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1 An Inauspicious Beginning

Dr. Fairfield is putting together a case study on me, so she's asked that I write down my experiences on my numerous pregnancies. I'm not sure why I didn't take the initiative on this one – it's a great story and I tend to have a bit of time on my hands. But I'm writing it now and posting it here. Maybe some of you will like it.

My first pregnancy started the week of my 16th birthday. I hadn't been particularly interested in boys – or girls – before then. Sure, I thought Johnny Bloome and Hugh de Caprio

were hot, but so did every girl at my high school. There were some boys at school I thought were cute, but I didn't know how to flirt or make myself super attractive like so many other girls excelled at doing. I've been looking through some old pictures of myself. I wasn't ugly, but I wasn't beautiful, either. I was short – still am – and fairly undeveloped. My hair's always been an unruly, uninspired brown. My teeth are a little crooked but never bad enough to need braces. Freckles, shallow dimples, fair skinned, on the scrawny side: there wasn't anything that really drew the eye. Apart from having hair longer than most boys, the only thing that really distinguished me from the bully-bait boys were my hips, which started to develop by the end of my freshman year. No butt or bust to speak of, just a scrawny girl with a little sideways flair.

I was pretty cheerful, I guess. Not like cheerleader-look-at-me cheerful, just usually smiling. I liked sewing and reading. I used to play soccer in the fall until I joined the marching band. Some of my friends were worried about when they'd get their first kiss, but I honestly wasn't. I figured it would happen when it would happen.

The reason I'm laying out my personality and looks like this is to show everyone just how unlike me that night was. Even now, understanding everything I've learned, I'm still pretty embarrassed by how I first became pregnant.

Starting on my birthday – Valentine's day, which happened to be a Monday that year – I remember feeling weird. Not sick, not emotional, and not like anything I'd felt before. I was tingly and flushed all the time and my stomach was churning, but not in a nausea way. My parents don't remember me telling them about it and I don't recall talking about it with anyone else, but that entire week I was off, distracted by that unsettling feeling.

The Friday after my birthday I was playing in the pep band for the quarter finals basketball game. The whole school was on fire about our chance to win state. As a rule, the Rust Belt is big about basketball, but as anyone from Indiana will tell you, we Hoosiers are the biggest fans you'll ever find for basketball on every level. The stands were packed, everyone on their feet, and I was mostly able to distract myself from that weird feeling unless someone jostled me. Then it made me almost faint with intensity.

We won the game and everybody was celebrating. Most of us band geeks decided to go out to a diner to keep the party going. Feeling weird still, I put away my uniform and clarinet a lot slower than everyone else. My friends were going to wait for me but I told them I'd meet them there. The last person in our section besides me was – and I'm changing his name to protect his privacy – Steven, our section leader.

Steven was a meticulous guy. He kept the rules and got good grades. It made him good at herding the lot of us. It wasn't unusual for him to double check everything after we finished a show, which I'm sure I knew. I don't remember doing a lot of actual thinking that night or I'd say I planned to be alone with him.

When everyone else had left – I'm not sure why the band teacher trusted his section leaders enough to leave them to lock up – I hugged him from behind. He was confused when I started grabbing his crotch and yanking off his belt. It took him a bit to process what I was

doing, but once he did he grabbed my chest and looked me in the eye. I don't know what he saw there, but he became a pretty willing participant at that point.

Some of the details get a little fuzzy here and some others are a bit too personal. Suffice it to say that I had my way with him extensively. I was a woman possessed and he barely hung on for the ride. He enjoyed it enough to fire a couple times, but from how he acted after I think I freaked him out.

We didn't talk much after the deed. I think I nodded off a little and he left while I did. When I could think coherently I was mortified. I walked home – we lived close and it was a safe neighborhood – and told my parents I wasn't feeling too well and had spent the time after the game on the toilet. I remember my dad mumbling something about nachos, but mostly that was that.

The next week we played – and lost – the state semifinals. By unspoken agreement Steven and I stayed on opposite sides of our bench. I couldn't believe that I'd practically forced a guy to have sex with me. For his part, I think he hoped it wouldn't impact his college plans. I don't remember any strange looks or whispering at that point, so I don't think he told anyone about us.

The next month I missed my period.

I freaked out a bit. It's unusual for girls that age and size to have super regular periods, but mine had been monthly for most of the time since it started for me at 14. The pamphlets and anatomy textbooks I looked through told me women could get pregnant their first time. My parents had gone through the basics of sex with me before I started high school, but I hadn't paid much attention because it was so far from my mind.

I got my hands on a pregnancy test from a store on the far side of town. It was mortifying to buy a six-pack of Sierra Dew and a box of pregnancy tests from a guy not much older than me. He looked down at the box for a long second, then up at me, slow understanding dawning on him. I shot him a glare and he looked away, silently checking out my purchase and handing me my change.

To take the test, I chugged the soda then went to another store to use their bathroom. After waiting an eternity and a half, the little stick showed up positive. I took another to be sure.

My relationship with my parents suffered a little when I became a teenager. I didn't think they'd react well to my new condition. To their credit, when they eventually found out they were upset but generally supportive. At the time, however, I was convinced they'd kill me. I wouldn't acknowledge that they'd eventually notice on their own.

I decided to simply hide my pregnancy. As it was March and still cold, hiding was pretty easy at first. My wardrobe was mostly baggy clothes I could move freely in. Jeans became tighter, but baggy t-shirts and jackets took care of that. Then the jeans became much tighter. I

didn't know the hairband trick yet, so I would keep them unbuckled under a belt. That worked for a while, but after the third time I found my zipper down in public I knew I was in trouble.

It was late April, maybe early May, when I overheard my parents talking about how hard some people at church were trying to have a baby. I had considered abortion, but I didn't think I could go through with it. Any thought about raising a baby made me panic. Adoption seemed like the way to go, but I had no idea how to go about giving a baby away. Hearing someone wanted a baby was like a declaration from heaven telling me what to do next.

By the way, I don't go to church anymore. It's not because I'm atheist or anything. Most of the best people I've ever known have been church going people. I rarely attend because there are a LOT of judgy people there and for some reason nobody stops them from saying whatever the hell they want. It's easier for me and everyone else if I don't attend Sunday services, though I do go in to talk with my minister on occasion.

I thought up some excuse to use the car the next Saturday and drove over to the Thomas's house. I asked about their issues and they almost turned me away at the door. That's when I opened my jacket and pulled my shirt tight. Even at just over two months I was showing.

They invited me in and let me blubber all over them for a bit. Mr. Thomas – the one who was ready to slam the door on me – was mostly just stunned by the whole thing. He sat there kind of awkwardly until his wife asked him to get me some water. Eventually he gave me water, lemonade, cookies, a sandwich, chips, and offered a few more things. Men can be so dense and clueless sometimes, but once pointed in the right direction they can be productive and sweet.

Mrs. Thomas was an angel. The topic was rough for her. I found out they were fairly strapped for cash after the latest fertility treatment failed and were starting to despair of having any kids. She was and is a kind-hearted woman with patience, honesty, and genuine compassion. She listened to my story and all the fears and embarrassment I felt. She didn't judge; just listened and empathized. I could tell pretty quickly that she'd be a much better mom than me.

Thankfully, they'd looked a bit into adoption. Apparently that was nearly as expensive of a process as fertility treatments. It hadn't felt right to them. She hinted that maybe they'd been waiting for me. I might have been reading into it, but Mr. Thomas didn't seem to share her belief. They told me they needed to talk about it, but no matter what they'd help me deal with the situation I'd gotten into. I went home feeling hopeful.

It was a week before they called me and told me they'd adopt my baby. During that time, I not only went through a growth spurt, but we experienced a minor heatwave. I hadn't had much morning sickness, I had always been a little mercurial in my moods, and as a teenager I ate a bunch anyway so the biggest clue was still my belly. I felt like I was big for how long I'd been pregnant, but unlike now I really wasn't familiar with pregnancy. Looking back I'm sure not only my parents but my friends knew something was up, but at the time I was sure I hadn't been

discovered yet. I was paranoid about slipping up and letting the world know, but for the moment the secret was between me and the Thomas's.

I can't remember how I ever got around without a cell phone, but I didn't have one then so they called our house number. My dad answered. Mrs. Thomas was observant enough to guess I hadn't told them yet, so she simply asked if I'd decided to do that favor for them. The phone was in the kitchen and I slipped in shortly after he answered. He asked me what the favor was, telling me they wanted to accept my offer.

I broke down in tears at the news. My dad hung up and asked me what the matter was. I told him I wanted to talk to him and mom. We all sat down at the kitchen table and I told them I was pregnant.

They were surprised, but not as shocked as I expected they'd be. They admitted I'd been a bit off for a while. My mom, well, she was flustered and 'not a little disappointed you didn't just tell us', and my dad was his usual rumbly thundercloud of constipated thinking. I asked them what they thought of me.

'Of course we're disappointed in you, but it's also just so surprising as you haven't even had a boyfriend.'

'We still love you.'

'Of course we still love you: you're our little angel.'

'Who's the father?'

That's when the conversation got hard again. I hadn't planned on telling them all the details, but after so long hiding the truth it sort of all spilled out. They kind-of knew Steven and agreed he didn't seem like the irresponsible type. They didn't think I could have forced him to do anything – 'Dear you're just a little twig' – but I was adamant that he hadn't forced me. I don't think they even understood how incredibly out of control I was that night, how even if he'd tried to get away I would have simply run him down and wrapped my legs around his waist until I squeezed every last little swimmer out. I think they understand better now, after a couple other experiences, but that's getting ahead of the story.

** * **

Leanne paused at her keyboard as her phone rang. She checked the screen and answered.

"Dr. Fairfield, how are you?"

"Doing well, Ms. Valens. I hope it's not a bad time."

Leanne checked the time. It was well after business hours, which was odd. Dr. Fairfield rarely called after four unless there was something hinkey.

“No, not at all.”

“Good. I just received a request from a couple and I wanted to talk to you before giving them a definitive answer.”

Her hand went down to her abdomen, which for the moment was relatively flat. Seven weeks post birth for most women would barely be out of the post-natal period where sexual activity was not only dangerous but largely unpleasant, but Leanne had never been normal when it came to pregnancy. In a month she would have another untamable Urge to breed. It had become her policy to be inseminated within two months after the previous pregnancy ended to avoid rape charges.

Dr. Fairfield went on. “This couple’s situation is a bit novel for us, and I understand if you’d prefer to pass, but you’re their most likely chance at having children of their own.”

“Tell me something I don’t know,” she said, smiling.

“They’re ogres.”

Leanne frowned. “So this is someone from your husband’s field of expertise?”

“Obviously,” she replied. “It’s a tribal chief and they need to forge an alliance through a child, or something like that. Hank was rushed when he called just now. I’m sure you could carry one to term, but...”

“But since when have I only carried one?”

There was silence on the line. Leanne had signed up for a few exotic surrogacy gigs in addition to the normal, human surrogacies that she paid many of her bills with. They all had their challenges, but she was superhumanly good at being pregnant. She’d been told she might have something supernatural in her ancestry. The general consensus was something fey. Hank Fairfield was an arcane scholar – most of the world simply thought of him as an anthropologist – and his wife Jill was a surrogacy specialist. Their lines of work hadn’t crossed until they’d met Leanne.

“So how big are ogres?”

“Only about eight feet tall, but on average around seven hundred pounds. Hank tells me the couple are above average.”

Leanne leaned back and whistled. She was going to get big.

“I’ll probably end up doing it, but I’d like to meet them first.”

“Of course.”

They chatted a little longer, but Leanne’s mind was elsewhere. Years ago she’d set an official record for the number of human babies carried to forty weeks alive – an even dozen – but she knew she could go further. In fact, her personal, secret record was twenty-five – at least for human babies. Some of her off-the-books occult pregnancies had been even more straining and bizarre. Her body wanted – no, needed – her to be almost continually pregnant. At first it had been astonishing in the worst way, but over time became more mundane.

However, it had always filled a little void in her. At times like this when she wasn’t pregnant she enjoyed the weight off her legs and the increased mobility and clothing options, but those joys faded as the sensation of emptiness became more and more acute. She enjoyed being pregnant; enjoyed the way it filled her and changed her.

After hanging up, she stared at her monitor for a minute. Then with a wicked smile, she resumed typing.

* * *

Yes, that’s getting WAY ahead in the story.

2 A Hard Talk

My parents insisted we talk to the father and his parents. By that point I was almost four months pregnant. With how waifish I was, it was hard to hide how unexpectedly big I was getting. There were probably some whispers around school at this point, but I hadn’t heard anything definitive. At any rate, the secret was up and even though I wasn’t keen on any more tough talks, I thought Steven should know.

I managed to get my parents to talk with the Thomas’s first. By this point both Mr. and Mrs. Thomas were on board and excited to adopt my baby – we didn’t know I was having twins yet – and this really mollified my parents. Heck, I felt like I’d taken a sousaphone off my very narrow shoulders.

The next day, my parents dragged me over to see Steven and his parents. I remember wearing my bulkiest jacket despite the unseasonably hot temperature. His parents invited us in, confusion evident in their mannerisms. They’d met at band functions, but otherwise didn’t know each other, which I still can’t decide if that made everything more or less awkward.

When Steven came down to meet us, it took him about one second after seeing me to turn green and run from the room. His mom followed to chastise him for his bad manners, but after the retching sounds from the bathroom she came back looking a little ill herself.

And we hadn't even told them the news yet.

My dad insisted we wait until Steven could join us. Once we were all seated, he had me tell the news my way.

I intended to say, "I'm pregnant. Steven's the dad, but it's not his fault." Nobody heard it the first time, so I said it again, louder. Before I could say it wasn't his fault, his dad blew up at him. He called him a lot of bad things, but the highlights amounted to 'screw-up', 'embarrassment', and 'irresponsible' once you took out the expletives. His mom was shooting daggers at him. I was suddenly quite thankful for my parent's more measured reaction.

"IT WASN'T HIS FAULT!"

I think I was at least as surprised as everyone else that I said that, especially so forcefully. Of course, once everyone was quiet and looking at me I couldn't just stop talking.

*"He didn't start it: I did. He didn't force me: I forced him. I don't know what kind of hormonal ****storm made me do it but it was me, not him."*

I looked over at him. He wasn't a bad looking guy, but between his dad's shouting, his own fear and guilt, and my sudden outburst he looked more like a kid trying hard not to cry. He might have been older than me, but I found I was feeling very protective of him at that time. Motherly, even.

"I'm giving it up for adoption," I told him. "There's a nice couple my parents know who haven't been able to have kids of their own. They'll be better parents than we could be, so go to college and leave this –" I pointed to my bump, which was no longer hidden by the folds of my coat – to them."

I looked around the room. His mom was shocked, his dad was resentful, and my parents simply looked surprised. I started feeling stupid at that point, but I had one last thing to say.

"I'm sorry I did that to you," I told Steven. I said it while looking at the ground, but I'm sure he could hear me. I sat back down.

My mom and his mom talked quietly for a bit. Our dads mostly just scowled at each other. Steven and I intermittently made eye contact. I think he felt a little embarrassed about me sticking up for him like that. Even so, he was definitely relieved.

I haven't talked to him much since then, but he did tell me later that the adoption saved his life. We follow each other on social media, but we never tried to date or anything. I think he forgave me, but the sort of powerlessness that comes from ... I don't want to say it was rape, but it wasn't quite consensual. Anyway, he went on to become a prosecutor. He made his name putting rapists away in cases light on forensic evidence. I really hope he's happy with life.

After we left, my parents took us out for ice cream. We talked about some logistics for the next few months – how they wanted to get me clothes that fit without seeming to reward my behavior and that we'd use our insurance for the birth at the hospital and all the doctor's appointments we'd have to make. Practical sorts of things. It didn't occur to me until later, but before that day all our talks had been about what I'd done. After meeting with Steven's family, it was all about what we'd do moving forward. They were sooo supportive from that point on.

I also had a short talk with my band teacher. My due date was at the end of the marching band season. I expressed worry about uniforms and marching technique and said it would be best for everyone if I didn't return in the fall. He agreed and made a bit of a show of saying the band would miss me and I should continue playing on my own. Neither of us mentioned the social factor and all the issues that were already cropping up. I'm sure he was relieved not to have all the drama on his hands, regardless of how much or little he meant what he said.

My daily routine pretty much stayed the same for the last few weeks of school, but how I was treated at school began to change. I wasn't as good about hiding the changes in my body as the weather continued to get hotter, but then it wasn't a secret anymore. I wouldn't have expected that change to be bigger than my middle.

People began approaching me then. Girls would ask who the lucky guy was, boys would make passes at me or act like I had the plague. It wasn't fun, but I mostly could just ignore it.

It was different with my friends. When the first one asked me directly, I answered honestly. Shortly after that, all of them were making excuses to stay away. Not long after, they stopped with the pretense of excuses.

Just writing that brings back the tears.

I spent more and more time alone. Straight to school and straight home went from my general rule to my absolute doctrine. Sitting in the corner of the classroom was good enough if I focused hard on the lesson. (Interestingly, after taking a slight dive when I found out I was pregnant, my grades went even higher than before when it became common knowledge.)

Lunch was the most awkward time. No one wanted to be seen sitting with me, but people also wanted to be close enough to stare. I started going to the library, but the librarian kicked me out because I started eating near her books. Then I went to obscure hallways to sit. As it became harder to sit on the floor comfortably, I had to switch again. That led me to the theater department and Lidia.

I've enjoyed needlework for most of my life. We did a craft in elementary school and I found out I had a bit of a knack for it. It hadn't become a major hobby yet, but I'd done a couple projects and knew my way around a sewing machine. I forget how I stumbled onto the knowledge that the theater department needed to fix some costumes, but I volunteered to help during lunches.

Lidia was the stage manager. Unlike the kids who were on stage, she was no nonsense. Drama nerds have a reputation for being flamboyantly chatty. Not Lidia. She was always about decisive action. When she was prepping for a production her mouth could run a mile a minute, but she didn't talk to be heard. She talked to communicate. As a rule, she only cared if a person could do their job. I found that out on my first day working with her.

I walked – I maintain that I was NOT waddling yet – into the drama room during lunch and asked the first person I saw where I could start sewing. She looked me up and down, pausing of course in the middle, and said I should talk to Lidia. I asked who that was and she pointed to this tall, dark, bottle-blonde teen with a clipboard giving instructions to two other students.

When she finished, I walked up to her. "I heard you needed some sewing done."

She looked me over. "Our lead ripped his crotch out while goofing off after the last show. Can you patch that up and keep it neat before Thursday night?"

I nodded in confirmation.

Lidia walked away briskly and waved for me to follow. I had to run a few steps to catch up. She led me to a desk in the corner where a cookie tin (you know the one) sat beside a pile of clothes. On top were a pair of Shakspearean hose with a very obvious tear about four inches long on the upper inner seam.

"The home ec teacher volunteers her machines for the big stuff, but we do a lot of patch work here. Our last seamstress has senioritis. You aren't going to flake on me, are you?"

I was a little miffed that she'd ask someone who walked up to volunteer to help her out of a tight spot if they'd be flakey, but I remembered how uncomfortable sitting on the hallway floor was becoming. "I don't flake."

The smile she gave me was interesting. It had both approval and a challenge in it. I've seen her give that particular smile on other occasions, to me and others, and it's something of a trademark for her. She's a natural leader, challenging people to do their best and organizing talent into productive forms.

I sat and didn't do more than munch on my meal while I worked my needle through the fabric. The next show was a couple days later, and by then I'd finished the pants and sewn on a few buttons for a shirt. The school year was practically over and I only got to eat a few lunches in that sanctuary, but the experience set the stage for the rest of high school.

One notable disruption to my new routine was my first OB appointment. It was an overwhelmingly negative experience.

First off, if I had a nickel for every dirty look I've received in an OB's waiting room I could have retired as a teenager. Secondly, as someone who has had relatively little sex in her life –

despite being almost constantly pregnant – I'm understandably uncomfortable with people poking and prodding my genitals. Third, my first doctor was an old crotchety guy with no filter and a highly judgmental attitude. I think it's self-evident why I do not enjoy nor look forward to doctor's appointments. (Jill, if you're reading this, understand that you're the exception.)

I'm keeping this brief as you wouldn't relish the details any more than I appreciated the experience. My mom deflected some of the bleh, but she was dealing with her own embarrassment.

Anyway, after a big prodding session, a longer lecture about responsibility, and a sonogram he announced I was having twins. That explained my size, but the news was still quite jolting. When we told the Thomas's they were also surprised, though that turned to joy pretty quick. Before they learned about their infertility issues they'd had dreams of a large family. They ended up being thrilled, and I was secretly excited as well. I didn't understand why, but the thought of getting extra pregnant was appealing – not that I said anything out loud.

Before the end of the year, I was pulled out of standard PE classes. My 'fragile condition' meant I wasn't allowed to do activities like dodgeball or the mile run, which I could still beat a lot of other students in. I was told that until after I gave birth I'd be doing modified physical activities. That turned out to be a bunch of low impact calisthenics, which I found repetitive, but had the added effect of me not needing to use the lockers at the same time as the other girls so I didn't complain.

Soon enough, it was summer vacation. At home I didn't bother covering up in overly hot coats. My parents tried to split the difference between keeping me in fitting clothes and not rewarding me with a new wardrobe. I ended up with semi-fitting thrift store purchases and hand-me-downs from my mom. I occasionally wore some of my older clothes that stretched – basketball shorts, worn out tank tops, sweats – but those became less and less effective as my tum grew. It was kind of fitting that we covered U.S. history that year, because my belly was manifesting its destiny in an expansive way.

With no friends and no desire to be gawked at, I had a lot of unstructured free time at home. While I spent increasing amounts of time eating and trying to stay cool, the boredom eventually forced me to start thinking about my future. In addition to getting more serious about my studies, I spent a fair bit of time improving my skill with sewing and related crafts. In addition to really enjoying my lunches with the drama crowd, I figured it was a life skill I could use even if I bloated to be as big as a whale. By the end of the summer I had adjusted several outfits (admittedly with mixed results, but hey – I didn't have the experience I do now) and even knit a bikini for myself to wear in our little kiddie pool. That yarn didn't age well with all the water exposure, but I felt pretty accomplished.

My mom told me some of the ways she stayed healthy when she was pregnant with me. Pregnant women are supposed to gain something like forty pounds – closer to sixty with twins – so I got to eat almost anything I wanted. Not gonna lie, that was pretty sweet, especially since I didn't have much nausea. She introduced me to prenatal yoga, which I only took to slowly.

Since then I've moved to swimming and working out with resistance bands, but I still know some of the positions and forms she taught me that summer.

At the time, I didn't understand this, but I LOVE the way I look pregnant. Sure, the belly gets in the way and I can't do a bunch of things other people take for granted and towards the end of the third trimester my joints tend to get pretty sore. I don't deny those are all downsides to the way I've lived my life. However, the absolutely full feeling I get when my abs are pulled taut over my bustling womb is heaven. The way all of me turns into sensual curves, the veins that show blue through my skin, the engorgement of my breasts as my milk comes in, the widening of my hips with each birth, the glow to my hair and skin, the way clothes have to stretch to accommodate my growth – I feel sexy and alive and fulfilled. (I'll admit, sometimes I'm a bit self-conscious about my appearance. That's less from what I think of myself and more of my reaction to how other people think I look.) It was several pregnancies before I fully admitted it to myself and even longer before I voiced this to anyone else, but I really, reeally, REALLY love being pregnant! One of the most common primitive goddess themes in ancient cultures from across the globe is that of the fertile mother. I understand why. Life is a pretty amazing thing, but to be the one creating it is to touch the divine.

Over the summer I grew bigger. My chest bumped up from an A cup to a B. My stomach grew from grapefruit to watermelon size. The bigger I grew, the more this little giggling flame grew inside me. I wasn't happy with some of the side effects my pregnancy brought me, but from then on I was never unhappy with being pregnant.

That said, I was nervous as school started up again. By that point only maternity wear could let me meet the dress code. There wasn't any hiding my bump. It wouldn't be rumors at school – it would be facts plain as day. I was going to be a teenage mom. This was before those reality shows about pregnant teens, making it seem cool. The weight of the impending social ostracism made me consider homeschooling, but my parents wouldn't go for it. Since I made this bed I was going to have to lie in it.

As I mentioned earlier, my parents were supportive. My mom went into nesting mode with me, though I could occasionally tell she was miffed about becoming a grandmother so young. It was my dad, though, that really helped me start school again with confidence.

I'd come back from shopping with my mom earlier and I'd gotten a bunch of sour looks from other shoppers. My mood was definitely dark and only souring as I contemplated the coming school year.

My dad came through the door like he always does after work: not waiting to get to his bedroom to take off his tie. He once told me he thought of it as a slave collar sometimes. I certainly don't see him wear one when he can get away with not doing so.

Anyway, he walked in and saw me moping at the kitchen table. I think I was eating a bowl of ice cream or something, because when he first walked over I thought he might serve himself up. Instead he asked me if I was okay.

I was more than a little upset and worried, because normally I can paste a smile on when I need to. I couldn't make myself smile almost at all. I'm sure he saw right through it. He sat down next to me and just sat there for a bit. I looked over at him occasionally, but mostly I spooned food in my mouth with all the enthusiasm of a condemned prisoner.

"Scared for school?"

I shrugged in response.

He leaned down to my eye level and I made myself meet his gaze.

"The best way to conquer fear is to laugh in its face."

I'm pretty sure I rolled my eyes at that point, but he continued. "Yeah, I've been the odd kid out before. It wasn't fun for me and I doubt your classmates are going to let you have an easy time of it. You're marked as 'different' now and they won't let you forget it. The only way out is through, so own different. Take their contempt and shove it back down their throats."

It started off sounding like fortune cookie wisdom to me, but with how much force he put behind his words I couldn't help but listen attentively.

He reached out and took my hand. "You're strong, smart, and beautiful; show the world. Even if those idiots can't see it, at least you'll be reminding yourself."

I kind of nodded and returned to my ice cream. He sat there a moment longer, then headed off to change out of his suit. We didn't talk for the rest of the day and like a typical teenager I was ready to write him off. Thing was, I couldn't forget what he said. I was sure his advice was crap and that he had no idea what I was going through, but it stayed with me anyway.

He told me years later about the time he learned that lesson for himself. It's not my story to share, but I will say he knew from bitter experience how to face down a derisive world. I'm sure that's why the lesson stuck, because at the time I didn't understand. I would soon.

First day of school: I'd been through it enough times to know it set the tone of the whole year. The night before I spent hours deciding between outfits. One moment I thought I'd better try to blend in. The next, that I should go for as skanky as possible so they'd send me home. What I finally decided on was a bright red shirt, maternity jeans, and cowgirl boots from an old costume. At the last minute I decided to put my hair in pigtails. It was definitely not my best look and it was definitely not subtle. It made me look bigger than I was. It drew attention to me. When I waddled into school I was shaking with fear inside. It was obvious I was absurdly pregnant.

But I owned it.



There were looks and whispers and laughter and I hated every second I spent in the hallways. Nobody called me out to my face, though. I'm sure news of the preggo junior spread to every jock, goth, prep, and loner, but at least that day nobody got up in my business. Nobody came up and insulted me. They all knew I saw them staring because I dressed in a way they wouldn't miss. Because of that, they didn't feel the need to come harass me. A few people started doing that a few days later, but it was like they had to work up the courage to approach me. It was totally empowering.

I stuck with the bright colors for a bit, then I'd spend a day with a totally new style. While it was still warm I wore a sundress. A few days later I dressed all in black, including lipstick and nails. I wore plaid and stripes once. Another time I dressed up like I was going to a ballgame. Attention was on me, but it was on me because that was my intention. Of course they noticed I was waddling around looking more and more like some kind of overripe fruit with every consecutive day, but that wasn't what they noticed first. They saw my style, my attitude, my projected image. They might have noticed when I sat sideways at those stupidly designed desks (good god do I hate those things), but that wasn't the image that stuck. What they saw was an individual apart from the crowd.

Lidia wasn't the exception. Plenty of my outfits were customized personally. She made a point of asking about the most unusual bits. We had a few chats about clothes, which was a few chats more than I had with anyone else. I was still pretty lonely, but unlike before summer I wasn't connecting my loneliness with the idea of being wrong and broken. I wasn't the problem: my former friends were wrong with how judgmental they were being. Lidia was becoming a way better friend and I credit (at least partly) our friendship forming in the first place because I followed my dad's advice.

* * *

Leanne rubbed her eyes. She'd stayed up late writing, but she wanted to jot down a few thoughts before heading to Dr. Fairfield's office. She was sitting at the kitchen counter, her charger trailing away behind the laptop.

Her apartment was nice. It was on the edge of where university students would live and where the inner city started. The location meant she had public transport and most of life's essentials nearby. She knew and liked many of her neighbors and felt safe. However, the best perks of the apartment were the ones a contractor had designed especially for her. All the doorways were at least nine inches wider than standard. There were counters at different heights in the kitchen. The floorplan was open and on one level, all of it on even flooring and with rounded corners. For almost half of the time she was either not pregnant or small enough during the first trimester that the customization wasn't needed. For most of the rest of the time those little changes made getting around and doing all the little day-to-day chores life required so much easier. By the end of a pregnancy she wasn't on her feet enough to benefit, though the extra-large doorways were certainly needed. On a couple occasions she thought she'd have to get them widened even more.

She was about to start typing again when Lidia walked into the living room, dressed for work in a pantsuit. Her broad smile was somewhat uncharacteristic for this early in the morning, but then she'd gotten engaged not even a week before.

"Up early or still up?" Lidia asked her roommate.

"Up early," Leanne replied. Lidia was very familiar with Leanne's erratic sleep patterns. They contrasted sharply with Lidia's clockwork schedule, but the two of them made it work.

"Today's the big day for the deal, right?" Leanne asked.

"The culmination of weeks of negotiations, but it should be a relatively uneventful day for all of that." Lidia was a corporate mediation lawyer. She rarely made it to a courtroom. Instead, she generally got two or more companies to negotiate, haggle, and compromise without legal proceedings. In fact, she did it so well that she hardly broke a sweat paying for her half of the rent.

"Speeches and back pats?"

Lidia wrinkled her nose. "Speeches and back pats."

There was a lull in the conversation at that point. Lidia went through the motions of looking for her keys while Leanne adjusted how she was sitting.

There was an unspoken issue they were both avoiding. Ever since Andrew had proposed, they both knew one of them would soon be moving out. They'd lived together for so long it was hard for either to imagine life separated.

"So, Leanne..."

"You don't need to feel guilty about leaving," Leanne blurted out.

"Oh, no, I think it's time for pumping," Lidia said. Immediately after she said it, Leanne's watch chirped to remind her of the same thing. Even her watch wasn't as punctual as her friend.

"Butt-nuggets," Leanne said, standing up. She hadn't pumped as thoroughly as she should have the night before, so her E-cups were quite full. Now that she was paying attention, she could tell they might spring a leak before she got the pumps attached. Part of her revenue stream was selling her breast milk to the university hospital where it was used for babies whose mothers couldn't produce enough on their own. They also used it as an ingredient for a lactation supplement. Sales were good presently, so Leanne tried not to give herself the opportunity to cry over spilt milk she couldn't sell.

When Leanne finally returned to the living room, electric pump at her waistband collecting her milk into bags attached to her opposite hip, Lidia was gone. Leanne went over to

her computer in a huff, annoyed at her friend's apparent avoidance of the topic, and found a sticky note on her laptop's keyboard.

