

What about now?

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29 November 2009. My mother had died three weeks previously.

D was out of town, translating. I had been busy working, and shuttling our two daughters around — karate class, choir practice, birthday party, soccer game, choir performance, soccer practice. The timing had been tight. No time for food shopping, or cooking — if I had known how to cook. Just trying to pull one meal rabbit out of a hat every few hours. Nevertheless, for the most part, things were going well. The girls seemed happy.

A week earlier, I had tried to call my dad, unsuccessfully. Mom's voice was still on the answering machine. I didn't like that — it was painful and eerie. I left a message with my oldest sister, who left me a message in return. I heard her grief.

One night, there had been an emotional crisis over dental flossing. I had shouted. We all went to sleep disturbed. I woke up early, unrested. I invented a breakfast and rushed us to a choir performance.

I felt disheartened, impressed that harmony could be so fragile, transforming into conflict without warning. How could I be loving *and* hard-hearted? But conflict proved fragile, too.

I glanced out a window. The boughs of an evergreen swayed in the wind and brilliant sunshine. Insulated from the cold, I felt empty, and connected — my heart connected to a vastness that was forgiving.

Between choir performance and soccer practice, I had run around the corner to Natural Foods, spending \$18 on pea soup, Kamut salad and two milk chocolate Truffle Pigs. The girls loved this lunch.

One asked, “Did you go to Natural Foods?”

“I never give away my cooking secrets. Such secrets are handed down from generation to generation in our family.”

“Ya, sure.”

“Such secrets are treasures to be revealed only when the signs are auspicious and you are ready to hear the wisdom of the ages.”

“What about now?”

As I wrote this in an empty house, white sheets on the clothesline next door joined the wind dance of the evergreen boughs. In our garden, the stone Buddha with a broken neck sat in dappled light. The kitchen clock ticked in the quiet.

What about now?

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