



The SHIFT

How to combine **nap time** and **BABY BOTTLES** with a deep sense of spirituality, ghostly chats, and a dramatic penchant towards **disco**?

*Text Isabelle Vander Heyde - Photography Eva Vlonk
Clothes by Natan & Jewellery by Diamanti Per Tutti*

The neighbourhood will be abuzz: 'What in the Lord's name is the local witch up to this time: is she performing a satanic ritual?!' Sophie Wolf and her little pack enjoy the early morning hours in the wilderness behind the house she lovingly calls her Disco Temple. She's casually wearing a dramatic red cape, the soft morning light plays with her golden curls whilst a gigantic white dog happily stalks her. This picture is the slightly adapted embodiment of at least five fairytales: a red-hooded, goldy-locked witch bossing around her wolf whilst carrying a bundle of joy by way of a basket. Dramatic as it may seem, this is quite a typical scene for the girl who discovered her medium powers some time ago. She is used to drawing puzzled looks, such as that time her obstetrician enquired about her occupation during a pregnancy check-up scan. "I told her I read people's souls for a living. She froze and was like, 'wait, what; are you reading my soul right now?!'"

The doctor may have been a bit surprised by the idea of having a witch on her examination table, but Sophie herself certainly never expected to be lying there either. To be honest, kids weren't her thing. Motherhood wasn't for her, maybe in another lifetime -by which she really meant the next life. She is what you might call a soul reader, someone who uses medium powers to read people's auras and communicate with the surrounding energy, spirits, souls, angels, ghosts, gods, or Pokemon - call them what you will. Sophie's life wasn't always this way. She previously pursued a successful career in fashion, travelling around the world and hosting big-shot photo shoots. Glamorous and thrilling, yet something was off, so she hit the brakes and started over. Or rather, her soul did, as she suffered a massive burnout and didn't know what to do with it. On her journey towards more harmony, she stumbled into the world of soft spirituality. She tried practices like



reiki, acupuncture, and healing by energy. She met with various healers, developed her intuition, and researched tarot cards and the moon. And casually, along the way... she discovered the medium powers she had been suppressing since childhood! Those scary ghost dreams she always used to have as a kid: no coincidence. She spent a year refining her gift and learning how to deal with it, and now offers to read people's souls. Sounds a bit unnerving, right? The thing is, not when Sophie talks about it: "When I tell people about all this, they are like oh cool. They find my words make sense, whereas most of what they read online or find in specialised groups seems too otherworldly and bizarre. It hit me that maybe that is my mission: to make spirituality more approachable, fresh and elegant so that everybody can get to know the ancient tools we all carry within." She set up The Place, an online holistic platform that shares knowledge, gathers spiritual guides from different disciplines and teaches workshops on the moon cycle, tarot reading, etc. "It's all about reconnecting with and living according to spirituality, which is easier than you might think because it is an essential yet often forgotten part of us. It's the wisdom we all carry within us but lost our connection to; this disconnect explains why many people feel lost nowadays."

So much for her work baby. One day -or rather one very improbable diner party, as she describes it in her delicious frenglish- something changed. She thought she had everything figured out when an elderly woman sat beside her. She was wearing all sorts of colours and jewellery, her every move accompanied by the jangling of bangles, and she spoke in a soft, velvety voice. They started talking and having fun, but suddenly she looked Sophie straight in the eyes and asked her why she didn't have any children. "Truth be told, I was all awkward around little ones, uncomfortable to the point of wanting to leave the room whenever a kid came in. They felt like a burden to me, some huge pile of responsibility and risk: everything I was running away from since leaving behind a life full of career goals and unhealthy ambition. I wanted to be free, and from what I knew about the people surrounding me, even within my own family, a baby was a roadblock. As if having a child would mean the end of everything. Plus, the world is a mess, and I didn't want to bring a child into it, as it's only going to get worse, right? The lady sighed and said it was such a pity because if people like me weren't raising children, then who would change things for the next generation? That hit home; I was embarrassed to admit how selfish I had been in thinking it was all about me. A child affects everything it touches and interacts with; it would change not only my world but the whole universe it lives in. It unlocked something, and the idea of motherhood started growing on me. Looking back, I'm not even sure this woman was actually really there; she might as well have been an angel."



