The Cradle Snatcher

Tess Stimson

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Clare

Orgasms are so tricky, aren't they? You need just the right mood and atmosphere; one false note and it's all over, however diligently your husband tongues your clitoris. I've never really enjoyed oral sex at all, actually, but I didn't like to say so when we first met in case it made me seem dull. And then you get stuck with it, don't you? You can hardly tell your husband after seven years of marriage that he's barking up the wrong tree. I knew I was too tense from the start, of course; but when I put something on my List, I like to get it done.

'Darling,' Marc says, looking up from between my labia, 'is something wrong?'

Not that sex is ever a chore. I put facials and reflexology on my List too. How else could I run seven boutique flower shops in seven different parts of London and still keeps things ticking over smoothly at home without being ruthlessly organized? It may not seem very romantic, but if more wives put sex on their lists, there'd be fewer divorces. Though I don't think Marc would see it quite that way. Poor Marc. He wasn't really in the mood tonight either: he wanted, rather keenly, to watch the ice hockey on cable (his home team, the Montreal Canadiens, were playing); but of course it's never difficult to change a man's mind.

They don't need warm baths, soft music, candlelight and forty minutes of foreplay. Or even a flesh-and-blood woman, come to that. He returns conscientiously to his task, but I'm tired and we both have to be up in five hours, so I . . . well, I exaggerate things a bit. We all tell little white lies from time to time; imagine the scene on Christmas morning if we all said what we really thought of that hideous nest of fleshcoloured Tupperware boxes. Sometimes faking pleasure is the only polite thing to do. After a brief interval, Marc slides comfortably inside me. I hold him close so he doesn't pull out too soon and waste our efforts.

Published by Pan Books

Three months isn't very long to try for a baby; but I'm already thirty-seven years old. I work very hard to make sure my handsome, charming husband forgets he's nearly a decade younger than me; but I don't forget. Not for a moment. Sex with Marc is usually very nice. So it's unfortunate I conceive during one of our more pedestrian encounters. My pregnancy is textbook; I know, because I read fourteen of them. They give different, and frequently conflicting, advice, but when in doubt I err on the side of caution. As I explain to Marc (crossing my fingers behind my back): it isn't that I've gone off sex, but neither of us wants to take any risks with the baby. And then, at the thirteen-week nuchal fold scan, we discover it's babies, plural. Marc is delighted, of course, at this sign of his exceptional virility. Once I get over my initial shock, I quickly see the practical advantages. Two babies are scarcely more work than one; it's just a question of organization. Doubling up on the home-made apple pure´e, that sort of thing. It's taken five years of marriage and a great deal of careful planning to create a window in our schedules, and finances, for this pregnancy. At least now I won't have to take time off from PetalPushers again. Marc may have wanted six children (he has five older sisters), but two has always been my limit.

'Darling! Twins?' my mother ventures when I break the news. 'Clare, are you quite sure that's wise?'

'A little late now,' I say drily. 'Davina, I manage nineteen staff and seven shops. I think I can take care of two small infants. I've researched it thoroughly.'

'I'm sure you could write a marvellous thesis on childrearing,' Davina says, gathering her summer furs, 'but it's not quite the same thing as actually doing it.'

Kettles and pots come to mind, but I let it pass. My mother has never pretended to enjoy motherhood; possessed of a maternal instinct that would make one tremble for a pet rabbit, she made a point of not taking the slightest interest in me or my younger brother, Xan, until we were legally adults. Growing up, I understood 'mother' to mean a remote, impatient figure who brushed away hugs - 'Darling! Sticky fingers!' – and punctured the small accomplishments of her children with verbal stilettos:

'Sweet that you came top in Biology, but, darling, there are only twentytwo of you in the class.' I was quite sure she loved us; and just as certain she'd never have had us at all had my father not made it clear her duty – and his fortune – required the provision of an heir.

