Chapter 16: A Treasure — Our Firstborn

On March 29, 1968, I married Tom Todd, the young man I had dated through high school and college. Our early days as newlyweds were simple and sweet. We started married life in his modest one-bedroom apartment in Wayne, Michigan. We settled into routines. We dreamed of the future. Soon, we bought a single-story brick home at 9151 Lathers in nearby Livonia. The location was perfect, close to family, friends, and all things familiar. It truly felt like a new beginning for our family.

Soon after moving to our new home, Tom faced the possibility of being drafted during the Vietnam War. Life took a tender turn: I became pregnant, which brought a draft deferment. We were relieved and overjoyed. Though I suspected the baby was a boy, we didn't care either way. What mattered was becoming parents—we eagerly embraced this new chapter.

Preparing the nursery was a labor of love. I painted the walls semi-gloss white and decorated one wall with whimsical zoo animal wallpaper—mostly giraffes. The used crib got a coat of sunny yellow paint. I starched and ironed white cotton café curtains left by the previous owners; their embossed pattern gave the room a delicate charm. The fresh scent of paint filled the house, giving me a deep sense of satisfaction in our new home.

As I neared the end of my pregnancy, I often relaxed on the couch, indulging an odd craving: pickled pigs' feet. Their sharp tang satisfied me completely. As I savored them, I felt soft, feathery kicks in my belly. Was labor starting?

That evening, a dull ache persisted in my back. As the pains continued, Tom and I went to Outer Drive Hospital. A nurse's aide briskly prepared me for delivery with the standard practices of 1969—an enema, a partial shave, and little modesty.

"Have you ever had an enema?" she asked.

"I don't think so… not that I recall," I replied.

"Well," she said with a knowing look, "if you did, it wasn't like this one. It'll clean you out real good."

My obstetrician, Dr. Georg Klutke, arrived to check my dilation and monitor labor. When the time was right, he gave me an epidural to ease pain, but relief came mixed with confusion. I became disoriented and struggled to speak. I wanted to mention the misspelling on my hospital bracelet—"Modd" instead of "Todd"—but could not find the words.

When I awoke, I was sure I had given birth to a boy. Confusion lingered for some time before I realized we had a beautiful daughter, and I felt both surprise and relief as understanding dawned upon me. The anesthesia had dulled my senses, but when clarity returned, so did genuine joy. Despite the earlier uncertainty, there were no complications, and I quietly vowed not to have another epidural.

On January 19, 1969, Tom and I welcomed our red-faced, healthy baby girl into the world. We named her Barbara Marie, after Tom's beloved mother. She took to nursing right away, her appetite as strong as her presence. Cradling her, singing softly, whispering sweet words

—all of it filled me with a deep, tender love I hadn't known before. Bringing a child into the world is truly a miracle.

In those days, Mothers remained in the hospital for five days after delivery. Babies stayed in the nursery and were brought to their mothers at set times. Each time Barbara was placed in my arms, ready to nurse, I felt pure, full joy. Tom and I often visited the nursery, exchanging quiet, adoring glances as we watched her sleep and stretch.

I cherished those restful hospital days. Sleepless nights and unpredictable feedings were coming. For now, I welcomed the chance to relax and recover. I enjoyed ordering from the menu, soaking in the last moments of calm before parenthood's chaos.

Tom and I thought deeply about our growing responsibilities. We were ready. We had prepared as best we could for raising our daughter and whatever challenges awaited.

*Barbara at three months old … so happy*