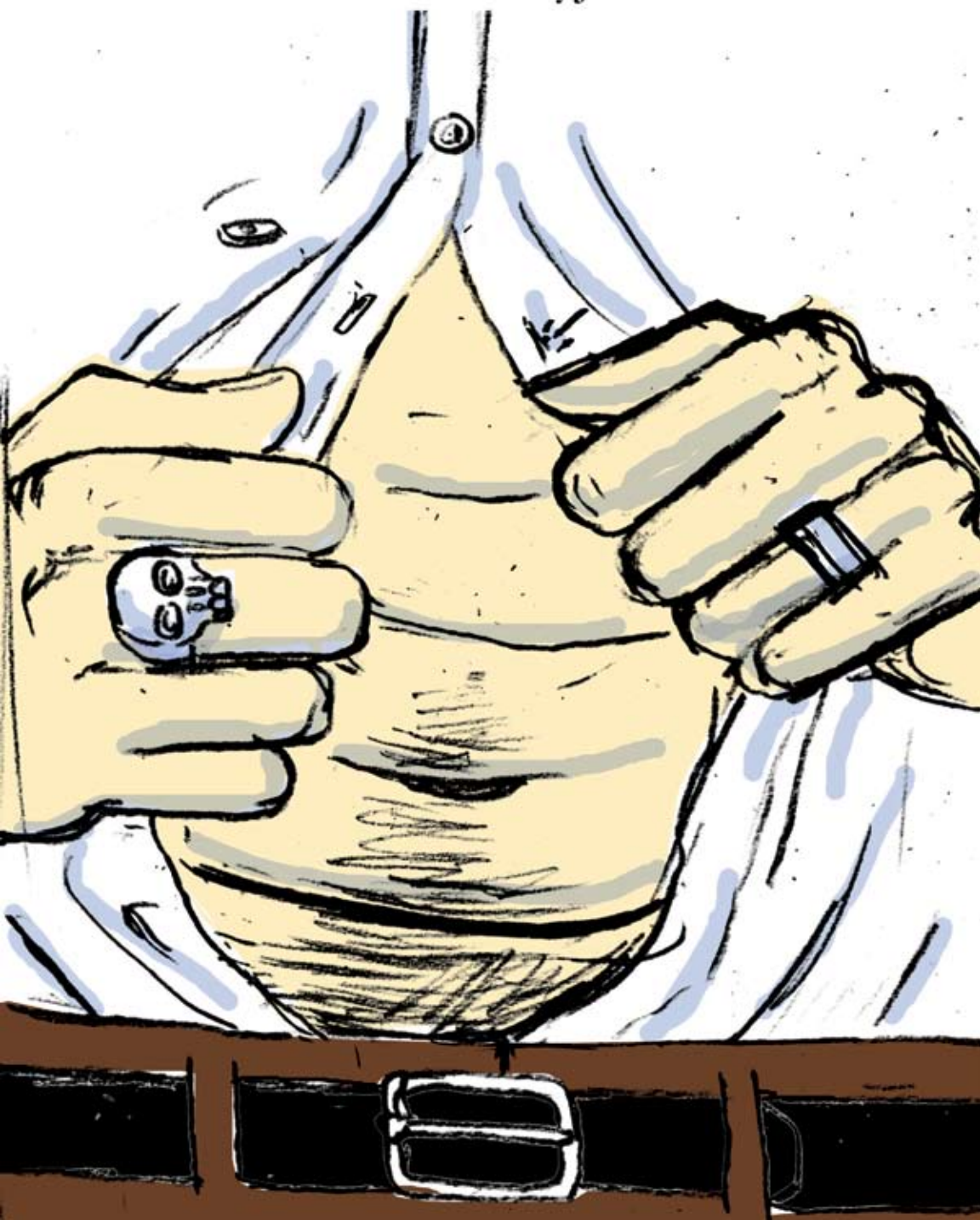


MID-LIFE

a true fiction comic by joe ollmann



CHAPTER ONE:

WERE YOU IN THE SHIT? YEAH, I WAS IN THE SHIT.



THE PLASTIC GROCERY BAG FULL OF CAT SHIT THAT I'M CARRYING BREAKS SUDDENLY.



RELEASING A REMARKABLY ELEGANT CASCADE OF PISS-SOAKED LITTER, PUNCTUATED WITH HARDENED TURDS THAT CLICK IN DIFFERENT TONES, LIKE A XYLOPHONE—OR A VIBRAPHONE MAYBE—AS THEY HIT THE TILES. DINK- DINK-DINK!



