

I Made a Booboo

A mom who had parenting all sorted...until she had a baby

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Praise for *I Made a Booboo*

“Author’s self-deprecating yet witty style of writing will make you glance through the pages even if you aren’t a first time mom.” - DECCAN CHRONICLE

“You will be tempted to give this (book) a shot.” - THE ASIAN AGE

“I made a booboo presents the good, bad and ugly of parenting peppered with wit and heart warming moments.” - THE INDIAN EXPRESS

“The book sheds the preachy tone, which is almost invariably resorted to by countless parenting blogs and books. It’s an honest confession from a mom.” - THE TRIBUNE

“Being a mother is world’s most beautiful experience. This book is as interesting as the author’s experience of writing it.” - DAINIK BHASKAR

“Not your ordinary parenting book...Any parent, especially a mother will be able to completely relate to author’s story as if it is their own.” - MILLENNIUM POST

To my son, who proved every parenting book wrong and made me write one of my own.

If not for him, this book wouldn't have existed.

(Or perhaps it would have, but just like a Garfield comic strip without Garfield in it.)

Disclaimers:

- This book won't teach you parenting—because no book can. It will tell you what it might look like.
- No babies were left unattended when this book was written. (They had iPads.*)
- Holy poop! I forgot what the third point was. Damn you, mommy-brain!

**Not really. Relax*

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First Words

Hi there, parents. How are you? Tired, but still going strong?

Remember when your weekends used to be full of three-hour afternoon naps and sleeping in till late in the mornings?

Me neither.

But let me tell you, you are not alone. There is a virtual new parents' society that exists somewhere, and you were automatically affiliated with it when your little one was born. Today, I come before you as a representative of that society to remind you to sit back, brew yourself a cuppa and just tune out of everything. You deserve a break more than anyone else. I present to you my whirlwind journey as a first-time Mom—one that is full of insane, unforgettable and goofed-up moments. You may find here: things that you can relate to, things that will make you laugh and things that could possibly touch your hearts.

Hi there, parents-to-be. How are you? Excited, right?

First of all, congratulations on signing up for an experience that will shake you to the core—in a good way, of course. You might be bursting at your seams with advice from the whole world right now. But you really need to get into the water to learn how to swim and not just watch a YouTube video of swimming lessons. I will only say one thing—just take everything easy. As long as you don't serve them drugs, your children will turn out to be fine. And so will you. You only need a bit of freely available common sense and some love to get you through.

Hi there, whoever-does-not-fall-in-the-above-two-categories-of-people. How are you? Good, I hope?

If you want to know what you were as a small child, read this book. It might make you respect your parents a wee bit more. Or help you take a decision (either way) about your future procreating plans.*

* I can't be held responsible for anything, however. Just to give you an idea—this book has positive words like laugh, love and happy mentioned over 99 times, cry 74 times and poop about 20 times.



Chapter 1: The Beginning—the Best Place to Start

To reproduce is the most natural thing to do in this world for all species. But we are not birds or animals; we can easily crack the utterly distorted *captcha* codes in three attempts. And hence, we think. We think if we should have a baby, when we should have a baby, how many we should have, with whom we should have, where we should have, what are the return policies in case we don't like the baby, etc. Discounting for accidents, the common belief is that you should have one only if you really feel like it and can take the mountain of responsibility and hard work that comes along with it, head on. So before you go any further with this book, I would like you to take a quick test to see if you are the parenting type:

1. Are you fine with counting out loud till three, with some extra excitement at three—more like 'thareeeeeee' at least 56 times a day? 'Let's sit in the car—one, two, thareeeeeee.' 'Let's stop sticking our heads out of the car window—one, two, thareeeeeee.' It doesn't matter if the activity is not done after the counting; you start again, and with the same level of excitement as the first time.
2. Are your feet strong enough to bear the excruciating pain of stepping on a Lego block while sleepwalking? Mind you, this is no mean feat. Only a parent knows where a toy pinches.
3. Do you agree that wearing sparkling clean and ironed clothes to work is highly overrated? And that it is absolutely fine to refresh your yogurt-stained black pants with a baby wipe when leaving for an important meeting? (After all, you *have* worn those pants twice before in the week, since everything else was dirty too, so it's not like you are not capable of sporting yogurt free clothes.)
4. Do you think it is morally right to insist on playing hide-and-seek with your kid, just so you can hide in the kitchen and gobble down some chips and/or chocolate? If not, then are you okay to permanently live with a little moocher who wants to eat whatever you are eating, whenever you are eating?
5. Do you ever feel that you don't have anything to do on the weekends? That there is nothing on TV that you haven't watched before? That you are spending way too much time in the bathroom?

6. Can you live with getting physically abused by a person a third your size every day and not being able to do anything about it, not even yelling back?
7. Are you a morning person? And a night person? And an afternoon and evening person? Basically, a person who is on call duty 24x7?
8. (Philosophical question): Do you think that your life has no purpose?¹
9. (Practical question): Suspend a football from the roof with a string. Stick some faux hair on it. Now, give the ball a push so that it starts oscillating. Try giving that moving ball a haircut, without poking or harming it in anyway. Were you successful? Of course, you can say you will have a hair dresser do that for your kid. Stop rolling your eyes now and roll that ball on the ground instead. And while the ball is still rolling, try to put pants on it. Were you successful this time?
10. (Multiple choice question): What is your opinion of bodily fluids (not your own)?
 - You don't mind dealing with them every day.
 - You don't mind dealing with them every day.
 - You don't mind dealing with them every day.
11. Do you want to laugh your heart out; find happiness in the tiniest of things; release more endorphin than ever before; put yourself second, not because you have to but because you want to; love and be loved unconditionally and unfathomably; feel proud; cry silly; spread your arms wide for a hug that can set everything right; feel like you have 'come home'; be elated; mean the world to someone and give a thousand kisses—all in the same day, every day?

That's it. End of quiz. If you answered yes to these questions (and attempted the multiple choice question), you have it in you to be a successful parent. So go ahead, there is a life waiting to be created by you—one that will teach you what life is actually about.

If you still have the book in your hands, you do seem serious about parenting. Good, so let's get on with the real stuff.

Typically, in about two to three years—and I say that based on my research of non-parent married couples around me—the novelty of marriage starts to diminish. You are still happily married, but now you are used to each other and their snoring like the family you grew up with. You no longer try to control your belches in front of each other and you may even discuss your gastrointestinal issues with your partner on a date night. The wedding DVD that you watched over and over again cosying up on the couch, catches dust in a corner and is only found when you move houses. Even then, the latest *Die Hard* is more fun to watch.