INFUSED WITH GOLD

Special powers or not, the road to motherhood is bumpy and can sometimes make you feel powerless. Ticking all the boxes of the perfect holistic lifestyle, balanced health, and even feeling the baby's spirit lingering around her aura didn't prove enough to become pregnant. After months of trying and asking herself what was wrong with her body, Sophie realised she was blocking out the baby on an energetic level. "The limiting beliefs I was holding onto stopped the baby from entering my body. The heaviness of what I thought motherhood was and the horror of childbirth. I always figured it was violent, bloody, the worst pain you'll ever feel, etc. Like many other women, I grew up with these stories. So, I went through some kind of spiritual renewal, shedding my beliefs and deconstructing my vision of motherhood. Up next was redefining what being a mother would mean to me. Once again, I hit a wall because neither the traditional nor the spiritual way resonated with me. The latter is all about being free, but once you start digging into it, you realise it's a world full of dictates and rules: you have to breastfeed, you have to do this or that ritual, you need a homebirth, traditional medicine is poisonous, an epidural is the worst, and so on. This struck me as equally narrow-minded and limiting as the classical way. As far as I'm concerned, every mother does what she feels is right, and that's the end. I don't like being told what to do. I'm spiritual but not opposed to science, and I discovered that many rational, classically schooled people aren't set against the mystical world either. My obstetrician, for instance, was startled by my job initially, but she made me promise to stay in touch and teach her more about it. I love how open she was, her scientific background notwithstanding. My experience, the way I'm experiencing motherhood included, is between worlds; navigating between the seen and the unseen, the practical and the magical, the science and the mystical. And once I had that into place, I felt things were slowly unlocking. Soon after that, I was finally with child."

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Sophie named the baby Gabriel, a name whispered to her a few years earlier. It means “he who brings the golden prayer”, and that was exactly how she felt, infused with golden messages. “Being pregnant was pure joy infiltrating every cell in my body; it was galvanising! I felt golden, invincible; I was busy growing life inside my body; whatever could stop me now? Not my accountant, not the taxes, not even my fears, haha! I was worried about my self-image, as I used to struggle with it. The women in my family are very self-conscious and preoccupied with weight loss; they kept warning me to watch my diet during the pregnancy. I cast off those dark horses long ago but feared they might start haunting me again. Once I started gaining weight and changing, quite the opposite happened: it took me over three decades, but I finally fell in love with every inch of my body. I felt divine, radiant, the most beautiful woman on earth – to the point my doctor jokingly put these ‘bragging symptoms’ into my medical file. After a lifetime of being at war with myself, especially growing up in fashion, my baby boy helped me love myself for what I truly am.”

BABYMOON

“About eight months into my pregnancy, I went on a babymoon all by myself – well, me and Gabriel. We attended a wedding in Mallorca and then stayed on for a few more days. Everybody was worried: don’t wear heels, don’t dance too much, don’t drive too fast, or go anywhere alone... I wore heels, danced like crazy and spent hours speeding over the islands’ winding roads. I’m a bit of a daredevil and I adore driving around. It’s funny how people treated me as if I had some kind of illness whilst I felt more powerful and sassy than ever! Again: I already considered my baby a portal of freedom rather than a blockage. Mallorca is gorgeous and mystical – it’s not a coincidence Mary Magdalene once spent time there on her way to southern France. Gabriel and I were on a journey together, driving up and down hills in the Tramuntana region, exploring pine forests and chilling at hidden beaches. I would listen to Frank Sinatra in the convertible, and he would kick me in the belly as if to show his appreciation. I could practically visualise an older version of him, sitting in the passenger seat and laughing his head off. I felt

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Portrait

a huge bond between us, as if we'd been doing this through so many lives passed. After this solo time, I came back a different person. Did you know a woman's aura is six times more powerful than a man's, and being pregnant, she also holds the baby's aura within hers? There was much energy in my soul; it made me feel invincible. I realised I could do this entire birthing and parenting thing independently. Even if I would be devastated not to have my partner, the love of my life, by my side, to know I could handle it alone felt very empowering.”

