



Source: John F. Burns, 'With Hussein gone, other Iraqi trials lose impact', *New York Times online*, 17/05/07.

Tags: [child/parent](#), [intimacy](#), [home](#)
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First of all, the baby was asleep in the other room, and Louisa didn't want Matt waking her up when he arrived. Of course, the baby had slept through their arguments before, and they had always argued, even before she told him the truth about her infidelity which, obviously, led to an even bigger argument. But she had decided that they shouldn't fight in front of the baby, never again. She was trying to clean up her act in that one small way at least. And finally—and she would get to this point third—the third thing was that she was sorry. She could finally admit that what she did was bad and self-destructive and hurtful to other people too, but still, it didn't even mean anything, and yelling about it wasn't going to help, especially because, as she planned on saying from the very beginning, the baby was asleep in the other room.

'What other room?'
'The other room.'
'In the kitchen?'
'It has a dining nook, whatever, she's sleeping.'
'That's her bedroom now?'
'I thought it would be better for both of us if we had our own sleeping spaces.'
'Better for you and me?'
'For me and the baby. Or for me and you, comma, and the baby. I mean, if you came back.' Louisa tried to put a little laugh in her voice when she said, 'comma,' but he didn't laugh with her.
'She's slept through our fights before.'
'Please don't raise your voice. That's the second thing I was going to tell you.'
'So you've got this all mapped out, huh, in your head?'
But she never got to the part of being sorry. Matt just made her so mad sometimes.

That night, after he'd left, she rolled the bassinet back in the bedroom. She didn't want to be alone, and the baby was crying. She took her into bed with her. The paediatrician had explained it all so clearly, all the different options. There was the 'No Cry' sleep solution, but she always felt like she didn't even know what that meant. 'No cry? Like what kind of baby no cries?' they would ask each other. When Matt said it, it was especially funny because he taught remedial junior high English. That's why she had made the joke about the comma. Louisa pulled the thin bed sheet up to her daughter's chest. Her little legs kicked down below. Did she know that her daddy had held her while she was asleep in the kitchen? Is that why she was happy? Option two was called 'Silent Return to Sleep.' Louisa guessed that's what she was doing because the third and last option was 'Extinction' where the parent had to ignore the child. The nicer name was 'Let Cry,' but Louisa couldn't do it anyway.

'How long do you think you'll be gone?'
'I don't know, an hour.'

'Cause sometimes she eats every hour.'
'I thought you said it was more like every four, these days.'
'Usually. But sometimes.'
'I'll bring her back if she's freaking out.'
'I could give you a bottle. I'd have to show you how to give it.'
'Formula?'
'No, I'm pumping. I've got to go back to work soon.'
'Back to work?'
'Get a job. I don't want all the financial burden on you. I could get a job.'
'How does that make sense if you have to pay someone?'
'My mother will watch her.'
'She'll drive two hours, four hours, every day?'
'I'll have her move in for a while.'
'And that's why you're pumping breast milk?'
'Yeah, getting a supply going so when I have to go back to work, you know.'
'Just don't ask your mom yet, okay?'

If cheating on Matt with her pre-natal yoga teacher was the worst thing Louisa had ever done, then confessing to it after the baby was born was the second worst. But the third worst thing turned out to be the best. Because when she went by the Yoga Zone again, still on the fence about whether she should apologise to Matt or stick with her 'It's not like we're married, and you made out with that girl at that bar last New Year's' defence, it became immediately apparent as soon as she took off her shoes at the door that Louisa wasn't the only horny, pregnant lady that Swami David had bagged. She was such an idiot. What if she had gotten some disease and passed it on to the baby? That's what Matt screamed about the most when he screamed, but even then Louisa understood that it wasn't really what he was screaming about. Louisa saw the truth and put her shoes back on.

'I'll sleep on the couch if you want.'
'You don't have to do that. You don't have to wear a Scarlet A for Adultery either.'
'So what do I have to do?'
'You want me to give you some options?'
'Please. I'll take them all.'

She tip-toed into the kitchen. The bassinet looked ghostly: just the LED from Matt's computer lighting up the room. Her daughter lay there awake, eyes bugging in the way they sometimes did which made Louisa nervous even though she knew it was okay. She knew it was okay. It was just one night and there were no promises after that. It felt okay, this option, like a death sentence had been lifted.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Rinne Groff.