

Baby Teak

by Michael Seidel

When Baby Teak seems done, he starts moving his arms like a badly-propelled helicopter. He chops food with the soft part of his hand and then fists it down to the ground where our schnauzer Puss sits squinting up, looking like a gold prospector enjoying a sunup. "Baby Teak," we say, "Utilize your intelligence." Just then the irises lob off of his eyes, and Baby Teak levitates out of his highchair. He lands down next to me, undoes one of my shoelaces and ties a Blake's Hitch with it so he can scale my leg. Sitting on my knee, he'll tell me about the day's exchange rate for the Rubel.

Some babies start with DA and MA sounds. Some babies walk by 9 months.

Baby Teak is a poet. He writes moving haikus from letters cut out of the newspaper. Then he mails the poems to hostages dispersed throughout the world to make them feel better, or as he says, "Affectionized."

We had an antique afghan. One Saturday, Baby Teak placed his head down on it for just a second. When he sat up, the thing was all yarn. Baby Teak took all of the yarn in his pudgy fists, threw it up and it landed down on his shoulders, fully in tact.

Baby Teak taught Puss to jump through ringlets of fire and to eat burning coal. He taught Puss to yodel and explained that it was perfectly reasonable to dig a hole in our yard that goes straight to China. "Puss," he said, "How else will a Schnauzer like you ever get the opportunity to go halfway across the world to study mutant allele at the Sun Yat-sen University in the Guangdong province?"

Baby Teak can access Wikipedia by rubbing two xylophone mallets together.

Baby Teak started a salon last week. He used safety scissors to snip locks, Play Doh for bikini waxes, and stickers for nail polish. Real money traded hands. By Thursday he was rich enough to retire to any town off the Florida Turnpike of his choosing.

The four fingers on his right hand are wrought iron amulets in the shape of the figures on Mt. Rushmore. His thumb is forged like a prairie dog. The tips of the fingers on his left hand are crystal balls. And he'll tell you your future in five different ways for a buck.

Lately I've been having troubles with Baby Teak though. Mostly he's good. Calm, able to occupy himself. Cute as hell. He cries little and is smart, as you can tell. A real unique little guy.

But how do you go about setting a bedtime for someone who terrifies you so completely?

