

On the other side of tomorrow there's still a mother's smile

The other side of tomorrow is laden with the weight of an increasingly volatile future. It is saddled by the prospects of global decay—collapse even—and an unbridled optimism that calls into doubt whether our descent is already written. This may sound fatalist, hyperbolic, or even sensational; is the future as we once envisioned it too rotten to salvage? I wish I could discard my realism and replace it with something that has the air of restoration (can you?). What I can do, though, is recount the stories of love, of compassion, of persistence; the stories of joy, of struggle, and resilience; the lessons of life shown to me by the woman most central in my life. Because what remains on the other side of tomorrow is a mother's smile.

The flames of fear need not be stoked, but if you're looking to read something a bit more sobering, Pablo Servigne and Raphael Stevens' *How Everything Can Collapse* surely sounds the alarm bells. It's a non-exhaustible guide that puts into layman's our approaching battles; an analysis that fastens itself to the reasons why our growing systemic instabilities pose a solemn challenge to the capacity of human populations to maintain themselves in a sustainable environment. It's heavy and unlikely to satisfy any need for existential comic relief, but it is as important as it is frank. Whether you read it or just imagine the gravity of its findings, do so while thinking about the various mothers who have affected the composition of your soul and person, because it's their legacies which will endure unto tomorrow.

Describing my mother always leaves my tongue tied. Whatever articulacy I normally wield finds a convenient exit when somebody *Tell-me-about-your-mother-s*. **She's an enigma's enigma. A labyrinth who wears lipstick in the deepest red to outline the contours of an irrepressible smile. She is the personification of my reason for being and the clarity when that reason eludes me. My mother peddles a cautious brand of optimism, the type one has when keenly aware of the obstacles which befall her children. She's an educator whose pedagogy is as vibrant as the dresses she wears, but I digress.**

She's my insurance when disaster strikes. And when it does, her prudence, a single thread that feeds seamlessly into the rich web of eternal matriarchal wisdom, will be the reason my smile weathers the storms of today with the promise in mind that there will be a tomorrow. Just as my grandmother was my mother's spine, my mother is mine.

I'm not in the business of reading crystal balls or palms, so I'll save my theories on our trajectory for a separate occasion. However, I do indulge in the half-baked philosophy of motherly-inspired hope, as it is only in conceiving of a future where resilience rebounds from collapse that such a future can be.

The jury has reached no consensus on how sharp the apex of systemic global disregard will be, and whether it will make landfall during our lifetimes. Yet despite this, my mother has had the courage, and maybe naivety, to dare hope out of me. She's imparted to me that when there are

unknowns. A great many variables that, if left alone, are plagued by system failure; all one can do is their very best.

Doing what one can with the energy one has has to be enough. Let that not be a diversion from the very real and necessary work of tending to an ailing world, but let it serve as a reminder to represent the best of ourselves in the fight against what lay beyond tomorrow. Global collapse is an eventuality, however our response isn't fixed.

My mother is a fanatic when it comes to "getting her steps in." Never have I witnessed a person as stubborn as she when it comes to crossing the 10,000-step-a-day threshold. When she reads this piece, she'll likely be exasperated by my suggestion that she walks a mere 10,000 steps per day. If the reins of creative license had rather been given to her, she'd attach a screenshot of the four walks—accompanied by a selfie taken just a smidge too close to the camera—she went on before lunch, amounting to a colossal 600,000-steps. "And I'm just getting started!" she'd say with a mother's usual emphatic yet impossible arrogance.

I reveal this anecdote to demonstrate the determination of my mother and, broadly, all mothers. In the wake of collapse and on the other side of tomorrow, hope finds refuge, resilience finds abundance, and I find my mother's smile.