



delivering
HOPE

LIFE'S MOST *unexpected turns* CAN SOMETIMES
PRODUCE THE *greatest joys.*

a novel

JENNIFER ANN HOLT

© 2012 Jennifer Ann Holt
All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form whatsoever, whether by graphic, visual, electronic, film, microfilm, tape recording, or any other means, without prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief passages embodied in critical reviews and articles.

This is a work of fiction. The characters, names, incidents, places, and dialogue are products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real.

ISBN 13:978-1-59955-902-5

Published by Bonneville Books, an imprint of Cedar Fort, Inc.
2373 W 700 S., Springville, UT 84663
Distributed by Cedar Fort, Inc., www.cedarfort.com

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Holt, Jennifer (Jennifer Ann), 1977-
Delivering Hope / Jennifer Holt.
pages cm

Summary: A woman unable to have a baby yearns to have children, and an unwed mother chooses to put her baby up for adoption.

ISBN 978-1-59955-902-5 (alk. paper)

1. Adoption--Fiction. 2. Adoptive parents--Fiction. 3. Birthparents--Fiction. 4. Man-woman relationships--Fiction. 5. Christian fiction. 6. Domestic fiction, American. I. Title.

PS3608.O4943593D45 2012
813'.6--DC23

2011042269

Cover design by Angela D. Olsen
Cover design © 2012 by Lyle Mortimer
Edited and typeset by Emily S. Chambers

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Book One Olivia

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Book Two Allison

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Book Three Hope

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Author's Note

Acknowledgements

About the Author

Book One

OLIVIA

CHAPTER ONE



Olivia's hands were shaking as she opened the small, pink box containing the pregnancy test. She carefully unfolded the instructions, which she read every single time she was about to use one of these sticks. The familiar words raced through her mind without really registering, but she knew the important parts by heart. Accurate up to five days before your period, and then, the appearance of one line is a negative result, the appearance of two lines is a positive result. She took a deep breath, closed her eyes, and whispered, "Here it goes."

After placing the test stick face up on the counter and flushing the toilet, Olivia looked around her bathroom, studying the tiny purple flowers on her shower curtain and that place in the corner where the warm tan paint she had applied to the wall slightly overlapped the white baseboard. She noticed that they were running low on shampoo and that she needed to get a new bar of soap from the closet in the hall. She consciously kept her gaze away from the small piece of plastic lying on the corner of her counter while the required three minutes seemed to drag on for thirty. She checked her watch. Nope. One minute left to go. She knew if she glanced at the test, she would be able to get an idea of what the results were, since the lines would already be forming. Instead, Olivia directed her eyes to the laundry hamper and made a mental note that she would need to wash a load of whites today.

One more peek at her watch told Olivia that the time was up. She could check the results. Her heart was racing, and her palms had become wet and sticky. She chided herself for getting so worked up. The results would be whatever they were, and she could not do anything about them now. Olivia did not realize that she was holding her breath as she reached over, gripped the test stick in her hand, and looked down. One line. Negative. She was not pregnant.

Olivia felt the air rush from her lungs as though she had been hit right in the belly. She dropped the stick with a little clatter on the tile floor and braced herself against the vanity cabinets as she slid down to sit on the plush bathroom rug. Olivia propped her elbows on her knees and buried her face in her hands. The tears came as they always did. Slowly at first, as the results of the pregnancy test sank in, then harder and harder until the sobs were bursting, uncontrolled, from her chest. She let herself have a good, hard cry, then rubbed her eyes in anger and frustration when the tears stopped coming and her eyes began to burn.

Partly, Olivia was angry with herself. Angry that she had let her hopes build up once again. Frustrated that the news was still affecting her in this way. This was, after all, the twelfth pregnancy test she had taken in as many months. Every month she told herself that she was *not* going to buy another test. She would just wait and let nature tell her whether she was pregnant or not, but the “not knowing” was almost as unbearable as finding out she wasn’t.

