

A woman with curly hair, seen from behind, is walking away on a paved path in a park. She is wearing a white dress with a pink and red patterned border and is holding a pink and white striped hat. The path is flanked by green grass and trees with yellow and green leaves. The sky is clear and blue.

THE MAKING OF A MOM

my unexpected
journey through
birth and adoption

KIMBERLY SEVERN

The Making of a Mom

My Unexpected Journey
through Birth & Adoption

Kimberly Severn

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For Q-man and Lu-Lu who continue to teach me about motherhood.

Love you both forever and for always,

Mom

And with love and gratitude to my partner on this wild journey.

Hang on babe, there's more adventure to come!

Author's Note

Thank you to the family and friends who were part of my journey and who will see themselves in these pages. To protect the privacy of the people involved, I have changed individual's names and identifying information about the experiences we shared.

The events that I share in this memoir are based on my personal memories, legal documents, email correspondence, and other documentation I retained throughout the adoption process and its aftermath. Nonetheless, some of the events I describe are narratives of my own perceptions of a deeply personal event that involved many different people, with perceptions of their own. It has not been my intention to hurt anyone or misrepresent anyone in any way, and to the extent I may have done so, I apologize.

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Prologue

By the time I was twelve, I had created my life plan: go to college, marry my high school sweetheart, have two kids and a career — most likely as a nurse or a teacher. I figured if I did everything right, my plan would become reality.

My quest for the perfect life started early. I was the second of four children, all of whom — except me — sailed through school, earning great grades with minimal effort. I was the odd kid out.

Each day, during the five-block walk to and from school, I struggled to figure out how to get from the bottom of the class to the top. It was up to me to figure it out, since no one at my school knew how to help a kid with dyslexia. My biggest obstacle by far was reading; a single page took forever. It was humiliating.

“Okay, boys and girls, pull out your books and turn to page 20,” said my second grade teacher, Mrs. Campbell, beginning the instructions for an assignment that would ultimately leave me feeling defeated. I groaned as I reached inside my desk. “Please read the story and then answer questions one through four.”

With both elbows on the desk and my forehead resting in my hands I started to read. After only a few minutes, the rustling of paper and scratching of pencils told me many had already finished. My stomach sank in

despair as I counted how many pages I had left to read. I considered closing the book and telling Mrs. Campbell I couldn't do it. There simply wasn't enough time. But if there's anything worse than not finishing, it's quitting. I was not a quitter.

"Okay, time's up," Mrs. Campbell announced. "Make sure your name is on the top of your paper and pass it forward."

The next morning we got our assignments back. I stared at the half-inch long red dash in the upper righthand corner of the page. I knew I'd be called up to talk to the teacher before recess to explain why I hadn't finished and she'd question me about whether I'd understood the assignment. The thought of being called out yet again made my jaw clench and my cheeks burn. *I'm not stupid. There just wasn't enough time! I'm smart. I just gotta read faster.*

But no matter how hard I tried, I never finished in the time provided. Mrs. Campbell didn't treat me like I didn't understand. It was even worse, she treated me like I wasn't trying. I wanted her to know I was doing the best I could, that I was smart, and that I belonged at the top of the class. I hated the experience of failure.

Second grade and already enough was enough. If I was going to succeed, I needed a plan.

First, I tried reading faster. Sliding my eyes across the page like a speed skater racing around the rink only got me to the questions faster; it didn't help at all with finding the answers. But it did provide the insight I needed to create a successful strategy: *start with the questions*. If I read the questions first, I'd know what to look for. I could stop and write down the answers as I read. Eureka!

The confidence my academic successes provided eventually helped me read faster too, and, with more time, I started to show off my smooth cursive writing skills, which also improved my grade.

By the end of sixth grade, I'd found a formula for success I could apply to any situation: identify a goal, build a plan, execute it. Although I never made it to the top of the class, I graduated high school with honors and was accepted to the top university in my state. So far, so good. My plan was on track.

