

BIRTHRIGHTS...and WRONGS

A short play

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CAST OF CHARACTERS:

GREGG:	30 something; expectant father	M
PAM:	50 something, expectant grandmother	F

PLACE:

Waiting room in a maternity wing.

TIME:

Any

SYNOPSIS:

Two unrelated people. Two babies waiting to be born. A friendship is developed between two strangers.

Ambient hospital noises. Pam, on her phone, sits in the waiting room near the maternity ward. Gregg enters in a paper hospital gown, hat and mask. He's in a mad rush, yelling at himself and pacing...

GREGG

Oh geez. Oh my god. Oh god! (Beat)

PAM

Uh...hi.

GREGG

Oh sorry. Sorry. Didn't see you.

PAM

You okay?

GREGG

Yeah. No! I couldn't stand it. She's in such pain. I...

PAM

It's a hard job.

GREGG

I know but...I mean all those classes...I didn't expect this. She's always under control. Stoic. But this...I couldn't stay. I just couldn't.

PAM

She'll be fine. With everyone in the room. They'll talk her through it.

GREGG

She's alone. I mean there are nurses and everything, but my mother and sister couldn't get here. (Beat) She'll never forgive me.

PAM

She's lucky to have you. At least you tried.

GREGG

I did but...

PAM

She'll let it all go when the baby comes.

2. Birthrights...and Wrongs

GREGG

Doubt it. Cherilyn's mother died last month and she's been counting on my mother, my sister and me. Oh god. She yelled at me the whole time she was pushing. That it was my fault she was going through this...that I wanted this baby. As I left the room, she said "I curse you, Gregg".

PAM

Can I get you some coffee?

GREGG

Thanks, no. I'm already on edge.

PAM

I've never seen a live birth.

GREGG

Oh...

PAM

Always wanted to...since forever. I used to watch one of those shows that showed a live birth every episode. Loved it.

GREGG

Um...so...I mean...why're you here?

PAM

My daughter-in-law is in labor. First grandchild.

GREGG

Is she close?

PAM

Don't know.

GREGG

You better go in. You don't want to miss this.

PAM

...I'm not invited.

GREGG

That's...awful. It's such a moment.

3. Birthrights...and Wrongs

PAM

Says the man in the waiting room!

GREGG

I know. I'm such a wuss. But, her screams. I hope she never yells at me like that again!

PAM

Funny.

GREGG

Why're you not...you know...

PAM

Allowed? She's kind of prissy. Doesn't want me to see her private parts, as she called them. I said I could stand up near your head, but no...

GREGG

Who am I to talk? I ran out the minute she started screaming.

PAM

Why don't you go back in. It couldn't be that bad.

GREGG

A banshee. My gentle, sophisticated wife sounded like someone was killing her.

PAM

Is it a boy or a girl?

GREGG

Don't know. We didn't want to find out.

PAM

Got names picked out?

GREGG

Almost. We're still deciding.

PAM

Mine's a boy...I mean my son's having a boy. They're calling him Jaxson. With an X. So silly to screw up a good name like that. But nobody asked me. I mean, why couldn't they pick an easy name like mine: Pam.

GREGG

Call your grandson Pam?

4. Birthrights...and Wrongs

PAM

You know what I mean.

GREGG

I think ours will be Sharon after her mother, or Corbin if it's a boy.

PAM

Nice names. I especially like Corwin.

GREGG

Corbin, with a B.

PAM

Still nice. Why don't you go back in. Give her some company.

GREGG

Not if she's still in agony. (Beat) Thanks for talking to me.

PAM

It makes the time pass. So thanks to you, too.

GREGG

She's so beautiful, my wife. And she's gone through so much.

PAM

That's why you should be there for her.

GREGG

I'm afraid. I'm stinking afraid.

PAM

Of what?

GREGG

She lost our daughter last year. Around this time.

PAM

Ugh...I'm so sorry. Did she have a tough time with her...your first?

GREGG

We never really...too difficult to talk about.

PAM

Yeah...

5. Birthrights...and Wrongs

GREGG

So this is supposed to be our rainbow baby. Not to take our little girl's place...but to help us remember her.

