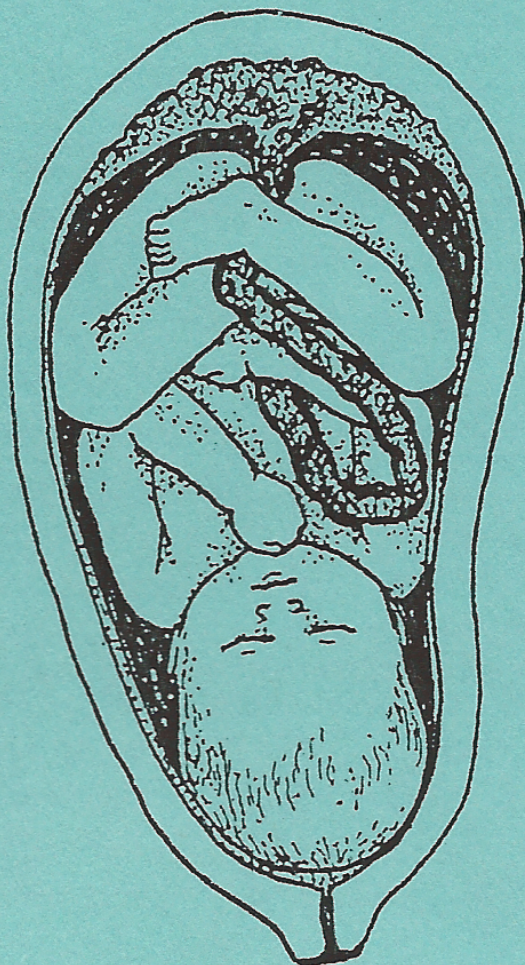


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# ZUZU and the BABY CATCHER



midwife • meets • motherhood

Rhonda Baker • 2000 NE 42 #183 • Portland, OR 97213

Ahh... back to normal... whatever that is!

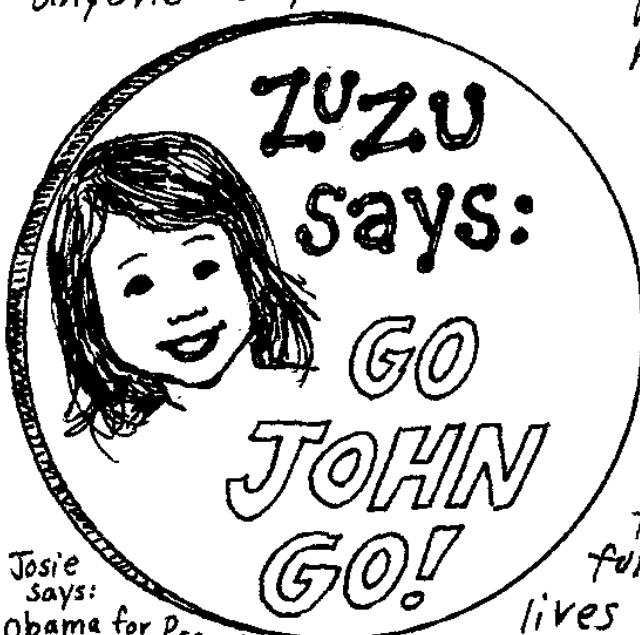
Here at the world headquarters, life has been lots of fun, travelling, continued sleep deprivation, escaping heat, being completely enamoured of my children, and POLITICS.

I've never been a particularly politically active person, I've chosen my battles and I've gotten out there and marched on occasion - but nothing has gotten me as inflamed as George W. Bush and his regime.

I've tried to make it my policy not to preach to the choir, but if you happen to be a Republican and somehow this liberal little zine got into your hands, let me ask you - in gentle and loving tones - Do you honestly, in your heart, believe that George W. Bush is wise enough, honest enough, has integrity enough to be the leader of this country? Have you heard him speak? Do you really believe that he cares about anything or anyone beyond his own personal agenda?

Please, I beg you - search your heart.

Don't vote on just one issue. Vote on the hundreds who have died for no reason. Vote for the air we breathe. Vote for education, for healthcare. Vote for John Kerry. Let our lives improve. Peace, *Rhonda*

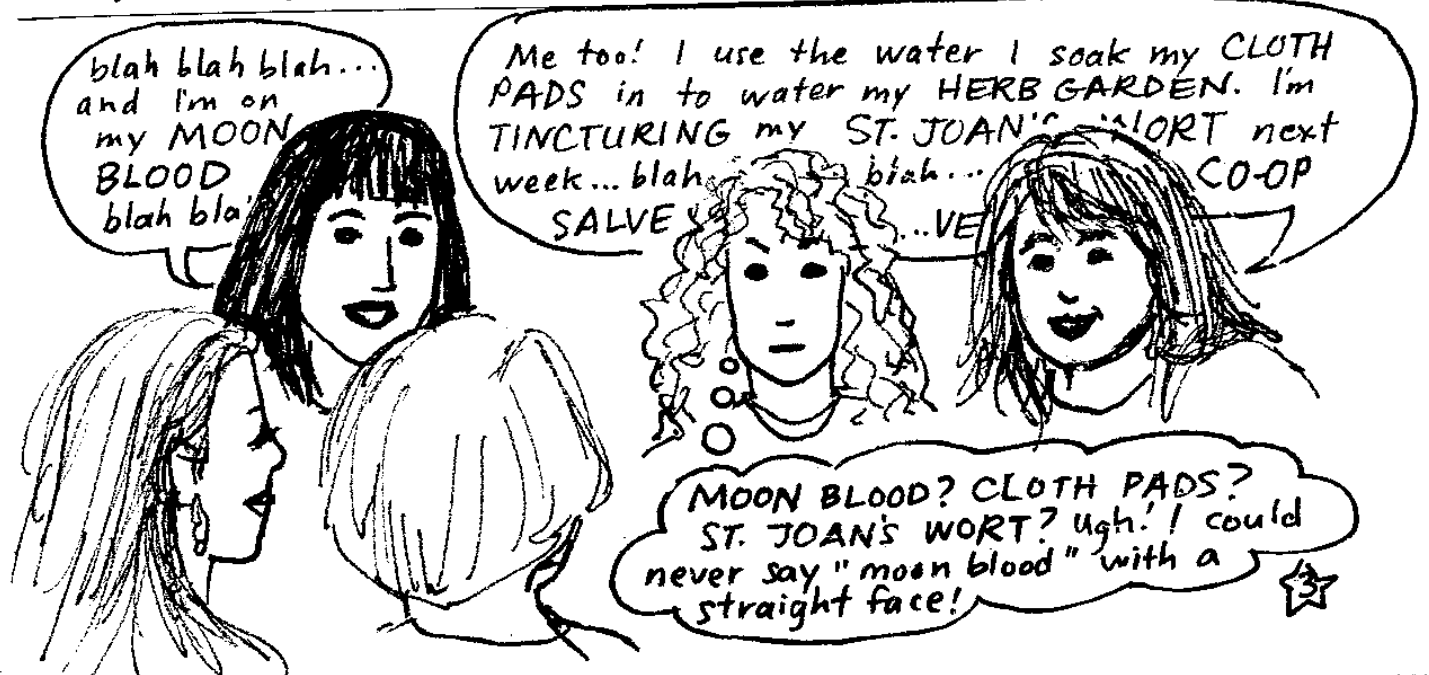


Josie says:  
Obama for President 2020!!