"SHIT" IS ALL I MANAGE TO ADD TO THE SONG. LESS A LYRIC THAN A SONG-TITLE REALLY. THEN I BEGIN SWEEPING UP THE MESS, BE-MOANING MY SAD, BULLSHIT CINDERELLA FATE.



AFTERWARD, MY SOCKS HAVE CAT-LITTER STUCK TO THEM. I PEEL THEM OFF AND BACKING AWAY FROM ANY REMAINING-LITTER AND...



... I STEP FULL INTO THE MIDDLE OF SAM'S ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY AND SHIT-COVERED DIAPER COVER I'D LEFT ON THE BATHROOM FLOOR TO CLEAN.



PEOPLE MARVEL AT A SURGEON HOLDING A LIVING HUMAN HEART IN THEIR HANDS. I'M MORE AMAZED AT THE EASE WITH WHICH A PARENT GETS USED TO HANDLING BABY POOP.



I JUST KEEP WONDERING HOW MY LIFE HAS COME TO BE SO LITERALLY FULL OF SHIT. I MEAN, SERIOUSLY, THREE CATS AND A BABY MAKE FOR A LOT OF CRAP.



THERE'S MORE POOP IN MY LIFE THAN A GERMAN PORN-FILM. HOW DID MY TEXT-BOOK HIP-STER LIFE GET SO VERY BORING AND DOMESTIC?



CHAN IS ALWAYS REMINDING ME THAT IT WILL ONLY GET BETTER. SHE IS PRONE TO OPTIMISM. BUT SHE'S PROBABLY RIGHT TOO.



I MEAN, I KNOW THIS FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. I'VE DONE THIS BEFORE AND LIVED TO TELL THE TALE. SOMETIME AROUND TWENTY YEARS AGO, THE GIRLS STOPPED POOPING THEIR PANTS AND BEGAN SLEEPING MORE THAN TWO HOURS A NIGHT.



EVENTUALLY THEY GET UP BEFORE YOU UNSUPERVISED AND YOU CAN EVEN TRAIN THEM TO MAKE COFFEE



DON'T GET ME WRONG, THE GIRLS STILL GIVE ME GRIEF, BUT IT RARELY INVOLVES POO, AND TONIGHT I'M MOST GRATEFUL FOR THAT.



I GOTTA CALL MARTHA TONIGHT AND BOOK HER TRAIN TICKET. SHE MENTIONED WANTING TO VISIT HER LITTLE BROTHER.



OH, JUST SHIT-WRANGLING. CLEANED THE LITTER AND THEN I STEPPED IN THAT GUY'S SHITTY FUCKING DIAPER...



YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO WATCH THAT SOON.



OH, A LITTLE BABY SAYING: 'FUCKING SHIT, DADDY.' YOU KNOW...





SHE'S RIGHT AGAIN; THERE'S NO-THING WE CAN DO. IF EITHER OF US WANT TO GET ANY OF OUR OWN CREATIVE WORK DONE IN THE MAY-BE ONE HOUR A NIGHT THAT SAM IS ASLEEP BEFORE WE FALL DOWN OURSELVES, WE HAVE TO LEAVE THE DISHES AND THE SWEEPING TO ROT.



I MEAN, REALLY, I DON'T WANT TO BE REMEMBERED SOLELY BY HOW CLEAN MY CARPETS ARE WHEN I'M DEAD.



AND TO BE HONEST, CHAN AND I WEREN'T EXACTLY MARTHA STEWART IN OUR OLD LIFE BEFORE SAM ANYWAY.



MAYBE I SHOULD JUST KEEP A CLEANER HOUSE. IT'S NOT LIKE MY "CREATIVE WORK" IS SEAR-ING A GIANT SCAR ON THE COL-LECTIVE MEMORY OF MANKIND ANYWAY.

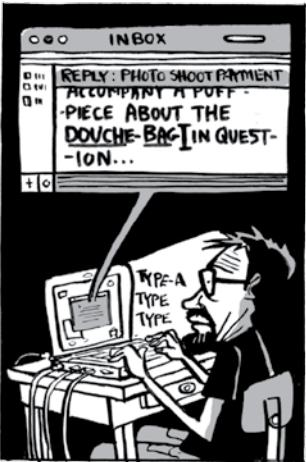


THERE'S ACTUAL DUST ON MY DRAWING BOARD.



AH WELL, MAYBE AFTER SAM'S BATH...





CHAPTER
TWO:
REPEAT
OFFENDER



FIRST OFF, LET ME TELL YOU, I LOVE MY KIDS. ALL OF THEM.



