

1 **0:00:00 Sarah H:** So, let's see. I was, I'd been married less than a year, so I got, I got pregnant  
2 pretty soon after getting married. And this is my first husband, Lars. And the pregnancy was fine,  
3 but what happened is that in the... God, I think I was around 36 weeks, I started to develop  
4 preeclampsia. So, um, it actually was, it was, actually it was my last day of work before I went on  
5 leave, um that I'd gone to a visit, which was convenient 'cause I worked in the hospital, so I just  
6 popped over and went for my visit. And they, it was my last day of work and they put me on bed  
7 rest because of the preeclampsia. And then so for the next week or so, they tried inducing me with  
8 prostaglandin gel and they did some testing and this and that.

9 **0:01:00 Sarah H:** And I had to lie on my left side in bed and it was hot. It was July, it was so hot.  
10 And I was like a beached whale [laughter] and, oh my God. And I was just swelling, my nose was  
11 large. I was just swelling. So, finally they induced me, um they took me in to induce me when I was  
12 37... no, 37 weeks or 38 weeks. I think it was 37... no, it was 37 when they found out, 38 weeks  
13 when I was induced. And so, we went in early in the morning and they started me on the Pitocin  
14 drip, and I had to come in not eating anything. Um, I was lying in bed and you know, this was back  
15 when camcorders were huge and Lars had this massive camcorder. So somewhere here I've got this  
16 VCR of me watching TV and I'm going, oh wait just a minute, and I'm having a contraction.

17 **0:02:06 Sarah H:** But like, like, looking back on it now, it's laughable. And it wasn't even, I don't  
18 even think it was painful. It was probably just intensity. So, this went on all day and around... so  
19 literally there, 5:00 am started me on Pitocin, I'm lying there. And around 6:00 pm, this, the  
20 midwife who was on call who I'd never seen except for I was... I saw all the midwives, that's the  
21 way they did it. You went to a visit and you kind of cycled them through. And the woman that I saw  
22 the very last time, the one who found that I had preeclampsia and put me on bed rest, I thought she  
23 was amazing. And she just happened to be on call when it was time for me to be induced.

24 **0:02:57 Sarah H:** So she came in and she sat by the bed and I was lying on my left side. And she  
25 said to me, "Sarah, you know, nothing's happening. We don't wanna risk irritating the uterus, but  
26 the Pitocin is really not doing anything and so we're gonna send you home and have you come back  
27 in three more days, um, and try this again." And I was so disappointed 'cause I knew she was going  
28 on vacation the next day and I really, really wanted her to birth this baby. I didn't do any preparation  
29 for this childbirth. I didn't take any classes. I mean read like a, like an idiot. I read everything I  
30 could get my hands on, but I had no real plan except for I really wanted to go natural. I wanted to  
31 try and avoid anything. And I thought, I knew that they used laughing gas, and so I had let them  
32 know that I'd be interested in laughing gas.

33 **0:03:56 Sarah H:** So, as she was telling me this, my waters broke. So I'm lying on my left side and  
34 out of, this internal sensation of like a balloon exploding and like, thwacking my cervix, it was just  
35 like an explosive thwack. And I remember going, oh, and just looking. And then I just felt the water  
36 everywhere, the liquid everywhere. And I looked at her and I said, my waters just broke. And I'd  
37 had this nurse, this insipid, like brand new 20-year-old nurse all day with me who was getting ready  
38 to go off. And she was like a hen. We called her the cackling hen, and she was just talking, talking,  
39 talking, talking. And so, she lifts my sheets, she goes, "Yep, yep, your water broke, \_\_\_\_." And  
40 she's just like, chirp, chirp, chirp, "Oh, but now I'm going off shift [0:04:52.7] \_\_\_\_." And I just  
41 wanted her to leave. You know, she was just such a pain.

