

# STOLEN ANGELS

25 stories of hope after pregnancy  
or infant loss

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or infant loss

*Edited by*  
SHAREE MOORE

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# STOLEN ANGEL

By Robert E. Stephenson

*“To the angel I’ll never hold ...”  
I’ll try to find the perfect words  
To share my deepest grief  
A baby cries, but can’t be heard  
Death’s a heartless thief!  
It steals from us those we love  
And those we’ll never hold  
The smiles and dreams life’s made of  
For pittance; bought and sold!  
My soul erupts from sorrowed wells  
There is no consolation  
For naught, but time this hurt dispels  
A memoired reservation!  
Lamentations cloud dimmed eyes  
As pools of droplets fall  
My breathing heavy labored sighs  
Death’s sting affects us all!  
The truest test of life is death  
Loved ones gather ‘round  
When innocence dies without a breath  
Only God hears the sound!*

17 July 2003

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OUR HOUSE, grief support center

May you each reap what has been sown.

Hugs,

Sharee Moore

## FOREWARD

If someone told me five years ago that when I finally made the decision to start a family my journey would be filled with loss and pain, I don't know if I would have believed them. And if I believed them, I'm not really sure if I would have pursued getting pregnant, knowing that I wasn't going to have a baby right away.

Looking back at my four pregnancies and subsequent miscarriages, I realize that one of my greatest needs wasn't finding a reason why the losses occurred but a great need to hear from other women with similar experiences. I wanted to hear in women's own words about their joys and their sorrows in a detail as graphic as they could stand to tell it, in terms as raw as I felt.

Bringing together the voices of women who share their stories is an age-old tradition that is an important part of women's lives. We learn from one another. We feel less alone when we hear someone else say, "I went through the same things you describe." We aren't looking for someone who knows how we feel because, frankly, they can't really know exactly how we feel. But they can know something. And that knowledge connects us; a thread that weaves the tapestry of our lives as women and mothers. Bringing men into the discussion is equally as important to this tapestry.

No matter when loss happens – before, during or after our quest for motherhood, for parenthood – it brings a sorrow so deep that many of us do not know how to grieve. It is in hearing the stories of others that we can touch our own deeply-held emotions and in doing so, hopefully, release them somehow. They will never leave us entirely. We may never be entirely whole or healed. But to be able to add our own voices, our own stories – even if just through reading this book and thinking of our own lives – is an empowering thing.

Telling one's story takes courage. And I applaud the courage of the women and men who give us a glimpse into their lives on such an intimate scale. Each story is different. Each story is unique to the person telling it. But each parent is connected to one another and to each one of us.

Aliza Sherman Risdahl

Author, entrepreneur, and new mother to Noa Grace

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## PREFACE

You are not alone. We too, remember significant dates and anniversaries that others may have forgotten. We too, have felt the slaps of careless words across our hearts. We too, have seen our tiny babies tossed into the trash; their names changed to “specimen.” We too, have returned home to a nursery offended by our empty arms. We too, have stared greedily at a pregnant woman’s stomach, longing for what isn’t ours. You are not alone.

We write these experiences in remembrance of our children. For many of us, a phantom kick, a stuffed bear, a couple of pictures or a scar may be the only physical reminders of the lives we loved. Surely, our aching hearts and empty arms will never forget. Thank you for allowing us to share our hurt, our hope and our healing with you. Join us as we remember.

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## INTRODUCTION

After my third baby died, I remember the chaplain handing me a packet full of information, including a book. I thought to myself, not another book about grief and tossed it to the side. Those books only told me about the grief process and that it was normal. Stuffed inside, I might even find a story of infant loss about a paragraph long. Psychologists analyzed the science and steps of grief, but I only wanted to know I wasn't alone.

Did anyone out there understand my pain? Could anyone share a similar story of dark depression, of heartache? Could anyone look me in the face as I held my tiny, lifeless baby and say "I have been there?" If not, then I only felt the breeze from their flapping gums!

Finally, here is a book written by moms and dads who actually lost babies! There is no science, just average people and their journey toward healing. You'll read about miscarriage, multiple losses, SIDS, stillbirth, murder, drowning, meningitis, a birth defect and an abortion.

