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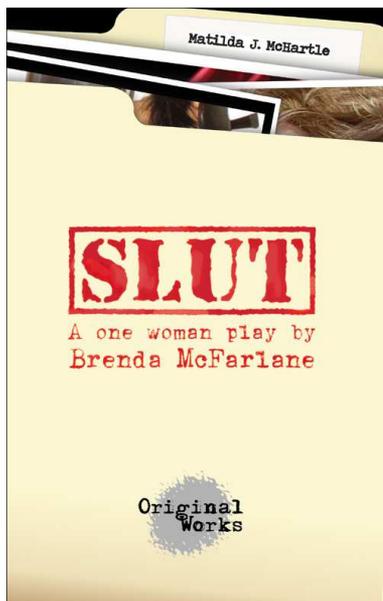
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*Baby Mama: One Woman's Quest
to Give Her Child to Gay People*

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Slut by Brenda McFarlane

Synopsis: Matilda McHartle would describe herself as a perfectly ordinary person and her behavior as completely normal for a single woman in her thirties. She'd admit to being a little quirky for an accountant but she'd never guess what other people might call her if they knew the details of her sex life... that is until she is arrested for running a brothel and taken downtown for formal questioning.

Cast Size: 1 Female

**Baby Mama: One Woman's Quest
to Give Her Child to Gay People**

By Mariah MacCarthy

BABY MAMA was originally produced at Dixon Place in New York City on August 18, 2014.

It was directed by Sara Lyons and starred the playwright.

BABY MAMA

Heartbeat/Orgy

(An empty stage, except for a stool on which Mariah sits. She talks to us directly.)

MARIAH

The first time I saw my son's heartbeat as more than just a flicker, Amanda Palmer's song "Trout Heart Replica" had just come out. It's the story of how she went with some friends to a fish market, and the butcher cut the heart out of the trout in front of them and held it up to them, still beating. *(singing "Trout Heart Replica") "And it's beating, and it's beating, and I don't wanna know..."*

I saw my son's heartbeat at the "anatomy scan." An anatomy scan is basically just, an ultrasound technician rubs the thingie on your tummy with the

goo, and you watch on a big-screen TV as she points out body parts. “That’s a forearm. That’s the top of his head.” And this is when we determined, for sure, that it was *his* head. She showed me an inkblot splotch that was allegedly a fetus penis, though to me it looked like a butterfly.

Now my usual gyno, Beth, knew that I was placing the child for adoption, but this ultrasound tech did not. So I imagine some of the moms who are planning to actually raise the humans that emerge from them are a little more...vocal. Than I was. Maybe there’s more squealing. I just watched, in silence, and I think she was thrown off. She kept asking me, “Are you OK?” and I was fine, I just didn’t have anything to say. Sweet, that’s a femur. Good job.

And then I saw the heartbeat.

I saw it before she pointed it out to me. You know a heartbeat when you see it. I'd seen a heartbeat at my very first ultrasound, but that had been a tiny flickering light; this was a HEARTBEAT. I said, "Is that the heart?" My voice was lower; I couldn't keep the awe out of it.

She said, "Yep." She confirmed that everything looked fine, and left me with three printouts: his profile, his feet, and his little Rorschach test butterfly dick.

Outside the hospital, in the little garden out front, I sat on a bench and looked at my printout and lis-

tened to Amanda Palmer’s “Trout Heart Replica”

on repeat:

And it’s beating

And it’s beating

Look, it’s still beating...

I stayed there until standing and walking to the subway seemed like a feasible task. My baby had a sex — and he had a heart. And yes, even though I was planning to place him for adoption, he was, and is, MY baby.

My son was conceived in a drunken fit of passion with a friend we’ll call Kermit. It was January 3, 2012, and I apparently had no idea how a woman’s menstrual cycle works, because I thought the week after my period was the safest time for unprotected

sex. I even remember saying at the time, “I’m not gonna get pregnant! I just had my period last week!” ...I know now.

Interesting factoid: We were not only using a faulty version of the rhythm method, we also used the pull-out method. ...Neither was effective.

Kermit’s not really in this story, by the way. I mean, other than the part where he deposited his sperm in me and made a person appear, other than that. I will say that I don’t consider him an asshole, and that’s really all you need to know.

So, there are two really uncomfortable topics that you’re not supposed to talk about ever, but which you can’t really NOT talk about if you’re going to

talk about adoption. Those two topics are abortion and money.