42 **0:05:01 Sarah H:** So, so the water's everywhere. They're beginning like, okay, well now my  
43 water's broke, so I'm staying. And honest to God, within a minute or two, this overwhelming nausea  
44 overtook me. And with that came panic because I hated throwing up. But it wasn't the panic over – I

45 mean it was panic over the nausea – but it was like, oh my God, something suddenly started  
46 happening. And Lars was... I was staring at him and I said, "Oh my God, I feel like I'm gonna throw  
47 up." And there was just this surge of something happening in me. And so, they got me a pan. I  
48 didn't throw up, but like, all of a sudden it was just horrible. And I went from having no pain, all  
49 day, and nothing happening to barreling into excruciating contractions. And I think this only lasted  
50 like 40 minutes maybe, like a little over a half hour or 40 minutes and then it was time to push. But  
51 during that time period, I dilated from like three to 10. And the way I describe it to people, it's like  
52 the Freddy Krueger movies where they have the knives on, he has the knives on the fingertips. It  
53 was like coming up into my uterus and then just shredding it apart.

54 **0:06:34 Speaker 2:** Oh my God.

55 **0:06:34 Sarah H:** And I lost my mind. I absolutely lost my mind. I was screaming. I was trying so  
56 hard to, to, you know, the nurse was saying, "Breathe in through your nose, out through your  
57 mouth," and I'm like writhing on the bed and rocking back and forth. I was in so much unbelievable  
58 pain, and I couldn't think. I [yeah] couldn't think, I couldn't... And I looked over at Lars and he was  
59 just looking at me horrified just like, oh my God.

60 **0:07:12 S2:** Of course.

61 **0:07:12 Sarah H:** And so, this went on and on and luckily the new nurse that came in did not talk.  
62 My midwife, unless she was asking me to change position or something, she did not talk. Thank  
63 God, it was perfect. It was just what I needed. I remember I was lying there at one point and they  
64 finally got me laughing gas. And so, I was, you know, inhaling it and she was, and I was just lying  
65 on my back and I had my knee, my knees were up and one of them, I was just going back and forth  
66 my leg and she had her hand on my knee, it was just following it. It was so comforting. She wasn't  
67 saying anything, I just knew she was there. And the laughing gas did nothing, but it made my lips  
68 numb and the top of my thighs numb.

69 **0:07:59 S2:** [laughter] Oh my God.

70 **0:08:00 Sarah H:** You could have stuck a fork in my thighs.

71 **0:08:02 S2:** [laughter] Oh my God.

72 **0:08:03 Sarah H:** Um, but it did nothing for the pain.

73 **0:08:06 S2:** Wow.

74 **0:08:03 Sarah H:** And I just remember at some point thinking to myself, "Oh my God, I sound like  
75 um, like a wounded animal." There were these high sort of keening woos coming out of me. I was  
76 just, honest to God, I was in another world. I couldn't endure the pain. I couldn't endure it. Um, and  
77 so, it just went on and on. But really, thank God it was like 40 minutes, it was so fast. And then uh,  
78 my midwife said to me, "Do you feel like you have to push?" So she must have noticed me grunt or  
79 bear down or something. And I, I was like thinking, I don't know, I can't tell anything. But then I  
80 felt like, oh my God, yes, I want to push. So, so then they started breaking down the bed. And I  
81 think I was just in utter shock to go all day with nothing happening, no pain. It's just like blah, blah,  
82 blah. All those hours, like 12 hours. Um, and all of a sudden to be blasted into this experience and  
83 the pain that was part of it. So, they were breaking down the bed um, and I'm just lying there still,

84 like wondering how I'm gonna get through this.

85 **0:09:36 Sarah H:** And then she said, she checked me and I was fully dilated and she told me that I  
86 could start pushing whenever I liked. And the pushing helped the pain. Even though it was still  
87 very, very painful, it felt like, I was pushing into it. And so it, it was incr-, I was struck by how  
88 involuntary it was. I mean I couldn't not push. So I was giving it my all. you know, I'm like giving it  
89 all, my all. But also thinking to myself, this doesn't feel right. I don't feel like I'm in the right  
90 position. I was flat on my back, and it felt like I was pushing uphill. Um, and it just felt like  
91 seriously? They had my legs back, like way back up in the stirrups and they're holding them. And  
92 I'm like, this just feels like, it feels like so much more work than it should be. So, I pushed and  
93 pushed and pushed. It was a half-hour pushing, which was pretty quick. And I still remember with  
94 one of the pushes, the sensation, it must have been a really good push, I still remember the internal  
95 sensation of feeling him move down. It was just such a, an interesting sensation for him coming  
96 down. And then, um, I forgot to say, there must, there was a leak in the laughing gas. So, even  
97 though I got it probably, I probably only had that, the last ten minutes as I was in stage two before  
98 the active, before the pushing. But I kept at it during the pushing too. But meanwhile it was leaking  
99 into the room and giving everyone a headache.

