

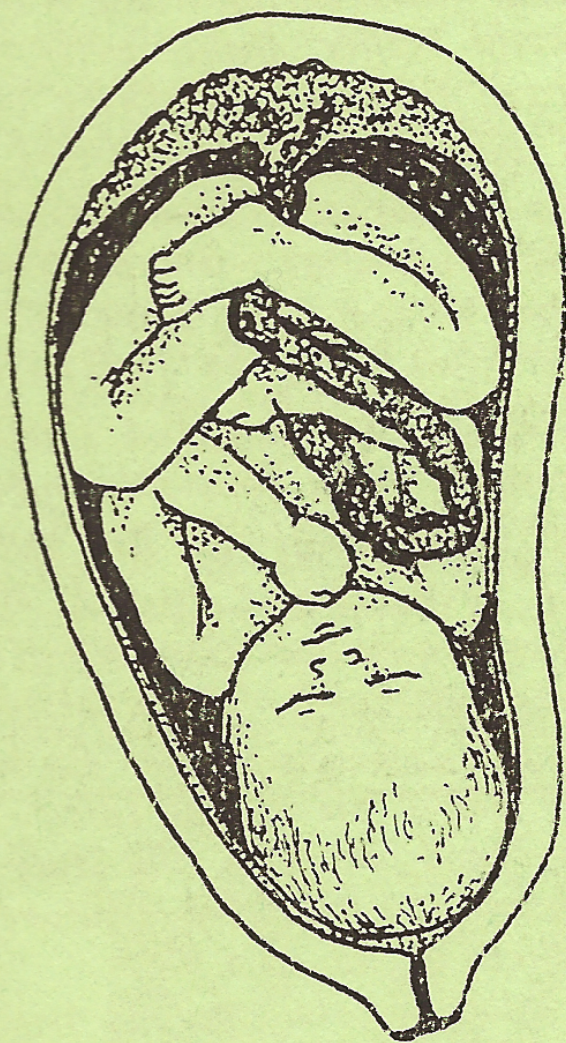
NO.
9

\$2.00

ZUZU

- and -

the BABY CATCHER



from
the
heart.

midwife • meets • motherhood

Yes, #9 is "from the heart" - which god knows we all need after the disaster that was the election... and now the unparalleled tragedy of the tsunami. I do not watch the news but can see it in my mind's eye. All I can do is hope fervently that George W. Bush & Co. realize that this is their opportunity to show the world that we are not all about destruction - this is our chance to really become a world leader again - with humanitarian efforts and monetary support for those ravaged countries. Will "W" give up his billion-dollar inaugural ball and say "send the money to Sri Lanka"? Will his "best friend" Jesus whisper in his ear that maybe the world will hate us a little less if we send some of the billions we are spending to bomb Iraq to Indonesia? Something tells me... "Uh, no. Never." This is not a Christian president. This is not an honorable man. This administration will send a small fraction of what we are spending on war, and probably use it as an excuse to cut other programs. But enough about them. What can WE do, the people who do care? Some trustworthy organizations, who will truly help, are listed on the Tsunami help page. As for the rest of this issue, my intent was/is the holiday spirit. Recipes and love stories, heartening and just plain silly stuff. My son Tyler has a piece in this issue (and hopefully in future issues!) and my hope is it will cheer us all up a little.

Some of my other activities lately include trying to get my midwifery practice up & running (www.full-circlemidwifery.com) and creating fun things any midwife would love (www.cafe.press.com/fullmidwife). We will rise above it all. You can take away Democracy, but you cannot take away the AUDACITY of HOPE! May peace prevail in 2005. XO Rhon

BECOMING A MIDWIFE IN 10 EASY YEARS

1994... We have come to a point in my midwifery career where everything starts to become a blur. I started attending births. I dropped out of school. Holistic Midwifery Vol I came out, the same day that Tara ended our 3.5-year relationship. Just... a blur. Since it's all so non-linear from here on out, I may just discontinue this column and just tell birth stories. I don't know. We'll see. What do you all think?

Well, let's just jump to the very first birth I attended. It was in May, 1994. The mama was a cousin of a friend of mine who very graciously asked me to provide labor support at her birth. I was SO EXCITED.

I rented a pager, freaking out everytime the batteries started running low, or I got paged by a wrong number. I mean, I was a basket case.

I went to a non-impact aerobics class with the mama (part of our getting-to-know-each-other) and fell in love with the CD they used, "Deep Forest". I bought a copy, envisioning playing it during her labor as I became her indispensable helper... ah, the fantasies of a midwife wanna-be....

S. finally went into labor and finally my pager beeped FOR ME! I was SO thrilled and a bit nervous since her midwife was none other than my midwifery school teacher... what would she think? Would I be amazing? Would I fuck up? Well, I actually didn't see a whole lot of her as luck would have it. But boy did I learn some serious lessons.

When I arrived S was laboring on hands & knees in her bedroom with her husband, and had been for some time. I peeked into the room and was instantly brought to tears by the energy in that room. I went back out to the living room where my teacher was charting and said in a hushed voice, full of awe, "It's so... holy... in there." She shot me a weary look.

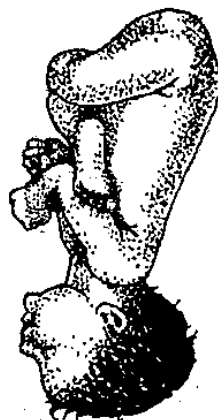
Illustrations of fetal "attitude" from Holistic Midwifery Vol I, of course.



flexed
(preferable)



military
(not so good)



brow
(even worse)



face
(not so good) (3)

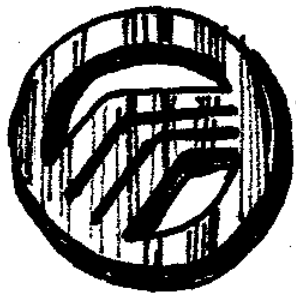
That first night passed. Morning came. S's baby was posterior (which I knew) and military/brow (which I didn't know)...her labor was hard and her progress was agonizingly slow. Being completely green, I felt I should not leave the house, but when the second night came I gave in and went home for a rest. I felt guilty for leaving-(a throwback to my 'never sleep when you're baby-sitting' days) but saw the midwives and their apprentices coming & going so I followed suit. It was my first taste of adrenaline fatigue...where the simple act of breathing is an effort. In hindsight, I will freely admit I had NO IDEA what was going on. None. And for whatever reason, no one bothered to explain much to me. Maybe it's because they didn't know either.

Day 3 came and as it started to go my hopes of seeing a home birth crumbled away. She had not dilated past 8cm. It was time to go to the hospital. We packed some things up and headed over. I was wound up with disappointment and exhaustion (I imagine poor S was a bit worse!). At the hospital they gave her an epidural and her baby went into deep distress-decels to 60 and not recovering, lots of meconium. We wept over the decision to do a cesarean but once that baby was out S was so happy and at peace with it that I was further baffled. I repeat: I did not understand so many, many things. I was just caught up in the loss of my own vision; I did not realize or even imagine that S's vision (not to mention the baby's!) was quite different. I really was clueless.

