

(introductory music)

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MARYN: Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Hi. Maryn here today. Maybe an unorthodox type of podcast. But just me for today. I'm going to be reading some journal entries actually from about two years ago. So fair warning, not really anything graphic, but if you're bothered by the idea of miscarriage or loss or death or any of those things, then please you may not want to listen to this. So it's almost the holiday time here 2017. And about two years ago, I was pregnant with a little baby, who left his body at about 15 weeks of pregnancy. Many of you know this. And there are other Indie Birth resources around this loss and miscarriage. My son's name was Sable Sage. And there's at least two blog posts, I believe. And I, of course have referenced him many times in the podcasts.

But I haven't really devoted a whole podcast to him. It's definitely something I want to do. Something I've wanted to do last December. So a year after Sable's death, I was fortunate enough to be pregnant again. And as many of you know, that wonderful baby, Deva, was born about 8 months ago. So I'm kind of recapping that just to catch anybody up that is maybe new to the podcast or wasn't aware of this element of my story. But, again, I really have been waiting for the right time. And in a lot of ways, I don't know that there is the right time. It's not something I've really looked forward to doing maybe like some other podcasts or interviews or chats or kind of the more fun subjects. But I kind of feel like I have to. I feel like sharing about him as a person and sharing about my very lengthy experience as I waited for him to be born is meaningful. It's especially meaningful to me. And literally, every week I get an email or a contact from Facebook maybe or other social media from a woman or maybe it's her doula who has experienced the same type of early second trimester loss that Sable was.

So, again, I am doing this a lot for me. I think it is healing to talk about it. I think reading through my journal as I will in the rest of this podcast will be, again, healing for me and just providing some kind of peace actually. It's been two years. But anybody that's had a loss of any variety knows that time isn't really that meaningful. Yes. Time does relieve some of the pain. But two years. It doesn't mean a whole lot to me. It just—I know he's gone. And Deva has come, and that was wonderful and is wonderful. And last December when I was pregnant with her, I was probably about 20 weeks around this time. And I just wasn't in a space, as you might expect, to really revisit and relive Sable's death. It felt very important that I focus on Deva being alive and putting all of my energy and emotional charge into life. Life and death are so intimately connected.

And having lived that, it certainly wasn't something I was unaware of when I was pregnant with her. But not something I really wanted to sit in.

And sitting in death was literally something that I was asked to do with Sable as I'll illustrate with some of these journal posts. So he died at about 15 weeks. And on the calendar two years ago, that was closer to Thanksgiving. Now, of course, it's closer to Christmas. So at this point, two years ago, I had already been waiting a couple of weeks for him to leave my body. I'll probably talk a little bit as we go here about the expectations around that and even in a mainstream kind of world what is expected when a baby dies. What do we expect to happen? What's the time frame? And so at this point, two years ago I was still very much in an expected time frame. Generally speaking, it can take up to six weeks for a baby that's died to leave the mom's body. But Sable ended up hanging out for way longer than that. So that's what I want to share today.

So when I started this journal just here on my computer, I, of course, didn't know what would happen or what I would be doing. And so I was just chronologically notating my thoughts, my experience, my emotional state. All with the intention of really helping myself focus. It was—journaling is such a cathartic way often to heal ourselves or to express anxiety or fear or to process big events. Whatever it is. And so I was very much journaling at the time. And I was also journaling in an actual, written journal. So I'm not going to do that today, but I have entire books—I think two entire written journals filled with this sort of thing. But my journal on my computer was simply what was just coming out into mind when I was not really focusing on it. I'd get a thought or I'd get something I wanted to write down, and I—my computer would just be right there.

So I didn't make this journal or the other written journals with an kind of intention of sharing them really or publishing them or anything like that. And in the two years since Sable's death, I have realized, again, the power that the written word has and the power of this experience. So I do want to share that today even though it was something I didn't necessarily think I would do. And I do think in the coming years I will probably make some kind of written book around these journal entries and experiences. And, again, it's a lot for me as a lot of these podcasts somehow turn out to be. But also, I feel the connection with sharing it with many of you that are regular listeners and write me emails and notes and let me know how these podcasts have reached you. So I do think there is value in that. And without further ado, I'm going to start reading.

