

The Burden

Written by

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1 INT. ERIC'S BEDROOM - EVENING**1**

ERIC (late twenties) is sat on his bed staring at his baby daughter's crib in front of him. She is barely a few days old. His younger sister, ANABEL, is sat next to him. The child's mother is nowhere to be seen.

They both look lost.

ANABEL
She's beautiful.

ERIC
She is.

ANABEL
And she looks just like you.

ERIC
No. She doesn't.

Pause.

ANABEL
Clementine is a wonderful name.

ERIC
Uhu.

Pause.

ERIC
She chose that name. I mean we had talked about it, but we hadn't settled on one.
(beat)
She wanted a little Clementine.

ANABEL
She chose well.

ERIC
I can't even name my daughter.

ANABEL
You gave her that name.

ERIC
I didn't choose it. I just want to make Jasmin happy...
(beat)
She'd have been happy.

ANABEL

Did you have another name in mind?

ERIC

No! It's perfect! It's just... If I can't even give her a name, what about the rest? How do I know what's best for her?

(beat)

Like right now: should I worry if she's not making a sound?

ANABEL

I don't think so.

Beat.

ANABEL (CONT'D)

Jasmin wouldn't have known.

ERIC

She would have.

ANABEL

(curt)

She wouldn't.

ERIC

How do you know that?

Anabel looks at him with pity.

ANABEL

Eric, she was my best friend. I know. She was terrified. She...

She stops, recalling.

ANABEL (CONT'D)

She called me a week ago. She could've just come over, but it was as if she wouldn't have been able to look me in the eyes, so she called.

Eric looks at her, expectantly.

ANABEL (CONT'D)

She was crying that she didn't know what she was gonna do, if she was gonna be a good mom, if your baby was gonna turn out okay.

(beat)

I told her that no one knows if they're doing it right, but that I knew that she was gonna try. And that's enough. Enough to be okay. Enough for your baby to turn out okay.

(beat)

You were gonna be...

She stops.

ANABEL

You are gonna be a great dad.

ERIC

How do you know that?

ANABEL

I dunno... You and Jasmin spent weeks preparing this apartment, reading books...

ERIC

Yeah, but... nothing in there mentions Eric and Clementine.

ANABEL

I know. But you guys will be okay. And I'm here in any case.

They exchange a smile. Eric looks at the crib.

ERIC

So what do I do?

ANABEL

I don't fucking know.

Pause.

ERIC

Clementine. That's a great name.

He takes a deep breath.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Clem. I'm already gonna give you a nickname. Clem. Is that alright?

(beat)

I'm just your dad. I'm not her. I'm not... but I'm gonna try, I'm really gonna try to give you the best life. Because you deserve the best.

(beat)
I don't know what I'm supposed to
do now.

As he finishes, his gaze turns to Anabel who responds.

ANABEL
I told you, I'm just as lost as you
are. And I read the fucking books
too!

They chuckle as they turn their attention back to the crib.

ERIC
I'm gonna try. Your mommy would
have wanted that. Is that okay?

Clementine is sound asleep and doesn't move. Anabel takes her
brother's hand as they stare at the crib.

The scene fades out.