Let's talk about abortion first. Many birth mothers would actually have gotten an abortion if they could have, but it's either not accessible for them, or they find out too late, or put off dealing with it, and adoption is more feasible than a late-term abortion.

I was not one of these women. I knew from day one that I would choose adoption, for the simple reason that there was no particle of me that wanted an abortion. Call it my Catholic upbringing, call it that one scene in *Blue Valentine*, and I will support Planned Parenthood 'til the day I die, but at the end of the day, one of the great things about being

pro-choice is that you don't have to do anything you don't wanna do.

So I knew I would not be getting an abortion. That leaves the money thing. I would actually much rather talk about my relationship to abortion than my relationship to money. I would rather jump out a fucking window than talk about money. But you can't talk about adoption without money.

Because most birth mothers, if they could afford to raise their kids, they would. Money is the deciding factor for them. Even things that seem like they're about something else are actually about money. Time is a factor — not thinking you'll have time to be a mother — but oh wait, time is money, because if you could pay for childcare during that

time you don't have, it wouldn't be an issue. Career is a factor — oh wait, that's money too, because if I could make a living as a playwright, I wouldn't have needed a full-time job in addition to writing and producing my own work, which is ALSO a full-time job, as is raising a kid. It all comes down to money. I'm not even gonna talk about all the ways that America fucks over women who have the nerve to get knocked up — and is probably about to start fuckin' 'em over even worse — because we just don't have that kind of time.

Through mostly my own fault, I was more broke in 2012 than I've ever been in my life. I had defaulted on not one, but two student loans... and three credit cards. This part fills me with more

shame than anything else I'm about to tell you, because I want you to think I'm a responsible adult and maybe hire me for something at some point, but this is what happened. As a result, my already unimpressive wages were garnished by 25% every paycheck, and I made additional monthly payments of hundreds of dollars. I knew, somewhere in my mind, that women had raised children on less than I was left with, but I honestly cannot tell you how.

So — child-rearing was out. Abortion was out. That didn't leave much else.

I went to a Planned Parenthood and peed in a cup to confirm that I was, in fact, pregnant — spoiler alert: I was — and I told the Very Concerned So-

cial Worker who sat down with me that I wanted to give it to gay people. She gave me an adoption agency pamphlet with an adorable Asian child on the front, and we were off to the races. I was like, sweet, I've always wondered what it's like to be pregnant, so now I'll find out, and then at the end of it some gay people will get a baby, and it'll be a beautiful thing, and yeah, I'll probably have some intense emotions about it, but overall? Pretty cool. Partytime. Excellent.

But if you're not babyproofing your home and shopping for pediatricians, being pregnant changes everything but it also doesn't really change anything. You stop drinking, try to eat better, go to a doctor, but otherwise you kind of just have to keep waking up in the morning and continue with business as usual.

So I decided, around four months into my pregnancy, that business as usual for me included an orgy.

I did not generally attend orgies, but I did occasionally go to kissing parties. Yes, you've been living your lives wrong, because there are parties where the express purpose is to make out with people, and none of y'all are at one right now. So, PSA, now you know: There are kissing parties. You pay a small cover fee, go in, and make out with the room. This is a thing.

So I decided that I needed to go. You have to bring a friend — it's a safety thing — so my friend Didi and I strut into the bar that night, she in a black corset, I in a skin-tight red dress. And one of the

first people we spot is a guy wearing Virgin Mary pants. Like, pants covered with the Virgin Mary. So obviously we have to talk to this person. So we approach him, his name is Pablo, and Pablo owns a string of hotels in Argentina or some shit, *I don't* know, but he offers me a drink and I say, “No thanks, I'm not drinking, I'm pregnant.”

And Pablo's like, “Really?”

“Yeah.”

“Wow, I'm suddenly even more turned on, kissing you. That's so hot.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, I’ve always had a fantasy about having sex with a pregnant woman. That’s so sexy.”

So Pablo and I make out, and then I make out with other people, since that is literally the entire purpose of this party. And toward the end of the night, the bar is closing down, and Pablo approaches me and says, “Hey, if you and Didi wanna keep hanging out, a bunch of us are heading to my loft a couple blocks from here, there’s a hot tub on the roof...you guys wanna come?”

There are not many phrases guaranteed to make me come to your apartment. “Hot tub on the roof,” however, makes the short list.

