

DANGEROUS BABY

By Ed Valentine

(1 M, 1 W)

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DANGEROUS BABY

SETTING:

Twilight. A nursery. Window at the back.
Center, a crib, with baby blanket on the sides, draped all the way to the floor.
We can't see what's inside the crib. Off to one side, a rocking chair.

CHARACTERS:

MAY

New young mother.

LOWELL

New young father.

They are *not* wealthy.

DANGEROUS BABY

AT RISE: A nursery. Center, a crib, with baby blanket on the sides, draped all the way to the floor. We can't see what's inside the crib. The room seems empty.

After a moment, MAY and LOWELL rise from behind the crib wearing clown noses. They peer into the crib.

MAY

It looks just like you.

LOWELL

That's not funny. Not funny at all. Let's try again: *googie googie! Googie googie goo! Attababy attababy! Honkatta honkatta beep beep beep!* Anything?

MAY (takes off clown nose:)

Nothing. Not a thing.

LOWELL (takes off clown nose:)

Not even a smile.

MAY

A giggle.

LOWELL

A wink.

MAY

A smile. Why doesn't it smile? That's what gets me. I mean, don't they –

LOWELL

Normal ones.

MAY

Eventually? Giggle and smile? That's what gets me.
(They pause and watch the baby intently.)

LOWELL

Look! There! Was that a –

MAY

A giggle? That? Gas.

LOWELL

Oh. *Googie googie. Attababy.*

GOD, what do we have to DO?

MAY

Don't –

LOWELL

I mean, what'll make it happy? Nothing makes it happy.

MAY

Him. It's a 'him.'

LOWELL

What'd I say?

MAY

"It."

LOWELL

Oh. Well.

MAY

It's okay. I understand. It's – y'know. Understandable. But it's a 'him,' not an 'it'. Right? I mean, that's without question, isn't it?

(They peer in.)

The thing between his –

LOWELL

Don't get too close.

MAY

No, it's a "him." I'm a proud Poppa of a little - ?

LOWELL

I hate how it stares – how *he* stares. How he watches us, how he stares.

MAY

It *is* disconcerting.

LOWELL

Those eyes darting from me... to you... to me... to you.... Like a metronome.

MAY

Like tennis.

LOWELL

Like a pendulum.

MAY

LOWELL

Like tennis. At least he's attentive.

MAY

It's sizing us up.

LOWELL

Him.

MAY

Whatever. It's dangerous. It's a Dangerous Baby.

LOWELL

Now, now.

(They stare at the baby. LOWELL makes a face.)

Wait – wait – is that a – is that a – THERE! He smiled. I got him to – awwwww.

MAY

Grimace. Gas.

LOWELL

And yawn, a yawn! That's something, at least. We're boring him, maybe. *He's* not boring.

MAY

No.

(Beat. She shudders.)

UGH. You saw, when it yawned. The teeth! Those teeth. Sharp! And baby knows how to use them. Yes, baby does! See the sawdust? And the toothmarks on the slats? Gnawed on them, like–

LOWELL

Like a beaver?

MAY

Yes. His teeth are sharp. I'm not going to breastfeed.

LOWELL

I don't think you should. I wonder: what's he thinking?

MAY

I don't want to know.

LOWELL

What are you thinking?

MAY

You don't want to know.

(Change of lights. MAY and LOWELL are isolated. They speak to us, but separately.)

MAY (cont'd)

I blame him.

LOWELL

I blame her. Not blame, really-

MAY

But I do. I do.

LOWELL

But I do. Secretly.

MAY

Secretly. Don't tell him.

LOWELL

I think about her womb, her womb stacked with hard cubic ovum, like boxes in the corner of a warehouse.

MAY

I think about his sperm. At conception, his sperm tumbled through me like tiny blue dice.

LOWELL

And when the baby came out of her –

MAY

Slid out of me -

LOWELL

Slick, slick and blocky, we could see that it was: blue. Blue! Not sky blue, no, not robin's egg.

MAY

But nightblue, brightblue.

LOWELL

Yellow markings.

MAY

And not round. Not round. Angular.

LOWELL

Even, in places: flat. Flat!

MAY

I may be new at this but – a baby should be round. And it shouldn't be blue.

LOWELL

The midwife puked. She shook so hard -

MAY

I screamed, of course I screamed –

LOWELL

I thought she'd drop him. I grabbed him -

MAY

Screamed and screamed –

LOWELL

Grabbed him, held him -

MAY

Screamed and screamed and screamed -

LOWELL

And he looked at me, with those dark little marbles of eyes, looked at me and locked in.

MAY

Maybe I never stopped screaming. Maybe I never will.

LOWELL

And the room was filled with blood and hollering. And I didn't see anything but him.

MAY

That's when they gave me a shot. A shot, and a baggie full of doctor's samples. Pills, like Halloween candy. Trick or treat! I'm supposed to love it, right? It's mine, I'm supposed to love it, no matter what.

LOWELL

I can't tell her, but I've started to – I don't know. "Love's" not the right word... but – something like love, but blue and flat with yellow markings. It doesn't look strange in the dark.

(Lights as before. They speak to each other again.)

Night almost. Dark soon.

MAY

Not soon enough.

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