You'll smile with one mom as she reflects on losing her tears, you'll cry with others as they learn their dreams of motherhood have ended too soon. You'll lie on the examining table next to women as the doctor feverishly searches for an absent heartbeat. You'll gasp in horror at the murder of one writer's 15-month-old daughter, and you'll pray for the paramedics as they try to revive a toddler after a drowning accident. Your arms and heart will ache as some lose baby after baby after baby in a drive to become parents. You'll reach for two dads as they share the father's perspective and with each story, you'll leave a little less alone in your pain.

Each parent shares a soul-searing story, but each is also laced with hope for the future. Each writer reveals what they did to find wholeness, break free from depression and learn to smile again. I've also included a more detailed guide at the back of the book called *Tried and True Strategies for Today, Tomorrow, the First Year and Beyond*. This guide offers tried and true tips for how to get through the first day or the first year after your loss. You'll learn what to expect from grief, red flags for more advanced medical care and specific suggestions to encourage healing. Between these covers, you'll read advice that can snatch you from a pit of depression or recapture a forgotten smile.



This is also a revealing book for those who want to understand the devastation infant loss can leave on the bereaved. Have you ever secretly thought it probably hurts more to lose a full term infant than say a baby 12 weeks gestation? If so, you aren't alone. I think losing a baby feels a lot like a plane crash. Regardless of when the baby died, families still must wade through the same wrangled mess.

Imagine you are heading for the destination of your dreams. Maybe that location is Tuscany, Florence or Brazil. As you settle into your seat during the flight, sudden turbulence violently wrenches your lids open. You desperately claw the armrest and try not to peek while the sky falls past your window. There's no escape, the plane is going down.

The impact is the same whether the airplane crashes just after takeoff, during mid flight, or when the Tuscan airport is in plain sight. No one would ever say, "Wow what a devastating crash! Well, on the upside, at least it happened only two hours into the flight!" The same is true for the parent whose baby has died. Regardless of gestation, death has stolen an angel from our wombs, our arms, our lives, but never our hearts.

If you love someone who has lost a baby, you don't want to skip even one of these heartfelt stories. If you are a parent with empty arms, finally here is a guide that speaks to your soul. Let the healing begin!

*This book is dedicated to all those  
who ever soaked a pillow with tears  
because of a child lost.*

Part One

# A FADING PAIN

## PAIN, HEALING PAIN

By Beverly Dukes

*Then there's this pain, pain of healing  
Pain that never seems to go away  
Pain that is always with me  
Pain that is with me both night and day  
Pain that tells me, yes, it's over  
Time has moved on why can't you  
You've done everything to hold on  
Don't you see there's nothing left to do*

*Pain is the sign that you're healing  
And the loss was deep and raw  
The little life was real and precious  
Whether carried, felt or saw  
Now they are no longer with us  
God has chosen a better place  
But the fullness of our love  
Prepared or expected has left a space*

*Why me, is the question in anger and hate  
What did I do to deserve this?  
I never imagined life being so cruel  
Defenseless and prey in such a crisis  
This piercing pain it hurts so bad  
People want you to get over it  
You fake a smile and share the time  
When really you just want to vomit*

*The tears that are shed, every night in your bed,  
From the pictures in your head causes pain, healing pain  
God caused this to be, not to hurt me,  
Just so I could see that the pain is the healing from the pain*

# ALEXZANDER'S VISIT

By Bethzaeli Safier

*"A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more."*

That last week of the pregnancy was the longest week of my life. With excruciating pains in my lower belly, I paced back and forth around my house to try and start labor. I was so excited to give birth and finally see what this little person inside of me looked like and whether it was a boy or a girl. "Oh don't worry about a second pregnancy it'll be like second nature." That's what other moms told me.

My baby was born at 9:57 a.m. He was a 9 pound 3 ounce boy who was as chunky as he could get, and as beautiful as his brother. I was so happy to finally hear and see my baby. I thanked the Lord with such gratitude.

I cried out, "My baby, my baby, my baby!"

I could not believe that moment had come and gone so quickly. It seemed like time stopped for a few minutes. My stay at the hospital was wonderful. The nurses there were amazing and they walked me through every step of recovery. Those three days at the hospital were also great for bonding with our newborn and just relaxing. My aunt picked me up from the hospital and brought us to our home sweet home.

The little newborn welcome home event was wonderful. Part of our family was there and it was the most beautiful time to share Alexzander with the rest of the family. It was the most meaningful experience to bring our child home to Zach, his brother. They bonded so well. Zach

was very happy to have his brother home. You could just see his love in the constant hugs and kisses they shared. Never would I exchange the moment of witnessing the purest form of love through my children. The Lord was definitely in all of this since He is love. This type of feeling lasted throughout the rest of our little one's short life.

