



BECOMING
ME

FINDING THE BABY GIRL WITHIN

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*Becoming Me:
Finding the baby girl within*

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By Rosalie Bent

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In the Beginning

The blessed day had finally come.

Meredith Owens lay in the birthing room at the city maternity hospital waiting to deliver the child she had waited for these many years. Only 25 years old, Meredith was recently widowed and was even now flip-flopping between the grief of bereavement and the utter joy of imminent motherhood. The birthing room itself was almost brand new and cutting edge at a time when so many births still took place at home with a midwife in attendance. In the blessed gaps between contractions, she gazed around the room wondering how she had been so lucky as to have not only a midwife but a doctor in attendance.

But as these things always go, the pain increased and culminated in the delivery of...

A Baby Boy.

Her joy was now almost complete. As she looked at her newborn son, she fondly remembered her dreams of having... a baby girl. But despite her hopes, her baby was indeed, a boy and so when asked, she told the nurse his name.

“His name is Mikey. Michael Jonathon Owens.”

A form was filled in, a name card created, and hours later as she recuperated in a bed, she glanced over and saw her son lying in the tiny crib next to her.

“Welcome to the world... Baby Mikey... or maybe... Michelle?” she whispered, using the name she had chosen originally, and then fell back to sleep with a smile on her face.

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A week later, Meredith was at home cleaning up her baby boy from the inevitable and unpleasant task of a dirty diaper. While holding her breath, she smiled at him and spoke out some powerful words.

“My dear baby Mikey. You are the love of my life and I will raise you to be the best...” She hesitated briefly. “...man you can be. You are wonderful.”

It was the first time she had called him ‘Mikey’ when she was alone. Since his birth, she had called him ‘Michelle’, the name she had chosen months earlier had he been born a girl. But every diaper change reminded her that Mikey was in fact, a boy. Infant genitals are very small, but there is no confusion about which sex he was. He was very definitely... a boy.

That morning, Meredith decided that she would call him his proper name and accept that the baby she was holding in her arms was in fact a boy. She sighed and cuddled him to herself as the week-old infant fell back asleep.

A new life had been created and a new unbreakable bond forged.

Aunt Matilda

“Matilda!” yelled Meredith as she hugged her older sister. “I’m so glad you came!”

“Well, of course, I came! You’re my only sister so I had to come and see this baby of yours!”

Meredith smiled at her sister’s words. In truth, Matilda was quite the odd woman, despite being given an old-fashioned name. Born too early to be a hippie, she was the prototype of an alternative woman. She was 30 years old and single – almost a crime at that time – and happily so. She was an artist - and therefore perpetually poor – but was the happiest person Meredith had ever known. And there *was* another sister, despite Matilda’s words. But there was no spite, just her single-focused capacity to ignore all others when speaking with someone. Her other sister was entirely opposite to Matilda in that she was sensible, down to earth, and... a mother of two.

Matilda was weird, truly unusual. But she gave herself 110% to the people she engaged with. But even without mind-altering drugs, Matilda saw ‘things’ that others did not. She had that keen sixth sense that kept her both safe and considered odd by the world at large.

“Well...” she demanded with a wide grin. “Let me see the baby! I’ve come all this way you know!”

She had come by bus having never learned to drive nor having any desire to do so. The hour-long bus trip from a nearby town followed by the fifteen-minute walk was typical for the time and she arrived carrying her single suitcase.

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“So gorgeous!” she exclaimed as Baby Mikey came into view, sleeping soundly in his second-hand crib. Truthfully, it was about tenth-hand, but neither baby nor mother cared. She was there for ‘the baby’ and nothing else.

For the next hour, the two sisters talked about the experience of labor, feeding, and child-rearing, but Meredith noticed something in the way her weird – but very precise – sister was speaking.

She was avoiding his name. In fact, she was talking about the baby in a very generic and non-specific way. It both concerned and scared her. She didn’t believe in prophets and seers but if she did... it was Matilda who best fit the bill.

Ten years earlier, Matilda – known mostly as *Tilly* - had shared a dream with Meredith that made her shudder even now when she remembered it. Matilda had dreamt that their father would die violently in a car accident driven by a drunk driver down on Carpenter Street, a road not far from their home. It had spooked them both, but Meredith brushed it off until precisely one month later, their father *did* in fact, die in a car crash at that *exact* location. The car had not been driven by a drunk driver but by a wife with her drunk husband lying in the back seat. The prediction was more than close enough to convince her that at times, Tilly was someone whose predictions were to be taken seriously.