Hmm. So, again, before I knew how long I'd wait, I had a lot to say about waiting. And I will start there. "So over the next (blank) weeks I waited." And I left it blank because I didn't know how many weeks I would wait. "What can I even say about that? Waiting was hard but not as hard as I would have expected. It was necessary taking me from the initial grief and shock when most women say, 'Get this baby out of me,' to a place

where I was actually pretty comfortable. I felt great and release so much. So much. That it felt good. It felt normal to wait and be excited for this labor. Something you would never imagine being. But my body and mind were prepping for labor like they have each time. My reaction in the initial day or two after it happened was that I was not ready to birth, and I wasn't. I am so grateful I did not have to and was not forced to.

“Reaching that place gracefully and organically to be ready is a journey I am grateful for. In so many ways, birth is birth. The body doesn't just one day crank out a baby. Dead or alive. The process is still a process, and it takes time. Now don't get me wrong, I had more than a few days of impatience and frustration and extreme sadness. But each day I worked through it all and got that knowing that comes with an impending birth. That confidence and trust that we come into in days and weeks before that get us ready. Get us in a place where we are going to do it. I never expected to be in that place at 19 weeks or any time soon. But it was cool to see my body follow the same timeline I know well. I found immense trust in the harmony of my body and only needed to remind myself that my brain just needed to stay out of the way.”

So that was written kind of as a—not a dated entry. Just kind of a bunch of thoughts. If you saw what I had written here, it's all pretty random. A lot of it is dated, but a lot of it is just random. And a lot of that will be what is eventually in some sort of book. So I'm going to move to some of the dated stuff and just give you a sense of my life during this time. So Sable was held inside my body for close to 4 months, which is a very long time. And I don't know that I've met anyone at this point who has lasted longer than that. And I'm not saying that as a medal of honor or anything, but it was just hard to find support. It was hard to find women that had chosen similar paths. So I'm certainly not going to read every journal entry for four months. But I'm going to read a couple that kind of take you through the transition and transformation because, honestly, every day was an adventure. And, of course, not maybe the most fun adventure, but it was an amazing experience in a lot of ways. And because I didn't know, because I didn't it would be four months—I mean I didn't know if it would be two months or whatever. I had no idea that each and every day that I made a journal entry you can hear a lot of the time that I'm so hopeful or I'm so discouraged. But hindsight is the greatest teacher, right? You look back, and it makes more sense than it did in the moment.

So let's see. About two years ago. It was December 4, and this was, again, maybe two to three weeks after Sable had died. “Waiting for birth is waiting for birth. I have never been in this spot that so many women find themselves. Maybe at 42 weeks or when a midwife threatens them with transport willing, begging their bodies to go faster than they are supposed to in this delicate process. It is madness. The futility is almost funny. My body is holding on. It knows when. But it is not there yet. I can really feel the damage done to women and babies when the labor process is rushed or hurried. Madness. It's like pushing a river. I have been shown an immense secret of the universe. Out on the

land, I have been shown that death is not the fall into nothing, the abyss, the solitary blackness. It may feel like that at first, but the depths reveal that death is a peaceful stillness. A return to one into the earth.

“I truly can release this body knowing that. Wanting to return it to the land. I am infinitely grateful to get this wisdom as I have had the fear of death my entire life. And having my own baby die has been my worst fear. I am in it now, and I can feel the truth. I am not sad at the moment. I sit in calmness and peace and wait for the release. I also saw a bluebird on the land which was Sable’s totem and which I have not seen for weeks.”

