
Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective

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For Julie

Cambodian Jungle

"Do you even want to have a baby?"

My friend Newt called me at work one day not long after the first IVF transfer had failed. Newt had made it a habit to call me periodically at work so that I would hear the crack of our receptionist buzzing over the intercom that there was a "Newt" for me on Line X. He never called for the purpose of discussing fertility concerns, and in fact, Catawampus: The Fertility

Process from a Man's Perspective Newt was not aware, as far as I knew, of what IVF was, or Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective that we had recently undergone a transfer, or that we had undergone any fertility treatments whatsoever. Instead, he appeared to enjoy periodic work phone conversations with an old high school friend.

When he called this time around March 2012, I was finally looking to tell someone something—to talk to someone other than my wife—and thus, when he asked how things were going, I told him honestly.

“You know, Newt, not so great.”

I work in an old, stone house on West End Avenue in Nashville. Apparently, in the eighteenth-hundreds, stately homes like this with multiple chimneys, drawing rooms, and dark wood covering all available surfaces, used Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective to line this primary thoroughfare leading up from downtown and the Cumberland River west into the suburbs. Now our building is sandwiched between a Pizza Hut Express on one side and what was a Mrs. Winner's, Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective then a Church's Chicken, then a shuttered Church's Chicken, and now an AT&T store on the other.

About twenty years ago, before my law firm moved in, an architecture firm bought the house, left the original structure essentially intact, and built an extension of office space on the back. The extension was cutting-edge and modern for its time: spiral staircases, exposed pipes, skylights, and an entire wall of windows facing west. My office is on the lowest floor, below street level, and my view out my office door through this window Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective wall is an alley and, beyond that, the faded, beige-yellow brick of Pizza Hut. The pizza employees periodically drag out various cooking utensils and trays and spray them down with a hose in the alley. At other times, a crazy man may shuffle through.

Despite the limits of this view, I tend to avoid shutting my office door if at all possible, because otherwise, I might feel like I'm buried underground with only piles of paper to keep me company. But, on this particular occasion, I got up and sealed myself in.

I told Newt about our experience through the fertility process thus far, and in particular, the feeling of living in constant, all-consuming frustration—a frustration that had recently bottomed out, with a whimper, after a failed IVF transfer in Dallas.

In the midst of my extended confession, he interrupted, “I don't know if this is even an appropriate question at this point, Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective but, I mean, do you even want to have a baby?”

I laughed and said that conversation—or at least, that particular topic—was half-heartedly raised (by me) and quickly dropped long, long ago. So long ago, in fact, that remembering back to the time where *that* was a concern of mine seemed about as removed from the present as a horse-drawn carriage might, clopping through the alley outside my office, while blue Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective chimney smoke silently billowed overhead.

Did I even want to have a baby? Prior to any and all trying and failing? Prior Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective to the fertility treatments? I have no idea. Sure. Always thought I would. I probably thought it was going to be a major change that I didn't quite want to delve into just yet. I probably thought that having a life centered around baby showers and baby photos and love for babies was beneath me. I probably thought babies and children, in general, were a bit more obnoxious than they were cute. But now, I didn't care whether I "wanted to" then or not. What I did know was that I wanted, desperately wanted, and ached for whatever we were currently Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective doing to be successful and complete and over.

My wife, Julie, however, was different. She said then and she'd say confidently now, without hesitation, that she had always dreamed of being a mother. That it was always of primary importance. I had known this, of course, but Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective I also knew that there were other Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective factors to consider.

Julie and I both graduated from the University of Virginia in 2003. We spent the next two years or so in Washington, D.C. She worked for a trade association. I bombed job interviews.^[1] I eventually got a glorified administrative position at a local D.C. government agency. I spent the first six months reading the *Washington Post* at work and lamenting the state of my professional existence and the last six Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective months working on a movie with my old high school friend Charlie.

After shooting the movie—a thirty-two minute short film—in early 2005, Julie and I moved to New York City. She got a job as Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective a buyer for a major women's clothing retailer. I worked Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective with Charlie to finish up the movie Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective and found part-time work watching television at a market research company. Later, I was a paralegal. Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective The movie ran its course.^[2] Eventually, Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective a switch flipped in my professional decision-making and I decided to go to law school. Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective In 2007 Julie and I moved from New York City, got married in Charlottesville, and, after Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective the honeymoon, drove to Nashville, my hometown. I started law school the next day at Vanderbilt. Julie found work about three months later as a buyer for a major men's shoe retailer, based in Nashville.

Baby discussions certainly arose during the three years of law school, but Julie didn't push it. It was theoretically not the right time. At first, the topic was wildly alien to me. But, then, like anything else, it began to make more sense—or else, all of my rational excuses ceased to be rational—and, at some point, it was decided: Let's wait until after law school. Then everything would be ready.

Therefore, we did not actively start Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective trying to get pregnant Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective until after I graduated from law school and, actually, until after the Tennessee bar exam in July

2010. That we delayed “trying” not only until law school was over but until *the bar exam* was over three months later seems laughable to me now. I don’t know if I anticipated a baby spontaneously emerging and taking a few glances around the room after sweet, unprotected love-making or that unprotected sex would perhaps distract me from the task of memorizing flashcards of legal concepts, but back then, it seemed like another conversation—a different conversation—that I couldn’t quite handle until I had completed the job at hand.

