

33. The Perfect Present

The perfect gift for me (though I hate to admit it) would be better control over my temper. When I was very young, there were two Sandra's -- a well-mannered little angel and a brat who kept getting that angel in trouble. I would bang my head (or someone else's) against the wall, break my mother's favorite vase (or my favorite toy), and get into fist fights.

When I was "on a tear," as my mother called it, I heard no voices of reason. I felt no doubt, no remorse, no pain -- until later. Afterwards, it seemed that I always hurt myself worst of all -- damaging my own property or hurting myself, driving away friends, hurting someone I loved -- so I felt guilty, as well. As I grew older, the damage I could do became truly frightening.

For example, when I was sixteen, I lost my temper about something I don't even remember now. Unfortunately, I was driving my mother's brand new baby blue Chrysler Imperial when the Evil Sandra took over, pulled into our driveway, and bashed the front of the car into the garage door. Not once. Not twice. But over and over and over again, until the garage door was demolished, the front fenders askew, and deep ugly dents scraped through the baby blue. And then my mother came out of the house. . .

Never since have I lost my temper so completely, and I am proud of my progress. I no longer hit people or expensive things. . . though I still grit my teeth and yell and mutter curses, I only beat up cheap stuff. If I had absolute control over my monstrous temper, I wouldn't have to apologize so often and I could probably save some money and keep some friends. My life would be so much easier!