So yeah. And I still see these beautiful bluebirds, which are somewhat rare here in Arizona. Probably once a week I see one out on a hike, and I always say, “Hi, Sable.” The next day. December 5. A very short entry here that you might laugh at. I am laughing at a lot of this so feel free. “Alien abduction. Do not Google that.” That’s my entry. Yes. Do not Google that, if you’re miscarrying.

December 6. “I feel like I am walking on holy ground. But yet, aren’t we always? That is something I can keep with me when this is through. The knowing that each moment and color is sacred. I don’t know how else to say it.”

The next day. Another brief entry. “Worried and scared. Molar?” And I meant molar pregnancy. “Alien abduction. Should I get ultrasound? Confused and lost. This sucks. Too much sadness.” I’m going to skip ahead a little bit just because it’s repetitive in its own kind of way.

December 11. “For years, I have been practicing presence, but now the message, the lessons are real. In truth, I have nowhere to go. No place but in the now. I still may only have a peace but acceptance is growth. And what else can I do but be where I am recognizing the perfect place that it is. I would truly be crazy now if I insisted on focusing on what has happened or what might occur. I am being asked to be in the moment in a way I never have. In acceptance, there is growth. For years, I have practiced presence, but there has never been such an opportunity to practice nonjudgement. What happened is not bad. It also is not good. I understand the what is in a way I did not. Nonattachment. This pregnancy was not and never mine as nothing is on the physical plane. I am as clear as I think I could be at the moment, which is all that matters. And all that is keeping me sane. The breath in each moment. It’s all that is real.”

So that’s what got me through a lot of days. And I’ve shared this kind of sort of advice with women that are going through the same thing and are feeling rushed to make a choice or get a D&C or whatever it is that, honestly—honest to goodness, I would wake up each morning, and Sable was still inside. And I was having no signs of labor. And I

would just need to find my truth or my sanity for that day. And as I've already said, I think there are lots of parallels even with live birth and going past a due date, for example. That we can't really think ahead. We can't think behind. We somehow have to just be here now. And when everything is okay here, now, we learn in these situations, I think, to really appreciate it and to not wish for anything more. So by the time this got to be months and months, I had given up in a sense thinking about anything other than the present. And that was one of the most helpful things for me to be able to go on each day.

Let's see. December 15. "I am removing the word waiting from my vocabulary during this experience and possibly permanently. I had gotten used to telling people lately, 'Still waiting,' as if what was happening was other than what was supposed to. As if my body was being neglectful or slacking in some way by not meeting my expectation. Waiting. It made me see how often life passes me by without word always needing the next thing but never quite there yet. Waiting to get pregnant. Waiting to feel better. Waiting to be at the end. Waiting for a baby. Now at the end, I don't want to wait. I want to see and trust the harmony in my body and in spirit. There is no waiting for what is now."

Here's a little story I included in the journal entry. "I zip my jacket up not wanting to invite any attention. The lady at PetSmart catches my eye. 'How's the pregnancy going? Did you have the baby yet?'" And this was, of course, a standard stranger out in the world that had no idea my baby had died. "No. The baby died.' Silence. 'Are you kidding?' 'No. My baby died. That's the truth. It happens sometimes.' Super awkward. She did give me a hug and tell me about someone in her family who lost a baby at eight months. We had a moment, and life went on. Sitting with it—oh, wait. Sitting in it. Have I done this? Have I really felt it? Or have I thought about it? Gleaned wisdom. Asking my body. It's not too sad. It doesn't think life won't happen again. But I had been running from it. Sit with death. It is you. It is in you. What does it feel like?

"And I get this vision of holding this baby's body up to the sun where the energy is simply exchanged. The energy that was here goes there. Moves onward and upward. And I lower the body into the earth. The exchange of energy that is death. It will return and never really leaves. The energy of the soul just is. And the physical body returns to the earth. I feel the earth and sun calling for him. And now that my body has sat with this, I too feel it is possible." So not going to apologize for getting teary on my own podcast. It's probably the first time I've cried about Sable on a podcast though. So yet another reference to time not meaning much when you read these powerful words that somehow come out of you in the most unexpected times.

