

BABY GANGS



OF ATHENS

DAVID BRENNAN

*Who knew that babies too young to walk could take part in gang activities? In the *Baby Gangs of Athens*, we see how babies live secret lives in between their bottles and naps. It all ends in an epic baby drag race at the county fair.*

The Baby Gangs of Athens

By David Brennan

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“Children at this age (1 year) move around a lot while they sleep. If we didn’t keep them in cribs, they’d be hundreds of miles away by dawn.” (Babies and other Hazards of Sex) The great sage David Barry uttered these words when asked about babies one day as his disciples crowded around him to hear his words of wisdom. I confess I wondered what he meant when I first heard his words about babies. Was there something that babies did about which I did not know? Then one day, I was watching television and I saw a baby in an E-trade commercial who, as soon as its mom left the room, got out a smartphone. Obviously, those commercials were showing us babies that were actually pretty darn smart. Another time a two-year-old was caught driving at night down a street in a toy BMW. (Go to www.scarymommy.com/two-year-old-drives-bmw if you doubt my words). My curiosity about babies was awakened and, over time, I discovered a world of babies that is hidden from us. The story I have written will open your eyes to the unseen world of babies. So let us begin.

There is a part of your past you cannot remember. It is a time when we are young, and our minds are not fully formed nor capable of piecing together events into a coherent timeline. We are told that our brains are so small and our experiences so limited, that memories do not form. This story will demolish that narrative though. Instead it will show you that you lived a fully functional life from day one, limited only by your physical abilities and your limited knowledge of the world. It will show that you learned quickly, and your life helped lay the foundation of what you would eventually become, a functioning child/adult. Come now as we follow the life of babies who, though newly entered into the world, face challenges of complex and daunting perspectives. Through their eyes, you just might reawaken those

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dim memories of what you went through in your beginning months.

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ISBN: 978-1-64718-363-9

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

Printed on acid-free paper.

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Cover Art Dion Weichers <https://www.dionweichersart.com/>

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2023

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Brennan, David
The Baby Gangs of Athens by David Brennan
Library of Congress Control Number: 2020914715

Chapter 2

Ben's sixth month on the planet was fast approaching. Ben always felt uncomfortable around each month day (the start of a new month of a babies age, like a mini birthday) and this one would be no exception. Yes, he did want to learn to crawl, if for no other reason than to learn what was over by the toy box. He had come to realize that he was burdened with expectations. He constantly heard his parents and others talking about how he was going to start crawling soon because he was holding his head up and rolling over. Rolling over? He was only rolling over because after eating, his belly was so full that he was balancing on the place where he had had a tube severed from his mother upon birth. He was still pondering that event. But he supposed that he must make his parents happy so three weeks into his sixth month he pushed his legs back and forth and to his surprise, a small but noticeable gain in location was achieved.

Ben realized that his accomplishment was small but dramatic. No longer did his placement on the carpet mean he was permanently anchored to that spot. He imagined himself as a new age Columbus going forth to discover new lands. Lifting his body up by his arms, he had heard his parents say how he was strong for his age. Fitfully he lurched into the carpet, banging his face. "Ouch," he wailed. His mother came over and picked him up and cradled him. The dramatic rise in elevation from the floor to the dizzying heights of his mother's arms often made Ben think of the time he had watched a program on the big box that everyone sat around staring at with lots of noise coming from it. He had seen

the big box where the big people got onto this round thing and sat in chairs that were part of the thing he saw; a big round thing that spun around from the ground to high in the air that was at something called a fair. He supposed that perhaps the big people were trying to have the same feeling he had of being picked up off the floor into his parents' arms. There was sort of a "what is going on?" moment that lasted until he got his bearings. By then he was usually almost face to face with whoever had lifted him up. Fun stuff.

A few weeks went by, and with plenty of practice he found himself finally crawling with authority. Now his mother would utter words of "no, stay out of the bathroom" or "be careful" as he meandered around the kitchen at her feet. His father was somewhat nonchalant about his wanderings and remarked on several occasions how strong his boy was getting and how he would be walking someday. Ben knew that walking was what the big people did, but for now, crawling seemed awfully cool.

One day Freddie came by with his mother. The two babies were put together on the floor. Ben was astounded to see Freddie pull himself into an upright position and stand holding on to the coffee table.

"So kid, I see you are crawling. How about you and I go down to the clubhouse and let me introduce you to the gang."

"Gang, what gang?" Ben asked.

"Ha-ha, you six-month-old babies are so ignorant about life. No kid, there are hundreds of us just like you and me out there in the world. The big people are okay to hang out but only until you get around others like us. Then you can really learn about life. We meet late at night at a clubhouse. All the babies for miles around crawl or walk to the clubhouse and hang out. We drink flavored formula, play beach ball soccer, look at the big noisy box with the

changing pictures, watch the older walkers ride their wheels around, and mostly guard against another gang of babies who would come over and try to steal our formula."