¹About question 8: Having a baby will not give you a purpose in life, silly. It will just not give you enough time to ponder on such things anymore.

You don't necessarily have to do everything together now, so you stop faking your interest in your husband's football match finals and wife's cruising through malls for aimless shopping. You are on an auto pilot mode—wake up, get ready, go to work, come home, eat, watch TV, sleep; with some socializing, grocery shopping, individual hobbies and spa visits on weekends. In your conscious attempt to give each other enough space, you have created a lot of room around you that can easily be utilized if tried.

Then you get invited to baby showers and first birthdays. The frosted cupcakes, the primary colours, the ridiculously tiny baby shoes and the beaming mommy as the centre of attention light a spark in your mind. All those years until then, you had been brushing away any broody ideas that ever cropped in your head—thinking you still wanted to work on that promotion, bungee jump in New Zealand, finish the list of hundred books you always wanted to read, learn to make chocolate and post pictures from all seven continents on your Facebook page— before you entered the no-exit world of parenting.

But you are somehow unable to ignore those ideas anymore. Suddenly, everyone around you is pregnant. The long lost friend from college you borrowed jeans from, calls to tell you that she is expecting a baby in three months, and so is your aunt's daughter. Your biological clock is ticking and there would never be the 'right' time to do this, you tell yourself. Not to mention, that the whole world around you is expecting you to multiply, and really quickly at that. You need something to look forward to every day, you need a new activity to do, new things to shop, a new place to visit, a new person to come home to. So having a baby seems like that foreign country you visit for an unprecedented experience or like that exciting start-up venture you own and grow with your responsible hands as against your very predictable and mundane daily job.

And one fine day you take the plunge. And how!

Never has peeing been as thrilling as it is now, with the pregnancy test stick in your hand. The two pink lines that flash on the stick are going to change your life forever.

Congratulations, you are pregnant! Shout-from-the-rooftops, PREGNANT!

You don't have the slightest idea what you have signed up for. Ready or not, the baby is coming.

I hit a similar point about three and a half years into our marriage. I have always liked the idea of having kids, so I knew I would have at least one at some point in time. That I would actually start getting dreams about being a mother, was something I had never thought would happen. Cheesy as it may sound, I think motherhood really called me. Although we had started to plan a baby, I never expected to get pregnant this quickly—within a month. This was probably the fastest thing that I had ever done, except, perhaps, for a slow-cycling race at school where I had lost for riding the cycle faster than everyone else.

I found out about my pregnancy while holidaying in the US, at my sister's place. We had gone to a Mexican restaurant for lunch and a certain aroma put me off so much that my husband and I had to walk out without eating anything. We went to a mall later, and I

was alternately feeling either extremely cold or extremely hot and sweaty every 15 minutes. The moment I'd bought an XL size frozen yogurt cup, I felt like having a hot steaming coffee, and right after I was done with the coffee I wanted to drown myself in a tub of ice cubes.

On our way back from the mall, we stopped at a pharmacy to buy pregnancy tests. I bought two, just in case I didn't believe one and wanted to double check. Surely, I couldn't already be pregnant? Of course I had decided that I wanted to have a baby, but this was similar to deciding to bet all your money impulsively in one shot at the roulette table. The idea of taking a plunge gives you such a high, that sometimes you forget that the plunge is actually going to land you at an altogether different place from where you had jumped—a place from where you may never be able to go back.

I am not sure if there were the usual butterflies flitting away in my stomach or pregnancy was acting up, but my stomach felt really odd and my heart was almost in my throat. I was wearing a bluish-green sweatshirt that day that I can't even bother to look at now. I associate that colour with being pregnant and feeling queasy. No wonder the curtains in many hospitals are made in that colour, the colour has vomit written all over it. Writing about it, even now, makes me feel weird. It is the same with red onions that I ate that day. I can never eat those again in my life. They still make me nauseous.

So, this was it, I was going to take the test.

5 minutes later I came out of the bathroom, crying.

'Yes, the test is positive,' I told my husband.

'What is there to cry about, then?' he asked.

We hugged.

I was crying out of happiness, excitement, achievement and surprise. But most importantly, I was crying out of the guilt of having had tequila shots at a friend's Christmas party about two weeks before.

Damn, I have wrecked my baby. I am possibly the worst mother and the worst woman on the face of this planet.

Apparently, the moment a man's sperm attaches to a woman's egg to create a baby; it also injects a lifetime's supply of guilt into her system—one that haunts her at every step of motherhood. Right from feeding formula to your baby, to dropping him at a day care to join work and to accidentally throwing away one of his twenty-six ninja warrior toys—mommy-guilt stays with you until...well until you are a mommy.

So I did what any 21st century pregnant woman worth her salt would do to appease herself when faced with traumatic situations like the one I was in.

I Googled.

My dear friends—‘Baby Centre’, ‘What to Expect’ and a million other pregnancy forums full of expectant stranger women came to my rescue. My sister had a copy of the hard bound *What to Expect When You Are Expecting* from her pregnancy days. There was an entire section devoted to people like me, who had unknowingly had a little to drink during what possibly were the first few days of their pregnancies. It did not do any harm, said the book, since you didn’t even know when exactly you got pregnant. Even if there was an embryo inside by then, it was too tiny to get under the influence.

The book also said that right from calculating my due date to actually bringing the baby home, it had everything figured out for me in its thirty-two odd chapters. The book was pregnant with information on what happens inside your body during pregnancy and how a foetus grows, complete with tips and tricks. I spent the next nine months cramming the book, learning from it how my son was growing from a peanut to a peach to a butternut squash, and balancing it on my belly in the last trimester. I must have thought that the mere physical proximity of the gospel to the site of action could work more in my favour.

It would be wrong to say that I had a tough pregnancy. I mean, there was the usual discomfort that everyone has to go through and the twenty-eight extra kilos I added to my body in the name of feeding the baby well. But other than that, it went pretty okay. I had become very broody during my pregnancy—from decorating the baby nursery all on my own, to rearranging all cupboards, giving myself facial treatments and ironing baby burp cloths purchased well in advance—I did everything that was originally very unlike of me.