Alexzander and I constantly let each other know somehow or somehow that we loved each other whether it was through hugging, kissing, oohs and ahs and gentle smiles. I felt as though I was falling in love all over again. My love was so strong then and still is. I will never, ever stop loving him or stop hoping in God for heaven. For it is there where I will meet Alexzander again.



It was a Sunday afternoon on January 15, 2006 after church that I took my children home to feed and change them into warmer outfits because it was nippy outside. I planned to take them to the mall to buy clothes for Alexzander because he was growing out of his 0-3 months sized clothing. He was so big and cuddly. He had spiky hair, big chunky cheeks, a huge belly, thick legs and big sweetly-scented feet. I love him so much. We had a fun evening shopping. As we returned home all was calm. I bathed Zach and left Alexzander sleeping on the bed since he already had been bathed and pampered.

I finally put Zacharia to sleep and by the time I got around to going to bed it was time to feed Alexzander. It was 12 a.m. when I cradled him in my arms and sang to him as he drank all my milk supply. I burped then put him down to sleep at 12:19 a.m. Somewhere between then and 5:30 a.m. something went unexpectedly and terribly wrong. I woke up to feed Alexzander only to find that I would never breastfeed my baby again.

I touched his little belly and tried to feel a heartbeat. I checked to make sure that his peaceful look wasn't that of a dead baby. This moment made me overwhelmed with confusion because I didn't know what happened and why my baby was so pale.

At the time I wished my husband could've been there to help bring Alexzander back to life. Our son was a little cold and without movement. I began to shake him to see if he would respond, but all I saw was blood

come out of his nose and mouth. I did not know what was happening! I grabbed a syringe bulb and began to clear his nose and mouth to make way in his passages for me to perform CPR.

I ran next door to my friend and hysterically pleaded with her, "Please, help me!"

I sent a quick plea to the Lord and said, "Please Lord don't take my son away, please God forgive me if I've done anything wrong or offended you in any way, just please don't take my son away."

In my panic I yelled at the top of my lungs, "God, PLEASE!"

All I could do was to try and bring my child back to life so I performed CPR over and over again until a breath of air exhaled out of his body as if to let me know that he was already gone. In the midst of all this chaos, my friend called 911 and as they rushed an ambulance to our home, a paramedic walked me through the CPR procedure over the phone.

I kept screaming, "Oh my God, my baby, my son! Now my husband is going to divorce me and they're going to put me in jail!" I immediately thought I had failed Zander, my husband, Zacharia, and myself as a mother. I pointed fingers all at myself because I thought that maybe if I had awakened a little earlier I could've saved Zander. My disappointment was unbearable.

At the hospital I leaped from one nurse's arm to the other asking if my son was going to be okay. All they could tell me is that they were doing everything possible to care for him. A feeling of faintness wanted to come over me, but I was not giving in. My mouth and throat were cotton-dry and my knees were as useful as a horse's when on its side. I felt helpless. I bowed down on a chair and began pleading to the Lord for His forgiveness for whatever I thought I committed to cause this. I begged and begged for my son's life. The moment came when I had to enter the room where they had him. I ran to the bed and watched the monitor for a heart rate.

I asked the doctor, "Is that a heartbeat? Is it? Is he breathing?"

The doctor held my arms and turned me toward him as he squeezed his lips together as if he didn't want to say what he was about to tell me.

# LIVING WITH TRAGEDY: A FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE

By Robert E. Stephenson

*"There's got to be a morning after ... if we can hold on  
through the night ... We have a chance to find the sunshine  
... let's keep on looking for the light."*

My mind struggled to believe what my ears just heard. I was going to have another baby? Wow! After all, it had been a very long time and I was in my forties! I had made many mistakes raising the other three and God was going to give me another chance at parenthood? Excitement and wonder overwhelmed me as I began to daydream about our futures.

The first few months of pregnancy progressed normally and regular doctor's visits upheld this notion. We began doing usual things expectant parents do. We bought baby clothes, furniture, diapers and even some toys. We did all the things you shouldn't put off until the last minutes before the baby arrives. My wife, Julie, and I also began searching books for the perfect name for our special, though unexpected surprise.

