THE FART THAT (ALMOST) ALTERED MY DESTINY

AND OTHER HUMILIATIONS, THOUGHTS AND SHORT STORIES.

BY ANNA LIND THOMAS

Introduction

Hi. I'm Anna. About seven years ago, I started a funny website for women with my best friend from college and we called it HaHas for HooHas. Shortly after, I wrote a story about a humiliating first date I had with my husband and slapped it up on the website before running off to a dentist appointment. Out of a tiny fanbase comprised of my parents, friends I barely remember from high school, and a few older ladies from church, it somehow went mega viral.

I guess the fart altered my destiny in more ways than one.

Self-deprecating humor, with perhaps a bit of "laugh at other people's expense" if no one is around to reel me in, is about as ingrained in me as the ABC's. I remember when I was around 11 years old, I was lying on my stomach watching Sylvester Stallone's *Rambo* with my family. My dad entered the family room in his boxer shorts, an old workout sweatshirt with the sleeves cut off, and the belt of a robe

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tied around his forehead. If you looked down, you noticed a butter knife sticking out of his sock. With his hands placed firmly on his hips, he announced “Rambo, the later years.”

Some of us laughed, some of us groaned, and my mom asked, “Is that the belt to my linen robe?”

Getting a good laugh in my house was the utopia we sought after during every family gathering. Of course, this also means we had a few tense dinners at the table. We all have a pretty good sense of humor about ourselves, but we have our limits that need to be tiptoed around gently, lest you wanted Mom to remove herself from the table and scuttle off to her room before bursting into tears. Like that one time it was really humid outside and the topic of her frizzy hair came up over a spaghetti dinner. Normally, she’s the first to have a good laugh at a bad hair day, but you can only push a woman so far. After she left, we knew we were in for it. We went back and forth, aggressively telling the other to chase after her and apologize.

“Dad, you go apologize! She’s your wife!”

“Me!? I’m not the one who said her hair looked like black packing peanuts!”
“But you are the one who complimented her boldness to wear a 70s disco wig at the dinner table!”

Etc. etc.

For me and my sister, for instance, you never joke about our weight. Ever. But for my brother, that one year when he got really fat and could only fit into FUBU velour track suits is one of our favorite Thanksgiving recollections. He lost it all after going

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barely low carb for a few weeks, something I'm still bitter about, but at least I'll always have his velour track suit memories to get me through the tough times. Our family's humor was often a tight rope and our job as a loving family was to try our hardest to not fall off it. The best way to stay out of trouble was to simply make fun of our own outrageous stories. I suppose this was the beginning of my story telling.

I've discovered, seven years too late mind you, that one of the worst things you can do as a writer is blog all the time with a poor categorizing and filing system. Which is, unfortunately, what I've done. But the good news is that there are a solid handful that have each been well received in their own way, and I've tried to include the funniest ones here. I've also included some fresh pieces to toss things up.
I think laughter is the best thing you can douse on a crappy day, bleak circumstances or when you step on the scale after a wild weekend on carbs.

Laughter is a reminder that it'll be okay. It really will.

HooHas is still up, but is more like an old museum at the moment. You can visit me now at annalindthomas.com.

And, I hope you'll come see me on my Facebook page and say hello every once in awhile. Mostly because I'm a work from home mom who typically doesn't put a descent bra on until 2 PM and I get a bit desperate for adult interaction.

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The Fart that (Almost) Altered My Destiny

Like everything in life, farts have a time and place. However, I never realized that in the wrong time and place, flatulence had enough power to alter my course in history. Well, it can if it's the third date with the man of your dreams. And, if it makes his eyes burn. If God destined us to be together, I was one SBD away from foiling His plans (that's "Silent But Deadly" for you prudes).

It was about five years ago. I was trying to lose a few pounds so I was staying away from carbs. That's when I met my husband, Rob. On our first date, he booked the next two. He liked me. I liked him. Things were looking real good.

He picked me up in a Cobra Mustang and his pathetic attempt to win me over with a car totally worked. I'm not shallow, but since I spent most of my twenties picking

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men up because I didn't want my hair to frizz in their non-air conditioned jalopies on 3 wheels and a 15 year old spare, I welcomed his fancy sports car with open arms.

We arrived at the restaurant and Rob was ordering food I hadn't allowed myself to eat in years. I didn't want to be "that girl" so I ate, drank, and oh, was I merry. Later we shopped a bit. Rob surprised me by buying an expensive pair of shoes that he caught me eyeing. Was this love?

That's when it happened. Gas strikes in two different ways - uncontrollable toots or sharp, shooting pains that feel a lot like dying. I thought I was dying. Not to make a scene, I told Rob I suddenly wasn't feeling well and probably needed to head home. On the way home in his Cobra, he tried to hold my hand and ask me lots of questions, but I wasn't having any of it. The pain was so bad it felt like I was being stabbed with a bunch of tiny forks. Then I realized ...

My God, help me. I have a horrendous fart on deck. I'm in trouble. Big trouble.
The more I held it in, the more pain would shoot through my stomach and down my legs. I was even having to raise myself off the seat, gripping on to my door and the dashboard.

"Seriously, you need to hurry - I'm in a lot of pain." I managed to say through gritted teeth.

"Wow, it's that bad? What's wrong? Do I need to take you to a hospital?"
How do you tell a man you just started dating that the reason you're writhing in pain is because you have to fart?

Well, you can either tell him, or like me, let the fart speak for itself.

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People, hear me. There was nothing I could do. As impressive as I am with sphincter control, this was out of my hands. Slowly, it eeked out. The more I tried to stop it, the more it forced its way through the door. However, to my pleasant surprise, there was no sound. I sat silently, sweat accumulating above my upper lip. Ok, maybe I got away with it. Maybe I'm home free. Then it hit me. Not an idea, a cloud. A horrific, fart cloud. Not in a, "Am I smelling something?" sort of way. More like a "Is someone dead and rotting in your trunk and am I in hell?" sort of way. Suddenly, I panicked. "Roll down the windows!" I screamed (yes, I literally screamed it like I was in a horror movie).

"What? Why?" Rob asked, starting to freak out because I was freaking out.
"I can't roll down the windows, unlock it! UNLOCK IT!"

"What's going on?" Rob yells back to me, "Why are you …" then it hit him. I could see it in his eyes. Was it surprise? Horror? Water started to accumulate at the base of his eyelids, "Oh my God, I CAN TASTE IT!" he screamed.

"Roll down the windows!" As I screamed, the toots started to flood out uncontrollably. I scratched and clawed at the window like I was being kidnapped. Rob, unable to see either by fart cloud or panic, kept turning on the windshield wipers instead of unlocking the window.

It was chaos. We were acting like we were under siege by gun fire. We were under siege alright, just not by gun fire.

Finally he was able to hit the right control and he rolled down our windows. We both gulped in fresh air. I was horrified, yet happy to be alive, then remembered I just farted on the man of my dreams, then sorta wished I was dead.

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We sat silently for the rest of the way home. Although the shooting pains had subsided, I now desperately needed to use the bathroom, in an urgent, explosive kind of way.

He pulled up to my apartment and before he could come to a stop I had already jumped out, “Ok, thanks for dinner, sorry about the fart, love the shoes!” and ran in to my apartment like I was running from the cops.

I burst through my door and ran straight for the bathroom, where I was finally able to unleash and make noises that no one should ever, EVER, hear coming from another person.

