A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

How To Have An Anorexic Pregnancy: Tips From An Expert

It's well-known that sisters are competitive, especially when they're close in age. My own sister Blara's first reaction when she found out I was pregnant was to try to get pregnant herself; when that didn't work, she decided her best plan of attack was to call me every day to remind me that I am going to get fat.

Get the Tu

Getting fat being the absolute worst thing either one of us could ever imagine happening to us, having been raised in a society where women become Internet celebrities for starving themselves during pregnancy.

“You’re fat,” has always been my sister’s best weapon against me during moments of triumph. “I made this plus-sized for you,” she says when she made me a graduation dress. “You’re too fat to wear that,” she said when we went wedding dress shopping.

Pregnant women are supposed to gain weight. A lot of weight. 25-30 pounds. Most of it is healthy. You gain 4 pounds of blood volume. 3 pounds of placenta. 3 pounds of amniotic fluid. 3 pounds of breast tissue. 6-8 pounds for the baby. And some extra in stored fat.

But it's made very clear from all sides that you're not supposed to think of pregnancy as an excuse to eat anything you want. "You're not actually eating for two," pregnancy books warn. "You should be eating 200 extra calories a day," my doctor told me. "But remember, that's only a granola bar."

"Do I see a double chin forming?" my sister asks.

I am not a person who can listen to information, and decide not to consider it. I weigh everything everyone says to me as an equally viable option. The pressure not to gain weight has gotten to me.

"You're going to get so fat," my sister reminded me the other day.

“Can you help me?” I blurted out. “What can I do to stay skinny?”

“No problem, bitch!” she said. “I’m like an eating disorder expert, I’ll give you tips!”

Below are her nine tips for staying skinny while pregnant..

1. Always start your day by drinking water not eating food

2. Nothing tastes as good as being skinny feels

3. Eat for your baby not for yourself

4. They list calories on food for a reason — make sure to read them

5. Take adderall

6. If you feel bloated, take natural laxatives

7. if you have morning sickness, make sure to throw up

8. Know your competition – just because your husband loves you don't mean he'll stay with you

9. After the baby's gone the weight's all yours — remember that

If you follow these tips, your baby might be a speed freak with developmental disorders, but you'll be skinny, she promises.

Even just writing this makes me feel sick. But it's also funny. I love my sister. I will not follow a single one of her tips. I might get a little fat so what. I would go buy myself a bagel now but I'm too nauseous to walk the five blocks to the bagel store.

If I lived near my sister, she'd get me a bagel for sure. She'd come over here brandishing it with her two chihuahuas on her arm, and an electronic cigarette dangling from her mouth. She might call me fat, but mostly, she'd just make me laugh.

#9weekspregnant #Sarah Stage #My life #Pregnancy Tips

11 notes Jan 21st, 2016

MORE YOU MIGHT LIKE

Wisdom has it you don't show until late in your second trimester, especially for a first pregnancy, but I'm pretty sure this is a baby bump. When I'm bloated, I look full term. I'm posting this because

there isn’t much out there to compare to, and I wish there was more! #9weekspregnant

#9weekspregnant

8 notes

I guess I’ll start this post by saying what it’s all about — Caleb and I got engaged on Saturday night. I wish I could say that it was a complete surprise, but I’m two months pregnant, so it was either get married and have health care, or give birth with the help of my sister,

a pair of scissors, and a bath tub in a motel room.

I'm 100% kidding about being pregnant — wasn't that joke so not funny in retrospect? — because Caleb and I got engaged for reasons of love alone. We've been talking about it since the first month we started dating. Everyone says that when it's right, it's right, and you know, and Caleb and I knew it was right the first time we kissed at an orgy.

I'm having trouble processing my feelings about being engaged. I always said that when something happened to me that happens to many other women, I'd be brutally honest about it. I'd say the things that no one else wanted to say. I'd talk about the horrifying things that leaked out of me after I gave birth. I'd talk about the way I dreamed about my dad in the weeks before walking down the aisle. (Does that happen? Be honest with me.) I think that everyone's read enough about marriage, and becoming a mother, and planning a wedding, to not want more of the same.

Keep reading

#Marriage #My life #Love

34 notes

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A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

I Am a Failure But So What?

Get the Tu

I went to dinner with my friend Stephanie and Omer's place this past Saturday night. Present were Stephanie's friends from college, Nikki and Bill, along with Caleb, DEH, and my sister Tara. Each one of us, in turn, talked about what we did. "Sorry for asking, I feel like that's a super aggressive question," Bill prefaced his request the first time. "Nah, in New York, it's like saying, 'How are you?'" we assured him.

My sister talked for a while about her marketing business, and how well it's doing. "I'm always trying to get Brienne to work for me but she's lazy and irresponsible," she told Bill. To me, this just read

as, “Years of childhood competition mixed with self deprecation, lack of social grace and honesty.” But he was like, “Woah, that’s pretty harsh.”

“She went to two Ivy league schools, and I was the fuck up,” my sister continued. “Now look at where we are now, situation totally reversed.”

“I wrote a book last year,” I confessed to Bill. “I spent most of the year working on it for free. I gave up everything for it. I thought it was going to lead to something, but it hasn’t, and now, I’m in a sort of bad situation financially.”

“Oh, that sucks,” he said.

“It’s hard for creatives to make money,” Nikki offered.

“Yeah, it’s ok,” I said. In truth, I’ve kind of moved on. In the period of nothingness that followed the day when I handed in my book in June, I struggled quite a lot emotionally. In struggling, I worked through a lot. The book still might sell, but if it doesn’t, I think that I’ll honestly be ok with that. First of all, because it opens the pathway for me to write another book that won’t sell, which takes a lot of pressure off the process. I already have an idea for two books, in fact. In the downtime I have later today — that in truth, I have every day — I’m going to begin to sketch out the idea for one of them, which already has a beginning and an end.

I may never be a “successful” writer, but I’m still a writer. It is still my calling.

In this down period, I've realized some essential truths that people always told me, but that I didn't necessarily believe. They are below. I think these might be helpful for writers:

1. You don't need to publish constantly in order to build a name for yourself.

When I first started freelance writing about art six years ago, I took literally any assignment that came my way. I have said this before, but there was a period of time when I was writing somewhere between 10 and 20 pieces a week for online sites, not including for

this blog. I was so stressed out that I could barely sleep, but I felt like it was necessary to work that hard firstly to justify the fact that I wasn't working in an office, and secondly, to stay visible.

"You know you can write one article a month, and still be totally relevant," my professor said.

"What do you know?" I wanted to ask her. "You're probably from a rich family and don't need to worry about money or making a career."

The truth was, she was right. I've been publishing a lot less this past year, but I still get the same amount of press releases and invitations. Moreover, the quality of my work is a lot better. I actually think through what I say. If I write one piece a month for a magazine, it's the culmination of all of the thinking I do in that month. And people respond to it more, I've noticed, on social media.

Moreover, freelance writers get paid less than ever before, and moreover, have to fight for their payments. So what's the difference between $250 you never get paid and $25 you never get paid in the long run? The financial incentive to pound it out as a freelancer just does not exist.

I make enough money to live, and almost all of that money comes from doing CMS work that has nothing to do with writing.

2. The more you write, the better you become as a writer.

Looking back, I honestly can't believe that anyone ever let me write anything at the beginning of my writing career because I was a terrible writer. I think I had a lot of "voice" maybe. But my pieces sucked. I didn't put the important information in the first paragraph, for one thing, or include it at all — for example, who the person was I was writing about, or why they were important. I was so consumed with being clever, or writing banging sentences, that I literally forgot that I was supposed to be, first and foremost, relaying information to an audience that didn't know it already. That, ultimately, is the task of a journalist/critic/art writer.

I still have a lot to learn as a writer, but I'm definitely getting better. Part of the reason why I think I've been so bored these past few months is that I've become more competent at writing articles. A piece on an exhibition that might have once taken me 9 hours of painfully parsing through my thoughts, and trying to get those thoughts down in writing, takes a lot less time these days. I'm just more of a professional, and in an all honesty, it feels great.

What no one ever tells you about investing in a career is that there might not be immediate rewards, but you do learn something over time. And you don't get paid extra for the learning, or get accolades for it, but it's more valuable than anything else – big paychecks, lots of likes. Learning is anonymous, and slow, and it's not valued enough in adult society.

3. It’s ok not to be stressed out.

It’s no secret that we measure our success based on how stressed out and overwhelmed we feel. I like to feel overwhelmed because it allows me to focus on something other than myself.

It’s extremely hard, on the other hand, to look at a day, or a week, ahead of you, and realize, “I don’t really have a lot of stuff that I’m accountable for, and moreover, I don’t have a lot money to just like pick up a hobby in my downtime, so I gotta figure out ways to fill the next 300 hours all by myself, with my own mind.”

In the past few months, I've been practicing living with almost no stress. And while it's been stressful, I'm also finding quite a bit of pleasure in having time to do things that I never have had time for before. For example, this morning, Caleb and I sat down to talk about Christmas presents. We need to buy Christmas presents for our family and friends. For the past 32 years, I completed this task, at the very earliest, on December 22, rushing around the city in a fit of anxiety. But this year, I can take my time with it, and I'm actually really looking forward to the pleasure of going to different stores for different people, or at the very least, purchasing things for them online. And they don't need to be big things, or expensive things. Like I definitely will be buying some people fleece relaxation pants for $12.99.

The lesson in all of this is that it's ok to enjoy your life exactly as it is, without anything more, and without worrying too much about the future.

4. Things have a way of working themselves out.

I'm not sure I believe in like the cosmos, and other shit. But these past few months, I've definitely felt like "blocked." I didn't know what to do with myself. I didn't see any way forward in the future. The knowledge was there, but I couldn't shake it loose.

Then, these past few weeks, things have been working themselves out in the weirdest ways. I got invited on a press trip to the Caribbean, for example, on the contingent that I could place a story before I left. I pitched myriad people, with no luck. I knew I should keep on pitching other people, but every time I sat down to do it, I just couldn't force myself even though I had nothing else to do. It

was causing me considerable anxiety. Then, all of a sudden, the press trip was cancelled. The press person was extremely apologetic, but I couldn't help feeling that the entire time, it hadn't been "meant to be." And that my gut was telling me that.

Little things like this have been happening a lot over the past few weeks. I'll get in touch with people who haven't been responding to emails. Or I've been getting long overdue payments. I feel things becoming unblocked, and largely, I realize that this is all a matter of perspective rather than some cosmic shift – although it could be a cosmic shift, do you believe in that?

Anyway, the truth to be gleaned from this is that you don't have power over anyone but yourself. Stephanie's mom actually said this to me last week when I went over there for lunch. Hi Tomoko! I was telling her what had been going on with my life. I said, as I often do when I'm catching up with people, "I wrote a book, but it hasn't sold, I don't know what will happen with it."

And she said, "Well, you wrote the book, and you did your part, and now what happens is out of your power."

The only constant in life is change – and maybe entropy. You only have power over yourself, but when you're connected to other people, sometimes they end up solving your problems through random chance. And sometimes they don't, and eventually, the problem just is replaced by another. In essence, you can rely on things happening, some of them good, some of them bad, but in the meantime, worrying about them is a waste of energy better spent doing yoga, or something. And Christmas shopping. And making babies. And probably making some money. And more than anything, being kind to people.

This post stopped making sense towards the end, but whatever, I gotta go to kickboxing!

#Writing #My life #Your life #Entropy

9 notes Dec 7th, 2015

MORE YOU MIGHT LIKE

My brother Stuprendan and I have recently begun emailing each other stories that we are writing. The last one I sent him was my first epic, “Gallerina,” which counts at 150,000 words, and is an abysmal failure. “You probably shouldn’t try to get this published,” Stuprendan wrote back to me.

He sent me a novel he’s writing about a genius who deals in designer prescription drugs, and also serves as a drug informant to the FBI. It is not at all an expression of yearning or ambition….(not).

What it is, however, is a better novel than most things that William Gibson has ever written. Both Sadie Lady and I devoured it within the first hour of receiving it.

Now, Brendan will probably be more successful than I can ever hope to become by the time he’s 20, and I feel no shortage of jealousy for that. “I wrote the chapter I sent you this afternoon so that you could get an idea of the characters,” he said, flippantly. It was 35 pages long.

Yesterday, I received a teaser about the next chapter:

“It is titled ‘Why Hot Girls (And Boys) Are In Need Of Ketamine.’ It is not at all like it sounds. I actually took it straight from a doctor’s website. The post is about heat dysfunction. I guess the doctor forgot that ketamine is also a date rape drug.”

Need I even say that I eagerly anticipate reading it?

#Childhood Bipolar Disorder #Ketamine #William James Sidis #Writing #my life #fiction

6 notes

Do You Think Fellini Was Ever Bored?

Because the past few days have been depressing, weather wise at the very least, I've been thinking a lot about making changes in my life. "Should I be looking for a full time job?" I am asking myself. Simultaneously, I've thought up ideas of novels I could write, articles I could try to sell, people I could reach out to for assignments.

The truth is, this place of feeling like I'm running in place, wanting something else, but going nowhere, is the most constant feeling of my life. I don't know if it will ever end, and if I'll ever find a purpose. Honestly, just entertaining it is exhausting. The nice thing about motherhood is that unlike many other new mothers, the question of, "Should I stay at home or should I go back to work?" is not that different from the question I have been asking myself over the past six years I've spent freelance writing. Only now, I have a companion in my loneliness and indecision who chews on her own feet.

I did have a nice moment away from her. I took a meeting with a friend, and a really nice guy who runs a travel company. It was rainy and horrible outside. I met them at ABC Kitchen. I arrived early. In the entranceway was Olivia Wilde, in high tops, without any make-up. She was beautiful.

At the meeting, we spoke about travel for ninety minutes or so, and I remembered what the best part of my life before the baby was. The problem was that travel was only a highlight; something that came once in a while, and kept me going, but didn't sustain me financially.

I don't think I've chosen the right life for me, but does anyone really know they've chosen the right life? The challenge I've made for myself over these past five months is to be happy with what I have, and want no more. At no point in my life have I been truly content for very long; does the contentment come with age? I certainly would be happier working harder; I like to work hard. I fucking hate working in an office.

I felt content running back to Caleb's office after my meeting. The streets were shining. I didn't have any precious weight strapped to my body. I didn't have to worry about getting someone else wet; keeping them safe, dry, entertained. Giving them the best experience of life they could possibly have. I was just me, and simultaneously, jealous of people who have full working lives that sustain them.

I hope that all of this striving, and thinking, and dissatisfaction eventually leads to a change; change is the only constant in life, right? The only constant in my life is a sense of unease.

#My life #Writing #Nights of Cabiria

12 notes

See briennewalsh's whole Tumblr

A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

I chased my aunt around the city for her marathon yesterday. Given that I already had a fever and bad cold, I am now deathly ill. It was worth it.

Because my Aunt Peggy is one of the kindest, most loving people I've ever met. She has been there for me my whole life, no matter what. I was so proud to see her run yesterday, and I felt heartbroken that I wasn't on the course with her.

The marathon has become one of those universal events made irritating by social media, because everyone in New York seems to know someone running. But there's a reason why everyone talks

about it — and it's because if you're here, in New York, watching it from the streets, you witness this incredible mass of people from all over the world just enveloped for 26.2 miles in a crowd of cheering spectators. There's nothing evil about it. There are no overt corporate sponsors. People run for themselves, or for causes, and they're proud to be there.

At the first spot where I waited for my aunt, in Brooklyn, there was a guy in the line next to me who was cheering for anyone who had noted either their name, or their country, on the front of their jerseys. "Yeah France!" he yelled. "Let's go Julie!"

I started along with him. "Looking good Ecuador!" I shouted. "Come on Japan!"

Later, I was with my family on the Upper East Side, right near my sister's apartment. "People running the marathon aren't that skinny," Blara noted. We slowly crept into the central divider, beyond the line demarcated for viewers, and kept on doing it even when a police officer tried to herd all 8 of us back onto the sidewalk, just so that we could greet my Aunt Peggy on her 18th mile, coming down a hill. At the sight of her, we all started tearing up.

"I signed up to watch a marathon, not run one," noted Blara when I said we were going across town to watch my Aunt Peggy finish.

She took off, and left me and Caleb behind on 59th street, in the last quarter mile. I ran into the lovely Bianca there. Burning with fever, I became elated as I cheered on the crowd that came before my aunt, many of them whom I recognized from other points on the trail.

My aunt was in a zombie zone when she passed us on that final stretch. She barely registered my screams. My Aunt Colleen, somehow, had joined her, thwarting security and sensors that kept outside runners from joining the race. My family is a family of rule

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POSTS LIKES ASK ME ANYT

Around Columbus Circle, finished marathoners drifted with their loved ones, wrapped in orange thermal capes that looked like hazmat suits. "I don't think we can walk that way," I said to Caleb when I first spotted them. "It looks like an anti-bomb squad shut down that street."

We met my Aunt Peggy back at my Aunt Colleen's apartment above Lincoln Center. She had returned to her normal state. She looked beautiful, like she had just had her hair blown out, and her make-up retouched. My grandmother sat in the corner, drinking her Coors Lites. "Tara, that's enough," she said to my sister as she poured her second glass of wine.

I want to write something more beautiful, but I can hardly see the computer screen because my eyes are watering. And I just don't have the energy.

Anyway, to all of you haters, next year, come and join the race. And don't walk around New York City in 40 degree weather with a fever.

#NYC Marathon #Blara #My life

13 notes Nov 4th, 2013


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MORE YOU MIGHT LIKE

On Afternoons in Chinatown with Stuprendan and Blara

I've been writing so much about I bet you think we have a *Flowers in the Attic* thing going on or something. I'm even beginning to think that. But honestly, I'm just writing about him because he's a pretty great evil sidekick.

Keep reading

#Blara #Stuprendan #my life

2 notes

Three Jewels of Cultural Advice from Blara

Whenever Blara and I speak on the phone (which is less and less now that Stuprendan and her have formed a closed secret society more formidably psychotic than anything a member of the Bush family could dream up), I put her on speaker phone, and then let her run her thoughts aloud while I do chores around the house.

(Sidenote: Blara and Stuprendan are code names for my younger sister and brother.)

Usually, by the end of the conversation, I've finished cleaning a week's worth of dishes, all 12 square feet of wooden floors in my living room, and my teeth without having uttered a single word.

159_CSC-07811.jpg "CONFESSIONS OF A SHOPAHOLIC" Isla Fisher Ph: Robert Zuckerman © Touchstone Pictures and Jerry Bruckheimer, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Every few minutes, she punctuates her stream of consciousness with: "Don't put that on your blog!" or "Do you think I'm skinny?"

Keep reading

#Blara #my life

5 notes

See briennewalsh's whole Tumblr

A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

Icon of the Day: Tara Goldstein

My friend Tara Goldstein is getting married this weekend in Newport to her long-time sweetheart, Kevin Dolan. Above is a picture of them at my best friend Kim's "New Year's Eve" party which lead to a "six-week-long legal binding" and eventually a "quick departure from her shared apartment." You can't see, but Blara was right behind Kevin's head. She had just blown a noisemaker in his ear.

A few minutes later, she hit me in the head with a champagne bottle.

Get the Tu

I'm really happy for Tara Goldstein, because she's marrying an Irish-Catholic guy, which means that she'll have wild, freckled children that have a way with words and develop chronic depression and alcoholism in their adolescence.

For you, Tara, for being just about the nicest person I know. For your ever increasing beauty. For being a wonderful teacher, whom my cousin loves more than anyone. For thinking that I'm funny when I say crazy things just to make everyone else around us feel uncomfortable.

For tanned skin and houses on the beach and getting really, really “happy”, Tara Goldstein, you’re my icon of the day, and my bride of the year.

#Tara Goldstein #icon

Jun 4th, 2010

MORE YOU MIGHT LIKE

Icon of the Week: Maria Shriver

My friend said she's going as Maria Shriver for Halloween, so I'll

make her my icon.

(Can you pick out Eunice?)

Maria Shriver was the daughter of Sargent Shriver (from whence she begot her name) and Eunice Kennedy Shriver. Eunice Kennedy Shriver was the fifth child in the most famous of all of the Kennedy Clans. All of her older siblings died horrible deaths (JFK, Joseph and Kathleen), or were lobotomized (Rose). Her little brother Bobby was shot while he was walking through the kitchen of the hotel. By the end of the 1960s, she was the oldest child remaining to Joseph P. Kennedy; father, lover, and former ambassador to England.

(There's Maria, second from the left)

In other words, Maria Shriver is the niece of JFK, and the first cousin of JFK Jr.

The scary part about all of the information above is that I didn't even need to look it up on Wikipedia. I knew it all already after reading *Reckless Youth* by Nigel Hamilton, a brash biography of JFK in his early years. Good read, highly recommend.

Keep reading

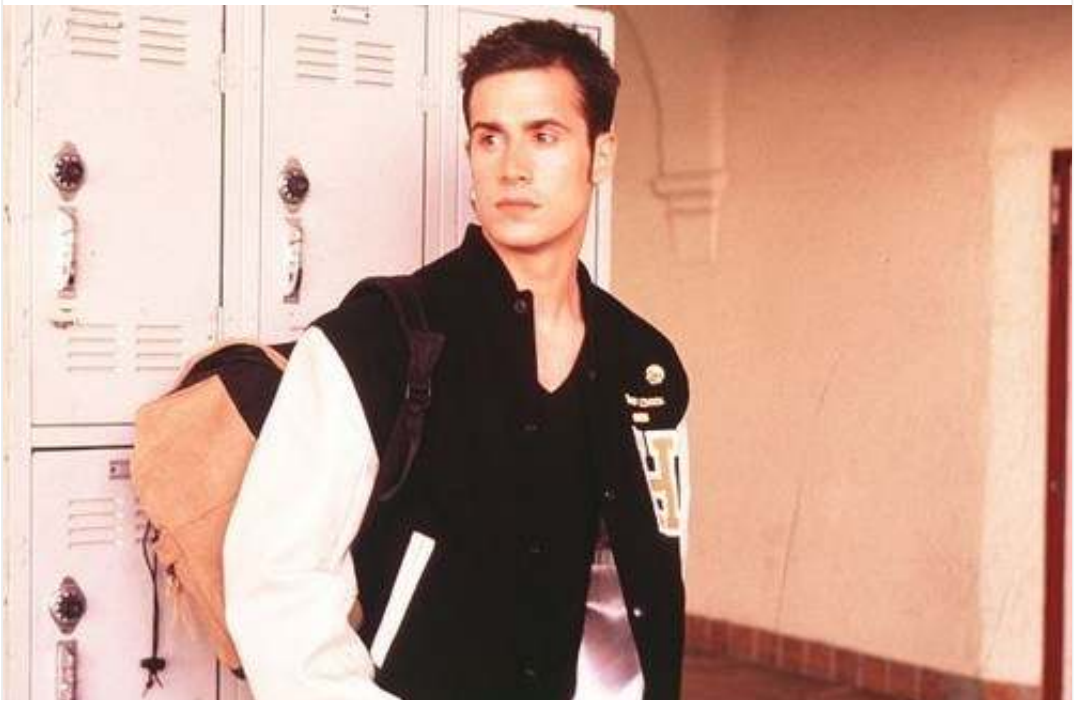
#Icon of the Week #Kennedy #Maria Shriver #icon

2 notes

Icon of the Week: Claire

Forlani

Not many people appreciate Freddie Prinze Junior movies for the masterpieces of millennial teenage kitsch that they are.



F—k *Can't Buy Me Love.* Doesn't anyone remember *She's All That?* I certainly do. My senior year of high school, I became of the embodiment of Laney Boggs when one of the star basketball players in my grade noticed that I had finally gone through puberty. Every day on my way to AP Latin, him and his teammates would sing "There She Goes" from the doorway of their Regents Spanish class (Sixpence None the Richer, anyone?). Just like Laney, he asked me to prom. And then he broke up with me the week after. And that's where the similarities between Laney Boggs and I end.

For Laney Boggs never suffered from such an abrupt dismissal. After she broke up with Freddie Prinze Junior, he realized how much he really loved her, got in his sweet ass Range Rover, and came to beg for her forgiveness. He helped her father clean his pool, or some shit, and it all ended happily ever after. Unless Freddie Prinze Junior was like my basketball player, in which case he's probably living at home with his parents.

Keep reading

#Claire Forlani #Icon of the Week #icon

1 note

You scrolled this far. Check out the rest.

A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

Last night my sister and I were hanging out with Shark and Rat-A-Kat at the Noho Star. My sister had just finished a story about the pharmacy. When the pharmacist gave her her medicine, she had apparently asked, “What’s the matter with you?” “That’s not legal to ask, right?” my sister noted. “Let’s call Nana?” I suggested.

So we called my Nana, and she said, “Oh, Brienne!” because she was very happy to hear from me.

“Where are you?” she asked.

Search briennewalsh

“Oh, very nice,” my Nana said.

“A strange man just put something in it but whatever, I’m going to drink it anyway.”

“Very funny,” she said.

“Are you ok, your voice sounds very hoarse?”

“Oh yeah, I’m fine, I just ate some ice cream,” she said.

She paused. “I love ice cream.”

“Here’s Tara,” I told her. Tara talked to her for a few minutes, and then said, “I gotta go.” She handed the phone back to me. “Have I told you lately?” I said to my Nana. “Have I told YOU lately!” she said. “That I love you.” “That I love you,” she echoed.

#My life #Blara #My Nana

10 notes Oct 16th, 2014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On Afternoons in Chinatown with Stuprendan and Blara

I've been writing so much about I bet you think we have a *Flowers in the Attic* thing going on or something. I'm even beginning to think that. But honestly, I'm just writing about him because he's a pretty great evil sidekick.