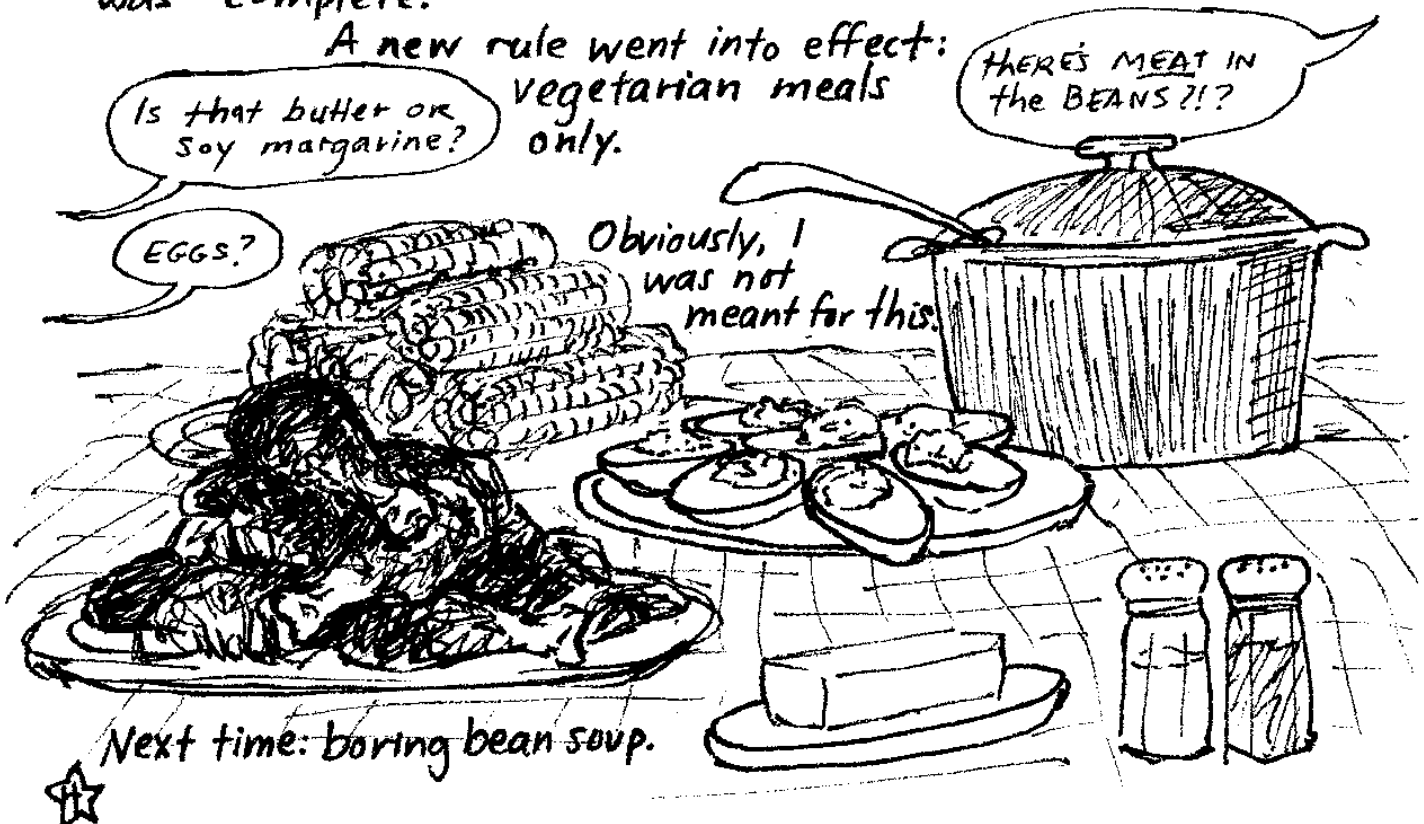
# Becoming a midwife in 10 easy years

I'd be lying if I said I have clear memories of midwifery school. I don't, really. The things I can recall are specific moments here and there... and certain overwhelming feelings. For instance I know that I very quickly fell into the common trap of thinking my instructor was god; the be-all and end-all of midwives. I wanted to grow up and be just like her. I wanted her to like me best. I wanted her to choose me as her apprentice. I wanted to make her smile, laugh. I desperately wanted her approval. I worshipped her, and was crushed by every negative comment thrown my way. I hated her. You name it. It was very much like my relationship with my mom when I was 10 or so, now that I think about it.

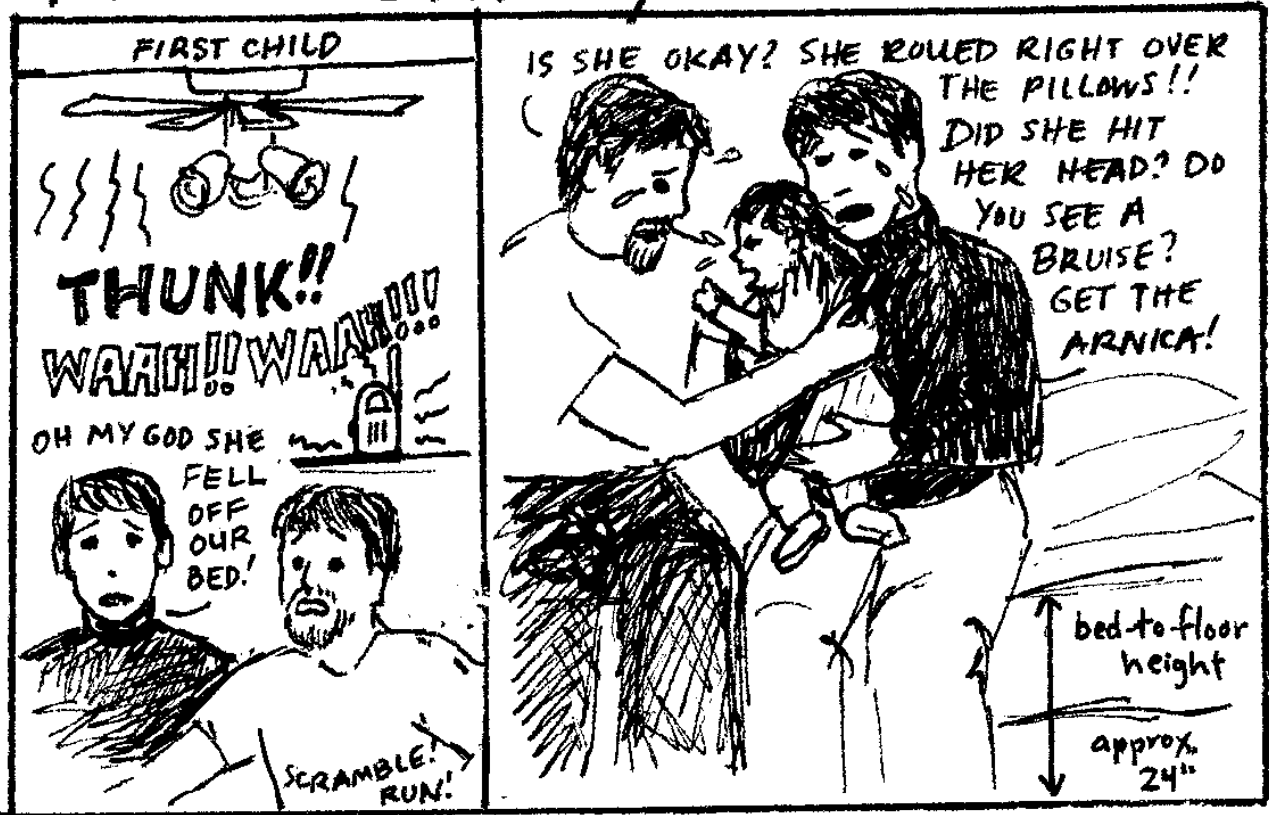
And then there were the crushing moments when I was convinced that I could never be the 'right kind.' of midwife.



All I cared about was pregnant women, birth, and babies... but it seemed that somehow I was not up to par because I didn't embrace the whole crunchy granola earthmother lifestyle. And I didn't want to. This put me at odds with most of the other students... especially when it came to food. Each week someone provided lunch for the class. After many weeks of over-garlicked bowls of vegetable mush, it was my turn. The weather was warm, and I made a good old-fashioned picnic: bar-be-qued chicken, baked beans, corn on the cob, devilled eggs, strawberry shortcake. An easygoing, fun-in-the sun picnic to offset our sobering studies! In my naive little redneck mind, you'd have to be crazy to turn down such a feast! Crazy... or a vegetarian. Which they mostly were. The disappointment and disgust were thick as barbeque sauce. My sense of shame & unworthiness was complete.



# FIRST CHILD/SECOND CHILD



# Thinking about scars ~

When Zuzu was teeny, maybe two weeks old, I noticed a hot red lump in the crease between her belly and thigh, right where there are a bunch of lymph nodes. What in my instant flash of ignorant terror was surely lymph cancer turned out to be nothing but a boil. Well, not 'nothing'... it was still a big deal to new-mama-me.

Doctor sent us home with instructions to use hot compresses to bring it to a head and then lance it ourselves if we felt up to it. (But not before sending us to the lab for a blood draw, where I taught that phlebotomist a thing or two about effectively getting blood from a baby's heel!) We hot compressed and clayed and two days later we had a big juicy pus-filled zit to pop. Sounds like fun, huh? Uhm... no. But, we did it. Randy held our poor little baby still while I poked and squeezed...

Three years later, you can still see the little scar where I was clumsy in my lancing. She doesn't even know she has it.

I look at my daughter's sturdy smooth body; her long legs, her strong back, her soft cheeks, and my heart aches for her perfection. Already she is accumulating the scars of her lifetime: the boil. The place on the side of her right nostril where she face-planted on the pavement three times last summer, landing in the exact same place just as it started to heal.



Her lifetime will bring her many more scars, I'm sure, and I worry a mama's worry about all of them. I pray she never has a disfiguring accident - I want her perfect hands and feet, her priceless face, her velvet skin to remain flawless & unharmed. I am powerless to stop the world from happening to her. I know it. I grudgingly accept it... but it still hurts to think about it. It hurts worse to think about scars she may carry in her mind and heart. She is so sensitive, so loving. What heartbreaks are in store for my girl? What crazed, sleep-deprived, mean thing will her mama say that she will carry with her her entire life? What lover will break up with her and leave her feeling ugly & unlovable?

Last May, a month before her 3rd birthday, we were seated in our warm-up circle in gymnastics class when the teacher announced that the trampoline was available that day if anyone wanted to jump. Zuzu hopped up immediately, "Let's Go!" and all the adults laughed lovingly at her enthusiasm. Zuzu turned her face away and crumpled into my arms, crying, "I don't want to be a misfit, mama." My heart broke, and I thought, It's already begun.