While the shock and horror of the event had overshadowed their lives for months, Meredith refused to discuss what had taken place with her sister. And for her part, Matilda had withdrawn and not spoken almost at all. She blamed herself for not taking action to save her father from a fate she had so clearly foretold. The life of a prophet is rarely an easy one.

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Years later, now-adult Matilda had unexpectedly moved out of the house she was renting and moved to a more expensive, but less suitable location. Her mother had criticized her 'foolish decision' but Meredith had stayed silent. A month later, the house she had moved from burned to the ground. Proof of concept. Prophet one, mother zero. And it spooked Meredith even more.

And as they chatted amiably about life and getting back into life after bereavement and childbirth, Meredith was growing increasingly anxious at the way her sister was talking. And given her record of predicting the future, her fears began to mount. Then Mikey woke and began to cry – as infants tend to do.

"He's wet!" exclaimed Meredith. "Time to change his diaper!"

"Can I change it?" Matilda asked.

"Do you know how?"

Matilda looked at her sister and laughed.

"Of course, I do, silly! Just 'coz I'm not... er... married... doesn't mean I don't know how to change diapers!"

Meredith smiled. 'Married' was, at that time, still a euphemism for 'virgin'. While Meredith could scarcely imagine being 30 and still a virgin, her sister seemed to thrive in it. There had never been a man in her life as far as she knew. She smiled briefly at the thought of any man being with Tilly and the battle that would naturally be,

There were no change tables back then and so laying down a towel on the bed, she took her baby, laid him on it, and then stepped back to let Matilda take over.

"Ah... now let's see..." she laughed. "The first thing to do is... hmm... I suppose to take off these rubber pants, right?"

She pulled down his rubber pants and revealed a truly soaking wet cloth diaper with two shiny pins holding the garment together.

“Now let’s get this wet thing off you, huh?”

She carefully unpinned the two sides of the diaper and slid it from underneath him. Then she looked at him intently and grinned.

“Oh, what a pretty baby girl you are!” she exclaimed without hesitation.

Meredith’s face went blank. From anyone else, that would be an insult. But from Tilly, it had... meaning.

“Oh, Baby girl, you are so pretty. But let’s get you changed before you get cold, right?”

Meredith was silent.

“She’s so pretty!” her sister said softly. “I could just cuddle her and take her home with me. And I love her name!”

Silent tears flowed down Meredith’s face and the two sisters understood instantly what was going on. Matilda was having ‘a moment’. She knew that Michelle was the original chosen name for Mikey.

“Can we put her in that dress I made her?” Matilda asked.

Meredith wiped her tears away and went to the chest of drawers and extracted the simple knitted pink baby dress with matching bonnet and booties. For all of her oddities, her artist sister was also a talented knitter. It was yet another contradiction.

The two women looked at the baby now fully dressed as an exquisite baby girl and smiled. They both knew that something special had just taken place.

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For the week that Matilda stayed with her sister to help her through the early days after giving birth, they both called the baby 'Michelle' and despite the obvious presence of a penis, insisted that the baby was in fact a girl. Neither was delusional. Both were in fact, *seeing* something that was there that couldn't be seen by natural eyes. And so it was that for the first few years of his life, Meredith called her baby 'Michelle' when alone while to everyone else, he was 'Mikey'.

Matilda still dropped in occasionally, often without any warning to check up on her 'niece' and until he was going to school, only ever bought girls' presents and girls' clothes. And so it was that Baby Mikey and Toddler Mikey grew up with dolls and a few dresses.

Outside the house, Meredith had a growing and robust baby boy but inside the house, she thought of him as a baby girl.

It was a very prophetic and meaningful start to life.

Aunt Carolyn

Why doesn't that kid ever sleep in? thought Meredith as she woke up groggily listening to the 'quiet' play of her now six-year-old boy in the next room. Between jumping off the bed onto the wooden floor and dropping toys on the floor, 'quiet' was something that never truly happened, even at 6 am. She rolled out of bed, trying desperately to keep her balance as she pulled on a dressing gown and slid into her slippers.

