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Hello friends,

I feel like I can start calling you 'friends' now since this is my third time writing to you. Mummy says all good things come in three's, whether it be good fortune or good tidings. Apparently I'm a good thing too, but I didn't come in three's. Thank goodness there are some exceptions to this rule!

It's been a while since I've written but it's been a busy time. I've had lots of growing to do and many things to explore and understand as my world keeps forever expanding.

Firstly there's been the business of trying to sit up. Once I mastered holding my head, the target then became sitting up. Daddy has been saying I'm getting rather tubby so I've started my tummy crunches routine, which I rigorously do several times a day in an effort to acquire a 6-pack. Yes, babies can get them too. Don't be fooled in thinking we can't just because you haven't seen a baby with a 6-pack until now. Babies are inherently very lazy and rather than being diligent and doing sit-ups we'd much rather spend our time guzzling milk or sleeping. I have to think of my figure and start early as Daddy likes his girls slim and trim.

Secondly at the tender age of five months, I got my first teeth. What's all the fuss about teething? My first two just popped out before anyone knew and I had to bite Mummy's finger to let her know they were really there. After that, she went on a daily search for the next two and saw imaginary white marks under the gums before anything appeared. They were the two top ones, bigger and harder to come through, but there was still no need to fuss about them. I got rosy cheeks several nights and Daddy swears by this old wives' that's what happens when babies are teething, so he proudly announced, 'Coco is getting more teeth.' As it turned out, he was right because two more appeared on either side of the bottom front two. Daddy was chuffed about that for weeks, having been the spotter of the second incisors.

It appears I have become a model baby, the envy of other mothers in our Mothers Group. I sleep through the night (still), I love my food so there are never any concerns with being too skinny or not getting enough nutrients and I can be put and left in my rocker while Mummy busily buzzes around me and cooks dinner. Not so the case for other babies in my group, apparently. They require more hands on attention, holding, cuddling, rocking or vigorous wobbling from side to side. I'm quite happy to just sit there and observe the world around me - 'I like to watch', as they say.

We are still going though the phase of people adapting to my name. When they hear my name is Coco people I haven't even met quickly enquire, 'Does she have dark eyes?' Mummy says yes and their response every time is an oh-so-relieved 'Oh great, then she's a true Coco.' I love this reaction and I can't help thinking it begs a couple of questions: 1. Why is it that a true Coco only has dark eyes? and 2. How many Coco's do people really know? It's not like the world is full of brown and black-eyed Coco's. Whatever, I'm not

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even going to try to understand this reasoning but thankfully I pass the test because my eyes are going dark (to Mummy's initial disappointment as she was secretly willing them to be bright blue like Grandad Nev's).

Speaking of granddads, I finally got to meet Taia, my other grandfather on Mummy's side. He wasn't able to come to Sydney and visit us, so we went to see him and Maia on the Gold Coast. That little visit turned into quite the trip for me as I got to experience my first time in a plane.

We flew out in the evening and, although I wasn't sure exactly what was happening, by the time we arrived at the airport I was pumped and ready. I knew we were on a little adventure when Daddy put me in the Bjorn carrier facing out. I grinned a Cheshire grin at everyone we passed – small or large, human or animal – while Daddy and Mummy struggled behind with suitcases full of nappies and Coco paraphernalia, my new stroller and all our other travelling gear. The highlight was when Daddy's boots set off the metal detector at the security gates and he had to take off his belt, his boots, his baby and the Bjorn to pass through. There was a lot of commotion around and Mummy mumbled something about 'those bloody boots again', but I thought it was a hoot.

Once in the plane, Mummy attached me to her seatbelt with my own mini belt and it was like being carried in the pouch again, only this time I was on the outside. I gazed out the window and for the first time I wasn't really in a mood to drink milk, even though I was supposed to, to pop my ears as the plane ascended into the sky. Once we were in the air and the miniature scenery was engulfed by puffy white clouds there was nothing else to do except sleep. So dummied up and sucking to keep those ears from blocking, I drifted off into a peaceful and contented slumber while the engines roared towards Maia and Taia's place. This angel-like behaviour from me prompted Daddy to draw the conclusion that I am born traveller.

