

**Summer of '73**

**by Frances Gapper**

Expecting quintuplets! Flowery voluminous, I chuck out the miniskirts and Randy buys a suede scoop chair for our open-plan lounge, redecorated in earth tones. But we're keeping the bedroom flamingo pink. I am not a cranky vegetarian.

Names we've finally settled on: Ryan, Brian, Kevin, Gary and Todd. Or Heidi, Brandi, Kimberly, Tammy and Tina. Or pick 'n' mix.

My birth plan: for me to immerse in warm water and them to fizzy-pop out of me, giggling and splashing. Tina doing widths, Kimberly daring Brian to touch the bottom of the pool.

I ask my friend Eileen about her birth plan when she had Samantha. Me, she says, I self-hypnotised. I wasn't there at all.

Eileen: worry lines and spaghetti straps. A witch who dances naked under the moon. Behind the potting shed, this being the only place in their garden not overlooked by nosy neighbours.

Although she doesn't summon up spirits, she believes in the power of thought to control the telly. She's been requesting David Carradine. We're both crazy for David because he is pure, unlike our slimeball husbands. In Kung Fu he plays a monk with a shaved head who fights baddies.

Any luck, I ask. Eileen says no, they keep sending her televangelists.

I egg her on to try again and shazam! Her hocus-pocus conjures up an American talk show, guest star David Carradine. Fab! With long hair, which we approve of. But also,

bummer, a hippie chick girlfriend called Seagull. Wonder if I could rename myself Albatross. A baby starts howling offstage and Seagull runs to fetch him. The audience aahs but he's still grouchy, so she whips out her tit.

Quick ad break, following which the host asks David for his opinion. Breastfeeding on the box, yes or no? Our hero shrugs: it's cool. I adore him. Meanwhile Eileen has become hysterical, so I slap her. She collapses into our tub chair.

The juniors are jigging, they can't wait to be rugrats. I put my arms around myself to soothe them.

Once Eileen has revived, I make pink squirrels. My mind is still on Free, Seagull's baby. What bliss, I say dreamily, oh what joy to suck the nipple and be pressed into the breast. Eileen shakes her finger at me.

Night. Randy is snoring. Can't sleep on either my back or side, and obviously not on my front. Am ridiculously enormous.

I stand at the window. A magnificent full moon is sailing through the clouds. She looks pregnant too, with moon embryos or new universes. I lift my arms to her and dance.