

And baby makes three... by Anne Coates

Lucy had just stepped into the bath and sank with relief into the bubbles when the baby cried. She could hear her on the baby-monitor, something she always carried around with her, then as the screams became more insistent, she had no need for such a device.

“Oh hell,” she muttered and was reaching for a towel when the cries ceased abruptly.

“There, don’t cry precious,” the voice of her husband, Tim, crooned over the alarm. “Daddy’s here.”

Sinking back into the bath, Lucy breathed a sigh of gratitude. Thank God for Tim, he was such an involved father. “Too involved?” asked a tiny voice in the back of her head and her mind went back to a conversation she’d had with Megan. They’d met antenatal classes and now they often shared their experiences over a hurried lunch while both babies slept.

“Don’t you think it a bit ... well ... odd, the amount of time and energy Tim devotes to Sophie?” Her friend had asked.

Lucy laughed. “You’re just jealous because Jake leaves everything to do with Adam to you. I don’t suppose Jake’s even changed a nappy. You’ll regret it later when you want some time for yourself.”

But now a small part of Lucy’s mind wondered if Megan was the luckier one. Jake was always there for Megan. He had enticed his mother over for a few days so that they could go off for a romantic weekend. Megan had come back positively glowing.

“Oh Lucy, we had such a good time. The hotel was fantastic - pool, jacuzzi, sauna... and I even had one of those hot stone massages. Good food, wine and company. You and Tim should try it some time - it did wonders for our sex life.”

Lucy smiled what she hoped was the sort of smile that conveyed the message that there was absolutely nothing wrong with her sex life, thank you very much.

And there hadn’t been - before Sophie was born and that was six months ago now. Lucy patted her stomach. Not quite as firm as it had been but still far from flabby. Her breasts, however, were still enormous.

“You’re beautiful,” Tim said massaging oil on to her eight month pregnant abdomen, “and so sexy. I think I’ll have to keep you pregnant for ever.”

“Mmm,” Lucy sighed as his tongue found the hollow just below her neck and her body arched to him. Sex had always been wonderful between them. But in pregnancy every sensation seemed to be times two. The baby kicked - in protest? - and they both burst out laughing.

“She’s already making her presence felt.” Lucy giggled.

“Her...” he looked at her askance – “is there something you haven’t told me?”

“No, it’s just a feeling I have.” She raised herself and rested her head on her elbow, looking down into her husband’s deep brown eyes and just for a moment she saw him as he must have been as a small boy. That wondering look she adored. Would her child look at her like that?

“And if it is a girl,” she said with a laugh, “will I have to compete for your attentions?”

“No way,” he said as the rhythm of his lovemaking took over and words became superfluous.

“Now, your daddy’s just going to check your nappy and then we’re going to have a big cuddle...”

Lucy smiled. Tim’s voice soothed Sophie as she imagined him undoing her babygro and changing the nappy. Everything would be done unhurriedly, tenderly. She wondered how many men were that gentle. She heard a few gurgles over the monitor as Tim chatted away.

“I bet you’re going to grow just like you’re mummy and you’ll break all the boys hearts.” Lucy could have sworn she also heard him mumble “Just like mine” but she couldn’t be sure and anyway it wasn’t true, was it? “There my tinker, all clean and comfy.”

The image of them together was so strong she could almost visualise him walking up and down the room, nestling Sophie in his arms as she dropped off to sleep again. She always did that for Tim. Whenever she tried that the baby demanded to be fed and she gave in, unequal to the piercing cries that would ensue if she didn’t. She felt envious of both Tim and Sophie.

The bath was cooling and Lucy topped it up with more hot water, unwilling to move,

unwilling to face bed and Tim.

The model husband, he hadn't been putting too much pressure on her but she could tell he was feeling more and more aggrieved with each refusal she made.

Last night had been the worst. She cringed, remembering. Tim had snuggled up to her and immediately she'd felt her body tense.

"Not now Tim," she pleaded. "I need my sleep."

"I have needs too, you know."

"I know you do but right now I feel the world and his wife can make demands on my body and as a person I don't count."

"Thanks a lot!" Tim sounded really angry. "I think I'll sleep on the sofa in Sophie's room. That way I won't disturb you at all."

Lucy was too tired to argue and Tim left earlier than usual the next morning. It wasn't that she didn't want to make love. She did. And they had. Once or twice. But the baby had interrupted or she had been distracted by worrying about her loosened body, desperately tired and still feeling weepy although she didn't know why. And all the time she was putting on a brave face - especially in front of Megan who seemed to positively glow with motherhood.

"It's all that breast-feeding," Megan said next morning over a cup of coffee. "It's taking it out of you. You should put yourself first for a while. After all what good is a mother on her last legs. Give her a bottle."

"It's tempting," Lucy agreed but in her heart she knew she wouldn't. She'd been determined to feed the baby herself and it wouldn't last forever. "I just don't fancy getting up to heat bottles in the night - and all that sterilising..."

"Get Tim to do it," Megan replied.

Lucy smiled but privately thought that perhaps Tim was doing too much already. He'd certainly bonded with his daughter and he seemed so proud of every minor milestone in her young life.

It was several moments before Lucy realised that Tim was standing there watching her. She smiled and looked down at the baby at her breast who, sound asleep, had such a look of deep contentment on her face that Lucy could almost feel love exploding inside

her.

“Don’t move. You look so peaceful and it’s a beautiful sight to come home to.”

“Mmm but it would have been nice to have had a few appetising aromas wafting from the kitchen. I’m sorry Tim, I completely lost track of the time.”

Tim knelt in front of her. “Don’t be silly, darling. I don’t expect you to be the little wife just because we’ve had a baby. Remember, I do know my way around the kitchen.”