'Le,

It's not guilt I'm feeling. You're an adult and you can take care of yourself – provided nothing is on the top shelf.

Andrew and I are getting a place after his lease expires in a couple months. Until then, I'll still be around. There's got to be some grad student that would love to live here. I'll help you settle in with whoever's going to be your next lucky roommate.

We will always be friends. That will never change.

-Li

*P.S. How are things going with you and Charles? *wink wink**

Leanne smiled. That was an interesting idea. Charles was already leaving a toothbrush in the bathroom. Was moving in that big of a step?

He hadn't been over in a few weeks because she couldn't risk getting pregnant the normal way and pass up a surrogacy gig. It was an aspect of their relationship neither of them enjoyed, but he'd been a real sweetheart after the pregnancy before last. While that month had seemed to stretch on forever, their sex life for the next few weeks had been nothing but fireworks.

She pondered the possibility as she returned to typing.

3 Beginning a Foundation Chain

It kind of sucked to not be in marching band. They won the state competition for our division, something they hadn't done in the two years I played with them.

That was softened somewhat by my joining the theater club. Well, technically you weren't in the club unless you were taking the class, but I became a fixture before and after school, not to mention during lunch. I didn't do a lot of talking at first. I sat in my little corner and stitched. I occasionally brought some of that work to my home ec class (the class was my parent's idea) when I was ahead in those projects. By the night of their first performance I'd greatly improved on the quality of my work and the speed I could get it done. Lidia told me their last seamstress hadn't been nearly as efficient. The teacher/director was also impressed and suggested I take his class the next semester.

It was a real boost in my confidence. I wasn't just a screw up, a mistake, or an outlier in the wrong direction. I started feeling less that following my dad's advice was just a front. Heck, I was feeling more like a success than I was before getting knocked up. Underclassman clarinet player of middling talent vs. upperclassman seamstress supreme? Yeah, I felt fairly good. I wasn't missing my friends or how things used to be so much by October. Of course, I was also approaching the size of a hot air balloon, which to be honest I tend to feel great about.

In fact, I was feeling so good by early October that I started planning a Halloween costume that centered on my burgeoning center.

I started heading to the fabric store with my mom almost weekly. Plenty of people gave me the stink eye, but I was really getting into sewing so I generally didn't notice as much. I found this admittedly hideous fabric with a brick pattern and it gave me an idea. I immediately bought three yards of the stuff and made a round through the local thrift stores for a shirt with a particular logo. I didn't end up finding it – honestly I'm still a bit miffed, because it would have made my costume that much more awesome – but I managed to enlist some help from a stage hand with a knack for drawing to make it a reality.

So, by Halloween I was going to be over eight months pregnant. My obstetrician warned me repeatedly that I might deliver early. At one point, he thought that little ol' me would pop around seven months. When my blood pressure, blood sugar, fetal development, fetal movement, muscle tone, et cetera all continued to be optimal, he'd shake his head and give vague, dire warnings. I always had a feeling things would develop just fine and I'd carry the babies to term. In light of that feeling, I had no reservations about prepping a costume around my bump.

Now, at that point I was still mostly the petite teen I was before, discounting my middle. I was barely over five feet tall. My legs and arms were pretty thin, though the baggy pants I often wore hid that a little. My hips were a bit wider, but I hadn't gained much of a butt by that point. That's definitely changed – I've got a big bank, a dump truck, a phat ass, or whatever other term you might use. I also didn't have the rack I now sport. My belly, however, was massive in comparison. I've carved pumpkins smaller than my first pregnant belly. I could barely reach my belly button when standing up straight. Weight wise, I went from around a hundred pounds to one hundred and seventy. Almost all of it was in my gut. I definitely got tired more easily carrying that thing, but not as much as people seemed to expect I should. I've always been kind of scrappy. I wasn't doing cartwheels, but I didn't have a problem walking around at school or spending an hour at the store. But I definitely looked to be half belly.

There were two costume parties I could attend; one with my church and one with the theater kids. The church one was a trunk-or-treat on the Friday before Halloween, so I ended up able to attend both.

That Friday, my parents and I arrived early and set up our car with a cutesy Sweetsland theme so as to not scare the little munchkins. My parents had these store bought N&N costumes that went with it. We didn't coordinate costumes, but it actually worked out pretty well.

For my costume, I made a Hawaiian shirt from the brick pattern cloth and wore a red long sleeve shirt under it. On the front of my shirt I had the Kul-Aid Dude's face drawn on. Whenever someone pointed out my costume, I'd stick out my stomach and yell 'Oh yeah!' The kids got a kick out of it. I think their response stopped the critical crowd's comments, because I don't remember hearing any judgmental remarks.



I have some pictures from that party. It looked like I had just as much of a blast as I remember. Part of that was the bag of candy that never made it to the kids (I get cravings,

okay?), but part of it was I got to show off my creativity. I've always enjoyed being able to do that.

The second party was at someone's house. There was minimal adult oversight, which probably explains the beer that got passed around. It was mostly just the drama nerds to begin with, but later some other colorful characters showed up. Most of the costumes started as really obscure literary references, but the majority of late arrivals were in thin excuses to be vulgar.

Kid friendly clothes or not, I had several guys make passes at me. One or two were tipsy and the others just seemed to think I was easy. One guy went so far as to say "You clearly don't mean 'no'," . There were a couple cute guys in the group I would have liked to know better, but with how some of them were acting I was really repulsed. It wasn't long after that that I asked Lidia to take me home. Before people decided the night was about making out, the party was fun, but the end of it left a sour taste in my mouth.

I'm not making a generalization to all actors, but I found these drama kids to be pretty smart and conscientious on the whole, if way over the top at all times. The two years I spent with them were full of smiles and laughter. I didn't hear a single pregnancy related joke until after I'd made a couple friends, but after I cracked a few the jokes came in a preverbal avalanche. Some of them were actually pretty funny, too. I didn't mind because they told them in such a way that I got to laugh along with them. None of them besides Lidia became lifelong friends, but I appreciate what they were for me through my last two years of high school.

After Halloween, I knew I was in the home stretch. I'd been told I, as a tiny teen mom, would not carry twins to term. In fact, my pompous OB predicted my babies would need to spend time in the NICU because their little lungs wouldn't be developed enough to breathe on their own. He always tied such statements to comments on how irresponsible it was to have sex as a teenager. My mom's first instinct was to defend me, but in private I told her it was easier just to let him ramble. While he talked, all I had to do was feel the strength of their kicks to have confidence I was doing a good job.

What surprised us all was how I grew during November. Typically, when pregnant with multiples the babies slow down their growth toward the end, presumably to keep the mother from going into labor too soon. That didn't happen. Instead, they grew like they were alone in a six foot Viking woman's womb. I was amazed – and secretly tickled pink – that we were all growing so much. My belly began to be visible from behind me. I had to lean back to stay standing. I struggled to adjust clothes fast enough to stay covered. My belly button stuck out at the limit of the reach of my fingers. My legs and back began to be almost constantly sore, but otherwise I wasn't showing any symptoms of pregnancy complications. I was a model of health.

My stomach was short on space, so I ended up snacking almost constantly while eating smaller portions at meals. I was stubborn about continuing to attend classes, so I ended up getting a lot of walking in. My legs grew a lot stronger during that period. Most of my teachers were really accommodating, especially about food in class and sitting in a chair without a desk attached. I brought a clipboard and used myself as a writing surface, something I still enjoy being able to do.

My milk came in partway through the month. I'd previously swelled to almost a C cup – which would have looked massive on me if it they weren't dwarfed by their downstairs neighbor – but before pumping in the morning my breasts would overflow my new bras. That was good, because Mrs. Thomas wasn't producing any herself. We stocked up on bottles for my pump and froze the stuff for her to use later. I kept tissues in my backpack to clean up any spills, but my boobs were cooperative and I rarely had issues during school. At night was another matter, because my dreams tended to, um, cause the right kind of excitement to make them leak.

The Monday morning before Thanksgiving, we visited the hospital so I could be induced. I didn't need it, but they insisted that I use a wheelchair while there. I was a little upset by the entire situation. My doctor and I weren't seeing eye to eye. My belly hadn't dropped, I wasn't dilated, and I hadn't had so much as a single Braxton Hicks. But nooo, the numbers and statistics suggested it was best to force the babies out before they were good and ready. I admit to being a bit of a handful for my parents and the hospital staff at the time. They couldn't see it, but mine wasn't a typical pregnancy. For whatever reason, I was better equipped to carry babies than the other women they'd dealt with.

Besides, I was missing some important rehearsals for a seamstress to be at. I had to finish several more costume fittings before dress rehearsal the next week. We had a few rather 'athletic' choreographed musical scenes for Nebraska, which meant I also was probably going to have my hands full repairing costumes for those actors. This wasn't a good time to be induced.

Anyway, they got me all settled in a hospital bed, surrounded by beeping machines and with an IV attached to my hand, and we waited for the induction drugs to kick in. It was only supposed to take a couple hours for it to begin, but by the next morning I still wasn't contracting. They upped the dosage multiple times, but my babies were stubborn. I was pleased I got to say 'I told you so' to my doctor, who was eventually forced to concede defeat and let me go home Tuesday evening with the promise to return when I started feeling even slightly like going into labor. My parents and the Thomas's were surprised I was leaving the hospital still pregnant. They all wanted to be there when it happened, but they didn't express any annoyance that it wouldn't happen on schedule.

I skipped school Wednesday – my teachers weren't expecting me anyway – and played catch-up with sewing. Lidia dropped it off for me and we talked a bit. We were open and friendly on just about every topic, but she never really pried when it came to my pregnancy. Our conversation that day was a little halting and awkward and I could guess why.

I remember asking her to grab me a notepad. She handed it to me and I wrote 'This coupon entitles the bearer to one no guilt conversation on any awkward topic' and ripped it off for her. She blushed and smiled when she read it. A whole slew of questions followed.

As it turns out, she was the oldest of four children. They were all pretty close in age, but she could remember when her youngest brother was born. She wasn't old enough to really understand it, though, so it started a curiosity she didn't know how to ask about until there was no longer an opportunity to ask. Sex-ed classes explained a lot of the science side, but it lacked

the intimate details. She asked me about sex, about how it felt when the babies kicked, about morning sickness, about my center of gravity, about mood swings and preggo brain, about lactation, about how I decided to give them up, about the Thomas family, about telling my parents, about telling Steven and his parents, about maternity clothes, about how I was treated by my old friends, about baby names. We talked for hours and I answered her fully and honestly. She relished the chance to feel the babies kick, which for once they did on cue.

She asked me why I hadn't been induced and I told her the babies weren't ready to come yet. That confused her. Wouldn't the doctor know best?

"Well, he didn't, so no," I answered.

I figured out afterward why that was hard for her to believe. Her mind is orderly to a degree I've never fully understood. It helps her understand convoluted 'legalese' and keep an unruly cast in line, but she has trouble with intuitive knowledge. I might not be able to tell anyone how I knew my babies weren't ready to be born, but I knew it regardless. In her mind, the doctor was the expert and the doctor should have been right. It made no sense that a teenager would know better.

She eventually left with lots of answers and one question. I was left with a bunch of sewing and a lot of warm, cuddly feelings about having such a wonderful friend.

* * *

Leanne was in Dr. Fairfield's waiting room. As the good doctor was normally quite punctual, Leanne assumed the trouble was with the ogres. They were typically aggressive, she'd heard, so it might have been a good idea for them to not travel openly where a layperson might unwittingly set them off.

She signed and pulled out her laptop's charger. They'd arrive when they arrived. In the meantime, she'd write.

* * *

Thanksgiving weekend passed in a blur of sewing and food comas. I turned a lot of heads when I showed up to school Monday bigger than ever. Word got around that I was going past my due date and suddenly I was everyone's favorite topic of conversation again. It was also difficult for me to get around at that point. (Looking back it's odd because this was my all-time smallest pregnancy. It was also my first, so I guess I wasn't as practiced as I was later.) My balance was more off than it had ever been and I was feeling every pound I'd gained in the last nine months, especially in my knobby knees and put-upon hips. People walked around me like they were afraid I'd explode. I'm pretty sure I wasn't fully covering my stomach despite the modifications I'd made to my wardrobe.

On Wednesday my belly dropped overnight. My balance was all off again and I knew I didn't have long. But the play opened Thursday night and I willed my babies to be patient. I

stuck it out at school, though I wasn't able to pay much attention. My babies were active and I had a few moments when my breasts began to leak. I was bummed at how much milk I wasn't freezing for later, but going around with my pump attached would have killed me with embarrassment.

I made it through school Thursday, at which point the only thing that would have convinced me to not attend the show would have been if they'd started crowning. Lidia and the director asked if I was alright, but everyone else was too worried about opening night to notice my discomfort.

I got to watch from backstage as everyone put on a great show. My parents took turns sitting with me and sitting in the audience. I'd have resisted this protective gesture more if they hadn't already been familiar with the musical. Lidia fretted a bunch, but even she couldn't find much wrong with how things went.

The director asked some of us backstage workers if we'd like a chance to bow onstage. Lidia and I both declined, as did most of the rest of the stage hands. I was getting plenty of attention already and didn't need to steal any that night. I think Lidia didn't take a bow out of solidarity with me. It was a sweet gesture, but I was a little too distracted to appreciate it.

After thunderous applause and actors greeting the audience as they left, my parents tried talking me into going to the hospital. My goal had been just to watch opening night, but there were shows on Friday and Saturday, too. I wanted to give birth Sunday so I could attend those shows and the ones the next week. I also wanted to enjoy the after-show party, but my parents vetoed that pretty firmly. Instead of letting me celebrate with the cast, we compromised and decided to go home for ice cream.

They walked along slowly as I waddled to the car on the icy cement. As I bent down to sit in the back, my water broke all over the parking lot.

Things were pretty exciting for a bit. We rushed to the hospital and got me up to a room. All the specialists rushed in, then wandered out for a bit because I hadn't exploded or whatever. It took a couple hours to dilate enough to start pushing. By the time I finished it was early Friday morning.

I will admit to crying and screaming a bit through the process. I'm more composed now that I've done it almost two dozen times, but that first time I was scared and really, really emotional. Because I was giving the babies up, I only had a little skin time with them. Those minutes were precious and for a moment I thought about keeping them. When I saw Mr. and Mrs. Thomas holding one each, however, I stuck with my original decision. They would be wonderful parents to my little boy and girl.

* * *

"The doctor can see you now," a nurse said.

Leanne packed up her laptop and followed her back to Dr. Jill Fairfield's office. She was already there with two hulking people sitting across the room.

They looked generally human, but the shape of their eyes and mouth especially were off from human proportions. Sitting they were taller than Leanne was in heels. Standing they would have needed to bend over to avoid the ceiling. Both were massive through the shoulder and chest. Their arms were bigger than Olympic weightlifter's legs, all of it rippling muscle. The greatest visual distinction between them was that one was wearing a sundress and the other the tatters of what had once been a suit. *Yeah, it would take more than industrial stitching to make a suit last for someone that big*, Leanne thought.

Immediately when he saw her, he stood up, bumping a ceiling tile. "No, you said we would get the best surrogate, not a *lagskugkle*, a little person," he said, the room rumbling with his words.

"She is the best," Dr. Fairfield said evenly. She turned to Leanne. "Did you bring your photo album?"

Leanne smiled and pulled it out of her bag.

"Yours would be my 22nd pregnancy," she said, opening to near the beginning of the album. She handed it to the husband, but it was the wife that took it. Her eyes widened with astonishment. She prodded her husband and mumbled something in their language. He glowered at her, then took a quick glance at the picture she pointed to.

His expression changed and he did a double take.

"This is you?" he asked, showing her the picture.

The photo was of her near the end of one of her early surrogacies for Dr. Fairfield's clinic. In it, Leanne was leaning back and rolling her eyes in annoyance. Her belly, easily big enough to contain the rest of her, was being distended by several kicks, making it look like she was hosting a wrestling match. That she looked mildly annoyed instead of in great pain was just as startling as her size. She opened to that picture specifically because it showcased how durable her womb was.

"Yes, that's me several weeks before giving birth to a mongrelmen litter," she said calmly, as if it were the most common occurrence in the world.

He took the album back, sat, and flipped to a new page. His bride looked over his shoulder excitedly. They gasped together. Leanne assumed they'd found the one where she was an incubator for a bunch of frogmen eggs.

He showed her the picture and sure enough it was her in a bikini, belly sticking out five feet and pulled low to rest on the ground. She'd done a Vanessa Grey pose, as if she were hosting *The Dial of Wealth* game show.

She nodded and he again flipped through the pages of the album. They'd see her with her 'record breaking' belly with twelve human babies, the one she went three months overdue with septuplets, the six month pregnancy with a slime that could fill a Jacuzzi, and the one when she tried being a surrogate for four families at once and ended up with her most taxing pregnancy. On that one, she'd been bed bound for two months and still had to deliver a few weeks early. She was proud to say that all twenty-five of her children survived. They always did.

"Like I said earlier," Dr. Fairfield said, "Leanne Valens is unequivocally the most capable surrogate I've ever worked with. I have every confidence she will carry your children to term healthy and strong."

The couple traded one of those long looks married people do with a conversation's worth of meaning. Then the lady extended her hand to Leanne. Leanne took it.

"You are *gullagan*, and I will being honored for you hold my children," she said, eyes moist.

Leanne had no idea what *gullagen* meant, but they wanted her to be their surrogate. That was the important thing.

The man stood back up and placed his fists on his hips. "You will do this thing for us," he said, not making it a question. He turned to Dr. Fairfield, not waiting for Leanne to reply. "We will do this thing now."

The doctor smiled. "I'll prepare my equipment and we can begin within the hour."

4 I Definitely Did NOT Have a Problem

I hadn't thought much about after birth – the time after delivering, not afterbirth – and things surprised me. The Thomas's took the twins home, I was released without incident, and I took it easy over the weekend. I lounged in a daze disturbed by moments of either extreme elation or tearful release until Monday, when I went back to school. I still had a bit of a paunch, but it was much smaller than it had been the previous week and it shrunk more every day. There was an uptick in whispers for a while, but those died out and I was just another face in the crowd.

Everything was emotionally hazy for a couple weeks. I attended the rest of our shows, but I wasn't excited to be there. It was hard to talk with anyone beyond simple pleasantries. Visiting the twins was nice, seeing them taken care of and loved, but we'd all decided to limit my interaction with them for a bit.

Christmas arrived and my parents were really starting to worry about me. I got better at faking being cheerful, but even my moron of a doctor could tell something wasn't right. Postpartum depression is what he called it, and there might be something to that. However, that wasn't the whole story. It took me until Christmas to figure it out and that realization came in a surprising way.

When Christmas break started I was almost back to my pre-pregnancy weight. My breasts remained marginally larger as I continued to pump, my belly was almost washboard flat, and my hips, legs, and rear were only slightly bigger than they were before. I might have been half an inch taller, but that also might be wishful thinking.

(By the way, there's a stretch of time for about six weeks after giving birth called the postnatal period where a woman's body reverts back to its pre-pregnancy state; hormones, uterus, and all. For me it happens in about three weeks. I think it's my body's way of telling me to get pregnant again.)

My mom, who had been very lenient with my nutrition while I was pregnant, began a health food kick after I gave birth that helped me lose the little extra weight I did pack on. Between the lower calorie intake and the energy it takes to produce milk (quite a lot, as it happens) I zipped back down through the sizes. Most women would be pleased about that. I wasn't, but I couldn't put my finger on why.

When break began, however, all sorts of treats made their way into the house. They didn't tend to stick around very long.

I remember my mom scolding my dad about snacking between meals a few times, but most of it was me. I'd thought I'd kicked my snacking habit, but the chocolate called to me. Every cookie had me thinking about the next bite. It was a funky mix of heaven and hell: heaven for the pleasure and hell for the constant fear of getting caught.

Christmas Eve rolled around and we had our traditional big dinner. I'm not sure if my parents thought I was eating because I was depressed or if they thought it was just extra good that year, but they didn't say anything when I helped myself to three full plates.

Maybe there's some macho football player that can put food away like a trash compactor that ends up reading this. I just want to remind him and everyone else that I was (and still am, to an extent) a petite woman. Sure, teenage hormones helped along by lactating breasts made my metabolism quick, but holding that much food in that small of a person all at once isn't something that can normally happen.

When it occurred to me just how much I was eating, I checked under the table and nearly choked when I saw how big I'd gotten. I looked four months along with twins! I loved it, but my gut reaction (pun intended) was to hide it and the smile threatening to plaster itself to my face from my parents.

I chatted with them for a bit, not trusting they'd miss my new bump if I stood up. I think I eventually made a comment about letting them enjoy some mistletoe and handling the dishes myself. They lightly objected, but with how much stress helping their teenage daughter through pregnancy had been, I think they were glad of any chance for time alone, even when suggested by said daughter when she was acting suspiciously.

They went off and I started playing with my belly one handed while carrying dishes to the kitchen. I was surprised at how happy the gut made me.

When I began putting away leftovers, I got this crazy idea. My stomach was telling me to stop, but a nagging feeling from the back of my head told me to continue eating.

I started with the potatoes.

After a few mouthfuls, I didn't feel any fuller. So I continued with the turkey. Then I sampled some stuffing. Rolls followed.

When I went to take a bite and found there wasn't any food left, I looked down at myself again. The leftovers pushed my belly out several more inches. I was totally stuffed. I probably didn't need to eat anything the next day. That said, I knew I could hold more.

I looked at my reflection in the window and realized I was holding my food baby like I'd held my real babies only a month before.

It wasn't the same. Not only was I not as big, but it was in the wrong spot. It was kind of just a lump whereas my babies had moved independently. Not the same, but close and still nice.

I finished with the dishes and headed to bed.

My dreams were pretty vivid that night. I blame the tryptophan.

There was a big gingerbread house. I walked inside and began eating things. When the furniture was all gone, I started on the walls. My belly grew heavy, but I wasn't tired of walking with it. When the first wall was finished I fell back onto my butt. Over the curve of my stomach I saw the rest of the house fall on me. Somehow every little piece of it squished itself into my mouth. My stomach grew to epic proportions. It didn't stop when I was finished with the house. It kept growing, like the house was multiplying into two houses, then three. All I could do was stare as it began to dwarf me, stretching tight as it spread ever outward and upward. By the time I felt like I'd burst I was warehouse size and still growing.

I woke up when it was still dark with a button busted off my pajamas and a mighty need to poo.

For Christmas Day I wandered around with a blanket on my shoulders, hiding the remnant of my binge. Dinner that night was smaller and I kept myself to one helping.

It seems silly to me now, with all I've experienced, but I was scared. Scared of what I did and how I felt. In the past year I'd made the totally irresponsible mistake of getting pregnant as a teen, but dodged that bullet because the perfect couple wanted to adopt them. Now I was getting nostalgic and wishing I could carry more than a food baby inside me?!? This was not me! I was responsible to the point of being bland. Hadn't I already alienated enough people? Hadn't I already put my parents through enough?

So I suppressed my feelings. I focused on my sewing and vowed to ace my classes. I kept my hands and head busy so there wouldn't be time or thoughts of another pregnancy. In a way, I was better off when I was in that hazy fugue. At least then I wasn't always anxious.

When school started back up, a familiar feeling returned.

* * *

Leanne gave in at that moment to run to the bathroom. Even as she emptied her breakfast into the toilet she knew morning sickness hit some women way harder than this. She should be thankful every other smell didn't trigger her.

That said, experiencing even this level of nausea was unlike her and didn't bode well as a sign of things to come.

She washed up. Thankfully, her hair was relatively short at the moment. Puke in her hair was one of her least favorite things.

This was something Dr. Fairfield should know about. Anything atypical was something to report, especially when her brood wasn't human. The good doctor inseminated her with two fertilized eggs. With her track record, if they'd inseminated her with just one it would have split anyway. In the past, giving her singles had resulted in multiple pregnancies with just one placenta, which was somewhat riskier. Giving her multiples sometimes resulted in one or more splits, but starting with extra placentas tended to reduce that sort of activity. Unfortunately, it would be weeks until they found out how things were going this time.

She grabbed some SportAde to replenish her fluids and continued typing.

* * *

I know now it wasn't simply horniness. It was a desire to be filled and to grow. Buying a dildo and going to town wouldn't satisfy me. Only getting pregnant again would stop the feeling.

This feeling I didn't understand scared me enough for me to tell my parents.

They tried taking me seriously, but I really didn't articulate myself well. While I'm not sure I convinced them how bad it felt, they certainly didn't want a repeat of last year. They ended up sending me in for some blood tests and to the school counselor.

Another thing they tried was giving me more time with the Thomas's and the twins. Little Louise and Liam were adorable. They were having trouble sleeping, which meant Mr. and Mrs. Thomas were quite sleep deprived. They appreciated the free babysitting.

I was doing well with my Urge to get pregnant again – keeping busy, staying clear of boys, focusing on all the bad things that might happen if I got knocked up a second time – when Mrs. Thomas made an offhand comment about possibly wanting more kids.

It was something like, 'Once these two can sleep through the night, I could see us adopting another. Let us know if anyone else at your school is expecting and wants to go that route.' It might have been common politeness. She might not have really meant it. But it sunk my resolve like a torpedo below the waterline.

There was a lady's choice dance in the second half of January. I agonized over it. I could ask someone I liked and potentially push them away forever, or I could ask someone I knew would try something and let it happen like a paid escort. Then there were times I wondered where to buy a chastity belt. It was a maelstrom of impulses and a gauntlet of choices.

I tend to turn inward when I'm conflicted, which made it easy for Lidia to push me into asking – again, changing names here – Peter out. He had just been selected to play the playboy Nicolas Tombot for A Solstice Midnight's Sleep, though in reality he was very self-conscious and tended to be tongue tied around girls. I'm pretty sure Lidia was trying to kill two birds with one stone, getting him some confidence and getting me out of my anxiety induced work frenzy. She asked another guy out and we decided to double.

Peter was sweet to me. He asked ahead about my dress's color so he could match the corsage (burnt orange and black, btw), volunteered to cook for the four of us, and all in all played the part of the perfect gentleman. I might have been a teenager with a bunch of her own problems, but other people have concurred he wasn't just playing the role in order to get in my pants. Again, I want the record clear when I write what happened next.

I hung in there until the day of the dance. Lidia and I had our hair done by a theater person's mom – another reason to be in theater, kids – in the morning and met up that afternoon for an early dinner out of formal wear. We ate and talked and laughed and had a fun time. The Urge to get pregnant was pushed waaay back and I really enjoyed our date.

Lidia and I went back to my place after for dresses and make-up. It was nice being the one wearing the costume and being dolled up for once. I felt beautiful, which I rarely felt. Cute, perhaps. Pretty? Maybe when I made a rocking outfit. Being massively pregnant makes me feel sexy, but that's different. Beautiful usually seems out of reach. I still enjoy being in a support role with sewing costumes, but that afternoon led me out my comfort zone later, but I'm getting ahead of myself again.

It was when the boys came over in their suits and we got to show off in our formal dresses that the Urge came back. A suit isn't quite the male equivalent of lingerie, but oh is it

hot. He had a blue three piece number with an orange tie and pocket square and I think my ovaries just about exploded when I saw him.

Then there were the pictures. Lidia and her date were awkward in that first date way, but I just moved right up close to Peter. He was rigid at first, but he warmed up to me and relaxed. With how well the pictures turned out I'm not sure how my parents couldn't see what was going on with me.

I'm proud to say I managed to get my mom off to the side to warn her what was up. I didn't convey my understanding of the situation to her, but she did understand what I was afraid of.

"Sweetheart, I believe in you. That thing with Steven was a fluke. You're past that. Just wear yourself out dancing and keep Lidia around and you'll be okay."

Despite my insistence to the contrary, I'm sure she still thought on some level that me getting pregnant the first time was more Steven's fault than mine. Our relationship was better than before and I'd really tried being honest with her, but this is one thing she and I are still reconciling.

We drove straight to the school for the dance. I kept going back and forth between keeping my distance from Peter and putting my hands all over him. He seemed confused about how I was acting, but he didn't complain.

The dance was a generic winter themed cliché and the music was all the most recent popular stuff. I made sure to dance fast and hard, trying to wear myself out as much as possible. I think it kind of backfired, though, as grinding was kind of becoming a thing. I saw someone else doing it and my libido just sort of took over. Lidia, bless her, cut in a few times and I managed to calm down a little, but never for long.

She told me later that Peter and I had crazy dilated eyes and wondered how on earth I'd found and used drugs when we'd been together all day. All I can say is that if someone slipped me drugs it couldn't have been more potent than the estrogen cocktail I made myself. I actually have some blood tests to support me on that. In fact, it might have seeped out through my pores and made a few other people a little sex crazy. That night was reported by chaperones as one of the most hormone injected nights the school ever saw.

At one point Lidia pulled her date aside, possibly to ask him to get a bucket of ice water to clear my head, and I saw my chance. I pulled Peter off the dance floor and out of the gym.

Once we were alone by the bleachers I began kissing and groping him. He returned the favor with gusto. I didn't realize it until later but our clothes got pretty ripped up as we got them out of the way. There was snow on the ground and I didn't care.

It didn't take us long to finish. Shortly after that, our senses of dignity returned. He took off his coat and tied it around his waist to cover his ripped pants zipper. My dark dress

thankfully hid most of the stains, at least without good lighting. He ditched his vest, which I'm not sure how I ripped so thoroughly without meaning to.

Lidia met us when we headed back inside. I asked if we could go home. Her date was a little surly about it, but he drove us home. Peter and I stayed pretty quiet, but I'm sure the two of them had a fair understanding of what happened. They didn't have any idea about how mind numbingly awesome it felt, but they could see the writing on the wall...or stains on the dress, I suppose.

There wasn't a kiss on the doorstep, or even a handshake. I rushed out without looking back and slipped inside. My parents were there looking confused about how early I was home.

I took a few deep breaths to steady myself.

"How do I get the morning after pill?"

My mom hurried in for a hug and my dad swore under his breath. That's when the enormity of everything hit me and the waterworks started.

My parents got into a fight over it. My dad said I was being super irresponsible while my mom could only blame herself (and him by proxy) because she'd encouraged me to go when I pulled her aside. Lidia clarified what happened a few days later and that settled the water between them some, but that argument remains a really bad memory.

I ended up taking plan B the next day, but it was only a long shot. It didn't work just like I thought it wouldn't despite my hopes to the contrary. By my birthday, I was pretty sure I was pregnant. I confirmed it with a test before March began.

Long story short: Peter and I got along awkwardly for a while, but since we had witnesses to our behavior that night we confronted it and remained cordial. The Thomas's agreed to adopt this new batch, which is pretty amazing considering it was triplets this time around. I went with a different OB, a woman who was slightly more sympathetic but whose nails made her exams even worse in some ways. I didn't work as hard to hide an even bigger belly this time, so rumors of me being pregnant were flying around by the end of March. A couple months later two other girls were sporting baby bumps from that same night. Rumor was a few more got abortions. My one-off mistake was beginning to be a pattern.