It’s me, Pablo, Didi, a couple — Rob and Emma — Rob is gorgeous, Emma makes hats — and

Pablo's friend Cassie — Reiki practitioner. We get to Pablo's loft and it's absurd. It's, like, bad-movie huge, everything's automated, one wall is just a giant fucking mural — and there is a hot tub on the roof. (We don't go in. It's too cold. This is good. Pregnant women aren't supposed to go in hot tubs. I didn't know.) So instead we all adjourn...to the soft room.

The soft room is exactly what it sounds like. It's a room...that's soft. There's couches. There's cushions. The floor is basically one big mattress. It's the ideal room for, oh let's just say, group sex.

So Pablo kind of inserts himself between me and Didi, and around now is when I start thinking, all right Pablo, the whole fetishizing-pregnancy-thing

is getting kinda old. Like, at one point he actually says, “Mm, pregnant boobies.” That’s literally a thing that happens.

Fortunately, Rob swoops in and steals me away to our own special corner, where he goes down on me for like a year. He’s good. Like, might be a sex robot. And every now and then, I look over, and Cassie’s doing Emma with a strap-on, or Pablo’s taking Didi from behind, and they’re all lit up by the fireplace and it’s beautiful, but me and Rob are in our own magical land of eight billion orgasms. And eventually he finishes and I give him the thank you kiss to end all thank you kisses, I’m feeling GRATITUDE, dude, I’m ready to pay this guy back like it’s my JOB, but he just says, “Welp, better go check on my girlfriend!” and goes over

and starts taking care of Emma, and I'm just like,
"OK byeeeee. Call me."

And I realize that eventually Pablo is going to turn his attention back to me and my pregnant boobies, and I decide not to stick around for that. So when Didi starts getting dressed, I get dressed, and when I say good-bye to Pablo, he says, "Can we just have sex real quick before you go?" And I say no, and he says, "Aw man, I just really want to have sex with a pregnant woman. That's like my one fantasy I haven't done yet." And I lie and say, "We'll *totally* have sex! Soon!" And Didi and I make our escape.

I should clarify that this was not the first time Didi and I had participated in group sex together...that

week. She was seeing a guy named Eddie, and Eddie was CUTE. Like ruhl cute. And I'd told her I thought so, and so a threesome just seemed like the thing to do. (Didi and I have a special friendship.) So three days before the kissing party, we'd called him up with all the nonchalance of stoners ordering a pizza, and put this plan into action.

But it was hard, because Eddie was very clearly falling in love with her, and as the third party in a threesome, that's difficult to watch. You get touched less, kissed less, noticed less. I think the one time Eddie's attention was totally focused on me was when I used my big swollen boobs to smack him in the face, that was fun.

I felt hung over the next morning, even though I hadn't been drinking. I emailed Didi, kinda freak-

ing out. “Hey, uh, so I found myself wondering if I should ask you how you’d feel about it if I had sex with Eddie without you, but I know it’s not really Eddie I want. I want someone to want. I just want someone to hold me. I just want someone to fuck my brains out and stay to cuddle. And I don’t know how to square that with being so busy and FIERCELY independent and, hello, I’m having a fucking baby, but now that this experience has reminded me what I really want, how do I get it? Or if I can’t get it, how do I take care of myself while not having it? Sucks that these kinda crashes don’t go away just ‘cause you stop drinking. I love you.”

Didi writes me back and says, “Hi, this is normal. You are OK. You are beautiful. Thank you for sharing your feelings. They all make sense. I know

some of them suck. But Mariah, you will meet your match. You will meet your multiple matches. You will meet people to hook up with and to hold. And the kissing party is gonna be so good for that! For us! It's gonna be so much fun!"

And it had been. And I was so glad that I'd gone, that I hadn't stopped living my life and being who I was.

But now, riding the elevator down from Pablo's loft with Didi, all I could think was: God, I can't wait to have sex with just one person over and over again.

Debbie/Doubt Makes Faith Stronger

After Planned Parenthood gave me the pamphlet with the adorable Asian child on the front, I met with a social worker named Debbie. (*Doing a Debbie impression*) Debbie is always kinda looking at you like this (*sad smile*), like she thinks you're gonna die but doesn't wanna tell you. I love her immediately, and the feeling is so mutual; she tells me, (*Debbie impression*) "You just have passion radiating out of you." She counsels me on my options, tells me I don't HAVE to choose adoption just because I'm meeting with her; I tell her my life story and how I'm feeling about the pregnancy.