Julie returned from a scheduled doctor visit with pictures taken during her ultrasound. Pictures! I held pictures of a beautiful new life we'd soon be holding in our arms. These are treasured moments of great joy and I know I must have looked like a peacock in a full feathered strut!

I could see external signs of the changes taking place within my wife's body. Her ever tightening abdomen, swelling breasts and slight moodiness were some most obvious to me. Yep, it was really true and we were going to have a baby!

Time passed quickly as we prepared to receive our special blessing. I thought decisions through and then carefully considered them again. Which room would become the baby's? Would we decide to go through the pregnancy without letting them tell us our child's sex? Did it really matter? It didn't to me, though in my private prayers, I asked God for a healthy little girl.

After completing the first trimester without complications, my wife returned to her OB doctor for a follow-up appointment, but this time the news was not good. The ultrasound confirmed what her doctor silently suspected. No heartbeat. Our blessing had somehow passed away.

After her appointment Julie called and relayed the tragic news. I was devastated but had to be strong for her. She needed that no matter what. I tried to be unshakable. A shoulder she could cry her tears upon. I was more attentive than ever and tended to look for good, even when something touched a nerve. I struggled with my own heartache and frustrations, reassuring her brighter days were ahead even though I wasn't sure we'd find them.

I loved my wife for better or for worse in times both good and bad just as I'd sworn, before God, on our wedding day. It was really tough but losing the baby wouldn't change how I felt for my beloved Julie!

A D&C was scheduled quickly so our now lifeless child could be taken and to minimize the risk of infection or other complications. I was there physically and mentally during Julie's struggles but I am still not absolutely sure whether she ever sensed how deeply I was hurting.

Until this day, I have spoken of it only through poetry, which until now, was my one true vent. How can you talk to someone about something like this? Only someone who has lived it could truly understand and offer some sort of consolation. I desperately need to put this behind me somehow, but for the life of me I simply don't know how and it still tears me apart. I hope writing my story helps to remove the deep sadness and guilt harbored inside.

The wound is painfully fresh though it happened nearly three years ago.

Despite hearing over and over again, "time heals all wounds," time

# I HAVE BEEN THERE

By Robin Lynn Graham

*“They will be like a well watered garden, and they will sorrow no more. ... I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.”<sup>1</sup>*

There are some things that a heart cannot forget. It’s been more than 13 years, and I can still remember every detail about the day I got the news my baby had died. I remember what the ultrasound room looked like and what I wore that day. The smells, sights and sounds. The image of the little peanut on the ultrasound screen. They are all imprinted in my mind like a bleak winter scene etched into a cold black piece of glass. There are some things that a heart cannot forget.

It was a cold day in October, and I was scheduled to have a routine ultrasound at the hospital. I was about 16 weeks along in my third pregnancy, and the doctor had yet to hear a heartbeat. I was assured it was nothing to worry about; this sometimes happens especially after multiple births. Besides, I had put on quite a bit of weight which might be hindering things.

I walked into the clinic, finishing up the gallon of water they made me drink before the ultrasound, and then I sat and waited my turn. It didn’t take long before I was called back and asked to put on a lovely gown and lie on a freezing metal table. Two minutes into the ultrasound, I knew something was wrong.

The technician became really quiet and soon left the room without an explanation. A different technician came in a moment later, all smiles and friendly, to begin the ultrasound again. After her first attempt, she

asked me, in a calm reassuring voice, to go to the bathroom and drink a few more glasses of water. When I asked if there was anything wrong she said that she just wanted to make sure they were getting a clear picture of the baby.

I did as she asked, but was she nuts? Drink more water? After two babies, my bladder wasn't that strong to begin with and yikes! It hurt when they pressed on my tummy like that! When I came out of the bathroom, there was an official looking, doctor-type person at the ultrasound machine.

"Okay, Mrs. Graham, let's see what we've got going on here," he said, as he began the process yet one more time.

This man had the bedside manner of a steam roller.

Right away he said, "Okay, we've got a problem." He turned the screen so that I could finally see what they had been seeing. My baby was just a tiny peanut of a thing on the screen. I was used to having ultrasounds later in pregnancy when there are clearly defined fingers and toes. There was none of that, and the worst part, the doctor so bluntly pointed out, was that there was no heartbeat. He showed me the small black spot on the screen that was my baby's heart. I stared numbly at that spot as the doctor explained that my baby had died.

