

The Electric Baby

by
Stefanie Zadravec

3 page excerpt

Kate Navin
Abrams Artists Agency
275 Seventh Avenue, 26th Floor
New York, NY 10001
646 461 9372
kate.navin@abramsart.com

stefanie@szadravec.com
www.szadravec.com

CHARACTERS:

NATALIA - 30s. Romanian. Provides natural cures for things. Married to Ambimbola. Mother to the electric baby.

HELEN CASEY- 50s-60s Unable to move past the death of her 22 year old daughter 5 years ago.

REED CASEY - 50s-60s Has stayed w/Helen out of a strong sense of loyalty and family.

AMBIMBOLA - 30s-40 Nigerian. His name means *born into wealth*, and he is convinced he is going to win the lottery. He drives a cab.

ROZIE - 20s Works part-time as an escort and also as a waitress. Brash, blunt, damaged, and refreshingly honest.

DAN/NURSE/DAVE- 20s/30s. **DAN** is the nice guy a girl like Rozie won't let herself date. Slightly anxious, a stutterer. **DAVE** - a waiter and Natalia's downstairs neighbor.

SETTING: Pittsburgh, PA. Present day

NATALIA SITS BY THE BASSINET.

SOUND: a soothing lullaby mixes with the loud rhythmic hiss of an oxygen concentrator.

NATALIA sits knitting/crocheting in a chair next to a bassinet from which a warm light emanates.

The bassinet is covered in cream-colored knitting rather than the usual ruffled cotton. Out of the bassinet erupt several wires, also covered in cream-colored knitting, that run across the floor and disappear.

Suddenly, Natalia spits in her left hand. She then wipes her right index finger on the bottom of her shoe and mixes the dirt with the spit in her hand. She wipes the mixture on the baby's forehead, bends down and mutters to the child.

She looks up, notices the audience, smiles, and begins to speak.

NATALIA

(thick Romanian accent)

Try not to talk too much. Is not good to wake the baby. Needs too sleep. Babies beautiful when they sleep, no? Trick is not to mess with that.

She knits for a while.

NATALIA

So, which one of you is going to drive everybody crazy with the coughing, eh? Seriously. You? Maybe? Maybe a little, yeah? Tonight, go home, feel sorry for bothering all the nice peoples who sits by you. Then, take pair of white socks, dips them in whiskey, put hands inside. (She crosses her arms over her chest) Sleeps like this. You wake up, no cough. Next time do this *before* you go to theater.

She rocks the bassinet and in Romanian tells the baby about dipping socks in whiskey to cure a cough.

NATALIA

Daca ai o tuse, înmoi o pereche de sosete albe în whiskey, apoi le pui pe mâini ci dormi cu ele. Când te trezesti, nu vei mai tusi.

NATALIA

Shh. Anybody little bit stinky? Not you, stinky. I hope. (sniffs bassinet) All good. Seriously, someone feeling stinky? Don't have to raise hand, we know which one you are. Trust me. Stinky person, this one for you as they say, free-of-charge. Take two potatoes, put in fridge. Let gets cold, then peel potatoes and put one under each arm like so. Rotate couple of times until room temperature. Do two times a day for something like four days. Armpits will turn black. Don't freak out, is temporary. This is toxins, you know, coming out. When toxins gone, smell gone too. Seriously, don't use the antiperspirant, has aluminum, cause cancer. Try potato instead.

Natalia tells the baby in Romanian not to use anti-perspirant because it causes cancer.

NATALIA

Scumpo, nu folosi *anti-perspirant* niciodata, faci cancer.

Oh, look who's waking up. (to baby) You want to say the next one? No? Okay. What? Which one? Ah yes, this one is good. (to audience) Tell this one, he says: if you have headache, put the banana peel on the forehead. Maybe fifteen, maybe twenty minutes. Headache gone. Seriously. If nothing else, when peoples laugh at you for having banana peel on the forehead, you forgets you have headache. I joke, I joke. But banana peel is good remedy. Seriously.

Now, please, the ringtone you have chosen for your small electronic device is maybe only cute and charming for you. Is probably good idea to turn it off now, no? Also, wait until the end to have to pee, otherwise bothers everybody when you get up. Yeah? Next time maybe skip giant coffee with the whip creams, eh? For coffee, one should drink only one cup, no sugar. Then everybody not so fat, not so angry, everybody sleeps, America is happy end-of-story.

Why I tell you these things? I don't bloody know. You have child, you remember these things. You want to tell them whats you know. You think maybe it will make life easier for them. They won't listen, but they will know. I don't bloody know. Maybe I will stop talking and listen. (To baby) You would like that, eh?

VALET PARKING.

HELEN is waiting outside an apartemnt building.

After a moment REED exits the building juggling Helen's coat, purse and a piece of cake on a party plate wrapped in plastic.

REED
Jesus Helen you bolted out of there-

HELEN
I can't find the attendant.

REED
What happened?

HELEN
Nothing.

REED
I came out of the john, and people said you left.

HELEN
Do you have the ticket?

REED
Something happened. They're opening presents, I go to the bathroom, I come out-

HELEN
Where do they park the cars here?

REED
Wait for the guy, Helen.

HELEN
(with disdain)
Valet parking.

REED
Did someone say something to you?

HELEN
This is Pittsburgh, who needs valet parking?

REED
It's downtown.

HELEN
So?