Let's see. December 16. "I have been wondering what animal totem would show itself to me given all that is going on. Today a mama and baby bobcat ran in front of my car into the desert. Looking it up, bobcats symbolize clear vision in dark places, patience and time for solitude. Sounds about right. On a different note, it was good to laugh with Margo. The dark side of comedy. Laughing about death and its antics. Totally not funny to some but funny nonetheless. I realize how my comfort with birth is/was nothing like my comfort or lack thereof with death. I mean really there are just a few differences. If we can be honest about labor and laugh about how horrible it can be or feel, then we can laugh about death. Why not?" And I don't remember specifically what Margo and I were laughing about. But it definitely wasn't the first or last time that this whole experience brought laughter just because it really brought every kind of emotion.

December 17. "Something I am truly grateful for is the community of women that I have met and that have walked this way. I never would have guessed that death in pregnancy or birth would be anywhere I would ever want to be. But it is. And I am. And I have matured in a way I never knew that I needed. The women around me have mirrored everything I have recorded or written thus far. Conscious and wise and loving beyond any human experience. I am so grateful to be among these women. I would have said I would not wish this place on anyone, but now I am not sure. To be welcomed into this sacred circle and sisterhood has been life changing."

The next day. Completely different emotional state, which was definitely a take home of this experience. That I could feel black one day and white the next. "Maybe now I just need to scream about it because I have cried and laughed and processed and released. And every freaking thing you can think of, I have done. I have asked, begged, and then not. I have loved this baby to the moon and back and understood and not understood. I have nothing left. This morning no spiritual realizations from me. The reality is I am done and frustrated, and maybe that's the key. Because I have cried and laughed and processed and released and interpreted and held on and let go and sat with death and been with it and loved this baby and sent him on and communicated and had others communicate in a million billion other things. And now I have nothing left. In my human brain, release before or at solstice has been in my brain and heart. But not really thinking that means anything at all at this point. I have no control. I am just done. All these days I wanted to be done, but I knew I was not. Today I am done. My body is done. Get out. I went to the desert and the rocks and had a tantrum along with a prayer."

So that was December 18. Many nights. Many days before this baby actually left. Let me scroll a little bit since this is quite, quite the journal. A lot of it is just endless mind chatter. I'm reading the thoughts that are the most coherent. But there is so much in this journal that is stream of consciousness and trying to make sense of what we can't make sense of essentially.

December 26. So almost exactly two years ago. “Things falling apart is a kind of testing and also a kind of healing. We think that the point is to pass the test or overcome the problem. But the truth is that things don’t really get solved. They come together, and they fall apart. It’s just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen. Room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.” And that’s actually a quote from a book. Those aren’t my words. Everything else has been to this point, but that was just a quote from a book called *When Things Fall Apart* by Pema Chodron, who is an awesome Buddhist author who was introduced to me by my friend Ariel, who had a stillbirth many years ago. And when she found out Sable died, she sent me this book. And it was amazing and beautiful and very helpful.

The next day—or no. Two days later. December 28. “My head is not the clearest this morning, but in a way, it makes my heart clearer. It’s so odd in our culture to want to bring normalcy to what is death. But walking around literally carrying this within has taught me so much. And the fact that that freaks people out is enough reason to share some things. I feel so lucky I have been given this time. There is nothing that puts in the now like breathing in and out with stillness right there. It has been and continues to be although I hope not for too much longer a period of beauty and clarity and even humor as death has become to me truly just the other side of the coin. I no longer feel fear. And it is all the qualities I have come to love about birth.

“It’s often hard, but it’s a sacred space where we see our true selves. It can also be funny and revealing and ridiculous. This human condition and normal. And we find our way through and continue to function even amongst what we think is so serious. The end of this phase must be coming soon for me because I have such a peace about it. I have moments of sadness about what could have been but mostly the baby inside is a quiet reminder about what is. And I hold that in the moments when I am not together at all which is totally fine too.”

