

She couldn't make this story up

By Esther Baird

Wed Apr 09, 2008, 05:13 PM EDT

BEVERLY, MASS. - There is silence and then there is *silence*. There is the near-blissful silence in the evening just after the children have gone to bed. There is the drowsy silence of a long car trip in the afternoon. There is the happy silence of a walk on a sunny day when everyone is busy looking for hints of spring. And then there is the unique silence of Something Going Awry.

At first, I was just so pleased to make dinner with no interruptions. My youngest daughter was amusing herself calmly with, what appeared to be, a gummed-up paper towel roll. My older daughter was playing upstairs, and playing so . . . *silently*. It was delightful. While I did wonder what she was doing that, for once, didn't involve seismic bangs, or loud recitals of her musical repertoire, or steady chants of "Mommy," I didn't wonder enough to break the spell.

But once dinner was ready, I wiped my hands and picked up my baby. "Let's go see what your big sister has been doing all this time," I said good-naturedly.

We proceeded upstairs to her room. She wasn't there. Nor was she in the nursery or the bathroom. That left my bedroom. And that's precisely where I found her: Standing on my not-even-two-week-old, cream, handmade, New Zealand wool, shag rug.

She was wearing only her underwear and she was covered in my makeup. Specifically she had gravitated toward Pink Pot and Blue Tilt, my two most vibrant, special-occasion-only, eye shadows. To be clear, by covered I mean full body paint, tribal-war paint, Blue Man Group paint. Her entire face shimmered. Her stomach, arms, legs and feet glowed pink and blue in the late afternoon sunlight.

In that moment before actually catching my breath, I also noted that she had used every single one of my brushes to create this look. They were ravaged. The bristles were bent in unnatural ways and the handles were coated in a thick, sludgy layer of what appeared to be my neutral color, Shroom. Guess how neutral Shroom is when it's flung far and wide across a cream rug and bedroom? That's right; it wasn't just my daughter that was covered. No, this had been a full-contact application process. The bed skirt was smudged, the sheets glistened and my new rug appeared to be growing an electric blue and pink flower garden — each separate, woolly piece of shag perfectly suited to soak up the oil-based makeup.

Disaster.

When relaying this tale, everyone, including my husband, asked, "Did you get a picture?" A picture?? Do I seem like the sort of person who had a shred of perspective in these sorts of situations? Please. I was far too busy hyperventilating and envisioning a time-out that lasted till my daughter was 18.

I know. I know. It was just a few material possessions. I know. I know. I had been downstairs after all. It could have been worse. I could have found my daughter eating my makeup, or she could have hurt herself in some horrific makeup-brush induced trauma. It could have been a true emergency instead of an inconvenience. Coulda. Woulda. Shouda. WHATEVER! It wasn't. It was exactly this: My daughter was slicked up in the most non-soluble makeup of all time and had taken out half my bedroom in the process.

So no. I didn't get a picture.

Things eventually sorted themselves out. I bought new eye shadow. Dave's Carpet Cleaning in Beverly managed to render the rug nearly spotless. And my husband kindly washed out my brushes with Lesstoil. Remarkably, that worked and provided the added bonus of a piney fresh feeling with each subsequent makeup application.

Our daughter, who knew better in the first place but has an insatiable curiosity, learned a number of things, not the least of which is that eye shadow goes on one's eyes, never on one's feet — a lesson I hope we don't revisit for at least 10 years. I learned that some moms keep cameras handy in case they bound into a room that has been decorated by a Sharpie marker or find their kitchen awash in flour and glitter glue — and that I am not that kind of mom.

What I am though, is a mom who now fully grasps that there is silence and then there is leap-into-action-and-run-like-the-wind silence. And *that* is a lesson I will not forget.

Esther Baird is a Beverly writer. Her column appears regularly in the Citizen. Please contact her with suggestions or comments about The Baird Facts at: esther@estherbaird.com, or visit her Web site at: www.estherbaird.com