

Henry's letter to a friend with weeks of Valerie's death in December 2023

These are some of the last words she wrote:

"Walked with Dad past log cabin house - halfway down hill to Glistening Pond - and back. Had to argue somewhat about the pointlessness and cruelty of me staying alive. Insisted again that I need a concrete plan for how I will actually live if I get better, how I will survive until then, and how can I return to Penn State without going nuts immediately and just wanting to kill myself and everyone else. I have none of these."

Indeed, she castigated me for not actually responding logically to her arguments for the necessity of her death. I was overcome, as her father and greatest admirer, by my fervent desire to keep her in my life. I could not see past my wishful thinking, my hope that she could one day get what she wanted and so actually desire to live.

The Babesia infection from age 10 disabled her and the treatment for it, including the high-dose steroids she required, degraded her body and her appearance. But the worse problem was the intrauterine Bartonella infection that replaced all normal feelings with anhedonia and mental pain from birth. This caused her to never feel our love and therefore to have an attachment disorder. She therefore hated herself and other humans. She literally did not get to join the human club. She was an outsider and therefore saw human beings and their sexual dimorphism objectively--as if an alien came to Earth to study us. She hated being born female because women have evolved to make and care for babies, not to be effective builders, creators, fighters, etc. She felt that men were the real humans, and women a sort of necessary adjunct in order to produce children. She believed that she was unlovable and she anticipated rejection by everyone--no matter how often they welcomed her and enjoyed her presence. The only things that helped her attachment disorder--the problem that caused her worst mental suffering--were romantic fantasies where she could feel a connection to very unusual androgynous aliens or young men. While she hated herself and all men and women--she could be attracted to a male if she could convince herself that he was female. He had to have very interesting features too--that she could find intellectually interesting. Romance is the second chance a person gets at attachment to others. However, her appearance changes and age made her certain that she could not attract the extremely rare young male she might be attracted to. She often called herself "human garbage" due to her appearance and disability.

Lacking normal feelings, she had to be brilliant, intense, and ambitious. She was an amazing individual who could never be content just to live. She never experienced the normal joys of living that can make even slaves enjoy this life. This is also why she had such

a remarkable over-development of her intellect. Since she didn't get good feelings, she had to get intellectual stimulation from everything, as much as possible. She became an artist because she paid extremely close attention to every visual detail of everything. Whereas normal people just see a cat, or a tree, she found something akin to a good feeling by examining and thinking about every detail of its appearance.

She was a black hole of despair. We often said that I was her "auxiliary consciousness". She could dump all her despair and anger on to me, and I would soothe and comfort her, and try to give her hope for her future. I was keeping this poor suicidal girl alive and working to get better by constant, unrelenting, minute-by-minute effort. I was constantly attending to her feelings and trying to make her feel a little better. It was mentally and emotionally exhausting, but I did it gladly because I loved her intensely, admired her, and did not want her to leave my life. The nature of her disease eventually decided in her favor and she got her wish--but how I miss her! I do know, however, that she got what she wanted, and that I could never have given her what she needed to tolerate life on this planet.