

Anticipating Reilly

May 6. Found out that the baby is a boy last week. I'm all over the road with it. I could feel my little heart sink when the tech pointed out what looks like a budding penis, and yet it seemed so karmically predictable. I never get the easy thing, I just don't. I had hoped upon hope for a girl, whom I felt ready to deal with on whatever end of the gender and sexual orientation spectrums she found herself on. But a boy, ach! So much work to do—keeping his heart open, keeping my heart tied to him. Dealing with what it means to be a white boy growing up in D.C. (relentless, state-sanctioned violence perpetrated by white men in power, astronomical incarceration rates among Black men in the neighborhood), growing up anywhere in this country with the pluses of having a mom who can take care of him along with better than average food, shelter, etc.

Then the reality that I am going to be investing all of this extraordinary, loving, positive energy in a bio-boy when I've consciously chosen not to do this around intimates. This boy's mom is not only a dyke, she's a dyke who chose women for political reasons. Can't wait for that chat at bedside! I have to believe that the universe wants me to learn some incredible, wonderful lesson that I can't even fathom at this point. Because this is certainly not what I would have picked.

On the other hand, I have been having some wonderful moments anticipating Reilly. Telling others has been great. The gay men in my life are absolutely ecstatic. A number of my gal-pal beloveds are talking about how wonderful I'm going to be as a mom for a boy in this particular political/cultural moment. They seem absolutely genuine about this. I have been thinking a lot about Taylor, the child I most fell in love with of any child I ever knew (lost to a car accident at five and a half), and thinking what it might be like to raise a

boy like him. Could it be possible that the goddess would send me a Taylor-like spirit? In these moments, I drop my worries and my over-analyzing and feel really excited. I know I'm going to love this boy, and love him well.

What this will mean to him and to me is really beyond my understanding or projection at this point.

May 7. Watched a TV program last night about the trial of three high school boys who were caught having sex with a developmentally disabled woman functioning at the level of a 12-year-old. I dreaded the whole thing, and then the jury came back with a rape conviction. For half a second, I had this odd sense of relief and then the judge threw the verdict out. I started weeping, remembering all of the developmentally disabled women I worked with at the shelter who'd been raped—especially Lisa and Tony. I remember that we took Lisa's case through the preliminary hearing stage, but I can't remember the trial. I know that everyone I worked with from emergency room to trial lost their cases (about 12 women in three years), so I know Lisa lost too, but I guess I've totally repressed the trial. Tony, I remember, was just incapable of setting any kind of consistent sexual boundaries for herself. She'd been incested for about 15 years by her stepfather, who was very brutal. She'd have rages periodically, that kept all kinds of folks at a distance. But various and sundry men knew how to pick their spots to take what they wanted. It was totally exhausting and demoralizing trying to help her create some sense of consistent safety around her body and her sexuality. Then, of course, there was Rita. Raped at 40-plus years of age, assured by me that she would be okay, and then murdered the night after her rape in her apartment.

I shut off the stupid TV and had a long, wailing cry. I thought about what it means to bring a boy, who will be a man, into the world. How do I not hold all of this against him? How do I keep myself open to his wants and his needs when I have observed so many men plow past all of these women's most sacred boundaries to "get theirs"? I find myself in the territory of all of the straight women who I worked beside, who went home to their husbands and their sons, and just about split themselves into a million pieces trying to live with what they felt and knew. I chose to be a lesbian so that I wouldn't have to fight that particular battle, at that close a proximity, on a daily basis. And now, here I am. On the cusp of it, again.

I'm really tired today. Trying to pat Reilly, sweetly. Sifting all of this through.

