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## Oh, Baby

Ali Giles

The way it feels is, there's never an end to anything. There are never really endings; happy or otherwise. Things are just...endless.

Like when his mum got pregnant again, she sat around crying a lot and lost her job and they had to move *again* because she couldn't pay the rent *again*. He had to leave school, which was ok, because he hardly went anyway, and it meant he could look after her better.

When the baby was born, things changed again. She spent all her time with it, cooing and fussing and taking pictures and trying to force him to hold it.

They had a brilliant Christmas though, sort of; for once, his mum had a bit of money which she said she'd been saving and she bought a massive tree and loads of food and presents. She never cooked Christmas dinner because she burnt the turkey, so he ended up eating arctic rolls and mince pies and played on his new Playstation. But she didn't play on it with him, like she used to.

He tried to cuddle up with her like in the old days, but she was obsessed, seriously obsessed, with the baby and seemed to forget he was even there. The flat filled up with its clothes and toys and she never cooked anymore. She got fat from MacDonald's, her hair got stringy and rank. She didn't care.

The baby was ugly and had no hair even a year later.

Sometimes, even then, he wandered into its room and just stood watching it. He didn't know what it was he felt, but it was like a worm in his stomach.

The next Christmas she met some bloke called Gary online, and they talked a lot on Skype. She would wedge the door shut and tell him not to get silly, and he would stand outside listening to her laughing.

On New Year's Eve she and Gary arranged to meet. She had one decent top left that fitted her, she told Gary on Skype, and she looked fat; he wouldn't like her.

Through the keyhole, he watched as she tore off her shirt in a panic, buttons flying everywhere. When she came out she was anxious and said maybe she'd better not go, and he said stay then, stay with me. Please.

But she went. Just for a couple of hours, she said. She didn't kiss him.

In her room he trod on a shirt button and saw another on the bed, next to the shirt she'd ripped off. He picked up the button and saw the baby wasn't sleeping but lay there just watching him. Pushing itself up on its fat arms and looking at him through the cot bars, its head all wobbly. It was creepy. He turned it over onto its back and watched its fat hands reaching up, expecting him to pick it up but he didn't.

Instead he pushed the button into its mouth.

Then he went and played his Playstation.