



Please Don't Leave the Room

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In the forward to her recent report into the maternity services, Baroness Amos wrote:

“Words cannot describe the pain, suffering and trauma I saw and heard time and time again when talking to women and families about their experiences of maternal and neo-natal care in England. Anticipation and joy turned into pain, distress and trauma.”

In this very moving piece, a mixture of poetry and prose, first time mother Shellby Robertson shares her experience of giving birth to her son Morrie



Please Don't Leave the Room

By Shellby Robertson

Hello, please don't leave the room

Something is wrong you see

I can't quite see your name

Human I presume, compassion required

I need help with this suffocating sense of impending doom

Hello? I'm bleeding on the floor

Yes, I can see you're short staffed

Sympathetic I am, but we need your help more

Wait, no don't close that damn door

I won't make a fuss, not one single sound

Just look at my eyes as they dart around

This pain is all wrong, it's as clear as day

Please I can't die today, its my baby's first day

The machine starts to shriek, its an ally in a way

A-ha, maybe now the team will come running

Yes, they'll whisk us away,

the corridor stays still,

my screams of anguish refill

Hello, something is wrong-

My baby he's not-

My chest its-

Please please please please

This is inhumane I scream

My blood begins to leave its sticky red trail

I drop to my knees as it all goes black

My dear sweet boy I promise I'll be back



Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping

By Shellby Robertson

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping

My blood drips on to the surgical table

The hands that held me down, they're gone now.

The screaming has stopped you see,

For the people in the room at least

For me? It's a different beast

Ping, Ping, Ping, ping, ping, ping,

To place my darling baby on my chest ,

Ah yes, my most profound request

Refused, denied, excuses from those up high

Not a sound in the room as if they all knew

The hurtful lies and tales they were about to spew

Ping Ping Ping Ping Ping Ping

I can't lift my head you see,

Can't gaze upon my darling boy

I begged, I bargained, I threatened, I screamed

I looked them dead in their eyes and told them it's all wrong

I know my body, for it is my own

For 273 days I've nourished my newborn

Ping Ping Ping Ping Ping Ping

Should we cut the cord and move on?

Ah, for me I'm entrenched, I'm rooted here

Only mere minutes before, I'd stolen a breath

and gasped my hearts giving out surely, I'm close to death

Ah yes, cut the cord and move on

I know my heart, for my heart is my own.

Ping, Ping, Ping, Ping, Ping, Ping

Harsh fluorescents mock me as I pass

A different sterile room, that sneering look of pity

Congratu- don't you dare I scream. Get out, stay out

I peer over at my son, as he sucks his thumb

Ah yes, no damage done

I look at my hands still coated in our blood,

and note with an irony

crisp sterile white meets dark crimson red

black devours my throat and creeps into my head

here comes that unspeakable dread

Ping ping ping ping ping ping

In my own bed, I clutch my baby to my chest

They can't hurt us here you see

I know my mind, for my mind is my own

Wake up, feed the baby, Wake up on surgical table

Wake up I'm dying, they're here, they found us

They're holding me down, get out, stay out.

I scream at the night as my sweat coats the bed

Ah yes I knew my mind, but my mind is gone you see

It's trapped on that table, it's held down by ten

Ah, yes no damage done

Wake up, feed the baby, wait why am I wet

There's that irony

as again

My blood runs over the bed

Ping,Ping,Ping, Ping,Ping ping



An open letter to the midwives and doctors who were supposed to care

Dear The Nameless

Do you remember me, I wonder? A cautionary tale and a face you can't quite place? I see you at night as my mind drifts off, I wonder if you're aware of the harm you've caused.

See now, I remember how I walked into that room, my head held high, buzzing with excitement and expectant joy to finally meet my darling boy.

I remember that you had name badges that I couldn't quite see, stuffed into pockets. No introductions, just intimate exams. No warmth given, no there's no time for that.

Do you remember how I looked at you when it began to go so wrong, hot blood poured freely from my back, I softly met your eye, as my voice began to shake. "Something is wrong, the pain too intense" An eye roll ensued, "Now I'm the midwife here, not you", you said. Job done. I'm quiet now.

