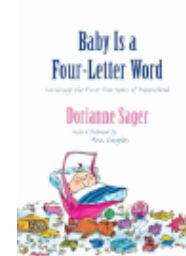


Baby is a Four-Letter Word: Surviving the First Two Years of Parenthood

by **Dorianne Sager**

Key Porter, 2006 (2006)
 Paperback

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Reviewed by Hilary Williamson

You know from the title that this small book does not take itself too seriously, and chapter headings like '*Life in the Trenches: How Do You Discipline a Two-foot Dictator?*' and '*The Grocery Store and Other Nervous Breakdowns*' reinforce that perception (and bring back memories to anyone who's *been there, survived that*). The author, Dorianne Sager, is a journalist, and parts of her book appeared in *The Vancouver Sun*.

Sager begins by blaming her mother for reinforcing the belief that '*my eggs were numbered*' - which, of course, led to pregnancy and baby Zach - and continues with an offer to the reader '*to laugh about these early years: the endless crying ... and the peaks of utter helplessness and pure joy that make up the mess of motherhood.*' The book's chapters are divided into five parts: *Welcome to the jungle; When Toddlers Happen to Good People; Does My Bum Look Big in This? Fitting into motherhood; and All in the Family.*

Topics touched on with wit and humor include the convenience of breastfeeding (as well as how exhausting '*Life as a twenty-four-hour buffet*' can be); sleep deprivation; worrying; the toddler airplane/restaurant/shopping ordeal; discipline; domestic drudgery; conflicting parenting advice; mommy networking; Playschool; babies and marriage; grandparents; the stay-at-home-daddy phenomenon; television as a life preserver; competitive parenting; potty training; and Christmas through a child's eyes.

Even though Sager tells us that '*Some days, baby is a four-letter word*' and she underscores the humor, she also makes points that will resonate with any parent, like '*How do you keep your heart from breaking under the pressure of everything your child needs to be protected from, when you can't promise you'll always be there to protect him?*' And she reminds us that though *baby* is a four-letter word, '*so is love.*'

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