

The Lilly and the Rose

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Highlights & overview of story (starting at chapter two) and its ending

Lilly starts to push and initially makes normal progress until Brian lets the cat out of the bag and tells her father is on the way and will be, unbidden, at their house on a few hours. Lilly is horrified and her labor immediately stalls and her progress stops. The contractions become mild and far spaced as she keeps obsessing on her troubled relationship with her dad, the power disparities between them, as he continues to treat her like a little girl far into her adult life.

The mental picture of him walking in on her while she is pushing the baby out is the straw that breaks the camel's back and temporarily derailed her labor. If labor had continued as before, the baby would have been born in an hour or two at the most, which would have been many hours before Dr Sellers was scheduled to arrive. Unfortunately for her, this incident caused Lilly to "fall off the 'horse'" so to speak, at a critical time in the labor.

The next phase of the story is a period of cliff hanging but not one that introduces any actual physical danger – just the possibility that she might need to go to hospital, which would be a disappointment. Considering the personal dynamics with her father, this would seem like he'd "won", that is, dominated her experience and critically influenced her birth without even being in the same state. Nobody wants that to happen, but also it's clear that the basic safety of mother and baby out-trump any of these psychological and social issues.

During this sharp right turn away from the goal, the midwives have a chance to employ a host of midwifery strategies and "tricks" to get things back on track again, which also

allows the reader to be informed about midwifery practice and physiological management when applied to a temporary problem area. During this phase, there is a phone conversation between Rosanna and her midwifery mentor, who she calls to consult with. This stage of the story also includes the intermittent use of a small battery-powered EFM, to help the midwives evaluate and document the status of the baby and to make a record for the hospital, should they ultimately be required to transfer Lilly in before the birth.

This angle also sparks a revelatory conversation among all the participants about the relationship between the community-based midwives and the local obstetrician who has agreed to provide care to Lilly if it becomes necessary. She also talks about the supplies and specialized equipment that she routinely carries to deal with medical emergencies, and the wisdom of only using these devices when actually needed – not just for show or to protect herself from legal liability.

Interwoven in this part of the story are one-on-one conversations between Sarah and Rosanna and Rebecca and Rosanna. This includes a flashback to the earliest part of labor, when Sarah and Rebecca each wanted to talk about their own problematic experiences with childbirth. Both doubted that Lilly would be able to have her baby without massive quantities of medical “help” and were worried that the idea of a planned home birth was foolish and maybe even dangerous. This gives Rosanna an opportunity to explain about other aspects of physiologically-based childbirth and to address the big **existential** question of how midwives achieve equally good or better outcomes *without* recourse to powerful restricted drugs, obstetrical instruments, surgical interventions or other hospital-based resources.

While all this is going on the UPS truck bring the deep water birth tub and Brian sets it up and begins to fill it with water. About this time, Lilly’s labor turns the corner and she gets back on the horse. It becomes clear that everything has righted itself and yes, they will be having a normal birth at home. She gets into the tub and is relieved, amazed and happy for the first time in many hours.

During this whole span of time, there have been several phone conversations between Rosanna and Tomas, who first called her from the airport on the East Coast, then from the plane, then after he landed at SFO and after the limo driver picked him up and was driving him from the airport to Lilly's house several hours away in northern California.

During this time, Dr Sellers, whom Rosanna eventually insists on calling by his first name (Tomas), grudgingly becomes more friendly. One of the reasons is the Tomas/Dr Sellers called one of his OB friends to belly ache about the 'midwife problem'. In the course of that conversation his OB doc lets it slip that the issue isn't really safety, that midwives actually have a better perinatal and maternal mortality and morbidity rate for healthy women than hospital-based obstetrics.

The scare tactics doctors use are a political strategy in the effort by organized medicine to block the economic competitions and to "kill the messenger". The obstetrical profession/organized medicine doesn't want people to know that all those expensive toys and high-priced professionals don't really improve outcomes for a healthy population and aren't really biologically necessary (Rosanna would say "*or safe!*"). It's just "business as usual", which is pretty lucrative, and cover-your-ass malpractice protection.

This changes Dr Sellers relationship with the issue of the planned home birth (or 'birth in a barn' as he thought of it). As the birth approaches, Dr. Sellers begins to listen on the phone to the unmistakable sounds of the impending birth and become "hooked" – doesn't want Rosanna to hang up because he wants to stay connected to Lilly and the birth of his first grandchild.

With Lilly's permission Brian snaps a few pictures with his cell phone camera and sends them off to Dr Sellers. Then Brian turns on the Apple computer (with Lilly's consent) and points the i-Sight camera at the general scene from a discrete and non-crotch revealing angle. The streaming video is sent to www.normalbirth.org, where doctor-daddy watches the final 30 minutes of the labor live on the Internet connected computer in back seat of the limo as he is being driven north.

Just before the baby is born, Ellen, the other midwife, tells him to have the driver pull over and so he can watch the birth without the distraction of a moving car. During this phase of the story, the limo driver gets engaged in the emotional impact of these unfolding events and reveals that he is actually an MD / general practitioners who is a political refugee from Iran.

While they are sitting in the limo and awaiting the birth of the baby, the limo driver starts to talk to Dr Sellers about his distress with American obstetrics. The history of his extended family was no CS for last 50 years till his daughters, who have only lived in the US for 10 years, gave birth here and all wound up with complicated forceps deliveries or a C-section. The driver laments that he didn't know about midwives and staying out of the hospital when his daughters were having their babies. He tells Dr Sellers that he's lucky that his daughter stood up for herself.

Then the baby is born in the deep water tub as Ellen takes pictures with her cell phone camera and Dr Sellers, in spite of his tough, eat you for lunch exterior, gets emotionally overwhelmed and really become just a nice new proud grandfather.

Then it is revealed to everyone inside the house that the place Lilly's father pulled "off the road" was in front of Lilly and Brian's home. In recognition of Lilly right to have her privacy and out of respect for the psychological aspects of her birth, he voluntarily abstained from coming in until the baby was born and he was invited.

Of course, when Lilly finds out that her dad is right outside, she is delighted and wants him to come in and see the baby. Dr Sellers becomes just Lilly's "dad" again and tells Lilly how proud he is of her for standing up to him and for doing such a splendid job of giving him this little bundle of joy.

After properly meeting and greeting the new baby and socializing all around, dad steps into the kitchen so Lilly can be gotten out of the tub and cared for by Ellen, the other

midwife. Rosanna follows Tomas into the kitchen and offer to make him coffee for him. They sit down at the kitchen table and talk while he drinks a cup of coffee and she has a cup of tea. They have a mutually enjoyable and satisfying conversation in which there is a meeting of the minds and mutual respect of one another.

Epilogue Day 1 and Day 2

Rosanna makes a postpartum/neonatal house call on Day 1 and Day 2 after the birth and develops an increasingly friendly relationship with Tomas (maybe he is a widower?? – next book??), but for sure Dr Sellers becomes more deeply informed and won over. He offers to speak out in support of physiologically-based maternity care and planned home birth.

The story ends when the Rosanna gets paged and has to bid them adieu at their front door. She drives down the lane in her zippy little VW Beetle on a sunny and beautiful afternoon, (trees and birds, etc) to attend to another laboring mom and the cycle starts again.