

FROM LEFT: Lizzie David, Joshua David, and Nicole Fortez.



A DAY WITH THE BABIES

by Sarah David

6:30am

There is a loud rap at the door. "Tita! Tita Sarah!" Lizzie shouts in a musical voice. Before I can get up, Lizzie bursts in the room followed by Joshie-boy. Lizzie and Josh struggle to get on the bed and jump up and down. Nicole, who sleeps beside Ed and me, stirs from her sleep and cries, "Sleep *pá*" (Sleep more.) I try to persuade Lizzie to leave the room, but she refuses to budge. I struggle to carry her from the room. She cries and screams right into Ed's ears. Ed wails "Oh no," and covers both his ears with an overstuffed pillow trying to get more sleep. I drag Lizzie, who is almost half my size, out of the room. Josh follows. I go back to sleep.

7:30am

I get ready to take Lizzie to school since Joy left early to take a review. Ed claims he has a headache from Lizzie's earlier screams. Nicole senses that I am off to go somewhere so she clutches my legs, making it impossible for me to walk. She says, "Sama!" (I want to go with you.). I tell her to dress up. She is thrilled and runs to change out of her pajamas. She appears minutes later, bathed and groomed in a Winnie the Pooh outfit.

8:00am

We drop Lizzie off at her nursery. Nicole wants to join Lizzie at school. I refuse. She freaks out. I try to pacify her. "We'll go to McDonalds." She seems to understand and calms down. At

McDonalds, I relax with a light breakfast and read the morning paper, watching Nicole out of the corner of my eye. In the play area, she climbs and slides down the tunnel, thrilled to play even by herself. There is a little girl who wants to play. Nicole stands still and observes the stranger. The girl approaches her and invites Nicole to play. Nicole sees that the girl is harmless and joins her. They are fast friends. Pretty soon, the girl's mother takes their picture.

10:30am

I sneak out of the house to get samples for my microbusiness in garment trading. Nicole is nowhere in sight, so I dash for the car and make my getaway.

3:00pm

I arrive home tired, but decide to ease my mind with a game of *Broodwars* on the computer. I sense a presence sneak up behind me. It is Lizzie. She demands, "Tita, I want Barbie." I ignore her. She is insistent and repeats in a louder note, "I want Barbie." I realize it is hopeless to try to win over Lizzie. I give in.

I set up the *cyberBarbie* game. Nicole wakes up from her afternoon nap and joins Lizzie in changing the outfits of the cyber dolls. Their attention is shattered with the mighty cries of the *Power Puff Girls* on television. The cartoon heroes throw their power punches at villains and thrill Lizzie and Nicole. They scream, "Bubbles! Buttercup! Blossom!" (names of the heroes). Pretty soon, they lose

interest in Barbie.

Josh wakes up from his sleep. He is at the top of the stairs and attempts to go down by himself. He is apprehended by his *yaya*. He joins Lizzie and Nicole in the play tent. The two girls are busy playing tea set. Josh grabs for the pitcher and Nicole strengthens her hold. Josh bites her arm and Nicole attempts to bite back. It is futile. She runs to me and points to her arm, "Bite Joshie."

I call to Josh, "Josh, say sorry, and kiss and hug." Josh pretends he does not understand and walks away. Nicole forgets about the incident and goes back to the tent.

4:00pm

It is snack time. The babies run in circles while occasionally stopping to take a bite of pancake. Josh swallows a small portion and spits it out. He decides to take another bite but Lizzie grabs his piece. Josh cries in frustration. He chants in his own baby language, "Bula, bula, bula." Nicole cries, "*Tapos na Power Puff*" (Power Puff is over). Lizzie reprimands her *yaya*, "*Yaya, bad iyan. Hindi ka nag-smile.*" (Yaya, that is bad. You are not smiling.) Her *yaya* is embarrassed and plasters on a smile.

Lolo Vic passes by. They try to get his attention, "Lolo!" Lolo hugs the kids and disappears back into his room.

4:30pm

I remind the babies it is time to kiss their Lola Ching. They climb the bed and make a riot. They jump up and down on the bed and take turns for their kisses. Lizzie brings her face close to Lola and gives her a big wet kiss. She waves, "Bye, Lola."

5:00pm

It is time for the babies' daily walk around the neighborhood. They board their separate carriages to meet fellow babies--Carlos, George, Ariana, Mickey, Bianca, Basia, etc.

5:30pm

Finally, I am alone. I am supposed to be happy since I have the house to myself. But somehow, I realize the house suddenly became just a bit too quiet.