I was ravenously hungry all the time right from day one, despite feeling bilious. So I used to stock my bedside drawers with cheese sandwiches to satisfy my 2 a.m. hunger pangs and gorge on an entire box of mangoes on a summer day. If you ask my husband, whose only frame of reference is Hollywood movies where pregnant women are shown hugging the toilet every morning with their hormones going wild, he will definitely say that I got a good deal. He wouldn’t know much anyway, since he was away half the time in day long cricket matches, when poor, fat bellied me had to go maternity clothes shopping with his credit card, all by myself.

Can you imagine? All that my husband did to support me was to drive me to work and back every morning, getting late for work himself, bring me whatever I wanted to eat whenever I wanted, soak my feet in a hot water bucket in the evenings, be there for every single check-up appointment, and make sure I slept well.

While I was absolutely in love with my pregnancy—with my belly growing to be like my very own Lamborghini that drew attention from everyone around me—there were days when I wished for my husband to take the pregnancy over from me, like, give me weekends off or something. Or for me to go back in time to stop Eve from making Adam eat that goddamn apple. Or simply, for my husband and I to be born as seahorses—as, with them it is the male who carries the baby. (Additionally, the sea horses get to live in the sea, which is nothing short of heavenly for a woman who is heavily pregnant during summer and is sweating for twenty. Getting in and out of bathtub for her is the equivalent of running a triathlon with your body hanging upside down.)

Right after our wedding, the husband and I had moved from India to Singapore for our work. A couple of years after that, he was offered a job in Hong Kong and he was able to convince me to move again. And yet another year later, we moved lock, stock and barrel to Amsterdam. We were a carefree DINK (Double Income No Kids) couple back then, in those pre-baby days of the yore. We could just pack our bags and set sail. We never bought any real furniture or anything that couldn't fit into a suitcase. So we were never sure if we were going to stick in Amsterdam as well for this long, long enough to get pregnant and raise a child.

The child birth system in Amsterdam is a bit different from what I had seen or heard of in India, to say the least. My doctor here didn't see the need to confirm my pregnancy through any test. Although he did calculate the due date of my baby through a very state-of-the-art gadget—a small cardboard that was cut in a circle and had dates printed on it. By moving another smaller cardboard circle on top of that, he calculated and told me the date on which my baby would be born. Later on, he handed me a letter for a midwife and informed that doctors are not really involved in pregnancy and birth here, until and unless really required.

I could have run away from there right then, but something told me I should stick on.

We could even opt to have the birth at our home, like what one third of the local people here did, absolutely safely! But I was too chicken to try it, however exotic it may have sounded. It took us a few months to get to terms with the highly relaxed healthcare system here. Back in India, I was a person who would buy antibiotics like chewing gum and suspect a doctor if he didn't prescribe a laundry list of medicines for a case of eye twitching. But here, they lay stress on going as natural as you could, regardless of how much I craved for a pint of amoxicillin served neat to tame my sore throat.

The midwives were highly qualified and still did all the regular check-ups and ultrasounds. But at every check-up we met a different one and who would eventually be there on the D-day was anybody's guess. We couldn't book a hospital in advance here; we could only give our preference for one. Only when the labour started, would the midwife call the hospital to check if there was space available for us and involve a doctor if some medical intervention was required. If the hospital was full, she'd take us to another one. I wondered how there were no cases of babies being born in the back seat of the car when trying to get to one hospital from the other, but I was told that somehow all of this always worked out. First baby, new country—this was going to be exciting *and* terrifying. So, both my parents had flown over from India to be with me for the delivery.

The due date came and passed. No baby. My mother-in-law in India called me and said that I shouldn't worry—since, according to her indigenous calculations, my due date should be three days after the one my doctor had told and the midwives had confirmed after a series of ultrasounds and other highly advanced tests.

Three more days passed, still no baby. My mother was loading me up on sesame seeds, nuts and other 'heat-inducing' foods. According to the highly advanced research centre of Old Wives, backed completely by unverifiable hearsay passed over from one

generation to the other, such food when eaten during the last month of pregnancy make the baby feel hot and eager to come out. This is also the very reason why these foods are not allowed during the first months of pregnancy, so that the baby feels cold and stays inside. Now, you might think that hearing such things would annoy the hell out of a modern day pregnant woman. But you see, by the end of nine months we are completely maxed out on the whole world prying on our lives and giving us advice, so we don't really bother anymore.

I went out for dinner with my work colleagues and I was asked by someone if I was having twins, for I was as big as a duplex house, garage included (although, he didn't dare to utter that last part of the sentence).

'No, I am not,' I replied to him politely.

'Are you sure about that?' the cheeky sod felt the need to inquire further.

It would have been fine if his tone had a little taunt in it. But he genuinely thought I could have miscounted the number of foetuses inside me, and that it was his moral responsibility to remind me to make sure I didn't leave the hospital with lesser number of babies than I was entitled to.

'Oh, now that you say, maybe I should double check. Wait, how many children have you fathered? Zero, right?' came from my mental word processor that was permanently set to sarcasm font.

So now I was not only a sixteen-million-weeks-pregnant woman at work who would just not start her maternity leave, I was also as-huge-as-a-whale pregnant woman at work who got offended easily by non-parent idiots asking me what they thought were innocent questions.

But secretly I did think, 'What if there *was* more than one that the midwives had somehow failed to catch? Perhaps there were three in there, or eight! How scary and record-settingly incredible would that be?' The pregnancy was taking a toll on my brain and the heartburn, summer heat, sleeplessness and endless wait were slowly killing me. At one point I may have said, 'Alright that's it, the show is over. Let's go back to being *unpregnant* now.' I had been doing this pregnancy right all this while, doing exactly what the book had advised. And therefore, I felt betrayed by my unborn child—to whom I had been providing 24x7 room service for the past forty weeks and over—for not showing up on time.

'Why, just why wouldn't he come out? Those are your genes coming to play there,' I told my husband, who is always late in reaching everywhere. He arrived late by a full hour on our wedding day, when almost all the guests from my side had left.

Twice the midwives did a membrane sweep on me to kick start labour, but this one was a strong-willed baby who couldn't be hurried up. (He continues to show those traits even now at the age of two, so basically whatever nurturing I have done so far has had little or no effect on shaping his natural personality. I should probably just stop bothering with it at all now.)

Forty-one weeks up. Intervention could be discussed, they said. But I refused this time. I too wanted to do everything naturally, with hypnobirthing and the full shebang. (That I caved in for an epidural later was another story.)