During my sophomore year of college, I was set up on a blind date and, two years later, Nate and I got married. Life was turning out better than I had planned. By the time I was 25 I had a university degree, a good job, and we had bought our first home. I was on top of the world. The stars were the limit and I couldn't imagine anything slowing my momentum.

What I didn't recognize in my youthful naiveté, however, was that life doesn't operate like a classroom — it's uncontrollable and unpredictable, and one formula can't solve all problems. When it came time to having children, Nate and I faced challenges we had never imagined. And the very skills that had been key to my past success would prove my Achilles heel.

Despite a decade's worth of data proving I could achieve anything I set my mind to, the next decade would test even my deepest held beliefs as I set out to become a mother.

Chapter 1

Next Phase of the Plan

“Hold onto your kibble, Chinook, the ride’s about to get bumpy,” I said to our fifty-pound husky who lounged across the backseat as we turned onto the narrow gravel road that led to the Christmas tree farm. I glanced over at Nate, who sat behind the wheel of our Subaru station wagon. With his unshaven face and dark blue raincoat over a red and black flannel button-up, he looked part yuppie, part lumberjack. After seven years of marriage I still had a deep crush on him.

The mottled grey skies threatened rain and the wind rustled the branches of the evergreen trees that filled the rolling landscape. We were only a few miles from home, but it felt like a world away from the manicured lawns of our suburban neighborhood.

“You ready for this?” I asked, pulling on my gloves and grabbing Chinook’s leash.

“Yep. Let’s do it.”

“What kind of tree are we looking for?” I asked as I negotiated a puddle and met him at the back of the car.

“A live one?”

“Oh really?” I raised an eyebrow. “Everyone loves a smart ass, Charlie Brown.”

He smiled and reached for my hand. After receiving a saw and instructions on how to safely cut down a tree, we headed into the nearest field. Chinook and I followed a few steps behind Nate as we tried to decipher the difference between Noble Firs, Grand Firs, and Blue Spruce.

It was a busy day at the tree farm. Giggles and excited screams filled the air from every direction. A father helped his young son maneuver their saw back and forth through the trunk of a tree. The father's encouragement interrupted by the *vr-r-rup, vr-r-rup, vr-r-rup* of the saw slowly cutting through the wood. A high-pitched "Timber!" accompanied the satisfying crack as the last of the wood gave way.

A mom, bundled-up baby strapped to her chest, tried to get her husband's attention so she could point out the perfect tree. "Hey, sweetie, over here," she bounced slightly, arm raised and pointing in the direction directly opposite her husband's current path through the trees. A moment passed and she whistled, "No, babe, this way. That one over there, between the two shorter ones."

I glanced in the direction she pointed and saw a slender pine, standing at attention between its two squatty neighbors. It looked barely wide enough to stand up without toppling over, but the joy in her face said it all – that tree would be at the center of their Christmas celebrations.

"Excuse me, would you mind taking our picture?" another woman asked as the teenage boy standing next to her rolled his eyes. She elbowed the boy in the side and handed Nate her camera as she said, "I saw that."

"On three say, Merry Christmas," Nate said, brandishing their camera. "One, two, three."

“Merry Christmas!” each member of the family of five responded, some sounding more excited than others. Nate took several pictures, hoping to catch the teen smiling in at least one.

As Chinook and I stood watching, I wondered if a picture at the tree farm was part of their annual holiday tradition. I imagined the family using the photo for their Christmas card and placing a copy in a frame, replacing the one from the year before. Every December the parents would take a moment to reflect on how much their children had grown. It was an idyllic and sappy tradition that I unexpectedly realized I wanted to be mine. But years before we’d agreed not to have children.

My thoughts were suddenly taken over by the memory of sitting in the sparsely furnished office of the Pastor we’d chosen to marry us. She was a friend of Nate’s mom and had agreed to officiate at our wedding on the condition that we met her for three pre-marital counseling sessions.

We were young and had fallen in love fast. During our courtship, it had never occurred to me to ask Nate where he saw himself in ten, fifteen, or twenty years. I just assumed, since we had so much in common, that our expectations for the future were compatible too.