5 Second Verse, Same as the First

Things with my parents got sticky for a bit. In addition to a one-time mistake becoming the beginning of a pattern, my dad felt I manipulated my mom into thinking I was the victim. The two of them being at odds didn't make for the most welcoming home environment. I spent a fair

bit of time at school and with Lidia. It was her senior year and she was busy getting ready for college. Despite that, she made time for me. Her parents weren't super pleased that she was friends with the girl that got herself knocked up twice before turning seventeen, but they were always cordial. Lidia did confess they told her repeatedly not to get pregnant herself, but Lidia, being the super serious, always in control person she was, didn't make mistakes of that magnitude. She did, however, briefly consider going into medicine instead of law school via business degree.

Things changed when the results of a second battery of blood tests came back.

Both of my parents were able to go to that appointment with me, which wasn't always the case. I remember it was April already because the old saying 'April showers bring May flowers' was really underway. It rained almost nonstop for two weeks and the appointment happened during a raining cats and dogs type of day.

The first hint that something was up was that we were called back with almost no wait. The second was the three doctors who came with the news. I'd been curious that they asked for a second set of tests without telling me anything about the first set. They had me worried when all three walked in together.

They first assured me I was healthy and there wasn't anything life threatening. That was only so reassuring, but it was something. He then launched into a complicated explanation of women's hormones. My normal family practitioner tried simplifying what his colleague said and all I understood was 'Women have really complicated sex hormones'.

The third doctor, the only woman in the group, was the one to share my results. They asked for the second set of tests when my first set came back with two hormones out of balance. One kind of estrogen was almost triple what it should have been normally, much less right after having a baby. The other was super, super low. They didn't know why those would be messed up, so they asked for more tests for hormone levels. Those tests, which were taken when I was a few weeks pregnant, came back with the estrogen still off the charts but the other one was normal now. Normally that one would be lower for a pregnant woman and higher when not pregnant.

The first doctor took over again, reiterating that while they didn't know why my hormone levels were out of balance, every other indication showed I was healthy. They didn't know of any disease or congenital condition that would cause what I was experiencing.

However, they could give me some insight into what effects those hormone levels would have on me. That caught my attention after getting lost in the medical jargon.

The high levels of the specific estrogen hormone meant I would be horny and fertile. They put it differently, but that's what it boiled down to. The low hormone was associated with some kinds of depression. Because it was raised when I was pregnant, it had the effect of causing a dopamine reaction to being pregnant. Their best guess was that I would be depressed unless I was pregnant.

That made perfect sense to me at the time, though I've never heard of anyone else having this diagnosis. I shared how I'd felt during my last pregnancy, after giving birth, right before getting pregnant again, and during the last couple months. It matched with what they said.

My parents asked a few clarifying questions at that point. My dad wanted to know how hard it was for me to resist getting pregnant again. They told him it would have been a powerful compulsion for me to have sex – more so than normal for a teenager. My mom focused on me being depressed for the rest of my life. They suggested some possible treatments including getting me on the pill once I gave birth.

It was the female doctor that mentioned surrogacy might be more effective than birth control. I perked up at the suggestion. I didn't say anything as the doctors continued talking back and forth, but the thought of being pregnant with other people's babies was exciting for me. I'd lucked out having one family adopt two pregnancies worth of babies. Getting couples to agree to it beforehand would be way more responsible.

While I might not have had a cell phone yet (though some kids at school did) I did have access to the internet through our home computer. I did some research online about surrogacy and not only did they let you be pregnant for other people, they paid you for it! Indiana didn't have the best laws for gestational surrogacy, but they did allow it. Ohio, on the other hand, had laws much more favorable for surrogates. That's the biggest reason I live there now.

My future seemed brighter when I realized there was a way to keep this full feeling practically forever. And while I did like kids and wanted some eventually, I didn't want to raise dozens as a single mom. This was definitely the way forward.

It took a long time for my parents to come around. They said it almost felt like monetizing my body, even if the genetic mixing happened in a test tube. Another thing they worried about was my health. Apparently, my mom was pretty sick while she was pregnant with me. I'd heard that before, but this time they told me how sick. It involved a hospital stay and weeks of bedrest. My dad was afraid he'd lose us.

That news hit pretty hard, but my first pregnancy went so smoothly they had stopped worrying as much. They expressed some worry that I was pregnant again so quickly, but as my mother said, "We're your parents – we'll always worry at least a little for you."

Of course, before I could become a surrogate I had to finish the nine month result of having asked a boy out on a date.

** * **

Leanne smiled as she typed that. She was sitting in bed with a bit of insomnia while Charles snored softly beside her. Love had been an elusive commodity for a long time, but she had it now. Charles was strong and independent while being introspective and good at listening.

She'd had a few boyfriends since high school, but none for as long as she'd been with Charles. They would have their two year anniversary before too long. She hoped he'd propose soon.

Being pregnant while dating put off most potential dates while bringing some weirdos out of the woodwork. Only a couple guys had ever really been boyfriend material, but Charles was so far beyond that. Not only were they crazy about each other, they tended to work well together. She had a handful of plutonic, non-judgmental friends and acquaintances she got along with despite her less-than-normal lifestyle choices, but finding the combination of good person and heartthrob was like finding a black unicorn – the rarest kind of a rare species.

When he first admitted his pregnancy kink, she thought that everything she loved about him might be a lie. But his honesty helped her believe he was being sincere with how he felt about her. He'd been her boyfriend at all stages of pregnancy and twice when she wasn't pregnant, but his affection didn't change with her waistline. He was genuinely smitten with her, which made him all the more lovable in her eyes.

He was very keen on moving in with her when she brought up the idea. It made her think that it was something he'd considered before, but had been too shy to bring up. As relatively inexperienced as she was at dating, he had even less experience for several reasons, chief of which were his absolute obliviousness to his own good looks and his shame about his secret fetish.

Leanne looked down at her current bump, still too small to balance her laptop on but big for only a month into pregnancy. Signs were pointing to this being a particularly interesting surrogacy. If he could stick with her through this, then she'd have to buy a ring and propose to him. She continued typing.

* * *

When the rain ended in late-April, I had just finished my first trimester. Some women are barely showing at that point. I definitely looked pregnant, especially without my raincoat. I figured I was carrying multiples again. Around that time I had my first sonogram of the pregnancy, which revealed three little heartbeats.

I continued sewing at school. My new theater friends found themselves receiving flak from my old band friends, who were even more gung-ho about rubbing my face in my irresponsibility. I can understand a private thought of 'Thank God I didn't make that mistake,' but openly and repeatedly mocking someone for a dumb decision is in the territory of plain wrong.

For their part, the theater kids by and large defended me - or at least ignored most of it. There were a few times my relationship with some of them felt strained, like they agreed I wasn't a good person to be around. Most of them had to drop-off or pick-up costumes from me at some point, so I was as polite and upbeat as possible. Mostly that small interaction made things good again with them. I wish that strategy worked with my old friends.

By the time school finished I was looking almost due with one baby. As much as I wanted a nice, easy summer like the one before, my dad talked me into looking for a job. It was the responsible thing to do, after all. (While there was understanding about the medical side of my condition, there were also a lot of lectures on responsibility around then.)

I tried a couple fast food places, but I was really, really glad they weren't hiring. My mom suggested I put my sewing skills to use, and that paid off. The second dry cleaners I tried needed someone for emergency repair work. It wasn't full time or a lot of hours, but it was something and good enough for my dad. The owner was a little skeptical about hiring a pregnant teen, but when I told him I had the triplets lined up for adoption with a good family he was impressed enough to give me some probationary work. Within two weeks he was impressed enough to keep me on for years.

I also spent a bunch of time with Lidia. We talked about everything, especially our futures. She was excited to start college. Her grades got her accepted into the University of Ohio State and several other schools, but her parents talked her into accepting a scholarship at a local community college for her Associates degree. She confessed to me that her parents were worried about paying for college for her and her three siblings. This would cut down costs not only on tuition, but also because she could stay home for a couple more years. I was more than a little happy about having her nearby, if not actually at school with me.

The rest of my time was spent eating, sleeping, or trying to stay cool. My little kiddie pool was a godsend. This time, however, I actually purchased a maternity swimsuit. It was a two piece that provided some belly support without restricting my growth, which was important because there isn't an off-the-rack swimsuit for women my height that fits my late term belly and doesn't billow off the rest of me. Believe me, because I've spent over a decade looking. Bikinis work, but I find most people don't respond well to me wearing one (with a couple notable exceptions).

I had my driver's license, but it became increasingly difficult for me to drive anywhere. The larger my belly gets, the harder it becomes to reach the wheel and pedals at the same time. I was able to get rides from my mom or Lidia, but it became increasingly obvious that I needed an alternative if I wanted to remain independent. Today I mostly use public transit, but that wasn't as optimal where I grew up. Of course, occasionally I get too big to fit on the bus. Then I mostly stay home unless I really, really need to be somewhere. At that point, vans are my best friend.

As independent as I wanted to be, I stopped looking for solutions after an ill-fated trip on a bicycle. I'll say this then leave the subject to your imagination: with how much my center of gravity shifted, I really shouldn't have tried to ride anything with two wheels.

There are only a couple other things worth mentioning before school started again. First, I saw a news story about a lady who had septuplets that all survived birth. That's seven babies! (Hey, it's a big deal if you aren't me.) There weren't a lot of good pictures of how big she got, but I didn't think it looked all that much bigger than I felt with twins. It would be a while before I did anything about that, but the thought of that many at once stuck with me.

The second thing was I discovered people on the internet that thought pregnancy was sexy. I felt vindicated about enjoying my bump. Some of them seemed pretty weird, like I'd think they were total dorks if I met them in person, but some of the others seemed kinda cool. It made me feel like I'd be the cool (or even hot) kid if we went to school together. That was encouraging, as I was bracing to endure some whale jokes as I started my senior year of high school almost seven months pregnant with triplets.

Just like the year before, I agonized over what to wear on my first day at school. I was already beginning to outgrow most of my last trimester clothes from my first pregnancy, which got my sewing fingers some extra work as I kept choosing different outfits to modify.

I ended up keeping it simple with jean overalls (I had to add some length to the straps) and a pink t-shirt. I had these sketchers I really liked that weren't too worn out that went really well with it. To really complete the look I put my hair in pigtails. Hey, it worked the year before and there was no reason to think it wouldn't work again.

The first day of school turned out a lot like the previous year: everyone noticed me, partly because of my size and partly because I wore bright colors and pigtails. There were a few jerks, but I got to hang out even more with my theater homies because this year I was actually taking the class. (Did I seriously just type 'homies'? Uhg, I'll fix it in the revision.) Senior year was going great.

Those of you reading this who like history probably saw this coming, but for the rest of us it'll blindside you just like we were.

About a week into school we heard about a plane hitting a skyscraper in New York. We were all confused about what was happening, so my first period teacher turned on the news. We watched as the second tower was hit.

The rest of the day had a dreamlike quality. It didn't seem real and still doesn't. Everyone had questions, some of which were answered throughout the day and others of which still haven't been. For many of us, it became abundantly clear that the world wasn't what we thought it was.

Personally, I questioned what kind of world I was bringing children into. The things I'd been so worried about were still scary, but it paled in comparison to such reckless hate. The Thomas's were good people and I still felt good about letting them raise my babies. The world outside their home, however, seemed more and more dangerous. I didn't know if my enjoyment of being pregnant outweighed bringing people into this traumatizing world.

That terrorist attack is a major reason that despite my opportunities (and Urges) I haven't had any more children of my own.

6 Hints of the Supernatural

At this point in my story, nothing particularly crazy has happened. Teenagers have gotten pregnant before, babies have been given up for adoption, and people have done things they normally wouldn't do because they were hormonal. Slice of life, pure and simple.

Looking back, it was around this time that the first hint that I wasn't normal came during a sonogram appointment. It puzzled me then, but it seems obvious now.

While my mom and I were in the waiting room ignoring the usual shame-on-you stares, I noticed some nurses paying special attention to me. They whispered back and forth between themselves a few times kind of urgently. They didn't approach me with anything, but I had the distinct feeling they were worried and preparing for something.

We were called back and they weighed me – no, I won't tell you what I weighed, but I'd gained about 65 pounds by then – and took my blood pressure. Normally this nurse adopted a semi-cheerful office personality, but she was much more serious that day. Just before we headed off to the sonogram room she asked if I was okay.

"Yeah..."

"Your chart says you're at 34 weeks."

"Almost 35."

"Most women with triplets would be begging to be induced at this point," she said. "You're sure you're okay and not just putting on a brave face?"

I shrugged. "I'm not winning any medals for how fast I waddle, but I'm alright."

She gave me a concerned look before leading us back to look at the babies.

While she was putting on the gel, she said, "You know, for your height and build you're getting pretty massive."

I feigned shock, hiding how pleased the comment made me.

"My sister-in-law is also pretty petite," she continued. "She recently had twins. By week 32 she couldn't stand on her own for more than a few minutes. They put her on bed rest until they induced her at week 35. You're holding up remarkably better than she did."

The observation made me smile.

"She's been really healthy all her life," my mom responded.

The nurse nodded. "Maybe that's it."

Once she spread the cold gel all over my bump she started up the machine. We all watched the little black and white readout as she checked on each baby. She stayed pretty quiet while she checked out the first two. When she was checking the third (the only boy) she said, "I've seen singleton babies not as developed at this point."

"Is that bad?" my mom asked.

"No, just unexpected with multiples," she said. "If anything, it's the opposite of a problem. Your daughter could give birth right now and they wouldn't even need much time in the NICU (she pronounced it 'nick-you'). That said, she's showing no typical signs of stress beyond a normal, one baby pregnancy with a healthy mother. She could be the poster girl for multiple mothers."

She offered me a fist bump, which I returned.

"What's your secret, kid?"

I shrugged. "Eat your vegetables?"

My mom chuckled at that. "If you knew how hard I worked to make you eat your peas when you were young, you wouldn't be saying that."

We finished up and dropped that topic, but the conversation kept repeating itself in the back of my mind. Why was little ol' me so good at being pregnant? Regardless, it made me more confident in my plan to be a surrogate.

September wrapped up and I moved forward with school. The drama teacher, Mr. Beare, gave me a pass on being in the first play of the year, but I was still doing costumes and going to rehearsals. Lidia would come by on weekends to let me know how college was going. Half of my classes were honors courses that counted as college credit while the other half were fun, easy courses. Homecoming came and went. For some reason, nobody wanted to ask the massively pregnant girl that jumped her last date's bones. Wonder why.

My due date was right before Halloween, but I couldn't help but plan a pregnancy costume anyway. If I did give birth beforehand I probably wouldn't be up to attend a costume party. Of course, if for some reason I went overdue I might not be up for a party either. However, I really enjoy costumes, especially ones that incorporate me being pregnant. It was a pretty simple costume. The clothing side I finished in an afternoon. The tricky part was the paint, which I enlisted some of our set building experts to help me with. When I told them what I was going as they laughed and several agreed to help.

My OB/GYN told me she'd like me induced at week 38, which was past what most mothers of multiples make it to. I insisted I wanted to deliver when the babies decided to come.

She didn't like it, but she couldn't point to anything in my condition beyond 'other mothers do it that way' to justify ending my pregnancy early.

I think my parents would have preferred I just do what the doctor said, but they could see how well I was doing. Being what I then thought of as being massively pregnant as a petite teen wasn't getting in the way of my schooling or extracurricular activities. Except for the weight gain (95% of which was baby, placenta, and amniotic fluid) and slightly elevated (but still normal) blood pressure I was a picture of health. Twice in a row I was experiencing a complication free pregnancy and they couldn't see an actionable reason to interfere.

By mid-October I was still waddling around school with a belly four fifths my non-pregnant weight, prepping costumes for Joshua and the Wonderful Colorful Vision-Jacket while keeping my grades up and applying to some local community colleges. Despite having been pregnant since I was a sophomore, there were some people who thought me getting this big was newsworthy. So, I was still generating comments and stares. I was having trouble pulling attention to my clothes, as I was losing the battle to completely cover my belly. Induction or natural, I wasn't going to be pregnant much longer.

I decided to stick with the kid-friendly party, partly because of my experiences the previous year and partly because I had a feeling I wouldn't quite make it to Halloween. My church held their event the Friday before, which I'd more likely make it to.

My parents planned their costumes and car trunk decorations around mine that year. My dad dressed up as Ham Lonely, complete with the poofy hair and blaster. He even carried around a plush Bitechaka, doing ventriloquist bear sounds and carrying his half of the conversation. My mom went as Queen Leah. She had to buy the hair buns to complete the look because she's never grown her hair out long enough to do them herself. They found these miniature X-fighters and TYE Wings with little wires to make it look like they were flying. The back of their car was just a bunch of those on a black backdrop, making the whole thing a space battle.

I, of course, was the Planet Killer.



I wore all black and cut a sweater so my belly was exposed. The stage kids I enlisted to help me painted my belly gray then put a surprising amount of detail into it. Not that I could see

much of it without a mirror, but there was the big dish that shot the laser, the equatorial trench, and even little gun placements like the ones that shot at Duke. I connected a couple of the miniature spaceships to my outfit to make my belly look bigger by comparison.

The kids loved it. They rushed over and oohed and awed and put their little faces right up to my belly to look at all the little details painted on. Some of their parents tried to stop them from getting so close, maybe thinking they were being rude, but I just told them to look all they liked, but if they touched it the Planet Killer would use its tractor beam to steal all their candy. Some of them laughed at that, but others seemed genuinely afraid for their treats. Maybe they thought I was filled with candy like a piñata instead of with babies. At any rate, I got fewer unwanted belly touches than I'd have expected.

Adults were generally supportive and if anything less defensive than the previous year. I thought it might be because the Thomas's were defending my reputation, but maybe they were just nostalgic thinking about when they saw Space Battles come out in theaters. Several people came up to me and said 'That's no moon,' thinking they were original. One person asked if I swallowed the moon, which was a reference my parents had to explain to me.

While my parents wanted me to sit down and hand out candy all night, I did get up and mingle with a few of the kids my age. I'm not sure what enables me to be as mobile as I am while pregnant, whether it's the angle of my pelvis or extra strong legs, but people are continuously surprised at how freely I move at my big sizes. It's not like I'm winning any races, but late term with triplets I wasn't far from doubling my previous weight and I could still walk around for an hour. Eventually my mom convinced me to sit down, but I only agreed because I completed their decorations.

And no, there wasn't any leftover candy once I started on it.

* * *

Charles and Andrew carried Lidia's dresser out to the freight elevator while the two women ogled them. Andrew was the taller man, but Charles was thicker. Neither of them was handling the furniture particularly expertly.

Leanne and Lidia had agreed to disagree long ago about what made a man attractive. Lidia was drawn to tall, lean men with clear eyes and chiseled features; the kind that Palmwood loved to cast as doctors, lawyers, and business executives. Andrew fit her ideal perfectly in addition to being a surgical resident. He was quite charming, as well, and the two got along swimmingly.

For Leanne, height wasn't important since she'd met only a couple men shorter than her. What she did appreciate were muscles: bulging pecs and biceps, eight packs with those lines just inside the hips that aimed right at the goods under the belt, and hands that could completely envelop hers. Only in the hands did Charles really meet her criteria, but she couldn't be happier with him. The soft pudginess he had hiding his core matched the softness of his personality. He was kind in the way little children recognize and trust implicitly. His eyes were a chocolate brown and

he rarely raised his voice in anger. He retired from a local grocery chain only a few months before with full benefits. He'd started working there in high school and opted into staying on afterward. Now he was starting college with a comfy pension.

Lidia carried a box of kitchenware down after them. Leanne was left alternately munching on carrots and chocolates while she typed, watching because no one would let her carry anything. She was small enough that off the rack maternity wear actually fit her, if only barely. At just over six weeks, this wasn't the quickest she'd outgrown generically fitted clothes, but only a week behind her record. That pregnancy had been large, of course, but it had also been quite quick. A gestation time of five months meant her growth with a litter of goblins was rapid but brief. Ogre pregnancies apparently went for a year and a half, which made her current condition worrying to Dr. Fairfield. She was less worried than her doctor.

Leanne felt great, not only about her pregnancy, but her life in general. Her parents were preparing to enjoy retirement together. She and Charles were in a good place with their relationship. Her best friend was getting married. Even the weather was ideal. Life was good.

The guys came back up and she watched as Charles wiped some of that manly glisten from his forehead. Life was more than good. It was *bea-utiful*.

* * *

Over the next couple days I was reluctant to begin any labor inducing activities. I kind of wanted to show off to my doctors and make it a full week overdue. By my count I was a full forty weeks pregnant, which with multiples isn't the norm. My parents convinced me that I was being juvenile, especially since it wasn't a contest. I now know I have a lot more control over how my pregnancies go than I understood then and I'm convinced I could have made it a full month overdue if I'd needed to without pharmaceutical aids. There's actually this one pregnancy where I was on a boat and was shipwrecked for – right, getting ahead of myself again.

I caved in by Sunday morning when my dad made his special recipe biscuits and gravy. He uses super-hot Italian sausage and I always end up putting a bunch of tabasco on it as well. Once I ate that much spicy food I figured I might as well bounce on my exercise ball, too.

Contractions began in the evening. We called the Thomas's, grabbed the hospital bag, and headed out. The triplets came without complications. I was more composed than previously, now that it wasn't my first rodeo and I knew what to expect. It was just as beautiful of an experience as before.

Interestingly, Tasha and Ashley were both born that night, but Christian was born just after midnight so his birthday isn't the same. I'm told they still tease him about it.

I went ahead and stayed home for the whole week even though I was feeling fairly good by Thursday. My parents were willing to give me some time off, but I actually wanted time to do some personal research. Some comments from hospital staff had me thinking about what was

normal for pregnancy and what wasn't. I hadn't been exposed to many pregnant women as an only child. What I found was intriguing.

Apparently, that nurse's sister-in-law was fairly typical. The average weight of twins is about five and a half pounds with a pregnancy of about 37 weeks. For triplets, it's just under four pounds and delivered at 34 weeks. Both of my pregnancies were right around 40 weeks and none of my babies were born under seven pounds. One baby from each pregnancy was actually a bit over eight. I didn't have an accurate sense of how out of the norm I was, but from what I was gleaning from the medical staff it was quite a bit. The question remained as to why.

7 Getting a Commission and a Future

My next pregnancy was noteworthy because it was the first time I deliberately became pregnant instead of through hormonal, crazed sex. I'll admit to being a tad nervous when I met the couple whose babies I'd be carrying for nine months.

It's actually pretty amazing that it happened as soon as it did. The couple had had a series of miscarriages and were beginning to look into other options. Adoption wasn't right for them and they heard a story from a friend about a surrogate who decided to keep the baby. They were beginning to despair of ever becoming parents.

Yet again, the Thomas's did me a huge solid.

It turns out that Mr. Smith (they'd prefer not to be mentioned by name) worked in the same field as Mr. Thomas. By chance, he overheard Mr. Thomas raving about how wonderful the birth mother of their kids was (he seriously talks like that, which is super complementary but not wholly deserved). It might not have gone any further, but he mentioned I was looking to be a surrogate.

(Full disclosure: he was talking about how I was pregnant again and I liked it so much I might become a surrogate. He also mentioned being pregnant helped me with a depression-like mental illness. That's a sensitive topic for me and I'd shared that with them in confidence, but apparently it wasn't intentional so much as it slipped out in his proud-father spiel. If it hadn't resulted in a surrogacy gig I'd have been a lot angrier. As it was, I forgave him fairly quickly once he promised to be more careful. To my knowledge he hasn't slipped up a second time.)

After expressing some interest and explaining their situation, Mr. Smith asked how much Mr. Thomas trusted me. Mr. Thomas apparently said concerning his children he trusted me unequivocally.

I was a few weeks from my due date with the triplets at that point. He decided not to drop that potential news on me just then and instead let the Smiths initiate contact. Their lawyer came by my parents' home about two weeks after I delivered the triplets.

It was a school night; a fairly cold, wet evening, if I remember right. I was feeling better: no huge mood swings and I was much lighter on my feet than a few weeks before. I answered the door.

Outside was a miserable looking man in a suit. I thought he was in a bad mood because of the weather, but it turns out he usually just looks grumpy. He asked if I was Leanne Valens and if so could he talk with me and my parents.

My mom walked up and started playing mama-bear at that point. That's when he name-dropped the Thomas family. Well, we invited him in and he laid out the deal. He did his homework before approaching us and while my dad insisted we have our own lawyer look it over, I wanted to sign then and there. While I wasn't able to do that until after Thanksgiving, it was practically the same contract, except we used the surrogacy center my doctor suggested instead of the one they wanted.

I'm not sure how, but the rumor mill at school got wind that I was going to be a surrogate. I hadn't experienced that level of scrutiny since people found out about my first pregnancy. Apparently, when a girl gets knocked up twice before she turns 17 it's less noteworthy than if she serves as a surrogate before she turns 18. The only group I didn't mind the attention from was, unsurprisingly, the theater crowd. They thought it was weird, but I didn't feel judged by them.

The theater teacher had a few choice words for me. He'd given me a pass on being in the fall production because I was due right before we performed. That was kind of a big deal, as participation was a large part of our grade. I made it up to him by servicing him sexually - joking! Mr. Beare was never improper with his students to the best of my knowledge. No, I made it up by performing a dramatic monologue in class in addition to my seamstress duties.

That being the case, he was prepared to flunk me if I let another pregnancy get in the way of the show. Thankfully, my projected due date was well past graduation and I had an excellent track record for not delivering early. He reluctantly agreed I should be able to participate while in the second trimester. He did mention he had a role in mind for me to try out for, but he refused to elaborate just then.

With another impending pregnancy and all my ducks lined up in a row, I was pretty excited for the future. I applied to some online universities, looked up new maternity fashions to try, and generally looked forward to being big again. Lidia was happy for me, if confused as to why I wanted this. I still didn't understand all the particulars myself, but I was sure it was the right thing for me. My parents were somehow on board with their teenage daughter getting pregnant yet again. Everything was shiny.

I mentioned earlier some misgivings I had about bringing babies into a world where terrorists killed civilians by the thousands, but an unlikely thing helped convince me it was still worth doing, at least when parents wanted my help to have their own children.

Many people reading this are probably familiar with The King of Brooches. If you'll recall, the first installment of the movie version came out that Thanksgiving. For some people it's merely a bunch of cool fantasy action scenes. Most people thankfully recognize the incredible message of good overcoming evil against impossible odds. I think part of the success of the series on the big screen was that message combined with timing. None of us wanted to live in a world of terror, but that wasn't ours to decide. All we could do, myself included, was choose what to do with the time that was given to us.

I didn't know how much I could love someone until I held my babies for the first time. I didn't know how painful doing the right thing for someone else could be until I gave them up. I know I go on and on about how satisfying being pregnant is for me. It's a huge part of why I became a surrogate. That said, the miracle of birth is just as much of a reason. Doing for parents what they can't do for themselves is immensely satisfying. Sure, I get paid for it, but so do teachers, nurses, and police officers. This was something I could do that others couldn't, just like Drofo tossing the brooch into Destruction Peak.

(If you can't tell already, I'm something of a nerd. It dates back from around this time and yes, I do a lot of cosplay.)

* * *

Leanne looked over at her closet from where she sat at her desk. There were literally a dozen costumes stuffed in there with the rest of her clothes. There were a couple dozen more in storage, not counting the ones she cannibalized to make new cosplays. 'Something of a nerd' was an understatement.

A little flutter in her belly caught her attention. If she wasn't so familiar with pregnancy she'd have thought it was a muscle spasm or indigestion, but she could tell it was one of the fetuses making themselves known. At just over two months pregnant and bigger than she finished with quintuplets, it was obvious it was going to be one of *those* pregnancies. Most of her size wasn't baby yet: it was placenta and amniotic buildup to make sure she was stretched out enough for the real growth to come. Well, hopefully when it was time for bed rest she'd have more time to write and sew.

* * *

They scheduled the appointment for just past six weeks after I gave birth. The doctors encouraged me to wait longer, but I'd fully recovered from being pregnant almost a month before and my Urge was coming back. Thankfully, it wasn't as bad as before. It was almost like my body knew I was planning to get pregnant, so it gave me a bit of a pass.

With IV pregnancies being what they were, the Smiths elected to have multiple embryos implanted in me to make sure it worked. I remember thinking that I'd probably spontaneously make one egg split anyway, but this was new to me so I didn't make a fuss. They didn't want a huge family, so they split the difference with two. I made sure they knew I'd only had multiples so far, but they were listening to the doctors more than me. If they had listened, maybe they would have amended a certain clause in the contract, but there I go getting ahead of myself.

For the next week I stayed home from school. Apart from a couple trips to the store with my mom, I didn't leave the house. The Smiths were much pickier than the Thomas's about the children being genetically theirs. I'm not sure why, but it was their family and they were footing the bill, so I wasn't going to risk breaking the contract and get pregnant with babies besides theirs. The Urge wasn't too bad, but I was also living like a nun, so I'm not sure if it was because my body knew it was pregnant or because I didn't see anyone with a Y chromosome without a chaperone present.

At any rate, when the Urge was gone I relaxed a bit and went back to school. At that point everyone was restlessly awaiting winter vacation, so I was able to catch back up while they talked about what they were doing and getting for Christmas. I didn't participate because I already had my favorite gift inside me.

Apart from more frequent than usual doctors visits to keep the lawyers happy, the next couple months were uneventful. I took my AST, was accepted into Tucson University Online, and gave my parents a handmade tie and scarf for Christmas. I also found out what role Mr. Beare had in mind. Our program traditionally did a musical in the fall, sketch comedy for a select few students in the winter, and one of Shakspeare's plays in the spring.

Before I tell you the role, I want to point out a few things. First off, most high school theater groups are predominantly female, so women often have to play men's parts. That's a total flip from Jamesian Era theater, but that's just how things are. Also, Mr. Beare would have been driven into a psych ward from the drama and antics of his students years before my time if he didn't have such a dry sense of humor. He always had something witty to say no matter what we did that would either put us in stitches or silence the lot of us. Sometimes we didn't get what the real joke was until much later.

For the final production of my senior year we put on the Blithe Brides of Tudor. As he sometimes knew who he wanted in which role before he officially set the cast, we simply auditioned to be in the play instead of for a specific role. I wasn't showing at this point (at least in normal school clothes), but he knew I'd be pretty big by the time opening night arrived. So despite reading some of Annie Squire's lines, I was put in the part of Sir Jack Springpole, the fat antagonist of the show.

After I got over my initial embarrassment, I agreed with everyone else it was pretty funny. That said, my only high school role was going to be an aging overweight leech of a man that -

* * *

“You never told me you did that play.”

Leanne nearly jumped out of her skin. Charles was standing behind her, reading over her shoulder. She didn't know how he moved so silently, but he got a kick out of startling her.

“One of these days you're going to put me in premature labor,” she said.

“Isn't he a friend of King Harry the Something?”

“Different play,” she said, shutting her laptop. “So why are you testing the integrity of my womb like that?”

“For a few reasons.” He held up a finger. “Food's ready, for starters.” She started to get up, but he put a hand on her shoulder. “Also, your milking alarm has been going off for a few minutes.”

As he pointed it out, she simultaneously heard the incessant beeping and felt that familiar fullness in her chest. She wasn't about to leak, but she'd have noticed if she were sewing. Writing kept her hands just as busy as sewing, but mentally forced her to block the world out instead of observing everything with a zen grace she imagined Buddhist monks worked years to perfect. She reached for the pump sitting nearby. “Any other reasons?”

“Well, this,” he said before bending down to kiss her. “Also, a package arrived for you.”