I did have a moment, a revelation of sorts, before I went home to sob uncontrollably for hours...and it went like this: while they were performing the cesarean I sat alone on the floor in the hospital corridor. I was bewildered, shaking with fatigue, weeping a bit, and thinking WHAT THE HELL AM I DOING!?! Why do I think I could be or even WANT to be a midwife? This was AWFUL! How could I possibly be a part of this, this... huge life-and-death

process when it can go so horribly wrong? I couldn't even think clearly! This was crazy! My mind was reeling, spiralling downward fast when a young woman in labor walked slowly by with her support people. She caught my eye and I smiled at her, something inside me opening, awake at the sight of her. "That's what you gotta do, just keep on walking!" I encouraged her. And I realized the words were appropriate for me, too. So... I kept on walking. Z





MERCURY RETRO- GRADE

NOV 30-
DEC 20!
LE

YES, YOU TOO CAN BE PART OF THIS AMAZING PHENOMENON! JUST PAY ATTENTION TO ALL THOSE LITTLE INCONVENIENT HAPPENSTANCES AND CHECK YOUR CALENDAR!

FOR THE BAKER FAMILY, MERCURY BROUGHT US (OR LEFT US, AS THE CASE MAY BE...)

- ① VACUUM CLEANER BREAKDOWN - which might have been a good thing, since I hate the damn thing... except that it was originally a \$700 vaccaum, so it was silly not to pay the \$100 for the repair. Rats.
- ② SEWING MACHINE DYSFUNCTION - a catastrophe considering I'm MAKING stuff for x-mas! Luckily only a \$6 power cord. Whew!
- ③ STROLLER WHEEL OF MYSTERY - four years ago the left front wheel started falling off... but we always caught it. Then, while Christmas shopping at the mall, the RIGHT wheel fell off... NEVER TO BE FOUND. -and- can't be replaced.
- ④ WATER WONDERS - a sudden bathtub leak was nothing compared to the piece de resistance... Randy dumped an entire cup of water on his laptop. Killed it dead.

KEEP YOUR EYE OUT FOR YOUR MERCURY!

- a fine how-to-do -

You may not know this about me, but I don't cook. I hate cooking. No, really; I find it a hideous waste of my time. Spend an hour (or more) chopping and mixing and measuring and stirring and then it's gone in 15 minutes? No. Not me. But BAKING - now there's a worthwhile endeavor. Bake, and you have something yummy that lasts for days! Whoo-hoo! Call me a Baker! (tee-hee) Cookies... cakes... I'm in.

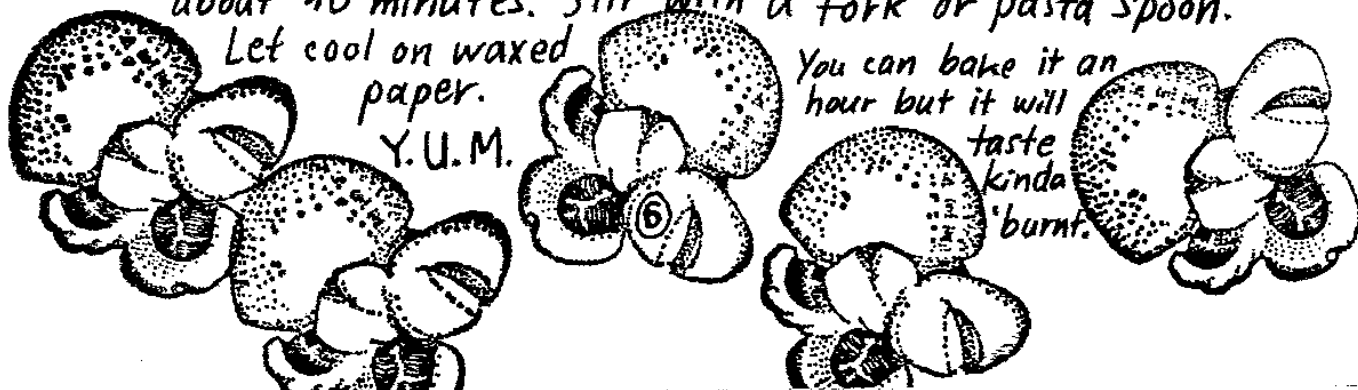
Well, at this time of year caramel corn is the thing. Even tho I have an amazing sugar cookie recipe, I ~~gasps~~ find decorating cookies a waste of time. So here I share with you my revered family recipe for

- the best damn caramel corn ever -

- Make enough popcorn to fill 4 cookie sheets, in a single thick layer. I have no idea how much popcorn that is. Eat the rest!
- Mix in largish saucepan 1 scant tbsp salt, 2 sticks (1 cup) butter or margarine (butter is better, of course), 2 cups packed brown sugar, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dark corn syrup. Bring to boil and cook on medium heat 5 minutes. DO NOT STIR WHILE COOKING. Just stand there and watch. It's meditative.
- Remove from heat & add $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking soda - mixture will foam. Pour it over the popcorn, dividing it up. Don't even bother to try to stir it... it's too thick just yet. Trust me. Now bake in a 250° oven, stirring well every 10 minutes, for about 40 minutes. Stir with a fork or pasta spoon.

Let cool on waxed paper.
Y.U.M.

You can bake it an hour but it will taste kinda 'burnt.



And now that you've tried that recipe and you know it's the best thing ever, I will now give you another recipe. It, too, the best... AND it is SAFE for pregnancy! Score!

the best damn yeast infection remedy ever

Oops! Did I offend you? Not ready for that, huh? Well, look, yeasty beasties happen, especially if you've been on antibiotics. Here's how you fix it!

- Get some boric acid powder in the "pharmacy section" of your grocery. You may need to ask for it at the window. It may even be in the first aid section, since it's used as eyewash, too! (keeps ants & cockroaches away safely also! It's great stuff!)
- Get some gelatin capsules, empty. Health food stores usually have them, but if you can't find them, buy some cheap encapsulated herb & empty the capsules out. You'll need 14. ↓ or bigger
- Fill them. This is the fun part. Pour out the powder on a plate & fool your snoopy neighbors. They'll think you're doing cocaine... imagine the police visit: "Uh, officer, these are for a yeast infection..."

- Put one in your bukiluki in the morning and one at night. Wear pantliners, it's a messy thing. Voilà! (Changes your bukiki pH)

Then after you scoop it full, you put the top back on...

MAKES A
GREAT MOTHER-
DAUGHTER
PROJECT- AND
YOU GET TO TALK
BUKILUKI HEALTH,
TOO!



the mind of Zuzu

Zuzu at the kitchen sink, on chair: "Would you scoot my chair in?" Katherine, not quite understanding her, waits for her to say it again.

Zuzu: "Scoot my chair in."

