

## PERSPECTIVE

## Confessions of a worried mom

**T**HE other night my daughter had her first sleepover party. The girls, who came over to spend the night at ours, were daughters of my friends, and the girls had known each other since babyhood.

How time flies! They are in their pre-teens now; still together and their moms still cribbing but about a totally different chapter in their lives; 'how to deal with adolescent girls?' The pyjama parties seem to have thematically remained the same. The incessant giggling till 4a.m, the loud music, the non-stop chatter, the whispers, the curiosity about boys, the infatuation with Michael Ballack or Wayne Rooney, the board games and the nervous, fussy mom strutting around barely able to keep her eyes open, all remained unchanged. Except, I was The Mom now and I realised that I cannot consider myself to be the 25-at-heart any longer. Being the mother of a pre-teen girl is a totally different ball game and, if the preview is anything to go by, I am dreading the teens.

I consider myself to be modern and not at all conservative. In fact I promised myself that I will not be like my own mother, a spoil-sport, constantly fretting and fussing and controlling every step. Unfortunately with deep regrets I must admit that I am everything like my dear mom now. And I can't help it.

When one of the girls threw a question at me as to whether I would let my daughter have a boyfriend, I was certainly caught behind and bowled out. What answers do you have for such questions? I became tongue-tied and tactlessly avoided the question, with a bug in my mind. Would I? I still can't answer it.

The girls are all intelligent, all fairly knowledgeable and I am sure the topic of boyfriends spilled to other issues, and I asked my husband 'Do you think they know about it?' We both shrugged and kept mum for a while and then laughed our hearts out concluding that at least partially they do. Birds and the bees; how do you explain that?

Anyway that brings me to another topic, when I took the girls to browse through books at Book Express and out for a pizza, I was checking whether the girls looked



'proper'. I am sure you know what I am talking about?

My instincts proved right; the men present were blatantly ogling the females around, practically gobbling them up with their lewd stares, passing comments and hugging each other, as if... I just can't continue.

'You have no idea what goes on around you,' my mom used to tell me and it took me to become a mom myself to actually see what she meant.

My daughter being the youngest among the three looks the oldest; she just turned ten last week. And honestly I have to admit that I have taken up the role of being the monster mom. "No you can't wear that tight tee, you cannot wear the low hipster, you cannot go out without trainers, you cannot wear mini skirts, you cannot cycle in the streets without a chaperone, you cannot do this, you cannot do that..." my instructions continue without a stop.

It doesn't help that she is at that awkward stage where her body is changing, slowly blossoming towards womanhood, while her heart is still involved with beyblades. And while she is blissfully unaware about her budding sexuality, the society around her expects her to behave all grown up.

Whenever she calls me to her room to see something, I freeze. Did she get her periods? It's natural at ten, but at ten she is still a kid, and wrestling with her uncle is also very natural.

However at ten, it is not natural to expect that your society and people in it will have a twisted, perverted mentality. She was sleeping in her room with the curtains drawn apart and at around midnight when I went to check on her, my steps faltered and I stood shell-shocked. This humongous, obnoxious old fellow in lungi was peering at her room from the roof of the next house. How do you deal with that?

I just hope that at ten the girls grow some awareness and are able to deal with girly issues more consciously. And I realised at that instant that instead of being the monster mom I should be that modern person that I think I am and frankly and openly deal with issues like birds and the bees, boyfriends, periods, drugs and pervers.

All said and done, now I am fretting again. What if they read this article? Well if they do then almost 50 percent of my job of informing is done and the rest I will deal with later.

By Raffat Binte Rashid

## From Popsicles to Pervertion

**M**Y editor had asked me if I wanted to do an article concentrating on mother-daughter conflicts and hackneyed as it may be, I more than jumped at the opportunity. The bickering over (excessive) phone usage, drawing the line between wearables and wear-nots, the enforcing of curfews, I would put it all. While I lazed through the week penning down nothing more than the date, her article was done checked and printed. I read through it quickly to decide exactly which points I would oppose, because with her writing from a mother's perspective, she was on the other side of the enemy line and I needed to build my army strong. Half-way through, I realised I would either have to be helplessly naïve or downright lying to not write in accord.

Perhaps my Southern African background is to blame for reality check hitting me later than it did others, but that is what growing up in a serene, unconsumed-by-technology country does. It gives you false impressions of joy and romanticism and most importantly morality. Childhood for me equals blowing with the wind. Doing things because they were to be done but never once having to stop to think how or why. I'm sure the same applies for most childhoods but growing up in Zimbabwe meant not having even the slightest of worries. Never having to fret about Scholastica's environment or qualifying for Sunbeams or discipline in Sunnydale. Schools were decided by location, private teachers unheard of and traffic jams in-existent.

I moved to Dhaka when I was just a little shy of 15 and all of a sudden smiling faces on the streets were allegedly evil faces, thinking 200 times before speaking to anyone unknown was necessary and my mother became obsessed about not only wearing dupattas but maintaining them as well. I

despised the sudden shackles, not because they tied me down, but because I could not understand their significance. I was constantly subject to lectures that ended with a sigh followed by a worthless comment like 'duniya ta boro kothin jaiga' but giggles still roared in my head. I looked at it like a plane crash, I knew it could happen, just never happen to me.

