

Nancy Ford Dugan

GPS for the Car-less

Don't even think of giving up your job in this economy, even if it bores you silly and they keep asking you to remove your files from their precious windowsills. This is not self-fulfillment time, despite the letter you got in the mail inviting you to live your best life with a special discounted rate on Oprah magazine. Now is not the time.

Turn left at Melissa's desk and move quickly out the door, before she asks you again about the symptoms of swine flu.

Step away from the Starbucks. There's a woman inside screaming, "There's not enough foam!" at the barista.

Go ahead and take that yoga class. It may calm you. But don't even think about trying a headstand. Some folks Twitter, but you, my dear, totter.

Stop looking in the store window at the belted pink spring sweater with the white collar that would beautifully frame your aging face in flattering rosy hue. Keep moving. That material will be too tight across your gut and upper arms anyway.

Don't even consider going for a drink with Danny. His 401(k) is decimated and you know you'd have to pick up the tab. Your 401(k) is decimated, too, but at least you have an income at the moment (as long as you clear your clutter from their stupid windowsills). Have some pride. Not only is Danny not that into you, he's desperate. And you know it. Recalculate.

Don't put your ruby ring on the side of the sink as you wash your hands at the hair salon. You'll forget it and lose thousands of dollars. Your 401(k) has already done that for you.

Stop crying on the subway as you realize you left your ruby ring by the sink at the salon. Call them. Too late, they're closed now. Fill out the forms tomorrow. Kiss that ring good-bye.

Stop talking about your stupid ring at Ben and Brian's perfectly lovely dinner party. They're upset for you, but you're ruining the discussion with Harry and Tom and Cecile about the economy and Michelle Obama's arms.

Okay, go ahead and drink another glass of wine since Ben forgot to put the fish in the oven. Apparently it's going to be a long evening. Try to be entertaining and stop looking at your naked finger.

Go home. Spring for a cab just this once. You're a bit swacked. Tell the driver to take the FDR. Now weep alone in the backseat thinking about your ring and the taxes you need to finish. Repeatedly

punch the button on the annoying and loud advertising screen on the back of your driver's seat until it shuts up. Look on the bright side. You may pay fewer taxes next year, when your job (like your ring, like your nest egg, like your youth, like your parents, like your mental acuity, like Danny...) is long gone. Go ahead. Live your best life.