

Dr. Strangemom

Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Carrying the Bomb

by Tracy Moncrief Mounts ©2001

Who would've thought that the experience of expelling something the size of a watermelon from a hole the size of a pear would be a cherished act? Who'd have thought I'd volunteer to do it again?

Not me, that's for certain.

Don't get me wrong, I love my son. I can see family traits, even things I quite like about myself in him. I can see his own distinct personality, and I often feel proud of our co-existence. I have warm mommy moments when I come into his room and watch his little chest rise and fall. I'm frequently overcome with the cuteness of the Buzz Lightyear underpants and the way he insists on having his superman cape attached to his jammies.

But the little bugger was a parasite.

Before baby is a time I refer to fondly, nostalgically. B.B. I had a body. Size 8, relatively slim, but realistically fleshy. I had time, oh, the time I had! I would lounge around for hours, sleep until noon, take hours to have a bubble bath with a glass of wine and a candle, conduct extensive manicures and facials. I'd bat my eyes innocently when others mentioned varicose veins, grey hair, cellulite.

I was occasionally bored.

How I miss those days, now.

Any new parent merely nods in understanding and agreement when late night feedings are discussed. Anybody mentioning “sleeping through the night” knows to whisper proudly, but never boastfully. Famous last words--we’d cackle if someone was bold enough to voice it aloud. Tearfully we new moms would share our nightmares of leaving the baby’s seat next to the car while we drove off. Mournfully we’d lament our fallen breasts, limp and pallid after a beating from baby’s gums. We’d pat and console each other when waistlines were discussed. And secretly we’d all curse our pioneer-granola mom friends who plopped their babies out in record labor time, breast fed while mowing the lawn *and* baking cookies from scratch, and had the nerve to have every pot and dish in their house sparkling even while cooking gourmet meals from scratch and having a part-time job. We almost hated them.

Every cloud has a silver lining, it just took a while to find mine. I am never, ever bored. How could I be when I have a future ruler-of-the-universe explaining that he only french-kissed the dog because she started it? Or perhaps I can now laugh at the time when, at only about 18 months of age, my son took my car keys from my purse, walked down the steps, out the gate, and unlocked the car door while I said hello to our neighbor on the back porch for three seconds? Then there was the time when walking up the stairs and talking to my husband, a fully-clothed child ran up past us, and somehow 30 seconds later we caught up and found him naked with a book of matches in our bathroom.

So what convinced me to repeat this contradictory experience? I think it must be insanity. Somewhere in the cacophony of dogs barking, screeching and crash noises, toys flying about, dirty laundry piled so high I could barely get to the kitchen sink to sigh dejectedly at the growing mess of dishes and pre-cooked meal containers which awaited my touch, I was tricked.

My husband seduced me with wine and whispers. *Soft baby bottoms to pat powder on,* he'd say. *Nine months without a diet.* My heart would begin to pound. *Full breasts.* I began to tingle. *Excuses to park closer, check out of the grocery store faster, have people carry things for you.* My heart leapt in a joyous display.

He continued the seduction. *A new wardrobe. Opportunities to redecorate part of the house.* I was almost there, at the brink of passion. *A pretty little girl.* I began to grow dizzy. *A child who will play dolls instead of car crashes.* My heart began to palpitate. *A child who will still want to snuggle.* I hadn't a chance. Clothes were flying, hearts were pounding. *This one will obey.*

The deed was done.

Afterwards as he sat with a satisfied know-it-all grin on his face, I meekly asked, "Tell me again about the clothes?" He just smiled. I began to remember; the mommy amnesia faded as quickly as my progesterone increased.

Oily skin. Swollen feet. Having to pee every 15 minutes. Fatigue. Fatigue. I slept incessantly. My son began to play "mommy night-night on the couch." I grew nauseous and had my meals there, too. And slowly but surely it dawned on me. *This thing will get bigger. Then it will have to come out.*

I had to face facts: I was not one of the people who do pregnancy well. I was the kind of woman who gave others' fuel to call it a "delicate condition." If I could've just put our genes in a little whir-o-matic and produced a baby that way, I'd do it in a second. Yet somehow I knew this second time would be better—I'd somehow get more sleep, have fewer worries, knowing I had

successfully “hatched” one previously, with few negative effects aside from the one bulging eye in his forehead and progressive limp.

This time I’d be the ultimate player in the “I can’t hear the baby, I’m asleep” game. I’d emerge victorious as I expertly diapered a baby, taught my son to read, whipped out a few articles and short stories and perhaps a novel or two while cooking gourmet meals as I jogged with my baby stroller around the lake and hit a mile in 4 minutes flat.

Okay. I’ll settle for remembering to put makeup on after delivery so I don’t look so gaunt in all the “after” photos, diapering the correct end of the baby, and making dinner by telling my husband it’s his turn to order in.

You have to think small.

After all, creating a human being is no small feat. With all the supermoms out there we sometimes forget that a pregnant condition, while not exactly delicate, is not a normal state of affairs either. That fatigue you feel is magic at work—somehow you seem to know just how to whip up ten tiny fingers and ten tiny toes, regardless of whether or not you “won” at Lamaze class. When you are so big you can’t eat more than a few mouthfuls at a time (and then the heartburn kicks in) it’s tough to forget that a triple bologna sandwich and strawberry yogurt are somehow converting into a mystic formula, helping junior to grow hair, tiny eyelashes, tiny eyebrows—and paper-thin fingernails.

When I reached that magical, seemingly-arbitrary date of 40 weeks, I sighed wistfully as I waddled out the door, suitcase in hand, a war-zone ahead of me. I cursed my husband, swore he’ll never touch me again, offered my stock options to my anesthesiologist for a double epidural. I screamed every time someone came in to “check” my dilation, insisted the janitor

come for a look-see since everyone else was in there. I burst into tears and told my husband I'd changed my mind, that I didn't want another baby, and he'd just have to take it back.

I consider such torture my dues—a small, temporary price to pay for that tiny, powdered bottom to pat. Pennies, really, for the soft, downy fuzz of her head. For any complaints I have, I'll be grateful. As for my *waistline* (remember to whisper), I have the four most beautiful syllables in the English language. Li-po-suc-tion.