

Cobwebs

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I am filled with cobwebs. Doctors tell me that they are adhesions. They can call them what they want, but I've seen the grainy images that look like patterns of silken threads surrounding and binding my insides.

A tiny little being did this to me long ago. It settled in a warm tunnel and grew and grew until it and the tunnel exploded into a million pieces and created a dramatic scene. I lay on a bathroom floor wondering why the voices on the other side of the door were shouting, "unlock the door!" over and over. I was colder than I'd ever been and, for a moment, I wondered if I was lost in a snow-storm. Then the banging of fists and suddenly I was on a gurney being wheeled through the hallway of the school where I worked. I told myself not to swear out loud — not in front of the kids. When the ambulance doors closed, I wanted sirens to carry my screams out into the world.

Like a wounded bird, I watched from a corner near the ceiling as doctors frantically tried to figure out what happened. Hands and cold instruments probed as I bled. I heard the keening of an animal and felt sad for whatever was suffering. And then everything stopped. As I looked down from my perch, I heard someone say, "no pulse, no blood pressure." All I could think was "leave me alone, let me go," and I felt relief — but they wouldn't and so I am still here.

Something must have survived. Something that can spin a web so strong that nothing can affect it. I run and I jump and I swim and I stretch, and yet the cobwebs draw tighter. That something that survived must be tough, tougher than I am. I sulk and I cry and I rage but to no avail — the cobwebs will not give. They look so fragile, so delicate, and yet their strength defies my efforts to diminish their power.

When it was gone, I thought I should die. What good was I when I couldn't even protect it? Why couldn't I keep it safe so that it would grow in the right place and turn into



what it was supposed to turn into? And what good were all the tests and procedures and medications — the marvels of modern medical science that I endured at the infertility clinic? They'd waved goodbye after a year — I was not one of the success stories and, in their disappointment, they suggested that perhaps if I just put it out of my mind, magic would occur. I suppose they were right. Magic, although short-lived, did occur.

Sometimes, just for a moment, I will forget. And I will think "I am okay, I am at peace" and then the cobwebs pull and burn and wake me in the night like a harsh whisper urging me to pay attention. What do they want me to pay attention to?

I remember the first sweet moments after discovering I was pregnant and that we had a bit of time — sitting on the hot soil in the garden talking into its hiding place, telling it how much fun we would have and telling it how lucky I felt. And I imagined what it would become: "You will be brave and kind and happy. You are a miracle. I wished on a star for you." A memory filled with hope and growth and a fully realized future child — not with my brown eyes or his thick hair or my sense of

humour or his intelligence — rather, its own unique and splendid self. Such reaching for completion in the blink of an eye.

Is that why I am filled with cobwebs? Are they protecting something? Something that couldn't be hurled into the abyss by a misadventure? Something that shelters me in the gloom between darkness and dawn when I wake, yet again, and think: Go away pain. Unspin the cobwebs and leave me in peace. Unspin me back.

But I can't go back; I can only decide to crumble or carry on. And the something that was left behind stays hidden in the unbreakable silk of the cobwebs. I sleep knowing the cobwebs may awaken me sometimes with a sigh and sometimes with a howl, but always with the reminder that once upon a time, a tiny little being fluttered and grew. So, when I wake, instead of heeding the pain, I will welcome the memory and say: Ah, there you are.

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This article has been peer reviewed.

This is a true story.