

It's Amazing How Different They Are...

I think that "It's amazing how different they are" is something that you hear many people say when they're talking about their kids, and I'm no exception. My two oldest daughters have the most contrasting behaviors between each other; it's probably because my youngest two don't have fully developed personalities yet, so it's hard to say about which siblings differ the most from each other. But here is the example that made me reflect upon this:

Tonight the kids were given glow sticks to play with. The glow sticks came with a plastic wheel. Our eldest, Taylor, who is 8, used her wheel to make a flower out of her glowsticks. Really, it was quite creative and also pretty cool-looking and beautiful. Her 4-year-old sister, Sammie, put her plastic wheel on her face and used it to make funny faces. Both creative, but Taylor's idea was so much... well, it was a better idea, let's be honest. And you might be saying, well, that's the difference between 8 and 4. A perfectly logical response, but if you knew my girls, this wouldn't surprise you, and I'm not convinced that it's their age difference more than their personalities. Taylor is much more artistic while Sammie is a clown. We love them both equally of course, but it's really fun to note their variety. It's amazing how different they are...

Nocturnal Purple-Legged Baby

So how is life with 4 kids? One word – chaotic. I suppose

some of that can be attributed to us not taking any time off from volunteering with the various community groups we are involved in... Most logical people would have done the smart thing and laid low for awhile. But us, we did just the opposite and jumped into a few new projects head first – oops. But, I do enjoy getting out and spending time with fellow adults, and besides, we've already committed ourselves, so it's too late now.

But anyway, the kids are adjusting just fine to having a new little brother. Our almost 2-year-old has reached the terrible twos officially, and she spends most of her time being upset or making messes. Figures, doesn't it, that she would reach this stage right as there's a new baby in the house. But it can't be helped, and we just have to grin and bear it for awhile until it passes. The upside is that her terrible twos are no where near the magnitude of the turmoil that her older sister caused in the house when she was going through them, but it's still hard to see our once sweet little girl being so nasty. I don't know what it is about the terrible twos, but every kid goes through them (maybe the terrible twos aren't so bad with boys? I'm hopeful...), and they can totally change a child's personality for months, even years. Little Disney was the sweetest baby and toddler, and now that she is almost 2, she has begun tantruming (almost constantly), hitting, spitting, and biting. Much, if not all of the behavior comes from being so frustrated – she gets frustrated when people don't understand what she wants or when she thinks her sisters are taking things from her. Even if they're just trying to help her, if anyone is doing anything she doesn't like, she'll throw a tantrum. But what keeps me going is knowing that it's just the age, and she'll magically return to normal one day; that's how it works. It usually happens suddenly, almost as suddenly as it began – it's like a spell is broken, and hopefully it's sooner rather than later; but I'm prepared for the long haul because her sister's terrible twos (and boy, were they *terrible*) lasted from about

the ages of 16 months until she was 4 years old.

And speaking of our 4-year-old, Sammie loves her new little brother and always wants to hold him. I'm trying to get better about how nervous it makes me; especially because Disney sees her older sisters holding him and then of course she wants to do it. But as time goes by, he gets stronger and less floppy, so eventually I can let them help more and be relaxed about it.

Taylor, our 8-year-old, loves her new little brother also, although with 2 younger sisters, she's kinda been there and done that, as far as new babies go. She is still a big help, especially with Disney, but she and Sammie fight constantly, and now Disney is starting to join in... If we could get a handle on some of the fighting, things would be much better around here. I feel like my kids fight, argue, and bicker *constantly*. I probably feel this way because it's true. Part of it is Disney being so frustrated all the time, and then neither she nor Sammie like to share things with others; and then also Taylor can be really nasty to Sammie, probably just cuz it's summer and they're sick of each other. Thank goodness school starts in less than 2 weeks. I say that now, but I'll also be losing my day-help when Taylor goes back to school, so we'll have to see how things work out.