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#Blara #Stuprendan #my life

2 notes

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#Blara #my life

5 notes

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A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

On Afternoons in Chinatown with Stuprendan and Blara

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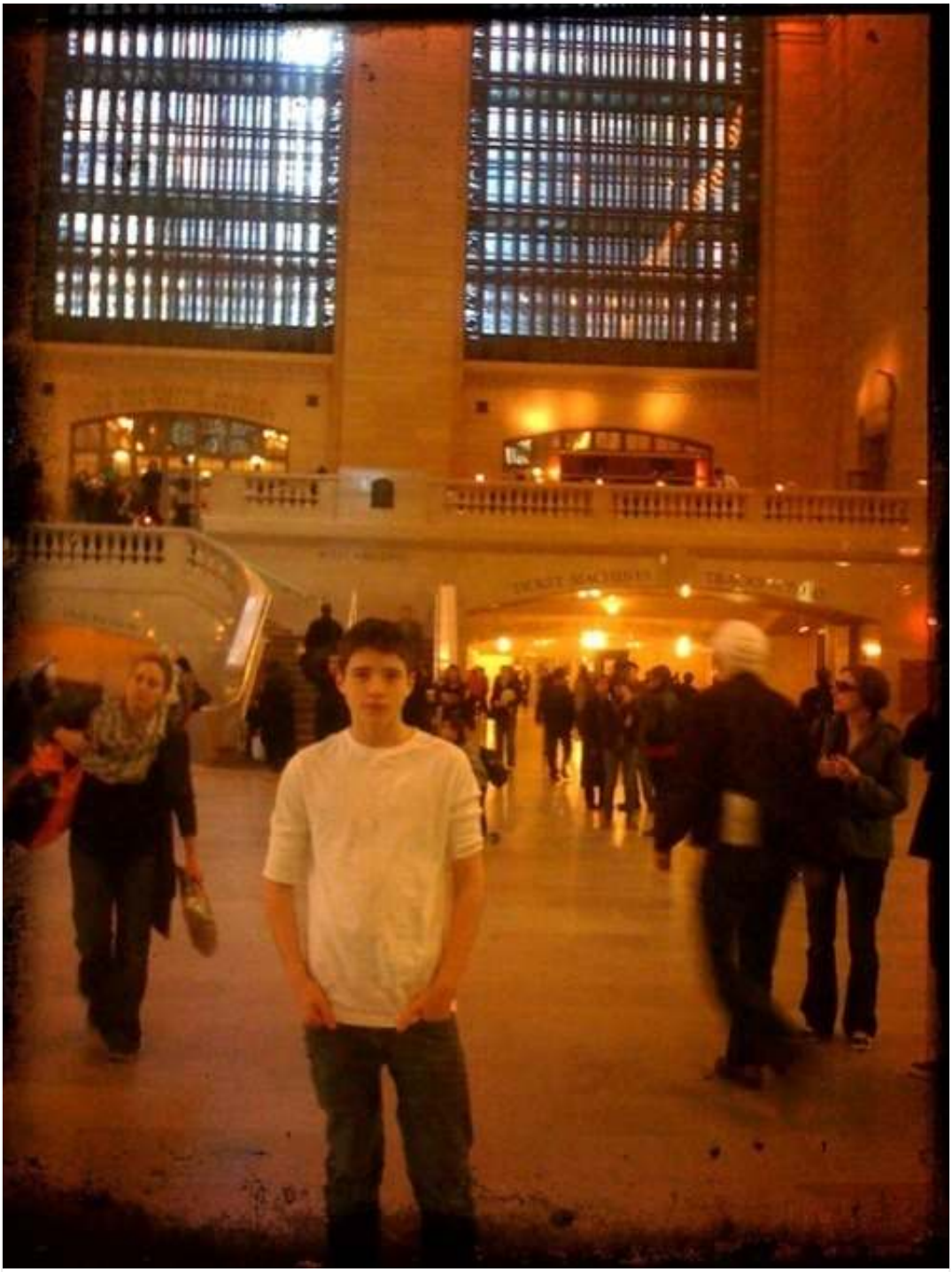


I've been writing so much about I bet you think we have a *Flowers in the Attic* thing going on or something. I'm even beginning to think that. But honestly, I'm just writing about him because he's a pretty great evil sidekick.

I was home this past weekend, which was fun times for everyone but my other brother Pickle, whom Blara and I terrorized so much that he'll only interact with us if we are silent and watching a movie. He's the only normal person in my family.

and Blara talk on the phone for an average of 1 hour a day. They are best friends, and it's honestly very sweet. In fact, I get a little jealous. I think that likes me too, even though he frequently tells me that I'm an idiot.

Some say is a bona fide genius, and he certainly won't dispute it. We had a conversation this weekend where he told me that he's already better than me at everything I've ever tried. Then I locked him in the dog's cage and left the house (I'm kidding Mom…we only did that kind of stuff when he was younger).

He took the train back with me to Manhattan on Saturday, so that he could have lunch with Blara. They had plans to go see the FBI building in lower Manhattan, and then to return home to Chappaqua. I wasn't invited, because I'm apparently too annoying, but I enjoyed my 45 minutes alone with anyway.

Speaking to is like talking to someone who's a little bit older than you, very wise, and extremely condescending. We launched into an interesting conversation about high school popularity in the United States vs. the rest of the world. Then we talked about the relative merits and de-merits of Piper Perabo, who he recently got over (teen dream crush). Then we talked about an ex-boyfriend who wouldn't

talk to me (fortunately for me, I have so many of these that no one has any idea who I'm referring to). considered the ways in which we could re-establish contact, and then made this fair point: "I guess it's too late to pretend like you're pregnant."

We arrived to find Blara missing from the rendezvous point, so we went to the food court in Grand Central to grab lunch while we waited for her to arrive. I don't know where got it from, but he's the absolute perfect gentleman. I attempted to pay for lunch, which was two slices of pizza at Two Boots, and he held up his hand. "I got it," he told me, offering the $20 bill my father had given him to the cash register.

Blara finally showed up, almost 45 minutes late. We met her in front of the Magnolia booth. “I want a cupcake before we leave,” I said to , who had already proven himself to be more generous than 80% of the boyfriends I’ve ever had. He reached for his wallet. “You’re too fat for cupcakes!” Blara yelled at me. And then she kicked me in the shins.

We got on the train downtown, which was filled with a Saturday afternoon mish mash of wackadoos. In the corner, a gigantically obese man wearing a doorag was working his way through a bag of pork rinds. We gawked for a while, all three of us, and then launched into a conversation about how Blara could frighten her co-worker, who lives in Staten Island and sincerely believes in vampires.

“Chain her to her desk with handcuffs, and then leave her there for an hour,” offered. “No one will know.”

We got off the train, only to be confronted by a man who looked like a Puerto Rican dressed up like a Native American for a costume party. He held a mirror notebook in front of his face, which he shifted whenever someone tried to look in his eyes, like it was a fan and he was a geisha at a mating ceremony. He shifted nervously up and down the platform, muttering to himself. If I darted back and forth quickly enough, I could catch glimpses of his face, which looked like it had been the victim of a chemical peel gone awry.

“Let’s follow that guy and make him paranoid,” Blara said, and we did, all three of us, laughing our heads off. We darted out behind him onto Canal Street, where we lost him in the crowd.

We continued on our way to the correctional facility in the heart of Chinatown, where I promised we would find the best bubble tea in Manhattan, along with the site where Blara had once stolen two mini turtles out of a fishtank on the street, without breaking a stride, which had resulted in us being chased down the street by a Chinese storeowner.

Along the way, we found a rack of rings for $1, which Blara and I both admired. “I’ll get you each one,” Stuprendan said, pulling out his wallet. “Early birthday present.”

(Note: Stuprendan is flush with cash from his summer job, which was running a soccer camp for my baby sisters and my younger cousin Brian. He line item invoiced my mother every week, and insisted on being paid in cash).

By the time we finally found the Bubble Tea place, on Mott Street, relations between Blara and I had started to disintegrate. “This is why I hate you,” she told me matter of factly as we wove up and down the streets of Chinatown, looking for the storefront, which initially escaped my notice. “You’re a f—ing bitch.”

didn’t say anything. He’s smart, so he knows how to steer clear when Blara and I start fighting. “Your hair looks completely bleached,” I said.

“When I make clothing for you, I have to make it plus-sized because your ass is so big,” she responded.

I have to say, the nice thing about Blara and I is that we can say whatever we want to each other, completely freak other people out, and then be totally normal like 3 minutes later. That’s what sisters

are for! Um…

We went inside to pick out our Bubble Tea flavors. At the cash register, again reached for his wallet.

“,” I said, patting his head, finally assuming my role of big sister. “You don’t have to pay for everything.”

“Don’t worry,” he responded. “I’ll invoice Dad for the extra expenses when I get home.”

#Blara #Stuprendan #my life

2 notes Nov 16th, 2010

MORE YOU MIGHT LIKE

Three Jewels of Cultural Advice from Blara

Whenever Blara and I speak on the phone (which is less and less now that Stuprendan and her have formed a closed secret society more formidably psychotic than anything a member of the Bush family could dream up), I put her on speaker phone, and then let her run her thoughts aloud while I do chores around the house.

(Sidenote: Blara and Stuprendan are code names for my younger sister and brother.)

Usually, by the end of the conversation, I've finished cleaning a week's worth of dishes, all 12 square feet of wooden floors in my living room, and my teeth without having uttered a single word.

Every few minutes, she punctuates her stream of consciousness with: “Don’t put that on your blog!” or “Do you think I’m skinny?”

Keep reading

#Blara #my life

5 notes

A Call to Arms

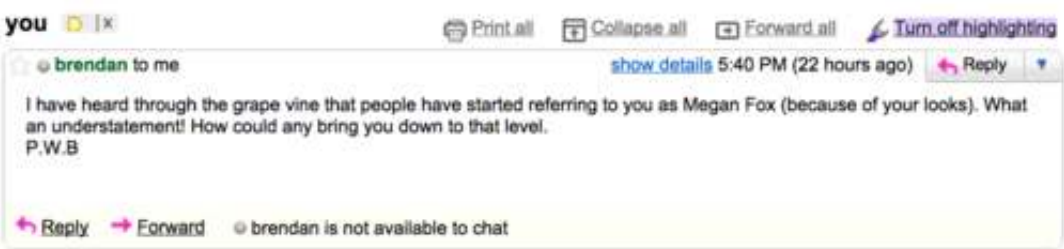
I haven't spoken to my fifteen-year-old brother Stuprendan in a few weeks, which usually means that he and my twenty-six-year-old sister Blara are getting along swimmingly.

A few months ago, they were speaking at such lengths that my parents made a rule that he couldn't use his cell phone after 10pm, so that he wouldn't talk to her all night. It was like Blara was his girlfriend, only she was actually his sister.

There is absolutely no Freudian shit at all going on in my family.

Then they got in a fight, and suddenly, every three or four minutes, my phone was ringing. “I’ve gotta go,” Blara would say whenever I picked up the phone. And then she’d hang up. Like I was the one who was bothering her.

Stuprendan generally abhors me, but occasionally he checks in to see if I’m still alive, or even worse, writing about him on my blog. Yesterday, I got the following email from him:


you

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brendan to me show details 5:40 PM (22 hours ago) Reply

I have heard through the grape vine that people have started referring to you as Megan Fox (because of your looks). What an understatement! How could any bring you down to that level.
P.W.B

Reply Forward brendan is not available to chat

Keep reading

#Freud #Stuprendan #my life

4 notes

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A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

Three Jewels of Cultural Advice from Blara

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Get the Tu

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159_CSC-07811.jpg "CONFESSIONS OF A SHOPAHOLIC" Isla Fisher Ph: Robert Zuckerman © Touchstone Pictures and Jerry Bruckheimer, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Every few minutes, she punctuates her stream of consciousness with: "Don't put that on your blog!" or "Do you think I'm skinny?"

To which I murmur acknowledgment, which is enough of a response for Blara to move on.

Last night's topic of conversation centered around Blara's business plan for her handbag company, which I honestly and truly think will be a success. Blara, for all of her loveably odd proclivities, like adopting stray kittens by the half dozen (boy, do I have a story for you…), and biting human beings as a display of love, is one of the most creative people I know.

We're planning a trip to Shanxi, China to get samples made, with my Aunt Leggy (the youngest of my mother's sisters) and a team of handlers well trained in the art of restraining human beings with mild electric shocks (does anyone get the Robert Jordan reference…no? make me fall in love). So Blara has been doing market research about handbags to know exactly what she wants to get done during our odyssey.

In return for listening to her talk about her business plan, Blara threw me three tidbits of cultural information to post on my blog that she promised would make me seem extremely cutting edge. I'm going to share them with you, because I want to give you the same opportunity to really impress people in idle conversation:

1. The Mulberry Alexa bag, inspired by fantastically skinny British model Alexa Chung, is all the rage. Anyone who is cool should buy one. If they don't want a handbag, they should just make a pile of 1200 one-dollar bills, and watch them burn. Same use-value.

Also, the bags by Reed Krakoff, a former designer for Coach, are pretty high in demand.

I'm not gonna lie…I really like them too.

2. John Galliano loves Hitler and thinks Jews should be gassed.

To watch him say it out loud, click here.

3. Charlie Sheen is scary.

For those of you who have been in a hole, Charlie Sheen has been giving some pretty unbelievably hilarious interviews, in which he re-enacts entire dinner conversations my family has during the holiday season. For instance:

“She was attacking me, though, with, like a, a small fork. Like a cocktail fork. And she had it with her, that was the weird part. What was she doing with, like, a shrimp fork in her purse? She stole it, clearly. From a buffet.”

He’s not bi-polar, he’s bi-winning.

Anyway, there's the rundown of the news yesterday, as reported by Blara. I would relay it to you every evening, but I'm not part of Stuprendan's secret society, so I don't get to talk to her every day.

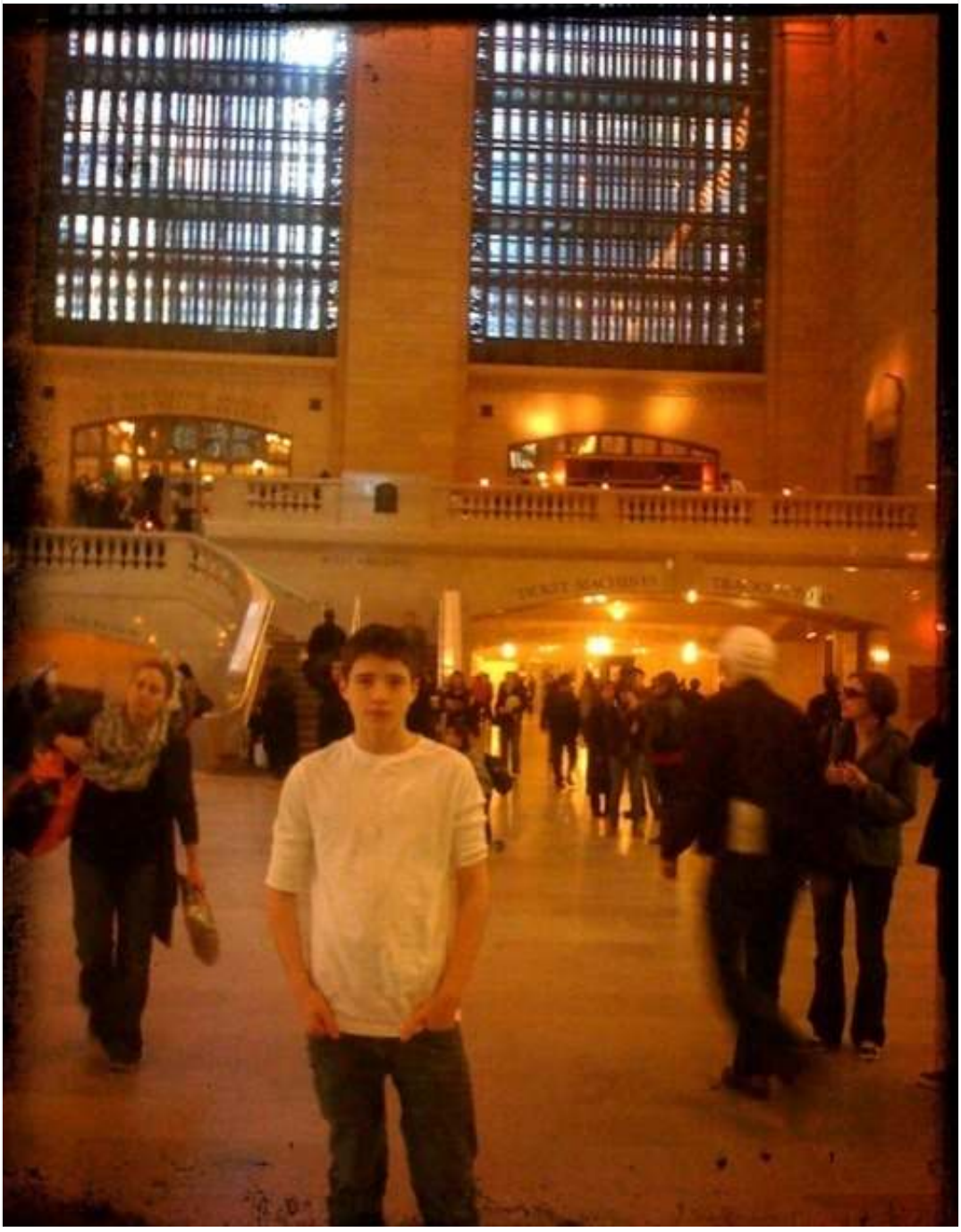
Get ready for some blogging magic from China…

#Blara #my life

5 notes Mar 2nd, 2011

MORE YOU MIGHT LIKE

On Afternoons in Chinatown with Stuprendan and Blara



I've been writing so much about I bet you think we have a *Flowers in the Attic* thing going on or something. I'm even beginning to think that. But honestly, I'm just writing about him because he's a pretty great evil sidekick.

Keep reading

#Blara #Stuprendan #my life

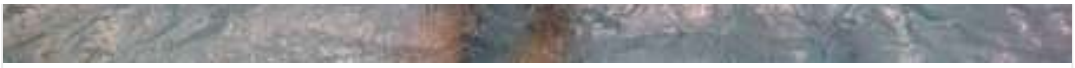
2 notes

Having a Sister Makes You Happier

There was an article earlier this week in the *New York Times* about how having a sister makes you happier.

I know that having Blara as my sister makes me happier, and I'm not even making a funny joke when I say that.

I also have two little sisters, those who must not be named because my mother banned me from doing so on my blog.



They make me happy as well.

Blara and I are mostly like Waldorf and Statler, the two theater critics in the Muppets. When we're not fighting, we're making fun of other people, most especially Superbad.

When we’re not like Waldorf and Statler, Blara is like Animal:

And I’m like a victim.

Keep reading

#Blara #my life

1 note

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A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

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Try watching this video on www.youtube.com, or enable JavaScript if it is disabled in your browser.

Stuprendan’s Gate Trick. Some background information:

1. My parent’s house has a gate

2. The gate is controlled by a motion sensor remote control

3. Stuprendan is in possession of the remote control

4. Every time my grandmother comes over, Stuprendan sits by the gate, and fools around with the remote control so that my grandmother can’t drive in.

5. Usually he films it.

And, cut.

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markvelasquez markvelasquez

markvelasquez

“Mika Lovely,” 2019

#my life #Gate Trick

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75 notes

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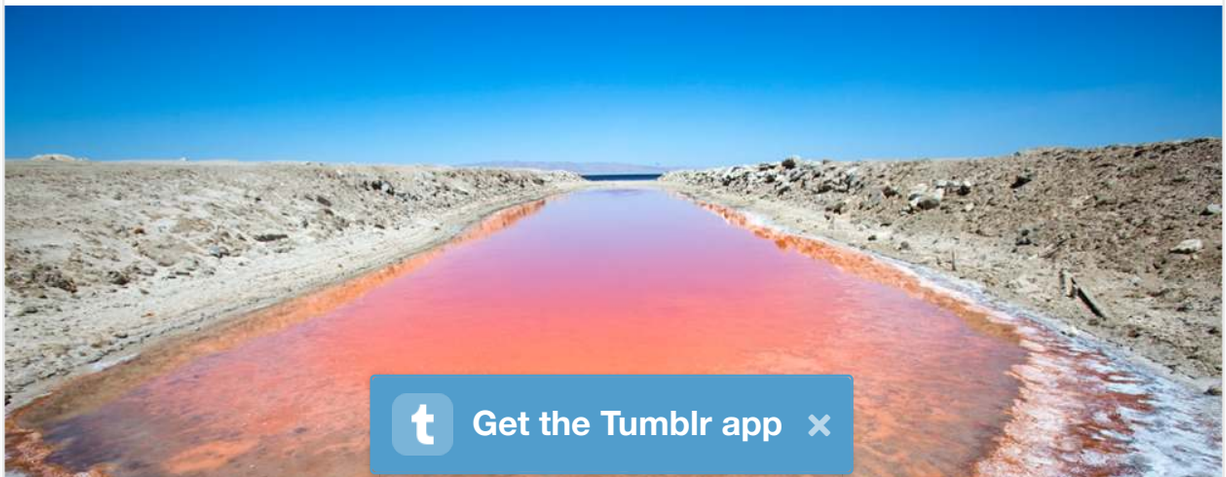
A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

On Fear, “Gold, Fame, Citrus,” Claire Watkins, and Myself, As Per Usual



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These past few days, I've been thinking a lot about fear. And more specifically, that the only true freedom is to live in absence of fear. Fear of bodily harm from outside threats, but also fear that you will lose your home, your job, your income. That you will be truly left without recourse. For most of my life, I have lived largely without fear; and although I'm loathe to speak for others, I believe that it is a condition of many of peers in America.

I know that fear exists however. I first learned it from my parents. My parents who came of age in the Bronx in the 1970s, in what was essentially a war zone. My father who got in a fight with his friends on an MTA bus one day; and the next day, lost two of the same friends in a retaliatory knife fight. My mother who came home from high school, opened the door to the closet to put her coat away, and was attacked by a young man with a gun who had been in the process of robbing her family's apartment. These are the most re-told of their violent stories. They carried this fear with them into the suburbs, and I, their eldest child, felt it most acutely.

In the mansion he bought with the money he made as a bond trader, my father slept with a hammer under his pillow every night. Owning a gun was, and would have been, inconceivable. He figured that if there was an intruder, which his childhood had taught him to anticipate automatically, he would have one shot to knock the dude out with the hammer. Over the years, the hammer migrated to the basement; now, my parents don't even turn on their alarm system.

Their formless fear infected me. I was afraid to sleep in a room by myself; and later, in the various apartments where I lived in the city. I barricaded my doors. I double checked the locks. My uncles told me, don't ever walk on the sidewalk alone at night, so when I took the subway home alone to my apartment in Prospect Heights, I walked in the center of the street, flooded by streetlights, my iPod turned low, my heart pounding in my chest.

Over the 11 years I have lived in New York, I have learned the opposite of fear. I have learned that I am safe. It took an entire week of Caleb being gone in China for me to notice that all of the windows in my parlor floor apartment were unlocked. I don't ever jolt awake in the middle of the night and think, "What was that noise?" I don't ever think, "I shouldn't go to a place that's crowded" for any other reason than I hate crowded places. I know, after 11 years of working, that I am capable of taking care of myself, and if I ever were to come upon hard times, I know that there is a network that will support me. I live in absence of fear.

Of course, this ties into Paris, where now, I assume, people are afraid that if they let their teenagers go to a popular concert. They may still to a square to mourn with groups of others, but there is a part of them that now hesitates before they do it. This fear should not be derided, but it is nothing in comparison to the fear of refugees leaving Syria, people living in war torn zones, people who are targeted based on their religion or the color of their skin. In New York, after 9/11, I assume that people felt fear, but our government, with its masculine, security-heavy apparatus, has done a good job to dispel that fear, whether its through propaganda or otherwise, allowing us to deal in 2015, arguably, for the first time since the war in Iraq, with our own domestic issues of racism.

But as humans, we know we should be afraid, and that fear is an essential condition of feeling alive — that fear leads to evolution. So we still seek out fear, in America, where we don't feel it acutely enough, perhaps — in culture. The proliferation of zombie apocalypse and dystopian dramas. The popularity of apocalyptic young adult or even adult novels that anticipate future disasters based on our current problems. In the case of Claire Vaye Watkins's *Gold, Fame, Citrus,* this future scenario is a drought in Southern California. The Colorado River has dried up. Los Angeles has been evacuated. A dune of dust has created a hard sea of destruction that moves from the Rockies to the Pacific Ocean, destroying everything in its wake. In this landscape, survival cults arise, and thrive. A former model, Luz, and her lover, Ray, find a child being passed around by drug addicts at a party, and decide that they will try to cross the closed border in the greener, and wetter, Northeast.

Not to break this sort of serious narrative thing I have going on here, but badass scenario, am I wrong? I really liked the storyline of this book, and in fact, couldn't put it down all weekend until I finished it. Claire Vay Watkins is smart, and she did her research. The situation she imagines, this dystopian Mad Max future scenario, is well thought out, well-researched, and surprisingly lacking in the sorts of logical holes that make this sort of shit ridiculous.

I feel as though I should warn people, however, that Claire Vay Watkins massively overuses language. She has been honored with all sorts of awards, including a Guggenheim fellowship, and you can feel the pressure she must feel to write something entirely unique. I read her first book of short stories, *Battleborn,* which in 2012, won every literary prize imaginable, and found myself frequently annoyed by its shallow depth frequently masked by very deep phrasing.

The loudspeaker will emit a disembodied human breath. Things will never be the same, it will say, as if she needs to be told this. As if she doesn't know the instability of a tall tower, a city's hunger for ruin. As if this weren't what she came for.

This ends a story about a teenage girl who doesn't prevent her friend from getting gang-raped in a hotel in Vegas. Pretty, but what the fuck does it mean, you feel me? As a writer, I only end things like this when I'm being lazy, and it's only the best editors that are like, "Nope, bullshit, re-write it."

As a writer, however, I feel for Watkins because I do see the work she put into *Battleborn,* and even more into *Gold, Fame, Citrus.* She is a really talented writer; and to create a world such as she does requires enormous courage and dedication, especially given the pressure of expectations put upon her. But I also see a lineage of modern overwriting, that all traces back to books like Maggie Nelson's *Blue.*

They walked on and on through the forest, the wise firecracker heads of the yucca motionless above. The Melon became an enamel droplet on the tarry road behind them.

Above is a description of a dried out forest of yuccas. Gorgeous, yes, but not necessarily evocative of anything but its own rhythm. Did you see what I just did there? I just wrote a sentence that didn't mean anything. I do that a lot.

In any case, I warn you that *Gold, Fame, Citrus* is heavy with VOICE because I don't want you to buy it, and be like, "What the fuck, I thought this was going to be Mad Max only more fun because there's a former model in it." This is a book that takes some patience to read.

I can tie this back to the fear thing. The book evokes fear of future droughts. But in the prettiness, the real fear I felt when reading, for example, *The Road,* or Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood,* or John Williams' *Butcher's Crossing,* is missing. As a result, I'm not sure that the book is much more than a beautifully written variation on the same sort of lukewarm dystopian theme. Yeah, these books make us minorly afraid, but deliciously so, in a way that is more pleasure and entertainment than real fear.

I feel so much for the people who feel fear. And to be honest, this past weekend, I also have felt deep gratitude that I live without it. For now, at least.

