

The Nanny



Simone Reynolds

A "New Woman" Novel



Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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Love,

Ms. Chrissie
Editor in Chief

The Nanny

By Simone Reynolds

Mark Holbrooke opened the door of the kitchen and walked in. There was no one there, most unusual. He looked around, no sign of Kay. He put his paper on the table, took off his coat and hung it on the hook in the hallway. All was as it should be, apart from the usual welcome that he had enjoyed since he married, now over ten years ago. Kay was home first most days as she was a school teacher and finished early in the afternoon, whereas Mark was very much 9-5 working in the NHS.

“I’m home,” he shouted.

“Down in a minute,” he heard a call from upstairs.

Soon Kay bounced into the room. Not quite literally, but he had never seen his wife quite so animated before. She was all smiles and bubbly.

“You haven’t been out to lunch with your friends, have you?” He sniffed her suspiciously for alcohol in an amused way.

“No, I haven’t!” she replied with mock annoyance. “I can only do that in half-term, the head wouldn’t approve of me being drunk in charge of a class.”

“Well then, why are you so sunny?” He was very suspicious.

“It must be the sight of my gorgeous husband, fresh home from working at the coalface with a pocket full of money for me.” Her face was full of smile showing her cute little dimples. With her short blond hair, cut round her face, she couldn’t look more excited. Added to this, she was bouncing up and down like a little dog.

“The nearest I’ve come to a coalface was bringing in the scuttle for my mother.”

“NHS management is your coalface. Anyway, you’ve been bringing home the bacon for your family.”

“My wife you mean.”

“Maybe not just your wife anymore.” She looked even more animated.

“What do you mean?”

“I’m pregnant!” she couldn’t hold it in any more. “I did a Boots test and I’m having a baby.”

“Kay, that’s fantastic.”

Kay and Mark were in their thirties and had been trying to have a child since they married and had made no progress. They had been to their GP who had found nothing wrong, there were no obstacles. They were on the point of trying IVF. Now this news was wonderful.

“So, what shall we do to celebrate?” Mark was now as animated as his wife.

“No champagne I’m afraid, but I’ve booked a meal out at the Black Sheep in the village.”

Mark took her in his arms and they held each other for fully five minutes. He couldn’t remember anything so exciting happening before. Even as he was thinking this, he knew there was a long way to go. Kay could only be a few weeks in at most and babies needed nine months in the womb. Such a long time to keep his fingers crossed. (Week 3)

The celebration took the form of the ‘Pub standard’ of beef and ale pie for him and fish and chips for Kay.

“Fish and chips is absolutely the safest food,” she said. “No risk of food poisoning, nothing can survive the heat.”

“Beef’s OK now I’m sure. That BSE has gone.”

“Well, our baby’s not risking it,” she smiled.

Celebration also took the form of some baby-making practice, but now it was all about fun. Up until today they had been thinking about positions, whether the semen running out mattered, was the time right? All sorts of distinctly un-erotic concerns. Today it was about pleasure.

He was delighted to find that Kay was in her wedding underwear when he helped her out of her blouse. He loved the white basque which presented her breasts in such a ripe and inviting fashion, her waist so smooth and sleek down to her legs, clad in white so silky to the touch. He inhaled her powerful odours, seemingly loaded today with extra pheromones. He took her in his arms for a long and tender embrace. Then he fell to his knees to gently ease down her white thong to reveal her neatly-trimmed hair.

“I wasn’t sure if I could really take us back 10 years,” she smiled.

"You'll always be my blushing bride."

"Can you remember our first night?" she queried.

"Of marriage or sex?" They certainly hadn't been the same thing.

"Our wedding day of course," she laughed.

"No, I suspect I was one over the eight."

"You were but it didn't matter, it was still perfect for me." Kay always became soulful when she thought of her wedding day.

They slumped backward onto the bed and Mark slipped out of his trousers. She turned from him so that she could enjoy her neck being caressed and he spread his strokes slowly down to include her pert little bottom. His organ was rampant as he pressed against her cheeks. Then she turned over to take his penis in her hand, drawing it out of his pants and giving it a tentative nibble.

"Don't, I want to save it for you," he added urgently.

"You don't need to now!"

She lay back and he mounted, pushing himself in as he felt her slaking juices. They came rapidly, he in spasmodic jerks, she in shattering chains of vibrations. They fell back exhausted, and after so little work.

"The lack of pressure improves things," she said, smiling serenely.

"Yes, it wasn't really a chore this time."

"Is it usually?" she complained.

“Well, it has seemed that way at times.”

