

The Baby Monitor
By
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“Mommy!” the small voice cried over the baby monitor. Bill looked over at his wife. He could see the outline of her face in the green light coming from the monitor’s power light.

“Mommy, please!” said the small voice again. Jenny got out of bed and walked out the bedroom door. Bill turned and stared at the clock on his night table. He strained his eyes to make out that it was just after eleven. A few minutes later, Jenny returned with Sarah in her arms.

“She feels a little warm to me,” said his wife. Bill got up and went into the bathroom to find the thermometer. After rummaging in the medicine cabinet, he returned and placed it in the baby’s ear. The thermometer beeped and Bill turned on the light to read the temperature. Both Bill and Jenny squinted their eyes while adjusting to the light.

“Ninety-nine point two, that’s not anything to be concerned about for a three year old,” said Bill.

“My fingers and toes feel funny again, mommy,” said Sarah.

“She told me that this morning too. I think she should sleep in our bed tonight. I can tell she doesn’t feel good,” Jenny told Bill as she pulled her long dark hair back away from her face with one hand.

Bill began to speak, “Just give her some medicine and put her back in...” Jenny knitted her brows at Bill causing him to stop in mid-sentence. He pushed his pillow over to one side of the bed. He then went back into the bathroom and retrieved the medicine. After Sarah took her medicine, Jenny took a spare pillow and placed it in between she and Bill. Jenny then laid Sarah down gently on the pillow. Bill turned out the light and Jenny and Bill tried to go back to sleep in the quiet house.

Bill lay staring at the ceiling; Jenny and Sarah were now sleeping soundly. He placed his hand on Sarah’s back. Sarah was still warm. He thought to himself that he would give the medicine a few more minutes to work on Sarah. He closed his eyes. The bedroom was quiet. A few minutes later the silence in the room was disturbed by the sound of loud static over the baby monitor. Bill wanted to turn it off, but he could not reach the monitor over Sarah and Jenny. He sighed as he stared at the ceiling. Just as suddenly as it started, the static sound stopped. The room was quiet again, dimly lit by the green power light on the baby monitor. Bill looked over at his clock, twelve-eleven. He closed his eyes and tried to go back to sleep.

“Mommy!” a small voice called over the baby monitor. Bill opened his eyes. He looked over and saw Jenny and Sarah sleeping next to him. He stared at the green light on the baby monitor for a few minutes. There was no sound coming from the monitor. Bill laid his head back down on his pillow and closed his eyes.

“Mommy, please!” the voice called louder over the baby monitor. Bill and Jenny both sat up in bed and looked at the monitor. Jenny looked back at Bill and then down at Sarah. Then Bill and Jenny stared at the monitor. The room was quiet. Jenny gently rested her hand on Sarah’s back.

“Mommy, come get me!” said the voice. Jenny shivered. Bill and Jenny looked at each other. It was Sarah’s voice on the monitor, but she was sleeping soundly between them.

“Daddy, Mommy, please!” pleaded the voice. Quickly, Jenny reached over and pulled the power cord from the monitor. The green power light faded and the room grew dark. All was quiet in the room.

“Mommy, please!” shouted a small distant voice from down the hall. Beads of sweat began to form on Jenny and Bill’s foreheads.

Jenny reached over and gently pushed Bill, “Go see,” she whispered. Slowly Bill got out of bed and went out of the room. Jenny reached over and turned her nightstand lamp on and then she picked up Sarah holding her close to her body. Sarah didn’t wake. Jenny could feel Sarah’s rigid body.

“Sarah,” said Jenny. “Sarah, wake up Sarah.” She gently shook the child, but there was no response. Seeing through watering eyes, Jenny watched Sarah’s chest rise and fall with each breath, but Sarah would not respond to Jenny.

Bill approached Sarah’s bedroom. The door was partially opened and the room glowed orange from the nightlight. He pushed the door open and saw Sarah sitting up in her bed. Bill could feel his heart pound in his chest.

“Daddy, I don’t feel good,” said the little girl, reaching up her arms to her father. Bill tried to swallow, but his throat was too dry. Bill took one step toward the little girl, then stopped. He turned and quickly went back to his bedroom. Jenny looked up and saw Bill standing in the doorway, his face was pale and his eyes looked glazed.

“What was it?” she asked.

“Noth... Nothing,” said Bill. Jenny stared at Bill and Bill stared at Sarah in Jenny’s arms. Just then, Jenny gasped loudly just as Bill felt small fingers grasping at his right hand. He looked down to see Sarah clutching his fingers. Bill quickly pulled back his hand and let out a gasp. He looked back over at Sarah. Jenny covered her mouth to keep from crying aloud. The two of them stared at the Sarah standing next to Bill.

“Pick me up Daddy,” pleaded the little girl with her arms stretched up to Bill. He reached down and picked her up in his arms. The little girl rested her head on Bill’s chest and looked at the little girl Jenny’s arms.

“Sarah is very sick,” said the little girl. “It won’t let go of her.”

“What’s going on?” Jenny said crying.

“I don’t know,” said Bill. “Where did you come from?” Bill asked Sarah in his arms. The little girl did not answer Bill. “Who are you?” he asked.

“I’m Sarah, daddy,” the little girl said as a matter of fact.

“I think we need to take Sarah to the Hospital,” said Jenny. “She won’t wake up!”

“I’ll hurry and get dressed,” said Bill. He placed Sarah down on the floor and went into the closet to get his and Jenny’s clothes. Jenny and the little girl stared at each other.

“They won’t know what’s wrong,” Sarah told Jenny. “Sarah is very sick. You have to get rid of it.”