Katherine: "Oh! SCOOT your CHAIR IN!" (Scoots chair in)

Zuzu: "Of COURSE I said scoot my chair in! What do you think I said? Eat a pickle? Cook a pickle in the microwave?"

I have no idea where she gets her sassy mouth. No idea.

Like most kids her age, Zuzu is very intrigued with the idea of death. She often tells me she is sad because she misses her old mama, who died. She's very matter-of-fact and sincere about it - and although it's a bit freaky to hear about her dead mama, who am I to invalidate a past-life memory?

A lot of our most interesting discussions take place as our alter-egos, the Scooby Gang. Zuzu is usually Velma or Freddy and I am usually Daphne or Shaggy & Scoob. As Freddy she told me, "Don't worry Daph, when I die. I'll be back as my former Freddy self to be your friend."

"Oh, I'm not worried, Freddy," I said, "But why are you going to die?"

"Well," she explained, "I'm going to run out of hopeful luck. You're full of hopeful luck, and that means you are alive. And then it gets taken away, and you die.

But I'm FULL of hopeful luck!" She finished, skipping along. "So I'm not gonna die yet!" Then she got serious and said, "Mama, I don't want you to ever die."

⑧ Not as long as I have hopeful luck, honey. ♪



HEY MAMA- HOW CAN
HE SING WITH STAMPS
ON HIS MOUTH?

Stick some stamps on the
top of my head, I'm gonna

I think he's SINGING
ABOUT WHAT HE'S GOING
TO DO. HE HASN'T
DONE it yet.

mail myself to you...
I'm gonna tie me up with

Red string... I'm gonna tie blue
ribbons, too... I'm gonna climb
up in my mailbox, I'm

HOW CAN HE CLIMB
UP IN THE MAILBOX
IF HE'S ALL TIED UP?

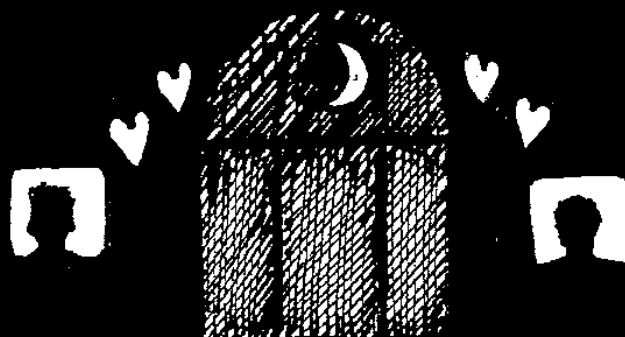
gonna mail myself to you..

SLEEP is highly overrated

8pm. Mama's time. Josie is asleep. Randy is getting Zuzu to sleep. Aaahh...



9pm. Zuzu is asleep. Mama and Randy recognize each other! Both enjoy some quiet computer time.



11pm. Mama, exhausted, heads for bed. Josie loses her binky just as Mama drifts off. Mama replaces binky, goes to sleep.



1am. Zuzu calls out for Daddy, awakening Daddy, Mama, and Josie. Daddy goes to Zuzu. Mama tends to Josie.



2 am. Randy returns to bed to find Josie still awake. Mama too.



2:30 am Randy takes Josie down to basement guest room. Mama goes back to sleep. Eventually.



4:30 am. Zuzu calls out for Daddy, awakening Mama. Daddy and Josie are still downstairs.



5:00 am. Mama finally convinces Zuzu that she's just as good as Daddy, and Zuzu goes back to sleep. Mama tries to sleep in Zuzu's bed. No dice. Mama goes back to own bed & back to sleep. Eventually.



Reason #7586:

It's because she's so smart. Intelligent kids don't sleep well.

6:30 am. Josie wants her mama. Daddy brings her to mama, and goes down to sleep with Zuzu. **SOMEBODY** needs to get sleep.



nurse
nurse
nurse

If you think I'm kidding, think again. This is how it is. Every. Frickinfrackin. Night. Sometimes Mama & Daddy swap. Doesn't matter.



I'm not kidding. Now go to sleep.

My first VBAC

VBAC (Vaginal Birth After Cesarean) is quickly becoming extinct here in the United States... unless you are having a home birth. Midwives know that under normal circumstances it is highly unlikely that the uterus will rupture – because at home we are not inducing or augmenting labor with pitocin! Pitocin, so commonly used in the hospital for induction, causes hard, unnatural contractions, just the thing for a rupture. Why are hospitals inducing women with previous cesareans? Why because they don't want those babies to get too big! The cycle is self-perpetuating... and wrong. For more information on VBAC, see www.vbac.com. The following story appeared in the Winter 1996 issue of "The Birthkit", Midwifery Today's supplemental newsletter..

In the two years I've been doing births with Gail Hart and other midwives, I've seen a good random smattering of both heart-break and triumph in childbirth. But until I met Carrie, I had yet to assist at a VBAC. To my mind, Carrie was the perfect VBAC candidate; she has no hospital-fed delusions about her first birth, and no fear about her second. In fact, at the time we met her in her 20th week, she had no idea that what she wanted to do was considered 'high risk' – she had always assumed that her next baby could and would be born vaginally, and most certainly at home! Her many questions about her first failed-induction cesarean (an 8 ½ lb girl two years before) prompted me to give her some books on VBAC, and she eagerly devoured every one – Artemis Speaks by Nan Koehler, Open Season and Silent Knife by Nancy Wainer Cohen. It was only then that she realized that most people in this country consider VBAC a dangerous thing to do, and certainly not to be attempted at home.

Thankfully, all the reading she did only strengthened her resolve, and helped her hold her doubting mother and well-meaning friends at bay.

I did a lot of reading myself during her pregnancy, so I knew some of what to 'expect'; a probable stall in her labor at 3 centimeters dilation (where she had gotten 'stuck' before), a long second stage, etc. Once again I was to learn my lesson as a midwife: HAVE NO EXPECTATIONS.

Carrie's pregnancy progressed normally. At some prenats she was full of questions; at others she seemed almost bored. It was hard to tell just how she would do in labor – or even when that might be, as her dates were not at all clear. As her original June 12 due date came and went, we decided the re-evaluated June 20 due date was probably more accurate. Regardless, she wanted NO intervention, NO ultrasound. She was going to wait it out. So, with bated breath, Gail and I waited, too. And her baby grew and grew!

The truth be told, Gail was more nervous about doing a VBAC than I was. Perhaps my lack of experience (24 births to her 700+) gave me a lack of fear, I don't know. But I was sure that Carrie would have her birth her way, even if Gail was doubtful. We had not done a single pelvic exam, and when June 20 came and went with a baby that was easily 9 ½ to 10 lbs, Gail persuaded Carrie to let her do a pelvic exam. What she found made us all laugh with relief – a huge roomy pelvis, a deeply engaged head, cervix anterior, 50% effaced, and 3cm dilated! No fear of her stalling at her stuck point – she was there before labor began! But, we still had a few more days to go...

