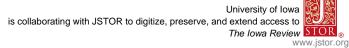
Dana Roeser

Ars Domestica

The key to this life is surprise. Don't say my whole life is spent trying to reunite socks. Say instead, surprise! Here is Jane's white cotton undershirt. Surprise! My husband slept in the living room; he's in a bad mood. Surprise! Jane spilled lemonade over the coffee table and onto the Persian rug. Surprise, it's warm and looks like rain and little red berries are showing up on the blushing dogwood leaves. There's a bit of laundry accumulating in the laundry room: a light pile! a dark pile! and a cold wash pile! Surprise! Jane coughed so hard this morning she gagged and threw up in the toilet. Not: Every morning and evening she does this. Not: Every time she comes off medication, she gets sick and runs a fever in precisely three days. Not: Every time she gets a full glass of lemonade. . . .

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Not, I am getting older and will never look a) young b) fresh c) thin, again. No. Surprise! My face looks rumpled and tired-I'm sure tomorrow I'll look young again. No. Surprise! I seem a little plump today, can't seem to close a size 16 around my waist. See above. I'm so surprised-my roots keep growing in dark with grey streaks! I'm sure I'll have the pale yellow hair of my childhood any minute.

I'm so surprised. Sally wants to a) nurse again b) eat again c) put a foreign object into her mouth again. Mix up the burners! Put the rice pilaf on the front burner to cool, move the pasta water behind it to heat-then, turn on the wrong burner! Presto! The smoke alarm! Hand stuck on the horn! The pilaf soldered to the pan! What a wonderful surprise! The whole family has to run out of the house into the cloud that has just landed and is lying in the yellow grass of the front yard.