

Parturition

a drama about wanting a baby

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Parturition

Scene 1

Magda

(Magda, twenty-two, is seated in a rocking chair. She sews what appears to be a pillow.)

When I first heard the news, I swear, I was walking on a cloud.

For four whole months, I was floating.

Even Boone, my boyfriend at the time, remarked how I looked “like you just had the best sex of your life.”

But Boone was a pig and of course would say somethin’ like that.

This was nothing like sex.

“Far from sex,” I told him “This is something pure. This is like nothing you will ever know. This is heaven inside of me. I’m pregnant. I’m pregnant. I’m going to have a *baby!*”

Boone didn't seem to care so much. If anything, he got quieter even... goin' to work, comin' home, watchin' sports, drinkin' his beer, smokin' his cigarettes. Even though I told him, "Do that outside from now on, no smokin' in this apartment from *now on*! We have a baby on the way."

He looked at me like I was a lunatic. Then he looked down at the ground like he does with that grin. I will tell you, I think my being pregnant shook him up. I have heard that babies can do that to a man. Well. I didn't worry about that. By then I was already fallin' out of love with him anyway. I got what I wanted most. His sperm. His baby. *My* baby now.

For four months...

For four months, you should have seen me! I was the most beautiful, big, most beautiful pink balloon, floating up there, up against the purest blue sky, floating above my house, above Boone, above work, above Dad, above the whole town.

I felt clear. Clear like I was doing what I was put here on this earth to do.

I do think I was born with it in me. I remember even when I was a little girl I always had a baby doll with me.

"That doll is just *attached* to her," my Mom use to say.

It's true, too- I never let myself be alone. I always had a baby in my arms, a baby to hold, baby to wash in the tub, baby to kiss goodnight. And I'm not just talkin' about my doll. We lived on the farm then and I was the one who took care of all the baby animals; the chicks, the baby goats... feeding them with a bottle when the mother couldn't.

I loved holding them, the feeling of their hard hair and the strong pull of them tugging at the nipple.

You ever feel that?

I learned how to help my Dad give birth to the baby calves too. They'd come out all tangled, sticky wet and red.

And all the kittens, I cared for them.

The ones that didn't get drowned by my Dad.

Oh, he was just doin' what needed to be done. I learned that lesson fast.

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(Pause)

I did cry like a baby when he drowned that first litter in the rain barrel in our back yard.

“Too many mouths to feed around here without more damn cats,” he said.

I remember them floating up to the top the next day, picking them out of the barrel with a stick and looking at their small wet faces. Dead, even though they looked like they had barely been born.

But that’s life. On the farm, you get to see it up close.

I remember when one of the chickens I loved- Speckle I named him because he was spotted all over- and the day came when it was his time to be killed. I didn’t watch it but I heard him squawk and the ax hit the wood.

At dinner I wouldn’t eat a thing ‘til I was forced.

My Dad said “Don’t be stupid. Eat. It takes life to make life.”

When you get older you understand these things.

That life ain’t fair.

(She stops, considers the pillow, adjusts its shape, and then continues to sew)

You’ll think I’m silly. I know maybe I shouldn’t have, maybe it was too soon, but you can’t help yourself, you get excited and start thinking and wondering and everything changes. I did buy some baby clothes when I was in that happy stage. Expensive ones, too, from the downtown shops but yellow because I didn’t want to know. I wanted to be surprised.

Boone didn’t want any surprises. He said he saw a little penis in the ultrasound but I didn’t think so. All I saw was this perfect baby with the sweetest hands and feet, a little mouth, lips so small...

So peaceful and floating...like an astronaut.

But space was in *me*, the universe was *me*.

(Pause)

Then... the balloon popped. *I* popped.

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One night on the bathroom tile floor with pain and some blood- just like that.

I screamed, “Boone, the baby, *my baby!*”

There was nothing he could do. Nothin’ anyone could do, it was what it was. My beautiful baby was gone.

The doctor said there was nothing I could have done different, that it just happens to “a certain percentage of women,” which I guess means me. Then there were all these tests and him sayin’ it didn’t seem likely- “it doesn’t seem probable that you will carry a child to term.”

I don’t mind sayin’ at that time I felt such *hate*... for him, for myself, my body, hate for this whole world. Doctor said I should think about adoption. But that wouldn’t be the same. I told him so. I said “don’t make light of something you can never understand.” I stood and looked at him right in the eyes and I told that doctor, for me, adoption is *not* an option!