Meeting Taia was lovely. He is shorter than I imagined and has kind eyes. He also speaks in that funny Romanian tongue, like Maia – at least they can understand each other – but even more reason for me to learn it. He held me lots and we played, but he kept peering at me asking 'Who are you, little one? Where are you from and what have you come here to do?' These are all big questions, Taia, and although I could probably answer some of them at this age before I forget it all and get wrapped up in day to day living, it's for me to know and you to stay tuned and find out.

I have also started a bit of a love affair with the camera. Every time a camera is picked up it's invariably pointed at me. And every time it's pointed at me, I look straight into the lens and smile. Sometimes I even tilt my head ever so slightly and pout. I know it's early but sometimes it's just in your blood and you can't help it – you might as well make an effort and look good than have to negotiate later with Daddy about which photos to delete. Maia keeps saying I'm going to be a supermodel and with Daddy's height genes and Mummy's slim genes I'll have really long, slender legs that will stretch all the way up to the heavens. Mummy says long legs or not, whatever is destined is what will be. I say let's just wait and see.

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However, while Maia thinks I'm perfect just the way I am, we have another school of thought that's suggesting Mummy and Daddy have a big baby on their hands. The fact that I have grown a lot in these last few months and I'm now hovering in uncharted territory way above the 100th percentile on the weight and height charts is making most people a little uneasy. They stop Mummy in the street with 'Isn't she beautiful?', which would be nice and complimentary if it wasn't followed by 'My, look at those thighs - they are MAGNIFICENT!'

The family doctor has said, 'You have a thriving, beautiful baby, who's totally in proportion so don't worry that she's twice the size of the average baby at her age'. There, they've been told - there is nothing to worry about. Then the doctor went on to add, 'All babies are fat at 6 months. If she's still twice the normal size at two, we'll put her on a diet.' What is with that? Doesn't anyone know anything about babies anymore? We need our fat deposits because once we start crawling and walking we require all the energy we can get to move around. So relax people, it all goes away and we turn into long, lean, fast moving beanpoles.

I've heard Mummy recently tell people, 'She'll a little squealer. She's a happy child and constantly squealing and giggling.' Well, that's not entirely right. While I might be of a happy disposition and like to smile and giggle a lot, this squealing - as Mummy calls it - is actually mono-syllabic, high-pitched talking. There is so much to say, so little time, so few who can understand me. But still I go on and persevere. I think the cat (Nooushhh) is starting to decipher some of it. She seems to be meowing back at all the right times, but this just puts additional pressure on me - now I have to learn not only English, French, Romanian, but Meow as well.

The nickname game continues. I'm glad there is something that keeps Mummy and Daddy entertained and amused. Now the nicknames are no longer part of the animal kingdom or of the kitchen variety. No, nothing as cute as that. They are now mostly little digs at my fast expanding size. So I get called Tubby or Tub-cake, Chunks or Drumstick Thighs, which only goes to propagate people's opinion of my magnificent thighs.

Daddy is particularly proud of himself having come up with what he considers to be the most apt of names for me - Sherman Tank. Yep, this is what I have to put up with, being denigrated to a WWII tank! He's even threatened to blow up some photo of me on a 'fat day' and show it to all my friends at my 21st! I think that's just plain mean and shows little empathy for the plight of the little and no understanding of the symbiotic nature between milk and happiness.

One of my favourite pastimes has become bath time. I have now graduated from the small kidney-shaped plastic bath to the real thing and went from barely being able to fit into a tiny tub to a massive ocean liner filled with water. It is fantastic and makes me wonder why I had to endure all those months of cramped torture in what was little more than a bucket - something to do with once being little, slippery and not able to hold my head.

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Anyway, now I have an entire ocean liner to wriggle around in, splash about and play with all my new aquatic friends. They came with the bath but interestingly, they only come out when I'm around and not when Mummy and Daddy have baths. They must have done something to upset them because it is very clear they're only my friends. There is Dory and Squirt, Quack and Dolphin and they all have super powers and different abilities; for instance, Squirt and Dory spray water, Dolphin lights up from the inside and turns a turquoise shade of blue and Quack vibrates and makes its own waves. It's very busy in there, time passes far too quickly and I even forget to cry about suds going into my eyes. Before I know it I get prematurely pulled out for the drying, oiling and massaging routine, which is a big anti-climax from being with my super friends.