#Gold Fame Citrus #Claire Vey Watkins #Fear #My life #Reviews #Literature

1 note Nov 16th, 2015

MORE YOU MIGHT LIKE

On Ben Lerner, Acceptable Drug Addiction, and Why Guys Who Go To Brown Can

Be Such Assholes

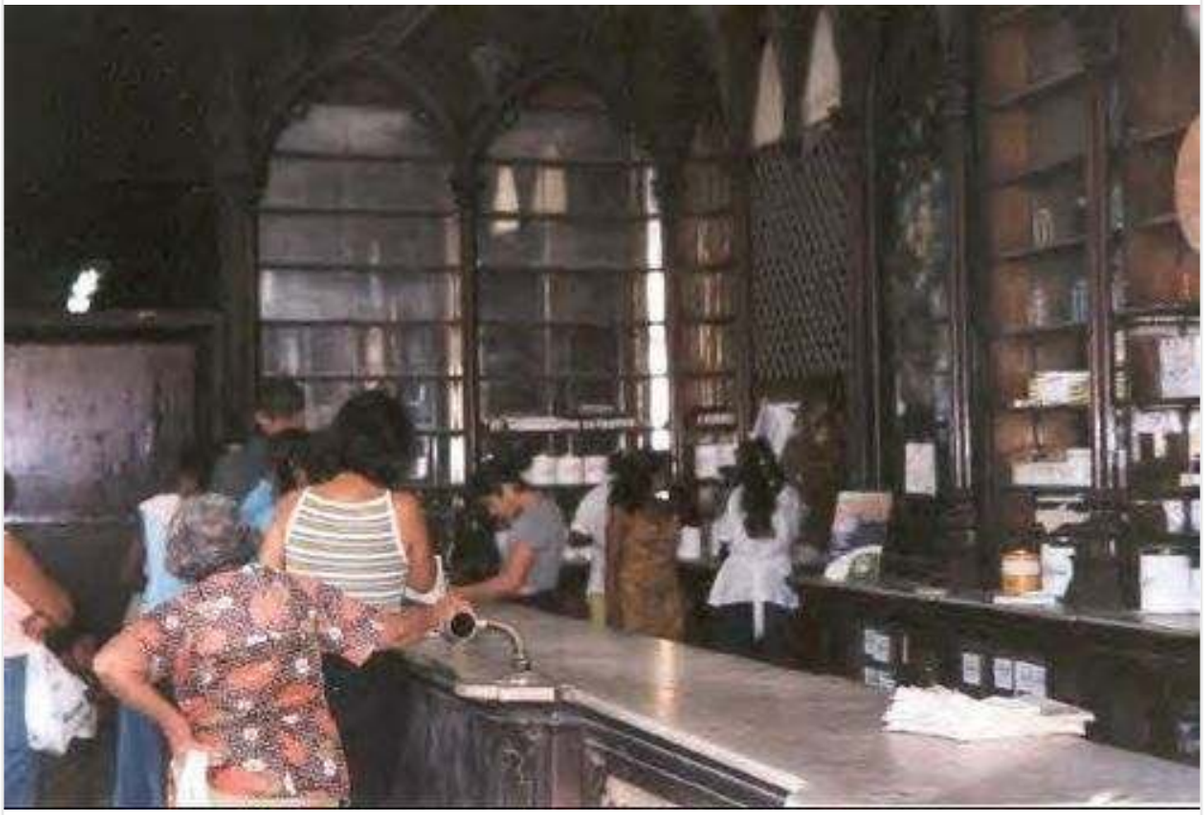
I'm so lonely I almost panicked, and I haven't panicked in almost eight months thanks to the anti-depressants. I won't panic though, this shit is really effective. I think it has something to do with the fact that I went to bed at 8:30pm last night. That was a terrible time to go to bed. I woke up at 1am, I woke up at some ascertained other time but did not look at my phone to see because apparently screens are like "shots of caffeine," then I woke up at 6am to work. It's only 1:38pm now, and I've already read a book. Now I'll write. I don't feel like drinking or taking a substance. I would go for a run but I have to get two cavities filled at 3pm.

I have an essay that needs to be re-written, the last of the re-writes, but I don't know how to begin it. It's about meeting Caleb. Do I go glib? Do I launch into the story? Do I read some enlightening other work by googling, "statistics about falling in love," and use it to make the essay seem more professional?

It actually just occurred to me that masturbating might be a better idea than writing.

I can't tell you how much I will hate myself after writing this post.

My leg needs lotion, but the only lotion I have smells of lavender.



The book I read is called “Leaving the Atocha Station” by Ben Lerner. It’s a book about a young poet living on a Fulbright in Madrid. This man is only a little bit psychotic, unsure of what his purpose is, and addicted to Adderall and Tradazone. He also went to Brown. At certain points in the book, I related to his pill consumption, which is why I made Caleb hide my bottle of Xanax from me. He says of his substance abuse problem…“the origins of which lay not in my desire to evade reality, but in my desire to have a chemical excuse for reality’s unavailability.”

I was like, “Yes."

Keep reading

#Ben Lerner #Leaving the Atocha Station #Literature #Reviews #My life #Brown University

12 notes

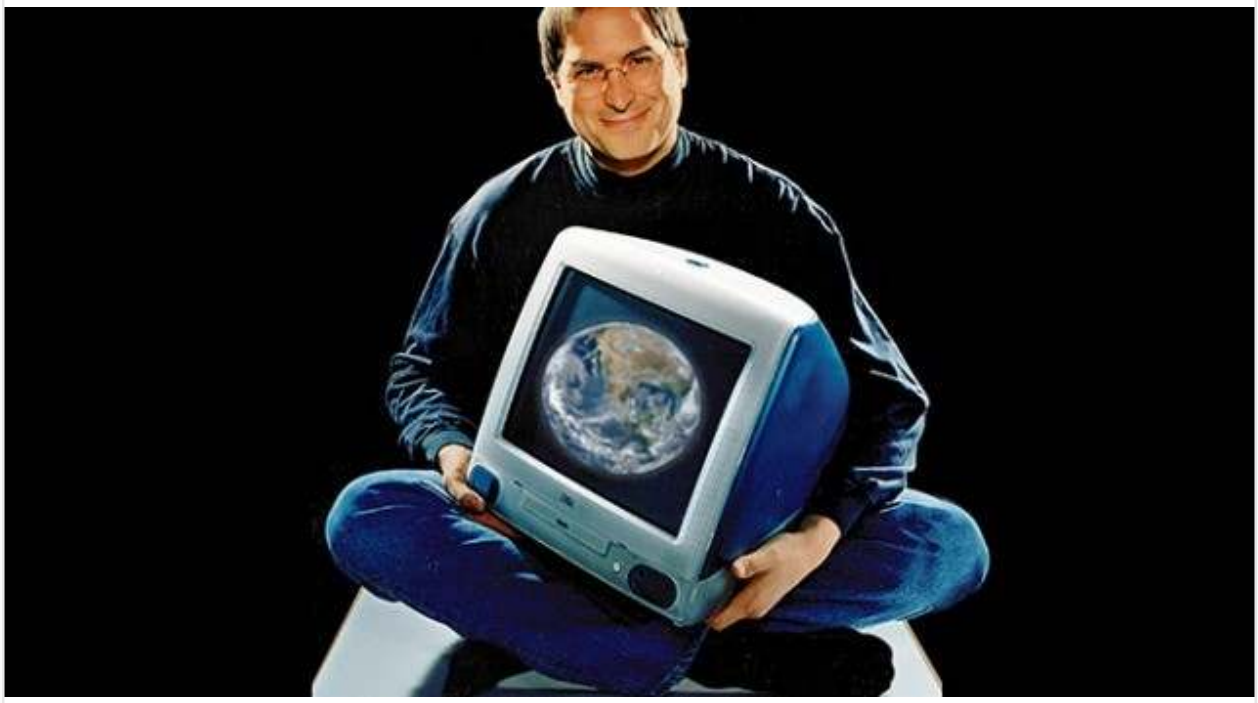
War And Peace Notes: Part IV: I Tried And Failed With This Post, But How Can I Try and Fail While At the Same Time Being Rich Like Steve Jobs or Pierre Bezukhov, Is My Real Question

So I finished *War & Peace* a few days ago, and I can't really figure out if I'm happy about that or not. It was a fun read. But the epilogue veered off into a lot of nonsense that seems to conclude with the supposition that humans inherently have no freedom because their destinies are controlled by a higher power known as God. Tolstoy also revealed himself to be someone who believed that doctors did more harm than good, and also that the best women know that their place is in the home with children. So I'm like, "Eh, Tolstoy, you wrote a great romance a la *Gone With the Wind,* but the 20th century completely debunks all your supposed wisdom and knowledge." It left something of a bad taste in my mouth.

I have so much to say that I actually don't want to keep writing. Among them that writing novels of "new" ideas are dangerous because ultimately, the most enduring truths are those that are the simplest, and have been known since the beginning of known time; that 19th century novels are actually the equivalent of soap operas, and people who think that the form peaked then are morons; that if you only read 19th century novels your brain would rot; that to say that Tolstoy wrote a novel full of philosophical musings is also garbage, he only threw in the philosophical musings at the very end of the epilogue, on page 1200, which can easily be skipped; that Europe is living the utopia Napoleon imagined, in which there are no real borders, and that is both weird and almost unbelievable; and finally, Tolstoy was on to something when he said that there are no real "great men," and that "great men" are merely playing out a role prescribed to them by millions of other tiny, equally important, but less visible actions.

This ties into the comparisons I'd like to make between *War & Peace* and *Steve Jobs,* which I saw last night. Both debunk the notion that a man can singlehandedly change the course of history. Tolstoy takes down Napoleon, who conquered Europe all the way to

Moscow, and Alexander I, who was the Emperor of Russia, saying that they were merely beings born into a place already appointed to somebody, if not them. Aaron Sorkin and Danny Boyle, the writer and director behind *Steve Jobs* respectively, take down Steve Jobs, the man who came up with the iMac.



I've always been suspicious of Steve Jobs. I take issue with the idea that one of the transformative moments in human history is when he came up with the iMac with Steve Wozniack in a garage. Also, his most transformative contributions to society — the iPod and the iPhone — are really updated variations of an old theme. In our capitalist society, technology innovations are closely tied with marketing. Both the radio and the television were invented by the advertising industry. Yes, the iPhone changed the way we interact with each other — but like television, and radio before it, the device has been co-opted by industry to become a means by which corporations can almost non-stop try to sell products to us. Open up your smartphone right now, and I would guess that it takes less than 20 seconds before you're hit by an ad, even on apps you pay for. Was the moment the iPhone was birthed really a step forward for humanity, or was it yet another way to trap us into a cycle of dependence on a certain type of economy? I'm not able to get my ideas out at all today, this will be a bad post, I will power through it.

Keep reading

#Steve Jobs #Michael Fassbender #My life #Reviews #War and Peace #Literature #Genius #Mankind

8 notes

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A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

Someone Wants To Sue Me Over This Blog…And That Person Is An Original Investor in Uber

Last week, something pretty frightening happened to me, and that was that the father of my niece had his lawyer write me legal papers stating that I was ordered to preserve all public and private statements I made about him, including on te especially on this blog. He was very angered about a series of blog posts I wrote about the chaos that ensued around my niece's birth. He is currently fighting for custody, and would like to discredit and intimidate my family. More so, as far as I know, he does not have a job, but he has time unlimited resources. From what I know, he is a very wealthy man who can basically hire lawyers to bring lawsuits ad infinitum.

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When I got the letter, I was very upset. I have $3,000 in the bank, and I'm about to give birth to a child. I don't have the time or energy to fight a legal case. I don't even have time to have a career. Mostly, these days, all I have time to be is a mother, and I feel like a fucking loser. My blog has caused me more trouble than it's probably worth over the last 8 years that I've written it. It has angered my family, alienated me from those closest to me, and caused me to lose

RECENTLY LIKED

friendships. To date, I have yet to become famous, get a book deal, or receive any money for writing it. My readership is slight. Like what the fuck am I doing even writing on this blog at all?

I consulted a close friend who is a family lawyer in Manhattan. She told me the letter from the lawyer basically was garbage — my aunt, who was also a lawyer, said that it would be like me writing a letter to a complete stranger saying that he or she needs to stay in the house, walk in circles, and eat carrots all day. Unless an order comes from a judge, it is meaningless.

My close friend who is a family lawyer, warned, however, that if I anger my niece's father, he could retaliate in traumatic ways. For example, she told me, he could call Child Protective Services on me and Caleb, and report us for abuse against Cleo. Even if this is far from the truth, Child Protective Services would still come to our apartment, and investigate us. The father could call them multiple times a day until I am silenced, broken, and no longer able to write anything at all. She also warned against me mentioning anything like depression, or struggling with motherhood — to keep things vanilla so that he had no ammunition against me. Vanilla? Then I really won't have any readers.

Some people I have talked to about this say, “So what, you’re a good mother, nothing will happen to you.” The thing is, back when I was 18 years old, and a sophomore in college, my sister, who had just escaped from a boarding school, and was suing my parents for emancipation, called Child Protective Services on my parents and myself over 35 times. I was 18, and could have technically been given custody over her. Let me tell you — it was fucking awful. I don’t think one of my brothers has ever recovered from it, or forgiven me. Our house was dead for ten years after. A happy kid for most of my life, even through my teenage year, I went on to struggle with extreme, oftentimes suicidal, depression for the rest of my twenties.

Here’s the thing. I thought, last week, you know what, I’m not going to write anything on my blog. It’s not worth it. But then I started thinking first about how jealous I am of other people right now because their lives seem so great on Instagram. It’s the summer, and everyone is on some fabulous vacation. Caleb and I can’t afford a vacation, and moreover, we are saving his vacation days for paternity leave. Sitting on my couch, it looks like everyone has a happier and better life than I do.

Then I think of the images I post on my own Instagram. In the pool with my big, good-looking family. On our big family estate. And I think how those images lie so hard. When I got the letter from the lawyer last week, I called my dad, and he screamed at me to calm down. My mother hasn’t talked to me in any meaningful way since. I know that there have been battles at the house when I’m not there. I know that once again, my family is choosing an unhealthy situation over supporting and loving someone who has been there for them, who is a good mother, who is trying to be a good person — that person, of course, is me. Last October, my sister moved across the street from me, bereft and in a dark state I will not elaborate on for fear of getting sued, and rather than turn her away, I helped her, I took her to the doctor, I held her in my arms, I gave her my daughter and my husband for comfort, I let her take over my life. I have few defenses because, in my heart, I want so badly for my life to be full of family and love. And my sister has repaid me with…a lawsuit.

Yeah, I have a blog where I'm very honest, but do you know what, it's all I have. I don't have money to go see a therapist. Even more so, I don't have money to hire someone to watch Cleo while I go see a therapist. Even more so more so, no therapist has ever been able to heal this sadness I feel over the fucked up things that have happened in my family.

More than anything, I think this blog reaches people who also have fucked up families, and no one to talk about them with. Who struggle with whatever. I don't know why you read this, but it makes me feel good to let you, and other people know, that I am not perfect, that I am struggling, that my life is not a cute Instagram story.

I guess I'll probably be afraid of writing on the blog for the next few weeks, but I'll keep trying.

#My life #Family #Motherhood

20 notes Aug 27th, 2018

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I Wish I Had Less

I think a lot of kids in America grow up dreaming about living in mansions. I was certainly one of those kids. When I was born, my parents lived in a one-bedroom apartment on Moshulu Parkway in the Bronx. When my sister was born, they moved to a two-bedroom on the Grand Concourse. My dad got a job in the back office of Drexel, a firm on Wall Street, and he bought a small house in the suburbs so that I could go to kindergarten at a good school. He quickly began making money, and traded that house in for a small Victorian a few blocks walk to my elementary school. By the time I was 13, he made a fortune, and we moved to a mansion on a road full of mansions, after spending almost a year looking at mansions throughout Westchester county.

From the second we moved into that house, none of us could sleep. There were 10 bedrooms, and they were too far apart. My sister almost always ended up in bed with me, as did my younger brother. If we didn't sleep together, we slept in my parents' room, where there was a queen sized bed and a small sofa. The weight of all of us in that small bed was enough that the boards holding it to its frame cracked in the middle of the night one night, wedging my father in a corner, and permanently fucking up his back.

This past week, I planned on staying in that house. There are a lot of hands living there, and I've just been beyond overwhelmed by myself with two children. At one point, last week, I was on my knees hysterically crying, and Cleo came up to me and said, "I miss Mommy." The guilt of being an imperfect human in front of her is unbearable. My mom planned day trips to the Bronx Zoo, the Norwalk aquarium, a trampoline fiesta. Cleo, I thought, would be happier.

But then, on Christmas Day, we arrived. Caleb says it's impossible to rest in the house, despite its size, because people are always walking around looking for snacks. That didn't bother me until I had to try to get my newborn to sleep, only to be continually thwarted by the sound of someone descending the main stairs, and running at full speed towards the snack cabinet.

I didn't realize how hormonal I still felt until my sister demanded that I take down a picture of her from my Instagram page, and I launched into a full blown screaming takedown of her narcissism. "What do you want, a halo light and A SHOT OF BOTOX?!" I screamed. That was the first time I threatened to leave immediately. I kept on threatening throughout the day, as the pressure of being away from our apartment mounted. When we had to wait for my dad to individually microwave each of our 11 plates before we could eat lunch. When my aunt sternly told me, "If you weren't coming for dinner, it would have been nice if you had texted me" while I breastfed an exhausted, and wide awake, Cass standing up at the sink, my nipples throbbing with the pain of being used to the brink of permanent damage. When Caleb was getting ready to head back to the city.

Caleb left; we tried to put down Cleo in her portable crib in my sister's room. My sister had won the dubious pleasure of sleeping with her after much wrangling with my other sister. Cleo, who had been through the same routine when I went to the hospital, completely freaked out. She looked up at me, and began saying, "Go home. Go home. Cleo home." I began crying for the 100th time that day. I made a decision. I was going to go back to our apartment. I called Caleb, who was audibly annoyed, and asked him to come pick us up. My dad helped me carry our 50 bags to the back door, where we all loaded them quickly in the car as soon as Caleb pulled up the driveway. Everyone was visibly relieved we were leaving.

Both Cleo and Cass screamed their fucking faces off for the first 40 minutes of the car ride back to Brooklyn, but I was so relieved to be going home that I just laughed through it.

The truth was, I was myself relieved not to sleep in that house. In a house that size, you don't need to share a room with anyone. The room that was mine there is roughly the size of our apartment. The closet is a walk-in closet. The house was built in 1781, so it's crumbling, but one would think, after living in such tight quarters in Brooklyn, that I would appreciate the space, at least. But I didn't. The bedroom was too far away from other people. It was so quiet. I wanted to see the lights on in all of my sibling's bedrooms. I wanted to hear them go about their routines before they went to bed — toothbrush, glass of water, toilet flush. I myself was without water, and to get any, I had to walk down two flights of stairs, which is roughly the same distance I have to walk in our current place to get a professionally made latte.

"I don't know how you live in such a big house," I told my family as I put on my shoes, and they ignored me. "It's stressful."

And it's true, it is stressful. If you bring something up to one of the bedrooms, you have to walk like 200 steps and three flights of stairs to get it back. If I place a glass of water in our bedroom at home, I just have to lie flat in the living room to knock it over with my finger.

Ever since the holidays, I've been feeling overwhelmed with stuff. I feel like I'm going to choke on it. I clean up our apartment all day, and it's still a mess. We've reached a critical mass here where we have too much — too many toys, too many clothes, too many gadgets, too much food. I know that this is a privileged complaint. But it is also a contemporary complaint. Things are so cheap now. Everything is built to be disposable. We throw out so much shit in America that China, which used to buy our recycling, has begun rejecting it, leaving us with even more shit. Cleo has 40 different toys, but never wants to play with any of them. I have a closet full of clothes, and only wear two outfits. I don't know if you feel like this, but it physically overwhelms me to live with so much waste. The suffocation is visceral. If only I had the time to throw it out all out … which of course, I don't.

There are a lot of articles about how bad things are right now. Most recently, the New York Times published a piece about how modern parenting is so stressful. These articles are a dime a dozen, and basically point out how over scheduled and overattentive modern American parents are. This article was on the front page of the times on Christmas. Happy holidays, you motherfuckers who are trying too hard!

But there is of course nuance to this viewpoint. Yeah, parents are stressed. But I'm still waiting for the unhappiness to hit me. Because I'm happier than I've ever been. I have a daily purpose, which was completely lacking in my life when I was merely working in an office, or working as a freelance writer, to gain accolades and money. That felt so empty to me. And it was stressful to commute; to navigate co-working; to constantly worry about status and impressing other people. Parenting may be stressful, but it's also so joyful. I live in a 600 square foot apartment with my two children, but we all sleep so well here, close to each other. And yeah, I may be over scheduling them, but part of the reason why we do so many activities is because there are no societal or religious communities that we can rely on anymore. The state doesn't pay for childcare or child enrichment before the age of 4. And all of our morals come from for-profit companies like Facebook, instead of from churches, which by the way, are equally as corrupt and morally bankrupt. So yeah, we pay money not to be alone all day; to make friends; to see them. Give me communal childcare, and library that isn't a dimly lit broken computer game center, and I would not pay or schedule shit.

Anyway, this holiday was a hard one. I know it will get better. For now, I'm grateful for what I have, and wish I had lesser.

#My life #Motherhood

7 notes

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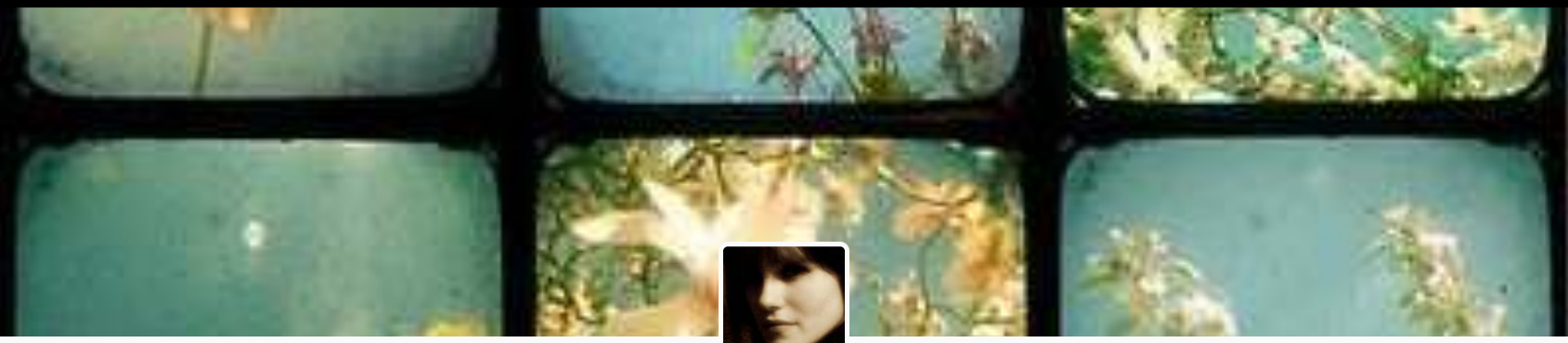
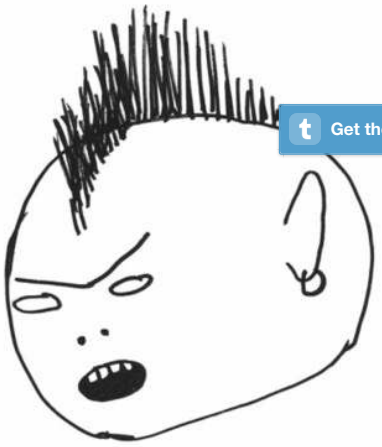


A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

On Money by Martin Amis and Why I Think You're An Alcoholic



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PUNKS ENJOY FREEDOMS THAT THE REST OF US DO NOT

I'm not really sure how to begin this review, or why I'm even writing it. My general impression of "Money" by Martin Amis, the entire time I was reading it, was that I disliked it. But I finished it anyway, and on occasion, even chose it over watching a television program. Which, if you know me at all, says a lot.

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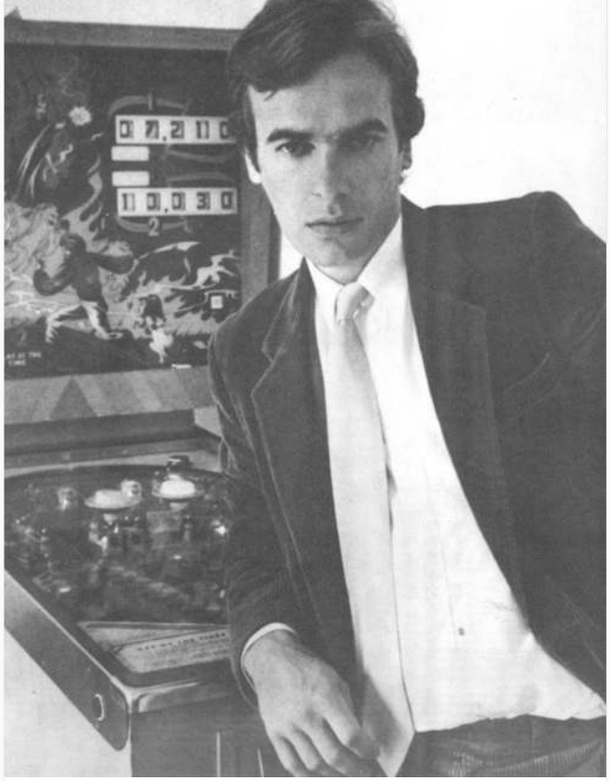

“Money” is about a British man named John Self who has made a pile of cash directing controversial television commercials in the late 70s and early 80s. Flush with material possessions and bored out of his mind, he decides to make a feature length film with a producer named Fielding Goodney, who is based out of New York. There is a lot of meta stuff that goes on as the narrative develops — for example, one of the characters whom John Self frequently encounters is named Martin Amis. Martin Amis a bookish author who keeps to himself and ends up re-writing the screenplay for John Self’s movie when the original, written by a lithe lesbian named Doris Arthur, turns out to be something of a joke. Martin Amis is also the name of the actual author of the book, and John Self is either the self hidden in him, or the self hidden inside of us. Or something stupid like that.

I have a feeling that Martin Amis was inspired to write the novel by three things:

1. Zeitgeist (the climate of money and excess that existed in the Western world in the early 1980s)

2. The bumbling alcoholic at his local bar who both repelled and fascinated him because he reminded him of the darkest parts of himself.

3. His Oedipal Complex

But then again, what white male novelist is not inspired by those three things?

The plot itself is ambitious — there are layers and layers of subtext that no doubt were lost on me, most of them having to do with the characters morphing into different people — and oftentimes tragically descriptive. But in retrospect, I appreciate the ambition, no matter how messy and contorted the execution, because it made for a lot of meat to read. And in the computer era, where meat is usually pared down by rounds and rounds of obsessive editing, it's nice to read a book that's over-written and rambling and takes forever to get through.

Now that I'm writing this shitty review, I realize that I did appreciate even the overly descriptive passages. While looking for one to malign, I only came across ones that, taken out of context, were kind of brilliant. For instance, when John Self gets wasted and takes a redeye plane back from New York to London, Amis writes:

"Boarding began, first class first. I stood up and entered the tube. And continued to travel deeper into the tubed night — to travel through the night as the night came the other way, making its violent sweep across the earth."

Isolated, the language is brilliant; clumped all together, it's fucking exhausting.

What most struck me, however, was the way that Amis captured addiction. Having been acquainted with quite a few alcoholics in my day — and recently, given up trying to save one of them — I appreciated how Amis doesn't spare the reader from the idiotic repetition of a true addict. John Self drinks. He drinks some more. He constantly talks about drinking. Then he fucks something up and falls asleep and you have to keep on reading about his drinking, because the narrative is never disrupted by repose. You constantly want to slap him upside the head and scream, "Stop drinking you fucking idiot!" And then you read about his drinking some more.

One of the things that Caleb and I argue the most about is drinking. Caleb doesn't understand what the problem is with other people drinking all of the time — he says that it's their choice, so why judge them for it? But I grew up with the fear of alcoholism instilled in my heart by my mother, who gave me a shot of whiskey when I was 8-years-old and said to me, "Isn't that disgusting? You know you're an alcoholic, right?" It was her belief that given my genetic make-up, even at that young age, the diagnosis was unavoidable.