"Other babies, steal our formula, what the hospital are you talking about?" Ben asked.

"Listen up kid, you need to know that there are times when you want to get away from the big people and chill with your homies and pals. We can go there tonight if you can crawl. I can introduce you to the gang and if they like you, you can be initiated and join us. Plus you can meet girls. Oh, wait. Do you even know about girls?"

All this was coming onto Ben like a spoon of oatmeal being jammed down his closed mouth. He would ask about girls later as he assumed they must be the pinks he had seen in the beds at the time of his first day in the hospital. He had noticed that he was a 'blue' based on the color of his name tag affixed to his bassinet. Some of the other tags were colored pink and he noticed that those babies seemed a bit different than him though the difference was eluding him at the moment. *No matter, I am sure when I get older, girls will be easy to figure out*, he thought. The fact that there was a place where other babies like him came together and hung out intrigued him to no end. *But other bunches of babies who wanted to steal formula? What was that all about?*

"And who, pray tell, are these other babies and where do they come from? Who would violate the sacred soil of the clubhouse? Who would dare disturb our noble peace with disturbances in The Force?" he asked. These questions and more were flooding into Ben's mind.

"Well, the babies you will be meeting all live within a 10-block radius," Freddie explained. "But the babies who attack our clubhouse live in neighborhoods in other parts of town."

Sometimes, when downtown babies run out of playschool toys, they raid other baby hangouts to steal stuff. The west side babies have a thing for music and will steal your music accounts by hacking into your computer."

Ben recoiled in horror. *To think other babies would stoop to such levels.*

Freddie continued, "But I should not dwell on other babies who have taken the wrong road in life. No, our gang of babies are there because of the good times we have, the stimulating conversation that takes place, and the really good sippy cups that are there. We do not emulate those other babies and raid other clubhouses. No, we stay put and party."

"You say there are other gangs, how many are there in Athens?" Ben asked.

"Well, there are the West Side babies who hang out at Miller's Turkey. Do not go there alone. Then there are the downtown babies, but they are few in number and they mostly hang on Court Street at the Cathy Nueva. Then there is our gang who love to hang at Little Emperor's Pizza and at Snow Slide Pizza. Our gang is a mighty gang with a near Eastside and a past Bo Evans side. We all meet up together and are the biggest, baddest gang in Athens. Technically, Stimson Avenue is our dividing line of our turf and other gangs though we do allow most gangs to come onto East State Street to go shopping at Wall's Mart, Krugers Food Store and other stores."

"Then there is the Richland/Oakmont baby gang who love the Korean Dynasty restaurant. In some cases, there are gangs of babies that are not bound by geography but by lifestyle, like the babies who hang at the Farm Acres on Stimson Avenue. They only eat whole grains and organic food. I could tell you about the baby gangs of the county but that can be another day. No sense

overwhelming you with too much information right off the bat. We have a map in the clubhouse that shows where all the gang territories are. You can and should study it when you come to the clubhouse," Freddie said. "That way you will know which gang's territory you are in when your parents take you someplace."

Ben liked what he was hearing, though he had not realized that he might go onto another gang's territory if he ventured out with his parents. Ben already did not like Korean food, so he was glad he did not live near Richland Avenue. He thought for a bit and then told Freddie that he would crawl with him to the hangout that very evening. Soon their visit ended and as Freddie was scooped up and goodbyes were being said, Freddie told Ben to meet him under the swing set in his backyard at midnight.

Ben could hardly wait. The hours dragged on, and the dinner of Graber mashed peas and pureed broccoli bits hardly bothered Ben. He had a tough time concentrating on his meal and several times he nearly had a spoonful of mashed peas plastered on his cheek. Luckily, his parents put the peas onto an airplane that flew into his mouth, thus ensuring a good dinner ending.

He was put into his crib and as he lay there, he heard one by one the big people go into their bedrooms and turn off the lights. He waited a bit until he could not hear any sound coming from anywhere in the house. He knew that the time to meet Freddie was just around the corner.

The house was quiet, and Ben knew it was now or never. He managed to pull himself over the top of the crib and slide down the bars. (Little known fact: at night babies develop superhuman strength and the ability to escape their boundaries for a brief time-kind of like Cinderella). He crawled to the door of his bedroom, turned to his friend Teddy, who sat in the crib staring into space with those deep button eyes. "Guard my crib, oh trusted friend,

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for the night holds promise of new adventures and I must depart. I will return with stories to last us to dawn.” And with that, Ben started down the hallway.

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