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Dear Friends,

My mother used to call with the news from my hometown, mostly centered around all the wedding announcements from my high school peers and their subsequent baby announcements, as if willing the same for me. But one day, the news was different.

"...so they went on vacation and Joe decided to scuba dive," she said. "He's done it before," she added. "And he disappeared." "What do you mean, he disappeared?" I asked. "He went down, but never came back up. They searched for a long time, but never found him."

It was an image that still haunts me. Imagine you are on the boat, waiting for your husband or father to come back up, and he doesn't. The panic, the irreversible heat that rises through your neck onto your face, the disbelief, the grief, all circling each in their turn in your head. How awful is this not-knowing? Did he die suddenly or was he in agony? Did he sink to the floor of the ocean, or did a shark eat him? They will never know. I'm unsure how strong a heart would have to be to survive that.

That's how it feels this week and last, with our beloved cat, Pochie, suddenly gone from sight, like he's over a hill we can't see beyond. Is he alive? Will we ever see him again? Did he get attacked and killed? Was he hit by a car? Is he in agony and trying to get home to us?

He has been Feliks' cat from the start. We finally settled on the name, "Poochie," because he is the most dog-like cat we have ever seen, languid and smooth in his movements, none of this hissing and hiding from humans from Poochie; he is a long animal of love for us to count on. We say, "hi, puppy," when we see him. He comes when called, and when John walks the dogs, he walks behind them, as if on an invisible leash, keeping them in his sightline always.

He always finds our bed at night time and warms up my side of it for me. Then I take him into Feliks' room because Feliks always calls for him at bedtime.

The hardest part of his being gone this way is the not-knowing. Feliks walked into the bedroom last night and simply said, "Where's Poochie?" We all jump with a start at any flash of white in our peripheral vision; we enter the kitchen looking toward the window outside of which he always sits. I stand at that window, willing him to return.

Where's Poochie? Did he drift to the bottom of the ocean?

Links you might want to check out

Some common sense [prep advice](#) for the Coronavirus. For more detail, here's a general [family emergency checklist](#) (pdf).

I would love to work [with her](#). That's leadership.

This [vegan lavender cake with lemon drizzle](#) is fantastic. (I subbed applesauce for the oil).

I really enjoyed [this honest interview](#).

What about listening to [writers in forests](#)?

Coming Up

Hard Conversations: Whiteness, Race, and Social Justice - Begins April 7. Focuses on white racial identity, hallmarks of white supremacy culture, what it means to be white in a racist world, and how to create a positive white identity. [Go here](#) for info.

Hard Conversations Book Club - It's never too late to join this group of folks who read and think in community each month. Our reading list will expand your world. You can find the 2020 list and other information [here](#).

Life is a Verb Camp - October 29 - November 1, 2020, near Asheville NC. [Go here](#) to get information and to register. You'll leave inspired, with an amazing community to support you in your journey. Poets Jericho Brown, Andrea Gibson, and Mahogany Browne headline this year's Camp. Only a few tickets remain.

Thanks for reading. If you like this newsletter and want to support it, forward it to someone who'd

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Patti

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