

Another Month.....
by Sylvia Edgerton

For the woman or women out there who are considering alternative insemination and want to know more about the experience, here is what an average month might look like.

Day 1 : First day of period. Typically a bad day. Another month, another chance.

Day 2 : Study calendar on your own and with partner. Estimate ovulation. It feels like a calculus exam but is actually a question of counting to 14. Order semen. Unlike the first few months when you sat down at the computer to compose the letter together, sending positive vibes through the phone line while the fax was being transmitted, you are now cutting and pasting last months letter. Meanwhile co-mom is more or less aware that you are ordering half of the genetic material of your future (possible) off-spring, and that it is the very last time (possibly) of your whole long lives that you will be doing this and what a meaningful event it is. Breathe.

Day 3 : Take your 294th folic acid supplement of the year. Appreciate the genius-linguist-artist-guru which is your son (born two years ago) while he dances around his own poop which he has proudly deposited on the carpet. Admire his vocabulary regarding such things.

Day 4: Pray that this is your last period for a good long while and use up all the tampons left just to prove it so. Tease girlfriend, with a smirk, that she can now switch to buying her favorite brand because you are not going to need them anymore. She reminds you that delivering first baby, her chore, was worse than a life time of what she now refers to as nothing more than a tickle. Stand corrected and try to ignore the fact that it will be your turn soon, if you ever get that lucky.

Day 5 : Do twenty laps in the pool. Look at your still un-pregnant body in the full length mirror for maybe the last time..

Day 6 : Weigh yourself. Maybe you will never weigh this little again. And you thought you were fat! Decide to accept that reality and focus on the important things in life : love, family, health, ice cream.

Day 7 : Tell girlfriend, life partner, that you love her while taking a bath together. Discuss the presence both of you feel of the soul of your future child hovering near. It is like the buzz of summer, the heat one feels just outside of the skin. You wonder if she really wants, and is up to, a second child. You refrain from asking.

Day 8 : Friends ask how you have the courage to have another child considering the character of the first one. You try not to show you are hurt, especially since it is you who has been complaining about his temper tantrums. "He has a great character." you say, " He'll be older by then. It's a phase," fingers crossed behind your back that it's true.

Day 9 : A butterfly practically lands on your shoulder just while you were thinking of your pregnancy and you know that it is a sign.

Day 10 : You get in a fight with your girlfriend about your discipline techniques with your child. Tension in the house accompanied by a screaming two year old who is stronger than the two of you combined. You wonder if your nervous system will be able to do this all over again.

Day 11 : A breeze. You are feeling detached from the process, as though it were happening to someone else. Get some exercise, enjoy a last glass of wine. See signs everywhere that this is the one. A spider seems to be following you around (those are lucky, aren't they?). Your acupuncturist tells you that your energy is circulating better than ever. You vow that this month you are going to be patient, taking it one day at a time. You are in control of your emotions and oh, so very Zen.

Day 12 : You are cool, calm and collected and know in your heart that this will be the month you get pregnant. Practice announcing it to mother in your head. You make yourself some organic raspberry leaf tea and concentrate on the loveliness of your uterus. It is three forty five by the time you get to the hospital to pick up the tank, office closes at four and they can't find the tank. You practically feel your ovulation begin (or is that a stress cramp) as you search the hospital for the shipping/ receiving department. A depressing place and you start to wonder : who is this donor anyway? Some mass murderer drug dealer who comes from a long line of genetically violent criminals? You find the tank and go home, the butterfly having fluttered down from your shoulder and begun to beat feverishly in your belly.

Day 13 : You starting getting horny. You are optimistic but realistic. At four o'clock the process starts to shift as you observe a change in secretions. You seduce your girlfriend and you make love with tenderness and the intensity of creating a new life. Love makes a family and the your love is the best of all loves. For the first baby you discussed until way too late into the night if this was really what each of you wanted, if you were ready to take this major step, and of course, re-calculated the difficult mathematics of when this baby would be born if it worked. Since this is a second baby, you fall asleep and pray that the results of the first pregnancy don't wake you up in the middle of the night asking for apple sauce.

Day 14 : You take the ovulation test and it is positive (you threw away the basal thermometer after two years of charts). You wonder what that really means. In the evening after the first born is sound asleep and the house is picked up, the lunch for tomorrow's LMA activity is prepared, the moment arrives. The candle is lit by the most wonderful woman in your life. She burps. You laugh as though you were doing something elicit and slightly naughty. A few quiet moments, a few shared reflections, a few reserved touches, both of you know by now that making love at this moment is out of the question. Your beautiful co-mom does the honors of taking the vial out of the tank (a witchy, smoky vapor escapes, you shudder). Suddenly you feel no secretions, no

butterflies, no chance of getting pregnant. You keep these thoughts to yourself, for once. You lie down, hips propped up unnaturally on some pillows (and the pillow case your great-grandmother embroidered), and the most technically uninteresting thing happens. You do some breathing exercises. Your girlfriend stares at your vagina like it was a wild life documentary. There is some laughter, your girlfriend soothes your nervous belly and caresses you gently and slowly you kiss like your first kiss, seal the deal, and go to sleep. Sleep comes for girlfriend rather quickly. You lie there meditating and concentrating on receiving this new being into your life. Oh mercy - you never could sleep on your back.

