

that I can't sing for long and I start humming. Then I realize how exhausting it is to hum and begin doing a nearly silent breathy whistle. The advantage of the whistle is that I can do it while inhaling and exhaling, so that all I'm really doing is breathing normally and modulating my lips. If I make it through the whistle stage a few times without complaints from the audience, I can lay her down.

Anyway, back to the particular evening in question. The lullaby is NOT working. This does not bode well. My precious little girl slowly transforms into the prime instrument of torture in my own personal hell.

**ZOMBIE PARENTS of the STRATOSPHERE!**

Then something magical happens. She points to the couch and says, "Daddy sit there with Zuzu?" Hell yes daddy sit there with Zuzu! I sit on the couch and she tries to sprawl over me like she used to do when the only way she could sleep was laying across daddy's chest. (She's still like this when she has a cold). I lay back in one corner of the couch and she nuzzles into my chest and shoulder and is promptly asleep. I didn't have time to prepare the couch at all, and I'm going to be there for several hours, hopefully sleeping. All I could do was grab two of her stuffed toys and cram them into the corner to support my back. One makeshift pillow was a "Captain Kaleb" doll, complete with a stuffed bird that's Velcro'd onto his shoulder. As I drifted off to sleep I recall thinking that if I could stick Zuzu to me with Velcro it might make the Zombie walk easier.

Fussing and all, she is just the sweetest thing. I can't say why exactly, but for all the exhaustion and frustration, and for all the times she's nearly blinded my right eye while thrashing around with a dangerous object, I wouldn't give up a night like this for anything. On those nights when she sleeps peacefully all the way through, I'm relieved and grateful, but I also feel that I missed out on something - something infinitely precious that I won't get to experience too many more times.

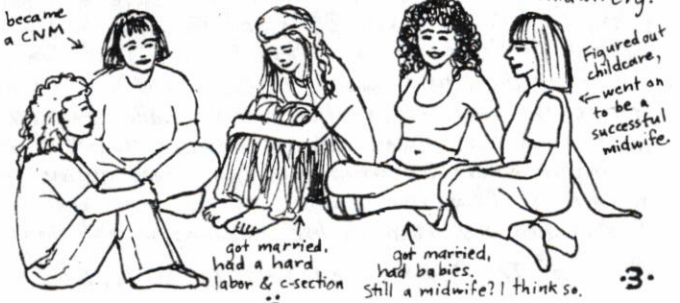
She's just turning two in June and I miss her already. Happy birthday, my little bean.

**BECOMING A MIDWIFE IN 10 EASY YEARS**

**PART 4: Where do I go from here?**

We left our intrepid heroine daydreaming in a vehicle... and frankly my memory of where I went from there is murky at best. It was March of '93. I knew I wanted to be a homebirth midwife. I got my hands on as many books and magazines as I could. And I called that phone number for the Portland study group, remember that? Who should answer but that very insistent "What do you do about childcare?" gal! Turns out she and four or five other women had a long-running midwifery study group. They had midwives come and teach on different topics, they had assignments - it sounded great! My elation was short-lived, however: one of their teacher-midwives was going to be opening a midwifery school in a few weeks, with the study group as her first students. I could come to the last study group meeting if I wanted, though, to just see what I thought.

Of course I went. I don't remember much from that afternoon, but I do remember being impressed by the diversity of the women. The one I'd called was a lovely woman, older than me, expensive but casual clothes, very savvy. One was dark and exotic-headful of dark curly hair, tanned and very sensual. The expected hippie chick, long hair, unshaved legs, soft and sweet and gushing. A registered nurse, ready to try something else. Since it was their last "study group" before they became actual "students" it was a bittersweet meeting. For my benefit, or perhaps for their own rite of passage, they reminisced about their own calls to midwifery.



The hippie chick told how she immediately ran out and got Spiritual Midwifery and read it cover-to-cover, sitting on the bathroom floor! I marvelled at how similar, yet how different we all were. And they were so welcoming, so open and kind... they encouraged me to talk to the new school's instructor, Marnie (not her real name) and see if I could join their class. It was an exciting prospect. I came away with lots of encouragement and some books I wanted to find.

I was still working fulltime at the Art Supply Store, and when word got around that I wanted to study midwifery, one of the assistant managers hooked me up with a friend of his, Bonnie. She was working as an apprentice at a very very busy birth center in town, and she graciously met me for coffee. She filled my ears about the lifestyle, about births - and, despite the fact that midwifery had lost a bit of its shine for her, she too, was very encouraging.

The doors were starting to open. Since leaving home at age 17, I had made many career choices - all of which had fallen through or had somehow been blocked. Starting with my son's birth, which veered me away from fashion design (unfathomable to me now). Living in Chicago killed my urge to be a commercial artist. The local colleges in Portland were undecided about which course of schooling I should take to teach 8th grade English, so I had backed off from that until they figured it out. Then I thought architecture would be cool... and just months before the semester started a state ballot measure and its funding cuts closed the architecture school! It seemed no matter where I turned, the doors kept closing. Until midwifery. Now, here I was... all the doors kept opening. I dug into my reading list, knowing it was right.

4. Next: TO SCHOOL, OR NOT TO SCHOOL?

On whom I took two pillows and stood them up sideways, then put another pillow across the top to make a pillow tunnel. She crawled in around and through the pillow tunnel for a great long time, frequently stopping in the middle so that she could peek out at me and say, "Hi". Then at one point she crawled inside, turned sideways so that her feet were tucked under one "wall" of the pillow tunnel, leaned her head back on the other wall, and she says, "This Zuzu's house. Go sleep Zuzu's house!"

The pillow house promptly collapsed atop her unstoppable wiggling, making her giggle like a... well, like a two-year-old.

What is more precious than that? I'll tell you a story. One dark and frustrating evening, Zuzu is being really fussy and contrary - arguing, demanding and fickle all day long. Mama is at her wit's end trying to get the little beastly to sleep, and daddy steps in for round two (or is it round 127). Zuzu sleeps for 20 minutes then wakes up very upset. I think she has to pee - she hates having to pee in the middle of the night (who doesn't?). So I'm up carrying her in the dark as she fusses and complains; finally she "agrees" to sit on the potty, angry at the world because she doesn't want to have to go pee right now. I have low hopes that she'll settle down anytime soon, but I pick her up again when the potty business is done and begin singing her favorite lullaby, ready to do the zombie-walk for the next hour if necessary.

Let me digress right here to share the zombie-walk with you. It's 3 AM, I haven't had more than a few hours of sleep for days and I'm carrying my little girl trying to comfort her. Usually it's easy - she passes out right away, I lay her down in her crib, mission accomplished. This evening however, she needs a lot of TLC. Maybe it's a stomach ache, or a nightmare, who knows. Daddy drapes her on his shoulder until she realizes she's tired, at which point she lays down in my arms facing me, head resting in the crook of my arm. I sing the lullaby, which is "Southern Accents" by Tom Petty. At some point I may need to give her the sippy-cup full of water or her "night-night Elmo". I'm a zombie of course. I'm so tired I lose track of large blocks of time as I shuffle about the house retracing the same steps back and forth. I think I may actually fall asleep while walking and carrying and singing. I'm so tired