

February 3, 2021

It's good that you woke up from your dream before you drowned, right? I don't know if I need help or if I'm capable of helping anyone else, but maybe the person you heard screaming, "Ona!" in your dream was me. I talked to Bob about your dream and he told me that waking up before you drown in a dream means rebirth. He told me he read that somewhere? He told me, "Your friend may be about to have an emotional rebirth." I'm excited for you. It may be hard, but birth is hard, right? And pain means that you're growing, at least I hope so. I mean, Bob says that pain means you're alive and that you're growing.

We do this dedication thing at the beginning of every month during which we dedicate the month to a certain theme, or intention. It means that we focus all of our spiritual energy on this intention for the month. For February, it's "endurance." We're supposed to just push through things that feel uncomfortable, or just ENDURE, so that we can understand how strong we are as individuals and as a collective. I'm beginning to think that I'm not a very strong person at all. I mean, emotionally. When something hurts, I want to run away, I don't want to stay and work through it. I'm really trying to change this tendency of mine.

I barely even know what day it is. We didn't watch the inauguration here at the farm. We don't really do tv or the internet or anything like that. In fact, we lock up our phones in a room the main house and have to sign-in and get the key in order to check them. It's a whole thing. I actually think it's great, though. Bob really encourages us to focus on ourselves and our work and not be distracted by the outside world. He calls it "altruistic narcissism." Like, we have to fix ourselves first before we can fix anyone else. He always says that you can't save people from drowning with a broken boat. So I'm working to fix my boat. It was stressful, at first, to not have my phone with me all the time, but now I feel really liberated to not be so tied to my phone! I used to spend whole days just doom scrolling and now I'm like, "Oh, look! The world in real life!" Who is Amanda Gorman? I heard about the riot at the Capitol, but it's hard for me to understand how bad it was. I mean, how bad WAS it? You wrote about an "enraged mob yelling and roaring and breaking things," but how bad could it be if Joe Biden is now the president? How bad is it still out there? It definitely has begun to feel like the world is "out there" and that Black Feather Farm is the only here. At least this here has organic vegetables and evening dance parties. I'm gonna be so snatched when I go back out there, Ona, what with my Black Feather Farm diet and exercise plan, lol.

We don't drink coffee here because caffeine is toxic and the whole coffee industry is based in colonization. I'm actually embarrassed that I profited off selling coffee at The Natural Cafe. When I go back home, I'm only going to sell herbal tea. And maybe green, lol. I DID sneak away one day to get a coffee at the Dunkin Donuts and feel a little normal. I mean, can you imagine not drinking coffee? Maybe that's why I feel so weird all the time. My back hurts, my head hurts, and I feel like screaming. I think my body is in the process of releasing toxins and I just need to be uncomfortable in order to

grow. Growing pains, right? Because I know how to cook, I've been put on kitchen duty with another woman named Barbara. I share a trailer with her and this other woman named Tashi. Barbara's nice. She likes to sing Patsy Cline songs while we cook. Anyway, I told Barbara about the coffee thing and asked her if we could maybe sneak some instant coffee in. She just shook her head and told me I had to try to be strong. I mean, she's right. She encouraged me to try sleeping on the floor as a kind of penance for drinking the coffee. The floor of the trailer we share is pretty hard, as you can imagine, and low-key cold. I might try it. For a couple of weeks, Barbara and I have been sharing the bed, and Tashi has been sleeping on the little couch.

Don't get me wrong - I'm so grateful to be here. Everything is so intense. Like I mentioned in my last letter, we rise early to do yoga and meditate. Barbara and I make breakfast (usually oatmeal, or porridge), do the dishes when everyone is done and then make lunch (usually some kind of vegetable stew and a salad and fresh-baked bread or biscuits). In the afternoon, I chop wood and clear rocks for the tiny houses I told you we're building. Then I'm back in the kitchen to help make dinner. After dinner, we all head to barn where we make music and dance and stuff until midnight, or one, sometimes two in the morning. Bob says, "To do hard work is to celebrate and to celebrate is hard work." We celebrate hard, girl.

