

intro: now you don't

When you grow up in a world that dictates all the norms, it's obvious when you don't adhere to them physically. But when the differences are invisible, they can go undetected for years, even to the people living with them. This was the mystery of my family.

Alongside that daily ambiguity, I grappled with my own internal mystery: who was I, and what exactly was I doing with my life? From the outside looking in, it seemed I was destined to live some weird urban version of the trad wife life; doing the invisible labor by the invisible woman, quietly holding everything together.

This is where I stood, at the intersection of invisible differences and invisible work, continuously navigating space unseen.

I felt like I was drifting, going through the motions, untethered from any sense of purpose beyond picking up clothes, washing dishes, and raising kids, while my spouse seemed perfectly content with the whole arrangement. I became desperate. I needed a sign that this wasn't all there was to my life.

It came in my mother's basement.

The summer of 2018 looked like most others: staying in Montreal, sandwiched between caring for my kids and caring for my mom. That year, it also meant clearing out her overstuffed garage. At some point, overwhelmed by it all, I found myself on the cold vinyl floor, surrounded by wood paneling, closed my eyes, and cried out: *"Please give me a sign!!! Tell me what I'm supposed to be doing!! Something. Anything!!"*

I opened my eyes and unsealed another box.

Whatever you want to call it, the Source, the Gods, the Universe, saw fit to have me open a box labeled MY STUFF. At the top of the pile sat a burgundy 3-ring binder with a typewritten label taped to the cover: HOME ECONOMICS. It was the only binder that remained intact after the catastrophic 1998 Montreal ice storm flooded and froze my mother's basement.



"Are you kidding me?! My purpose is to do Home Economics?!!"

I asked for a sign. I got a sign. And the symbolism, as I read it, was that I was meant to stay at home; to gripe about it, fight against it, and eventually to write about it.

Along the way, I've made peace with the idea that my journey was necessary to reach this destination: unravelling the long-standing mystery of my neurodivergent family, moving from what I believed we were to what we turned out to be, and finally to an invitation to explore what we could become.

We often fail to notice the signs and cues right because life gets overwhelming, juggling responsibilities and managing other people's lives. My own discovery required screaming, shouting, and an intense pandemic lockdown that forced us all into the same space with nowhere to hide. Before that, I missed the breadcrumbs quietly signaling *pay attention...this isn't what you think it is.*

I document this chapter of my life and share what I uncovered for those who know this journey and are navigating similar terrain in silence. Many, I suspect, are like me: invisible to the world, either because of who they are, what they do, or both.

I wrote this story so that others might see their own experiences reflected here, understand they're not imagining things, and catch on sooner rather than later. I hope my writing can

serve as both a compass and comfort as you discover and recover from your own hidden truths.

What I now know, having documented this journey and having watched people I love pass this earthly plane, is that I'm with Maya Angelou: in the end, it won't matter who I am, what I say, or what I do. What will remain etched in people's bodies, minds, and spirits long after I'm gone is how I made them FEEL.