

Heartache is the greatest gift

by Susana M. Silverhøj

On the 28th of January 2009 I got pregnant. What a joy. When I took the pregnancy test a few weeks later I couldn't believe it – such love was floating through me. I was sitting on the bathroom floor, watching a blue line on a stick and I fell totally and unconditionally in love with this little embryo. I loved her just as much as my other two children. I was ecstatic. I cried, out of gratefulness and happiness. She was so loved and wanted.

Three weeks later I started to have stomach cramps. I called the doctor for an appointment to do a check up. I had never been nervous in my other pregnancies but now I could feel that there was something wrong. The doctor sent me to the hospital for a scan. The scan showed that the baby wasn't as big as she should, but that could mean that she was conceived later than I thought, so it didn't have to mean anything. It only meant that the baby was too small to be able to see any heartbeats. I had to take a blood test and then return a week later.

That week was one of the worst in my life. I was thrown between hope and despair. I cried and kept on thinking: "My baby is dead." Other moments I felt faith that she was ok, that it was just my mind playing me a trick.

The D-day came. The day where we would finally get the results - is the baby alive or not?

Then, the bomb. The bad news. We had lost our baby. All hope was lost. I had to have an abortion since the baby's heart never started to beat. She only reached the age of 5 weeks and 6 days. When we walked into the blue and cold hospital room where the medical abortion would take place, everything felt surreal. I felt that I was in a movie and I could almost see myself from the outside. My heart was broken. Large warm tears were pouring down my cheeks and it felt like I was about to die. The words "I lost my baby, my baby is dead, she is gone" were pounding in my head. I could hardly breathe. My chest cramped from the pain.

My husband and I were holding each other so tight and hung on to each other to not fall apart completely. We were crying together like we never cried before. Normally my husband is the strong one, holding me up, helping me to cry like a baby. The beautiful thing at this moment was that we were crying together, supporting each other at the same time. It was such a peaceful moment. We were one in this moment of chaos and pain. It was just beautiful. Our hearts were bleeding, but our love was so strong, both for each other, and for all our children.

He was by my side all day while I had all the drugs and pills, waiting for the bleeding to start. The nurses were so sweet and had such empathy. I felt the support I needed from all around.

We got to go home late afternoon when the bleeding had started. After an hour at home I had to go to the bathroom. When I sat down, all this warm thick blood came pouring out like a flood. And then I felt a big lump coming out of me.

I flushed my baby out in the toilet. It is one of the most heartbreaking moments of my life. I felt horrible. I felt so much guilt. I was disgusted with myself. I just flushed her out. What kind of parent am I? I wanted to pick her up and hold her in my arms forever. I didn't want to

let her go. It is my baby! My beloved baby! I didn't want to lose her. I didn't want it to end like this. In a toilet.

That night my husband and I lay in each other's arms and talked. I wanted to say that this was the worst day of my life, but I couldn't. Despite the awful experience of losing a child -no matter how small she was-it was a beautiful day full of love. My husband and I were closer than ever before, we felt the compassion and love from the people around us and we felt the love for our children. So it was a strange day, heartbreaking and full of love. Painful, but loving.

I have had periods after the miscarriage where I was wondering if I had done something wrong. If I could have done something differently. What if it was my fault I had lost her? What if I had listened to the body sooner, or didn't stress as much, or.... The grief and pain lasted for years. I still cry once in a while and I can still feel my love for her. But I can also see the magic and gifts of the experience. I have learned that you can never measure another person's pain. A miscarriage early in the pregnancy might not create much pain for some, but massive for others. People tried to help me by saying things like: "It was something that wasn't right". "At least it wasn't a real baby yet". "It would be worse if you lost the baby after it was born". Well, it didn't help because from the moment that baby was made I loved her just as much as the other two. I had named her Alma (means spirit in Spanish), and she was real to me. If your partner died and someone said: "there will be others" -don't you feel insulted? I didn't want somebody else -I wanted this baby, I love this baby.

The week before they told me I had lost her, I prayed every day. I prayed for her to stay with me, to give me the greatest gift I thought she could ever give me -to let me hold her in my arms and love and take care of her forever. But I know that her gift was for us to help us to open our hearts and to stay vulnerable. I have previously had great sufferings in my life. Experiences such as sexual abuse, an alcoholic father and an unfaithful first love when I was a teen, made me close my heart and it was hard to let anyone in. I was really disconnected from my heart. Every time I felt vulnerable I shut down again and again, leaving me with a lot of suffering and pain. Alma helped me crack my heart wide-open with no return. What these sufferings gave me were the gifts of living from my heart, cracking the wall I had around my heart and learning to reconnect with myself.

Children are the best gifts in so many ways. Children are our best teachers. They mirror you, they give you unconditional love and you have something higher than yourself to live for. We have been blessed with a baby boy after this experience, and because of the loss of Alma I have been so grateful and enjoyed my wonderful children even more. I don't take my children for granted. I appreciate them and life more. I live more. I love even more.

The spirit of Alma was also a gift designed so we could have the experience of losing someone we love -to do the research -so we can help others with this experience and feel more empathy. I know that it was for the higher good, even if it causes so much pain.

They say that all roads lead to Rome. And I say that all our experiences are gifts, helping us become conscious of who we really are. Even the painful ones. Or rather, maybe even the more painful and the more suffering, the greater gift. It never feels like it in the moment, but looking back, those experiences are amazing blessings. So I say thank you life!

Easter 2009 I received a “message” from Alma. I heard this voice in my head saying: “Mom,if your love was enough, I would have stayed”.

I knew it was her and a lot of the guilt I have had disappeared. I knew this wasn't about me, not loving her enough, or her not loving me –this happened for the higher good. In other words, it wasn't about personal love, it was about universal love. After her message I could let go, accept what is and enjoy the gifts she gave me.

I will always remember and love her, and feel grateful for the experience. Love is more than life –love is everything and beyond time and space. There is a higher purpose with everything –we just have to stay open for the gifts we receive. They come in all shapes. Even death.