

Battered body, SHATTERED CONFIDENCE and giant breasts. ANTONIA HOYLE, 34, reveals...

What motherhood IS REALLY LIKE

Last Saturday, my husband took me out to lunch. Afterwards I fuffed around a fancy candle shop for an hour and in the evening we laughed without worrying about the noise we were making. It was the perfect day, and as it came to an end, I cried. I cried because I knew it would be months before I'd have a chance to do it again.

I'm a mother, you see. And fun stuff like leisurely lunches, window shopping and yes, even laughing loudly after 7pm, is pretty much confined to my past.

If you're a mum, too, you'll know what I mean. But chances are you haven't told your childless friends. When it comes to what motherhood really entails, there's a conspiracy of silence. We'll mutter something about sore nipples and sleepless nights and leave it at that. We think if we tell the truth, our mates won't follow suit and we'll be forced to spend the next 18 years sobbing into our Sauvignon Blanc alone.

Well, as the war-weary mother of a soon-to-be two year old, I'm ready to come clean about some of the things I wish people had told *me*. After all, forewarned is forearmed.

Breastfeeding HELL

You know the birth will hurt, so I'll skip that part. But do prepare both yourself and your partner for plenty of projectile vomiting and flying placenta blood. And the pain doesn't stop once your baby is out. Maybe this is too much information, but for weeks after my daughter Rosie was born in

November 2010 I thought my stitches were going to snap whenever I sat down.

When my milk came in on day four, my breasts felt as if they were filled with cement – like implants from hell. That's the thing about breastfeeding. It's not the bleeding nipples or baring my breasts in public (as excruciating as it was) that stick in my mind, but the effect it had on the shape of my boobs. They'd inflate from a C to a G cup and, if Rosie didn't fancy feeding, squirt out milk at random, be it in the shower or the haberdashery department of John Lewis.

I tried to get rid of the excess with a breast pump. But the more I pumped the more I produced.

Rare evenings away from Rosie were complicated – I spent the majority of my friend's birthday in a nightclub toilet trying to squeeze out enough milk to fit my boobs back into my dress, convinced people would notice I'd gone from Kate Moss to Katie Price over the course of a couple of hours. And God forbid I should leave the house without a wad of breast pads stuffed in my bra or I'd end up with damp patches all over my clothes. Dignified? Hardly.

But my battered body was small fry compared to my baby blues. I'd read I might be a 'little tearful' in the weeks after the birth. Ha! The best way I can describe it was feeling as if I was being buried alive, hit with the sinking realisation that the old me – the girl who loved vodka shots, late nights and her total lack of responsibility – was gone forever. I fantasised about leaving Rosie in the Post Office for a kindly stranger to discover before running away to the Bahamas in the dead of night.

Sleep deprivation made me demented. It wasn't so much the amount

of shut-eye I averaged – which was often, as my financial worker husband Chris, 34, would gently point out, a respectable six hours. The difficulty was the fact it was only available in two-hour stretches, making me feel permanently jet lagged.

I made funny decisions – I walked out of Sainsbury's without my shopping so often I made friends with the checkout lady, and I once set fire to my pyjamas after throwing them over a lamp to create a baby-friendly glow. The smell of smoke coming from the nursery alerted Chris one Saturday afternoon and stopped Rosie and I burning to death.

Non-stop CRYING

Though I did a lot of crying, I wasn't the only one constantly in tears. Rosie did her fair share of (colic-induced) crying too, like clockwork in fact, between 7pm and 10pm every evening. From talking to other mums I knew her weeping was supposed to break my heart. Secretly, though, I felt a mounting anger at having to wear earplugs and stick my head under a pillow whenever I needed a break.

The other thing about newborns is that they're not exactly riveting company. There were only so many times I could head-butt the carpet shouting: 'Nee-ow' in an attempt to entertain my daughter before I started to feel as though I was losing my mind.

Then there's the pressure you come under from the Mummy Police – be it the woman on the bus who thought Rosie needed more clothes on, the man in the cafe who clearly couldn't stand the sight of my nipple or the friend who →

Antonia wears: dress, New Look; necklace, bracelets, both Primark; shoes, Next. Rosie wears: all clothes her own



*'Milk squirted
from my
BOOBS in
John Lewis'*

20-month-old Rosie
rivalled Antonia in
the crying stakes

wondered if I shouldn't be having a glass of wine two hours before breastfeeding. Someone, somewhere, always thought I should be doing it differently.

Even when my confidence grew and my hormones levelled slightly, everyday events still seemed hugely significant. As the rest of the nation chortled at the sight of a sequinned Ann Widdecombe doing the foxtrot on *Strictly Come Dancing*, I wailed inconsolably. To me, she wasn't a wizened old battleaxe but an emblem of all that was brave and vulnerable about the human spirit.

My husband Chris looked on in astonishment. Because here's the other thing about motherhood – your relationship will end. At least the one you enjoyed pre-baby.

Chris would *never* admit it, but he no longer sees me as the girl in an obscenely short mini-dress he fell in love with. How could he? He watched our daughter's head come out of my nether ends. For a while we were neither lovers nor even friends but merely co-sufferers – resigned to a relentless relay of feeding, bathing and rocking. I resented him for having the privilege of returning to work and 'real life.' He suspected me of watching *Neighbours* on the sofa all day (which was only part true).

Everything CHANGES

Our arguments became farcical. One night Chris got so het up about my escalating grumpiness that he accidentally pulled the bedroom door handle off and locked us in for half an hour, complete with screaming baby. That's when we decided to grant each other immunity from insults between 11pm and 6am.

In any case, Chris slept in the spare room for the first four months so he could keep a clear enough head to go to work. On the rare occasions we did share a bed, all we wanted to do was sleep.

Whereas once we'd been a partnership of equals, we were heading in different directions.

The same could be said for my friendships. Meeting up with the girls felt awkward. They were getting promoted – I was going home to purée sweet



Despite the hardships, Antonia loves being a mum



Antonia with newborn baby Rosie

'I'm knackered and no longer see MY MATES'

done her third runny poo of the day and is therefore deemed poorly enough to come home from nursery?

So here I am, knackered and bedraggled with a husband who thinks I'm deranged, a career in crisis and mates I no longer talk to.

And, as if that wasn't bad enough, I'm pregnant again... So what did I go and do that for?

Well, because I love Rosie so much that every time she gives me a snotty kiss I do a little jig with excitement. When she gets the first three lines of *Baa Baa Black Sheep* right I practically explode with pride. Watching her cover her bears with a blanket and put them to sleep keeps me smiling all evening. And I know I'll feel exactly the same second time around.

I just won't be able to boast about it after bedtime at 7pm. Or go for a boozy lunch to celebrate. Or sit down without wincing in pain... **T**

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potato. I grudgingly accepted that we would grow apart.

But nor did I have much interest in making friends with other new mums – the tedium of singing nursery rhymes at baby classes was almost too much to bear. Once I had a successful career. Sitting in a circle performing *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* seemed like a demotion. I had an identity crisis – I didn't know who I was or what I wanted.

After nine months I returned to my job as a journalist. I had every intention of working as hard as I did before, but I was hopelessly naive. Anyone who tells you that you can have a glittering career and a baby is lying. Sure, it's great being able to go to the loo on my own while my daughter is at nursery, but the brutal truth is I'm never going to be as successful as my baby-free colleagues.

How can I compete when I have to cut interviews short because Rosie has