

For Sale: Baby Shoes, Never Worn

The world is indeed a complication of joys and sorrows, a continuous play made up of tragedy and comedy, and even in every day life, items and experience, small and unusual to us, perhaps, is woven a little story of the heart.

Last Saturday an ad appeared in a local paper which read: "Baby's hand made trousseau and baby's bed for sale. Never been used." The address was on East Mission Street.

That perhaps meant little to the casual reader, yet to the mother who had spent hours and days planning the beautiful things for her tiny baby, it means a keen sorrow and disappointment.

She had, perhaps, dreamed of the time when her little one should be grown up and could, with a source of pride, look back upon its babyhood days and display the handiwork of its mother in the first baby clothes worn and the first trundle bed it had slept in when it first opened its eyes upon the beauties of the world.

But the hand of fate had been unkind and took from the devoted parents the little one which was destined to be the sunshine and light of their life. And the mother, in a desire to forget her sorrow by parting with anything that reminded her of the little one, advertised the garments at a sacrifice.

Take 1000 CP back with you to this personal tragedy on May 16, 1910.

Backgrounds

Drop-in: A wanderer from afar, or perhaps another face in the crowd? The uncaring cruelty of the universe has not yet left its mark upon you, for you hail from beyond its reach. Yet the world is a harsh teacher, and perhaps one day you too will know of joy and loss.

Grieving Parent: The world has ended for you. The child you nurtured in your womb or held in your arms is gone to you now, lost, vanished from your life in mysterious circumstances. Your financial status is no longer of any import, though presumably it was stable enough to consider rearing a child in the first place. Now all is as unto ash and dust in your mouth.

Lost Little One: You were cherished once. Loved. And then one day, you were gone. Were you kidnapped, little one? Or did you come into this world breathless, denied even the chance to see it with your own eyes? Whichever is the case, death is not a loss condition for this particular jump should you have endured it for this particular background. You are separated from your parents by a great gulf of distance one way or another, and that is enough.

Journalist: Stop the presses! A terrible event has occurred, very terrible, but there's no time to lose! You're not a cruel man, not a bad man not like those reprobates in the funny pictures but you've got a job to do dammit! If you've gotta put a little sensationalist spin on a woman's tragedy to put food on the table, why that's just what you gotta do to stay afloat in this economy dangit! It's just business, and always has been!

Perks

Perks are discounted by 50% for their respective backgrounds. 100 CP perks become free.

Drop-In

Baby Driver (100 CP): It is a terrible world, a cold world, but tears won't fix it. You have enough emotional maturity to maintain a stiff upper lip in the face of impersonal tragedy as long as it doesn't happen to you or anyone you care about. This is less effective the greater the tragedy. A million missing babies is more hurtful than one.

Babysitter (200 CP): Perhaps you'll be the one to make sure this terrible event never happens again. You are very good at taking care of babies, and have a higher than average knack for keen observation of the position and health of any babies you are actively tending to at any given time. If people gave awards for good nannies, you'd earn one fairly easily if you put your mind to it.

Baby Cobbler (400 CP): All those baby shoes come from somewhere, and you're just the guy. You're very good at making baby shoes both comfy and aesthetic. If there's any babies left out there, they'd all look very smart in your shoes, and probably like the feel of them around their footsie wootsies. Someone with their baby still present would very much appreciate your talents.

Friend to all Babies (600 CP): You are one with the babies, and the babies are one with you. You are now and forevermore considered the dear friend of all babies. Babies will stop crying at your behest, and do their best to aid you in your endeavours should you request it. Babies are generally not very clever or mobile but they will do their best. Just remember that friendship is a two-way street and that deliberately hurting babies risks spreading bad rumours of you down the baby grapevine while going out of your way to help babies improves your reputation even further.

Then again, babies aren't very clever or good at talking to each other.

Grieving Parent

Small Smile (100 CP): You can still picture the smile on your little one's face. The joyous days never spent together, the promise of a new life in your household. The memory of your loved ones will always seem fresh and wondrous to you, and your feelings for them will never diminish. But perhaps such intimacy can become a curse over time.

Stalwart Spouse (200 CP): Ah, your husband/wife. Your rock. Your tower of strength. Your loved ones are now more emotionally resilient when faced with dire events in your personal life. One baby gone from you forever won't tear

you apart, but drive them to keep you closer to cling to whatever happiness you have left together.

