

Silence Is a Scary Sound: And Other Stories on Living through the Terrible Twos and Threes

Clint Edwards

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Clint Edwards's memoir *Silence Is a Scary Sound* is written from the family trenches, as his toddler navigates the transition between babyhood and childhood, asserting independence and making mistakes. Though it is heavy on humor, many of the book's short essays end on a sweet note, with Edwards reminding himself that he loves being a father, even when he's exasperated.

The storytelling style varies between entries. Some are straightforward narratives, including the story of Edwards's son's obsession with rubber snakes. Some are list-based entries—about, for instance, all the things Edwards wishes he could say to people who judge his parenting in public. He establishes his wife, Mel, as both an attuned parent and a person at the end of her own rope, striking a delicate balance between idealism and spousal critique.

Edwards's unhinged humor fits well with the content: problems like being scratched by the dog while holding an angry cat, or needing to help a potty-training child wipe themselves, are mind-boggling. He is elsewhere introspective, acknowledging when his desires are selfish or less-than-noble. The book's laughs are well earned, and the casual tone ably portrays the frayed nerves of an overworked parent.

The book is gentle as it pokes fun at stereotypes of parents and of parenting-related media. Goofy but intense lists include pro-tips like "a great way to clean the car seat is with the garden hose." The final essay is fitting, focused on his first sleep-in after his children were old enough to watch cartoons on their own in the morning: toddlers do grow up.

Silence Is a Scary Sound may not reflect every parenting style, but it's realistic in capturing moments of exhaustion and hilarity during a child's toddler years.

LAURA LEAVITT (November / December 2019)

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