

Not Finished Yet - Three Perspectives

By

Gina Ladinsky

My mom is okay, but I don't tell her that. I can't. Kids have a code of honor about these things, and I'm not going to be the one to break it. Don't get me wrong, my mom probably drives me more nuts than any other mom on the planet. She won't let me grow up. She finally gave in and now I can keep my room as messy as I want. I just have to keep the door closed. I still have a curfew, and she still wants to know where I'm going. And get this, if I'm going to a friend's house for a party, she still asks me if supervising adults are going to be home. Do you see what I mean? So when my the New England Conservatory of Music accepted me, well, I figured it's a great school, and it's far away from my mom. No more curfew, no more questions, I will never clean my room, and I will call my mom every other week.

The plane ride was different. We weren't going on vacation. I was taking my first born to a town that I had never seen. Already I didn't like it. Other people on the plane were going to late summer vacations on the Cape. The Cape. I looked at my younger son, who was wearing a headset and reading a magazine. Where was the Cape was in relation to downtown Boston I shouted, so he could hear me. He shrugged.

My bro and I have been hanging out together since I was born. He's okay for a brother, but one day I'll have to beat the crap out of him. He's been doing it to me for so many years. And choke holds. I hate those. He does that to me all the time too. My mom really screams her

head off when she finds me in a choke hold. It's almost worth hearing her yell so loud and watching her face turn red to get choked. It's going to be weird without my bro around.

I chose the Conservatory because I want to be the best jazz piano player. But there's someone else who doesn't give me enough space, and that's my girlfriend. I love her a lot and all, but I need to get away from her too. She won't let me grow up either. She wants all my attention and won't let me do anything on my own. She's staying in L. A. I'm not surprised. I knew she wouldn't go too far from her home there. It's a really big house and her mom buys her everything she wants. It's weird to be on this plane flying to the east coast. Knowing that I'll be living in some small stinky dorm room with a stranger. A dorm room half the size of my bedroom at home. I don't even want to think about the bathrooms. I'm going to miss my brother. I hope he'll be okay without me to look out for him. I feel bad to leave him alone with my mom.

When we got to his dorm room, I tried to be cheerful, but I was shocked. If there was a rating for dorm rooms, the ones at the Conservatory would be at the bottom of the list. They are too small and dark. So I tried to do mind travel because I thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown on the spot. I tried to think about going skiing or sitting on the beach. None of these did the trick. I felt the tears starting to well up. The dentist. Needles in my mouth. That helped. That's what it felt like when I left my son in that town. A town where Pilgrims hung witches and Patriots threw tea in the harbor.

I thought my mom was going to puke when she saw my bro's dorm room. I can always tell when she does her cheerful bit. She does it to cover up how she really feels. My brother and I looked at each other cause we know her better than anyone. Then she got that far away look.

The one she uses when she's trying to not have a nervous breakdown. I think she should see a shrink or something. I don't think it's normal for her to be so nervous all the time. Don't tell anyone, but I wouldn't want to stay in my bro's dorm room either.

I thought someone would have to physically remove my mom from Boston when it was time for her to leave. I was wrong. See that's what makes her okay, some of the time. We went to nearby stores and bought me more stuff than I could ever use. Stuff I didn't have room for, like a microwave and a mini-fridge. Then she stuffed it with juice and water. I mean the first floor had the full cafeteria and all. It wasn't like I was gonna starve. Then she bought every medical thing I could ever need. I probably could've operated on my room mate. He just sat there and watched the scene of my mom trying to pretend it was okay she was leaving me off for four years.

When we arrived back home, I had trouble. The door to his room was open. It hadn't been open in three years. I had to close it. Only when I did, I noticed how neat the room was. That really made me sad. That and the fact that the house was so quiet. No one was playing the piano.

My mom did average, I think. I mean, I don't think she would have won any awards for going nuts when we got back home. She did that cheerful stuff again, but she wasn't fooling me. She closed the door to my bro's room. That made me sad. That's when the house felt empty. That and the fact that no one was playing the piano. My mom is back in school. She'll be okay because she has a plan. Everyone has to have a plan. Otherwise you get left behind.

I'm worried about her now. See, ever since my dad left, it was my job to look after her and my brother. I mean nobody told me that, it's just the way things are. The deal is she has to grow up just as much as I do. That's the other reason I left. So she could grow up. It's hard to be a kid. Maybe it's different if you have a big family. Or if your parents are still together. Then you don't have to worry so much. But when it's just you and your bro and your mom, well, it can be pretty scary. It's starting to snow here. I wonder how the weather is in L.A. I found out yesterday that my mom was accepted to graduate school. I told you she's okay.

It's good my son is going to school on the east coast. Most people don't understand that going away to college isn't all about academics. It's also about learning to be on your own. Not just for the kids who go. It's for those of us who are left behind too. I have been taking care of kids for seventeen years. Now I have to learn something new. I wonder if I'll ever be finished.