Olivia also had to admit that she was getting frustrated with Heavenly Father. Having a family was her greatest desire, and she could not understand why that blessing was being withheld. Before her mind could wander too far in that direction, there was a soft knock on the bathroom door.

“Livvy, are you okay? I’ve got to leave or I’ll be late for work.” It was Michael. This was the part Olivia dreaded most of all. Michael wanted a child as much as she did, and it broke her heart to have to tell him month after month after month that there was still no baby on the way. She stood up and splashed a little cool water on her face. After a quick pat dry, she opened the door.

Before Olivia could even open her mouth, Michael knew. Her big blue eyes were not bright and vibrant as usual; they were darker—almost gray—

a sure sign that she had been crying. She gave a nearly imperceptible shake of her head and attempted to shrug off the ache in her heart.

Michael tried to hide the disappointment that rushed through him. He knew that Livvy needed him to be strong right now. He opened his arms and said, “Oh, Livvy, I’m so sorry!”

As she buried her head in his shoulder and the tears started flowing again, she whispered, “Me too, Michael. Me too.”



Michael drove until he knew that Livvy would not be able to see him from the house. Then he pulled the car to the side of the road and put it in park. He had to gather his thoughts and get his emotions in control before he could go to work. Michael was at a loss, a complete loss. He had never felt so helpless or hopeless in his entire life.

It had been over two years now that they had been trying to get pregnant. Twenty-seven long months, to be exact. And for every one of those months he’d had to look into the eyes of the woman who meant everything to him and see the hurt and disappointment and sadness that threatened to engulf her. Of course, he wanted a child too. He wanted one so badly that his heart physically seemed to ache, but even more than that, he wanted Livvy to be happy again. He thought back to their wedding day and the sparkle that had been in her eyes as they knelt across the altar of the temple to be sealed together as husband and wife for time and all eternity.

He smiled momentarily at the memory, and then Michael’s brow furrowed as he remembered something having been said about “multiply and replenish the earth.” Apparently that was easier said than done. No one ever talked about the “what ifs.” What if you and your wife couldn’t conceive? What if your wife cried every single month? What if you tried to find words to comfort her, but they all seemed hollow and meaningless compared to her pain? What if you sought out the best doctors and tried everything in your power, and nothing changed? What if he could never fix this? What if that sparkle never made its way back to Livvy’s beautiful blue eyes? What if...

Michael stopped and took a deep breath. Tears had sprung to his eyes and his chest was pounding. Clearly, this train of thought was not going to help him calm down. He just needed to do what he had been doing for the past two years. He needed to be strong and he needed to be supportive. He needed to push his own pain aside and focus on helping Livvy. Then maybe, just maybe, they could find a way through this together. That was the only thing he knew to do right now. Michael rubbed his forearm across his face to remove any evidence of tears and then slammed the car into drive, took one last deep breath, and headed off to work.



Olivia watched from the window as Michael backed the car out of the garage and headed down the street. Once he was gone, she tried to focus on what needed to be done that day. She remembered the load of whites from the bathroom and made her way upstairs so she could get the laundry started. As she bent over to pick up the laundry basket, her eyes inadvertently found the plastic pregnancy test lying on the floor where she had dropped it. She picked it up and threw it into the trash can with all the force she could muster. The action cracked her carefully formed composure, and she moved quickly to her bed and dropped to her knees. She pounded her fists on the green bedspread and screamed, “It’s NOT fair! It’s NOT fair! It’s NOT fair!” Olivia looked heavenward and, for the first time, allowed all of her frustrations to fully form in her mind and on her lips.

“Heavenly Father, I’ve always been taught that if I did what was right, if I followed the commandments, I would be blessed. Why are you withholding this, of all things, from me? What did I do that makes me unworthy to be a mom? What is it that would be beyond my capabilities that every other woman on earth seems to be able to do? It’s NOT fair!” Olivia knew that she sounded like a spoiled child, but in that moment she just didn’t care. She had always done what was right. She had always done what was expected of her. For what? If she was not going to be able to have a family, what was it all for?