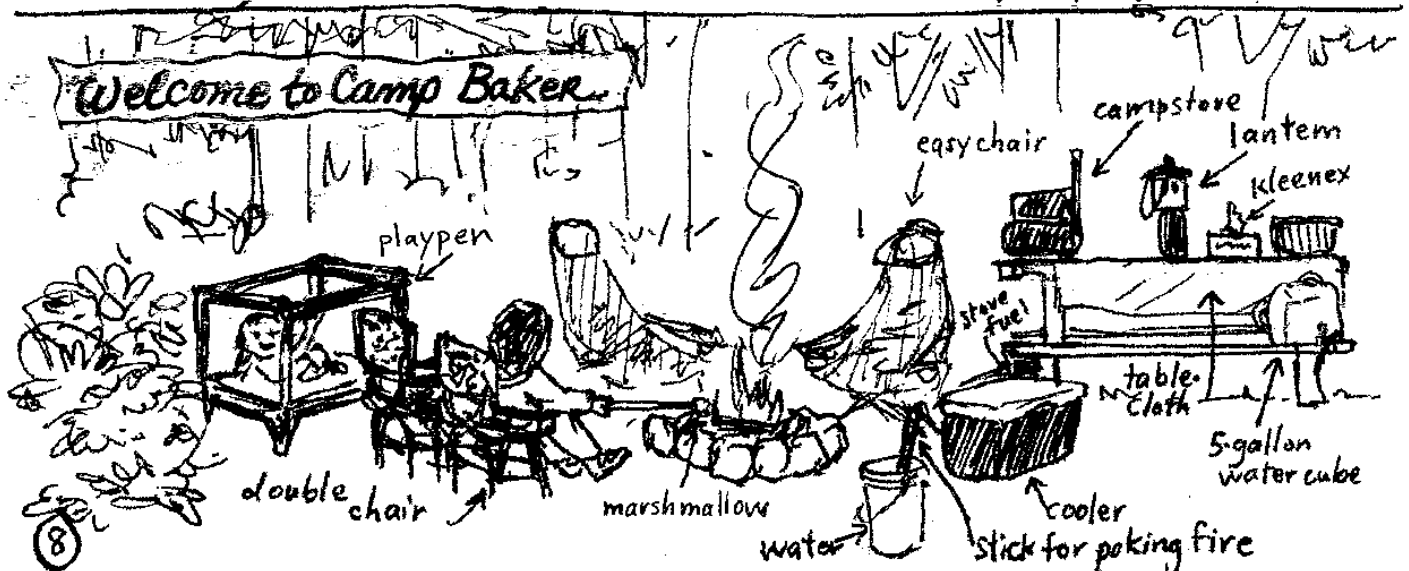
I try not to think these thoughts too much, and instead when I admire how her chocolate-brown eyes move, how sweet they are when she first awakens, I think, someday she will open her eyes and see her love gazing adoringly at her, saying, "I love watching you open your eyes." That someday a lover will stroke her back, gently, as I do now, and will love the feel of her skin, will stroke her back for hours just for the pleasure of touching her.

I send these sweet thoughts and hopes like a balm into the universe, hoping they will float through time and space and help soothe and heal those future scars... or maybe even help prevent them.

# CAMPING

"SO...what exactly do you LIKE so much about camping?" my friend Michelle, the avid bug-hater asks. I couldn't really tell her. It's everything about it, it's the... NON-ness about it. The musty smell of the tent, the pervasive smell of the wood-smoke. Relying on a fire to heat the water (well, the dishwater, anyway). Building the fire - always a somewhat triumphant experience even with matches. Making do. No telephones, computers, TV. No house or yard to keep up with. Limited choices. The intense darkness and quiet of night. Flashlight and firelight. Everything.

We have a camping routine... well, I have a camping routine that Randy follows as best he can. I like to get our campsite all set up pretty much the same way every time - this appeals to the part of me that craves order and consistency (rare commodities in motherhood). Besides, setting up camp is a lot like playing house as a kid - which tree is the 'bedroom'? Where will we hang the clothesline? And the challenges of setting up with a newly-crawling infant 'just can't be beat.' (Thank you playpen..)



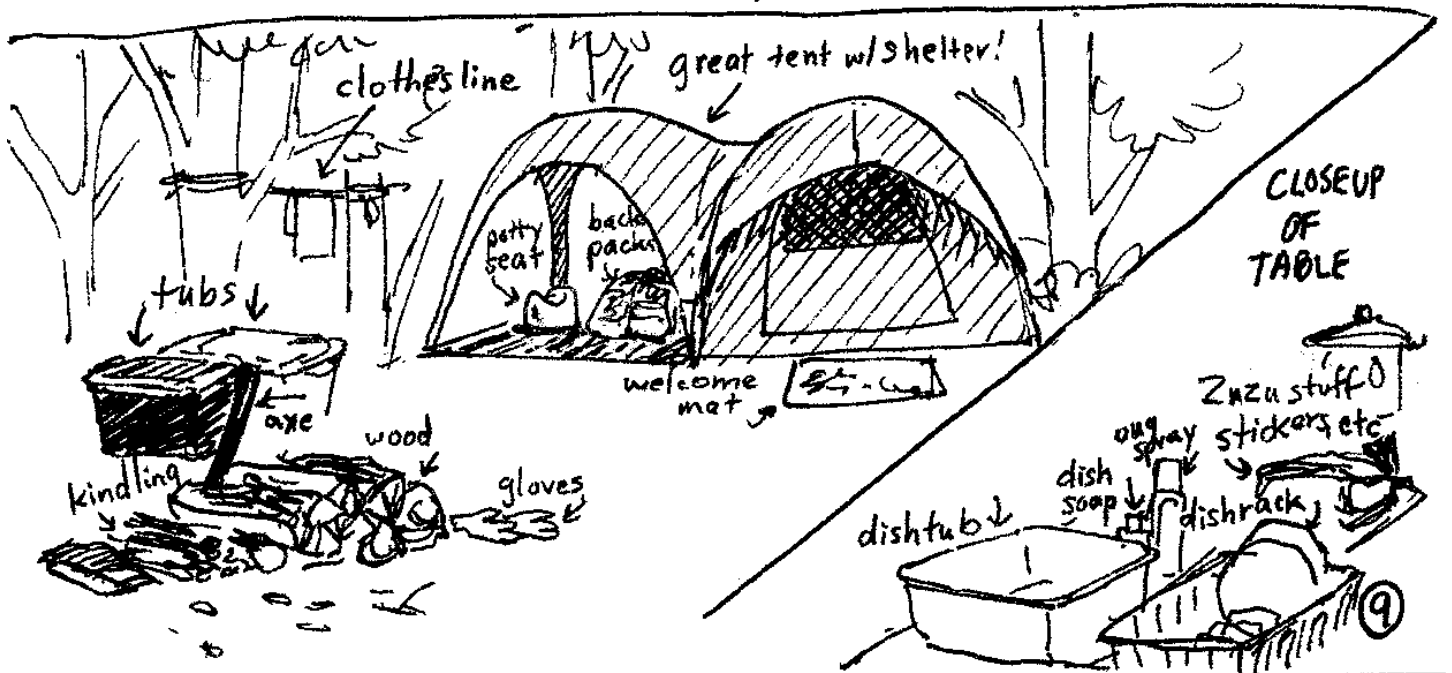
Unload the kids, & the van... we put up the tent first, then get a fire going. Set up the table & light the lantern when it's dark. I used to think that it isn't really camping if you are cooking on a campstove and peeing in a bathroom, but listen - with kids, you can't be without hot & cold running water. We go to campgrounds that have well-spaced sites, with water spigots every 100 feet or so, and camp hosts who can help you out if you run out of kindling.

We keep suitcases & laundry bag in the back of the van, keep a pot of water on the fire for dishwashing, keep all the food in a storage tub, all the dishes & matches & dishtowels &c. in the other storage tub, keep a bucket of water near the fire... the same setup everytime. And I gotta say, it's idyllic. No, really. It is.

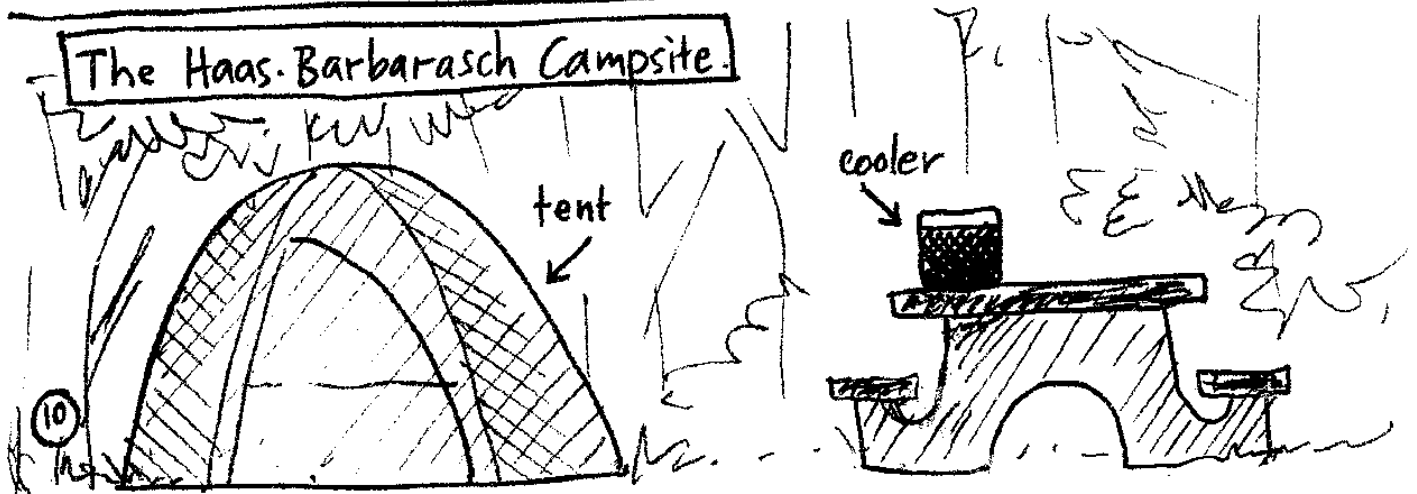
Josie learned to crawl - well, scoot - on one camping trip this year, and our nature girl made a beeline for the endless dirt and rocks. Yum! Zuzu was barefoot for most of the same trip. I just love getting my girls out in the woods.

Zuzu is instinctively careful around fire - my biggest worry, that fire - and I can only hope Josie has the same common sense.

I think I like the simplicity most of all... rise, get the fire going, get coffee perking, water warming, make breakfast, wash up, hike & play, eat again, chores, play, eat, rest, sleep. Somehow it's just not so simple at home. Not sure why.