On July 1 my sister and her family flew in for a visit and before we decided on the day's plans I called Carrie's house. Sure enough, she had lost her mucous plug at 1am and had called Gail at 9am to bring the portable hot tub and set it up. "I was just going to call you," Gail said, laughing. Carrie was in good labor but I wasn't needed yet, so I went to breakfast with my sis, saying a silent prayer to Divine Mother all the while. Let this birth happen well.

11:45am – I arrived to relieve Gail so she could take her hubby to work. Carrie was in the tub, her husband Pete sitting beside with a comforting hand and a glass of juice. Her labor was smooth, even, and breathtaking to witness. Breathtaking, I say, because Carrie did Lamaze-type breathing, which I had never seen anyone really do before. I honestly cannot believe a woman could breathe so quickly and not faint. Gail commented softly that only women in labor can breathe like that: I believe her! With each contraction Carrie whistled and "hee-ed"; between them fell silent, resting. Nary a moan or a word did she utter, except when asked a question. She wanted it quiet; even the noise of the hot tub heater was unacceptable. Once Gail returned we spent our time boiling water to keep the tub warm.

12:53pm – a flush appeared high on Carrie's cheekbones, signaling to Gail and I that she was around 7cm. She lapsed into sleep between contractions, refusing to let us listen to baby's heart tones, refusing anything that would disturb that sacred place she had created. She seemed to be laboring effortlessly. She was beautiful.

2:45pm – a moaning sound started creeping into her voice even through the breathing, and I knew she was getting close.

I strongly urged her to go to the bathroom, since she hadn't emptied her bladder for hours. With great reluctance she let Pete and I help her into the bathroom, and then she slammed the door shut, hard.

"Go AWAY!" she shouted at us. Poor Pete was beside himself, especially when the breathing finally seemed to fail her and she began making wonderful primal noises during contractions. Noises which to Pete were scary wails of agony made Gail and I smile and start getting things set up. I hugged him tightly, big tears welling in his eyes, and assured him that all was very well indeed. "I was the exact same way," Gail told him, "Don't worry, when she's ready for company, she'll come right out." He smiled weakly.

3:40pm - the noises changed. Was that a grunty tone I heard? I stuck my ear to the bathroom door. "UUUUNNNNNGGHHH! UUUHH! GGGHHHHUUUGGGHH!" Definitely grunty.

"Carrie?" I called after she finished, "How are you feeling? Are you feeling lots of pressure?" "YYEEAAHHH!?!?!?" her tone was firm but questioning, like, is this how it's supposed to feel? "Are you feeling pushy?" I called. "YYEEAAHHH!?!?!?"

I went to Gail, who then asked Carrie through the closed door, "Tell me what you're feeling." "I DON'T KNOW!" she wailed, "I feel like I'm taking a poop, that's how I feel." Her tone grew irritated, and she cracked the door open, just enough for us to see her flushed face. "Is that what pushing feels like? Then I guess I'm pushing. I don't know." The door slammed shut again as another contraction came. "UUUUUNNNNGGHGGGH!!!" Pete stood there, a helpless look on his face. Gail chuckled, "Don't worry, she'll be out in a minute."

3:50pm – the bathroom door FLEW open, and there stood Carrie, a confused and fierce look on her face, blond hair hanging down in wet tangles. For a second no one said anything, then Carrie said, “WELL, what do I do NOW?” I said, “Well, where do you want to have your baby? In your room? In the tub?” “The tub.” She climbed in and knelt forward, then sat back on her heels. Pete positioned himself in front of her, holding her hands. “WHAT DO I DO WHAT DO I DO???” she demanded, frantic. “Push your baby out,” Gail and I said at the same time, laughing gently. Pete leaned forward, their foreheads touched for a sweet, peaceful moment. He whispered to her softly, her body relaxed, and she nodded. Then she began another contraction, took a breath and bore down, stopped. Her eyes flew open, “I can feel the head down there, it’s right there!”

“That’s good, that’s good, keep going,” we encouraged her. Pete let go of her hands, unsure what to do. “Put your hands down there, Pete, you want to catch your baby, don’t you?” I said, grinning. He smiled and plunged his hands into the water. “Carrie, I can feel hair, our baby’s got a ton of hair, honey!” She pushed again. “It’s a whole head! Honey! The head is out!” She nodded, bore down again, and up from the water rose a big beautiful baby. Carrie immediately caught him up in her arms, “I did it, oh my god! I did it.” Her voice was full of awe and pride. “It’s Jared!” Pete announced joyfully, “We have our boy Jared!” Carrie had pushed perhaps 10 minutes.

And, by the way: Jared weighed 10 lbs, 4 oz.

Another lesson learned. 

PLANET ZUZU

While making Frosty the
Snowman of
Playdoh..

POP!
(off comes
his head)

Here's the blood!

RED
PLAY
DOH

BLOOD?!

Yeah! Snowmen have blood,
if they're LIVE Snowmen
like Frosty!

But you have to wear
GLOVES when you do it, so
it doesn't BURN You!

Well, that
makes sense.

Oh.
of course.

← Frosty of
the Burning
Blood!

I asked Tyler if he wanted to have a column in my zine. Since Geek Daddy gets space, and Zuzu's artwork is usually featured, I figured it was only fair. He offered to tell stories from his childhood - and I eagerly accepted. I give to you...

Ty's Tales from the bayou...

Back when I was around nine years old or so, we'd go to a friend of the family's house every week-end for a barbeque. It's a commonplace thing down south, except during the right seasons the chicken is replaced with crawfish or crabs. I'm a picky eater, and I never ate anything with barbeque sauce on it. Something about putting goop on anything to sap away the way it's supposed to taste bothers me.