Her judgement made me judgmental. I judge people all of the time for drinking, and talk about it to the point of nausea. (Just in case you're wondering, yes, I do think you're an alcoholic.) It also made me really confused. I didn't drink until I was 21. When I did start drinking, I was very cautious of it. Then, I spent a while drinking too much — but then again, I was single, and how can one possibly be expected to casually date without drinking too much? Now that drinking is not verboten or necessary, I've had some distance to consider my real feelings about alcohol. Am I really an alcoholic because I drink? Or is social drinking a natural, fun activity?

My inclination is that alcohol is poison, and if you're drinking every day, you're probably overdoing it. Ultimately, who fucking cares. But (to keep on obsessively talking about this) what I've realized, observing drinkers over the past few years, is that there is a big difference between a drinker and an alcoholic. Being a drinker is not great for your health, but ultimately is not terribly harmful. I am a drinker; I drink, but I get tired of it. I want to do other things. Being an alcoholic, on the other hand, is like being a prisoner. You are completely trapped in the repetition of what you must do every day, which is keep drinking. You stop being able to do other things, like watch movies or read or walk. All you can do — whether you want to or not — is drink.

Ultimately, being trapped doing any one thing is fucking boring. If you were trapped watching television for 16 hours a day, you would be bored. If you were trapped in a prison cell for 16 hours a day, you'd get bored. If you were trapped with me for 16 hours a day, you'd cut out my tongue. If you're trapped on a bar stool all day, even if that bar stool changes locations or becomes a friend's couch or a bench in the park, you would get fucking bored. And you also become fucking boring. And reading about it is pure boredom too. Which is why, as irritating as Martin Amis' novel about a cash rich alcoholic was, it was brave of him to bombard the reader with the experience of it. Despite the tedium, I was able to finish the novel. And still, the sensation of it sticks with me.

#Alcoholism #David Shrigley #reviews #Martin Amis #Money

2 notes Feb 15th, 2013

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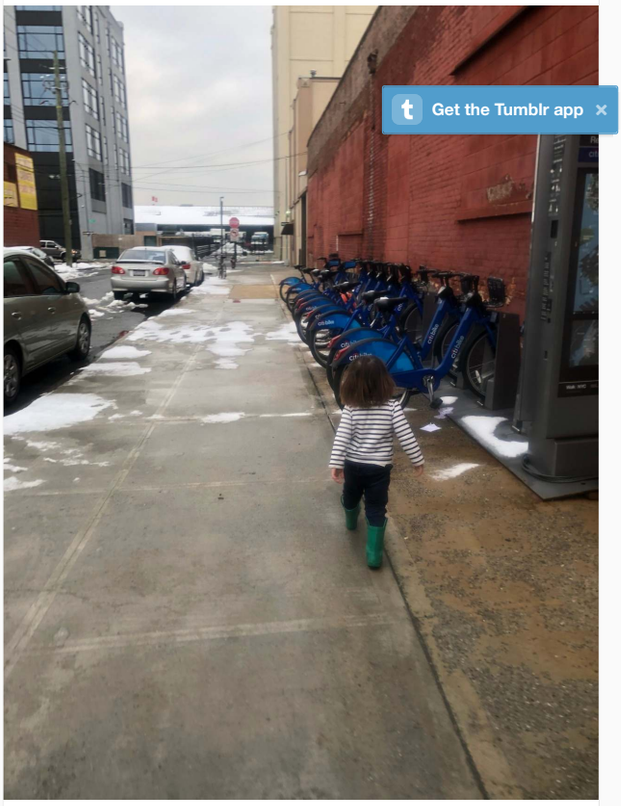
A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

On Why I'm Not Drinking

I want to start this post by stating that things are better at home. We had a great weekend. Whether it's because all of the dairy and soy has finally cleared my system, or he's just getting bigger, Cass is a much different baby. Right now, he's throwing his arms up in the arm, and squealing with joy on the floor of our living room.



One thing I'm not sure how to talk about, or whether or not it's worth it, is the fact that I've basically decided not to drink anymore. At least in the short term. Saying this out loud makes other people feel uncomfortable. I think it's because it makes them feel like you're judging them for drinking. I've actually been pretending to drink at some social occasions so that people don't really ask me questions about it.

The easy explanation for this is that I'm co-sleeping with Cass, and it's dangerous to be at all intoxicated when you are sharing a bed with an infant. The more truthful explanation is that I don't like the way drinking makes me feel. Having a drink, or two, or three, for me, is like trapping yourself in a state that you have to wait out until it dissipates. It's a prison. After the initial burst of pleasure, drinking makes me feel fuzzy, and headachy, and slightly depressed.

I used to be afraid that if I stopped drinking, I would lose all of my friends. The truth was that I was drinking very heavily, and I was hanging out with people who drank very heavily. I also had no idea

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what I would do with all of my excess time. I was terrified of boredom. I wasn't sure how I would reward myself. The thing about being a human is that when you stop one habit, another habit fills it quickly. People often ask me how I read so much, and the truth is, the reading fills the hole where I used to be drinking. And I reward myself, these days, with vegan ice cream from Milkmade, which is not only delicious, but fucking expensive — $12 a pint — so it feels like a real indulgence.

I've written before about how my mother told me, from a very young age, that I would likely be an alcoholic due to our genetics — Irish, many family members who are alcoholics, etc. And I believed her, in my core. But I also didn't believe her, and wanted to be different. I didn't drink until I was 21. In our society, it is extremely hard to participate in normal social events if you're not drinking. Looking back, it's sort of scary to realize how quickly I fell from not drinking at all to drinking a lot, during the day and all weekend. I wonder if her prediction for me was true, and that if I had continued drinking, if I would indeed have developed a real problem. Or if the problem had already developed already, and I am too afraid to admit that to myself. I think, especially, of the time when I showed up tutoring with alcohol on my breath.

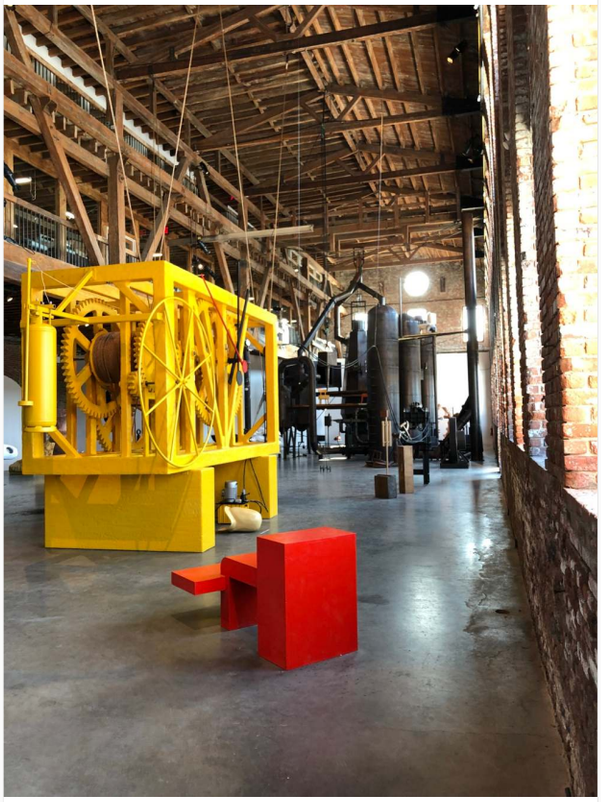
My friend Becky came over on Friday. She is the younger sister of my best friends from college, twins named Jon and Josh. Let's just say she struggles in a similar manner to my sister, and leave it at that.

Becky has been sober for a long time now. "I'm so lonely," she told me. "You go to any NA meeting in the city, and that's what people will tell you, 'I'm so lonely.'"

Our society is so full of holes, and everything is commodified. The alcohol industry has sold us the idea that in order to have a good time, in order to watch an event on television, in order to be outdoors, to be alive, having fun, living life, you have to be drinking. Drinking is just a form of being fucked up, and you can also achieve that by smoking weed, by doing other drugs. The legalization of marijuana is very scary in that respect, because it will just encourage more people to stop being present, to stop building communities.

Having a family has given me two sober companions, and it has saved me, in many respects. I have a purpose where I was always looking for one. It has allowed me to make many news friends. It has killed time that I formerly didn't know how to pass.

I am lucky.



On Saturday, we went to see my friend DEH's new show at Pioneer Works. After, we went to go visit DEH at the new Mexican restaurant where he was hanging out. DEH was taking shots of whiskey at the bar. He wrapped his arms around me, and told me that he loved me. Then he kept on doing that, again and again, crushing Cass's head in the carrier. And I realized DEH was so drunk he could barely walk. "Are you judging me?" he asked.

DEH used to be my main drinking partner. I would call him at 2pm on a Tuesday, when I either had no work to do, or didn't want to do it, and we would meet, and drink until Caleb got home from work. We had a lot of magical times together, and I love him very dearly.

The truth is, I am good, and I am dark. The dark part of me is really hidden right now. The part of me that once cancelled dinner plans with an editor by telling her my friend had committed suicide when in fact he hadn't, I just wanted to keep on drinking with DEH.

That part of me was striving to an "artist," and I fit in in the bars in Red Hook where artists hang out and drink. I had a weird premonition of that person after we made sure DEH was safe, and walked home to our apartment. She inhabited me briefly when I looked into the window of a studio, and saw a row of photography printers, and I remembered all of the blog posts I wrote that were experiments. Now, blog posts are just relaying my state as a mother.

I missed her, and I wondered if I would remember her. I wonder if and when she'll return. When my kids are older, and I return to a state of not having enough to do? Of loneliness.

We texted DEH on Sunday morning to ask if he was ok, and he was surprised that we were even asking. "Yeah, I'm fine," he told me.

I wanted to tell him, "You know, you won't be lonely if you stop drinking, I'll be there for you." But Caleb told me not to.

#Motherhood #Sobriety #Alcoholism #My life

13 notes Mar 4th, 2019

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"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

Myself: An Excruciating and Stupid Torture

I've been struck by a familiar feeling of boredom these past two days, and it's been an excruciating and stupid torture. I mean, what the fuck do I have to complain about? I have a beautiful baby, a husband baby (kidding), and am completely safe and financially secure. The truth is, I know the dark curtain is a mental deficiency; something in my brain just doesn't work right, and there are days when I just feel like the very act of passing time is unbearable. C'est la vie, or whatever the fuck.

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Something else I've been thinking about is how pointless this blog is in 2016. I think I've been keeping it for 7 or so years. When I started, it was rebellious to put your real thoughts on the Internet because you might lose your job. Now, everyone puts their real thoughts on the Internet. And some of these people are very smart and articulate. My Facebook friends already say anything that could possibly be said about the election. The comments section of the article I posted about breastfeeding the other day was an echo chamber of my own thoughts. So where do I fit in? Especially, where do I fit in as a young mother and a writer living in Brooklyn; in other words, as a double cliche that everybody was over ten years ago?

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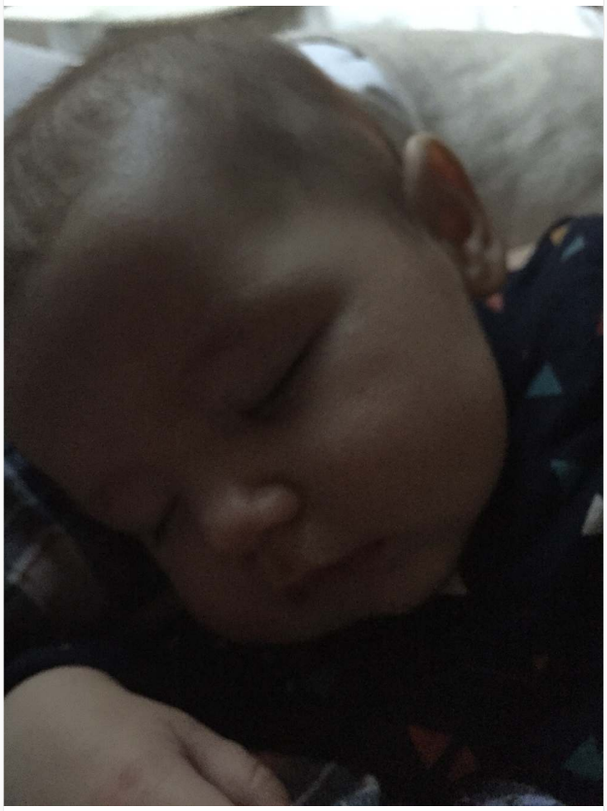
The thing I think I have is first of all a compulsion to write, and secondly, I've got something that's like a rhythm I can feel when I'm in the grove, connecting ideas and writing sentences. I don't know if other people can sense the rhythm, but I can, and it makes writing feel good. And somehow right. What I also have, I think, is a very large capacity to work hard without anywhere to really focus all of that energy. If I'm being truthful, taking care of a single infant is very manageable for me. I don't get overwhelmed easily. I'm a fucking Irish Catholic. I get why Irish women had six or fifteen children now, and I think it's because we're very fucking capable on a genetic level. You could throw eight children under the age of 8 in my direction, and I think that then, finally, I would feel like all of my energy was wholly absorbed. I just have some stamina. And when I don't have enough to do, I'm like a powerful sentient machine looking for something to make me work physically harder. I crave being exhausted.



I don't know, sometimes writers with a lot of rhythm in their words get to write books about stupid things like the color Blue, so I've decided that I want to write a book about Boredom. Boredom is something I think about constantly, and the things you think about the most are the things that hold the key to your success, perhaps.

Boredom as a manifestation of mental illness is something that has been written about very little. But I know I'm not the only person who has felt bored as a state of being. And I only assume that as the machines take over our jobs and our purpose, it will become more ubiquitous. I would start in a single place, with the aphorism:

"Only boring people get bored."

And try to tear that shit apart.

Something else I'd like to write is a historical fiction about breastfeeding. Like maybe I'd go through a variety of different ages – the Neanderthals, the Romans, the Amazons – and write some fake stories about women and breastfeeding. Babies would die. Clothing would be discussed. I'd have to research historical documents and that would eat up some time.

And finally, I'd love to write the story of my great-grandmother. She may have been from an aristocratic family in Ireland. She moved to New York with my great-grandfather, and left him a number of times, only to return, and keep on getting pregnant. My great-grandfather may have been a longshoreman and a Bowery bum, and he was most certainly a drunk. I know nothing about them, but I'm too intimidated to ask my grandmother's sisters because their stoicism is as intimidating as fuck.

A book about them could be an outlet for all of my failed love affairs, which still haunt me.

Anyway, I guess I could start all of this now. I mean, I'm writing this blog post with a baby suckling on my nipple. It's been almost 14 weeks since I gave birth, and guess what? All of my new mom friends are going back to work. I'm lonely. I feel like a failure. But I don't want to get a full time job myself because honestly, I would miss Cleo way too much. If you are still reading this post, damn, you must be really bored at work.

My greatest fear is that I am not creative or motivated enough to initiate any of the projects I mention above. My father has wanted to be a writer his whole life although he never writes; I am my father's daughter.

#Motherhood #My life #Boredom

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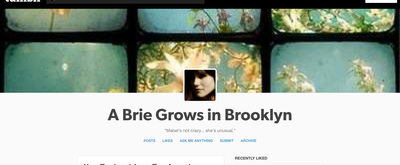

A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Natalie's not crazy... she's unusual."

I'm Embarking On Another Failure

Last week I started the book that I've been percolating on for a while, and it's about my sister, her pregnancy, my pregnancy, motherhood, rich people and insanity. I think it could be great. But it could also be a complete failure, as have my previous two books. It's fucking hard to write a book, yo!

Caleb keeps on telling me that I shouldn't talk about it at all with anyone. That I should keep the whole thing to me. I think he's afraid I'll fail again, which is likely.

But sitting down to write this book, I'm suddenly proud of the last book I wrote. Like, yeah it got rejected by 20 book publishers, and my agent dropped me, but I put my heart and fucking soul into that thing. I was in that book 24 hours a day for almost a year, and one day, maybe, I'll be able to read it again without wanting to throw up all over myself.

In any case, I have accomplished things even if I haven't made any money from them.

The problem with starting this book is that it puts me into a state of anxiety. Now, I'm constantly thinking about it, wanting to sit with it, wanting to think about it, and it's a very intense feeling. Which is why being a mother is nice, because it pulls me away from it, and allows me a chance to breathe, to be in life, to think about something else.

I don't know if I'll ever be good at writing books, but I'm proud of myself that I keep on trying.

#Motherhood #Writing

5 notes · May 21st, 2019

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A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

Life is Not Fair Except If You're Caleb

I'm rage writing a blog post right now because Caleb put all of the fresh food I just bought in the freezer so that he could turn off the fridge last night because he didn't like the sound it was making while he was eating his take out Chinese food.

To be honest, I don't have anything to write. I feel like a mess. There was a point last week when I saw an article about making your baby fresh purees and I almost lost it. I'm not exercising. I'm not dieting. Cleo routinely eats ketchup with her fingers for dinner. Whenever Cass need something, I just pop him on the boob, and pray that he stops making noise. My career is a fucking mess. When I started this blog a decade ago, what I was doing — writing about my life with honesty — was unique because it was the general consensus that you could get mad from your job and lose everything by putting yourself out there on the Internet. Now, it's de rigueur. What book deal could ever come from this? What money could I ever make from it? Where will all of this work I've been pouring into writing ever coalesce into a marketable product that I can sell, and use to put my children through college?

Caleb came home from work last night full of tales about how amazing everyone at work thinks he is. "My boss talked about me for an hour," he proudly told me. "They just can't believe the work I'm doing."

"Did you see what happened in your home state of Georgia this week?" I wanted to ask him. "DID YOU SEE THAT MEN ARE STILL TRYING TO KEEP WOMEN PREGNANT, UNABLE TO RECOVER, AND DESPERATE, SO THAT THEY DON'T REGAIN POWER AND UNLEASH THE FULL FORCE OF THEIR POWER UPON THE WORLD OF COMMERCE?"

Which, let's be honest, might not even be a worthwhile goal.

I finally came up with a solution of how I'm going to "make" it this week. My sister and I are on good terms right now. I know this because she FaceTimes me multiple times a day to talk about the handbag line she's been trying to get off the ground since 2002.

The truth is that the best writing I do is about my family. And motherhood is a hot topic these days that everyone is writing about, but motherhood done like my sister is a unique fucking specimen.

"Can I write a book about you?" I asked my sister, I was walking the dog, which is my nightly routine now so that I can have a moment to myself away from my husband and children. Her adorable daughter was chirping "ha ha!" on the screen next to her. My cousin Brisa was also there, which I didn't find out for a full five minutes into the conversation. In the background, my dad could be heard screaming about where the car keys could be found.

"Yeah, sure!" my sister said. "But can I get a part of the proceeds?"

"Of course," I said. "We can get famous and go on a speaking tour together."

"I don't need the fame," my sister said. "I am already going to get that from the handbags."

QUICKLY, she decided that I couldn't write a book if I made her look like shit, and even quicker, she decided it need to be Karen. I came to a slump of faces, and wanting to smell them, ended the conversation.

I could write a book about my sister easy. It would be magnificent, and if life is any indicators, no one would read it but my family, who would discern nip fat it.

A girl can dream. My rage is gone. God, this blog is a massive wasted potential. So much of my heart that will just blink out of existence one day.

#Motherhood #My life #Family

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A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

These Pictures Tell A Lie, I Am a Very Flawed Mother

I literally have almost no clear memory of it now, but yesterday was one of my worst days as a parent. I did horrible things. I told Cleo she had been mean all day to her brother, mean to her friends, mean to me, and then left her standing, clutching her stuffed monkey, and staring at our front door.

I tried to wrangle a screaming Cass, with our twenty pounds worth of junk, through our front door by opening the door, and then trying to jam the stroller through the opening. Cleo jumped in the front of it as I was doing this, and when I rammed the stroller, she banged her head on the front door.

Cleo, who rarely if ever walks up our three flights of stairs, demanded to be carried up, and then proceeded to scream at the top of her lungs in my ears, and when I got to the top of the stairs, I screamed back at her, “CLEO!” And then dumped her in the doorway.

When I put Cass down on the couch, Cleo immediately jumped on top of him, and began folding his ears down at the sides, and pressing his cheeks together with increasing force until he started to cry, and I was just so fucking sick of saying, “Stop touching your brother.” So I screamed at Cleo that she was being bad, she was

RECENTLY LIKED

not listening, that I had had enough, and couldn't take it anymore.

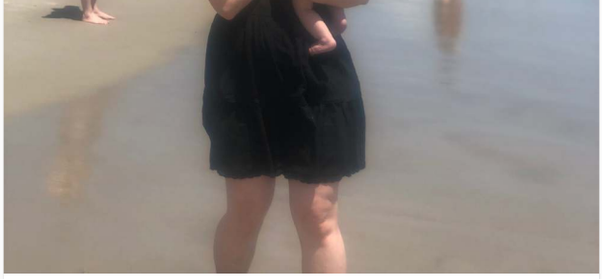
And Cleo looked at me, and continued to fucking manhandle her brother.

So I dragged her screaming and kicking into her crib, where I made her stay for five minutes while I tried to clean up the kitchen table. All the while, she watched me dart in and out of her line of vision through the doorway to her bedroom. Whenever she would catch sight of me, she would say, "Mommy, let me out!"

When I finally let her out, she told me she was going to go to the couch, and not touch her brother. Which she did. But then she began demanding milk, and then almond milk, and then in this cup, and then she wanted a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and then she wanted another snack, not that snack, and finally I screamed at her, "I AM NOT YOUR SLAVE."

And she looked at me, and recognition dawned in her eyes. "Mommy, are you not happy?" she asked me.

And that's when I realized that she just barely registered my emotional state, if at all, and it made me feel better because I really was feeling like a fucking monster. Cleo only really notices me if I, myself, am having a complete and total meltdown.



“Mommy yelled at me,” she informed Caleb when he got home.

“Mommy was freaking out,” he agreed.

When Cleo went to bed, I made Caleb hold me for a few minutes because I felt so sad, and I wanted to be loved.

Yesterday was not necessarily different than any other day. But I am burned out. I have a bad cold. I spent the last ten days just crippled by back and rib spasms that sometimes made it difficult for me to breathe. I have been holding a baby almost continuously for 6 months and three weeks. The hardest thing is just trying to be a good, kind, mature and decent person to everyone I meet at all times, in an effort to exist well and not burn any bridges in this claustrophobic world.

What do I mean by this? Not showing my anger at my children, but also at the people who cut us off on the sidewalk, the people who lecture me about my behavior, or my children’s behavior, the people who lecture my children in front of me, the people who judge me, the people who cut eyes at me, the people who protect their own interests at the expense of my own. People I see multiple times every day because I rarely go more than 5 blocks away from our apartment.

When you live in a city, you are just constantly rubbing against people, and it fucking makes you angry. When you are a parent, you are also constantly rubbing up against people, in the playground, at school, at events, at classes, in your building, and it also makes you angry. Most people are assholes. Caleb's general belief is that one should go through life fighting with as few people as possible, and whenever I tell him a story about someone pissing me off, he gets a look on his face like, "Oh no, you didn't go psycho on them, did you?" Because sometimes I do lose my temper, I act lesser than, I let my worst self get the best of me, I can also be a fucking asshole. Especially via text message.

Every day, I struggle to suppress this part of myself, the part of myself I get from my dad, who last weekend, at the Memorial Day parade in Chappaqua, was the sole person screaming at the people who had come in from Michigan to heckle the Clintons as they walked by, and it is fucking exhausting. I want to be liked, I want to be good, I want people to say about me behind my back, "She's a decent person."

But sometimes I want to fucking say to people, "You're a selfish asshole, you are behaving like a spoiled brat, wake the fuck up and in the meantime, leave me and my kids alone." But also, "Forgive me for saying this, will you still be my friend, don't act awkward the next time we run into each other on the playground."

I often think there is something wrong with me, that I'm always getting emotionally entangled with people and then fighting with them. And there probably is something wrong with me. I had a dysfunctional childhood.

But I don't know, isn't it also normal to be angry? And if so, how am I fucking up myself and my kids by constantly pretending like I'm not?

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POSTS LIKES ASK ME ANYTHING SUBMIT ARCHIVE

Then last night I watched an episode of *Better Things,* a show that I'm obsessed with, if you haven't watched it yet. In the show, Pamela whatever the star's name is called, goes to a science night at her kid Duke's school, and just spends the whole time grunting and fighting and rubbing up against other parents in the wrong way, and it made me feel less alone.

One aspect of parenting that no one talks about is how difficult it is to coexist peacefully with other parents. It's a new type of relationship, and I'm like in unchartered territory over here, trying to learn as I go in wild waters, with my wild child, a child who almost seems to have a sixth sense about people, and will often say to them, "I don't like you."

I really can't think today, or any day. This post makes no sense. I'm sorry. I'm going to drink another coffee.

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#Motherhood #Parenting #Life

3 notes Jun 4th, 2019

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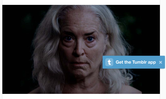
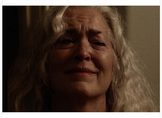
A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

Krisha: I Love Emotional Abuse



This past weekend, I went to go see Krisha, a film that apparently is making some waves amongst hipsters. It is about a sixty-something year old woman who returns to her family after a ten year absence. It's clear that Krisha has issues with addiction almost from the very beginning, when she settles into her room, takes a key off her neck, and pops some pills she has safely locked in a safe box marked "private, keep out." If Krisha were one of my family members, that safe box would be breached within minutes of her arrival, and Krisha would have lost her mind much sooner.



Anyway, Krisha keeps it together until dinner, and then, shit hits the fan. I won't ruin the film for you. I personally really enjoyed it, but almost everyone I was with found it to be excruciating to watch. Caleb, in particular, cursed the day I was born for bringing him to the movie. I guess one might call it an emotional horror film.

Something interesting about the movie is that it stars the director's aunts, Krisha and Robyn Fairchild, as well as his grandmother. Many of the cast members are his friends. By the way the director's name is Trey Edward Schultz, and he is also in the film, playing the son of Krisha, a victim of her addiction. It's pretty easy to draw conclusions that the film is about Schultz's own mother in real life, who does not appear.

In this very recent past, this film would have reminded me of my own family. Fighting, horror, emotional abuse. I bet some of my aunts would have participated in a film I made about my mother, and that for the next decade or so, I would have lived in the misery of a family-less vacuum.

But the truth is, I could no longer make such a film. Ever since I married Caleb, my family has become almost normal — exemplary, in fact. I talk to my mother on the phone every day, usually more than once. We never fight. She no longer serves ice cold food that she expects us to heat up by ourselves in the microwave, this past Easter, she made an entire meal from scratch that she served hot out of the oven.

