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Opening extract from

Moose Baby

Written by

Meg Rosoff

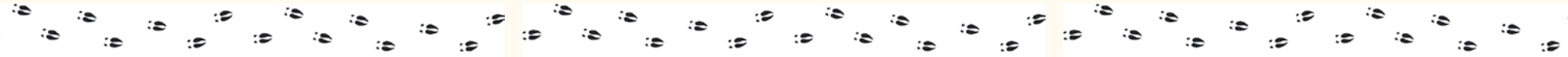
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To Miss Kristina Gillett of Laycock School,
best nursery teacher ever

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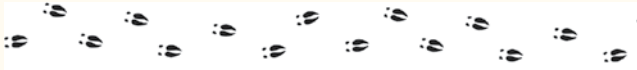
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The midwife gave me the evil eye.

"Mothers your age often don't bond well," she said. Then she added, like it hurt her to say it, "It will come."

My age? Jeez. It's not like I was twelve or something.

She and I had spent the last ten minutes glaring at each other, but I couldn't help admiring the way she held my baby. She hugged him close to her great big bazooms and looked into his big velvet eyes. Her smile (at him) appeared to be real. Which was a plus.

"Who's a dear little sweet thing?" she purred. "Who's a beautiful big moosie boy?" My baby gazed back at her with love, his eyes wide open. "Look at those eyelashes!" she said. She turned to me again. "Well, he

may not be what you expected, but he is a beauty."

"I wish you'd tell that to my mum," I said. "She refuses to look at him." I squinted and searched for the beauty in the curve of his nose, his little baby nostrils. "I guess she has a point. He is kind of hairy."

"Don't you mind about that, now," the midwife said. "Just look at his lovely wee hooves."

She held out one tiny foot, shiny and ebony black. It was cute. I closed my eyes, still pretty numb and sick from the C-section. And a little dizzy from getting used to things. I mean, how exactly had this happened? The 20-week scan had looked perfectly normal.

"It's a late development in some pregnancies," the consultant said. "We often fail to pick it up on the blood test." He spoke in an 'I'm-SO-much-more-important-than-you' voice, slithering out of any and all

blame at the same time. "We've had a small cluster of non-homo-sapien births this year," he told me. "They're not common. Mainly moose. No one knows why."

I squeezed my eyes into slits and all of a sudden I realised that he wasn't a doctor at all – he was a zombie! Heh heh. Of course he hadn't looked so smug when Mum threatened to sue the hospital over my non-homo-sapien birth. He'd looked even sicker than I felt.

"Something to help you sleep?" the zombie-doctor asked. His eyebrow was elevated a little, as if to suggest that he'd accept if it were *his* child. "We'll send the social worker round first thing in the morning," he said. "In the meantime, try to get some rest. It won't all look so bad in daylight."

Did he mean the situation, or my baby?

I didn't think either was going to look a whole lot better in the clear light of day.