As for the little guy himself, Christopher is almost 4 weeks old, and he's doing well. He is a constant joy to have around, but aren't they all at this age? The only problem with him is that he seems to be nocturnal – wakes all night and sleeps during the day. Luckily for me, my husband is a light sleeper and wakes with him before I even hear anything. He is getting no sleep, but I told him weeks ago, once you let me start sleeping through the night, my body will get used to it and I won't wake up... I don't think he listened. But my sleeping-lightly days are over – during my pregnancy I awoke very easily at every little noise, but now I'm back to my I-could-sleep-through-Armageddon phase. I also warned Hubby

that this baby was going to be nocturnal because in the womb, he wouldn't move much during the day, but he's start going crazy about 9pm until after I went to bed.

And almost all new babies bring with them the fear of something being wrong – the other day, Christopher's legs turned purple out of no where... I had just gotten him out of his stroller, but his straps weren't too tight or anything like that; I checked on them later. It was horribly scary to see his little purple legs, and I've never experienced that with my girls. But the doctor didn't seem to be too concerned; just something to take a look at next appointment – might be a blood vessel spasm, which I found out is not terribly uncommon in infants after looking it up on the internet. There is a condition called Raynaud's Syndrome that is characterized by purple limbs, however they're accompanied by extreme pain, and little Christopher was sleeping calmly while this happened. We'll see what the doctor says on Monday.

That's about it for now; it's good to be sitting here blogging again – it's been so hectic for a few weeks that I was not in front of my computer enough to even blog. But then I started thinking of all my faithful readers I was disappointing, and I thought I'd better make the time to give them something to read ☐

ONE More Time, She Says...

Yeah right. I've heard that before. I went to the dr. today and we were supposed to schedule an induction date – AGAIN. But we have to wait and see how I'm doing at another appointment – AGAIN! My body is very slow to react and I

think that if I weren't induced, my babies would never come out. But Thursday is the new day, so we'll see how I'm doing then, and she said *hopefully* Friday I can be induced. Hopefully is the key word here because after going to the dr 4 times to get an induction date and not getting one, I'm starting to lose optimism. My husband says let's just wait until the 21st... that's funny because our first daughter was born on December 21st, our second daughter was born on May 21st, and our 3rd daughter was born on October 20th (the 21st was a Saturday and the dr. was off work and didn't want to induce me on a Saturday). So it's only fitting we should have a July 21st or even July 20th baby, right? But this whole pregnancy my dr. said she wanted to induce me a week before my due date (which is July 14 and she is adamant that it is correct) because I have large babies. My first was 7 lbs 2 oz which is normal, but my youngest two were 8 lbs 12 oz each with the last one being even a half ounce more than her sister... so it seems that they just keep getting bigger. Except today the dr. said this baby doesn't seem to be as large as the others, and since my body is not cooperating anyway... it's the waiting game we play.

I guess we've gotten spoiled with being able to set a date for having the other kids; we've gotten used to knowing when the babies are going to come, and it's hard to remember and realize the fact that it's not an exact science even in this day and age. I want him here ASAP of course, not only to meet him, but also for selfish reasons; mainly involving having my body back so I can do some things other than eating and sleeping. I feel so guilty about my lack of participation around the house, but physically, it's become impossible to even push myself to do things like I was a few weeks ago... I can no longer bend over to let the dogs out, and bending over to do laundry is becoming more difficult by the day since we have front-loading machines. My muscles most of the time feel so tired that I worry they won't even hold up my own (very heavy) body, let alone strong enough to chase kids around...

and my kids have been acting horribly lately – what timing. Hubby has really had to pick up some extra slack around here, well more than that really, he's doing almost everything... and I feel badly but what can I do but wait. My biggest wish of course is a healthy baby, and wish #2 on the list is an easy, painless labor, so if I get my wishes, all this waiting won't be so bad in retrospect. But in the meantime, I have so many people waiting on us... Grandma's been on standby from 2 states over for a week now since she is planning to come and watch the kids... Hubby's work is somewhat on hold since he must take frequent breaks to referee the kids. He's waiting until I'm in the hospital and Grandma has the kids, then he's going to work like a maniac in the empty house to build up our finances which have also been neglected during the waiting game... Not to mention all the wonderful friends and well-wishers who want to meet little Christopher! Maybe on Thursday I will have some better news... or I could actually start going into labor on my own before then... yeah right! ☐

Doomsday – A Week Away?