They didn't know the cause or why my body had not done its job getting rid of the fetus. Yes, he actually said those words. He said my OB doctor would probably give my body a few weeks to dispel the dead fetus, and if this did not happen naturally, then they would have to do a D&C.

I dressed in a continued state of numbness that slowly turned to anger. He was talking about my baby like it was garbage that my body needed to get rid of! It was so unreal to me. No one could talk about a baby like that, could they? When I left the room, someone handed me a paper and told me I would be getting a call in a few days with my next appointment, and that was it. I walked like a zombie out to my van where I sat for who knows how long. I don't know if I even cried. I just remember sitting there for the longest time before I remembered my two girls at the baby-sitter's. I needed to get home to my kids and hold

them tight until my husband came home from work. I needed him to hold *me* tight and let me know everything was going to be alright.

The next few weeks flew by in a blur of tears and confusion. I didn't talk about what was happening to me because it still didn't seem real. I told my parents and one or two of our closest friends, but that is all. It wasn't until the day before the D&C that we decided to tell our Sunday school class and ask for prayer. After the prayer time our teacher began her lesson, and I really cannot tell you what the point of that lesson was, I just remember these words:

"I cannot even look at Robin this morning. There she sits with a dead baby inside her womb and she has asked us for prayer. She doesn't need prayer. When people like this ask us for prayer, what they are really wanting is one of two things: answers or someone to feel sorry for them."

I didn't hear another word of that lesson. I was mad. I was furious! I wouldn't have been surprised if the fire alarm went off. I was that HOT! Did this woman actually think that when I finally chose to open up my wounded heart for a second to share with them it was because I wanted someone to feel sorry for me? Unbelievable!

My teenagers will respond in the same angry way and my response to them is, "Me thinks thou doest protest too loudly." I know when they respond in anger that I must be getting close to the heart of the matter. The situation with the teacher reminds me of that and now that I'm so far away from the pain of her statement, I can look back and honestly say she was right. I don't know the meaning she had behind those words, but she was right. I don't know how I can, in good conscience, sit here as a Christian and tell you that I didn't really want prayer. Maybe it was just that I didn't want to hear the typical prayer that is given almost robotically on these occasions. I didn't want the doctors to be granted wisdom. I didn't need my body healed. I wasn't ready to use this situation to reach out to others with Christ's love. My baby was dead inside my "safe place," and I wanted to know why and I wanted someone, not to feel sorry for me, but to at least be able to empathize. To be able to say, "I have been there."

## 7 IS FINALITY

By Christine M. Alexander

*"You are the salt of the earth ..."*

All I know is that one moment I was going in for a routine appointment during the middle of my second trimester and in the next instant we can't find the heartbeat on the ultrasound machine. I just felt the baby kicking two days earlier and decided that he or she was just resting and growing. My worst fear was coming true. I felt such emptiness in the moment when we could not see any heartbeat or movement whatsoever. I immediately knew the baby was gone.

As the doctor tried to awaken the baby I knew I would have to say goodbye - again. My husband looked at me and before the doctor could get the words out, we both were in tears. I felt numb from head to toe. I grew even more distraught when the hospital staff wanted me to stay the night so that first thing in the morning, I could have an amniocentesis to determine why the baby died, and also have labor induced.

I thought to myself, *I actually have to deliver this baby? What kind of world is this where a mother has to go through the labor pain and deliver a baby that is dead? Why couldn't God just make it all disappear?* I felt so alone; my husband could not deal with the pain so he stayed away from the hospital. I went through the whole experience alone. In the morning, the doctor wheeled me up to labor and delivery where other happy mothers were delivering their babies and joy was in the air; I felt so sick and empty.

I wanted to die as I lay alone in the room going through labor pains all throughout the day. I knew somehow this was my fault. What did I do that had been so wrong? I kept asking God to help me understand how He could do this to me.



Since we've been married, this was our seventh loss in six years; all of them up to this point were early miscarriages in the first trimester. I was well into my second trimester with Jacob. The doctor pleaded with me to take medication for the labor pain, or get an epidural but I could not. I needed to feel every sensation and every moment. It was, after all, my punishment. How could God do this to me?

When I delivered the baby close to 10 p.m., I just held him and cried and didn't know what to do. I knew I had to let him go, but I couldn't. The doctor took our baby away and I called my husband to come and take me home, my anger with him for leaving me to do this alone was overshadowed by the pain of my loss. For the week leading up to the funeral, I could not eat, sleep and did not want to live. On the day of the funeral, we went to the funeral home to follow the hearse and view the baby one last time. I thought I was going to pass out from the pain. When I looked at the baby, he didn't look the same because the preservation process made him shrivel up and look much smaller than he was after his birth.