So, late this summer we were told about Oxbow Park campground by Kate "Miranda" Haas - a woman for whom "camping with two small children" was synonymous with "a mother's worst nightmare hell." They were going, Kate & Bruce & Simon & Nate, for one night, as an experiment. I was excited at the opportunity to show Kate the simple beauty of camping, even WITH children. She was not of my same frame of mind, but was willing to open her mind to the possibility of fun. We arrived a night early and happily set up camp. No, that's a lie. Mama was a complete idiot and thought, hey, why wait til Friday morning? Lets leave when daddy gets home. At 8pm, with two exhausted and screaming children, with dusk melting quickly into night, I was cursing as I tried to find, oh, ANYTHING in the tubs that I had foolishly allowed Randy to pack up. It was miserable. But finally the children were asleep to the music of the dripping trees (it had stormed heavily the three days previous, but were the Bakers deterred by the possibility of a thunderstorm? HA!) They both slept for 6 hours straight - a first for Josie - and I woke elated after my first night of good sleep since she was born! As dawn broke my wonderful husband and I smiled through the mist at being in the woods again. No, really, we did.



We had been dedicated to Wyeth campground, a sweet spot on the Columbia River, for a couple years now, so it was a joy to find we liked Oxbow even more. NOT ONLY were there pay showers (solar showers, taken bent over in a makeshift showerstall with moss as a bathmat are nice and all, but a hot shower in a warm room? oh yeah.) but the best part was the DEER. They are practically pets at this park where no dogs are allowed to camp, for better or worse... but hey, they're safe! A young buck with antlers about 8 inches long, a doe, and a little spotted fawn came right into our camp! It was so sweet and thrilling. We were blissed out.

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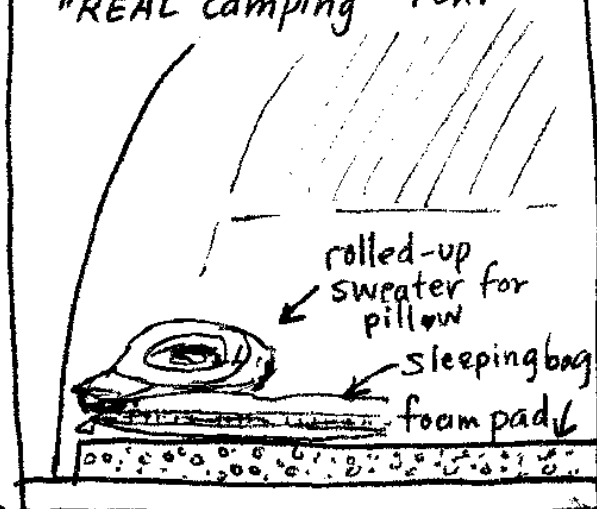
After breakfast - which always tastes so much better when cooked outside - and dishes washed, it's time for playing and hiking. We were near the Sandy River with its sandy, rocky banks and Zuzu and her daddy were in heaven. Zuzu can turn any object into a toy and a field of rocks is a perfect playground. She built houses and cars and rock families, and of course the Daddy Challenge: find a rock that Daddy CAN'T skip. Oh, yes, Randy is the skip master, and he and Zuzu spend many a happy hour honoring that ages-old pastime: throwing rocks into water.



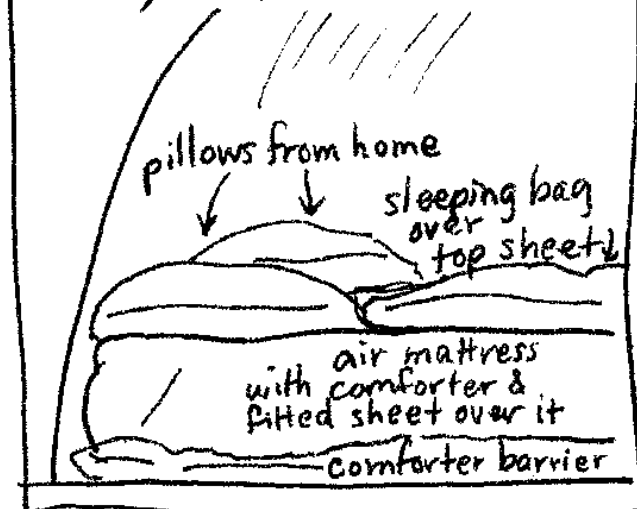
Friday night at Oxbow found me blissfully holding Zuzu on my lap (Daddy and Josie already asleep back at camp) on a hard wooden bench as the guest folksinger entertained us with favorite sing-alongs. "This Land is Your Land", "There Aint No Bugs on Me" and "Roll On Columbia", a favorite of Simon's. This is the stuff my childhood dreams were made of. We never went camping when I was a kid, although somehow along the way I did learn from my mom how to perfectly toast a marshmallow. I smile at my daughter and my friend and her family in the darkness and hope I am piling up the good memories for my Zuzu.

So, yes, earlier that evening our friends Kate & Bruce & Simon & Nate arrived and set up their -ahem- rather Spartan Campsite, and came over for some food & marshmallows. Nate, at 18 months, had a fabulous time with a big stick, and Zuzu was very happy to have her pal Simon around. For my part, it was nice to be able to let Zuzu go explore a bit, knowing that four pairs of adult eyes were on her. At one point Kate came over to our site and sighed, "I'm relating more and more to Ma Ingalls and less and less to Laura." We agreed that we could never have been pioneer women, thanked heaven for our comforts. It was great having her there. I even think... that she might consider doing it again. But with pillows, next time.

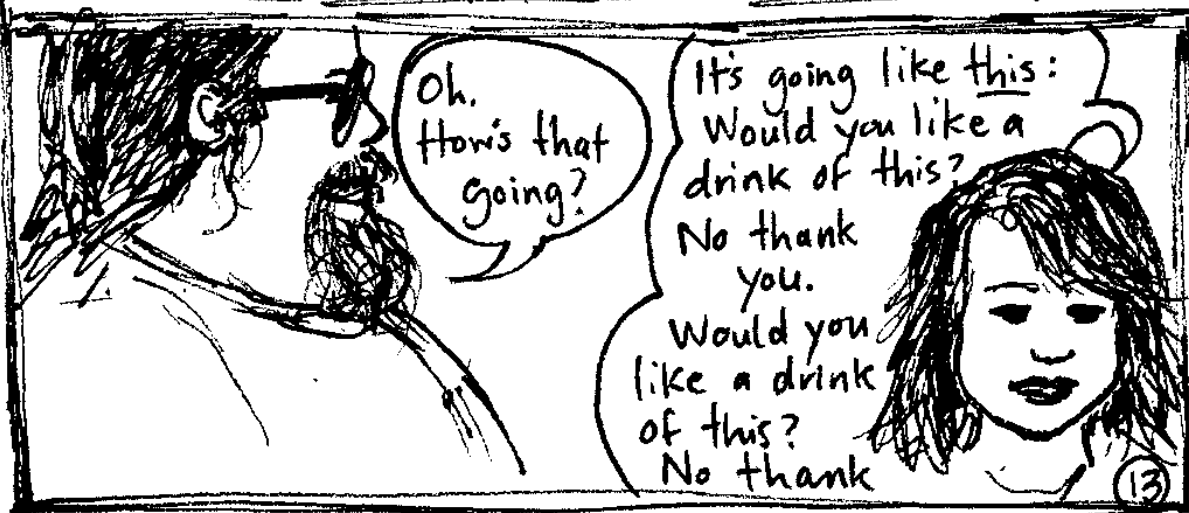
INSIDE the Haas-Barbarasch  
"REAL camping" tent:



INSIDE the BAKER plush  
cushy comforts-of-home tent:



# PLANET ZUZU



# LOOK WHAT I FOUND! A bit 'o' Zuzu's past...

Every once in a while I think that surely life was easier when I only had one child... but then I find a little gem like this: a long hard day, so unbelievable in its happenstance that I had to write it down.

APRIL 9, 2002 - 10 MONTHS OLD - ZUZU.

6am - wakeup (2 days ago it was 5 am, thanks daylight savings)

7am - Daddy offers/Mom begs Daddy to take baby

8am - Mama up & showered. Daddy naps. Baby eats Scrambled eggs & prunes

9am - Baby falls asleep nursing. Mama determined to still get going. (To prenatal)

9:15am - Baby spews entire breakfast in car. Still recognizable food. Lucky only just out of driveway.

9:20am - Baby changed, carseat meticulously cleaned by daddy, on the road.

9:30am - Daddy dropped off; on the road for one-hour trip. Baby now awake and hungry, eating fruit-filled cereal bar and getting it all over face, hands, hair, carseat and outfit #2.

11am - Eating more eggs at client's house.

11:45am - On the road to home. Sleeps most of the way.

12:50pm - Home. Mama rinsing outfit #1 when baby starts pooping. Mama removes diaper and puts baby on potty. In the process, small bit of poop falls on floor.



12:50 cont. Mama discards bit of poop. Baby poops & pees.

Mama leaves baby naked to continue rinsing out clothes. Baby finds piece of poop, decides to taste.

Baby taken into bath, then into outfit #3.

Playdate called.

1:15pm Playdate here, baby eats Berrie-O's for lunch.

1:40pm Playdate leaving when baby nurses and then vomits entire lunch on mama & self, narrowly missing carpet. Playdate's mommy helps clean up. Baby into outfit #4.

3:30pm Mama & baby go for walk. Baby does NOT nap as hoped.

4:45pm Daddy home. Baby spits up lingering lunch on mama. Family eats dinner.

Mom needs a break, but first baby's diaper is wet.

Remove diaper. Baby wants to nurse.

5:30pm Baby nursing w/naked bottom, pees all over mama's lap. Mama gives baby to daddy, goes to prepare bath for herself.