PAM

Did she have a miscarriage?

GREGG

No. Almost full-term. The cord was around her neck, and she...

PAM

Couldn't breathe. Yeah. So you went through that birth though...

GREGG

No. Her water broke early. I was out of town on business. Couldn't get a flight. So she-

PAM

Had to do it on her own. You read about these things, but...

GREGG

You don't think it'll happen to you. That's why I want to support her...to be there...but...

Silence.

GREGG (CON'T)

What's the real reason you aren't in there?

PAM

You go for the jugular don't you.

GREGG

Sorry.

PAM

She's punishing me.

GREGG

You been doing the monster-in-law thing.

6. Birthrights...and Wrongs

PAM

I didn't think she was good enough for him. Never finished college. Still owes a fortune on student loans. Now she wants to go back to school. And I'm like, who's going to take care of the baby?

GREGG

Stuck your nose in.

PAM

Big time. I should never have said anything to Bobby about how I felt. She's his wife...they talk.

GREGG

But you opened your mouth. It's hard sometimes...to keep...to zip it when you don't like something.

PAM

The thing is, she's smart. Just wasted a bunch of years not taking life seriously. And because I said something once, she's always assuming the worst of whatever I say. (Beat) Did you get along with your mother-in-law?

GREGG

I did. She really appreciated me. The fact that I took on Cherilyn's loans when we married. Then put her through school. She's a teacher now. First grade. The kids love her.

PAM

Wish I'd done that. Well, not put her through school, but kept my thoughts to myself.

GREGG

It's not too late.

PAM

I hope not. Bobby's my only...

GREGG

You've got some mending to do.

PAM

I do. (Beat). How come you took her on with her student loans and everything?

GREGG

It's what you do when you feel it's right. When you couldn't imagine it any other way.

7. Birthrights...and Wrongs

PAM

I think my Bobby felt that way.

GREGG

What if you supported her...I mean...helping with child care or whatever, so she has something other than motherhood in her future.

PAM

Your mother do that?

GREGG

She doesn't live that close. But she's helping...hiring a part time nanny.

PAM

Bobby's old room would be perfect for a part time nursery.

GREGG

That's good. Give her a break for a few hours. Also, encourage her to start taking one class.

PAM

When Bobby was born, I thought my life had ended. Suddenly I had none. I remember the first time I held him thinking: what have I done! And I wanted him. We wanted him. But the life you know is suddenly gone. And everything revolves around the baby. Even your private life shifts. Not that I didn't love my husband, but...I guess that's the nature of it.

GREGG

We went through that. And she didn't even have our baby girl to cuddle. We worked it out, but it took time.

PAM

I've got to be there for her...Carrie...that's her name. She'll need me whether she knows it or not.

GREGG

Right.

PAM

You should go back in...give it another try.

GREGG

I should. (Beat). Would you come in with me?

8. Birthrights...and Wrongs

PAM

I don't think so. She wouldn't want a stranger in the room.

GREGG

You're not. You're my...friend.

PAM

I don't know.

GREGG

You could watch our baby being born...I know it's not yours but...

PAM

Yeah, that...

GREGG

You'll regret it if...

PAM

Um...if you think so, but make sure it's okay...

GREGG

Right. Don't move. Be right back.

Pam's phone rings.

PAM

Bobby? Oh, how wonderful...I'm so happy for you...I'll bet he is...

Gregg rushes back in with a gown and a mask.

GREGG

She said if *I* was there, I could bring in Attila the Hun if I wanted. Come on, she's crowning big time.

Pam into the phone.

PAM

Be there in a minute. I've got to meet a little someone first. Tell you later. Give my love to Carrie.

She ends the call and starts to dress.

PAM (CON'T)

Let's go.

9. Birthrights...and Wrongs

She stops as she dresses in the gown.

PAM (CON'T)

Thank you for this. I can't tell you how I always...It's such a miracle.

GREGG

Move it. I don't want to miss this miracle.

PAM

Bet...boy or girl?

As they rush out of the waiting room...

GREGG

Cherilyn, meet Attila.

PAM

I'm so happy to be here. Whoa, that's one big head!

CURTAIN