

# Smooth as a Non-Dog-Faced Baby's Cheek

I saw him flinch slightly as I conducted my morning ritual of picking his hairs off the pillows and sheets, though I assumed he was still asleep.

A garbled and groggy, "What are you doing?" rumbled out from under the blanket next to me.

"Oh, nothing. Go back to sleep, babe," I piped in cheerful dismissiveness before carrying on with my secret labors. But after several more moments, in which the soft scratching and swishing sounds of my fingers plucking short, dark hairs from the bed linens, and then dusting my fingertips against one another to scatter them down into the pile of the carpet, disturbed the quiet of the room he rolled over toward me, making eye contact from under heavy lids.

"Are you picking my hairs off the bed again?" he asked accusingly, and a bit less groggily.

"No," I blatantly lied.

"Does it bother you that much?" he countered, now seeming quite awake.

I didn't want to get into it, so I attempted to shift the subject to something lighter. "Did you have any nice dreams, sweetheart?"

His head sunk back into his pillow and his gaze went to the ceiling contemplatively. "Not really a good dream, but I did have a dream that our surrogate gave birth. The baby had red hair, like my grandmother. She was so precious and small. It was a girl. But even though she was a beautiful baby, we weren't happy. I didn't know why it felt that way in the dream. But there was something wrong, and neither of us were as happy as we should have been."

Damn. So much for lightening the mood. "Well, I think that sounds like a perfectly lovely dream. Much better than mine was. I dreamt that Harrold's had discontinued my favorite vegetarian samosas. You know, the fresh ones they sell in the bakery? I went in to buy a half dozen and--"

"I've been thinking about it. And I kinda want to use my sperm for the surrogate," he broke in, strategically cutting me off.

“Oh,” I said. This conversation was clearly going in a direction I did not want, but I was apparently helpless to change that. So, I let go and resigned myself to just riding it out. It was too early to get into this again.

“I just... I feel like it’s important to me somehow. Part of me never thought I would ever have a chance to have a kid of my own. I never thought I’d find someone that wanted to do that with me. So now that I have that opportunity, it seems like my one and only chance to make this happen. You know?” I could tell I was getting set up, but now that it was coming to it, I didn’t want to be rolled over either.

“Well, I definitely see what you mean. But I did think we would go with my sperm.” I wanted to sound firm, yet not demanding. I have no idea how successful I was on that front.

“You don’t want to risk having a dog-faced baby.” He had gone for the easy kill. He’d held off saying it for a while now, but apparently it was time to address the elephant in the room.

“Danny, don’t say that,” I pleaded.

“But it’s true, isn’t it?” he pursued. “You don’t want to risk my freakishness being handed down to a child that you would be committed to raising. You don’t want them to be like me.”

“Danny, this sounds a lot like self-pity,” I rejoined, using some of the language from our recent counseling sessions. “Why are you saying all this?”

“Are you saying it isn’t true?” he pressed morosely.

I slid across the bed, put my arm around his stomach, and hooked my chin over his shoulder from behind so I could whisper into his ear, “If I’m this happy with a dog-faced man, why wouldn’t I be thrilled with a dog-faced baby?”

Danny flipped onto his back and looked directly into my face. “Would you really be OK with using my sperm?”

A sharp, thoughtful exhale paired with a pursing of my lips and I looked directly into his eyes. “Yes. If it means that much to you, of course I would be OK with it.” My stomach knotted slightly as I spoke. Truthfully, I did not love the idea of dog-faced baby. But I simply didn’t have the heart to say so—not to this one. “I have no doubt they would be the most gorgeous, cuddliest little baby ever conceived.”

Danny’s face softened and he kissed me on the forehead. The hair of his face tickled my nose and wafted his scent over me. “Thanks, love,” he said softly. “I really needed to hear that. I hope I don’t seem manipulative, but truthfully, I want to use your sperm anyway. I just needed to feel like it was really OK with you to go either way.”

I tried to keep the sound of relief out of my voice. “Really? Are you being serious?” I searched his glossy, bed-headed face. “You didn’t mean all that about your one chance to physically sire a child?”

Danny smirked up at the ceiling. “Yeah, I mean, in a way I do feel that way. But at the same time, I wouldn’t want to put a kid through the things I’ve been through. If he had my condition, that is. I barely got through it myself. I don’t know how I’d get someone else through it.” His eyes moved back to mine. “Besides, you’d make one hell of a handsome baby.”

I smiled and ran my fingers through his hair, down his neck, and over his arm. “We really can’t go wrong either way, as far as I’m concerned.”

“Then let’s do it,” he said, excitement twinkling in his voice. “Let’s take your sperm to the clinic today and give the surrogate the good news that we’re ready to go for it.”

“Are you sure?” I probed.

“Yes. Really, really yes,” he affirmed. “Let’s do it. Let’s have that beautiful, smooth-checked little baby as soon as we can. I feel like I can’t wait another minute.”

“Well, as long as you’re su-” I didn’t get through the sentence before his mouth pressed to mine. He pulled away, beaming the biggest smile I’d seen on his big, fuzzy face in weeks.

“This is going to be great,” he chirped, still smiling at me. “So amazingly great.”

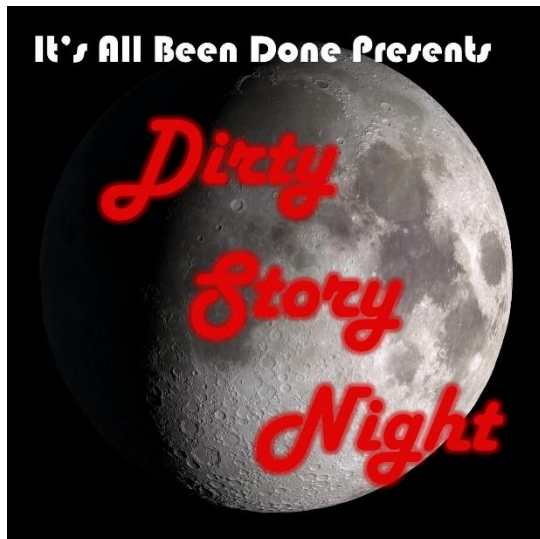
I scratched the hair on his cheeks. “That’s my good boy,” I buzzed at him as I nuzzled into his side. Boy, am I a lucky one.



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Maybe next season.

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