

# Conception Control

By Pete Malicki

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*Sebastian: a thirty-something-year-old small business owner who really loves his wife.*

“Sebastian, what do you think about kids?”

What do I think about *kids*? I was *not* expecting that question. What kind of a person feeds their husband an amazing three-course homemade dinner and drops *that* on them when they’ve got a mouthful of crème brûlée?

“They’re alright. Depends on the kid, I suppose.”

I know she wasn’t asking about my general opinion of children but I have to buy time. Vanilla-flavoured custard is leaking out of the corner of my mouth. She rephrases to “us” having kids. I grab a handtowel for my face.

“Yeah babe, I mean, of course I want kids. With *your* looks, and *your* and brains, and *my*... unchippable fingernails, how could we go wrong? Smart, beautiful and naturally equipped to play the harp.”

Shit! I don’t want kids at all! I can’t stand poop and vomit, screaming, sleep deprivation and anyone who can eat three bags of lollies per day and not get fat.

The thing is, I’m a five. I’m in bad shape man, terrible shape. Every time I exercise I have to spend a fortune on chiro and physio. Had to stop jogging to keep up with the mortgage. My business is successful but not because I’m particularly smart. I just got lucky. I have seriously bad dandruff and allergies to almost everything that’s in shampoo and my breath is completely immune to the most powerful breath mints. Fuck, I’m lucky to be a four. But Vanessa, she’s easily a nine. Beautiful, master’s degree in science, amazing body – like swimsuit model amazing – and good at everything she does and everyone adores her and she’s basically perfect. I married way above my station man. *Way* above.

“That’s wonderful, hun,” she says. “You know... there’s never a good time to have kids... may as well get started.”

Fifteen minutes later I’m having the worst sex of my life. I mean, it’s amazing. Vanessa could charge five figures a day if she was in that line of work... not that I know the market value of high class escorts or anything. Anyway it’s terrible because her sex moans sound like (*moans sexily a few times then wails like a crying baby*).

This should make me softer than a McDonalds ice cream in the microwave but damn it, Vanessa is just too damned sexy. Barely seconds after she’s said “let’s have kids” and I’ve knocked her up. Fuck. A couple of weeks later, she yells at me and storms out of the house because I folded the fitted bed sheet the wrong way round and I have never been happier to see her period firing away at full blast.

Thing is though, I got lucky this time; my only saving grace was probability. The only thing I can do is never make love to my beautiful, *beautiful* wife ever again.

I start staying back late at work. Like, ’til after midnight. We practically double our sales that month. This is all fine and dandy until Vanessa pulls me aside and says, “Hun, why are you working such ridiculous hours? I don’t even get to see my own husband any more. I miss you, hun.” I explain that sales needed to increase or the company would be in trouble and she points out that I don’t work in sales and all of a sudden she’s suspicious.

Shit! She probably thinks I'm having a bloody affair! Even if another woman would touch me with a pool cue I would *never* cheat on Vanessa. We make sweet, terrifying love and I leave the dishes in an unwashed heap in the sink for thirteen days until she throws a dirty plate at my head and thank Jesus she isn't pregnant.

Alright, I can't stay back at work, I can't avoid sex, how am I going to do this? I mean, I don't even *want* to avoid sex. I could get a vasectomy. Have my scrotum cut open and my sexual organs surgically mangled. (*looks at crotch*) On second thoughts, how about no fucking way. Um... well... (*thinks for a long moment*) got it!

The next day I call Vanessa from the emergency room of the local hospital. "Babe, I sat on a needle! I sat on a fucking needle! I'm going to die of hepatitis."

"Oh my Lord Sebastian, how did that happen?"

I explain it had been maliciously placed in between the slats of the seat and I sat right on it without realising it was there. I even said that I must have had it pricking into me for two minutes before I noticed. If you want to tell a lie, you need to add in the little details that make it convincing.

The good thing about a potential AIDS scare is that it takes three months before your body produces sufficient antibodies to give a conclusive test result. Sometimes it takes six. I act really paranoid to buy myself maximum time.

Unfortunately, Vanessa wouldn't sleep with me *at all* before the test came back negative. "What if the condom breaks and I get infected too?"

So I could either have a child, or die an AIDS-ridden celibate. AIDS was not a good option. At least the kid might leave home at sixteen and nine months. My beautiful wife was not sleeping with me and it reminded me of when I was eighteen through thirty-one.

