

The Milk Of Human Kindness



FEED.
BREATHE.
RELAX.
YOU MATTER.

BOTTLE FEEDING
FOR STRESS RELIEF
AND COMFORT



Bottle feeding.
Comfort. Calm.
You deserve it.



NOURISH.
RESET.
BE KIND
TO YOURSELF.



Safe.
Comforting.
Judgement free.
Always.



COLIN MILTON

The Milk of Human Kindness

by
Colin Milton

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The Milk of Human Kindness

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Chapter 1: The Weight of Hands

Clara's hands always felt worst in the mid-afternoon, when the pale London sun caught the grease on the kitchen windowpane and the flat turned the colour of wet cardboard. For seven years, those hands had belonged entirely to the dark. As a postpartum doula, she had moved through the dark blue hours between midnight and dawn, passing through the hushed homes of strangers. She had known the exact weight of a three-week-old skull, the slippery feel of sterile silicone, the specific, ragged rhythm of an exhausted mother's breathing from the bedroom next door. She had been a ghost paid to keep the world from collapsing between midnight and dawn; she was the custodian of the quietest, most fragile human moments.

But babies grow, contracts end, and six months ago, her grandmother, whom she'd nursed through the long, slow fade of dementia, had passed away. The rocking chair in the corner stood empty. The silence in the flat didn't feel like peace; it felt like an unpaid debt. Something that should have been there wasn't.

When her phone buzzed on the Formica table at 2:15 PM, she was just staring at her knuckles.

Are you awake?

It was David. David was thirty-six, smelled of expensive dry-cleaning and stale espresso, and had spent the last decade climbing the jagged ladder of corporate finance. Currently, he was vibrating at a frequency that made Clara's own chest ache. He was wealthy, hollowed out, and entirely spent.

I'm awake, she replied.

Can I come over? Just for an hour. I'm near your street. I can't go back to the office. I think my chest is collapsing.

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When the buzzer rang ten minutes later, the sound was sharp and intrusive in the quiet flat. David didn't just walk through the door; he seemed to spill through it, propelled by the manic, invisible momentum of the financial district.

"I can't go back," he said before his coat was even off. His voice was too loud for the small hallway. "I sat in the car park for forty minutes watching the windshield wipers. If I go back to the office, my chest is going to split wide open."

"Take it off," Clara said softly, pointing to his overcoat.

He unbuttoned it with numb, clumsy fingers. As he moved toward the kitchen table, Clara noticed the small, unconscious rituals of his performance. He unclasped an oversized Patek Philippe watch, a heavy, aggressive piece of gold that seemed to tick with a cold, demanding urgency, and set it on the Formica. Beside it, he dropped his phone, a silver Montblanc pen, and a heavy gold signet ring that left a deep red indentation on his finger. He was stripping away his armour piece by piece, leaving the corporate wealth on the table like a pile of discarded scrap metal. His hair, usually sharply gelled, stuck up in erratic tufts where he'd been running his fingers through it.

"They want me to lay off forty people tomorrow," he said, staring into a mug of black coffee he hadn't touched. "I know their kids' names. I know the names of their dogs, Clara. And my boss called me a soft touch because I asked if we could pad the severance packages."

"When did you last sleep?" Clara asked.

"Tuesday. Maybe Monday night, an hour. My brain won't stop. I lie there, and my heart beats so hard I can hear it in the pillow."

He looked up at her. Clara had seen that look before, in new mothers at four in the morning when the crying wouldn't stop, and the universe had abandoned them entirely. It wasn't just stress. It

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was a loneliness so deep it had gone structural: a failure of the body itself.

Without a word, she stood up and lit the gas ring.

She poured whole milk into a battered saucepan, adding a bruised pod of vanilla, a scraped shaving of nutmeg, and a heavy dollop of honey, which was the old remedy her grandmother used to brew when Clara was small, and the thunder hit the council estate. She heated it slowly, watching the spiced steam curl up into the kitchen. But when she reached into the drying rack, there were no clean mugs. Left over from a box she'd brought home from her last doula client sat a wide-necked glass baby bottle: heavy, borosilicate glass, clean, sterilised, and fitted with a variable-flow silicone teat for older infants.

She poured the warm, spiced milk into it anyway. The glass scorched her palms.

"Sit back," she told him, moving to the narrow sofa where he had migrated, his head wedged in his palms.

When he looked up, she didn't give him a choice. She guided his head down until it rested against the denim of her thigh. He was rigid, with every tendon in his neck corded like iron cable and every muscle locked.

"Close your eyes, David."

When the silicone teat touched his lower lip, he didn't recoil. There was a fraction of a second where his civilised brain hesitated, and then the ancient, hardwired mechanics of the human body simply overrode his executive title. His lips parted.

The warmth hit his tongue, and the mechanics of swallowing took over. Because the valve forced him to work for the milk, his frantic, shallow breathing was instantly disrupted. He had to take a breath, swallow, take a breath. Clara placed her flat palm right over his breastbone, pressing down with a steady, heavy pressure, using the same technique she used to settle colicky infants.

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Beneath her hand, his heart was galloping like a panicked animal in a fence. She closed her eyes and began to count her own breaths, making them long, deep, and audible in the quiet room. In. Out. For five minutes, they stayed in that silent tug-of-war until the frantic rhythm beneath her palm began to yield. The tension started to leave his jaw. A ragged, shuddering sigh escaped through his nose, and a single tear tracked from the corner of his eye, hot and heavy through her jeans. He didn't say a word. He just kept drinking until the glass clicked empty.

When the bottle was empty, his hands, which had been clenched into tight fists, lay open and limp on his lap.

"I don't have to think," he muttered, his voice thick and slurred with sudden, chemically deep exhaustion. "For the first time in ten years, nobody expects anything from me."

"Nobody wants anything," she agreed, her fingers running through his hair, smoothing the gelled tufts flat. "You're done for the day."

He was asleep inside two minutes, breathing deeply, his face smoother than it had looked in years. Clara sat in the quiet flat for a long time as the room turned grey, watching the shadows lengthen across the floor. Her hands didn't feel heavy anymore.