We were both twenty-nine at the time, and so perhaps this concept should not have been as foreign to me as it was, but the peer-group baby boom had not yet begun. Thus, my apparent inability to contemplate two differing aspects of life that might require my attention, simultaneously, had not been exposed just yet as short-sighted.

Julie ceased taking birth control pills one year before we started “trying.” I remember her doing that and telling me that she was doing so, but even then, I did not understand why. That would just be the first of many things I did not fully intuit during this process. Instead, it was simply understood through the vibrant and brimming-with-information, female grapevine that the birth control pill should be discontinued far before actually attempting a pregnancy. So, sure, that’s what we did.

At some point I heard the phrase “pulling the goalie” used as a metaphor for ceasing all birth control. But it was only after we were struggling, deep and confused along the fertility trail, that this phrase sprung up and seemed Catawampus: *The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective* to me, like many other things at the time, highly inaccurate. I knew this particular metaphor was related to hockey, but in my mind, I always associated it with soccer. And so I thought pulling the goalie was like pulling the keeper and I was standing there waiting on an empty-net penalty kick, where probably ninety-six times out of a hundred I could manage to knock it in. Of course, I was mistaken. Instead, in the midst of our experience, it appeared to me that for this analogy to be remotely accurate I would need to be on ice, on skates for the first time since fifth grade, standing behind my own goal, maybe with a soggy mop instead of a stick.

And I wondered: Why did we even have birth control pills? Why had we been bothering with condoms every time we had face-melting sex if it was so difficult to have success when we were in there, with no restraints, letting loose to our hearts’ content? In short, if I had known it was going to be this hard, I would have approached this entire process far, far differently. We wouldn’t have waited this bloody long!

But an arbitrary line had been drawn: law school, bar exam, then sure, let’s give it a shot. Of course, after the bar exam, with a never-ending, legal career on the immediate horizon, we planned a trip to Asia. And when taking a trip to Asia, certain government agencies recommend taking drugs for malaria, yellow fever, Japanese donkey flu, and the like. Now, when we were finally set to begin, we had a medical professional telling us that my wife shouldn’t be taking this medicine if she was pregnant or trying to get pregnant.

Julie was, understandably, more than ready to get the whole process started. Right on the cusp of actually making progress, she did not want to be told that she needed to hold off *Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective* a little bit longer *Catawampus*:

The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective while we were on a fourteen-day trip overseas and then, oh yeah, for a couple of weeks after we returned Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective while the medicine gradually trickled out Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective of her body. Before we had heard this news, we had been making jokes about the mystery and intrigue of starting to “try” in Asia—a baby conceived in Kuala Lumpur! Abdul Burkhalter! So upon hearing this, she was upset.

I had doubts that this was that pivotal of a predicament. At the same time, I understood the frustration. And likewise, I understood that my uninformed opinion that it was more than likely not a problem—the first of many times where Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective I was asked for an uninformed medical opinion (and gave one), that fourteen days was not that terribly long of a time, and that it was highly unlikely that anything would occur in that fourteen days—there I Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective actually was Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective correct—did not salve her angst. She called her uncle, a doctor in Georgia, to get his advice. And before I knew it, in another sign of things to come, the entire enterprise became a semi-public one.

This is Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective true more for women than men, but at least in our particular social circles, there seems to be a certain point in time after which women simply know that another woman is having an issue. At some particular stage, there is either a reason or a problem. Once it became readily apparent that my wife and I not only had a problem but had passed a fair number of trail markers on the unkempt, fertility trail and were rapidly, blindly, and hysterically forging deeper, Julie became, whether she wanted to or not, a resource for others. Ask Julie; she's done it all!

For me, at the beginning and through many months of this process, I was evasive and gave friends vague statements like, well, my wife is having surgery that day, so no, we can't go to dinner. It's no big deal though. It's casual surgery. I swear, it's fine. After extended darker times, though, I found telling a male friend like Newt worthwhile to, at the very least, provide me with some basic perspective. I needed a reminder of normalcy that can be lacking when you're so deep on the fertility trail that you're incapable of waking up to what are typical concerns of the world like, say, “Hey, man, do you even want to have a baby?”

Eventually, the call ended. I opened the door to my office to let a sense of the outside seep back in and returned to work.

I hung up the phone that day feeling a measure of relief. Nothing had changed, of course. We were still as clueless and wanting as before, and our journey through the fertility process was destined to continue. But I felt then, as I do now, that details of our experience needed to be remembered and that the story needed to be told to someone.

In the end, Julie's uncle said that the antimalarial medicine should not be a major concern, but if we were alarmed, she might just want to wait a little while, a week or so, or alternatively, she could stop taking the medicine earlier so that it would be out of her system sooner rather than later. I don't know if prematurely ceasing the antimalarial medicine was on her mind when we biked through the Cambodian jungle led by a fifteen-year-old Cambodian boy to crumbling

stone temples, abandoned by ancient kings first and, more recently, by tourists, as these Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective particular sights were impressively far off a tourist-trod path of any sort, with rain persistently coming down, and a steadily rising river by our side Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective without concern for us in our twelve-cent ponchos. In the end, I imagine she was balancing those concerns—malaria, drowning in a Cambodian jungle, running over a landmine—along with any number of others, while still gliding along with a grin on her face.

Catawampus The Fertility Process From Catawampus: The Fertility Process from a Man's Perspective A Man S Perspective

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