By now every other woman I knew was having a baby, even the ones who were not pregnant. Or at least that's what I felt. My cousin was due to deliver three weeks after me and her son was born almost a month before mine. I was like that child whose parents are the last ones to pick her up from school—doubtful and dejected. I absolutely longed to get on the hospital bed and have the damn machines attached to my belly. In desperation, I even went to the hospital three times on account of false labour, only to be asked to wait longer. I even faked false labour once—yeah, beat me to that—just so I could see some action, as I was pretty sure there was no baby coming out of me.

Well, the silver lining of it all was that at least now we were saved of the stress of finding an available hospital at the time of actual labour; as I was now a frequent visitor at this one, they were obligated to keep a spot for me. They should have given me a membership card to scratch and win points every time I went. Besides, my case was not normal anymore and hence it was out of the hands of midwives.

My friend's gynaecologist mother in India made fun of me by saying that I was probably making an absolute genius inside that it was taking me so much time, and that she would have never waited that long if I were her patient. Every morning my mother would shower and get ready with the hospital bag to see me off; thinking today would be *the* day. But, by evening both of us would be killing time with yet another failed baking experiment subsequently used to feed pigeons in our balcony.

Six more days gone. They wouldn't let me go beyond forty-two weeks. So this was going to be my last night before I got induced to somehow get the baby out. I downed a full pineapple and a generous serving of extra spicy Thai green curry, as advised by the midwives, to induce labour naturally. They didn't prescribe these methods officially, as these were not based on any research. But I was willing to try out anything at that time. Another trick I had read that could do the job was to dance naked outdoors on a full-moon night. I tried that too partially, by exposing my belly as I slept, with a full moon coincidentally shining through my window that night. I had done that every night anyway during my last trimester, as I had a terrible itch on my belly that I could not scratch away.

Now, what business did the baby have to act on the outer surface of the stomach? Was it not enough that it was already creating havoc inside, colonizing all the space that was in there, all the way from oesophagus down to the cervix?

Right when they are in the womb, children learn to claim exponentially more territory than what is proportional to their pocket-size bodies. When they are introduced to a bed, they sleep with arms stretched out as if they are giving chest measurements for their rompers to a tailor and legs as if they are playing hopscotch.

In a way, pregnancy is very similar to raising a small child. Both keep you up all night, both make sure you are never alone, both keep the child at the forefront of your life—

one literally and the other figuratively, both shrink your brain, expand your heart and make your sense of smell more pronounced than ever before—from ‘those are definitely red onions frying in the neighbour’s kitchen in the next street and I CAN’T stand the smell,’ to ‘there is something going on in baby’s diaper right now, that I can tell even from this side of the football field.’

I am not sure which one of those labour-inducing tricks worked, if at all they did. But I did wake up with cramps in my back at 4 a.m., about five hours before I was scheduled to go to the hospital anyway.



Chapter 2: Stork Brings the Baby. Well, Not Exactly

So I did not have any dramatic water breaking or rushing to the hospital at the last minute and getting stuck in the traffic jam kind of deliveries that we see in the movies. We went to the hospital according to the appointment given to us, at 9 in the morning on a Saturday.

'Go on, say it. I know what you are thinking,' I teased my husband as we were getting ready to leave.

'What?'

'The hospital is making you miss your weekend cricket game today.'

'Not just a game. A real match. That too finals!'

'I can imagine what you might be going through. I wish I could take your pain, since I *really* don't have any right now.'

'Oh, don't worry. The game doesn't start until 11. I am sure we will be back before then.'

'Are you kidding me?' my eyes almost bulged out of their sockets.

'Why? Aren't you happy that I planned it so well? See, if I don't practise, how will I teach our kids?'

'Kids? Plural? Can we just handle this one for now? And why do they have to learn what you like?'

'They don't have to, but they will. I know.'

'Arghhhh. I don't have the patience to deal with this right now. I will hire a taxi and go. We will inform you when we are done and the baby is ready to come with you on the field.'

'Ha ha ha. Of course I was kidding and you were the one who started it, remember? I wouldn't miss being with the baby for the world. Baby first, sports later.'

'And wife?'

'Oh yes her too. First, first. And I won't pressurize our kids into doing anything,' he paused for a bit and then teased me back with, 'as long as they turn out to be world class sports players when they grow up.'

'Glad we got that all "sorted".'

'Anytime babes. Shall we go now?'

So the fourth time when we went to the hospital, we really thought this was it. I was already getting mild contractions in my back for the last few hours, so there was no doubt that the baby express had started from terminal uterus. We went all prepared with a bag full of four different baby outfits complete from head to toe (*since the baby couldn't appear in public wearing the same clothes every four hours*), six pairs of underwear for me (*since we might just have needed to camp there for a week and house was a full ten-minute-drive away*), three change of clothes for me (*since my belly would have obviously shrunk back once the baby came out, so I couldn't decide which ones would fit*), extra warm socks, leggings and hat for me (*since it was the 1st of September and temperatures might plummet from 20 to 0 overnight*), lots of stuff to eat (*since the hospital might just starve us to death for having them work on a weekend*), a pack of cards (*since it might be a good idea to shout 'I got a royal flush here' while breathing through contractions*) and a portable CD player. The husband came in his ubiquitous black *Adidas* track pants, which I sometimes think that he was born wearing. The label on those pants very clearly says, 'the brand with three stripes', just so that no one has any confusion whatsoever. Thank God for little mercies like lucidly explained clothing. Life with labour pains is tough enough.

The CD player that we carried was to play my Hypnobirthing CD, which would put me in trance and make my mind totally aware of the entire baby delivering business while magically ignoring the pain associated with it. In a Zen-like fashion. The Hypnobirthing book was another one that I had read over and over again during my pregnancy, which came along with this CD to train me on meditation during labour and delivery to manage pain.

Every night when I played the CD on to practise, a woman's balmy voice would ask me to relax each of my body part, starting from my head. I think this was the same woman who does the Siri voiceover in iPhones and can never understand my Indian accent. Each night I kept a target to finish the entire CD, but just as I got beyond relaxing my nose, I would start snoring with the earphones still intact in my ears.

On the day of my labour, I felt like that student who, a night before her exam dozes off for a little bit to be fresh for a whole night of study, only to wake up 15 minutes before the actual exam, wondering what to do now. I somehow hoped that the CD would help me sail through the labour exam since I hadn't been able to study at all beforehand.