A friend of a friend, who knew what was happening with me, sent me some beautiful words that I cut and pasted from probably an email into this journal. I was so reliant at this time on other people’s wisdom. I was closed off, of course, to talks of fear and people’s—if they had some kind of nonagreement with what I was doing which was waiting. But the support was so helpful. And, again, that’s something I keep in mind when I hear about people in similar situations. So here is a quote sent by a friend of a friend. I thought it was just a beautiful piece.

“Black is the sacred story of the cosmos. The sacred space between stars. The rolling forward motion of the expanse of the universe. Flow. Black is sacred, quiet, holy. Sound waves move differently through the dark and the secret spaces where light is not. And truth is more direct, more precise, more targeted, aimed, forceful, powerful. In the absence of vision, imagery, there is only the powerful connectivity of spirit and

instinct. We honor this sacred work. This powerful forward motion that slips so quietly and expertly into the realms beyond imagination. Thank you sacred little one. What could be more beautiful than carrying the vessel in which this sacred spirit made the journey through the cosmos?"

Sable Sage. Sable means black. And Sage, of course, is a wise teacher. And you may have read this in his birth story, but just reiterating for those that don't know that Sable's name was given to me before he died. And it was—I don't know. A couple of weeks before he died—this name, Sable. And all of my children, for the most part, have named themselves to the point where the name is told and then I look it up to see what the heck it means. So with Sable, I did just that, and I was confused and maybe a little disturbed. I had had dreams and feelings that he would die. But he was still alive at the time. And so I looked up Sable, and it meant—or it means black. So in hindsight, once again, the greatest teacher, his name really was perfect for him. And so that quote I just read was, of course, in reference to death but also specifically to his name.

So let's see. I go on through the journal. Early January to start to try things—to try more things than I had. Now I have—I did try many things. From herbs to homeopathy to all kinds of shamans and spiritual teachers and people that do releases. And I mean, really, I think I do have a list if I come across it while I'm reading this of all the things I tried. And I had just many, many days of losing it. Like losing it mentally and emotionally. And then I would just get right back on the next morning. But it wasn't for not trying things. So I did wait this long time for him, but I was always hopeful that something would work. So like January 1, I can see that I did four hours of cotton root bark and the cohoshes and nothing. I did almost regularly throughout the almost four months have more nights than not of bright red bleeding, but it would only start at about 6:00 p.m. And then it would taper off. And so, I ceased being excited after that went on for a week or two. Of course, I thought initially that it meant something. But it didn't honestly.

So let's see. January 3. "A woman grieving her baby whether she has none or a thousand more at home is the same. There is a unique soul that never came to be. A pregnancy that stopped too early. It doesn't matter. Grief knows no bounds and no numbers. If you think to remind her of her blessings, hold your tongue knowing that she knows. But at the moment, she is focused on what could have been. She will most likely return to counting her blessings. But for right now, there is a huge painful place that once held a life."

The next day. January 5, 2016. "This may not be an event, a birth, or a release like I thought. Perhaps my body or his body is choosing another way. Sad at first to think I won't have closure. But making peace with whatever it is and however it is best for it to go. He was real. I know he was a baby with a heartbeat. Walking on a trail this

morning with pretty thick mist all around and really wet sticky mud to walk on, I thought what a great metaphor it is for life right now and life in general. Really not being able to see ahead at all. Obscured by the fog. Nothing to do to make the path ahead clearer. Just needing to keep walking. And then beneath my feet slipping at times on dry rocks and being able to somehow keep my footing on the wet, slippery ones. This is exactly where I am. Reminding me to stay on the path and a belief that it will go somewhere. Exactly where it needs to go even though I cannot see what lies ahead. And really this is where we are all at. Nothing wrong with it except sometimes the idea that we can control it.”