6:15 Mama says to daddy, "Are you watching your girl?"

Baby is sitting on floor with poop in each hand, and large poop on floor beside her. Cleanup commences.

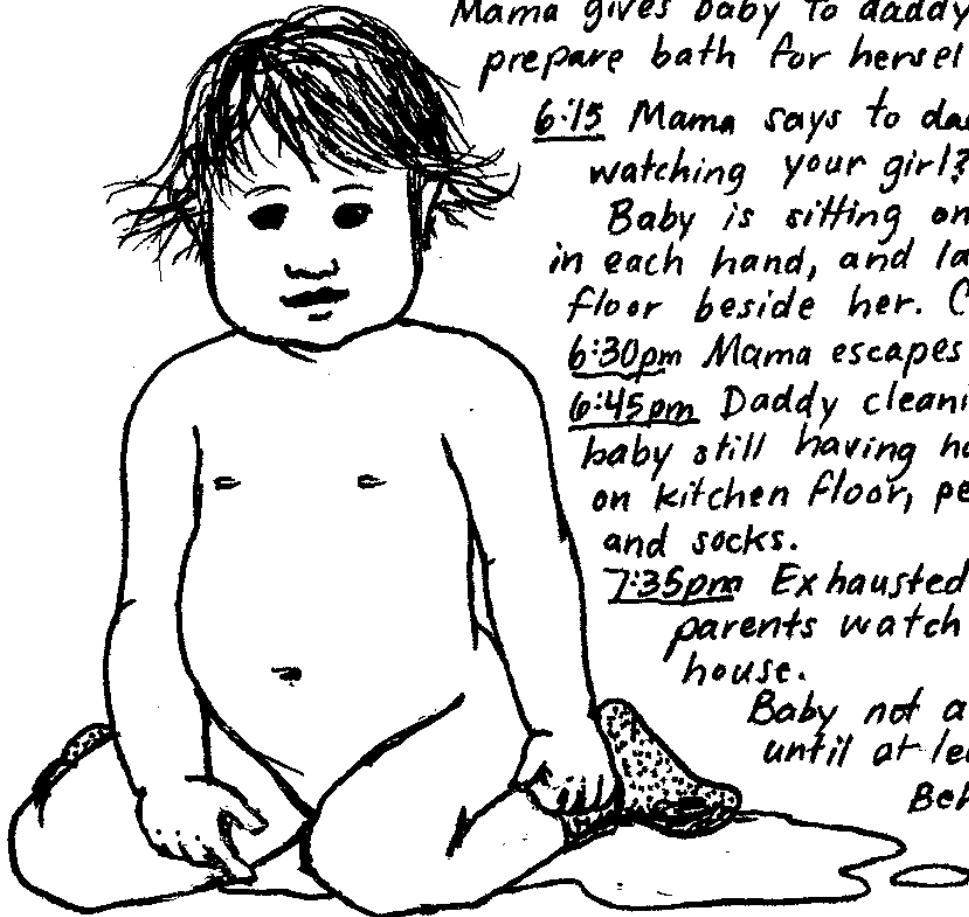
6:30pm Mama escapes to bath.

6:45pm Daddy cleaning up dinner mess, baby still having naked time. Baby, on kitchen floor, pees all over self and socks.

7:35pm Exhausted and bewildered parents watch child destroy house.

Baby not allowed to sleep until at least 8pm.

Behavior improves.



## and now a few words about Josie

Well, what can I say? She's still alive. There have been moments when I thought I'd have to send her packing, but she's so damn cute...

Being a sahm\* to two is hard. Hardest, most frustrating, uninspiring work I've ever done. Well, close anyway.

I love both my girls madly, but right now Zuzu is a much more interesting person to hang out with. Thankfully, and miraculously, Zuzu loves Josie so much, so even when I am frustrated with our lack of time to play together, Zuzu is totally welcoming of her babysister (most of the time.) Josie is really a quite lively and happy baby these days, but has that annoying baby need of near-constant attention and being carried around. Razza-fratzin' BABY!! She wakes up every two hours ALL NIGHT. Sometimes a binky replacement does the trick, sometimes a nurse. So far the worst is her wee-morning wake-up, where for one or sometimes two HOURS she is simply AWAKE. Usually fussy. Doesn't want to play, just wants to climb on me or her daddy. Needless to say I am zombie-tired most of the time.

Let's see... well, she is completely different from Zuzu in every way. She loves to bang on things, splash in the tub. She cut her first tooth and started crawling the same week - at 7 months. (Zuzu@9)

She is pulling herself to standing and is cruising the furniture already - learned how to climb stairs @ 8 months. ZOINKS! Can you say 'mama in for some trouble'? She is learning sign language - "eat" "nurse".



But for all her genius, her main fault is this: she is a baby. And babies are thankless little energy drains. Yes, yes, when she smiles and flaps her arms at me - or claps her hands, her new trick - it makes me smile.

I even occasionally feel rushes of pure mama-love as I hold her and feel her relax into me. But she is simply not Zuzu. Nor do I want her to be. I don't want her to be anything but herself - just OLDER herself. Like... two. Two is great.

There are those women who love babies. They "miss that little cry"; they miss nursing all night, they long for the days of spit-up clothes and sleep deprivation and incessant demands. I don't know why. I'm just not a 'baby person'. Yes, yes, I know, I'm a midwife.. I should love babies. I do! I do! I love newborns, and I love tucking them in with their mamas and going home. Give me a two-year-old any day.

So, at this point in my life I feel like I am just... waiting. Waiting for sleep. Waiting for weaning. Waiting for Josie to be able to communicate with me, to get a mischievous gleam in her eye, to make me laugh at her silliness. I know she will. I see her in there, the fiery little girl with the determined brow, my explorer, out to conquer the world.

For now, I eagerly greet each milestone as one step closer to my desire: to have two KIDS.

I love you, Jose-a-Bose.

We'll make it. I know we will. Be patient with me.



# ZUZU

"If you eat ice cream and watch a movie together, then you're married!"  
6-27-04

Watching Daddy do Taekwon Do:  
"That's called a Hawaiian punch!"

Mama, to runny-nose Zuzu:

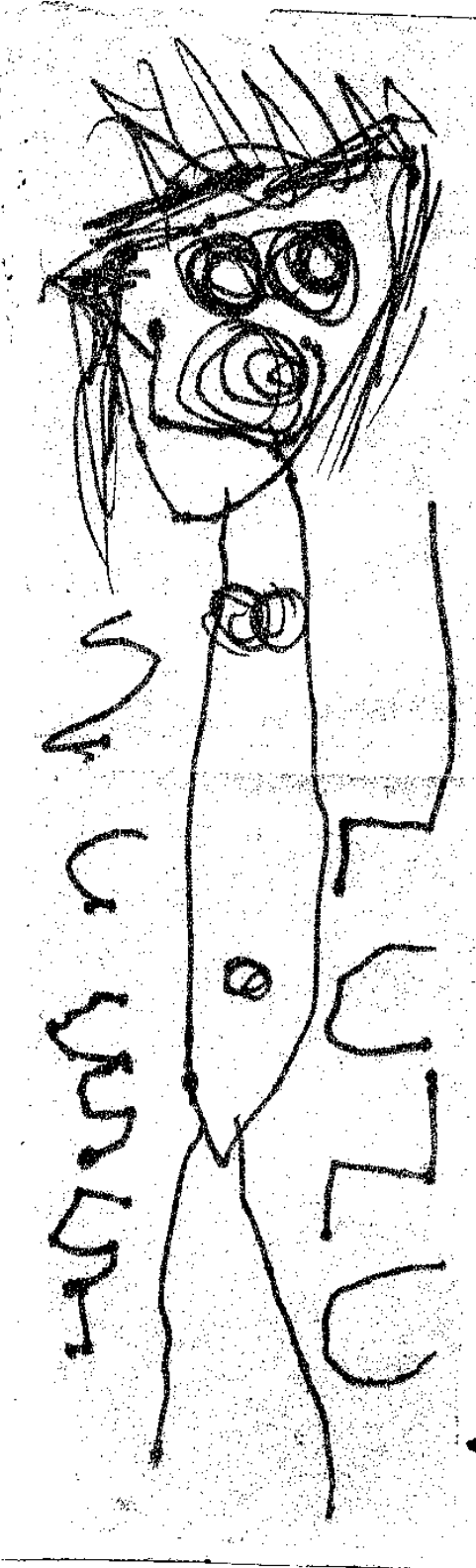
"Honey, do you need a nose wipe?"  
"No mama. I can just use my handy-dandy shirt!" Zuzu wipes her nose with her shirt. Eyes light up.  
"Or, I can use my sleeve!"

Zuzu says something hilarious, and I ask her, laughing, "Why do you crack me up so much?" She says, "Because I'm so funny." Duh.

"Mama, Daddy said I'm out of my freakin' mind!"

To her older cousin, Skylar:  
"You're a big kid, so you can wink your other eye, too. I can't."

The 'writing' on the left of this drawing of me (note boobies) says:  
"Dear Mama, You wish you had long hair, and you're welcome for this picture." 7-24-04



# GALLERY

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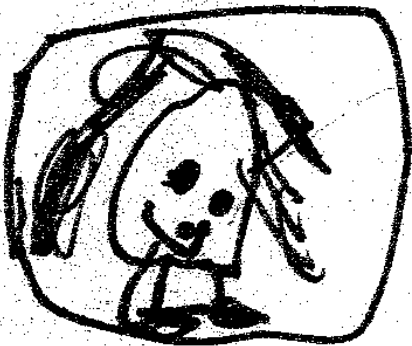
Zuzu is very into the idea of having "choices"—and when I was pestering her about choosing something to eat (don't get me started on the eating habits of a three-year-old; I'm astounded that she continues to grow) she told me, impatiently:

"If I want to have it, I want to have it!  
If I don't want to have it, I don't want to have it! That's my CHOICE!"