And to be fair, my head and nose *were* actually very relaxed during the labour, thanks to months of practising.

We reached the hospital and I was put on my dream hospital bed for a check-up. 20 minutes later a rather ruthless nurse announced that, lo and behold, those contractions

that had been killing my back all these hours were still not real and hence the labour had not actually started. I couldn't believe my ears. I really tried to negotiate hard with the nurses, but they wouldn't have any of it.

'The contraction monitoring machine is showing only 45,' the nurse told me in a matter-of-fact manner, like I was too plebeian for her—just another woman having just another baby.

'So what is the cut off you need here?' I asked her helplessly, like that student who had flunked her exam.

'What is the "what" you need here?'

'Sorry, I meant how much does it have to be for actual labour?'

'At least a 100,' she replied in a very strict head-masterly fashion.

I hated biology in school, and now biology was starting to hate me. I was sent home yet again what with my bags and all paraphernalia to come back the same evening at 8. The entire day I kept feeling sporadic, painful cramps in my back, as if someone was hitting me with my husband's cricket bat several times in a go, and stopping only to take rest before hitting me harder.

'Surely, this can't be just 45 now,' I thought. 'What else did I have to bear to go over a hundred, be bitten by a blasted platypus?'

We went back at 7, just to not be late and miss out on the baby coming out, as I couldn't take any chances now. We wanted the best seats available for the show. I lay on the same bed again with all machines attached to me, and my husband's eyes glued to the contraction machine as if he was watching the World Cup finals.

Reams of graph paper kept coming out with haphazard lines peaking to a maximum of 60 and down again. All of a sudden, I screamed some expletives. Wowza! What the hell just happened?! I was now almost lifeless and whimpering in pain, calling out for my mother, swallowing the last bits of pride I had. It was that bad. Hubby turned to me a couple of minutes later and tried to high five.

'You know what, we just crossed 130!' he said, with a spark in his eyes and a grin on his face.

I stared at him for a second before I exploded.

'It is not your Brett Lee making a century here. It is your wife dying away from labour pain and I could deal with a little less excitement right now!'

'Oh okay, I'm sorry,' and he sat down quietly.

'What now?' I asked him, after a few seconds of silence in the room.

'You said Brett Lee? Seriously? He is not even Indian! Or a batsman!'

'I know! But I don't care, alright?'

'You could have simply said Sachin Tendulkar, you know. It would have made more sense,' he replied in a mellowed voice, as if he was heartbroken.

'Do you think anything is making sense right now?'

It happened over and over again, and every time I felt as if someone had forcibly sent me on a giant wheel in an amusement park where I was crying for the ride to stop but it took me up again. My teeth were clattering and my entire body was shivering.

'No, it isn't cold in the hospital room. Shivering is normal in labour,' the nurse told us, who had probably been yawning all this while as I doled out sopranos from my mouth.

'Should I take the CD out?' Hubby asked.

I don't remember what I replied to that, but it definitely wasn't anything polite. It was all back labour for me and the pain was horrible, to say the least. I had only read that back labour is worse than regular labour. I hadn't experienced the latter so I can't judge. But I felt like a Lilliputian getting a lower back tattoo of the size originally meant for Gulliver, while going through the compounded period and constipation pain of my entire tribe. My mind had stopped working so I could not recall any of those breathing techniques that I had read about. The moment I'd start to think about how to deal with the pain, I was hit by another contraction.

Many hours of agony later, we asked the doctors about epidural and they said that they would need to phone the anaesthetist who might have just called it a day. They'd call her only if we were very sure of taking it.

'I think you should get the epidural,' hubby said to me.

'B...but I had always wanted to do everything naturally!'

'It is still natural. You are not getting induced. All you are going to do is to manage that pain better.'

'Yes, but that takes away the thrill from it.'

'Listen, there is no need to act macho and bear all that pain. You are not here to prove anything to anyone. If technology exists, use it,' and he turned back to his phone.

'Epidural isn't exactly technology. You mean adva...hang on, another contraction, *phoo phoo phoo phooooo... what theokay, it's gone.* You mean advancement in medical science.'

'*Potato Potahto.* It's amazing how you can be a stickler for semantics even during your labour pains. Anyway, who is going to remember how you delivered? Not even you, yourself. It's not like they will etch the names of women who didn't use any drugs on their hospital roll of honour.'

'They won't, right?'

And that was all it took a strong willed, obsessed with natural birth, hypnobirthing-book-reading-me to say, 'Yes, I do want the epidural.'

They changed me into hospital scrubs and poked my spine with what felt like a parrying dagger. About 30 minutes later I could not feel anything down my lower body, and no pain or shivering whatsoever.

'Ha! Now bring on those contractions I say, I got my back covered,' quite literally at that.

I felt like a queen perched on the top of an ivory tower, being served with food and drinks, not lifting a finger to even visit the bathroom, while my baby slid down the birth canal at his own will. Hubby on the other hand was given a wooden chair to spend the night on—poetic justice I guess.

Watching contractions spiking on the graph but not feeling anything in your body was like enjoying a ferocious street fight from inside your double glass window house. The drug then started to act and my eyes felt heavy. I strongly believe that they should start marketing epidurals in the league of sauna treatments or marijuana—they are that relaxing. Around an hour later, I shut my eyes and drifted to wonderland.

Yes, I slept during my labour and had to be woken up every now and then by the doctors to check how I was progressing. GO ON AND JUDGE ME IF YOU HAVE TO! (LIKE I HAVE, A MILLION TIMES SINCE THAT DAY FOR TAKING THE EPIDURAL!)

At some wee hour in the morning I was told that I had dilated enough to start pushing.

'Damn, the party's over,' I thought.

'It is just 4 a.m., could you let me sleep a little more so that I wake up fresh, brush, have breakfast and be ready for action?' I wanted to say to them, but thankfully I was not zonked that much to twaddle like that.

So they ruthlessly just shut the epidural off.

Holy Moly! Did that hurt or what? I was back to forced-on-a-giant-wheel helpless with cricket bats hitting my back harder than ever before, and had the often heard 'I can't do this, get the baby out another way' drama sprinkled all over.

'Don't give up. It's happening. I can see the baby's head. Come on, you can do it!' This was husband-talk for *stop being such a baby*.

'You said that an hour ago! Stop lying to me and go ask the doctor to operate on me!'

'Your baby has a lot of hair! Curly hair!' one of the nurses exclaimed.

