My Baby, My God

Four months ago yesterday, I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. Labor began in the early morning and he was delivered before midnight on a cold day in November. Though I may have been a bit of a skeptic, as it turns out, every single universal cliché about babies ends up being true after all. People told me it would be so and they were right: it is a love so intense, so all-consuming, so powerful, that it is hard not to see him and feel anything less than God in my arms. There is not a metaphor to describe it—a star exploding might be the closest I can get. Or a seraph—that highest order of angel literally on fire with love. He's like a poem I am living inside of. And if I never read another book, never hear another song, never receive another gift, I have all the poetry, all the music, all the riches I could ever need.

Coming back to work has been one of the hardest things I've had to do, not because I don't enjoy my job, but because asking someone else—and trusting them—to care for my baby goes against every natural impulse I have. Even now, as I imagine my husband giving him a bath, dressing him in some ridiculous pajamas, warming a bottle, I feel like I am missing a limb—a physical ache—my heart on the outside of my body.

I can't say that it was love at first sight—in fact it was not much of anything at first sight. Childbirth was a mostly terrible and frightening experience at the hospital and I have very little memory of the days I spent there, the lost hours. I know that there was an emergency. I know that I had several unexplained seizures. I know that my heart suddenly stopped on the operating table—a ten-second arrest—and that it restarted as inexplicably as it had stopped. I know that I could not hold my baby when he was born, that I was rushed somewhere, that there was machinery, that I was trying to listen hard but the voices sounded to me like I was underwater and all around me were faces with blue masks, serious eyes and I recognized no one. I was deeply afraid and though I could not speak I remember pleading with my eyes to the person nearest me to help me, help me. I know that the doctors and nurses and specialists that saved my life and my son's life kept calling us a mystery and then, later, a miracle.

And it is a miracle. I named him Ezra—as in the Book of Ezra, the scribe, the priest, the prophet. My son. As in, Ezra Pound, the masterful poet, who famously wrote, "The temple is holy because it is not for sale." Ezra is a Hebrew name. Its translation: God helps. And what I could not have known at the time, but later realized:

My Ezra was born during that brief period of time when Anglicans around the world were reading from the Book of Ezra in their Daily Morning Prayer. On the very Friday of his birth, the morning lesson began, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king…" and later, "You are holy to the Lord…"

It will take me the rest of my days to think through it all. Every part of my life is different. And for all this love I feel, for all this divine love on the one hand, I feel on the other that the war has begun. It's me fighting against every single force in this world that could hurt him. I will guard him with my life, do everything I can to protect his dignity, his safety, his joy, his God-given life. I know very little about how to be *a* mother, but I know that I have no shame when it comes to being *his* mother. When Ezra was baptized here one month ago I vowed with every ounce of

my being that I would, with God's help, proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ, that I would love my neighbor, would strive for justice and peace, would persevere.

And I will. I will, I will, and I will. Faith has never felt more essential.

He sleeps in my arms and I look at him in awe. I see God. And I wonder if trauma might always precede miracle—this baby who feels like he has always been mine. Each night I say a prayer of thanks for this life, asking for protection and grace. May the world be kind to him, I pray, spare him from cruelty, danger, poverty of spirit. May he come to see that the world has more good than it has evil. And may he know all the days of his life always that he is loved. My baby, my baby, in the flesh, my God.

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