Serene Seller (400 CP): There's no point crying over spilt milk, and no point crying over spilt babies either. All the tears in the world won't put the money you lavished on your little one back in your pocket, so it's a damn good thing you've got a knack for selling your things. The more personal they are to you the better you are at turning a handy profit for them by spinning a good sob story. Don't get me wrong, you're not going to sell those unused baby shoes for a small fortune, but you're definitely getting more than fair value for them.

Second Son/Daughter (600 CP): Well, what's left to do now? Languish into old age? No. You'll try again, and get it right this time dammit. This perk guarantees that the first time you enter a jump to try to have/make a child, you will definitely succeed at it. The pregnancy will be as painless and smooth as possible. The sex WILL feel great, even the in vitro fertilisation or whatever will if you're doing that for some reason. If for any other reason you somehow have an effect that already guarantees childbirth, you will have one extra child on top of that.

Lost Little One

Peekaboo! (100 CP): What's that mysterious big person standing over your crib? It's papa! And THAT one's mama! Unlike many babies you're very good at recognising faces and associating them with names. You're unlikely to forget either in life. You're also very good at playing peekaboo.

Cutie! (200 CP): Aww, look at you! You're extremely cute, even by baby standards! You're so cute that everyone looks at you just like your mother does when she had you!

Walkies! (400 CP): Most babies don't actually do all that much walking in their shoes, but you're different. You have the basic ability to walk. If you can already walk, you're a talented runner/parkour enthusiast/whatever but let's be honest this perk is made to let the baby background actually use those damn shoes it's getting in the items section STOP OVERTHINKING IT

Happy Family (600 CP): In this world, is the destiny of mankind controlled by some transcendental entity or law? Is it like the hand of God hovering above? At least it is true that man has no control, even over his own will. Man takes up the sword in order to shield the small wound in his heart sustained in a far-off time beyond remembrance. Man wields the sword so that he may die smiling in some far-off time beyond perception.

You reject that reality, and substitute your own.

Once every jump, if you are dead or lost from your loved ones you may simply choose not to be. You wake up in your own home somewhere safe and easy to find.

Journalist

Professionally Trained Journo (100 CP): You know how to smoke cigars, scribble in notebooks, heckle celebs and all the other scummy things journalists have to do to make a living. Your kind are left-wing leaning parasites out to destroy this country or righteous crusaders of truth, justice and the American Way depending on who gets to write the article first. Better hope it's you.

Profitable Sadness (200 CP): You're very good at writing tragedies in a way that sticks in the memory and catches the eye. Your purple prose can turn the most mundane calamity into a front page sensation. "Lo, the anger of God as His righteous wrath descended on one Tommy Wilkins' thumb, the hammer held in his hand a force of judgement from on high!"

Actual News (400 CP): Wouldn't it be nice if it wasn't such a slow day that you have to write about lost babies of all things? This perk ensures that you'll always encounter interesting things to report on that aren't lost baby shoes. Good things, uplifting things generally. But always interesting things.

"Am I getting a raise for this story about dead babies, boss?" (600 CP): Fine. Yes Jenkins, you are. Once every jump you can demand a raise and definitely get it-as long as the reasons for justifying said, however tenuous, relate to dead or missing babies. The raise must be within the norm for whatever your occupation is, other than that the sky's the limit.

This perk does not prevent you from losing the respect of everyone in your office.

Items

Items are discounted by 50% for their respective backgrounds. 100 CP items become free.

Drop-In

Some Spare Change (100 CP): It seems you've got some dollars stashed away in your coat pockets. Just enough to buy a pair of baby shoes, in fact. Not sure why you'd want to, but it's still extra money and you can always spend it on something else. It's your chain, Anon.

Ernest Hemmingway Ticket (200 CP): It's not actually clear if Ernest Hemmingway actually said the quote that inspired this jump. Why not ask him yourself? Once every jump, you can rip this ticket in half to instantly summon Ernest Hemmingway in the prime of his career to ask him whether or not he ever said that quote. And yes, if you use it in this jump that means you can potentially cause a time paradox by causing two Ernest Hemmingways to coexist.