June 10. Last Sunday, I was standing in line at a local coffee shop, packed with folks, the line interminably long and slow, when an old homeless woman started to faint in her seat by the window. A young woman with three kids in tow starts yelling "an old woman is fainting, call 911!" and the hapless coffee crew responds like molasses. The woman yells, "she's throwing up, she's throwing up!" By now, I've eeked my way to the front of the line and the clerk is trying to get my order together. A wave of disgust comes over me—this old woman alone is so vulnerable, so without a net. Suddenly, the

lights start to dim, and I can feel myself start to pass out. I'm thinking, "Oh. No, I am NOT going to pass out in this fucking Starbucks." I realize it's my mother's voice in my head. Full of steel. Absolutely determined. I am NOT this vulnerable. I will NOT keel over among all these strangers while I'm carrying this baby. I lean against the railing at the counter, dip my head slightly—because I also don't want any of these people to know that I'm having a sympathetic reaction to this poor woman, whom I refuse to identify with around the fragile house of cards that is her life. It's not enough. I need to squat down and put my head between my legs. But no way, I won't. I stand there, give my money, take my change, and the darkness closes in on me. I'm realizing, finally, that I am not going to make it to the door with my coffee, juice and muffin, as planned. I need help. I turn to a woman in line with two daughters and say, "I'm having an hysterical reaction to this woman. I'm going to pass out, too." The woman looks at me blankly, like she can't put my logical, even-keeled description together with the information. The man next to me in line puts out his hand. I take it. He moves me over to the window, where there's a chair, and I sit down. I put my head between my legs and he retrieves my coffee and sundries. I sit there for two minutes and regain my bearings, breathe deeply. The ambulance arrives and goes over to the old woman, whom I have refused to look at. There is some discussion taking place, but my back is to them, I don't know what the deal is. Finally, I can tell that my head has cleared. I pick up my stuff and walk out, careful not to look in the direction of the crisis, get into my car, and drive myself home.

June 23. Rocky week. Last Wednesday, I started bleeding. Rusty, brown-colored blood in dribbles down my leg, but mostly just enough to get a stain when I wipe. So, I had an ultra-sound and everything checked out fine. Placenta's in place, no tears. My cervix is closed. Reilly is still doing his Olympic training in my womb. Active as hell. (I must say all that activity gave me pause.)

Friday, I'm still bleeding, so I go see the Doc, who sends me over to the hospital to "labor and delivery" to get on a monitor and see if I'm having contractions. I have just a pitiful walk over there by myself. Panicky. Cosmically "alone." My ex-lover Linda races down from a house she's framing in Bethesda. After a couple of hours it's clear that I'm not having contractions. I appear to have a bad bladder infection. Dr. B. gives me a scrip for some horrendous antibiotic and puts me on modified bed rest for the weekend.

What happens for me is this: I've been really, really ambivalent about having a boy for a couple of weeks. Just sad, sad, sad about not having a daughter and it being unlikely that I'll have more than one child. I'm thinking, even as I'm crying and going over to the hospital that maybe I'm not supposed to have this boy. Maybe we start all over again and I'll get a girl next time. And other voices rush up to meet me: What an ingrate! You're so lucky you can conceive, this may be your only chance to have a baby, *period*. A miscarriage would serve you right now, wouldn't it? How could you be sending this child signals—after all this—that he's unwanted? Maybe he can feel it and he's bailing out! Who

needs an ambivalent, queer, single mom anyway? And on and on..

Now, I know I need to have the sadness around not having a daughter and what I imagine that loss means. But finding the room for this ambivalence is hard. I'm aware that I'm not as excited as I would be if I were having a girl, and were telling folks that I'm having a girl. When I see little girls with their moms, I feel like I'm experiencing a kind of death. Goddamn, I don't want to infect this child with all this stuff. He's barely a pound and I've got the weight of all my wounding on him already. I can only hope that allowing myself the space for this is going to bring me to a much better place once he arrives.

July 13. A little over 26 weeks today. Feeling good, after a second round of antibiotics—a much less harsh prescription than the first. Reilly is just active as can be. He moves around all day, and into the night. He's gotten big enough so that I can track his movements visually across my stomach. I've been trying to spend more conscious time with him lately—to rub cocoa butter on my tummy and talk to him. To give him my full concentration instead of just moving around with him as though I'm still on my own.

