

# Not This Way, Not Like It Has Been

*by* Kait Mauro

I want to just be,  
that was the goal for this  
next chapter. I wrote it down  
but being is painful today.  
I know some days being will be  
painful, others good. I've accepted  
this much but there are  
some things I don't know  
how to accept yet -  
will I learn? Should I?

I wish for a simpler brain,  
a medically simpler body,  
things I probably cannot have  
& maybe don't deserve. I wish  
for a simpler way of seeing,  
maybe an entirely new way of being -  
I'd forgive faster, I'd be less pathetic,  
I'd understand, I'd be grateful,  
I wouldn't need so much,  
have such loneliness,  
such a hunger to feel seen,  
to feel cared for,  
to feel chosen,  
to feel understood.

I'd be good at building a life  
in wherever city it brings us to.  
Instead I see therapists,

make the appointments,  
show up & try to paint  
a picture for them -  
am I doing things right?  
Am I doing anything right?

There is no right.  
Everything is perspective.  
This is what I've been told.

I'm afraid.

Please, someone, tell me:  
What is my calling?  
Where am I meant to find meaning?  
Do other people find meaning?  
How & where do they find it?  
Are others struggling?  
Why are we silenced?  
What is my purpose?  
How should I spend this one  
wild & precious life that  
Mary Oliver tells me I have?

My mother's voice in my head from a decade  
ago, "You ingrate, you spoiled bitch."  
I'd be more appealing to him  
if I weren't so dependent on him,  
if I could be soft & supportive,  
if my schedule wasn't so empty,  
if I had dreams for myself,  
my own life. Where does one find dreams?

He's afraid of quietly festering resentment,  
a raw spot from his first love, me too,

but we can't talk & we can't change direction.  
Can we change direction?  
What can we change?  
I have to be the one to change.  
He says it without saying it exactly.

Everyone thinks I'm so lucky  
to have a, presumably, secure  
financial future - is it worth it  
to be lonely? Is this what life is?  
The problem is that I love him.  
The solution is that I love him.  
Will I have to & can I play second love forever?

I want him to have sex with all of me,  
not just my female organs.  
I want to be fucked hard,  
I want to be celibate.  
I haven't had an orgasm in so long  
because of the medications.  
I want an orgasm.  
I want an orgasm.  
I want an orgasm.  
But I also want to be sane.  
I need the medications.

I want those chemicals released  
that make sex feel like bonding,  
instead of like a performance.

It's very loud inside my head,  
the big dog is barking his fool head  
off outside, noise hurts. I can't listen  
to music. My body hurts & mind is foggy  
from a new medication taken last night.

The medication was meant to do something  
but I can't remember what -  
make me saner, make me behave,  
lessen my suffering, put me to sleep?

*Dear Dick,  
I refuse to behave.  
Signed,  
Chris Kraus*

Would things be better if I just pretended?  
If I just behaved? Should I just pretend?  
Should I just behave? Could I just pretend?  
Would I be able to just behave?

I took a shower today  
for the first time in a while,  
washed my hair & body,  
gross how long it'd been,  
I know, I know, I know.

The point is I am trapped  
and I am going to write myself out of trapped.  
But is rewriting reality a smart thing to do?  
If it makes me happy?  
If it makes him happy?  
If it's not real, but I start to believe it?  
What is reality?

I imagined marriage a lot.  
I never imagined it would be so lonely.  
How do we put each other first  
with conflicting needs?  
How do I know I can trust you?  
I call myself an ungrateful cunt.

I know I am often a selfish cunt.

Be grateful you aren't living in your car anymore.  
Be grateful you have food,  
though you don't eat much of it anymore.  
Be grateful for the clothes  
and the earrings and  
the art supplies you can't bring  
yourself to make anything with.  
Be grateful for the times he is kind.  
Be grateful someone loves you -  
even if it isn't what you imagined,  
even if you don't feel chosen,  
even if you feel alone & scared,  
even if you are the second love.

I send a selfish message,  
a plea for him to come home  
from the hospital,  
come home to me,  
choose me,  
choose me over medicine,  
for the first time in a long time.

He'd dispute me on this point. He'd say  
he chooses me often, more than he should,  
that there is no competition  
between me & his career, it's all in my head.  
He'd say he chooses me constantly  
when he's not at work. He'd say  
his entire life is work & Kait.  
He'd say he's tired of putting out constant fires.  
I am the constant fires.  
He'd remind me of the texts he sends me,  
the calls he makes to me.

He'd tell me my emotions dominate  
our lives & that is why I have the power.  
I don't feel that I have much power.  
If I knew how to cast a spell, I would -  
but what would I try to summon?

I know I am his second love -  
three great loves, my palm-reading  
Irish Catholic gypsy grandmother  
predicted this before we were even married.

Why didn't I take this more seriously?  
Because that's a crazy person thing to do.  
I'm trying so hard to be good but I'm so scared,  
I slip up - I am not good.

His loves, chronologically:  
Her  
Me  
Medicine

I want to take it back.  
I feel pathetic.  
The only thing planned today  
is therapy & packages being delivered.  
I don't know if I'll be able to go to therapy.  
I'm afraid to leave the house  
and exhausted from new medication.  
He, the future doctor, says  
it's a neurochemical imbalance  
that's making me feel this way.  
I think it's more complicated than that.  
I know enough to know  
mental illness is almost always  
genetics meets environment -

voila.