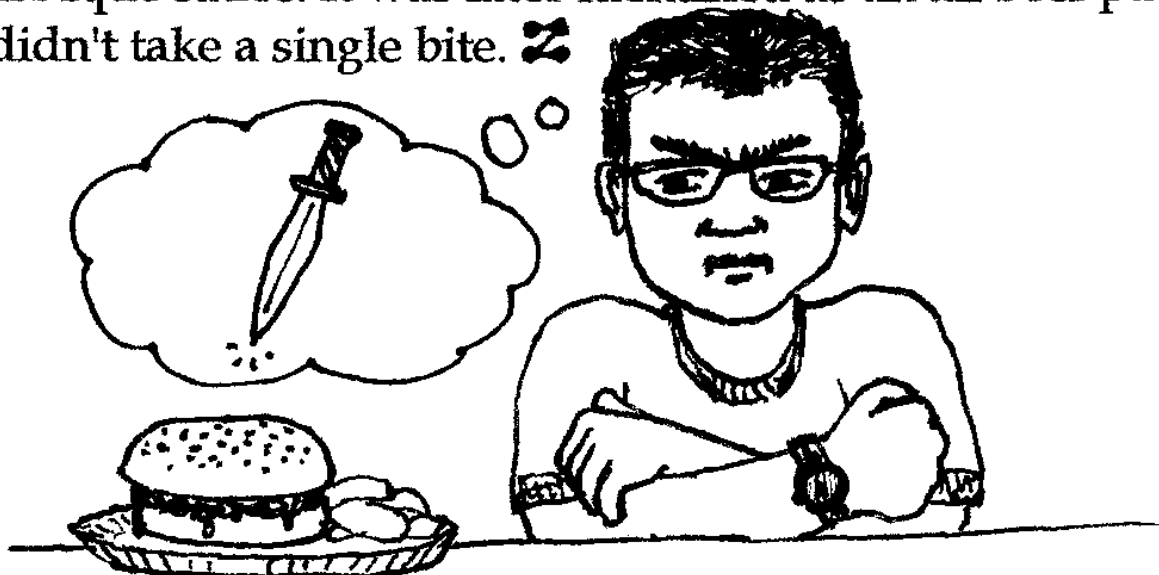
Since I was a spoiled rotten pompous little jerk when I was a kid, my food had to be cooked separate, but I'd eat burgers like everyone else. One day, my mom down here wasn't present for the barbeque, and I was left with the man of the house and 20 screaming kids whose respective moms weren't there. He couldn't sate them all, and when eating time came, he couldn't sate me. I got my paper plate, barbeque-sauce smothered burger, and greasy plain potato chips, and I said "nuh-uh".

The man of the house wouldn't have it. It was a contest of two hard heads, but one head was larger and more authoritarian than the other one, so I ended up being commanded to eat the burger. I don't remember crying so hard for something so silly, but my friends were cheering me on, and I eventually found myself locked in a bedroom

with a craptastic hamburger on my plate and some potato chips on the side. I didn't even have a drink! "There has to be a solution," I said. "I am NOT eating this."

All was quiet when I came out of the room, everyone looking at me anxiously to see whether or not I had degraded myself to eat the gross burger. My plate was empty! Cheers erupted across the room, resounding down the halls! I had a good rest of the day. People treated me like a hero! I got to do all of the things reserved for the kids a year or two older than me, like jump on the soap-soaked water sprayed trampoline and have them push me on the oak tree's hanging tire swing. I went home, played my Nintendo, and went to bed.

Years later, long after the time of the weekend barbeques, the man of the house decided to remodel his bedroom. They were moving an old dresser to another room when they found a shriveled, smallish black lump. Upon further inspection, they perceived the faint smell of barbeque sauce. It was later identified as an all beef patty. I didn't take a single bite. Z



SUGGESTION BOX

People send me zines all the time... and I read them as much as I can. Everyonce in a while a real gem shows up... like these:

FRAIL ROOTS - Kyle introduced himself to me at the zinemaker movie screening (another story for another time) as a friend of my niece Kristine. This is his zine, and it is as poignant and thoughtful and funny and sweet as anything I've ever read by an older, more experienced writer. This is a gifted kid. I think my favorite tale is "Escape Attempt" where an intense desire to get 'numbed' led to a long wet and cathartic bike ride. I don't know the price but send \$2 or so to Kyle, 136 Tanglewood Dr. Longview, WA 98232. Tell him Zuzu's mama sent ya!

8 LB GORILLA - When you slog through as many well-intentioned mama zines as there are these days, you start to feel like noone, not even yourself, has anything original to say anymore. But THIS... this fabulous little one-shot zine is SO GOOD. Marissa Madrigal starts this tale of her motherhood with a recipe for "How to Make a Baby" "Combine ingredients at a large party. Shake together for several hours... Wait three weeks and Panic." And it just keeps getting better from there. "Mid-Twenties Party Girl Goes Pregnant", "Ten Phrases, Comments, or Questions to Utter If You Wish to Unleash the Wrath that is the Pregnant Human." "The Showing" "Nightmare on Pregnant Street" on to "Bliss" "The Screaming Shit Monster - A Fairytale" the wonderful "Conversation with My Thirteen Year Old Self" Each chapter original, funny, real, all that. \$4.50 go to www.shiftylinings.com to order. It's the shit. No, really. It's the real shit. It's a good thing.

