

This story begins with a name. That of which I'd heard when I was a little girl. Unfortunately, I was never able to meet the bearer of this name because she died before I was born. Afton was her name. She was the deceased wife of my step great-grandfather. Throughout the years it had always been in the back of my mind as one of the most beautiful names I'd ever come across. Years later when I found out I was pregnant with a baby girl, I just knew THIS would be her name. It also helped that she was conceived right outside the small town of Afton, Wyoming.

Once I became pregnant with her I knew the fetus was a "her" because I felt so different than I had with my son. My morning sickness was worse, my body temperature was not quite as high, and I didn't feel any surges of anger and frustration like I had with all the extra testosterone coursing through my veins from a baby boy. My pregnancy was smooth, easy going, and calm.

When I was three months pregnant with Afton I decided it would be best for my little family and I to go-it-alone. My 15-month-old son and I moved in to our own two-bedroom apartment and made a new home for ourselves. As the weeks went on we savored our mommy and me time, but also enjoyed creating a special space for our new little partner-in-crime to join us on the outside world.

As with my first pregnancy, I had decided I would have my baby girl at home, in the loving care of my midwives and birth assistants. On the early morning of February 24 at 2:45, I awoke to the loudest sound I'd ever felt. This was not a sound audible to any ear, it was only audible to my body, and all the water, muscle mass, and tissue inside it. With a "POP" my water had broken,

and I was unable to move just yet, as I was experiencing a very real, very strong birth wave consuming my entire body.

Once the wave was over I ran to the bathroom to allow the rest of my 'waters' to expel in the toilet – my water had also broken with my son, so I knew to expect more amniotic fluid to leave my body. As I was on the toilet I called my midwife to let her know my water had broken. As we had done during my birthing time from before, she had advised me to call her when my birthing waves were stronger, and closer together. After our conversation I felt better and commenced to preparing for my baby. I braided my hair, and then went to my bed to begin preparing it for birth. I rearranged little pieces of furniture in my bedroom here and there to clear the path for my midwife and birth assistant. My mother, who was in town from Florida, was asleep with my son in the other room.

Again, another very real, very strong birth wave hit my body. I stood by my bed, holding it with my hands for support. Breathing, breathing, that one was fierce. At this point it had been 30 minutes since my water broke, so I decided to wake my mom to let her know it was "go" time. She hurried out of bed and asked what she could do to help me. I told her to call my aunt and cousin to come help in case my son woke up. One minute later another wave began to travel through my body – this was the strongest yet. I thought to myself, "can I do this again? Can I do this unmedicated, again?!?! Breathe, breathe in white light, blue light, pink light, just breathe!". This time I laid on my bed, clenching my fists, moaning to my mother, and telling her to get off the phone because I needed her beside me to hold my hand. At this point she began timing my birth wave. RELIEF! It was over. My mother said that one lasted for eight minutes, and insisted we call the midwife ASAP.

We called the midwife, and she was at the ready, as she was waiting for my call anyhow. Since things were happening so quickly, and it had only been one hour since my water had broken, my midwife suggested I also call the other midwife who lived closer in proximity, just in case. Now they were both on their way. At this time another birth wave had begun, so I told my mother to go move my car from my designated parking spot, and park it on the grass, so that either midwife could easily park in my spot and rush inside – the guest parking in the apartment complex was nil. My mother was hesitant to leave me alone, but I insisted she move the car for ease of access for my caregivers. As my mother was leaving I told her I needed to use the restroom and would be fine – she'd only be gone for a few minutes.

This is where I struggle for the right words in the story. What happened next felt nothing short of a miracle. I sat on the toilet thinking to rest...suddenly, I felt an uncontrollable urge to push. I knew exactly what this was! I thought to myself, “no, not yet, not yet!” I felt an enormous amount of pressure in my pelvis. I got up to a mid-standing position and reached my hand down to see if I could feel my baby's head inside my body – she was about two inches away from crowning. At that moment something inside of me took over. Calm as can be I told myself, “ok this is it. You and your baby are doing this right now.” The uncontrollable urge to push came over me again. This time I reached down and felt the top of her head. It was warm, soft, and wrinkly. I stroked the top of her little head and marveled at the delicate feel of her hair. Last time - the urge to push and I was ready. There she was in my arms! She let out the tiniest of peeps. I sat down and immediately took her to my chest for warmth and comfort. I could feel her sweet little body breathing, and I was of nothing. She and I sat there on that toilet together, still as can be, enchanted in that moment.

Not a minute later I hear my front door open. I say, “moooooom can you come here please?” She calmly rounds the corner, turns to see me and my baby sitting on the toilet, and exclaims, “Oh my god. What should I do? Oh my god!” I tell her to call the midwife, tell her what has transpired, and that everything is ok. She calls, the conversation ends, and I have now been advised to shuffle back to my bed with baby in arms, get under towels and lots of blankets, and await their impending arrival.

Both my midwives arrive within five minutes of Afton’s birth. They swoop in like mother geese with their tender love and care. One hurriedly throws towel into the clothes dryer which will be used to warm Afton, while the other tends to me and baby. Not too long after the midwives arrive my aunt and cousin arrive. They are both marveled when they learn of Afton’s birth story, as is everyone else who has heard it since.

My sweet Afton was born at 3:56 A.M., only one hour and 46 minutes after my water broke. The hours, days, and even weeks after her birth I was in a slight state of shock at the extraordinary events that occurred that morning. Looking back on it now is almost like a vague dream. She will always be my miracle baby, for what she and I did together was miraculous.

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