

Part A:

30 Reasons For a Father *Not to Have* a Daughter

(1) She'll decide to be born at the end of January, in Oregon, in the middle of a serious snowstorm, and you'll have to put chains on your car to get to the hospital, foreshadowing the chains she soon will be forging around your life, plus she wants to leap out of the womb so quickly, eager to get going on her malevolent plans, that the obstetrician you and your wife have spent so many months getting to know, and have had heartfelt discussions with about the meaning of the childbirth that you will experiencing together, doesn't have time to get to the hospital because labor is so abbreviated, and you will end up with a complete stranger of an obstetrician who just happened (thank god) to be at the hospital when the Little Wonder took it in her mind to pop out for a visit to this earthly plane.

(2) She will be born round-faced with a shockingly thick head of black hair, leading well-wishers to say, with depressing regularity, "Oh, so you decided to adopt an Eskimo? How kind of you," and undoubtedly to think, with equal regularity, "I didn't know their milkman was an Eskimo."

(3) Proving that the cosmos has a sense of humor, she will be raised by two vegetarians, who all-too-soon will discover that the one food group their daughter absolutely despises, and has to be coaxed beyond belief to even put in her mouth, is...*vegetables*.

(4) The day after you take care of her all Saturday afternoon, while her mother has her nails done or something, and she cries non-stop for four hours, even after you've changed her diaper, fed her, put her in her crib, gotten her out of her crib, read to her, sung to her, walked her, threatened her with eternal hellfire if she doesn't stop her damned wailing, and, finally, shaken her little body in an inexcusable, but uncontrollable, fit of frustration, a newsmagazine will arrive in the mail featuring a story on "Brain damage and baby-shaking," after which you will feel responsible for every low grade on her report card, from kindergarten all through college.

(5) Two scary words: stinky poop. Also: wriggly baby. Plus: safety pin. And: skin piercing. Culminating with: *Want Mommy!*

(6) You will listen to the recorded tale of Bambi and the forest fire that kills her deer parents so many times in a row that you will have serious thoughts of giving up vegetarianism, buying a rifle and lots of ammunition, and slaughtering as many of those damn animals as you can, then turning your sights on whoever first designed the little tape players that are simple enough for small children to use on their own.

(7) You will give up praying for world peace, praying for the poor, praying for enlightenment, and praying for whatever else you used to pray for, because all

your psychic and spiritual energy will be devoted to a single goal: that you or your wife will call a babysitter on Thursday night and hear the blessed words, “Yes, I’m free tomorrow.”

(8) Once she learns how to wrap presents, kind of, she will take your wedding ring, tell you that she wants to give you a gift, disappear into her room with a small box and wrapping paper, and you will never see your ring again, no matter how hard you look.

(9) When you ask her what she wants to play before she goes to sleep, she will say “cars,” at which point your heart will leap into your chest, because you’ve had a tough day at work, and “cars” requires so much concentration and attention to detail, you’d rather jump up and go right back to work, because then your mind could rest (since you are a state government worker), but you smile and say, “sure,” and go about drawing the streets on the blackboard, and adding houses, stores, parks, schools, stores, and so much else, then populating the blackboard town with figures of little people, each of whom has a story, and relationships with the other people, all of which you have to make up afresh every time you play “cars,” and god help you if your oh-so-tired brain gets the storyline wrong along the way, because your sweet little girl will instantly pout and scream, “No, Dad! Sweetums’ best friend, other than Poopface, is *not* Wrinkletoes; it is Farkle—don’t you remember!!??”, and of course you don’t, because all you want to do is latch onto a plot device that will kill off all the little imaginary bastards at once in some horrendous blackboard gas main explosion, so you can get your daughter off to bed, and watch some TV by yourself.

(10) You will rue the day you ever thought up the bedtime entertainment of “Bisneyland,” especially when a friend of hers spends the night, and you have to twirl *two* girls around in a blanket, emulating as best you can rides made out of actual machinery at the real Disneyland, which produce considerably more power than your aching arms can, not to mention the prospect of (further) daughterly brain damage is ever-present in your mind as you spin them around in the blanket in the pitch dark, now emulating the Haunted House, hoping you are remembering where the bedposts and sharp cabinet edges are.