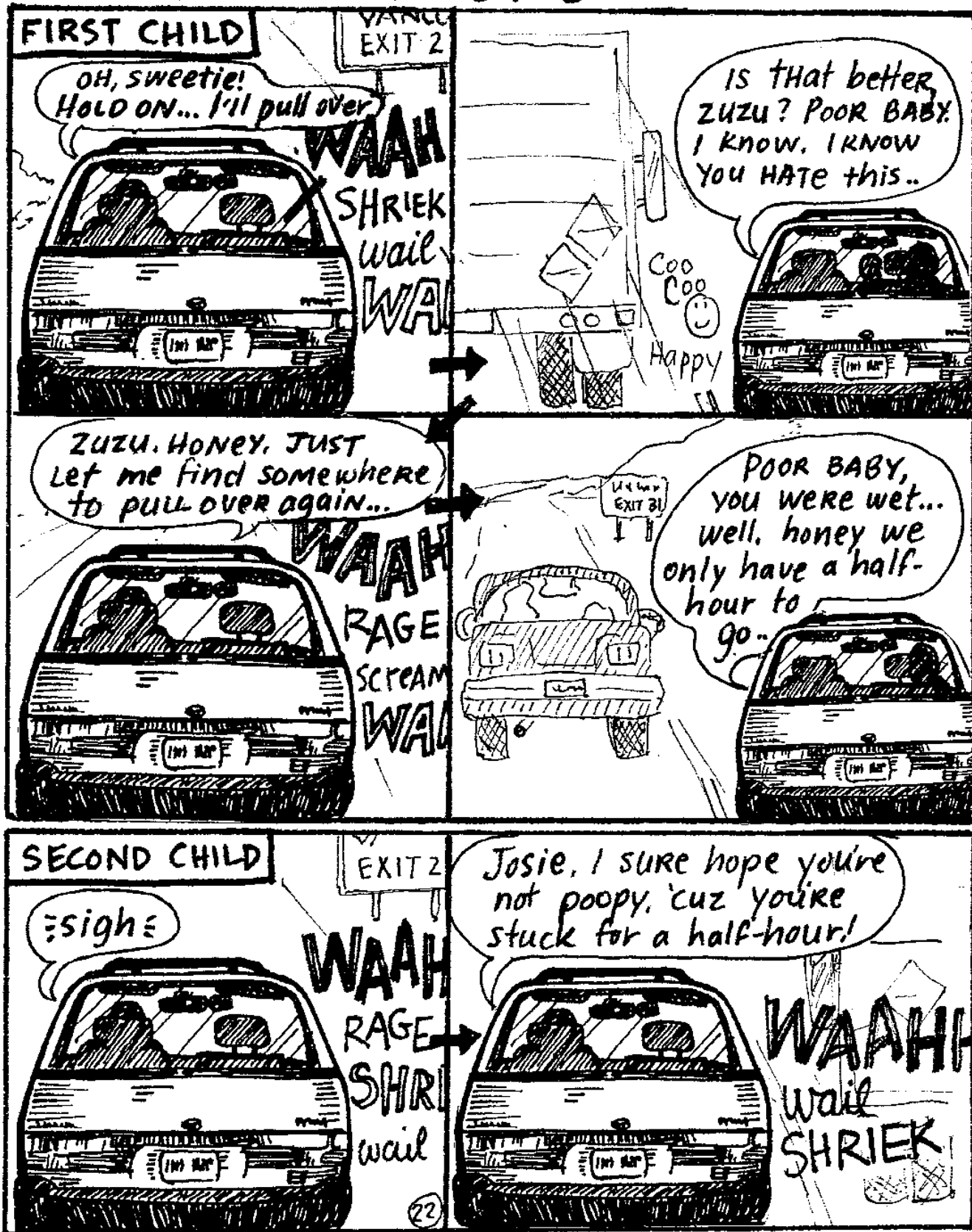
SUGGESTION BOX 2

Next up, [PRE]TERM - THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MIDWIFE - Well you know I was happy to have a zine to look at about midwifery! Whoo-hoo! (I hear tell a couple of midwifery students have put together one also... I can't wait to see it!) Christina Cameli writes about the trials of nurse-midwifery school-stuff that makes me nod in sympathy and shudder in horror. She is intensely self-questioning - Term is her place to overturn every stone, every belief - about birth, medicine, herself. #2 has a great tale of "feminine protection" and adding a new meaning: being protected by your mom! Go mom! Go Christina! #2 to Christina Cameli, P.O. Box 40422, Portland OR 97240. (She's sweet & lovely, too. Just so ya know.)

THE SOULSISTERS GUIDE TO A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS

This big yummy 76-page zine (yes, Ladies, it is a zine) is by sisters Jan & Patience & starts off on a frivolous note (aptly titled "Just for Fun") Some good "Practical Tips" (to get through a dysfunctional family xmas ① Be yourself ② Upgrade (your) addictions ③ Don't Bite the Bait ④ Get Your Support Team in Place ⑤ Resurrect the Positive ⑥ Pray for Clear Vision ⑦ Save the Big Stuff for Later.) Sweet Essays and Letters, some SARK-inspired soulwork (not my thing but Cool if you're into it) and the lovely section called "Peace & Reconciliation." The gals are Christians with a crush on Jesus, and they're just so nice that it's okay! www.soulsistersunite.com click on "buy the zine" they'll email you the addy if you want to snailmail the #7.

FIRST CHILD/SECOND CHILD



the CARTOON HISTORY of Rhonda & Randy

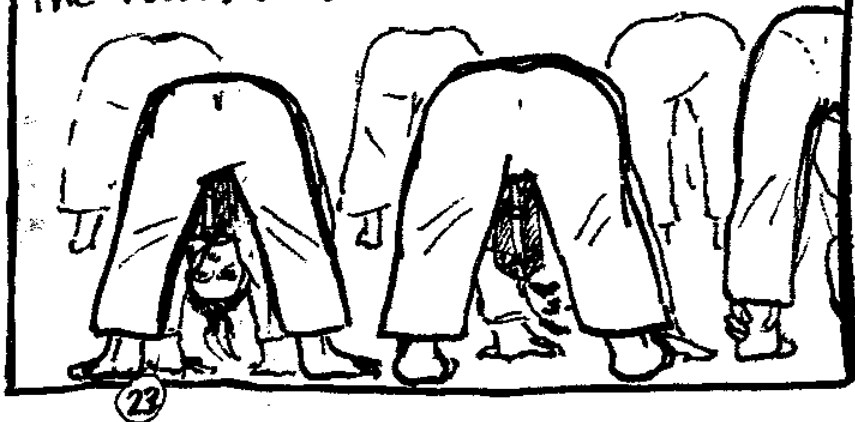
tip o' the hat to
Larry Gonick

DECEMBER 1999-
on the brink of
the dreaded
"Y2K", Rhonda,
a beginning student,
met Mr. Baker, black
belt, in TaeKwon Do
class. In a bad and
soon-to-end relation-
ship with a woman,
Rhonda liked the kind
guy with the dark
eyes, but that was
all. Besides, he had
a mullet from hell!
Anyway, as unhappy
as she was with
dating and her life
in general (training
as a 9-1-1 operator)
she really didn't give
him much thought
outside of class.
Still, he helped her
in TaeKwon Do.
He was alright.

Part 1



Meanwhile Randy, newly divorced, was starting to love his single life, and all the POSSIBILITIES it offered...

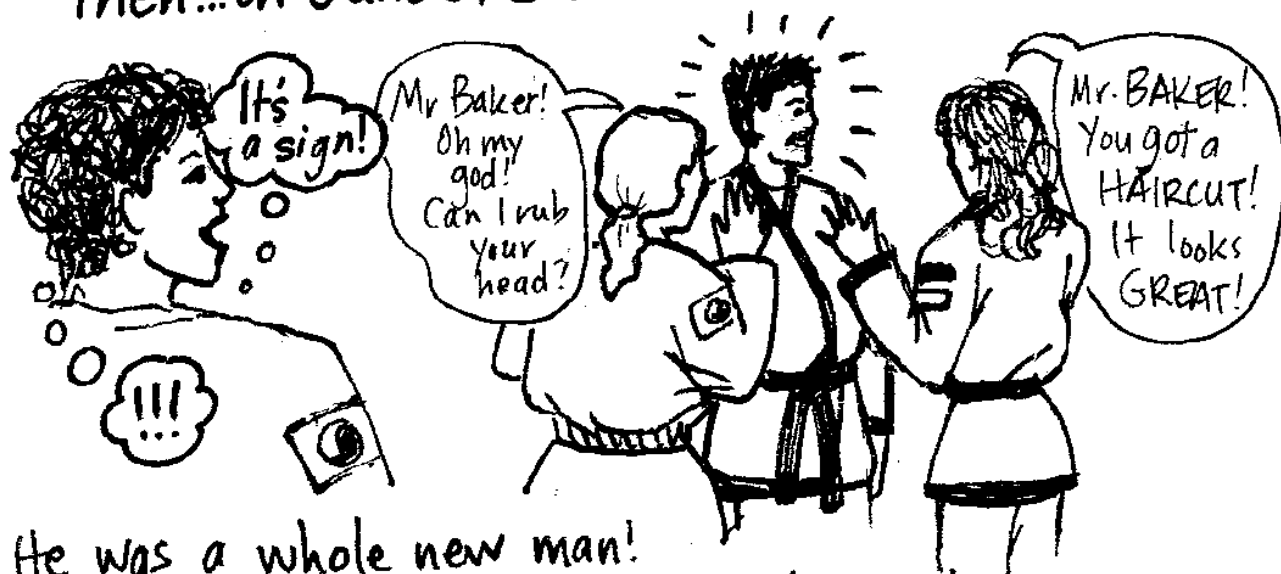


In February, bruised from ending the relationship AND the abusive job, Rhonda found Taekwon Do her only source of sanity. Dating was NOT on her mind.