Growing up, Olivia had always been taught that being a mother was the most important role that a woman could ever have in this life, and she believed that it was true. More important, having children was what Olivia

had dreamed about for as long as she could remember. When she was in Primary, Olivia had stood up in the Mother's Day sacrament meeting program with several other girls holding dolls wrapped in blankets and had sung about growing up and becoming a mother. Even at the young age of nine, those words had touched Olivia's heart, and she knew that she was meant to be a mom. In the sixth grade, when she was supposed to write a report on what job she wanted when she grew up, Olivia wrote about motherhood and the challenges and responsibilities that a mom has.

As she progressed through the Young Women program, lesson after lesson taught the importance of motherhood and the need to prepare for that most sacred calling. Olivia couldn't wait. She couldn't wait for the little boys who looked like the man she loved, and the little girls with the same golden brown hair and big, blue eyes that Olivia's parents found so endearing. She couldn't wait for the joy and happiness that each child would add to their family. Now, all that had been ripped away from her, and to make everything worse, week after week after week she attended Relief Society, and all she heard was "children, children, children." Last week she'd wanted to yell, "What about me? Where do I fit in? Is there room in this church for a woman who may never be a mom?"

They had been seriously trying to get pregnant for over two years now, and Olivia didn't know what to do. They had started working with Dr. Collins nine months ago, but nothing had come of it so far. Michael had given her countless blessings, and Olivia always hoped to hear a blessing of healing pronounced on her body so that she could give him the child that she knew he wanted as badly as she did. But that pronouncement never came. The blessings were mostly of comfort and reminding her to continue in faith. *That's all well and good*, Olivia thought, *but faith is not going to conjure up a baby.*

These thoughts felt a little like mutiny, and while part of Olivia relished the feeling of freedom, she mostly felt guilty. *After all, I have a wonderful husband. We have a roof over our heads and plenty to eat. We live in a time and place of abundance...but what good is all of that if I don't have a family to share it with?* As Olivia allowed herself to indulge in her feelings of anger and resentment, she crawled up into her bed and cried until she fell back to sleep.



The first time that Olivia saw Michael was while she was playing basketball inside the Smith Fieldhouse at Brigham Young University. It was fall semester of her senior year, and Olivia was, at the moment, involved in an intense game of intramural coed basketball. Normally while she was playing, she didn't notice anyone or anything that was going on off the court, but as the tall, dark-haired man strolled through the door, something about him caught her eye. He was good-looking, but it was more than that. As she tried to figure out what it was that made her notice him, Olivia realized—a split second too late—that the ball was coming her way at a very high speed. The next thing Olivia knew, her eyes were filled with tears and her nose was throbbing where the basketball had hit her. Olivia's best friend and teammate, Heather, came running over as the referee called for a time out. Heather's face was pretty serious as she surveyed Olivia's and then broke into a grin as she teased, "You're supposed to catch the ball, not kiss it."

"Thanks a lot. I'll try to remember that," Olivia groaned. "Is it bleeding?"

"Yep. You better go take care of it. We'll try to survive without you."

"Whatever."

Olivia and Heather were both laughing as Olivia jogged off the court and out the door to the indoor track that surrounded the gym, trying to catch the blood that was dripping from her nose as she went. The drinking fountain was closer than the bathroom, and Olivia's hand was getting pretty full of blood, so she stopped there to rinse the blood off her hand. Then she filled her palm with water and tried to wipe off her face. She was just wishing that she had thought to grab a towel off the bench before she left the gym when Olivia felt someone walk up behind her. "I thought maybe you could use this." The voice was clear and strong, and Olivia turned around to find herself face-to-face with the dark-haired man who had distracted her in the first place. He was holding out a towel, which she gratefully took, and mopped at her nose and face, trying to clean all of the blood away.