One week from today, I will be hitting a milestone – the big 3-0. To say I am dreading it would be a huge understatement. It's not that I feel old – at times I do, but mostly I enjoy being older because in some ways, my early 20's really sucked. After working out the growing pains of my early 20's and figuring out how and where to settle our family for the rest of our lives, my late 20's went really well. But there are a few things about turning 30 that have me feeling a little depressed lately...

This first thing is really not a big deal, just food for thought, really – I read an article about a year ago about

fashion etiquette, and apparently etiquette says I can no longer wear my hair in pigtails. They say 30 is too old for this. I haven't worn my hair in pigtails since I was about 6 years old, but it's the principle of it now being inappropriate because I'm too old. What if I wake up one day wanting to wear my hair in pigtails all of a sudden? Not really a catastrophe, but again, it's just the principle – something I CAN'T do... Maybe I should wear my hair in pigtails ON my 30th birthday...

My biggest qualm about turning 30 is that I feel too old for a career. Over the past year and especially in the last few weeks, I've been thinking about all the things I'll never be nor do because it's too late... So I guess this is it – I am officially locked into the Mommy career path, sigh. Not that there is anything wrong with that, some people thrive on it. I'm just not one of them. While I truly appreciate being able to stay home and watch my kids grow without having to take some low-paying horrible job, I will also greedily admit that sometimes it's not enough. Sometimes, I think about maybe taking a minimum wage job, just to be able to contribute, just to be able to have a logical conversation with adults during the day. Most of my daily conversations now revolve around poop, Barney, Hannah Montana or what was stuffed into the toilet. When a person is in their 20's, I always figured that was the time for establishing one's career path, but my 20's are gone, so I guess this is it. Some days, I'm ok with it. Some days I don't even have time to really think about it. But other days, I think about how I want to do something much more productive and lucrative, make a mark on the world while having fun and feeling like a contributing citizen... I know, there are lots of people (especially stay-at-home-moms!) who say that raising happy, healthy, successful children IS the most productive and rewarding job out there... But that's easier said than done. First, I don't yet know if my efforts will be fruitful – what if the kids don't turn out so well? And second, and I hate to say this, but I will anyway – some

days it just doesn't seem like enough... I want to be creating something, doing something, making money – I lack that immediate sense of accomplishment in my life, and I am a person who thrives on immediate payoff for effort. Third, there's always the thought in the back of my head – what am I going to do with myself when the kids are grown and in school? I will be in my mid-thirties at the youngest, and since I didn't use my 20's to develop career skills for myself, where will that leave me when my days are no longer filled with changing diapers, preparing meals, cleaning up spills and mishaps, and chasing after kids? Lately I've been dwelling on all the careers I've let it get too late to pursue, but there's also the terrifying thought – suppose I actually had some free time for myself... WHAT ON EARTH WOULD I WANT TO DO WITH IT? I never have any free time, so I don't even know what I would do if I got some, and that for some reason, is terrifying!

I'm sure the pregnancy is adding to some of the anxiety I'm feeling about hitting the big 3-0. After all, I'm due, well, actually, scheduled to give birth only 5 days after I turn 30. And like I said, most days I can look at my 4 beautiful children and think, wow, creating them is a lot to accomplish by the age of 30... But what about the dark days when all 4 are acting up at the same time, and I just can't feel pleasure nor reward in the career path I've chosen? And most of all, what career is just going to suddenly pop out of the woodwork for me once the kids have grown and aren't so needy?

Can't I just turn 29 again?

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE BEST!

Today is my husband's birthday! Poor guy, he has to work. It stinks that when you become an adult, you can't take the day off on your birthday. When you think about it, each person would get only one day per year, it could be easily proven when your day is and if you've already taken it, but I guess in larger workplaces, it wouldn't be very economical when there are lots of employees. Plus, it's not like you can take a break from every responsibility in life for a day – though that would be nice! There's no 'off' switch on the kids, the pets still need to be cared for, bills are due, errands to run... the list goes on... so why draw the line at having a day off work?

