

MY SEPTEMBER BABY-to-Be

by

Dortell Williams

It was the sunniest day of my life, literally and figuratively. The September sun beamed on the vibrant streets of Los Angeles as I had returned from work. Upon entering the door, I was met by my wife with an apprehension and fear that surprised me. Kimberley's olive-colored skin was pallid, her voice shaking. My otherwise confident and capable wife announced with unease, "My water broke. It's time."

Like a contagion, fear whipped through my body; my head and throat tightened, and my knees weakened, barely holding me up. As my heart raced – and its vigorous thump echoed in my ears – my body went into auto-pilot.

The drive to Kaiser Hospital was quick, careful and uneventful, other than my occasional "Are you okay?" My welfare checks were met with intermittent nods and soft whispers of "Yeah." My fear, fear of the unknown, my inexperience, was fast accompanied by worry. Dark thoughts shot through my mind of all of the things that could go wrong. I was getting irritated. I turned my mind off.

Our arrival was warm and without much ado. I felt a blanket of calm come over me as Kimberley was placed in a wheelchair and pushed toward the labor room. I was ordered to dress in scrubs. I quickly complied.

The bright labor room smelled nauseatingly sterile. I clasped Kimberley's trembling hand and smiled at her. My heart continued to race. Kimberley pushed and screamed, and pushed and screamed ... and pushed and screamed, to no avail. Fear had once again invaded my being. I held

her hand tighter, my mouth was sealed and dry. Her continued efforts were in vain. She turned over to me, her beautiful face wearied and sorrowful. Then, without warning her eyes brightened and she began to vigorously curse at me. Blame was the theme of her obscenity-laced song. It was all my fault: the pregnancy, her condition, my getting home from work so late, the *slow* drive to the hospital, the color of my shirt! It was all my fault. "All of it!" she emphasized, ensuring she had the last word. I was surprised to no end. So much so that I was silenced by the shock of it all. I was shocked at the vulgarity of her language, as if she was possessed. It was then I realized that locker room talk has nothing on labor-room talk. Not even close!

I was warned in Lamaze class that women sometimes spew such hate upon their partners during this extremely emotional and painstaking event. I was not at all prepared. I was crestfallen, I felt utterly helpless. As the empathy rose up from my bowels, washing away the surprise and shock, I calmed myself and regained control. But the worry remained. It had been nearly three hours and no baby yet.

Finally, the medical team took decisive action. "No more foolin' around," seemed to be their attitude. They threw the ball in my court and suggested a C-section. Kimberley's response to my inquiry of her approval? "Whatever!" I signed the necessary papers in the reception room. It was a needed break from the intensity of the labor room, where this strange woman was cursing, mad-dogging me and basically in need of an exorcism. It was resolved, a C-section would be our fate.

Upon my signing, I was forbidden from entering the operating room. Not! I didn't sign up to be excluded. Now I was the cursing maniacal fool. Totally frustrated at this point, I flatly refused to comply. I followed the gurney through the electronic double doors, through the bluish, semi-

transparent hanging flaps and into where my baby and baby-to-be were at. I planted myself, deeply. Noting my resolve, the obstetrician retreated on the idea of expelling me.

When they sliced my wife open, just below her belly button, I wondered if they were right. *Perhaps I shouldn't be in here?* I thought. *Could I handle this?* Doubt tried to rear its useless head, but I resisted. The activities had quickly shifted from neutral to fast-paced. Suddenly, and without warning, there were a pair of blue-gloved hands literally reaching into my Kimberley's entrails – pulling and yanking. I was dumbfounded by the entire process. The doctors were not being tender, or caring, at this point. Were they frustrated, too. (At least that's how it seemed.) It looked like something out of a horror movie. Yet it all happened so fast, I had no time to intervene.

Brandi was pulled out. No bells or whistles. No flashing lights. It was at that moment that everything changed. Just like that, suddenly I was a father. Kimberley was a mother, and we were parents. The umbilical cord was cut. Brandi was now her own, independent being, normal and healthy in every way – all eight pounds and six ounces of her. “It's a girl! One, two, ten fingers and toes! You're good to go, Son!” The doctor announced. No wonder traditional birth wasn't going down.

At the sound of Brandi's cry, as if nature gave me permission, I was overcome with a perfect balance of relief, happiness and pride. I recognized Kimberley's smile. She was back! It was the happiest day of my life!

Bio:

Dortell Williams is a prisoner at the California State Prison in Los Angeles. He has made it his mission to focus on self-rehabilitation, earning various college degrees and self-improvement certificates. He is a published author, loves to read, mentors youth and helps crime survivors heal from trauma. He is currently pursuing a BA degree in Communication Theory at CSU-Los Angeles. He appreciates feedback from readers. He can be reached directly at: Dortell Williams, H-45771 / A5-204, P.O. Box 4430, Lancaster, CA 93539, or indirectly at: DortellWilliams@gmx.com.