What am I going to find this morning? she asked herself as she stumbled out of her bedroom, made her way along the short hall, and pushed open the door to Mikey's bedroom. She had one rule that she could be assured that he would obey – that he stay in his room until she got up. It was pretty much the only rule that he obeyed consistently. *It's the only way to make sure the mess stays in one room!*

Carefully opening the bedroom door - having learned the hard way that her son could be lying, standing, or even running on the other side of the door - she saw her smiling boy sitting on the bed playing with his soft toys and setting up a school room for them.

"Mikey, love," she asked sweetly. "Did you sleep well?"

"Mommy!" he yelled, taking his pacifier from his mouth, jumping up from the bed, and literally launching himself at her.

"I guess you slept well then!" she said as she held her son in her arms wearing just a tshirt top and the bulk of a very wet and thick cloth diaper and plastic pants. She carefully squeezed the back of his diaper, checking for the possible presence of more than pee. She sighed in relief when she discovered that he was only wet. It

was not always the case. Several mornings a week, Mikey's diaper would be loaded down with poo. Not that he cared about that at all. There were always more important things to worry about than such trivial matters.

"You can come out now," she said automatically as he ran past her into the rest of the small house.

He still won't take his diaper off, she observed. I hope that changes one day.

Only the week before, she had spoken with another mother at school whose son, Marty also still wore diapers to bed. She had bemoaned the fact that the first thing Marty did upon waking was to take off his wet diaper and leave it 'somewhere' in the house and run around half naked and sometimes leaving wet spots in places they shouldn't be. Mikey, however, was very different. In fact, getting him out of his wet diapers was sometimes a chore and at times, a real struggle.

"Sit up at the table properly!" Meredith admonished her wriggling son. "If you don't sit still, you won't get any breakfast!"

Meredith instantly recalled a year earlier when he had wriggled and bounced in his seat at breakfast...



"Mikey!" she had shouted in frustration that Saturday morning. "Sit still and take your pacifier out of your mouth!" Despite the rule that his pacifier should only be used at night time, it was once again in his mouth out of his room.

Mikey was still for a few seconds before once again bouncing up and down in his chair, squishing the sodden diaper and the small dirty mound inside it.

This is fun! he thought to himself. *Feels funny too!*

“Mikey! If you don’t stop mucking about, I will put you back in your old highchair and strap you in!”

Mikey suddenly stopped bouncing and Meredith was briefly pleased that her threat had worked. And then everything changed...

Mikey sucked deeply on his pacifier and bounced up and down on his seat even more.

“That’s it, young man!” Meredith shouted as she stormed off to the spare bedroom which was more of a storage room for everything she hadn’t yet found a permanent place for. She grabbed the wooden frame highchair and carried it to the kitchen and dropped it onto the floor next to the table with unnecessary force and noise. She wanted to make a point.

Meredith grabbed Mikey and lifted him up, suddenly aware of the ‘little present’ in the back of his diaper, and unceremoniously put him in the highchair. Blessed with narrow hips which were only ever bulky because of his pinned cloth diaper, Mikey slid into the highchair with relative ease, if a bit of a tight fit.

Mikey smiled.

“You think this is funny?” Meredith explained, her annoyance now very obvious.

Mikey said nothing. Even though he was smiling, he was old enough to know that his mother was angry. He didn’t think it was funny at all. He thought it was *wonderful*.

“If you’re going to act like a baby then I will treat you like one!” she added.

Instead of the usual routine of making his cereal and then having him feed himself, she sat on a chair next to him and spoon-

fed him, trying to punish him for his misbehavior. It did not work. She found an old baby bib and tied it around his neck, and slowly placed every spoonful in his mouth. He swallowed happily.

Meredith felt like she was in a dream as she fed him the cereal and then prepared some toast, cut into very small pieces such as you would for a toddler. Mikey ate it up like it was the most normal thing in the world.

Suddenly quiet, Meredith realized she was observing something special: unusual, but special. After he had finished eating, she broke one of her own rules and took his pacifier and put it back into his mouth, lifted him up out of the highchair, and carried him to the living room, holding him tight.

