

The Moms of Millennials

It was 5 AM. The 16-year-old girl knelt on the concrete ground of her home in the oppressive heat, both slapping away mosquitoes and making designs dried rice and colored powder in the traditional *rangoli*. She stood up to survey her work and hoped that the parabolic weather of late- monsoons and drought- wouldn't ruin it. She went inside and began preparing the day's meal of starchy rice and sambar for her family- meat or vegetables of any kind being a luxury- and was careful not to bang the pots and pans too much. She also mopped the wooden floors, her forehead soon glistening and the tendons of her forearm visibly lengthening. Meanwhile, her older brother and youngest sister were upstairs sleeping, having gotten the better end of the genetic lottery- and the favor of their parents. Having completed their requisite chores that were sparing their parents the expense of a summer housemaid, she and her close sister dressed in their standard school uniforms, plaited their hair, and stepped into their shapeless brown sandals. They passed a sign on a tree stump, advertising the latest appearance of the actor who came from her small town. She imagined piling into now-outdated Volkswagens to go to the cinema and see it. Wistfully eyeing the tandoori stall and sugarcane juice stand that they passed on their way, they ventured into the sandy roads, and hailed a rickshaw in the heavy, thickening air. They were volunteering to teach the younger students- comparatively less stressful to the previous ten months in year 11, when they were all competing and studying for their entrance exams to gain admission into the one local medical school. In spite of the blaring of car horns, squealing of tires, and occasional shout of profanity, she gazed out the window and wondered about the future tenor of her life- a residency, a family, maybe even the States.

Thirty years later....

"Work, work, work, work, work, work"- the daughter awoke to the tune of Rihanna's #1 on Z100's playlist. She glanced at the digits on her alarm clock, noticing she had slept through all of her alarms and would likely be late to her annual checkup. Shrugging, she grabbed her flatiron and figured she would get her nanny to drive her to the clinic to meet up with her mom who would drive her to her job at the mall at noon. Pushing her omelet's veggies around the side of her plate, she realized it was Friday, and she looked forward to ordering take-out, lounging in bed with her laptop and Netflix, and to her Saturday afternoon appointment at the salon for a spray tan and some time below aluminum foil to get highlights in her hair. The phone rang, interrupting her reverie.

"Good morning, honey. I realized I left your insurance card at home, and you'll need it for your appointment. Do you mind looking in the file cabinet in my office for it?"

"No, not at all."

She left her omelet and rooted around in the stainless steel stack of drawers. She wrinkled her nose at the musty documents that were in there- her mother's passport, flipped open to a page

filled with a bunch of inky stamps, and some old checkbooks with unfamiliar apartment addresses.

Well those are definitely not it, was all she could think.

After finally finding the small white card, she dressed in her favorite designer jeans and halter top and suddenly remembered that her SAT score was scheduled to be released today. Upon logging into her College Board account, she stiffened at the sight of her score- and momentarily lost sight of her future- swiftly forgetting the easygoing nature of her parents and the thousands of universities, degrees, and possibilities at her fingertips.

Two hours later....

“Now, please stay still and keep your arm straight. It’ll just be a tiny pinch.” The daughter shut her eyes and braced herself, stories of needlesticks reeling through her mind.

One 10-mL vial of blood later later, the nurse returned and announced, “Normal blood glucose, slightly low cholesterol, and normal platelets. You should be good to go.”

In the car, the daughter finished her cookie and juice, and suddenly remembered the discussion of blood types and antigens in her biology class.

“Hey Mom, what’s my blood type?”

Her mom glanced back at her through the rearview mirror, “Well, Type A- like me.”

The daughter smiled, “Wow, I find it just so incredibly cool that we have, like, the exact same blood type.”

At the next stoplight, the mom looked again at her daughter- taking inventory of her highlighted hair, painted face, pierced earlobes, innocent smile- and realized that, in this day and age, really the only evidence of their shared heritage and ancestry would be their melanin, their keratin, and maybe around half of their alleles. Realizing that ignorance is likely a small price to pay for the distinctly better life her daughter had, the mom withheld herself from berating her daughter for her small everyday calamities of the department store not having her size in stock or an impossible trig curve.

With a wry smile, she responded, “Yes, honey, it’s *almost* as if we were related.”