

DEREK BEAULIEU / Extispicium

Three weeks late and finally they decide to induce. Did it once sent us home and then did it again her on her knees panting. She drove us to the hospital who were expecting us the delivery room was surprisingly spacious.

With each push her heart rate dropped again and again 40 20 15. It's supposed to drop yeah but it's also supposed to come back up again. Forceps didn't work suction cup didn't work something that looks suspiciously like salad-tongs didn't work. The heart monitor kept dropping that's supposed to be a quick beat. The rate just didn't recover and eventually the doctor yelled something hit the red button the door. He the nurses and the salad-tongs were piled on top of her and rushed from the room. An announcement over the PA.

I was alone with the gowns the instruments and a heart monitor that wasn't monitoring.

Sure seemed like a long time. A nurse finally came back in gowned and scowling. We're going to perform a C-section and your wife is going to need you to be strong she said.

Are she and the baby going to be ok I said.

So come with me we'll get you a gown and you can be there for your baby she said.

Are she and the baby going to be ok I said.

Maybe she said.

Maybe I said.

You're not listening to me she said.

The anesthetic hadn't quite taken hold she jumped with a new smile the anesthetist barked Not yet and then ok now. A little slow on the apgar tests but eventually she was ready swaddled and I could look out the window with her. Hi there I said. She didn't say anything.

She had her eyelids taped closed a wintergreen colour. Was sure when the time came that she was a boy I had a son she said but there she was he was she.

Her first trip outside was tucked in my coat the fridge was empty.

We were two. I was one. They tried things. There were things they tried. They tried this. They tried this again. They tried something else. Again they tried something else. They went away. They came back. They took her away. They tried something else but it was too early. They tried again. She was ready. She was there. She and I were there. It was just her and I there. They had her and they gave her to me. She was there with me and she was just there. There we were.

She walks in with a ring from that corner that Birks while he's shielded behind the newspaper What do you think she said.

Not much he said.

He hoped his teeth would last as long as he did. They didn't.

She'd listen. You could talk and she would listen she had no problem listening and knowing what to say and what not to say to him.

He asked her to stop. She stopped because he asked her. She knew that she had to stop and when he asked her she stopped. He had stopped years before but she hadn't stopped until he asked.

They burned the papers we didn't need to see. There are some things that we don't need to keep they said. There are some things that it's best to not remember. You don't need to keep everything when there are so many things. There are things here and there and there. Things arrive in boxes and envelopes and bags and do we need to keep each and every everything when some things don't need to be kept at all.

Some of the things are photographs. Some of the things are papers. Some of the things are letters. Photographs and papers and letters and things. Photographs of people with things.

She couldn't remember but he sang to her. Sang and talked about when they met the swimming and the dock and living in Verdun. She asked for her mother. They said

prayers together she and him each night. Talked to her or talked to her photograph.
That stopped. Goodnight Lassie he said. That stopped.

He. She. She.

He was angry.

She was angry.

She had to be centred.

They always told him about me and told me about him all I knew is what they said all
he knew is what they said. All we knew is what they told us him and I.

Purple.

Just like her mother.

She couldn't relate she left came back on a stretcher and moved as far as she could.

He was quiet and wasn't there when he was there he wasn't there until he was there
and didn't know where he was.

Just like her mother.

Two years later he works on the railroad he's a carpenter. He makes coat-hangers. All
paw. Oil onions tea and maple leaf cookies. He couldn't write his name but he printed
it on every coat-hanger. I heard. The gate squeaked and so did the mailbox. Blvd
Gouin the back river.

Did anyone ever call you Francis I said.

He chose and after two years he chose to bring them to Verdun.

Only once he said.

He makes coat-hangers.

He was married once and had another daughter. She and her died from influenza.
She was an infant. Him.

Over here is where the butcher was I remember the sawdust on the floor to soak up the blood and there were horses here the last time I was here.

Yes he was there too but he was much younger and so they had him in a different wing I didn't see him very much. She does this they do that.

He worked hard but he didn't work as hard didn't work. Even then he worked too much and so did he.

A new sister the other one was already his but she was kept she didn't have to go. She insisted that she had to cover them. But Mum there's no yeast in them she said. Yes but you still have to cover them to make them rise she said. She played the piano. She knew that she just forgot.

She was an only child her mother ran a boarding house up towards McGill used to toboggan in the winter. She insisted that she was born in England came here on a steamship when she was a little girl but she didn't. And she didn't have a sister either. She knew that she just forgot.

She sang all the girls declare that I'm the gallant major hi hi clear the way here comes the galloping major. Then she just sings her songs when she was a girl. She knew it she just forgot.

When she died we were all there when he died we weren't. It was different.

Onions cookies tea. Tomatoes. Oil mould.

He went to high school at Sir George and so did he. Took the courses and then taught them. Said that most of his students re-enlisted they didn't know how to do anything else. His flowers won card after card. Tomatoes and cucumbers in styrofoam boxes. Only man who could grow cantaloupe by accident. Not much.

Met at a summer camp friends of friends. A story with a new watch taken apart and reassembled the patience to do that and laugh at the end of the dock under a parasol. Her swimsuit went to her knees and so did his. He couldn't swim but he could learn.

Even then he worked too much.

Years later he was given flowers because he was a veteran but he refused to accept then and refused to even listen. He was a sergeant they said no he wasn't he said. They said yes and he said no. His efforts were too valuable here and they wouldn't accept him once they learned he was a chemist was more valuable here than there. Instead he trained them when they returned grew in rank refused to hear about it. They refused he refused.

He was on a trip he had somewhere to go and they could come or they could stay it made little difference but he had things he wanted to accomplish. He learned the piano he taught he worked. He hurt them he intimidated them he frightened them he yelled. You people you people did this to me.

Men don't have friends men work. Men don't have feelings. Colds are afraid of me. I simply don't let death into my life. That dog don't hunt. There are things that just happen there's no right or wrong about them. It's just the way it is no reason to get upset about it. I think I've hurt myself does it look serious to you. Measure twice cut once. Why do you have to do everything the hard way. Do one thing do it well then move on.

Why can't you take our word for it why make the same mistakes over and over again.

Her and him and him and him and her and her and him and him and him. And him and her and him.

Her and him and him and her and her.

Her and him and her and her and him and him.

Her and him and her and him. And him.

Her and him and him and I.

Her and him and her and him.

Her and I and her. And her.

She and I and her.

Not much.