



# FOUR REMOTE CONTROL CARS AND ME

## Goldie Grossbaum

Four remote control cars in one room is really hectic. Very hard on the ears. But if it keeps all the kids busy, then I'm determined to ignore it. And it works like a charm for at least six minutes, until they have a great idea to take them outside.

I tell them I don't think it's a good idea, they're not meant for outdoors. They beg and explain and negotiate and convince me it's okay to take them outside. I state my opinion again and let them decide. They pack their cars and controls and I enjoy the few seconds of quiet, knowing this outdoor activity is not going to last long.

Only 3.5 minutes later, one of them is back, sobbing hysterically. As the car was being maneuvered outside, apparently it went right down the drain across the street.

I'm not much help here, because the only thing I could think of saying is *of course it went down the drain!* but I don't say it and instead just offer my sincerest *oh no!*

My boys are on it, they are determined to get it back from the five foot drop under the drain grate.

I mind my own business as they get to work, monitoring the situation out of the corner of my eye.

The door opens and closes, little feet come in and out—there's a serious operation going on.

The outdoor broom makes its way out of the house, along with some hangers and string. Only when the kitchen broom starts being led toward the door do I intervene and say *no, not that. Who knows what's down that drain, I don't want it on my kitchen broom.*

More random pieces leave the house, and I decide it's time to go check what's going on.

I go out and see a bunch of little people huddled over the drain, quite a cute sight, if I may say so myself.

But they are kind of in the street...and even though it's a very quiet street, it's a street nonetheless...not very safe.

My oldest has some contraption consisting of a broom handle, string, hangers, paper clips and some other objects I can't identify and the rest of the kids are all cheering him on.

"Guys, you need to come in, this isn't safe. You need to go back inside."

Hmm, they don't seem to hear me, although I'm standing right there.

"I know you all want to get the car back, but it's not possible. We'll just have to share the other three."

They look up and finally notice me, excitedly filling me in on all the details of their plan.

"But you're in the street, this isn't safe, we need to go back inside..."

I'm not getting very far with this line of reasoning, so I stop and watch the scene again.

And I quietly admit they are on to something...they just might get it!

As my son works very cautiously and determinedly drops his makeshift car-catching rod down the slats, they all hold their breath.

And I hold mine too, not saying a word. Not a word of encouragement or discouragement. I make a conscious decision to just watch and put all my mother-comments on hold.

And slowly he pulls his car-catching rod up, up, up with the car dangling off its edge. Higher and higher, until it reaches the opening.

Once again, I swallow the temptation of letting any

instinctive comments escape. I successfully suppress the urge to say *careful, move it slowly...*

He clearly doesn't need my help. He reaches for the car slowly as it appears above the drain grate. *Don't touch it*, I want to shout, *it's dirty!* But I don't say that either.

And he lifts it up, as if it's a trophy, and is greeted by wild cheers from his whole crowd of followers, his siblings. And they all run towards the house, my son proudly waving the car in the air. And I just watch.

Five little boys with *tzitzis* blowing in the breeze, little heads with matching yarmulkes bouncing down the street, some barefoot some not, but clearly a tight-knit crew. And they're mine.

All mine.

It's overwhelming and it's humbling. Because once again I'm reminded that being a mom is not just about knowing what to say, and when, and to which child, it's also about knowing when to say nothing and to just watch quietly instead.

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*Goldie Grossbaum and her husband, Rabbi Yossi, direct Chabad of Folsom, California, with the help of their children. To read more of Goldie's musings, visit [littleyellownotepad.com](http://littleyellownotepad.com).*



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