I've never blamed her for palming us off on a series of nannies, of course; but from the start I was determined to do things differently. It never occurs to me that my childcare plans are at best vague; at worst steeped in denial. By the time I'm seven months pregnant, I'm completely prepared. Everything on my Baby List has been satisfyingly crossed off. Stair gates are installed in our Chelsea townhouse – 'The rug-rats aren't even here yet and you're corralling them,' Marc grumbles good-naturedly – and plastic safety covers fitted to every electricity outlet. The nursery is decorated a gender-neutral pale green with child-friendly non-toxic paints; an artist friend stencils primroses (signifying hope and youth), daisies (innocence) and asters (tiny beginnings from which great things proceed) around the door and windows. I spend weeks researching travel systems that incorporate the maximum number of

safety features whilst providing ultimate comfort to the infant(s). The obstetrician I select (having interviewed four) dissuades me, against my better judgement, from the sleep-apnoea monitor, but I have Marc mount a state-of-the-art video system throughout the house so I can keep an eye on the twins wherever I am.

Craig, my VP, is primed to take over the reins at PetalPushers at a moment's notice. I finish all my Christmas shopping by November so I won't have to rush around with two newborns should they arrive before their due date (New Year's Eve). My overnight bag is packed and all set to go. I'm ready. The twins, it seems, are not.

I try to rest, as the books suggest, but I've never been much good at waiting. I prefer to make things happen. If I wasn't so determined to have a natural birth (I've read that drugs cross the placenta, making the baby drowsy and less eager to feed in those first vital bonding hours after birth) I'd seriously consider an elective caesarean. It's so hard to plan ahead when you don't know your schedule. And then on Christmas Eve my waters break as I travel the District & Circle Line, my arms filled with a massed ball of mistletoe for one of my most important clients. I double up as a belt of white pain tightens around my abdomen. It's so much worse than I thought it'd be. Why doesn't anyone tell you? The newspaper vendor puts his thick padded jacket around my shoulders. My teeth chatter. I can't seem to get warm. I want it to stop. I want this to be over. I want my husband—

'Clare!'

'Marc!' I sob, clutching his hand.

Voices fade in and out:

'We need to get her into a taxi—'

'Too late for that, mate—'

Someone is talking to me. I want them to go away. I'm so tired. I could bear the pain if they'd just let me sleep first. If only I could rest, and come back to this tomorrow—

'Clare, stay with me,' Marc demands. 'When I tell you to push, give it all you've got.'

'But my private room! My TENS! Everything's arranged—'

'Darling, our babies are coming! Isn't this exciting?'

'You fucking try it!' I yell.

Marc, sotto voce: 'Christ, it must be bad. My wife never swears.'

'You might want to let that pass for now, mate.'

'I could see the baby's head during that contraction, Clare. When the next one comes, I want you to push - '

'Just get this thing out of me!'

Suddenly I have a desperate need to bear down, as impossible to ignore or control as the urge to vomit. It feels like a huge iron fist is trying to punch its way through my rectum. It can't be the babies, I think stupidly, it's in the wrong place, I'm going to shit myself, everyone will see but I can't help it, I can't stop it, I have to push — I feel a burning, tearing sensation, as if I'm splitting open like a ripe melon.

'One more push . . .'

This isn't right, it can't be, I'm not big enough, something is wrong—

'The baby's beautiful, Clare, beautiful. Push!'

'I am fucking pushing!' I scream.

There's a sudden rush and slither, and the pressure has gone.

'Open your eyes,' Marc whispers.

My baby is placed in my arms. He isn't crying. I open my eyes and look directly into his, deep blue like mine and already questioning. His skin and hair are still waxy with vernix.

Minutes later, his twin sister is born. She yells her fury at the indignity of her arrival immediately. Dimly I register that my son still hasn't drawn his first breath. I hear the sound of sirens, and a paramedic thrusts her way towards us.

'Tell them not to worry, I think I'm getting the hang of this,' I say; and promptly black out.

Our daughter, Poppy (named for the qualities I see in her: pleasure, consolation and peace), takes after Marc. A vital, vigorous baby you want to devour, with smooth honeyed skin, thick dark hair and lashes like Dusty Springfield's. Rowan is pale and blond like me. I hope that, by giving him a name associated with potency and magic, it will somehow keep him safe.

For two weeks Marc shuttles heroically between home, where Poppy is thriving, and the NICU of the Princess Eugenie Hospital, where Rowan clings precariously to life.

Meanwhile, in a different hospital on the other side of London, their hormonal, humiliated and exhausted mother is confined to bed by a virulent infection picked up giving birth in the streets like a gin-soaked whore in a Hogarth print.

