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My whole life I'd been really excited to be a mom. Like I just couldn't wait. Um, I married my high school boyfriend and he was in law school, which is why we came to Ann Arbor. And the whole time he was in law school, I was like, just let me know, like just let me know when you're ready 'cause I am, I am ready. [laughter]. And we had gone on vacation to Mexico in April, 2019 and at that time agreed that I would go off birth control when we got home. And then he spent the summer in Pittsburgh, so we didn't really see each other, um, 'cause he was doing an internship. And then, you know, I got pregnant in October, 2019 and I was just so, so excited. Um, we chose not to find out the sex before delivery, which I think in part is because I'm a labor and delivery nurse,

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so I have seen people go either way and always thought it was like a really fun, um, surprise to not know. But um, yeah, so we were really excited and the pregnancy was perfect. It was just like the happiest I'd ever been and I felt great. I had really insane heartburn, but other than that I felt awesome [laughter]. I was like really just so excited. Um, and then, you know, March, 2020 happened and everything got a little bit crazy, um, with Covid and the start of the pandemic. So I was working in the hospital that I delivered at as a labor and delivery nurse. So I was very, you know, familiar with our policies and how we were managing Covid and everything. But I just remember it being such a scary and like strange time because all of a sudden I went from seeing my family a lot to like just going to their house and standing in their garage to talk to them because I was so terrified that I would have asymptomatic Covid and give it to them.

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Um, so anyway, basically at that time there was sort of a recommendation that pregnant women self-isolate beginning around 37 weeks so that you would not have Covid at the time of delivery. I was really nervous that I would, you know, go to 41 weeks and have eaten up four weeks of maternity leave, being self-isolating [Speaker 2 affirmative]. So I spoke with my OB, who I also worked with, and she suggested, you know, if I was comfortable that we could do a Covid test me at 39 weeks and if I was negative, just proceed with induction. And I, even though I had in some ways really wanted labor to just start on its own, I was also extremely excited to meet my baby and I was very Covid nervous and it just seemed like given everything going on at the time, it the right, um, move.

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Also, my baby had been breached until about 35 weeks, so I was happy, um, that he was head down and was like, let's just get this show on the road now that he's in the right position. Um [yeah, certainly]. So I went to my 39 week appointment and they told me I was like one centimeter dilated. Um, and then I came back, or I was, I was not quite 39 weeks at the time. I was 38 weeks and six days. And then I came back the next, in two days at 39 and one, and the night before I'd had, at this point my family had decided we were comfortable being with each other, so I basically only saw my parents. Um, so I was at my parents' house with my husband the night before my induction, and it was, so, I remember taking a shower at their house for some reason, they have a much nicer house than us, so [laughter] I was taking a shower at their house and I was like, this is like the last time I'm gonna see my moms before, um, I myself am a mom and it was such a weird and like surreal feeling.

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And my parents, I have two moms, um, who are a couple and I'm super close to them and they're very, they're very emotional. So I knew like, I couldn't even open up that can of worms or it'd be like a whole thing. So I remember like hugging them as I was leaving their house and kind of like choking back tears and being like, all right, like, I'll see you in a couple days, [laughter]. Um, and they had recently changed the visitor policy of the hospital, so I knew like my parents would be able to see me in the hospital after I delivered. Um, so anyway, so the next day I, oh, I get home from that, um, dinner and I'm going to the bathroom and I had lost my mucus plug and I was really excited and I was like, oh my gosh, maybe, maybe it'll just start before the induction.

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Like maybe I won't even have to be induced. But yeah, I wasn't uncomfortable or anything and I kind of knew nothing would happen. So I went to sleep. We got up the next day, my husband and I, and we were like, you know, taking walks, doing all these things and I, I look back at the end of pregnancy as just the most like, surreal but amazing time. It was so, the weather was beautiful. It was like my husband and I, I felt so close to him because we've just been together. You know, he, he was at home totally because of Covid. So we were together all the time except for when I was working and I was just like, that day is one of like my favorite days. Um, so we go to my OB's office and it was not my, it was like my, the other OB who I tended to see because it's a group practice and I, there were two OBs that I saw throughout my pregnancy who I love both of them.

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So I go in and they, um, checked my cervix and said I was one to two centimeters dilated. They stripped my membranes, which they had tried a couple days before and nothing had happened. Um, and then they, um, placed the Foley balloon. So you had to get, we did monitoring beforehand, like where they put the baby on the monitor and everything looked good and then they put the Foley balloon in, which is something I had been a part of many times in the hospital [S1 affirmative], but because this was essentially like an elective induction and there was no medical need for it, I was able to do it out of hospital, like get the Foley balloon and then go home. And I remember right after she put it in and it was not, I was really worried it'd be like really painful because I've seen people, um, struggle with discomfort in the hospital getting it placed.

