

Between a Block, Fifty Hot Wheels and a Hard Place

By

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I know the procedure like the back of my hand. I have the stick in my hand and my eye on the goal. Calculating my options, I line up my approach. I only get one shot at this, and I know others are counting on me. I could hear a pin drop and all eyes are on me as I'm nervously contemplating, Can-I-do-it? I boost myself up onto a nearby chair and I hear a sea of gasps when I slip and catch myself, just before falling forward. I balance myself ever so carefully. Easy, easy, don't want to get too anxious, as I move toward my objective with the precision of a Ninja. Whap!! I got it! The crowd, now crammed around me in a group hover, consists of my five sons. They cry out "Ew-w-w-w" in perfect unison. What the heck do I have five sons for if they can't climb up on a lousy chair and kill a spider?

With five sons, I've heard, "You really wanted that girl didn't you!?" I admit I imagined a daughter could bake cookies with me and let me paint her fingernails. It is funny what a sense of humor God has. I imagined God smiling at the angels while he contemplated what to give me. Since I loved to crochet frilly pink sweater sets, he probably figured it would be entertaining to see what I'd come up with if he sent me all boys.

When my oldest son was three, he helped me wash the dishes. I filled the sink with water and made sure there were plenty of soapy bubbles. He pretended to cook and apparently had paid close attention when I cooked because I observed him using the soapy bubbles to be his pot of water boiling over.

He helped me bake cookies. I demonstrated how to place spoons of the cookie dough onto a cookie sheet. I could always tell which pan was his because there were usually a few cookies the size of a dinner plate and others the size of a dime as they came out of the oven. Of course, he would want to eat his "dinner plate" cookie right away.

When my oldest son was about two and a half and his new brother was three months old, I was preparing Easter baskets. The baby was sitting in his infant seat on top of our kitchen table as his older brother stood right alongside me eagerly watching. I had just opened a pack of yellow marshmallow peeps when I realized I had to retrieve something from the other room. I took maybe thirty seconds to dart out and as I headed back, I heard a dragging sound in the kitchen. Panic surged through me like a bolt of lightning, as in my head I pictured my older son pulling the infant seat from the table with his brother in it. My heart went back into my chest as soon as I saw the baby looking around happily safe and sound. My eyes darted down to look at my older son who had just finished sliding down from the kitchen chair as though it was on fire. His cheeks were bulging like a chipmunk carrying a load of nuts and he had a yellow mustache. His eyes open wide in fear blurted out, "I not eat the chickees" spraying out bits of marshmallow as he spoke. Until now the chickens hadn't crossed my mind but now my eyes were instantaneously drawn like magnets to metal to look down at the marshmallow peeps. My two-year-old son had scaled up on the chair, bit every peep's head off and retreated down again, all in less than sixty seconds. All I could do was laugh.

Although I didn't have a girl with long hair to braid at night, I did provide home haircuts for my sons. When you flip through photos of them growing up you can see the evolution of my hair cutting talent. They often ask if I still have the bowl I used.

My second son is now a psychiatrist. For a while he didn't believe in college, he said it was a croc and didn't need it. He was eighteen when he got a real estate license and assured me, he would be a millionaire by the time he was twenty-three. I told him to write his book while he still knew everything. He lost interest in the real estate market as soon as the market took a nosedive; I was his only client. When he moved out into his own apartment, let me correct that, when his stuff moved out into its own apartment, he stayed at my house anyway. It was too inconvenient to keep dragging his dirty laundry back and forth plus the food was all at my house. He said it was easy to live cheap if you just lived on a budget. For him, that was only a theory. He couldn't afford to chip in any expense money since his couch had its own apartment and he was supporting it. He would brag how clean his apartment was and how low his utility bills were. "How DO you do it?" I asked him.

All my sons are now grown and married. Gone now are the days of waking in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom skillfully maneuvering around action figures holding weapons, blocks with pointy corners or Hot Wheels with sharp parts. For a new unsuspecting parent, a midnight bathroom run can be a hazardous and risky mission! Recently during a visit to my oldest son's home, I caught my daughter-in-law dragging a chair out of the bedroom. My son watching from around the corner asked her, "Did you get it"? Sure enough, she had just killed a spider.