Leanne smiled. If it was what she thought it was, then she would soon have a thoroughly enjoyable night.

* * *

-that is motivated by sex and greed. It would feel like a slap in the face if I didn't know him. Instead, it was more like a mutual chuckle at the subtle nuances of life.

As it turns out, I filled out the role better than either of us expected.

8 The Show Must Roll On

I had the appointment that told us how many babies I was pregnant with in early February. The technician found three heartbeats during that ultrasound. The Smiths were so happy they were going to be parents, but I also sensed they were overwhelmed by the thought

of raising triplets. By March they could put that fear to rest: they would instead be raising quintuplets.

There was a brief legal threat to only accept two of the kiddos, but thankfully the contract's language was clear - their DNA, their responsibility. They accepted that, but believed I must have gotten pregnant on my own. They insisted on DNA tests after I gave birth. If any of the children were mine I'd be raising those. I insisted that it wasn't possible, but I could tell they didn't believe me. My relationship with them became somewhat chilly thereafter.

Apart from that, I was thrilled. I was matching both my previous pregnancies all at once. I had mental fantasies of being so pregnant I was half belly. When I gave birth I practically was. In fact I would have been, but I also blew up in the chest and bottom so I wasn't quite as visually unbalanced.

My doctors were alarmed and put me under some strict orders to take it easy. For the most part I complied, but there were a few times I exerted myself more than they would have liked. The play was one circumstance when I disregarded their guidelines.

My role in the play was pretty dang involved. In addition to my sewing, I had a lot of time on stage. In addition to all the lines, I had some interesting choreographed parts. In one scene Jack was carried out of a house with a pile of dirty linens and another time he was beaten with a riding crop. Theater magic being what it is, I didn't actually have to take a beating or be tossed into a river, but it was still pretty rigorous to fake it.

I was about four months along when we started rehearsing those scenes. I was definitely showing, but not waddling yet. Mr. Beare and the cast were hesitant to have me do anything too rigorous. I convinced them by doing a cartwheel that I not only was willing but able to do the stunts without modification. They reluctantly agreed that I could, but they were all extra careful at those times. I think that might have been obvious to the audience when we performed, but a small break in the illusion was better than undue risk to five unborn children.

I might not need to come out and say it, but I was incredibly busy for my last few months of high school. That was the most I ever enjoyed being a student.

We performed for two weeks in the middle of May. I hit my fifth month mark during the play's run. I was as big as I ever got with the twins and everyone was getting pretty skittish around me. I admit I let them coddle me a bit, but that was mostly to mollify them into still letting me do my two little stunts. It worked.

I admit, I made a pretty good fat guy. I had to bind my chest a little (and modify my milking schedule to make that possible) and put on a fake goatee, but dressed up in a period suit I looked more like I had a beer belly than a pregnant belly. I did get one comment from a guy (a fairly cute guy) that my butt was definitely not a man's butt, but with how tight the costume was by the last show there really wasn't anything I could do to hide it. More about him later.

Despite having worked behind the scenes for three other productions, I wasn't prepared for the rush of performing for a live audience. Opening night there was a bunch of fluttering going on inside me that had nothing to do with the twenty little limbs getting a workout. I didn't puke or pee my pants, thankfully, but I was barely holding it together. My first few lines came out a bit garbled, but once I stopped focusing on the audience I did better.

I have to say I've never enjoyed so many people laughing at me before. They were technically laughing at my character, but it was invigorating.

We almost botched the laundry stunt simply because I was nervous. I almost missed my cue another time. One thing I learned from that performance was how letting the little mistakes slide while you focus on what's important sometimes can result in a better outcome than fretting at each flaw. I made a dozen little mistakes, but the crowd roared when we took a bow.

Lidia and my parents congratulated me after the show. I was feeling fantastic and was going to go to the after party, but there was an incident involving someone's parents. From what I understood, the cute guy's mom (who basically said he liked my butt) didn't think the director would actually let a pregnant girl participate. When she saw me onstage she was shocked. By the end of the night she had almost convinced herself it was a prosthetic. To make sure, she came up to me as if to congratulate me in order to feel my bump.

Of course, when she felt it one of the babies decided to kick. There was just no way it was a prop. She got all flustered and just came out and said I should be ashamed for getting knocked up then putting them in danger by unduly exerting myself. I went from elated to mortified and just locked up.

Lidia came to my defense first. She tongue-lashed the lady, telling her I was responsible and wouldn't participate if it was risky for me or the babies and besides it was a surrogacy thing and wasn't she just being a little presumptuous and rude and how dare she judge her friend. Before she could work up too much steam, Mr. Beare came up and said that if she had some concerns about the show she could call him and they could talk about it more at length.

Mr. Beare mollified her enough for my parents to steer me out of her way. They agreed with Lidia that I was being responsible and they were so proud of me. They tried cheering me up by talking about my great performance, but I wasn't in the mood. I really was grateful for each of them stepping up for me. That said, the lady's remarks really hit home and I was tired enough that I just wanted to try again the next day.

Each of the five remaining performances went really well. Lidia came to two more. The Thomas family all came one night, though they had to take their kids out at various points because they were crying. One night the Smiths came to see me. I made sure to make my stunts go flawlessly that night.

* * *

"Everything alright in there?"

Leanne huffed in frustration. It was the day after her package came and she was getting annoyed. The parts of the outfit she made all fit, but the metal and plastic accessories weren't cooperating. Having him help put them on would diminish the experience for both of them. If she couldn't get them on soon she was going to have to leave them out, which was really unfortunate.

Her and Charles's sex life was good. He was a bit anxious about doing things wrong sometimes and she sometimes got so caught up in the feeling she pushed the boundaries of what he was comfortable with, but normally they clicked as well as either of them ever had. It only improved after he admitted his kink for pregnant women and she in turn was honest about her Urge to breed.

Towards the end of her last pregnancy, she delayed doing laundry for too long and wore part of her Lisa Craft cosplay. His reaction to seeing her bursting out of that character's iconic shorts and tank top resulted in a particularly passionate night. He admitted he had had a crush on that and a couple other video game heroines. Leanne wanted to recreate or even exceed that experience. Judging by how handsy he'd been recently, she was at the right size to blow his mind. However, her size was also making it difficult to properly put on all the bits of armor.

She stopped for a moment to think. Could she work the missing armor into the role play?

With a smile, she opened the bedroom door.

"Mist!" she said. "The Maternia is reacting again!"

He looked at her first in shock, then recognition, then with joy and lust.



The wig of long, black hair tied in a loose ponytail threw him for a moment. Once he took in the short white tank top, the armor on her forearms, and the taxed suspenders leading down to the black leather miniskirt barely visible behind her pregnant belly he recognized the cosplay. It didn't matter to him that she didn't have on the character's trademark boots or the thigh high armored socks. They wouldn't have been readily visible below her now truly impressive gut (by other women's standard) anyway.

He smiled. "Don't you mean -"

"I know what I said, Mist Quarrel. It reacted with my pregnancy again and I grew this big in minutes!"

He swooped in to kiss her. His excitement was evident in both the intensity of the kiss and the poke she felt in her side. Yeah, the parts she didn't have on really didn't matter right now.

"So, Ms. Tafi Heartkey, how do we fix this situation?"

Leanne did her best to give him a smoldering look. "I really need a shock to my nervous system to reject the Maternia. Can you make that happen?"

In answer, he put one hand behind her neck to pull her in for another kiss. The other hand gently teased the skin on her belly. Then he bent down and, with a little grunt, lifted her in his arms and carried her to the bed. She smiled the whole way.

9 On to New Widths

With the show finished, there wasn't much left of high school. I waddled around school for a couple weeks before I waddled across a stage to accept my diploma. You'd think a shapeless gown would hide how enormous I was, but the photos my parents took made me look like I swallowed a prizewinning pumpkin. I was six months along with quint, but still.

After classes ended, I took it easy for a while. I was going to attend online college in the fall, which felt like settling for a reason I couldn't quite put my finger on. In the meantime, all I had to do was my part-time seamstress job, which after the year I had was super easy. Well, that and eat enough, which was a part-time job on its own. I was, after all, as big at six months with quintuplets as I was at nine months with triplets. I was growing faster and larger than I ever had before.

Looking back, another hint that I was supernaturally good at making babies was my lack of stretch marks. I attributed it to being a teenager, but even still I should have had a few when I tripled then quadrupled my waist measurement. No stretch marks, lots of multiples, normal

sized babies with multiples, able to stand and move around freely at double my normal weight - lots of little hints that I was abnormal in a good way kept cropping up. The doctors just continued to scratch their heads.

As I broke my previous size record, I got it in my head that I should show my bump off. I was really feeling both sexy and horny and I wanted to celebrate myself. I enlisted Lidia, who finished her semester shortly after I did, to join me for a pool day.

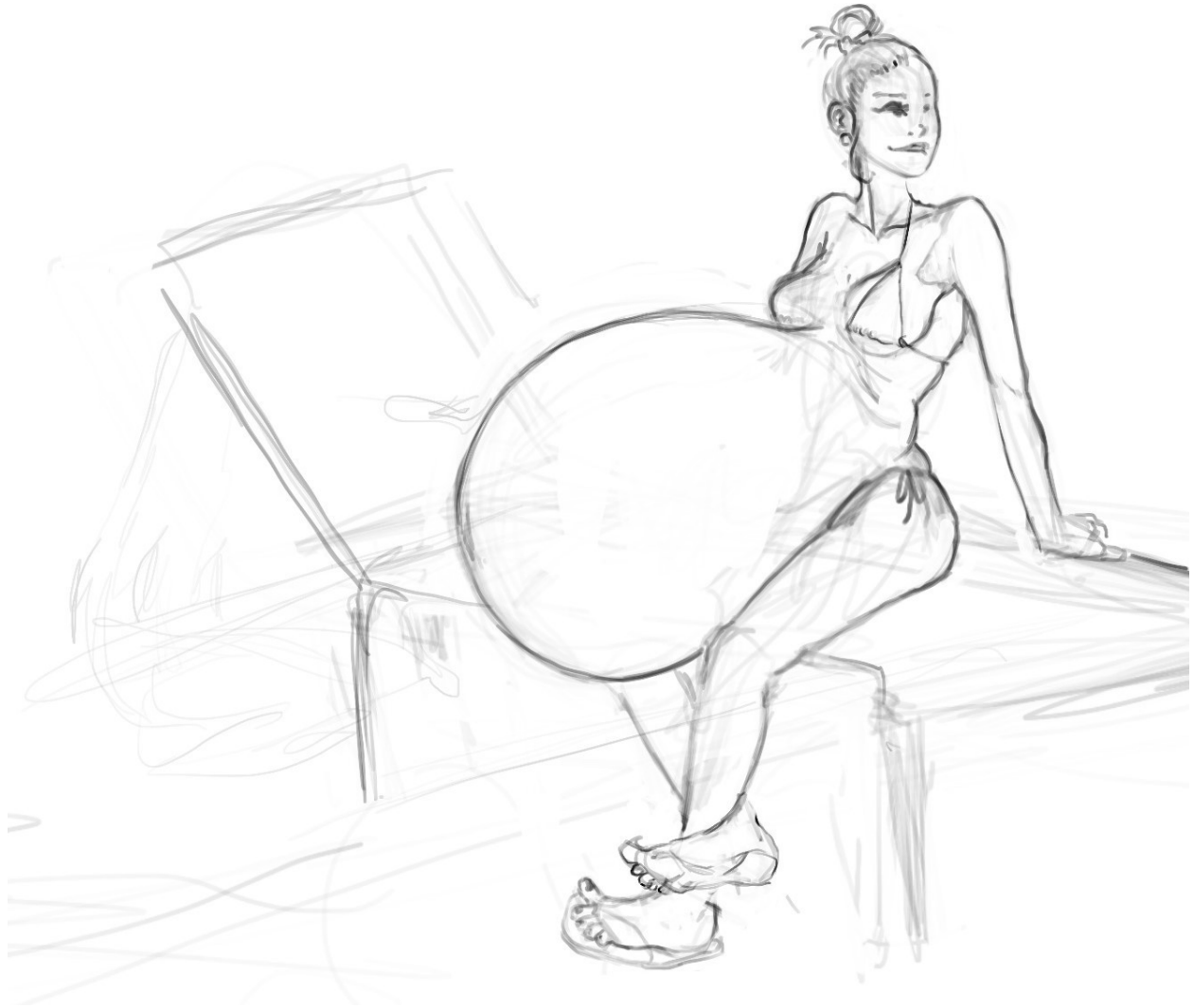
Now, I should probably let you know a few things about Lidia. I've always admired her sharp intelligence, her ability to bring order to chaos, and her understated tenacity. Apparently, guys saw those traits and skittered away. She was also a bit taller than many guys, especially back in high school, so that was sometimes a turnoff for them as well. That resulted in exactly one date during her first year of college. My beautiful, wonderful friend was getting a little down on herself and I wanted to help her. She'd helped me so much, after all.

We chose a Saturday in late June and packed a picnic lunch so we could stay all day. We also did a little swimsuit shopping so we both looked our best. I had very few options that actually fit all of me, so I ended up with a bikini almost by default. Lidia had LOTS of options. I sort of pushed the more revealing options her way. She'd only ever worn standard one piece swimsuits, so anything two piece was automatically risqué in her mind. I reminded her that there was no way she'd show more skin than me. That made her laugh and she ended up picking a two piece that emphasized her modest bust without revealing most of it. We also grabbed a few tubes of sunscreen, as I wasn't kidding about having lots of exposed skin.

We showed up shortly before the pool opened. A fair number of people were already there. The two of us (seven if you counted fetuses) definitely turned a few heads. We were wearing matching dollar store sunglasses and homemade sundresses. My sundress had a bunch of extra fabric and still had a 'high-low' effect, but I think we both looked great. I think several guys agreed.

We paid our admission and headed in. We picked a couple of lounge chairs away from the pool deck and made them ours. Normally I preferred the feel of being on the grass, but

standing from the ground unassisted was a little difficult at that point.



We slightly delayed putting on sunscreen just to see if some macho guys would volunteer to help. They didn't, so we did it ourselves. I helped Lidia with her back and she spent twenty minutes and an entire bottle on the parts of me I couldn't reach easily, which felt like most of me. By that point, I was ready for a snack.

Lidia started some light reading while I munched my way through some cheese sticks and trail mix. As I ate, I watched what I could see of the pool area to either side of the enormous mound sitting on my lap. At that point, it was pretty much as big as the rest of me. My belly button was several inches out of reach. I remember they started kicking up a storm. Either they really liked the trail mix or the inadvertent belly rub I received from Lidia.

Instead of the hunks I was looking to catch, a trickle of children came by with and without parents to ask why I was so fat. After showing them that my arms and legs weren't fat I told them I was pregnant and full of babies. When they asked where babies came from, I

answered that in my case a doctor put them there. When they asked where babies normally come from, I told them to ask their parents.

I checked over on Lidia a few times. A couple guys came over while I entertained the parade of children. She even put down her book for one of them.

While I definitely wanted a chance to find my own stud, I was happy my best friend was getting some well deserved attention. Besides, the kids were cute and I was getting pretty good at ignoring the stink eye from some of the parents.

That's when someone I knew snuck up on me. By that I mean he walked straight at me with my bump blocking my view and it took him calling my name a couple times for me to start paying attention. It was the guy from theater that thought my butt didn't look like a man's butt. His name was Murphy (you know the drill with names) and he was even cuter without a shirt on.

At first I was startled and flustered, but soon enough we started talking about life after high school and our future plans. Turns out he was going to a smaller college not terribly far away. He wanted to be a writer, but his dad convinced him to study business instead. To show he wasn't totally backing down, he made sure I understood he would be minoring in English.

I told him I'd be attending classes online (it was still a new concept then) because it provided more flexibility around giving birth. He was really supportive when I told him I wanted to be a surrogate as often as I could. At the time I thought he was just being nice or possibly that he liked what pregnancy was doing to my breasts and butt. Turns out, there was more to it than that.

It started warming up during our conversation, so I suggested we move to the pool. He helped me up with an amount of effort I found embarrassing. I left Lidia talking with two guys and smiling wider than I'd ever seen her smile.

We walked arm in arm - not that I needed the support, but it was nice anyway - over to the steps at the shallow end. As he stepped away when I moved my grip to the handrail, I could tell he was checking me out. I tried swaying my hips as I made my way into the water. Between my behemoth belly and the shock of the cold water I doubt I succeeded. Even so, his eyes didn't leave my body.

Once I left the shallow end, the weight just dissolved. I didn't have a lot of body fat back then, but for being so full of milk and amniotic fluid I was surprisingly buoyant. I remember trying to stay at a depth where my boobs would float on the surface. They were a D cup when I was full of milk (C without) and I thought they were pretty impressive. So did Murphy.

We couldn't really continue a meaningful conversation with all the shouting and laughing and splashing, so I just splashed him. He was a little hesitant to splash back at first, but once I got him good a couple times he eased up. He figured out I couldn't turn quickly in the water (or on dry land) and he made a game of splashing me from the back. A couple times I bumped my bump against people and they were confused at who they touched.

Once I started to get tired of losing that game, I pulled him aside and laid a hand on his shoulder. He was confused at first, but eventually he put a hand on my lower back to pull me close. We felt each other up a bit below the waterline until the lifeguard whistled at us.

We spent most of the rest of the day back on land. I offered some of my snacks and we munched while we talked. Lidia and I checked in on each other regularly, but we were each doing pretty well on our own. He was a bit hesitant to get physical where someone could see, so I ran the idea of having a movie night by him. He loved it and immediately asked me out to see some action movie. He was chivalrous enough to offer to pay even though I broached the idea. Toward the end of the afternoon, he asked about the father of my babies.

“Oh, I’m a surrogate this time.”

He hadn’t heard of that, so I explained that an infertile couple was paying me to be pregnant with their babies. I also had to tell him what in-vitro fertilization was, which blew his mind.

“So you’re not sleeping around?”

That was triggering, but I’d had such a nice day that I kept my temper under control.

“My first two pregnancies were from mistakes. Those guys aren’t in the picture. I’m not repeating that mistake. Part of why I’m doing surrogacies is because I don’t want to have kids of my own. Not right now, anyway.”

He didn’t really say what he thought of that. I couldn’t tell if he was disappointed I wouldn’t have sex with him or skeptical I really meant it. What he didn’t do just then was push the subject, which I appreciated. I was three for two on getting knocked up and I didn’t have much of a leg to stand on when I said ‘No’.

Lidia was as successful as I was. She had some paper, so we each gave a boy our home numbers. Murphy and the guy Lidia liked high-fived in front of the other guy, which he took well enough. The outing was a huge success and we celebrated with ice cream before heading home. (Lidia would probably have me point out I ate half of her sundae, which was typical of me when I’m super pregnant. The babies need the calories, okay?)

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Leanne belched for five long seconds and Charles applauded her at the end. He brought home Chinese takeout after classes and Leanne was showing what happened when she forgot to eat for a few hours then pigged out at mealtime.

“I think that’s twice as long as I’ve ever burped before,” he said.

“Jealous much?” she asked, picking up a container she hadn’t finished yet.

“Honestly? A little.” He took a swig of soda pop, trying to swallow as much air as he could.

Leanne chuckled between bites. They’d been living together for about two months and they were settling into a pleasant routine. Three days a week he had classes and three days he worked as a waiter. She could get her sewing jobs done in two, sometimes three days, and used the rest of her time to keep the apartment running. Together they were bringing in a respectable bit of money and could afford buying enough food for three active adults most nights.

Leanne was going through a growth spurt. She wasn’t even a third done with her expected 18 month pregnancy and she was becoming more belly than woman again. Ultrasounds had revealed at least seven ogre children, all of whom were almost full term human sized at this point. From what the Fairfield’s were able to put together, ogre fetuses put on a lot of size early on then generally became more dense toward the end of gestation. Of course, more than two babies at once was unheard of for ogre women. They weren’t sure what caused this pregnancy to deviate so much, but at this rate she was going to need to move into the clinic’s ‘Leanne Suite’ soon. She and Charles were enjoying their time as a couple as much as possible before then.

She rubbed what she could of her belly, quietly regretting eating so quickly. Charles gave her a look. “Everything okay?”

Leanne nodded and ate a bit more rice. “I really need to quit skipping meals.”

“Would you like a belly rub?”

Leanne gave out a combination moan, purr, and belly rumble. “You are too good to me,” she said as she moved in closer.

He expertly ministered to her packed womb and she played with his hair whenever he was close enough. Several more gas bubbles loosened up, though none resulted in as prolific of a burp.

“Are you happy?” he asked.

“You know it,” she replied in a sultry, contented voice.

He shook his head. “Like really happy with life, not just this moment.”

Leanne cocked her head. “You know how much I enjoy being pregnant, so I’ve been pleased with how that’s turned out. I’m also content with my living situation. My relationships with my parents, with Lidia - with you” she ruffled his hair, “are all going really well. So yes, I’m happy.”

He leaned in to kiss her. “I’m happy to hear that.”

“What about you? Are you happy?”

With a huge grin he whispered, “I never knew what happiness was until I met you.”

They sat together, smiling like idiots and looking into each other’s eyes for a minute before Charles continued her belly rub.

* * *

Murphy and I talked on the phone quite a bit over the next couple weeks. We also ‘saw’ an action film together, by which I mean we made out in a theater during said film. We also made out in a changing room, behind a diner, and a few times in his car.

I did begin to notice a few things. First off, as much as he enjoyed feeling my ass and tits, his hands also spent a lot of time on my belly. I certainly enjoyed it, but I sort of assumed it was him just giving me something I liked. I was so naive.

With as much as I enjoyed feeling up his pecs and glutes I also, um, ‘serviced’ him for his pleasure. It was more than I was comfortable doing, but I really wanted to make him happy. I also figured if we had enough outlets we would avoid actual intercourse. It was my first real relationship and I was super hormonal, okay? It seemed like a reasonable course of action at the time.

The summer progressed and I started to redefine ‘large’. The babies were just as healthy as during both previous pregnancies. They were also individually just as big. My doctors were pleased at how they were doing, but kept fussing over how uncomfortable they thought I should be. I became a broken record, telling them I felt fine.

That was the gospel truth. I adored how I looked and reveled in how it felt to be so gloriously pregnant. When I went to bed in the evening my back and legs were sore, but I’d wake up feeling great. I wasn’t running any races, but I could still keep up with my mom at the fabric store and take walks with Lidia or Murphy. My gut felt taunt, but I still hadn’t developed any stretch marks. I might have looked like a caricature of fertility, but I felt fantastic.

It was a hot August day when Murphy sat me down and told me just how sexy he thought I was. I’ve already said I found people on the internet who thought pregnancy was sexy. He was the first person I met face to face who admitted a fetish for pregnant women.

On the one hand, I was thrilled someone else was as into pregnancy as I was. It was even better that he was cute. On the other hand, it made me wonder if he liked me for anything besides my pregnant body. It was a few days and a few make out sessions before I realized just how much that thought bothered me.

When I brought it up, he said I was just being hormonal and of course he liked me. I let it lie for a couple days before beginning a series of questions about what I liked and other

personally revealing topics. Within a week it was pretty obvious the attraction was purely physical. I ended it after that.

I was pretty shaken up about it, being my first breakup and all. I leaned on Lidia for support for a while, but she headed back to school before long. By that point I was in the home stretch with my pregnancy and I had a lot of things to do to prepare for that, keeping me occupied.

For instance, I started my pregnancy scrapbook around then. I didn't have a lot of pictures from my first two pregnancies, so I made up for it on my third. My dad helped me figure out his old camera and I did a couple little photo shoots.

Looking back at those photos, I'm surprised at how small I looked. It's definitely not what other people think looking at those pictures. After all, I was big enough to curl up inside my own uterus. My belly curved up from my ribs even when standing. It flared out wider than my shoulders and hips, making it obvious I was pregnant from behind. I was almost a foot away from touching my belly button by that point. It might sound huge to you and it felt gigantic at the time, but that's seriously a normal late-term size by my current standards.

It isn't just my belly (which was admittedly massive by normal standards, but rather mediocre compared to my later pregnancies), but the rest of me was also tiny; from my stick limbs to my relatively small chest and ass. I guess the little excess weight gain from each pregnancy adds up, because I no longer resemble that beanpole with an exercise ball attached.

(As a side note, I've switched to digital. Digital is easier to store and with my limited skill gets better quality pictures. I also may or may not photoshop myself for pictures that I show to people besides clients. Sue me for feeling a bit insecure about my thighs.)

Another thing I occupied myself with was cosplay. If you remember, sewing initially started as something to do so I could sit comfortably and quietly alone during lunch. Later on, getting a decent job was a reason to improve my skills with a sewing machine. Altering my wardrobe to keep up with my changing physique was time consuming, but I found I still had the time and energy to do more. My costume success prompted me to look into other ways to creatively make outfits, which led to Con'o'Comic.

If you've never been, just know you're missing out. Fan conventions are a blast. There's sneak peeks and merchandise, but the real fun is with the people. Everyone is there because they're enthusiastic about the art, stories, and characters of the different media. The writers, artists, actors, and directors that come all seem to enjoy the overwhelmingly positive feedback. In turn, people enjoy meeting the talent that produces what they've come to love. It's a win-win situation all around.

Being several months along with quintuplets meant most normal cosplay was off the table. As tempting as it was to repeat being the Star Killer, I wanted to try something new. I'll occasionally repeat a cosplay, but only if it's one of my all-time favorites and I never do the same one twice in a row.

What decided it for me was when Lidia told me she might want to dress up as well. When she told me that, I looked at couples costumes for inspiration and struck paydirt. Her costume actually took me much longer than mine, what with all the detail work in her dress. She bought a wig for herself and the headpiece for my costume as her contribution. While I stitched, she'd occasionally sit with me so we could practice our accents.

When we showed up together, we immediately turned heads. It was pretty obvious who we were together: Fiori and Shruk. When people came up to congratulate me, there was a pattern of going from congratulatory to confused to understanding to amazed. I guess when I'm covered in green makeup and wearing men's clothing I look like a short dude. They thought my belly was an oversized prop to make up for my lack of height. When they discovered I was actually a pregnant chick, they almost always took a step back and stared wide-eyed at what they now recognized to be a prodigiously large pregnant belly. Usually I'd just say, "That's not nice - it's only some babies," when they pointed it out to their friends. I got some good laughs from that line.

Everyone asked Lidia to sing like Fiori does. She always refused. Not only is she insecure about her singing voice, but she's more of an alto. She did get some attention from guys, which I was really happy for. Murphy didn't come with us (we broke up a couple weeks later, if I'm remembering right). He made some excuse to avoid being a third wheel. I'm glad he didn't or he'd be in my photos from the event.

We saw a lot of good comic and anime cosplays, but movies were by far the most popular at the time. I think everyone worried about being recognized. Anyway, it was a great experience and a fantastic day.

I avoided being induced again by pointing to my track record and gave birth exactly on my due date in mid-September. I remember I really had to lean back to walk around by the end, but I could still stay on my feet long enough to run errands. I couldn't sit in a sedan or walk through the turnstiles at the library, but I could still go shopping. That was pretty impressive, as I'd more than doubled my pre-pregnancy weight by month eight. The Smiths were nervous through the whole labor, but by this point I was a pro - so long as I had an epidural. It went smoothly, though it understandably took longer. They took all five home after the DNA tests they insisted on came back. We haven't really kept in touch, but I can report the children all grew up healthy.

*I'll note here that during my final month I was euphoric. Sore knees be damned - I was a f***ing fertility goddess! When I deflated after giving birth, it was like waking up on rainy Monday after a fantastic dream. All I wanted was to fall asleep again. I was hooked on being a surrogate mother.*

10 Sabotage of the Most Wonderful Kind

I had another couple lined up before giving birth. The Kelfords looked up the surrogacy clinic on their own. They were quirky academics and while they were nice enough, I never developed the relationship I had with the Thomas's or even the Smiths. The timing simply lined up right, so the clinic offered me the gig. It turns out it was a good thing it was me and not someone else.

Mrs. Kelford wanted a big family. They decided to go with four implanted eggs, which was the most the clinic's doctor would do. However, when I told her how well I handled five she was really impressed. She told me she hoped a couple of the eggs split. I agreed that it might happen.

(Incidentally, I was implanted on Halloween, making my belly-less costume the thinnest and least interesting one I've had since first getting pregnant. I went as Larrina Fletcher, the Witch Who Survived. I didn't like not having a rounder costume, but I still enjoyed the Halloween event my church put on.)

I put it off as just awkward friendliness, but she offered me a smoothie at every appointment. I later found out she had an ulterior motive.

Murphy got back in touch with me around this time. He apologized for being pushy and said he hoped we could still be friends. I - young and inexperienced as I was - decided to try that despite Lidia warning me not to. We hung out a couple times, including making ice cream at his parent's house on one occasion. We stopped a few weeks after the in-vitro procedure.

This is the part where I fess up to my role in what happened next. I admit I was keen on the idea of being even more massively pregnant than before. I didn't share this with anyone, but I did purchase some neonatal vitamins that had a reputation for occasionally increasing the number of children a woman would have. I took a few around the time of the procedure then crossed my fingers and hoped for the best.

My morning sickness, which was normally nonexistent, was somewhat more of an issue this time around. I also noticed a much larger increase in my appetite after about a month. At two months I was beginning to outgrow my normal clothes.

When I had my first ultrasound the nurse counted eight heartbeats. The Kelfords were ecstatic, the clinic was frantic, and I felt guilt and joy in equal measure. What was I thinking, trying to boost my already high fertility? I was going to enjoy getting so big, but was I pushing things too far? I contemplated my pregnancy obsession while I slurped the smoothie Mrs. Kelford gave me.

I did a lot of soul searching for the next two weeks before my next appointment. My first semester of online classes went really well. Things were good with my parents. If my choice of boyfriend wasn't the best, well, there were other fish in the sea. I was healthy and I hadn't given

in to the Urge in almost two years, so this surrogacy solution was going well. That said, eight babies at once was possibly a little much, even for me.

Lidia freaked out a little when I told her. She was overprotective and a little bit scared for me during the end of my last pregnancy. I reassured her that my doctors were great and I was still a pregnancy badass.

Murphy was understandably more excited. He was so excited he accidentally admitted that he'd put some fertility supplements into the ice cream he made for me. When I asked which kind, he showed me the packaging. It was over the counter medication, but it was WAY more potent than the vitamins I took. I ripped him a new one for that and said I never wanted to see him again. He grinned through the whole thing. He was sooo excited to see how big I'd get. I was too, but sneaking me drugs in my food was totally not cool.

I called up the clinic and told them what my ex-boyfriend did. They thanked me for telling them and said they'd get back to me on what to expect both medically and legally.

At the next appointment, my doctor pulled everyone together and explained to us that someone had slipped me some fertility medication and they believed that's what had caused the extra splitting of the implanted embryos. Before he could mention who it was, Mrs. Kelford asked how they found out, because she was careful to make sure I always finished the smoothies so there wouldn't be any evidence.

Long story short, she slipped me several large doses of prescription grade fertility supplements left over from when she tried to get pregnant. The lawyers had a field day putting blame primarily on them (though Murphy had some consequences, too) to protect the clinic. Mrs. Kelford got some court ordered counseling. I got some extra compensation, though not as much as I would have without my freaky ex-boyfriend's contribution. The doctor contacted the media to get publicity, which I didn't really appreciate.

