

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

7lbs something

by Victoria Cooper

Her first started at 8.00 in the morning and the thrill of anticipation battled within her as the ripple of a contraction shuddered inside. It took 24 hours of waiting, pacing, puffing and swearing and then pinching. She pinched a midwife and she liked it. She felt she had endured more pain than a human was capable of. Her shock of its existence and that it had been there all along was as great as the outer edges of the meandering bodily sensations that took her breath away. She arrived with fat ankles and an oversized pink sweat shirt but evolved to wailing beast, spitting, snarling and lashing out at others as the pendulum of pain and saccharine relief swung backwards and forwards. So yes, she pinched, she howled and she wept. Her tears flowing like the passing of a life into death, birth though ending in 2 is the loneliest place for 1.

For the second one she held on. She held on as she was 1 of 3 and the stranglehold of an unhappy marriage compelled her to. She held on for the one who had come before. She breathed and counted and for him alone. 1, 2, 3, 4 under her breath on the trip of calm, quiet and at 7.00am her ex-husband praising her timing of broken waters made her hate him just a little bit more as her knuckles whitened on the sides of the seat.

Tea and toast at 10.00am and a baby one hour later. No punches, no pinches. The familiar waves of dipping in and out of life with each breath. That wash as her body disconnected and returned as a vehicle of production, when released she looked down at this pink squirming animal and knew she would leave his father for him.

Number 3 and at 43 years old she was classified geriatric. She was ridiculous, a liability and she was making life difficult for herself. She did not understand this transition; all life is difficult; at least her life was now happy. The numbers were paramount: 1 in 5 miscarriage statistic before 12 weeks now became 2 in 5. The abnormality fear now 1 in 19 not 1 in 200. She felt ashamed and stupid. What madness had grown in her head while a body had been growing inside hers?

The last and bloody child crowned at 7.00am on the 1st day of June. They had waited all night in the dimmed lights of a labour suite. They had held hands and whispered to each other as lovers in a secret tryst. He with excitement of the spectacle about to unfold, her with the dread of revisiting terror through gates that had to be traveled.

Holding the hands of the one you love connect the dying to the living. The feather touch of fingers fuse between two as life passes between them. The journey is well trodden but there are no passengers for death or birth. One always has to proceed alone.