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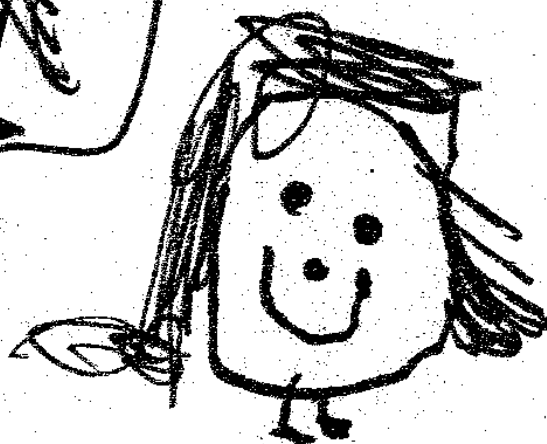
Making me a note, and narrating as she writes:  
"Dear mama. Thank you for the love."

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"Zuzu watching  
Zuzuvision"

8.6.04



— Zuzu

## *A Prayer for Re-Birth*

I laid in Randy's warm familiar embrace, and wept. "I'm so afraid," I sobbed. "I know, I am too," he whispered, and we wondered, how did it get so bad? And just how much worse is it going to have to get? Illness? No. Job loss? Not yet. Then why do I weep?

I weep because I am deeply afraid that George W. Bush will get elected (or NOT elected) again, and will take office anyway. I weep because he is a dishonest, disrespectful, dishonorable man, and he is president.

I weep because I am ashamed of what this country has become under him and his administration. I weep because we are less safe, and less liked, than ever before.

I weep for the children and mothers in Iraq who are living in a hell no better than before.

I weep for the children and mothers in Sudan and other countries that actually need our help and intervention, for whom George W. Bush has not lifted a finger.

I weep for the people of this country who have lost their jobs to outsourcing, while George W. Bush rewards the companies who sent the work overseas.

I weep for the senior citizens whose medicare is threatened.

I weep for the future senior citizens whose social security is threatened.

I weep for the soldiers in Iraq whose pay and benefits have been cut by the president who sent them there. They have been disrespected and dishonored.

I weep for the environment, as George W. denies global warming, lifts regulations to protect the environment, and believes that no historical site or forest is sacred.

I weep for the dead of September 11, 2001, whose murderer has not been caught, and has instead been forgotten.

I weep for veterans who gave life and limb, who were made mockery of at the Republican convention, where they passed out purple band-aids saying, "here's your purple heart, anyone can get one," as a way of ridiculing John Kerry, a true war hero.

You see, I don't understand how anyone could vote for this man. He lied about weapons in Iraq – a country with barely an army, ignored his advisors,

ignored the United Nations, and waged war for NO REASON. A thousand soldiers have died and many more will die. In fact at this rate we will most certainly have a draft. Do you know any young men or women between 18 and 25? My son is that age. Your brother? Your nephew? Your husband? Are you prepared to put them in a uniform and kiss them goodbye for one of Bush's unholy wars?

I don't understand – Bush thinks it is wrong to kill unborn babies, but it is okay to kill anyone else? Why is it okay to kill Iraqis? Who attacked us again? I'm confused, I guess.

They say that Christians with strong family values will be voting for Bush. So far he has lied and killed... what else has he done that is good? Isn't Christianity about love? Stewardship? Honesty?

Are you better off than you were in 1999? Are your friends? Is your health care better? Is the economy stronger? Do you feel safer? Do you really?

Bush insists he is making the world a safer place, yet when the ban on assault weapons expired a few weeks ago, he did nothing to reinstate it. Why? Are assault weapons safe now?

George W. makes enough grammatically incorrect, insulting, or just plain stupid remarks to fill a page-a-day calendar. Yet somehow he is our president. How? Why?

He makes people sign loyalty oaths before they can hear him speak in person. This is not a president for the people, of the people. This is not MY president.

Call me naive, but I believe the president of the United States should be an intelligent, honest man. Who fights for his country, instead of shirking duty. George W. Bush IS NOT AN HONORABLE MAN. If you think he is, I beg you to prove me wrong. I WANT to trust the president. I want to be proud of the good noble things this country can be.

I weep because I am not proud.

*I tried to write a birth story for this issue. I can't. Though my memory is full of wonderful births, my mind and heart are not in it at the moment. This essay says what is weighing heavily on me, and I felt needed to be here, in my zine, with me.*

## STRAY THOUGHTS ... won't someone take them?

I want to say thank you to my dearest friends for getting me through this crazy path of motherhood on a day-to-day basis. Their empathy, always-ready ear, gifts of food and clothes, etc. make my life so much more better! 😊

Kate.. Michelle... Kim.. Nephyr... thank you.

A few days ago we said goodbye to our most wonderful babysitter, Melissa. She has been such a breath of fresh air and so good for Zuzu. I wept as we left her party. I think part of me was weeping for Zuzu... I had hoped for more consistency in her life and I know she will really miss her friend & babysitter. Melissa - godspeed. Thank you for everything - the love & care for my girls, your patience & flexibility, your wonderful paintings. We'll miss you.

One of the greatest & most unexpected joys in my life has been watching Zuzu learn how to skip! First hopping, then one foot, then another.



Then moving forward, awkwardly - so utterly cute... huge grin on her face. Now she does it easily... but those first few days were full of giggles for us both.

One of my favorite authors, Jean Hegland (Into the Forest) came to town to promote/read from her new book Windfalls. I was gone, but Kate (Miranda zine) went...and was charmed and inspired by the very gracious lady. Long story short, Kate told her about my zine, and she wanted to read it. Thrilled, I sent her all the issues I had, and that started a very wonderful correspondence. Jean is just as Kate said, wise and warm and generous, and it has been so... great... wonderful... awesome to be in contact with someone I admire so much. Thank you Kate & thank you Jean. I am proud to call you friend!

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## SPECIAL OFFER! SUBSCRIBERS!

So many of my readers have become subscribers, and many of them have sent me extra money, asking me to send copies to friends OR sisters.

Well, everytime someone sends me money for someone else, I add an issue to their subscription- always have.... then I thought Hey! I should advertise that! So... if you are a subscriber - and you send me money to send someone else my zine - I will add one issue per friend to your subscription.

Spread the love! Share the goodness!

(Oh, hey, I also got my hands on some #3 and #5 - so as of Sept. 04 I've got 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7!) (23)

# CLASS of 1984

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Well, I could probably write 10 pages about this trip to Illinois, Land of Lincoln (bless him)... but I won't. In the interest of saving space and hopefully excusing my pathetic prose, I will synopsise the trip with highlights. Okay? Okay.

THE TRIP THERE: Flying with a kid and a baby is much, much easier with two things: 1. another parent 2. a rented DVD player. Zuzu watched Scooby nearly the entire flight. What was supposed to be 4.5 hours in the air turned into 6 hours.... Air Force One was flying out of Chicago O'Hare right when we were supposed to land - AND there were thunderstorms. (Now it crossed my mind that if only our airplane could just bonk into Air Force One sending Mr. Bush plummeting to earth... but I knew that couldn't happen without lots of innocent people dying as well, and enough of that has happened already because of him, so...) Anyhoo we finally landed and were all happy to see my sister Wendy (who Randy calls 'Wingnut' but I don't know why exactly. Maybe it's a pet name. They are madly but secretly in love with each other, so who knows) and thus we made the 1.5-hour Dodge Durango trip back to my hometown.... nope, not gonna name it. No pilgrimage for you.

Oh, and this: Even though you would THINK they would have changing tables of some sort on airplanes (and I know some airplanes do - but ours didn't) Ours didn't. So what you get is the filthy floor in the galley area. The cool flight attendant jumpseat in the back? The thing that LOOKS like a changing table? Works great. But don't let the flight attendants catch you doing it because it is against FCC regulations. They will be happy to find you a blanket to put on the floor. And please, double-wrap and hermetically seal that baby diaper. Thank you for flying with us!! Sheesh!

THE WEATHER: Well, we brought Oregon weather with us and it was cool and pleasant our entire trip. Meanwhile back in temperate Oregon it was 102° every single day we were gone. We missed the heatwave entirely.

Zuzu was singularly unimpressed with the lightning bugs but mama was rapt, walking Josie to sleep in the sling down the country road, watching the bugs light up in their soundless symphony in the cornfields, listening to the keening symphony of the bountiful cicadas (ahh... I love that sound and hear it in my drowsy mind still!) until the mosquitos drove me back to Wingnut's house.

THE ACCOMODATIONS: My family, if I do say so myself, ROCKS! Wingnut and her hubby John - who I never get enough time with, unfortunately, - always make the ultimate sacrifice for us - they give up their bed, and sleep on their kids' beds. No small feat for 6'2" John on his daughters' double. Wendy always goes out of her way to get Organic food for kids and vegetarian stuff for Randy. Their house is sprawling and it never feels like we're taking up too much space. We stayed there Thursday & Friday Night, then we stayed at Lee's Inn on Saturday night.

Why? Well, my sister had won a free night in the deluxe 'honey-moon suite' and thought that giving it to Randy & I would be a swell anniversary gift. and it was... excepting the host of things that went awry. Where to begin? Well, first, Zuzu developed a snuffle/cough that was keeping her awake so there was no way we could leave her overnight - so that meant our romantic getaway would include BOTH



girls. Well, that was really fine, because we all needed a break at that point. We get to Lee's Inn and the first thing we see is a big CAUTION-ed off area right at the entrance - part of the overhang had broken off.. and it was clear it had been that way for some time. Nice. The garbage cans outside the doors were overflowing, bottles and cans lined the window ledges. Hmm. Inside a sign welcomed the regional little league tournament guests. Aha.