100 **0:11:15 S2:** [laughter] Oh my God.

101 **0:11:17 Sarah H:** Um, I found that out afterwards. And my midwife also was just about to be  
102 diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

103 **0:11:25 S2:** [laughter] Oh my God.

104 **0:11:27 Sarah H:** I always think back to that thinking, oh my God, the woman two weeks later was  
105 going to be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and she was getting a headache from my laughing gas.  
106 I just feel horrible, horrible about that. She was, she was amazing. She was so amazing. Just so calm  
107 and quiet, which is what I wanted. And I just kept thinking, "I'm a lunatic. I'm making all this noise  
108 on the unit," but I couldn't help it. I just scr-, until I began to push, I was screaming my head off. It  
109 was just, it was unbearable. The pushing, I didn't have to, I didn't feel like I needed to scream with  
110 that. It just felt better. So, finally, Jacob was crowning and um, I think they asked me if I wanted to  
111 reach down. I was just like, no. I just wanted to get this over with.

112 **0:12:22 Sarah H:** And so, he crowned, he came out, and he's on my, on my, on my chest, and I'm  
113 just traumatized. I'm just thinking, oh my God, what the hell happened? It was like an hour and a  
114 half from beginning to end, the entire thing. I'm like, what the hell was this? Um, you know, I've got  
115 my son here, and...my first thought, which is... I don't know if I've told this to you, I may have said  
116 this. My first thought, so here's this boy, like I...it wasn't real until he was - I knew I was pregnant,  
117 I had this conversation, I had this relationship with him in me. But there was another reality to it as  
118 soon as he joined us. We went from two to three, all of a sudden we're three people, and it's and it's  
119 gonna be like that for... I mean, he's not going away. But my but my first thought, I've got this little  
120 guy on me, and my first thought was, "Oh my God, now he has to die." Like, he's now out in the  
121 world, but someday he's gonna have to die.

122 **0:13:34 S2:** Wow, Sarah, that's amazing.

123 **0:13:35 Sarah H:** Like it was the mo-, I know. I felt so happy that he was there. I mean I was one  
124 of those women who, I mean I always wanted to have children. So much so that I married a man I

125 never should have married, because I was feeling my clock ticking, but, God damnit, I wanted  
126 children, you know? So, then they took him over to the thing and checked him out and all that, and  
127 I'm like, oh, just like, oh. And so they were sewing me up, because he came out like this, he came  
128 out with his hand on the side, so then everything, so I guess I tore. But it wasn't a severe tear, so it  
129 didn't go into the perineum or anything, but they did need to stitch me up, and this caused problems  
130 with my second birth, because both births were precipitous. Um so, what, they turned the Pitocin  
131 off very quickly as soon as I went into labor, 'cause it was just, it was contraction after contraction  
132 after contraction, so they just took me off completely, and I just barreled into what my midwife  
133 called a train wreck delivery, [laughter] which I also had the second time, so it turns out that I just  
134 had precipitous...

135 **0:14:50 S2:** Yeah, I would certainly call that precipitous.

136 **0:14:50 Sarah H:** Yeah, as soon as I go into labor, boom. So, the same thing happened similarly  
137 the second time, and with different variables. But, so, they're stitching me up, I'm lying there just  
138 trying to wrap my head around all of this, and um, then they brought him back over and and put him  
139 on my, um, put him on me, and I started nursing, and he took off like a pro immediately, so he's  
140 like...and I remember that feeling of like, oh my God, that's what it feels like. I didn't believe it. I  
141 couldn't believe it was so strong. It was like someone attaching the strongest vacuum hose. It wasn't  
142 pain, but it was so strong. And he just took off, you know? And so he's nursing away, and making  
143 noises, and you know really, like there's this creature on me. And I called my mom. And they're still  
144 like doing things down there, cleaning out the placenta, cleaning me up, stitching, all that.

