



Botta Bing, Botta Boom— The Sound of Miracles

When our daughter Anna Maria was born, she slept a lot—except when we wanted her to sleep. She would sleep in my arms. She would sleep in a car seat. But if we put her in her bassinet, her eyes popped open wide as if she had just seen a gallon of milk or a shiny new pacifier. I should have remembered from my high school French class that the literal translation of *bassinet* is “sleepless parent.” *Je suis un bassinet.*

My first night of sleeplessness wasn’t too difficult. But after a week I was delirious, and I don’t mean in the happy sense. I considered signing up as a subject in a sleep deprivation experiment just to get some rest.

I kept a journal during our first week with Annie at home.

Day 1—Yawning: Only two hours of sleep but I’m so happy about the new addition to our family that it hasn’t fazed me. Drank two cups of coffee to take the edge off my sleepiness. Watched three infomercials at 2 a.m. while rocking Annie to sleep. Resisted the temptation to buy a

Chia Pet in the shape of Jay Leno's head. Decided I would try to take a nap tomorrow.

Day 2—Groggy: The daytime nap didn't materialize. Used twice as much coffee in the coffee maker and cut the amount of water in half. Drank four cups. Starting to feel a little disoriented from lack of sleep. Our other children have noticed I'm a little grumpier than usual.

Day 3—Dazed: No sleep again. Can't make the coffee fast enough. Filled our water softener with coffee grounds instead of salt. Now we have java coming out of every fixture in the house. Beginning to hallucinate from lack of sleep. Had a great conversation with the toaster oven. Seems she has a crush on our George Foreman Grill.

Decided I should get some other chores done since I'm awake—although not coherent. Watered all the plastic plants in the house. Sent our dishes outside and put the cat in the dishwasher. Didn't realize we had a cat.

Day 4—Zombie-like: Annie was up again all night. Called the water softener company to see if they had a unit that makes espresso. Fell asleep for about an hour. Dreamt I was sailing to the new world with Christopher Columbus. Three ships were making the trip: the Niña, the Pinta, and the Anna Maria. The Anna Maria's sails were huge diapers. I was in charge of swabbing the poop deck. Awoke to the sound of Annie's cry. I was still in charge of swabbing the poop deck. Called the water softener company and told them I'd pay for rush delivery. Received a call from our neighbor asking if I had seen his cat.

Day 5—Comatose: No sleep again. Can't stay awake a minute longer. Resorted to putting a fistful of coffee grinds between my cheek and gum. Mmmmmm. Genuine coffee pleasure without the annoyance of holding a mug. My eyes are as red as radishes and I haven't shaved since Annie was born. When I answered the doorbell today, the two Girl Scouts selling cookies dropped their wares and ran in terror.

Received a phone call from the president of a major coffee company who said I was chosen as customer of the year and would receive a lifetime supply of coffee. Told him that I had already consumed a lifetime supply of coffee in the past five days.

Took an "Are You Sleep Deprived?" quiz I found in a supermarket tabloid.

1. **Do you need an alarm clock in order to wake up at the appropriate time?**

No. To wake up, I'd have to first be asleep.

2. **Do you have trouble remembering?**

Yes. Especially my name and where I live.

3. **Do you often fall asleep while doing other activities?**

ZZZZZZZZZZ...

Then one night—botta bing, botta boom—Annie slept for eight straight hours. It seemed like a miracle. Our prayers had been answered.

“Botta bing, botta boom” is a term people use when they really mean, “I have no idea what happened, but I suspect a higher power was involved.” For example, while the creation of the world took six days to complete, it can be summarized in just fourteen words: In the beginning was God, then—botta bing, botta boom—there was everything else. This is known as the Botta Bing, Botta Boom Theory of Creation—not to be confused with the Big Bang Theory, which was much louder and would have awoken the neighbors if they had already been created.

Some “botta bing, botta boom” moments are more spectacular than others. Being a parent changes your perspective about what constitutes a miracle. Before my wife and I had kids, I rarely thought about miracles. Now that we have three children—Maria (age seven), Paul (age five), and Annie (age two)—I experience miracles all the time, even if they are what some people would consider the minor variety.

If I had to list the top three miracles of all time, they would be the creation of the world, the parting of the Red Sea, and my son’s potty training. You might question whether my son’s learning to use the john is really in the same category with the creation of the world. I’ll admit, I pondered that question for quite a while too. Then I realized the key difference: God didn’t have to bribe the world into existence using M&Ms or sit next to Adam for

hours reading *The Little Engine That Could* to coax Eve into popping out of Adam's rib.

When our son was two, and my wife and I had cleaned pee off the kitchen floor for the tenth time because he wasn't able to make it to the bathroom, potty training began to appear as miraculous and unlikely as the parting of the Red Sea. And, when the wonderful day arrived and he put on his first pair of "big boy" underwear, we thanked God as if we had just escaped from bondage, which in a sense we had. Our bondage just came in the form of size-five Pampers instead of Pharaoh. Potty training may be a minor miracle, but it's still a miracle if you have eyes to see it.

When I was in kindergarten, I prayed for proof that God existed. I wasn't looking for God to reveal himself through the biggest miracle. I was only five, so I was practical. I wanted God to place some graham crackers in a plastic bag in my coat pocket. Every day when I went into the coatroom, I dug my hands down deep into my pockets—but they were always empty. When I graduated to first grade, I gave up asking God for graham crackers because I was convinced he wasn't going to produce.

Thirty-five years passed. Then one day, I put my hand in my pocket and felt a plastic bag. I pulled it out, and there in the bottom of the bag were three graham crackers. Sure, they belonged to one of my kids, but who's to say God didn't just take the slow fulfillment route—using my daughter as the delivery girl—to grant my kindergarten prayer?

But that wasn't all. As I dug my hand deeper into my coat pocket, I discovered two rubber bands, a dandelion, some pebbles, and a Happy Meal prize. When God answers prayers, he does it in abundance. I showed these treasures to a friend, who showed me the contents of his pocket—two licorice sticks, three pennies, and a feather. I didn't have to ask him what he prayed for in kindergarten.

Minor miracles aren't as glamorous as their larger counterparts, but they have a powerful impact on life. It's no small event when your daughter rides her bike without training wheels for the first time or your new baby sleeps through the entire night. God uses minor miracles the way we use M&Ms for potty training. He coaxes us along through life with them. Minor miracles are God's way of reading *The Little Engine That Could* to us.

And, now that my eyes have been opened to minor miracles, they arrive on a daily basis.