They both lay back mulling over this idea. Sarah realised that she had tended to nag him around her supposed time of ovulation; the lack of spontaneity had certainly made some sex acts seem more like drudgery. Making love, even when you have a headache. Most women would have made an excuse, not tried to egg their lover on. Now perhaps it would be 9 months of pleasure. Actually, she knew that was not terribly probable.

The next day saw Kay off to visit her GP. This was Dr. Wiley, an oldish man with short grey hair and glasses.

“All the signs fit, so you must be pregnant. We hardly need a lab test. We do need to send you off to maternity clinic to get your blood tests done and ensure you are booked somewhere for delivery. The Midwife will sort all that out with you.”

So the next stop was the Midwife. She took down all Kay’s details, including her shoe size, strangely. She had blood taken and blood pressure checked and also tested for Chlamydia and protein and glucose in her urine.

“You’re only a few weeks in yet, so there’s no need to hurry but you will need to think what kind of birth you want. Water birth would be an option and you have choices about consultant or Midwife service,” the woman intoned but Kay didn’t really hear too much.

Once she had left the doctor’s she headed into town to “Mothercare.” She wandered round the shops looking at all the things she could buy – or, ideally, get her parents to buy for them. Obviously there was the cot, and mattress, clothes of all sorts,

baby baths and a variety of toys. The pram would be a must to show off her child; take them to mother and baby group, display them to all the friends and relatives. How long she had yearned for this, having seen her sister produce. Her youngest must be eight or nine now. It had been so difficult with her mother continually asking questions. Then when she had realised that there were problems, wisely shutting-up. Kay had had many tearful nights, wondering what was wrong with her, or perhaps Mark.

Ultimately, the medical people hadn't found anything. Now after all that time, she had proved herself, or at least was on the way to doing so.

One thing she could buy now was maternity clothes. To be honest, they didn't look terribly exciting, all smocks and flounces – very staid. She would want to show off her bump when it arrived. So that people would know that there was a baby on the way.

She settled on some smocks, not exactly the height of fashion, but it was buying something to recognise her future motherhood.

Within a few weeks, Kay was enjoying the full effects of her pregnancy. She was sitting next to the lavatory, wondering whether she would be able to hold any food at all down. As the last wave of nausea passed, she staggered to her feet and made it the bedroom to lie down. Being an expectant Mum wasn't so wonderful today, she thought, as she patted her tummy.

Fortunately, the sickness didn't last for too many weeks and by the time a bulge was showing to her waistline, it seemed pretty much over. She had been booked with a Midwife at the hospital by this time – Jackie – who nodded sagely over all her changes and told her there was nothing to worry about. Jackie was in her 30s, blonde, round and bubbly, a match to Kay herself. She seemed to have all the answers for

Kay. Kay had no idea that everyone had asked her the same questions before.

"I'm not really worried Jackie, but this breast doesn't seem quite right," Kay informed her at one appointment.

"How do you mean?" Jackie responded.

"Well, they are a bit bigger but there seems to be a hard lump here on the left," she showed Jackie from the outside.

"Let's have a look."

Kay raised her T-shirt and took off her bra. Jackie stood back and looked, there was nothing to see but when she put her hand on the left breast, she was able to discern a hard lump, a little more firm than she was used to in her customers.

"I don't think it's anything but perhaps your GP should have a look, no need to worry." Her face said otherwise.

Kay was with Dr. Wiley the same afternoon. She was in tears and he was trying to reassure her as he started to feel her breasts. He had his nurse in to keep an eye on him and his glance revealed his feelings to her.

"Mrs. Colbrooke, Kay, I think we may have to take this a bit seriously. I am going to have to send you to the breast team at Nordale Trust."

"You think its cancer, don't you?" Kay leapt in straightaway.

"To be honest it may be, you can't really tell until the mammography and biopsy are done."

Kay started to well up with tears. All the joy of her pregnancy was disappearing. Dr. Wiley put an arm

round her shoulder, but he knew he couldn't really comfort her.

"Shall we call your husband to take you home?" asked the nurse.

"No. It's OK. I'll manage," Kay snuffled.

She made it to the car and spent ten minutes in floods of tears, before she could start the engine. She drove back to the house through a mist and collapsed in the chair, where Mark found her half an hour later, after he had rushed home. They sat clasped together for over half an hour not speaking until Kay was finally settled.

"I don't know what it will mean yet, do I? It might be cancer, it might not and even then we don't know what treatment will be needed." She was trying to smile.

"You're right, so let's not cross all the bridges in one go," replied Mark.

He could see that it was going to be a gruelling time waiting for the diagnosis, trying to keep Kay on an even keel, trying to keep himself going for her. Suddenly all their hopes of just a few weeks ago might be about to be dashed. If she had cancer, what would it mean for the baby? Both were thinking these thoughts, but were unable to express them to each other.

