

## MY TOXIC BABY – DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I've never been good at taking care of most living things - plants, cats and even those electronic gadgets that you 'feed' and take care of (a bad trend of the 90's) all withered under my careless guardianship. Don't get me wrong - it was never premeditated, just kind of happenstance.

And then I became a mother. I remember holding my daughter Song Ji in my arms just after we returned home from the hospital. I was in awe. She was so small and so new. Nothing can really prepare you for the moment when it hits you like a wall: "I have a child in my arms, my child and it's up to me to take care of her!" I actually couldn't believe they'd let me take her home. By 'they' I mean the hospital authorities. I was so surprised, it was like, "Okay, here you go! You're on your way!" Whoosh - I was in a cab with my partner and my sister and my baby. I thought, "What training do I have to do this?" Geez, getting a drivers license was more intense.

I'm one of those women who could have stayed pregnant forever and been mostly happy. I even shot a film that took me to North and South Korea throughout my pregnancy. I loved being pregnant, it felt totally magical - as though I had become some sort of plant/ creature that just bloomed effortlessly. Except for the last few weeks, when I got so big and the claustrophobia began to creep in and I was thinking: "Get this thing out of me!"

So there I was, holding little Song Ji in my arms, staring at her. So in love. Like I'd never been in love before. So amazed by her newness. She seemed so pure. I felt like I'd never held anything purer in my life. The old world around us loomed ragged and long-toothed. I remember looking around my room at all the baby-care paraphernalia my well-meaning friends and family had gifted me. Lotions, toys, wipes, plastic liners for bottles and assorted items I'd never heard of and had to use my imagination to figure out how to use. The mountain of stuff just seemed so completely unnecessary. Here was little Song Ji - just perfect. She smelled amazing. Her skin was so

soft. And all she seemed to want was to be next to me, skin-to-skin. And that was all I wanted.

At that instant my gut kicked in, what I now recognize as the burgeoning tendrils of mother instinct (which I'm still learning to hone and respect). I decided not to use any of that stuff. I didn't see why I needed the wipes, the lotions, or the soaps. Their own smells were overpoweringly chemical and artificial. The wipes oozed with slimy, soapy stuff. The lotions and soaps had artificial floral scents. I wanted to breast feed and didn't see the point in mixing commercially produced formula to feed her even though there were many who told me the formula would help her sleep better. That kick in the gut was what started me on the journey to making my documentary *My Toxic Baby*.