

# Rose & Thorn Journal - Spring 2005

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## When You Grow Up

by

Susan Lovejoy

"I hope you have children just like yourself, then we'll see who's laughing."

Years ago, our mothers threatened us with dire predictions of how our children would retaliate for all our deviant childhood behaviors. Now, that's silly. Why would our kids want to even the score for something that didn't affect them? If parents don't have the nerve to get their own retribution, I say they lose the right by default.

We need to get even with our kids when they grow up, but we can't depend upon the next generation to do our dirty work. My first mother-in-law planted this idea in my head with her words of revenge to her sons: "When you grow up I'm going to come over to your house and put my feet all over your coffee table. We'll see how you like having your new furniture ruined." Hmm, sounds like a plan to me! The seed of revenge, once planted, grew into a fragrant bloom. Take heed, my children, for here is your fair warning:

"When you grow up, I'll come over to your house while you're working and use every glass you own, leaving them all over your house, and drink milk from at least half of them so that you can appreciate that wonderful white coating lining the bottom. I'll set

down a glass half-full of milk in some out of the way place, where it will remain hidden for a few days, long enough to let the odor build to your favorite pungent scent. Then I'll eat a bowl of cereal, making sure there are enough remnants in the bowl to form an impenetrable crusty clog in the sink strainer. I won't forget to leave a thick coating of cream cheese on the knives that I throw in the dishwasher, so that you can have hours of fun picking at the baked on petrified residue. When you buy steaks, I'll grill them up right after I get home from school for my brother and me. When you come home, I'll look dumbfounded as you rant and rave that our supper was irreverently devoured as a snack. To make it even more exciting I'll whine 'What's for supper, now?' as you storm out of the kitchen hungry.

Next, I'll go into all your cabinets, leaving empty boxes of cereal and crackers to lull you into a false sense of security about the abundance of your food supplies. Box tops will be ripped haphazardly to prevent proper closure, because you are so fond of them like that! I learned your search technique for food, too, as I can now stare into an open fridge for hours without blinking. That, along with leaving every light and appliance on in the house, should assist in running up those colossal utility bills that you so generously produce to augment the Electric Company's monthly revenue. You will also receive gracious thank you notes from the Telephone Company for those epic long-distance phone calls that I will continue in your honor.

Your trash will receive the same care and attention that mine did. I know how high you like to build the pile, balancing every new addition precariously, in an amusing family game of 'chicken'. I only hope to have your legendary engineering abilities, so that the trash overflow will land in the general vicinity of the barrel, especially the wet and sticky stuff like ketchup or coffee grinds. Once your personal ant population reaches the peak of their breeding season, I will grudgingly empty the fetid, fly-ridden trash for you. But, please don't expect me to put in a new trash bag without the accompanying moaning and groaning about it being 'someone else's job'. I know how much you enjoy that tune, because you sang it to me every time I asked for a favor.



*Why Me? courtesy of Art.com*

There will be plenty of dirty clothes where you like them— on the floor and under the bed. You've had such a flair for decorating over the years! I feel humbled in the wake of your genius, for I will never be able to spawn the vegetation that you have so casually cultivated over the years. Wet towels on the carpeting will not be a problem for me, for nothing feels more like home than stepping on something cold and damp in the dark. Not to mention that rank mildew smell that permeates the carpeting so completely. I will toss all recently ironed or folded clothing into your sanctioned heap in the middle of the floor. You will sense my level of appreciation, when you get the opportunity to wash my clean clothes repeatedly. There will never be a need for a clothes hamper, I can promise you that!

Remember the day I was sure there was a carcass in your room because of that rank odor? Well, I have discovered that if I wear my sneakers without socks and then leave them in my closet on a hot humid day, 'Eau de Cadaver' will perfume my room, too. I'll also leave six pairs of dirty socks in hiding places, so that you can go on an exciting safari of your own! If you can't find any dirty clothes under my bed or in my closet, that will mean I didn't have any, because I wore the same clothes for a full week. Why, if I feed myself in my bedroom, that will eliminate the need to wash dishes because they'll disappear in there permanently. Can't wash what you can't find, now can you?

I long to call you at work to tell you anxiety-provoking things. I'll tell you how bored I am and how there's nothing fun to do, and nothing good to eat in the house. I will make sure to call while you're in an important meeting to tell you that my brother hit me for no reason, and now his arm is hanging funny and his face is a funny color. My voice will rise as I tell you that he just said he's going to kill me. I'll even scream loudly enough so that everyone in your office can enjoy it when he chases me around the room, leaving the phone off the hook as confirmation of my mortal danger. After all, I would not want anyone there to miss the excitement! When I'm not fighting or crying, I'll describe some gross atrocities over the phone to you, like how the dog is barfing up something greenish and foamy all over the new living room carpet because he ate 'something' while hiding under my bed. I'll be sure to inform you that neither of us will be able to clean up the dog barf because it's 'sick' looking, and we're leaving it there until you get home in two hours. If you try to insist that we clean it up before it solidifies or jells, I'll have to demonstrate my disgust with really loud gagging noises and threats that I will heave, myself, if pressed into service.

To entertain you on weekends, I won't forget to run into the living room with my sneakers on, screaming that I just stepped in dog poop, as I dance around the room demanding that someone scrape it off, now! After my shoes are removed and cleaned, I'll wrestle with my brother all over the same living room floor, knocking down every plant in our way. Looking on in astonishment when you come screaming into the room, we'll point at each other when you ask who's responsible for the piles of dirt all over the room. Don't bother to show me the vacuum cleaner. I'll have broken that, too. After all, you are the one who discovered those neat grinding noises the vacuum makes when it sucks up pennies and marbles.

There are so many things I want to do to you when you grow up. I want to look at you like you are insane when you ask if I have taken a shower recently and reply indignantly, 'I just had one last week!' Then I want to do a sudden about-face, deciding that it's imperative to take marathon showers that peel the ceiling paint in the bathroom and empty the hot water tank, leaving you with ice water for your morning shower. Don't worry, the bath mat will be soaked in a few inches of water, just like you prefer it. I'll knock your shampoo over and forget to warn you about the puddle it made in the bathtub. Your pleas for mercy will escalate as you slip and slide naked into the sides of an enamel tub, dragging the shower curtain with you on your way down. You'll find that to be quite the endorphin rush around five-thirty in the morning! I know it always woke me right up.

You'll also love finding the toilet seat up when you're expecting it to be down, especially at two in the morning when you're racing against nature, mole eyes navigating the semi-

dark bathroom. Quite a drop, I dare say, and cold, too. When I use up the last of the toilet paper, I'll forget to mention that fact, and I wouldn't dream of spoiling the surprise by telling you before you sit down to do your daily thinking. I know you'll relish the sheer physical challenge of replacing the bare cardboard roll from your perch almost as much as I have. Don't expect us to hear your cries for help because the cartoons on television will be excessively loud.

Oh, the fun I will have when you grow up. For now, go ahead; enjoy your spontaneous combustion of life. I am a patient woman and my time will come. While it really is true what they say about paybacks, I wouldn't dream of passing on the torch of revenge to my innocent grandchildren. After all, why should they have all the fun?"

**Susan Lovejoy** has been writing ever since she learned how to hold a pen to paper. Her writing credits include: poetry published in *Young America Sings National Anthology*, *Country Woman Magazine*, and *Scribe & Quill*; and a short story that won an honorable mention in the Inscriptions Dorothy Parker Writer's Block Contest. A graduate of the Institute of Children's Literature, she is currently working on a youth novel, as well as many other projects.