BUT I AM SERIOUSLY GOING TO SMASH MY BALLS WITH A COUPLE OF BRICKS TO STOP MY PROPENSITY FOR REPRODUCTION.

RING-RING.



MATTY! HEY KID, WHAT'S HAPPENING?



NOT MUCH, 'ADULT,' WHY ARE YOU WHISPERING?



SAM'S KIND OF ASLEEP ON ME. I CAN'T PUT HIM DOWN OR EVEN MOVE 'CAUSE HE'LL WAKE UP.



LUCKILY, I COULD REACH THE PHONE THIS TIME. I'VE BEEN TRAPPED UNDER A SLEEPING-SAM FOR HOURS BEFORE, TRYING TO REACH SOMETHING TO READ; A HARDWARE STORE FLYER, A TAKE OUT MENU...

NOW, TRUE PARENTING STORIES YOU DIDN'T SPOIL US LIKE THAT.

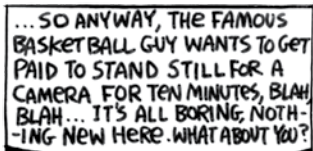


I'M PRETTY SURE I DID. ANYWAY, YOU'RE COMING TO TOWN; FALL ASLEEP ON MY ARM AND I WON'T MOVE... GO CRAZY.



WHAT TIME YOU WANT ME TO BOOK YOUR TRAIN?







MATTY IS TWENTY-THREE AND LISA IS NINETEEN.



I'M FORTY YEARS OLD. I KNOW THE MATH. I WAS MARRIED, RIDICULOUSLY, AT SEVENTEEN AND SPAWNED CHILDREN AT THAT SAME TIME LIKE SOME HILLBILLY CHILD BRIDE.



CONTRARY TO WHAT YOU MIGHT THINK, HAVING ADULT CHILDREN WHEN I'M FORTY DOES NOT MAKE ME FEEL AS OLD AS THEIR LITTLE BROTHER DOES. HAVING A BABY AT FORTY WITH A SUBSTANTIALLY YOUNGER WIFE HAS AGED ME TWENTY YEARS IN MINUTES.



WHEN I'M OUT WITH MY GIRLS THERE IS STILL ALWAYS A CHANCE A STORE CLERK OR SOMETHING WILL COMMENT ON HOW YOUNG THEIR DAD IS. THOUGH IT HAPPENS LESS AND LESS AS I GET EVER CRAGGIER AND GRISTLED.



WITH LITTLE SAM I'M JUST A NEAR-ELDERLY YUPPIE DAD, EMASCULATED BY THE DIAPER BAG...



... BY THE STROLLER...



... BY FRONT CARRIERS AND VARIOUS "MAMA KANGAROO" SLINGS.



POOR SAM WILL NEVER KNOW HIS DAD AS A CAPABLE, VIRILE, STREET-FIGHTIN' MAN...



... HE WILL ONLY KNOW A WEAK, SAGGY-BOSOMED OLD-DAD.



I HATE TO BE A CLICHE' HERE. BUT MY BODY IS FALLING APART. LET ME JUST LIST A FEW HIGHLIGHTS:



FACE - LIVER SPOTS AND WRINKLES. THIS IS THE KIND OF SHIT MY GRAMMA HAD AT AGE 96. THIS IS THE KIND OF SHIT OLD GUYS IN CHINESE MEDICINE SHOPS HAVE. AND NOW, SO DO I.

NECK - TURKEY WATTLES. MY FORMERLY MANLY NECK NOW LOOKS LIKE GOLDIE HAWN IN HER OSCAR DRESS.

SHOULDERS - SAGGING, PLUS BOSOMS! FOLDS OF FLESH WHERE THE CHEST AND SHOULDERS MEET MAKING ME LOOK PREMATURELY LIKE CLINT EASTWOOD IN THE BRONCO BILLY SERIES OF FILMS: SHIRTLESS, SQUINTY-EYED AND SAGGY-BOSOMED.