And I was actually pregnant with twelve babies, not eight. Those technicians always seem to miss a few on that first appointment.

** * **

Leanne sighed, remembering that fiasco. Ultimately, it resulted in meeting Dr. Fairfield, but it was just a huge mess at the time.

She sat in bed because Charles had stepped out for a moment and she could no longer get out of bed without some help. She could still walk around despite being so big scientists couldn't explain the physics behind it, but her weight was just too far forward for her to pull herself out of bed and not fall down. She really had to pee, too. If he didn't come back soon, she'd have to try some fairly desperate gymnastics to get herself up. It involved some rolling and a motion that resembled an olympic deadlift. She'd done it before, but one time she tweaked her back and she couldn't risk a back injury if she had more growing to do.

Hoping to distract herself long enough to not wet the bed, she continued typing.

* * *

The weight of my guilt left me, only to soon be replaced by the weight of a quickly expanding belly. By the time I was three months pregnant - which I could hide with triplets - I was wearing my largest unmodified maternity clothes. It was wonderful to have a proper belly again so soon, but I'd be lying if I said I wasn't a tad apprehensive. I was pregnant with more babies at once than my three previous pregnancies combined.

Life continues despite our occasional wishes for it to stop or turn back. I was still taking classes so I could earn my Associates Degree. I didn't know what I wanted to major in, but I was told moving halfway to a Bachelors was a good first step I didn't need firm plans for. I was also able to continue sewing, not only earning an increasingly decent wage, but honing my craft more and more.

Lidia, worried as she was for me, came to visit me only occasionally. Her boyfriend - the same guy she gave her number at the pool - was being a pain around then. She worked really hard at school and her night job and didn't have the energy nor focus to coddle his ego. They lasted longer than my first relationship did, but it eventually ended a lot uglier.

Murphy, on the other hand, became my stalker. He would 'just happen' to be at the store when I was. He decided to start going to church where my family went. (Incidentally, I can trace my reluctance to attend church back to when people there picked him over me.) He even tried visiting me at home a couple times. My dad ran him off, but the dude was committed. I eventually got a restraining order on him, which mostly kept him away.

A cold, wet winter was turning into a cool, wet spring when a certain Dr. Fairfield inquired about me at the clinic. I was over four months pregnant and struggling to make my wardrobe continue to fit when she approached me after an appointment. She originally explained her interest in me by saying she was doing a study on pregnancies with multiples and heard about my situation. At that point, my doctors wanted to terminate the fetuses for my own good, but I continued to be too healthy to let them pull the trigger. Dr. Fairfield was the lone medical voice that didn't want to kill the babies.

When we first met, her demeanor kept switching from stoic professional to excited fangirl. I was an interesting case to her - because I was twice as pregnant as anyone she'd ever worked with! The fact that my quintuplets were born full term and at average singleton weight amazed her. That I wasn't totally bed bound by that point baffled her. She was skeptical when I told her about my daily schedule and all the walking I did weekly right until a couple days before birth. Honestly, I felt like both a scientific specimen and a rockstar around her. I decided to meet with her again. We set a date to meet at her office.

The meeting didn't actually happen until I was over five months pregnant. A few reporters had already come to see me. They had been half convinced I was a practical joke, so I was preparing myself to convince her I actually was as pregnant as I claimed to be. By then, I

was approaching my late stage quintuplet size. Even so, I was able to move around even easier than the last time I was that pregnant.

I arrived early and settled in to wait. Pretty quickly, a man who was already there changed seats to strike up a conversation.

“You know, women about to deliver use a different entrance straight back to the delivery rooms.”

I nodded, trying to figure out a way to acknowledge him without saying I was too early to deliver. He continued before I could.

“Of course you don’t look like you’re in labor, but they’d probably put you in a bed really quickly if you asked.”

I decided to play off the taboo of men mentioning how big pregnant women were becoming. “Why?” I asked. “Does it look like I’m about to pop?”

He shrugged, seemingly totally at ease. “Looks like you should have exploded already.”

I gave him my best death glare, then ignored him.

“With how well you’re handling being that pregnant, you’d think something spooky was involved.”

No one had suggested the supernatural was involved before. I continued to ignore him, but I started considering if what he said had some merit.

“Seriously, being only five months pregnant with twelve kids, all of whom are growing at the same rate as singletons, and moving around as easily as you do suggests a more than normal situation.”

I looked at him in shock. There was no way he could know the details of my pregnancy so exactly. I assumed he was a reporter following up on earlier interviews, but he didn’t really seem like the reporter type.

“In other words, a paranormal situation.”

It was right then that a nurse called me back. The man popped up and offered me a hand, which I was too stunned to refuse. As he escorted me towards the back, he said to the nurse, “Jill wants me in on this one.”

The nurse nodded. “It’s good to see you again, Other Dr. Fairfield.”

That surprised me yet again. She hadn’t told me her husband would be meeting with us, too. With the situation I had with Murphy stalking me, I probably would have insisted he leave

me alone if I wasn't so startled by the series of revelations. As it was, I let him escort me to his wife's office in stunned silence.

Dr. Fairfield stood when I entered. "Ms. Valens, I'm so glad you could make it. I see you've met my husband as well."

He walked over to give her a kiss on the cheek. "I was just getting to know your patient."

"You'll have to excuse Hank," Dr. Fairfield said. I thought I saw her roll her eyes a little. "He's an anthropologist, so he loves poking holes in local customs to see how people react. It really is one of his more endearing traits - once the urge to strangle him subsides."

"I didn't choose the science life," he said while giving me a wink. "The science life chose me."

I decided if he was going to be like that I could get comfortable. I pulled his chair in front of mine then sat my bump on it. Then I hooked my chair with my foot to pull it closer. He took a seat on the desk as I got myself situated. Once I was sitting, my bump in one chair and the rest of me in the other, I spoke up.

"So your husband mentioned the paranormal. Do you believe in that stuff? Do you think I qualify?"

Dr. Fairfield gave her husband one of those little glares married people give each other. He had the decency to at least look a tiny bit embarrassed.

She turned back towards me and said, "My field of expertise is medicine. It's a scientific endeavor to the core, but any physician or nurse that spends enough time around the sick and dying has stories about things they can't explain.

"Something I can't explain is your current condition. Yes, the in-vitro and the fertility drugs caused you to have twelve fetuses. What's puzzling is how well you carry them. For instance, quintuplets never are carried to 40 weeks. I haven't heard of many quintuplets all surviving, much less born at seven pounds each with fully functional lungs. That is so far beyond normal that I can only speculate. What has me questioning everything is there is every indication that you're about to repeat that feat with twelve."

She let that hang in the air. I didn't have a response. Lately, my answers amounted to 'I'm just good at being pregnant', which explains nothing. As stunning as it was to be told I was supernaturally gifted, I really didn't have another explanation. So I just sat there, waiting for her to continue.

"For my part, I'd like your permission to sequence your genome. There are people that are humanoid without really being human. Some of them can freely breed with Homo sapiens. When they do, they sometimes produce offspring that appear human but have extra or altered

DNA. Sometimes it stays dormant for generations. I'd like to check if you have such an ancestor."

"I'm here to check on a more mystical cause," Hank Fairfield said. "I've come across rituals in obscure villages that do things we can't do with modern technology. I wasn't always a believer in magic, but now I've actually learned how to do a little. I can demonstrate if you like."

I expected a bit of sleight of hand. Maybe a light show from a hidden projector. Instead, he pulled out a little origami spider and set it on the desk. It scurried around a little.

"This is Spence. Spence, say hi to Leanne Valens by waving three legs at her."

The paper spider shook three of its little legs at me.

"Now do a flip."

It did.

I gasped. In addition to being much cuter than anything with eight legs should be, he took verbal commands. No way it was a normal spider covered in paper. There was also no chance it was a robot or clockwork toy. It was simply too small and moved too fluidly.

"Would you like to hold him?"

I nodded, at a loss for words.

He scooped Spence up and set him on my hand. He hardly weighed anything. His little legs poked my hand lightly. After a short moment, he started to vibrate.

"What's happening?" I asked, nervous that I'd somehow hurt it.

Hank shrugged and leaned in to look. "I think he's responding to your personal energy. It's what I made him to do: seek out magic. May I try something?"

I nodded without looking away from the little guy. He was stepping up and down on my palm in a little dance at that point.

Hank picked it up and held it in his hand. After a moment it slowed down. It stepped lightly onto his finger and waved a couple legs at me. I looked up and saw both Dr.s Fairfield we're smiling. Jill was practically vibrating in her seat. Hank got a little twinkle in his eye before dropping Spence onto my belly.

The paper spider began climbing around on the top dome of my enlarged womb. Soon he was running circles on it.

"I think he found some magic," Hank said.

Spence responded by catching on fire.

I screamed and pushed the flaming bit of paper away from me. It landed between my belly and the back of the chair, catching my shirt on fire.

I stood quicker than I would have thought possible and backed away. Hank reached down for his magical pet while Jill threw her coffee at the burning part of my shirt. Thankfully it was merely warm.

Once my heart stopped racing, I noticed Hank holding the charred remains of Spence. His expression was a mix of curious and regretful.

He looked up at me. "Well, you're magical enough to overload it."

I covered my mouth with my hands. "I'm so sorry."

He shrugged. "These things only ever last a few weeks. Maybe a couple months. Point is, don't worry about it."

"I'd offer you a replacement shirt," Jill said, "but I'm afraid I don't have anything large enough."

"Love, you can't go around telling pregnant chicks they're too fat for your clothes."

I'm only comfortable writing this because it happened over a decade ago, but that lame joke made me laugh so hard I snorted repeatedly and even wet myself a little. You'd just have to meet him - he's seriously that funny.

By the time I could control myself again, I not only believed in magic, but was fully convinced I was something not quite human. I'd freak out about it later, but at that moment I had enough serotonin pumping through my system that I thought it was the coolest thing in the world. I gave them permission to run some tests and map my DNA. I sort of hoped I was part unicorn, but I felt it was more likely I was related to some sort of whale-sized rabbit. The three of us agreed to keep each other's secrets. I wouldn't go blabbing about magic and they wouldn't start telling people I wasn't totally human.

Why am I writing it now? Well, I have my reasons. Keep reading and eventually you'll see why.

11 Big News and Big Bellies

Around month six of that landmark pregnancy, I became too large to walk unaided. I'd already outgrown cars, buses, my twin bed, and doorways, but for some reason I was surprised I couldn't move on my own anymore.

To give you a clear picture, let me explain in detail how big I'd gotten. I hadn't been able to reach my belly button in weeks. Now I was quickly losing the ability to reach the widest part of my womb. Not only that, but I was longer than I was wide. Standing up, I was shorter than my belly was long. With mirrors I could see that my bellybutton looked like an upside down soup bowl. My thighs bumped against it while I was walking. At the same time, it was fighting for space with my breasts, which were Ds even right after pumping. I looked like I'd swallowed my dad.

The clinic (and by the clinic, I mean the Kelfords because of the settlement money) purchased an old veterinary clinic for me to stay in. I wouldn't fit through hospital doors for long, so they decided a place designed to accommodate livestock was the right way to go. It even had medical equipment, though they carted in some of their own as well.

The lobby became my living quarters. There wasn't a bathroom at first, but when I eventually complained about using a bedpan they installed a portable toilet. It wasn't all that private, but the people helping me during the day were nice about it.

Doorways were large enough to walk a cow through, so I could go from my bed to the exam room. Of course, I had to wait for someone to lift my bump with a hoist onto a modified office chair. Only then could I move around freely. There weren't many places to go, but I could pace at least.

My mom brought home cooked meals, but it wasn't ever enough. First and second breakfast were followed by lunch and a couple dinners. I had literally grown around fifty pounds of baby, forty pounds of placenta, fifteen pounds of skin and womb, and a little extra on the side in half a year. That wasn't even counting amniotic fluid, which was mostly water weight. I was prescribed milkshakes every evening to keep up with my caloric needs. I was both hungry and bored enough to try every item at all the local fast food restaurants.

(By the way, Burger Queen has better sides and burgers, but McDougals has much better desserts, drinks, and non-beef sandwiches. I also don't understand all the diarrhea jokes about Burrito Bell, because it never caused me issues.)

I had daily check-ups and exercises. My blood pressure, pulse, and breathing all continued to be normal. Apart from being anchored to one spot, I was as physically fit as ever. The babies continued to grow and became much more active.

By month seven I couldn't see past my belly when I walked, so they switched me to a piano dolly. That fixed the problem for several weeks.

Lidia was finished with her Associates by then, so she came over much more frequently to help me pass the time. I used some of my earnings to splurge on some costumes and fun clothes for photos. She did a good job with making the camera angles interesting despite my size. I have a lot of good pictures from then. I did photos of me failing to fit in my non-maternity clothes, of me cosplayed as some of the bustier super heroines, in my bikini, and even a few in lingerie. I realize most people would think I looked like a fat lump of crap, but I just loved how sexy I thought I looked. Maybe not beautiful, but damn sexy. When I later asked her why she didn't get more into photography, since she clearly had a knack for it, she told me that she doubted she'd ever have as interesting of a subject again. She's my best friend because she says sweet things to me like that. I'm hers because anyone else would feel boring at this point.

My parents visited me daily, but there was increasingly little to talk about. They also were just so dang worried I sometimes pretended I was too sleepy to enjoy their visit so they wouldn't feel pressured to stay. Not that it wasn't true often enough, because I'd sleep ten hours a night and still take naps.

It was a waiting game. My doctors were tired of waiting and wanted to induce me. I talked them out of it until week 35, when they did it despite my protests. Just like when I was pregnant with twins, my body simply didn't react to the drugs. They would have performed a cesarean, but a couple of the placentas were in risky positions. I took the high road with them until they weren't looking. Then I stuck out my tongue and made faces at the cuckoo-brained quacks.

In the final weeks, my breasts went into overdrive. I would produce a couple gallons a day. They swelled quite a bit, but mostly they just didn't stop leaking. I took to wearing only nursing bras and my pump on my top half. I felt self-conscious around the male medical personnel (which seems absurd with how much skin I was showing elsewhere), but I couldn't care much about little things like that at that point.

Instead, I worried about things like not being able to receive an epidural this time. See, epidurals block pain in your lower extremities, but they also block your ability to move your legs. That works fine when you're laying back on a table. It was awkward for me to do that with quintuplets, but still possible.

This time, I was going to have to squat with my belly hoisted above and in front of me. The squatting bit meant my legs needed to be functional, which meant no epidural.

The anesthesia guy explained he was going to give me a combination of general pain blockers and some local numbing. It would block most of the pain. That 'most' had me worried.

At around 38 weeks I had a false alarm. Hank was there trying to get some readings when I felt a new kind of movement and pressure inside me. We called in the team and prepared for delivery. I was confused, because it didn't feel exactly like my water breaking or contractions. This was more like someone was pumping up a balloon inside me.

For half an hour the pressure increased. My gut went from merely tight to drumhead taunt. By the time everyone showed up, I was sure I was going to explode. They lifted my front two thirds into the harness and that extra pressure triggered the longest, loudest belch I'd ever heard. Someone said they timed it at seven seconds, but it felt longer to me.

After that gross display of bodily function with half a dozen witnesses, I crumpled in relief against my belly. I felt much better. I'm not sure if it was the burp, the fact that they were called in for a false alarm, or the realization that I had a little more growing to do before delivering a record breaking and frankly absurd payload of children, but they all started laughing. I chuckled along as well. It prompted some stories from people and that turned into a big, friendly conversation.

Before the Burp (if you'd witnessed it you'd agree it deserves to be capitalized) they were strangers there to do the job. Afterwards, they were associates I knew by name. It made everything feel safer. I've made it a practice to know the names of everyone involved when I give birth.

One thing we talked about was how big I was. I made a joke about how they'd built the building to accommodate horses, but it was starting to get cramped. That let loose a flood of comparisons. Beached whale and pregnant with a cow were among them. I faked having my feelings hurt when someone said I looked like a hot air balloon filling up when my belly was lifted. There was a long, guilty pause where they all glared at the offending party. I eventually couldn't hold back my giggle. When they heard that they knew it was all okay and we laughed some more.

Eventually, the on-call people went home and I was left with a nurse, a tech, and my twelve closest friends fighting for room inside me. I think I had my stupid grin on for the entire next day. It felt good to be seen and treated like a person instead of a challenge or an operation waiting to happen.

* * *

Leanne was sitting down in her chair, her belly resting on the ottoman, while Charles double checked that all the appliances were unplugged. They were leaving for the Fairfield clinic's 'special room' for her extra large pregnancies and didn't want to pay for utilities in the apartment during their protracted stay.

This was old hat to her, but it was Charles's first time seeing her so pregnant her special apartment was too small. She was halfway, which with human babies would have been the finish line. The latest growth spurt was slowing down, but it left her unable to walk on her own. She had almost tripled her weight and while sitting she couldn't see anything in front of her. In fact, with her growing breasts pushed up and to the side she had some trouble seeing sideways.

She swallowed the last of her latest candy bar before asking, "Are you sure you aren't nervous?"

“What was that?” Charles asked? He wasn’t quite hyperventilating, but he was definitely on edge.

“Come here,” she said, extending her arms to give him a hug.

He knelt beside her and put his arms around her shoulders. They wouldn’t fit around her lower abdomen. They stayed like that for a moment.

Leanne pulled back. “The biggest things I have to worry about for the next several months are hunger and boredom. We’re a long time away from all the pushing. You can relax.”

He sighed. “I know you can do this, but I’m your boyfriend. I’m supposed to worry at least a little about your health and happiness.”

They hugged again. “I know you prefer I care too much to caring too little,” he whispered in her ear.

She nodded.

He pulled back to look her in the eye. “I really care. I love you and I want to be with you for a long, long time.”

She beamed at him. “I want that, too.”

Charles cleared his throat. “Well, while I’m down here I might as well make it official.”

As he pulled something out of his pocket, a flutter started in her stomach that had nothing to do with the babies inside her. Her breaths became shallow and her eyes moist.

“Leanne Valens, will you make me the happiest man in the world?” He held up a diamond ring. “Will you marry me?”

“Yes!” she said, pulling him in for a hug.

* * *

I was a little disappointed in myself when my water broke a few days short of forty weeks. My belly had swollen noticeably since the Burp. When my belly rested on the ground the top was above my head. I could lean way back and keep it up in the air for a few seconds, but it was much more comfortable to simply lean forward a little and have it rest on the floor when I stood. When I stood in the livestock door and pressed my back to one side, my belly button tickled the far side. I’m not going to tell you my total weight, but I’d gained significantly over three hundred pounds.

I lost maybe thirty when my water broke and covered the floor in two rooms.

Everyone stepped carefully so they didn't slip as they lifted my enormous belly into the harness. Mr. Kelford was warned to bring galoshes when he came - Mrs. Kelford was uninvited by the lawyers. One of the medical staff said I must find one of them hot for me to gush like that. I think I managed a weak laugh. I was in some pain and quite nervous, but I appreciated his sense of humor at that moment.

The OB got me situated how he wanted me and his staff got all the cribs and blankets prepped. It was midsummer, but they still switched the air conditioning off so the babies wouldn't be chilled. My parents were the last to arrive. Shortly after, I was dilated enough to start pushing.

There wasn't as much pain as I was afraid there would be. Instead, I was surprised at how much pleasure there was. I've since figured out that when I don't have an epidural I have what's called 'orgasmic births'. Basically, it's an evolutionary mechanism to convince women to give birth more. I didn't need the enticement, but it sure made a nice perk.

I have to admit I was pretty embarrassed for the first few babies. I didn't know what was happening for the first one, only that it felt good. Remember, I'd only had sex twice and both times I'd been practically possessed by my hormones. It also hadn't happened the last three deliveries, mostly because of the epidurals that kept me numb from my ribs down.

It wasn't too bad with the doctor and nurses. We'd all bonded when we laughed together about a different bodily function. It was my dad and Mr. Kelford that I was embarrassed about. However, I wasn't going to keep Mr. Kelford away from the birth of his children. I also wasn't going to kick my dad out and let the biological father - practically a stranger - stay.

Around the fourth baby, hours into labor, I didn't have the mental capacity to worry about it. Partly I was just too exhausted. Just as big of a factor was the sheer bliss of those rolling orgasms. Not all the sweat dripping off me was from exertion, let me tell you.

They had to adjust the harness a couple times because I kept shrinking. I chomped through a pitcher's worth of ice, too. Before the last couple practically slid out I even dozed off a bit.

When the last baby was swaddled, the last umbilical cord cut, and the last of the afterbirth was out of me they put in a couple stitches and laid me down in bed. The skin and muscles of my abdomen spread out a few feet in front of me, which was weird and a little unpleasant.

I have vague memories of different babies being placed on me so they could drink some milk. The skin time was good for them, but all I wanted was sleep.

I finally woke up almost twenty hours later. When I did, my abdomen had significantly shrunk. It was a couple days before it looked mostly normal, which seemed long to me but was many times quicker than the weeks it takes other women. Some women always carry obvious signs of having expanded in pregnancy, but just as before I didn't have any stretch marks,

which amazed the medical staff. The magic explanation really was the only one that held water. I kept it to myself, though.

Medical science certainly didn't explain how all twelve babies were over seven and a half pounds at birth or why I could carry them practically to term.

* * *

After phone calls to her parents and Lidia, an impromptu but much needed milking session, and a bit of passionate kissing, their ride to the Leanne Suite called to ask why they weren't ready.

Charles grabbed all their luggage and rushed it out to the elevator while Leanne changed into a clean top. She followed him out and was surprised that she touched both sides of the door frame as she passed through. She locked up and headed down to the elevator.

As she got there they both noticed a problem. With the luggage already packed in, there wasn't enough room for Leanne, much less Charles.

"No time to pull it all out," she said as she rolled her belly in. "Just help me lift."

Together they pushed her belly into the far upper corner of the elevator. It made barely enough room for Leanne to squeeze in by the floor. The luggage dug into her gut, but the doors closed.

"I'll meet you downstairs," Charles said, a little awestruck at not only how big his fiancée was getting, but that she could hold that position with her gut in the air.

A terse, "Sure," was all she could manage in reply.

He raced down the stairs as she counted the floors. Somebody tried getting on, but understandably didn't when he saw Leanne holding up her belly like Atlas. When she reached the bottom, the doors opened to reveal her fiancé breathing a little hard, holding her rolling belly holder.

"I forgot this and had to go back up a flight."

She smiled at his comment, then backed out enough to let him get the modified piano dollie underneath her. As soon as he was clear, she lowered it slowly enough to avoid hurting herself or the babies. It still made a dull *thwap* on impact. She backed out of the elevator, rolling her belly down the hall and giving Charles a quick peck on the lips. After he gathered up all their bags, they headed outside together; one burdened by luggage and the other by her own fecundity.

The driver stood next to the cargo van, smoking and looking at his watch. He looked up and the cigarette fell from his mouth.

Charles stepped over and crushed the cigarette. "I'd thank you for not smoking around my fiancée. It's not healthy for her or the babies.

"Also, could you handle stowing these after I get her situated? Thank you."

Leanne beamed at Charles while the driver fumbled with the luggage, his eyes never leaving the enormously pregnant woman. She walked down the apartment's accessibility ramp while her beau opened the back doors of the van. She turned so she could back in. Charles tapped her on the butt and whispered, "I think he thinks you're hot."

She playfully pushed his chest. "Why wouldn't he? You certainly do."

He smiled and kissed her before circling to the other side of her belly. Then he followed as she stepped backwards into the van. As she slid herself in, he lifted her belly high enough to slide in with her. It took them a few seconds, but she eventually slid up behind the front seats.

The driver opened the side door and filled some of the remaining space with luggage. Leanne helped slide one of the smaller bags on her far side.

"He's a really potent lover, if you know what I mean," she whispered to him. He dropped a suitcase and stammered something before stepping back and smashing the door closed. That pushed a suitcase roughly into her side, making her wince.

While that was happening, Charles was eyeballing the back of the van, trying to see if the doors would close around her protruding belly button. It was close, but he thought there was enough room. The driver came by with one last bag, which Charles pushed up between the tummy and the van door. He tried to close the door, but the bag stopped it from closing. With a huff he slid it higher along her belly and tried again. It shut.

"So I'm taking you to the hospital?"

"No," Charles said, suppressing a grin, "we're going to a place to let her incubate longer."

"No kidding?" he asked.

"Scout's honor."

The driver just shook his head as he walked to the driver's seat.

Once everyone was situated, Charles and Leanne shared a look. Some people's reactions were hilarious, so it was hard to suppress the laughter. She was, after all, really quite massive.

12 Life After Breaking Records

It was almost eerie how little attention my pregnancy got in the wider world. A local news station reported that a local woman had twelve healthy babies at once, but it didn't go further than that. I broke the record by four, they were born at term, and were way larger than multiples usually are, yet I got less coverage than the Nonumom and her nine kids later got. Corona World Records recognized it, but they didn't make a fuss, either. I suspect my parents worked to keep the media from storming me, which may or may not have sunk our credibility. Conversely, it could have been the Kelfords trying to avoid further ramifications for slipping me fertility drugs.

It could also be that magic was involved, but I don't know the why or how on that one.

Not that I was complaining, mind you. I don't generally enjoy having people gawk at me. I like being able to walk out in public and just do my own thing. I like my anonymity. I like having an audience of one.

The doctors gave me plenty of attention anyway. They marveled at how large I got and how quickly I bounced back. By September, I was comfortable back in a non-maternity one piece swimsuit, not that I had much opportunity to use it.

Don't get me wrong: my body had changed. My legs were noticeably thicker. Partly that was from all the muscle I gained, though a fair bit was adipose. My breasts were now in D range even when empty. I didn't bother buying anything but nursing bras, because milk was just flowing out of me. I kept a little pudge around my front, but not anything too noticeable. My hips, which were fairly wide before I first got pregnant, were verging on cartoonish.

In other words, I went from stick to sexy in some pretty fantastic ways.

A few things happened almost all at once when I recovered from that particularly strenuous pregnancy.

First, I switched to Dr. Fairfield's clinic for surrogacies. She had answers for me and I was excited to learn more. I also just really liked and trusted her way more than any other doctor I'd ever had.

Second, Murphy got arrested for trying to rob a pharmacy. Apparently, he had a plan to kidnap me, rape me, and shove a buttload of fertility drugs down my throat. Not sure if I dodged a bullet or made a monster, but boy was I glad he got some therapy in prison.

Third, I convinced my parents to let me move in with Lidia at her new college. Besides just wanting a taste of the college experience, it was also closer to the clinic. I had the money

(and extra coming in because Ohio is awesome for surrogates) and I really didn't want to be the person that spent her adult life living with her parents.

So, at the end of the summer I moved into a tiny house off campus with Lidia and two other girls. I had a good talk with Lidia and while I conceded I couldn't hide that I'd been pregnant, we wouldn't mention just how many babies I'd had. I was making some extra money as a surrogate mother while I completed my degree online - nothing super abnormal about that.

The two other girls were fantastic. Beth was a farm girl majoring in Agricultural Science, but minoring in theater. The three of us bonded over drama nerd stuff. She also was really popular with the boys, which was not something Lidia nor I could relate to. Shawntay was a sprinter using her scholarship to earn a Political Science degree. She was a riot and also a closet geek, which I really enjoyed about her.

The first week was a little awkward when they saw me pumping breast milk in the morning, but they got over that. We settled in eventually and I really loved living with them. It was an absolute blast getting to know them and getting into shenanigans. We watched all of Gilmore's Creek in a month - Beth had the boxed set. We got invited to several parties because Shawntay had connections with all sorts of different athletes and political activists. Lidia kept us all in line with chores by pranking anyone that didn't do their dishes. I handmade Halloween costumes for everyone (we went as the Indigo Spice Dolls).

When they found out I had just been implanted again they had questions for me.

'Why do you get pregnant so often?'

'Do you enjoy being pregnant?'

'Aren't you worried about ruining your body?'

I held back a little, not talking about the Urge I'd get to be pregnant or some of the particular oddities of my body. Lidia knew, but we were super close. I trusted her not to judge me. I was worried about alienating my new friends. It seems shallow now, but I really, really cared what they thought of me.

I gave them just enough information to get them to stop asking. Well, I got them to stop until I decided to show off.

** * **

Leanne sat beside her table in her temporary accommodations. It was an airplane hangar at a regional airport. The fifty foot ceiling seemed a bit excessive, but she'd learned before that once large spaces could start to feel snug during her third trimester.

All of her necessities were situated along the walls of the room, leaving the center open for her continuously expanding womb. A bed, a kitchen, a table for meals and writing, a toilet

and bathing area, and even a comfy chair stocked with snacks and sewing supplies all had their places like the numbers on an enormous clock face. The new wheeled harness was significantly more comfortable than the piano dolly and rolled smoothly over the concrete floor. When she turned, it made her feel like a moon orbiting her planet of a belly, but that was hardly surprising.

Charles was nearby, cooking a few dozen eggs for their breakfast. Mostly her breakfast, but she liked eating together so he served himself as well. He was wearing some tight boxer briefs with his apron, which she found very distracting.

It had been a week since they moved in. If she'd waited until now to move she might not have been able to leave her apartment without knocking out a wall. Instead of plateauing, she'd had a growth spurt. Her van filling belly now was almost as big as a van. She'd be completely immobile without her wheels. Even still, she had to get some traction to hope to move. The Doctors Fairfield were running tests to see what was happening.

While she had enormous confidence in her body's ability to make babies, she was concerned with her current situation. No one would confirm it for her, but she knew she was as big as she'd ever been. Any growth past this was new territory.

She covered her mouth to smother the sound of her latest belch, then continued writing. No way out but through now.

* * *

During the Halloween party, I showed off my cleavage and got a lot of attention. I was only about two months pregnant, so my girls weren't competing with my belly for attention. Of the four of us, only Beth had comparably eye catching breasts. Of course, she was also the second tallest of us (barely behind Lidia) and had wide shoulders and back. Mine looked much larger on my small frame.

I'll admit the attention went to my head. We were all having fun, but I think I took it too far when I had Lidia and Shawntay judge who actually had bigger boobs after the party. I got the feeling the scrutiny made Beth uncomfortable, but she didn't back down.

After examining them from several angles, they declared Beth's bigger. I could have left it at that. I probably should have let it be. But I didn't. After being a late bloomer and having a smaller chest even through my first two pregnancies, I was really happy with my boobs. So I told them I could get bigger if I didn't milk myself for a day.

Lidia told me to just accept defeat. Shawntay surprised me and said she'd like to see me get bigger than Beth. She told me a friend of hers gave her some pasties I could use to stop myself from leaking. I immediately accepted.

She left and came back with two tassel-topped hot pink foam disks about three inches in diameter. She'd spread some kind of gel around the edge of the disks, which she said helped

her friend keep them on for longer shifts. She denied it later, but I thought I remembered she assured me it wouldn't hurt to pull off.

I put them on in private. I tried swirling the tassels in the mirror, scandalized and incredibly pleased with how my breasts jiggled. It wasn't something I seriously considered ever doing, but I was convinced in that moment that I would make a great stripper with my jugs.

I bundled it all under a nursing bra so no one else saw me in them. Hey, just because I could be a good stripper doesn't mean I had to give my roommates a show.

It was the weekend, so I woke up late. My boobs were swollen, but not amazingly so. When I went to grab some breakfast Shawntay offered me some 'breakfast cookies'. I accepted one, but it was good enough that I went back for another. She was pleased by that, which I thought was a little odd.

