

Cuteness, it's just no excuse

NOT BREEDING

MY FIFTH NIECE arrived at the height of the August heat wave. This gave me pause. There comes a time in every woman's life when she must consider her options.

"Am I going to use my ovaries, or not?"

At 34, I am pretty certain that the answer is not.

For one thing, I'm only shooting with one barrel, since my right ovary decided to grow a mini-me in the form of a melon-sized cyst that was removed, along with the offending organ, in January. I now sport a thin line across my lower abdomen that bears an unsettling resemblance to my sister's C-section scar. My gynaecologist, quite the joker, informed me I could still wear a bikini, no problem.

Yeah, right, like he could wear a thong, no problem. An image of me in a bikini and my surgeon in a thong would not be a selling feature for an advertisement for P-Town.

of the hour, who wears a paper plate hat festooned with bows and ribbons, and then they all titter loudly over "darling" bibs and "sweet" Oshkosh jammies.

It gave me a headache and a touch of nausea. I just didn't get it. And I don't think lesbians are any less prone to baby brain than the next poor sap. The only difference at a dyke baby shower is that the estrogen-pumped crowd gushes over a teeny-weeny Harley jacket and a perfect pair of kiddie work boots. Perhaps they also dispense with the paper plate crown. Baby brain, it seems, happens to all women, and I refuse to let it happen to me.



KATE BARKER

My partner has never suffered from delusions of motherhood. Once trapped amid a throng of baby-brained zombies, she was asked, "Don't you want to have kids?"

"I have romance, freedom and money. Why the hell would I give that up?" Why indeed. Let's look at parenthood realistically. Kids are noisy, smelly, expensive, all-consuming, never-ending guilt making machines. They suck you dry.

Despite the oophorectomy, I'm probably still just as fertile as the next lesbian. I am left handed, so why not left ovaried as well?

Besides, women in my family have a remarkable propensity to get knocked up, a trait I assume was also passed down the line to me, although I have never actually come into contact with sperm to test this theory. I attribute my total gayness in part as nature's way of protecting me against motherhood. Nature, in this case, didn't make a mistake.

The halving of my reproductive potential had no emotional impact on me whatsoever when it came to the question of kids. My partner feared the loss of half my eggs could spark maternal urges.

"Hell no," I told her flatly.

"Thank God," is what she said.

It's not like there hasn't been pressure for me to reproduce. My mother sent me clippings about gay parenting when I was in my mid twenties. She wanted a grandchild, damn it, any way she could get one. The arrival of my sister's offspring last year finally got me off the hook.

The whole experience leading up to niece number four baffled me. I attended a baby shower in which the collective IQ of the women in attendance dropped as their voices reached stratospheric registers. They all had baby brain, a sad phenomenon in which women become cooing and frankly stupid beings. They cluster around the pregnant girl

Now let's look at the worst part of being an aunt. The kids are still noisy and smelly, but we can give them back. As parents, our teenagers would think us losers, no matter what we did. As aunts, our nieces will think we're cool, no matter how geeky we truly are, simply because we're dykes.

I think it's also safe to say that the two of us would make appalling parents. We frequently forget where we left the dog, and once accidentally trapped our poor cat between the screen and back doors... in winter. (It was just for a minute and the cat was fine, but still, you can't make those kinds of mistakes with kids.)

Some women, and I would argue most lesbians, just don't want to be mothers. I look at a baby, and I think, "cute," because they are designed that way.

Then I look away and hope to engage adults in conversation. I could not look at a baby all day long thinking "cute." I would tear my hair out. I would rip the Teletubbies tape from the VCR and stomp it into a million itchy bitsy pieces. I would, in short, lose my mind. And I haven't got a problem with that.

It's time for us never-meant-to-be mothers to stand up and say with pride, "I'm no breeder." Sure, let those other lesbian mommy wannabes flit off to bed with their donor sperm, if they must. Just don't ask the rest of us to babysit.