women could. It was late at night, we had gotten dolled up and gone to a party, where we were given compliments and male attention and such, but that didn't help really. We were staring out at the sea, and I suddenly turned to her, a feeling of astonishment at the naked truth of our situations, and said emphatically, "I just realised, our husbands find us repugnant!"

She looked at me and burst into laughter (we do that a lot—bursting), and I did too. We still laugh at that sometimes, the idiotic notion that anyone could find us repugnant (the way they both behaved though, that is the only word to describe it), but it's more poignant because of the amount of pain and feelings of rejection that we were experiencing at the time.

As fate would have it my son did in fact come into the world with a built in affinity for laughter and appreciation for the absurdities of life. So much so that he has decided (for now) that he wants to be a stand up comedian. He did his first real set last Saturday night and I was a wreck because the fact is, his happiness is so much more important to me than my own. My evoking repugnance in someone else I can handle a great deal better than anyone rejecting my kid. I was so scared for him and so awed by his bravery that I was almost paralyzed by the power of my emotions. He tanked at the rehearsal, texting me to say that no one laughed and that he was miserable and nervous. When I asked him what he wanted to do, he said he would see it through, awing me yet again. Then he requested a foot long meatball sandwich and a medium Dr Pepper, saying that he felt the food would help calm him (only on a teenage boy with the metabolism of a ferret would a greasy meat sandwich work as a sedative).

I was so torn between driving over to the auditorium right then and there and bringing him home so he would not be exposed to the rejection and using this as a pivotal life lesson that might set the course for the rest of his existence. Yes, I make melodramatic leaps in logic. In this case I had convinced myself that either action—whether he stayed or left—would somehow render him homeless by the age of 30, sniffing on glue.

He, brave boy, ate his meatball sub, spilled most of his Dr Pepper all over himself, clung to his girlfriend, who was beaming the whole time, and then went on stage, and made people laugh. He was terrified and he did it and his mother can once again breathe. It seems, for the time being anyway, his destiny of living on the street, and rummaging through garbage bins for dinner, has been staved off. Once again, laughter saves the day. ■

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