Then I heard it. Rob’s voice. Right. Outside. My. Bathroom. Door.

“Anna? You left your shoes in my car and your front door was open. Where do you want me to put them?”

“Get away from the door!” I screamed like Reagan from The Exorcist.

“Ok, I’m sorry. Are you okay?”

toot *toot* *splatter* *ungodly noise*

“I’m fine, Rob - just leave the shoes there. I’ll call you later okay?”

“Okay, are you sure you’re …”

“I’m fine! Get away from the door!”

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This man! I mean, I love him, but take a freakin' hint!

Finally, I heard the front door shut, and the Cobra engine zoom away. I thought that was the last I'd hear from him. I didn't think it was possible to ever see a man again after he screams he can taste your fart after only knowing you for 48 hours.

But, to my surprise, I did. A couple days later, actually. Now we're married and he's lying on the couch while I type this … "It was your rack that saved you," he just lovingly reminded me.

Well, thank you boobs. You saved us. You saved our destiny.

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I Owe My Existence to a Douche

No, I don't owe my existence to the lead singer of Nickelback. I'm talking a literal douche here, people.

My mind is continuously blown by the existence of life. Think about it. It's estimated that the chances of you being you – is 1 in 400 quadrillion. QUADRILLION. My brain doesn't even comprehend that type of number.

Put more simply – the odds that you even exist at all are basically zero.
We beat those kinds of odds, people. Don't tell me you're not special.
Which is why I feel like it's some type of poetic justice that a humor writer like myself exists thanks to one awkward and arguably not really necessary feminine hygiene product – Massengill spring fresh douche.

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Allow me to elaborate.

I'm the baby in my family. My sister is ten years older and my brother is five. My mom was mentally done having children after my brother. My dad is a home builder and at the time of his growing business, they were moving constantly, often among construction and living a lifestyle that just confirmed to my mom she didn't want any more children.

So, like many women in the 80s, she used spermicide as birth control.
As an aside, could spermicide have a more terrible name? Do we really have to get *that* literal with it?

Anyway, I guess most spermicide brands came with an applicator that was reusable for every application. Most women found this a little weird and gross. I mean, yeah – I don't think I'd want to use the same tampon applicator, either. Where do you put it – the bathroom drawer next to the toothpaste?

Anyway, I'm getting off topic.

Step one to my existence: My aunt calls and gives my mom a hot spermicide tip.

After what apparently was a great trip to the grocery store, my aunt called my mom and told her there's a new brand of spermicide that has disposable applicators (about freakin' time!). I assume it was probably with much glee, like she just hit the modern technology jackpot, my mom decides to pick up a box of this new fancy spermicide with the disposable applicators the next time she hits the store. I mean, what next – portable telephones?!?!

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Step two to my existence: Local grocer decides to put the spermicide products and douche products right next to each other in the feminine hygiene aisle.

While in the aisle that carried feminine products, my mom searched for the golden ticket of spermicides. As she scanned the different options of preventing me, her eyes lit up when a box read "disposable applicator!" She grabbed that puppy off the shelf and threw it in her cart next to a bag of peas and hamburger buns.

Step three to my existence: My parents, um. Decide to, um …

Now this is the part of the story that even at 32 I have a hard time recounting, but since we're all adults here, I guess I'll just come out with it. My parents "did it." According to my mom, her period had just ended so she knew she wasn't ovulating anyway, but they used protection no matter what because she really didn't want to get pregnant.

She emphasizes the "really didn't want to get pregnant" part in the story a lot. We get it, alright? ::eye roll::

Step four to my existence: My mom ovulates twice in one month.

I don't have much to add here other than, are we surprised?

Mother Nature is all, "Here's a bouquet of gorgeous flowers I've pulled from my soil" to our face and all, "Oh by the way, your period is gonna rock you like a hurricane on your honeymoon, so don't bother packing the sexy panties. They aren't sufficient enough for that gigantic overnight pad you're going to be purchasing at the front desk," once we scuttle off to put our flowers in some fresh water.

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Step five to my existence: Mom loses all common sense and reading capabilities FOR THE SECOND TIME.

Apparently she had horse blinders on that wrapped around her face five times, because she refused to read the box of "spermicide" for a second time, ignoring important keywords such as *douche* and *spring fresh* and the fact *spermicide* isn't even on the box at all.

I'd like to think that all of this has far less to do with my mom having a ditsy brain lapse of epic proportions and more to do with God really needing me to be born.

At this point we all know where this is going. In fact, I'm pretty sure you all figured it out a long time ago, but whatever, I wanted this story be longer than a paragraph.

So, to recap: Instead of properly protecting herself from pregnancy, my mom freshened herself right up with a spring fresh scented douche while she was unknowingly ovulating for a second time in one month.

And then …

Ta Da!

I'm the 1 in 400 quadrillion. Thanks to a douche. And that's alright with me. It's even poetic, actually.

No matter how you were conceived – a freak accident or meticulously planned – the fact you're even here is an unfathomable miracle. We take it for granted because babies are born every day, but it doesn't make the stats less real.

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We all beat ZERO odds.

There has to be meaning in those odds. There simply has to be purpose. It's too freaky, too uncanny – too unlikely – not to.

But we blow our miracles all the time. Just like most winners of the lottery, we will be bankrupt within five years. Maybe financially, maybe emotionally, maybe spiritually or physically. Maybe sometimes all of the above.

Humans have a bizarre way of squandering our miracles and crushing them into unrecognizable dust.

That may be because it takes a miracle in itself to recognize miracles past despair, current economic climates, wars, and battles even in our own homes.

If only we can shift our thinking. If only we can see the miracle in our existence and feel the urgency to make the miracle mean something through our purpose. Maybe choose kindness instead of snark. Maybe listen instead of just waiting for our turn to be heard. Maybe give more than we think we have. Maybe take that improv class we've been putting off because our knees buckle just thinking about it.

We have the choice to believe that all of life on earth has happened by freak chance with no meaning at all, or we can make the choice to believe everything aligned perfectly, for us, for this moment. So take it.

We beat zero chances to exist already. I conquered spermicide like a ninja. I like our odds. There is meaning to all of this and we have everything within us to bring that meaning to life. We're pretty damn special. Time to start acting like it.

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Things Women Do Alone

(away from men and children)

I always thought it would be fun to be a ghost and haunt my friends and family, but then I thought about the terrible things people do when they're alone and started to think better of it.

Sometimes I giddily imagine returning to quietly visit my dear, sweet friend Mary, and maybe play a prank on her, like giving her a mild stroke by flipping the pages of a book she's reading. You know, funny stuff like that. But what if right when I'm about to do it, she belches in a way that would only make sense coming out of a drunk John Goodman? Or picks her nose, looks at the booger on her finger tip and then scrapes it underneath her night stand?

That isn't how I want to remember my friends.

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As a a wife and mother of two toddlers, I can tell you that I'm a ghost's worst nightmare. Not because they would find me in a pretzel position trying to conquer an ingrown hair (although, I'm not above it), but because motherhood has made me so boring, the last thing a dead person wants is to be bored to death.

However, as any woman can attest to, once children take your freedom - what we do alone isn't boring at all. It's bliss.

Here is a glorious list of things I do alone.

