

TASTELESS TOYS

It's sad that this book's most violent, sex-laden, and cringeworthy article is about things that kids are supposed to play with.

LITTLE LOST BABY. Sold in the 1960s, Ideal Toy Company's 22-inch baby doll came with a note explaining that she was abandoned; the little girl was supposed to find the baby on her doorstep and "raise it" herself. That's not the only odd thing about Little Lost Baby: She has three faces. By pulling a lever on the back of the doll's neck, her head spins (*Exorcist*-style) inside a non-removable pink hood to reveal a sleeping face, a laughing face, or a crying face (the latter two have creepy sound effects). If one of the baby's faces isn't looking straight ahead, two faces appear at the same time, looking in opposite directions.

MIDGE HADLEY. This doll, known as "Barbie's pregnant friend," actually "gives birth" to a curled-up diapered baby that's attached to a magnet inside Midge's removable round tummy. After receiving a slew of complaints that Midge promoted teen pregnancy (most kids think of Barbie and her friends as teenagers) and that she's supposed to be "happily married" but wears no wedding ring, Wal-mart pulled the doll from store shelves in 2002.

"POOP PATROL BARBIE". Here's how you play with Poop Patrol Barbie: First, "feed" her yellow Labrador retriever—named Tanner—a little tube-shaped piece of "food," and then crank Tanner's tail until it falls out of his butt. But the fun's not over: You and Barbie can then scoop up the poop (pooper-scooper included) and throw it away in a little trash can (also included). The fun resumes when you fish the poop out of the trash and feed it to Tanner again.

JIBBA JABBER. Released in the 1990s by American toy company Ertl, the original Jibba Jabber was a plush doll with a round cartoony face and a long black neck. Grab the doll by the neck, start shaking, and it makes a kind of choking-gurgling noise. After parents complained that the doll encourages violence toward children, Ertl recalled it and released a "tamer" version in which the

doll chokes-gurples no matter where you shake it. The new version, this time marketed to stressed-out corporate executives, comes with a pamphlet inside the box that reads, “It’s OK to shake Jibba Jabber. It’s never OK to shake a child.”

KABA KICK. This Japanese game teaches a skill every kid should know: how to play Russian Roulette. Each player holds a pink hippo-shaped toy gun up to his or her forehead, and pulls the trigger. If the gun “fires,” two hippo feet pop out and kick the unlucky player in the temple. The game part: If the gun doesn’t fire, you get points.

WOLVERINE SQUEAKY HAMMER. This inflatable toy hammer is no bootleg—it’s an officially licensed product and features a picture of the metal-clawed X-Man at the base of the handle. Only problem: The hammer’s blow-up nozzle, which protrudes from the handle, is located right where Wolverine’s... little wolverine would be.

THE PUNISHER SHAPE-SHIFTER. One-upping the Wolverine Squeaky Hammer, this Punisher superhero action figure comes with a large “power pistol” that emerges from his crotch. Insert a plastic spear into the tip, pull back on the sleeve, and watch the crotch gun shoot the spear across the room. (Bonus: It converts into a handgun, and the rocket shoots out of the Punisher’s other end.)

HAZMAT FIGURINE SET. German toy maker Playmobil has a number of “Playworld” sets that let kids pretend they have adult jobs. From the product description of this one: “Oh, no! Hazardous waste has managed to seep out of a barrel and onto the sidewalk! No need to worry, the Hazmat Crew has promptly arrived. Dressed in protective uniforms and armed with hazardous material equipment, this sidewalk is sure to be free of this hazardous substance in no time! Ages 4 & Up.”

AIRPORT SECURITY PLAY SET. Another in the Playmobil “Playworld” series, this \$58 set allows kids to reenact the excitement of going through the security line at the airport.

75% of Americans who use Q-tips stick them in their ears, even though the box says not to.