But anyway, my husband is going to take a half day off tomorrow so we can celebrate just the two of us; and we're both really looking forward to that – I just have to make it through today. I've had a terribly stressful day so far, but I shouldn't vent about it to my husband on his birthday... so instead I've recorded a time table of everything that's been going on in our house for the last hour. Normally, this wouldn't be that big of a deal, but since I'm now up going to the bathroom half the night and our kids spazzed about going to bed last night and kept everyone up late, today I was really looking forward to some downtime and maybe even a nap. I was hoping to just sit here and write a blog post or two, mostly about how wonderful my husband is on his birthday... but instead I find myself venting about the kids because they're being really needy. Not bad really, but I am so tired! I don't know how I'm ever going to find the energy to take them to the carnival tonight! So anyway, my hour that I've set aside to blog before lunch has gone something like this:

11:24 – getting youngest something to drink (*and there's been lots of stuff before this, this is just where I got frustrated enough to notate everything*)

11:27 – sat down again

11:29-11:34 – setting up youngest outside at the ‘picnic’

11:34-11:38 – sat down to blog

11:38 – a request comes in for more Pringles

11:39 – After some discussion, it’s decided that if they eat their sandwiches, they can have popsicles instead of Pringles

11:40 – whats this about giving their lunchmeat to the dog?!?

11:42 – About this time, I should be getting up to go take a peek out the window to see if I can determine the fate of the lunchmeat. But I have a big long day ahead of me, and it’d be nice if I could sit for a FEW mins! I will just have to trust the kids to tell me the truth. I have a bad feeling about this.

11:45 – The back door opens. This time it’s the oldest with an update – “Sammie stepped on dog poop and she doesn’t have shoes on.” UGH – I make a quick note of the time in my blog and head outside to clean it up.

11:46 – turned the hose on right on my sock-and-shoed-foot while washing dog poop off of Sammie’s foot

11:51 – Friend shows up for help in carrying furniture – ringing the doorbell and making the dog go completely crazy. Shoot! I totally forgot he was coming today! Now my husband has EXTRA responsibilities on his birthday!

11:55 – UPS guy pulls up, dog still going crazy from friend stopping by

12:08 – Wow – have they really let me sit and type this for a whole 13 minutes?!? Uh, oh – back door opens again – “I have something in my hair.” – Guess who? Surprise – it’s the same kid who stepped in dog poop.

12:10 – bug detangled from hair

And the day is just beginning. So it will go on like this, and on, and on... So now maybe you have some insight as to why it takes me a good hour to write one blog post or get much of anything accomplished around here, really. But on to my birthday wishes for my hubby, since I only have 5 minutes left of my blogging hour.

So I have absolutely NO idea what to get him. I'd like him to have a gift to open, even though he says he doesn't care. Everything he wants (and that's not much, he's not really into material things) he says he buys for himself and he'd be happier knowing that no money was spent on buying him any birthday presents. But the way I am, I like to give gifts; I like people to have something to open and to see them get gifts on their birthdays, so I feel badly that he doesn't have anything. I was going to go out today and get something, but I really can't think of anything to get him... I've had some good ideas in the past, but this year I'm at a loss... So I will just try to keep the kids good and out of his hair, which is actually much more difficult than it sounds for me right now. But my husband said earlier today that he wants to make my day extra special and good. He woke up early with the kids (as usual) and had the dishwasher emptied and the kids' breakfasts cleaned up by the time I got up. Only the most wonderful man like my husband would go out of his way to make *my* day extra special on *his* birthday! And that's why I say Happy Birthday to the BEST!!!