I took him to the Vietnam Memorial last week. I have been to the Memorial wall many times, but this was very different. Viewing the names this time, I imagined scores of mothers burying their young sons, and the terrible grief that such a perverse loss engenders. I eavesdropped on the conversations mothers were having with their young children as they filed past the thousands and thousands of names. One young girl asked her mother over and over, “So, everyone on this wall died? Every single one? None of them survived?” It reminded me how desperately children want to believe in a just world. Her mother explained that “not everyone” who went to the war died, but that all of the people whose names were on the wall were killed. This did not appear to comfort her daughter. One mother, who was bald-headed—I imagined a cancer survivor—explained to her son that “Daddy’s number came up” on the draft but it was as the war was ending and he was very lucky not to have to go. The boy kept looking at the wall saying, “His number came up? His number came up?” Other parents didn't do much framing of the Memorial for their children. I saw little boys “playing” on the bodies of the nurses in the women's memorial as though they were bongo drums. Other young girls had a height measuring contest by aligning their bodies with the rows of names on the wall. I heard some parents finish the procession with comments like, “Okay, the Lincoln's next and then we'll go to the Washington.”

So, I'm trying to stay “awake” through the pregnancy, to relate to Reilly more like the parents in the earlier part of that passage, without obsessing on him.

In terms of me, myself and I, my sexuality stuff appears to be shifting. I thought I'd get more seriously horny in this final trimester, but I seem to be getting less so. For the past couple of months, I have been lamenting the great waste of my gorgeous blooming body with me as my sole audience. But now,

I'm getting so big, my fantasy life has slowed to a serious ebb. Getting in bed with anyone right now would be hard to maneuver, and I don't feel as hot as I have in the past few months. In the second trimester, I had a regular flow of group sex fantasies, featuring butches, f2ms and bio-boys variously. I was a top in most of them, generally with a compliment of bottoms that I ordered around me (and around each other). In the past week or so, I've let myself move into bottom territory in these fantasies. For a while in month 5 and 6, I seriously thought of placing a kinky personal ad. But despite my horniness—and notwithstanding my therapist's observation that getting laid might do me some good—I just couldn't figure out a way to play out the kinds of fantasies I was interested in while keeping me and Reilly safe. So the sex horizon remains (seemingly) devoid of possibility.

September 16. Just finished Anne Lamott's *Operating Instructions*, a wild journal of her first year as a single mom with her son, Sam. Was struck by a number of things: first and foremost: the insanity of having a colicky baby. I was thrilled to learn after many harrowing passages that cutting out dairy and wheat changed this dramatically. In those first, intensely colicky weeks, Lamott moves between being besotted with love and barely able to control her homicidal rage. I felt really blessed that she was willing to share the depths of this.

I was also struck by what it means to be a heterosexual single mom—really so much more to carry around the absence of a father. She feels this as a failure of hers for Sam and worries about his impending sense of loss around this. I guess the queer model gives me more room not to worry—the absence of a father will not be construed as a loss in our family, and the presence of so many loving aunts, uncles and what not will certainly provide a tangible and vibrant family for Reilly.

And, I know my decision to have a known donor definitely assuages the “absent Dad” fears to a degree. I don't know how present D. will be, but it will be up to him to decide, for the most part. Whatever “losses” Reilly might have about his family configuration are more likely to be centered on the queerness of the whole endeavor and I think this will be a good process for him to go through, and get to the other side of. Since my biggest worry is that he's going to be a white boy of so much privilege, locating a sense of otherness in his family situation is going to be an important lesson—an ultimately humanizing one, I hope.