I don't share my food

Sometimes I just want to eat a frickin' bar of chocolate without having to break off a piece for a bunch of beggars. I mean, can't a woman get a Jamba Juice without a constant barrage of requests for sips?

Enjoying a smoothie without kid floaties wrecking it should be a right, not a privilege. And when I'm alone, I know my rights.

I watch bad TV

Sometimes I like to watch shows I'm not exactly proud of. Real Housewives, Kardashians, shows documenting the journey's of the morbidly obese - so pretty much anything on TLC, etc. On Sister Wives, the show about a modern polygamist family, I remember setting the DVR to watch the episode when the wife who cries the most, Mary, was catfished into a romantic relationship with a large woman who

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she thought was an attractive rich man. When my husband saw the recording on the DVR, he looked at me, not with anger, but with anguished disappointment.

Oh please! It's not like he found cigarettes in my purse! How I relieve my stress as a woman on the edge is my own business. I didn't need to be judged - that's why I do it alone. The peace and tranquility that comes from watching bad TV in a kid-free, judgment free zone is a gift one can't put into words.

I bask in the tranquility of not not being touched, leaned on or smothered by someone

Of course, the affection I receive from my husband and children releases the oxytocin and endorphins that places giant hearts in my eyes for my beloved family.

But sometimes I just need 20 minutes where everyone gets their freaking hands off me.

Just yesterday, both of my girls started fighting over who got to sit on my lap and give me kisses and I was not only the recipient of this aggressive love, but the referee and disciplinarian of this catfight. One would think the preciousness would never get old, but I can assure you - it does. In the process, I was elbowed in the eye, someone was using a fat roll on my stomach to gain leverage, and my hair was being pulled for balance.

Shortly after, my husband hinted at some "alone time" once the girls went to bed. If by "alone time" he had meant me completely alone with some bad TV and a good

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bourbon, then I wouldn't have shot him the Dorothy Spornak eyes when Rose says something stupid.

But he didn't. And I did.

Going to the store and slowly viewing/caressing all the beauty products without someone screaming, crying or impatiently sighing

Going to Target alone feels like being released from federal prison. I feel so carefree, I don't know what to do with myself! What aisle should I go down first? Home decor? Cosmetics! Hell, I'll go hang out in sporting goods - I could use some 5 lb dumbbells.

Sometimes I just want to stand and stare. So many shades! So many styles! And that best, most glorious part? There's no one there to sigh with a "Hurry up honey, the game is almost on" look in their eyes, or no one screaming in the cart, trying to get out so they plummet head first. No chasing a toddler running down the aisles. No telling someone they can't buy the pack of 15 Lip Smackers at least 8 times.

I'm free. Until my phone rings and it's my husband calling wondering when I'll be home. But until then - I'm free.

Sitting on the couch to enjoy a clean house for .3 seconds

One thing I've learned is that after I deep clean my house, the only reasonable option is to put it up for sale. There is no way I'm going to scrub a toilet and then let someone crap in that toilet again. It's not happening.

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In ways that can't be explained by observation or science, just my family's very presence will create a tornado of crap that will swirl all over my clean house. It doesn't even appear they're doing anything, yet somehow someone manages to make a deck of cards rain on my living room, a poopy diaper explosion goes unnoticed until the child has crawled into every room of the house, and there's a pile of half eaten tangerines on my favorite rug.

But those .3 seconds while it's clean? There's nothing better. I just soak up every millisecond of it.

Taking the glorious time necessary to thoroughly wipe our butts without interruption

You don't realize how much you miss thoroughly wiping yourself until you give birth to a permanent bathroom audience. Just yesterday, I could hear my husband yell, "No Lucy! You can fall off and get hurt!" and then I heard her burst in to tears. Because, you know - how dare daddy protect her from imminent doom.

Not my problem, I thought, as I continued to scroll through my phone doing my business. Then, as if I was being raided by the cops, my daughter blew my door open and ran to me for comfort.

While I was on the toilet.

She was utterly distraught, burying her head in my shoulder while I was quite literally going to the bathroom. Then the baby crawled in hollering at me like she was a Viking about to pillage a village, then made her way over to my bare knees and cried for me to pick her up!

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Hello? Where's my husband?!

One can not express the pure bliss from going to the bathroom uninterrupted. It's almost like an exotic getaway. Should I bring in Cosmo or a Pottery Barn catalog? Maybe I'll just scroll through my Facebook feed, liking things and leaving comments!! We have so much time to poop in peace, the possibilities are endless!

Taking a long, hot shower without someone barging in asking questions you don't want to answer

A hot, luxurious shower alone is what dreams are made of. Of course we love sexual intimacy with our partners, but sometimes we just want our nakedness to be benign. Getting naked before entering a shower doesn't always have to serve alternative purposes, ok? We don't need propositions, innuendos or proposals, we just need to suds up our chimichangas and get our legs shaved real quick before we miss our 11 o'clock appointment.

And why is it no one can find anything while we're showering?

"Hey babe? Where's the extension cord we had stored in the basement for the past decade? I suddenly need it while you're showering."

"Hey mom? Do you know where my one pink sock is? I haven't looked for it yet, but I thought I'd start by asking you first."

"Hey, are we out of mayonnaise? I can't find it in the fridge."

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“OHMAGOD IT’S IN THE REFRIGERATOR DOOR NEXT TO THE BBQ SAUCE!” you scream back and then they act like you have an anger management problem.

No. A good, hot, mesmerizing shower alone is where it’s at. And where it should always be.

Go through a Starbucks drive thru

The freedom to go through a drive thru alone is enough to make a woman roll down the windows of her minivan and start blasting some Salt N Peppa.

I can’t tell you how many times I’ve simply wanted a cold brew, cream no sugar without having to take out a loan for all the backseat requests. When you’re alone, there’s no one in the backseat begging for 20 dollars worth of frappes or cookies or scones.

You know what? Forget the cold brew. I’ll take the creme brûlée salted carmel with unicorn chips. I deserve it. Hell yes, I’ll take whipped cream! I’M FREEEEEE!

Getting tasks done without sweet little helpers

Sometimes children want to be helpers which provides parents a wonderful opportunity to teach them chores, generosity and responsibility. But sometimes, a woman just wants to get the frickin’ dishes done so she can relax and move on with her life!

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One wonderful tradition I have with my toddler is that she helps me make dinner. She pulls up a chair, has me put on her special apron and then proceeds to drop the lettuce on the floor, dump a bottle of garlic powder on the the counter tops and cries when I don't let her mince garlic with a chef's knife. If I'm being honest, we're making memories and it's pretty delightful, but on really busy, exhausting days, I feel there are scientists observing me behind a mirror.

"Let's see if she crumbles when the toddler dumps a whole bag of flour in the drawer where she keeps the cling wrap," she says in her lab coat as he scribbles on her notepad.

One real doozy is when they're at the age where they want to push their own stroller or ask to "help" push our grocery carts so they can clip old lady's heels or crash into a display that will topple over in front of everyone at CostCo.

So yes. We love our little helpers, but sometimes - we love to get crap done.

Sleep

I know this is cliché, but I'm not sure I actually remember what it feels like to sleep through the night. Whether being woken up by a teething baby's cries, or a child creepily entering your bedroom like they're an extra on The Walking Dead, I've honestly forgotten what it feels like to be well rested.

