

Story of a Generation

All history is the story of rebellion, for without rebellion there are no stories to tell. Without rebellion there is only tradition, the stories told without telling. Without rebellion there is no generation, just as every generation has its rebellion.

My generation's rebellion was domestic, which isn't to say it wasn't authentic (because it was), which isn't to say it was honest (because it wasn't, and because fooling yourself doesn't make you any more clever than a fool).

"Strip off your shirt and bra," the male doctor instructed.

Winston performed as told and continued explaining how one week ago today he began feeling and emptiness in his chest cavity, a sort of throbbing dullness, a sort of phantom pain. "It's probably nothing," he reassured himself to the doctor. "But I'd rather be safe."

Our demands – for the tradition of rebellion demands demands – were, of course, also domestic. We demanded the families in the family montage, the pictures in the picture postcards, the dramas in the network dramas that only end in hugs or to-be-continueds. We demanded easy money; we demanded easy sex; we demanded easy lives. We demanded risk without consequence, love without risk, and riskless adventures. Pan left, life goes on, everybody smile, click.

The doctor showed Winston the x-ray. "You haven't been imagining things," the doctor said. "All of your internal organs are missing."

"What?"

“Check the usual places first – maybe they snuck off for a swim in the tub. Your stomach might be in the ‘fridge. It’s anybody’s guess, really.”

“I’m not sure I understand.”

“I wouldn’t worry too much – you seem to be doing fine without them. I’ve been thinking about having mine removed, actually. Lose some quick pounds.”

“I think I’d like to see another doctor.”

Our rebellion, like most rebellions, failed. “Too many variables,” we’d say later, or “There’s no way we could’ve known.” In other words, it couldn’t have been our fault. We didn’t do anything wrong.

“Yeah, I did leave towels in the sink. And you didn’t put out last night. What about it?”

Winston was on his way home when he checked his pulse at a stoplight. No luck. He scoffed.

Entering his apartment he tossed his keys on an end table and went to the refrigerator. His appetite was as pallid as it had been all week but it was almost lunchtime and he wasn’t one to skip meals. He opened the door and saw his stomach (he assumed it was his, at least) wrapped around some potato salad. He closed the door, blinked a few times, waved his hand in front of his face, and reopened the door. The stomach had moved on to the eggs.

Winston walked into the bathroom to take a leak and splash some water on his face, but quickly noticed a heart (his heart, surely) enjoying the toilet bowl as its own private whirlpool. The seat was up and the heart was holding a string that had been connected to the flusher, and was flushing it again and again. Not wanting to disturb his heart, Winston pulled back the shower curtain to use the bathtub drain, only to find his spleen and pancreas swimming laps. The water was still steaming.

Winston felt faint.

He stumbled to his living room sofa and blacked out.

Everything was empty, so nothing could hurt.

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