Easter this year, with my family, was really beautiful. All three of my elder siblings have significant others, and we brought them home for the afternoon. We ate our uncharacteristically hot food. My father didn't threaten anyone's boyfriend during the prayer before the meal. We had an Easter egg hunt. My father noticed that rather than walk, I've begun to waddle, and I told him, "Fuck you." Then we all played a family game of soccer. Normally, my mom wouldn't participate in this sort of thing, but this year, she played second goalie. We did boys vs. girls. Genetics were on full display, and it became clear that when my sister tried to kick her boyfriend in the nuts, she got the legs from my mother, who herself bit my father whenever he came near the goal.

On the way home, I felt tired and warm. I thought a little bit about how no one tells you that starting a family of your own might bring your own family together. I thought about my baby, as I always do, and what my mother's face will look like when she runs out to the driveway to lift her out of the car when we go up on the weekends to see her. I thought about how important it is for me to be close to her.

#Krisha #trey edward shults #My life #Family #Easter #reviews

2 notes May 20th, 2016

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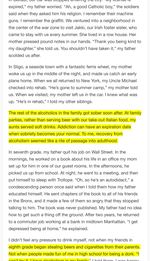
A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Adam is not crazy... she's unusual."

The Beginning of the End of Something

I've been working on an essay about my relationship with alcohol, and the way that alcohol and addiction, which both of our family's struggle with, plays a role in me and Caleb's relationship. If I don't have some sort of breakthrough, I'll chuck it. Because I don't have anything else to write about today, an excerpt of it is below.



When I was 11, we went on a family trip to Ireland. My mother's two brothers came along with us, as well as my three cousins, Kevin, Danny and Brian. We drove the entire perimeter of the country in rented cars, the men always confusing which side of the road they should be driving on. We had brown bread and Fantas for lunch. We kissed the stones in castles. We listened to the Chieftains on cassette tapes. "Can you believe the Chinese people here have Irish accents?" my father said when we stopped for Chicken Fingers in Dublin. "Don't be wimpy!" he goaded us when we refused to join him for a swim in the icy ocean between the cliffs of Moher, from which he emerged blue with cold. It was the summer, and the weather was mild, for the visits we made Arctic. The landscape didn't seem real. On a visit, we paused, and saw five lakes shining like mirrors in a valley of gold.

Wherever we could, we visited our relatives. We brought Mets caps to my great-grandmother's four brothers, who still lived on the farm where they had grown up — blue hats for the men, and a pink one for the wife of the only one who had ever been married. They were in their 90s. In the hats, my uncles had them stand on the hot and pose for photographs. "Come over here and sit on my lap, child," they told me. They had lumpy heads shaped like potatoes, and absolutely no teeth. Their hands were worn from working. The electricity only ran in the main room of the house. In the dim light, I could see the cracks in the whitewash. Me and my sister imitated their tongues.

"They're gay," my Uncle Michael explained when we asked why none of them had ever married. "They're scary!" I said.

In their house, and all of the others we visited, there was always a whiskey toast for the men, no matter the time of the day. "To family," they said, clinking glasses. "To family," my uncles and my father said when they had their first beer at the pub. I could sense, even as a child, that the trip was the beginning of the end of something.

In Belfast, our car was stopped entering the city. "My license is expired," my father worried. "Ah, a good Catholic boy," the soldiers said when they asked him his religion. I remember their machine guns. I remember the graffiti. We ventured into a neighborhood in the center of the war zone to visit Jakki, our Irish foster sister, who came to stay with us every summer. She lived in a row house. Her mother pressed pound notes in our hands. "Thank you being kind to my daughter," she told us. You shouldn't have taken it," my father scolded us after.

In Sligo, a seaside town with a fantastic ferris wheel, my mother woke us up in the middle of the night, and made us catch an early plane home. When we all returned to New York, my Uncle Michael checked into rehab. "He's gone to summer camp," my mother told us. We visited, my mother left us in the car. I knew what was up. "He's in rehab," I told my other siblings.

The rest of the alcoholics in the family got sober soon after. At family parties, rather than serving beer with our take out Italian food, my aunts served soft drinks. Addiction can have an explosion date when sobriety becomes your normal. To me, recovery from alcoholism seemed like a rite of passage into adulthood.

In seventh grade, my father quit his job on Wall Street. In the mornings, he worked on a book about his life in an office my mom set up for him in one of our guest rooms. In the afternoons, he picked us up from school. At night, he went to a meeting, and then put himself to sleep with Trollope. "Oh, so he's an autodidact," a condescending person once said when I told them how my father educated himself. He sent chapters of the book to all of his friends in the Bronx, and it made a few of them so angry that they stopped talking to him. The book was never published. My father had no idea how to get such a thing off the ground. After two years, he returned to a commuter job working at a bank in midtown Manhattan. "I get depressed being at home," he explained.

I didn't feel any pressure to drink myself, not when my friends in eighth grade began stealing beers and cigarettes from their parents. But when people made fun of me in high school for being a dork, "I can't try it, I have alcoholism in my family," I told them. I was happy with candy and chicken cutlet sandwiches from the local deli where everyone hung out in high school. So much was forbidden to me that I needed very little to make me happy.

I felt everything so intensely in those days. Every time my boyfriend Rob laid a blanket under the Japanese willow tree in our yard, where we lay naked in the summer from the middle of the night until sunrise, my stomach dropped. When I made a new friend, I prepared questions to ask them in advance in case we ran out of things to talk about.

My sobriety was something my parents closely guarded. "A friend told me that her son doesn't drink because Brienne doesn't," my father announced proudly over the dinner table when I was a senior. "You won't start drinking, will you?" my mother asked me anxiously when I began college.

I didn't disappoint them until my junior year, when I was studying abroad in Florence with my best friend Laura. It was the time of my first major depression. I had no words to articulate what I was feeling. After Italian class in the morning, I walked to the center of the city, and distracted myself by seeing English language films in a grand old movie palace. If there was no movie, I walked back up the hill to the house where we were staying with a couple that owned a contemporary art gallery. It was half way between Florence and Fiesole. I watched Rosanna, whom we called "mama," make dinner in her tiny kitchen in the basement. She taught me how to make a tiramisu with coffee. She taught me how to make arrabbiata. If she wasn't home, I walked down the street to a little park that overlooked the domed red roofs of Florence. It was better to be outside than inside. I brought a book with me always, but most of the time, I just sat there and cried. My mind raced. I felt desperate. "Ciao," said the young men who came upon me. "Qual è il tuo numero di telefono?"

It was easier to give them my cell phone number than to protest. I didn't have the language for it. Those boys drove me out of the park. My phone blinked for hours afterwards. "Your eyes are like the stars," the boys wrote in Italian. "They are very nice, like they sky, and you are very nice, very beautiful." All of the girls in my study abroad program got the exact same sort of crap. Word on the street was that American women, and especially the students, were easy. Most of the boys weren't even Italian — they were Albanian. "Get away from me!" Laura screamed when they followed her home from school. Laura is 5'10", and looks like Hilary Rhoda. "Ugh, I hate Italy!" she proclaimed when we lay in our respective beds.

The first few weeks, Laura was so homesick that she could hardly move. Right after dinner, she took a Tylenol PM. I was homesick as well, but my sadness seemed less debilitating in comparison. At night, I set up shop next to my bed. I read 30 books in four months. I made absolutely no friends. By the end of our stay, I was the miserable one. "What are you doing tonight?" I asked Laura a week before the term was over.

"Going out to the club," she said. American students went to the same two or three places every weekend, where they danced to 50 Cent's "In Da Club" and made out with other American students. Sometimes, if things really got crazy, they smoked some hashish with the guys who worked at the Diesel store.

"Can I come?" I asked.

"Yeah, of course," she said.

We took a cab. When we arrived, I cornered one of the girls. She was from Long Island. She had frizzy brown hair, and carried a Louis Vuitton baguette. She was overweight. She had a very high opinion of herself. "What should I drink that won't be disgusting?" I asked her.

She shifted her baguette from the crook of her elbow onto her shoulder. "A whiskey sour," she suggested.

I drank the whiskey sour. No one cared. It made me dizzy. When I got home, I violently threw up in the bathroom.

I went back to Brown the fall of my senior year a changed woman. The seal was broken. My friends mixed me drinks in red plastic cups. I got smarter, and suddenly parties became fun for me. One night, my friend Sonia, a water polo player, made me a huge gin and tonic in a water bottle. I drank the whole thing. We went to a party at a fraternity house. I lost Sonia. I lost my eyesight. I lay down on the sidewalk outside of the entrance in a pool of vomit. My friend Matt, a 6'11" basketball player, picked me up in his arms, and carried me to my friend Yoni's house. Yoni drove me home to the house where I was living, and helped me walk up the stairs. I fell asleep with my head in the toilet. The next day, I couldn't get out of bed. "She's bulimic," I could hear my roommate hissing through her wall. My roommate had a pet rabbit, and she never cleaned up after the rabbit when it shit all over her bedroom.

Most of my friends in college were potheads. I smoked weed with them on the roofs, or in bedrooms lined with tapestries and bookshelves. The balance slowly shifted in my twenties. Now, most of my friends are heavy drinkers. My love best what you know, and what I know best are alcoholics.

#Alcoholism #My life #Analysis

9 notes Oct 9th, 2014

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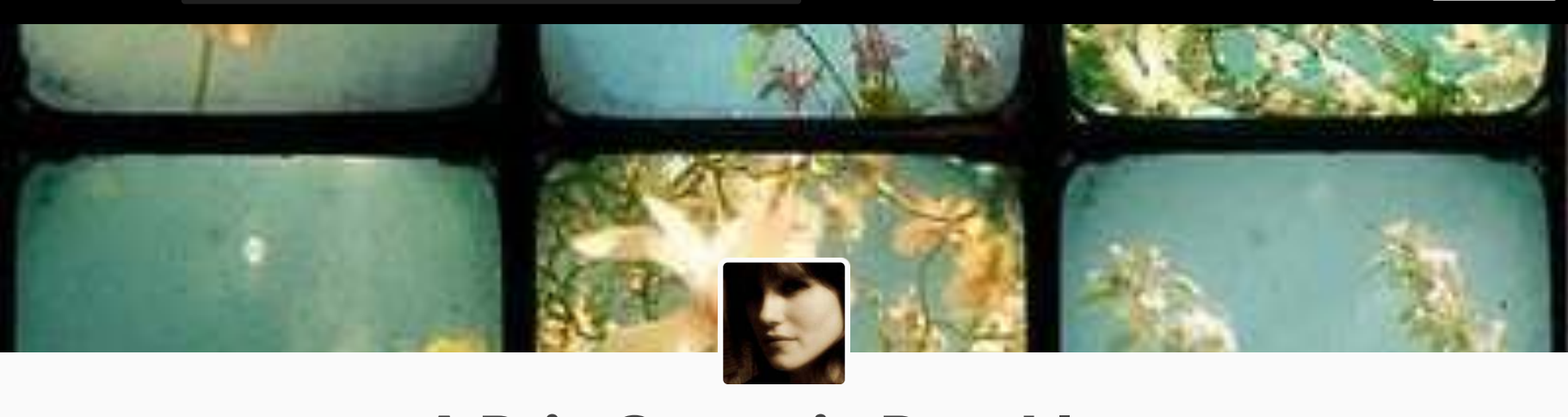


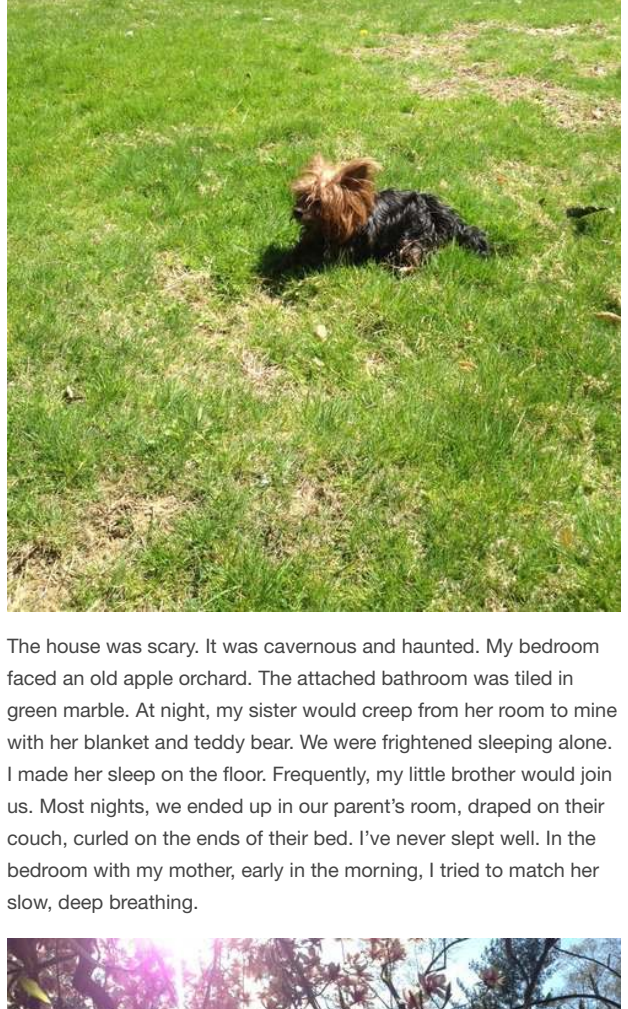
A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

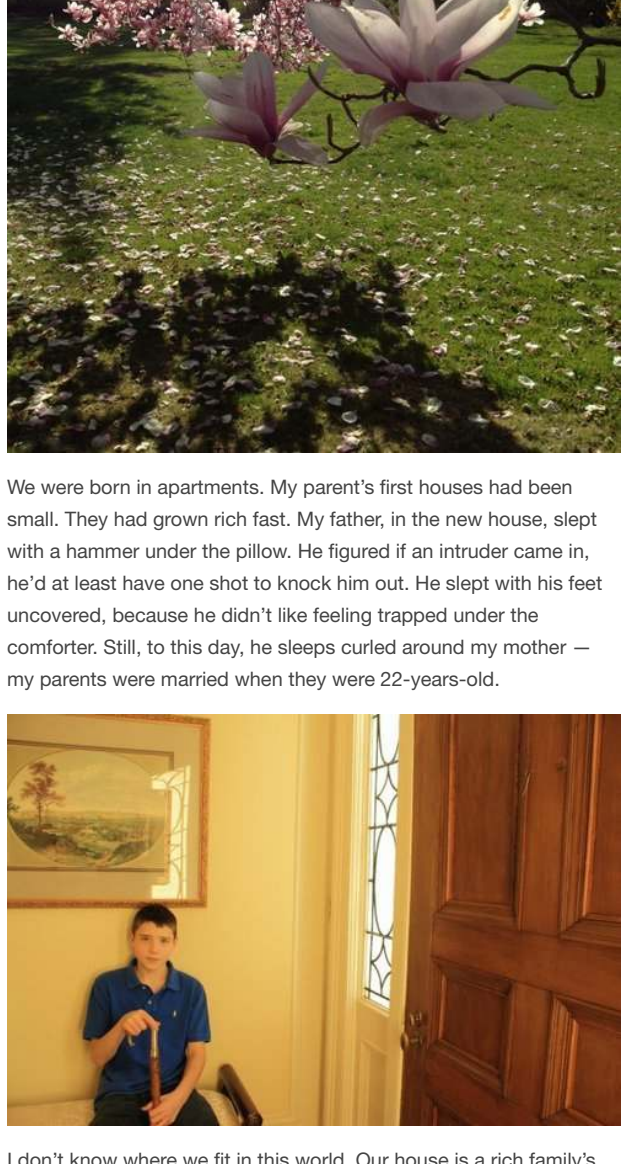
An Epic Story Left Untold

My parents live in a house that was built in 1781. It's name is Tara Knoll. When they bought it, my dad was a prince of Wall Street. I don't know much about those days, because my parents never talk about money.

The house is a small mansion. It's set on 7 acres of land, and it's surrounded by a 100 acre nature preserve. It has a guest house, a pool house, a play house, and a shed. When we first moved in, my parents only had enough furniture to fill two of the rooms. For a while, I lived in a bedroom with only a mattress and an old dresser.



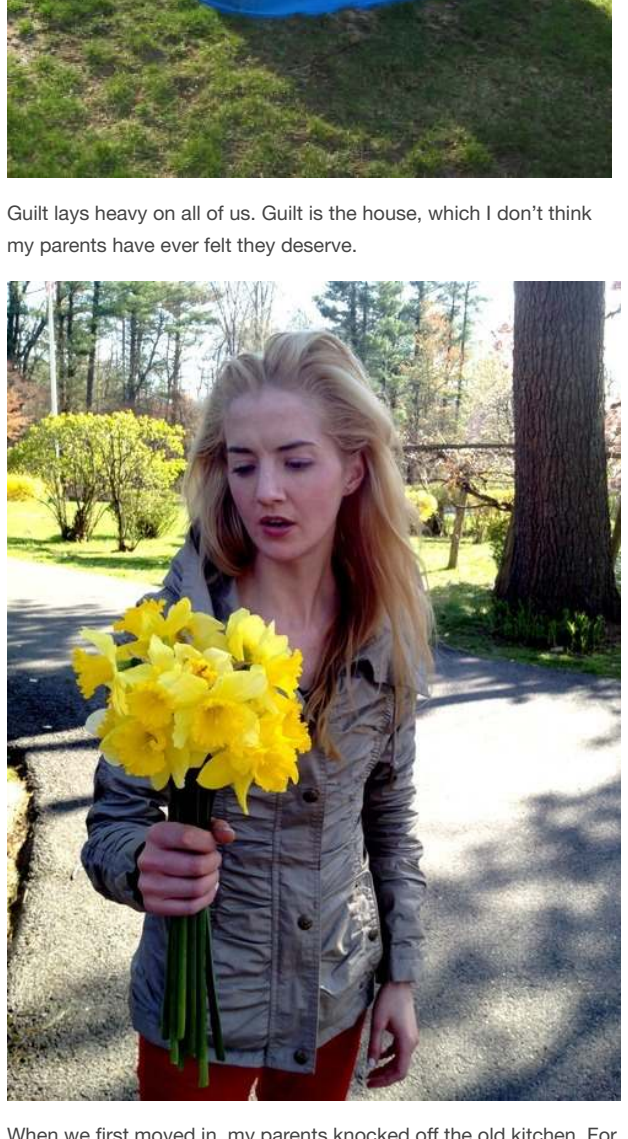
The house was scary. It was cavernous and haunted. My bedroom faced an old apple orchard. The attached bathroom was tiled in green marble. At night, my sister would creep from her room to mine with her blanket and teddy bear. We were frightened sleeping alone. I made her sleep on the floor. Frequently, my little brother would join us. Most nights, we ended up in our parent's room, draped on their couch, curled on the ends of their bed. I've never slept well. In the bedroom with my mother, early in the morning, I tried to match her slow, deep breathing.



We were born in apartments. My parent's first houses had been small. They had grown rich fast. My father, in the new house, slept with a hammer under the pillow. He figured if an intruder came in, he'd at least have one shot to knock him out. He slept with his feet uncovered, because he didn't like feeling trapped under the comforter. Still, to this day, he sleeps curled around my mother — my parents were married when they were 22-years-old.

I don't know where we fit in this world. Our house is a rich family's house, but our mentality is poor. Soon after they bought it, my father left his job. For years, he had sat in front of dozens of tiny computer screens, tracking money, until he had enough money of his own. He set up an office on the third floor, in one of the smaller bedrooms, and wrote a novel.

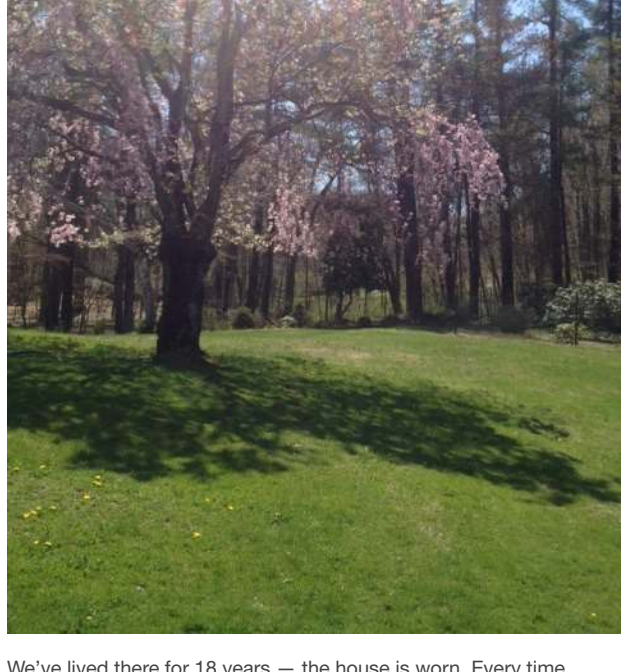
He was the first to alienate people with his writing. He sent the novel to his best friends, and a few of them stopped talking to him. I was the second. I write things, and I hurt everyone who is close to me. My little brother Brendan is the third. A few weeks ago, he read a story out loud in his English class about a gay couple who smoke weed and hallucinate seeing a bear climbing on the tree outside of their window. The teacher said it wasn't funny, and called home.



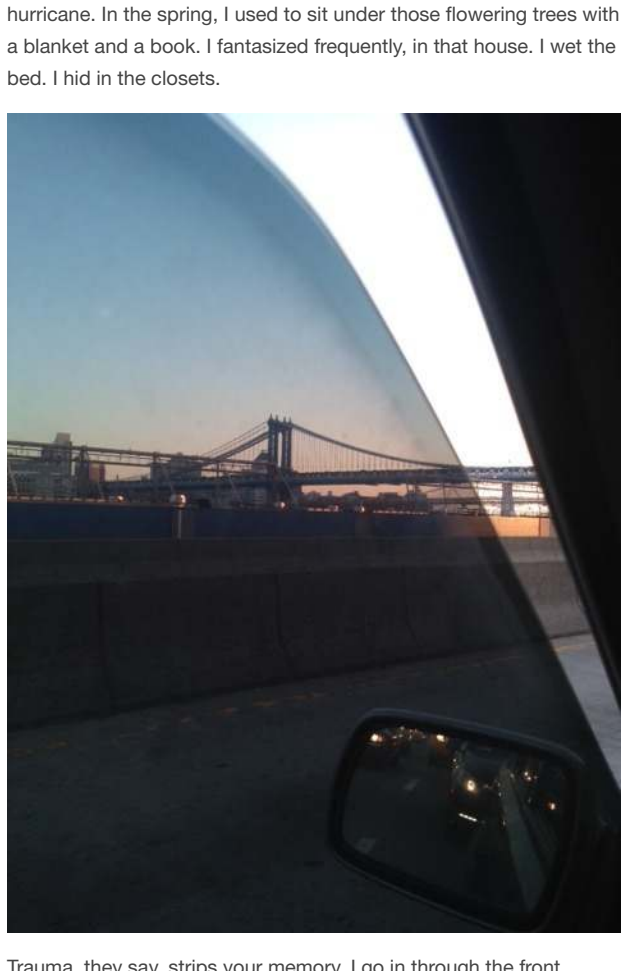
Guilt lays heavy on all of us. Guilt is the house, which I don't think my parents have ever felt they deserve.

When we first moved in, my parents knocked off the old kitchen. For six months, we lived in the guest house. The back end of the mansion was gutted. You could climb the servant's staircase, and look down from the third floor to the basement. It was a cavernous hole. In the walls, we found old newspapers from the 1920s, good luck trinkets, small hidden toys. Someone came to our door once, and brought us a book of old photographs of the house from the 1920s. The people who lived there rode horses, summered in the Hamptons, wore fur coats.

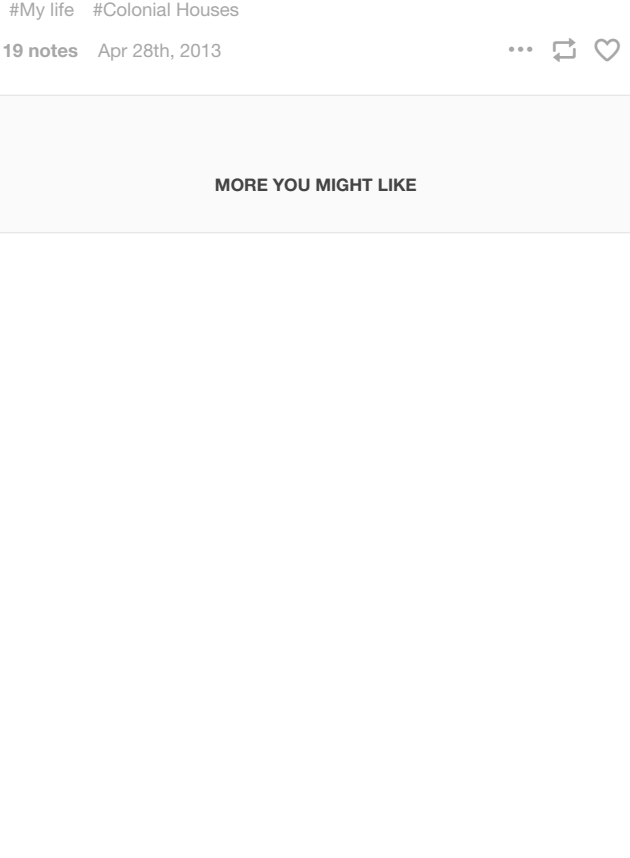
My parents built a new kitchen, with custom cabinets. They bought old antiques and Persian rugs. The drapes, they had made by a man named George. For a while, a housekeeper and an au pair lived in the small bedrooms on the third floor. My aunt lived in the carriage house with her baby boy. Every summer, a boy named Keith stayed with us — he is my brother from another mother. Sometimes, he was joined by others — Jakki from Northern Ireland. A boy named Ivan who showed up with cauliflower ears from being beaten by his grandfather. Violete, a smart, talented girl from the Bronx. Dozens of kids whose moms were in the Ossining Women's Prison. My best friends, their families. My dozens of aunts, uncles and cousins. There's an epic book to be written about life in the house. There's a heartbreak in the story.



Today, the house is lonelier. Two brothers, two adopted sisters. My parents. A housekeeper named Christina, who arrives every morning, and leaves in the afternoon. A handy man named David Jolen. A Guatemalan gardener named Roberto, who has to stand on a stepladder to trim the hedges, because he's only five feet tall. He lives in a basement apartment in the next town over. His English is rough. When he comes, my mom buys him a chicken parm sub and a liter of coke. She leaves it on a table in the sun. He doesn't know his sons.



We've lived there for 18 years — the house is worn. Every time there's a storm, trees fall all over the yard. Yesterday, I returned home only to find that my apple orchard had been decimated by the hurricane. In the spring, I used to sit under those flowering trees with a blanket and a book. I fantasized frequently, in that house. I wet the bed. I hid in the closets.



Trauma, they say, strips your memory. I go in through the front gates, and I leave exhausted.

#My life #Colonial Houses

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On Why I'm Not Drinking

I want to start this post by stating that things are better at home. We had a great weekend. Whether it's because all of the dairy and soy has finally cleared my system, or he's just getting bigger, Cass is a much different baby. Right now, he's throwing his arms up in the arm, and squealing with joy on the floor of our living room.