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But thankfully I did not find it too uncomfortable. And then I got a call from our, and it, every time somebody would call me from St. Joe's where I worked, it just came through at St. Joe's number because that's the way they, like their system works. It always comes through from the same number. You can't see individually who's calling you. So I had this moment like, was I supposed to be at work? Was I supposed to be working right now? So I answered the phone and it was our, our education coordinator who, um, called all inductions to like check on them and give them some instructions. And I was like, "Hey, like I'm not the OB. Like they just started it" and she was like, that's great. Um, so then we went home and I immediately started having contractions with the Foley balloon and I was so excited.

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I was like, this is gonna work. Like I'm not even gonna need like the whole rigamarole. I was wrong about not needing the whole rigamarole [laughter], but I immediately got pretty

uncomfortable. Um, we went to Potbelly's and got sandwiches as like our last meal and we were, um, eating them and then I started to get like concerned about having enough snacks for labor. So I wanted my husband to go to the grocery store and get like Jello and Gatorade and all this stuff and I didn't end up eating any of it, so it was not necessary. But he left to go get that stuff and I was getting like increasingly more crampy and on uncomfortable and was like standing in our driveway and having contractions. And he came home and he was kind of freaked out. He was like, oh my gosh, this is happening.

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Like should we go to the hospital? And I was like, no, no, no. They told me, you know, the Foley balloon can be in for up to 12 hours. So they had put it, I mean it could be in actually up to 24 hours, but they anticipated it to be in around 12 hours. So they'd put it in around 3:00 PM and told me like they would call me in the morning. Um, but I was super uncomfortable and I got in the shower and I was having contractions and I remember we had not told my husband's family the exact date of the induction because I was worried I would feel like a lot of pressure to have the baby quickly and being a labor and delivery nurse, I know that first time moms often have long inductions, but my own mother-in-law had had very quick inductions.

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So I was like, let's tell them the exact specific day. Like we'll just say like, oh, hopefully we'll get in this week for the induction. But she ended up calling my husband, whose name is Kerry, um, calling him to like ask how things were going. And he was like, "Claire's in labor like [laughter] we're, we're having "and we were FaceTiming and they lived in California at the time. So she was like, can I see your belly? And then all of a sudden I got significantly more comfortable, like I felt like I was no longer really having contractions. And I went to the bathroom and the Foley balloon had fallen out, which I knew to be a good sign that like it had done its job and it had only been in for a couple of hours. So I was like, wow, this is great. Like things are just moving along.

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But I kind of didn't know what to do at that point because I was like, okay, it's no longer in, but I'm not really supposed to show up to the hospital until tomorrow. So I guess we'll just like hang out and see what happens. So we were hanging out and then I kind of realized I hadn't been feeling my baby move very much and I was getting a little nervous. So I was like drinking the Gatorade and you know, laying on my left side and doing all these things and not really feeling him move. And my husband didn't really understand what, like, he was very focused on the labor element. Like he was like, but like, are you in labor? Like are you uncomfortable? Should we go to the hospital? And I was like, I'm not like horribly uncomfortable, but I'm worried like the baby isn't moving.

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So I ended up calling my OB and leaving a message and then also texting some of my friends at work who were all like, okay, just come to the hospital. And I was like, no, I don't wanna be annoying. I don't wanna get there too early. I'm not supposed to be there until tomorrow, but I still couldn't get the baby to move. And they were all texting me like, you're being so stupid, just come in. So I came in and um, right as I was walking out of the parking lot, my OB called me back and was like, come to the hospital right now if you're not feeling your baby move. And I was like, I'm here, don't worry. Um, so I came in and they put me on the monitor and he didn't

look, the tracing as we call it, um [S1 affirmative] did not look amazing, but it wasn't horrible, but it wasn't like perfect.

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It was kind of flat, not amazing variability. So they had me do some different things and I had already tried those things at home, like changing positions and drinking juice and stuff and it was quite busy, so I was sort of worried I was gonna be sent home, but my OB came out and was like, I don't love how your baby looks. You know, I'm not horribly concerned, but I don't think you should go home. I think we should just move along and like get things going. So one of my best friends at work, um, was assigned to be my nurse, um, which I was really happy and excited about [S1 affirmative]. And they walked me to my room and I was like, I felt like so excited and I saw all these people I knew and I was like waving at them. Um, [laughter].