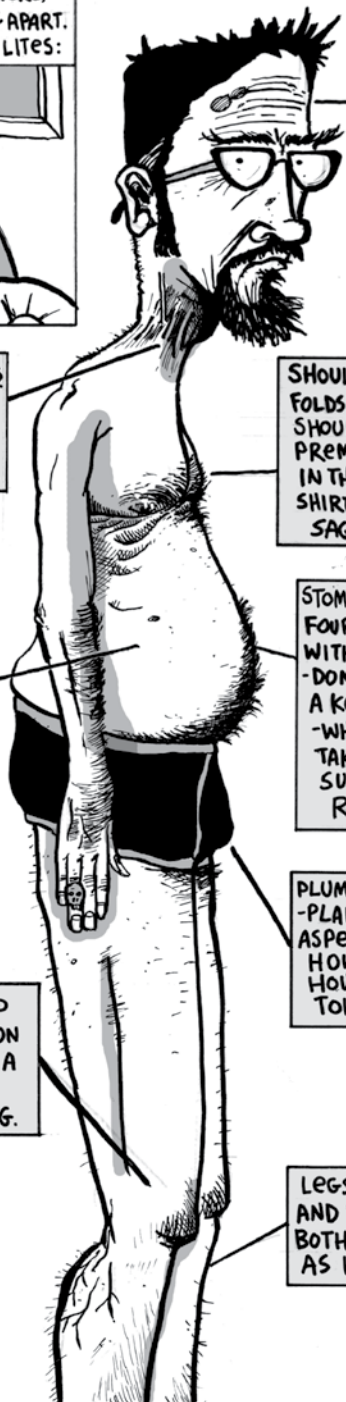
STOMACH - CONTINUAL BLOATING, EMBARRASSING "INTERNAL FLATULENCE" NOT FARTS, BUT INTERNAL SHIFTING OF GAS WITH NO ISSUE, USUALLY DURING BUSINESS MEETINGS. ALSO, CONTINUAL ALTERNATING DIARRHEA OR CONSTIPATION!

STOMACH (CONTINUED) - I HAVE A PICTURE, TAKEN FOUR YEARS AGO, WHICH SHOWS ME WITH ROWS OF PROMINENT ABDOMINAL MUSCLES, PURPORTEDLY A KEY ELEMENT TO BEING A WORTH-WHILE MEMBER OF OUR SOCIETY. TAKE AWAY DAILY EXERCISE AND SUBSTITUTE A BAG OF CHIPS, RESULT: GUT.

KNEES - BENDING TO PICK UP MY YOUNG SON IS ACCOMPANIED BY A SOUND LIKE FOUR CHOPSTICKS BREAKING.

PLUMBING, ETC - NO REAL COMPLAINTS ON THE RECREATIONAL ASPECTS YET, BUT YOU KNOW HOW OLD MEN SHAKE IT FOR HOURS AFTER PISSING IN PUBLIC TOILETS? I DO THAT TOO.

LEGS - THE HAIR IS FALLING OFF AND THERE ARE VARICOSE VEINS. BOTH OF WHICH ARE ABOUT AS MANLY AS HAVING A BLADDER INFECTION.





MOST KID SHOWS IT MUST BE STATED- AND I'VE HAD EXTENDED EXPERI- ENCE WATCHING THEM, BOTH FIRST-HAND BEFORE I WAS MARRIED AT AGE SEVENTEEN...



...SNATCHED FROM SATURDAY MORN- ING CARTOONS TO CONNUBIAL LIFE. THEN TOO, I'VE WATCHED A LOT OF ANIMATION WITH MY TWO GENERATIONS OF OFFSPRING.



-MOST KID SHOWS ARE VARYING DEGREES OF CRAP: CLOYING AND CUTESY OR FARTY AND INNAPPRO- RIATELY RIBALD. THEY INSULT THE INTELLIGENCE AND DUMB FOUND WITH THE LACK OF EFFORT THEIR CREATORS APPARENTLY PUT FORWARD.



I'VE SAT THROUGH SO MUCH OF THIS DRECK OVER THE YEARS AND IT IS ONLY BY A CONSTANT, QUIETLY MOCKING DIALOGUE/ COMMENTARY, THAT I HAVE MAINTAINED SANITY.



THE KIDS WERE ALWAYS TOO YOUNG TO COMPREHEND THE SARCASM. IT'S LIKE WHEN YOU SING A HORRIBLE SONG TO A BABY THAT IS DRIVING YOU MAD IF YOU SING THE TERRIBLE WORDS TO A LOWKEY, FAMILIAR, UNTHREATENING TUNE.



THESE ARE THE TRICKS A FATHER USES TO SURVIVE. WHATEVER. ASK WARD CLEAVER, ASK BIL KEANE...



WHAT'S THIS? "SHERRI SMALLS AND HER..."



WOW, WHERE DID THIS EVEN COME FROM?



HEY, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANT THIS FOR YOUR KID. I DOUBT WE'RE GONNA REVIEW IT HERE AT THE MAGAZINE.