(11) You will learn more about dog economics that you ever wanted to know when cocker spaniel puppy A is bought through an ad in the newspaper, and daughter-who-wanted-puppy-A promises with all her heart to feed it, and brush it, and walk it every single day, yet doesn’t, for even a single day, and you quickly put an ad in the newspaper offering to sell the cocker spaniel puppy, at which point the market value of cocker spaniel puppies immediately plummets from hundreds of dollars to absolutely zero, at which point you give the freakin’ thing away, and she gets a hamster (which is another story).

(12) No matter what kind of restaurant you are in, after reading the entire menu to her, she will say, “I just want plain spaghetti, with butter” (try explaining this request to your Chinese waiter).

(13) Forget about ever winning another game of Monopoly, since an instant after she lands on the Boardwalk property that you have taken such pains and so much time to populate with hotels, and she glances at the pitiful amount of money she has remaining, the board will be overturned, pieces scattering everywhere, and she will scream, “I quit! It’s a *tie!*”

(14) “Why, oh why,” you keep asking yourself, “didn’t I invest in Kraft Macaroni and Cheese stock the moment she was born, knowing what I do now?”

(15) The ten-thousandth time she asks, “Why didn’t you and Mommy have any other children?,” and you respond, with a sickly sweet smile, “Because, honey, we knew something perfect when we saw it,” you will have to bite your lip so hard it bleeds to stop yourself from blurting out, “Because, sweetie pie, when you hit yourself on the thumb with a hammer, and it really hurts, you don’t want to do it *twice.*”

(16) Whereas you used to cruise around town peacefully listening to New Age music on the radio, now, since she doesn’t have a drivers license yet, but has lots of places she needs to go with her best friend, your ears are subjected to the not-so-pleasant backseat sound of incessant girl-giggling and locutions in a language that bears some resemblance to English, but obviously isn’t, which makes you wonder if somehow you have given birth to an alien who, after 15 years of reconnoitering, has linked up with one of her own kind in order to plan the next phase of their plot to rule Earth, which naturally can’t be discussed in any language known to this planet, so it is cleverly disguised as Teenage-ese, impenetrable to adult ears, whether they belong to an FBI agent or just a plain old befuddled father.

(17) After going out of town for a few days, and leaving clear instructions, “No parties!”, you will be struck by the number of beer caps that, amazingly, must have fallen out of the sky and landed around all of the bushes by your backyard deck, lifted into the air, you surmise, by some sort of tornado striking a beer factory and miraculously depositing the caps in your back yard, which is, at least, the story your daughter tells you, and naturally you believe her, being the gullible guy you are, until a small shred of doubt begins to form after you find, tossed in the high grass at the end of your driveway, a hand-lettered piece of cardboard on a stake which reads, “Party **HERE** tonight!”

(18) She will manage to graduate from high school, and be admitted to a university, without being able to perform such fundamental activities of daily living such as fixing her own breakfast, putting dishes in the dishwasher, making her bed, or picking clothes up off her floor, leading you to realize, way too late, that you could have adopted a “mentally challenged” child who actually *could* have learned these things, and your life would have been a heck of a lot easier.

(19) After you pay taxes in Oregon for 18 years, playing a large part in maintaining the high quality of the state’s institutions of higher learning, she will decide to go to the University of Arizona, and you will be writing out-of-state tuition checks for five years.

(20) During her college years, every friend you run into will also have a child in college who is majoring in a field such as astrophysics, pre-med, renaissance art, or ancient Greek, while you respond to their query, “And what is *your* daughter majoring in?” with a mumbled “fathwn markendice” and start to walk away, until they run up and say they couldn’t understand you, at which point you snap and scream, “Fashion Merchandising, OK! Fashion Merchandising! Got a problem with that, asshole?!”, which eventually cuts down on the number of questions from friends about this subject, because now you don’t have any friends.

(21) Needing a car in college, or, at least, believing she needs a car, she will ask your fatherly advice as to which sort of used vehicle to get, and after you spend many hours researching Consumer Reports and the Kelly Blue Book, plus countless car magazine reviews, she will completely ignore you and buy an old Merkur XR4 ti, or whatever the hell it is called, which you can’t exactly recall because you never see these pieces of crap driving around on the street, only in automobile museums, mostly because you can’t find parts for a car that only 16 people bought in this country at the height of its popularity, which was aeons ago.

(22) You find yourself thinking of forming a “Friends of Infanticide” club when, a few months later, you get a call from college: “Dad, my Merkur needs work and the mechanic says he can’t find the parts; could you loan me money so I can get a Toyota Tercel?”, which happens to be the exact car you recommended before.

