

**YOU'RE
CRAZY**

My pain is my pride and my power. My daily life is fueled by the past.

I recently returned home from my mother's house. It was intended as a farewell trip before my move across country to San Francisco. Within the first two hours it started...

Upon telling my mother that I had learned how to eat fire, and that I'd like to show her and my brother—as a gift—she responded with an emphatic, “you're crazy.”

What an opening. I had to act. “Well Mom, speaking of crazy, there's something I did that I should tell you about. You're not going to like it, but you'll probably see it. Uh, my tongue's pierced; it's pretty subtle, but I just wanted you to know that's what's in my mouth.”

My mom's expression says it all, but she feels the need to elaborate. “Charlene, who ARE you? I mean, you're still my daughter, so I'll always love you, but otherwise I can't relate to you at all!”

I think to myself, “Well, I'm a human being; I'm sure that's something you can relate to.”

Instead I manage to muster up some diplomacy. “Mom, we live very different lives, but I don't think that's a bad thing at all!”

We banter some more about how she can't understand me, and during the whole discussion I'm trying to remain objective in my speech. Considering that I was basically justifying (rather than “discussing”) each of my actions that were suddenly under scrutiny, I think I did a pretty decent job. But never good enough, because good enough would mean that I would be an entirely different person. Good enough would mean that I was a straight, skinny, career-minded “young lady” who was looking for a husband. That's not me.

“Charlene, can't you just join a weight watcher's program that doesn't make you buy their food? It won't be as expensive...”

I start to retreat again, thinking to myself, “But Mom, what's so wrong with me the way I am?”

My mother's still talking: “...Charlene, I know you're big-boned, but that is no excuse for you to be...overweight.”

**“Mama, you send me,
oh, you send me.
Mama, you send me
honest you do, honest you do,
honest you do”**

I am speechless. I'm 24 years old and every time I visit my mother's I regress at least 10 years! Each time, I try to keep myself open in hopes of “working on our relationship.” Instead, I end up vulnerable to her jabs at me. I'm a strong woman, but I don't feel so strong right now. I think about my life at

**YOUR LIFE'S
outta control**

my house, my friends, my support network, and my accomplishments.

Then I think about how invalidated and powerless I feel right now with my mother.

For the following three days I was more self-conscious than ever about every fucking thing I ate, the way I sat, what I wore, how long I slept, how fast/slow I walked... EVERYTHING.

The day before I left, we went to see a friend

I would be teetering on the edge of being FAT.

I could go down several roads from there. I could either: a) starve myself and obsess about grams of fat and calories, or b) eat what I want, when I want, and treat myself like a normal human being instead of some chick with a problem. Because to me, feeling “normal” isn't about the size of the clothes or the waist or the ass, it's about healthy behavior with food. It

involves acting in accordance with my needs and wants, not someone else's standard of beauty.

Of course, these aren't realizations that come easily to me, even today. I could only believe that after being loved by people who are supportive of me, not dependent upon how I fit/don't fit into society's standards.

That night, when I returned home from my mom's house, I went out dancing and met up with some friends and my lover. I was wearing a racy new outfit which showed off my tits and my friends told me they had missed me and that I

**AND YOU SHOULD GO TO
weight watchers**

from my childhood. We've been friends since we were two years old and I hadn't seen her in about a year. She wasn't home when we arrived so we waited for her to get there. When she arrived, before I even laid eyes on her, my mother dragged her aside just to tell her how much weight I had gained and how “awful” I looked.

Now, I can't even imagine anyone deliberately humiliating someone else like this not to mention that this being the woman who is supposed to love me unconditionally! I have never been treated with so much disrespect on a continual basis by anyone aside from her: my mom.

**“Big girl, don't you cry-y-y,
(don't you cry)
Big girl, don't cry...”**

Sure I get mad and, believe me, I also confronted my mom the next day about her behavior. Then there's the guilt that I feel upon expressing my anger. I am torn between this never-ending rage and the knowledge that my mother has had the exact same words thrown in her face. She is hurting and I can't help but feel empathy toward her. But there's that rage...

You see, all my life I've been taught that I was BIG. You know: tall, big-boned, and because of this I would always have to “be extra careful with my weight!” because

looked fabulous. I was so grateful to be in the company of people who really care about me. It was then that I asked myself, how can I be so well-loved by people who have only known me two or three years and so misunderstood by a family member who's known me all my life? How can I accept this love when I also feel such acute self-hatred, so freshly cultivated—in soil so old and rich—and I can't get it out from under my nails...

My friends have always acted as my main support structure, but do even more so now that I'm out as a big queer pervert. These are things that my family will never be able to fully know or understand. Sometimes I try to imagine what my life would be like if I hadn't come out into the queer world, and then into S/M, and I am convinced that I would be so very unhappy. I would be trying to fulfill my mother's wishes for a straight, skinny, career-minded “young lady” in a pale pink suit and shoes too tight for this very round, big-boned, woman-loving, body-pierced, anti-conformist goofball. No way. I am learning to love myself too much.

**“I'm harboring a fugitive,
defector of a kind
She lives in my bones and
drinks of my wine
And I'd give my last breath
To keep her alive”**

by Charlene