I spent the day doing some chores and lounging in an oversized sweatshirt. I refrained from checking how much my chest had swelled, but with how poorly they fit in my bra and how they tingled I was sure they were filling up nicely. I snuck another of her cookies.

By dinner time, I was ready to show off. Beth seemed reluctantly curious while Lidia was exasperated. Shawntay was grinning ear to ear. I pulled off my hoodie and saw my breasts for the first time since breakfast. They were billowing out the top, bottom, and sides of my bra like bread dough left to rise too long. The skin felt tight and was a little pink. I was definitely bigger than Beth, who was equal parts miffed and amazed. Lidia had to pull her jaw off the floor.

Again, Shawntay was a bit off. She was smiling, but it seemed odd. It was almost predatory.

I should probably describe her in a bit more detail. She was about average height, maybe as tall as 5'7". Her arms and legs were really muscular. She wore her hair in dreadlocks. With her accent I think she was Afro-Caribbean. If there was anything she might be self-conscious about, it would be her almost nonexistent bust. It probably was nice when it came to competing in races, but as a former leader of the Itty Bitty Titty Committee I can tell you it can make a girl feel undesirable.

That look gave me pause, but as I already said I was really enjoying the victory. I went and put on my top from the night before. All my bras that actually fit were bulky nursing bras. I'd designed that top to work without a bra for that reason. It was fitted for my size as of last week, but with less than a day of backed-up milk it was a tight fit, but they at least lost their pink hue. That tightness was fine because I wanted to show off.

We sat down to eat (I think it was Lidia's turn to cook) and about halfway through the meal one of the seams gave way. Everyone stopped and stared at my chest.

"Maybe you should go unplug," Shawntay said, looking more worried than the situation warranted.

I shrugged, making sure the motion made my bazongas bounce. "It hasn't quite been a full day yet."

Lidia just shook her head while Beth looked at me like I was making her question her sexuality. Shawntay squirmed a bit, almost like she felt guilty, but she didn't say anything else about it. I continued eating, but I secretly started thinking about how much milk I had to have produced to grow as much as I did.

I concluded I must have produced a little more than normal, but I wasn't really worried. I had just given birth to twelve babies only a few months before. Their parents were feeding them formula, but my body hadn't gotten that memo. Milk production had been up since then and having just started another pregnancy I might have increased a little more. No way I was suddenly dangerously overproducing.

It was my turn to do dishes. While I took care of that, another seam popped. I looked down and I was surrounded by boob. They had grown in the hour or so since I put on the top. They'd also become a little pink again.

Maybe, just maybe, something out of the ordinary was happening.

I rushed through the rest of the dishes, grabbed another of Shawntay's cookies, and rushed back to the room I shared with Lidia to inspect my bust. She was there, reading or something, but I still just started pulling my top off.

"Le, what's-"

"They're growing too big, too fast," I told her. I was having trouble lifting the top above my head, so I asked, "Could you help me get this off?"

She jumped up to help. It took her several seconds to get a good grip and another few to pull it high enough to free my boobs. When she did, the top ripped again. My breasts slumped down, but they didn't sag like they should have at that size. They stuck out forward and sideways and stayed round from the internal pressure. Just as worrying, they stayed pink despite being out of tight clothing.

The tassels swayed back and forth as the girls hung free. Lidia and I just looked at them for half a minute. They quivered with every tiny motion I made. Free from constraint, it was obvious they were each at least as big as my head. I'd have been amazed my back wasn't killing me if I hadn't carted around twelve kids inside me just a few months before.

"We need to take those off now," Lidia said, her tone similar to how you talk to unreasonable children.

I turned to her and nodded. "Would you get the left one?"

We both reached for my right nipple before she rolled her eyes and whispered “stage left” and switched sides.

I have to give it to those tassels: they hadn't let a drop through despite the obvious pressure they were holding back. Or perhaps it was the paste that deserved the credit. Either way, they weren't budging.

After a lot of wincing on my part and a lot of apologizing on hers, she went to go find Shawntay. I went and sat on the bed to wait. Maybe I was in shock, but I didn't have the presence of mind to shut the door when it bounced open when Lidia left. Otherwise I'm sure Beth wouldn't have stuck her head in.

She doesn't normally swear, so I was extra startled when Beth let loose a string of colorful terms to let me know she just spotted me topless with pastie topped melons growing on my chest. When I stood up and tried to calm her down she looked away and started hyperventilating. It took me a bit to calm her down. She'd keep looking at me then away, like she couldn't believe what she was seeing and had to check again. A couple times I got too close when she tried to push me away, so she ended up groping me a little and freaking out even more about it.

At long last, I got her sitting and breathing normally again. It took covering myself up with both a maternity dress and a blanket, hot chocolate, and some Inya music in the background. When she was self controlled enough to speak, she asked what happened to me. I explained that I didn't quite know why it was happening, but I was experiencing an increase in milk production. It wasn't able to go anywhere because the pasties Shawntay gave me weren't coming off.

Beth asked me if I'd eaten any of Shawntay's lactation cookies. It took me a moment to process that question. Mothers that had trouble lactating ate lactation cookies, not collegiate athletes.

When I asked her to clarify, she squirmed. “She's sensitive about her chest. She's been trying to make her breasts grow.”

It was my turn to hyperventilate. With my recent experience of being slipped fertility drugs, I was a little sensitive to the idea of supplements of any kind. I had to remind myself that I handled that experience just fine. I was the best at being pregnant, so I probably could be the best at producing milk, too. I inspected my breasts to support that thought. Sure enough, I couldn't feel any stretch marks despite their rapid growth. They were uncomfortable and tight, but not painful or taunt. They might be absurdly swollen, but I was the queen of growing to ludicrous sizes. I could hold it together until Lidia tracked down Shawntay so she could tell us how to remove the pasties. Then I'd just have a massive milking session. It seemed like a pity to me to waste all that milk in the tub, but my pump probably wouldn't cut it.

I stood up. Saving my milk probably wasn't a priority, but it seemed like something I could actually fix at that moment.

“You mentioned you were in America’s Future Farmers competitions, right?”

Beth nodded, obviously confused.

“Did you have any experience milking cows?”

Her eyes went wide again. She looked down at the twice covered growths on my chest with apprehension. “Yeah, but if you’re thinking-”

“I’m not asking you to milk me,” I clarified. “I want your ideas on how to catch all this breast milk. I donate it and it would be a shame to waste it all.”

She nodded, still staring at my chest. “There’s some empty pop bottles I could wash out. They’re the 2 liter ones, so a few might hold” she gestured at my sweater mastiffs “all of that.”

I smiled. “Thank you. I’m going to take a bath and see if the hot water might make these things come off.”

Beth stood rather quickly. “SureyougodothatI’llgocleanthosebottlesbyenow!” She raced out of the room.

She seemed more flustered than the situation warranted, but she’d been off all afternoon. In fact, she hadn’t been her usual confident self since I forced us to compare breast sizes. A thought occurred to me that I wouldn’t have suspected previously. At that point, I hadn’t actually met an out-of-the-closet lesbian before. There was a theater kid I suspected was gay, but I really wasn’t close enough friendshipwise to ask.

I put that thought away and closed the door. Even though I was about to take a bath, I decided the odds of someone else having to come in were high enough that I should wear my bikini. Well, the half of it that currently fit, anyway.

While I was putting it on, someone knocked on my door. “Hey, I have the bottles.”

“Thank you,” I shouted. “I’ll be out in a minute.”

I tried wrapping my towel on me, but it wasn’t quite big enough. I ended up just draping it over my boob shelf. It stayed there on its own, but I kept a hand on it anyway.

When I entered the living room, Beth wasn’t there. If I was correct about her being a lesbian, then she probably hadn’t come to terms with it. That probably explained her earlier hysteria. That moment probably wasn’t the time to confront her about my theory. I grabbed the bottles and took them to our one shared bathroom. (I’ll note that they were on the floor, so I had to bump one with my foot to find them. I couldn’t see an increasingly large swath of floor, which was odd only because it wasn’t my belly blocking my view.)

In the privacy of the bathroom, I inspected them again. As the tub filled I decided they were moving from melon to pumpkin range. They remained unnaturally perky from the internal pressure. They weren't perfectly round: my narrow shoulders made for limited space on my front. That made my mammaries smush together, forming a canyon of cleavage that ran out of sight. The outsides were pushed sideways past my shoulders, even pushing up into my armpits. Still, no stretch marks, which was reassuring despite the pink hue.

The tasseled pink pasties looked much smaller now and somehow menacing. Right along where I suspected they were super glued around my areola the skin was red from where Lidia and I tried pulling them off. Hopefully hot water and soap would loosen it up.

I turned off the tap when the water was about two thirds full. Steam rose from the water's surface. I like my showers and baths hot. I slipped in and immediately relaxed muscles I didn't know I was clenching. I leaned back and felt the weight fall off my shoulders. Rather, they floated off. It surprised me because they were so full of fluid, but they floated in the tub a few inches above the waterline. They were two relatively little islands in a steaming sea.

After a short soak, I started applying soap around the glued bits. It didn't seem to help, so I leaned back and enjoyed the water.

I must have nodded off, because suddenly someone was knocking on the door and water was flowing over the tub's edge. I pulled the plug with my foot and started standing up. It immediately became apparent that I'd continued growing while I napped. They were not only significantly heavier than before, but they were also throwing off my balance so much I slipped back into the bath.

Lidia had been talking through the door while I stood and slipped back down. When she heard me fall, she rushed in just in time to be splashed with half a tub's worth of old bath water. When she opened her eyes again, all she could see of me was my ginormous tits, one of my legs, and a bit of hair. And the damn tassels, still firmly attached.

When she was confident I hadn't hit my head hard enough for a concussion, she pulled me out of the water and handed me a towel.

"Shawntay is really worried about you. After I found her she dragged me to buy something to dissolve the glue, and yes it was glue."

I clenched my fists. "That's not all - she fed me lactation cookies this morning!"

Surprise, fury, then tempered frustration took turns crossing her face. "She didn't tell me that."

I was so livid I couldn't speak, so Lidia continued. "After I told her what was happening to you, she was helpful and honest and even a bit scared."

“Look, without knowing your history there’s no way she could have predicted that you’d blow up like that. I think you should cut her some slack.”

“I might have snuck a couple extra cookies,” I confessed.

Lidia bopped my nose. “So it’s partly your own fault, too.”

I huffed. “What now, Li?”

She thought for a second, then her prank face peaked out.

A couple minutes later, we left the bathroom. I held a towel over myself and Lidia held something else underneath my bust, acting like she was helping me carry my massively milky mammarys. It took all my acting skill to act like I was in pain instead of giggling.

Beth and Shawntay were in their room. Shawntay paced back and forth while Beth tried to read her Bible. They both looked at me with apprehension when we entered. I took a second to soak in Shawntay’s worried guilt and Beth’s confused concern, then started whimpering. Both of them leaned away from me as Lidia asked in a shocked voice, “What’s happening!?”

I gave a pained cry as I whipped off the towel. Both of them bugged out at my end of the alphabet, pink pumpkin sized boobs, which I circumspectly jiggled.

“They’re gonna blow!” Lidia shouted.

That was my cue to bounce them up, which I almost threw out my back doing. Shawntay threw her hands up, which protected her from most of the glass of water Lidia flung at her.

We all stayed in place for an eternal second. Shawntay looked like she was expecting a bomb to go off, dripping with water. Beth sat slack jawed, gazing in disbelief at how much bigger I was than when we last spoke. Lidia looked like she was about to open Christmas presents. I stood there in nothing but a bikini bottom and nipple tassels, blushing like a whore at church.

Lidia burst out laughing and I followed suit. Beth joined us after a moment. At long last, Shawntay opened her eyes and relaxed. Ah man, I’m getting a kick out of the memory while writing this.

Once we were all sitting down, faces dry and pulses no longer racing, we had a long heart to heart.

To start, I shared my pregnancy journey with my new roommates so they understood why I didn’t bother going to the hospital. They were skeptical, but between my current condition and some photos of me over the summer they became believers. Lidia confirmed my story and insisted we take some pictures for posterity. Shawntay had an apology and some pose suggestions for me. Beth blurted out that she thought she was a lesbian and was going to hell. We assured her she wasn’t going to hell, but while she might be a lesbian she was still our

friend. We moved to the kitchen to remove the pasties, where I both filled the empty pop bottles and covered a fair bit of the floor. I offered everyone a sip, but I only got halfhearted declines.

By the time the sun came up I was half my largest size, as empty as I was going to get, and looking rather saggy. Beth volunteered to clean the bathroom while Shawntay apologized again, confessing how angry my little contest with Beth made her the night before. After Lidia went to bed, I confessed to stealing a couple of Shawntay's cookies and offered her a drink to repay her. With no one around she accepted.

My production stayed up for several weeks, making trips outside the house problematic. Thankfully, I had several friends willing to help me out. By the time my breasts stopped shrinking (E cup, for those interested) I was halfway through a quadruplet pregnancy. They surprisingly didn't stay saggy, but perked back up a remarkable amount. With what I know now, I think I willed them back to their previous shape, if somewhat bigger.

Shawntay continued drinking my milk regularly (from the bottle, not the tap) and had B cups by Christmas. She stopped once she reached a C, saying she was happy but didn't want to push her luck. By the time I gave birth in the summer, Beth had a girlfriend and a family that wouldn't talk to her. She's mended some of those fences despite a long term girlfriend.

I don't see those two much since they graduated and moved away, but they remain some of my favorite people.

(Side note: those pictures aren't in my regular pregnancy album. They're in a spicy one viewed by a much more select group of people. Those pictures don't play directly into my FIANCÉ'S - so excited! - pregnancy fetish, but they're still some of his favorites. I know, shameless relationship plug, but I'm happy enough I don't care.)

13 Digging Deeper

I need to backtrack a little before moving on. Dr. Fairfield - the anthropologist, not the fertility specialist - wanted to test me for the specifics of my magical potential.

We started shortly after I delivered my dozen kids. I visited his wife's office twice a week, performing the same tests because apparently magic can be fickle and not work the same all the time. The tests were things like pulling a specific card from a deck, holding tuning forks until I vibrated in their pitch, talking to plants to make them grow faster, and drawing with chalk. After a few weeks it seemed like I worked best with living things, which made perfect sense to me.

The tests were part of the reason I moved in with Lidia. She was much closer than my parent's home. Also, she was much better to talk to about this stuff than my orthodox parents.

Once she accepted the premise that someone in my distant ancestry was probably also super fertile, it was almost a scientific inquiry for her. Magic and genetics became purely semantics.

We didn't tell Beth or Shawntay about magic, but we did get some herbs for me to practice with. For instance, we bought two identical mint plants. One I told to be strong flavored and the other mild. After a few weeks their aromas actually changed just as I told them to. It wasn't flying on broomsticks, but I was definitely pleased with myself.

The lactation incident was explained to me as an example of self actualization gone too far. I wanted bigger breasts by producing more milk and fed my body lactation supplements: of course I started overproducing. He warned me to be both very specific with what I wanted and not to push myself too far out of balance. It also might be that I shouldn't push myself at all in any way not related to reproduction.

He also said not to use magic if I got super pregnant again. When I was beyond what normal biology supported, I was using magic to keep the babies healthy. If I used it for something else, I'd put myself and the babies at serious risk. Even with it, I had limits I shouldn't try crossing.

Honestly, I wasn't too worried. I carried TWELVE normal sized babies to term at once! I was a certified fertility badass.

The latest couple were friends of the Fairfields. They thankfully weren't put off by the prospect of lots of kids. Two implanted embryos turned into boy twins and girl twins. At every appointment the babies and I were all healthy. I blame the lactation incident, but at birth the largest was over nine pounds while the smallest was eight. I ended up as large as I was with the quints. I did that one without an epidural and had a similarly orgasmic experience.

Me being pregnant was how Lidia best knew me, but my new roommates warmed up to the idea only slowly. After Christmas break, I was starting to get big by normal standards and they treated me like fine china. I do enjoy a bit of pampering, but that kind of one sided relationship isn't generally healthy. I had to prove to them I was still a capable, independent person. I ended up doing more than my fair share of scrubbing toilets and cooking meals - at least until the last month or so when I couldn't reach anything around my belly.

That spring, I dragged Lidia and Shawntay down to Georgia for a Con. (Beth had a family thing, which ended poorly because that's when she came out to them.) The three of us went as Chuck's Cherubim. Lidia of all people came up with the costume because she's a big Drew Diaz fan. While they have a bunch of outfits in the movie I could have chosen, I stuck with the classic look from the movie poster. The pleather I used was tricky to work with, but it ended up looking good.

Despite my physique not looking the part, we were recognizable whenever we stood together. I explained my pregnancy as going too 'full throttle', which gave most people a chuckle. We had a lot of positive feedback and posed for quite a few photos. People were a little concerned with my size, assuming I was overdue instead of starting my third trimester with

quadruplets. I reassured them I wasn't about to go into labor, but didn't otherwise inform them of my situation.

I stayed with Lidia for the summer while Shawntay went home and Beth visited some cousins who didn't care she was openly a lesbian now. Once I was no longer blimp sized, we did some fun stuff out on the town. There were some dates, but nothing that turned into relationships.

During that time, I also did some experimentation with magic. There was a surge in stock at a local pet store, for instance. Apparently, rabbits and mice multiply even more when I'm around. There was also an increase in pregnant students a few months later, but I didn't actively work for that to happen. I guess life, uh, finds a way.

I did become more cautious in sending out my particular magical energy - or as I thought of it, my bedroom vibes. It was a powerful thing, creating new life, and after the last few years I knew how it could change a person's whole world.

The school's theater department hired me to help with costumes. I think my Halloween costumes caught someone's attention. At any rate, by that summer I was the program's lead seamstress. The pay was even better than what I got back home despite an overall lighter workload. Between that and my surrogate payments I was able to start saving for the future. I also finished my Associates Degree that summer and started a course for business management, thinking of doing something with tailoring or textiles.

Lidia and I had another opportunity to dress up that summer after I delivered. The idea was good enough that we convinced Beth and Shawntay to drive back to school to join in. We went as characters from one of my favorite shows: *Lightning Bug*. Lidia went as the ever composed and alluring Inaru. Shawntay really enjoyed being Zo, military badass with a shotgun. Beth went as Kylee, which I was a little bummed about because I adore that parasol. She did well with the bubbly persona, so I can't really complain. I went as Stream and enjoyed telling trolls I could kill them with my mind. The costumes were surprisingly easy to make. We met other people dressed as other crew members of *Zen* and took lots of photos together. It was a very shiny experience.

I began my sixth pregnancy early that autumn for a charismatic preacher and his shy wife. They welcomed the possibility of a bundle of kids and had me implanted with four embryos. When there were seven heartbeats they gave all praise to Jesus and only a passing thought to the girl carrying them.

Life was going well. It was Lidia and Shawntay's final year of school, while Beth was only on her second. She worked for a year before starting, so she was actually the closest to my age. We saw a little less of Shawntay starting around Thanksgiving because she found a boyfriend she really liked. We vetted the guy and found him to be proper boyfriend material.

* * *

Leanne looked over at Charles from her chair. She'd slept all day when he was at work, so was awake while he slept. He looked as at peace as she'd seen him recently.

She took another bite of her burrito. She was sleeping close to 14 hours a day, so with the calories she needed almost every waking second was spent stuffing her face. That meant always having food on hand, especially between naps.

With her size steadily growing past her previous limits and with no definite end in sight, she had to admit she was a little worried. Ultrasounds revealed images of both human and ogre fetuses in addition to some as yet unidentifiable masses. Some resembled creatures she'd been pregnant with before, but that should have been impossible. The Fairfields were both working the problem from their respective ends.

As moderately concerned as she was, her fiancée was scared. She had years of experience giving her confidence, but it was all still pretty new to him. He was also really turned on by her size, which was something he'd previously thought impossible. His attraction in context of his fear for her made him feel guilty, which was dampening their relationship. They'd talked a little about it, but she felt he needed more reassurance.

To give him some insight, she was having him read up on her previous pregnancies. She hoped that would help him understand how much she excelled at making babies. Unfortunately, it was also highlighting how abnormal her year of unprecedented growth to her current colossal size actually was. The mixed-bag results of these revelations were still helping him accept that he didn't need to worry, but not as much as she'd like.

She finished the burrito and pulled out some chocolate. As she took her first bite, she looked up at the curve of her womb. Maybe she should be more scared than she was.

* * *

Time flew between school, work, OB appointments, magic practice, and fun with my roommates.

For Halloween, we were invited to a sexified Dasney themed party. I know, it's a cliché that Halloween is just an excuse to dress skanky and I've totally judged other people for doing so, but with my girls at my back it was an empowering experience and more enjoyable than I'm usually willing to admit. My fingers were pretty overworked, so everyone else insisted they could make (more like buy, but that's their prerogative) their own costumes. We did another group costume, this time as characters from the Twenty-Mile Forest. Lidia was Rab, but stylized more like a FunMan rabbit; bowtie collar and all. She was the least comfortable with the attention of the frat boys that night, which was odd as she was arguably the most modest. Shawntay was Owlette, which ended up just being some feathers pasted to a bikini. Coincidentally, her future husband was there dressed as Captain Claw, but I never actually saw him. Beth went as Lioon (el, eye, double-oo, NNNN!), so she put on tan body paint, a matching swimsuit, a little mane

and tail, and shoes with springs. She might have fallen over a few times before taking the shoes off for the rest of the night, but if she had I'd have been sworn to secrecy. (Gotta love loopholes.)

As you might guess, I was Boo-Bear. I had a skintight yellow bodysuit with a red bra attached to the outside, yellow face paint, and a honey jar prop I lost somewhere. I was showing at around two months, so I had the pot-bellied part down naturally. A few guys ended up liking my pregnant look, but when they found out I was actually pregnant they backed off like they were trespassing. I don't understand people sometimes.

Toward the end of that year, we had one more opportunity to dress up together. It was specifically a gaming convention, so I had to expand my horizons looking for a good group theme. We came up with two, so we did paired costumes. Lidia and Beth went as Yunu and Hurte from Last Tale 10- Part 2. I really enjoyed working on the kimono-esque Yunu costume. Beth bought her own sword prop, which I've never been good at making.

Shawntay and I went as Turquoise and Pay'g from Past Weal and Woe. Shawntay's physique was perfect for her character's crop top and cargo pants. She went with a wig instead of dying her hair green. I was a little self-conscious going as a literal pig, but I was halfway done with septuplets and there weren't many fat characters I could impersonate. At least people thought my gut was just a prop.

Despite liking how I look pregnant, it does stifle my creativity sometimes. I have just as many nonpregnant cosplays in my closet as pregnant ones for that fact alone. That I get asked more about my pregnancy than my costumes can get annoying as well. When I watched my friends get more attention with skimpier attire during that Con, I confess I got a bit envious. However, winter in Chicago made me glad for a bit that I was bundled up in my costume - something none of my roommates could boast. I held onto that small victory while I waddled after them. Once inside I was sweating like, well, a pig. They were all comfortable, which made me a tad irritable. They admittedly did a good job of crediting me as their tailor, which is always gratifying.

Once the weather began warming up a little, we all became very aware that our time as roommates was limited. Lidia and Shawntay would be graduating and presumably leaving me and Beth. It was sobering to realize the two of us didn't have a lot of time left in college, either.

We decided we wanted a final celebration before graduation, so I went ahead and rented a beach house on Cacao Beach down in Florida for several days. When they (I mean Lidia) protested, I pointed out that not only did I pay significantly less for tuition, but I had some savings from my surrogate work. After all, a significant part of my pay was calculated by how many babies I was pregnant with, so I was raking in the dough.

They eventually relented and we headed down by train when school let out. I was worried that flying would be a problem when I was in the third trimester with so many babies. Alternately, no one had a car that would hold me and all our luggage.

We made it down to the beach and - lo and behold - there was all manner of wonderful shenanigans to be had. We swam, visited the space center, flirted with boys, used several tubes of sunscreen, and generally just bathed in the carefree atmosphere. I tried to keep up, but I missed out on a few things in favor of taking naps.

One particular event we involved ourselves in was a bikini contest. Well, Beth and I did. Shawntay didn't want to upset her boyfriend (who was a bit jealous) and Lidia felt it was degrading. They both looked fantastic, but they decided to cheer us on instead.

Beth had slimmed down a little and it made her hip to waist ratio just pop. Her breasts were as full as ever, her hair and skin glowed, and now that she was out of the closet her confidence was through the roof. She wore this cobalt blue sporty swimsuit that hugged her curves. During the competition she pulled out some Latin dance moves she learned for a musical she was in and the crowd roared with approval. She handily won the main event.

I was in an adjoining competition for the ladies in the family way. Most were in the second trimester, but several ladies were in their third and a couple even had multiples. I, of course, was in a league of my own when it came to size. That gave me a huge wow factor. My pink string bikini emphasized how little I was covering, which I admit made me feel a little skanky, but the crowd loved it. I stayed light on my feet for my time on stage despite my size. Much to the despair of the other future mothers, there was simply no denying my superior fecundity.

Having won, we were invited to a little boat party. Lidia and Shawntay went back to watch a movie while the two of us headed out to sea on the contest sponsor's yacht. I feel confident when I say we were both overwhelmed and a little over our heads.

The other party goers plied Beth with drinks while asking me all sorts of suggestive questions. I was getting pretty uncomfortable while Beth just kept partying. It was good to see her having fun, but not having an exit made me a little nervous.

The sky went from partly cloudy to stormy in no time. I had only just noticed when the captain told everyone to find a PFD. Right around that time, some of the guys were getting handsy with Beth. She was definitely drunk at that point, but a slurred no is still a no.

Anyway, she was trying to walk away from one punk and he wasn't going to take a no from her. He was trying to pull her closer and she kept pushing him away. They were on the back deck and with the rain starting in earnest when I tried intervening by bringing her a life vest. With what happened next, I'm really glad I had a life jacket in each hand.

There was a flash of lightning and I jumped. My belly - I have mentioned it gets big and just a little unwieldy when I'm 30+ weeks pregnant, right? - bumped the guy, who pulled Beth down with him into the water.

I'd like to say I heroically leapt in after them, as dumb as it might have been. Instead, I honestly lost my balance and fell overboard.

Coastguard witness statements didn't record anyone saying they saw us fall in. The weather was bad enough that I could believe that if I hadn't been so dang conspicuous. My womb was stretched enough to hold any of my roommates inside: in other words, I was sort of a prominent partygoer. I guess it's possible no one happened to be looking in our direction, but I can't help but feel resentful towards them. Regardless, no 'Man overboard' was given and they only noticed our absence several minutes later.

We were lucky to have two life jackets, because I doubt we'd have survived with only one. As it was, we had to fight to stay on top of the waves for hours during the storm. Beth was still fighting off the alcohol while her would-be rapist was really panicky. We ended up each holding a vest except Beth, who had an arm through both of them.

The sky was truly dark when the guy started swimming hard, pulling us along. I might have been buoyant, but I'm not a fantastic swimmer and I definitely didn't glide easily through the water. I don't know how he spotted land, but he dragged us to a sandbar where we crawled onto 'dry' land. We huddled together, trying to keep from freezing despite the relatively warm rain. I'm not sure which of them groped me during the night, but I didn't push them away because I was cold and frankly the human contact was reassuring.

The weather cleared a bit before dawn. We slept fitfully until late morning. When we were all awake, Beth had a lot of harsh words for him. I added a few zingers myself, but eventually I thanked him for swimming us to the sandbar. That calmed Beth down. She didn't remember that part.

His name was Keith (or that's what I'm putting in my record, anyway). His ego was thoroughly deflated from his actions the previous day, which he seemed sorry about. He told us he was invited to the yacht party by his roommate, who was the sponsor's son. We learned more about him later, but at that point the important thing was he was a competitive swimmer.

At his urging, we attempted another swim to a larger island almost a mile away. We lined up with Beth in the middle, the life jackets between us. He gave us a few pointers on resting strokes, as he called them, and we headed out.

I never knew how blinding and dehydrating the ocean could be. 'Water, water everywhere and 'ne'er a drop to drink' makes a lot more sense now. It was further than I'd swam in all my trips to the pool combined, but with jellied limbs we finally pulled ourselves onto the island. It wasn't much of an island; a couple miles of sand with some trees and grass. One part was slightly higher than the rest and there was a little lagoon, but most of it was as flat and featureless as a winter corn field.

That first night we didn't have fire, so we huddled up again. We were dry this time, so I slapped away whoever's hand kept trying to cop a feel. It was easiest to have them cuddle around me, big as I was, so it really could have been either one in the dark.

The next day we got to work. I volunteered to put my sewing skills to use by weaving grass and palm fibers together for things like shelter and clothes. Keith was a big Angus Grylls

fan, so he went to try his hand at spearfishing. Beth wasn't familiar with the local plants, but her agriculture background helped her not only find some wild onions but a spring on the island!

While I was working away before she found fresh water, I was wondering how we were going to have anything to drink. As hungry as I was, the thirst was the worst feeling. The sun was powerful even in April. I was feeling pretty desperate when I noticed my bikini top was getting wet. It hadn't occurred to me that I might continue lactating after all that trauma.

It was warm and a little sticky, but it did wonders for my thirst. I emptied one side and started on the other when Keith came back. He was sunburned and dejected. I knew how distressing thirst could be. Still, if he hadn't caught me at it, I might not have offered him any.

There wasn't an alternative to drinking straight from the source. After I threatened all the things I'd do to him if he bit me, I told him to kneel next to me. He did as I asked with fear, hunger, and a little lust fighting for prominence on his expression.

With all the pumping I've done over the years, my nipples are somewhat used to stimulation. That said, a human mouth is very different than a plastic cup. I had to massage my breast a little to get the milk flowing for him initially, but once he started in earnest I almost regretted emptying the first one. He'd definitely sucked on some breasts before, and not just as an infant. I had to stifle my moans - he tried sexually assaulting my friend! Sure, he helped save our lives after, but he wasn't getting a free pass.

He finished all too soon and I covered back up. Not long after, Beth came back with some greens and news of the spring. Keith went back to fishing to avoid talking about drinking milk. Instead of telling her I'd let him drink first, I claimed I emptied myself. She told me she wasn't going to drink with him watching, so it was a few days before she tried it.

I continued my weaving. The first thing I completed was a mat for sleeping. Then I made a shallow bowl. It wasn't quite waterproof, but it helped with drinking from the spring.

That night we weren't as thirsty, but we were all still very hungry. Due to my being massively pregnant they didn't have me moving around much, but I had seven babies almost fully baked in me and they demanded calories. It was another fitful night.

The next day was better. I recalled a tidbit from a book we read in high school. It was about a teenager who survived a plane crash and had to survive in the north woods for months on his own before being rescued. He only started actually catching fish when he remembered that water bends light. That means the fish wasn't where it looked like it was. Once I told Keith that, he actually caught a couple.

That night we feasted. It wasn't actually that much, but starvation is great seasoning. We kept the fish guts for bait and ate the rest raw. It was just sushi, right? Besides the fish, Beth had opened some coconuts and after drinking the milk we scraped out all the lining with a rock. I was feeling better about everything and they seemed to feel the same. We all slept soundly.

