

Fireworks and fireflies and creating summer memories

Yesterday afternoon we invited my parents and my sister and her four children to come for dinner. The children played until it was getting dark, and then we invited them to stay for fireworks.

I tried not to overpromise. We don't set off our own fireworks. We also don't travel anywhere to see them because last year when we tried that our boys both fell asleep in the car on the way. Besides, after we came home and tucked our little guys in bed, John and I realized we could see some fireworks from our front yard.

So this year we decided to let the fireworks come to us.

While we were waiting inside for it to get dark enough for the fireworks display to start, I glanced out the window and said without thinking, "Oh, look. There's a firefly."

Instantly my 8-year-old niece was at my side.

"Where? I've never seen a firefly!"

Neither had her little brother. The children ran for their shoes and we went outside.



They were so happy, sprinting from one end of the yard to the other, calling for back-up assistance as they caught each firefly, and placing them inside Daniel's insect cage.



As dusk turned to evening, we caught fireflies as we watched bats circling overhead, capturing their own insects. John went into the house to get drinks for the children and came out with drinks, as well as a plastic bat attached to his back. I married this amazing man for better or for worse and—I know now—for some of the best practical jokes you can imagine with a plastic vampire bat.

By the time the fireworks started popping up, I knew they would never compete with the firefly experience.



There were only a few fireworks. They weren't close, and there were trees blocking many of them.

But if there is one thing I have learned as a mother, it's that children's expectations are not the same as grown-ups'. They will remember a wonderful evening of fireflies and fireworks and cousins and how Uncle Baba John pretended to be attacked by a bat.

If only we could always keep that sense of wonder our children have, that openness to new experiences.



Tonight as our boys were falling asleep, they heard fireworks outside again. We went to the window and watched another handful of fireworks. They didn't ask why we didn't take them somewhere closer, or why they had to strain themselves to see fireworks through the trees.

They watched and they celebrated each shower of color.



Then they fell asleep happy.