

Baby-sitting: A Bachelor's Cure For Pride

by Evan Loeffler

After more than two years as an attorney I felt myself quite worldly. I had conducted several jury trials, learned the intricacies of the rules of evidence, and negotiated over huge sums of money and long prison sentences. There was nothing, I felt, that I could not handle if I put my mind to it.

My best friends decided it was time to burst my bubble and did so by subjecting me to a most humbling experience: baby-sitting.

I was asked if I would be willing to spend a Saturday night baby-sitting my friends' infant daughter. As usual, I had not been invited to the party they were to attend, so I had nothing better to do. I smugly accepted, looking forward to an evening of drinking their beer and watching pay-per-view movies on their television.

My charge for the evening was Piper, a nearly one-year-old girl of intolerable cuteness. My duties were to make sure Piper did not hurt herself or burn the house down. I felt myself at a distinct advantage due to my quarter-century of life experience over Piper, and the fact that I was several feet taller and more than 100 pounds heavier than she. Finally, I was a professional attorney. I had mastered the art of creative wheedling ("I'll kiss whatever you want, your Honor"), and prided myself for my ability to think quickly on my feet. Piper, on the other hand, had only recently mastered the art of digesting solid food.

Piper happily cooed and gurgled until the moment her parents closed the door of their home. She then began to shriek like a lost soul. I did not worry, however. Employing my best negotiating tactics I tried to reason with her.

"Why are you crying?" I asked.

Piper indicated she was thirsty by attempting to nurse through my sweater.

"What would you like to drink?" I asked.

Piper wanted mother's milk which presented some logistical difficulties. I pointed out that her mother was out of my jurisdiction, and that technically *all* milk is mother's milk. Piper was not interested in my explanations, however, and proved her point by spitting bottled milk in my face.

Eventually, Piper and I reached a settlement: Piper could cry all she wanted and I could carry her around the house while she did so. Eventually, this turned into a game of sorts. The volume of Piper's crying was inversely proportional to the speed I carried her. I determined that if I could walk at 37 miles per hour, Piper would not cry at all.

Later, Piper decided to play a game called "See Evan run." In this game, Piper would grab whatever was within her reach and attempt to either a) break it, or b) eat it. My job was to keep her from doing either. At this game my performance was not good. How Piper managed to pull down the light fixtures from the ceiling I'll never know. Fortunately, she ate the evidence before her parents got home.

Presently, Piper announced she wanted her diaper changed.

"Well, don't look at me, Piper," I said. "I said I would baby-sit. Your parents never said anything about changing diapers."

Piper's response was to produce an odor strong enough to change my mind. Changing a diaper is not fun, even under the best of circumstances. In my case, having never been saddled with diaper duty, I quickly found myself out of my depth. I peeled off her diaper and was appalled at its contents.

"Oh, Piper, we're going to have to file an environmental impact statement," I said. "When did you eat the television remote control?"

I found holding a wiggling baby in place with one hand while using a squeegee to clean it very challenging. I also learned that putting diapers on a child is not as easy as I thought. Piper encouraged my work by screaming and kicking.

Eventually, the baby cleaned, changed and fed, she fell asleep. I was watching television (I had rinsed off the remote control) with Piper sleeping on my lap when the phone rang.

Not wanting Piper to wake up, I very carefully and gently slid her off my lap onto the couch. She was fast asleep, and I rushed to the other room to answer the phone. I dimly remembered advice never to leave a baby by itself, but I reasoned that a sleeping baby couldn't get into too much trouble.

"Hello?" I said into the receiver.

Thump.

"Gotta go," I said, hanging up and rushing back to the living room.

Piper, who apparently had been feigning sleep in an attempt to get me to let my guard down, had made another attempt at the remote control and fallen off the couch. She was not hurt, but she was not pleased either.

"You incompetent idiot!" she shrieked (well, she shrieked anyway—I admit to some writer's license). "Don't you know you aren't supposed to leave me alone?"

I apologized profusely, but Piper was not to be placated. Huge welts and bruises appeared all over her body. She cried louder and louder, and I swear little horns began to grow out of the top of her head.

Finally, I couldn't take it any more and caved into her demands. Piper wanted to watch videos of *Barney, the Lobotomized Dinosaur*, and so we did. Again and again and again. Piper decided she wanted to pull all the fur off of the family cat, so I held the critter in place while she did just that. Later, Piper's preference was to projectile vomit whatever she ate and watch me clean it up.

At length, Piper's parents returned. Piper's bruises had healed by this time, and she stopped crying the instant the door to the house opened. I noticed, also, as I handed her back to mother, that her horns had been replaced by a halo.

Piper's parents forgave me for the state of the remote control and for the denuded state of their cat, but only after I promised to baby-sit again. They are planning a weekend retreat to the mountains in May. I am preparing for the occasion by looking for a position in another part of the State.