One thing I'm not sure how to talk about, or whether or not it's worth it, is the fact that I've basically decided not to drink anymore. At least in the short term. Saying this out loud makes other people feel uncomfortable. I think it's because it makes them feel like you're judging them for drinking. I've actually been pretending to drink at some social occasions so that people don't really ask me questions about it.

The easy explanation for this is that I'm co-sleeping with Cass, and it's dangerous to be at all intoxicated when you are sharing a bed with an infant. The more truthful explanation is that I don't like the way drinking makes me feel. Having a drink, or two, or three, for me, is like trapping yourself in a state that you have to wait out until it dissipates. It's a prison. After the initial burst of pleasure, drinking makes me feel fuzzy, and headachy, and slightly depressed.

I used to be afraid that if I stopped drinking, I would lose all of my friends. The truth was that I was drinking very heavily, and I was hanging out with people who drank very heavily. I also had no idea what I would do with all of my excess time. I was terrified of boredom. I wasn't sure how I would reward myself. The thing about being a human is that when you stop one habit, another habit fills it quickly. People often ask me how I read so much, and the truth is, the reading fills the hole where I used to be drinking. And I reward myself, these days, with vegan ice cream from Milkmade, which is not only delicious, but fucking expensive — $12 a pint — so it feels like a real indulgence.

I've written before about how my mother told me, from a very young age, that I would likely be an alcoholic due to our genetics — Irish, many family members who are alcoholics, etc. And I believed her, in my core. But I also didn't believe her, and wanted to be different. I didn't drink until I was 21. In our society, it is extremely hard to participate in normal social events if you're not drinking. Looking back, it's sort of scary to realize how quickly I fell from not drinking at all to drinking a lot, during the day and all weekend. I wonder if her prediction for me was true, and that if I had continued drinking, if I would indeed have developed a real problem. Or if the problem had already developed already, and I am too afraid to admit that to myself. I think, especially, of the time when I showed up tutoring with alcohol on my breath.

My friend Becky came over on Friday. She is the younger sister of my best friends from college, twins named Jon and Josh. Let's just say she struggles in a similar manner to my sister, and leave it at that.

Becky has been sober for a long time now. "I'm so lonely," she told me. "You go to any NA meeting in the city, and that's what people will tell you, 'I'm so lonely.'"

Our society is so full of holes, and everything is commodified. The alcohol industry has sold us the idea that in order to have a good time, in order to watch an event on television, in order to be outdoors, to be alive, having fun, living life, you have to be drinking. Drinking is just a form of being fucked up, and you can also achieve that by smoking weed, by doing other drugs. The legalization of marijuana is very scary in that respect, because it will just encourage more people to stop being present, to stop building communities.

Having a family has given me two sober companions, and it has saved me, in many respects. I have a purpose where I was always looking for one. It has allowed me to make many news friends. It has killed time that I formerly didn't know how to pass.

I am lucky.

On Saturday, we went to see my friend DEH's new show at Pioneer Works. After, we went to go visit DEH at the new Mexican restaurant where he was hanging out. DEH was taking shots of whiskey at the bar. He wrapped his arms around me, and told me that he loved me. Then he kept on doing that, again and again, crushing Cass's head in the carrier. And I realized DEH was so drunk he could barely walk. "Are you judging me?" he asked.

DEH used to be my main drinking partner. I would call him at 2pm on a Tuesday, when I either had no work to do, or didn't want to do it, and we would meet, and drink until Caleb got home from work. We had a lot of magical times together, and I love him very dearly.

The truth is, I am good, and I am dark. The dark part of me is really hidden right now. The part of me that once cancelled dinner plans with an editor by telling her my friend had committed suicide when in fact he hadn't, I just wanted to keep on drinking with DEH.

That part of me was striving to an "artist," and I fit in in the bars in Red Hook where artists hang out and drink. I had a weird premonition of that person after we made sure DEH was safe, and walked home to our apartment. She inhabited me briefly when I looked into the window of a studio, and saw a row of photography printers, and I remembered all of the blog posts I wrote that were experiments. Now, blog posts are just relaying my state as a mother.

I missed her, and I wondered if I would remember her. I wonder if and when she'll return. When my kids are older, and I return to a state of not having enough to do? Of loneliness.

We texted DEH on Sunday morning to ask if he was ok, and he was surprised that we were even asking. "Yeah, I'm fine," he told me.

I wanted to tell him, "You know, you won't be lonely if you stop drinking. I'll be there for you." But Caleb told me not to.

#Motherhood #Sobriety #Alcoholism #My life

13 notes

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A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

The Big Short: A Review That Is Also A Love Letter To My Father

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The first — and only — person I wanted to talk to after watching *The Big Short* was my dad. If there's anyone who knows about the bond market, and especially mortgage backed securities, it's him. I've written about this a million times, but he started his career at Drexel Burnham Lambert in 1982. He recently told me the actual story of how he ended up there. His friend, Lukey Knee, got him a temp job in the back office, doing administrative work, for the traders, while my dad was waiting to find out if he got accepted into the NYPD academy. My mother was pregnant with me. My dad is competitive by nature, so while there, he took the Series 7, the test that all the traders took, to see if he could pass it. He did. He got the results the Friday before he was supposed to enter the Academy — enrollment there began on a Sunday. It was December, and I had been born a month earlier. The recruitment officer at the NYPD, sensing my dad's hesitation, told him to delay his decision until the next round of cadets were accepted. In that time, my dad began to make money; he's worked on Wall Street ever since.

Everything else I know about my father's career after that is mostly mythology that I've written about before. I know he made a lot of money very quickly because we went from living in a one-bedroom apartment in the Bronx to, only 13 year later, living in a historic mansion in one of the most expensive towns in America. He was a senior vice president and managing director at Morgan Stanley, Prudential, DLJ. He switched jobs frequently. Abruptly after he bought the house, my father stopped showing that he had any money. We stopped going on fancy vacations. He stopped buying my mom fur coats. He stopped buying BMWs. It was bewildering to all of us because we went, seemingly overnight, from being rich to being not rich. I think he lost his taste for making money; but he also, with the insight privileged to only those can afford it, decided that money was corrupt, horrible, acquired through fucking over people, and not something he wanted to be associated with. He was 36. He "retired" for 2 years, wrote a book; then went back to working at small banks, this time on the sales side, packaging

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extremely safe mortgage backed securities.

The reason why I was so interested to talk to him about *The Big Short* was because beyond being a literal expert (and in my father-worshipping opinion, a genius) I know, in 2008, that he didn't lose any money. He knew that the mortgages being given AAA ratings were garbage, and he didn't deal with them personally. Of course he knew. If he didn't, as someone with decades of experience, he would be a literal idiot.

When I called him this morning to talk about *The Big Short,* which is about various bankers who bet that the mortgage market would implode in 2008, and profited from it, he got immediately angry. "Those people are not heroes, you know," he said.

"It doesn't say they're heroes," I told him. "It was just an interesting film because it really explained what happened in 2008."

"I'm staying as far away from that film as possible," he spat. "Those people disgust me."

He continued, "The American economy is built on greed. Everyone that blames the banks is missing the point. Everyone was greedy. The people selling those securities, but also the people accepting free money to buy houses they couldn't afford."

"But the mortgage brokers were targeting people who were ignorant or could't speak English," I said. "Those people were criminals."

"I can't talk about this anymore," he said, handing back the phone to my mother.

"Why does Dad get so emotional about this?" I asked her.

"I'm sorry," I heard my father wail in the background. "I don't mean to get so angry about this."

Every conversation that goes on between my family members takes place over speakerphone; there is no secrecy.

He came close to the line again. "In truth," he confessed. "Talking about this reminds me that I wasted my life."

It was the first time I had ever heard him admit this. It broke my heart. "You didn't waste your life," I told him. "You have six beautiful children, and a grandchild on the way!"

"Little Stevie," he joked, in his way, his Irish way, to change the subject. Self loathing, it runs in our family.

The people who made *The Big Short* ascribes some similar self loathing to a few of the characters in the film; and especially to Mark Baum, who ran a small hedge fund at Morgan Stanley. He is played by Steve Carrell. He ended up making $200 million personally by betting that mortgage-backed securities would fail; the film depicts him as hesitating to profit for moral reasons, which may have been true. He is depicted as something of a hero. The abrasive, angry New Yorker with a secret heart of gold, and a deep love for his wife and children — my favorite stereotype, because of course, it reminds me of my father.

It's hard to describe the film in detail. It charts the work life of three different types of traders who bet against the mortgage market — a weird, autistic-type guy in California who bet his entire $1.2 billion hedge fund against the market in 2005, two young guys from Denver who sense an opportunity in rumors, and Mark Baum's team at Morgan Stanley. The film is funny, well-acted, full of pop culture. It's not condescending, but it lays out what happened by breaking the fourth wall, and having various famous people — Margot Robbie in a hottub, Anthony Bourdain cooking, Selena Gomez playing blackjack — explain how the economy crashed in 2008 using simple terms.

The take-away is that you actually can understand what happened – it's just that bankers don't want you to because then their jobs would be meaningless. Another take-away is that the big banks were absolutely involved in criminal activities, as were the rating agencies, and the government. Everyone knew that the mortgages were going to default eventually, but they weren't worried about it because they were making crazy amounts of money fucking over "average" Americans.

I would absolutely go see the film, it's one of the best, if not the best, I've seen this year. I feel like I learned more from it than I have reading the *New York Times* for the entire past 12 years.

I got what the take-away was, and agreed that it's insane that the banks weren't broken up, and moreover, that the people selling junk mortgages weren't put in a jail. But I also saw something much larger, and arguably more profound, in the film. And that was something nihilistic. "There are just too many people in the world," I told Caleb. "There are just too many people that can be taken advantage of; and moreover, not enough real jobs to keep even a minority of us gainfully occupied."

Let me try to explain this further. I am going to preface this by saying that I don't understand it myself. But in 2014, there were 5.99 million people employed in the financial services industry in America. In the same year, 7.2 financial services accounted for 7.2% of the GDP. The only industries more profitable than the financial services industries in the United States are Health, IT Services, Business Products and Services (like literally providing offices and supplies), and Energy. The Financial Services Industry is the 5th most profitable industry in the United States. Everything on the list ahead of it is more of a concept, or a supply chain supporting a concept, than it is an actual product. That's pretty scary.

If *The Big Short* taught me anything, there are not 5.99 million real jobs in the financial industry. There is more like a few thousand. The rest has been invented to provide for the need for employment. My father told me that if no one greedy touched the American economy, there would be no bubbles. The film showed that after all of the stable securities were used up, people began inventing new securities in order to continue making money. At the top, these assholes profited. But arguably, they needed to create labor to support the 5 million or so people beneath them. Very few people working on Wall Street actually get filthy rich; most of the people who work in the industry are in administrative positions. In essence, and I'm not articulating this well, you can hate the financial services industry, but you cannot get rid of it; if you did, unemployment would skyrocket. And moreover, given how ephemeral and invented most of the American economy is, you would just need to invent equally insipid and meaningless products just to re-employ people.

We live in a world where none of us really have to enough work to do, I've realized, and maybe I'm wrong. But computers and robots do a lot of our manual labor; only poor people and a few privilege hipsters actually touch physical goods. Nothing that we create is really necessary except to make money. Most people working in offices of any kind are working on inventing need. From retail, to culture, to manufacturing, to real estate. We're fooled by another bizarre industry — marketing — to believe, from a very, very young age, that we want, and deserve, all of these things we don't need because if we didn't want them, the economy would collapse.

I went to our storage locker the other day to take out my "winter" clothes. It was stuffed with so many suitcases full of garbage. I didn't want any of it. I realized that I had spent probably $20,000-$30,000 on the contents within. And for what? I wanted to burn it.

But I guess, the problem is, we can't really blame ourselves, or anyone else, for living in such a world. There's just too many people. Less in America than other places; but in America, it's still a problem. None of us can blame ourselves for our lives being meaningless because that's how they were set up from birth. Just to support an economy of junk so that people can afford to buy more junk. The freedom comes, perhaps, from admitting this. From saying, "I feel like I wasted my life." From taking pleasure in what you can.

I think my father takes pleasure in being decent; and I take pleasure that he is so decent. I take pleasure in the good I do for other people, and for my blog posts. But I can't help wanting a slice of the pot of junk myself. If I don't grab from it, then someone else will. I think what my father learned is that you can own everything you ever wanted, and still feel unhappy; the eternal adage that money doesn't make you happy is true, but you can only know that if you have the real choice to reject it, which is available to so very few people.

This was a weird blog post, whatever!

#The Big Short #Review #Financial Services Industry #Wall Street #Brad Pitt #Steve Carrell #Ryan Gosling

75 notes Dec 27th, 2015

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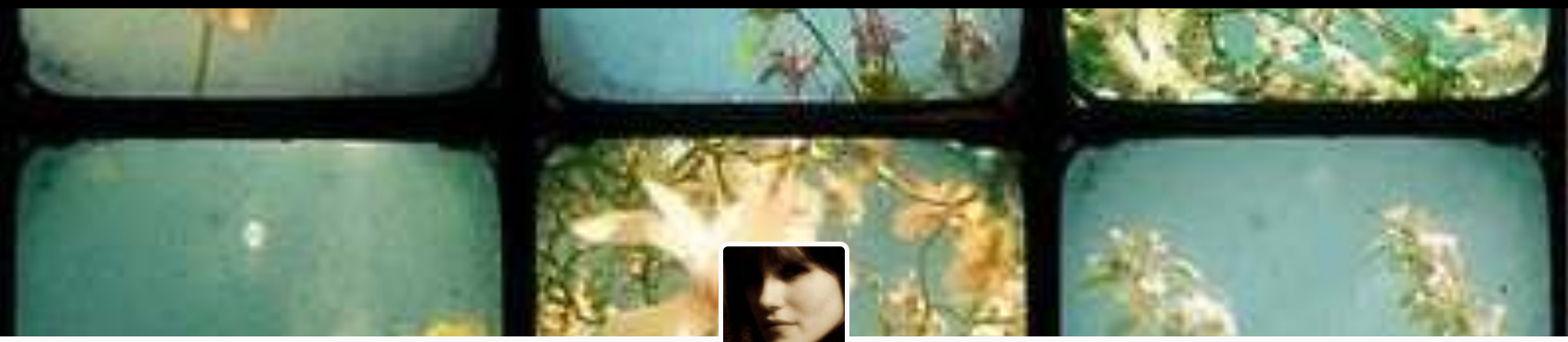
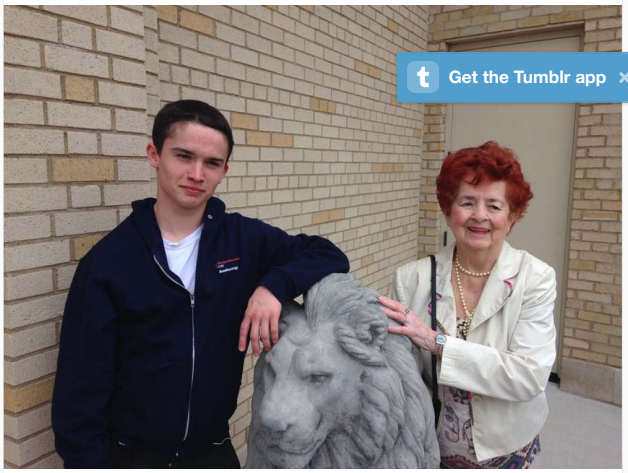


A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

In Which My Nana, on Her Deathbed, Taught Me To Stop Expecting Everyone Will Give Me a Fucking Medal For Doing This Mother Thing



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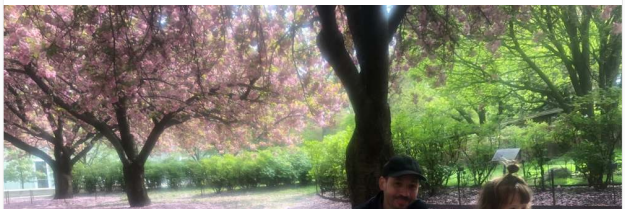
Last Thursday, Caleb stayed home from work, and we went to the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. The morning was heavenly until I pulled out the apple I had packed for my snack, and Caleb started complaining that I wouldn't give it to him. "I'm going to pass out from hunger," he began whining.

At the time, I was doing Weight Watchers, so the only snack I was able to eat was the apple. I began thinking things like, "If you know you're going to get hungry to the point of fainting, why not pack your own snack?" And, "Hey, there's a cafe twenty feet away, maybe it will occur to you to go there without me mentioning it first?" And, "Why do I have to be your mother, I'm already taking care of two small children?" But I didn't want to start a fight, so I didn't say anything.



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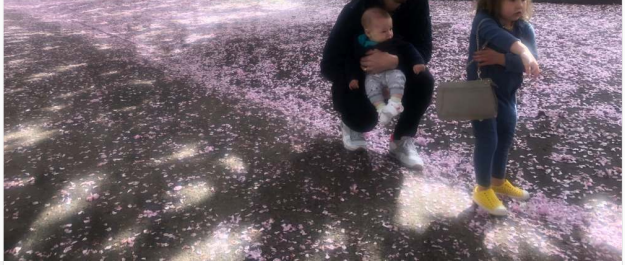
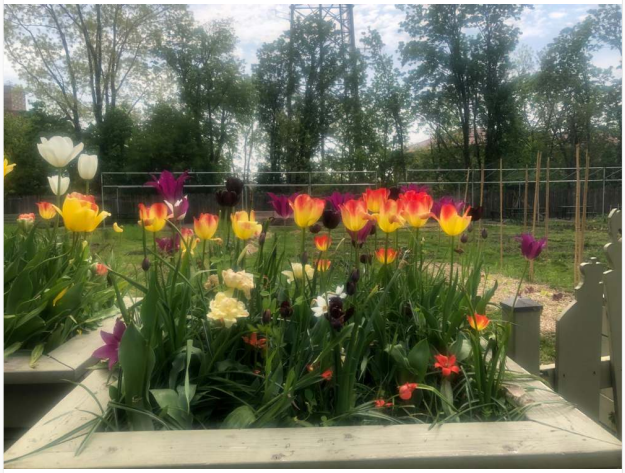


An hour or so later, after Caleb had scolded me for “not being in the moment” and instead, taking too many pictures of our children in the Japanese garden; after Cleo, unsupervised by either of us, took almost every item off the shelves of the gift shop, and put them in a butterfly net; after she took off her shoes, and I began asking Caleb to please put them back on her feet, which he acknowledged but did not do; after Cass took twenty minutes of screaming to fall asleep in the carrier, we arrived at a vegan sandwich shop, and that’s where shit hit the fan.



Cleo jumped out of her stroller, and shoeless, began walking around that disgusting place, where all of the sandwiches had normal sounding names like “BLT” and “grilled cheese,” but were all made with non-dairy, non-meat products that are best described as “flat and spongy.” “AAAAGH!!!” I moaned from deep in my chest. “Caleb, how many times do I have to ask you to put her shoes on?!?”

And finally, he reached for Cleo’s shoes, only to realize that along the way, one of them had fallen out of the stroller. He darted off to comb the streets for the shoe, and upon his return, immediately began peppering me with questions like, “Are you ok?” and “Maybe you should eat something?”

It’s one thing to be forced into the role of caretaker for a 45-year-old man, and another thing entirely to be treated like a lunatic for doing the work anyway without any pay or gratitude. “Do not treat me like I’m crazy for getting frustrated here,” I said.

Which began a multi-block fight that turned into a screaming match, all in front of our children. I won’t bore you with the details, but the gist of it was:

Caleb: “Who cares about the shoes? I don’t care about the shoes.”

Me: “The shoes are my job, and I care about my job, which is more important than your job because it involves keeping the most precious things in our life safe, healthy and happy, but obviously you don’t have any respect for me because the patriarchy has taught you to treat domestic work like lesser work, and also you think you’re better than me.”

The day was ruined, and I think Caleb slept on the couch, although I honestly don’t remember that far in the past. Which was five days ago.

The next day, my sister called me, and told me that my Nana was really not doing well.

And the day after that, which was Saturday, my brother Brendan called me, and told me that my Nana had an hour or two to live, and that I should get to Greenwich, Connecticut, where she lives in a nursing home, as quickly as possible if I wanted to say goodbye to her.

Caleb and I packed the kids in the car. There were road closures along the way, and we found ourselves re-routed and frustrated, with two screaming children in the back seat. My brother kept on calling me. “I’m keeping her alive for you,” he said. “I’m giving her some liquids.”

“Wait, you came up?” my father said on a separate occasion. “Why did you do that?”

“Because everyone is saying Nana is going to die?” I said.

“Oh, I don’t know about that,” my father said.

We arrived, and my Nana was lying in the hospital bed in her room, very weak. She has colon cancer. She was doing chemotherapy, but the last round landed her in the hospital, where scared and confused, she began hallucinating. “Hi Nana, it’s Brienne,” I told her when I visited her there.

“Brian, stop messing around with me,” she told my cousin, who was not in the room.

Life is not fair, and life has especially not been fair to my Nana. Or so it appeared to me until this past weekend. When she was younger, my great-grandmother hit her with a belt, and blinded her right eye. The past few months, her left eye has developed glaucoma, and weakened, stealing away her eyesight entirely. She once told my sister and I that she never would have married our grandfather if she hadn't gotten pregnant with our Uncle Kevin. The two of them met, got engaged, and then he went to train in the air force for the Korean War. While he was gone, he met another woman, and wrote a letter to my Nana, asking for her ring back. Back in New York, he returned, got her pregnant. She raised their six children while also caring for him. He had four open heart surgeries over the course of their marriage, and also, was schizophrenic, unable to work for long periods of time. Somehow, she was strong enough to not resent him.

My Pop Pop, whom by the way, I loved absolutely, partially because he loved my sister and I so much, given that we were his favorite child's offspring, was not in the room with my Nana when she was hallucinating. But we were, as young children. "Leave her alone," she said to someone right over my shoulder. "She's my granddaughter, and I have a say in what you do to her."

Thinking about my Nana, in these past days when we thought she was going to die, and by the way, still might, I realized something about her. And that was that of everything I have experienced in my life, she is the one example of unconditional love. With the exception of a few jabs at my thick legs, my Nana has loved me every day of my life with a fervor and pureness that is unmatched by anyone, from my parents, to Caleb, to my children. She is always, always on my side. She is always, always there to pick up the phone when I call. She is an absolute steel trap for secrets, allowing me to say anything to her, or express any feeling, without fear that she will turn the information against me in a conversation with another person.

So many of my childhood memories are with my Nana. I think of her, and I feel myself lying on a twin bed in her apartment on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, her hands in my hair, singing the song that I now sing to Cleo. "Nana loves her Brienne," it starts. "Mommy loves her Brienne."

I taste her weak tea when I'm sick, I see her smiling at me from the pew where she waited, decked out in bright colors, every Sunday at mass. I see her white house, I see her pull out couch, I see the bowls of food she left outside on her patio for the two raccoons that lived in her yard, and whom she called Amos and Andy.

When I arrived in Greenwich on Saturday, to what everyone but my father assumed was her death bed, she was lying, surrounded by people. My mother's two sisters, Colleen and Peggy. Colleen's wife, Deb. My brother Brendan, and cousin Brian, who spend every Saturday with my Nana, and will feel her loss profoundly, as a literal gap in normal routine. My three sisters, my niece, Evie. My sister, Tara, to whom my Nana said, “You will have to learn to live without me now,” was gently kissing her forehead.

“Where are the babies?” she asked me, as she always does, whenever we talk, and I brought Cass to lie beside her, where he cooed and sang, and chewed on her fingers as she drifted in and out of consciousness.

Over the next few days, we spent as much time as we could with Nana. On Sunday morning, we arrived, and she was lucid, so together we sang some songs, because from my Nana, my voice is inherited. And later that afternoon, after her blood pressure dropped when she was using the bathroom, and she was too weak to lift her head, I sang the songs to her again while I brushed my fingertips through her bright red hair, as she used to do to me in my earliest memories.

And I realized, this is what life is all about, loving others. And that my Nana did not have a hard life, but instead, had a beautiful, wonderful life, because she loved so unconditionally. She never made money doing it, no one ever publicly thanked her, she is not famous, or important to strangers. But every small, private thing she did accumulated; all of it is remembered in our bodies, where we stored her affection. On her death bed, I was able to see how her love was the most precious of all commodities, and see a glimpse of what makes a life worth living.

My Nana is doing ok. She’s lucid, she asks for Cleo and Cass when I speak to her on the phone, she asks for Caleb, whom she adores. And back to that. I really have been feeling resentful for doing all of this domestic work without any praise, without any money, without any recognition from the person whom I thought should be praising me the most, who is my husband.

But the thing is, I don’t need that to keep on doing it. And now, through my Nana, as stupid as that sounds, I see that this work is worthwhile even if it never gets recognized. That even if all I do for the rest of my life is be a mother to Cleo and Cass, and then, perhaps if I’m lucky, a grandmother, and even a great-grandmother, that my life will have been perfect, complete, whole, meaningful. Ever since being with my Nana on my death bed, I have been more deliberate in the attention I give to my children. I have been putting down my phone, and singing to them, talking to them, reading to them, loving them, inscribing in them the touch of unconditional acceptance.

My Nana is actually doing better. Her body is strong. She says, “I’m sorry I haven’t died yet,” but two days ago, she drank a milkshake, and ate part of a fish filet sandwich, from McDonald’s. I have hope that maybe she’ll pull out of this, be with us for a few more years. And if she won’t, I will be devastated. Even still, Caleb and I plan on taking the children up to see her this weekend. Behind me as I held her hand, Caleb knelt, rubbing my back, crying himself, and occasionally, leaning over to kiss me.

“Have I told you lately?” is how a conversation with my Nana always ends.

“That I love you,” either one of us responds. “Have I told *you* lately?”

“That I love you.”

#Grandmothers #My life #Motherhood

15 notes May 8th, 2019

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Watch One Mississippi: The Character Bill Is Like My Mother

I really want to write a post about my sister's situation because it is consuming me, and also, it is bonkers town, but Caleb says, "NO! YOU WILL MAKE EVERYONE ANGRY!" So I am trying to listen to him like a good wife.

I will say that I am consumed with rage at the [illegible] consumed with rage that Trump is going to [illegible] regulation in the United States. Do any of you idiots know what de-regulation looks like? It looks like air you can't breathe, so you don't go outside; it looks like miles of concrete with no natural world left behind but the natural world that has become a dump site. It looks like shit on the street, and epic poverty. It looks like lack of clean water; landfills full of toxic waste. I hate to say this, but it looks like India.

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I was so angry reading this article about the Tech Industry's Gender Discrimination Problem last night that I literally couldn't sleep. It relates to my sister's baby daddy, who worked in tech. Those guys are making so much money you couldn't even choke them on all of it, and they're not deserving. They are not deserving of the power money brings. They are not using it wisely. They are not smarter than anyone, they are not better. They are just richer because they have figured out how to cheat people out of small amounts of money. And they have no shame capitalizing on it.

The one balm to my anger was "One Mississippi," the second season of which Caleb and I finished last night. It's based on the radio personality Tig Notaro's life. When I saw it reviewed in the New Yorker, I was like, I'm going to watch this even though I thought that Tig was twee, and also, lesbians intimidate me. Twig is not twee. She is fucking awesome. She's funny, and brave, and Southern. She has a fucked up family that reminds me of my own family, and the show is awesome.