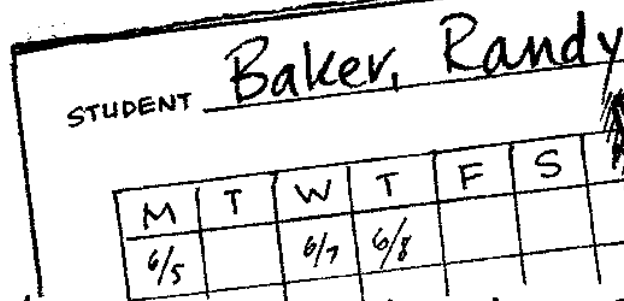
But then came spring, and her heart thawed. She felt ready to date again. Despite her feelings for Mr. Baker (she didn't know his first name), she simply COULDN'T date someone with a mullet. Could. Not. No.

Then...on June 8, 2000... a **MIRACLE!!**



He was a whole new man! Rhonda resolved that very day to ask him out...but her class ended and his began...without the opportunity.

Friday, June 9, 2000.



His name
is
"Randy"
huh?

Rhon wrote a note asking
him out & clipped it to his card.

Rhon went to get changed into her dobok. The
dressing room was occupied, so she sat down to wait.
The door opened - and Mr. Baker - Randy - came
out! She leapt up!

Oh! Uh! Hi!
Mr Baker! Well,
I just left a note
clipped to your card,
but I can just ask
you I guess... I mean..
would you like to
go get coffee or
something with me
sometime... dinner?

I would
LOVE
to!

His smile was the
most beautiful smile
she had ever seen.

Meanwhile Randy had planned
on asking Rhon out that same
day. **BELIEVE IT... or NOT**

At home after class, Rhon showered and wondered. Was he going to be one of those guys, who plays it all cool and waits, because he doesn't want to seem eager? It was Friday night.

She had no plans. She headed for the living room to flick on the TV.

The phone rang.

It was him.

"I'm not busy tonight..." he said.

His honesty was refreshing.



They went to one of those trendy restaurants called "Chez Grill" that served small portions of not-so-great food.

It didn't matter.

They talked until midnight... went to Rhon's house and talked some more.

She sent him home in the wee hours, without even a kiss. Because she knew there was lots of time.



Geek Daddy: Counting Little Things

When I was in college debate delivering little speeches with terribly anal time limits, I became very familiar with how long one second is. And ten seconds, and thirty. Sometimes I would lie awake at night doped up on caffeine and play a little game. I'd look at the digital clock until the next minute ticked over, then count to myself with my eyes closed. I'd look back at the clock when I'd reached sixty, and if the minute ticked over at exactly the moment I opened my eyes, I'd won.

After six years of this I discovered that life is miserable when you know how long one second is. It makes you impatient, it makes even the briefest waiting period so tedious that you want to die. I actually decided that time was my enemy, and I despised it. One day it was clear to me that I no longer WANTED to know how long one second was. Seconds were off limits in my new brain, and even minutes became suspect.

So for the next ten years I avoided wearing a watch or timing anything. My little plan to disassociate myself from tiny units of time worked. Until I had kids.

It started with Zuzu's bedtime rituals. There I was in the "lay her down with one hand on her until she falls asleep" stage. What do you do when you're leaning uncomfortably over a crib with one hand extended unnaturally as the railing cuts into your underarm? It's totally dark, I'm tired, I know I am damaging my back, my brain is mush. All the while I'm trying NOT to think about my squirming baby girl fighting sleep like it was the grim reaper. Every experience I've had with children tells me that if I think about what I want them to do they will never do it. (They possess a bee-like sense for desperation. Come to think of it, women in general have that same sense). So, at first I would think about tomorrow -- listing and relisting everything I was going to get done - I'm such an idealistic dreamer! Then I had the misfortune to read this in a parenting

magazine: "If the child or infant is completely still for one full minute, she is asleep and it is safe to leave."

Guess what I have been doing every night since I read that? One, two, three.... fifty-seven, fifty-eight, fifty-nine... damn! She moved! The saddest part is that it's true. One full minute and I am outta there!

And what am I doing in the van when Josie is wailing like a banshee and won't stop until we get home? It goes something like this: "Let's see, we've just listened to Stone Soup on tape for the third time, and it takes 4-and-a-half minutes for that story, so if all the stories are about the same length and I have 28 more miles to get home I only have to survive six-plus more stories, which means I'll hear Zuzu's tape one-and-a-half more time if I drive at sixty miles per hour. If I push it to seventy..."

Is it all about time? Of course not. My little joy-makers deliver the gift of obsessive-compulsive behavior in SO MANY other ways! Observe:

- "Zuzu, I'm only finding four Scooby-people, where'd Scrappy-do go? You know how tiny the little Scoobs are, and Scrappy is the smallest of them all, so we need to pick them all up so Josie won't eat them or choke on them." (In case you're wondering, Shaggy is less than an inch high, and Scrappy is about a quarter of an inch. They are tiny)
- *Zuzu just hopped off to the bathroom, I've got maybe three minutes to myself assuming she doesn't have a crisis or drop the TP in the toilet or something. That's enough time to write a note to myself reminding me of my plan to do the thing that I'll never have time to get to, but if I can just write it down I can pretend I accomplished something today!*
- "I'll tell you what, Zuzu. You can have three Red Hots AFTER dinner if you finish eating everything." (Three Red Hots? Would I ever count out little candies like that for myself? Have you ever eaten a box of Milk Duds at the movies, and when you left the show you said to yourself, "Hmm.

Apparently there are 37 duds to a box". No wonder kids think their parents are nuts.)

- "Zuzu ate two bites of toast and five bites of mac-n-cheese. She ate all of her peaches. Josie ate six the rest of Zuzu's mac-n-cheese, a bowl of refried beans, a yogurt, two pieces of toast and a mule". (Okay, so I lied about the mule, but this little girl EATS!) Mama and daddy need to know the bite count. This information is vital in preparing for the next meal, and it sometimes provides a basis for deciding if an unwholesome treat will be allowed.
- "No Zuzu we're only reading three books tonight. We talked about this already. You pick the first one, I'll pick the next one, and you pick the last one."
- *It takes seven minutes to get Zuzu to school, and it's twelve minutes to nine now, so I have five minutes to shower, dress and pack here out to the car. Hmmm. "Rhon, if you can get Zuzu dressed for me, I'll take her to school. I'm going upstairs for a quick shower."*

And here's a gem that's not even about counting. When I get one of girls to sleep, I try to sneak away, right? We have some hardwood floors, and in the quiet dark of the night I want to walk away without any hideous creaking that might wake her up. Sometimes I've prayed for the heat to come on so the blowing ducts will help mask my foot-steps. When I started doing this with Zuzu, I quickly learned every creaky spot on every floor in the house. The horrible racket as I would step from the masonite linoleum of the kitchen onto the old beat-up hardwood in the dining room. CR-E-E-A-K! The one spot on the thick hallway carpet where the underlying POP is so loud you can hear it two rooms way. The spot just outside the hallway in the dining room where there is no safe place to step at all. You can try a little hop over it, you can try to walk so slowly that the sound is spread out over two minutes of smaller popping noises,

or you can try to slide along the floor in your socks keeping your feet within six inches of the bookshelf. I learned to walk up and down stairs by always sticking close to one side - the noisy spots are in the middle. You get the idea.