145 **0:15: 55 Sarah H:** I'm on the phone with my mom, she can hear him on the phone. Um, Lars is just  
146 standing there, also traumatized. I don't think they, I don't think they, I don't think enough is done  
147 for men. That's something I'd like to do research with, is how men experience all of this. Um, so so  
148 finally, I'm all stitched up, my midwife goes away to do paperwork and all that. I'm, I have a couple  
149 nurses with me, they tell me to get up and go to the bathroom. And I got up, and I wobbled into the  
150 bathroom, sitting there. And I thought, oh my God, I'm gonna faint. It was just like that blackness  
151 was coming on and I grabbed the thing, and I said, I said I think I'm gonna faint, and they said,  
152 "Well, you shouldn't. There's no reason to. Like, your blood pressure's fine, and everything's fine,  
153 you shouldn't." And no one came in. No one came in.

154 **0:17:00 S2:** That's crazy.

155 **0:17:00 Sarah H:** So, I'm just grabbing on. So finally, I got my head down. Finally, I kind of  
156 recalibrated, got into a chair, they put Jacob in my lap and off we wheeled, so we were, he was born  
157 in Mott Hospital, but recovery was, at that time – not everyone – but the old women's hospital,  
158 which was the old hospital, was still being used for recovery. So I was wheeled all the way through  
159 the hospital, blah, blah, blah, to this dingy, dingy unit, old unit, the very last room on the floor, um,  
160 and where they proceeded to drop me off, get me in bed. And I didn't see anyone until we were  
161 discharged, um, which was a day and a half later.

162 **0:17:52 Sarah H:** At that point, you were supposed to be, like insurance wouldn't cover you  
163 staying. Um, like 12 hours was what it was. And for some reason, I was kept...so he was born like  
164 at 7:30 at night, I was kept till the next night, and left early the next morning, but I can't remember  
165 the reason. I don't know how they got me the extra hours, so it was like 24 hours. But this is what is  
166 weird, because I didn't know this at the time, but since I became a nurse and did labor and delivery  
167 and all that, no one came in to do fundal checks, no one came in, no one came in. I could have

168 hemorrhaged to death in my room and no one would have known. There were no nurses.

169 **0:18:35 S2:** That's crazy, I've never heard of that.

170 **0:18:36 Sarah H:** I think part of the problem was, is that at that time, still, midwifery patients were  
171 unusual, and it wasn't, um, the midwives, they'd only been practicing for a couple years at that  
172 point, I think. Like maybe, maybe two years, I don't know. And I really felt a difference on the unit,  
173 like, oh, you're a midwife patient, you know? Who are you guys? And there was a real sort of  
174 degradation to it.

175 **0:19:09 S2:** Wow. Just in the recovery area, or also during the delivery?

176 **0:19:17 Sarah H:** No, just in the recovery. I didn't feel it in the delivery, just during the recovery.  
177 So, Jacob uh, was in the little bass plastic bassinet there. So this was like, I don't know, by the time  
178 we got in the room it was like 10 o'clock. And Lars completely, completely crashed on the little  
179 chair that you can fold out. And he was out snoring like a banshee. And Jacob was fussing, fussing.  
180 So, even though they told me not to have him in bed with me, before Lars went to sleep he gave me  
181 Jacob. So I'm nursing this little guy and he would not stop nursing.

182 **0:19:56 S2:** Oh my gosh, a hungry little dude.