There is no return ticket. You have unleashed Ernest Hemmingway on whatever world you are in for the sake of satiating your curiosity, you damn fool.

Avid Reader (400 CP): You've subscribed to a daily newspaper in the style of the 1920s. It often depicts tragedies of a personal nature occurring near where you live. Not all of them will be about missing babies. If you somehow end up in a setting without personal tragedies you'll see none of course, just decent journalism about ongoing events and maybe the odd cartoon-as well as a small sense of relief.

Baby Products Factory (600 CP): You are now the legal owner of a company that makes all kinds of baby products. This includes shoes. If you like, it can have once been a family business owned by you long since upscaled, and have your name and face as marketing for it. Unlike the Colonel from KFC, the baby products are always at least as good as they would be if you had made them. Nobody will substitute *your* secret recipe for baby food to cut costs and corners.

Grieving Parent

Baby Shoes, Never Used (100 CP): It still hurts.

Baby Hat, Pants, Coat, Gloves, Socks and Crib, Never Used (200 CP): You don't like to think about those either. They're so well-made. They could probably sell for quite a bit BUT IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY DAMMIT, WHY WOULD YOU EVEN TALK ABOUT MONEY AT A TIME LIKE THIS

A Large Supply of Varied, Good Quality Alcohol Restocked By Friendly Anti-Prohibitionists Every Week (400 CP): Your best friend.

Life Savings (600 CP): Seems you have more of them than some households have in this economy. In fact, it's fair to say you have a small fortune capable of easily affording a lavish mansion with money to spare. That's more than a lot of households can say, even those with living babies. Hold on to those savings tight, there's a pretty nasty financial crash coming at the tail end of your stay here. It's hard to believe, but as time goes on baby shoes will be the least of your worries.

Lost Little One

Bottle of Milk (100 CP): Is baby hungry? Does baby want some num-nums? Here's your num-nums baby! Mmm! Nice and warm milkies in your tummy!

Plush Animal (200 CP): This plush toy of your preferred design is always a source of comfort and reassurance in a lonesome and brutal world. Even if you are a dead baby and therefore unable to hug it, starting the jump collapsed with it on you or you on it will be a source of happiness for you.

Lifetime Supply of Diapers (400 CP): This is going to be progressively less useful as you get older unless you're...into *that* or ever suffer some kind of critical incontinence-related problem. But for now? It's almost as great a source of relief to your parents as knowing you are safe and sound would be.

As a baby, your parents will own the diapers in this and future jumps since they're the ones who can actually put them on you. Unless for some reason you want to retain full ownership of your diapers. As a baby. A small, helpless baby.

GPS Tracking Ribbon (600 CP): This piece of advanced technology is attached to a beautiful blue ribbon tied to your arm. It lets your parents know where you are at all times through a small monitor it's connected to; they will never question it's advanced origins, and assume that America is using them to test

anti-Commie technology or something else period appropriate. If you are a dead baby, this will bring them closure. If you are a live baby, this will bring them hope.

Journalist

Notepad (100 CP): Wait, seriously? You call yourself a journalist and you need me to tell you what THIS is!? Get out! And don't come back without a hot scoop!

Office Cubicle (200 CP): One office cubicle wherever you work is always yours and yours alone. All legal checks will ascertain this. You own this tiny piece of company property, no matter how many times stuff is reshuffled around the office. It's your cubicle. Yours, and no one else's.

Unfinished Bestseller (400 CP): You may not be Ernest Hemmingway, but your name's going to end up in the same circles with this baby (figurative)! Every jump, you'll start with an unpublished manuscript containing a story of the type you'd like to write if you had the time, talent and motivation which in overall quality is on par with Hemmingway's most celebrated works. Careful not to release anything too provocative or political in ye olde timey 1920s.

Bullpen (600 CP): You're now in charge of an entire news outlet on par with the ones that published the text which inspired this jump! You've got a bunch of journalists, power & utilities paid off for several years, the works! Congratulations! Try to find stories about things other than missing babies, okay? Watch out, incoming financial crisis!

Drawbacks

Baby Financial Crisis (+100 CP): What is this world coming to? Products related to babies are suddenly much pricier! Who's buying all the baby products? Are the fat cats and wealthy uptown snobs lording their tragedy-free, whimsical lives over you plebians? Outrage! DAMN YOU, INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION!