Now here's the mystery. About two years ago someone changed all the sounds. It wasn't a seasonal change, and it hasn't changed back again. The two very worst spots in the house are now SILENT. Formerly quiet spots, particularly where we have muffling rugs over hardwood, now make sounds like I'm walking on peanut shells. Why?

And who would care, except that in the weary darkness of late night parenting your world shrinks to such a subjectively small and very personal size. There's you, the blessed angel in your arms, and the EVIL BACKSTABBING FLOOR, built by maladapted cultist who obviously despise liberty and justice.

Ironically, I didn't count fingers and toes when the girls came out. I counted heads, one each. And arms and legs. That's good enough - they can have as many fingers and toes as they like.

It's important to know that I don't resent these things I'm forced to keep track of. The irony is sweet, though. I really and truly spent a good fifteen years breaking out of many of my compulsions (by no means all of them), and especially my anal accounting of time. Now I'm back to the protracted seconds and minutes of measuring each moment. I don't think this is what "living in the moment" is supposed to be. In fact the phrase "living in the moment" has always seemed carelessly misleading to me. You know when it's easiest to live in the moment?

- a. When you're having fun with no burdens weighing on you whatsoever, and
- b. When you've just whacked your thumb really hard with a hammer.

It's the little things that count, and I find myself counting every little thing.

TSUNAMI HELP... *with the death toll at ^{150,000} ~~120,000~~ and rising... anything will help. Please give to these reputable organizations!!*

* Doctors Without Borders/Medecins Sans Frontieres
PO Box 2247
New York, NY 10116-2247
1-888-392-0392
www.doctorswithoutborders.org

Action Against Hunger
247 West 37th Street, Suite 1201
New York, NY 10018
1-212-967-7800
www.aah-usa.org

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC Crisis Fund)
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA
1-215-241-7000
www.afsc.org

Direct Relief International
27 South La Patera Lane
Santa Barbara, CA 93117
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www.directrelief.org

** Baker family favorites.*

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www.mercycorps.org

* Oxfam International/Oxfam America
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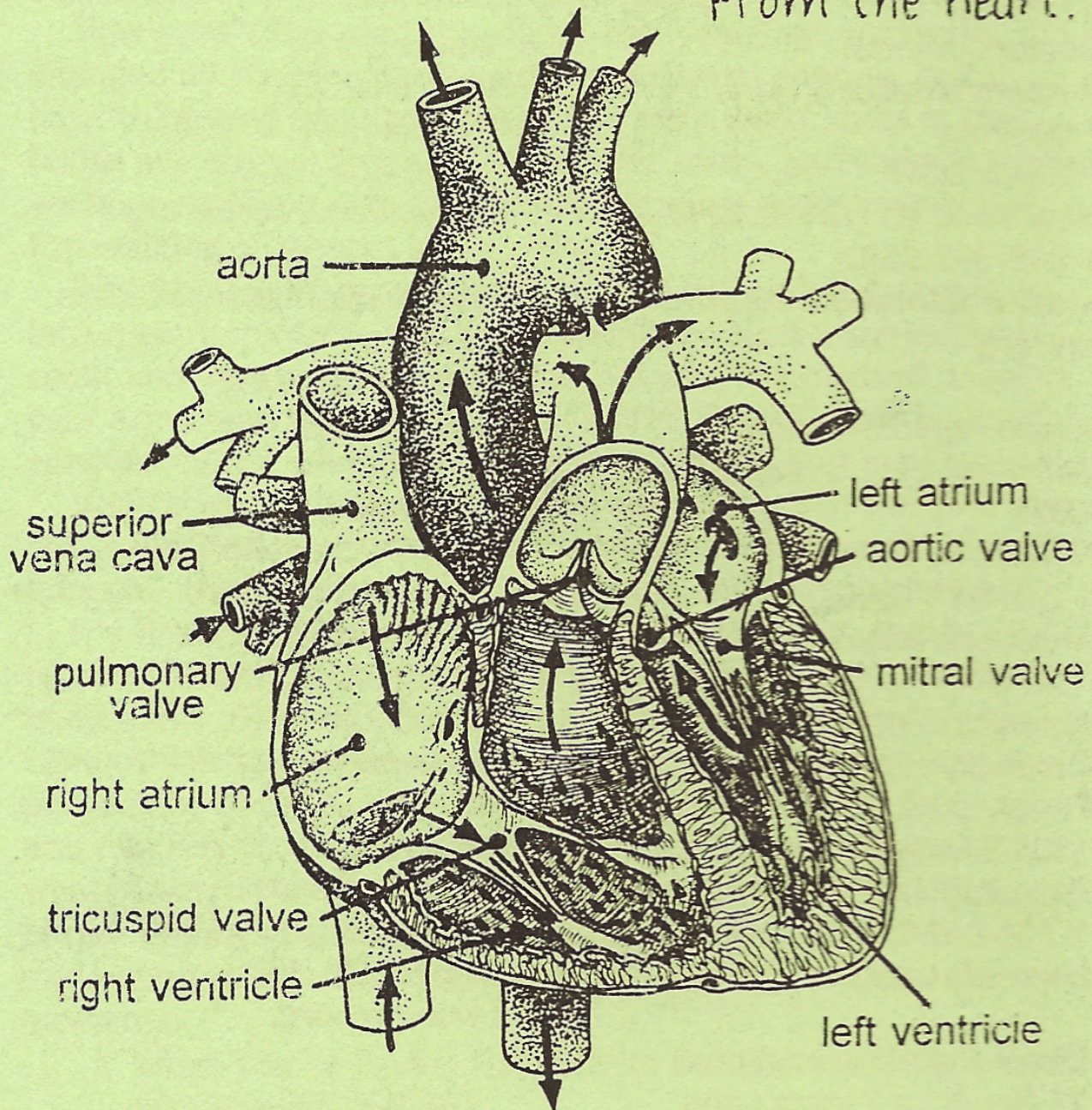
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Baltimore, MD 21202
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www.wr.org

World Vision
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Tacoma, Washington 98481-0288
1-888-56-CHILD
www.worldvision.org

This issue is for the heart.

From the heart.



Zuzu and the Baby Catcher is a zine by Rhonda Baker
\$2⁰⁰ per issue. subscribe online www.earthlingiant.com/babycatcher
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