

erma bombeck
if life is a
bowl of cherries.
what am i doing
in the pits?



If Life Is a Bowl of Cherries— What Am I Doing in the Pits?

**by
Erma Bombeck**

McGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY

New York • St. Louis • San Francisco • Dusseldorf •

Mexico • Toronto

Book design by Lynn Braswell.
Illustrations copyright © 1978 by Hal Just.

Copyright © 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978 by Erma Bombeck.
All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this
publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in
any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or
otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 BPBP 7 8 3 2 1 0 9 8

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Bombeck, Erma.

If life is a bowl of cherries, what am I doing in the pits?

I. Title.

PS3552.059I34

818'.5'407

77-17344

ISBN 0-07-006451-2

A number of the chapters in this book are based on material that has ap-
peared elsewhere in another form.

Also by Erma Bombeck

At Wit's End

"Just Wait Till You Have Children of Your
Own!"

I Lost Everything in the Post-Natal Depression
The Grass Is Always Greener over the Septic
Tank

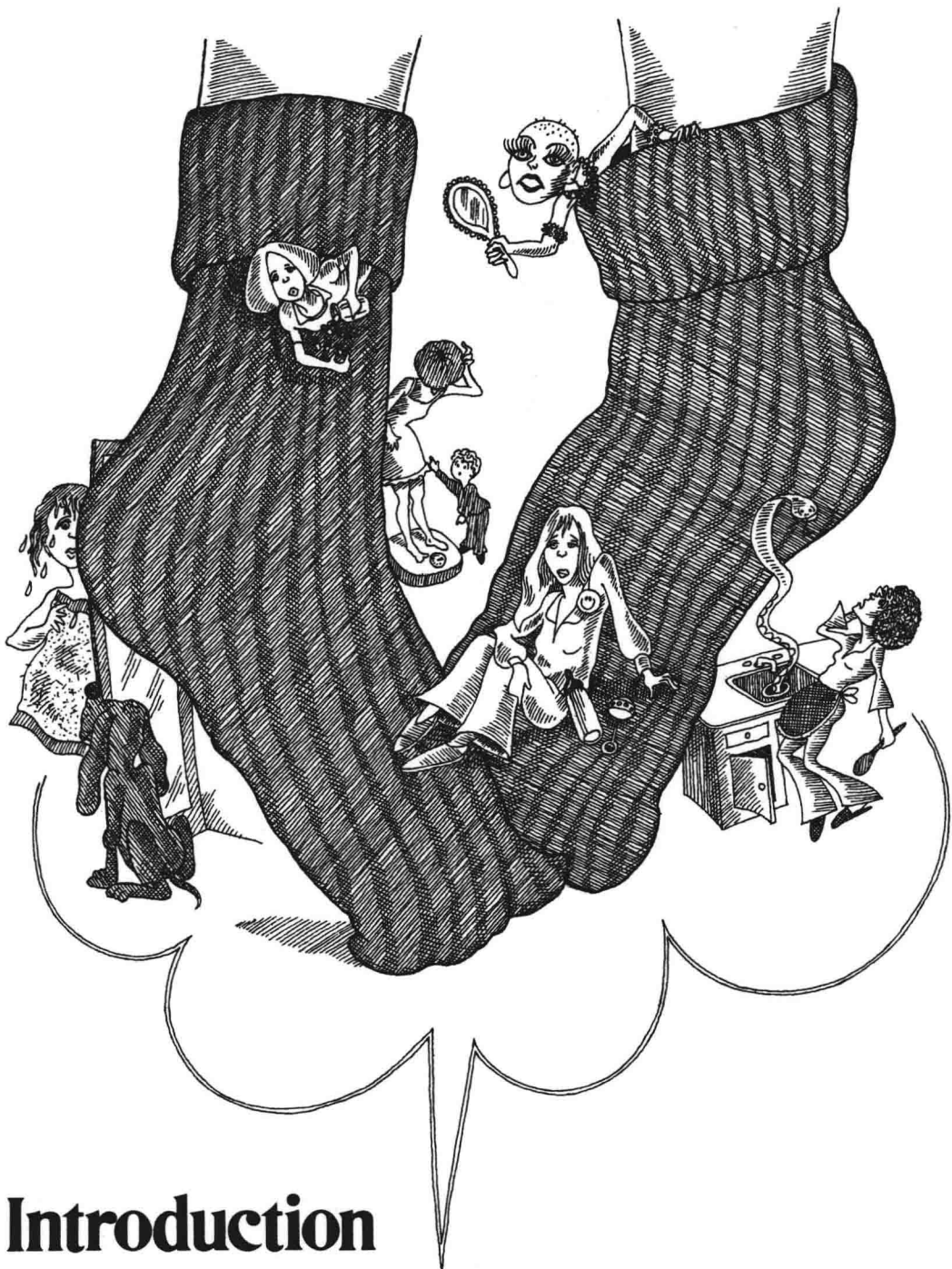
*For my editor, Gladys Carr, who has the
courage to laugh only when it's funny.*

*To my agent, Aaron Priest, who gives 100
percent, but takes only 10 percent.*

*For my Mom and Dad, (Albert and Erma
Harris), who tell everyone their daughter
is a successful dental assistant.*