The call arrived from the hospital the very next day calling Kay for an appointment to the breast clinic on the Tuesday of the following week. They were been amazed how quick the appointment was. Even though Mark worked for the same Trust, he didn't know too much about that particular area, as his main interests were in finance and contracting.

They arrived hand-in-hand for the appointment to a corridor lined with similar couples of varying ages,

some younger, but most were older. There was a ten-minute wait before they were called into the consultant, a woman in her early forties. They were shown to seats beside a cluttered-looking desk and the surgeon started to speak.

“Hello Mrs. Colbrooke, I am Mrs. Baton. I am a breast surgeon. Tell me what has been happening to you.”

Kay gave a brief account of her experiences to date, outlining the symptoms of her pregnancy and her health in general. In response to questioning she revealed that her mother had had breast cancer when she was younger, but now seemed to be cured.

After hearing the account, asking some questions and making a few notes, Mrs. Baton got up from her chair.

“Would you like to come the couch and I can take a look?”

Kay took her top clothes off and Mrs. Baton looked at her breasts before gently examining each with her hands and fingers.

“I can feel what Dr. Wiley has noticed. It’s not likely to be cancer on a pure odds basis, but we need to look further. Do a mammogram.”

“Will that be safe for the baby?” Kay queried.

“It seems to be OK, but we could do ultrasound first. Either way you may end up with a biopsy. I’ll send you down to Radiology and they will decide.” She was very matter-of-fact, which to Kay seemed a little cold.

The couple were soon ushered out and directed to the Radiology queue.

A new doctor welcomed them into the diagnostic room.

“Hi, I’m Mike Jones, I’m a breast radiologist.” He seemed to be as bouncy as a Tigger. Everyone seemed to want to be upbeat. It was ridiculous to Kay.

“We want to do a mammogram. It will be fine for baby if we put some lead shielding across. It’s pretty low dose.”

Kay acquiesced and was immediately led to the machine to have her breast squashed between the plates.

“That’s it,” said Mike after the technicians had finished. “I’ll call you back in ten minutes.”

The ten minutes went slowly, but then they were ushered back in.

“Well, there is something there and we need to do a biopsy. If that’s OK, I’ll do it now.” Somehow he now seemed less light-hearted.

Kay was guided through to a new room and marked up for the biopsy. She was given some local anaesthetic and then Dr. Jones plunged in his needle to remove a core of her tissue.

“We should know in a couple of days. We would like you to come back on Thursday afternoon. Please bring your husband.” He had a slight plea here.

Once outside in the car park, Kay was able to speak.

“He thinks its cancer, doesn’t he?” she said earnestly.

Mark could not contain himself as his eyes reddened. He drew up all his strength.

“We don’t know that yet,” he said with a forced smile that attempted reassurance.

The few days that they had to wait seemed interminable. Kay sat at home brooding or trying to find activities to take her mind off the subject. On the fourth day a call came through, inviting her back to see Mrs. Baton.

The next day they arrived in the outpatient’s clinic and took their place for the thankfully short wait.

“Well Mrs. Colbrooke, I am sorry to say that all was not well. You have a small tumour. The pathologist feels it might be spreading so we will need to remove part of your breast.”

“Oh,” Kay had still had a glimmer of hope and now it had been dashed. “When will you be able to operate?”

Mrs. Baton smiled, “I have a slot for you on my Tuesday list the week after next.”

“Will I need to stay in, do you think?”

“No, we don’t usually need to keep people more than a few hours. After you have had the operation and depending on what we find, we will need to look for signs of spread. We don’t want to do that first because of your baby, we want to take things carefully.”

Kay was relieved that she didn’t have to wait long, but there were so many questions that had no answer yet. Mrs. Baton was particularly unclear what additional treatment she would need.

“That depends a bit what we find at operation,” she said. “We want you to have a CT scan and positron tomography to help us decide.”

So for the next week Kay embarked on a round of visits to the hospital before her surgery. It left her in a

whirl of emotions as on top of it all she had her developing baby to worry about. This was happening in Mark's own hospital so he could accompany her for most of the sessions and did his best to help her, but even so she felt that she was facing this ordeal alone.

At the next meeting, Mrs. Baton told Kay of the findings. There were signs of spread and they wouldn't be able to give fully aggressive treatment until the baby was born. In any case, it didn't look as though that would make a great deal of difference.

Four days later Kay was being wheeled into the theatre where she met the team just before she went under the knife.

"Hello Kay," smiled Mrs. Baton. "We're all ready for you, we hope it's only going to be a small operation and we'll see you on the other side."