Davina doesn't visit, of course. I didn't expect her to. I'm astonished by the apparent ease with which Marc has taken to fatherhood. I'm the one biologically programmed to bond with my young; and yet, as I struggle to adjust to the idea that I'm now a mother, he's the one who seems to find it as natural as breathing. Marc Elias was not

promising parenthood – or marriage – material when we ran into one another at four o'clock one foggy February morning nearly seven years ago. Literally: I didn't even see his grey BMW until it slammed into the side of my van.

'I'm so sorry,' I apologized, as only women do when they're clearly in the right. 'But it's one-way.'

The driver buzzed down his window. 'You didn't signal—'

'As I said,' I repeated, rather less politely, 'it is one-way.'

'Look, it's only a dent. You'll be able to—'

If there's one thing I can't stand, it's a man who won't take responsibility. I held up my hand to silence him. 'That really isn't good enough,' I said coolly, 'is it?' It didn't occur to me to be nervous till he got out. At five-ten, I'm tall, but he towered over me. It was still dark, and the streets of New Covent Garden were deserted; most stallholders and early-bird wholesale buyers like me were already inside the covered market, out of the wind and sleet. No one would hear me scream. I stood my ground and wondered if my knee would even reach his groin. He caught me completely off-guard.

'How about lunch?' he said.

Later, as I sat at the Oyster Bar and toyed with my shellfish, I wondered what he wanted. I hadn't been fool enough to think he'd been mesmerized by my beauty. I'm no oil painting at the best of times, and seven years ago, my life was as far from the best of times as it was possible to be. I'd foolishly over-extended myself buying up shop leases across London as if I was playing Monopoly; regularly putting in twenty-hour days just to keep PetalPushers afloat. I was running on empty, and it showed. With the benefit of daylight, I could see that Marc, on the other hand, looked good enough to eat. Skin the colour of caramel, eyes like bitter chocolate. (I learned later he owed those smouldering Omar Sharif looks to his Lebanese father, who'd emigrated with the family to Canada when Marc was four.) He was witty, charming and well read; he even had a sexy foreign accent, somewhere between French and North American, thanks to his upbringing in Montreal. He was also, at twenty-three, eight years younger than me.

He asked me out to lunch again; I said no. As if following a woo-by-numbers rulebook, he sent me books of poetry, chocolates shaped like lilies, tickets to Madame Butterfly; I thanked him and went with my brother, Xan. Of course I didn't take Marc seriously; despite the millions he traded daily at a Canadian bank in the City, as far as I was concerned he was still barely out of short trousers. I was thirty-one; I needed an older man, an equal, someone I could look up to (metaphorically rather than literally). But despite – or perhaps because of – his youth, he continued to pursue me with a level of ardour and persistence I'd never experienced before. Most men were put off once they discovered I had a First from Oxford and earned well into six figures. Marc was different. He wasn't fazed by any of it. I put it down to the fact that he was so much younger; maybe this generation of New Men really did see

women as equal. Even so, I might never have returned his calls, had he not found my website and started emailing me. At first, his emails were the kind of casual notes you'd send a friend; I'd thought (with a surprising pang) that he'd given up on the romance idea. He sounded off about global warming (ah! his age was showing there) and debated the wisdom of remaking classic movies. Then gradually he started to tell me about his life; he discussed his five older sisters in such detail I felt as if I'd stepped into an Austen novel. He told me how he'd felt when his best friend shot himself in the head at the age of seventeen, and wondered if he'd ever have a marriage as strong as his parents'. It was less what he said, of course, but that he said it at all: for a woman used to dating emotionally constipated toxic bachelors, nothing could have been more seductive than a man who told me, without asking, what he was thinking. For six months he emailed me pieces of his life, and before I knew it, he was a part of mine. When he asked me to marry him, a year after we met, I still had no idea what he saw in me. I sucked in my stomach as I gazed up at the shining young knight standing beside me at the altar, and prayed he loved me for my mind.

'Tell me,' my mother, Davina, said, 'has he ever asked you what you're thinking?'

It is Marc who brings my newborn daughter to stay with me every day, so I can feed her, not my mother. I've read about the difficulties of breastfeeding and latching on, of course, but nothing has prepared me for the reality of the two hot, painful, misshapen bombs strapped to my chest. The slightest brush against them is torture. Poppy's suckling isn't the tranquil, bonding experience I'd imagined, but a violent wrestling match with an incubus I can never satisfy.

