None Yet
by Wendy Jones

"How many children do you have?"

She asks the question innocently, never imagining the sorrow it will evoke. I sigh, wondering how to answer this time. In my heart, I know I cannot make her understand, for she is already a mother. She cannot be blamed for her naivété, for there was a time when I too believe in the fairy tale that all couples are able to bear children. But that was long ago.

As she patiently awaits my answer, my thoughts slowly drift back to a time when my husband and I believed we were going to become parents. Those days are shrouded in a haze, as though they never really happened. I remember that, even though the news took us by surprise, we were overjoyed. A baby! We were going to be parents. We immediately began making elaborate plans for the arrival of our child. Night after night we would lie awake and contemplate the future. Would we have a boy or a girl? What would we name him or her? Whose eyes would he or she have? We amused ourselves by browsing in baby stores, shaking rattles and gazing at tiny but costly baby sneakers. Those fleeting weeks we lived in a dream world.

We told everyone the joyous news. Our parents were as enthusiastic as we were. My mom proudly informed all of her friends that she was going to be a grandmother. My mother-in-law made sure I was taking care of myself appropriately. My father made plans to take his grandson (for he was certain the child would be a boy) to a Cleveland Browns game. Already he was searching local stores for baby Browns-wear. My father-in-law, not to be outdone, was searching for Pittsburgh Steeler clothes.

Then came that fateful morning when I awoke to painful cramping. We knew at once something was terribly wrong. My husband rushed me to the doctor’s office. There our worst fears were confirmed: we had lost our baby.

To add to my pain, my doctor nonchalantly asked, "Why the tears?" leaving me with a feeling of utter confusion. Was I wrong to mourn our loss?
In the coming months I experienced extreme emotional lows, intense grief, and an acute sense of emptiness and loss. There was no comfort, only misery. No one could speak words to make me feel better. Sentiments intended to bring comfort and reassurance instead brought anger.

Now, when I should have been pondering what our child’s name would be, I was instead asking questions for which there were no answers. Why me? What was wrong with me? Am I somehow defective? Will I ever be able to bear a child? What did I do to cause this?

As if searching to answers for my own questions weren’t enough, I was confronted with a barrage of well-meaning inquiries from friends and family. "Did you exercise too much?" "Did you ask the doctor why this happened?" "It must have been God’s will." One person even blurted, "What are you so upset about? You’re still young and you know you can get pregnant. Quit complaining!"

Even now, after much time has passed, the sorrow lingers. I am painfully aware that most commercials on television during the day are geared toward new mothers. I am constantly invited to baby showers, which if I were to attend, would only add to my anguish. Even at work, pregnant women surround me. Day after day I must smile as they recount tales of baby movement, nursery painting, and ultrasound checks. I must pretend I am happy for them when they tell of how their husbands are going to make wonderful fathers. While a part of me is happy for them, I cannot help the feelings of bitterness and resentment that overwhelm me for the loss of my own child.

Her voice jolts me back to the present. "How many children do you have?" she politely asks again. I rub my hands over my face in a futile attempt to eradicate the memories. "None," I whisper, and smile. "None yet."

Wendy went on to have two healthy baby boys, though she experienced some complications in her pregnancies. She spent several months as our Sidelines Ohio Coordinator, and now works fulltime at a shelter for battered women.