So over the next couple days, I was constantly talking with people and hearing different experiences. And during this week, I was interested in the theory of the baby just maybe calcifying itself which sort of sounds crazy. But honestly, there was nothing too crazy for me to consider or imagine as I waited. I really trusted my body, and I still do. But it was a struggle a lot of days to understand. Where is the wisdom in this? What is the physiology? If we didn't have doctors and medicines and surgeries, what would any woman have done in this situation? Would she just have held this pregnancy until her dying days? Or what would have happened? So, again, that's what I was considering when I read that last journal entry. Just I don't really know what the plan is. Maybe my body will just absorb this baby.

I had heard from another midwife friend of a story she knew—maybe it was a client of hers. Where a similar thing happened to the client. She had a baby die at about the same time and somehow resumed ovulating while the baby was not alive inside of her and conceived another live baby. And then when the live baby was born, at term, then this little, tiny, calcified, old baby came out with it. That's a fantastic story, isn't it? It's not the kind of thing you hear every day. And I believe it. And I heard several stories like that. So, again, it was just another theory. It was another possibility that I was entertaining that maybe that would happen. That maybe I wasn't actually going to get to birth this baby. Maybe something that I just couldn't fathom was going to happen.

Let's see. January 11. “If you want to learn more about miscarriage or supporting women through this sometimes lengthy, bizarre, and intricate process, read on. First of all, losses in the second trimester is pretty rare. 1% of pregnancies. 80% of second tri or later losses will be birthed or expelled within 6 weeks of the death.” Now, obviously, I had passed the 6 week point at this point. “I guess statistics—what do they really mean to an actual person? It's weird being a statistic and then wondering what it means when you don't identify with those numbers. I guess I am one of the 20% that waits longer than 6 weeks or indefinitely or maybe forever. And so far, I am not one of the 50% of women who choose to induce or facilitate a miscarriage in the medical setting. All to say that if you find yourself in this situation or walking with a woman who is there is no answer. Often, there is no certainty.

“There isn’t really much they can tell you why it’s going this way or that way or what will happen. She may choose to try natural stuff. And I have tried the herbs in every form, homeopathics, oils, massage, emotional release, vaginal steaming, you name it. But in the end, the body will choose what is best. It’s a lesson in futility for many of us, even as midwives when we think we know what needs to happen. Along the way, many midwives have shared incredible stories with me that would blow your mind. We don’t know anything really ever. The blessing is I have found, and so many other women have too, their bodies do work carefully and wonderfully. It’s weird being outside of the normal when it comes to miscarriage or fetal death. But then again, what is normal? Maybe we should think about redefining what that is as we have these experiences and support women in their choices that are not typical.”

So, again, another moment of what does this mean. Where will this go? Does anybody know anything? Over the next couple days, I was big into homeopathics and other kinds of meditation. And all kinds of thoughtfulness. Let’s see. So as we near the end of January 2016, I still held Sable inside obviously. And I was, at that point, about 8 to 9 weeks past when he had died which was significantly longer than I had read about. But we were approaching our first Indie Birth conference, which sounds crazy. And I think that’s another level of humor, in a sense. That this baby somehow wanted to be part of this conference. And I think what a crazy predicament I was in wanting to birth this baby but not wanting to miss the conference. And essentially conducting this entire conference with a dead baby inside of me. Again, there’s humor in that. There’s ridiculousness in that. But that’s what I did. People came from all over the world. Maybe you were one of them at this very first conference here in Sedona.

And just business as usual. I did, of course, get to talk with women from all over that knew what I was experiencing and were very compassionate. So there was a level of sisterhood that I gained at that conference that I really wouldn’t have had I not had Sable inside. So that was a joyful part of Sable’s experience was this conference and being so connected to conscious women and this birth community. And it really was a fantastic conference. So during the conference, many people don’t know this. And some do who know my story about Sable. But at the end of January, which was when the conference was, we had Dr. Stu here who is a friend and who was presenting at the conference. And I asked him if he would bring his portable ultrasound machine. And so, he did. And with his amazing compassion, I took Margo with me up to where he was staying and got to see my baby on ultrasound which, obviously, I had never done.