Imagine my surprise when, during our second pre-marital counseling session, Nate said he didn’t want children. *How could you not want kids?* I had thought. *How could you be happy without children in your life? What would you do on weekends, vacations, and holidays while everyone else was spending time with their families?* I simply couldn’t imagine it.

“What do you think about that, Kim?” the pastor asked, raising her eyebrows above her round tortoise-rimmed glasses.

“I, well, uh...” I wasn’t sure how to respond. “Well, it’s not as if we’re going to have kids any time soon. There’s a lot to accomplish before we could even think about becoming parents.” I smiled and looked from the pastor to Nate.

“It sounds like something important for the two of you to talk about.” Her tone was matter-of-fact, despite the potentially ruinous disclosure. She allowed the silence to linger, the time morphing her suggestion into a warning.

It was three months before our wedding, I loved Nate, and I couldn’t imagine life without him. We both agreed that we weren’t ready for children, so I let it go. There was plenty of time to change his mind later. *Why worry about something before it’s even a problem?*

A burst of wind chilled my cheeks and the fresh, pine-scented air brought me back to the present. The constant buzz of activity as people pointed, chopped, and lugged evergreen trees back to their cars sent the memories of the past into the recesses of my mind. The excitement and energy of the present moment echoed my satisfaction with the life Nate and I had built together. Even the bickering that broke out between a set of nearby siblings had a note of warmth to it.

Chinook and I followed Nate through the trees. Stepping over stumps and hopping over puddles in the mud, we continued our search. As we wound our way through the evergreen forest it was impossible not to notice that we appeared to be the only kid-free couple in the area. I wondered if we were missing out, having only our four-legged baby in our life.

Eventually, we found a mostly symmetrical Blue Spruce about seven feet tall with branches extending four feet in diameter at the base. Nate and I took turns

sawing through the trunk, making slow progress with the well-worn saw in dire need of sharpening. Chinook joined the fun by providing the occasional bark of encouragement. *He's our four-legged baby, we should snap a picture with him before we go*, I thought as Nate made the final cut through the trunk. I shrugged off the thought, feeling uncomfortable with how sentimental the outing had become for me.

We worked as a team to get the tree back to the car, tied it to the roof, and then, after stopping at the pay station, we headed home.

* * *

The rain fell in fat, round drops that burst into hundreds of droplets as they hit the road. Illuminated by our headlights the water looked like glitter erupting from the pavement. As Nate drove us to our friend's house, I thought about all the families we'd seen at the tree farm, each one flashing through my mind like a slideshow of Norman Rockwell paintings. I'd been pushing the thought away for hours but could no longer resist its power. I wanted Nate and me to be the subjects of one of those paintings. As much as I'd grown used to our comfortable life and family of two, I couldn't shake the feeling that Christmas would be a lot more meaningful with a child to share it with.

"That was fun at the tree farm," I said, glancing over at Nate. "The house is gonna smell so good with a real tree." I tried to sound casual before dropping what I feared would be a bomb.

"Yep, we found one good lookin' tree." He said with a fake southern drawl that made me laugh. "I'll trim the trunk tomorrow and we can decorate it."

“Be sure to check for spiders before bringing it in from the garage, okay?” I’m seriously afraid of spiders.

“Don’t worry, honey,” he said as he reached over and set his hand on my leg, “I got your back. I’ll make sure it’s spider-free.” He flashed me a smile that reminded me how much I loved him.

“I hope Chinook won’t knock it over. Remember the year Lucy knocked the tree over so many times, we had, like, two ornaments left?” Lucy was a cat we’d adopted shortly after our engagement, nine years earlier.

“He’ll probably leave it alone.” I could tell by the wrinkles that had suddenly appeared at the corners of his eyes he knew I was headed somewhere with this conversation.

“There sure were a lot of families there today.” I paused, stared straight ahead, and slowed my breath before continuing. “Did you see how happy they all looked with their kids? How cute the babies looked all bundled up?” Nate’s smile broadened as he glanced over at me and squeezed my leg again. I laced my fingers through his. “Wouldn’t it be great if that was us next year?”

