

Excerpt from The Mommy-Go-Round:

Chapter 7: 8:00 p.m. "Mom, I have a test tomorrow."

Who knew that this would someday be a phrase that would strike terror in my heart? What's even more incredible is how making that statement somehow brings a sense of peace and tranquility to the child's heart....It's like a transference of the responsibility for passing the test. Despite my many pleas over the years that we spread test preparation over at least two nights, my children seem to delight in an incredible sense of freedom (and forgetfulness) that first night and the prospect of jamming the studying of 25 pages of history, science, whatever into one teeny tiny evening....More interestingly is that somehow my children have gotten the crazy idea that if MOM memorizes the materials, they are guaranteed an A+! No problem!! They must have this vision of me sitting in the desk beside them filling out the test and passing it over to them to put their name on. We're a team, we're family, she's my Mom...Let me assure you, we're close but NOT that close.

Did I torture my parents in this same way? I shudder to think. Of course, I can't take full responsibility for this behavior. Having had the pleasure of reading my husband's report cards when we first married (at which point his family must have believed it safe to bring them out of hiding....), my years of report cards reflecting the comment "too talkative" seem mild in comparison. As one teacher summed him up....if Steve required an effort to breathe, he would cease. Sounds to me like he enjoyed that same incredible sense of freedom which our kids now love, throughout the entire school year.

Now admittedly by having school age children, I have had the opportunity to re-learn all the things I blew off the first time around. And enjoy it too! Trust me, there is nothing more annoying to a child cramming for a test than to say things like...."Isn't this interesting" or "I love history, don't you?" All's fair in love and tests. They come to me with open books and blank expressions on their faces. My feelings are that if they're going to act like they never heard the test material before and put the burden on me to re-teach two weeks worth of lessons in one hour, then I reserve the right to be annoyingly cheerful and completely absorbed in the subject matter!

Excerpt from Chapter 13: The Pet War

I have continually been under parental pet siege by my youngest child, my animal lover, approximately since his birth! It doesn't matter how many fish, rabbits or whether another family member's cat is staying with us, it seemed it was never enough. This time, shortly after the passing of our one beloved rabbit and the move of an uncle with his cats from our home, Nathan assumed command of yet another attack, call it an act of war. Oh but he was good. He started with a whole new angle, not known or previously tried by any member of this family A "Mother of the Year" contest with the winner the recipient of a trip to the SPA!! Lures and reward never before dangled in front of this mother --- and seemingly so innocent, no strings attached, not yet at least...

He and his sister were hard at work, willingly, singing the praises of my "motherhood." They carefully listed each of my "wondrous traits" in an effort to convey to these judges - - just how perfect a Mom I was -- to win that just reward-- a relaxing day at the SPA!! I, ever naive, had nearly take the bait, when the trap was snapped --

"And after you win the contest Mommy (may as well make that Mommy Dearest), you'll be so well rested from your day at the SPA that maybe you'll be up to taking on the added responsibility for a new pet, a dog!!!"

My moment of basking in their love --- shattered at the mere implications that my actually winning brought, regardless of how remote a possibility!! --A punishment far worse than any one mother could imagine -- a price so high for one measly day at a spa--- you've got it -- 10 to 15 years hard labor --- given full charge of yet another "child," a newly acquired family pet! Why not just take a knife to me and...

It suddenly became a bit harder to smile happily pretending to believe that we would all live happily after, right after I won the contest, that is. --- The kids, their Dad a dog? And me. The important thing is that 15 years down the road, after countless vet visits, thousands of dollars invested in pet food and supplies, lost sleep to dog walks, etc., I can always remember that I looked nice the day I went to the Spa! Lucky me... Wouldn't it have been easier to just treat myself to a day at the spa and skip the hard labor. Needless to say I dodged the bullet that day, never won the day at the spa but that alone was not enough--- and sooner or later, destiny would have the last laugh.