

Evolution



LAUREN LEBLANC

I have come to a place not so much of peace but of understanding.

Once upon a time, I had delusions of grandeur. I believed—as many young people believe these days, I think—that I was special, that I was different, that I was set apart. I truly believed that I was destined for richness and fame because of my talent and “specialness.” I was going to live the new American dream. I was not going to grow up to be a “normal” person, not just another number in the growing American census.

But time passed. Reality set in, as did age, and my perspective changed. The paradigm shifted.

I am a schoolteacher. I am married to a salesman. We have a baby, a dog, a two-car garage, and a mortgage. Could my life *be* any more normal?

And yet, I am perfectly okay with this.

If I were to have a conversation with my eighteen-year-old self, I'm sure there is a lot she wouldn't understand. She wouldn't get why I'm not pounding the pavement in NYC, working to get an audition or that coveted part on Broadway. She wouldn't be able to accept that I haven't been to a real audition in four years. She wouldn't be able to fathom that my coworkers have never heard me sing.

She'd be curious about the baby, because she hasn't had much experience with babies. She would wonder about my teaching career, probably calling it "pedestrian." She would look around my very suburban neighborhood and accuse me of selling out. If I'd bought a house, it should've at least been in an interesting, eclectic neighborhood with coffee houses and tapas bars on every corner. She'd probably scoff at the corner house in the painfully suburban neighborhood that I now call home.

But I know things she doesn't know. I know of the alchemy of loss. I understand that those volatile college years—both wicked and wonderful—are a mere microcosm of life, like a lens zoomed in too close on one object. Life is so much more rich and complicated and wonderful and terrible than those four self-righteous years in the bubble.

I know what it means to work for love, to not just sit back and let it happen the way it can when you're young. I know about bringing life into the world, and the complexity of emotions that brings: the confusion, the bone-deep exhaustion, the loss of sense of self, the love that doesn't know how big your heart is, so it splits it wide open.

My life is simple. It is small, and it may seem interchangeable with so many other lives out there. I may never make an impact outside my house, my community, my hometown.

But I've learned that importance is relative. Because to a small few, I am irreplaceable.

When my little girl cries, she calls for "Mama." When she reaches out, it's for me, and me alone.

So, a small life? It's perfectly fine by me. In fact, I think it's what I've wanted all along.

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