'God, I can't do thi.....hang on...did you say curly? NONE OF US HAVE CURLY HAIR, HOW CAN THE BABY HAVE CURLY HAIR?' I shouted at the poor nurse as if it was her fault.

'Your sister has curly hair, doesn't she?' hubby tried to placate me.

'Wavy... ouchhhhh...not curly...phoo phooo. Are you checking the right baby here, nurse?'

'Go, go, go!' everyone ignored me and continued with their cheering.

At one moment, I felt a warm gush of something going out of my body.

'Look, what we have here!' the doctor announced gleefully.

'What? The baby's here? Okay, that's good, but do you promise me I don't have to do anything else now?' I had thought my tribulation would never end.

So almost 27 hours since the first cramp, a harried dad, a war wrecked soldier of a mom and excessive body fluids later, our son was born. If I now look at him, it is hard to imagine that those twinkling eyes and chubby cheeks came into being through such a gruesome parturition process. You would think that something as magical as creating life should have a backdrop of rainbows, flowers, lush greenery and chirpy birds. Nada. There is blood, grime, placenta and a heavily sweating woman screaming like a banshee.

At the end of it all, I just wanted to turn to my husband and say, 'You know what, that *really* hurt and I am a bloody hero to have done that. I have created life from scratch. So honour me with a Nobel Prize here, dear hubby, and never ever tell me how your neck hurts from using a wrong pillow at night. Henceforth, the pain bar has been set way too high for you to ever reach.'

But of course, you don't get a chance to say that (and never in your life will you get to say it to get anything done in your favour), since the attention of the whole cosmos has now shifted to your baby.

The umbilical cord was cut by the husband and our son was put on my chest for the first real skin-to-skin contact. That feeling, dear readers, is beyond words. So I shall not even attempt to describe it. Go have a baby just for that.

I couldn't believe that I was done after almost ten months of being pregnant, which felt like a lifetime. The feeling took some time sinking in. I touched my belly and saw that it had turned from a taut, huge igloo to a squishy, deflated tent with no one kicking and punching it from the inside. The inmate of that igloo was out in the world that I had to share him with. It was not only I who could touch, feel and communicate with him now. His new world was much bigger than my womb.

He was no longer just anticipation, no longer a part of my body, no longer a monochromatic photo and no longer an exotic fruit as per *What to Expect When You are Expecting* milestones. He was a real person with hands, toes and facial expressions. And he was perfect!

My son's life wouldn't be measured in weeks now, but in months and soon, in years. His existence no longer depended on me, although mine still depends on him.

But phew, I really was done.

Get me a double cheese burger with extra fries and a large shake, and turn the lights off. I am going to sleep for three days straight, I wanted to say. And the world would laugh at me. The real work started now, I was told.

I indeed had no idea what I had signed up for. Even after supposedly preparing for all these months, I was so not ready for this. One can never be. No one is born a parent, the child makes you one—whether you turn out to be a good or a bad one is up to you.

My son was here, crying, hungry and tiny. And I was there, knackered, messy and unable to pee on my own.

Two years later I am still knackered, only slightly less messy and still not able to pee on my own.

(Since my son now follows me to the bathroom.)



Chapter 3: So This Is What It Looks Like

The hospital had a policy of discharging everyone the same day of delivery if everything went fine. While everything did go fine, they asked me and the baby to stay under observation for one more night as the pregnancy had gone beyond forty weeks.

So after I had showered, I was transferred to another room. The baby was wrapped up from head to toe and put in a see through plastic bassinet that was wheeled into this new room as well. The nurse told me that if I had any difficulty in peeing, I had to inform her and she would then attach a catheter inside me. I did not know what a catheter was and how it looked like. So I assumed it was definitely something bad. Nothing good can come out of the hospital with a name like that anyway. For a few hours I kept drinking water but had no urge to pee. After about four litres, I figured something was wrong.

I turned to the husband who was busy entertaining our baby with his extempore rendition of spoken word poetry.

Easy baby, easy easy

Easy peasy Japanesee

Uncle Sam went to buy Chinesee

Papa getting sneazy sneazy...

When I interrupted with, '*Mama feeling uneasy uneasy. Can you take me to the bathroom?*'

'Sure.'

'Turns out I don't have to pee, Can you help me back to the bed?'

'Sure.'

'I think I do want to go now. Can you take me again?'

'Sure.'

'Not happening. Help me back to the bed?'

'Sure.'

'This time it's for real.'

'Sure.'

'Nope, back again. It's like I have to but I am unable to.'

'Sure.'

'Listen, can you...'

'I am calling the nurse.'

The nurse came in hurriedly and exclaimed, widening her green eyes, 'Why didn't you call me before? You have completely messed everything up now!'

She inserted a tube in me, which had a container at its other end. And urine started to flow. It flowed and flowed until the container got full. They emptied it and brought a new one. Twice.

'Your wife, sir, will be a great mother. She has a massive control over her bladder. I think we emptied enough liquid from her to irrigate a paddy field,' the nurse told my husband in a rather congratulatory manner.

'Control over bladder = Great mother?' I wondered then. 'Hell, yeah,' I can say now.

You never know what fear can make you do. The fear of getting a catheter installed kept my body going on without peeing for hours, hoping all would be fine on its own eventually. A plastic bag was now put at the end of the tube that I had to carry with me everywhere I went. Then I realized that this was the exact same thing that geriatric patients used to carry with them.

All I needed now was to wear round golden rimmed spectacles, put crochet covers on my desktop computer and laugh with my fellow oldies at a yoga class in the park. Overnight I had turned from a pregnant woman into my great grandmother. And I absolutely hated it.

The night I stayed back, my husband or parents were not allowed to stay with me. The nurse offered to take our baby away for the night so that I could rest well. I may confess that I jumped at that offer, as much as I could with my sore limbs. Although at that time I did show some concern over strangers taking away our son for an entire night, even if to a room right next to the one I was in.

Now that we are on the topic of confessions, let me also add here that I did not instantly fall in love with my baby when I saw him for the first time like many people say they do. The love grew over days and months and I haven't experienced loving anyone that much ever. But it definitely wasn't instant. The love was also there when he was still inside me, but just that moment when I saw him first, I was a little bit more concerned about how he looked and if his hair was straight or curly as announced by the nurse when he had first crowned. I am a sucker for straight hair.