“Ya think?” *Why is he being so casual about all this? Does he seriously not get what I’m hinting at?*

I took a deep breath and decided to get to the point. “I think I’m ready to have a baby.” There. I’d said it.

“Okay.”

“Okay?” A huge smile spread across my face and my breath caught in my throat. *Did he truly mean it? Was he really ready?*

More importantly, was I?

Chapter 2

Preparing for Success

Why am I so nervous? I thought as I waited for Susan Worthington, my nurse practitioner, to enter the room. Since the first time I met her almost a decade before, she'd made me feel so at ease that I felt safe asking her almost anything, no matter how potentially embarrassing. This time I felt different. I knew the only way to get what I was after was to tell her that Nate and I had decided to get pregnant. But mentioning we were ready for kids, meant talking about sex – and I suddenly realized that wasn't something I was comfortable talking about with anyone.

I was in her office for my annual exam, but what I really wanted was her reassurance that I was ready to be a mom. Or more accurately, that my body was up to the task. *Why shouldn't it be?* I was twenty-nine, healthy, and strong. Both my mom and my two sisters had had easy pregnancies and deliveries. This exam was just a routine precaution. But like taking a reading test, deep down I feared I wouldn't pass it.

Once she entered the room, however, she put me immediately at ease and my fears faded. Getting pregnant would be no big deal. People do it every day.

Once the exam was over, she left the room so I could get dressed. After a few minutes, there was a quick knock on the door, Susan entered and sat down across from me. With her elbow resting on the laminate countertop, I felt as if we were meeting for a cup of coffee, not discussing my reproductive organs.

“So, here’s some information on getting pregnant.” She handed me a small booklet. “It covers the basics, most of which you likely already know.”

“Thanks.” I paused and took a deep breath. I felt my cheeks begin to pinken as I summoned the courage to ask the only question I wanted her to answer. “I guess what I really want to know is,” I paused, “How long will it take?”

She smiled before responding as if she’d anticipated my question. “For healthy couples your age, it could take anywhere from a couple months to a year.” She leaned toward me a few inches before continuing, “If you’re not pregnant after twelve months of trying, make an appointment and we’ll talk about options.”

A year? Since when did it take a year to get pregnant? We were a healthy young couple who wanted a baby. *Why would it take a year?* The women in my family never had a problem getting pregnant. Furthermore, if it took a year just to get pregnant, it would be almost two before we had a baby! I knew it wasn’t rational, but we’d made our decision, and it was go time. Time to move on to the next step. I felt a sudden rush of disappointment and embarrassment at my uninformed expectations.

“Wow, that long? I thought if it took more than six months, that was a long time.”

“You know, Kim, someone once gave me a card that read, ‘The only way to ensure you get pregnant right

away is to be two sixteen-year-olds in the back of your parents' station wagon.”

“Well, at least we own a station wagon.” I laughed, easing the tension I felt. “I guess we’ll have to be patient and just start trying.”

“Good luck and call me if you have questions.” Susan stood up to leave. “Oh, and it’s not a bad idea to start taking prenatal vitamins now. It won’t hurt and you’ll know you’re getting plenty of folic acid from the beginning of your pregnancy.”

I thanked Susan, grabbed my bag and followed her out to the reception desk. As I walked down the hall to the elevator, I stuffed the booklet into my purse and decided to stop at the drug store in the lobby. Although, clearly I’d never been a Boy Scout, I did subscribe to their motto “Be prepared!” There was no better time than the present to begin preparing my body to make a baby.

* * *

Two months later and a few days late, I grabbed the home pregnancy kit from the back of the bathroom cabinet. Nate was already at work. I followed the directions, placed the little white stick on the back of the toilet and jumped in the shower. The results would be ready by the time I was done.

With a towel wrapped around me, I stepped out of the shower and grabbed the stick. There were two pink lines in the small recessed oval. I compared what I saw with the pictures on the brochure. Under the diagram showing two pink lines I read the word PREGNANT in thick bold letters. I must have looked from the stick to the diagram and back again a dozen times before I was convinced.

I grabbed my cell phone off the counter and called Nate.

“Morning babe. What’s up?” he said sounding cheerful.

