

## **Ready or Not**

By: Geneva Kelly 5-4-2020

It's been almost three years now. To say I was depressed would mean I felt something; anything, other than numbness. I buried my feelings, buried the grief and any possibility of what could have been. Losing a baby isn't something anyone plans on happening.

Timing was irrelevant. Whether I was financially secure or not and knowing I'd probably have raised the baby alone, didn't make it hurt any less. I lost her. Or him. And never saw it coming. Before I could pick out a name, or make that famous 'Big Brother' shirt for my son, the baby died inside of me.

Grief is lonely. It's encapsulating. But what's the alternative when you've lost something you will never get back? What do you do when you feel broken and don't want to tell anyone it hurts?

My heartache was paralyzing. It attached itself deep into all the cells of my body without me knowing. I thought I moved on, pretended nothing happened because forcing myself to keep going seemed logical. Until today. When I sat by the pool to simply breathe—the sun let up its scolding rays and glistened down like an old friend. The breeze rustled through the trees demanding my attention and a realization screeched in my ear with a passing crow. The world had become invisible and for the first time in years I could see it.

Memories flashed as vivid as the trees in front of me. I was two months pregnant and in denial, scared to take a pregnancy test. The guy I'd been seeing was *questionable* and the thought of raising a child with him wasn't great. Still, there was a dramatic change happening

in my body. My intuition was bursting with new information and despite exhaustion, I felt more alive than I had in years.

Bees began gathering at my front door daily. It was strange. There was no visible hive so I searched the internet for a spiritual meaning. Every website confirmed that bees are a sign of new life. It was time to face the truth.

A pregnancy test confirmed my suspicion. Financially, it wasn't the right time to raise another child. I had no clue how I'd manage a different schedule and knew people would judge me if things didn't work out with *Mr. Wonderful*, but I was resilient. The new life inside me provided strength and determination. My son was seven and always wanted a sibling. He'd be thrilled. His dad and I had been broken up for three years already.

When I met Mr. Wonderful, he caught me by surprise. He was tall, charming, and beautiful. He told me he loved me every day. His actions however, showed a different story. When I told him I was pregnant, he gave me every reason not to go through with it. His life was a mess, his job was questionable, he loved me but... The excuses were like a broken record, useless. I'd taken care of my son with barely any help for years. With or without a man, I would do it again.

Each day brought new clarification. The world had new sounds and it felt like I tapped into a small piece of heaven. Mr. Wonderful wasn't interested in being a father so I accepted it, let him go and grew peaceful; excited even, about the future.

Three months into my pregnancy my doctor gave me the green light to tell everyone. He also reminded me that I wasn't in my twenties anymore. Having had my son at thirty-three I was familiar with the drill. You're ancient if you have kids after thirty. I was healthy and

confident in my body. Though you usually don't feel the baby until much later, my child had a way of communicating. Everything inside of me was active.

I decided to surprise my parents with the news. What better day to bring up a tricky subject than Halloween? I broke the news wearing a *Supermom* costume with a cape. "Trick or treat?" I sang out, while handing my mother a box with my secret in it.

Like a hidden treasure there was a pacifier wrapped inside a piece of paper, a poem I'd just written revealing I was pregnant. My father glanced over from the sofa and my mother asked if it was a joke before reading it. "No." I had written my truth and my mind was made up. Understandably, they were in shock.

I was connected to this new life, planning how I'd tell my son and how excited he'd be Christmas morning knowing he got the gift he always wanted. I took care of myself, gave up caffeine, and quickly told my boss who graciously gave the heavy lifting to my co-workers. Things were going smooth. Like my first pregnancy, morning sickness was brief. I felt lucky.

But life happens—with or without our permission.

Three months and two weeks in, I woke up feeling nothing. As the day continued, I realized my normal sensations were gone. It was profound and confusing. Later that night, while driving my son to soccer practice, a bee clung to my windshield. Despite the wind pushing against it, the bee was motionless. "God, please don't let it be dead!" Horror washed over me as I considered the stillness of the day. I prayed it wasn't another message. Then, I blinked and it was gone.

The following day, my doctor saw me for an emergency appointment. Walking toward the building, things grew dull and colorless. While the technician scrolled the sonogram machine over my belly, he kept a solid poker face. It was obvious something was wrong. He suggested an internal exam because blah blah... I couldn't hear a word he said. I saw myself dropping to the floor weeping, but instead laid-back waiting for understanding. It never came.

Not only did I lose my baby, but because of the doctor's schedule, I'd have to hold it inside me for *two more weeks*—unless by some chance it passed by itself. Then, I could live with that trauma instead. I felt numb walking to my car, barely strong enough to press the buttons on my phone. My mother's voice came through and a flood of tears masked all of my words. I was drowning in sadness, begging for a reason. How could this have happened? She listened.

I felt like I had been robbed, like my connection to the world had been shut off; like my unborn child was robbed, and my living child as well.

Had they taken the baby immediately, the aftershock may have been less traumatizing. Every day until surgery felt like living in a coffin, shut off from the people around me. I pretended things were fine. After the procedure I felt empty. I constantly felt like crying but was scared that if I started, I'd never stop. It was a twisted self-training to suck in the pain and bury it without a word.

My alternative to grief was numbness. Unfortunately, while tuning out the pain, the rest of the world went with it. I didn't let anyone get close to me in fear I could get hurt again. I tuned out nature because of the messages it sent and ignored my intuition because the truth hurt. I thought if I could swallow every tear, eventually they'd go away.

Life happens, whether we're ready or not.

Looking back now, I wonder what would have changed if I'd given myself permission to grieve? What if I shared my sadness with the same power that I shared my strength and let the people around me, be there for comfort? How much sooner would I have recovered?

When I decided to write this, I was hoping I'd find solace; hoping that my words would reveal a deeper purpose. It didn't happen. What I did find was a reflection of a woman, who wants to keep going. I found the person I was before I went numb, and the memory of a little piece of heaven. That *has* to be worth something.