

KNOCK-UP BOY'S IN TROUBLE

so you **got** your girlfriend pregnant. she's three months **along** at this **point** and you're **getting up the courage** to tell her parents. if you think that's the worst **part**, you're **in for** a rude surprise. and **just in case** you don't know this **already**, don't **get off on the wrong foot with** your parents-in-law. **when** you actually **become** a parent, you'll **be happy to be on good terms with** as many grandparents as possible.

KNOCK-UP BOY /1/ PACIFIER JAM SESSION

now, what does **having** a kid mean for you personally? forget **about having much of a social life**. that is, if you're the father. forget about having a life, if you're the mother. you're **about to spend** the next ten years (**assuming** there is one more child **in the pipeline**) taking care of creatures that **take** your time **for granted** and feel absolutely no need to be grateful for the services they **are being provided with**. yes, you heard right. ten years. **that's what I'm told** by those who **lived to tell** about it, **anyway**.

you're going to spend endless nights groping for the pacifier that your child has spat out and immediately **regretted doing so, resulting in** a high-pitched wail that the little bundle of joy is **capable of keeping up** all night long (you will **occasionally wonder** how long the child could **possibly** keep this up but you will never actually **put it to the test**). after locating the pacifier you will **keep jamming** the damn thing between the baby's toes, **thinking** it's the mouth, **only to be informed** of your error by a continuing ear-piercing screech.

you **may** never quite **get used to** the stench coming from the baby's diapers, **either**. **while** the rest of the baby's body smells wonderful the first few years, **even** very small kids **turn whatever** you have fed them **into** something that looks awful when released and smelling **even** worse. sometimes the smell will **become** so **overwhelming** that you will **have trouble keeping from throwing up** into the smelly pool. **now, there's a mixture I could live without ever seeing**.

KNOCK-UP BOY /2/ BULLETS BEING BITTEN

you will learn that **each time** you have **gotten** the kid **dressed**, which takes about four months **off** your life expectancy, the kid's posture will stiffen for a few seconds, its cheeks will **turn** Soviet-flag red, its eyeballs will **pop** about **halfway** out of their sockets and you know you have just **wasted** a **perfectly good** clothing **effort**. after you have **peeled off** all the many many layers of clothing (this kind of thing **tends to** happen in the winter), **it turns out** it was all just a well-executed **fart**.

suppose you've just built a house or bought a nice apartment that you **can't wait to fix up** stylishly and tastefully. **bite the bullet** and **shelve** those plans. for the next five years **at the very least**, you'll be barricading your stereo with heavy boxes, **putting up** a Chinese wall of encyclopedias in front of your PC case reset button, moving chairs away from climbable areas, cordoning off stairways with **spare** furniture and **constantly checking** that not one cup of tea or coffee is **within** the little beasts' **reach** (**the same goes for** papers, **cell phones** or anything the baby could swallow or **shove** inside its body any other way).

you'll learn to **keep** your keys **out of** the baby's reach, too. this **lesson** is usually **learned the hard way**. it follows long hours **spent trying** to **figure out** why the baby was **seen standing over** the toilet bowl **earlier that day**, beaming. or why you **keep finding** your waste basket's lid open when you know **for sure** that both you and your wife always **remember to** close it after **tossing stuff in**. it's the sound of a garbage truck **pulling away** from your house that **makes you put** two and two together and let out a sound that will **keep your nosey neighbors'** imagination **busy for weeks on end**.

as a parent, **you'd better get used to taking** all these precautions. you will have to, **provided** you're not **particularly anxious to** hear your top-of-the-line amplifier turned **all the way up** with a red hot chili peppers disc in the cd player. yes you will, **unless** you enjoy **mopping** the floor fifteen times a day and **brewing** four pots of coffee to enjoy one cup **in full**. I'm **assuming** that your idea of fun is not **watching your kid fall** down from a shelf high above your head after you **haven't been paying attention** for ten seconds. or maybe you don't **mind returning** to your PC only to **see your son pressing** the reset button with the frequency of a hummingbird's wings. but I think **you do**.

one of the things you'll **grow suspicious of** is the quiet. now, the quiet is normally a good thing, something **to be enjoyed**. **not the one** I'm talking about. not the quiet that you enjoy **tremendously** for a minute **or two** until suddenly you realize what this means and **break out in cold sweat**. a child can only be quiet if **it's about to** do something that will make you google **the internet for** "kill child maximum sentence." is it quiet **around** the house? **chances are**, your cell phone is on the way to a sewage treatment plant. I wouldn't **bet against finding** some coins in your kid's diapers the next morning, **either**. another result **may be** that **from now on** you'll be able to **appreciate** your child's **drawing skills** every time you look at the sofa. one of the classics **has** the parents **wondering** (and **you've all heard this one**) where **on earth** the slice of bread with jam has gone until **the next time they want** to put a video tape in their VCR.

KNOCK-UP BOY /3/ KIDS, GET OLD

it's time someone **came up with** a **device** that would allow the parents to **hook up** their kids **to**, say, a lawn mower. **by noon**, the kid would be exhausted and you could go bowling on your front lawn. now, **there's a** nobel prize we could all agree **on**. **as it is**, the energy flow is a **one-way street**. **for** a creature that can **barely** crawl or **stagger** around, a kid is **enormously** demanding. it doesn't **bother** a kid **in the least** if it has to **cover** the same **route** seventy times a day **with nothing in particular to show for it**. the **journey** is the **destination**, like **they say**. or rather, the parents' desperation is.

there's **no point in trying** to **entertain** the little angels because, **with the possible exception of** plastic dinosaurs that roar **on sight** and can't be stopped or **even** turned down and **whose** battery cover is **fastened** with seventy six **tiny** screws (or other **such** toys that grandparents buy to **casually drop off at your place** before going home to enjoy a quiet dinner), kids **grow tired of** any kind of fun **within** seconds. **apparently**, anything that **fails to make** their parents **see red** **isn't worth playing with**. even destroying stuff **gets old** soon (**unless** the parents become really **good at pretending** that it breaks their heart to see the junk they **purposely** left lying around broken **to pieces**).

it's seven o'clock. you're **worn out**. **so are** the kids, who let you know they're tired **by being whiny** and wearing you out even more. this also **happens to be** the time **for them to be bathed**. now, kids **either** love or loathe bathing. if they hate it, you won't be able to get them into the **tub**. if they love it, **good luck getting** them out. and remember, a **kid** is **entirely** willing to bash its own head in or mutilate itself **beyond repair** just to show you it's **ticked off** about something or other.

I believe **most** parents spend the first few baby years **wondering however** they spent all the free time before the kids **came along** and **wishing there was a way to relive** those happy days knowing what's **ahead**. well, here's a **comforting thought**: there's something **to look forward to**. the time will come when you will **once again** be able to **focus** your mind for more than thirty seconds **at a time**. yes, you will get your life back **one day**. not only that, the annoying sponges **will have turned into** great kids that you'll love spending time with. **that's how** I see it, anyway. if there's a **catch**, please don't tell me now.

in case you were wondering, my wife and I are **currently at** probably the worst **stage** in our baby years*. we have a four-year-old daughter, who **has** successfully **been developing a mind of her own**, and an unstoppable torpedo of a boy who's about to **turn** two (next month) and red (**the second** I turn off the computer). I can't see how **things** could **get any worse**. **but then**, I couldn't imagine how things could get any worse a year ago.

** that's not to say we don't love our kids, obviously. we do love them with all our hearts, they can be a joy beyond words. especially when whisked away by their grandmother for the day*