“Oh but...”

He kissed the protest from her lips, drew the curtains and turned on the lamps. The room took on a warm, inviting glow and Lucy relaxed back into the sofa. She must have closed her eyes and nodded off because it seemed only seconds later that Tim was edging his way into the room bearing a huge tray which he put on the coffee table.

“There you are - a feast.” He popped an olive into her mouth. Can you manage with Sophie or shall I move her?”

“No she’ll wake.”

“Then allow me to do the honours madame,” he said with a gallant bow and began feeding her portions of smoked salmon and tiny cherry tomatoes.

Lucy giggled as a little trickle of wine escaped from the corner of her mouth and Tim leaned over and licked it.

He sat back. “Why the giggle - I was trying to be sexy.”

“I know. I was remembering.” Remembering a time before they had married. She had prepared this same picnic: olives, smoked salmon, cheeses, French bread, black grapes and a bottle of good wine and they’d eaten it in bed at her flat.

She couldn’t understand Tim’s expression. He looked hurt, put out.

“This reminds me of another picnic. The night you proposed?” Tim had said he would keep her hostage there until she said yes. They had made love until dawn.

Tim grinned. For a moment he looked just as he had done that evening. “Well, that certainly was a night to remember.”

And there hadn’t been many of those lately – unsaid words that hung in the air between them. When they married they had both worked hard at keeping the romance alive. Lucy had felt so complete as a couple she was at first rather dismayed to find herself pregnant. They had talked about it of course and it was a joint decision for her to

come off the pill. Nevertheless she had thought it would have taken a bit longer to fall pregnant.

Tim was ecstatic. After she'd told him, rather hesitantly, he'd swept her off to bed. He'd made love to her so tenderly, he was so joyful that a treacherous thought came into her mind. Tim had married her because he had been desperate to have children! After this one was born would she still be his priority?

However although the prospect of parenthood obviously delighted Tim and he'd often come home with some purchase he'd made for the baby and worked hard decorating the nursery, he was still her loving, sexy adorable and adoring mate. Their lovemaking was more tender but deeply satisfying.

As Lucy grew larger and the life within her made its presence felt, she had moments of sheer panic. "Will I be able to cope with motherhood?" she'd say to Tim. "I've never felt particularly maternal towards other people's babies. Maybe I'm not cut out to be a mother."

Tim would do his best to reassure her. "Don't worry. You'll make a brilliant mother, just you wait and see. Love takes over."

Fortunately he was right. The moment Sophie arrived in the world and was put into her arms, she was overwhelmed. She hadn't believed it was possible to feel so much love. Tim couldn't stop grinning. He cosseted them both. For two weeks they lived in a little cocoon interrupted occasionally by visiting friends and family. Then Tim went back to work.

"I can't believe how time consuming a baby can be!" she confided to Megan. She was exhausted but her life was filled with joy. But not sex. That was something she now avoided – she couldn't believe she'd ever feel such passion again. In unguarded moments Tim looked so hurt and – disappointed. Yes that was it – disappointment.

The wine had made her feel light-headed. Tim leaned across and kissed the corner of her mouth. Then his lips glided down her neck, kissing just below her ear, then her throat. His hand cupped her cheek as he gazed into her eyes, his breath mingling with hers. Lucy felt a dart of arousal. She wanted him to make love to her, to make it right between them again.

Then she realised there was uncertainty in his eyes. It wasn't just up to him. After

putting him off so often, she had to make a move. With her free hand she pulled his head towards her. Her tongue outlined his lips...

Sophie let out a long sigh.

“She looks so comfortable but I think she could be moved,” Tim suggested.

“She’ll wake.”

“No she won’t. Here, take off your blouse.” He noticed her stunned expression.

“Come on, I’ll help.” He undid the remaining buttons watching the baby all the time.

She slipped one arm out of its sleeve and sat forward as Tim guided the blouse off her shoulder and round to the arm enclosing the sleeping infant.

“That’s it, let go.” He gathered the blouse around the child and gently placed her at the end of the sofa. She didn’t murmur. Within seconds Tim had guided Lucy onto the floor and before her body or mind had a chance to protest they were making love.

Lucy stretched and smiled. She felt fabulously relaxed. Her body glowed. Tim still loved her, still fancied her. The baby hadn’t made a difference in that way. She should have known that.

“You know,” Tim broke into her thoughts, “this evening when I came home the house was so dark and quiet for one awful moment I thought you’d left me.”

“Good grief - why?”

Tim concentrated very hard on pouring two glasses of wine. “Alan told me I was doing it all wrong that I was paying too much attention to Sophie... that I should be more of a lover and less of a father.”

“Don’t tell me - you should take me a way for a weekend without the baby.”

“Yes.” Tim looked up but waited for her to speak.

Lucy sighed. “Megan told me to give up breast-feeding as it was clearly exhausting me. And she told me about their fantastic weekend in Dorset.”

“Well, we could go away if you want to,” Tim said.

“Yes, I think it’s a great idea.” Lucy sipped her wine watching Tim’s face all the time. “You’ve been working hard and we both need a break.” Tim tried to hide his disappointment. “But I think we’ll find a hotel that’s suitable for families. Sophie needs to get used to new experiences – you never know she might even sleep long enough for us to have a meal in the restaurant.”

As if on cue, Sophie woke with a muffled sob. Lucy was about to reach out for her when Tim shook his head. They were both silent, unmoving. Sophie kicked her little legs in the air, found her thumb and closed her eyes. For several seconds neither dared even breathe. Then they smiled like two conspirators almost caught in the act, a couple again.

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