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and we got into our room. It took a while to get to the room because it was so busy and it was like they didn't have a room available. So it was at like 2:00 AM We got to the room and then they hooked me up and started Pitocin and I kind of, I knew I was supposed to sleep 'cause I've told people this so many times as a nurse, like in your early induction you should try to get some res. But I was like so excited and just had a lot of adrenaline. My husband is an amazing sleeper and he had no such problems, so he was just like passed out and I was hanging out with my work friends and they were all telling me to go to sleep, but also coming in and talking to me. Um, and then in the morning they, oh, and when they had checked, checked me when I had come in, they said I was like four to five centimeters dilated.

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So I was happy about that progress. In the morning I could tell like things were not really picking up because I was not particularly uncomfortable. And in the morning they came in and checked again and said, oh, you're still four to five centimeters, let's up the Pitocin and then we'll come back in a little bit and break your water. Um, and the doctor who checked me at that point was a resident who I'm also good friends with. Um, so she comes, she leaves to go do something else. Um, and then a couple hours later [yeah] an OB who I also love, she comes in and is like, yeah, you're still four to five centimeters, let's break your water. And I was like, all right. So she breaks my water and I immediately get very uncomfortable. This is at like 12:00 PM on Thurs a Thursday. So the induction had started Wednesday at 3:00 PM and nothing had really like happened after the Foley balloon had fallen out and then now it's 12:00 PM ish on Thursday they break my water.

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I immediately get like very uncomfortable and I'm like, this is labor, like this is great. Um, so I was getting in the shower, which is something I had also been doing at home when I was uncomfortable with my Foley balloon and my nurse at this point, we'd gone from night shift to day shift, so I have a new nurse. I'm had been a night shifter for many, not many, I'm not, it's not like I'd been a nurse for a million years, but I had been a night shifter for several years at this point. Um, so I had a new nurse who was a day shift nurse who I also love her. Um, she was awesome. And um, actually was somebody who had kind of, I remember I shadowed her when I was interviewing for the job, um, a couple years back. So I was like, Hey, it's me.

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I mean we, we knew each other and worked together at this point, but I remember she was like really excited to be my nurse and I was so touched by that. She was like, I can't believe you picked me. And I was like, I love you [laughter]. Um, and then she was like, do you want to get an epidural? Because I was starting to get uncomfortable and like kind of having to like really breathe through my contractions and stuff. And I was like, okay, let's do it. Um, my anesthesiologist came in and tried to do my epidural and told me that I had scoliosis, which I had not been informed of that in my life, um, and he was having a really hard time with it. And I was sort of taken aback because I had been told by a different anesthesiologist, like earlier in my pregnancy, just kind of hanging out at the nurses' station,

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he was like, oh, you'll be a super easy epidural placement because you're tall, 'cause I'm five nine and there tends to be a little bit more space to work with in taller people. So, when this other anesthesiologist was having a hard time, I was like, what do you mean? Like, they told me it wouldn't be a problem. And he was like, yeah, like, I'm gonna do it. I started getting super sweaty and like feeling like I was gonna pass out and my nurse was getting kind of anxious, and she was asking my husband like, what, what does her blood pressure reading say? And he is not medical at all and was like, I don't even know what numbers to look at. And she was like, okay, nevermind, just like step aside sir. And I started kind of freaking out and I was like, if we can't, if I can't have an epidural, like it's not that I can't handle the pain in this moment, but I know that I'm a first-time mom and this is an induction that is not exactly moving at a breakneck speed,

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and like, I don't think I can do this unmedicated. Like at this point I'd already been awake for gosh, like 30 hours [Speaker 2 affirmative] so I'm like, if we cannot do this, like I just dunno how I'm gonna cope with this. Like I think I'm gonna have to have like a c-section under general anesthesia. And my nurse was like, oh my gosh, Claire, no, we don't need to do that. Just relax. It's gonna be fine. He ended up getting it and I was like, absolutely dripping with sweat. It was so gross. I was so embarrassed. I was like, I'm so sorry. I don't know why I'm so sweaty. And she was awesome. And she was like, don't worry about it. I, I have this like little quirk that I hate having bare feet. So I was wearing, I wear like calf-length wool socks 24-7, like 365,

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and people always kinda make fun of me for this and I've just accepted it as a weirdness about me. But I was like, I need you to change my socks for me. Like, 'cause I'm so sweaty. And she was like, just be barefoot if you're so sweaty. And I was like, no, put on my new socks and have them like in my bag. And she was like, are you sure? I feel really weird about this. Like, you're really hot. I was like, no, put 'em on [laughter]. She's like, she's like, okay. So she puts them on and then at that point, I think I took a nap and things were, I was looking at my fetal heart rate tracing like ever-, every so often, but I wasn't, I'm kind of an anxious person and a lot of my coworkers had been like, we really want you to just trust us and let go during labor,

