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Twinkle Twinkle

by Vera Gajic

“What are you doing?” asked Jodie as she waddled into the nursery. It was full of every sort of soft toy and hanging mobile imaginable. She stepped over Archie lying on his back next to the cot watching the sun, moon and stars mobile rotating and singing along with a tinny version of twinkle twinkle little star.

“I’m just trying to get a feel for what the baby will see when it is in the cot,” he said grabbing Jodie’s hand and trying to pull her down to the floor with him.

“For goodness sake Archie, the baby won’t have a clue for the first few months. They can hardly focus their eyes for a few weeks. I think you are getting obsessed. I can’t believe what’s happened to you since I got pregnant. You’ve turned into a single minded baby obsessive who I can’t have a normal conversation with. There’s still a couple of months to go. Please can we try and enjoy our baby free time?”

“Jodie, don’t be like that. Don’t you feel excited? We’re making a whole new person who is going to be the most important person in our lives,” said Archie without taking his eyes off the moon.

“Excuse me, I am making a whole new person. I don’t think your contribution is feeding the baby in here,” said Jodie pointing at her extended stomach sticking out between the top of her leggings and bottom of her t-shirt.

She’d refused to get maternity clothes reckoning they’d only last a few weeks and was now squeezing into her stretchiest clothes which weren’t anywhere near covering her stomach. Luckily since working from home became the norm she didn’t have to worry about what she looked like below her shoulders. She was careful on zoom calls to only show her neck and head. Some of her colleagues didn’t even know she was pregnant and she preferred it that way.

“Look it’s hard enough having your body hijacked by an alien being without your partner only seeing you as a baby making machine. I am still here you know, it isn’t all about the baby. In fact I’m pretty sick of the baby and it hasn’t even arrived yet.” Quiet anger and fear started to rise up Jodie’s throat. She swallowed it down but Archie caught the look.

“Come on Jodie, come and lie down next to me, I’ll sing to you.”

“I don’t want to lie down in a nursery. I want to go out, have some cocktails, dance the night away, meet a stranger, have an adventure, not wonder what my feet look like because it is so long since I saw them.”

“It’ll all be over soon,” said Archie trying to be as soothing as possible. Getting off the floor and putting his arms around Jodie.

“That’s what scares me the most. You don’t understand. Being pregnant is bad enough but the thought of giving birth and then having to look after it is terrifying. What if I don’t like it? Everyone says the maternal feelings kick in but what if they don’t? They didn’t for my Mum. I hate the baby now, how is that going to get better?” Jodie slumped down onto the nursing chair and started to sob as all the stuffed animals looked on.

Archie knelt next down, stroked her arm and whispered, “of course the feelings will come, it’s just your hormones.”

“Stop stroking my arm. Hormones, hormones, how would you know? When is the last time you had a creature bouncing around inside your womb, oh yes never, you haven’t got a womb.”

“I wish I did,” said Archie.

“Oh p-lease of course you bloody don’t.”

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Twinkle twinkle Little star must have played for the five hundredth time but still Bee wouldn’t shut her eyes. Every time Archie tried to creep out of the room she would start to bellow. He was trapped on the floor holding his daughter’s little hand and there was no way she was going to let him go to his own bed. As he drifted off trying not to shiver he tried to make a mental note to bring his duvet into the room before he put Bee to bed.

What felt like five minutes later he heard the flat door slam. ‘Damn what was Jodie doing making that noise coming in,’ he thought. He looked at Bee but she was fast asleep at last and his stiff joints made him realise they both must have been for hours. He crawled out of the nursery on hands and feet to the kitchen diner.

Jodie was pouring herself a whiskey as she stood teetering in her new shoes and makeup.

“I thought you went drinking, why are you having a whiskey, didn’t you have enough/” asked Arche

“Takes the edge off coming home.”

“Jodie that’s an awful thing to say. We’ve missed you,” said Archie rubbing the sleep out of his eyes and looking around for something to eat.

“I doubt it – you two are obsessed with each other, I don’t think Bee would have noticed I wasn’t here.”

“She’s only a baby Jodie, It’s all about her primary functions. I do think you not breast feeding might have something to do with it though.”

Jodie had been determined not to breast feed. She knew how that would tie her to the baby for at least six months, she’d seen it with her friends. No way, she’d spent long enough giving her body over to growing the baby that was enough. She wasn’t going to have it rule her boobs as well.

“Don’t you want to see her?”

“What for?”

“Jodie, the feelings aren’t going to come if you don’t spend any time with her. You are going to have to get more involved as my share of the parental leave is finishing next month. You are going to have to pretend. What is that term “fake it till you make it.”

“I don’t think that counts with a baby.”

“If you express feelings you don’t yet feel, make promises you’re not sure you can keep, it will get your juices flowing.”

“My juices!”

“You know what I mean, you’ve locked everything up inside you. I know it’s there but you have to start somewhere, come with me, let’s go and look at Bee.”

Archie took Jodie by the hand and led her into the nursery and stood over the cot looking down at their four month old baby who looked cherubic, Jodie’s sharp expression softened, a smile spread over her face.

“You made that” said Archie and squeezed Jodie’s hand just as Bee woke up and let out a piercing scream.

“Shit I’m out of here!” said Jodie, grabbing her bag and leaving the flat.