So.. the room was, well, not a suite. A queen-size bed sat at an angled in the corner, with mirrors and a vase of silk flowers forming a headboard of sorts. Très tacky. A double couch along one wall, and the crowning glory - a hottub in the room - of course surrounded by mirrors. (Never really understood the mirrors = romantic or even mirrors = sexy) The room was rather dark, rather cramped, and echoed the entire hotel's run-down feel (the hall carpet had a ridge down its length, like it never quite fit). On every floor was a big screen TV blaring ESPN (those silly little-leaguers!) Well, it would be nice to have a nice hot bath. We donned our swimsuits and went down to the very nice indoor pool set in a greenhouse-type building.

That part was fun - Zuzu loves to 'swim'. So.. the evening loomed and I called down to the desk to ask for more blankets and pillows to make a bed for Zuzu on the floor. "I'm sorry, we have no extra pillows or blankets." I was told. None. We had two pillows. A queen-size bed on a pedestal. And four of us. Sigh. Such luxury. Well, I dropped my hubby & Zuzu off for dinner and went across the hiway to the Target. I was quite annoyed and stressed out, as you might imagine. I put on my backpack and took Josie out of Wendy's tiny car and started across the lot. Thunk! Clatter! Clink! Crack! My backpack zipper had opened and the entire contents had hit and spread across the parking lot. Meanwhile I had a 6month old in arms.

I nearly cried. I sat Josie down on the sticky blacktop and began to retrieve my stuff when out of nowhere swooped two angels on bikes - in the form of teenage boys. "We'll help you, ma'am," they said, and I was back on my feet in seconds, My faith in humanity & the universe restored.

I bought a fleece blanket & a Scooby sleeping bag for Zuzu, and we constructed a bed from the couch cushions (the crumbs and unidentifiable bits in that couch could have fed a family of four.) (But not us.) And I made a nest for Josie in the little triangle-shaped bit of floor between angled-bed and couch. Randy ended up sleeping most of the night on the floor and I wedged into the nest. The couch reeked of cigarette smoke. It was less than pleasant. After breakfast we made a beeline out of there. We spent the next two nights at my mom's house... she also making the ultimate sacrifice and doing everything for us. Sister Amy stayed at a friend's house so mom slept in her bed. Randy & I took turns sleeping on the couch with Zuzu, whose coughing was reaching its high point. Time spent sleeping: 5 hours each. With each other: 1 hour. Priceless.



ACTIVITIES: Friday July 23 was the only day warm & sunny enough to go swimming at the town's new water park... although the wind put a bit of a chill on it. What a blast! Randy is WILD for waterslides and this park had three! One was an enclosed tunnel-like being born to go through it. One slide was for rafts. So much fun. Squitting fountains and shallow wading areas and the "Lazy River" raft ride. We all had such a great time. Of course I kept looking for anyone I might recognize- remember? We're here for my 20-year reunion? Listen, I was nervous as a kitten by that night. I mean, guts-twisting nervous. I had realized that people go to their 20-year reunions for two reasons- to relive what a fabulous time they had, or to show everyone what they became. Of course everyone is curious... for me I wanted to show them that I had gone way beyond the 'brain who got pregnant.' Everyone knew me-or so I believed- in my class of 365, but I was not popular. I was a gawky, four-eyed, mouthy brain-but I wasn't \*really\* a brain, because I didn't go the math/science route. I was known for my artwork-my endless portraits of VanHalen & Journey. Later, my junior year, I hung out with the theatre crowd & did a couple plays, but I never really fit in to any group. So I didn't know who I wanted to see at this reunion... the few friends I had my freshman year? Drama people? Who would be there? It was awful, the anticipation. I was amazed at how scared I was. I donned my last-minute new dress, a low cut thin stretchy fabric black dress with a lacey pink floral design and strappy little black sandals (all told set me back \$45 at Target) and borrowed Wendy's black shawl. A little lipstick, some mascara, earrings. Randy looked handsome. And as we drove over I kept squeezing his hand with nervousness. "We don't have to go, you know," he told me. "We could go see a movie & have dinner..."

But, we went. Deep breath...and into the banquet room.

20 years had zipped by. And in doing so, leveled the playing field completely. Everyone was, at first, so happy to see everyone else. And you know what? It was fun. All that nervousness...for nothin'. The women looked the same as they did in high school...most even had the same hair length if not hair style. The cheerleaders were plumper & wore too much makeup. The wallflowers were glamorous & beautiful (did my heart good to see it.) The guys...wow, was it weird. I hardly recognized any of them. They had all filled out and were no longer skinny teenagers, and they nearly all had close-cropped hair. Way too military. Lots of gals had gone into physical therapy, or teaching, or some other 'helping' profession. The ones who had gone on to be artists of some kind made a point of seeking me out and telling me, which made me happy. The people I sought out tended to be those I was closest to in middle school, but for them the connection seemed gone. And although I had some great conversations with the friendliest of my "friends", I felt very lonely. Truth was, I hated high school. And my very best friends (Auntie Sarah back in Portland, who couldn't make it) and Erin (who I was no longer friends with), Mary M. (couldn't make it) and Naomi (different class) were not there. So, really, it was a big dinner with a bunch of strangers. Pictures flashed on a screen- all from the collections of the popular girls, who had all found each other and were laughing at their tables. Everyone pretty much went back to their cliques, as expected. The highlight of my evening was when Wendy brought Josie to me to nurse. Right after that they went through the Senior Banquet awards list, and when they named "Best Artist - Rhonda Wheeler" I stood up and held up my baby, my latest creation. Applause.

The whole thing was both eye-opening and anti-climactic. The most gratifying thing about the whole experience was seeing that even the geekiest, the lowliest, the least-expected to succeed, had indeed succeeded. Another surprising thing was the babies. I had fully expected to be relatively alone in my parenthood status - but apparently most of my graduating class waited to have kids... pictures of toddlers & babies flew thick and fast amongst the pregnant bellies. They turned on the lights on the "dance floor" and cranked up the AC/DC and Randy & I were outta there. You just can't dance to AC/DC.

The next day was the picnic and although it was great to see those folks in a more natural environment (and all the VERY cute kids), the best part was when Randy and the cousins and Zuzu started playing Duck Duck Goose. I joined them, and then more kids joined, and soon we had a circle of about 17 kids. Zuzu was probably the youngest, and so when, with a gleam in her eye, she went around and said "GOOSE GOOSE GOOSE" as she tapped each person, each of us got up and ran after her. She led a merry chase, looping around the field with a long row of kids giggling behind her. And I realized what was obvious all along. It doesn't matter what happened twenty years ago. What matters is now, and what you do with it.

Have fun.



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# Geek Daddy

## What keeps you awake at night?

You'd think I would lay awake at night thinking about the gas bill or my endless to-do list. No, I'm generally kept awake by two things.

1. Home security. No, not *homeland* security (I save that nightmare for the daytime). Did I lock the front door? Is the window in the basement blocked shut? What would I do if a SWAT team mistakenly raided my house in the middle of the night? If I thought they were "home invaders" and I stuck one with a knife, what would happen next? Gives me the chills. It's my brain that thinks this stuff up, not me - I'm just an unwilling observer.

2. Politics. My brain hops around like a demonic Easter bunny depositing the rotten-egg stench of current events all over the place. Invariably I get stuck on an item that makes me furious. Some recent examples: My parents' evaporating pension, social security and medical care; the gutting of public education; the vast and growing disparity between rich and poor. You can put it all in the same colorful Easter basket that holds the mean-spirited and ruthless greed that defines the daily news. Why did I bring kids into this mess. Is now the time to move to Canada? When I think about the misery in war-torn countries or even Ireland, there's a part of brain that says, "If I lived there, I'd get out. I'd get my family to a country that was more stable and make a new life." Am I failing to take my own advice by staying put in a country that is increasingly reviled by the rest of the world? A country where my girls will be at risk of being gunned down in junior high by one of the other kids while the current admin is stealing their safety net and saddling them with a national debt they can't repay in their lifetimes in order to line the pockets of its corporate buddies, all the while depriving them of school funds?

Yeah, that keeps me awake. I could write more about where those thoughts lead, but *homeland* security might not enjoy my flights of fancy.

As I lay awake the other night, I moved away from my usual troubled thoughts and ran smack into my own mortality. Ah, the quiet of the grave. The peaceful calm of non-existence. Or, perhaps the soul-

warming presence of God Almighty singing sweet succor for all eternity. Or then again, the everlasting ingenuity of Satan's minions as they invent tortures that only the immortal soul can endure. Or imagine the surprise of finding out there is an afterlife, and it's the one described by an obscure Amazonian tribe. Hey, look who correctly identified the One True God!

### **"I WAS BUILT, BUT NOT TO LAST"<sup>1</sup>**

"How we face death is at least as important as how we face life, wouldn't you agree?"<sup>2</sup> Taken together with the notion that "the unexamined life isn't worth living,"<sup>3</sup> I find myself thinking about the death of my children. All parents bring their children into the world to die. I believe I'm a coward if I refuse to give it some thought. But given the day-to-day struggle over schools, breastfeeding, sleeplessness, ad infinitum, who has time wonder, "Should I be trying to raise my children to have a healthy experience of dying?" Oh sure, let's teach the value of life and tread carefully when trying to describe what death is, but what about dying? No, Zuzu there is no Santa Claus, and by the way, "we all die alone and afraid."<sup>4</sup>

So far my limited experiences with dying have been unpleasant. Blissful death seems rare. Death appears to involve a lot of discomfort, confusion, and desperate thrashing about.