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like we've got you, you don't have to be worried. Like we will handle everything. So I wasn't, I remember kind of not feeling as anxious as I thought I was gonna be. Like every time I looked at the heart rate tracing it looked good, and I felt really confident that everybody was like looking out for me and everything was fine. So that was good. I took a nap. Things kind of got a little

blurry. I wasn't exactly sure like what time it was. I felt like, things were moving in the right direction in the sense that the heart rate tracing looked good and every time they checked me, I had progressed like another centimeter. But it was not like moving quickly. It'd be like, okay, now you're six, a couple hours later, now you're seven. Like no centimeter unchecked [laughter]. It was never like, oh, now you're nine,

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um, so it was like seven or eight centimeters, they said that my cervix was kind of swollen, which at this point we were back on night shift and my previous nurse was, um, back on and back with me and they, and another nurse I'm friends with also was there and they were like, maybe we should give you some IV Benadryl, which the evidence is mixed if that really helps, but sometimes it does to help with a swollen cervix. So, I was like, let's do it, let's try it. So, I got 50 milligrams of IV Benadryl. I am like, not somebody who takes a lot of medication. This IV Benadryl hit me like a freight train. Like I was hallucinating. I was talking about things that didn't make sense, not in a scary way, but I was so tired. I like, nobody was worried about it, but I was very out of it.

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And my husband was like, you're being really bizarre [laughter]. Um, b[laughter] ut he's also a very chill person and he was kinda like, it's all good. And I remember like my coworker was in there and she was like rubbing my head and was like, you're okay, everything's fine. And I was like out of it. And they were like, you really need to sleep. Like you're fighting sleep so hard and you're so sleep deprived and you have all this IV Benadryl coursing through your, your veins. Like you need to just chill out and go to sleep and like you'll feel better. So I think I took a little cat nap and then when I woke up I had like, so much pressure and I was like, thi- this is not good. Like I, I feel really bad. And I went from having really like, loved labor and enjoyed labor for the most part besides the epidural shenanigans, but to suddenly being very anxious and like, I'm not okay.

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So I started thinking that I was, they told me I should get an epidural bolus and I was like, okay, sounds good. So, the anesthesiologist, or the CRNA who actually I used to be neighbors with, but he did not recognize me in my current state, which totally makes sense cause I looked insane. He came in to give it to me and I'm like, Mark, it's me. And he's like, okay, uh, [laughter]. I'm like,

00:19:43 Speaker 2:

[laughter] If you say so.

00:19:43: Claire O:

your neighbor, like we, we work together and we're neighbors and like, remember when I pet your dog that one day? It's like, okay. So he gives me the epidural bolus and it didn't really work no, not because of him - he did an awesome job - but it just didn't really take the pain away that much. But it made my legs feel very heavy and numb. And then I kind of started freaking out and I thought I was having like a placental abruption or some sort of complication and my coworkers were in the room.

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Oh, I told my husband like, I need to get up, like I need to walk around. And because he doesn't know anything about medicine or obstetrics, he was like, "okay." So he goes outside and he is like, hey, can somebody help me like get Claire up? She wants to walk around. And they were like, no, a hundred percent no. Like she can't feel her legs. She has an epidural. She's been in labor for like a million years. Her water's broken. Like she's not getting up and walking around. So they come in and have my OB check me and they tell me I'm nine centimeters. And I'm like, okay, it's like gonna, we're getting there. We're so close [yeah] but it hurts so bad. And I was like on hands and knees, I told them to turn the Pitocin off because I was like convinced I was abrupting,

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I was like, turn off, I'm dying. They were like, right. I remember my nurse who is my very close friend and she, I just love it because she was so like, respectful of me in that moment, even though I was clearly out of my mind, she just like hits the IV and like turns it off. She's like, okay, it's off. And I'm like, okay. And so they call my OB and they're like, Claire is freaking out, like she's in a lot of pain, you gotta come in here. So she comes in and she checks and she's like, your 10 centimeters, like you're, we're gonna push, we're ready to go. I'm like, okay. I called my mom who had really wanted to be in the room. My mom is also a nurse, but I, I knew she would like be anxious herself because she is not somebody who really loves OB.