Day 15 : Much like day fourteen, except you get to sleep in late, you no longer take your bike to work (you promised girlfriend you would take it easy), nor do you allow your son to jump on your belly like a cowboy on his horse. You wonder how you will ever manage pregnancy with a two year old. You are cool again, taking it one day at a time. Inseminate again in the evening. Same thing, same thing.

Day 16 : You are promising to yourself that this time you are going to keep your cool which you have been cultivating since the previous insemination when you spent close to fifty bucks on pregnancy tests and took them on the sly in public bathrooms before your period was even due. Not this time. If it is meant to be, it will be. Cool breeze, that's what you're thinking. Cool Breeze.

Day 17 : No spiders. No butterflies. But that was just silly superstitious stuff anyway.

Day 18 : You are really proud of yourself for keeping calm and detached. You believe strongly nature works in mysterious ways. You know that you are not in control of destiny and whatever is meant to be is the right thing for everyone. You would never dream of trying to control the fates. You feel nothing unusual but what do you expect, you are just in the very beginning, if that at all.

Day 19 : Depression. Don't know why. Everything is going well. Suddenly you want to go to sleep, to sleep all the way until day 28. It's too long. Your girlfriend has hardly asked you once about it. Just as well, you know, but still, does anyone care? You want to talk to everyone about it, tell people at work you hardly know that maybe you are carrying the very beginnings of a new life around. You know that is stupid and destructive. You don't look radiant. You look fat. You haven't been exercising for fear of jarring the embryo loose, and months of this are starting to take their toll. There has been a tightness in your chest the last few days. More likely a sign of heart attack than of pregnancy. You wonder if you might not have a serious and very rare illness which causes infertility and tightness in the chest.

Day 20 : Your breasts seem bigger. They are definitely bigger. Girlfriend gives you a feel and confirms. This makes things worse. You limit yourself to testing your breasts for changes in sensitivity and size to only once a day, trying to avoid repeating the time when you poked and squeezed your breasts so much they were aching and burning and

bruised by the time you started your period. You are now counting down the days as a way to have something else to think about. 8 more days - almost half way there. You can do it, you tell yourself. Concentrate on distractions.

Day 21 : Your son walks around with tractors under his shirt proclaiming that they are his babies. You wonder where he gets this stuff. He touches your belly with such tenderness, looks you in the eye and says " baby ". Now you really wonder where he gets this stuff. You want to cry (could it be hormones?). 7 more days.

Day 22 : You wake up, take care of your son, wash your hair in the sink, go to work, work hard, come home late and eat while girlfriend fills you in on the day and she says " how do you feel? " and you know what she is referring to and you realize you did it, you forgot about it for a whole day, almost.

Day 23 : A friend calls and asks you if you are pregnant. They can't believe how long it takes to find out. Yup, you say, two weeks. Vow to not tell any more friends next time (if there is a next time - ugh how you hate to wait!). 5 more days.

Day 24 : It's like being in the closet, you realize. You are not obliged to tell anyone about it, except that it effects almost every aspect of your life : from not biking to not drinking to not carrying son in back pack to not cleaning out the cat litter box (supposedly), to not staining the fence, to wondering all the time if you are or are not pregnant. 4 more days. Almost done.

Day 25 : Randy, Jessie, Sadie, Elizabeth, Rosalind, Jules, Lily, Loic. Many hours of sleep are missed as the list goes on into the night. You are no longer in control of your own mind.

Day 26 : Your mother calls and asks if there is any " news ". She means to be subtle but she has never asked if there was " news " before. You fill her in on the latest elections and bills passed. You make a note about the next time again, if there is a next time (oh how you dread that line!). You decide you are either pregnant or in really bad shape. You are exhausted, breasts are sore (only squeezed three times today), joints ache, you want to burp all day, and you are completely on edge. The pressure in your chest is still there. This could be it, or it could be yet another pre-menstrual ritual. You vow to go to the gym everyday if you are not pregnant.

Day 27 : Girlfriend mentions process for the third time all month. She thinks you are pregnant. "Whatever", you say, as though you were indifferent. Somehow when she says it, it is light and darling, almost teasing, but when you think it, the world spins. You are nauseous in the mornings just from thinking about it all the time. She doesn't know but it is taking all of your energy to keep you from running out to the drug store to buy a couple of pregnancy tests. You discuss how many months you will inseminate before giving up. You decide you are not pregnant and another wrinkle around the eyes appears. We are not getting any younger here.

Day 28 : Complete roller coaster hell. Your period has not started yet. Must not get excited. It often comes on the 29th day. Communication varies between tender to tense in the relationship and lovemaking is out of the question. You are so sick of the process you hate it and can't stop talking about how much you hate it. You don't even want to be pregnant any more, you just want to know if you are or are not so that you can get on with the rest of your life (ignoring the fact the you will surely be starting over if you are not, ugh). You promise never to do this again even while reviewing the list of possible donors - someone more virile, who resembles your girlfriend's grandfather and had 21 kids. You buy a pregnancy test just in case you make it to the morning without your period.

Day 29 : Your period starts, one day late. You are now on Day 1 again. Go straight to Jail, do not pass Go. Pay 500 dollars.