**Things That Were Done to My Uterus and I During My Cesarean Delivery**

Lara Henneman

I threw up all over the hospital grounds before they admitted me, the path around the parking lot, the small trash can outside the chapel. Walking will help, the nurse chided.

*This is a 31-year-old at 41 1/7 weeks gestation with non-reassuring fetal heart rate tracing and Failure to Progress.*

26 hours of drugs in a dark room, I was only a body in pain. I faded and raged in waves. Try for another hour, my husband pleaded. Five minutes later the baby’s monitor wouldn’t quit beeping and the room filled with people in an instant.

*The patient was taken to the operating room where she underwent spinal anesthesia. She was prepped and draped in the usual sterile fashion in the dorsal lithotomy position with a leftward tilt. A Primary low transverse cesarean section was performed.*

Do you want to watch the surgery? No, I didn’t. You can’t unsee your insides. After two failed epidurals, I gripped the table in terror. I already started cutting, the doctor said. A dull tugging at my organs was all I felt, shedding skin and tissue like a husk under the bright lights.

*A skin incision was made with a knife and carried down to the underlying layer of fascia. Scissors were used to extend the incision laterally and the underlying rectus muscles were separated with a combination of blunt and sharp dissection.*

Just read the chapter on c-sections, my coworker said over a Greek salad and fries. It wasn’t in my plan, so I had no idea what actually happens with them until I needed one. OK, I munched, good point, believing contentedly in the sanctity of preparation.

*A hysterotomy was performed and the infant’s head was delivered atraumatically. The shoulders and body were delivered without difficulty. The cord was doubly clamped and cut, and the infant handed off to the pediatrician, after which the placenta was extracted manually.*

I was in between. I felt the presence of many people in the room, and suddenly, another life.

*Viable male infant delivered through meconium-stained fluid at 5:33AM. Fetal weight 8 lbs. 13 ounces or 4010 grams.*

My son, my tremulous heart excised. He cried vigor out at the world; I cried relief.

*Following this, the uterus was exteriorized and cleared of all clots and debris. After closing the uterine incision in a running locked fashion, the uterus was returned to the abdomen.*

I didn’t know that they had taken it. A paralysis of loss if the return hadn’t happened. My eyes blur with tears for the Black and indigenous women sterilized against their will, given the ‘Mississippi Appendectomy.’ My womb, where I would carry my daughter next, taking for granted my natural born right to do so. A house in my body to build a child, returned to me.

*The fascial incision was closed in a running locked fashion, beginning at the left apex and ending at the right apex. The skin was closed with staples after the subcutaneous fat was found to be hemostatic. Sponge, needle, and instrument counts correct per OR staff.*

They left my husband in the birthing room, so he didn’t see his wife opened in half. Then they rushed him in to hear our son cry. He cut the umbilical cord and brought him to my head. I can’t hold him yet, you keep him safe, my shoulders bucking as the adrenaline and morphine tapered. A block in my teeth so I wouldn’t break them with gnashing. The world rushing back among waves of exhaustion.

*The patient tolerated the procedure well and went to the recovery room in stable condition.*

Finally, something I did well during this birth. A baby on my chest, his tiny, muscled arms at my side instead of inside. Finally, a beginning, a tousled head and cinnamon bun smell. His tiny mouth insistent and aware of nursing, before I knew anything. Our reunion after the cut.