To Do

This seems a little strange to me, but the other day my husband suggested that I should put everything into my blog. Every to-do list, shopping list, etc. Anything I'm putting into my computer should be in my blog, he says. I'm a person who makes a lot of lists. I've even been known to make a list of the lists I need to make! It might sound dorky or anal, but it makes me feel better and more organized – I'm a busy person with a terrible memory, so any way I can feel a little closer to keeping my head above water when daily life becomes overwhelming is worth trying for me. And often I do so with

lists. So, upon the advice of my husband, a person whose knowledge of everything seems to know no limits (and no, I'm not being sarcastic!), here goes – hope it doesn't bore you too much, but here is my To-do List for when Grandma has my kids for just under a week – an event I am anticipating so anxiously that it seems to have SLOWED the passage of time... We were going to take a trip to New York, but we declined it because of gas prices and in favor of getting things done around the house, sigh. Besides, I don't know how a woman who is 35 weeks pregnant would fare walking around such a big city! Such a shame, though, it's the LAST time we will be kidless for a long period of time because Grandma can't fit 4 kids into her car to take them all at the same time ☐

To Do While Kids Are Gone

RELAX!

clean game closet

organize kids room – clean out their toys, add toddler bed, create play room

hook up hose

clean out laundry basket o' junk

clean out playpen

~~wash baby's clothes~~ – *(now that we just found out we're having a boy instead of a girl, I have no boys' clothes to wash!)*

pack away Disney's clothes *(now that we won't be needing them for the new baby!)*

fix pipe in upstairs bathroom – and the light that got broken and flooded because of the pipe!

Blankie Woes

I think 8 is too old for a blankie. I mean, it's ok to have one at that age, but only if it doesn't interfere with daily life. On February 19, I made a post in my blog about the same subject – the post is called Blankies. It's funny to read that post now and see how far we've come, yet we've also gone no where on this issue at the same time. My 8-year-old daughter has this raggedy blankie that goes everywhere with her... well, that's not accurate – it would if it could, but I put the kabosh on that long ago. It got so bad that if we didn't remember it to go out to eat or walmart or somewhere simple like that, the whole family would pay the price. So, probably about a year ago now, I said, that's it, blankie stays home. I got tired of the liability involved also. If we brought it to a restaurant or anywhere for that matter and it got dirty, I would have to wash it immediately when we got home or else it wouldn't be ready for bed time that night, and my daughter would put up a huge fuss. Now it's gotten to the point where I'm worried it won't make it through the wash in one piece. Heck, it's barely in one piece as it is.

A few weeks ago, I said, it's time for the blankie to stay upstairs. It's only for bed and that's it. My daughter would bring it down in the morning, then she'd leave for school all day, and I got tired of tripping over it while doing housework. She hasn't been listening to that rule very well... and old habits die hard, I guess. The other day, she brought it downstairs and left it on the couch where little sister came and sat on it. Problem was, little sister had just wet the bed, so needless to say, blankie needed a wash. Somehow, I did not find out about this until bedtime that night, when a huge fuss was made about blankie not being available for bedtime. I was not about to do a load of laundry at 10 at night, especially on a Sunday, which is technically (though it never works out this way with a family of 5 almost 6 and 3 of

them little kids), my day off laundry. Not only that, but the blankie would not have been ready for at least an hour anyway, and it was already bedtime. There was much struggle and lots of tears, but she did finally spend a night without her beloved blankie. And guess what? She survived unscathed!

A few weeks ago, she had a sleepover for girl scouts. The rules were, bring a sleeping bag or a blanket, so she planned on bringing her blankie, which is holey, threadbare, and of no use when it comes to keeping someone warm. Not only that, but she is at a good age for kids to start making fun of her for something like that, and both my husband and I know from experience that kids do not forget things easily! She has a really nice sleeping bag that she's never actually gotten to use at a sleepover yet, so we convinced her to just bring that... or so we thought. She packed her own overnight bag, and I didn't think to check for contraband. The next day when I unpacked the overnight bag, I found the stowaway blankie. I felt so duped.