I know that sounds horrible, but I had a type for babies I liked. Although now I want to bear hug them all and take them to my house. (Except the ones with runny noses, since my own son's snot is enough for me to handle right now, what with him wiping his nose on my jeans multiple times a day.)

It takes you some time to adjust to the fact that your newborn doesn't look like the chubby bubbies you see in *Pampers* commercials. He may grow into one sooner than you can imagine. That is when you will feel that yours is the cutest baby that has ever been produced by mankind, period.

But right when he is born, he has a giant head full of cradle cap—which is something like sticky dandruff but a lot worse, fuzzy hair all over his body, an off-centre chin, a barely there neck—that a person who has never seen an infant up close will never remember to support, structurally unsound legs, a clamp supported belly button and several bruises and blotches over his entire body. Of course he is still cute in his own vertically challenged sort of way and will get his due shares of likes and 'awws' on Facebook. But pretty much every baby gets that these days. So that isn't a fair evaluation at all.

Have you ever seen anyone comment on a newborn baby's picture with '*Oh, those eyes are really bulging out of that bald head, are you sure you like him?*' or with, '*I wish Facebook had an unlike button, as I really don't like that ugly baby of yours?*'

Either it is customary to show appreciation for all babies publicly on an autopilot mode. Or that all babies in the world *are* indeed beautiful. The pre-baby me would have gone with the former view, but not anymore! How motherhood makes you a better person! I genuinely feel now that babies really are the best looking people around—all of them. Yes, even the ones with curly hair. Now whenever I see a baby, any baby, I can't help but feel that it looks like mine in one way or the other.

I was woken up at 7 in the morning with a tray of toasted bread, butter, jam, orange juice and a crying baby on the side.

'He needs his mama,' the nurse plonked the baby onto my arms and went to air out the room that smelled from my continuous sweating from the last night, despite it not being that warm.

That was my first experience of *Thou Shall Never Be Allowed to Eat in Peace* commandment of motherhood.

'Bu...But...I don't know what to do. This is my first time. Can you send someone to help?' I almost pleaded to the nurse.

'You are a smart, grown up woman. Of course you can handle him,' and she walked out of the room.

'Yeah, right. Can't take a side on my own to save my life, and I can take care of my baby. What do these people think?' I muttered to myself.

I immediately made an SOS call to the husband who was snoring away at home.

'Come quickly and get us. I can't move, and now I have a baby on top of me,' I tried to make it as dramatic as possible.

'Eh?' hubby's standard retort to my panic calls.

'Remember, we have a B-A-B-Y now?' I was pretty sure that in his half-awake state he had a hard time recalling what all had construed over the previous day.

'Of course.'

'Remember, he is still in the hospital with me?'

'Of course.'

'Remember, how you went back home last night and had to leave me all alone here?'

'Oh, stop rambling now. What happened?'

'You really don't know what I am getting at? COME NOW, I CAN'T DO THIS ON MY OWN,' I screamed into the phone.

'Call the nurse to help you.'

'I did, but the nurses are now busy with new pregnant women and won't help me. Those ditchers have other fish to fry now. Can you imagine?'

He reached about an hour later. We packed everything up and I was taken to the car on a wheelchair that had '*It's a boy!*' helium balloon tied to it, to let everyone know what we had achieved. On my way outside I had a strong urge to blow air kisses and wave at everyone around, just like an Olympics winner would do on his home return while showing off his winning trophy. But to my utter dismay, no one in the hospital seemed to care for anything other than their own sickness. What a bunch of egotistical people we have living around us! There was no one whistling and clapping for me there. For them it was yet another addition to the seven billion population of the world.

But for me it was *the* entire world.

Hubby had duly pasted the '*Baby On Board*' yellow sticker at the back of our car, which, to be honest, was more to display our pride than to signal to fellow automobile drivers to drive carefully around us (nobody around you really cares about that sticker and the message you are trying to send with that). And all four of us—the baby, my husband, me and my catheter—sat in the car and drove home where my parents were waiting for us with balloons and all that jazz.

So we were back from what felt like a really long and painful grocery shopping trip. Except, this grocery shopping trip had changed my life forever. And how! I had returned home as a mother. A MOTHER! I would now be filling administrative forms for someone where I would write my name under the 'mother's name' textbox.

The first days of postpartum are such a blur. You haven't even recovered from the whole delivery trauma and you have another life to tend to. You can't sit since your bottom hurts, you can't stand since your legs ache, and you can't sleep for long since you have to feed the baby every couple of hours. You can't even hold your own baby for more than a few minutes since your body feels like jelly. It feels like a truck just ran over you and left you almost lifeless. You dread your first postpartum bathroom visit like a first-time skydiver dreads taking a plunge into the air, since you don't know your body anymore. You feel like a science experiment gone wrong. Your baby is so fragile that you fear you might break it. You check on your baby every moment to make sure he is still breathing. Despite continued prodding by my mom, I refused to have my son sleep next to me since I feared I would roll over him and smother him.

Now there were things I knew would happen when I would have a baby. Friends and books had given me a rough idea of what to expect. I had heard from a lot of parents on how babies don't sleep in the nights, how they cry incessantly and how your life goes totally out of control. But honestly, somewhere deep down I thought that none of those messy things would happen with me or my awesome baby. Don't ask me why, but I just did.

In my mind was a picture of me ready to go for power yoga three days postpartum, a calm and relaxed baby giving me clear signals on what he wanted, my weight dropping like the jeans that were too loose on my waist and my life completely under control. (The people who tell you that this actually happened with them are lying. If they are not lying, then please congratulate them on their fake unicorn baby the next time you meet them.)

First-time parents live in a bubble. The one that is created by images of super slim mommies with shampooed hair, feeding their super happy babies with *Avent* milk bottles. Or by those of Hugh Grant of daddies waltzing away with their babies looking drop dead gorgeous at 2 a.m., in a clean house with all laundry folded and put away.

None of the advertisements for baby gear on the internet that we research for months have any *real* people in them. They never show a mother's nipples bleeding when she is using a breast pump. Never ever is a baby shown frowning, let alone crying. The mothers in those images seem to have a day comprising only of blowing bubbles in their babies' tummies and radiating trance level calmness all the time. Their eyes are devoid of any dark circles and their clothes freshly ironed and free from any spit or stains. They even have make-up on their faces. Make up, ha! No, make that ha ha! And some more.

Let me tell you how I looked and how most of the moms look, not days, but months after the baby is there. (Unless of course they live in the Buckingham Palace, where an entire battalion is at their disposal to change one diaper.)