I didn't recognize my baby and it just destroyed me. I walked my son from the hearse to the burial site in his little coffin and felt like I had no choice but to let him go, physically. But never emotionally.



My first pregnancy produced a daughter who was 4-years-old at the time, and I felt that she could find a better mother, my husband could find a better wife and so I wanted God to take my life. I prayed for it every night. I wanted the power to take my own life, but couldn't find that strength anywhere. After the funeral I still felt empty and everyone reminded me that I should be grateful for the one child I had and some women couldn't even have one. This was the last thing I wanted to hear because how could they understand my emptiness? My love for my living child was the same as the love for my child that went to Heaven. I had to deal with this loss so suddenly and just couldn't do it. I decided to get into my Bible and let God explain why this was happening to me.

I became more involved with church activities and the women's

# NO MORE TEARS

By Cindy Cross Brookshire

*"I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears."<sup>1</sup>*

I can look back and not cry.

I'm 52, and haven't seen a period for more than a year. I've weathered hot flashes, stray hairs and that over-the-top snippiness you get when someone leaves a cart blocking the last parking space on a rainy day. My body is telling me child bearing has ended, more than a decade after the miscarriages and live births that peopled a maternal journey of enormous highs and devastating lows.



"Are you sure?" I asked the doctor at the clinic that first time. I explained that my husband was a cancer survivor and after four years of trying, we thought it wasn't possible.

"Positive," she confirmed.

I let it sink in. The nausea, the bloating, the headaches. I was going to have a baby.

And I did. Virginia Caroline came that hot summer, after ten frightening hours of labor that ended with a forceps delivery.

We were so happy! I quit my job, set up a freelance business and immersed myself in an ocean of breastfeeding and washing cloth diapers. I would be the perfect stay-at-home mom.

Then, in February 1987, when Carrie was nine-months-old, the nausea returned.

"The diaphragm works, but you have to take it out of the drawer," joked Dr. Bentrum. I made a note to ask for the one female doctor in the

practice next time.

A second child!

This time I was going to do natural childbirth. No epidural, no forceps. I'd breastfeed both children, in tandem! I scoured back issues of *Mothering* magazine and contacted LaLeche League.



Then one morning, it happened. There was bright red blood in my panties. Despite each blot of toilet paper, I was still spotting. I counted the fingers of both hands. I was only ten weeks – less than three months along. This can't be happening!

I tried to deny it, tried to relax and pray myself okay. But in a few hours I was doubled with intense cramps and bled so much, Martin couldn't mop up the bathroom before I was back again.

He took me to the emergency room with 11-month-old Carrie and all her baby paraphernalia in tow. I sat on a plastic chair in the waiting room, a thick towel folded inside my jeans. In time, a doctor examined me and told us it was normal for a miscarriage. Normal? I was scared out of my wits! I hadn't just lost a baby tooth or grown breasts. Those are normal passages of life. I was losing my *baby*! Couldn't he give me medicine to stop the contractions and somehow block the flow of blood? But he moved on to other patients, leaving us with a nurse who explained that I should see my doctor in the morning to schedule a D&C.

"What's that?" I asked.

She explained, "It's dilatation and curettage, a dilation of the opening of the cervix under anesthesia. The doctor would use a loop-shaped knife to scrape ...."

I shivered with one of those all over shakes that chatters your teeth.

"What are you shaking for? Are you cold?" she innocently asked.

"No," I said, unable to control the shakes. "I don't know, it's just happening."

She talked more words, but I couldn't hear them. I was watching Martin in the doorway. After a long time, he'd finally gotten Carrie settled to sleep in the stroller. His body was in the room with me, but his arm rocked the stroller in the hallway outside, where it was quieter.

# NO RAIN, NO RAINBOW

By Tania Marble

*"The one thing I do know is that through everything, with patience and with love, is hope."<sup>1</sup>*

There's an old saying, "no rain, no rainbow." In my life that has meant, I have had to go through horrible and at times painful experiences before things made sense and blessings came.

My drizzle turned into a torrential downpour before I was 24 years old, but eventually, I have been able to see the rainbow in my own sky. To be blunt, I'm not sure how in the world it happened. Five years have passed since the rain began, but just three months ago I finally learned to see the blessings in my life.