Over the next week, we figured out fire, found the best places to fish, discovered some wild potatoes, and fashioned clothing besides swimsuits. We kept pretty busy on our separate tasks and mostly socialized only before bed. Well, each of them would sneak by for a drink during the day. I reserved the left for Keith and the right for Beth and kept my own sipping balanced between them.

With our immediate needs met, I had energy to worry about the future. I was just about due to give birth. Conditions were not only unsanitary for the actual birth, but also totally unsafe for newborns. I couldn't hold half of the babies at a time and my two companions were collecting barely enough food as it was.

Once I decided it was best that I didn't give birth, I started trying to use magic to that end. I would spend half an hour at a time meditating with my hands on my womb, willing the babies to stay put. I'd tell them about all the reasons they shouldn't be born quite yet while I wove. I was already half belly, but I prepared to get even bigger. Hopefully I could slow them down, but even a little growth multiplied by seven went a long way. I also prayed they would be okay, though I was a little worried it wouldn't count because I was too big to kneel properly.

It worked. When they asked me about it, I told them I was willing the babies to stay put. It didn't pacify them how I hoped, but they didn't push it. Beth knew my history and I think Keith was ignorant enough about reproduction that he possibly believed all women could do it.

Soon enough, a month went by. We talked about what would happen if we were never rescued. We were technically in the Bermuda Triangle, after all. Keith wouldn't accept that they would stop looking for us. Beth was planning to make a house before hurricane season, followed by a garden and a hammock. I wasn't sure what would happen, but I didn't want to find out if I could be pregnant with toddlers.

We each slimmed down. Beth's bikini hung off her so much she took to wearing just my grass clothing. Keith went from muscular with a slight bit of pudge to super defined skeleton. My thighs and breasts shrank to resemble how I looked before first getting pregnant. I still lactated some, much to my companion's enjoyment. My belly lost the little padding it had, but grew a bit rounder. It felt like an overtaxed balloon without even the little give I had at full term with twelve. Fortunately, the babies became much less active. Not inactive, but continuously sleepy. I knew they were healthy, if a little underfed. I hoped it wouldn't give them long term health issues. (There's been a few things, but they're remarkably healthy kids today considering.)

** * **

Leanne was losing the battle for space. Her belly came up from her ribs and didn't start curving forward until it was above her head. She could lean back for a while so she could work on something in that small space with both hands, but more and more frequently she was forced to turn her head sideways and use one hand to interact with the world.

However, even that was beginning to be impossible as her breasts moved through melon sized. She'd been consciously slowing their growth and production throughout the pregnancy, but they weren't cooperating anymore. They'd plumped up and started producing more milk. She'd had

to double her milkings to stop herself from leaking. She'd tried bunching them together in front of her, but that quickly put a crick in her neck. Now Charles was trying something new.

She held her hands above her head while he pulled her breasts under her armpits and wrapped them in place behind her. He'd thought of this after seeing a picture of one of her cosplays. In the photo, he'd noticed she didn't look particularly pregnant. She had to describe to him how she'd wrapped an unusually squishy pregnant belly around herself, making her look fat instead of pregnant. It was only possible because the amphibian eggs she'd been carrying were very flexible.

You know, this reminds me of that bridal shower game where you make a wedding dress out of toilet paper, she thought, annoyed once again that she was missing Lidia's wedding. Her oldest, closest friend in the world was getting married and she was missing it. Lidia had offered to hold the wedding at the hangar, but Leanne had insisted she hold it at a proper venue. The bride was supposed to be the center of attention, not the maid of honor's runaway pregnancy. Some of her work friends had agreed to be her bridesmaids and they'd reportedly done a good job of it.

She understood why it was best this way, but it still was tough to know she wouldn't be there today when Lidia and Andrew tied the knot. She put her sad musings away to focus on the present.

Her breasts were as empty as they could be these days, which was letting Charles hold them flush against her sides. From what she could see, her nipples were pointing backwards and were beginning to drip.

"You'll have to attach the suction cups for me later," she told him.

He nodded, not looking up as he made one more pass with the clear plastic. "They might have to stay on for longer, because when they're pressed down like this I doubt they'll retain a lot of milk."

"Maybe," she conceded, "but it'll be nice to have them out of the way."

Charles stepped back, checking out his work. "We'll see how long this works."

"Thank you," she said, pulling him in for a kiss.

When they pulled apart, he grinned. "Already worth it."

14 Out of the Frying Pan, Still in the Oven

Summer was in full swing when we saw the boat. It passed in the distance despite our smoke signals, but we remained hopeful. They did grid patterns or something, so they might pass by again, right? I was getting to the point that standing to use the latrine with help was worse than sitting in my own filth when the boat returned a couple days later.

It turns out the search parties didn't start until Lidia and Shawntay went to the authorities a full day after we fell overboard. The yacht's owner tried to claim we were never there. While they made convincingly evasive arguments claiming Keith and Beth hadn't even been onboard, enough people remembered the impossibility pregnant winner of the pregnant bikini contest sailing off with them that they finally relented.

They called us gonnors after only a week of searching. When the Fairfields found out a couple weeks later, they actually could tell I was still alive because of a magic test I was supposed to continue after our trip. It took Hank several weeks to find someone willing to search for us. Once he did, it still took them a few weeks to pass our little island. It turns out it was related to the Bermuda Triangle. The island is hard to find unless you have some magic doodad aboard. I wasn't paying attention well when we were rescued and before now I wasn't interested in reliving the experience. Otherwise I'd give you more details.

Getting me on the rescue boat was difficult. First, it took two people helping me into the rowboat. Then they eventually resorted to using the winch for the rowboat to hoist me onto the deck. I felt like I almost popped at several points, but I held it together.

All told, we spent almost three months away from civilization. Beth was emaciated, but she'd gained an intensity I found inspiring. Keith went from an entitled frat boy to a serious minded adult - also skin and bones. I was in a similar position except for my middle. The babies were too still for my comfort, but I knew they were alive at least.

During our hours sailing to the mainland, we ate every scrap of food on board. They confessed then that they'd been giving me twice the food they allowed for themselves. That news made me start bawling my eyes out. I hadn't noticed, what with how hungry I was at every meal, what their portions looked like. They still couldn't stand each other, but they agreed to sacrifice for me.

I told them they shouldn't have: that the smart thing would have been to keep the productive members of the island healthier. In response, they talked about all the stuff I made. Between the sleeping mats, the cooking surfaces, the leanto roof, the barely passable clothes, the rope he used with his homemade trident, the fishing line, and the basket she used to collect edible roots I conceded I wasn't a total burden. Keith made it a point to tell me in particular how much he loved his hat. In fact, he sent me a picture of him wearing it with his last Christmas card.

Point of fact, I would have died without both of them. I doubt that they would have died without me (except as a mediator between them during a couple particular fights). While I appreciated the sentiment, I still am very, very thankful for the sacrifices they made for me.

** * **

Leanne winced as the wheeled frame allowing her to move crumpled beneath her. As the front end broke under her belly's weight, it pulled the rest of her into the air. She reached out with her toes and couldn't feel the ground. Charles yelped and rushed over. Her belly listed to

the side, making her tilt as well. The pieces of the frame hadn't punctured her - yet - but the broken parts were plenty painful pressing into her.

She'd joked about feeling like she orbited her own belly sometimes, but this was a new level of absurdity. Despite her engorged milk makers and her grade-A whooty, her belly was lifting her in the air like a child simply by rolling over an uneven surface. It was a surreal and uncomfortable way to be lifted.

When her belly finally settled, her feet were about two feet in the air. Still, she couldn't see over the top of her packed womb. Her new perspective did make the ceiling look a lot closer than it should be.

"Are you alright?"

She looked down at Charles, who was wearing pajamas still. He was clearly agitated and despite his lack of sleep looked ready to run to the hospital and back if needed. She took a moment to appreciate how full his head of hair was.

Leanne suppressed a grimace and plastered on a smile. "A little uncomfortable. The wheely-frame broke."

"I'll call them in to lift you off it," he said, running off before she could respond.

"Bring me back some pizza!" she yelled after him. With her massive size it was increasingly obvious her growth wasn't only fueled by calories. Something magical was happening, which thankfully was also allowing her to not collapse under her own weight. Still, every mouthful helped.

* * *

Once we were close enough to the mainland, they radioed ahead to get an ambulance to meet us. That made me panic a little. The reality of my situation - months overdue, weakened by profound lack of nutrition, and still away from civilization - made me a little nervous. Okay, it made me a lot panicky. The babies responded with a little flurry, but it was weak.

I'm not sure how, but as we made our way to land and the hospital I had a plan revealed to me. I needed time to replace my fat stores. The babies's organs were all well developed, but their muscles needed the opportunity to reverse the atrophy they'd undergone. I also needed to get my vitamin levels and other micronutrients in order. When I accomplished all of that, then I would enter labor and it would all work out. The hospital was the place to do that, but I'd need a lot of food and rest. I also needed to stop any doctors from trying to cut them out of me too early.

I told Beth what I needed to do so I'd have an ally in any arguments. I asked her to try to contact everyone, especially the medical Dr. Fairfield. She and Keith were going to spend some time in the hospital as well, but they could at least stand unaided.

This time there weren't any paparazzi because the contest holder/yacht owner didn't want bad publicity. We saw only a few people between the boat launch and the ambulance, all of them at a distance. I got my own ambulance while Beth and Keith had to share. The paramedic wanted me to lay down, but I convinced him I was way too top heavy that way. He let me sit on the gurney, back to the front wall, and that worked much better.

I chatted him up, mostly to stop his eyes from actually popping out of his head. He was a Florida native, just got engaged, and was trying to enter medical school. In turn, I shared how I'd come down during Spring Break, won a pregnant bikini contest, and fell off a party boat. When he saw how calm I was about everything, he tried to tell me the doctors would likely try to abort the babies to save me. That got me riled up, but instead of yelling at him like I wanted, I shared my pregnancy experiences with him. I'd had five previous pregnancies with a total of twenty-six babies. This was my sixth, and babies twenty-seven through thirty-three were not going to be aborted. When he asked me how those numbers were possible, I explained about the fertility treatments resulting in twelve healthy babies delivered at 39 and a half weeks. At that point, I asked him to tell the doctors to contact my doctor before doing anything rash. He agreed I seemed stable, if large, and told me he'd let the doctors know.

At the hospital, the staff freaked out even more than the paramedic. He talked people down while I did my best parade wave, smiling and answering questions. The three of us were all whisked away to separate rooms, though I'm told Beth and Keith were close together. The rest of my day was full of people fussing over me. The ones with needles I tolerated, but the ones with milkshakes and burgers I thanked profusely.

As predicted, one OB/GYN wanted to perform an emergency cesarean right away. I convinced her to consult my doctor first. Dr. Fairfield talked her down and suggested instead we let me put some weight back on. She didn't like it, but she allowed it.

So I was fed. While I stuffed my face for the next few weeks, I had a stream of visitors. My parents came down for several days. They thought I was dead, so there were a lot of tears and a lot of worried questions about my current condition. Lidia and Shawntay, now graduates, visited me for a couple days. Shawntay got engaged - yay! - and Lidia was starting a law degree. That meant we'd be missing our fabulously athletic roommate, but the rest of us were going to stay around at least a little longer. The babies' parents came by, relieved their little ones were still alive but surprised they hadn't been born yet. When I explained the plan to them, they shook their heads and said God moved in mysterious ways. She stayed in town, but I saw surprisingly little of her.

Oddly enough, as I packed on the pounds again I found I felt less tight through my middle. The extra padding made me stretchier, I guess. That growth basically only happened in my gut. While my thighs stayed thin and my breasts regained only some of their former heft, my belly experienced a growth spurt. This far overdue I was beginning to look more like I was full term with twelve. I was still a tad nervous, but everything was going well.

The local doctor was stumped as to how I could continue to grow without going into labor. Normal women would have exploded, either all out the south entrance or through the abdominal wall. I simply stretched further and further.

I was a couple days shy of being pregnant for a year when I woke up knowing I was giving birth that day. The nurses were confused when I refused breakfast, but I didn't want to have a full stomach if they needed to put me under for any reason. I considered asking for a C-section, but something told me that would have long term consequences I didn't want. The babies were big - like between eleven and thirteen pounds each - and orgasmic birth or not, I was skeptical of passing anything that large between my legs.

Sure enough, right around noon I leaked over the floor and into the hall. They rushed to set me up in a reclined position with my belly suspended in front of me. We'd practiced a couple times, so everything went smoothly.

That is, it went smoothly until I was fully dilated and still too small for their overgrown heads. After a few hours of ineffective pushing I felt like a hot knife started cutting my pelvis. I screamed as the worst pain I'd ever felt cut into me. People had to rush in to support me because my feet in the stirrups couldn't help hold me up anymore.

As soon as it started, it was over. The pain turned into a dull ache and the first kid started sliding down. My legs were next to useless as I tried to keep my position while pushing. Despite that difficulty, the birth was suddenly less painful than normal. The first three kids were pushed out with much less fuss before anyone understood what had happened.

A woman's pelvis is specially shaped for carrying fetuses then allowing them to exit when they're ready. Part of that specialization is a strip of cartilage on the front that can soften and allow the pelvis to spread wider. There's two other joints on either side of the spine that can flex a little to take advantage of it.

What happened to me was all three of those spots were blown wide open. The doctor took a good look between kids and told me what happened. Nothing like that had ever happened to me before. I'd never heard of anything like that happening to anyone else. Yet it happened spontaneously to me. It was startling to say the least.

After I squeezed the last of the babies out a couple hours later, I tried sitting up on my own. It felt like my hips were made of spaghetti. I could wiggle my toes and flex my feet, but any coordinated movement of my legs above the knee was impossible. The pain hadn't returned, but I was worried I'd never walk again. They sent me in for an x-ray to confirm it and found the front gap of my pelvis was over twice as spread at rest as it should have been with a head pushing it wider. The other two joints were only about a quarter inch to the front's three and a half, but those aren't supposed to spread at all.

As the situation was unprecedented, they decided to lay me flat, adjust my hips into the proper position and shape, then leave me overnight while they researched solutions. The

strategy of 'let's wait and see what happens' didn't instill much confidence in me, but I was just as stumped on how to proceed.

That night I slept fitfully. I had odd snippets of dreams about tiny elves using cobbler's tools on my hips, angels spreading superglue between the bones, and wisps of spirits singing to my connective tissue. The next morning I still felt terrible, like I'd just finished giving birth instead of half a day later. Not fully awake and thinking, I stood up to use the restroom. My hips ached, but I didn't have a problem walking. On the way back to my bed, a nurse spotted me. He fussed about not standing and putting pressure on the recovering joints. Once in bed again, I realized how amazing it was that I could stand at all.

Another set of x-rays confirmed what I was already thinking; my pelvis had already healed. The doctor decided to keep me around a bit longer, but in all practicality I was fine. There was no way I should've been, but I was.

15 Other Diversions

While seven babies - even oversized - wasn't a record for me, spontaneously disconnecting then reconnecting fused bones was absolutely new. In light of that, even Dr. Fairfield was insistent I not start another surrogacy right away. I disagreed with them, but the memory of the pain of my hips splitting open quelled my verbal disagreement.

When I left the hospital to head back home, I was noticeably lighter than when I'd started the pregnancy. However, my hips barely fit in any of my old jeans despite my smaller ass. My pelvis had evidently decided not to go all the way back to how it was before. While it would probably make future deliveries easier, I was really clumsy for a few weeks before getting the hang of walking with such a broad base. Lidia said I walked with a model's exaggerated gait all the time now, which I suppose I did. She made it sound more attractive than waddling, which is what it felt like to me.

My school was understanding of why I didn't finish Spring quarter, but I still had to retake the classes. The university's theater department hired someone else after they thought I died, though they offered me back pay and they occasionally brought me in during crunch time. Our new roommate, Ashley, was really bubbly and we didn't really know what to do with her. She had way too personal of questions for all of us, especially after she heard about what Beth and I went through.

After a couple months of rushing to get a job, catching up with school, and all the paperwork that comes with coming back from the dead, I suddenly found myself with very little to do and the Urge making me just a little crazy.

Make no mistake - I'm pleading temporary insanity for everything that happened next. When the Urge hits me, I figure I'm ready to be pregnant, so I get inseminated ASAP. Dr. Fairfield was extra cautious after my months on a deserted island and the weeks in the hospital that followed. The trauma of that delivery was also a deciding factor in her decision to hold off on getting me pregnant. Looking back, I see how utterly reasonable she was, but I knew I was ready for another pregnancy and - more importantly - my body knew it, too. However, I couldn't convince her to perform the procedure. Lacking a surrogacy, the Urge attacked with unprecedented force.

I started off using cucumbers. (Sheesh, just writing that makes me blush.) When my roommates started commenting on the missing vegetables, I knew I needed to change to something more permanent. There was a sex shop downtown that sometimes had church groups protesting outside - which is why I even knew what and where it was. I visited on a rainy day, partly so I had a reason to hide my face going in and partly because I wanted as few possible witnesses to my descent into debauchery. I'm fully aware there are plenty of people who think that's overkill, but for a proper Midwest church-going girl it was a rather big deal.

The daytime cashier seemed surprised to have a customer. I went in determined to just grab what I needed without talking with any sales people, but after a few minutes of looking around and having no idea what anything was for, I mustered my courage and headed to the front counter. Her little smirk told me she pegged me for a newbie and knew I'd need her help.

I tried being circumspect. I tried to imply what I wanted without saying anything explicit. When she asked very specific, very personal questions my first reaction was to be offended. 'How dare she ask that?' Of course, just like any salesman she needed to know her client's needs before making any suggestions. She was really patient with me as I admitted out loud what I wanted.

Once she established that I was single and looking for self pleasuring toys, she escorted me to the dildo collection. I must have been redder than a cherry while looking at all the phallic facimilies. Thankfully, she only teased me a little before reassuring me that all sorts of people came in for things like this.

When I was confused by the suction cups on the end of some of them, she explained how those could be attached to a wall, floor, or other smooth surface. That appealed to me, so I investigated those models more earnestly.

I left with a moderately large model and some lube. I brought my own bag to put those in so my roommates wouldn't be able to guess the contents. Hormones aside, I was way out of my comfort zone and I didn't need an audience for what I viewed as a weird way to satiate an abnormally active libido.

That purchase was put to use when my roommates were all away at class. I asked Lidia for everyone's class times so I could have dinner ready right away, but I know she saw through that excuse. She didn't pry, though I'm sure she knew something was up. We had been close friends for years at this point. She'd been around from my first pregnancy and had seen the

extremes I'd gone to with subsequent surrogacies. We were tight. We knew each other's moods, desires, idiosyncrasies, and temperaments. I was in a situation where I was denied what I'd come to see as my purpose. That would have been tough on its own, but I was also in a semi-frenzy of raw sexual need almost constantly. The Urge didn't give me a moment to myself without a cold shower and thoughts of dead puppies. It blossomed into lust at the most inopportune times. I became something of a shut-in to avoid men, leaving me with more time with my rubber substitute.

In addition to simply craving sex, I also wanted to feel myself grow. To that end, I stuffed myself semi-regularly, but I knew that wasn't quite the feel I wanted. I also bought an air pump and a hose for the sink to fill up via the other end. That was better - and I could definitely stretch more than anyone I'd seen online - but lifeless fluid in my colon wasn't the same as babies in my uterus.

Months went by like this. It was a white knuckle fight to not have sex. I pestered Dr. Fairfield with petitions to start another surrogacy. She seemed immune to my ranting and pleading. That I barely considered going to another clinic demonstrates how much I trust and depend on her.

It was late winter when that changed. I'd gained fifteen pounds from the stuffing I did almost weekly. Clothes weren't fitting me right, which only added to my malcontent attitude. The new girl really didn't like me much, and looking back I can't blame her. Beth blamed our time on the island followed by my extended hospital stay. She probably had a point, but that seemed less impactful than my ever present Urge to breed.

Dr. Fairfield knocked on our door in the early evening. House calls were unprecedented, so I was understandably caught unaware. She stayed calm and collected despite my disheveled appearance and my anxiety riddled affect. I was flustered when she asked me to dress up so she could take me to meet someone. It was obvious that person was a prospective client, but she remained hush-hush about the details.

I managed to wiggle into some mostly clean, kinda formal jeans and a blouse that showed the weight I'd gained. I reasoned that my rolls wouldn't be on display so long as I kept my coat on, but I was upset that I'd put myself in that situation.

She drove us slowly to her office on recently plowed streets. More snow was expected overnight, so the sky was that gray more ominous than a flat black. It didn't help my nerves at all. I wanted to gain the favor and trust of the clients so I could get knocked up again. Scenarios on what could go wrong played through my mind on repeat until Dr. Fairfield spoke up.

"I feel I need to warn you that the prospective couple aren't fully human."

It took a few moments for that statement to sink in. She drove quietly for another minute before continuing.

"My husband met them while looking for a ship to find you in the Bermuda Triangle. They pointed him in the right direction. After you were rescued, he went back and offered

payment to everyone that helped. This couple declined at first, stating there was nothing they wanted or needed. Eventually he discovered they were having trouble having children - I won't go into details to protect their privacy. After consulting me, he offered my services to them. I've spent the last two months trying to give them children. At this point, I think surrogacy is their best option."

The news that some inhuman couple wanted me to have their children hit me differently than it would hit other women. While a normal person might focus on the not 'fully human' bit, I was relieved to have another opportunity to be pregnant. The prospect of having alien babies or a litter of sasquatches didn't perturb me much, so long as it quieted the Urge.

Dr. Fairfield interpreted my sudden shift to a calm demeanor to mean I'd gone into shock. She suggested this might be a bad idea, at which point I vehemently disagreed. Then I started spouting off all the things I was feeling and doing to stay sane and my efforts to quash the Urge. A minute into my tirade she started smiling, which I took to mean she wasn't taking me seriously. It wasn't until she parked that I quieted down.

"So, what you're telling me is you're okay with the parents not being human?"

"Yeah, that's a non-issue for me. Just breed me again."

She smiled as she considered me for a moment. "Let's go meet the clients."

* * *

Having multiple industrial machines lift her pregnant belly off the ground was, in a word, embarrassing. On one side they had a forklift and on the other side they had a backhoe. They tied straps around her belly and had each machine lift at the same time. Leanne's face was beet red through the whole process of strapping her belly in, partially from chagrin and partly from all the stimulation. Charles stood nearby throughout the process, which helped.

It almost went without a hitch. Right after they'd lifted her, pulled out the broken wheeled frame, and shifted her upright, the forklift let out a whine. Leanne felt some kind of fluid splash high up on her belly. There was some shouting, then she fell. It was only a couple feet, but her weight was likely measurable in tons.

The impact jostled her gravid form, causing an immense push from her womb back to her body. A loud *crack* sounded through the hangar. She feared for a moment that she'd finally ruptured, but then she noticed the newly formed cracks in the concrete floor. Her unborn children began kicking up a storm, but apart from a small accident in her pants she appeared to be unaffected by the fall. The same couldn't be said for the ground and the forklift.

Charles came up and touched her leg - the highest spot he could reach from the ground. His eyes were wild and his expression fearful, but his touch was soft. It was gentle in the way you might hold a cracked dish before it shattered. Leanne looked down at him and mouthed, 'Wow'. He sighed, the panic draining from him.

She started to giggle; at his reaction, at her unexpected resilience, and at the absurdity of it all. He followed suit. Soon they were roaring in laughter. The workers that came to check on them could only scratch their heads and feel relieved their mistake wasn't going to get them in trouble.

When they were finally laughed out, Charles slapped her butt. "You had me worried."

Leanne shrugged. "I'm the best at what I do and what I do makes me heavy."

Charles pushed his fingers through his hair. "I'll say." He looked around. "You broke a forklift."

"Yep, and it was only doing half the lifting."

He grinned. "You have no idea how sexy that is."

"I think I have an idea," she said, looking down at his pant's tented crotch and winking.

Charles shifted to hide it, then said, "Well, so long as you're alright I think I'll ask them for a little privacy."

Leanne smiled. "You might also want to ask for a ladder or something, because I don't think I can come to you at the moment."

"The things you say..."

He turned and walked off. She rubbed a little of her belly, anticipating some enthusiastic intercourse. Her children responded with another round of kicks.

* * *

The parents were mongrelmen; anthropomorphic dog people. They understood English, but had a hard time saying anything. Hank was there to interpret the growls and barks that accompanied their unique sign language. I could tell they were happy to finally have children from their wagging tails.

I found the prospect of having a litter of dog people even easier to deal with than I'd have expected. They were enough like dogs in appearance that I could imagine how cute puppy mongrelmen would be. I later found I wasn't far off.

We did the procedure that night. Non-human people tend to like nighttime as a rule. Mostly, it's to avoid detection by humans. Interspecies conflict was apparently a big thing before humans forgot we weren't the only people on the planet. That's changing, as you might be aware. I don't fully understand the mechanics of how mankind forgot or why that happened, but I feel like I've done a big part in building goodwill with several species.

At the time, I was just happy to be pregnant again after so long.

The Urge subsided after a couple days, letting me know the procedure worked even with mongrelmen babies. She implanted me with only three embryos, but between my fecundity and their tendency to produce litters I was expecting to carry something akin to my twelve baby pregnancy, which thrilled me.

I let Lidia, Beth, and Ashley know I was pregnant again. Lidia was relieved, Beth was apprehensive, and Ashley was confused. I let them know that despite the admittedly traumatic nature of the end of my last pregnancy, I was excited for another go at it. I considered telling Lidia the nature of the parents, but thought better of it. As much as I wanted to share that with her, she would have investigated further. Not only did she not need the distraction, but the Fairfields had to maintain their client's trust.

With the Urge settled, I found I could focus on things again. My grades improved dramatically. I got back into shape. I only lost a few pounds before my belly started sticking out, but I swapped fat for muscle. I even found time for some cosplay work. It felt awesome to be active again. My roommates appreciated my newfound joy with life as well.

It was spring when I found myself experiencing some new side effects no pregnancy had ever given me.

16 A Nose for New Things

I didn't realize what was happening with this pregnancy until I was several months along. There's a few things most pregnant women experience in addition to the more visible changes: nausea triggered by certain smells, mood swings, nesting instincts, that sort of thing. With this pregnancy, I was super sensitive to smells, but not always in a bad way. I could tell if rain was on the way, what kind of sandwich someone had for lunch, or what brand of detergent someone used a week ago on their clothes.

I didn't consciously realize how incredibly accurate my sense of smell had gotten until Lidia came home once and I asked her who the lucky guy was without even looking at her. That was both a weird and heated conversation. After that, I realized that my nose was a lot sharper than it had ever been previously. It was a small hop to conclude it was a side effect of being pregnant with mongrelmen. They were part dog, right? Dogs are known for their extra sharp sense of smell. It was reasonable to assume that was the cause.

The Doctors Fairfield consulted each other and came up with a solid 'probably' for me. They had me do some tests when I came in for check-ups. The babies/puppies were healthy, if a bit more active than I was used to. They each ended up being smaller than a human baby, but with fourteen I still ended up well over my quintuplet size. My sense of smell dissipated a week or so after the birth.

I had some other new things happening in my life. I finished college, said goodbye to our little house, and moved into an apartment with Lidia. She wanted to be closer to the financial district, but our budget pulled us out a ways to an older apartment building between the university and downtown. We moved in right before the area gentrified, so we got what became a great location at a cheap rate. It also gave me the opportunity to make a few customizations as the building was overhauled.

As much as I loved that little college house, it was cramped under the best of circumstances. It felt even smaller when I hit the second trimester. We could have two of us work shoulder to shoulder in the kitchen - so long as neither person was me. They constantly needed to scoot their chairs in or step out of the hallway to let me pass by. With Shawntay and Beth it was fine because we were such good friends, but with Ashley it was aggravating for both of us.

That experience, combined with three abnormally super-large pregnancies to date, prompted me to have some doors widened and to modify the kitchen counters and layout. The contractor was visibly doubtful anyone needed the changes I requested, but Lidia made it clear he was going to do it anyway. He did and it became my ideal home.

Near the end of that process, Dr. Fairfield had another nonhuman client couple for me, this time some sort of amphibious humanoids. I carried their eggs, which I'm told numbered around two hundred. It might sound like a lot, but they weren't any bigger than golf balls. I got relatively large quite quickly, but I stayed the same size for several months. I visited the pool a lot in addition to baths at least daily.

After Lidia found a job and we weren't living in a construction zone anymore, I convinced her to do another Halloween party with me. It was a completely different sort of party than the college keggers we'd attended. It was a charity event supporting a cancer research group. There was a string quartet, multiple caterers, and nary a red plastic cup in sight. Her firm was one of the sponsors of the event, which made it possible for us to get on the guest list. I was expecting a stuffy affair, but it was lively instead. Surprisingly, there were several costumes that honestly outclassed mine. There were a bunch of witch and Deji robes, superheroes, and King of Brooches costumes. Several literary characters, like the Four Musketeers and Herlock Shomes, were in attendance.

I wasn't expecting anyone to recognize us, but a few people recognized my Radish Head walking stick and Lidia's fire devil Pulcifer. Her Screech costume took a lot of work, what with all the competing colors and colored gems attached everywhere, but the end result was dazzling.

My Sophia dress was drab in comparison. I went with the old version so I could disguise the girth of my belly. Those eggs made for a uniquely pliant belly. I used a tight wrap and pulled half of it around to my sides. The effect was similar to pillows covering my torso. Not one pregnancy comment all night, which was a welcome change. I got the emails of a few other people who made their own costumes. We still ask each other for advice occasionally.

We spent the night in pleasant conversation, but toward the end I started getting pretty uncomfortable. Not only was my uterus rebelling at being so misshapen, but I couldn't resist the

hor d'oeuvres. The extra mass started getting to be too much for my clothes, so I ducked out earlier than Lidia and caught a cab home. I was in such a rush I didn't go back when my shoe fell off. That would have been a lot more ironic if I'd been dressed as a certain Dasney Princess, but it was funny regardless. For the record, no princes have returned it.

After that pregnancy was another human couple. I had measly triplets that time. Then there were some witches who had their own procedure for me - nothing too involved, but it was certainly different from standard medical practices. That resulted in quintuplets, which stuck around a little longer than normal. The babies were extra well developed, so the birth was more rigorous than my norm. I remember having odd cravings for that. Lidia also was pretty sure I caused a plate to shatter, but I'm not sure how.

My next pregnancy - lucky thirteen - was with some fox people. I had a baker's dozen, which went more quickly than normal. Toward the end, I was able to light things on fire with my fingers. I found it really draining, though, so I didn't do it often. I was also really skittish around dogs. Despite the large number, I didn't get much bigger than with quints.

It was around this time that the existence of paranormal entities became more common knowledge. I forget the details of the court case, but you can look that up. Most people didn't pay attention to it, but a lot of closet believers came out of the woodwork. Occult bookshops and cryptid chat rooms exploded in popularity. I felt pretty good about being in the know before that began. Lidia confronted me before I could come clean about my most recent pregnancies. She'd suspected something ever since before we became roommates, but she'd never really believed in 'ghosts and haints', as she called them. I didn't have any solid answers about what I was - I still don't - so she was content to leave things in the shadows. I did notice she went out alone at night less than before. That said, it never came between us.