'She's doing it wrong!' I wail, as Poppy squirms and screams, red-faced and hungry, in my arms. 'She's got to open her mouth more!'

'Clare, you need to relax. The more upset you get, the more you upset her.'

'She's not getting anything! She'll starve! Davina was right, I'm going to be a terrible mother, I can't even feed my own baby . . .'

Marc perches on the hospital bed and reaches around me, cradling us both in his arms. 'She's just getting used to it, same as you. Look, stroke her cheek, so she turns her face towards you. There, you see?'

'I'm the one with the breasts,' I sob. 'How is it you know what to do?'

'I have five sisters, and seventeen nieces and nephews. You pick up a few things.'

'I should be able to do it. Why can't I do it?'

'You are doing it,' he soothes.

As Marc promised, Poppy soon gets the hang of it, but by then my nipples are cracked and bleeding. If only I could ask my mother what to do; and if wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

On the advice of one of the nurses, Marc brings in cold cabbage leaves for me to score and place against my engorged breasts, but nothing helps. Every time Poppy latches on, I want to scream with agony. But at least I'm managing to feed my daughter, however painfully. I haven't even seen my son, fighting for life in a hospital the other side of London, since he was born. Marc takes dozens of photos on his mobile phone, but I ache to hold him. He looks so tiny, though he's putting on weight faster than Poppy. A nurse with a bottle is nurturing my son better than I can nourish my own daughter. I can't seem to get it together. I burst into tears all the time, and forget things I know I know. My hair falls out in clumps, my stomach is stretch-marked and pouchy, and I'm bleeding so heavily I have to wear a huge pad like a mattress between my legs. I have eight stitches in my perineum and haemorrhoids the size of grapes. Even my toenail polish is chipped. I've been a mother less than a fortnight, and already I'm letting myself go.

In the second week of January, Rowan is unexpectedly discharged from the NICU, a healthy six pounds, and Marc is finally told he can take me home.

'I'm not ready,' I panic, 'I can't, not yet—'

'You'll be fine,' Marc smiles, strapping the twins into the back of the Range Rover. 'You'll feel much better when you get home and everything goes back to normal.'

Normal? I think. Nothing will ever be normal again. If I could just get a good night's sleep. Gather my resources. But the first night home, the twins wake at midnight, at two, at three, three-thirty, four-thirty. Poppy feeds hungrily, but Rowan struggles in my arms, red-faced and frantic, wanting the familiar rubber teat of a bottle in his mouth, not this strange, warm nipple. I'm used to Poppy in my arms; when I cradle Rowan, I feel as if I'm holding someone else's baby. Marc sleeps through it all. At 6 a.m., he leans over the
bed and kisses me on the cheek. His jaw is smooth and freshly shaven. Blearily, I push myself up on one elbow. 'You're going to work?'

'I have to, Clare. I've already taken too much time off looking after Poppy. There's a major deal going through in the European—'

To my shame, I start to cry.

'Oh, darling. You're going to be fine.' He sits on the edge of the bed and thumbs the tears from my cheek. He looks as handsome and carefree as ever. 'You've just got to get into the swing of things. It's not that hard once you
establish a routine. Fran said she'd pop over later this morning. She's done this herself three times, remember. She knows what it's like.'

'But nothing's organized, we need more nappies, food—'

'Sweetheart, you've been organized for months,' Marc laughs. 'By the way, can you get me some more razor blades? I forgot to buy some, and I'm out.'

The moment the front door shuts behind him, Poppy wakes. Her imperious cries disturb her brother. Rowan's sobs are anguished and desperate. I agitate beside their cot, not knowing who to pick up first. I've never been alone with my son before. I don't know what he wants. I don't know how to please him. Feeling guilty, I choose Poppy.

'I can't,' I plead with my son. 'I can't feed both of you together.'

