

# OPINION

Thursday  
August 26, 1999

## 'Lion Love' can transform the world

Society needs to harness mother's love for a child to help all Earth's young

Once, I was a nice person. I never rocked the boat, snapped at telemarketers, or brought up religion at social gatherings.

Then I had a baby. Birth brought forth not only the new child, but a new audacity to love and protect. Anyone who has stumbled upon a mother bobcat next to her den of newborn cubs — like I did once while hiking in Yosemite — knows what I am talking about.

You find a new route.

First evidence of this unused potential in me occurred when I flashed a gentleman. Only for a second. I was in a jet, adoring my newborn, who was happily nursing. A gentleman, sitting one row ahead of me across the aisle, would stare back at us. Then huff. Then rattle his newspaper. Stare. Huff. Rattle.

OK, here were my options:

1. Nurse my newborn in the 737's spacious lavatory;
2. Withhold food and see what



H. Katharine Swearingen

Voices

happens;

3. Flash the guy.

After I chose option 3, I thought, what's my mother going to say?

When our 1886 Victorian-style house with 30 coats of lead paint on it was being renovated, other mothers warned me about lead poisoning.

I asked these contractors if their sanding would be a hazard to my baby. Then I stole into the kitchen to call the Department of Environmental Quality. Do I have a problem, I asked with a growl, if fine particles of lead dust are covering my kitchen and baby?

As citations from the DEQ forced contractors to buy new vacuums for

their sanders, lay tarps along the outside foundations, and seal all windows with heavy plastic, "Lion Love" taught me to ignore the ire of those painters — just as it had shown me how to fend off glares from a ruffled gentleman.

A delicate, seven-pound infant had unearthed in me a lion's share of love. A fearless love. A love that prowls on hearts and claims them.

In Mark's gospel, a woman hears that Jesus can work miracles. And she needs one. Falling at his feet, the woman begs him to heal her daughter. Problem is, she is a Syrophenician, not one of Jesus' kind.

Jesus answers: "Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it unto the dogs."

Does she fall apart at this rebuff from the Son of God? Hardly.

"Yes, Lord," she replies, "yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."

Jesus blinks. Then, picking up a familiar scent, he changes his mind.

It is the only place in the New Testament in which Jesus does change his mind. "For saying this" Jesus says, "go

on your way. Your daughter has been healed."

Across a globe marked with human divisions, Lion Love roams and breaks down barriers. It opens hearts and minds. Heal my daughter, Lion Love insists, even if she is a Greek. Heal my son, even if he is a Sudanese. Heal me, even if I am a Muslim. Heal us, even if we are Serbs.

Love our children, whether they live in Rwanda, Haiti, Kosovo or Colorado. Protect them from our indifference to violence, our feeble compassion, and our voracious First World consumerism.

Jesus came to love children fiercely. If we did, too, we'd demand more justice for them. Snared inside each human heart, a ferocious love paces and waits to be free. Unleashed on every child in the world, it would transform us all.

H. Katharine Swearingen of Haslett is a free-lance writer with a Master of Divinity degree. She belongs to the State Journal's Editorial Advisory Board whose members write a column each Thursday. Write her c/o Lansing State Journal, 120 E. Lenawee, Lansing, 48919.