183 **0:19:57 Sarah H:** It was like, yeah, it was like nonstop nursing. Nonstop nursing. Finally I got him  
184 to settle a bit. So, he slept next to me in the bed. I'm like on my side. He slept there. And he would  
185 start, I remember he would start like getting restless and I would just sort of just breathe on him a  
186 little bit and talk to him, he'd simmer down a little bit. I was, I just loved this little guy immediately.  
187 He was so sweet. Um, and the next day, some friends came to visit and we had pizza. And I  
188 remember, before they came I remember getting out of bed, like Lars had to haul me out of bed. I  
189 had no strength. I couldn't like sit up. So, he's hauling me out of bed. I'm standing up and I'm like  
190 shuffling. I'm looking out the window, I'm looking out my door. There was no shower in my room.  
191 You had to go across the hall to a shower. And I'd see these women who had given birth and they're  
192 like trucking down to the shower, to take their showers. And I'm thinking like, how could they, how  
193 could they walk? And I'm just doing these little shuffles to the bathroom to pee, peeing the entire  
194 time [laughter]. Like I would get out of bed and just pee all the way into the bathroom. I couldn't, I  
195 couldn't like, [laughter] I had no control, you know? I'm looking at these other women like, what?  
196 What the hell? And after my daughter, though, I was one of those women.

197 **0:21:22 S2:** Yeah. See? Then you had it down.

198 **0:21:23 Sarah H:** I had, well, I didn't feel as – it wasn't anything like the first time. But so, that  
199 was, that was basically the story of my delivery. It was very, very um, shocking to me. Um, I would  
200 read these books talking about the, the beautiful surge of contractions. And um, I think the problem  
201 was I just had, I never had any easing into it. It's just, I went from nothing into transition. And so,  
202 all of my labor was like transition, that, that, that really horrible...it was so horrible.

203 **0:22:11 S2:** Yeah. I mean, to dilate that much in that short amount of time. That's crazy. That's  
204 crazy.

205 **0:22:18 Sarah H:** It was crazy. It was crazy. And there was like no, there was no wait between the  
206 con- contractions. It's like...

- 207 **0:22:23 S2:** There couldn't have been if you had pushed that much in that short amount of time.  
208 [laughter]
- 209 **0:22:25 Sarah H:** Yeah, it's not like I'd have one and then I'd be able to catch my breath, you  
210 know?
- 211 **0:22:29 S2:** No.
- 212 **0:22:30 Sarah H:** I'd have maybe 10 seconds and here would come another one. And so, it was like  
213 unending, unbearable pain. Just, just horrific.
- 214 **0:22:40 S2:** That's remarkable.
- 215 **0:22:40 Sarah H:** It was horrible. It was horrible. Um...I did not like it [laughter].
- 216 **0:22:53 S2:** Just to be clear.
- 217 **0:22:54 Sarah H:** Just to be clear, I did not like it. Um, and of course, both births, 'cause they were  
218 so fast, just, just put horrible pressure on my pelvic floor, you know? So, so I found out later that I,  
219 I, I did one of the research studies and I don't have one of the um...why am I blanking on it? One of  
220 the two muscles that we test for, the...
- 221 **0:23:22 S2:** Oh. What are they? Levator and the what?
- 222 **0:23:28 Sarah H:** Yeah, levator ani...
- 223 **0:23:29 S2:** Oh shoot, what's the other one?
- 224 **0:23:30 Sarah H:** And the other one.
- 225 **0:23:32 S2:** The other one...
- 226 **0:23:33 Sarah H:** One of them completely snapped. It's just not there at all. And the other one is  
227 kind of shredded a bit.
- 228 **0:23:38 S2:** Wow. Sarah, that's pretty serious, I don't want to use the word damage in a context that  
229 involves your children but...
- 230 **0:23:45 Sarah H:** Yeah, there was no, there was no, like they didn't come down slowly. [laughter]  
231 Like, with Emma, I pushed twice, and she just blasted through [laughter]. You know?
- 232 **0:24:02 S2:** I love the sentimental terminology. [laughter]
- 233 **0:24:07 Sarah H:** I mean really. Those, it's like my muscles, my uterus is so efficient at birthing.
- 234 **0:24:13 S2:** [laughter] Birthing. Your uterus is more efficient than the rest of your body. The rest of  
235 your body's like, we're not ready. [laughter]
- 236 **0:24:18 Sarah H:** We're not ready. No.
- 237 **0:24:19 S2:** The uterus is like, "I'm doing it. I'm doing it."