I haven’t gotten an ultrasound for any of my babies in many, many years. And so that was actually really beautiful and really amazing. Of course, I laid there, and I cried. There’s nothing like quite seeing your baby on ultrasound. I think it’s emotional in any case. But in this case, seeing that he was really gone and that sounds ridiculous, right? It had been 9 weeks. And I knew that he was. But it was a very final way of

incorporating this information. So I saw him. He was a perfect little person on ultrasound. He measured him at exactly the gestation that I knew he had died. And there really wasn't anything weird to see. There was no reason that he could see why this baby wasn't alive other than the placenta was really, really thick. But nobody could really say why, right? It could just be the placenta kept growing after he did. It could be that he had some kind of chromosomal abnormality. I really will never know. But that's all that came up on the ultrasound was just a baby, who measured exactly what I thought and a very thick placenta.

So that was the end of January. And this was my journal entry after the ultrasound, which I might also cry for this one. We'll see. "Now that I can sit with it I can say it. It is not time for that." And by that, I think I meant induction of any kind. Artificially. "I love you, Sable, so much and want to see you go. But I sit at the feet of my ancestors. That is my prayer and what I was shown last night in my dreams. I am fortunate that we live at a time where doing something as far as technology is very much an option. But I still sat at their feet. Not entirely with patience but with gratitude. Having the stars line up to recently be able to literally peer in there, I took the opportunity. A perfect 14-week baby. Not a lump. Not a mush. Very much there. Bones and all. The fear of what if, of risk. It is a risk to wait. It is a risk to intervene. What is my body doing asking? Moments of clarity and very much moments of confusion. Lessons of wisdom, futility, teachings. I sit at the feet of wise women."

I also, again, felt really blessed to be able to see him on ultrasound in such a private setting with friends. And it felt like a truly sacred use of technology. So let's see. I started looking up old textbooks. That was a fun sort of academic mission of mine. So the end of January. January 28. So I still had about a month left. But I didn't know that, of course. So January 28, 2016. "The lack of knowledge even among midwives means I will be teaching about this soon. Not even "second trimester miscarriage" but missed miscarriage or whatever. It's fascinating. Found in old textbook from 1920 on Google, and they saw it a lot. Although by the end, they say it's dangerous without a whole lot of why other than infection. And women showing up septic with no idea what was going on because they were still bleeding at least intermittently so many didn't even know they had been pregnant. Fascinating paper.

"I think the biggest wrong so far is it being described as inducing labor. No. It doesn't not feel like that. And I only agree with the "missed" because, for good reason I am sure, it feels like my body has missed a few cycles but will eventually get back on. Although when it does, it may very well be labor. But it's like inducing a period the week before it's due. Will it work? Maybe. Inducing a late period makes so much more sense which is why it works when it does. Perhaps a questionnaire for women and midwives to put out there."

So, again, I had started going into some of the research and just really trying to understand what are the risks. Nobody could really even tell me. If you have been in this situation or you know somebody and they're in a more medical setting, you'll know that they tell you the risk is infection. But I couldn't understand how I was at risk for infection when the waters—the amniotic sac was still intact. I wasn't really bleeding. It was just a complete—there was a sense of completeness inside of my body. It didn't feel vulnerable. So that's, again, what my brain was up against almost every morning when I would wake up. I would ask myself, "Do I feel well? Do I feel ill in any way?" Obviously, if I had had a fever or anything was going on, but I felt great. I honestly did. I felt fantastic. I was taking really excellent care of my body. I was taking really excellent care of nutrition. The last thing I wanted to happen was to get some kind of infection, so I was really, really trying my best.