In January 2006, I decided to visit my best friend in Hawaii. Since my husband, Brian, was in Iraq for the second time with the 101st Airborne Division, I figured I'd have a little fun and relieve some "deployment stress" by tanning on a beach. At first, I was a little hesitant to go because my friend just had a baby the previous year, and I would be there for her daughter's first birthday.

I felt nervous being there because I already had so much pain and aching in my heart for a baby. I didn't know if I could handle being around a baby for two weeks without feeling a little resentment. Once I saw that smiling little belle, somehow, I knew that everything was going to be alright.



As a little girl, all I wanted to be was a stay-at-home mom when I grew up. I had friends who wanted many great and ambitious careers, but I was the one who wanted to marry the man of my dreams, buy the cute

little “all American house” and have a family. Some said it was because of my strong Latter Day Saints upbringing, but I wanted to achieve my goal because I always wanted to be like my mom, my hero.

Well, things started out according to my plan. I met the man of my dreams; we fell in love and married in June of 2001. We became pregnant right away. I thought I had everything figured out. When we miscarried five weeks later, people said it was “normal” and not to be too alarmed. I was crushed, but I tried to listen to those who said it was “normal” to miscarry once or twice before a healthy pregnancy. It was nice hearing comforting words, but half the time, I really wanted everyone standing there with babies to just go home, and I hoped their babies stayed up all night crying extra loud!

My plans fell to pieces on September 11, 2001, as it did for many others. The events of September 11th sparked fervor in Brian to join the military. So a couple of months later, after I was getting over miscarriage No. 2, and some other medical issues, Brian joined the Army as a Blackhawk helicopter mechanic. I was pregnant again, but just after he left for training, I miscarried. Not having Brian there was the hardest thing. Knowing I had lost yet another baby made me feel lonely enough, but to have my husband gone for a seven-month stretch made it all the worse.

After Brian completed basic and advanced training, we received orders to move to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Sad, but true, I had to look on a map to see where the heck Kentucky was. It is actually a beautiful place, so when we arrived, we bought a cute little house and I became pregnant with our fourth baby. Five and a half weeks later, that pregnancy also ended in heartache.

I had become a desperate woman. Desperate because when I married Brian, he said he wanted eight kids. That’s how many kids were in his family, and he loved having a big family. To me, every time I lost another baby, I felt more and more like I failed Brian. I felt less and less like a woman and more like a burden to my husband. He, of course, was wonderful to me. He always knew the right things to say and do. But then he was gone. His new unit headed to Iraq. Just like that, my support, my friend, and my lover was gone for a year.

Now, I consider the time Brian was in Iraq the first time as my “irritated as hell” period. This was a “fun” time in my life where random people from social or church functions would give me their take on why I wasn’t carrying to full-term and what they thought I was doing wrong. Well, seeing how my parents tried very hard to raise me with some manners, I would usually just sit there and smile and humor whomever I was talking to, and then walk away, at times muttering choice words under my breath. Sometimes I would say that we might want to adopt later down the road after Brian applies to officer candidate school or makes a higher enlisted rank.

On one occasion, someone said it was selfish of Brian and me to put his career before having kids. My absolute “favorite” part of this period was when one woman had the audacity to say I wasn’t a worthy woman and that my husband shouldn’t be with me because I couldn’t give him children. Oh, how that comment haunted me.

One doctor thought that if I were to lose weight, hopefully my hormone levels would be high enough early on to sustain a successful pregnancy. I opted for gastric bypass surgery since losing weight has always been a struggle even after diet plans, personal trainers, and diet pills. It all went fairly smoothly. I had an excellent surgeon and I bounced back pretty quickly. From my highest weight to my lowest, I lost 120 pounds. I thought surely now I could be fit enough to have a baby, right? Yeah? No.



Brian came home from Iraq the next winter. This started the “confused as hell” period of life for me. I had yet another miscarriage, and yet another doctor told me what went wrong this time. I can remember thinking this couldn’t be my life. I was supposed to be the stay-at-home mom driving my little girl to ballet and soccer practice. My husband was going into a civilian medical career when we married, and now he was a war veteran in Kentucky, of all places!

I did everything the doctors had asked. I even just about sawed my body in half to lose weight in hopes of carrying full-term, and it still wasn’t happening. I was getting angrier at myself and at God for how

# I'M STILL A MOTHER

By Sharee Moore

*“For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith  
to be content.”<sup>1</sup>*

My husband and I were moving to Hawaii, but, I barely learned to say “aloha” before I found myself coiled in a grief so intense, I thought I’d surely have a stroke.

