

The Madonna

Category: Loss

written by Amy S. Fox | August 4, 2025

They must have given me something for sleep. My last memory was Madonnas, filled with tears in their eyes. Madonnas?

When I awoke, the lights were out and the door was closed. I could hear voices in the hallway but couldn't make out what they were saying. I could feel my naked skin as it rubbed against the scratchy sheets. I started to get out of the bed, but I discovered that I was restrained by the side rails.

As my eyes acclimated to the darkness, I could make out the time on my watch, 6:00 a.m. I realized that the voices I heard were the nurses on their morning rounds: giving out meds and taking vital signs. As I tried to lower the side rails, I had a feeling of being overwhelmed, and my eyes filled with tears. I somehow managed to get out of bed, and I realized I was wearing a hospital gown, open in the back. I made my way to the door, and when I got there, I saw it: the Madonna.

A Madonna card was pasted to my door as a sign for all to keep away. My pain was too much to bear: too much for me and too much for anyone else.

In the delivery room, they had let me hold him and look into his beautifully formed face. I touched his black, curly hair. His hair was just like mine. My husband held my hand and with the baby in my arms we formed the family unit that would exist only in our dreams.

The staff kept away. They offered no words of comfort. No kind social worker showed up and no one examined me. Just a nurse whispering hours later, "You can go home whenever you're ready. Your clothes are in the closet." No guidance or follow up care, just an exhausted husband in a waiting room where we were unwelcome visitors to their once hopeful maternity ward.

Thirty-five years later I return to that room often. Our son was named Raphael, the angel of healing. My heart, just like Madonna's, has yet to heal.

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