Wearing washed pajamas every day was the only standard I maintained. Coordinating their colours with tops would have been taking it a tad too far. Only the tops that fulfilled the functional ability to be quickly unfastened with one hand were considered—which were no more than three, so Thursday was not a good day for visitors, considering Sunday was the only laundry day.

My hair was still there on my head and that was all that mattered. While going out, I wore maternity jeans. Since the jeans didn't have the normal zipper or buttons, they were easy to pull up. Only once I didn't realize that I had pulled them up in the wrong direction—with back pockets now at the front—and found out after I was back home from my indulging hand sanitizer shopping trip, feeling something funny with my jeans all that while (I was simply happy with the luxury of being at the supermarket all by myself). And that was fine too.

Once it got cold, the only jacket I could fit in was my husband's huge downy black *North Face* coat, the sleeves of which covered my hands and made me look like an arctic fox. You see, I was sure I was going to lose that weight really quickly, so I didn't want to invest in any large sized clothes for me at that time. Some may call that practical and economical thinking, I now call that 'who was I kidding'.

So that was my fashion statement as a new mom.

Don't even get me started on personal grooming, or the lack of it. It should suffice to say that once when hubby was not in the house, I woke up from my nap and got dead scared to see a rather manly, hairy leg creeping out of my blanket—only to realize a few seconds later, that the leg was my own. That was the day when I decided I was going to invest time in myself, to look and feel good.

Hence, I ordered myself two new pairs of pyjamas that wouldn't roll up my legs easily and show the foot-long hair when I slept.

But the thing is that if there is a time in a woman's life when her own looks don't matter to her at all, it is the time when she has just become a mother. Motherhood is so beautifully consuming that there is nothing else you want to do or be associated with. You'd rather spend time sterilizing your baby's bottles than getting your eyebrows plucked in those 15 spare minutes. The scruffy department was not entirely owned by me in our house, though. The first two weeks when hubby was on leave, he too didn't get a chance to shave. Or maybe just had a valid excuse not to.

New parents are also extremely cautious and overly gullible. They will sell an arm and a leg to buy the very best, clinically proven, experts approved, BPA free stuff for their babies. A few months later they either laugh at themselves or don't dare to admit to each other that the super expensive electric swing, for which they paid more custom duty than the actual price of the swing to import from another country, was used by their baby for a total of 6 minutes—including the time it took to set it up.

Once while still pregnant, the husband and I had gone for baby goods shopping. I had made a spreadsheet in advance that I took with me, which had all baby things to buy based on research on internet—complete with brands, names of shops to buy from and a status column against each to indicate the progress. So, while trying to pick a mattress for our son's cot from an array of mosquito free, air circulatory, soft, firm and perfect spine development enhancing mattresses, we asked a salesperson to help us decide on one. Now, he wasn't the one to mince words and he told us that any mattress other than the most expensive spine development one had a small risk of our baby

dying. Dying he said. Of course we were going to pick the most expensive one, but why would the shop be allowed to stock all other varieties of murderous mattresses is still beyond me.

My son has always been a tummy sleeper, so the spine development aspect of that life sustaining mattress hasn't been of any use to us till date. Just like that swing imported from the US. Or those clips to fix the car seat on to the stroller. Or that *Fisher Price* seahorse that is supposed to help babies sleep. Or that blanket that can work both in summer and winter by adjusting the layers in it. Or that toy iPhone that looks just like the real one, but is still not the real one, Mama. Or that packet of fifty colourful plastic balls that guaranteed hours of fun. Or, check this out, *another* swing for toddlers we got our son for his first birthday on which only *Miffy* the made in China musical stuffed rabbit that just would not stop singing, swings sometimes.

Or that baby book that I had bought when I was about five months pregnant and my son had kicked for the first time.

It seemed like quite a milestone then that needed to be celebrated with some online shopping, only for those kicks to turn into all night football practices a couple of months later. The book had pages to paste baby's pictures right from the ultrasound scans up until his first birthday. I haven't got the time to paste any yet. I may have some after my retirement but I will need to use that time to find that book first. The ultrasound scans are quite hazy to say the least, they look the same for all babies and, more often than not, you cannot make out head from toes. People have started posting those to their Facebook pages these days. What do they expect others to comment? *'Wow your blurry foetus has got your eyes!' or 'If this is what he looks like as a foetus, I can't even imagine how cute he looked as a spermatozoon. Do you have those pictures to share too?'*

I did start filling in the first few pages of that baby book with names, birth dates and other such details of both me and my husband in the book, going as far as filling all of that for our extended families, hoping that somewhere at some point this exercise would make sense. Next was the section that asked for dates from when the baby first rolled over, first smiled, first burped, got his first tooth et al. Now I don't remember all of that, and I don't see the need to. It is not like we are going to celebrate his burp anniversary every year with aerated drinks served on the house. The first time he got his tooth was the time he stopped eating for hours and cried till it made his voice hoarse. No thank you, I don't want to remember that, I'm just happy he got his teeth. It feels quite creepy to preserve his first lock of hair in that book. I don't need to record his monthly height and weight in there too, as I don't have to pack him and ship him somewhere.

And hence, that baby book also lies buried under cobwebs in some corner of the house along with all the other useless stuff that I had bought.

If we add up the costs of all things new parents buy and never use in a year, I am pretty sure we will get to a figure that is close to the GDP of Zimbabwe. God, that hedonistic thought just makes me want to drown myself in my baby's spit.

My dear unborn, undecided, un-conceived, unplanned, un-discussed-with-my-husband second child,

If you do wish to surface on this earth one day, you will be given all that to use that your brother did not. We are not going to buy anything new for you. We are wise enough now to know that a baby wipe warmer that electrically warms up wipes to the right temperature is really not a necessity, since those wipes are not ice cold to start with. And the steamer that has to be kept miles away from you so you don't touch it, does nothing to alleviate your cold.

Of course we will love you both equally, but will love you a teeny bit more if you really like that electric swing.

Will you?

Love,

Mama

(Wait a second. I feel terrible now for saying those things. What kind of a mother would talk like that to their children? No, stop! Don't take me on a guilt trip here. I may have to come around on whatever I just said. I can't believe I am falling for this even before you are conceived!)

END OF SAMPLE

DID YOU LIKE WHAT YOU READ? IT GETS BETTER!

PLEASE BUY THE BOOK TO READ REST OF THE CHAPTERS.
