

WHAT IF  
ALL THOSE THINGS  
I DID  
WERE THE THINGS  
THAT GOT ME  
HERE?

A Wild





*Cheryl, who changed her name from Cheryl Nyland, with the horse tattoo she got in her mom's memory.*

"We love and care for oodles of people, but only a few of them, if they died, would make us believe we could not continue to live. Imagine if there were a boat upon which you could put only four people, and everyone else known and beloved to you would then cease to exist. Who would you put on that boat? It would be painful, but how quickly you would decide: You and you and you and you, get in. The rest of you, goodbye."

**CHERYL STRAYED**



"I receive a lot of letters like yours. Most go on in length, describing all sorts of maddening situations and communications in bewildered detail, but in each there is the same question at its core: Can I convince the person about whom I am crazy to be crazy about me? The short answer is no. The long answer is no."

**CHERYL STRAYED**



"I didn't get to grow up and pull away from her and bitch about her with my friends and confront her about the things I'd wished she'd done differently and then get older and understand that she had done the best she could and realize that what she had done was pretty damn good and take her fully back into my arms again. Her death had obliterated that. It had obliterated me. It had cut me short at the very height of my youthful arrogance. It had forced me to instantly grow up and forgive her every motherly fault at the same time that it kept me forever a child, my life both ended and begun in that premature place where we'd left off. She was my mother, but I was motherless. I was trapped by her, but utterly alone. She would always be the empty bowl that no one could full. I'd have to fill it myself again and again and again."

## **CHERYL STRAYED**



"Blood is thicker than water, my mother had always said when I was growing up, a sentiment I'd often disputed. But it turned out that it didn't matter whether she was right or wrong. They both flowed out of my cupped palms."

## **CHERYL STRAYED**



"I was a terrible believer in things, but I was also a terrible nonbeliever in things. I was as searching as I was skeptical. I didn't know where to put my faith, or if there was such a place, or even what the word faith meant, in all of its complexity. Everything seemed to be possibly potent and possibly fake."

**CHERYL STRAYED**



"...the death of my mother was the thing that made me believe the most deeply in my safety: nothing bad could happen to me, I thought. The worst thing already had."

**CHERYL STRAYED**



"I was amazed that what I needed to survive could be carried on my back. And, most surprising of all, that I could carry it."

**CHERYL STRAYED**



"I'm a free spirit who never had the balls to be free."

**CHERYL STRAYED**





## I WAS AMAZED

THAT WHAT I NEEDED TO SURVIVE  
COULD BE CARRIED ON MY BACK.  
AND, MOST SURPRISING OF ALL,  
THAT I COULD CARRY IT.

**CHERYL STRAYED**, *Wild: From Lost to Found  
on the Pacific Crest Trail*





# “FEAR,

to a great extent, is born of a story we tell ourselves, and so I chose to tell myself a different story from the one women are told. I decided I was safe. I was strong. I was brave. Nothing could vanquish me... Fear begets fear. Power begets power. I willed myself to beget power. And it wasn't long before I actually wasn't afraid.”

CHERYL STRAYED

*from* wild