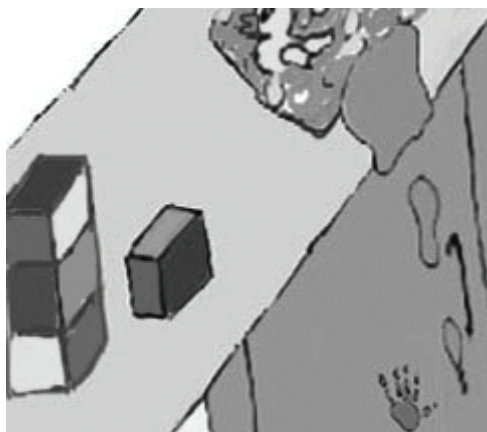


# Exploring the Seesaw Side

I Smile as I Drift to Sleep  
Couch Creatures, Laundry, and Crafts Materials  
Junk Mail  
Baseballs, Beach Balls, and Furballs  
Flicking  
Just Keep Breathing  
The Tintinnabulation  
Mission: Almost Possible





# I Smile as I Drift to Sleep

Missy, her horse, her dog, her rabbit, her chicken, her purple moose, and three of her platypi had tea. I tousled her blond hair and then tossed Baby around the living room until I was ready to fulfill my promise to nurse him.

Often, nursing has more appeal than do French fries or hamburgers. During such moments, I breathe the deep, slow sucks my meditation teacher once demonstrated. At other times, though, I'm less interested in the small, soft maw attached to me than I am in the unroasted kernels at the bottom of any handy, greasy, paper popcorn bag.

Whereas I've not yet worked up the gumption to dispatch my professional wardrobe to a local charity, I've hired a carpenter to build an additional closet for my new, mommy-sized, tops and elastic-waist bottoms. My transition back to "pert, young thing" will not be instantaneous. It doesn't have to be; I have twenty years before the oldest one needs family pictures for her college graduation.

For now, my days are small segments linked by changing nappies, feeding Baby, and keeping Missy out of trouble. A short car excursion, to deliver soup to a sick friend, might as well be a filmed adventure.

First, there's the matter of seating arrangements. My "short grownup" wants whichever car seat I adjusted for her younger brother. Even when buckled in, she deluges me with reasons as to why she's right, and, after failing at logic, with emotions that reflect my mistake.

Her sibling, meanwhile, punctuates her outpourings with cries of "maa-maa." Such exuberant expressions do not, sadly,

represent new bursts of exclaimed affection for Mum, or even remotely acknowledge the fact that he bruised my bladder while housed within me. Rather, those sounds signal that child's indifference to all but the health food store cracker that fell out of his hand miles ago.

I turn off the engine, remove the keys, open each of the rear windows a smidge and quickly hasten my gift to my friend's door. Thrusting the beribboned jar into her husband's hands, smiling and nodding, ever so briefly, I return to my vehicle before my crew can toss, or can complain about not being able to toss, various goodies out of the windows. I jack up the sound on whichever compilation of barnyard animal songs is sitting in the dashboard and proceed to return home.

Sometimes, inspiration leads me and we detour at a local playground. The first fifteen minutes of such visits is spent in the parking lot; there's no point in nursing and in diapering outside when Missy and I are warmer in the car and when the car's various knobs and buttons can entertain her. I just have to remember to turn off the windshield wipers, the blinkers, and all of the other accessible devices before we head for the swings.

At the sandbox, I remind my oldest not to talk to strangers. She immediately ignores me and trots up to the closest mother handing out candies. I shrug, put Baby in the sand, and pick up my big girl with one arm. I then lift Baby with the other and skillfully remove the only small toy, among the pile of otherwise impossible-to-swallow objects, which he succeeds in finding. Although the parking meter will give us fifty more minutes, I figure I'm good for only another ten.

In that handful of time, a dog, attached to its owner, by a fabric leash, fascinates my big one and frightens my little guy. We use up three minutes sorting out who wants to get close to the canine and who doesn't and how near is "close enough."

However, once my girl remembers the slide, our doggie difficulties look minor. My larger tot's too small to climb that gigantic piece of play equipment herself and I refuse to hustle up