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I was like, I think I remember having had this talk with her where I was like, I love you so much, I want you to be like the first person to meet the baby, but I just think like, I'll do better if it's just me and Kerry and like my coworkers. And she was super like, fine with that and very respectful. But I told her like, I'll call you when it's time and you can come to the hospital and like be the first one to meet the baby. So I call her and I'm like, Mom or I think I had my, I think I Kerry call her, I forget which one of us called her, but we tell her it's time to start pushing. She clearly had been up all night and she gets there in like 14 seconds [laughter]. Um, and the front desk keeps calling my nurse like, does Claire want her mom to come back?

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And I'm like, no, I have to push the baby out first. And my mom apparently, I love this, like she was sitting at the desk with one of my, um, coworkers and she was crying and she like, not in a sad way, but she was just so excited and emotional and she was like, is everything okay? And they were like, yes, everyone's got, they're like, we got, we're we're good, everything's fine. So I start pushing and one of the residents, one of the male residents who I initially had said like, I didn't want any male providers in the room, but then as things progressed I really didn't care. Um, he had like come in and out and he was pushing like we call it, you know, the doctor's pushing with you even though like they're not pushing, but they're just there with you while you're pushing.

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And everyone was really supportive and great. And um, my charge nurse, who I really look up to and is a mentor to me, she came in and she was like whispering in my ear and she was like, you got this, like, you're so close. But I started to kind of hear whispers in the room that they were worried that I was gonna have a shoulder dystocia because it seemed like the baby was big and like this thing we say, um, like the baby was turtling, like it seemed like he was gonna come out

and then kind of go back in and everyone was, I could tell like really worried I was super anxious, but I actually was not anxious once I was pushing. And I was just kinda like, okay, like, you know, just tell me what to do and I'll do whatever you tell me to do.

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And they kept saying, my OB who was in there was like Claire, like, you don't have to be a nurse right now. Like, you can just be a mom. Like we've got you just listen to me and you know, I'll tell you when to push and everything, you know, we got it. And I was like, all right. Um, and then there were a bunch of people in the room and Kerry was like, why are there like 17 nurses in here? There weren't actually 17, but there were a lot [laughter]. Um, and he was like, there's something wrong. And people were like, no, no, we just like, we're here for Claire. Um, so there are all these people there and I just felt so like, it's not, I think for a lot of people it's not exactly the birth that they would imagine as this like ideal birth.

00:24:07 Claire O:

Like it was long. There was a lot of medical intervention. But it was like so wonderful and special to me 'cause I was surrounded by all these people that I work with and that I love. And it was just like, the vibes were great. Um, so I finally like push him out and my coworker had come in and was taking pictures. She was like, do you want, you want me to take pictures? And I was like, yeah. And she was like, do you want like, what if there's like vagina in the pictures? I was like, that's fine, I don't care. Um, [laughter], you know, like don't hold back, it's fine, like I'll delete anything I don't like, I don't want later. So she's taking all these pictures and I, and now I, I love having these pictures because they're like, just the joy, not just my joy but Kerry's joy and like all my coworkers joy, it is just like the best.

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But I, and I had been kind of back and forth all pregnancy if I thought it was a boy or a girl. And I think because I consider myself such a girl's girl. Like I have lesbian moms. I'm a labor and delivery nurse. I have a twin sister, like I have a billion female friends. There was part of me that kind of thought it was gonna be a girl. But then once I was in labor I had this like extreme clarity that it was a boy. And I didn't speak that out loud, but I just like knew that it was so I push him out and my husband is absolutely - he's a crier - um, and he, so he's sobbing, um, like he's like sobbing and I'm like, do you wanna say it? Do you wanna say it? And he's like, uh, and I'm like, should I just say it?

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He's like, yeah. And I'm like, it's a boy. Um, and I like reached down for him and I pulled him up to my chest and everybody was crying. Like my nurses were crying, I was crying, my husband's sobbing. And then somebody's like, now can we get your mom? And I'm like, yeah, get my mom. Um, so my mom runs in the room like my placenta is not even out. My mom runs in the room and she's crying and she's like, oh my God. I'm like, it's a boy. And she's like, I know. I'm like, how do you know [laughter]? Um, and you know, she, I don't think she realized like he had literally come out like 30 seconds before 'cause she's like, how much does he weigh? I'm like, I dunno, [laughter] he just got here. Um, so then, oh, the other thing was that I really, really wanted to deliver on night shift because of being a night shifter.

