

Not There Yet

WhAt's WRonG?

You ask me what's wrong
and I say
"everything."
you sigh
and look bewildered,
wanting a more
specific answer.

Your face seems to
indicate
that
there is no way
everything
is simultaneously wrong.

How can I begin to
untangle
and articulate
the inner workings of my brain
and the heavy burdens
of my heart?

Don't worry about
your role in this
realize it's not
something
you can fix.

I just want you to be here
with me in my pain.
And tell me everything's going
to be all right
even if there's no way
you could know that.

They said

They said

don't put Qtips in your ears
don't put food in the disposal
don't pop your pimples
(and certainly not your blackheads)
don't scratch that itch
don't peel that sunburn

They said

you can't make up lost sleep
you can't go home again
you can't be friends with the opposite sex
you can't do anything without a degree
you can't carry a calculator with you wherever you go
(that was 1990)

They said

don't nap for more than 20 min.
don't room with your best friend
don't stay logged in
don't post on social media
(but make sure you have an online "presence")

They said

don't use a credit card
(but make sure you establish credit)
nothing good happens after midnight
write what you know
don't go to bed angry
(but stand up for what you want)
don't date anyone of another race
(or faith)
get your affairs in order
(but live for today)

They said

*Look out for #1
(but be humble)
be ambitious
don't worry about who you step on
on your way to the top
but if you're a woman
know your place*

They said

*create a routine
never go to the grocery store hungry
don't eat after 7pm
never eat more than 400 calories in one sitting
chew each bite 20 times
nothing tastes as good as thin feels*

They said

*if you're a woman and you get a compliment
brush it off
contradict it
belittle yourself
in order not to appear arrogant
a ball breaker
don't be aggressive
or you will be thought of as a bitch*

*but boys:
be as confident as possible
you will run the world
being demanding of other people
is good leadership
and burying your emotions
is compartmentalizing
and allows you to get things done*

They also said

*someday you'll be able to order pizza online
you'll carry a powerful computer in your pocket
you'll have anything you want delivered to your door, for free
you can have it "your way"
you can see what your friends in India are having for dinner
you can work in your pajamas
you can have a meeting with hundreds of people without leaving your couch
you can publish your own book
you can text your condolences
you can watch news in real time
you won't need a card catalog
there will be no more Blockbuster video stores
newspapers, encyclopedias, and tape recorders
will be relics of the past
your kids have never heard of*

*you could buy a research paper
you could spy on your babysitter
or your husband
you could meet someone on the computer
you could date someone you met on the computer
you could marry someone you met on the computer*

*people would be fascinated with shows
about people just living their lives
and competing in crazy, dreamed up competitions
or matchmaking in 6 weeks
and the dictionary would have nonsense words
like "impactful" and "unputdownable"*

*you're going to traumatize your kids
it's inevitable
save money for their therapy
and yours
and you will definitely need anti-depressants
to make it through
even with them and therapy
it's going to be rough*

*a moment to moment
survival*

But I didn't believe them
I learned the math
I used the disposal
I ate at 12 am
I used 2 spaces after each sentence
I got a job
making $\frac{1}{2}$ of my husband's salary
and felt guilty about not cooking dinner
I didn't venture outside my comfort zone

Until
they came and got me
telling me there was a world out there
I couldn't conceive of
but was coming
with the surety of a city bus
on an immutable schedule
one that would flatten those in its path
who didn't get out of the way

Scheduling a nervous breakdown

Make sure you wait
until
the children are off to school
before you have a nervous breakdown
and make sure it is over by 2:40pm for carpool
and you are once again in Mom mode
calm and capable and ready to deal with the children's big emotions

In fact
it would be better
if you could schedule it for another day
Perhaps after the fall term
but not during the holidays
of course
Maybe at the beginning of the new year
but that time is so discouraging
with all those resolutions
you're supposed to be making

No, not then either
wait until spring
then the children will have thoughts of summer
on their mind
and they will not notice
some waves at home
or better yet
wait until summer
when they are distracted with fun
sunshine
swimming
and free time
But wait
won't you be carting them
around to
all the camps
and activities?
no time to stay in bed
and wax poetic

Better wait until fall term
Oh wait
we've made it through a whole year
without scheduling it
I guess there is no good time
so suck it up
and don't have it at all
It's so inconvenient
and messy
for all parties involved:
time at the therapist's office
money for the medicine
lost time at work
just a lot of navel gazing
It's not worth it

Only writers
and artists
living alone
who are already
well established
have time
for such nonsense
yet it might stymie
their creative process
so there is no good time

Maybe the wealthy
who have money to burn
and time on their hands
with maids and cooks and nannies—
but don't they have to manage
their investments?
they don't have time either

And what about college students?
it seems to be a likely time
for a breakdown
on your own for the first time

drowning in studying
trying to find yourself
but they don't have time either
or they might fail the semester

It turns out
that
no one has time
for a nervous breakdown
so let's swallow
the difficult feelings
and plow forward
hoping for the best
but fearing the worst

Exquisite

I wished
he would
call me
exquisite
so I waited
and waited
and waited
until the day
I realized
I should call
myself
exquisite
instead
I am
after all

Intertwined

Thirsting after each other
exploring each other's bodies
joyfully
without abandon
like starving souls
desperate for water
praying this is not a mirage

Enter into
all of me
become one
with my being
let our essences mix
and intertwine

there may never be
this moment
for us
again
savor it
holding every detail
close to your heart
memorize my touch
let the marks
be indelible
on your soul

years from now
something tiny
will spark a memory
and you will once again
be lying here with me