

Phoebe Dijour

### Mother Knows Best

My mom is a superstitious woman. I would be too if I escaped the Soviet Union with five cents in my pocket; it must've been the red string on her wrist that carried her through. Her rules were simple. Don't walk under ladders, walk over people laying down, spill salt, whistle in the house, walk around without a red string on your wrist, cross a black cat, break a mirror, hug over a doorframe, sit on the corner of a table while eating, or return to the house after leaving without spitting over your right shoulder three times while looking in a mirror. And most importantly, never EVER celebrate your birthday before the actual date. Of course, I didn't listen.

The American (and Canadian<sup>according to Google</sup>) tradition of a "Sweet Sixteen" was a cute one; lighting candles for each person you care about, indulging in chocolatey sweets, and dancing the night away with your best gal friends and your one weird cousin seem like wonderful ways to celebrate your sixteenth trip around the Sun. I had every tiny detail planned out in my blueprints, mind maps, storyboards. It was going to be at a huge venue by the Jersey Shore the day before my actual birthday. Snooki would be making her guest appearance at 11:52 PM right after I corralled her at the local Italian-owned soft serve shop. A chocolate fountain would be provided for all the guests to dip marshmallows, strawberries, fingers...

Halfway through the party, my friend Laura and I started melting the chocolate chips in the microwave. Something was burning, but "Party in the USA" was on, so it didn't matter. The microwave beeped, and she took the bowl of molten goo out. Steam rose in front of my face as I sang. "Put my hands up, I'm playing my song, the butterflies fly away! Waa waa. Nodding my head like...Laura what are you doing?" She was holding the bowl of blackened burning goo over the plastic easy bake-caliber chocolate fountain. She started pouring. It was too viscous.

“NO!! IT’S TOO VISCOUS!” I yelled. My famous last words. I reached under the chocolate with my right hand, my WRITING hand, to save the \$5 tiny little plastic chocolate fountain from the viscous goo’s terror, instead catching it directly with my whole hand. That was the end of the party and the end of my ability to write for the next 8 weeks. Until I went to a burn clinic in Northern New Jersey where they replaced the molten skin on my hands from my second-degree burns. Everyone at my party agreed that if anyone asked, “What happened to Phoebe’s hand?” they needed to answer, “She burned it while designing a NASA rocket ship” instead of “She put it directly under a burning bowl of chocolate because she thought it was too viscous.”

I will never not listen to my mother again.