He took a step back and watched as she pinched her nostrils in an effort to stem the flow of blood. She had beautiful, curly brown hair that was pulled back in a ponytail. It was not as dark as his own hair, more the color of a perfectly roasted marshmallow. There were several errant strands that had worked themselves loose from the rubber band, and she kept pushing them away from her face with her free hand. When they stood side by side, he realized that she was taller than he had initially thought, being only a few inches shorter than his own height of six feet. She moved with the ease of an athlete, and aside from her efforts to clean her face, the fact that a basketball had just smashed into her nose didn't seem to phase her. He liked her at once.

When it appeared that the girl had the bleeding under control and her face was mostly clean, he stepped forward again. "Hi. My name's Michael." For the first time, Olivia looked at the man squarely in the face and realized that it was his eyes that made him stand out. Not necessarily the color—although she liked the deep, dark brown—but the twinkle in them. Here was someone who was truly happy, someone who loved life and wanted to make the most out of it. He carried himself like he was at ease in his own skin, like he was at peace. She liked him.

"Nice to meet you, Michael. I'm Olivia."

The two of them returned to the gym, where the game was just winding down. As it turned out, Michael had graduated several years earlier and was the football coach and biology teacher at a nearby high school. He was at the Fieldhouse to visit with one of his former professors about some new training activities he was thinking about using, and he had decided that it might be fun to watch the basketball games for a few minutes. After the final buzzer sounded, Heather and her husband, Greg, made their way over to the bleachers where Olivia and Michael were sitting.

"Is this a friend of yours?" Heather asked in a tone of mock innocence. Greg elbowed her and muttered that it was none of their business, but he grinned and gave a sly wink to the pair.

As Olivia felt her cheeks flush, Michael stepped up and reached out to shake Greg's hand. "I'm Michael Spencer, and if I have anything to say about it, Livvy and I will become great friends." Heather raised an eyebrow at Olivia. She had never heard anyone call her "Livvy" before. Olivia snuck a peek at Michael, *he was so...so, what?* she asked herself. *Confident?*

Relaxed? Handsome? Whatever it was about Michael, it just felt right that he had called her “Livvy.” She smiled at Heather and shrugged. Greg ignored their exchange. “Well, any friend of Olivia’s is a friend of ours,” he replied with a warm handshake. “Now, who wants pizza?”



Olivia and Michael had been seeing each other for several weeks when he planned a special evening in Provo Canyon. He had been talking about it for three days, and Olivia knew he was very excited about it. They were only thirty minutes into the date when an unexpected thunderstorm effectively extinguished the charcoal that was cooking their dutch oven dinner. Michael laughed as they were running back to his old truck, and he hollered over the booming thunder, “I guess it’s time for Plan B.” As it turned out, “Plan B” was to hurry back to his house and try to finish cooking the chicken and potatoes in Michael’s oven.

They were halfway down the canyon when a flat tire deflated Plan B. Olivia waited for some frustration to show. She knew from watching him coach that when Michael put a plan together, he expected it to succeed. Instead, Michael grinned and said, “Well, a little rain never hurt anyone,” and they jumped out of the truck while he changed the tire in the rain and the mud. It was there, on the side of the road—when Michael crawled out from under the truck covered in mud, his dark hair wet and dripping, with a smile on his face—that Olivia began to fall in love.

When he looked at her and saw her wide blue eyes laughing at him, his smile broadened and he reached around her waist and pulled her close. “Livvy, you’re really something special, you know that?” Being this close to him made her heart pound—or was that the thunder?

“You’re getting me all muddy,” she said grinning.

“I know,” was all he said. Then Michael slowly reached up and touched her cheek. She closed her eyes and leaned closer, feeling the rain land on her hair, her face, her lips. That’s when he kissed her for the first time, and Olivia knew that Michael would be the only man she would ever kiss from now on.



