



A Day Late

The Associated Press reported that on May 17, 2017, police in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, arrested a 38-year-old father named Cecil Kutz on charges of child endangerment.

According to the report, when troopers broke into the Kutz home, they found three children alone in the house: a 1-year-old boy in a playpen, a toddler locked in a plywood cage, and a newborn girl in a baby seat. The baby was one day old.

Police learned that the mother of the children had given birth to the baby just the night before. The next morning when the new mother began to bleed extensively, she was hospitalized for surgery.

Somebody tipped off the authorities that the children had been left in the house without a caretaker. When the absentee father returned home and was arrested, however, he refused to divulge where he had been.

When I first read this report, the event was still too fresh for anyone to know how all of this would eventually turn out legally. Nor do we know yet whether extenuating circumstances came to light to reduce the charges.

AP did report that the older two kids were being cared for by child welfare and the infant was being evaluated at a hospital. But it was too early to know just how the charges against Cecil Kutz would play out.

If the original charges do stick, that father could be facing some serious penalties. As he should, if anything short of dire emergency made him leave those vulnerable kids alone without care.

One more time, though, this sad story causes me to find as much fault with our present legal system as with the apparently derelict dad.

I don't know the fine lines in Pennsylvania law, but in several nearby states just a day before he was charged with endangering the child, Kutz and his wife could have elected to have their infant murdered medically and the courts would have nodded their approval.

How can this be just or fair? How did our child-protection laws get so convoluted that a parent can legally kill a child one day but go to jail and face serious criminal charges for putting the same child at risk just a day later? This baffles me.

How can the setting and rising of the sun—the passing of just twenty-four hours in this case—so totally change the legal status of that baby?

By Gene Shelburne