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And I knew we were kind of cutting in close. So I'm like, wait, what time was it? What time was it? And they're like, 6:58. So like in the seven to seven and I'm like, "I made it, I did it," [yeah] and everyone's like, yeah you did. And I was, I was so excited. And because it was shift change, no residents were there, it was just my OB, um, and it was just like, it was really the best. Like I was, it was just everything I hoped it would be, even though on some level I wanted like a spontaneous unmedicated intervention free birth and it was not bad at all. Like it was like a 40-hour induction. It was just still, it was just the best. And I was so, I was so excited, you know, to meet him and to have him there to be surrounded by so much love and you know, it was just really, it was awesome.

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And then kind of shift change happened and then my nurse who had been with me the day before during the whole epidural debacle comes in and she's my day shift nurse again. And she's like, Claire, you did it. I'm like, I did [laughter]. Um, and she's like, you know, helping me and everything, you have that first hour that we try to have, you know, baby on your chest and not to take them away. And it, it was like a time warp. Like it had felt like it was four minutes and then it was a suddenly like, okay, like it's been an hour, we're gonna weigh him and then do stuff. And I'm like, okay. And then you have another hour where they're kind of getting you ready to go and move over to the postpartum unit. And I was still in a time warp, like I felt like it'd been like a couple minutes and it had been, you know, multiple hours and then I couldn't get up.

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Like I was really dizzy, which sometimes happens. And of course this is like with the nurse who I had had this epidural breakdown with so she's like, [laughter], I'm like, here I am again [laughter] like having a problem. And she's like so nice about it and she's like, it's okay. Like we're just gonna toss you in the wheelchair and go. And I'm like, okay. My mom's like, are you sure this is normal? Like she seems really woozy and I'm like, don't worry about it mom, this happens. It's normal. And she's like, okay, but you look like a sheet of paper. I'm like, it's all good. And I was so exhausted, like I was so happy, but I was so exhausted. Um, and I like started breastfeeding and that went okay and then they were like, okay, take a nap. And my mom went out to get us food and my husband and I and our baby slept,

00:28:42 Claire O:

um, and you know, woke up a couple hours later and it was like I just, I loved, a lot of people wanna leave the hospital and they're like, I'm ready to go home. But I was like excited to go home. But also I loved being in the hospital for those couple days after my delivery 'cause I felt like we were just like suspended in time and it was like this perfect experience where my husband was like totally present with us. He didn't have any other responsibilities 'cause he was studying for the bar exam at the time and I knew when we got home he was gonna have to start like getting back to it. And the hospital's like my second home so I was very comfortable there. And in the night I would ask my nurse if I could go over from postpartum back to labor and delivery and I would walk over there and they said like, yes, but you can't bring your baby 'cause you're like, not steady on your feet.

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And I'd be like, okay. And I would go over and I would sit in the, in the report room, like the nurse's station essentially and talk with people. And then I'd go back and breastfeed and I'd come back and it was just like the best couple of days. And then when they finally, it was like a little bit of a delayed discharge I think just because of Covid and stuff, things were a little bit, um, you know, moving differently. So they'd asked me if I would stay a second night and I was like, for sure, um, [laughter] no problem. And that took them like all day. So I think I told the story wrong that it started on a Wednesday. I think it started on a Thursday and I delivered very early Saturday morning. Um, so sorry about that

00:30:14 S2:

That's okay. [No that's okay.]

00:30:14: Claire O:

anybody listening, um, started on a Thursday afternoon and delivered very early on Saturday morning at 6:58. And then they said we could go home on Monday and it took like all day to get the discharge together and I was just hanging out, like totally fine. And then they wheeled me down in a wheelchair and I, I used to be an ER nurse before I was a labor and delivery nurse. And because of Covid people were doing all sorts of weird roles in the hospital. So I saw like one of my former coworkers, um, manning a door, like a Covid screening station as I was being wheeled out. And I was like, "hey." And she was like, oh my god, you had a baby? I was like, yeah.

00:30:49:

And it was so weird, like sitting there in the wheelchair waiting for my husband to go pull the car around and it was, you know, it was end of, it was the end of June, 2020 so it was really hot outside and it just felt like almost being like birthed myself into this really bright, sunny summer world that I'd been totally, you know, I'd entered the hospital on a Thursday evening and now it's like multiple days later on a Monday and I've had a baby and this whole experience and um,

00:31:19:

I have a twin sister who's not a particularly emotional person but is like a sweetums like lover, um, but she was at my house when we came home and she had made this sign that said like, Welcome Ben, um, and had balloons up and everything and she was kind of tearful when she saw us and met him. And it was just like, my mom was there and it was just the best. Like, I was just so happy. I just couldn't have been happier. And I think because I'm an anxious person, I was really worried I was gonna get like postpartum depression or have really bad anxiety, but I was just like totally fine, and everything was great. I mean, not like to sugarcoat everything, you know, there were some breastfeeding challenges, and you know, I was really anxious about Covid and things like that. But in general, it was like, you know, it was hard for my husband 'cause he had to immediately start studying for the bar really intensely.