Olivia felt the sun streaming onto her face before she opened her eyes. She knew that it must be close to noon for the sun to be shining through her bedroom window. She groaned and rolled over. She just didn't want to face the day. She felt exhausted from finally vocalizing the feelings that floated around the edge of her mind and was glad that nobody had heard her outburst. Her mind told her that she was being irrational, but her heart told her it didn't matter. Whether it was true or not, Olivia believed that Heavenly Father was letting her down. She was upholding her end of the bargain, being a "good girl" and all, yet she was not allowed to have the one thing she wanted most of all.

The telephone rang and interrupted her thoughts. It was her boss.

"Shelly is sick. Can you please cover the rest of her shift?"

"Sure, I'll be right in," Olivia said before hanging up the phone. Olivia was a nurse in the local emergency room, and while she enjoyed her job, it was not what she envisioned for herself. She thought back to the day of her graduation from BYU almost three years earlier. She had been so pleased with the achievement of graduating with her nursing degree. She scanned the sea of faces in the crowd until she found Michael's beaming up at her next to her mom and dad. She remembered how it had felt to look at him then. They would be married in two weeks, and the thought of becoming his wife left her breathless.

The wedding and reception were beautiful—even better than she had hoped. She thought, with a sad smile, of the discussion she and Heather had before the reception started. Heather was still trying to persuade Olivia that a woman who was seven months pregnant had no business being a matron of honor. "Besides," Heather had quipped, "this belly will make all the pictures look unbalanced." But Olivia would have none of it. She and Heather had been inseparable throughout their college years, and she wanted her best friend by her side.

"Children are what marriage is all about anyway," Olivia had scolded her. "If someone doesn't like the way the pictures look, well that's just too bad for them!"

Olivia had taken the job at the ER upon graduation for “something to do until I have a baby.” She didn’t realize it would take so long. To date, there had been twenty-seven months of chances for her to get pregnant, all of them failures. *At least I’m good at my job*, Olivia thought as she got dressed and headed out the door.



Olivia arrived at work and jumped right in. It actually felt good to be busy as she tried not to think about the pregnancy test from that morning. Time passed quickly, and Olivia had just finished assisting on stitching up a little girl’s chin when in walked Sister Ellis from her ward. Sister Ellis was in the Relief Society presidency, had six kids, and always seemed to be on the go. She was carrying her four-year-old son, Jace, who had jumped off the top of the slide in their backyard and landed with his arm at an odd angle. By the looks of it, it was broken. Jace was upset and in pain, so Olivia paid special attention to calming him during the X-rays and while his arm was being cast. By the end of his ER visit, Jace was smiling and proudly showing off his fluorescent orange cast to anyone who would look. As Olivia was walking them out of the exam room, Sister Ellis took Olivia by the arm and with her eyes shining said, “Thank you so much! You took such good care of him and were able to calm him down when I was too frazzled to be able to do it myself! You’re really great with kids. It’s too bad you’ve decided to pursue a career rather than have a family!” She gave Olivia’s arm a warm squeeze, smiled, and hurried out the door.

Olivia stood there in shock—at first too surprised to feel anything else. But then the realization of what Sister Ellis said sunk in, and Olivia had to run into the bathroom before the tears of anger, pain, and resentment poured from her eyes. *TOO BAD...I’VE DECIDED...* Olivia was shaking now and getting more upset by the moment. Sister Ellis was always making comments in Relief Society about the nobleness of motherhood and how a woman cannot be truly fulfilled until she has given birth to a child (preferably many children). Sister Ellis constantly annoyed and often hurt Olivia with these comments, but Olivia never dreamed that Sister Ellis would be so insensitive. Not to mention nosy and completely out of line! What business was it of hers anyway? How could she possibly know of the

countless hours, days, weeks, months, and years that the desire to have a family had burned in Olivia's heart?

