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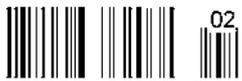
Birthing

FOUR
TRANSFORMATIVE
BIRTH STORIES

Loss *and Transformation*

Five Meditations on Loss

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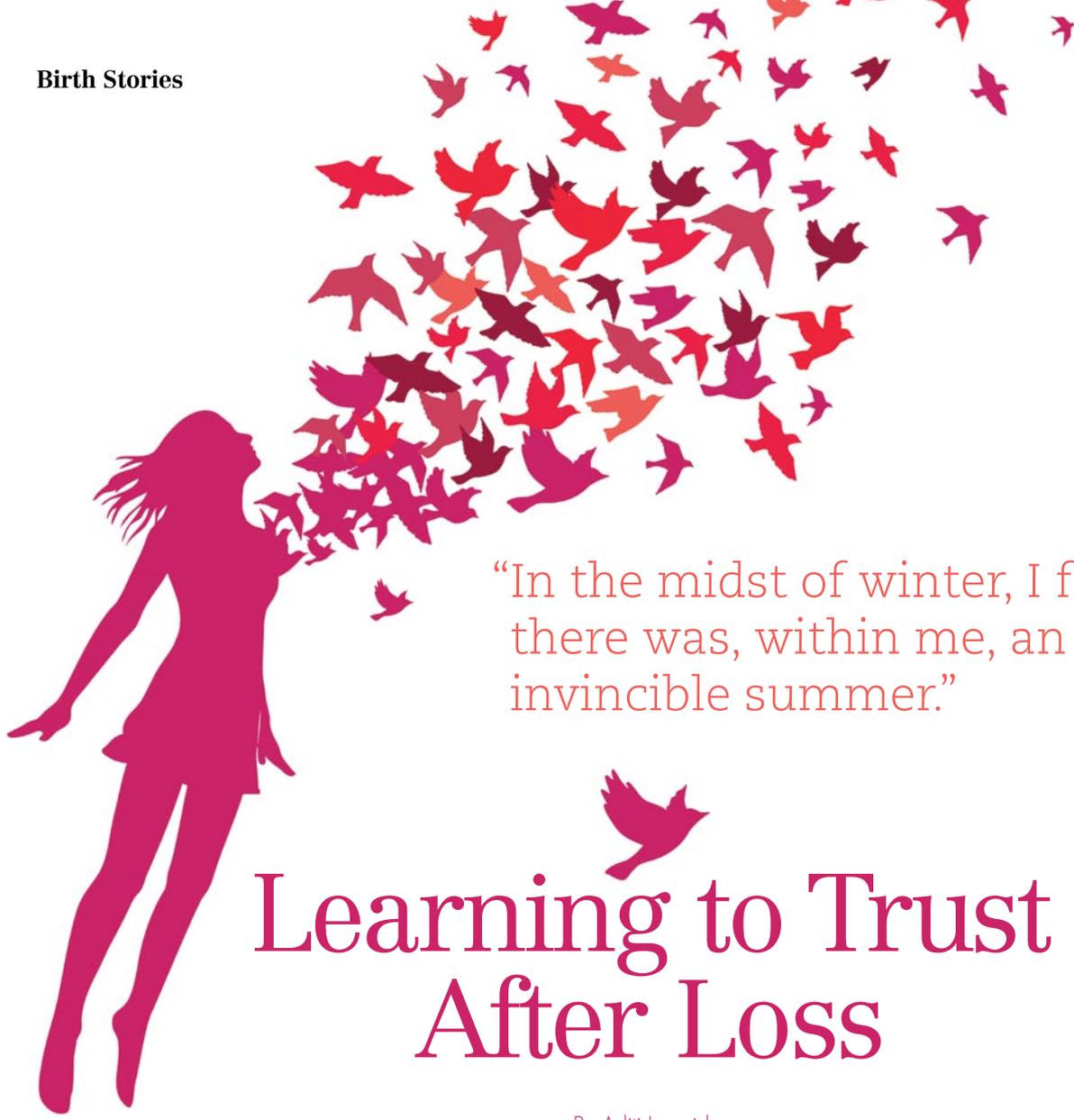
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“In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer.”

Learning to Trust After Loss

By Aditi Loveridge

NOTE TO READERS: THIS STORY DISCUSSES INFANT LOSS

On the evening of October 2, 2012, I went into labour. My contractions were light in the beginning and intensified throughout the night. Five hours from the start of my first contraction, in the ensuite bathroom of my bedroom, with my husband holding my hand, I miscarried our second pregnancy. Although I was expecting it, the experience was unlike anything I could have ever imagined.

On July 18, 2012 I received a call from my doctor notifying me that I was pregnant. What should have been happy news brought about feelings of worry, stress, and anxiety. My excitement was guarded, due to a very traumatic pregnancy loss (an ectopic pregnancy) in December which made both my husband and I lose the ability to be joyful, during what should have been one of the most joyful times in our lives.