Six *long* months later, Vanessa comes in to the bedroom after what must have been the best meal of my life. I swear she kidnapped a hatted chef and keeps them in the cellar. Anyways, she's wearing a sexy nurse's outfit and comes in with a letter.

"Hello Sebastian, I'm here with your test results. Shall we... open them together?"

She sits on my lap and opens the envelope. I'm not sure how well a hot nurse fantasy goes with *actual* test results from an AIDS scare, but I go with it. She reads it.

Then she frowns.

Then she looks at me, mouth open.

Oh God, I don't actually have fucking AIDS do I?!

"Hun, you have gonorrhoea."

"What?! How the fuck did I get gonorrhoea?"

"It must be from the needle."

"But..."

Shit. I didn't really sit on a needle. Where did I get gono-bloody-rrhoea from? "Oh yeah. The needle. I'd even forgotten. Well, at least I don't have AIDS."

She takes a condom out of her purse and we have the most psychologically scarring sex I've had in months. I get a prescription for the STD and there's only two weeks before she'll want to start trying again.

This is ridiculous. I need to find another way to avoid getting Vanessa pregnant. I really want to tell her I don't want kids but I know she'll leave me and I'll end up single and lonely and desperate.

And then the idea of the century comes to me. It's sheer, pure genius. I can't believe I skipped this and went straight to AIDS.

You can't get someone pregnant if you're having radiotherapy.

I just need to give myself cancer.

But... then I'd have cancer.

*Beat as Sebastian ponders this.*

Well, whatever the odds are for beating cancer there's *no* cure for children, so that's that. The first thing I do is get a dozen phones from work – I'm a mobile phone reseller – and keep them on in my pockets. Have to wear a coat so I can fit them all in. I don't want to take up smoking so instead I go for lots of walks down to the TV tower. There's something immensely calming about staring up at a TV tower. I start taking my yoga mat down there and end up doing downward facing dog under the Channel 7 transmittal.

I go to the solarium three times a week but stop when Vanessa comments about how brown I'm getting. Do some googling and apparently alcohol can increase the risk of cancer. I'm not much of a drinker but I try the Russian thing of putting vodka in everything I drink. Then two of my employees take a photo of me sleeping at my desk with my pants around my ankles and try to blackmail me into a pay rise. Slimy bastards. They didn't realise they'd overplayed their hand until I sacked them both and rehired them at two-thirds the salary.

Then it all comes to a head one afternoon when Vanessa comes home early from the Zumba class she teaches. I'm standing with my head next to the microwave. I've put something in the door mechanism so it thinks the door's closed and it's been on defrost for fifteen minutes.

“Sebastian, what the hell are you doing?!”

“I, uh, I had a really bad ice cream headache!”

She screams at me about how strange I've been acting and she starts crying and I start crying... I mean, I stand there stoically like a real man... and eventually she demands that I explain what's going on.

I blurt it out. “Babe, I don't want kids.”

She says, “What?”

“I'm sorry. I really don't want kids. I don't like them, they don't like me, and I'm not responsible enough to care for a dependent human being. The last four cats we got all ran away. Did I ever tell you I found Tabby at Mrs Wilkinson's house down the street? Little bastard prefers that old cow to me. Anyways, I just don't want to have children. I'm so sorry babe. I'm just don't.”

“I can't believe you would do this! I love you. Do you really think I want you to have *cancer* so you can get out of parenthood? Even if I wanted children I would still put you first.”

I pause. “What do you mean?”

“I mean I love you and I’d still love you even if I wanted kids and you didn’t.”

“But you *do* want kids.”

“No I don’t.”

“You asked me, ‘Hun, what do you think about kids?’ Then you said that there was never a good time and we might as well start now. You want kids.”

“But I don’t. I asked you what you thought of them and you sounded so keen, and I love you, so if you want to have kids then I want to have kids.”

*Sebastian pauses.*

“I only said I wanted them because I thought *you* wanted them.”

“I can’t believe you, Sebastian. You are such a dummy.”

“You might be right about that.”

“Let’s make love.”

Well, at least there’s a happy end to this story. “Alright babe. I’ll just grab a condom.”

Vanessa is already undressing on her way to the bedroom. “Don’t bother. I’ve been on the pill the whole time.”

*Sebastian gives a foul look to the audience. The lights go off.*