**If Life Is
a Bowl of Cherries—
What Am I Doing
in the Pits?**





Introduction

A Pair of White Socks
in a Pantyhose World

Contents

Introduction

	A Pair of White Socks in a Pantyhose World	1
1	If You Thought the Wedding Was Bad . . .	7
2	The Mother Mystique	25
	Who Is I. Dunno?	27
	At What Age Is a Child Capable of Dressing Himself?	28
	Haven't I Always Loved Whatshisname Best?	30
	"Why Can't We Have Our Own Apartment?"	32
	Is There a Life After Mine?	34
	"Why Can't Our Average Little Family Get Their Own TV Series?"	36
3	Who Killed Apple Pie?	41
	Primer for Imaginative Children	49
4	The Varicose Open	57

5	Profile of a Martyress	67
	Profile of a Martyr	69
6	“Have a Good Day”	75
7	“Warning: Families May Be Dangerous to Your Health”	85
8	There Ought to Be a Law. . .	101
	A Baby’s Bill of Rights	101
	The Hernia Amendment to the National Anthem	102
	Kissing by Mutual Ratification	104
	Search and Seizure Rights in the Laundry Room	106
	Regulation of Interstate Shopping Cart Traffic	108
	Truth in Fair Packaging of Children	110
	Constitutionality of Drive-in Windows	112
	Are Family Vacations Legal?	114
	Illegal Possession of Junk Food	116
	The Right to Declare War	118
	Register Camera Nuts	119
9	“Gametime”	125
	Joe Carter’s Jubilance and Excitement Seminar	130
10	Fashions and Fads That Underwhelmed Me	135
11	How to Speak Child Fluently	147
	Things My Mother Taught Me	147
12	“Travel Is So Broadening I Bought a Maternity Dress to Wear Home”	163
13	The Trick Is Knowing When to Laugh. . .	171
	Microphones	172
	No One Wins	174
	The Unmailed Letter	176
	Killing Your Mother	177

14 I'm Laughing So Hard I Can't Stop Crying	183
When Did I Become the Mother and the Mother Become the Child?	184
Mike and the Grass	189
My Turn	191
Beauty	193
"You Don't Love Me"	195
Are You Listening?	196
The Chimes	198
Epilogue	201

Introduction



A Pair of White Socks in a Pantyhose World

I've always worried a lot and frankly I'm good at it.

I worry about introducing people and going blank when I get to my mother. I worry about a shortage of ball bearings; a snake coming up through my kitchen drain. I worry about the world ending at midnight and getting stuck with three hours on a twenty-four-hour cold capsule.

I worry about getting into the Guinness World Book of Records under "Pregnancy: Oldest Recorded Birth." I worry what the dog thinks when he sees me coming out of the shower, that one of my children will marry an Eskimo who will set me adrift on an iceberg when I can no longer feed myself. I worry about salesladies following me into the fitting room, oil slicks, and Carol Channing

going bald. I worry about scientists discovering someday that lettuce has been fattening all along.

But mostly, I worry about surviving. Keeping up with the times in a world that changes daily. Knowing what to keep and what to discard. What to accept and what to protest.

Never, in the history of this country, have worriers had such a decade as the seventies. Each year has produced a bumper crop of worrieries larger than the year before and this year promises to be even better.

Children are becoming an endangered species, energy has reached crisis proportions, marriages are on the decline, and the only ones having any fun anymore are the research rats.

You cannot help but envy their decadence.

Throughout the years, these furry swingers have been plied with booze, pot, cigarettes, birth control pills, too much sun, cyclamates, caffeine, Red Dye No. 2, saccharine, disco music at ear-shock decibels, late nights, and a steady diet of snack food.

If people haven't asked themselves these questions, they should:

How come there are still more rats than people?

How come you've never seen an iron-starved, dull, listless rat drag around the house?

Did you ever see a rat with a salad in one hand and a calorie counter in the other; yet have you ever seen a fat rat?

Have you ever yelled at a rat who couldn't hear you and couldn't outrun you?

Did you ever see a rat drop dead with lipstick on his teeth?

These unanswered questions have bothered me because everytime I turn around a new research study is taking away something that has added to my pleasure in the past, but is bound to make me sick in the future.

I heard a story about a research rat recently that makes one pause and reflect. The rat's name was Lionel. He was a pro. He had everything tested on him from artificial sweeteners to bread preservatives to foot fungus viruses to brutal subway experiments and survived them all. A researcher figured he was something of a Superrat . . . an immortal who could sustain life no matter what the odds.

The researcher took him home as a pet for his children. Within three months, this indestructible rat was dead.

It seems that one day the rat was taken for a ride in the car with the teenage son who had a learner's permit. The rat died of a heart attack.

That's what this book is about. Surviving.



1
If You Thought the Wedding
Was Bad...

If You Thought the Wedding Was Bad...



Next to hot chicken soup, a tattoo of an anchor on your chest, and penicillin, I consider a honeymoon one of the most overrated events in the world.

It's one of those awkward times when you know everyone else had a better time than you did but you're too proud to admit it.

A Honeymoon Hall of Fame is being established at a resort hotel in the Poconos.

According to publicity, a heart-shaped alcove will feature photos, mementos and memorabilia of famed loving couples of history and fiction.

To date, they have included a recording of the Duke of Windsor's history-making declaration of love in which he renounced the British throne,