School days always meant that the diaper was the last thing to come off before his underpants and school clothes. And she always saw the signs of disappointment as it came off. That Saturday morning, she left his wet and slightly soiled diaper on and placed him in front of the TV to watch his beloved cartoons, sucking contentedly on his pacifier. Before she even left the room he jumped off and ran to his room before quickly returning with his two favorite toys – his special ‘friends’. Billy was his teddy bear and Suzie was... his dolly.

Mikey had just the one dolly and he loved playing with her as much as his other toys. Unsurprisingly, it was a gift from Auntie Matilda. His other Auntie – Carolyn – had sent him a curiously androgynous teddy bear that could be either male or female. It was as if no one in her family was truly convinced that her son was indeed, a boy.

The highchair remained out for another week and Mikey happily sat in it and was fed there for every meal. He was atypically well-behaved and still, but Meredith knew it couldn't last and so

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when the highchair was put back in its previous location at the back of the 'junk room', there were a few tears needing the hugs of a loving but very confused mother.



Meredith knew better than to threaten the highchair again. Recalling the old nursery story, she knew it was his own personal 'briar patch'. Also, the intervening year had made him taller and a little wider.

He'd never fit in there now, especially with that diaper on! she mused. *Not that I'd ever get him out of it.*

"Now, Mikey," she repeated as she stood him in his bedroom and began to pull his soggy diaper and plastic pants down his legs. "You remember we are going to Aunt Carolyn's place after school. It's a long drive."

"But mommy..." he complained. "I have to wear diapees and..."

"It's okay, sweetheart. They know you still wear diapers to bed and your cousin Sandy wears them too."

"But she's only three, mommy! And I'm six!"

"No one cares, honey. And Lisa will look after you as well."

"Lisa doesn't wear diapees..." Mikey added.

"No, she's a big eight-year-old now. She doesn't wet the bed anymore."

"I do," Mikey replied.

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“Yes honey, you still wet the bed, but no one will mind that. Now let’s take you to school and enjoy the day while I pack up your things.”



“Mommy,” Mikey asked just before they were about to get in the car to visit Aunt Carolyn. “Can I wear a diapee for the trip so I don’t wet my pants?”

Meredith looked intently at her son wondering if it were wise or not. The truth was that he still did have the very occasional wet pants during the day although thankfully, never at school. The drive was several hours and for a boy's bladder, that was an eternity.

“Sure honey. I think that might be a good idea.”

Taking her son by the hand she took him into his bedroom and after taking off his shoes, underpants, and trousers, quickly folded up a cloth diaper and laid it on the bed. Out of habit, Meredith reached under his pillow and extracted his white pacifier, and put it in his mouth. When getting him ready for bed every night and diapering him, his pacifier always went into his mouth. Realizing what she had done, she reached to remove it when Mikey placed his hand over his mouth and mumbled, “No, mommy! I want it!”

The trip was a long one by six-year-old standards, even interminable, but after just three hours, they arrived at Aunt Carolyn’s house. Meredith admired the sizable house with its tidy – if not exactly meticulous – garden. She liked gardens herself – just not enough to actually do the work they required. Carolyn was divorced and unlike Meredith, had been settled with a freehold house and a sizable child support income meaning that the fifteen

hours a week that she worked in a local company was all extra money to spend on niceties. A little jealous of her independence, Meredith nonetheless never held it against her, and when she became a single mother had gotten more than just some timely advice from her sister. On several occasions, she had received a nice sum of money to help out with life's little 'emergencies'.

But Carolyn was quite different from Matilda. It was hard to imagine that the three sisters shared the same parents. They looked different, had different views, and were never really the close friends that some siblings were. But they were still connected and so as Meredith walked down the path holding the hand of her still diapered son, she felt safe and secure, even if she never truly understood either of her sisters.

"Merri!" shouted Carolyn in an unexpectedly warm and emotional way the second after they knocked on the door. "And Mikey!"

Carolyn picked up the skinny young boy and the moment her hand went beneath his bottom she felt...

His diaper.

His wet... no... *sodden*, diaper.

Her eyes went to Meredith's and silent communication took place.

"Let's come in and meet the girls, shall we?" she said cheerily.

They walked into a large lounge room richly decorated with expensive-looking furniture and Meredith's jealousy rose ever so slightly before quickly evaporating.

She has everything! I wish I did. Mikey could have a lot more things too.