Lamott has a few intense and terrific passages about what incredible disappointments her male lovers have been (while her brother and many male pals come through in spades). As she rakes over their indifference, their willingness to take, take, take, she doesn't make any connection to this boy that she's raising in terms of thinking about masculinity, power and intimacy. Who does she think Sam will be??? This, of course, is where I go instantly when I think about Reilly: right to the insults and challenges that the queer and gender-transgressing men in my life have faced as well as the immense indifference and refusal to acknowledge power among the straight and traditionally gendered.

Will Reilly be a target of sexism or a perpetrator? What is there to hope for in that?

September 23. Every day feels like a bit of a milestone now. Last night I ate dinner too late and now I'm in heartburn hell. Didn't sleep well. Sluggish at work. Walking like a serious penguin, although I did manage about a third of my pre-pregnancy daily walk this morning, and it felt like a real accomplishment.

Reilly's sperm donor came by last night, ostensibly with veggies from our organic veggie coop, but really because he is just freaking out about the baby. I felt somewhat wary of him for the first time in all this. Partly, I think, because it seemed like he wanted me to take care of him in some way, and I don't want to get into the business of taking care of him, especially since he hasn't established anything that remotely resembles a care-giving relationship with me throughout the pregnancy. He has mostly just popped in and out and been somewhat distant from the whole process—which I've been very comfortable with given our conception of him as a donor and not a dad. I don't need him to take care of me. Accordingly, I don't want to be in a position of having to take care of him. This isn't a parenting partnership.

But the baby's almost here and he's wiggling out in a daddy universe, that much is clear. I can certainly understand that, and I want to be affirming and caring with him, but clear. I think it's going to be really important in the beginning for me to be clear about how I'm defining the "donor"-Reilly relationship, and to work with D. as openly and directly as I can about where he's at and how it's going for him. He's scheduled a trip for November, which I am relieved and grateful for now, although it seemed odd to me when he put it together. Perhaps he's (unconsciously or consciously) trying to build in a little space given this not-dad configuration. I realize that I don't want to spend a ton of energy on this. That I want it to be simple. And it's probably going to be very complex and take time.

January 21, 1999. The boy is exactly three months old today, and I am back at work for the third consecutive day.

Last night, he grabbed a soft toy and pulled it to his chest for the first time. (Then immediately tried to cram it in his mouth—his mother's child.) I am thrilled to be a part of the miracle that he is every minute.

No way to catch up on the three-plus month gap in the record here. A kind of supportive amnesia has already set in around the most traumatic parts—a really hard labor that ended in his arrival in respiratory distress and a one-week trip to neonatal intensive care. Leg paralysis (on me) that stayed almost a week in the wake of delivering a nearly ten pound baby (9lbs 12ozs). His distress over the ICU separation that left him unable to breast feed and biting me for weeks. A smoke inhalation scare at home during his first week. A yeast infection in his mouth/my breasts at Thanksgiving. Now a sinus something-or-other (into its fourth week) that makes it hard for him to breathe, waking him up every hour and half.

What I find myself in most of the time is just sheer awe. He is gorgeous. A big, active Gerber boy with blue eyes and a beatific smile. He's fat, fat, fat, with overstuffed sausages for arms and legs. He's long too, and very good-natured—especially considering the various challenges he's already faced. He adores me. He adores the world. There is nothing I'd rather do than this.

My sister Stephanie's presence the first several weeks saved us. I can't imagine what kind of distress we'd both be in if she hadn't been there—holding, walking, consoling, loving him up every minute, and then doing every possible job imaginable around the house, and finally reassuring me that I could do this. At two different points, I asked her if she thought I should give him up for adoption—"he is so perfect and I am so flawed." It was an astonishing place to get to in myself—and no one was more surprised than Steph to have to give me reassurance on that level.

Now, I will do anything short of murder to keep him, keep us together, to make a path for him that is safe and sure. He is an inexplicable gift, and I am working hard every day to be present for him, with him—despite sleep deprivation and whatever other nagging stresses. This is my life now, and I am one lucky dyke to have it thus.