

# The Gospel According to Erma

Written by Laura Packard

Tuesday, 23 September 2014 10:55

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</span><span style="font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif; font-size: 10pt;">Erma Bombeck, my literary hero and one of the wisest women of the twentieth century, once said, ♦Housework, if you do it right, will kill you.♦</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ She also said told us, ♦My second favorite chore is ironing. My first being hitting my head on the top bunk until I faint.♦</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ Maybe now you♦re starting to see why she may have possessed all the hidden secrets to the very vast universe, and quite possibly could have achieved eternal world peace if she hadn♦t ended up prematurely meeting St. Peter at the Pearly Gates.</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ But let♦s dissect this for a moment, shall we? Who would have thought it, but housework can be detrimental to one♦s own health. And men inherently seem to grasp this, seeing as it♦s coded in their DNA or something; kind of like memorizing SEC stats and waiting ♦til the last possible second to trek the garbage can to the curb only to realize, aghast, it♦s too late.♦ I don♦t know about your significant other, but mine is certainly no exception.</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ Every night, and I mean every, single, blessed night, my hubby leaves his plate on the kitchen counter directly 3 cm next to the sink instead of putting the godforsaken dish into the dishwasher that sits 4 inches due South East. Now, I have seen my husband singlehandedly battle a pound of Angus beef and emerge, though gassy, unscathed, but I guess he was terrified of the .2 ounce trace of mashed potatoes on a disc of Italian ceramic with a scant trace of leftover peas.</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ Women, on the other hand, are much more stubborn and like to prove we can handle just about anything dangerous, like salmonella, staphylococcus, rotavirus . . . and last but not least, small children who smell.</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ Advertising agencies know this too well and try and target us with cleaner scrubbing bubbles, cutting edge dermatologist-tested sodium hypochlorite, and better-than-ever yellow and blue ammonia with stain boosting hydraulics. I don♦t know about y♦all, but I am not about to ♦drink♦ the so-called bleach alternative Kool-Aid any more, seeing as I♦m not quite ready to meet my maker any time soon. So, in the name of self-preservation, I have decided to let it all go; say sayonara; bid the whole domestic rat race adieu.</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ I am, however, worried about my best friend Alicia who, to me at least, seems to have what I can only conclude as a possible death wish.</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ Here is a typical text from Alicia any given day of the week:</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">♦Had the BEST night EVER! Cleaned the light fixture in the dining room! Took apart the glass crystal one by one, then soaked and dusted EVERYTHING! LOVED it!♦</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ Cuckoo for coco puffs, right?</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦ Just wait.</span></p> <p><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;"></span></p>

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arial,helvetica,sans-serif;"> This recent cell phone exchange one random evening says it all:

What are you up to? she asks me in a voice that sounds entirely too chipper for a somewhat sane wife and working mother of two that's been awake since quarter of five.

Eating Cheetos and watching *Sex and the City* reruns, I tell her while tugging my blanket up snug around my sweat pant-wearing waist. You know, just trying to survive another day. What about you?

Finally got the kids down at 6:30 pm on the dot. Heck yeah! She's never been one to hide her excitement. I'm dusting the drapes and polishing the silver as we speak.

Are you trying to be a martyr or something? I ask her. Cause if you're going to bloody sacrifice yourself, can't you do it for a more noble cause, like zero calorie cheesecake or carb-less bread?

It helps me relax, she yells over the suction of her Dual-Action Bissell.

Hon, relaxing is watching a Matthew McConaughey movie and drinking Malbec. That's why God created those two things in the first place, don't you know? To help us prolong our precious time here on earth.

Unfortunately, my advice and Erma's fell on deaf ears.

Morning! What are you up to today? Alicia asks me the following day on speaker. I can hear the dishwasher, clothes dryer, Roomba all running fast and furious in some weird, but oddly pleasant harmony.

Well, I should be bleaching the shower doors and dusting the cobwebs from the ceiling fan but I've decided to expand my life expectancy by crawling back into bed, I yawned. I'm reading Julia Child's *My Life in France* and eating two pounds of butter. What about you?

Oh, you know, the usual, she says back. I just got done rearranging the books and pictures on my bookshelves and I'm about to move on to the old pots and pans before work.

Finally, I can't take it one second longer, only because I really love her and want her to live a long and prosperous life. After all, we decided we'd save for a room at the local old folks home together after finding out they had a *Gone with the Wind* themed party one night a week every week with hoop skirts and cocktails.

What in the Sam Hill is wrong with you? I ask. Are you trying to tell me something I should have figured out already? Do you have delayed post-partum? Are you depressed from all the Chucky doll videos you watch on the treadmill? Should you be eating THAT many leafy greens? Tell me. What's wrong, for gosh sakes?

Well, I read organization is a good way to prevent Alzheimer's.

You're only thirty-two," I yell before hitting the

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call end button.

Oh well, there's no helping some people. She is young after all and has a few more years ahead of her than I do. I just hope, like me, she finally comes to her senses before it's too late. Meanwhile, I continue to consult with Erma from time to time about how to handle certain domestic trials and tribulations. She never lets me down.

For example, when I worry about the kids not making their beds, Erma's sage words still ring true: No one ever died from sleeping in an unmade bed. I have known mothers who will remake the bed after their children do it because there is a wrinkle in the spread or the blanket is on crooked. This is sick.

Amen, Erma. Amen.

Now, I'd love to share with you my FAVORITE Erma quote. This one is from a column she wrote March 10, 1987 and was cut out and posted on fridges everywhere all those years ago. Please do the same, you won't regret it:

Erma:*I always had a dream when I was asked to give an accounting of my life to a higher court, it will go like this: So, empty your pockets. What have you got left of your life? Any dreams that were unfulfilled? Any unused talent that we gave you when you were born that you still have left? Any unsaid compliments or bits of love that you haven't spread around?*

And I will answer, I love nothing to return. I spent everything you gave me. I'm as naked as the day I was born.

Empty your pockets, my friends. Turn them inside out.

Laura Packard recently moved to Beaufort from Saint Simons Island, GA where she still pens a humor column for Coastal Illustrated/Brunswick News. She has brought along her 2 daughters, 3 dogs, 4 cats and one husband. They sometimes let her write. You can learn more about Laura and her writing at [www.lauraleighpackard.com](http://www.lauraleighpackard.com). And don't forget, if you can't make fun of yourself, someone else will surely do it for you. For Laura, someone else is usually her kids... and her dog, Atlas who she swears is John Candy reincarnate, but that's a whole 'nother story.