Ironically, as I'm writing this very post, my husband came downstairs and said, "Taylor can't find her blankie. She is really upset about it and crying." It was downstairs today, even though it wasn't supposed to be, so I know I had to add it to my huge load of laundry to bring upstairs... I told him to pass the message to Taylor that if I find it down here again, it will be gone forever because I am so sick of the whole situation. And I haven't done anything with it yet, honest, tempting as it may be. Don't get me wrong, I'm not mean or cruel, and I don't have a problem with kids needing a comfort item, even at 8. But when that item interferes with daily life, and one cannot function without it, then I believe it's time for a change. She should hope Dad or I don't find the blankie first – we are pretty fed up with the situation and cannot guarantee the safety of the blankie should we come across it!

Fun With Animals

Came across a few really cute animal-themed emails lately, so I thought I'd share. The first one is for people who don't have a dog or just have a very disobedient one. Enter a command in the text box and the cute doggie will do it. Try 'kiss'.

[swf]https://www.idodogtricks.com/site_template_v10.swf[/swf]

Then there's this video, which features the winning combo of a baby and a dog, awww... [Click here](#) to see "Childproof Drawer".

Finally, I got these really cute pictures in an email a few weeks ago... Seems a mommy tiger lost her cubs and "adopted" these piglets to take care of. See the 'pork chops':



Awesome Day

It may be cold and rainy outside, but the weather has not affected my emotional state inside! I've had an awesome day! It is our ninth wedding anniversary today, and so far, the day has been just short of perfect. The only thing that could make it better is if we could be together all day, but of course with 3.5 kids to support, it's unrealistic on a weekday

to take off work. Besides, we were able to have a fun family day together yesterday in between the dental work and the tantrums of our 3-year-old.

Today, my husband has left love-note post-its all around the house for me to find. He sent me a sweet e-card, and I really love the church sign he put on tangents.org of our wedding day. My almost 18-month-old daughter even let me have a peaceful lunch today – I didn't even have to interrupt my own lunch once to get her anything and usually I have to get up between 5-15 times! Oh, wait, I did have 1 lunch "interruption", but I wouldn't even call it that. The doorbell rang with the delivery of a gorgeous vase of flowers my husband sent me for our anniversary! And lately, the smell of fresh flowers has been completely relaxing for me... it must be the pregnancy. I've always loved flowers, but lately they're almost like a drug when I smell them! So, walking past the eye and nose candy on the dining room table is also keeping my spirits high. We were going to celebrate with a nice dinner and a night out, then come home and watch the first new Office episode in MONTHS, but the other day, we found out tonight is the monthly meeting for the board of a community agency with which we volunteer – wouldn't you know April's meeting had to be tonight! But no matter... we can still go out around the meeting, go to the meeting together, and in the age of VCR's, computers, and all of that, we will find a way to catch the Office later. So thanks to all the well-wishers who've written and called – we've had a wonderful day and we will see you next year at the big 10-year anniversary BASH!

Food Chain Gang

I should probably explain where the title of my blog comes from. It's actually a title I picked out years ago as I was musing while doing housework one day. I thought, a story about our household should be called, "The Food Chain Gang". At the time, we had a few more pets than we have now, completing the chain. Back then, we were the happy owners of 2 dogs, a cat, a parrot, and a little marsupial (animal with a pouch, like a kangaroo) called a sugar glider. The sugar glider and the cat have since crossed the "Rainbow Bridge" which some people call pet heaven. And, if you're a regular reader, you've read that we've added a new dog to our family in the last month. But the new dog doesn't exactly complete a food chain, so I just felt the need to explain why my blog is called "My Food Chain Gang" even though we are down to 3 dogs and a parrot.

As an animal lover, I would love to add even more pets to our menagerie, however, it's just not practical right now. We have 1 dog with some terrier (terror!) in her, Jack Russell to be exact, and she will "hunt" any kind of small animal we bring into the house. So, my dreams of owning a rat or 2 or 3 will have to wait at least a few years, hopefully more, since the "Jerk" Russell mix is only called that in jest – she is our baby. My husband and I adopted her before we were married and before the kids were born. And before you judge me, do the research – rats actually make very good pets! Unlike many of their rodent cousins; hamsters, gerbils and the like, rats are actually pretty clean, very smart, and they are even friendly and cuddly!

