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## Game Night

It was a houseful of adults and kids, toddlers, and babies. You'd think that with two babies, three three-year olds, one toddler, and four Game Boy-addicted boys that there would be pandemonium in the house. And there was. I entered the family room of a friend of mine who had invited me over for game night—assurances that it would be a fun night of Settlers of Catan, a tame version of what it must have been like to be a robber baron. I immediately saw baby Paige, sitting on the floor, wondering where Mom was in the sea of strangers around her. She was reaching in the direction of where she last saw Mom. Baby Ella was just finishing a dinner of something sweet and orange-colored in a baby jar. Pleased with her self, she rocked the high chair as if to congratulate the parents for having found something good to feed her. Several of the older kids were outside on the trampoline, bumping into each other with each bounce.

What was remarkable to me was the acceptance of life all around me. Three different couples, with children of somewhat matching ages, sitting down for a dinner of pizza before playing games for the night. And in between, there would be cookie baking, diaper changing, bed time with portable cribs in the laundry room, going back home for additional pieces for the game board, refereeing squabbles between little girls with fake vegetables in miniature kitchens. While all this went on, adults were reading books, mapping out the lumber store purchases for a play house, listening to familiar sounds from an unfamiliar CD, and looking up quotes about pieces of gold. I was lucky enough to hold sweet baby Ella, to show her another view of the world other than from the ground up. Occasionally, the Game Boy boys would come down from their lair and stock up on freshly baked cookies.

When you feel the vibe of community, you know it. It was all around me. Community looks like acceptance, when it's enough to just be with others. Community has an ease to it in the face of life's challenges. Babies' cries are smoothed over without getting entangled in the urgency. Missing game pieces become reasons to linger at the table longer, looking together. Darkness and cool breezes allow everyone to come inside and enjoy the warmth of the house. There's light banter and laughter in community—a reward for being together. It's relaxed and genuine.

Before I knew it, it was time to go home. I ended up not playing any games. The board was being set up and the rules being explained when I left. My host apologized for not having gotten to the game going sooner. All the while, I secretly relished being a part of the mix, where there's no agenda, no object to the game, other than to enjoy life.

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