

# Are We There Yet?

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By Are We There Yet



*Our view, driving across the country*

“Are we there yet?”

No, the kids didn't say it – I did. We'd just spent six days and six nights driving clear across the country in smothering heat, living on ice cubes, and I'd had enough. I slept sitting up behind the steering wheel, parked in rest areas with the windows barely cracked open, terrified that some crazy person was going to stick their hands through the window and do something weird or awful to us.

In the car, jammed along the sides and piled up on top of each other, were boxes with our clothes and most precious belongings – passports, birth certificates, and a small suitcase overflowing with favourite toys and stuffed animals. Everything else was in a truck.

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Next to the boxes were the kids, who after the first day ditched the car seats and sprawled out in the back, sleeping on quilts and watching thousands of miles of empty plains sweep by, adding to the feeling of distance. We were going very far away. We were going to start a new life, just the kids and I.

I thought I'd had it all planned out. You know as soon as you say that, you'll hit a speed bump. Only this wasn't a speed bump, it turned out to be a mountain.

The mountain was called work.

It was supposed to be flexible. Turned out, flexibility meant being available for more hours at the last minute. When you've got two small kids to pick up at school, this isn't an option.

I was so exhausted I could barely speak. Surrounded by piles of boxes at home, sinkfuls of dishes and unwashed laundry, all I wanted to do was to sleep. Except that first I needed to cook, feed the kids, and dodge guerilla warfare tactics to get them to bed. And there was no more clean underwear. And lunch still needed to be made. Arriving at work in the morning, I hung desperately onto the keyboard to try and stay awake, already dreading the trip home at the end of the day.

Five o'clock hits. If I ran really fast, I could catch the train on time, get the two connections, race four blocks after getting off the train, and just make it before school closes. I run really fast.

I don't make it on time.

I'm on the platform in the train station, shoving myself through the sweaty crowd as the train arrives. I find a half-inch space on the pole and weave my arm through the coat sleeves to grab

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onto it. As the train lurches forward, I realize someone's umbrella is poking in my lower back. Except that it hasn't rained in weeks. It wasn't an umbrella. I ram the heel of my boot straight into the ankle of the guy leering behind me and push myself away.

The trains are late, I'm late, the teachers bawl me out for being a lousy mother, and my kids start crying because they're hungry, tired, and the last ones waiting at school.

Obviously, I am a totally insensitive mother who cares more about her work than her children.

Obviously, I love sitting through meetings that go past 6 pm discussing the merits of changing the online scheduling system to link with Google analytics so we can see how long everyone is gone for lunch and how that affects our client access and numbers. This is especially appealing on Hallowe'en, when there is a very excited ladybug and bumblebee, dressed and waiting and wondering why all their friends have already been around the neighbourhood and all the candies are now gone. Obviously, I think it's great not being able to go to my kids' Mother's Day concert where they all hand out flowers to their mommies, and mine are the only ones standing there, alone with their flowers crushed in their sweaty, hopeful little hands. Obviously, I think it's wonderful to disappoint people who depend on you and believe in you, and do nothing but wait while you can't show up.

But mentioning families at work, does not work. It looks good if you have a photo of your darling cherubs on your desk and from time to time mention how they're on the winning team. It doesn't look good if you actually want, or need, to take care of them.

We've still got a long way to go in this world.

So I did the only thing I could. I quit. And decided to rebuild my life yet again.

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“Are we there yet, Mommy?”

Sort of. We’re getting there. It’s not an easy journey. But at least we can do it together, just my kids and I.

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