Before you think too much about your children's eventual demise, think about your own. Do you have expectations about your death? Which scenario best fits your death wish?

*\* I see myself lying peacefully on a bed surrounded by living things, my loved ones gathered near as I cross over.*

*\*Once those death-endorphins kick in, I won't feel a thing.*

*\*I never saw the bus that hit me.*

*\*Rage against the dying of the light.<sup>5</sup>*

*\*Death is like going on holiday with a group of Germans.<sup>6</sup>*

It's not meant to be a comprehensive list.

I don't believe that dying must be an awful, panicky thing, but it seems likely. Just on a physical level, your bodily organism wants to live. So it fights. I'm all for "the good fight", but in this match Death is a ringer. You're going to lose.

So don't cast it as a fight. Perhaps I can pass that on to my children. Maybe it's more like that first drop on a huge rollercoaster ride. Your intellect knows that you're safe (well, barring accidents, but that's always the case, right?). At the same time your body knows you are falling to your death. Maybe your character is defined by how you negotiate between the two.

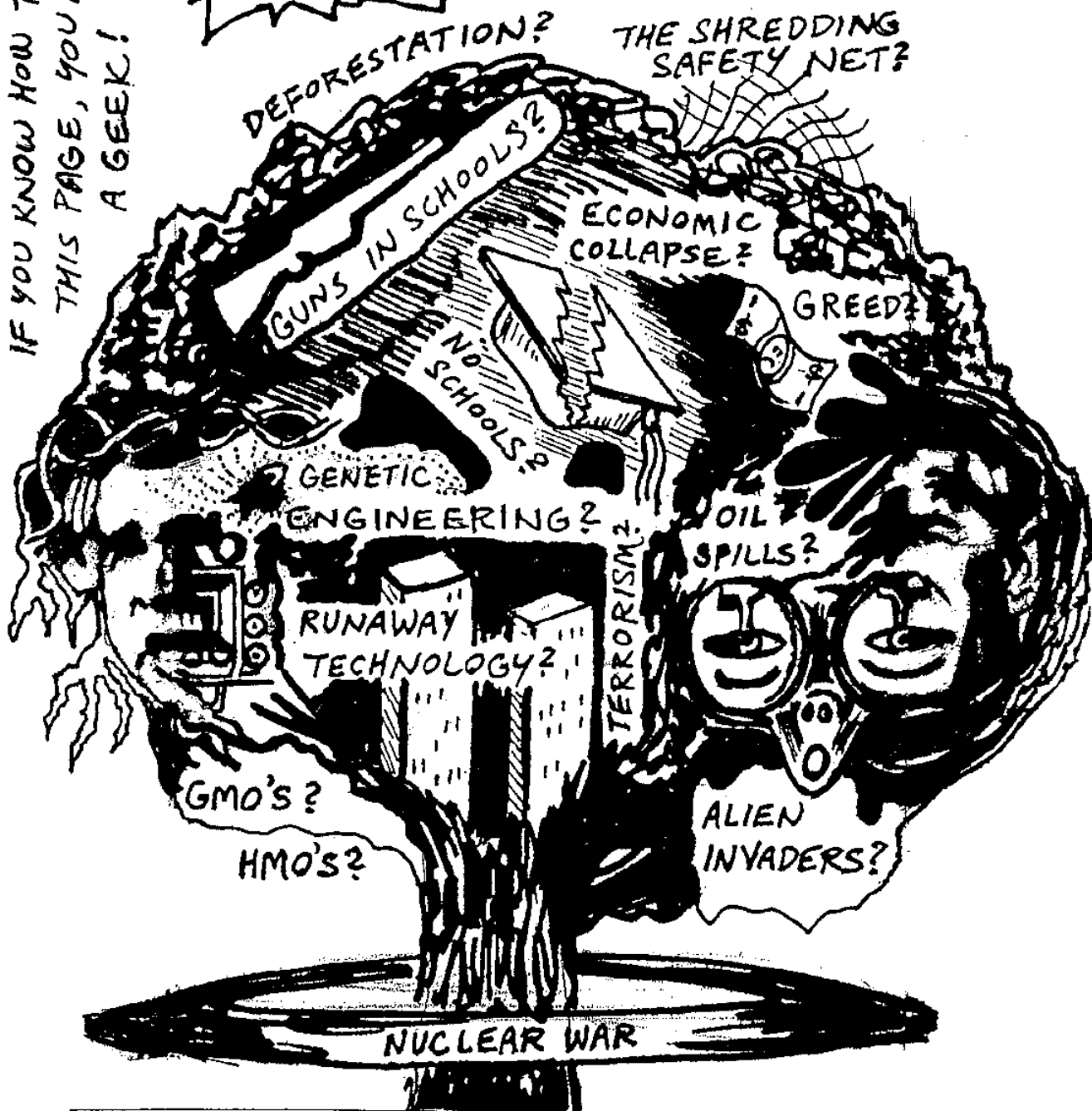
Hopefully my children will outlive me by some margin. Can "dying well" be taught? I doubt it -- no one knows if they will die well themselves. What I wish for my kids is that they have the mental and spiritual fortitude to think about it. If I'm right, they'll profit for it by being more compassionate and less timid about life.

Now turn the page and start folding, so you can see what keeps me awake at nights lately.

1. Roy Batty, Blade Runner
2. Kirk, Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan
3. Socrates
4. Dr. Clayton Forrester
5. Dylan Thomas
6. Arnold Rimmer, Red Dwarf

IF YOU KNOW HOW TO FOLD  
THIS PAGE, YOU ARE  
A GEEK!

WHAT KEEPS YOU LYING  
AWAKE?



FOR YEARS POLITICIANS USED OUR  
MORAL WEAKNESSES, AND NOW THEY ARE  
YEARNING TO MANIPULATE OUR FEARS.



# ERRATA

I made two huge glaring whopping mistakes in ZBC#7, but nobody even noticed! Whats up with that? I mean, come on, is anybody reading this zine? Well, I know you are, and I'm just thinking that #7 was so mind-bogglingly beautiful that even the most astute reader was blind to the errors. What were they?

Ahem.

Well, the first one is easy.... there was no Uncle Doug. No, really! Go look! Uncle Doug was NOT pictured in #7. I just totally forgot. Of course I realized it on production day... and Uncle Doug just happened to be here. I felt awful. I made it up to him by drawing him as a kid peeking over Randy's shoulder in his "Geek Daddy." At least he SAID he felt better.

The other mistake was more subtle and more mortifying. On the back cover? The huge gaping chasm? The little person on the edge? Saying it was a THIRD-degree tear? Well, it wasn't. It is a picture of a FOURTH-degree tear - going through the rectal mucosa. I was very embarrassed when I realized I'd made such a mistake... I mean, I'm a midwife! And I drew that picture! You'd think...

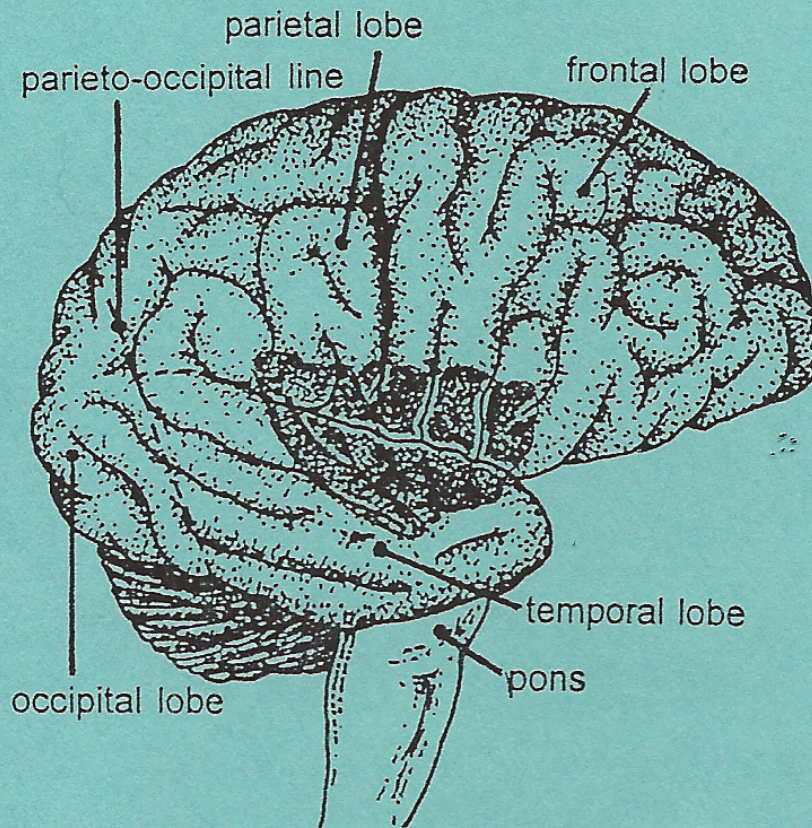
Well, knock wood, I've never seen a fourth-degree tear, or a third-degree, for that matter. So, it was an honest mistake.

But I still feel stupid.

Don't feel stupid.  
Just put me in  
twice next  
time.



Dear George,



**brain** [brayn] *n.* Something any leader of any country should be required to possess.

*This issue is dedicated to my family.*

*zuzu and the baby catcher is a zine by me, Rhonda Baker*

*I have some back issues available, but not many!*

*\$2 each, or subscribe! [www.emeraldgiant.com/babycatcher](http://www.emeraldgiant.com/babycatcher)*

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