Mummy and I have started going to gymbaroo. Gymbaroo is in fact not a gym for kids; it is more like playschool for me and gym for Mummy as she gets a fairly serious workout lifting and lugging me around for almost an hour. There are about 15 babies with their mums or carers in every group, all roughly around the same age. I'm currently in the Babies group, but I hope to move up to Creepers and Crawlers soon.

We begin the class by sitting around in a circle and sing, reach for colourful or noisy things that get placed in front of us and strive in vain to grab hold of something without much luck as most of us haven't quite mastered the grab and hold technique. Then we disperse and go to the "equipment" that's scattered all around the room and move from play-station to play-station, taking turns at rolling, going on the swing or skateboarding (where we lie on our tummies on a skateboard pad and get whooshed around). You can tell by the squeals of approval that the swing is my favourite and I would gladly hog it the whole time if I didn't have to share it with the others.

When I had just turned five months, Mummy got a disturbing call one day - something about going back to work a few days a week. Initially she said no way, but then the people said they'd wait and she could work from home a lot too and in the end they made her an offer she couldn't refuse (translation: 300mls of milk on tap every 3 hours), so reluctantly she agreed. She said yes on one condition though - that she wouldn't go back to work until they found the right nanny for me.

Thus project "Nanny Search" began. And it's still going... Weeks and weeks of dedicated online searching, emails, phone calls, interviews, agency briefings, agency follow-ups, agency firings came and went, and still no nanny. There were girls with good references but loud and squeaky voices, girls who could cook an authentic Hungarian goulash but only looked after their little brothers or sisters as previous experience, and girls who wanted to look after a small child who spent most of her time sleeping so they could study for their correspondence course while on the job.

There were lots of potential nannies, but they were not the right one. It was all a plot between me and the nanny world to have Mummy to myself a couple of months longer.

Finally Mummy and Daddy liked a girl (she even came with a Masters in French Literature and could read the French classics to me), but she was a Kiwi and was called back home suddenly for a family emergency. Despite much disappointment, it's now back

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to square 1 and project "Nanny Search with a Vengeance" has been launched. I wish they'd just chill and relax because the right one is out there - and like with the truth, she'll surface just at the right time. Meanwhile, Mummy has started going into work one day a week and Daddy works from home that day - in between feeding Coco, changing Coco, playing with Coco and putting Coco down. Oh well, there could be worse jobs.

The most recent craze after I turned six months was Mummy and Daddy's determination to have me eat lumpy stuff from a spoon. To make matters worse, I've heard them say this food is to gradually replace my beloved milk until I'm no longer dependent on it. Ha, as if that's ever going to happen! So I did exactly what anyone in my position would do - I kept my mouth as tightly shut as possible and didn't let any shred or morsel pass my lips. Mummy and Daddy would look at each other mystified and say, 'I don't understand, she's got all these teeth and she's not doing anything with them.' So?? What's teeth got to do with it? Teeth are for biting toys and leaving marks on Daddy's hands if he doesn't pull them out fast enough.

They tried and tried in vain and the food got less and less solid and more and more mushy. I tried some out just to see what it was like but it doesn't go down all that easily and this chewing business that I'm expected to do irritates and bores me. Just quietly, I think they've given up because it's back to milk on tap, pretty much when I want it.

We are apparently planning a christening for me. The invitations have already gone out, after Mummy spent weeks drying roses, gluing roses and making up over one hundred white and pink little ribbons to tie to the roses on the cards. I can't understand why they'd go to all this trouble, but apparently it's because it only happens once. So, it will take place on the 12th of November and will be held at All Saints' Anglican Church in Woollahra. Yep, apparently I'm going to be Anglican - unlike anyone else in my family. It seems we are aiming to collect as many religious denominations as we can - Mummy is Greek Orthodox, I will be Anglican and Daddy is... well, a bit of a believer in all - or nothing - whichever way you want to look at it. So I guess if I have a little brother or sister they'll end up a Buddhist or a Hindu?

I will write again soon - no doubt by then I'll have been baptized and I might even have a nanny. Until then, stay well and keep smiling (just pretend someone is pulling a face at you and that will crack you up - it works for me!)

With love,
Coco