There's a jembe - this African drum - and one of us is assigned to beat the drum for the night after dinner. Actually, there are three jembe, but only one of them - the main one - has to keep a constant beat going in the evenings. The other two drums can stop and take breaks, but the head drum has to keep going. You get a couple of lessons when you first get to the farm and then you're expected to just figure it out. Anyway, I've been really nervous about getting assigned the main drum because I've seen a few people, men and women, start crying after two hours of hitting that thing. I prefer dancing. The dancing is almost spiritual, the way everyone moves their bodies, just totally uninhibited and focused. It's like the best house party you've ever been to with all these black, brown, yellow and peach limbs flying everywhere. I just get into this zone where I move, and move, and move. But the thing with the drum is that you can't stop hitting the drum until Bob says to stop and he doesn't say to stop sometimes until one in the morning. If the main drum stops, the dancing is over for the night. Bob says that the main drummer controls when the music stops, but really Bob does. One night this guy Sammy stopped playing the main drum around eleven and it was so humiliating for him. Bob was just like, "Sammy says the party's over, so the party's over. Everybody go to bed." I mean, it was fine, but I could see that Sammy was kind of humiliated and I would have been to. The next day no one talked to Sammy. It was so weird. I mean, I wanted to talk to him because he looked so depressed about the whole thing, but then, I was also sort of mad that he let us down? He refused to eat anything for breakfast and was the first one to start work for the day. But I mean, it's all good with Sammy now. Anyway, last night I got the main drum. After an hour I felt like my hands were going to fall off and it was only ten o'clock! My palms were throbbing and I felt such a responsibility to the group, to the TRIBE, to KEEP GOING NO MATTER WHAT. It felt like life or death, like if I stopped drumming, the world would stop turning on its axis and everyone would just

disappear. I didn't stop. I ENDURED. It was fucking amazing, like this almost spiritual experience. This morning, Bob told me he was proud of me and gave me one of the succulents he's been growing in the living room of the main house. Bob says that he loves succulents because they don't need much to stay alive, they just endure. This succulent is my most prized thing, Ona. I mean, I love it so much. It represents a real victory for me.

To be RAD, I'm almost TOO awake these days and I don't think it's the weed that we smoke every morning. I can't explain why, but I feel so RAW. Everyone here is so lovely and giving and focused on making a little utopia here in Michigan. I'm preparing and eating beautiful organic food, I'm contributing to a community of people that are really trying to make the world a better place. Like you said, that man is out of the White House and we have a new president who seems like a decent person. I mean, nothing is WRONG. So why do I still feel so crazy? What's wrong with ME? Maybe I just want a boyfriend? That sounds stupid as I write it, but I can't shake this feeling of being totally alone in the world, even though I'm surrounded by people all the time now. Romance and sex is encouraged here, it's all about giving and accepting love, but it still doesn't feel... quite right? I don't want to have sex with someone who someone else is having sex with and maybe that's a hang up I need to work on, but I'm just not jump the drama of that. I want someone who is mine.

I'm sorry that things with Wen are still not good. Have you thought anymore about leaving him? Or I guess my real questions are: What would hurt more, leaving him or staying? What choice would make you grow and what choice would keep you from growing? I mean, no offense, but Wen sounds like such a dick... who grinds coffee beans in the middle of the night? (Although, actually, at the moment, I want caffeine so badly that I'd consider just eating the coffee beans themselves, never mind grinding them.) I mean, like YOU said, "Fuck that guy." I'm not sure I understand his installation sculpture thing, but it sounds... cruel? I'm not judging the fact that you're still having sex with him - after all, I fucked a stranger in a rest stop not too long ago - but I'm hoping that you will figure out a way to do what's best for you in this situation. When I think of it now, my sex with that brown stranger at the rest stop was not so much beautiful as DESPERATE. You deserve better than desperate sex, Ona. And your work IS important and amazing. You deserve to take up as much space in the world as Wen. What I DON'T want is for Wen to make you feel small. You're so big, Ona. I mean, to me, you are. I was absolutely not making fun of you in my last letter so please do not paint me with that particular brush. Thinking about you out in the world making art makes me feel hopeful about things. Like you said about me, you feel real to me, too. You feel like something that I can hold on to. Anyway, I guess what I'm saying is that I hope that you can endure, Ona, because I need you to. I need you to find your way through whatever block you're experiencing so that you can prove to me that it's possible to move forward, to change, and not just be stuck in the same place. I travelled all the way from Oregon to Minnesota and I still feel stuck. I mean, I'm happy, I'm having all of these amazing experiences, I'm learning a new way to be in the world, but I'm still me.

Construction for one of the houses has started. It's exciting to see dark wood raised against the backdrop of this snowy Michigan landscape. We're building HOMES. What could be more important than that? I feel like that third pig in that fairy tale about the three little pigs. Or maybe - the second pig. Which pig made the house of wood? Which ones did the wolf blow down...? I guess it doesn't matter which house the wolf blew down. It only matters that one of the houses endured.

Love,  
Bea

No PS this time. Haha.