Just last week I had decided to go to bed early. Real early. Like, only small children and people in their 90s go to bed this early, early. I reasoned that if I woke at 4 a.m. and had PBS Kids babysit my children for a length of time I'd feel guilty about later, I

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had a slight chance of meeting all my deadlines. So I crawled into bed, willed myself to sleep and, to my own surprise, slipped into a sweet, mouth-wide-open slumber.

Until I was jolted awake.

Someone had screamed … I think? Or was it just me dream-screaming at Antonio Banderas for eating all my Peanut M&Ms? Then I heard it again. A baby's wail. But which baby?

I lay still and prayed whomever it was had fallen back asleep. Then another wail. It was definitely Poppy, my one year old, crying for who knows what. I still hadn't moved; playing dead was my only defense.

My husband's deep breathing stopped. He was awake now, too, but he wasn't moving either.

We were at a fake sleeping standoff. Loser goes into the baby's room, checks things out and puts the pacifier back in her mouth.

To my surprise, he flinched first and flung himself out of bed, shuffling to the baby's room. I listened intently, hoping this was a quick baby fix and not a situation that needed my assistance. He popped her pacifier in, patted her little curls and shuffled back into bed. She was asleep. Thank God. But I was awake.

For the rest of the night.

I'm telling you friends, sleeping in a bed alone, and even better, away from your family, after years of balancing on the edge of the mattress or having people scream at you periodically through the night, can feel like floating on clouds while

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angels hum us to sleep with the majesty of their harps. And no, I'm not exaggerating.

Alright, so this is the end of my list of things I like to do alone. I've always struggled with a good way to close a post with a long list, so I'll just awkwardly end it here and, um, walk away slowly.

Still there? Just move forward to the next chapter. We're done here. Go on now, scuttle off. I'm closing the doors. There you go - alright. Bye bye now.

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An Open Letter to the Black Hair Under My Chin

Dear Freak Black Hair,

I remember the first time we met. It was a few years ago. I was casually resting my chin on my hand. Probably amid a deep thought, like trying to process Rachael Ray's boob situation, or determining which Property Brother was more attractive. Then I felt you. I was confused at first. I had never felt that sensation on my chin before. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't afraid. I'm sorry if that hurts you, but you have to understand – I'm not used to this.

I rushed to the bathroom and there you were. One inch of thick, black, man hair, so long you even started to curl, making yourself right at home under my chin.

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I'll admit it. I was horrified. So many questions flooded my brain. What were you, some kind of silent ninja? How did you set up camp on my face for that long without me ever noticing? Why were you there? Who sent you? And again, how did you grow that long without me ever noticing?!

I didn't even want to get to know you. I grabbed my tweezers and plucked you out of my life and let you fall to the sink along with my husband's whiskers. My husband's whiskers, by the way, that I continually ask him to wash out of the sink, but for some reason it's just way too much to ask, so apparently it's *my job* to clean up after his damn facial hair and I'm just like, how can I trust him with the big things if I can't even trust him with the little things?

Pardon me, I've strayed off topic.

Where was I? Oh yes. After washing you down the sink I thought it was the last I'd ever see of you. I admit, I judged you immediately and didn't even give you a chance. You threatened me. The only people I knew who had man hair on their face were men, witches and Sicilian grandmas – and only the Sicilian grandmas that stir a huge pot of spaghetti sauce all day.

Yes, it's true. I am Sicilian, I suppose I should have seen this coming, but why had you come for me so early? I was afraid.

The next day I awoke, entered my bathroom to brush my teeth and screamed in terror. There you were again. But how could this be? I just plucked you at the root, now you're straight chillin' on my face again like it never happened?

What is this, voodoo? Some kind of dark magic?

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I plucked you again. You seemed thicker this time, about the circumference of a tree trunk, but I suppose I can't be entirely sure as I didn't have a measuring tape on hand. With my heart racing, hand shaking, I ripped you out of my life once again and ran from the bathroom.

I bumped into my husband. He could tell something was wrong. I was wild eyed like I just saw a ghost. No, it was worse, I told him. I was attacked by a thick man hair growing on my face that was regenerating itself at a freak pace that can't be explained by science.

Day after day, you came back. Day after day, I plucked.

God forbid I forgot about you for a couple days. Left to your own devices, you would get so long I could string beads on you. I know, because I tried it once.
I suppose by now, you've become a friend. Not a good friend, one of those friends who you can't stand the sight of their stupid face. A stupid, familiar face that I can always count on to arrive right on time. I know that if I'm at an important event, or out of town and forgot my tweezers, you'll pop right out and shout "Hello world!"

I hate you. But you're a part of me now, so I need to be honest with you.

I don't know where you've come from, how you grow so fast or how you're totally invisible until you reach three inches long, but you can't live on my face. It's weird, distracting, and people don't look me in the eyes when you're around.
So, with these tweezers, I say goodbye to you forever. And by forever, I mean, I'll see you tomorrow.

Best,
Anna

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A Conversation with My Husband

My husband and I had just settled to sleep, laying on our backs - when suddenly a wicked sneeze overcame me.

Husband: Bless you, babe.

Me: Phew, thank you. That came out of nowhere - it was intense.

Husband: OH MY GOD, ANNA - ARE YOU SERIOUS?!

Me: What? What'd I do?

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Husband: Your freaking spit mist is falling all over me! ***frantically flapping his arms*** Ugh, it went in my eyes!

Me: Oh, please! Why are your eyes open, in the dark, while we're sleeping?

Husband: Your thunder sneeze caused me to open them in alarm, thanks. Why didn't you cover your mouth?

Me: I didn't even know the sneeze was coming - we were both caught by surprise!

Husband: Well why did you shoot it over here? Common courtesy says go up so it lands on you, at the very least!

Me: My head was facing your direction! There wasn't any time!

Husband: ***loud sigh***

Me: Are you mad?

Husband: Well, that was really rude. I'm dead asleep and you just shot a huge spit mist all over me. I think it's still slowly falling on me like nasty snowflakes. I feel moist.

Me: Oprah says never let the sun fall on your anger.

Husband: Um, that's in the Bible.

Me: Oh, really? I thought it was either Oprah or Tyler Perry.

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Husband: Alright, that's enough. Ugh, my eyes itch now.

Me: Oh your eyes itch from my sneeze spray? Laying it on a little thick, I'd say.
Husband: Shhhhhht, we have to wake up early.

Me: Gazoon tights.

Husband: It's gesundheit and yes, I noticed how you cleverly used it out of context, but I'm too tired too affirm you right now.

Me: Tomato, tomato.

Husband: Ok, we're gonna laugh uncontrollably at our own jokes, now? Alrighty ...

Me: HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

Husband: Is this going in an eBook?

Me: Yes.

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Check my cervix once, shame on you.

Check my cervix twice, shame on me.

Well, I feel violated.

As I approach the finish line of what I'm confident is a three year pregnancy, I'm starting to realize I have no idea what I'm in for.

I'm also realizing that I may have an 8th grade level understanding of my reproductive system. I thought I understood all the parts, the process and how they all work together, but as my doctor dove right in arm deep, I felt like someone who just discovered a secret room in a house she owned for 33 years.

Where the hell is she going? And, HOLY CRAP THAT HURTS.

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I feel a little betrayed no one warned me about cervix checks. I know they're not *that big of a deal,* but would it hurt a sister to be like, "Hey, towards the end of your pregnancy, your doctor is going to enter you like she's trying to get a wedding ring out of a garbage disposal. Good luck."

