

PRE - PRESCHOOL WOMEN (Jill)

I take my daughter to this community centre, for a kind of PRE-preschool class. On the first day I found out the parents were supposed to wait in this nearby room in case we were needed. I had my younger son with me, and when we walked into this room, I wasn't acknowledged at all by the other mothers, who were waiting there with their children's siblings. So we just sat to one side. Now these women all seemed to know each other. They were sharing coffee and muffins, and they were all really well dressed in these clean, coordinated outfits, and their kids were immaculate in their locally-made small-batch organic-bamboo. We had to leave in such a hurry that morning that I hadn't even brushed my teeth yet, and my son, who was still in his pajamas, kept gravitating to their side of the room. He was attracted to their children's toys - I hadn't brought anything to amuse him and he was tired of playing peek-a-boo with a diaper. So I had to keep going over to retrieve him and each time I was met with no response. I was starting to feel more and more insignificant, so I began saying things to myself to make myself feel better - you know, things like, "You're OK" "You have friends" "you used to have a relatively successful career" " you're married to a man who loves you"... "he does love you!" "you're OK, even though these women are acting like you don't exist!" And at that moment I thought - wait a minute. We're all mothers. Which means we've all had sex, carried a baby, and birthed!

And all of a sudden I was overcome with this urge to say "Excuse me ladies. Do any of you remember this one?"

(assumes a birthing position and)

AAAOWGHOUUANGH
A!"

Bet you didn't have your hair done then!

DAY IN THE LIFE (Deb)

So, it always happens when the teenager I hired for childcare cancels at quarter to 9 and I have to be somewhere on time and looking good and I'm not and I don't. And on the way home from the job interview one of them gets a nosebleed while the other one sucks on the germ encrusted handrails of the 14 bus. And the connecting bus is late because of some fucking accident and I have to walk across the bridge during rush-hour with one baby strapped to my body, the other one in some God-Damned \$15.99 stroller with one wheel that goes g-flap, g-flap, g-flap, 25 pounds of wet, poopy diapers on my back while the 2 1/2 year old whines "Mom Mom Mom Mom Mom Mooooooooooooooooooooooooooooom" *(annoying as long as possible)*

So we're home and its dinner time, where he picks out every shred of grated zucchini and flicks it on the fridge and I remember he's probably not hungry because he had that tube of toothpaste earlier in the day.

And then the phone rings and I didn't get the job.

So it's bath-time where they wait for all the water to run out before they get soaped up . And I'm naked by now because I refuse to get changed for a fourth time only to have my clothes soaked in bath water, food, spit, snot, blood, urine, vomit or feces, and they find a four-day-old cup of wild-berry yogurt (*or something sloppy*) and dump it in my lap.

Jeremiah! Georgia! Mommy is angry. And it's not at you

(*she loses it*) GO OUT**SIIIIIIIIIDE!**

Every day I start out Mary Poppins and I end up Cruella de Vil

Ben #2 (Alison)

In the three and a half months that my son lived in the hospital, my partner and my daily routine consisted of waking up, phoning the hospital, eating breakfast, packing our lunches, and heading off to the hospital in time to catch doctors as they came off their morning rounds. One day we arrived, to get the wonderful news that Ben's ventilator pressures had been dropped in the night. This meant three things: his lungs were getting stronger, he was doing more breathing on his own, and there was less chance of his lungs collapsing.

We were elated. We were one step closer to having our baby home. I floated off to the pump room to express my milk, but upon returning to the nursery was told I couldn't go in. Now, this was no cause for alarm - it could have meant one of many things - a nurse changing an I.V., Doctors consulting with parents, or doing more rounds. But I explained to the receptionist that I didn't want to visit with my baby, I just wanted to get my breast milk into the fridge, so she waved me on through.

Now, to get to the nursery where the fridge was I had to cross through the nursery my son was in and as I did I glanced down toward his incubator to wave at our favorite nurse. There was a team of surgeons standing around his incubator: Six doctors and nurses operating on a two-pound baby. The voice in my head told me, I wasn't supposed to be seeing this. This is why they told me not to come in. MOVE. But I couldn't.

An intern observing the procedure came over and explained that both of Ben's lungs had collapsed, they would let us know something as soon as they could.

I got my milk into the fridge, walked back through his nursery without looking at his incubator, went into the lounge, sat down with my partner curled up in her arms and cried.

LETTER #5 (Linda)

Dear Husband, Dear Partner, Dear Father of our children,
Just when I thought you really understood! Just when I thought all my insistent, fumbling efforts at communication had really sunk in, you go ahead and make the bonehead comments of last night! -- And when I asked you to apologize this morning you said "for what?"
Ahhh! Last night you asked me to help you with the children and I said no. You thought I was taunting you, but I simply needed some time off. You said you "never get any time off" because you "work so hard all day and then come home to "hand over time" ". During my day with the children I don't get the choice of taking one moment for myself. With your

work you do have the option. It's your choice not to take it. It's stupid to drive yourself all day with no lunch and no breaks. Especially now you have a family! We need you in reasonably good shape when you come home!

I cannot believe you said, "Looking after children should come naturally"! Who says? About as naturally as juggling burning torches on a tightrope, or writing a symphony. Perhaps in a simpler society it was more "natural" but even then I bet it was naturally hard work and many of the children died.

You have "more responsibility" than I do? Whoa! You are "dealing with a larger budget"? WHOA!! How much do you think our children are worth? What would happen if you got up and left your desk for four hours? What would happen if I got up and left the house for four hours?? I know, I know. You do try and you do do a lot, and it is a shame that our society separates our worlds so completely. But it is still my quest to communicate to you what my world is like so that you can be a part of it, be my partner in it, and not make stupid comments that burn my shorts!
Love, Linda.

I USED TO SAY (Robin)

Now, I always used to say that I wasn't a feminist because I didn't need to be. You get what you ask for, and if I expected to be treated "equally", I would be. I also always used to say that, on the whole, I didn't particularly like women very much. I much preferred the company of men. And I hated those things about myself that were stereotypically "female" - you know like

irrational emotional reactions, the desire and ability to knit..... stuff like that. Then I got pregnant.

I really hated it. I couldn't escape those things about myself that were stereotypically "female". The most inescapable fact about me every minute of every day was that I was female, and my body was doing the most female job on earth. Women would come up to me in stores, on the street, ...anywhere. They wanted to tell me their stories, they wanted to comment on my development. They wanted to touch me. It was like they wanted me to join this giant club.

What is the big deal about this shared experience? I mean I've been sharing the experience of menstruation with these same people for 20 years, but that hasn't been cause for this group hug with the sisterhood. I'm not going to be one of those women who sit around all day gossiping and talking diapers. I'm not going to live in shopping malls, and I'm not going to watch hours and hours of daytime TV. Just because I'm going to have a child doesn't mean it's going to change who I am.

Then I gave birth. And I'm a member of the giant club. I see women on the street with babies and I feel like I understand them. I see mothers with 2-year-olds having tantrums in grocery stores and I catch myself smiling with my head on one side and my lips together in that "I've been there" kind of way. I pass another stroller on the sidewalk and we give each other the high sign like two Harley riders passing on the open road... So I guess I'm just one of the gals now. And now that I am a member of this club, I move that we have more parties!

All: Yes! Party! Uh huh. Etc! High five!