I wrestle with the buttons on my maternity nightdress and unhook my nursing bra with one hand, fumbling in my haste, petrified I'm going to drop Poppy. Rowan's cries redouble. He sucks in a breath, but doesn't exhale, mouth open and eyes screwed shut in a silent scream. His face and lips turn blue. I tug Poppy off the breast, ignoring her indignant yells. Holding her under one arm, I scoop up Rowan with the other, then stand there with two screaming infants, unable to satisfy either one. Tears stream down my own cheeks. I don't know what to do. I don't know which mouth to feed. Somehow, I prop us all in the nursing chair, using two of the ridiculous oversized soft toys the twins have been given to protect their heads from its beautifully carved flame-cherrywood arms. (Why didn't I pick the cheap padded rocking chair? What use is carving to a baby?) I wedge them on each side of me, trapping their small hot bodies against the chair. I push one small face – none too gently – towards each fat brown nipple. Snuffling like a little animal, Poppy latches on immediately. Rowan twists his face away, searching again for the bottle. I yelp with frustration, and rub my milky nipple hard against his mouth. Finally, he starts to suck. I close my eyes. For the first time in my life, I feel a flicker of sympathy for my mother.

Fran is late. Fran is always late, which usually drives me wild – honestly, it's just a question of planning ahead – but today I'm relieved at the reprieve. It's midday, and I've barely managed to get dressed. How do other mothers do it? How do they even find time to go to the bathroom?

'Sorry I'm late,' Fran says, kissing my cheek. 'I caught Kirsty smoking on the nanny-cam, the little cow. I'd fire her, only she might go running to Rod, and this divorce is bloody enough as it is.' She unwinds her scarf and throws it over the banister. 'Darling, you look marvellous! So thin! Where are the twins, I've been dying to see Rowan—'

'Upstairs. Sleeping.'

'I'll be quiet as a mouse!' She's upstairs before I can stop her. Reluctantly, I follow her into our bedroom, where the twins are top-to-tail in the very heavy, old-fashioned pram that Marc and I lugged upstairs last night, since they refuse to settle in the expensive matching Simon Horne cots in their newly decorated nursery. The only way I can get them to sleep is by rocking the pram until my arm aches.

Fran leans over them, and I flinch as the oak floorboards squeak. Don't wake don't wake don't wake.

'Oh, Clare. They're adorable,' she breathes.

'They are now.'

'Oh, dear. I remember that feeling,' Fran sighs. 'I know it takes a bit of getting used to, especially with twins, but you'll soon get the hang of it. And think of the benefits of getting the whole baby thing out of the way in one go, two for the price of one. Perhaps if Rod and I had done that—'

'It took me four hours to get us all ready this morning,' I say bleakly. 'First I had to feed the twins, and then they needed changing. I put them back down for five minutes to have a shower, but Rowan screamed and screamed until he was sick all over the sheets and his clean clothes, so I had to strip the pram and change him for a second time, by which time Poppy wanted feeding again. I just can't seem to catch up. You've no idea how hard it is to feed two babies at once. Rowan keeps refusing the breast, I practically have to force him—'

I break into sudden sobs, and clamp my hand over my mouth to keep from waking the twins. Fran pulls me into a sympathetic hug. 'Clare, sweetheart, you're doing a wonderful job,' she says firmly. 'Everyone feels like this at first. You should have seen me when Hector was born. Every time he had a temperature, I was rushing off to Casualty, convinced it was meningitis or worse.'

'I feel – I feel so hopeless . . .'

'You're not hopeless,' Fran says, misunderstanding.

'Darling, you've had a terribly rough start. I can't believe how marvellously you've coped with it all. First having the babies in the street – I still can't believe it! – and then getting so ill, and not even being able to see poor Rowan for two weeks.'

'I don't think,' I say, 'he likes me. He cries every time I pick him up.'

'Of course he likes you! He's just getting used to you, that's all. Look,' she adds, steering me back downstairs, into the sitting room, and handing me a tissue, 'would you like to borrow Kirsty to help out for a few hours a day, just till you find your feet? Now Imogen's at kindergarten she's got time on her hands, and as long as you frisk her for cigarettes on the way in, she's marvellously organized. You could have her for a couple of hours after she's done the school run—'

'That's very sweet of you, but we'll be fine,' I say quickly. 'You're right. We just need to get ourselves into a routine.'

'If you change your mind—'

'I won't,' I say firmly.

But, over the next weeks, there are times I long to swallow my pride and take Fran up on her offer. I'd crawl over broken glass and stick shards in my eyeballs for a single good night's sleep. Rowan never takes milk from me without a fight. He twists

and turns in my arms, arching his back and kicking his legs as if he's trying to get away from me. Poppy nurses contentedly till she falls asleep with a smile on her milky lips. Rowan is sick after every feed; my clothes and hair permanently smell of vomit. I'm ashamed to admit it, even to myself, but there are times when I find it very difficult to summon even a shred of affection for my son.