(23) After tens of thousands of tuition dollars have flowed from Oregon to Arizona, she finally phones home from college with the words you’ve been waiting for, “Dad, I got an award!”, which makes your eyes well up with tears of pride, until they change to tears of another sort when she continues, “My sorority sisters gave it to me at our senior ceremony: BIGGEST PARTY-ER!”

(24) As she grows older, you have to keep changing your criteria for looking at women with lust in your heart: “OK, not anybody younger than my daughter.”... “Nah, make that nobody more than five years younger than my daughter.”... “Five years? Let’s say ten years.” And eventually, you anticipate, it will all switch a generation. “OK, not anybody younger than my granddaughter...”

(25) Your mailbox will be filled to overflowing with letters from the CEOs of credit card companies, thanking you from the depth of their heart for having a daughter who contributes so much to their bottom line, given that charging 18% interest when the fed funds rate is 2%, or whatever, isn’t a bad way of making a living.

(26) After she finally graduates from college, and finds a well-paying job, making her self-supporting for the first time in your life, leading you to finally start shopping in aisles named other than “Beans and Rice” at the supermarket, she will decide to quit her job, pack up her cat and belongings in a U-Haul, and move to Los Angeles without having a clue about what she will do there, other than get a tan and look good (which is, you realize, the most common profession

in southern California, but somehow you expected more from your one and only daughter).

(27) You won't be able to ever buy dark glasses again, for you made the mistake of glancing at an Oliver Peoples wholesale/retail invoice lying on the floor of the car after she picked you up at the airport, after having found a job, and you realize that those \$129 glasses sitting on your face must have cost the company that made them, at most, 49 cents, though you must remember that the situation is completely different with the product your daughter is foisting, since those glasses sell for \$300 (and also cost 49 cents to make).

(28) The image will never be erased from your mind, no matter how much psychotherapy you undergo, but, heck, it was your fault, asking the question, "So how did you and your husband-to-be get together?", and hearing the story of how she and he met in Dallas, but they each had boyfriends/girlfriends, blah, blah, blah, until they ran into each other in Los Angeles again, and still had other boyfriends/girlfriends, blah, blah, blah, and then they each didn't have anyone, so they would go out to dinner and a movie just for something to do, until that night they were lying on the bed in her apartment, watching a rental movie and eating popcorn, and, she says, "We looked at each other, and we were thinking, 'Hey, instead of being just friends, maybe we could be...um, so then we, um...'", and you scream, "OK, OK, I get the picture!"

(29) You'll get a phone call from her fiancée, amazingly enough telling you that he has honorable intentions toward your daughter, at least now that they gotten way past the movie and popcorn bit, and he wants to marry her, and even though he isn't exactly asking your permission, at least the whole conversation is wonderfully traditional and sort of old-fashioned, but still, you're a New Age sort of guy, having had a simple wedding (all right, *weddings*) yourself, once by a crazed Greek yoga teacher, and once by a Unity minister, so it is music to your ears, and pocketbook, to hear him say, "Yeah, we want to keep the wedding simple, probably just have a BBQ on the beach the night before, and just a few friends and family at the wedding the next day," so later you wonder what the hell happened, sitting there in a crowded Beverly Hills restaurant, unable to enjoy your dinner because you know how ridiculously much each bite is costing, but deep down you do understand what happened: it was *her*.

(30) Four days before her 30th birthday, she will call you and say that she is worried, because she hasn't gotten very many cards and presents, this from a girl who has *never* sent a birthday card to her father so it is received on or before his actual birthday, except perhaps for that memorable year when he was so excited to see the Federal Express truck pulling up with a envelope containing a hastily scrawled note, "Happy Birthday, Dad; P.S. send some money quick, I'm overdrawn again."

Part B:

30 Reasons For a Father *to Have* a Daughter

See above.

Celeste, I love you: truly, deeply, fatherly. Happy 30th. It's great to have a daughter that you can send something like this too. Don't spend the rest of the day crying, except with joy. All that I thought of has, with time, become a happy memory (with a few exceptions, such as the Merkur).

Have a great day, and a great life, you and Patrick both. Congratulations on your new job, Patrick. Did I tell you I have this idea for a screenplay? Let's do lunch sometime. Looking forward to seeing you this summer, if not before.

Love,

Dad/Father/Brian/Friend/Fellow soul/Whoever I am