“I found something out this morning!” The excitement took my breath away.

“What are you talking about?” Followed by a quick laugh.

“I found out we’re pregnant!” I started laughing and bouncing up and down, still wrapped in a towel.

“Whoa babe, congratulations!”

“Congratulations to us! I can’t wait to talk more when you get home tonight.” I knew his coworkers were likely nearby as we talked. Nate was a private person and I didn’t want to put him in an awkward situation.

“See you tonight. I love you, babe.” Despite his casual response, I could tell Nate was excited and a little nervous, too. This would be a big change for both of us.

“Love you too, babe.” I stood in front of the bathroom mirror and placed my hand on my still firm, flat stomach trying to envision how my reflection would change in the months to come. I turned and walked into the closet to find some clothes. *I’m pregnant!* I repeated it silently over and over again as I pulled out a pair of black slacks and a blue pinstriped blouse. I couldn’t believe it. Ten months short of a year. *How’s that for fertile?*

I was now running late for work, so I had to hustle to make the train. I worked as a project manager for a transit agency located in the heart of the city. It was an intense job that easily took up fifty hours a week, with an additional ten-hours of commute, and I loved it. The challenge of bringing together experts from multiple disciplines to deliver our projects on time fueled my passion. I was always learning. Everyday there was a

new problem to solve, a new opportunity to capture, new people to meet. Juggling motherhood with my career wasn't going to be easy, but I knew that I'd find a way to master it. After all, most women figured it out, right?

I spent the train ride thinking about what would happen next. My mom had taught us not to announce a pregnancy until after the first trimester because of the risk of losing the pregnancy in the first three months. How in the world was I supposed to hide my excitement for another seven or eight weeks? But my mom, a mother of four, had a lot more experience at this than I did. So I decided to keep my mouth shut and trust her advice. For the next two months, it would be a secret for Nate and me to keep.

On my lunch break, I locked myself in a conference room and called the doctor's office to schedule my first prenatal appointment. When the receptionist explained they didn't make the first appointment until ten weeks, my heart sank. The first milestone in my pregnancy was already delayed. I wrote the appointment in my date book, then sat at the long table imagining the excitement the next eight months would bring.

I pictured myself having an idyllic pregnancy — gaining a couple pounds per month, my stomach growing only until it looked like I'd swallowed a beach ball. I'd have a beautiful pregnancy glow and my hair would grow longer, thicker, shinier. Nate and I would work as a team to decorate the nursery in a music theme. We would paint a piano keyboard on the lower half of the wall with the hope of inspiring our baby to love the piano as much as Nate did.

My idea of the perfect pregnancy would culminate in an on-time delivery. Our baby would be born on his

or her due date, after only a few hours of drug-free labor. We'd bring our little bundle of joy home with smiles on our well-rested faces, the baby in an adorable outfit, me in my pre-pregnancy jeans. It would be perfect.

* * *

I treasured these images as my pregnancy advanced. However, as the months passed, life dealt me an altogether different reality. The first three months weren't *too* bad. My breasts, which had been throbbing initially, eventually stopped hurting, replaced by mild morning sickness. I was tired after a full day's work and would routinely doze off on the couch before nine.

At the beginning of my second trimester I found myself needing new clothes — not because of my growing belly but because of my rapidly widening butt. I didn't look pregnant; for the first time in my life, I looked fat.

All my life, I'd enjoyed a trim, fit figure. I never had to worry about what I ate or whether or not I exercised. As if having a human growing inside me wasn't strange enough, my quickly expanding size left me feeling rudderless. I no longer stood to wonder at my growing belly in the bathroom mirror after I stepped out of the shower. Instead, I headed straight to the closet to cover myself up as quickly as I could.

One afternoon, while walking back to my cubicle after a meeting, a male colleague came rushing up behind me and grabbed the door.

"Let me get that for you, Kim," he said rather gallantly.

"Oh, hi Scott. Thanks."

"So, how's the pregnancy going?"

“Fine, thanks.” My pregnancy had become common knowledge and I often felt awkward when coworkers mentioned it.