In particular, the last episode of the second season, I believe, deals with sexual assault in the workplace really well, and will be helpful for men, or anyone, who is like, "Why didn't you just leave?" BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE IN MOTHERFUCKING SHOCK YOU ASSHOLES.

Anyway, I would recommend One Mississippi heavily, but I would not recommend "A Quiet Passion," a movie about Emily Dickinson on many critic's "best of 2017 lists," because honestly, it is boring as fuck.

#My life · #Reviews · #One Mississippi

3 notes · Jan 25th, 2018

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Is Your Child a Piece of Work? Come out of the Woodwork

Before I had kids, I would often have telephone conversations with my mom in which she would say: "Are you sure you want to have children given the history of mental illness in our family?"

My entire genetic lineage shares a span of 124 miles, from Sligo, where my maternal great-grandmother is from, to Tyrone, where the entire rest of my maternal and paternal family originated.

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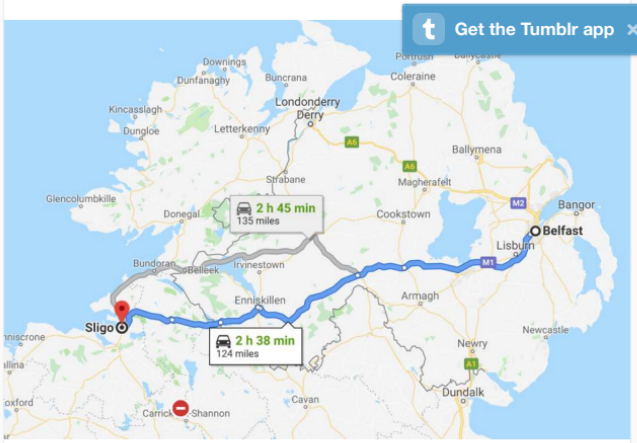
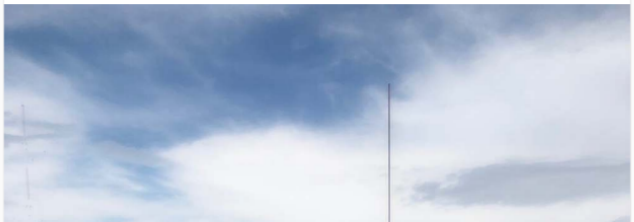


Inbreeding can lead to many things, among them charisma, beauty and a penchant for schizophrenia.

Then I met Caleb, and within three weeks we had said I love you, and within one month, he had a dream that I was pregnant. It took us three years before we were ready for Cleo. When I was pregnant with a girl, I dreamed of having one that was just like Arya Stark in *Game of Thrones.* A rebel, a silver tongue, a fighter. The sort of girl who doesn't take shit from anyone. A heroine.



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Fast forward two-and-a-half years, and we have a daughter who jumps in 46 degree Fahrenheit water and yells: “It feels good!” We have a daughter with bruises all over her body from falling, and getting right back up again with hardly a blink of an eye. We have a daughter who was throwing a temper tantrum on the bed last night, farted in the midst of it, and then immediately started hysterically laughing.

She is literally everything I ever dreamed of. What I didn’t realize was the amount of personal strength required to raise such a character.

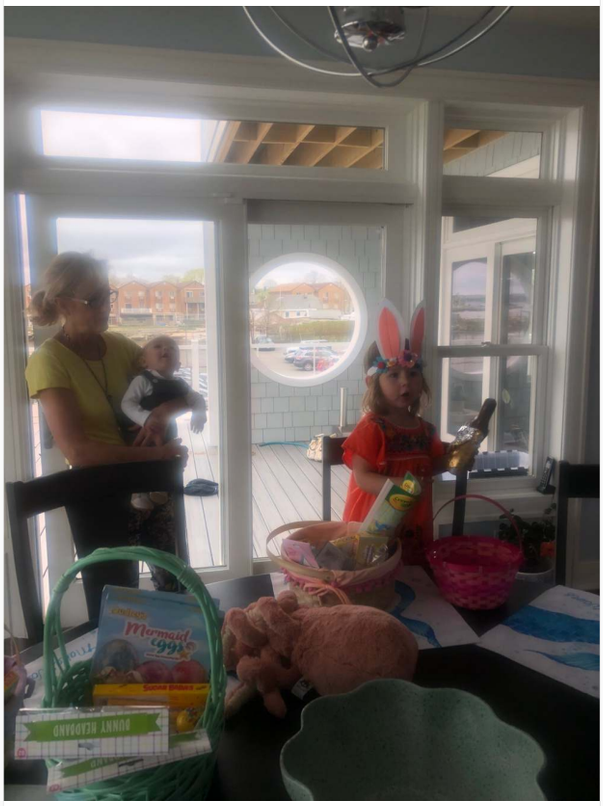
I admit we are struggling on a daily basis. On Monday, a friend of Cleo’s from school came over. School is closed this week in New York, so the friend’s older sister, who is 5, joined us. The five-year-old was very interested in baby Cass, but whenever she got near to him, Cleo screamed at the top of her lungs. “I don’t like her!”

Within a minute of this, the five-year-old had big fat tears streaming down her face.

“Cleo, you hurt her feelings, please say sorry,” I said.

In response to that, Cleo curled both hands into a claw, and began hissing in the five-year-old’s direction. For the next ten minutes, I had to field surprise attacks from Cleo, who would disappear only to reappear hissing again from behind something. The five-year-old left crying, and I was horribly embarrassed.

People say to me, “Oh, she’s just a toddler.” But sometimes, it feels like she’s more than just a toddler, and that maybe my mom was prescient. Part of this is compounded by the reactions we get when Cleo misbehaves in public — they are not good. Part of it is that even if their own kids misbehave, other parents have short memories, and more so, seem to enjoy watching Cleo flip out because it makes them feel better about their own kids, and their own parenting.



On Sunday, we went to my Aunt Peggy’s new boyfriend’s house on City Island for an Easter celebration. His name is Ted, and he and my aunt had stuffed over $250 in Easter eggs scattered around his yard. Upstairs, there were baskets waiting for Cleo with candy, and coloring books, and stuffed animals. You would think Cleo would be grateful, but no, she is a 2-year-old, gratitude is in her future, hopefully. Instead, she spent the first thirty minutes screaming at anyone who came near her: “I don’t like you!”

Eventually, she warmed up to Ted’s 93-year-old mother, who was shocked, amazed and amused that Cleo carefully removed the money from her eggs, smoothed it out, and then began stacking it in bills.

“She’s amazing!” the 93-year-old said.

I asked my Aunt Peggy who Cleo reminded her of, and my Aunt Peggy said that she reminded her of my sister Tara.

Those of you who know my sister Tara know why this might be a little bit scary.

“But remember,” my Aunt Peggy said. “Everyone loves Tara.”

And it’s true, people do love Tara. My sister is the funniest person you’ve ever met. She’s like a gigantic sparkler stick popping off pieces of gold in a huge barren wasteland of gray nothingness.

I told my sister, who only intermittently talks to me, that everyone says Cleo is like her, and my sister responded: “She’s a little bit devil, but mostly angel.” And that’s true, she is.

What I’m finding, or mostly reaffirming, is that people don’t actually respond well to strong personalities. The people who have it the easiest in life are the people who conform. People aren’t amused by what you really think, not even when you’re a toddler.

My challenge is myself, and my whole fucked up family history, and my own flaws. I need to stop caring what other people think so much so that I don’t extinguish what makes my daughter a heroine — or even worse, medicate and prescribe her with disorders where none exist. I struggle every day with what makes a person who they are, and what is good or bad. I think often about whether or not my siblings were victims of our circumstances, or born the way we were. I wonder especially if we were over-medicated. But I also need to up setting boundaries, especially in regards to sugar, which 100% makes Cleo crazy. I have a hard time with the sugar thing because I was not allowed to eat sugar, and any sort of control is triggering, for me, reminding me of the miserable parts of my childhood.

To be conscious and to be a parent is hard. It’s exciting to work on

it. I realize that even though I'm not accomplishing much monetarily or in terms of accolades from the outside, I'm growing a lot as a person these days. My empathy is expanding. I'm thinking about myself, and how I can be better.

I don't know, is your child a piece of work? Please tell me if they are because I feel alone in this.

#Motherhood

16 notes Apr 24th, 2019

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"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

I Don't Want Cleo To Try To Kill Me In My Sleep When She's a Teenager, But I Also Don't Want To Give Her Free Reign

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By the time Caleb got home last night, I had felt like crying for hours, but hadn't yet. I just don't have time for crying these days. Both Cleo and Cass had check-ups at the doctor yesterday. Cleo was healthy, talking, very badly behaved. She alternated between demanding a shot, and then screaming that she didn't want a shot, all the while talking in a creepy voice about the robot that seems to follow her around all day. Cass has lost even more weight, likely because of the stomach flu, and is now in the 12th percentile for his age group. A mother can be told 1,000 times that weight fluctuates, but your baby losing weight hurts deeply, still. Today, he has a fever from his vaccinations, and it feels like my heart is sitting in a wine glass with Ramona Singer screaming at it at a cocktail party, it hurts so much that he is sick again.

After we got home from the doctor, we had my good friends Matt and Andrea over for a playdate. Their son, Warren, is five days older than Cleo. Cleo, because she skipped her nap, greeted him by screaming, and kept up it up throughout their visit. Occasionally, she punctured the screams with the following statement: "I want to be a

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ghost for Halloween."

Warren, meanwhile, was perfectly behaved. Of course, he had his toddler moments, but what was most shocking of all to me was that when his mother, Andrea, told him to calm down, to come here, to listen to her, he actually obeyed. The only time Cleo obeys me is if I give her a Hershey kiss, and I sometimes give her upwards of 5 Hershey kisses before she puts on her jacket, for example.

I noticed Andrea never raised her voice. I don't know how I parented Cleo. I just know that I'm not doing it right. Here's the truth: I have no idea what I'm fucking doing. I'm a relatively literate person who has supported herself financially since the age of 21 — arguably my only accomplishment as an adult besides giving birth —and I have no idea how to control or discipline my child.

There's a part of me that just doesn't have it in me. I've been thinking a lot, lately, about what kind of person I am. I have long considered myself to be an aggressive person because I often get in fights with my close friends over text message. The other day, the owner of the Great Room, where I hang out, noted that I was a very passive person. This shocked me. I didn't consider myself a passive person, and I certainly am not in my writing, but that was how I came off to her.

That made me consider — am I a passive person? I was raised with fucking strict parents. You think you are a strict parent — you have absolutely nothing on my mother. My mother one time grounded me for a month because I slammed my bedroom door. My parents were unique among the parents of my peers because they never reneged on a punishment. If they told me I could no longer go to the Church retreat where I would have been able to eat whatever I want and stay up late trying to talk to the boys on the other side of the concrete wall from the girls' quarters, then there was no amount of contrition or backpedalling that would change that.

I think this has probably informed my parenting. I don't want to be a strict parent. My siblings and I were very well behaved in public, but our house in private was basically like a horror movie where you never knew if someone was going to run out of a dark corner brandishing a knife because they were in the midst of an anxiety-fueled mental breakdown. Like, literally. My mother never sharpened her kitchen knives even if it meant that she had to cut turnips by sticking a dull knife in one, and then banging it against the countertop.

But I also think that deep in my personality, I don't have it in me to be strict. I'm just easygoing. I love the antics of children. My father's mother, I think, was like that. My Grandma. My Grandma never set any rules with us. She let us eat whatever we wanted, say whatever we wanted, do whatever we wanted, and I fucking loved her to death. She was amazing. She was a reader, and on her deathbed, she told me that she had waited her whole life to return to my grandfather, who died when my father was six months old, in the afterlife. I relate to that.

Anyway, back to parenting in the modern day world. Last night, I didn't cry, but I finally laughed when I read this article about this drug the FDA just approved for postpartum depression. It costs $20,000 a dosage, and to receive it, you need to be hospitalized for three days. LOL. I mean, you have to laugh. Literally the opposite of what a mother needs is to spend more money, and be removed from her children in a hospital setting, but here we have it. The state of postpartum care for women in America.

I realize more and more that despite being a mega reader, I don't necessarily learn that much from reading. I learn from watching. That's how I finally taught myself how to cook on a basic level. By watching videos on the *New York Times'* website. The same goes with mothering. I don't need a drug, or a book, or an article, or a blog. I need to fucking watch someone else take care of a toddler in a healthy way so that I can apply those skills to my own children. But how to know what is healthy, and what is going to lead to your kid chasing you around the kitchen with a Japanese paring knife while calling you a douchebag?

I don't have the answer to that. But I do like having my babysitter Margarita. Who knows if she knows what she is doing, but at least she's a second opinion. Unfortunately, I have to spend every penny I make in order to have that feedback.

#Motherhood #Brooklyn Mom #Brooklyn Parenting

4 notes Mar 20th, 2019

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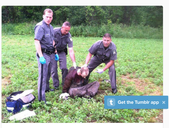

I have a lot of actual work to do this week, so I may only be able to blog at night. Frowny face sad emoticon I think I need an update on my emoji app because I haven't gotten new ones in a while.

Anyway, I still have a lot of things to talk about, and I feel the need to get them out quickly in list form. Someone said to me last week, "If you only proofread your posts, you would be more famous." And I was like, "Yeah right."

1. Look at the faces of the state troopers above. They're like, "Dude, get the fuck out of here with your camera." Oh by the way, the bleeding man in the middle is David Sweat, the man who escaped from the Clinton Correctional Facility like three weeks ago or whatever.

Yo, I would have loved to travel to upstate New York to be part of the media and law enforcement circus that gathered to track this guy. That is my secret fantasy. To be a photographer and journalist who just follows events around the country. Dog the Bounty Hunter was there. That guy is an idiot and like he looks like an idiot and one time I heard him speak on CNN about biker gangs.

2. I am going off one of my medications because Caleb and I are going to try to have a baby. Both medications and trying to have a baby are totally verboten topics to talk about online. What if Caleb and I try to get pregnant, and one of us is infertile? Or we have a baby with a severe neurological disorder? The good news is that will only give me more topics to write about.

Anyway, I went to go see an excellent doctor last week. I found him on Zocdoc because my Hasidic Jew psychiatrist disconnected his phone line. He was like all business, but also very knowledgeable. And affordable. I think he is a do-gooder type person. If you are looking for a psychopharmocologist, drop me a line.

So I am on two medications. Lexapro, which is the bomb, and Lamictal, which I've been on for about 10 years. Lamictal is for the treatment of Bipolar disorder. I don't think I'm really bipolar, but once a doctor gets my family history, that's like the first thing he puts me on.

My psychopharm told me that Lexapro during pregnancy has been studied more, and is fairly safe, so I'm going to stay on it. The Lamictal has been studied less, and also causes cleft palettes. So I'm going off that.

He explained that Lexapro is actually a much more potent drug. Doctors put patients on Lamictal, which is a mood stabilizer and weaker drug, if Lexapro makes them manic.

Anyway, I've only slightly decreased my Lamictal this week. I'm down to 150 from 200mg. Already, I'm feeling very manic. Caleb thinks that it's a sugar high. I know the mania is probably in my head, but I'm riding it because I was like killing it with funny Facebook posts all weekend.

3. How horribly boring are roadways on the East Coast of America? On a side note, I always feel hesitant to call the United States "America" because this woman I was staying with in Buenos Aires was like, "The United States isn't America, there's also South America," And I was like, "Oh, sorry, didn't mean to be offensive." Anyway, last night, I was watching the BBC soap opera "Poldark," and they referred to the United States as "America," so I feel better about myself.

There is nothing more depressing that getting off an interstate and getting a snack at a gas station. That shit makes you so constipated. There is literally nothing to write about the seven hour drive Caleb and I took up to Maine because it was all sameness, and sameness, and sameness. Roads lined by pine trees, signs denoting food options at an exit, and the occasional shit strewn rest stop.

I wonder if we had electric cars, if the charging stations might be nicer?

4. Yo, my dad told me last weekend that Puerto Rico is fucked financially, and it turns out Puerto Rico is fucked financially. And as the dark-skinned foster child of America, no one is going to bail it out. They're putting Puerto Rico in a group home with Greece and saying sayonara.

I'm not going to write anymore because I don't understand why they can't just invent more money and give it to both countries, isn't that how the financial services industry deals with everything?

5. I am really happy to be married to Caleb. We really got along in the car ride, and the only time we fought was when I was hangry in Freeport, and he couldn't find a parking spot.

I'm going to write more about Maine, and Caleb's twin brother Cage's wedding, in a later post. Now, I must make a smoothie, and then do an interview.

#My life #Puerto Rico #Bipolar Disorder #Lexapro #David Sweat #Prison Escape

21 notes Jun 29th, 2015

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"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

Happy Mother's Day!

For those of you who were worried that modern pharmaceuticals have ruined the unpredictable dynamic of my family, you can rest assured. Not even mood stabilizers could have prevented the emotional meltdown that occurred when the Internet stopped working earlier this afternoon at Tara Knoll (that's the name of our house, for reals).

The day started out well. My father's mother came over for lunch. My mother's mother did not come over, because she is angry at us, as my father explained, "for apparently no f–ing reason." We had Mexican food from a deli newly discovered by our patriarch, who talks about it like he's the first non-Mexican p the entirety of history. "Have you ever had a quesa dill A?" he asked his mother. "Here, try it with some of this green stuff, I think it's a lime sauce." (It was salsa).

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At around 3pm, everyone left for a regimented exercise routine- running, hiking in a small enclosed space, building barricades so cars can't come down the driveway, ruining the landscaping, etc. When we re-convened, I opened up my computer to start doing some work, but I couldn't connect to the Internet. Annoyed already that the only thing I could find to eat was raw almonds and a few frozen sugar cookies, I started to get a little testy.

For whatever reason, it has been determined that my 14 year old brother, Stupredan, is the only person in the family who knows who to fix anything related to technology. This often leads to broken computers, missing wires and the cable being disconnected. (Or perhaps the cable thing is my mother trying to prevent us from further access to popular culture. mwa ha ha).

"The Internet is broken." I announced.

"[Stuprendan] will fix it," my dad said.

"No, I can fix it, just show me where the modem is."

My dad turned red in the face. "JUST LET HIM FIX IT OR HE IS GOING TO HAVE A MELTDOWN!" he barked at me. I guess Stuprendan wasn't the only one on the verge of a meltdown.

RECENTLY LIKED

My brother appeared.

“[Stuprendan] where’s the modem?” I asked.

“You can’t touch it,” he said, his voice cracking (puberty is a bitch). “It’s a complicated network and you’re going to break it.”

“I’m pretty sure that it’s just a regular router,” I responded. Earlier in the week, our handyman had allegedly installed a more powerful router, which enables the wireless Internet to work in the carriage house. My parents have no f-king idea what that means, so Stuprendan had convinced them our house is now equipped with a super system capable of hacking into email accounts and taking over the country.

“Just let [Stuprendan] fix it,” my mother chimed in.

“Can someone just show me where the modem is, please? I fix the Internet all of the time by myself in my apartment.” This was not true. Earlier in the day, I had been unable to connect to the Internet in my apartment. Or figure out how to connect my laptop to an Ethernet cable. But the argument was getting competitive, and I was going to win it.

“You’re an idiot!” My brother screamed.

“Show me where the goddamn modem is!” I screamed back.

My mother started chopping up a carrot with a gigantic Japanese knife. “Let’s let Brendan try to fix it for 5 minutes, and then we’ll call David (the handyman).”

“All we have to do is unplug the modem and the router,” I said, lowering my voice. It was mother’s day after all, so I wanted to behave. And I knew that if I continued to fight with my little brother my mother would “fail” to serve me dinner.

“You don’t know what you’re talking about, the entire system will erase!” My brother croaked.

“It’s a goddamn Internet router not a spy system!”

This caused my brother to fly off the handle, a tiny bit. He started pacing back and forth between the entrance hallway and the kitchen. He clenched his fists to his chest. His face turned red. I briefly thought of beating the shit out of him (in a sibling kind of way), but then remembered that he is now my height and takes boxing lessons every day. “Go back to your disgusting apartment in Brooklyn!” He screamed.

“Go get the manual.” I said, trying to control myself.

“Stuprendan,” my mother said softly. The softer her voice gets, the more angry you know she’s getting. Once you can’t hear her anymore, you know that she is going to take you into a corner and dig her nails into your forearm. “You have five minutes.”

Thus ensued 30 minutes of running up and down the basement stairs, slamming doors and general mayhem. Blara got involved, and joined ranks with Stuprendan. Together, they are almost infallible. But my baby sisters took my side and crawled on my lap. That’s until one of them looked up at me and said “you smell bed.” Then they left me alone on the couch. The handyman was called, five times. He spoke to each one of us separately, in a voice weary with the patience of someone who is overcharging for their services. “Did you try selecting the wireless network on your mac computer?” he asked me.

Suddenly, miraculously, the Internet started working. At this point, my father had had to remove himself from the house, I had to snap in the air next to my ear to reassure myself I wasn’t deaf while my mother talked to me, and Stuprendan had grown 3 more facial hairs.

Things have mostly gone back to normal now. My mother is sitting in the kitchen, loudly speaking to her gardener in broken english about the rhododendrons. Blara and Stuprendan are filming each other taunt the dog by placing pretzels on a hook and dangling them over her head, and my father just gave me the finger. The girls are asleep, all is quiet and warm. The Internet is up, and I’ve just wasted another hour of my life writing on this f-ing blog.

To all of you mothers out there, I hope that you had as lovely of a day as we had here, that you consumed as many delicious salads as my mother did, that you also received clipped flowers from the flowering bushes in your yard. Happy Mother’s Day, and to all good night (wrong holiday?)

#Mother's Day #my life

May 9th, 2010

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"Mabel's not crazy… she's unusual."

Are We Fucking Kidding With This Al Franken Shit?

I'm fucking braindead today. I know I complain about this a lot but you have no idea what it's like to walk around all day like you were just released from the hospital after overdosing on marijuana edibles. That's motherhood. It's also because I've been working out at 6am every day, and this morning, was so tired from the effort that when I tried to stand on one leg, I fell down.

Someone who reads this blog emailed me earlier this week and asked if I would write about the Jane Mayer article on Al Franken. I read the article, and honestly, I couldn't believe that *The New Yorker* printed it because generally, they try to project at least a semblance of lack of bias. Or maybe they did at one time? Listen, I do not read *The New Yorker* from cover to cover anymore because it is more of a priority for me to watch *The Real Housewives of Potomac* during my downtime.

Here's how I would sum up the article: a woman who herself has a clear conservative bias accused Al Franken of forcefully trying to kiss her on the set of a skit. But everyone says Al Franken is not a great guy, but he's too awkward to sexually [illegible] was clearly a skit, which the accuser doesn't [illegible] accusation. A skit about an older man who tries to sneak a kiss from a much younger woman. What's the big deal? Oh wait, it turns out that Al Franken often tries to forcefully kiss people in real life, which is more of a gesture of affection and bodily comfort than it is of sexual harassment. Who doesn't like a portly middle aged man with very fleshy lips to plant a wet one on their lips when they're trying to introduce themselves? Oh yeah, and there's admittedly also that picture where Al Franken is pretending to grab a sleeping woman's breasts.

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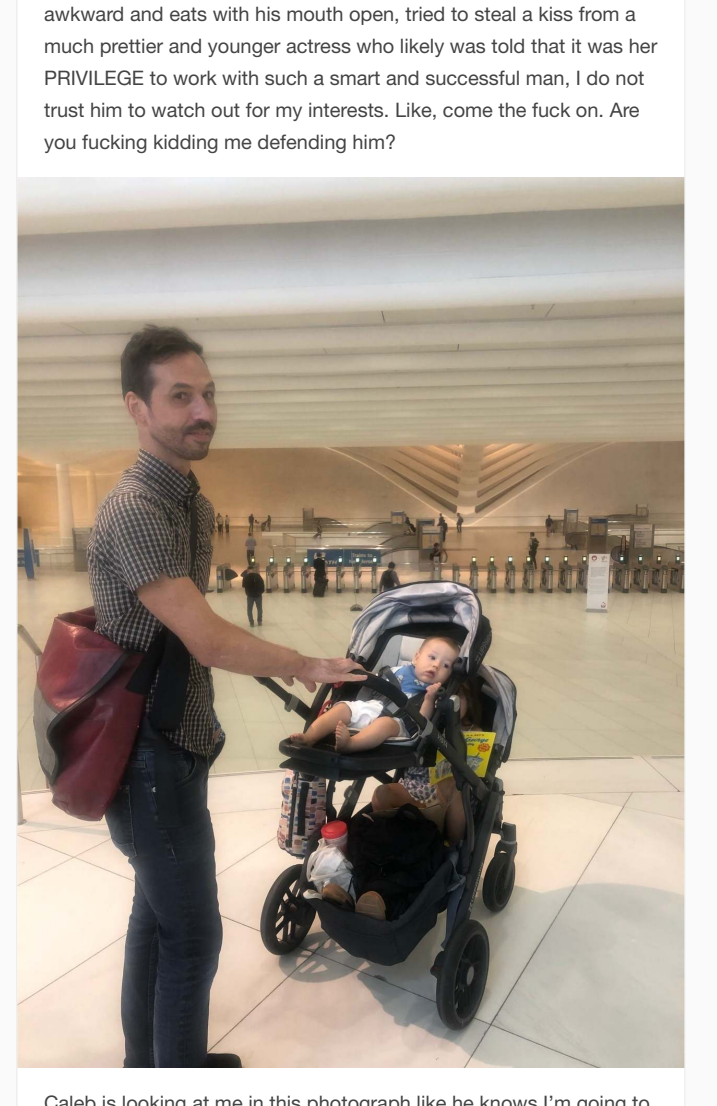
He's a comedian! Comedians can sexually harass women and make it a joke, right? Oh wait…

Reading the article, I realized that women are so far away from being equal to men that it's actually not even worth me writing this post. Like the fight hasn't even started yet. I get that women need to make allies of men, and shit, so we can't be so picky when we're choosing the "good" guys. Al Franken passed some legislation that helped women! Not like there aren't 151 million men living in America, among which you could probably find at least 20 who haven't done something disgusting to a woman before.

And do you know why that's important? Because women need better rights. One out of six women in America are the victims of completed or attempted rapes. An estimated 17,000 women are sex trafficked in the United States every year. Fucking Jeffrey Epstein wanted to start a breeding program on his remote ranch so that he could permeate the human race with his DNA. Only 23% of the Congress is represented by women, even though we make up 51% of the population. Women comprise of 56% of college graduates, but still make only 80 cents to every dollar a man makes. This morning, a man tried to beat me during the sprinting section of my workout by not fully touching the ground at each end of the gym.

I don't care if Al Franken takes the generally acceptable, and very clear stance that women should have general rights while speaking in public. That position helped him gain power. If he really thought it was ok, at any point in his life, to write a skit in which he, a frankly very unattractive and portly man who, by all accounts, is physically awkward and eats with his mouth open, tried to steal a kiss from a much prettier and younger actress who likely was told that it was her PRIVILEGE to work with such a smart and successful man, I do not trust him to watch out for my interests. Like, come the fuck on. Are you fucking kidding me defending him?



