

I Did Everything “Right” & Nothing Happened.

Welcome To The “Messy Middle”

Seven years ago, I was living in Brooklyn, fresh-ish out of college, searching for a job after quitting one I despised in the fashion industry.

On paper, I was set—I had a near-perfect academic record, a prestigious college degree, and years of experience in different corners of the industry.

I wanted stability. A normal 9-5. Weekends back. A chance to finally “adult”. But no matter how many interviews I nailed, the rejection kept rolling in. Four recruiters, months of searching...and *nothing*.

I had been told my degree was “gold,” that finding a job wouldn’t be an issue. And yet, there I was, sinking under the weight of feeling like a failure. Like I had made a mistake. Like I had a pointless degree and had been sold a lie.

At the same time, I was diving deep into spirituality, not because I had some grand plan, but because I was searching for *freedom*.

Books on Buddhism. Energy circles. Yoga. Gong baths. Endless meditation.

I was trying to understand myself and this world. *What was the point of it all?*

And more urgently, what the hell was *I* supposed to be doing?

Then...I started a blog.

I “wanted” a corporate job because I had been told that was what I should want, but I had all this creativity inside me with nowhere to put it.

So I wrote.

About job hunting. About checking all the “right” boxes and still feeling completely lost. About the strange freedom of having nowhere to be and too much time to think.

Mostly, I wrote to make sense of the uncertainty.

And somewhere inside those eight long months of unemployment, interviews, and rejection, that little blog became the first clue that maybe the life I was trying so hard to get back into was not actually the one I wanted.

My partner at the time thought I had completely ruined my life, which only made me question myself *more*.

I couldn't afford a coach, and truthfully, I couldn't find many people speaking directly to creatives navigating this kind of uncertainty either. Years later, that gap would become part of the reason I became a coach myself.

But back then, I had no idea where any of it was leading.

What I didn't realize was that even in the chaos, I was planting seeds.

That little blog, *Kelsey's Day Off*, eventually became the Love Letters I would write for years. The creative spark I didn't know what to do with slowly became a career I could never have mapped out at the time.

There would be jobs, coaching, marketing, entrepreneurship, and plenty of pivots along the way. But much of the discipline, resilience, and emotional bandwidth I would need for all of it was being built during a period *I was convinced represented failure*.

I was being trained in the Messy Middle.

And now, seven years later, I find myself somewhere strangely familiar.

There is rejection again. Uncertainty. That uncomfortable question: what do I really want?

Only this time, I recognize the landscape.

Rejection can feel like evidence that something has gone terribly wrong. We become desperate to find the "right path", but we forget that we change, and with this, our goals change too.

There is a strange tension in becoming competent at something you may no longer want. We spend years trying to establish ourselves, only to discover that eventually, growth can mean questioning the very identity we worked so hard to build.

It is easy to stay the course because it is familiar.

Maybe because it pays or because other people understand what you do. Because changing direction means becoming a beginner again.

It's worth asking ourselves the question: *Am I doing this because I actually want it, or because it feels safe?*

There is a strange cultural promise attached to ambition: that if we work hard enough, eventually we will arrive somewhere where everything makes sense.

The right job. The right title. The successful business. The stable identity.

But careers, especially creative ones, rarely work that cleanly.

The things that once felt exciting become familiar. Industries change. We change. Sometimes the version of success we spent years chasing no longer resembles the life we actually want.

That does not necessarily mean we chose *wrong*.

Sometimes the life we worked incredibly hard to create becomes the exact thing we eventually have to question.

The Messy Middle is uncomfortable because there is no proof yet that the next thing will work.

There are only clues: curiosity, restlessness, the idea that keeps returning, the work you keep making time for even when nobody is asking you to.

I used to think uncertainty was the problem.

Now I think *certainty* can become a hiding place.

Seven years ago, I thought eight months of unemployment meant nothing was happening. I could not see that I was learning how to trust my ideas, tolerate rejection, structure my own time, and build something without knowing exactly where it would lead.

I could only see what had not happened yet.

The job had not materialized. The plan had not worked. The future had not arrived.

And then, slowly, *it did*.

The Messy Middle is not particularly glamorous. It can be destabilizing, frustrating, and deeply inconvenient.

But sometimes it asks a useful question: What do I actually want *now*?

So are you feeling lost? Good.

You're standing at the edge of what comes next.