I completely forgot I was getting my cervix checked the first time. Once the nurse told me to undress from the waist down, I got a touch of anxiety like I was back in college and realized I had to take a test and forgot to study. Not that I needed to take a warm bath and lay out rose petals from the door to my tissue paper covered exam table, but I would have at least tried to not sweat so much during my morning errands.

"I wanna freshen up a bit," I told my husband while wrapped in a tissue paper blanket. "Go in the top drawer, I think that's where they keep baby wipes."

"What? Why?"

"I just told you, I want to freshen up a bit."

"That's ridiculous, you're showered."

All the sudden, what was simply a casual request as we waited, started to become a high risk situation. She could come in at any moment and catch us in the weird act of doing something suspicious with their last, dried up baby wipe. If I was going to do this, I had to commit. Suddenly, my adrenaline kicked in. There wasn't time to argue, so I whispered in my "I mean business" tone, "I've been sweaty all morning and it's a baby making inferno in there, give me the damn baby wipe!"

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Rob started to fumble with the drawers, now totally panicked like we were robbing the place.

“The top drawer!” I hissed again. “The top drawer!”

Finally he found them (in the top drawer, thank you very much) and looked at me wild-eyed. “There’s only one wipe left and it’s dry! Just forget about it, she’s a doctor, she won’t even notice!” We were both aggressively whispering at this point, acting like crazy people.

“Wet it in the sink,” I said as he stared at me blankly. “The sink, right behind you! Wet it now!”

“This is total insanity,” he mumbled as he turned on the sink to wet the baby wipe.

“Here!” He tossed it to me like a hot potato.

I gave myself a freshening up, haphazard and panicked, like I was trying to destroy evidence before the cops busted in. I knew the whole situation was way over the top and it was all entirely unnecessary, but I was already so whipped up in the moment I had no choice but to give it my all.

“Here!” I said, handing the wipe back.

“I’m not touching that!” he said, retreating to the corner of the room. “Here,” he stepped on the lever for the biohazard trash can, “throw it in there!”

I heard my doctor’s voice right outside our room. Adrenaline took me to a new height and I launched the wet baby wipe towards the biohazard trash can, missed

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by at least 2 feet where it splattered on the wall and slowly streaked down to the ground.

“Damn it, Anna!” Rob hissed. He was taking on the body language of a man whose lover just made him an unwilling accomplice to a crime.

“Put it in the trash!” I barked.

“No!”

“Put in the trash!” We heard the obligatory knock that occurs before she opens the door and we both shot a look at each other. Rob reached over to the wipe, threw it in the trash then wiped his hands on his pants like he was covered in poison.

“Hello you two!” my joyful doctor greeted us as she entered the room. Rob pretended to be fiddling with a 2008 *Good Housekeeping* magazine and we both tried to act real cool.

After a round of questions and chatting, it was time for my exam. I laid back and we continued to chit chat about Christmas shopping.

“I decided to order everything online,” my doc casually continued, then slid right in without skipping a beat. No warning, no nothing, “It’s just easier that way, I don't have to mess with the crowds.”

How can she be talking so casually right now? How can she keep going up into my body? Doesn’t it end?

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“Wow, that hurts. Yep, that hurts. Holy crap that hurts,” I kept chanting. Rob then, what I can only assume was a moment of insanity, shushed me.

“Take a deep breath, babe. Relax,” he said as if I was overreacting a smidge. Then a look of terror came over his face. I had obviously communicated his murder with my eyes effectively.

“I’m sorry,” my doctor said, giving me a look of empathy while still going up until she tickled my eyeballs. “I’m checking now to see if I can locate her head. Yep, there’s the top of it.”

The thought of her touching my baby's head blew my mind. How can that be? Then I started to think about what that must have been like for my baby Lucy. One minute you’re casually relaxing in your liquid home when something, out of no where, touches your head. Did she lose her crap like I did last week when I thought the loose cardigan string on my thigh was a spider?

Thankfully, my doctor was done shortly after the head touch and encouraged me that I was already 2 cm dilated.

“We’re off to a great start!” she said, snapping off her glove.

“So, that's about as painful as this is going to get, right?” I asked nervously, still shocked it actually hurt that bad. She shot me a “Oh, silly you!” look and then asked if we had any more questions.

The adrenaline of Baby Wipe Gate wiped us both out, so we wrapped it up and left buzzing on the news our baby will be here soon.

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A couple weeks later, it was time for another check. I wasn't going to be taken by surprise again - I was prepared this time. I felt presentable and respectable for another woman to lube up and enter my lady garden, leaving me brimming with confidence.

We took care of all the customary questions and updates first, then it was time. I took some deep breaths and it didn't hurt *as bad,* but I didn't want her lounging around in there either.

"3 centimeters! And your cervix is very thin. She could come at any time!"
Wow. And there you have it. She could come at any time.

I realize I truly have no idea what I'm in for. My guess is a routine cervix check is like a pin prick compared to what's coming.

Oh no. Now I'm regretting not taking that hippie's advice about rubbing coconut oil on my perineum.

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Allow Me to Apologize
Sincerely, My Pregnancy Hormones

Dear husband,

I've always believed that we should take responsibility for our own actions. And then I became pregnant with your baby. Now I don't know what I believe anymore.

I know there have been times when I haven't been myself during this pregnancy. Perhaps you've noticed the subtle shifts in my moods (subtle like a club across your face). Maybe you were blindsided, insulted or afraid. I just want you to know that my pregnancy hormones made me do it – I can't be held responsible. Allow me to explain.

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Pregnancy hormones are like an alternate personality that appears when something goes awry, like when our Wi-Fi runs slow. It says to me, “Step aside, sweetheart. We have two options. We can restart the modem or we can lose our damn minds. I recommend we lose our damn minds. Follow my lead – I’ll start by throwing your iPad.”

The first time my “alternate personality” (I call her Tina, feel free to address her by name as well) got me into a scuffle with you, I noticed you initially argued back as if you were arguing with me and not Tina. Rookie mistake, but we’re both new at this so it’s understandable. At one point it dawned on you that something wasn’t quite right. You probably discovered I’ve been taken over by something else when I burst into tears and said, “… and then you ate the last piece of pizza without even asking me first! It was SUPREME! You don’t even LIKE supreme!” Taken over by something more drunk-like, wild-eyed, and desperate.

As an aside, eating the last piece of pizza without so much as a courtesy announcement was cruel. I guess you and Tina both have your faults.
You see, pregnancy hormones are somewhat on par with PMS, except Tina tends to have more raw passion with a “Never give up, never surrender!” warrior spirit. Someone wise once told me an influx of a woman’s hormones isn’t a sign that she’s being crazy and irrational, but rather that she’s losing the filters that are often in place to help keep the peace. This unfiltered realness is actually an asset if you think about it. In fact, some Native American tribesmen would honor menstruating, hormonal women and call on them for advice, insight and guidance.

In other words, when I’m hormonally out of control, I’m actually a spiritual genius.

Please remember that next time.

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Regardless, Tina is admittedly rather new for the both of us, so we're in this together. She doesn't just show up out of the blue to wreak havoc, rather, she tends to appear when I feel slighted or if a situation is frustrating.

The last time she noticed you were toying with a nerve, she suddenly appeared and said, "Is there a problem here?"