Caleb is looking at me in this photograph like he knows I'm going to use him as an example in this post.

But I'm not, because it's not relevant. What I want to say is that the other day, we went to visit him at his office, and then afterwards walked to the Oculus, which I thought was a vast empty shell, but turned out to be a luxury mall. I was impressed, once again, by the amount of wealth on display. The exemplary architecture. The expensive materials. The clean floors. The security guards. New York is a city of a lot of money, and this money buys a lot of power and influence at all levels of society. Our President is from New York. Many of his strongest opponents are also from New York. You may hate New York, but you can't deny that it is a center of power.

I grew up worshipping my father, and my father is an investment banker. I grew up spending my summers trotting behind him as he raced through Grand Central so that he could get to work, and I could get to whatever internship I was lucky enough to score, most of the time though family or Ivy League connections.

I've said this before, but almost all of the jobs I've ever been offered were secretarial. I'm much more educated than my father, but I will never, ever make as much money as he does. Twenty-one years ago, when I was 16, and had my first internship at my father's best friend's publishing house, it seemed natural that the head of the publishing house was a man, as were all of the top editors, while all of their support staff were women. At the bank where I interned the next summer because my uncle got me the job, I worked in the back office doing spreadsheets, which I ran up to a floor on my high heels, where men referred to me as my father's daughter, and told me, to my disbelief and delight, that my father had been the top bond trader on all of Wall Street.

I have been out of the general office workforce in New York for a very long time now, since I almost got fired from an art gallery in 2005. I worked at an office in the East Village next, and then as a writer and babysitter, in the private homes.

I don't know why I was stupid enough to think that in 21 years, the world would have changed. Walking around the Oculus, I saw young, tightly groomed men in suits standing in lines, at home amongst the polish and power. They stood with their legs spread wide apart. They looked at their phones, and laughed loudly. And the women I saw looked like fucking support staff. They wore cardigans. They disappeared into their own bodies. They carried salads.

I often blame motherhood for not reaching my full potential, but in truth, it's just easier than blaming the amorphous world, where in 2019, men like Al Franken are given articles in the New Yorker extolling their virtues, while women are not even given a fucking chance.

I'm really tired now, damn. I am going to end this post, but first, I will raise a son who will know, at the very least, not to walk up to a woman and kiss her on the lips without asking her permission. I hope.

#Jane Mayer #Al Franken #Sexual Harassment

3 notes Aug 1st, 2019

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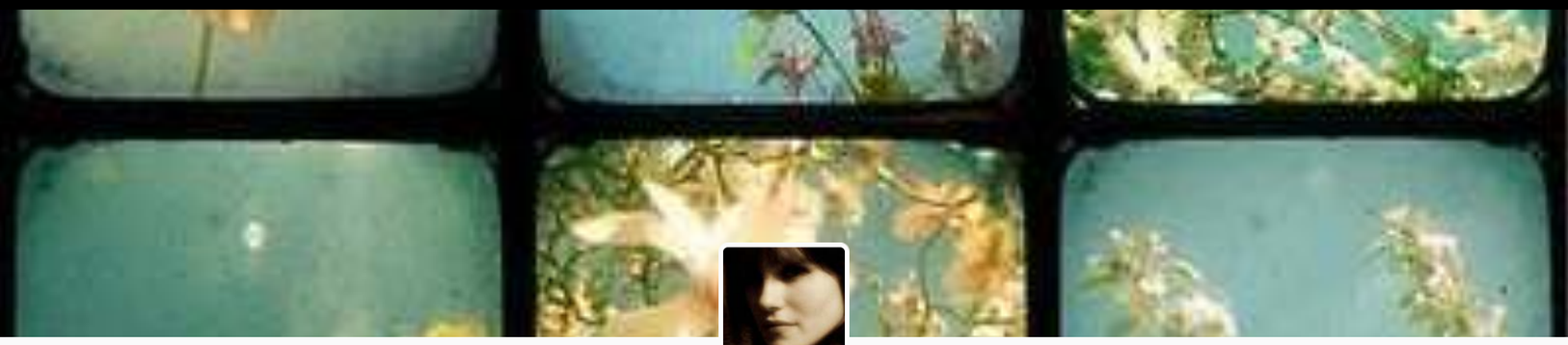

A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

I Really Feel Ashamed At The Urge I Feel To Share Everything That Fucking Happens to Me

Yesterday, while crossing the street on Hicks and Degraw street, a white van hit the stroller carrying Cass and Cleo. I just want to start this post with a note that we are all ok. I actually feel ashamed at how much attention I am drawing to myself a on social media. Everyone I see has heard ab result, and I feel guilty garnering sympathy when we are not seriously hurt. But I would like to write about it, I think because it is helping me to process everything. Yesterday, right after it happened, I was so afraid and traumatized that I couldn't stop screaming. Below is what I want to recount of the event.

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Thirty minutes after a white van plowed in our Uppababy Vista stroller yesterday afternoon, snapping it in two pieces, I found myself in the back of an ambulance with Cleo strapped to my chest. To my right, a young medic named Peter was trying to distract a crying Cass by playing him a Sesame Street video. "What's his favorite television show?" Peter asked me.

"He's too young to know," I said. "You can play him anything."

RECENTLY LIKED

“You’re doing good,” I encouraged Peter, who I could tell felt nervous, being responsible for this tiny infant.

“My brother had a son three months ago,” he said. “That’s why I’m good with kids.”

“Where are you from?” I asked next, knowing the answer already from his accent.

“Staten Island,” he responded. He paused for a minute. “Did you know those people who were helping you?” he asked.

“No,” I said. “Only one of them. My friend Rumples who took the stroller.”

“There are a lot of good people in this world,” he said.

What Peter had come upon, when he arrived on the scene, was me, on my knees, restraining a screaming, fighting Cleo. She was screaming, “I want to go home! I want to go home! I want my daddy!” Again and again and again. Her entire romper was soaked in blood. My neck, my shoulders, and my face were covered in her blood. She had a gash beside her right eye, through which I could see the muscle of her face.

I was saying to her, “It’s ok, baby, it’s ok.” I was screaming. She was saying, “I don’t want a shot! I don’t want a shot!” And I was saying, “You’re not getting a shot, baby, it’s ok, it’s ok.”

A man had wrapped himself around my body. He was sitting on the pavement, with his legs wrapped around my legs, with his arms holding my arms, and I was aware of his warmth. I didn’t know who he was. “Thank you,” I said to him, and to the woman who was holding Cass. Cass was happy in her arms. He was playing with a plastic plate. “Thank you,” I said to the man who put a towel against Cleo’s wound, to my friend Rumples, who got Caleb on the phone, and directed him to meet us at the hospital.

When Peter the medic said there are a lot of good people in this world, I thought of those people, there with me on the pavement, who had interrupted their days to stay with us, to be there, to hold my body, even though it was unfamiliar. I also felt shame.

Because when the white van hit the stroller, I reacted by screaming at the driver. “YOU FUCKING IDIOT,” I screamed. “YOU FUCKING IDIOT. YOU FUCKING IDIOT.”

We had been walking in the crosswalk on the way to the grocery store. I was going to buy seltzer, and potatoes so that Margarita, our babysitter, could prepare some food for Cass. I was doing nothing wrong. I hadn’t slipped a drink at lunch. I wasn’t on any pills. I hadn’t jaywalked. I wasn’t running to catch a light. I wasn’t on my phone. I wasn’t texting, or looking at Instagram. I wasn’t angry, or rushing. I was entirely present. I was calm and happy. I was singing to a fussy Cass. I was talking to Cleo, who was playing with her tiny friends. I was walking across the street, doing everything absolutely right, and all of a sudden, a white van came out of nowhere, and hit the stroller with my two kids in it. I felt the impact in my hands. The stroller spun around, but did not tip over. I felt disbelief. I felt rage. Who the fuck hits a stroller in a crosswalk?

“YOU FUCKING IDIOT!” I screamed at the driver of the white van. “YOU FUCKING IDIOT.”

“I’m sorry,” the driver said, in front of me, pleading. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I have kids too.”

Margarita later asked if the driver was brown. He was white, with a Slavic accent.

“YOU FUCKING IDIOT,” I screamed at him again and again as he begged for forgiveness.

“Shhhh, shhhhh,” the woman who grabbed Cass from my arms said. The driver dematerialized. The medics arrived, and the police. “You have to try to be calm,” someone said to me. “That’s the only way she’ll calm down.”

Because Cleo screamed for 45 minutes.

The medics wiped the blood from my neck, from my shoulders, from my bosom. I took deep breaths. I sang to Cleo, “Mommy loves her Cleo, Daddy loves his Cleo, Cass loves her Cleo.” I felt torn in two because my one baby was hurt in my arms, and the other one was fussing, needing to be breastfed, tired, and I couldn’t hold both of them at once. I held Cleo.

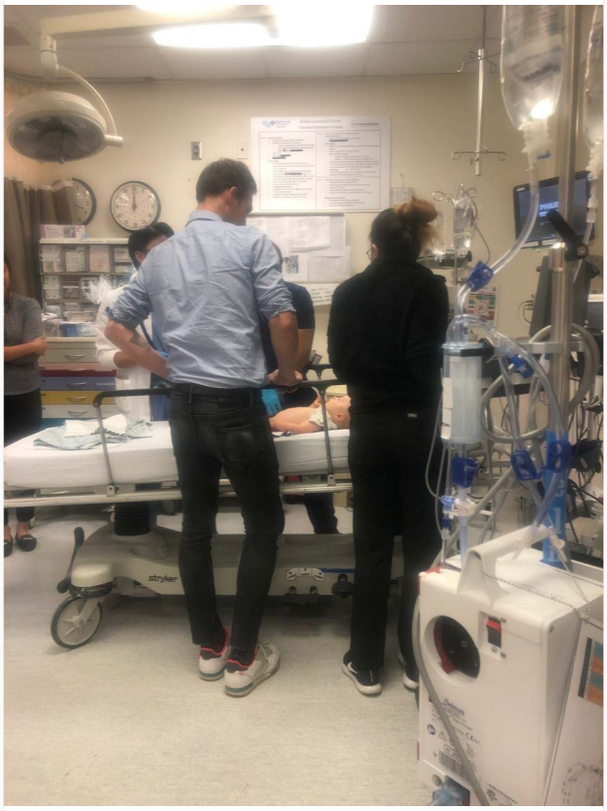
In the ambulance, there was some discussion of where to take us. The first impulse of the medics was to take us to Bellevue, where there is a pediatric trauma unit. Then a supervisor arrived, and tried to talk me out of the trip. “It’s not that bad,” he said. “We can just take you to Methodist or Maimonides.” Methodist is the local hospital. Maimonides is an apocalypse.

We’ve been through a lot, Cleo and I, in the short time she’s been alive. First, she was intubated for a week after birth because she swallowed her own meconium. Then, she was hospitalized for swallowing an errant Adderall in my sister’s purse. I survived two c-sections, and a MRSA infection in my surgical wound. If I’ve learned anything, it’s that you have to advocate for yourself in medical situations because otherwise you get totally fucked by the system.

I wanted the best. I wanted to be taken to Bellevue, where the doctors are trained at NYU. “These are my kids,” I told the supervisor. “What would you do with your kids? Take me to Bellevue.”

So they took me to Bellevue, and when we arrived, the head of trauma there was derisive. A white male, of course. “Does this look like the definition of a traumatic injury to you?” he said to his team, to the medics, gesturing at a now calm Cleo, whose head wound had stopped bleeding. He gestured at the instructions for traumatic injury which hung on the wall. “Doesn’t look like a trauma to me.”

I wanted to scream at him, “Can you take your issues outside of this room?” But I chose to ignore him. This is one of the skills I’ve acquired as a mother. A shield. Fuck that guy. My kids had just been hit by a white van while they were in their stroller. The stroller had snapped in half. The reason they were ok was because a miracle occurred, not because I was being histrionic.



“You did the right thing,” a young Asian female doctor told me. “This is the right place to take them.”

Both Cleo and Cass were examined for signs of head injuries or internal bleeding. They were both fine. Cass was absolutely thrilled to be introduced to so many new people. He is going to be a politician, or a guru. Cleo stayed in my arms, but then wanted her daddy to hold her, which broke my heart.

My brother Brendan, himself a trained medic, arrived, with my sister Tara. Tara took Cass. Brendan sat down and snuggled Cleo while we waited for a plastic surgeon to come sew up the gash on Cleo’s face. Cleo kept on saying, “I want Brendan to be close to me.”

My sister Tara provided the comic relief. Bellevue is known for many things. It's a place where crazy people go. It's a place where homeless people go. It has one of the best pediatric trauma units in the country. My sister one time bought the father of her baby there when he was having a psychotic break.

"He thought he had been poisoned by Palladium," she said. "I looked it up on the Internet, and that's not a real thing, it's something that happened to Ironman in the movie."

We laughed at that. How could you not? It was funny.

Cleo only cried briefly, when she got the first shot of novacaine in her face. Otherwise, she was calm. When the plastic surgeons were done stitching up her face, she said, "I'm done!"

The plastic surgeons were extremely handsome. When they entered, my entire vain family stirred perceptibly.

In the toy store when we were leaving the hospital, Cleo chose a toy, a single Dory the fish lunch box. “That’s it, I’m done,” she told Caleb, taking his hand, when he encouraged her to choose anything else she wanted. She was being a good girl. She was being conservative.

The last post I wrote was about how she was breaking me. She is so strong. It almost seems fitting that this next post is about how that strength serves her. She was incredibly brave. Her face will heal up perfectly because she didn't even fidget while they were sewing her up, despite the wound being so close to her eye.

"Are you ok, Mommy?" she kept on asking me, rubbing my arm.

"I love you, Daddy," she told Caleb, kissing his arm.

"Awww, so cute," she said to Cass. "I love you baby brother."

We got home from the hospital at 8. We let her watch Daniel the Tiger until 9:15. She went to bed easily. I barely slept. I kept on going in to check on her. She slept with her limbs flung apart. She woke up asking to see her friend Lula.

Life is a miracle. We got so lucky. What I have to do now is write a thank you note to the angels who stopped, and helped us on the pavement. The world is full of good people.

#Motherhood #My life #Trauma

7 notes Jul 2nd, 2019

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"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

I Struggle With Female Friendships, I Will Admit

Something I've been struggling a lot with over the past few weeks is anger towards my female friends. Anger is an emotion I have in abundance, but I try to suppress it, because I see it as toxic, and damaging to relationships. I was taught that. Catholicism teaches you to turn the other cheek, and forgive everybody. My father, whenever I was about to send an angry email to a friend, would bark, "DON'T DO THAT. YOU'RE GOING TO REGRET IT. And I knew he spoke from experience because I got it from him. My mother, on the other hand, has a very SHORT fucking temper, and if you piss her off, she will ice you out of her life forever.

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I learned two ways of handling problems in relationships, as a result. Either you blow up, and you become the bad guy; or you just cut the person out of you life to avoid the blow up altogether. The only people I therefore have truthful relationships with are Caleb, and my sister, whom I called, the other night, a lazy piece of shit for not carrying something down the stairs of her apartment for me.

This post is boring, sorry. I'm trying to get to a book review. I'm also trying to say that I'm slowly realizing that female friendships do not have to be perfect. I know that sounds obvious. But I have a hard time wrapping my head around it. In essence, female friendships can involve fighting, and moments when you do not act like your absolute best and most reasonable self. They can be like romantic relationships, where it's expected, and even encouraged, that you fight things out in order to get to know the person better. All of my female friends are afraid to fight with each other because we've been taught, in subtle ways, that our anger is disturbing, and perhaps even psychotic, and that in order to maintain the semblance of normalcy, we must avoid fighting altogether.

I found myself getting permission to fight; to feel rage at friends who are lying to themselves, and others; to protest being taken advantage of in the book *The Spare Room* by Helen Garner. In it, a 60-year-old writer is tasked to care for her friend, a patrician unmarried woman who comes to Melbourne for alternative cancer treatments, and will not accept the inevitability of her own death.

I was given the book by my friend Jayson, who just wrote a book about the death of his daughter. I thought, therefore, that the book would be about the bottom of despair, but instead, found myself emboldened to embrace the part of myself that I am most ashamed of, which is the part of myself that gets angry at my friends. Garner gets angry at her friend who is lying to herself, pretending that the treatments are working. She is not a martyr. She is so honest. I fucking loved this book, and recommend that you read it immediately.

Anyway, now I'm going to go scream at some people. Kidding, but I would like to stand up for myself a little more. I'd like to be a little more myself, in other words, in the privacy of my friendships. Anger is weak, and it's ok to be weak with friends. I recently found out that one of my closest friends had been talking about me behind my back for years, and even worse, had been telling others that my daughter was developmentally disabled because she crawled late. I wrote this woman a serious of enraged texts, and she has not talked to me since. I hate to threaten a friendship with, "if this friendship is real, it will repair," but it's true. Maybe the thing you learn in your thirties is that time is long, and that relationships do in fact deepen, rather than disappear, if you let them.

#friendships #My life

7 notes Nov 11th, 2017

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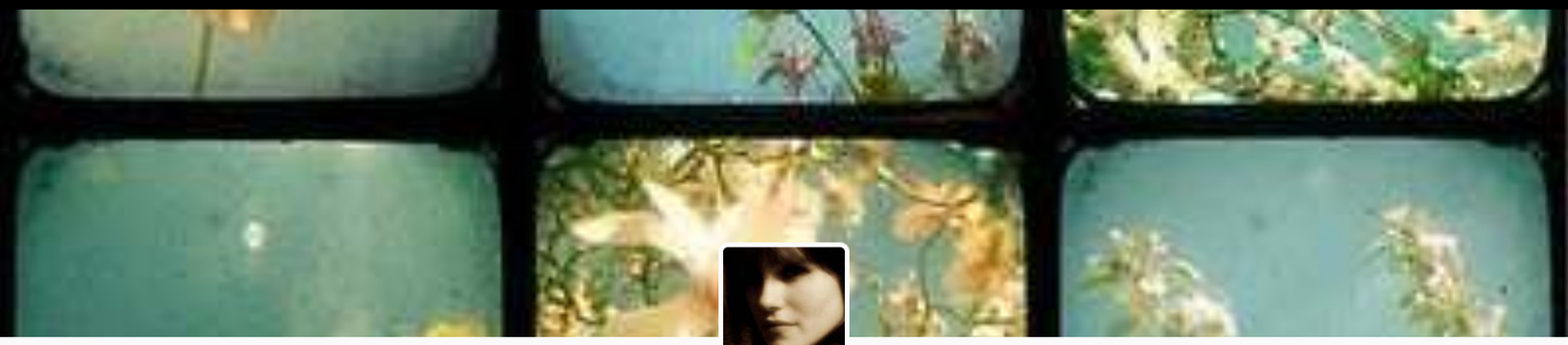
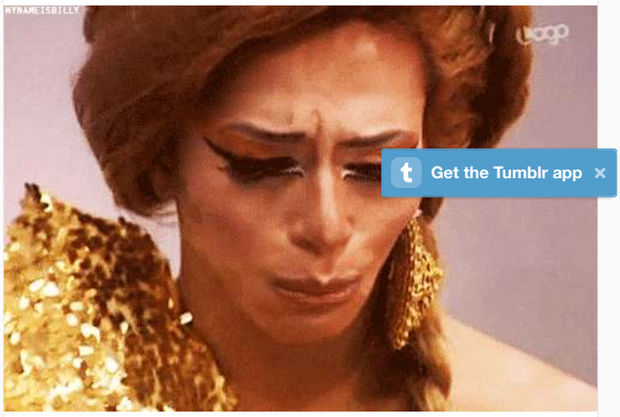


A Brie Grows in Brooklyn

"Mabel's not crazy... she's unusual."

"You Look Like a Drag Queen Crying": On Losing It At My Sister's Birthday Party



Last night, I had a complete breakdown on the street outside of my sister's birthday party. We were at a place called Apotheke in Chinatown. Throughout the evening, the bar had been denying entry to friends (and my little brother) because they were wearing sneakers. We had to beg and beg and beg the bouncer to let them in, and finally, as if he was doing us the biggest favor, he'd do so. The dress code was just a way to wield power. And who wears dress shoes to a bar in Chinatown unless they are a douchebag?

Douchebags are their audience because the drinks are $18 each. At the beginning of the night, we ordered five drinks. "I just need a card to start a tab," the waitress told me. I gave her mine. Throughout the night, people I didn't know came in, and ordered drinks from our table. "Can I please have the bill for my drinks?" I asked her when I was ready to go. She handed me a bill for $435. "I can't pay this," I told her. "And I have no idea who ordered drinks on the tab, so I can't chase them down to get money."

"Sweetheart," she told me. "Honey, you have to really calm down."

"Please don't condescend to me," I said. "I can pay for the drinks I ordered, but it's your responsibility to get the money from the other people. I'm not the waitress."

She clenched her teeth. "Sweetheart, you're going to have to," she said, like she was talking to an idiot. "This is our policy."

"Can I please talk to your manager?" I asked her.

"Sweetheart, calm down."

"I asked you not to call me a sweetheart," I reminded her again. "Can I please talk to your manager?"

"Do you know what?" she said, finally unleashing the nasty tone that had been under her voice the whole time. "Fine."

Then she disappeared for 10 minutes. I waited and waited. Finally, I

RECENTLY LIKED

just took my credit card, which was lying right next to the register, and went back to the table.

A few minutes later, the gigantic bouncer who had been sitting outside, came in and cornered me. “You need to get the fuck out here,” he said.

“Great,” I told him. “I’m waiting to speak to a manager to see how I can pay my bill.”

Out on the street, another honey-voiced girl waited for me. “I’m not paying a $435 bill,” I told her. “I was never told that I was paying for the entire table. That’s the amount of money I made this week, and I can’t afford it.”

“Maybe you should have listened to me,” sneered the waitress.

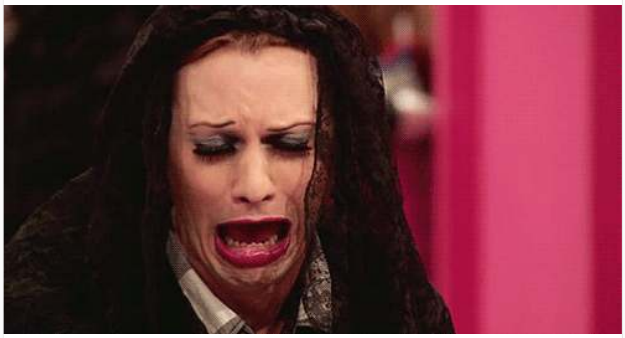
“Maybe you should do your job better,” I told her.

Then, like an idiot, I started hysterically crying. Once I started crying, I couldn’t stop. It had nothing to do with the situation. It had to do with the private wound that exists in side of me suddenly opening up, and spilling out without me being able to control it.

This happens to me extraordinarily infrequently. The first time was in eighth grade. A teacher scolded me in class, and I started crying. I couldn’t stop. I went into the bathroom, and locked myself in. I cried for three hours. The teacher felt terrible, but I tried to explain that it wasn’t his fault. It was just that he punctured me, and all of the internal pressure that had been building up was finally released. Stress about doing well at school, and being the best at everything I tried, and more than anything, modifying my behavior as to keep the abusive situation at home under control, which meant trying to make my mother happy. I never talk about my childhood being “abusive,” which it was. Outside of the house, I tried to be perfect, but inside, I was always being punished.

“You guys don’t understand,” my sister said when I cried on a doorstep in Chinatown last night. “You don’t understand the way that we were raised with money. We were raised to fear losing it because my parents were always taking it away from us.” All of my friends huddled around me. They were trying to press money into my hand, because that’s the kind of people they are. Even if they didn’t have drinks themselves, their money is my money, and they wanted to share it with me to lessen the burden.

“I’m sorry,” I said. “I’m ok. Just please go back inside.” I pressed the money away. “I’m sorry,” I kept on saying. “I’m sorry.” Sorry because I don’t like to be a burden to anyone. And sorry because the wound was not their fault, and in fact I didn’t want them, or anyone else, to see that it exists.



I have an exterior self who is always performing. I'm trying to make the person next to me at the dinner table feel comfortable. I'm trying to make everyone in a group feel included so that they don't feel bad about themselves. I'm trying to make the guy I run into every day on the street feel less awkward about seeing me by always being friendly and upbeat. I'm trying to convince people that no matter their situation, I'm on the same level. I'm trying to deflect Caleb away from asking me questions about myself by asking him questions about him, or teasing him, because I don't know how to put the internal pressure I feel into words. I'm always trying to watch out for my friends so that they get home safe, or show up for dinner on time, or don't have to worry about money.

No one watches out for me because they don't know that they have to.

Although most people can't tell this from the outside, I'm a deeply, deeply quiet person.

"I'm sorry," I kept on saying to DEH when I finally got up from the doorstep. "I'm sorry that I can't stop crying."

"Why are you sorry?" he said.

"I'm sorry you have to get a cab," I said. We were standing on Canal Street. Ordinarily, I'd be the one in the middle of the street, figuring out what direction cabs were coming from, and timing the group's movements so that we were all in the same place to catch one. But last night, DEH did it for me.

When we finally got one, I began to talk. "I feel so much pressure," I said. "I'm not making that much money right now, and I can't just relax and let Caleb pay for the larger part of the expenses because I don't want to be dependent on anyone.

"I don't want to be a wife. I don't want to lose my career, but I'm so, so tired of working. I need to just work on the book but I can't relax and give myself a break about money.

"I might never make it. The book might never sell. And then all of this work will just be meaningless.

"I'm scared to run out of money."

There was so much more to say, but I didn't have the words to express it. Even above, the words are just a pale, pale shadow of what went through my head. I just felt the wound. Not everything can be explained with reason.

DEH looked at me. We were close to home. "It's so hard," he said. Then he started crying with me.

On the street, we held each other. We were both sobbing.

I trust so few people. It's not that I don't want to trust more people, it's just that I don't have the energy for it. I am deeply protective. I am deeply intuitive. I am deeply sensitive. The people whom I trust, I want to take care of them. I want to love them. Loving people is a burden, and for me, that burden can only get so heavy.

I only take on the burden for people who are worthy. People who, when they see me sob, are themselves moved to tears because they are also intuitive, and also sensitive. But more than anything, they are, at their cores, deeply kind. Kind not to me, but to everyone. Kind enough that they must use humor to deal with the world, or else the world will crush them.

"I love you," I told DEH. I wanted to go home. I wanted to go to bed to cry myself to sleep. I left him on the street corner. "You look like a drag queen," was the last thing he said to me. "Your mascara is running everywhere."

We both laughed, and then, kept on crying.

The wound closed up over the night. "Why were you so upset?" Caleb asked me over Skype. "I just…" I had nothing to say. "Can I call you in a few?" I asked him. "I'm just writing a blog post."

"I love you," he told me.

I'll call him again now. I'll ask him how his day was. I'll listen to his China stories. And then, hopefully he'll have forgotten that last night, I wrote him a text saying I was devastated, and I can get back to working.

#Drag Queens #My life

20 notes Sep 11th, 2014

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