Ouch!

(She pricks herself with the needle, draws blood and sucks her finger. After a moment she resumes sewing.)

I guess I didn’t hide my feelings so well ‘cuz things fell apart fast. Boone left in a fit on Super Bowl Sunday. He left half a beer, half a bag of Lays and a cigarette burning in the ashtray. I stayed in bed mostly and called in sick a lot... and then lost the job at the market.

Sometimes things can get very dark.

I was thinking about that Dorothy girl in the Wizard of Oz. You know how she went from black and white to color? I know it sounds crazy but I feel like that happened to me but backwards. When I was pregnant I was in that color world. When my baby died I went into the black and white.

It has takin’ some time to get back on my feet. I know you might not know it from lookin’ at me, but I’m okay now. I see there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

And I have a plan.

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I got this great new job as a housekeeper for this lady. Her name is Laura and she lives in this huge house in the nice section of town. She's pregnant. I can tell. We haven't talked about it all yet... but I can tell she isn't too happy about it.

I can't understand that, can you? I never will understand *that*.

She's a lot older and maybe that's why or maybe it's 'cause she's divorced.

Either way...it's not fair.

But I guess she's alright we get along okay mostly- that is when we see each other 'cause she's always working. I don't mind that. I love being alone in that big house, cleaning and traveling from room to room. I pretend it's mine. Tryin' on her beautiful clothes from the closet that's big as a room. Sometimes I even lay down on her huge king size bed. Lookin' up at the chandelier on the ceiling...

It can feel sad sometimes to go back to my apartment at the end of the day.

But yesterday morning before Laura left for work, I told her the news- the good news- that I was pregnant too. I told her how cool that was, how now we could share stories and experiences and how interesting that will be, how we could go through bein' pregnant together .

I think she used the word "wonderful" to describe it.

I agree. I think going through this together will make us the best of friends.

(She stops sewing, stands and positions the pillow under her shirt. The pillow fits nicely at her belly.)

There. I think that's a perfect fit if I do say so myself.

At least to begin with. At least for now.

What do you think?

(Lights fade out)

Scene 2

Laura

(Laura is a successful, smartly dressed forty-two year old woman. She is in her spacious office and stands in front of her office desk.)

I've requested a meeting today... a meeting with my boss, Mr. Jerome Gerard. This meeting will be different from all the others. It will not be about my position, not about any salary increase or dissatisfaction.

"Have a seat, Laura," Jerome will say, not anticipating...this meeting is about something personal, something unexpected.

(Laura moves to a bar area and starts to pour a glass of wine. She suddenly stops and moves back to desk)

Getting to where I am now has not been easy. It has taken a lot of work, a lot of sacrifice. This is something I have had to accept. Sacrifice. To succeed, it is sometimes necessary to take time away from other things... and I did. My friends, my social life, my husband, my children- and trust me, they did not make it easy for me.

In my mother's time the sacrifice was different. You stayed home, you raised children and were a mother completely. The sacrifice came when your children moved on to college or their own lives and left you with...*what?*

I'll tell you. Nothing.

I saw this happen to my mother and I swore it would never happen to me.

As soon as I could make the transition, as soon as could make the switch, I did.

I *was* present, present completely for my children's adolescence. I put my education and career on hold and I never questioned it. Believe me- raising my children has been the greatest joy and the greatest challenge of my life. I have no regrets. They are both remarkable, wonderful individuals, above average in every way, both attending the best universities.

But the day came when I knew I needed to get back. Back to my work, back to myself.

I can remember pulling out of our driveway on my first day back to work. I remember Lisa and Mark's faces- thirteen and twelve at the time.

They both just stood there- *stunned*.

You might think I was being cruel, saying goodbye to them forever.

(Pause)

Still, I know I can credit myself with the wonderful way they have both turned out. I'm confident that asserting my independence has taught them to be independent as well.

The lessons they learned from my husband, Paul, were different.

Paul was on travel most of the time and missed out on the everyday details; the scraped knee, the dirty underwear, the figuring out what to cook, always that- breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Because we do, after all, have to eat.

No, Paul would be present on weekends for the fun things and the kids rallied around him. I can admit it was difficult for me not to feel resentful- even though I understood. I understood better than anyone regarding Paul and his charm. He had this way of making everything seem like fun, like an adventure. I can't blame them for loving him.