And the agency actually encourages open adoption, where you have some contact with the child

throughout their life, and this sounds great to me, so she asks me how often I'd be interested in visiting. "Oh, like, once a month." (*Debbie impression*) "Well, you know, most families are interested in closer to once or twice a *year*, but, you *never know*." She tells me I'm an unusual case, that I've started this process way earlier than most of the birth moms she sees. (*Debbie impression*) "You're just breaking the mold all over the place."

And I don't feel typical; I feel outrageously lucky. I have health insurance, on top of which the adoption agency is reimbursing my doctor's bills because I'm so broke. My friends ensure that I never have to go to an appointment alone unless I want to. I'm still making theater, even started my own theater company that year. And above all, I *chose*

adoption; no one chose it for me. Other than the fact that I think everyone on the subway can smell my vagina — oh yes, we talk about vaginal discharge in this play, I hope you came prepared — and there's a month of dizziness with a couple vomitings, but for the most part, I'm fine. I'm chugging along, I'm dealing with it and living my life and fucking killing it!

This all comes to a grinding halt sometime around eleven weeks.

Didi walks me to the subway station one night after getting sausages in the East Village, and before I get on the train, she says, “How you doing? You OK?” And my face and my throat just freeze, and I'm sobbing on Astor Place for two hours. I tell

her I've been doing backflips, thinking about how I could make it work to actually raise this baby. Maybe I could live with relatives, maybe I could borrow money, and the math still never came out quite right, but I was thinking about it. I was trying really hard not to think about it, because motherhood terrified me almost as much as abortion, but I was thinking about it, and trying not to think about it was killing me.

And Didi holds me, 'cause she's great, and I can be a mess with her like I can't be a mess with anyone else, but the thing about being a birth mother in America in 2012 is that no one else you know is. Like, if you've been raped, it's frighteningly easy to find someone else who's been raped. If you lose a parent, you probably know someone else

who's lost a parent. If you're a birth mother...it's, like, *Juno* and a relative that placed in the fifties. So, as far as the people around you relating to what you're going through...you're kind of fucked. It doesn't mean they don't love you, it doesn't mean they don't show up for you like fucking rock stars, it just means, sometimes you're gonna be sobbing your guts out and all they can do is put an arm around you and say, "Yeah, that sounds...bad."

But the next morning I was fine. I was like, "Cool, I cried it out, I confronted my feelings," and this actually made me feel *more* secure in choosing adoption. I had a youth minister in high school who used to say, "Doubt makes faith stronger," and that was absolutely the case with me. Every

time I seriously considered motherhood, it led me back to adoption full force. When I announced my pregnancy and adoption plan on Facebook, I said, “I remain open to whatever curveballs the universe — and my own heart — decide to throw at me.”

And this became my mantra.

The Book/Leo Hunter

The decision to finally start looking for families after months of appointments with Debbie wasn't so much planned as much as, we just ran out of other things to talk about. I tell Debbie one day that I'm doing fine, no recent breakdowns, and she says, "Do you want to go ahead and look at The Book?"

The Book is literally a book of families from which you choose who gets your baby. It's an ugly orange plastic binder. It has their picture, a letter to the birth mother, their religion, their occupation, their race, what race they'd be comfortable adopting, how open of an adoption they're interested in. All on one page, front and back. There are dozens, maybe a hundred, of these pages in The Book.

I'm on the prowl for my perfect gays, because as a queer woman, I think it would be a beautiful thing, but I'm open to heteros. Can't really call 'em "breeders" in this case, I guess. And so I'm looking and making my list of families I want more info about, and Debbie comes in with a new sheet and sets it down in front of me. (*As "Debbie"*) "Hot off the press." I look at it. It's two men. Mixed race couple. Interested in open adoption with three to four visits a year. One is a surgeon and one...does THEATER. And I'm like, oh, yeah. Yeah, I wanna know about them. (*As "Debbie"*) "I thought you might."

So your next session is all about looking at the photo albums that these families have created specifically for this purpose, while your social worker

reads to you from a confidential report. Like, she can't just give it to you with the confidential bits blacked out, she has to *read it to you*, it's that confidential. It's got their salaries, any debt they have, medical history, criminal history, the parenting styles of THEIR parents, education plan, how they plan to discipline the child, everything. Everything is in this report.

And look...you already know who I chose. I haven't really done a good job of building the suspense here. When I look at the gay couple's photo album, I get tears in my eyes. They've taken pictures in all these goofy poses and put silly speech bubbles on 'em, and there's a joy and a love there that leaps off the page.

