

Legacy of Expectation

The monitors in their hospital room beeped indefinitely, demanding observation from time to time, despite the absence of a devoted nurse for their room.

Bill watched anxiously over his sleeping wife. Although the child was breech, Linda did not want a C-section, so the doctors allowed them just to wait it out, but only through the morning sunrise. The labor had started seven hours ago and then stalled, allowing Linda this much-needed rest.

Just like with any pregnancy, there were concerns that she was a week late. Following the previous week's false labor, Bill and Linda drove miles over bumpy roads to pick up her last paycheck, and so they feared that the ride had induced an unnatural labor. Yet here they were, waiting patiently as their stubborn namesake refused to emerge.

Hours later, it was all taking place, just before the doctor's c-Section deadline expired. Bill realized that trauma in this life could not only be measured by the lash of an encroaching belt but through the joy of seeing the growing life inside a person suddenly become alive, squirming and badly in need of wash.

This was the greatest thing that Linda had ever done. Bill could not even begin to fathom how a woman possibly achieved this culmination of physical lovemaking. The adoration he felt for her reached a new level, taking him completely by surprise.

Yet when the baby and new mother finally arrived home, she complained about feeling the postpartum depression warned about in their pregnancy classes. Bill worried that he had not done his job properly, for she did not share the joy and elation for their newborn son that dominated his thoughts. He had to do what he could to see her through it.

In the two weeks of leave that Bill's job allowed him with his new family, droves of visiting sisters, brothers, and cousins appeared to see the newborn. Soon however, these guests dwindled and Bill's time at home ended. Linda remained to care for the baby while Bill returned to the software shop demands of the phone industry.

Both Bill and Linda discovered that it was possible to exist on four hours of sleep per night, and they fell into a period of humility and education in the ways of feeding and caring for a young child. It took baby Billy six months to learn how to sleep for extended periods, with a little help from solid Gerber cereal flakes mixed into his formula, and Bill keeping the baby up well past the schedule that Linda wanted him to maintain.

Bill's hours started to lengthen as his job responsibilities increased, and Linda found herself alone in their two-bedroom apartment with the noisy child. Feeling bad about not being there through the day, Bill took control of the child responsibilities when he arrived home in the evening, affording her the opportunity to relax.

She used these opportunities once again to enjoy her isolated rum consumption.

At about nine months of age, little Billy was capable of standing in his crib, demanding to remain awake, and Bill tended to his desires at night, trying to coax him down. Linda did not intervene in his efforts, so Bill now assumed total control of the evening situation.

One late afternoon Linda sat waiting for Bill while the child napped.

She had just fed Billy his bottle and returned him to his crib, so he could sleep until his father

arrived home. Bill was slightly overdue again. He had no labs at the job to test in through the evening, so she expected him home early for once.

He called and told her he was picking up dinner for them. She sat waiting patiently at the meal table, the smoke from her cigarette floating into the air, contemplating how to break some important news to him.

The front door to the apartment slid quietly open and Bill shuffled in, attempting not to disturb the baby so that his wife and he could enjoy a private dinner together for once. He brought her a plastic bag filled with freshly hot Chinese dinner as the door slowly closed behind him.

She set down her cigarette and rose from her seat, routinely hugging her husband so that they could get to their meal and she could tell him what she wanted to.

“So what did you get?” Linda questioned as she pulled from the embrace and reclaimed her seat, reaching now for the saucy, unpackaged feast.

The baby’s cry suddenly invaded their brief moment of privacy. Bill watched Linda continue into the bag, and then she stopped, noticing that he had not yet responded to their son.

She gave him a quick glance to let him know she was busy, not yielding in her current task, and Bill looked to the baby’s room, taking her queue immediately.

He walked into Billy’s room and moments later returned with the gurgling youngster, setting him down on the floor near them so he could crawl about while Bill and Linda dined. Bill closed the two bedroom doors and the bathroom door, so that Billy could not venture far from them, remaining in their sight.

“I’m going back to work,” Linda announced as she began to devour steaming Chinese noodles from their white boxed container.

Bill took a second to swallow the forkful of rice just stuffed into his mouth, and then turned back to her.

“What do you mean, you’re going back to work?” he argued. “Who is going to care for Billy?”

“I found someone to watch him during the day,” she said, revealing her well-organized arrangement. “You drop him off in the morning and I pick him up at four.”

This was not part of the plan. Bill lamented silently. Little Billy was not even a year of age. How could she shirk her duties this way?