And from then on, it was a journey downhill. Literally one fine morning I suddenly realised that the *he* standing by the escalator of so and so a plaza wasn't staring because my eyes are pretty, they are not and neither are they the objects of notice. It was at a time like this that I adjusted my clothes, without maternal command. I remember writing back home telling my friends about incidents like this after which they would ask why I should make changes because someone else was doing something wrong, why I should care at all. After almost four years of living in this country, I am unable to pick my attire without considering the place and people I am to brace for I will not have the filth in their eyes multiplied because Levi's chose to make jeans and I opted to wear them to the wrong place.

The downside though is not so much felt when chauffeurs or security personnel stare unblinkingly, for me it was the odd remark or two from boys in class, some acquaintances...some friends. I recall a sleepless night after a close friend commented along my 36-24-36 lines (or the lack of them) and asking myself aloud, "Oh that was on his mind during economics?" I realised that I was trying to protect myself from Chadni Chawk hawkers and neighbours' drivers when I should have been protecting myself period. True, most of us will fortunately spend our lives without associating with insane pervers that give horror or thriller movies their

punch lines, but even if it isn't sick to such frightening extents, it is there. Some voice it, some express it some just think it. But whichever class you throw them in, even the most decent guys will 'look' and it is in giving them cause to turn away rather than feast their sick senses that the least of the evils is embraced.

Watching such issues in movies or reading about them in books is when you can shrug them off and claim to be unaffected. Yes, it is after these that realisation strikes and you understand that neither your mother nor the editor was wrong. The difficult part lies in that there is no gray area between being a child and growing up, literally running around in cargoes and an alic band to suddenly seeing your reflection in the eyes of someone you don't want to, in a manner you are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with.

I can already see girls younger than me rolling their eyes at this heard-so-many-times-before topic but if they will just wait a couple of years, I know I will have more rockers on my boat. It is one of those things that experience teaches us best, or rather only experience teaches us because until and unless it happens every mother will be assured that the people in her daughter's world are not like the people she talks about, so she need not be afraid. I don't mean to make growing up seem so monstrous because it isn't. Consolation lies in that it is digestible. It hits you like a tonne of bricks but it can be dealt with. After the initial shock, the disgust, the fear, the important thing is to learn and gain consciousness. And this sunny side exclusive of the make-up, the high heels, the crushes and the love letters that are so sweetly a part of a girl's growing up!

By Subhi Shama Reeha

## HOROSCOPE



ARIES

(Mar. 21-April 19)

Do not push your opinions or try to reform your emotional partner this week. Take time to explain your intentions to loved ones. You can spend a passionate evening with someone you cherish if you make your plans early. Sudden romantic connections may be short lived. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



TAURUS

(Apr. 20-May 20)

Compromise if you have to, to avoid verbal battles. Social activities will be satisfying. Arguments with relatives may lead to a split in the family. Avoid any confrontations with colleagues. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



GEMINI

(May 21-June 21)

You can dazzle members of the opposite sex with your quick wit and aggressive charm. Don't lament to a friend about any grievance regarding your mate, or it may be hard to rectify your relationship. You need to be active and spend time with friends you enjoy. Avoid disputes with family; their complaints can't change anything anyway. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



CANCER

(June 22-July 22)

You will enjoy interaction with others this week. Empty promises are evident. You should put your efforts into creative projects. You may find that someone you live with is not too happy, but you can't really do anything about that right now. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



LEO

(July 23-Aug 23)

Your ability to do detailed work will dazzle those who are less creative. Take care of yourself or you can expect to suffer from minor illness. You may not be happy if members of your family are not pulling their weight. You can't live your life for others. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



VIRGO

(Aug. 23-Sept. 23)

Don't overspend on friends or children. You like to stay busy and now is your chance to do just that. You may have a problem with coworkers if you try to tell them what to do. Concentrate on spending quality time with children. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



LIBRA

(Sept. 23-Oct. 23)

You are best not to say too much to colleagues. Emotional matters may not be easy for you to handle. You must not let others talk you into doing things that will probably limit you financially at a later date. Be careful disclosing information. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



SCORPIO

(Oct. 24-Nov. 21)

Enjoy taking courses or lecturing others. You might not be as reserved on an emotional level as you'd like. One of your female friends may try to disrupt your day. Stand up for your rights. Chances to express your ideas and beliefs can bring popularity as long as you're not arrogant. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

You may find yourself in a heated dispute with a friend if you try to change your mind. You may be experiencing emotional turmoil in regard to your mate. You can win if you're open and up front with your boss. Put your efforts into your work or money making ventures rather than your emotional life. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



CAPRICORN

(Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

Someone you work with may be trying to make you look bad. Relatives may be less than easy to deal with. You will get along well in social situations. Try to curb your bad habits. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



AQUARIUS

(Jan. 21-Feb. 19)

Visit friends or relatives you rarely see. Don't make accusations unless you are completely sure that you are correct. You will have excellent ideas for changing or renovating your home. Sudden romantic infatuations could lead to a significant and prosperous connection. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



PISCES

(Feb. 20-March 20)

It's a good time to make changes to your living quarters that will give you more space. You need to do more things that you enjoy. Join a choir or a drama club. You may be considering moving to larger quarters. Limitations will set in if you haven't followed the rules. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.