We arrange a time to meet at the adoption agency, and I know they must be WAY more nervous than me, but I am sweating bullets. “Just PLEASE be good, PLEASE be good...” And I get there, and they come in, and we hug immediately, and they sit on either side of me and I say, “I’m in a sandwich!” and they laugh at my stupid joke and I’m like, this is great. This is already great. And they’re HANDSOME! I know this has fuck-all to do with anything, and that they’re interested in MY gene pool, not the other way around, but they really are quite fetching.

I love them. It’s love at first sight. They’re funny, they’re thoughtful, they have smart answers to my questions. I can see John, the surgeon, being, like, the ballbusting dad at the parent teacher confer-

ence, and Peter, the actor, is a little quieter, a little more vulnerable. We're all cracking jokes, we're all feeling the chemistry, and then John asks me, "What do you want for your baby?" "Oh...um, great question. Well, I think what you were saying earlier, about really giving him space to be himself, and encouraging his, um, creativity? In whatever way he chooses to express that? Which is why I think it's so great that he'd be getting arts and science in one family? And, um..." *(Pause)* And I stop 'cause I'm choked up, and I look over, and Peter is choked up, we're all choked up, it's beautiful. I think that was the point of no return.

And we take a picture to commemorate the occasion, and I'd been thinking of Hunter as a name so I say, "Hey, what do you think of the name

Hunter?” And they just...freeze. Just shut down, like, deer in the headlights, I’m like, ohhh, they do *not* like Hunter. And Peter makes a joke like, “Well, I just don’t believe in hunting!” but it’s clear, they’re not into it.

So we make a Google doc, and we name the baby *together*. One of the names on my list is Leo, and when I tell them this, they say, “We thought of Leo too.”

And once we agree on Leo, suddenly, he is theirs. Because if he were just mine, he would be Hunter. But because there are these fathers, his name is Leo, and Hunter is his middle name. And now I can’t think of him as anything but Leo. And I can feel him getting farther away from me, even though he’s still inside me.

And I find out that John dropped off their page for “The Book” while I was looking at families. We were in the building at the same time. An hour later and he would have missed me. More and more, I realize that while the pregnancy may have been an accident, meeting them was absolutely not. If I had any reservations about them at all, maybe I could convince myself that my son would be better off with me, but I don’t have any. Not at all. Not at ALL.

The Italian Boss

So there's a point in all this where I'm going to the adoption agency every other week, going to therapy every week, and going to the doctor, and I am missing a lot of work. I also am not being employee of the month. I'm rolling in late, I'm on Facebook, I don't give a fuck. What are they gonna do, fire a pregnant girl? They're not gonna fire a pregnant girl.

But eventually, my Italian boss calls me into his office and says, (*Italian accent*) "OK Mariah. You know I like you, I got a soft spot for you, I have shown it many times, but you know, people are starting to complain. You are never here, and Mal-lory is still waiting on the client letters from you

— and you know I stick up for you, I say, well, she is going through so much — and they say, yes, but what are we supposed to do? And I say, well?”

(Beat.)

I can't lose this job. I need the health insurance. I need my 25-percent-deducted paycheck that barely feeds me. And it's not a calculated move, but it might as well be, I just start weeping. The floodgates open, I just lose it. I really feel bad for the guy, in retrospect. He's got a pregnant chick crying in his office, what is he supposed to do? Be a monster? He says, "Oh, Mariah. You know I don't like to see you cry." And he gives me some Kleenex and I blow my nose, and once I get myself together he says, "Just try to be better, OK?"

This is not the first or the last kindness he shows me. The company is small enough that he's never really had to deal with a pregnant employee before, there isn't really a "set" maternity leave policy on the books. And at first, he just says, well, you get this much unpaid time off, Godspeed, and my brain explodes trying to figure out how I'm gonna save money for the occasion. But at some point after this meeting where I cry in his office, he sits me down again and he tells me he's decided to pay for my leave after all. "Just, you know, LOOK at your email, whenever you can, and if you can deal with something that is great, and if not you just tell me. Is that OK?" And I cry again.

It is not lost on me that I wouldn't be this fortunate with almost any other boss. It is not lost on me that

I'd be royally fucked if I were a server, or a temp, or any employee that gets paid hourly. It is not lost on me that this is just one more way in which I am almost impossibly lucky, and I wonder how every other birth mother survives.

END OF SAMPLE.