“Well, you look great. But don’t you usually see it in the stomach first?” Scott elbowed me like we were buddies at the bar after work.

“One would think.” I responded with a weak laugh. *What the hell?* I wondered as I tried to maintain my composure. “I just remembered, I need to stop by and talk to Stacie.” I turned and walked in the opposite direction. *What kind of remark was that?* As if I’m not perfectly aware my butt looks like it’s expecting its own offspring!

* * *

After four and a half months, I finally began to show in my belly. In the middle of my twentieth week, Nate joined me for my first ultrasound. “You’re having a boy!” the technician announced. We looked at each other and smiled.

A *boy*. I’d always imagined having a girl. I wasn’t close to my only brother, Greg, who was six years younger than me. I’d moved across the state to attend university when he was twelve and hadn’t visited my family for more than two weeks at a time ever since. I quickly convinced myself I’d figure it out. I had my mom to lean on, and my mother-in-law had survived raising four energetic boys.

My pregnancy had a few more surprises in store. One hot summer night, as I sat on the couch watching HGTV, I noticed my shirt was wet. Assuming it was just condensation from the glass of ice water I was holding, I ignored it. A few minutes later, I looked down to see

two large wet circles the size of saucers spreading across my chest. Something was leaking. I looked at Nate in a panic as I realized it was me!

“Nate, what the heck is going on?” I asked as my cheeks began to burn.

“I have no idea.” He jumped up from the couch to grab *What to Expect When You’re Expecting* from the bookshelf.

“What are you doing?”

“Seeing what the book says.”

This is so embarrassing! We’d been married nearly a decade, but we were in uncharted territory. Nothing we’d read or heard included anything about leaking breasts before the baby was even born!

Turned out, I’m one of a small percentage of women whose colostrum comes in early. In my case, three months early.

* * *

By thirty-five weeks, I was over sixty pounds heavier and had high blood pressure. So much for a couple pounds a month and only showing in my belly. My weekly visits to the obstetrician became twice weekly with routine non-stress tests. I’d lie with fetal monitors strapped to my belly, clicking a button every time the baby moved. If he didn’t move enough, the nurse would click spoons together over my belly to coax him into motion.

Alternating between nervousness and annoyance as my dream pregnancy disintegrated with each passing day, I had to constantly remind myself not to be dramatic and that the baby was perfectly healthy, which was all that mattered.

Except, it wasn't all that mattered to me. I felt I was letting myself, my husband, and my family down. I'd worked hard for a successful career, saving up five years' worth of vacation and sick time so I could stay home for three months without a break in paychecks. Still, all the planning, attention to detail, and determination wasn't enough. It felt like I'd lost myself — and I wasn't sure I'd ever find her again. There was nothing I could do but ride out the storm and hope for the best, whatever that might look like.

* * *

Late on a Friday, as I approached my thirty-eighth week, my doctor had me stay late to await the results of some tests. She didn't like how my weight had once again risen, my belly had shrunk and my blood pressure spiked from high to borderline alarming. I sat in the small exam room, reading a well-worn copy of *Better Homes and Gardens* and trying hard not to freak out as I thought about the rush-hour traffic I'd be forced to endure on my drive home.

"Thanks for waiting, Kim," the doctor said as she walked into the room. "I wanted to review your blood work before you left."

"Okay. What's up?" I tried to put aside my annoyance, so I didn't raise my blood pressure even more.

"As you know, you've gained a lot of weight and your blood pressure is steadily rising. I think it's best you stop working and go on bedrest. We want to give the baby as much time to develop as possible. These last few weeks are so important."

“When you say ‘bedrest,’ what exactly do you mean?” I felt my chest tighten and tears begin to sting the backs of my eyes.

“I mean, you’ll stay lying down, except to go to the bathroom or to eat.”

“Seriously?” I couldn’t believe what she’d said. None of this was in the plan. And I had so much work to get done before going on leave.

“Yes. We want to get your blood pressure down for the remainder of your pregnancy. If it gets too high, we’ll have to induce. And there’s an increased chance of cesarean section with induction.” She paused, allowing me time to process. Softening her voice, she continued, “And since I know you want a natural delivery, we’d like to give you a chance to go into labor naturally.”

