

Remember to Ask for the Recipe

1st July 2025

It's over.

At least, that's what they say.

I was one of the first.

Lucky me.

My husband laughed, when he first saw blue, fluffy down appearing on my face. I thought it'd just be loose fluff from the woollen blanket tossed across the bed. If only it was that.

I'll never forget my toddler chortling at me, his chubby finger pointing as he chanted, "Cookie Monster, Mummy looks like Cookie Monster!"

Blue feathers, bubbling from little pink pustules above my eyes, on my joints. Waddling across to the kitchen, wings sprouting from either side of my knees like some warped modern-day Cupid.

Broccoli, at least, smelt like chocolate, and tasted just as sweet. I couldn't get enough of the stuff, strangely enough.

Apart from the escapades to the kitchen and bathroom, I hid beneath the blankets, wrapped in a nest of blue wool. Enough that my loved ones laughed; what would the neighbours say? Lorna, down at the shops? I wasn't even willing for the postie to see me in my newly-feathered state.

The small child was next. He bounced down the hallway at some ungodly hour, flapping his arms and squealing about being able to fly.

All I could do at stupid o' clock was bury myself deeper into the blankets, and groan, and the freshly feathered child bounced on my body, willing himself to stay airborne.

Not everything that has wings can fly.

My husband was the last one.

Before, though, he stumbled inside after putting the bins out, glowering.

"What's wrong?" I rasped, my voice unlike the bird that I seemed to be becoming.

"Next door," he spat, his face twisted into an ugly grimace. "Bad enough that everything stinks like curry all day, every day. Now they have more of them!"

"More...of them?" I wondered aloud. "A new baby?"

I didn't remember her being pregnant. Actually, I could barely remember her at all.

Flickering shadows of colourful draped fabric danced in my mind, dissipating into the foggy ether as I peeked out from my nest.

“No!” he hissed, twisting his long white fingers into fists, clenched tight.

“Their family! Mum, dad, God knows who else! They’ve brought them all over!”

I struggled upright, brushing a swath of blue feathers from my eyes.

“That’s lovely! They probably haven’t seen each other in forever. I wonder if we could have them over sometime?” I pondered, twisting absent-mindedly at my winged arm.

The love of my life glared at me, anger seething behind his pale blue eyes.

“There...is...enough...of...them...here!” he spluttered, his face growing flushed. “You remember when they first moved in? We talked about leaving. They’re taking over the whole town!”

One family, taking over a whole town?

I giggled at the improbability of it all.

His glare intensified.

The pitter-patter of little feet echoed on the wooden floor as our little one toddled up the hall, sliding in his tiny blue socks.

“What about *his* future?” my husband seethed, swinging our babe upwards onto the bed. He chortled merrily, flapping his arms again.

“More, more!” he cackled, leaping against his father.

“The more, the merrier, right?” I murmured, bouncing off my son’s words.

“They are taking *over!*” my husband erupted, dropping his little boy onto the bed and swinging around. His heavy footsteps slammed through the air, echoing the crash as the door swung violently behind him.

Sobs wracked our baby’s body as he burrowed next to me, seeking comfort. I stroked his feathers, wondering what the hell had just happened.

Tomorrow, I resolved, as our son’s sobs subsided into snuffles, then soft snores.

I’ll ask him tomorrow, what all that was about.

I wrapped my arms around my little boy, breathed deeply, and stumbled into an uneasy slumber myself.

I swayed unsteadily into the kitchen, a small being seated awkwardly on my hip, fumbling for milk in the darkness of the early hours.

He entered, yawning widely, draped in an old rug. Traces of pale blue etched the outline of his bushy eyebrows. He reached for me, arms wide. I side-stepped him neatly, screwed the lid onto the bottle, and poked it in my child’s direction.

He gurgled as he glugged at the liquid.

“What?” my husband groaned, rubbing at his eyes. “What’d I do this time?”

“The neighbours,” I prompted him. “They have visitors.”

His eyes lit up. “That’s wonderful! We should invite them around sometime!”

I paused, plucking a wayward feather from my elbow.

“Even if they stink of curry? What if they try to take over our house?” I echoed his ugly words of yesterday.

He grimaced, looking confused.

“We love curry! And why would they take over our house? That makes absolutely no sense,” he insisted, reaching for me again.

This time, I softened into his embrace, warm against the chill of the early dawn.

“It does make no sense,” I agreed, reaching for his hand.

He sniffed the air abruptly.

“Are you cooking something? Chocolate cake? At this hour?”

I nodded in the direction of the boiling eggs on the stove.

“No idea where you got chocolate cake from!” I chuckled, enveloped inside his arms.

And so...today.

Today, all the stars aligned, as did our schedules.

When they joined us for lunch, they brought the most amazing curry I have ever tasted.

Strangely, it smelt vaguely of chocolate.

Stray blue feathers wafted underfoot as we chatted together. Their little girl, a bit younger than our boy, danced with him to a steady Bollywood beat. Then, together, their little voices howled along with John Farnham.

“You’re the vooooooice, try and understand it!”

Collapsing together in giggles on the ground, they padded inside to cause further mayhem.

We may have made some new friends today.

I’ll have to remember to ask her for that curry recipe.