LITTLE HER

by Lindsay Glenn

It is my first day of graduate school. I wake up, like any other day. The only difference is that today is the day I have to take the test. Not a test like a spelling test or some big examination, but the kind you pee on. You pee on them and wait and wait- waiting for a result that is never what you hope; but not this time. This time there were two lines, two lines right away. There was no waiting. Two lines? Wait! What does two lines mean? I search for the box. Two lines means this is it. Finally- this is finally it. This is where our journey begins.

I go and see him on Friday. I am swollen. I am not well. They check me and recheck. I am not well. They check little her and she is just fine. He is getting impatient he says. He says he is going to smoke her out very soon if she doesn’t come on her way. I convince him for a stay. I will come back Monday I say. He is working this weekend. He will be available. He will be happy as long as there is time for a round of golf. What about the weather, I say. I am changing the subject. I am moving us away from her eviction notice before he changes his mind.

On the way home we have a talk. We have a major talk. The first of what will become countless throughout her life. I talk to little her. The little girl I haven’t even met. I don’t know what she looks like. I don’t know what she will be like. The only thing I know is that she is mine. She is ours. She is a symbol. She is a symbol of something so special and sacred. She is of God.

So we talk. Time to come on your way sister, I say. That man you’ve been meeting with for months and months he says its time, I say. Better you make the decision for yourself than to let him make it for you, I say. This is the first big decision of your little life, let it be your own, I say. She doesn’t respond.

We are home. It is later that night or early the next morning. All I know is that the pains are coming. I get into the tub. It is time or is it time? I am unsure. How am I supposed to know, I think. Hours and hours go by. Timing, timing. Chores, cleaning, nesting, spending these last times together. We smile. We laugh. We try different things to make the pains come. Are they steady? Yes, no. I am unsure. I keep changing. Snacking, drinking, walking, laying around. We are outside, we are in. We are doing the most with these last few hours.

Hours and hours go by. I am getting sure. I am getting certain. The pains come and they are stronger. I am so scared. Adam says it is time to go. Going won’t change anything. I am comfortable here. Going will just mean all of this is actually happening. Going means all of this is actually real. Adam says we have to go. We say goodbye to the dogs, knowing this will be the last time just this way. We leave knowing when we come back, it and we will never be the same.

I am sitting on the bench outside. All sorts are walking by me, nurses, visitors, people. There she is, a statue. I listen to the water in the fountain. I am crying and hoping they don’t notice me and certainly don’t try to help. I am waiting. I am waiting for Adam to come. I am so scared. This journey we’ve been on is ending and a whole new one is about to begin. A new journey through uncharted territory and very unfamiliar waters. I am so scared. He comes and sits with me. We hold hands. We pray. We are both thinking that this is the last time we will ever be together like this but neither of us say a word.

Down the long hall we go, then a right turn, on the phone and through the door. As I approach them they look at me from behind the desk with skepticism as my pains return. Somehow, on this cold, rainy Saturday night we are the only ones there. I go into the room. I am suddenly stripped of my dignity and my clothes. The monitors, their tools, so much to be done. They remark about the results to see if I am staying. They don’t know and I am staying, I think.

She comes in and checks me, types so many things into the screen, entering, entering, reading the strips. I am staying she says. I say where I want to be and she says I’m right there. She says she will come back when I need her and she leaves. I can do this, I think. It is seven now.

I direct Adam to activate our tree, calling, texting. I just want silence. Adam is talking and talking. There is so much excitement for them. I am so scared. I think I want the television on, then immediately no. No sounds. We prepared for months on what we would need and now I only need silence. The pains are coming. The pains come sharper, faster, harder. I sit. I focus. I rock. I breathe. I must concentrate. I must have quiet. Then, in their absence we chat. We joke. We are supposed to be playing trivia with Father and friends. We laugh thinking they will be happy to miss us. We are sharing these last times. We silently wonder, curious about what the next hours will bring. I am so scared. Then the pains come again. Again and again they come. I watch the monitor. I can do this, I think.

More of the same. More of the same but faster, harder, sharper and still I need quiet. Adam is on the phone. They are here and want to know if it’s a good time to come back. No, I say. This is a time for you and me, our time. I need quiet. I need calm. I need to keep my balance. I knit some. I force out a row on Adam’s socks even though I don’t want to. I don’t want to knit for the first time in my life. For months I thought it would be my salvation at this time but no. I knit so I can say I worked on these while it was all happening. I knit so I can say how tough I was, like it would make any difference. I force out a row and set it aside.