Too Jaded For Clickbait (+100 CP): You're so sick of the sensationalist spiel by the news that you just can't feel anything about the latest dead baby. You're quite vocal about it too. Be prepared to get some dirty looks, and to feel the urge to hit back about your callous attitude to babies that for all you know aren't even dead.

Infertile (+100 CP): The good news is you're definitely not going to lose your baby in this jump unless you take the drawback after this one. The bad news is that's because you'll never have the chance. Uh, unless you adopt? That's still an option I guess. But I mean, it's not really *your* baby.

Have You Seen My Baby? (+200 CP): You keep losing your baby. You don't mean to, but the little tyke is just so easy to misplace. And yet without constant vigilance from you or another, somehow it just keeps finding a way to wonder off or get misplaced or otherwise wind up somewhere other than where you remembered. If your baby survives this jump you may take it with you as a companion.

Heart of Glass (+200 CP): You just can't take it anymore. Every hurt in life has left a crack in your heart that won't heal for your stay, and the weight of the world has pinned you to rock bottom. Everything sucks. Everything gets worse. You've got clinical depression, and good god stay away from what passes for asylums in this era. Just stay at home and drink or something like a normal person.

Ernest Hemmingway's Next Big Hunt (+200 CP): For reasons beyond your ken, Ernest Hemmingway in the prime of his health has dedicated himself to killing you. He has an elephant gun, enough ammo to devastate the African wilderness and any other weapons he could plausibly have. Good fucking luck, you poor soul.

Another Tragedy (+300 CP): Something else about as bad as losing your baby and needing to sell its clothes happens to you immediately upon entering the

jump. It can be summed up with in a snappy quote too. Life just sucks like that sometimes.

The Great Depression (+300 CP): Instead of the early 20s, you start the jump right as the Great Depression happens. Expect your dead baby/your dead self to be joined by many, many others as livelihood collapse around you.

But I Don't Care About Dead Babies (+300 CP): There's a lot of debate about what a sociopath actually is in the psychiatric community, but when all's said and done you're one of the biggest stereotypes of sociopathy there is. And you're not the movie kind of sociopath with a witty but charismatic attitude. You're the kind of raving, Begby-like schizo contrarian who upon being told it's rude to not mourn for a baby would set out to kill a baby just to make a point.

As if targeted for some kind of karmic payback in going against the narrative premises of this jump, you will find that you can NEVER win a fight against a baby. Whenever you try to hurt a baby that baby will KICK your FUCKING ass no matter what powers or protections you have. Nobody will find this strange. Everyone will laugh at you, especially the baby. The good news is, not all babies are innately murderous. The bad news is, not all babies are clever enough to know how to pull their punches.

Mommy Milkies (+300 CP, Drop-In, Grieving Parent or Journalist only): Babies are loveable and innocent, but they're not good. They're entirely self-centred, as they have to be in order to survive. Whether as a coping mechanism or just...because you have been reverted to the emotional control and intellectual maturity of a baby. You want mommy, you want milk, you want to be held, you want to be comforted. And if other people don't do all these things immediately, you will ruin their lives! That's not goodness, that's narcissism!

The Final Destination (Of Your Baby) (+300 CP, Lost Little One only, OR must take Have You Seen My Baby?): I don't know how, but it seems you've pissed off the abstract personification of death itself. If you own a baby everything from bad dogs to freak falling book accidents to thunderstrikes seems to keep trying to endanger your baby's life. Anything possible and not truly implausible will happen to end you/your baby's life; thunderstrikes won't be an issue unless you're out in a storm, for example.

If you're a living baby well, it was nice knowing you. And if you're a dead baby then first of all death gets fucking pissed about you getting free CP, and takes out it's rage not only by defiling your body with similar coincidences but sends an indiscriminate disaster in your parents' general direction too.

The Punchline (+300 CP, Lost Little One only): Life is short, brutal and unfair. You are, in fact, definitely dead. I'm sorry.

Go home

Stay

Continue

Notes

Heart of Flint and Small Smile don't cancel each other out. You get the happy vibes but also deal with the loss better.

Yes, it is possible for three Ernest Hemingways to coexist in the same jump with the right drawback/item taken.