

# Forces

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## 10-5

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## 10-5

Avery Taylor

**Often, I find myself looking down at my arm, the one missing the essential five digits that everyone else has, everyone else but me it sometimes seems.** Occasionally my brain is racked with an overstock of “What if” questions. What if it was different? What if I was different? What if I was born right? Would I be considered a more approachable person because of that? I’ve spent countless hours considering every “what if” you can come up with, and I’ve mapped out the entire story and outcome of each change.


I’ve constantly been told to “Cherish what you were blessed with!” but those words aren’t mine. These people aren’t living my life, they aren’t experiencing what I have, and they haven’t overcome 17 years of challenges. Challenges that have consisted of judgment, insecurity, and frustration. Conversely, they haven’t experienced the elation of putting their hair into a perfect ponytail after years of effort, finally finding a way to do the monkey bars, or even getting cast in a leading role despite my limb difference.



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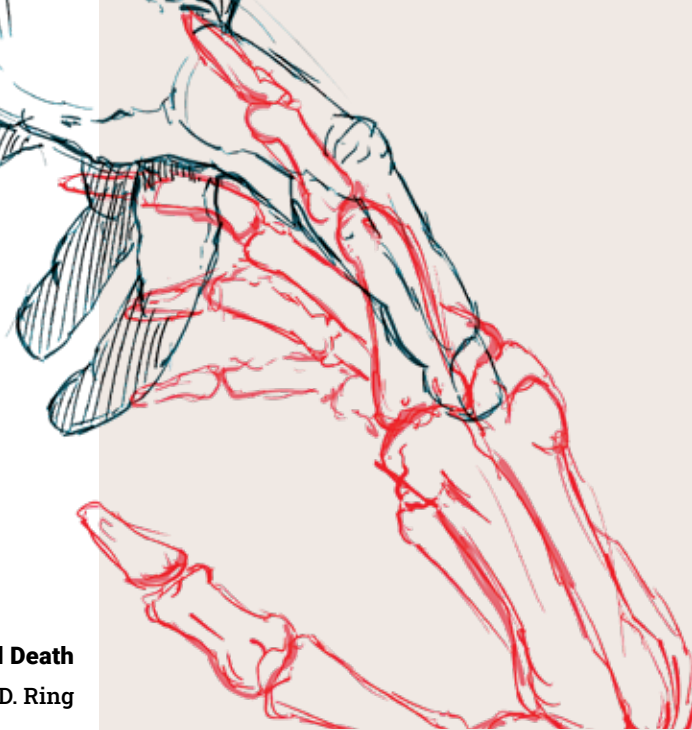
Despite the achievements, the jagged and consuming thoughts continue to flow through my head now and then. At night I have time reserved for overthinking small interactions. When shaking someone’s hand or meeting them for the first time, most people shake with their right hand and are met with a firm grip. When I go to shake a hand I often chicken out of using my right hand and simply contort my left hand to take theirs.

When talking to other people about my hand I put on a face, “I’ve never really had a problem with how my hand affects my image.” Little kids look up to me and find comfort in knowing they’re not the only



ones with a limb difference. It brings a happy and warm feeling knowing you can be that for someone, but suddenly there's pressure on you. You can't say things that will cause these kids to fear their future, but you want to be honest with them. It's hard not to say, "People will ask you questions you'll have to answer a trillion times. You'll get sick of it but you can't refuse to answer, that will come off as disrespectful." Instead you answer respectfully, and you repeat the same three sentences for the rest of your life. You'll hear the same few sentences for the rest of your life. "I feel so bad for you." People with differences just shrug it off.

Something I've learned to tell people is, "You don't miss what you've never had." I will stand by that statement forever. Many people will disagree with that, but missing and longing are two different



**Life and Death**  
Matthew D. Ring

things. You miss things that you've experienced before, and most of the time you long for things you haven't. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "Longing" as follows: "a strong desire, especially for something unattainable." When we see someone in need or someone with a disability, our first thought is "I feel bad for them." It's just human nature. We don't tend to think about the fact they are used to it, that they've lived their entire life in that state and adapted to every challenge they've faced.

There's nothing you can do to change who you are. You learn and grow with yourself and that's something I've come to accept. I am different, and a way for others to learn, because that is how the world changes and grows. Even still there are countless nights of longing and dreaming of what a "normal" life would be like. To me, this is normal. It's my normal.



Many people will disagree with that, but missing and longing are two different things. You miss things that you've experienced before, and most of the time you long for things you haven't.

**Peaceful Paws**  
Michele Cruz