Since I already mentioned wanting a rat, which many people think is a crazy pet, it should be no surprise when I say with sincerity that if I didn't have small children, I would have a pet alligator. Again, a little bit of research will tell you that alligators are almost nothing like (in behavior) their

fellow crocodilians. They are actually quite docile and easier to handle than you would think ***if you know what you're doing of course*** – stress that point. I know some about handling alligators, though I've only held small to medium sized ones, and I have never even owned a reptile, so needless to say, this is not an option for me right now... but maybe someday!

I would also like a tortoise, but with 4 kids, 3 of which will be under the age of 5, I do enough cleaning up around the house as it is – don't need a tank to clean! Plus, we are very lucky to be able to afford some mini-vacations now and then, and any more responsibilities for the pet sitter might put her over the edge ☹

I have always wanted a goat, and now that we live in the country, I can see how easy it is to get one – you can just open up the paper, call a number and buy a goat. But I don't think the neighbors would appreciate what our lawn would look like. Something tells me our quiet residential neighborhood near the heart of the downtown of the city would not be a good place to house a goat.

I would love another cat someday, but I'm allergic. And it all but broke my heart when I lost my beloved cat earlier this year... I felt very guilty that I couldn't really pet her or spend time with her as much as I (and she) wanted because of my allergies.

And talking about cheap farm animals reminds me of another realization I had after moving to the country – baby chicks and ducks are really cute AND very cheep, err inexpensive! But again, our Jerk Russell would just try to eat any kind of animal like that. She STILL likes to hunt the parrot when he flies in the house, even though he's taken a nip at her more than once with his huge beak!

And I would LOVE my own parrot – I've always wanted an African

Grey, ever since I was really little and read a wonderful book by the same guy who wrote the movie, "The Water Horse". The author is Dick King-Smith, and his book, "Harry's Mad" is just a wonderful story for kids about a boy and his pet parrot. But while I'm on the subject of parrots, let me talk for a minute about pets NOT suitable for families. Parrots sure are beautiful animals, and they're lots of fun when they talk, laugh, and imitate, but they are also very moody and unpredictable. Most are not cuddly, and if they are, it's usually only with one person in the household, and they will resent every other person who gets in their way. Which is what happened with our parrot – he has bonded to Daddy, that's his "mate", and the rest of us cannot touch him, OR ELSE we have to deal with the rath of a beak that is strong enough to snap a broomstick in HALF! Parrots are VERY loud – and there is no relief from their noise. Their scream can rattle your eardrum, and is almost always guaranteed to make a small child cry. And, they scream to have fun! It's not just when they are upset or want something, so if you think you'll be able to quiet a screaming parrot, guess again! Luckily, ours is about to celebrate his 7th year with us, so through lots of growing pains, we've learned how to make it work in our house. Parrots can also be very dangerous, so just like any other animal, kids need to have constant supervision around parrots. Overall, as the owner of a parrot, I would HIGHLY recommend another pet choice to anyone with kids in the house.

I wouldn't recommend a sugar glider as a pet either. Ours was "used" – we actually found her at a garage sale – and that is a testament to how often people think it'd be cool to have one of these only to decide later they're too much work. They are intelligent, social animals, so they require lots of attention. However, they are also nocturnal, so you have to be available at night to take them out of their cage to play. Light will actually damage their eyes, so taking them out at night in a specially under-lit room is required. They can be nippy, smelly (they excrete an odor to mark their territory),

and can even make loud noises all night that keep you awake. And they require a special diet of fresh fruits and vegetables also, which can be inconvenient and expensive.

So anyway, now that I've recommended all the pets that AREN'T good for families, I would say that the standard dog or cat IS great for families. Obviously, there is a lot to take into consideration when shopping for one of these, and I won't go into that this time... if you really need some good advice about why humane societies are a better choice than pet stores and what to look for while choosing a pet, see my previous post called, "3's a Crowd?".

So, now you know where the title "My Food Chain Gang" came from. Maybe someday, I will add to the chain and have a real zoo to call my own. But for now, I will stick with the gang we have – everybody knows their place in the chain and gets along great!