An early ultrasound, that was intended to ease our worry, did not show anything in my uterus, furthering the fear that this pregnancy would result in another ectopic. We were told to wait two weeks and come back for another ultrasound. Two weeks does not seem like a long time, but for me those two weeks felt like a

lifetime. The second ultrasound helped my husband and I relax when it finally showed that the pregnancy was where it should be, in the uterus. I let go of the breath that I had been holding, and I slowly allowed myself to imagine my future with a child in it. As the days carried on, I found myself growing attached to the possibilities that this pregnancy brought. I would talk to my stomach and fall asleep each night cradling the barely visible swell of my abdomen in both of my hands.

Just as I began to ease into the pregnancy, my world was rocked once again. I woke up one morning and suddenly all my pregnancy symptoms (did I imagine I even had symptoms?) were gone. I immediately started to panic. I called my doctor's office

right away and the nurse assured me that pregnancy symptoms come and go and as long as I was not bleeding or spotting there was likely nothing to worry about. In my heart though, I just knew something was wrong. There is something to be said about a woman's (a mother's) intuition. I was insistent that they move up a previously scheduled 12 week ultrasound.

My husband and I went in the next day. We were told that the embryo had stopped growing. Since I was not bleeding, spotting or cramping they referred to this as a missed miscarriage.

I wondered why my body had betrayed me, depriving me of the one thing a woman should be able to do easily. Ever since I was a little girl, I was told

that when I became a woman I could have children. No one ever told me that maybe my body would go against nature and not allow that. I began to cry. Each tear that streaked my cheek was filled with loathing towards my body and, essentially, me. The doctor continued to explain that my body had not yet recognized the pregnancy loss and would likely expel the tissues soon. He explained that when my body did recognize the loss, it would be a process similar to a menstrual period. So we went home to let nature take its course.

After five weeks, I was still waiting for my body to do what was naturally expected of it. Five weeks is an extremely long time to know that there is a pregnancy that is no longer viable still inside of you. It felt like my body couldn't do anything right, not even miscarry normally. During these weeks my pregnancy symptoms would come and go, like a cruel reminder of the loss that had occurred and was yet to take place. In an attempt to help, my doctor had suggested doing a Dilation and Curettage (D and C). He suggested that a D and C might be emotionally easier, as he knew that waiting to miscarry naturally had been taking its toll on me, but I immediately said no. Since my first pregnancy had ended with medical professionals intervening, it was really important that I allow my body the opportunity to let go of this pregnancy on its own. I realized that I needed to totally accept this pregnancy loss in my head and in my heart in order for my body to let go as well. In an effort to move away from fear into a place of complete trust, I knew that my body and mind needed to be in balance, so I meditated daily. Through meditation, I slowly began to move past doubt and into a space of faith.

Finally on the morning of October 2, 2012 I began spotting. When I first saw the blood my heart felt heavy as the reality of the loss began to settle in. I called my husband and told him that the miscarriage was starting. After I said it, the words hung heavily in the air, unsure of when to dissolve. Then in the early evening I began to have intense pains, which unlike my doctor described, were nothing like menstrual cramps. Seeing as how I did not have any children, I was not sure what contractions felt like but as the pain intensified, increasing in intervals, I realized they were exactly that. My husband came home and I moved to the washroom in our bedroom. The contractions were coming one on top of another by this point and I was in excruciating pain. Since I had not been told that the miscarriage would be in fact a mini labour, I was terrified. There was a point where the pain was so bad and I was bleeding much heavier than "a menstrual period" so I asked my husband to call an ambulance. The paramedics arrived

and said that my vitals were stable but I should go to the hospital. However, once I knew that my vitals were okay, I chose to stay home and say goodbye to this pregnancy on my own terms.

I began chanting, "I am strong. I am safe. I am trusting" between each contraction. With each word that left my lips, I felt myself becoming stronger, safer, more trusting. My mind released all the things I had told it about pregnancy, my body, and of myself and I became completely present in the moment. My husband held my hand and stroked my hair. Finally I had the most intense

urge to bear down and push.

I grasped my husband's hands in mine, trusted my body's urge and pushed. I watched as my body expelled the embryo

and with it any remaining doubt. All the feelings of doubt and inadequacy I held toward my body and my function as a woman were released.

My husband and I held onto each other and cried with such intensity that I was sure we would stop breathing; but, somehow air continued to fill our lungs. My body continued to expel tissue for another hour and just as it had started, the bleeding and pain eventually lessened and I was able exit the washroom standing strong on the legs that only moments prior were quivering from exhaustion.

In the aftermath of just losing a second pregnancy, I was overwhelmed by the strength, resiliency and wisdom of my body and I was overcome with feelings of immense gratitude. It might sound strange to feel gratitude for a labour that didn't result in a baby, but naturally miscarrying restored my faith in my body, and in myself. In such sadness, I have never felt so empowered. Through the loss, the universe provided me with a chance to truly embody Albert Camus' words: "In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer." I have carried this knowing with me every day since, into every aspect of my life. In fact, it is in this knowing that I realized my true strength had been there all along, it was just unveiled in the least expected way. *B*

"I was overwhelmed by the strength, resiliency and wisdom of my body and I was overcome with feelings of immense gratitude."

