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Lifeline

by Candida Lloyd

The lifeline which runs from your index finger down to the base of your thumb has tiny creases and cracks which represent significant life events - illnesses and relationships. Mine has a scar cutting right across it where the knife went through my hand and poked out the other side.

That was the day David saw my name light up his phone and knew immediately it was the call he feared. We had already prepared by practising the fastest route to the hospital and packed an emergency bag, which sat by the front door.

The streets surrounding our North London flat had seemed more hostile and smelled of dogshit in a way I hadn't noticed before. They were crowded with people in a hurry - never smiling or making eye contact. And everyone drove with such aggression - or was it something I just hadn't been aware of? The pace of my life had slowed, spending the last two weeks balanced on an exercise ball watching daytime TV afraid to go anywhere in case something might happen. Simultaneously dreading it and wanting it, so it would be over.

But that sunny day I ventured the safe distance to the greengrocers for something tempting to eat - I was always hungry. The display of produce spilled out on to the pavement and I lingered, fondling velvety apricots and giant waxy lemons. A waft of coriander brought on a wave of nausea which was quickly replaced by ravenous hunger. I filled my basket and then hastened back up the hill perspiring - heart pounding and breathing heavily all the way.

At home in the kitchen I searched the brown paper grocery bags for something instantly edible and then holding the pregnant bulge of an avocado in my palm I sliced it in half and jabbed at the stone with the tip of the knife to remove it. The blade slipped and went right through my hand.

Later, an A&E nurse bandaged my hand and David joked, “you know, Freud said there’s no such thing as an accident. I think you were determined to make it into hospital on this, your due date, one way or another.”

The nurse smiled and added, “next time try coming in via the maternity ward.”