Bill returned with his pants on and pulling his shirt over his head. He placed Jenny’s clothes on the foot of the bed. Jenny lowered Sarah down on a pillow, then put

on the clothes Bill brought her, over her pajamas. Jenny got out of bed and picked up Sarah from the pillow.

“What do we do with the other little girl?” asked Jenny.

“We can’t leave her here. We’ll take her with us,” said Bill. He suddenly noticed that the little girl was no longer in the room.

“Little girl!” called Bill. “Sarah!” Bill went into Sarah’s bed room to look for the little girl. After finding nothing in her room and under her bed, he quickly searched the rest of the house. There were no signs of her. Bill returned to his bedroom. “I couldn’t find her,” he told his wife.

“We have to leave now,” said Jenny.

Bill drove the car while sat in the passenger seat holding Sarah in her arms. They were riding for a few minutes when Bill checked his rearview mirror. He gasped loudly. Jenny turned around to see Sarah sitting in her car seat.

“Sarah needs to be at the hospital,” the little girl told them.

“We’re on our way to the hospital,” said Jenny.

“We don’t like being sick,” said the little girl. “If they don’t find it, Sarah won’t get better.”

“What do they have to...” Bill looked in the rearview mirror and saw the car seat was empty.

When they arrived at the hospital, the three were immediately taken to an emergency room. Sarah’s condition had not changed. A nurse took Sarah’s vital signs.

“The doctor will be in soon. If you need anything, just press the intercom to call the nurse’s station,” said the nurse.

A few moments later a young man entered the room. “I’m Doctor Roberts, the attending physician,” said the young man. He was holding Sarah’s charts. “How long has she been this way?”

“It’s happened in the last few hours,” said Bill.

“Has she exhibited any other symptoms?” asked the doctor.

“She did tell me her fingers and toes felt funny today,” said Jenny.

“Does she have any medical problems?” asked the doctor.

“No. She’s always been healthy,” said Jenny.

“Are there any other children in the home?” asked Doctor Roberts.

“Only tonight,” said Bill.

“Tonight?” asked the doctor.

“No other children at home,” said Jenny.

“We’ll need to run some more tests,” said the doctor. After the doctor left the room, the nurse came in and drew some blood from Sarah. It was about thirty minutes later when the doctor came back.

“Well, we don’t know what’s wrong with her at this point,” said the doctor. He examined Sarah again, checking her reflexes. “I’m going to send her down for some x-rays. If that doesn’t tell us anything, I’ll want to do an M.R.I.”

“Her condition hasn’t changed, has it?” asked Bill.

The doctor hesitated. “She’s not improving and I have to tell you, I’m concerned.”

After checking Sarah once more, the doctor and nurse left the room. Bill helped Jenny wipe her tears.

“What’s wrong with her?” Jenny asked Bill.

“I don’t know,” he replied.

The nurse returned to take Sarah down to x-ray. About an hour later the nurse returned Sarah to her room where her parents were waiting. Then the nurse came back to take Sarah for an M.R.I. an hour later. This time they moved Sarah from the emergency room to the intensive care unit. I.V.s were placed in Sarah’s arms to provide fluids for her little body. Twelve hours passed since Bill, Jenny and Sarah first saw the doctor in the emergency room. Doctor Roberts entered the room.

“Well, nothing has shown up on the x-rays or the M.R.I. I’ve consulted with other specialists and we don’t see any abnormalities that would explain her paralysis,” said Doctor Roberts as he checked Sarah’s breathing. “My concern now is that she may stop breathing on her own. That’s one reason why I had her transferred to I.C.U.”

Jenny began to cry out loud while tears fell from Bill cheeks. The doctor left the room to look over Sarah’s charts some more. Suddenly the sound of static came over the nurse’s intercom. “I told you they wouldn’t find it,” said the small voice through the intercom.

“Sarah! What’s wrong with you?” shouted Bill at the intercom.

“It won’t let go,” said the voice.

“What won’t let go?” asked Bill.

“The black bubble,” said the voice.

“Where’s the black bubble Sarah?” asked Jenny.

“It’s in my hair,” said the voice. Quickly and meticulously, Bill’s fingers combed through Sarah’s hair. Section by section he searched every inch of Sarah’s scalp. Just below the back of Sarah’s skull, deep in her hair, Bill’s finger felt a small rounded mass. He pulled back Sarah’s hair and saw grayish brown ball, affixed to her head. Bill quickly ran to the door and called the doctor.

The doctor came into the room. “What is it?” he asked.

“Here! At the back of her head,” said Bill. The doctor looked at the round mass on the back of Sarah’s head. He reached for a pair of magnifying glasses and tweezers. After studying the mass for a few minutes, the doctor carefully pulled the mass off of Sarah’s head with the tweezers. Doctor Roberts held up the mass.

“What is it?” asked Jenny.

“A tick,” said the doctor. Jenny could see the tick’s legs flailing the air as the doctor held it up with the tweezers. “It’s called tick paralysis. It can be caused by a common female wood tick when she’s producing eggs. The tick produces an extremely potent toxin that can cause paralysis in humans and animals. If the ticks are not removed they can eventually cause death. From what I’ve read, your daughter should recover quickly. Tick paralysis is very rare. It wouldn’t and didn’t show up in any of our test or the x-rays and M.R.I. I must admit, I wouldn’t have thought to look for it. How did you know?” Bill and Jenny just looked at each other without answering.

A few hours later, Sarah opened her eyes. Twenty minutes later she was sitting up talking to her mom and dad.