

Get a REAL Job

I have a real job. In an office. On BAY Street. A job where I make lots of money and can finally be fiscally responsible and pay my bills on time. I have a transit pass and take the subway. I listen to the staccato march of the workers as they enter the halls of the underground wearing their Donna Karan and Armani uniforms. I breathe recycled air for 8 hours a day. My parents are so proud. And terrified. That I'll get a 6 week acting gig and then I won't have my real job. That I'll have left my real job, to scrape by, all to satisfy a "Whim."

What my parents fail to understand is that acting is not a "whim" or a "thing" as in "Well, Heather you might just have to give up this acting thing..." Being an actor is like having... a disease. I have a disease. I have a disease where I need to be onstage sharing myself with an audience, and after I'm all done – having that audience clap. And if I don't get to be on stage and have people clap, then I get sick. With symptoms that are remarkably close to PMS. I get cranky, irritable, bloated, short-tempered, weepy, easily offended, I overeat, lack self-confidence, whine a lot... I basically become everything I hate in a human being. But when I get to perform... I... FLY! I SOAR! Happiness infuses my cellular structure! I love everything about acting. I love the nervous energy that you get before you go onstage. I LOVE that. I love the butterflies: heart palpitations, sweaty palms? It's all GREAT! But now that I have a real job, I don't get to feel any of that. Except when my boss yells at me, but I find I don't enjoy quite so much then.

But how can I complain about such minor inconveniences? I have a real job! Sure the actor in me might be dying a slow meaningless death locked in the passcard corridors of Bay Street, unable to breathe, unable to express myself, wearing clothes that are uncomfortable and expensive, where people assume that because I am an administrative assistant that I, haven't ever done anything important with my life, and they would never believe that I've read all the plays in the Shakespearean canon and understood most of them. But at least I can die happy in the knowledge that I was a contributing member of society, paid exorbitant middle-income bracket taxes and in the end - will have paid all my bills on time! In fact, it's all I can do not to burst into a rousing impression of Ethel Merman as Mama Rose in *Gypsy* singing "Everything's Coming up Roses!"

Toto we're not 16 any more.

So I'm at the grocery store, waiting to check out my more than 16 items and I am assaulted by that "impulse buy" rack between you and the nearest exit. Chocolate bars, mints, gum and MAGAZINES. I'm looking at the cover of one of these fashion magazines - "Cosmarieflare" with a big picture of Michelle Pfeiffer splayed across it. Looking all slim and svelte and beautiful and incredibly blue-eyed. And David says to me - "It's amazing what they can do with digital enhancement." I look at the cover again with a more critical eye. Michelle Pfeiffer's skin is dazzling, not a line, not a blemish - she looks like a goddess. And I'm pretty sure that were you to see her in person, say like on your average Saturday morning, shopping for produce, that she would not look like a goddess - that she would probably look way closer to a real human being.

So I look at the other magazine covers. Each one with a stunning woman who represents the idealized notion of womanhood. Depending on the month that means large buoyant breasts or small pert breasts. It means pouty lips and big teeth, or stern and unsmiling. It means laden with makeup, or "natural." It means thin. It means what the industry says is voluptuous, but is still really thin. And it ALWAYS means beautiful. There are NO homely cover girls. None. They don't exist. There aren't even any average cover girls. Not that we would know this because what we see on the front of magazines, inside our television sets and projected onto film screens isn't real. It's unattainable, enhanced. It's computer altered. You can't get there from here. So this should make me feel better about what I see in the mirror, right? Like I don't have to try so hard, because what's out there isn't achievable. I shouldn't be affected by all the media in our advanced society that conspires to convince us that those perfect women represent your average Jane. Can I give you a news flash? At most, those fashion models represent 3% of the female population on the earth. So that leaves the other 97% of us...? Apparently left in a vacuum that sucks our self-confidence and has us see our bodies as only fun-house mirrors could distort them. Logically I should know that my size 14 body is just fine thank you very much and my skin is allowed to age and I should willingly accept the corns that are developing upon my dainty size 9s. I shouldn't be standing in front of the bathroom mirror looking in horror at the lines on my face saying, "Oh my God." "What is it Love?" my attentive and adoring spouse says. "Look at

these lines!” “What lines?” “THESE! These lines!” He scrutinizes my face. “They’re smile lines.” “No, no they’re not! That’s not what they are!” “What are they?” “They are *You are this much closer to death lines!* I will never be asked for i.d. again!”

When did my body start changing. It’s like one day I had the concave 16 year old tummy and the next I was convincing myself that despite being on the pill and having had my period each month for the past 4 months that I must pregnant. I even imagined that I was having food cravings. Oh, I was having food cravings all right, but it had nothing to do with pregnancy. It had to do with the call of the wild Hagen Daas and having a lust on for home fries. These cravings give you the kind of tummy where you can’t even really suck it in to help make those clothes look good. I used to be able to. Up to oh, about 25, I was Supreme Goddess of sucking it in. I could suck in my stomach for a good 8-9 hours straight. I’ve got great stomach muscle – UNDERNEATH that nice soft, fluffy layer of fat that, were I to be lost in the Antarctic, would allow me to survive much longer than any skinny cover girl. In fact I’d probably end up eating the skinny cover girl as soon as she died of hypothermia. But now I have this tummy that, no matter how often I do Tami Lee Webb’s Abs of Steel video, still resembles a nice little jello mould.

Don’t get me wrong. I do not want to be skinny. That’s not my goal. With breasts like these, I would look ridiculous skinny. Skinny is not an option for me. What I would like however, is to lose the fat that garnishes my abdomen so lovingly at this moment. I don’t particularly want to wear a bikini – I have no urge to dress like Shania Twain – I don’t want people speculating if I am anorexic. What I want is to be able to stand on a streetcar and have people let me stand, not offer me their seats because they think I am pregnant. That’s what I want. When I am in fact pregnant, I will joyfully grab somebody’s seat, but until that time, it’d be nice if people assumed I had bad posture, and that the only bun in my oven is a great big Cinnabon with extra icing. Mmmm. Icing.