Olivia forced her mind off that particular train of thought. She couldn't lose it here. She had to get back to work. After a few deep breaths and a little cool water, Olivia's mask of normalcy was back in place, and she stepped out of the bathroom and back into her charade of happiness.

CHAPTER TWO



Olivia woke up early. After lying in bed for twenty minutes, she still couldn't fall back asleep, so she got up and had a long, hot shower. She enjoyed the heat and the steam and tried to imagine that the nervous butterflies in her stomach were being washed down the drain with the soap bubbles. Today she would head to the doctor's office for their first try of artificial insemination. After trying various fertility pills and shots over the past nine months, and having no success in becoming pregnant in over two years, Olivia's doctor, Dr. Collins, felt that artificial insemination was the next step. She agreed. Olivia was eager to try something new, and she was excited at the idea that this might work. She had been taking hormone pills to ensure she would ovulate, and although they made her feel lousy, it would be worth it if she got pregnant. Besides, it was early spring. The season of new life. The timing felt serendipitous to Olivia. She smiled.

The ovulation test she had been taking each morning was positive yesterday, so she called and scheduled the appointment. Michael was going to meet her at the doctor's office on his lunch break, and make his "deposit" in a little plastic cup which the doctor would spin with whatever else, and then bring it back in a little tube to be "inserted" into Olivia. Not very romantic. Quite embarrassing. Definitely not the way Olivia had envisioned getting pregnant, but at this point, she didn't care how she got pregnant, only that she did get pregnant. She was praying and praying that this procedure would work. She had even taken the time to explain to Heavenly

Father why she deserved to be pregnant and what a great mother she would be. Together with Michael, she had prayed and fasted and asked their family members to join in. Surely this was going to work.

Olivia turned off the hot water and reached for a towel. She took her time drying off and picking out her favorite khaki slacks and light blue button-up shirt. She spent a few extra minutes getting the curls in her hair to fall just right, and she even made the effort to add eyeliner to her regular makeup routine. At least she could look nice when she went to the infertility clinic. Somehow that seemed important—like compensation. Being unable to get pregnant made Olivia feel less like a woman, less beautiful, on the inside. She wanted to make up for that on the outside.

She went downstairs and poured herself a bowl of cold cereal and waited for Michael to come down. He hurried down a while later, grabbing a granola bar on his way out the door. “Don’t forget. You have to be at the doctor’s office by 11:30,” Olivia reminded him as he blew by.

“I’ll be there, Livvy. Don’t worry.” He gave her a kiss on the top of her head and was gone. Olivia was hurt. She had been pondering this all morning, thinking that today could be the day she would get pregnant. This was a big deal! Apparently, Michael did not share her feelings.



Michael knew that Olivia was disappointed when he left. He heard her wake up early, then get in the shower after tossing and turning for a while. He could see her contemplative mood when she came out of the bathroom, and it was hard to miss the care with which she had dressed and gotten ready for the day. This was a big day for her. He just didn’t have the strength to get into a lengthy conversation about it again. Every time they had discussed artificial insemination, Livvy talked about it as a lifeline. This would save her. This would make her a mother.

Michael didn’t want to be pessimistic, but he wasn’t so sure. He didn’t want to talk about and encourage and convince Livvy that this was going to work only to see her even more heartbroken if it didn’t. Nor did he want to tell her to prepare to be disappointed. That definitely would not go over well. So, this morning he chose to avoid conversation altogether. He laid in bed much longer than necessary, even feigning sleep at times, and then ran

out the door with barely six words spoken. He was pretty sure he had handled the situation poorly, but he was flying blind on this one. He just didn't know what to do or say that would help Livvy.



Olivia felt like the clocks were running in slow motion all morning. She tried to stay busy around the house but kept finding herself watching the clock or just sitting and daydreaming about what pregnancy would be like. When it was finally time to leave and Olivia got in her car, a fresh batch of butterflies emerged in her stomach. They became faster and more eager to break free as she drove across town. When she parked her car at the infertility clinic, Olivia had to stop and take several big breaths to calm herself down. Her hands were shaking as the butterflies made their way to her lungs. They were making it difficult to breathe.