I'm not sure what she might have said after that because I was in a hormonal haze. All I know is I had to apologize for Tina after I got over it. And by "get over it," I mean forgot why I was in a fury in the first place.

Then there have been other times Tina has intervened. Like that one time I was washing all the bath towels and I noticed you had just gotten dressed after a shower. Confused, I asked, "What did you use to dry off? All the towels are in the washer."

Then, casually (salt in the wound) you said, "I used your robe."

My robe. My fluffy, beloved bathrobe that I use to dry off my body. At this point it barely even closes around my belly, leaving me fully exposed to the stiff autumn breeze funneling through my bedroom window, but it's mine and it's fluffy and it's personal and it's mine!

That's when Tina stepped in and Tina don't play. "Please tell me you didn't use my robe."

"Yeah, what's the problem?"

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“What’s the problem?! It’s my personal robe that you just rubbed all over your jewels! You might as well burn it! It’s ruined. RUINED!”

“So what if I dried myself off with it, I was all clean!” I could see you were flustered, probably by your own selfishness. You were definitely no match for Tina.

“I use my robe to dry off my face. MY FACE! You’ve turned my robe into a butt towel that I use on my face!” It was then Tina took things into her own hands, grabbed the wet towels out of the washer, dumped them at your feet and said, “Next time, use one of these!” and stormed out of the room.

Shortly after, I re-entered and put them all in the dryer. I know Tina was trying to make a point, but I was worried they’d start to mildew.

Then of course, there was that one time you almost had me killed. While we shopped at Target, you went on and on about how your protective instincts were heightened and you wanted to wreck fools who could possibly pose a danger to me, like the teenager who almost hit me with his cart. Then as we were leaving the store, instead of helping to guide me safely across a busy intersection, you darted to the other side, leaving me waddling in your wake, vulnerable to crazed shoppers in SUVs. Tina arrived immediately. All you could say was, “I’m sorry babe, your side-to-side waddle is so unbelievably slow, I have a hard time remembering you can’t keep up.”

“Oh hell no,” Tina said to me. “Girl, hold my earrings.”

The man who just claimed to be haunted by a desperate need to protect me and his unborn child just ran across the street to save his own butt and left me there to die in a parking lot. Tina was speechless. Well, until she got in the car and then couldn’t

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stop going on and on about how appalled she was, complete with grandiose gestures and pronouncements.

To be honest, after a while I sort of wanted her to shut up too, but I'm afraid of her so I just let her do her thing.

There are probably many more examples I could share, but I don't want us to live in the past. I just wanted to explain things a little and apologize on Tina's behalf. She means well, she just wants to protect me whilst simultaneously making me feel like I'm losing my freaking mind. For some reason this is a normal hormonal part of creating another human being. I don't question it, I just hold on and brace myself while the storm passes.

For the record, you've been wonderful, kind, patient and loving. I can tell you think I'm so beautiful (probably because you never shut up about it) even when I feel like a beached whale in maternity yoga pants. Other than the time you basically left me defenseless in the middle of traffic, you're my hero. There's no other man Tina and I would rather be with. We love you.

And she's sorry.

Sincerely,
My Pregnancy Hormones

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An Open Letter to the Idiots who Don't Notice My Baby

Dear people who need to get their eyes checked,

When I was pregnant, it didn't take long for me to notice that people looked at me differently. I'd get smiles, head nods and warm glowing looks. People went out of their way to help me. I would have stand-offs with elderly women over who should open the door for who, and I'd let them win because my feet were swollen and I was on the hunt for carbs.

After having my baby, I realized there are two kinds of people in this world. People who love babies and people who don't. You must obviously be in the latter camp because when I walked by you with the cutest baby who has ever lived, you didn't

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even notice. I'm pretty sure Marilyn Manson doesn't like babies, so let that sink in for a second.

I've heard that nobody thinks your baby is as cute as you do, but now that I have my Lucy in my arms, whoever said that must have been Steve Buscemi's mom. Hello?! She's wearing cowboy boots! And you don't even look in her direction? Get your eyes checked you blind psychopaths!

Today I brought my baby into the grocery store. She was in a sleeveless dress with a flower bow on her head. Her cuteness was so intense it was making me lightheaded. I walked in holding her and looked around with a beauty pageant smile, awkwardly standing there waiting for the entire store to acknowledge her preciousness. After the 10th person asked me to please step aside so they could get a cart, I about had it. Who was I, Andrea from 90210? Somebody look at me! How are you not melting like butter at the sight of my baby?

Then a woman around my age gave us a big smile and hope returned. "Her name's Lucy," I said smiling like Kate Middleton. "Oh, that's sweet" she said. "Could you step aside so I can grab a cart?"

Fortunately, somewhere near the chips and guacamole samples where I was working on my seventh loaded chip, a few people with excellent taste and vision ooooh'd and awwww'd over her, but for the rest of you, I'm just baffled. To the gentleman in the uncomfortably short running shorts picking out mushrooms – were you in a hurry there, Bub? My baby tried to give you her toy, but you were too busy "perusing" to notice. Next time, just take your portobello mushrooms and leave.

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And for the lady picking out the McIntosh apples, did you not hear my baby belt out a piercing scream of delight for 10 long seconds? Her voice is like angel's wings fluttering in your face. Her sweet lips belted out a song more angelically feminine then a Justin Bieber ballad, and all you can do is pick out apples? They're not even the good apples. Every one knows McIntoshes are mushy on the inside!

Maybe I'm naive, I guess I just thought the most beautiful baby in the world would have captivated more hearts. For those of you who have stopped to smile or coo at her – thank you, but please stop touching her face.

For the rest of you, how you can purposefully ignore the only baby in the store, a true angel straight from heaven, I'll never know – and I don't want to.

Well, at least I think she was the only baby in the store. I don't really notice other people's babies.

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Movers, My Marital Drawer and Dear God, Even My Parents

Moving is the worst. If you're moving to a better home, the final result may be the best, but at some point in the packing process my entire house becomes a damn junk drawer and I start flinging 7 year old chapsticks into random boxes along with wires that haven't connected to anything since 1995.

I've moved a lot in my life. My dad is a home builder so we moved often when I was a child. I guess the bug has gotten into me because I love adventure, something new, perhaps something better, so if I find it, I move without much thought. And recently, we've moved from downtown to a beautiful home my dad built on a lake. I've never been happier and my Internet speed has never been crappier.

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Nearly every time I've moved, I've manipulated my parents into helping. Since I was a college student, they've been by my side during every move. They've never "enjoyed" it, per se, they're just the two people who can't make up an excuse to get out of it without me becoming a real spoiled pain in the ass. Besides, my dad has a truck, so by default he's screwed.

If you're also lucky enough to have someone volunteer to help you pack, not just move, both parties understand the helper will be ruffling through your drawers full of random crap you forgot existed. That's why many of us with "personal items," if we're smart, pack those puppies early and privately ourselves. And it's not only important that you pack it away safely, but you must make sure no one accidentally helps to unpack it either. It takes some forethought, but it saves your close friends and family visuals of you being a McNasty. Learn from me, friends.

When the movers arrived, I was woefully unprepared. My husband and I had previously packed as little as possible, mostly because of his work schedule and my super pregnant body that could barely get my belly over the boxes I needed to fill. We assumed if we woke up at 6 on moving day, we'd be packed and ready when they arrived at 10 like a couple of idiots. Most big things were ready to load, but it was the little, random stuff that was determined to destroy us, including unemptied drawers. Drawers, including, ahem, my marital drawer.