“Okay.” I slumped back and rested my head against the wall. I was concerned and also angry — mostly at myself, for not being able to control my body or work harder to ensure I had the pregnancy I had dreamt of. It felt better to be angry than afraid.

“I’m sure you’re disappointed. Do you have any questions?”

I shook my head. Thoughts were buzzing around my brain like bees in a hive under attack. I’d waited almost 30 years for this pregnancy. Nate and I had worked hard to create a stable life for our future family. My excessive weight gain had contributed to the hypertension necessitating the impending bed rest. *If only I’d eaten better. If only I’d taken time throughout my pregnancy to exercise. If only I’d practiced the breathing we learned in our birthing classes.* There was a long list of ‘if onlys.’ I felt responsible for what was going awry in my pregnancy. And I was wracking my brain to figure

out exactly where, when, and how I'd made the critical mistake that led me to my current predicament.

Pregnancy was one thing my body should be able to do without difficulty, right? These things are hereditary and nowhere in my family tree is there any hint of the troubles I was experiencing. Therefore, it had to be my *choices* that caused the problems I was experiencing.

It felt like I was back in my second grade class, trying to find the answer to why I'd failed. How was I going to explain this latest development to Nate? And, more importantly, convince him not to tell anyone? I didn't want to raise any alarms — or let anyone know what a failure I was.

I felt sad, frustrated, and embarrassed as I left my doctor's office and waddled to the elevators. *One of life's most important experiences and I'm blowing it!* I willed back the tears that still threatened to soak my cheeks.

* * *

Nothing could have prepared me for the difficulty of bedrest. It was hard knowing someone was picking up my work when I hadn't had the opportunity to organize everything first. There were important decisions scheduled and I wanted my recommendations and intentions clearly laid out. I wanted the quality of my work to speak for itself so I wouldn't come back to a mess.

While Chinook loved every minute lounging beside me, soaking in the hours of attention, I grew increasingly bored and frustrated. Even with a hundred channels to surf and months of *Architectural Digest*, *Vogue*, and *Sunset* magazines to thumb through, nothing captured my attention for longer than ten

minutes at a time. I couldn't wear any of the clothes in *Vogue*, couldn't do any of the gardening suggested in *Sunset* and, most surprisingly, didn't feel inspired by any of the homes in *Architectural Digest*. I wondered if Nate was up to preparing one of the dishes in *Bon Appetit*. At least my sense of humor remained partially intact.

Where was my appreciation for this time to completely relax? I was on doctor's orders not to raise a finger — was this not something most women dreamed of? Not me. With feelings of boredom and frustration, there was also relief that by following the doctor's orders I was keeping our baby safe.

A week and a half later, my blood pressure no better, we scheduled an induction. I'd made it to thirty-nine weeks. The nurse told us to wait for the hospital to call around six the following morning, unless the maternity ward was full.

The next morning, at six o'clock sharp, the phone rang and I reached over to answer.

"Hello?" I was already awake. Between the discomfort of pregnancy and having to pee every couple of hours, I'd given up trying to sleep.

"Kimberly? This is Stephanie from the labor and delivery unit. I'm calling to let you know we're ready for you to come in and have your baby." She sounded so chipper and excited for us, I suddenly felt excited, too.

"Okay, sounds good. We'll be there as soon as we can." *I'm going to meet my son today!*

I hung up the phone and rolled over to wake Nate. Just rolling over was so much work for my swollen body, I was nearly out of breath. *Thank God this will all be over soon.* I immediately felt a hot rush of guilt burn my cheeks. I was both excited to meet our son

and desperate for my body to feel familiar again. I just wanted to hold him in my arms, cover his cheeks with kisses, and put the last several months behind me.

As we left the house, I felt confident that no matter what happened our baby would be born healthy. But I couldn't shake the feeling that my body might not make it through the experience unscathed.

Thanks for reading a preview of *The Making of a Mom - My Unexpected Journey through Birth & Adoption*.

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