Within months of settling into our new home, everything that was me thudded into my lap, wrapped in a tiny lifeless bundle. We weren’t ready to face what lie ahead because, as a family, we still grappled with the sudden death of Cory, my 20-year-old brother. Cory’s passing crippled us, but when my two cousins, James and David, died less than a year later, the combined hurt crushed our spirits.

I guess some folks turn to God during times of trouble. I didn’t. Later, I found it would take more than a nice personality to get through the worst days – months – and years – of my life.



My husband, Henry, and I were positively radiant with pregnancy. We were so happy that we would now be complete. We were new to Hawaii and didn’t have a social network, let alone a spiritual one, so when I went into preterm labor in August of 2002, Henry and I clung to each other. I was only 23 weeks pregnant.

We rushed to labor and delivery, where we learned my cervix already dilated 3 centimeters. I spent five days lying head-down, while doctors pumped me full of labor-halting drugs. The magnesium sulfate burned a path through every vein and capillary in my body. Since I lay in an unnatural position, it seemed that food and my internal organs drifted

toward my throat, making it difficult to breathe or swallow. My body swelled as it held on to extra water; and I grew even more hot, nervous and hopeless. I had little to no faith that everything would work out, but felt even worse for Henry. He had to watch me suffer while he battled his own fears. I wanted to send Henry away, but I desperately needed him there.

At that point, the emotional and physical burdens of trying to preserve our son's life were driving me insane. I knew Christopher only had a 10 percent chance of survival if he were born at 24 weeks. I felt frustrated and scared, but was too delirious from the drugs to cry and when I tried to talk about the pain, my speech slurred. I had the common sense to pray for a way of escape, but it came in an unexpected form. Relief came when Christopher was born.

He was 23 weeks, 5 days and weighed only 1 pound. Every hour, our son fought for his life in the neonatal intensive care unit. While spending every moment by his side, I fought for my sanity. I prayed and cried. Prayed and cried. Then I just gave up and cried.

On Christopher's eighth day, we knew he wouldn't survive because his little organs began to fail and the skin along his chest and back began to die. The only thing that kept the hospital from pulling the plug on the ventilator were the needs of two desperate, praying parents. The staff knew all hope was lost. Our prayer at this point went from "God, save Christopher," or "Please God, take me instead," to "Please just let Christopher look at us."

That day, Christopher opened his eyes for the first time. God answered us when we were desperate for *anything*. We were crying out, "Lord just give us something to cling onto!"

When Christopher's eyes opened we knew God had heard all our prayers, He just didn't answer "yes" to each one. I don't know why, but Henry and I both had peace with that.

Ten days after his birth, Christopher released two tiny rattled breaths and died in my arms. My once lofty optimism plummeted to my feet. I wanted to smash, burn and destroy something – or someone. I hollered at God in despair, "Why not take me? How can I live when my son is

## TRIED AND TRUE STRATEGIES FOR TODAY, TOMORROW, THE FIRST YEAR AND BEYOND

The first hour

The first day

The first weeks

The first several months

What's next: What to expect when you're grieving

Pain relief: What's worked for others

The truth about grief: The real deal

Unhealthy grief: How to tell if you may need extra help

Some friendly advice: If you're a friend ... here's how  
you can help

The first year and beyond

Children and grief

### THE FIRST HOUR:

**Seek comfort.** Find the nearest person and let them hold you - whether it is your spouse, a nurse, friend, the chaplain or even the doctor. One mom recommends spending that time in prayer and deep meditation. Another mom took the phone off the hook, and took time for herself. For once, don't put others' needs ahead of your own. Do what works for you during difficult times and put words to what you need from others.

### THE FIRST DAY:

**Spend time with your baby.** Take as much time as you need to hold your baby after he or she has died. It will help transition from loving them as earthly bodies, to loving them as spirits. Take pictures, if that is an option. If your baby died in the intensive care or soon after delivery, gather every item used to care for your baby during her short life. Also, do what you can to parent your baby for the last time. You might talk to your baby, change her diaper, dress him or wrap him in a blanket. Don't try to work or drive a car or watch your other children by yourself. Find a friend or companion to be with you. Talk to a nurse about what to do about your milk coming