- 238 **0:24:20 Sarah H:** No. No. Yeah. It was, it was...
- 239 **0:24:25 S2:** Your poor cervix. It's like, there's not an opening. [laughter]
- 240 **0:24:30 Sarah H:** Yeah.
- 241 **0:24:31 S2:** Wow. That is remarkable.
- 242 **0:24:34 Sarah H:** Yeah.
- 243 **0:24:35 S2:** Do you think...how much of a role do you think that Pitocin played in that, the first  
244 time? Did - I don't know if you had it the second time. Pitocin.
- 245 **0:24:41 Sarah H:** Um, second time, I didn't have it. I didn't have to be induced. I don't think, I  
246 don't think it played a role in it because what happened...
- 247 **0:24:51 S2:** 'Cause it sounds like it wasn't doing anything.
- 248 **0:24:53 Sarah H:** It wasn't doing anything but it did, it did start labor. But as soon as labor started,  
249 I took off on my own. Because it was exactly what happened with my daughter, the second time,  
250 with no Pitocin. I went from nothing – nothing – to my water breaking at home and full-on train  
251 wreck again.
- 252 **0:25:17 S2:** This is just the way you birth. That's incredible.
- 253 **0:25:18 Sarah H:** She came 45 minutes later, after my water broke.
- 254 **0:25:22 S2:** Sarah, [laughter] wow. I mean, that is so rough on your body. And yet, Sarah, like  
255 some people you know, labor for a day and a half and you're just like, no, no, I'm done.
- 256 **0:25:35 Sarah H:** I know. I know. And I don't know worth - what's worse, 'cause my sister, oh my  
257 God, she was like one of those 72-hour people. Like and, and the baby was turned so it was also  
258 back labor. Just horrendous. And vomiting from the pain and all that. I'm thinking, okay what  
259 would, what would be worse? I'd rather think... I'd think I'd rather have a train wreck in an hour and  
260 a half and 45 minutes rather than a 72-hour horrific thing. Oh my God.
- 261 **0:26:04 S2:** Right? What is with, what is with you guys? You're just – birthing, birthing is just like  
262 intense and dramatic. [laughter]
- 263 **0:26:15 Sarah H:** [laughter] Intense and dramatic. It wasn't anything that I envisioned it would be  
264 like at all. Um, and so, it was really good for me when I actually worked in labor and delivery, to  
265 see the births, to help out with the births. And to see how different they all could be but also um,  
266 just how different they could be and how, how it was kind of rare when it happened that quickly... It  
267 didn't happen...
- 268 **0:26:42 S2:** Certainly, especially on the first birth. It's very, that's very rare. Yeah.
- 269 **0:26:45 Sarah H:** Yeah. Huh.
- 270 **0:26:48 S2:** It is such a surreal moment, right? When you, like you say you go from just like two

- 271 people to being three people and also being parents.
- 272 **0:26:56 Sarah H:** Yeah. And life is never the same.
- 273 **0:26:58 S2:** No, like never.
- 274 **0:27:00 Sarah H:** I remember talking – Lars and I talking about that and then my friends, I have  
275 friends who had children and everyone says the same thing. Not everyone, but most people who  
276 think about things like that. They bring that up, how that transition from, yeah, you're pregnant, you  
277 both, you know you're gonna have a baby but when it – suddenly that child is there and how the  
278 things in life that had meaning before and concerned you, who cares about them. Like everything –  
279 the world turns on its axis and you have a whole different paradigm of what life is.
- 280 **0:27:39 S2:** Yeah. Absolutely.
- 281 **0:27:43.4 Sarah H:** Yeah. And you can't know it unless you've done it. It's like, it's like my career  
282 which I was so focused on and thinking about and fantasizing and like, what? My career?
- 283 **0:27:53 S2:** I'm not doing that anymore. I don't wanna do it anymore.
- 284 **0:27:55 Sarah H:** Who cares? There's this being, you know, that I'm responsible for.
- 285 **0:27:58 S2:** Yes. Yes. It's remarkable.
- 286 **0:28:05 Sarah H:** Yeah.
- 287 **0:28:07 S2:** Well, Sarah, thank you.
- 288 **0:28:08 Sarah H:** You're welcome.