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StoryLane Magazine

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To become a mother, to remain a woman -
taking small steps out of the role

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A Suitcase Full of Dreams

When I was a young girl, I had three big dreams. I dreamt of having children and becoming a mother. I imagined myself giving bottles, pushing a stroller for hours, and picking up fallen pacifiers. My second big dream was to sit in a beautiful bay window of a large house, writing my books while overlooking a lake. My third dream was the desire to travel to the USA, likely rooted in the fact that I grew up in the late '90s and often lost myself in American feel-good movies. So, my father got me a map of North and South America, which I proudly pinned over my childhood desk. At the same time, I wore the Texas T-shirt my uncle brought me from one of his many trips across the pond, wearing it until I outgrew it.

On the Road to a One-Way Street

Today, two and a half decades later, at least one of those wishes has definitely come true. I've become a mother, and I embrace this role with all my heart and soul. But with motherhood came the feeling of driving down a one-way street. There were the beautiful moments with my children, the milestones we celebrated, this entirely new sense of life, and a heart full of happiness. However, there were also sleepless nights, hours of trying to get them to sleep, spilled juice cups, many tears I wiped away, and the fear of not being able to meet all the demands. At the same time, I pursued a bread-and-butter job that didn't fulfill me. Eventually, I realized that I had stopped taking care of myself. I was losing myself on this grand journey called life.

A Difficult Admission

One afternoon, my daughter brought home a kindergarten friend's book. When asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, she replied, "An elf and a mom." A mom like you." Two wonderful aspirations and the greatest compliment my daughter could ever give me. Suddenly, I began to reflect on my dreams from the past and wondered, "Who am I, really? And where is the girl with many dreams that I used to be?" Then it hit me with great force that I was stuck in a dead-end on my map. I made an admission that was not easy to speak aloud and said to my husband, "Being a mother alone is not enough for me."

Our Time is Now

When I eventually shared my feelings with my friends, I realized we all felt the same way. Being mothers wasn't enough for us because, first, we are women. Women who, with the onset of motherhood, were stamped with a label, while sympathetic looks told us, "There will be other times." But no, our time is now. So, why should we allow ourselves to be reduced to something called a role? What is this motherhood role, really? Occasionally, it feels like a performance where we outwardly portray the perfect actresses and compete to see whose child rides a bike first. We simply embody an image imposed by society while struggling to be everything in today's world: a mother, a homemaker, an employee, and a partner. I wondered where the person I wanted to be had gone amidst all these roles, and I decided, "I can be the director of my life and write my script." And I did.

My secret recipe is you.

I am inspired daily by strong women. Recently, I met founders and expatriates, globetrotters and freelancers. Most of them are also mothers, and all around me, these resounding voices said, “We want to be more than just a stereotype!” I realized I wasn't alone in my dead-end; I had a bunch of women around me ready to reverse out of their one-way streets at full speed. This gave me a sense of community, coupled with a great deal of courage. I shifted my gears and knew that if the engine ever stalled, we would push the car out of the mud together.

Paths are made by walking.

So, I took a small first step and began writing again after many years. That first step turned into a path that meandered somewhat chaotically through my daily life. In every free moment, after work or during my son's nap, I wrote short stories. Sometimes in the evening, sometimes in between. Sometimes while the kids were in the bath or while I was cooking. From that path emerged a road, and I eventually registered as a freelance writer alongside my day job. Today, I write not only books but also texts like this one. I am deeply grateful for this. I rediscovered an important part of myself that allows me to be the woman I always wanted to be, alongside being a mother.

Jam Jar Moments

I used to think you couldn't have everything in life. Today, I know that you can have a bit of many things. Life consists of thousands of jam-jar moments that become a delicious spread. This gives us the strength to input a new route into the navigation system. Maybe it's the yoga class you finally started or a weekly meeting with your best friend. Perhaps it's the surfing certification you've dreamed of since your youth, or the self-grown flowers from your garden. You deserve to take care of yourself and incorporate things into your daily life that make you feel good. Just start dreaming and take the first step.

Your Next Chapter

In the last friend book, my daughter answered the question about her career aspirations like this: "When I grow up, I will be a unicorn owner and a book writer like you." I believe she made me even prouder than I already am. Not because she wants to emulate me, but because she understands an important thing: You have the opportunity to decide every day who you would like to be and where you would like to go. Will I ever manage to travel to the USA again? Possibly I'll write that chapter of my life when the kids are grown, and we'll all enjoy a peanut butter sandwich together. As a family and with a lot of jam.