00:32:14:

But I was just kind of in this newborn bubble and I just had this like amazing birth. And I think I've told 'cause I love birth obviously, if that's not apparent, um, [laughter] but I had told some people the birth story people were like, oh my gosh, that sounds, that sounds like a lot. Like that sounds long, that sounds hard. And I was like, yeah but it was, it was great. Like it was so, it was

so cool. Like I even in that moment I was like, I can't wait to do it again. And my husband was like, you are crazy uh, [laughter].

00:32:44 Claire O:

But I just like was so happy and I felt this instant connection with my baby. And um, I know this is supposed to just be about one birth story, but my future births were not nearly so medically straightforward. [S2 affirmative] So I look back at this, this experience with him as just the most like beautiful and like gentle entrance to motherhood because the next couple of years, like kind of with certain pregnancy complications and things that went on kind of were a slap in the face in juxtaposition to this experience. And I'm just like, I'm so glad that was my first, like that was my first baby and it was just, it was everything, you know, that I wanted it to be. And you know, he's, it's, it's crazy that he's almost three and he's like a real talking member of society with a lot of opinions and now having [S2 affirmative] another child, um, having a 10 month old, it's just so funny to think like that my older son started out, you know, so small as well.

00:33:58:

And I think about the like, richness of my relationship with him now that he's a toddler and almost three and like how much I both miss him as a baby and like miss that perfect birth experience because it was like in many ways like a peak experience for me. But then also like how much it's developed and like the depth of like my love for him and our relationship and it's just like hard to believe all these things have happened in the short time [S2 affirmative]. But yeah, that was my first birth and I, I loved it and it was great.

00:34:36 Speaker 2:

I have to be honest that I would have to agree that most stories I hear that involve that that many, medical, I don't, I mean they are interventions but just like medical, that much medical participation [yeah], most people are not as positive.

00:34:53 Claire O:

And I think, I think a huge part was that it was like my work [S2 affirmative] family because I just felt, so my, my husband jokingly called it a party birth. Um, I loved having all these people around and it, I'm a very, very social person and I loved that. And even though it, it was hard in some way-, I mean it was long and there were times where I was like, oh this is really tough. But it also, even while it was happening kind of felt like a time warp and I just felt like I also, I think I went into the birth with like, really my only desire was to have a vaginal delivery. Like for some, my, my grandma was also labor and delivery nurse and she had told me a lot of birth stories and I'd always kind of had a fascination with birth from a young age.

00:35:42:

And I think, you know, all birth is birth and very valid and I ended up actually having to have a C-section with my second son so I think, you know, I've experienced both ways but I have always had a very strong desire to just experience having a vaginal delivery. And I think just having that work out for me, despite it not being like a super quick or straightforward path to get there, I was just thrilled. I was like, that's what I wanted and I had it and I had so much support and I, the moment, even though the labor was long and had its moments, like the moment of delivery was so like beautiful and perfect to me that it was just great. So yes, I know like 'cause

I've told this story to people and they're like, wow, that sounds like a lot. And I'm like, it was, but it also, like, I don't know if I would have the same perspective on it if I wasn't a labor and delivery nurse [S2 affirmative] and if I hadn't delivered where I worked. But the way it all played out for me, I just like was really, really happy.

00:36:40:

Oh, and I had had to get the Covid test, I think hopefully that was, you know, assumed and implied. But I did what they told me to do, got the Covid test, it was negative and they were like, all right, let's go. Um, I had worked my last day Sunday night shift going into Monday and then had a couple days to like, you know, rest and reset and get ready and then started the whole, the whole shebang.

00:37:07 S2:

So you were working nights at the time.

00:37:09 Claire O:

Yeah.

00:37:10 S2:

Do you think that that prepared you at all for those early like newborn days where you get so little sleep and you're on, even when you get sleep, it's often not at night, you know, and I think that's can be a really hard time for a lot of new moms to suddenly be sleeping during the day and it's very confusing. I wonder if you think that working nights helped you with that at all?

00:37:29 Claire O:

I think that it did. I think, um, nights has always kind of come more easily to me than to, you know, I know it kind of doesn't work for some people's bodies, but it had never not like, obviously there were times I was like tired, but I enjoyed working nights and I did not find the early newborn days, it was ki- I keep saying the, the phrase time warp, um, it was still kind of a time warp. Like I'd be like, oh, like a week has gone by. Um, but I was not, I I did not have a super hard time with the sleep deprivation. And I think part of it is that I very much can sleep during the day. Like if he was taking a big nap during the day, I was like, I'm gonna go to sleep [laughter] and I, I could go to sleep and be fine.