Everyone knows that bedside drawers are completely off limits to outsiders. It's a drawer to be respected, honored and completely avoided. Only perverts and probably the one teenager you had dog sit that one time would ever

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dream of opening it without your knowledge. And once you have kids of a certain age, everyone knows you gotta lock that shit up because all kids go through every ounce of their parents crap when they're not around and it's much better for everyone involved if their efforts to find evidence against you come up fruitless.

Now, I'll be honest. I keep a marital drawer, not a freak drawer (not like there's anything wrong with that). If I see something and feel compelled to clutch my pearls and say, "I'm supposed to do WHAT, with THAT, and put it WHERE?" then it's way too rich for my blood. But my husband and I do have some "personal items" that are great for our love life that would also cause me to drop dead if say, my mom found it and picked it up. But more on that later.

The movers arrived and my marital drawer had not been packed, so I stopped trying to find a box to put my non-working first generation iPod in, grabbed an old target sack, emptied the drawer into it and hid the bag under some towels in a box labeled "random crap - I don't have time to be specific." Satisfied, I went on with my life.

My mom arrived to help with my toddler Lucy and she judged our progress with her eyes. When I confronted her on her eye judgment, she said something like, "Hey, you're paying the movers to not be ready, not me." And to that, I say, touché.

Luckily, my husband agreed to let me get the hell out of there early. The stress of all the chaos, with big, sweaty movers aggressively wrapping a table

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in cling wrap was just too much. My mom and I left for the house to get things settled and so I could greet them and boss them around once they arrived. Eventually they did, and since I currently look and feel 14 months pregnant I asked them to unload the recliner first so I could sit in it while dictating where the furniture should go. I was holding and rocking my toddler Lucy, drowsy and up way past her nap time.

In the entry way, Rob and my mom stood by debating where a certain rug should go. Just then, a mover named Jake entered with two boxes. He stacked them near the entry way when it happened. A shockingly loud vibrating, buzzing sound started reverberating through the house. It took us all off guard. *What the hell is that?* I couldn't tell if the loud buzzing was coming from outside or if something was wrong with the house. As everyone just stared at each other trying to figure out the sound, the mover took the lead and said, "Something is going off in this box here." He pointed at a box labeled, "random crap - I don't have time to be specific."

Suddenly a light bulb went off above my head and my eyes grew wide. Another light bulb went off above Rob's head and then - Jake's head. Meanwhile my mom still looked puzzled. Rob's face looked like someone opened up the top of his head and started filling it up with Campbell's tomato soup. The mover made eye contact with us both, back and forth, back and forth, and then ran outside. He wasn't about to be smothered by the suffocating awkwardness swelling in the room. Rob broke our panicked stare off and tried to make a fast break after him, but I screamed.

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“Rob, stop! Don’t you dare go anywhere. Get in the box and stop that noise, now! STOP IT NOW!”

“No! I’m not doing it!” he yelled back at me. He was acting as if I was demanding he pull a dead body out of a creek.

I’m sorry, did he say, “No? I’m not doing it?” It’s his sexy time drawer too! Take some damn responsibility for your life and your choices!

Now, to set the scene, I’m rocking a baby in a recliner, looking and feeling rather large, and at times, in charge. But in this moment I’m helpless to stop what’s happening - which is - if you haven’t pieced together yet - a vibrator going off in a sealed box like thunder - in front of my mom and a sweaty mover.

Meanwhile, my husband is trying to make a break for it like this isn’t also his problem. Real typical. My first instinct is to kill him, but if I’m able to lay down the sleepy baby and hoist my pregnant ass up off the chair to kill him, I might as well just use that energy to tear into the box and shut it off myself. So I just sat there and panicked instead.

That’s when it happened. My mom, still unaware what’s going off in the box, offered to help. “Honey, don’t worry - I’ll find what’s making the noise,” and she ripped the tape off the box.

“Mom, no - let Rob do it! Mom, NO!” At this time she’s already in the box, has peeled back some towels and, to my horror, sees it and GRABS IT. I’m glaring

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at Rob who is now laughing in the same tone you use when you want to run away and hide in a dark hole for all of eternity.

“Oh no,” she gasped. “Is that what I think it is?” She dropped the vibrator and stepped away quickly from the box.

“Damn it Rob!” I yelled, while lovingly rocking my baby. “And damn it, Mom! Everybody just calm down and stop touching things! It’s all a huge misunderstanding!” It’s the only thing I can think to say when powerless and afraid. Jake’s head popped through a window, in desperate hopes the vibrator situation had been contained.

“Alright,” my mom said, calmly. “I have to go wash my hands and my brain in Clorox, I’ll be right back.” She politely excused herself so she could have the severest case of heebie jeebies known to mankind.

“Mom! It’s not what you think it is!” I yelled out, hoping bald faced lying still worked like it didn’t work in high school.

“It’s exactly what I think it is and I’m traumatized!” she yelled from somewhere in the house.

In typical fashion, my humiliation turned itself into righteous indignation as a defense mechanism. “Oh yeah?! Well, remember when I walked in on you and dad when I was 17? 17!! That’s too old! Children who walk in on their parents still have their innocence and don't fully understand, but I was

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grown! And it ruined me! I'm still traumatized, so we're even. Even! EVEN I SAY!"

Off in the distance, I could hear her laugh. Then I laughed - sort of. I was too busy fighting off the new visuals I had conjured. Rob was still in the entryway, standing alone, awkward and vulnerable.

Without speaking a word - my mother and I both agreed we would never, ever, ever speak of the time she accidentally touched my vibrator - ever again. Forever and ever. Amen.

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Is that a Maxi Pad with Wings Sticking out of Your Pant Leg, or are You Just Happy to See Me?

Can't it be both?

If I could give you any kind of warning, something that you just MUST heed, it's to never pray for humility. And also, don't low carb for six months and then go to the Olive Garden on your first date with a cute guy.

I should have known I was in trouble when I went to Express and purchased a smart suit. Already the universe was plotting against me just for using a term like "smart suit."

"Really Anna?" it said with it's arms crossed. You're going to a blogging conference. Calm down."

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I also think Mother Nature has it out for me. I mean, I think she likes me fine, but I just get the sense that she knows I'm a humor writer and is always trying out new gags with me, elbowing me in the ribs like, "Eh? Eh??"

For instance, since I was 12 years old, I have started my period the morning of every single important event in my life. I don't care if I had five important events in one month - it still applies. I would have been a great candidate for my own TLC show, "Girl Who's Always On Her Period at Inconvenient Times," airing tonight at 7! Right after "My 5 Blow Up Doll Sister Wives."

This freak show certainly includes the very first time I got my period. I was 12 and my best friend's dad, a carpenter, had a job in Florida. Our fathers were also close and he offered to take us girls to Disney World while he was there.

If there was ever a time someone would definitely NOT want to start their period for the first time, it would be in a Super 8 motel room right before heading to Disney World and the only adult in charge is a man's man named Merle who hauls 2x4s and slings hammers for a living.