Then, when he's three weeks old, he develops colic. I've read about it, of course, but the first time Rowan shrieks in agony, cramps twisting his tiny stomach, his little legs pulled up tight against his frail body, I have no idea what is wrong. Marc and I are frantic with worry, imagining twisted bowels, peritonitis or worse. When the paediatrician tells us the next day it's colic – 'Hundred-day colic,' he says cheerfully, 'never lasts longer than that' – I cry again, this time with relief. But that night, Rowan screams solidly from eleven till four. I give him his useless medicine, rub his back, massage his tummy, stroke his bare toes. He doesn't stop screaming. I take him downstairs so he doesn't keep Poppy and Marc awake too; we eventually collapse into an exhausted sleep on the sofa together, both of us cried out. I never even hear Marc leave for work the next morning. The next night, at Fran's suggestion, Marc takes him for a drive; Rowan falls asleep when the car is moving, and wakes up the second Marc steps back inside. Marc and I are both shattered, but, as he says, he has a full-time job to hold down. One mistake could cost his company billions. I tell him to sleep in the spare room to get some rest, and then resent him furiously when he agrees.

By the time the twins are six weeks old, I'm a zombie. I'm dizzy from lack of sleep and weak from having no time to eat. I cry all the time. All I care about is the next pocket of time in the day when I can snatch a few moments of sleep. The second the twins close their eyes, I close mine. I wake when they wake. I have no life outside their needs. There's no one I can talk to. Everyone thinks I'm coping marvellously; they've no idea that inside I'm falling apart at the seams. Marc's mother had six children in seven years; how can I admit to him I can't handle two? Fran's sympathetic, but she's got her own life. I can't burden her with my problems. I could manage, if it was just Poppy. She sleeps through the night already. If it was just Poppy, I wouldn't be so tired; I could catch up with things, pick up the reins at work (Craig's stopped bothering to leave messages, since I never return them). I'd be a better mother, a good mother: the kind of mother who plays peek-a-boo with her new baby and blows raspberries on her tummy, instead of slumming around the house in a stained nightdress at three in the afternoon. If I didn't have Rowan, I could enjoy Poppy. She's such an easy baby. She goes four hours between feeds; she gurgles with pleasure whenever I walk into the room. But I'm so tired and anxious, I'm a nervous wreck. I'm short-changing them both. If something should – happen – to Rowan . . . Not that I'd ever want it to. He's my son. Of course I don't want anything to happen to him. But . . . but if it did . . . For a brief moment, as I pace the floor in the soulless small hours one night with my screaming son, shivering with tiredness, I give in and allow myself to picture life without him. Just me and Marc and Poppy, a perfect little family. Going on outings, feeding the ducks, walking in the park. Simple, ordinary things that are beyond us now. Poppy deserves better. It's not that I don't care about Rowan. But I have to think of what's best for Poppy. It's only because I love her so much I'm thinking such unnatural, terrible thoughts. The clock in the hall chimes twice. I stare at the wailing infant in my arms with curious

detachment. I feel nothing: sadness or pleasure, grief or anger. I'm at the bottom of an abyss deep below the dark ocean. Nothing reaches me. I sit on the sofa and place him carefully next to me, wedging a cushion on either side of him so that he doesn't fall. I know even as I do it that it's pointless. Unless I pace with him in my arms, he'll scream himself sick. Within seconds, his cries are deafening.

Instead of picking him up, I sit and watch him scream, his face scarlet and shiny with tears. If I left him, would he literally cry himself to death? Or would he realize it was hopeless and give up? He'll wake Marc and Poppy. They need their sleep. You wouldn't think his lungs were big enough to make this much noise. The streetlight outside casts orange Hallowe'en shadows across the floor. It's never truly dark in the city. Never truly quiet. The room is filled with screaming. My head vibrates with sound, the way it does when a car has stopped next to you at a traffic light, the bass so loud you feel rather than hear it. My knuckles are white from gripping the arms of the sofa, but I can't feel my hands.

'I'm sorry,' I say calmly. 'I can't do this any more. It's too much. It's not fair to Poppy. You do understand, don't you? It's not fair to Poppy.'

And then I pick up a cushion to smother my son.