It is nine now. I ask her to come back. She checks me. The result is better than I hoped. It won’t be long. I am strong. God is with me, I repeat over and over. I reflect on how Mary did this in a stable. God is with me. The pains, they come faster and faster. The pains fill my head, my body, my soul. I am checking the monitor. The strap is so tight I think. She is calling him. She is calling him to come. It won’t be long.

The pains, they come faster, harder, longer. It is as if someone is turning up the intensity with a dial. Intensity. After all those classes, all the preparing, all of the scenarios in my brain, it is now that I realize what they mean by the word. It is intense. She is lingering, preparing, getting her things ready. She is getting ready for him. All the while God is with me but I am starting to cave. I don’t think I can do this, I say. She says I can. She says I am almost done. She says it would be silly to give in now. You are almost there she says.

The pains are nearly continuous. She turns me over. Adam is by my side. Hands and knees and I am hugging a pillow. Something about the hands and knees kick this whole thing into overdrive. Intensity. It is intense. I am losing grip. I don’t think I can do this even though God is with me. I am losing my balance. Focus on your breathing she says. I focus. I try to focus. God is with me.

He walks in. Thank heavens. Help me, I say. He says he will. I am relieved only a moment because there are those pains again. I feel like I need to push I say. She wants to turn me back over. Why, I say. Because, she says. I am dying and she wants me to roll over first. I guess it makes sense. The intensity is too much. Focus on your breathing she says. She is stern now. I am so scared. I don’t know about anything else. I only know about the pain. They are all getting ready. They are all preparing. I am breathing. I am focusing on my breathing.

They are all ready. They are waiting for me now. She is to my right, Adam to my left, he is at the head of all this. She is giving instructions. He is giving instructions. They take turns, they interrupt each other. So much is being said. I am inside my head. I am trying to focus. I am trying to do everything they say the right way. Intensity, the pains and their intensity. I can’t even think enough to be scared.

I push. I guess it feels better this way, I think. I am holding my breath. I have my chin down. I am doing all the things they say. I am doing all the things we practiced. He is counting. I bear down. I feel the capillaries in my face breaking as I strain. I push. The pains, they are non-stop now. I think to myself, there is no turning back from this moment- this is it. I push. They are rooting for me. You can do it, they say. I don’t know if I can do this, I think. I have to do this, I think.

I am looking at the clock just past him. It is ten-fifteen. Maybe by ten-thirty but definitely by eleven, I think. No later than eleven, I decide. I think about Saturday Night Live. Maybe, if we were home I would still be awake and we would be watching. Now I am back. I am back to the pains, back to pushing. Back to focusing, coordinating, tucking, bearing. He is counting. They are all cheering for me. They are cheering like we are at a personal football game. I look to Adam. He smiles at me from behind my knee. God is with me, I think. Mary did this in a stable, I think. I have to do this, I think.

I push. I have been exercising for months in preparation for these moments. We prepared. We did drills. We ran scenarios. I push. Suddenly, he sits. He has a needle in hand. Will that make the contractions hurt less?, I say. He says I haven’t lost my sense of humor. I concur. He flashes the scalpel and in an instant does his handy work. Disappointment fills me. I decided that wasn’t going to happen. That wasn’t in my plan. I let the thoughts go as fast as they came upon me. I know it had to happen for this to end. At this point, I am ready for it all to be over. Again I am pushing. Again he is counting. The mood is escalating. The intensity is ratcheting higher and higher. The pain is intense. The pressure is intense. Both being something that had been described over and over by the experienced ones, but never truly understood until in that time. I push. My face is so tight. The pressure overwhelms me. I have to do this, I think.

I push. He counts. She roots. Then a loud splash. I feel a sensation of warm water on my legs. Then little her appears. Suctioning, more suctioning. I wish they wouldn’t do that, I think. Little her is crying, she is on my belly. She has lots of brown hair with a little blonde patch in the front. She looks up at me. I am relieved. Adam is proud. Joy fills the room. God is with me, I think. God is with us, I think. Our new journey begins.