Kay felt the stab of the needle and the sense of the drug slipping into the back of her hand, then no more.

When she came round she was back in the recovery room, lying on a trolley.

"You awake now, dear?" a jolly round nurse enquired. "You look a bit ghastly at the moment but you'll soon be feeling better."

The next thing Kay was aware of was being on a ward bustling with staff, relatives, and fellow patients. She sat up to be sick into a conveniently placed papier maché bowl. She felt her chest, her left breast was covered by a dense dressing, concealing it from view. Was it there still, or had it all been removed? She hadn't been given any guarantees.

Soon her husband arrived together with her surgeon. Mark leant over and kissed her, taking her in his arms for a brief cuddle. Then he made way for Mrs. Baton.

“Kay, we’ve taken the lump and some of your lymph glands and the pathologists will be looking at them over the next week to see what’s been going on and what additional treatment you will need. We know your baby is fine. It’s just more wait and see, I’m afraid.”

Kay smiled weakly in assent and then Mrs. Baton was gone. Mark sat down beside her and they just gazed at each other as she relaxed back on to the pillow.

“As soon as they are happy with you we can go home apparently,” he smiled encouragingly.

A few hours later, Kay was in the car heading for home. (18 Weeks)

The team meeting was not a happy affair as they put up the slides of Kay’s operation, along of course, with a number of others.

“Mrs. Holbrooke has a high-grade tumour, which is invading the surrounding tissues and I am afraid it hasn’t been fully removed. We’ve sent it for tumour markers, but I should think it would be worth another go,” intoned the histologist, a dumpy balding man with sweaty armpits – Dr. Martin Braithwaite.

“I am afraid the PET scans aren’t a lot more hopeful, she seems to have quite a few possible deposits – one for you, Sarah, I would have thought,” Dr. Mike Jones addressed Sarah Hughes, the Oncologist.

“I would like to crack on as soon as possible after we’ve given her some x-rays.” She was a tall youngish woman with spectacles which gave her an earnest look.

“And there, of course, is the problem,” Claire Baton finally made her entry into the discussion. “She’s 19 weeks pregnant.”

“Leaving it until the baby’s born will make the outcome less good. I suppose we could start something gentle, but radiation, anti-oestrogens and anything vigorous is out” added Sarah.

“So there we have it. What would our consensus be? Advise termination – which incidentally, I don’t see her accepting - or cross our fingers, knowing the outcome may be poor?” Claire went on.

“Well, as there is to be no radiation, you should proceed to a more radical approach on the breast, I suppose, but who knows, it doesn’t have a good feel about it,” Sarah summarised.

Kay had a difficult fourteen days to manage until she was due to see her surgeon again. She and Mark came to the clinic with a good deal of trepidation. By this time they had Googled Kay’s disease and realised that the options were not good. Kay had been in tears at the option of losing her baby and would not countenance it, much as Claire Baton had anticipated.

“Mrs. Holbrooke I am afraid that the tumour wasn’t all taken out and because we can’t give you any radiation, I rather feel we should have another go,” she announced, looking Kay clear in the eyes. (21 weeks)

Kay could feel the tears welling up as she sought a reply.

“I suppose you’ll have to,” she croaked out between sobs. Mark had put his arm round to hold her close and Mrs. Baton now sat close by.

“I’m afraid that it’s the best that we can offer, while you still have your baby inside,” she replied softly.

"I'll have to give it a go then." Kay was doing her best to pull herself together.

Now Mrs. Baton could turn away now and was a little relieved to return to the factual work of fixing dates and organising her list.

Soon the Colbrookes were dismissed and they staggered out holding hands and made their way to the coffee bar.

"I wasn't expecting that," Mark said when they were seated, "I thought all the surgery would be finished."

Kay just looked fragile, on the point of more tears, nodding in ascent.

Back at home they couldn't decide what to do, Kay rang her mother and her mother-in-law, both of whom expressed their dismay and sympathy but couldn't do much else. To take their minds off things, they went out to the cinema. The Picture Palace was not the most comfortable of places, a traditional cinema that hadn't been updated, even if its prices had been.

They sat on the back row cuddling in the double seat, just as they had done before they were married. Now Mark wasn't inclined to slip his hand under Kay's jumper to attempt breast fondling. It would have felt right in other circumstances – but not now. Actually Kay laughed when she realised what he was thinking. She gave him a playful little slap on the face and he felt for her thigh instead. That was well received. Heavy petting was a stage that they were well past, but was fun all the same. Mark was keen to show that he still loved Kay for her body and not just her mind.

Within 2 weeks Kay was back in hospital (23 weeks) and this time she was set to stay a few days so that a more radical operation could be carried out.