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Happy Campers : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Friday April 12, 2024

Happy Campers

By January Ornellas

You know how most parents become more relaxed with their second child?

Well, not all of them.

It was last summer, and we had agreed to watch 3-year-old Holland and 5-month-old Noah at our house for the weekend.

“That’s a lot of stuff,” I said, as my daughter, Quincey and her husband, Colby, opened the back hatch of their minivan. Diaper bags, strollers, and a slew of other baby-related items tumbled onto the driveway.

“It’s mostly Noah’s stuff,” Quincey said. “She needs a few things to help her sleep.”

“But I thought you said she sleeps through the night now,” I said.

“Oh, she does,” Quincey said. “She just sometimes wakes up once or twice.”

“Wait, what?” I asked.

But before I could question it further, Quincey and Colby headed inside.

Steve took both girls to the other room, while Quincey and Colby surveyed the house, eventually settling on the downstairs bedroom.

The two of them were a fine-oiled machine.

Furniture rearranged, baby-proofing items installed, and a layer of blankets secured underneath the perimeter of the door.

"She doesn't sleep well with sound," Quincey explained.

The two of them looked at the window.

"She doesn't like light either," Colby added.

Quincey shook her head, pointing. "There's light coming through the blinds,"

"It's the sun," I said.

They sighed, clearly disappointed that I had allowed it to infiltrate our house.

"It's okay," Colby said, whipping out a long roll of fabric.

In minutes, black out curtains were installed, and the room became a coal mine.

"I can't see anything," I said.

"Perfect," Quincey said.

After a minute our eyes became accustomed to the darkness, and I could ever so slightly make out their shadowy figures.

"Too light," Quincey said.

"Too light," Colby agreed.

Colby left the room, and when he returned, he was holding a tent.

Now, granted it wasn't a tent for a whole family, it was more your solo traveler's tent.

Regardless, it sent a chill down my spine.

As the thought of camping usually does.

"Do you want me to take Noah camping?" I asked.

Quincey and Colby both laughed.

“No, that’s ridiculous,” Quincey said. “Noah is going to sleep in the tent on the bed. You’ll just climb in next to her and lie with her for like an hour or two until she falls asleep.”

Then Quincey went into a lengthy discussion on how sleeping in a tent can reset your Circadian Rhythms.

But I couldn’t tell you how or why because all I was thinking about was that “The Circadian Rhythms” would make a great name for a band.

“...and that’s why the tent is so important,” Quincey concluded.

“Just remember, you’ll have to move very carefully getting out of the tent, so the nylon doesn’t make any noise and wake her up,” Colby added.

“She doesn’t like noise,” Quincey said.

So, I’ve heard.

Then the two of them attached the poles and placed the tent on the bed and gave me a big smile.

I smiled back, but inside I was like, *I’m not getting in that tent.*

“Okay, just one more thing,” Colby said.

Then he installed a series of cameras so that they could monitor the room from 3,000 miles away.

Looks like I’m going camping this weekend.

—January Ornellas

January Gordon Ornellas is a comedy writer and blogger whose stories run the gamut from colonoscopies to triathlons (equally torturous). Her funny pieces often appear on the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop blog. Her article, “Rookie’s Triathlon Lessons,” appeared in the Los Angeles Times in June 2019. Two of her other stories, “Gobble, Gobble” and “Almost Taken,” were published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Laughter is the Best Medicine* (April 2020). She is currently working on a book, *Confessions of a Crazy Softball Mom*. January enjoys writing for her blog (midlifebloomer.com), traveling and spending time with her family.