00:38:14:

Um, right. There was sort of this weird thing that we settled into this like routine because there was, with breastfeeding, there was this like element of needing to pump sometimes. And I would always have this thing where I had to pump before I went to bed. And in those early days where babies are going to sleep weirdly late, like I remember my husband would be like, what are we doing? It's 11:00 pm like, why is our baby just like sitting with us in the living room? Like why are we keeping this baby up so late? And I was like, this is normal, this is their circadian rhythm, it's fine. Um, but I would always be like, sometimes I'd fall asleep on the couch and I'd set an alarm for midnight to like pump before I went to bed. And my husband was like, this is crazy [laughter].

00:38:53:

I was just like, it's, it's all good. Um, he's like, is this the way that other people are doing it? I'm like, I don't know. I did have this one like episode where I had fallen asleep nursing at like three in the morning and I had been scrolling on Instagram and you know how you can send people a post? Like you can DM them a post. I actually DMed people like this random post, like a, a baking brownies post to like literally like 30 people [laughter] in the middle of the night. And one of them was my coworker who was having a baby like shortly after me. And I was like DMing her this while she herself was being induced. And I was like, I'm so sorry that was an accident. I was getting induced. And she was like, I, I was sleeping. And like she was like, are you okay?

00:39:39:

And I actually, you know how you can FaceTime call somebody via Instagram? I FaceTimed, it happened, it was the perfect person to be this person, but it was my nurse, my like close friend who was my nurse and she answered the phone and her answering the call like woke me up and I was like, Hey, how are you? And she was like, I'm fine. How are you? I'm like, I'm good. I was like, what's up? And she was like, you called me. And I was like, oh wow, crazy, I didn't know that. And I was like, I had fallen asleep like feeding my baby. And she's like, are you okay? And I was like, oh yeah, I'm great. I'm fine. But it was so funny. I was like, what am I doing [laughter]? Like, but I do think even though it was like weird, you know, like obviously I was still sleep deprived and things were crazy and you're like up all night feeding a baby. But I think for the most part I just kind of was like, yeah, like, you know, night shift has prepared me, I'm ready to go [yeah]. So it really was fi- it really was fine for me for the most part. I, I love, I always say like, I love being pregnant. I love giving birth, I love having a newborn. I just kind of wish I could have that experience continuously on a loop every like two to three years for the rest of my life. [laughter].

00:40:49 S2:

I agree.

00:40:50 Claire O:

And most people are like, what?!

00:40:51 S2:

[laughter] I love, I loved all those parts as well myself [yeah]. And then I find that I'm very unusual in that with people I know too. They're like, no, I like when they can start talking and walking and doing stuff [right, right] and I'm like, it's all great. Like it's all great.

00:41:04 Claire O:

Right it's all, it's so wonderful and magical [but] when they can start doing those things. But like, I even, you know, I have a 10-month-old now and he's still like super itty-bitty because he was born early and it's, I like still look back and I'm like, oh, remember when he was so little? And 'cause I'm like, he's still like really little. And I'm like but remember when he would just like sleep on me and I would just like lay there all day with him And my husband's like, yeah,

[laughter]. I'm like, ready for round three. And he's like, you're, you are outta your mind girlfriend.

00:41:36 S2:

[laughter]

00:41:38 Claire O:

Like, yeah, even while it's happening, I'm like nostalgic for it. There's something so special about your first baby because [yeah], you've never done it before and it's such a, like I really, when Tamar told me like that I would pick one of my births, I was like, oh that's so tough for me 'cause like there's, they were so both so eventful and so much happened, but I was like, I just have to go with my first because it was just like, it was like walking through a portal into this like whole new world and I just, you know, I look back on it and I'm sure there's some rose colored glasses going on, but it was just like awesome. It was just this thing I had waited for my whole life, which again, my husband would be like, you were 26 years old, you had not been like waiting that long.

00:42:24:

[laughter] like, you, you were just fine. But I had just been so excited even, you know, from like, I would read birth stories, like when blogs were a big thing, like when I was in high school and college, I'd be reading women's birth stories and crying and people were like, what's happening [laughter]? Like why is this

00:42:40 S2:

What's happening for you?

00:42:41 Claire O:

the content you're choosing to consume as a 21-year-old, like living in New York City? But I just loved it, and I was so like ready for it and stoked about it, and it was, it was just, it was awesome.