“We worked with a doula in the weeks running up to the birth to practice hypnobirthing. This is a method of pain management using visualisation, relaxation, and deep breathing techniques. She educated us on what goes on physically and emotionally when a woman gives birth, which again helped me pierce through the horrific images I was brought up with. She acknowledged it was painful, but more of a ‘last three kilometres of a marathon’ kind of pain rather than the sharp pain from getting hit by a bullet. Knowing what it would feel like was a relief for me, a far cry from all these it feels like dying stories. My partner is the most rational person in the world and was a bit sceptical at first, but soon he became more involved and loved the fact that he had a significant role to play. Soon, he would lecture his friends on how every dad should know hypnobirthing and experience it for himself. Moments before Gabriel finally entered our world, my partner touched my shoulders, and our eyes locked. I knew then and there that all would be well and that the three of us were safe. I mentally travelled to my womb and hugged the image of my baby one last time, saying we'd meet each other so soon, that I loved him, and that we could do this together in the softest way possible. And then, poof, I zoned out and did what I had to do, completely unaware of time and space. It is said that when a woman gives birth, her crown- and root chakras open up, forming a tunnel for universal energy. She's on a high because of all the hormones, of course, but also because of all that energy racing through her body. When I gave birth, I was in between worlds; everything was open. It's funny because, during my entire pregnancy, I had been unable to feel my spirit guides. I could channel for other people, but not for myself - as if someone put a cap on my crown chakra not to waste my energy on communicating with other beings whilst I was growing one of my own. Slightly frustrating, but then Gabriel was born, and I was back up there with all my guides. It felt like remembering who I had always been and becoming again. I became another version of myself. It's like a rebirth. If you're feeling sceptical about all of this, just look up the scientific sources showing how much a woman and her brain change after giving birth: it's more impactful than puberty. Hence some call it maturescence. A few days later, we were snoozing when I suddenly heard voices in the room. I opened my eyes and saw my deceased father and late mother-in-law standing over the crib, softly speaking in Dutch. I was so grateful for being able to see them again, even more so because it seemed like they were blessing my son. It was like his spiritual baptism.”

“I added Wolf to Gabriel's name. Unlike his first name, this one wasn't whispered by any spirit, merely a touch of my own. I figured it made sense: the wolf and the angel, both earth and sky, both grounded and celestial, both strong and soft, both animal

and divine. The first months with a newborn are exhausting, don't expect me to tell you otherwise, as it's all about adjusting to a new rhythm and life. I don't think parenting is hard; the only bitter part is our incapability of letting go of what our lives used to be. There were frustrating days when I had these inspirational outbursts and wanted to write, read and create, but it wasn't possible because of the baby's needs. The same thing goes for my job; I panicked at the thought of how I would run The Place now that I had to take care of my son. How to host workshops, practice my readings, manage my social media, keep the web shop going, etc.? I figured my business was done for, but then it dawned on me that maybe I was looking at it from the wrong angle: I was trying to run a business as I had before, and maybe it was time to run it differently, to shift! Since then, I have been a lot more productive and flexible. That, to me, is parenting; letting go of who you were and accepting what you've become. This doesn't mean stopping everything you loved before - a baby doesn't take away your freedom - just readjusting and doing things differently. We're always talking about mindfulness and being present; a newborn helps us get there. As we're speaking, Gabriel is two months old, and I feel like he's been teaching me a new layer of living in the moment every day. He changes so fast; I'm bewildered by his face and expressions, the fact that he doesn't fit into his first pyjamas anymore. It's all about presence and being here, accepting the changes to make the shift smoother. I'm just at the beginning; I don't know the first thing about parenthood, I'm just experimenting, and so far, the big lesson I've learned is to be present.”

Special thanks to Natan & Diamanti Per Tutti

