Those pesky bears

Back in the summer, when I set out to work in my garden, I would have my 4-month-old Alina in her car seat (because I couldn't hold her and weed at the same time) and my 2-year-old Melise trailing behind me.

Getting them out the door was quite a task, and then we were still a generous distance from the garden. So I would put them both on a wagon along with a bag of gardening tools.

It was fabulous to just pull a wagon behind me instead of carrying everything and everyone. But nothing could stop Melise's imagination from churning, and that slowed us down.

One day, we were about a fifth of the distance to the garden when Melise yelled, "Stop, Mom! A bear is in the way!"

For a split second, I actually looked around in alarm. Not that there are any bears to worry about in this area, but I couldn't imagine why she would yell out such a random thing.

"Where is the bear?"

"Right in front of you!" She had a big smile as she pointed to empty air. I stood still in indecision. Should I play along or ignore her? I am naturally impatient, but the good mom inside my head said, "Oh, don't be a poop! Encourage her imagination!"

"Okay, Melise, what do I do about the bear?"

“Scratch it!”

“Scratch it?” She nodded emphatically and scratched at the air like she had claws.

I clawed the air, too, yelling, “Back bear, back!” Then I made a break for the garden. Of course, there were more bears lying in wait that I had to fend off. On the way back home, it was the same story.

This went on for days. I was sick of the bears. Finally, after being faced with yet another bear in my path, I sighed and said, “Really, Melise? Can we get to the garden without bears?”

She replied, “This is a nice bear, Mom.”

“Oh.” I was stumped. I pretended to pat the bear’s head and said, “Good morning!” And went on my way.

Ten steps later, we came across another bear. I dumbly asked, “A nice bear?”

“No, Mom, a mean bear!”

I decided I liked the nice bear routine better, so I said, “You know what, bear? I have a lollipop for you. Would you like it?”

I looked back at Melise for approval. She was the stumped one now! She smiled slowly and nodded her head. “Bear’s happy now, Mom.”

After that, every bear received a gift to appease it, from lollipops to hugs to haircuts and even new pairs of shoes! It didn't decrease the amount of bears that intercepted us, but it did make things more interesting and, for me, more tolerable! I also hope that I taught Melise a good lesson by helping the bears feel better.

Briefly, I thought I had that part of my life within control, until Melise and I were walking through the house and she said, "Stop, Mom!"

"Oh no," I said, "Is it a bear?"

"No, a cliff!"

Good grief, I thought. And thus began a month of cliff-hanging adventures in our house!

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