

# How To Make, Break & Keep Yourself Whole

BY SHANNON CROSSMAN

I unknit all the loops. Am a mountain of yarn piled on the floor. What was once shaped and formed is now an indistinguishable blob. I've destroyed myself again.

I could lament the undoing. Curl shoulders inward. Heave with great sobs. Grieve for the loss of an identifiable thing. Struggle with what was. Get entangled. Cease to move forward. I've crafted that pattern before. Know it well.

Know, too, that the time approaches when the winding mass of unkempt fibers will cry out to Become. Can feel the first stirrings of the desire to Be. No longer content to gel amoeba-like on the floor, the mass shudders with intention.

I uncurl myself. Try to stop seeing what was before. Do not want to recreate that structure in my life. Close my eyes. Find the end of a thread. Hold it between my fingers. Pause to consider the possibilities. Ask, "What would you BE?" I sit in the silence, an empty bowl ready to be filled by the answer.

***For about ten minutes, things are serene in the waiting. By minute eleven it's hard to stay in this place of not knowing. An impatient gaggle of voices in my head demand action.***

Tempted to give in, I think, "I could rush it." Clasp needles in hand. Knit furious, fast stitches. Just to be done; to be something. Just to shut up the stupid voices.

I've wandered down that dark alley before. Got my ass kicked in the process, too. Trying to be wiser now, I resist the urge to go faster. In a culture that is addicted to speed, slowing down is a f\*ck you to the status quo. To the up-and-comers. To making something of yourself – which I find ironic, since I am trying to make myself anew but in a radically different way.

I was raised to be a good girl, to go along.

Submit.

Take what I'm given and make rainbows out of sh\*t.

***But today, just for this moment, I rebel. Give fast the middle finger. Stay present to the texture and sense of this particular piece of thread rolled between thumb and forefinger. Consider my options. Conclude I am okay feeling undone for a while longer. No matter what the voices say.***

I wait. And wait. Wait some more. When this is over, I may demand sainthood for my patience. It takes weeks for the pattern to reveal itself. Once it does my hands are a flash of needles and color. Smoothing out the remnants of the past as I go. Finding a shape that suits this me. Here. Now.

Bring in new textures, shades, bits of brightness. Embellish as I go. Become a self-made woman. Capable of metamorphosing into whatever I choose. Today. Tomorrow. Next year. I know that all forms are temporal. Subject to time, experiences, the process of living. So, I go willingly off the edge of myself again and again. Sometimes in the arms of trauma. Other times, cackling with glee.

I've re-knit myself more times than I can count. Favorite fibers going all the way back to the first form, are shabby and threadbare. I love them too much to let go, so I bind them into the pattern of myself until there is nothing left with which to stitch. Other threads I release with ease. They bite my tender skin. Make me itch. They were the wrong thing all along.

I think we forget that this whole being human business is mostly trial and error. We blunder. Stumble. Construct one thing. Destroy it. Make another. We understood the flow of this as children, when we still knew how to strap on our seven league boots and skip from creation to destruction and back, like it was a great game.

Do you remember when you used to bring things into being so that you could obliterate them? Smash. Stomp. Roll over them when the entirety of your tiny body. I do. I remember being wholly and equally consumed by the acts of origination and extermination. Recall vividly the yips and howls of delight that came with ravaging the thing of my own making.

Only with age do we learn to cling. Hang on. Fear. Get overly attached. Decide change means we are losing something precious. But here's the truth: if we are only ever creating we become Winchester Mystery House people. Build doors that open onto walls. Staircases that go nowhere. Painted shut windows without a view. Unchecked creation has no architecture, no elegant plan.

***Destruction is essential to our makeup. We need it. Must dismantle ourselves from time to time. Tinker with the ingredients. Sort and sift through the***

***fibers of who we are so that we can choose who we are becoming. Otherwise, we become stagnant and more than a little crazy.***

Thoughts like these roll and tumble across my mental screen as I re-make my world again. Learn to forgive myself for the failed experiments. This time I bind the pleasure of destruction into my creation. Know that it will last as long as it lasts. That one day, all that I create will come to me on its knees, begging to be set free. And I will pick up the hot knife to slice its belly open.

I figure if I can wrap the end into the beginning, it will help me remember. Remember to be grateful for the shiny boots of destruction glinting on my feet as I rip and slice everything to pieces. Grateful for the creativity that reforms the aftermath. Even when it hurts. Even when I quake with fear. Even as I have to pry 'the precious' from my clenched tight hands.

I am as committed to the undoing as I am to the remaking; understand they are essentially the same in the quest to know one's self. I weave shadows and light into the patterns of my life because that is the shape of wholeness. And I would be whole. Am whole. Have always been whole – even when I forget.

The same is true for all of us.

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