Olivia walked into the waiting room and started to relax a little. That was the obvious intent of the décor, with the soothing pastel colors on the walls and the cushy furniture that reminded her of her mom's living room. A large aquarium in the corner bubbled soothingly, and several pictures of babies were hung strategically throughout the room. Olivia checked in at the front desk, and the receptionist smiled at her and said, "Let me know when your husband arrives, Mrs. Spencer, and we'll get you right back."

Olivia smiled, nodded, and settled into one of the soft pink chairs. She picked up a magazine and flipped through, finding an article entitled "How to Combat Morning Sickness (and Win!)." She started reading, making mental notes of the remedies she would try once she became pregnant. Olivia had made up her mind. This procedure was going to work. In a matter of a few hours, she would be pregnant.

Michael walked through the glass doors and scanned the room until he found Olivia. He had decided to be more excited about the procedure for Livvy's sake, even though the doctor had told them there was only about a 10 to 20 percent chance of pregnancy each cycle. Olivia looked up from her magazine and saw Michael watching her. She waved him over and was glad to see that he was smiling. *Maybe he was just nervous. Maybe that's why he seemed distant this morning.* Michael gave her a peck on the cheek as he sat down next to her. "Are you ready?" he asked.

“Absolutely!” Olivia felt confident and happy. She thought she saw a flicker of doubt as Michael’s dark eyes grew momentarily darker, but then he smiled and squeezed her hand. Everything was going to be fine.



Separated from the soft colors and sounds of the waiting room, Olivia’s nerves were starting to reappear. The nurse led Michael to a private room and handed him a small plastic container. After a bit, he came out, cup in hand, and red in the face. The nurse took the cup and told them that things would be ready in about thirty minutes. After the longest twenty minutes that Olivia could remember, the nurse led them to a small, antiseptic room. Bright white tile and glistening stainless steel cupboards full of medical instruments did little to inspire tranquility. The fact that Olivia was sitting, half naked, on a narrow, cushioned table, covered up with what looked and felt like an oversized paper towel, extinguished any remaining calmness she had felt earlier. She could hear her heart pounding in her ears, her hands were shaking, and she was starting to sweat. She shifted her weight, and the paper covering the table crackled beneath her.

Michael was sitting in the lone chair in one corner of the room. He looked up and forced a bright smile. “It’s going to be okay, Livvy. Try to relax.” She took a deep breath and tried to release the growing anxiety. She knew there was nothing to worry about. The procedure itself was painless; she would only feel some minor discomfort. But what if it didn’t work? What if she didn’t get pregnant?

No. Olivia mentally scolded herself. *You’ve got to think positive. Just think positive and everything will be fine.* There was a knock on the door, and Dr. Collins opened it, followed by the same nurse from earlier. He greeted Michael, and they exchanged brief pleasantries that Olivia barely heard.

Dr. Collins turned to Olivia as he was pulling a pair of latex gloves onto his hands. He smiled a warm, comforting smile that was a little too practiced to be of any actual comfort and said, “Now, Olivia, just lie down and try to relax.”



Two weeks later, Michael opened the bathroom door to find Olivia gasping for breath as her sobs threatened to overtake her. The artificial insemination had failed. There would be no baby in nine months. He reached for her, wanting to take her in his arms, to tell her that everything would be okay, that they would keep trying until something worked, but the words caught in his throat. They just didn't ring true. What if there was never going to be a baby in their lives?

Olivia read the emotions as they flickered across his face, and when he took a step closer, she turned her back on him. A sucker punch to the gut would have hurt less. Michael closed the door as he walked out.

You've Just Finished your Free Sample

Enjoyed the preview?

Buy: <http://www.ebooks2go.com>