At first, I thought perhaps I had pooped my pants, but in a weird way. This was an equally terrifying realization. *Did I just crap my pants?* I thought. *Is it possible to poop while eating Gummy Bears on a motel bed watching* Animaniacs *and never know it? Am I just going to be crapping my pants all day long at Disney World? Am I dying? WHAT'S HAPPENING?!*

Fortunately, my mom had just bought me a 12 pack of white briefs from K-Mart and I brought the whole bag. I discreetly threw the undies away in a trash can and hoped for the best.

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Obviously I got the worst.

Every time I went to the bathroom, my prognosis was more grim. Luckily I had stuffed extra undies in my fanny pack, but continued to suffer in silence with my poop disease. Somehow I managed to still enjoy myself on Space Mountain, but just barely.

It wasn't until I got home and my mom unpacked my suitcase did the truth finally emerge. I was relieved, yet horrified, yet hopeful I was finally "old enough" to watch MTV.

Looking back, I envision Mother Nature having a good chuckle. "Oh that's good. She'll use that horrific experience as fodder later," she'll say. And fuss about her kitchen before raining out someone's wedding.

She continued this unfortunate trend with me for the rest of my life. The middle of a fancy band concert (I later told everyone to watch out for the red sharpie someone left on my chair), state championship tennis finals, important job interviews, finals week and obviously my wedding (and straight into that honeymoon!).

So it was no surprise to me when I started my period in San Diego, in a fancy hotel, attending my very first professional conference. I had minor concerns that my water retention was going to make me regret buying the pant suit over a sarong, but I was thoroughly prepared - this wasn't my first rodeo. Advil? Check. Super Plus, Super and Regular tampons? Check, check, check. Overnight maxi pad with wings? Cheeeeeeeck!

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I gussied myself up as much as I could, but frankly I just kept trying to justify going back to bed, bailing on the conference, and giving myself a very well deserved "vacation away from my husband."

But I rallied, doubled up on all the feminine hygiene products and headed out the door. I met up with other bloggers I had already become friendly with online. It should be noted that not a one of us was nearly as attractive as our profile photos - an indiscretion we all pretended not to notice and then went into the expo room. As I scouted the room for the best samples, I nodded and pretended to be interested in a Clorox booth. That's when it happened. Something was rubbing on my ankle. I had the sensation like my sock had fallen and was collecting at the bottom of my shoe, but I wasn't wearing socks. I looked down. Nothing. Hmm. Oh well!

After a spell I decided to continue my rounds, shoveling so much swag into my bag I needed a new one. But that thing on my ankle was now sort of sticking to my ankle and was getting pulled down as if it was now stuck on the bottom of my shoe. I looked down again.

What is that?

I shook my ankle and was starting to get the attention of my friends who were growing increasingly uncomfortable with the foot shaking. That's when it hit me. *Oh my god that's my overnight maxi pad with wings.*

It's important I include the full description lest you imagine something dainty and discreet as opposed to a pad as large as a throw blanket. With wings.

What does one do in this situation? No really, I'm seriously asking. Try to shove it back up with the other foot? Quickly grab it and throw it in your swag bag? Point

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somewhere to the west and when your new friends turn to look, go running and never return?

I decided the only course of action was to walk, slowly, dragging the foot behind me as if it had just become lame. I then made my way to a trashcan, bent down pretending to tie non-existent laces on a leather boot, yanked that sucker out of my pant leg and threw it in the trashcan like it was an 8 ball of coke and the expo was getting raided.

Mother Nature, obviously, laughed so hard she peed a little, then wished she had one of my pads. This is the kind of crap I have to deal with. But it's this kind of crap I think we all need every once in a while so we can learn the biggest lesson to set me free -

It's not the serious.

Maybe those times we slip on ice in the parking lot while our groceries explode, or that time my dad fell down the stairs in the splits position while showing clients one of his homes, or perhaps you know - having your future husband scream "I CAN TASTE IT!" when you accidentally let out an SBD, are those little moments that remind us we all need to lighten up a little.

Frankly, I blame high speed Internet, Amazon Prime and flushable tampons for causing us all to lose a bit of perspective. We've lost touch with what "this sucks" actually means. Try to binge watch Netflix with a mediocre Internet connection and let the emotional meltdown that follows suit be a grim reminder of how we've lost our ability to handle life's challenges and disappointments.

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But impatience isn't our only American past time. Worrying, shaming and a healthy dose of doom and gloom has become our default emotional state. If you're not having a mental health crisis you're not paying attention, people! It wasn't that long ago when we respected our elders, seeking them out for wisdom and comfort when we were tempted to take life too seriously. I'm not sure when this changed, but probably around the time our elders started saying things like, "I can't get my Google to work. What's my password again?" We just went inside ourselves and thought, *Oh God, we're on our own. Maybe strangers online can help.*

Thanks to the age of social media combined with the abundance of first world country living, we struggle to see our life for how wonderful it really is (or at least can be) and see it through the lens of a Facebook feed. Now more than ever before, we have the time, mental energy and tools enabling us to take most aspects of life far too seriously, and unfortunately women are the biggest target for these kinds of shenanigans. While our ancestor's formed tribes for actual survival, we now form tribes to survive online mommy groups. We create identities around co-sleeping and put all our faith into the holy trinity of essential oils. Our fears are exploited for clicks and our spiritual boredom makes us vulnerable to taking up causes that don't actually exist. With politics now a blood sport, we're growing weary. Exhausted. Depressed.

Don't forget the new rules we all must follow. We can't tell our kids "no" anymore because it crushes their spirit. Our cottage cheese thighs are rubbing together and we're supposed to pretend that doesn't make us a bit despondent. We must embrace aging, but only with good lighting. The Mindfulness movement helped reel us back from these meaningless distractions, but now we've started minding every possible thing until even mindfulness has become its own meaningless distraction.

Enough is enough! It's time women rise up together and stop giving a crap!

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It’s not the big deal you think it is. It’s fixable. Who cares! Move on. You think that’s bad, let me tell you about the time my overnight pad with wings fell out of my pants at a conference. Bad things are often the catalyst to great big wonderful things - if we choose to learn, take a bit of responsibility for our lives and, most importantly, calm the hell down.

Laughing at the silliness of what scares us takes the boogey man out of it. We can face the day knowing that the only thing to fear is fear itself and a super annoying UTI. Of course, bad, horrible things happen in this life - no one escapes it. But most of the time? They don’t. Sweating the big stuff AND the small stuff is a life full of sweating, which is a real problem since deodorant apparently gives us breast cancer.

It starts with a laugh. Maybe some unreasonable kindness. A touch of perseverance. And truly understanding that every obstacle, every toilet paper stuck to your shoe, every whoopsie daisy, and yes, even every misplaced toot - can be used to make someone feel better. Not so alone. Even hopeful. We could have a good time over a cup of coffee where I ask if you’ve heard that story when I thought my pad fell out of the pant leg of my smart suit.

Then we’ll laugh and laugh, eat mounds of coffee cake and not even care, because we were very wise and wore sarongs.

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the end-ish.

Well. You made it. You're my hero.

I'd love to hang out with you and continue this friendship thing we've got going.

Let's be Facebook friends here.

Or, ogle each other's picture on Instagram here.

Or listen to my hilarious faith based podcast, The Anna & Susannah Show here.

I often talk a lot about faith, dream chasing and living your best life. You can download a my free inspirational audio, 6 Roadblocks to Living Your BEST.YEAR.EVAH! here.

All my love to you,
Anna

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