Do you remember leaving me alone in the room, the clock ticked on and the danger I was in crept insidiously higher. I wonder what happened to my birth plan where the doctor said I needed one to one care. Alone and afraid my blood began to flow, and my hands began to shake, buzzers repeatedly pressed, but calls never answered, closed doors that took far too long to open.

Do you remember how I looked at you the second time? "I know my body" I scream, it's wrong, it's not right. I swore, I thrashed, I fought with everything I had to make you see. I had to move, I couldn't lay on the bed any longer. "No", you said coldly, "You can't change position. Stay on your back".

Do you remember the third time I looked at you square in the eye? I pleaded to you, I begged you, I sobbed, "This is inhumane, my baby is coming, please please help me, believe me, let me push".

"No", you said, "That can't be". Then I'm on an operating table. Ten more nameless faces, no introductions in an emergency. You locked my partner outside the room. Accidental, you said. You shouted to behave, you must get the needle in.

The last time, I couldn't bear to look at you, "I'm going to die." I whispered to the room, the pain in my chest you couldn't believe, I fell hard to the table, you see my boy had already begun his journey into the world. You all held me down as I screamed at you to stop. "Safety," one of the nameless muttered. I birthed my son alone and reached my hand across the table for someone to hold, no one did.

Do you remember what it felt like to hold my ankles, my wrists, my arms, my head. Maybe you've forgotten that part? It's gut wrenching for sure.

I blinked at the sterile white lights and prepared to die, just get him here I screamed at my body, but my eyes couldn't obey.

Do you remember you put my son on my tummy, not on my chest, that was my one request. No skin to skin given and no soft pillow for my head. I clutched him so close, but you'd put him where I couldn't see him, cruelty or oversight, I'll let you decide.

The room went so silent, we all knew the truth in the silence of what had happened in that room. You're

hidden behind rules and a complaints process that's so very painful and untrue. I walked out that very same room with my head held low, a broken woman, you took me, and you broke me in all the ways you cared to break me. I hold my own hand now.

Oh. While I'm here, what were your names?



And the letter I wanted to be able to write. It would only have required such small moments of kindness and respect.

Hello, how lovely this memory is to revisit.

I remember so clearly how I walked into the room with my head held high, and a buzzing excitement of what was to come.

Do you remember how you introduced yourself and the team? How kind of you that was. I knew exactly who to ask for when I needed help and whose hands carried out intimate care and tasks. There was warmth in your eyes and so much time to help me when things went wrong, I was so glad.

Do you remember how when things started to go wrong, I looked to you with a shake in my voice? "Something's wrong, the pains too intense". You grabbed my hand and gave it a reassuring rub, "You know your body, and I know what that's worth". Ah yes it was a partnership, a team event.

I remember you quickly had to leave, but you found another staff member to make sure my needs were met. I knew you'd be back, I rang my buzzer when the blood began to pour. Instantly you were there, you held my head on the bed. I needed to change position and had this sense of dread.

Do you remember the second time I looked at you? I said my baby is coming, the pain's just not right. You looked me in my eyes and said It was going to be all right. My birth plan was followed the best you could, more important than that was your warmth and how I felt understood

Do you remember in that room, the lights were soft and low, some gentle music played. You believed my pain and didn't shy away. You helped me bring my son into this world, then I held my hand out and you entwined it with yours; I was so grateful I was given the time to push.

Do you remember I birthed my boy and you met my dearest request, you placed him skin to skin on to my bare chest, I snuggled him so close and breathed in his air, small curls had already started forming on his beautiful hair

I walked out the room with my head as high as it would go, puffed up with pride and my dear boy by my side.

To my midwife, I know your name, I keep this memory safe, it comforts me to know that even when things went wrong, you believed that I knew my own body, for it is my own.

Author Bio: Shellby is an occupational therapy student who has a passion for poetry. Through her poetry, she reflects on motherhood and trauma, drawing inspiration from her lived experiences.