

Crazy 4-wheeeeeeeeeee! drivers

USA WEEKEND's resident humorist Jay Dyckman takes his life in his hands dodging today's oversized high-tech strollers.

Window-shopping one afternoon, I paused to consider just how many pints of blood I would have to sell before I could afford an iPhone when, out of nowhere, my ankle was viciously struck from behind, sending me crashing to the pavement. Writhing in pain and searching eagerly for the wave of first responders, I looked up to see a young woman fleeing the scene while operating what appeared to be either a Zamboni or a pastel armored assault vehicle. It was a hit and run! And then, as I squinted to get a better look, I saw a tiny arm extend from the vehicle, indifferently waving some type of intimidating gesture.

That's when I realized -- I had been Bugaboo'd.

Now, as a non-parent, I admit that I am not current on the latest trends in child-rearing. But will someone please tell me what has transpired in the last 20 years that has made the art of baby transportation so fraught with danger that infants require their own Hummers? Do babies go off-roading? Are the streets crawling with rabid ferrets, poised to tear at tiny people who are riding less than 3 feet from the ground?

Baby strollers these days are so big that they look like something you could use to explore the Serengeti.

The answer is obviously "yes," because strollers these days look like something one could use to explore the Serengeti. I mean, who can honestly say he isn't a little frightened when one of these things comes barreling out of the sliding doors at the neighborhood Kmart? I half expect to turn on the local news and see them being used to break up prison riots.

I understand that my almost completely bias-free observations probably come across like I'm anti-baby. But nothing could be further from the truth. A person would have to be insane to think I would actually imply that babies are like a parasite on society. (After all, parasites don't generally require their own mobile homes.) And I certainly never would advocate some ridiculous law that strollers be allowed outside only between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. on alternating Tuesdays, or that anyone take, at most, 30

seconds to call their local congressman (I believe that the call would be free) and perhaps gauge his view on the feasibility of such legislation.

Really, I'm a very selfless person, so the concern is not so much for me. I'm simply worried about the effect that these behemoths are having on child bearers who are cruelly held hostage by their prams. Much like the cursed ring in "The Lord of the Rings," these prams have corroded the parents' sense of proper social etiquette, infecting the owners with a voracious lust for power. I now realize that their cries of "My precious!" are not directed at their kids at all, but rather at the plastic blue corrugated handles around which their hands are tightly gripped. How long will it be before two young mothers lock eyes across the crosswalk at high noon, then set out slowly toward one another and build up speed until they are locked in a tragic game of chicken? One mother-child combo will be left reeling against the curb, wheels spinning in the air, as the conqueror takes a victory lap in front of a throng of cheering Starbucks patrons.

No, I love this country too much to let that happen. So I implore all parents to actually carry their children instead of using giant strollers. Just think of all the benefits to manual hauling. With some creative carrying, babies offer the perfect opportunity to get in a good workout while you're on the go. By the time my niece was 2, I swear my sister's biceps were bigger than Schwarzenegger's.

Or perhaps there is the slightest chance that I'm really just jealous of these babies. With gas prices going through the roof and fares for public transportation steadily climbing, a free ride inside a padded carriage sounds pretty good these days.

So c'mon, Bugaboo, cut me a break. Can't you at least install a sidecar on your strollers so that I can hitch along, too?

Jay Dyckman last interviewed Saturday Night Live's Andy Samberg about the movie "Hot Rod."