

Lullaby

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The notes of a lullaby drifted through the labor and delivery ward, announcing the good news of a newborn baby. Muffled by the bustling sounds of the hospital wing, the song was missed by some. One young couple, however, heard the music clearly.



Their room was in the back of the ward, away from most of the traffic. A single solemn white rose was taped to the door. As the lullaby came to an end their eyes met for a moment.

"How are you feeling, Sarah?" John asked gently.

Sarah sighed. She did not know how she was feeling. How could she possibly express what was inside? How could she explain such a sense of loss? How could she put into words the sense that something was torn from the very center of her being? The only thing she could think of was having a beautiful dream, waking up and then feeling that dream slip away. Except this emptiness ached so much more.

"I'm okay." She looked to the window.

Sarah thought back to a day ago. She had been content. She had spent the morning making preparations for the coming weeks. Family would be flying in and finishing touches needed to be put on the nursery. She had felt the baby kicking earlier in the day so she was not concerned when he calmed down in the afternoon. Later that day Sarah and John went to a prenatal appointment at the hospital.

The doctor frowned as she moved the device around Sarah's belly. "I seem to be having a little trouble finding his heartbeat," she said. "I'd like to check an ultrasound."

The rest of the day was a blur. The ultrasound confirmed what everyone now feared and the nightmare became reality. Connor would never be born.

Sarah still had a hard time believing what had happened. While she had feared the idea of losing her child, nothing could have prepared her for what it was actually like. When they told her she would have to deliver the baby she was dumbfounded. The thought had not actually occurred to her. She had to actually deliver him? To go through the same discomfort and pain? To be greeted not with a forceful cry but a lifeless body?

"Love, what are you thinking about?" John asked.

Sarah looked at him. Throughout it all John had been a rock, but she could see the suffering in his eyes as well. She decided to be honest.

"I was thinking about yesterday. I . . . I cannot believe that we lost him. I'm trying to remember if I did something yesterday. Did I bump against the counter? Did I eat something wrong? I can't think of anything. I just . . . I just don't understand."

"You remember what the doctors said. There was nothing that you did. Nothing that you could have done to prevent it."

Nothing that I could have done. That phrase bothered Sarah. The idea of futility was maddening. Her baby died inside of her body and she could not have prevented it. She was able to grow a child for over thirty weeks. Suddenly, something just happened to go wrong?

"I remember," she replied softly.

They sat.

A quiet knock at the door broke the silence. A nurse entered. She seemed a little uncertain, her face a mixture of pity and hesitation. "Hello, Sarah, how are you feeling? Are you in any pain?"

Am I in any pain? The question echoed through Sarah's mind. With a flash of anger, she almost blurted out, "Am I in pain? What do you think?" but she stopped herself. She understood. One way the nurse could help would be to relieve her physical pain, and the nurse obviously wanted to help.

"No, I'm fine. Thank you."

"All right. Let us know if you need anything." The nurse left.

It was another common phrase that the nurse probably said all the time, but it stung Sarah. *I need my baby*, she thought. *I need to forget yesterday ever happened. I need to somehow replace this hole in my heart. I need . . . too many things that you can never get me.*

"Everyone has been so nice here,"

John remarked.

"Yeah."

"I was thinking. We need to tell our families what happened. The last I told

them was that you were getting checked over."

The thought of talking about what happened with her family overwhelmed Sarah. For reasons she could not understand, she felt ashamed. The thought of talking about it with her mother, her sister, was almost unbearable. Sarah started to cry.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Sarah." He lay next to her on the bed, and she curled up against him. "Don't worry about that right now. I can talk with them later."

"It's just so much. How do people get through something like this?"

"I don't know how. I know people do, people do get through it. I know that we have each other. I do know that."

Sarah continued to cry. She cried for her lost child. She cried for his father. She cried for all the birthdays he would never experience, all the places he would never visit, and all the friends he would never make. She cried because she would never give him a bath or hear his first word or watch him graduate. She cried because all of this had seemed certain to happen yesterday and now it was all taken away.

Down the ward there was a rush of activity. A newborn baby cried out. And then, the sounds of the lullaby drifted through the hallways.

Sarah looked towards the door. With a faint smile, she recalled the words to the lullaby she had learned long ago.

Lullaby and goodnight,
With roses bedight,
With lilies o'er spread
Is baby's wee bed.
Lay thee down now and rest,
May thy slumber be blessed.
Lay thee down now and rest,
May thy slumber be blessed.

—Brahms' Lullaby

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