The next two were human: sextuplets and octuplets. Then I had - I can't pronounce what it was, but we all called it a slime - pregnancy. I retained a lot of water that time. My belly got pretty massive, but the oddest part was how it would move and stretch. It was like I was a glove for a pseudo-tentacle. It didn't move often, but when it did I was stretched several feet in one direction, like it tried to reach for something. The rest of me became pretty flexible, too. I could stretch the skin on my neck to the far end of my collarbone. My breasts became really perky, which I admit to having fun playing with. It was one of the few times I was actually comfortable laying on my belly while pregnant.

After that novel experience, I talked Jill into letting me try being a surrogate for several couples at once. Four couples, two embryos each - you'd think I'd stay at a manageable size. No, I ended up with a total of twenty-five babies! They had me at a special site again, this time starting during my second trimester. I was immobile without a wheeled cart by the time I began my third. God as my witness, despite gaining close to six hundred pounds I've never felt sexier. My belly dwarfed me. It was significantly taller, wider, and longer than I was. They gave me some pills to help me stretch, so I didn't end up with any stretch marks. Some credit probably belonged to my previous pregnancy with the slime. It took over a day to naturally birth them, but it was especially pleasurable.

Dr. Fairfield freaked out a little during that process. Each of the parents were expecting twins, but she'd prepped them to expect as many as four. One couple came away with triplets, but the others came away with five, seven, and ten babies each. Over delivering when it comes to kids is not generally appreciated. Her malpractice insurance went up, which made her more conservative with future human clients. I'm pretty glad it turned out the way it did, but for her sake I didn't want a repeat experience.

The pregnancy after that was quadruplets, this time for a shaman. I don't have any hard evidence of this, but I'm sure I was haunted by a ghost the entire time. It was a little freaky at first, but it ended up being helpful and comforting. Lidia named it Bob.

Next, I had some shapeshifters for clients. After about two months I'd wake up in the morning with a different sized belly than when I went to sleep. Usually bigger, but sometimes noticeably smaller. I have no idea how the laws of thermodynamics played into it, but my dramatic fluctuations in mass were enough to keep me on my toes when I thought I had experienced everything there was to experience with pregnancy. My biggest size during that pregnancy was about octuplet size, but apparently I only had two babies.

Each of these pregnancies were unique. Even human babies have their own quirks and bring me a distinctive experience. Yet I raced through that last handful of pregnancies when that's the entire point of this case study. Why am I doing that? Let me list my reasons.

One: Dr. Fairfield was my doctor for each of those. She already has all the clinical information on each of them.

Two: while the pregnancies were distinct, my life was kind of bland. Sewing, growing, eating, and giving birth consisted of most of my waking hours. Meanwhile, Lidia aced law school despite its boys club nature, then went and got a serious career. I don't regret any of those surrogate pregnancies, but I do wish I'd pushed us, pushed myself, to do a little more. Walks to the store and swimming twice a week were the highlights of my schedule. I think I stagnated. I gained weight that didn't go away between pregnancies and I lost touch with most people in my life. My pregnancies consumed my attention, and pleasant as they were, there's no substitute for a social life. Fetuses don't make for great conversation partners.

Three: I want you to know about Charles. For the last couple years he's been the light of my life. He's good and kind and sweet and I love him dearly.

Four: I'm writing this on my phone. I'm big enough that a laptop or even a tablet wouldn't fit comfortably where I could reach it. This is a bit of a recent development and leads to my next reason.

Five: I might not have a lot of time left. You'd think 25 babies, which was my largest size before my current pregnancy, would be the definition of massive. Don't get me wrong, I was as large as I'd been at any other point in my life with that one when I ended my second trimester. I gave birth early and I still surprised myself with how much bigger I was. They put me in a warehouse for that one. I was heavier than some species of whales. I was-

That's not the point. With my current pregnancy, I surpassed that size months ago.

I was told to expect a gestation time of 18 months. Yes, that's twice what a normal pregnancy is. I started large and continued growing quickly. What's supposed to be typical with ogre pregnancies is a quick surge in size followed by a long period of slower growth for the last half. That's not what happened. I haven't slowed down. In fact, a few months ago I think I sped up. I'm in an airplane hangar. They tell me they use it for Leer Jets. I thought it was overkill at first, but lately it's begun to feel cramped.

I've held up pretty well so far, but I'm way out of my depth. I'm scared. There can't be many whales I'm not larger than now. I feel far tighter than ever, though there hasn't been much pain to speak of. However, whatever's inside me has to get out. I've had rough labors before, but this...

Mom, Dad, Lidia, Charles - I love you all. I'm not sure what the hell happened this time, but I love you.

* * *

The day Leanne grew large enough to buckle one of the roof supports was the day a lot of things came to light.

Instead of trying to roll her so her feet could touch the ground, they used a mechanical lift like the ones telephone repairmen use to give her a place to stand. That was another foot in the air from when she broke her wheeled support, so her growth was faster than what should have been possible. The concrete had cracked even more, so her weight was also absurd.

When someone inspected the roof, they found a giant circle with arcane writing painted on it. No one noticed before because the paint was almost the same color as the aluminum sheets. They called in the anthropologist Dr. Fairfield to investigate.

Thankfully, he was nearby and not in some tropical village halfway around the world. In fact, he'd just returned with information pertaining to her beyond record breaking pregnancy. He held off delivering that news to examine the magic circle. Leanne and Charles waited impatiently below as he did.

When he finished, he climbed up onto a ladder to talk with them face-to-face.

"So, you remember that pregnancy you had with the fertility treatments? The one before you started working with Jill."

"Yeah, I remember," she said, willing him to explain faster.

"My wife called that a perfect storm. Your above average fertility combined with the drugs that lady dosed you with and the supplements your boyfriend slipped you. The three factors came together and boosted your fertility well beyond what any would do alone.

“We seem to have a similar situation now.”

Leanne and Charles shared a look of mutual worry. With a belly weight best measured in tons, there was definitely going to be a big explanation.

“The markings on the roof are to gather energy from the natural world. With you in the center of it, you’re the easiest place for it to pool. It’s supplementing your growth. It’s more effective than it should be because we’re apparently on a ley line.”

“So I’m being pumped full of magic from the planet both because of where I am and because someone with a paint can decided I needed even more?” she asked, a combination of nerves and anger making the remark accusatory.

Hank held up his hands. “I didn’t pick the site. I didn’t paint the roof, either.”

“So that’s why she’s getting so big?” Charles asked.

“There’s more,” Dr. Fairfield said, a frown on his face. “The ogre parents aren’t exactly what they claimed to be. It turns out, they’re giants.”

Charles’s eyes grew wide while Leanne’s narrowed to daggers. Hank rushed to continue.

“Giants are a lot rarer than they were a millennium ago. In addition to their size, they’re also inherently magical. They’re more magical than ogres, even, which is a surprisingly high bar.”

“How magical?” Charles asked.

“How big?” Leanne asked at the same time.

Hank winced. “Their size is variable. If the sources I found can be believed, they can grow to be taller than redwoods with human proportions, though they often shrank to be only marginally taller than humans. Their magic rivaled that of gods in the old pantheons.

“I never would have suggested you should carry a giant’s child and Jill never would have done the procedure. They knew that somehow and duped me. I’m so sorry.”

As angry and afraid as she was, Leanne believed him. Charles squeezed her hand, letting her know he was with her for this.

“So what happens now?” she asked.

“We break the circle on the roof, which should lessen how much magic is funneled your way by the ley line. We can’t move you anymore, which is probably a good thing. Cutting off all the energy would put you in too much of a deficit, so no cold turkey. I’m researching giants and relaying everything to my wife, who is putting together a plan for delivery. She thinks she should operate soon.”

"I've never had to have a cesarean before," Leanne protested.

Hank held up a hand. "She says there's no way you're birthing some of the things inside you. Some are bigger than the parts of you that aren't uterus."

Leanne frowned. Her record wasn't worth her life, but it was humbling to need outside intervention doing what she did best. There was also the worry that any puncture of her womb wouldn't heal completely, making future pregnancies more risky.

Charles spoke up. "Let's go erase some of the marks on the roof." He climbed out of the lift's basket and down the ladder after Dr. Fairfield. Leanne heard him say something else when they reached the ground that she didn't think she was supposed to hear.

"While we're at it, let me explain what I'm going to do if she doesn't survive this."

They walked off, Charles muttering threats to Hank as Leanne brushed a tear from her eye. Muttering about not having fluids to waste, she distractedly waved over a delivery boy with food. She ignored his naked awe at her size and did the only thing she could do at this point - fuel her babies's growth and hope for the best.

* * *

It was just after I delivered the shapeshifter babies that I met my fiance, Charles. It was a chance meeting at a supermarket. I was barely fitting into my - I can't call them normal clothes since I spend more time pregnant than not - my non maternity clothes. I was feeling self conscious about the extra weight I was carrying in my midsection, so I was wearing baggier clothes to hide it. He was working as the store manager, running some promotion that required him to go out and mingle with customers. He approached me and I didn't hear him coming. I was reaching for some cereal on a shelf just a little too high up and he grabbed it for me. He's not much taller than me, so he had to stretch, but I still found it chivalrous.

After he handed it to me, he sort of just stared at me for several seconds. I thanked him, which startled him back into action. He started telling me about the promotion they were having. I patiently listened, noting that he was kind of cute. I'd been on a few dates in the last several years, but mostly between pregnancies. None of them were really serious prospects, but it feels good to be wanted. Those I told about my surrogacy gig tended to lose interest fast, so my interest in them faded just as quickly.

He was different. Right from the start, Charles seemed more genuine, kind, and mature than anyone I'd ever dated. I gave him my number after he finished his promotional spiel. I tried walking away with extra sway in my step, which at that point with hips too wide for some chairs was a considerable amount. He later told me that was the clincher for him deciding to call me.

We had our first date that weekend. He took me to a bookshop, where he directed us first to the children's section where we picked a favorite from childhood. It sparked some wonderful discussion. He moved us section by section through the store, fiction and nonfiction, and at

every place we stopped I found something to admire in him. I was a little embarrassed at how well read he was compared to me. When I mentioned it, he said no one could read them all, so it was good we all read different books so we could talk about the ones we'd never get around to. It was really sweet of him to try to make me feel better, but it only worked because he was so sincere about it.

I took a big chance at that point. I was due to be inseminated soon. That was a dealbreaker for most guys, so I wanted to make sure it wouldn't make him run when I started to show. With as much as I was attracted to him, I wanted to save myself some heartache, so I decided to let him know sooner than later. If I did end up pushing him away, at least I wouldn't be madly in love yet.

When we were heading through the nonfiction, I pulled us over to pull out a copy of What Expecters Should Expect. I hadn't read it since I was pregnant the old fashioned way. The book has some wonderful information in it and the material was presented in a very approachable fashion.

He looked a little nervous when I showed him the cover. When he asked me why I liked that book so much, I told him I was a surrogate mother. While I wouldn't know the details until much later, he tipped me off subconsciously about his pregnancy fetish on that first date. Instead of acting interested while really uninterested, he tried to act uninterested when he was very, very interested.

I told him in general terms what I did and how it worked. He asked some questions about how long I'd been doing it among other things. I told him I'd been pregnant 'several' times, always with multiples. When he asked about multiples, I blamed the technology, saying clients usually chose to inseminate at least two embryos to increase the chances of the procedure working. He nodded and said it was impressive I could carry more than one at my height. I feigned embarrassment, secretly thinking back on my largest pregnancies and how those would overwhelm even seven foot tall nurse women.

The date ended with frozen yogurt and a lovely goodnight kiss. I could tell he was into me and I was certainly into him.

Pregnancy didn't come up again as a topic of discussion for a few dates. In that time, we talked about most everything else. I told him about sewing costumes for the theater and my other projects. He told me about the model cars he made, the books he read, and his thoughts about what to do when he retired. I was a bit startled by that information, but he explained he was approaching 20 years at the supermarket he worked at. From bagboy to manager, he was familiar with every aspect of working at grocery stores because he'd basically done it all at one point or another. He planned to use his retirement pension to go to college.

As someone else with a nontypical lifestyle, his path to college was intriguing. It was only as I saw his nonconformity to norms that I realized how much I valued my individuality. Once I recognized it in me, I cherished it in him.

Those early months of dating were such a rush. It was obvious he liked me, just as it must have been obvious I liked him. Each date was simple, giving us plenty of time to talk and enjoy each other's company. That time was so pleasant we didn't find ourselves in a hurry to move onto the next step in a romantic relationship. We were well past the 'third date' mark when I began to show. I thought I'd waited too long to take our relationship to that next physical level. He started acting a little weird around that time.

I tried being alluring to try starting something. I really did. But as much as I like how I look and feel pregnant, I know from experience many men are turned off by women in that condition. The awkwardness from when I first mentioned being a surrogate mother kept bothering me. I didn't know what to think about what he thought of me. I became really self conscious about my quintuplet fuelled growth.

He took me back to the bookstore from our first date before I had the nerve to initiate 'the talk' about our relationship. He seemed really embarrassed, which made me think he was breaking up with me. Instead, he confessed his near obsession with how pregnant women look. Before I could get a word in edgewise, he told me he really liked me for me and he'd date me even if I was never able to have kids. He explained it by saying he liked cake and he liked icing and I was cake and pregnancy was icing. It was a really sweet explanation (pun intended) despite his slight stutter and beet-red face.

I dragged him home and had my way with him that night. It was fantastic. Lidia told us she didn't know I could be so loud. Things only got better from there.

* * *

It only took about twenty minutes from when they rubbed out the first bit of the magic circle that Leanne felt something change. The babies became much more active. She felt a few 'little' ones at different points all around her impossibly fecund center start to squirm, which prompted a chain reaction of kicks and punches.

Leanne couldn't appreciate the full effect of all that motion from how close she was. Everyone else watched as the massive oval that was her womb began shifting, stretching, and settling back in place. Some creaking metal from where she was crunching the roof added to the show. Her skin, already obviously taunt, began to darken with bruises in places. The incredibly distended woman was showing the strain more than ever.

A scuffle somewhere beyond the front side of her belly caught her attention. Shortly after it started, she felt someone slam against her. The impact rippled through her, rilling up the babies and putting extra pressure on her skin. The person ran into her again and the resulting tremor broke her water. It left her at a firehose rate. She could feel her vagina stretching to let more out at a time. Her pelvis was preparing to split to let her giant babies through her birth canal. She grimaced, remembering how much it hurt the first time that happened.

She screamed as the fire lanced through her hips, there one moment and gone the next. Immediately she could tell that four or five times as much fluid could flow out of her has before.

Despite the pain, she knew that was a good thing. If she could stretch a bit more, she just might be able to birth everything inside her.

With tears in her eyes she looked around for Charles. It took a moment, but she finally spotted him. He was helping several technicians wrestle someone out to the exit. She wiped away the tears to get a better view.

Leanne gasped. They were hauling Brett away, her old boyfriend that dosed her with fertility drugs. She'd called him Murphy in her story to protect his identity, but if he was the one that painted the roof of the hangar then she had no qualms against defaming him for the rest of her life.

As they pulled him outside he looked back at her massive womb with naked lust. "You're a goddess among insects!" he screamed. "I brought you to your true potential! Yours is the power of creation!"

She tried tuning out the fanatic's ranting as a massive contraction rippled through her belly. Already, a couple normal sized babies had popped out of her along with the amniotic deluge. A nurse was gathering them up and calling for assistance. Leanne stroked what she could of her belly, trying to calm herself and her hoard of unborn children.

It was a good thing her belly was holding her up, because her legs weren't working properly. Without a rigid pelvis, the muscles couldn't hold her weight. She tried to relax so her opening would be as large as possible. This was going to be a long, long labor.

17 Good Things in Excess

Good news, I'm still alive. Whew, things were pretty hit and miss for a while, but I'm alright. I might as well pick up where I left off with Charles. I promise I'll let you know how my latest pregnancy turned out.

I enjoyed sharing that pregnancy with Charles. He practically worshiped my growing form, but somehow continued to treat me with the same respectful friendship we'd developed before we had sex. He was the one. Forget about his boyish charm and muscled physique - he not only accepted but loved the deepest parts of myself I barely showed my best friend. He was kind and gentle and strong all at once and for whatever reason he liked me being pregnant as much as I enjoyed it myself.

Partway through my third trimester, he became concerned about my size. Like most people, he didn't understand that I could carry full sized multiples to term. Confident he'd understand, I showed him my unabridged scrapbook. Watching him flip through the pages was like watching a kid open presents from Santa Nick. I wish I had a snapshot of his expression when he saw my full-term icosaquintuple belly. He was surprisingly unsurprised that magic was involved. How he

put it was, 'There's no way someone can be as incredible as you without some magic helping you out.'

After I gave birth, I had to set some ground rules. I told him I wasn't ready for kids of my own just yet, so we were going to have to abstain from sex until a little after I was inseminated again. He asked if he could just use protection, but when I explained how insanely fertile and eager to breed the Urge made me, he agreed to keep his distance for a few weeks. Lidia (and occasionally her beau) helped us as a chaperone during that time, but mostly I just kept myself away from him. It gave me a lot of time to think about things we could do together. I worked out and dieted to get rid of some of my excess weight, trying to be as shapely as possible without having rolls. He in turn hit the gym and bulked up. We sent each other Chatsnaps, which kept the fire alive through those weeks apart.

Immediately after the appointment that confirmed I was pregnant, I put a plan into motion to thank him for his patience. He was very open with me about what he found attractive and why. I'd already treated him to a belly larger than he thought he'd ever get to caress, so I decided to play into a different part of the appeal.

I got in touch with Shawntay and asked her about getting my hands on some of the lactation cookies she once fed me. By then I was much more in control of my bodily functions and could usually increase or decrease my milk production without help, but a catalyst was still helpful when I wanted to make a big change quickly. She sent me a recipe and I went and baked a double batch.

Lidia agreed to give us free reign of the apartment for a week, which I really appreciated. She went away with her then boyfriend (now husband), so perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised she agreed to clear out for so long. I promised not to destroy the apartment in her absence.

Charles brought me flowers, chocolate, and finger food so we wouldn't have to cook as much. I bought some new lingerie and some pasties that weren't quite so adhesive. By the time Lidia cleared out, I was a couple cup sizes larger than my normal E cup. He enjoyed me at that size for the evening, then enjoyed me at nearly double the size the next morning.

I kept the pasties on for two days, backing up my milk and stretching out my breasts. Unlike with a pregnant belly of equivalent mass, I had a hard time carrying my milk engorged breasts around. Charles either carried me or did things around the apartment himself.

By the time I took the pasties off, each breast was as big as the rest of my torso. They were sore from the stretching, so Charles agreed to be gentle until after they were emptied. Of course, he was in a milk coma at that point.

I'll keep most of the rest of the details private, except to say that by Saturday morning I was well and truly immobile. It took me weeks to work them back down to a manageable size. Of course, at that point I was in the second trimester of a fairly large goblin pregnancy. Charles and Lidia were a big help during that time. Life was good and I struggle to think of a time I was happier.

Of course, my next pregnancy was exponentially more difficult.

* * *

Leanne paused her typing. The laptop was resting on her breasts, which in turn were resting on her lap while she sat up straight. They'd started growing rapidly with milk after the birth, but were staying about the same size now. The suction from the pumps continued to provide a low plateau of stimulation while the feel of her stretched out tummy skin touching her shins continued to be novel. If she could continue shrinking it on demand then she'd have abs in days, but for now she had a circus tent paunch leading away from her middle.

The first time she was immobilized by the sheer size of a pregnancy was both thrilling and frightening. Her full recovery made subsequent times exclusively positive. She loved the full, stretched feeling that accompanied maternity. It satisfied a deep seated need in her.

This latest experience, however, brought back some of that fear. Despite the multitude of orgasms she had during delivery, she was afraid of exploding from the pressure or being ripped apart by the massive children inside her. There was real danger of being killed. She hadn't been that close to death since falling overboard while eight months pregnant with septuplets.

She'd heard that the most invigorating feeling in the world was getting shot at to no effect. With the enormous sexual satisfaction accompanying her experience, she respectfully disagreed. Being unimaginably full of children, her skin threatening to snap at any moment, and orgasmically birthing multiple massive giant babies larger than her pelvis was just as dangerous and much more exciting. As thrilling as it was, she wasn't keen on repeating the experience. At least, not any time soon.

Her computer notified her of a new email. Leanne opened it up and saw it was from Dr. Fairfield. It was about money stuff at first, talking about converting the giant's payment in gold to US dollars and a proposition on how to split payment for her time in the hangar. The costs they'd incurred were significant, but she hinted the giant's gold was worth significantly more.

Right at the bottom of the message was a note that a potential client heard about the giants and might want to employ her services. She didn't specify who or what the client was, but omitting that information made her think Dr. Fairfield wasn't sold on the idea. Neither was she.

* * *

There've been a dozen cosplays since I moved in with Lidia, but one last one I want to note is my Lisa Craft cosplay. I first did it when I was not pregnant. It's a simple enough cosplay - tank top, shorts, boots, and tinted glasses. As I've filled out as an adult, I've become more comfortable showing off my figure. I've never really liked my face or hair, but my cleavage is hypnotic and my ass can stop traffic. Both are showcased nicely in Lisa's iconic outfit.

Lidia also went as Lisa when I debuted the outfit. She went in the skintight silver jumpsuit getup from the Crypt Adventurer movies. Hers took me a lot longer to make. I think she still has it

somewhere. Anyway, we generally took pictures separately - it's weird having two of the same character in a photo unless it's canon.

I remember being hit on multiple times during that event. My confidence was through the roof and I ended up very briefly going out with a guy I met there. He was pretty, but uninteresting and only wanted to feel me up. I ended up having to slap him, which ended up with security at the restaurant kicking him out, leaving me with the bill, but I digress.

About a year later, I wore the cosplay again, slightly modified to accommodate a respectable baby bump. I carried around a 'fertility idol' to explain the pregnancy, which earned a few laughs, but was largely met with significantly less enthusiasm than the first time I wore it. It was a bit of a knock for me. I adore my body when I'm pregnant. I understand most men prefer thinner women and very few like seeing a woman pregnant if he wasn't the one to cause it. That said, I don't see why most people think pregnant women are meant to be hidden away. Baby making is a super power that adds curves to a woman - why not worship that look?

If that were the end of that cosplay's story, I probably wouldn't have included it here. A while after Charles and I started dating, after he admitted his pregnancy fetish, I ended up wearing the cosplay again. I'm usually pretty prompt with laundry, but I wasn't that week. I was out of summer maternity clothes and he was coming over that evening. As it's a pretty simple costume, I wore it instead of one of my other options.

*He came over before the dryer finished and his eyes nearly burst out of their sockets. I was preparing for take-out and a new episode of *The Shambling Undead*, but with how turned on I was making him - well, those plans were tossed in favor of bedroom fun. I thought I looked good, but he treated me like a vision of horny heaven (is that a thing?). Ah, that sort of intense attraction is one of the things that make us work.*

18 Past Meets Present

Apart from the pregnancies I glossed over (they just seemed so mundane after being shipwrecked in addition to the other reasons I listed) I've pretty much reached the present.

I didn't actually sign up to be pregnant with giants. I thought they were ogres. My doctor was under the same impression. Ogres are much larger than humans and have much longer pregnancies, so with my penchant for multiples I prepared myself to get huge. Shortly after getting inseminated, Lidia moved out to live with her fiance (I recently missed the wedding due to being larger than the venue) and Charles moved in with me. He proposed and I accepted, which was something I hadn't let myself hope for in a long time. He loves me for me and likes my pregnant body. I love him for him and I really like his ... anatomy ... as well. It's a perfect match so far as I'm concerned.

By about month 8, I was too big to move around independently, which was a little sooner than I'd anticipated during the expected 18 month pregnancy. I moved into an airplane hangar before I grew too big for my apartment door. A couple months later, I was as big as I was expected to get.

Remember that 'perfect storm' situation that caused my first double digit pregnancy? I was secretly dosed by two different people with potent fertility drugs. Well, something like that happened here. In addition to my clients being giants disguised as ogres, my sleazy ex-boyfriend Brett (previously called Murphy because I was trying to protect his identity) painted a giant magic circle on the roof of the hangar. I'm told it channeled leyline energy (which was already higher at that location than anyone expected) directly into growing my babies, both in size and number. He also got a job as a delivery driver for a take-out place I enjoy. That job gave him the opportunity to dose me with more fertility drugs.

Words don't adequately describe how big I got. The weight of my womb cracked the pavement before I gave birth. My belly grew high enough to buckle the roof, which is what led to the discovery of the circle. I'm told I grew to be a few feet away from three walls of the generously sized hangar meant for a private jet. I was suspended several feet in the air because the rest of my body - including two very large, leaking breasts - weren't heavy enough to counter my Euro-car sized belly button. When my water broke, I covered the floor with a foot of amniotic fluid. I had a plethora of human babies - three of which share Charles and my DNA, so we'll be raising them - mixed in with dozens of mongrelmen, kitsune, shapeshifters, fishpeople eggs, goblins, and of course several giants. The smallest of the giants was my size without the belly. The largest was twice as tall and four times as heavy. That one was particularly difficult to pass, but thankfully my hips detached again to make it possible to birth him.

After three days, my belly was a flabby mess that covered a quarter of the hangar floor. Dr. Fairfield ordered it lifted, which pushed a few babies, some slimes, and a bunch of eggs out of me. My hips reconnected, though they're even wider than before. I'm a week past birthing the last baby and my skin has pulled back enough that I can carry it around bundled in my arms. My legs atrophied enough that I'm not doing much walking. I'm tethered down to an industrial milking machine anyway, which is barely keeping up with my prodigious lactation. Yes, you heard that right. I'm out producing cows - plural. Charles has his hands full with our little triplets and I'll be busy with physical therapy and pumping for a few weeks.

Apart from the obvious changes and impacts of this pregnancy, I feel different. Part of me feels spent, stretched out and deformed like an overfilled balloon that's been emptied and discarded. Another part of me feels invigorated. Dr. Fairfield the anthropologist tested me for magic potential yesterday and mine is significantly higher than it used to be. Giants are inherently magical, so I guess that makes sense. We'll see if that fades like with past pregnancies or if the location is screwing with his tests, but I think this experience unlocked a change in me. I've successfully sped up and slowed down my belly-skin's retraction, which is more control than I've ever had. Once that's finished, I'll test out a few other things.

To be clear, while I fully intend to be a surrogate again, I'm afraid of taking non-human clients. That said, I have to ask myself if I want to face that fear or run from it. We'll see what Dr. Fairfield says about my health before I make any final decisions.

* * *

Leanne held one of her babies on top of her engorged chest to bottle feed her. Ironically, breastfeeding was impossible because she'd risk drowning a baby with how much milk she was *still* producing. It had been almost two weeks since she was hooked up to the machine and it still hadn't pumped her dry. Because of that, they were still in the hangar. It seemed unreal than not so long ago she'd nearly filled the entire space.

A little movement made her look down at her perfect little daughter. She and Charles hadn't decided on names yet, but she was warming to Brienne for this one. He held one of the boys to his shoulder, gently tapping his back to burp him. She smiled, thankful her love was so strong and gentle. He was already a great father.

Clacking heels announced Dr. Fairfield's approach. Leanne turned and noted her apprehension. Her doctor had been very apologetic for months, but right now she was emoting something different. Was it worry or excitement?

"Sorry to disturb you during feeding time," Dr. Fairfield said, "but I have some news I think you'll want to hear."

Leanne and Charles shared a look. They'd discussed their future as a couple and her future as a surrogate, but they didn't have many absolutes they were certain of. Her ability to ever be pregnant again wasn't a sure thing with how straining her last pregnancy was. It wasn't clear if the Urge would return. She was increasingly confident her body would fully recover, but convincing Charles of that was proving more difficult. Additionally, they weren't sure how well they could provide for their triplets with one of them being a full-time caregiver, especially if she couldn't continue as a surrogate. They did know they wanted to stay together and be the best parents they could be to their children. Everything else was up in the air. Any news Dr. Fairfield brought them would direct the course of their future.

"First off, your ex is being charged with practicing medicine without a license, trespassing, assault, and a few misdemeanors. Your friend Lidia told me he'll be in prison for a few years at least - longer if she has a say in matters." Leanne and Charles nodded in response. It was good he was out of the picture. She reminded herself to thank Lidia next time she saw her.

"Second, I mentioned the giants' payment in gold had to be converted to US dollars." Charles cocked an eye at Leanne. She hadn't mentioned that detail to him. She would have, but her current situation made her both sleepy and absent minded. "My earlier estimate turns out to have been conservative. Even after paying for the damage in the hangar and the extra medical intervention, you and I will be wealthy enough to retire comfortably." Dr. Fairfield shrugged. "That, or simply not worry about charging clients. I know we both do what we do for more than money."

"Third, I mentioned a potential new client."

Charles frowned. Despite loving how his fiancée looked pregnant - perhaps because he felt guilty about liking it - he was against her taking inhuman clients ever again. Leanne hadn't argued that point with him, but neither had she agreed with him. She felt admittedly crappy physically, but she'd probably feel much better in a few weeks. She didn't want to commit herself either way to anything huge just yet.

Dr. Fairfield sighed. "I'm going to have to monitor your condition for some time before I agree to any inseminations. I'd also like to give you an easier pregnancy, probably human, before I even introduce you to this potential client." She straightened up and looked Leanne directly in the eye.

"That said, what do you feel about being pregnant for a dragon?"

For a moment, the only sounds were the hum of the industrial milker and the soft sucking of a newborn.

Leanne broke the silence first. "Don't dragons lay eggs?"

"That's what you're worried about?" Charles asked. "Not, 'How big will that make me?' or, 'Can my reproductive system handle that?'"

"I was going to ask those as well," Leanne said defensively.

"You could have died!"

"But I didn't!"

Both the babies they were holding and the third napping nearby all started crying. Leanne and Charles both began calming their children. Dr. Fairfield stepped in to settle the third back to sleep. Everyone took that time to collect their thoughts. Leanne spoke up first.

"Life is a risk," she said. As Charles began to answer, she held up a finger. "I'm a little scared, okay? That last pregnancy scared me. It also thrilled me. And that's life; a risk. Small risks only ever bring small rewards. Both of us took risks to forge a life differently than other people our age. I know your parents were as unapproving of when you decided to delay college as mine were when I decided to become a surrogate. But we persisted and life has been good."

Her fervor surprised even her, but it felt right. She held up her daughter. "Life *is* good. Just because my life almost ended sooner than I'd have liked won't stop me from living. Yes, I'm going to keep being a surrogate for as long as I'm able to carry babies to term. I'm also going to learn from that experience. I'm going to take more precautions."

"I'm updating our client background check procedures," Dr. Fairfield added. "Fool me once and all of that."

“And I should have kept track of Brett. He’s in prison now, so he shouldn’t be able to do much to me again.” Leanne sighed. “I want to live my life. I want to live it with you. I don’t want to live in fear.”

She let that pronouncement hang between them. Charles took his time fussing with their son, a look of worried consideration on his face. Leanne waited, not wanting to overrun her husband-to-be.

After the baby settled down, he said, “I’m always going to worry about you. I love you and I don’t want to lose you ever. Losing you so soon because your client lied and your ex sabotaged your pregnancy would break my heart.” He took a deep breath, like what he was about to say was going to hurt. “But stopping you would break your heart, and that would be worse.

“You have my support so long as you listen to medical advice and don’t take too big of risks.”

Leanne waved him over so she could hug him. He hugged her back. Their future still wasn’t certain, but it was theirs to embrace.

When they parted, Leanne said, “So, just in case we’re able and interested, tell us about dragons.”