And I realize that I was pushing the edge of what anybody would even be able to tell me. So what do you do with that even when people you respect, like Dr. Stu, who is a medical provider—so on one hand, you could say, of course, he doesn't know the edge of women's experiences. But who else do we ask when kind of nobody holds these answers and nobody holds this knowledge? These were the questions I was asking myself. And I had a theory, at this point in this loss that perhaps my body was going to cycle again. Maybe my hormones were trying to get back on, and so I was doing all kinds of acupuncture and Chinese herbs to try and maybe go that route. So maybe my hormones would be strong enough to just go back to cycling and maybe I would expel the pregnancy as a result of that. Anyway, it all sounds slightly crazy now. To me even. But really it's just part of the process. It was just part of this waiting and the research and all of the digging deep that I needed to do for whatever reason that was.

So I report feeling crampy and maybe thinking it would happen at the end of January. And, obviously, it didn't. And so many days where I thought that, again, "Maybe today is the day. I feel different. I feel emotionally different. I feel physically different. I feel contracty. I feel prelabory." Every way that there was to feel, I honestly did feel. I thought it meant something. But, of course, it really didn't. It didn't mean anything, at least, in the obvious sense. The baby continued to stay inside. So by the beginning of February—February 2, to be exact—I wrote, "Wake up—I woke up feeling absolutely fearless today. I've had so much time. 12 weeks to be exact. To process this. To sit with it. To be in it. To feel it all with no escape. I am so grateful for that. My body is moving into a different phase. I had been able to feel it the last couple of days. And, again, I am so grateful that I have gotten to experience these subtleties and feel my body tipping over into release with the timeframe that it has requested. But yet, I have no expectations. Should it be another week or more? If you have positive energy to send and love and courage, I will take it. I can only bathe myself and this baby and my body in that right now. All else will be refused."

So I was kind of talking to anyone. Kind of to the universe to my journal. More nights of bleeding. More nights of contracting. Nothing happened. And waking up the next morning kind of thing. So let's see. January 4. "No bleeding at all today. My dreams have always spoken to me. Last night I was desperately trying to catch a flight. I was late and rushing to the airport, and there was traffic. Barely making it there, I stood there throwing papers all over trying to find my ticket and ID. I just wasn't ready for the trip even though I really wanted to be and was super stressed to not be with the program and annoyed to be missing wherever it was I wanted to go. So the wheel turns again to being patient. The time is not now, or it would be happening. The dream not only spoke to my inner truth but also reminded me whether it's happening or not it is required. It will be at least another five weeks. I don't know where I got that. This I know. And the voices around me confirm it as well as my protection and mystery of this event. My baby is a special soul. And the lessons are not complete."

So I don't know where I got the idea that it would be another five weeks, but I was probably right. I go on to just have other similar things happen. I remember one night, not shortly after that journal entry, waking up bleeding. But I was welcoming this. It wasn't bad or scary. It was like, "Yay. Maybe something is happening." But it was strange too. Like how often do you just wake up bleeding? That's a strange sensation. I did get some internal pelvic massage from my friend, Diane. And that also caused some bleeding. And, again, this was the beginning of February. So obviously, I still had another month.

Here is a journal entry from February 7. "The wise woman does not ask why. Why is this taking so long? Why me? Why? Why? Why? The wise woman only asks how. How can I open myself up to fully experiencing this? How can I more fully support my wholeness during this time? This has helped me immensely. Instead of being on the defensive, I feel as if still, by some grace of the universe, I can find the space to open to what is left to learn." So that wise woman idea, I believe, came from Susan Weed. Maybe a blog post. But that's kind of a tenant of the wise woman tradition is that we don't ask why especially when things aren't going our way. But we ask how.

So wow. My journal just majorly skipped ahead here with my own hands on my computer. Maybe it's trying to tell me something. I also, through this time, tried high doses of vitamin C and all kinds of journeying and all kinds of journaling as well which is different than journeying. And crying and all of these things. So I contacted a friend, who does shamanic work. She was actually my teacher for some amount of time. And I told her what had happened. And she said she would do a journey for me. But that she expected or wanted me to do my own journey around it, and that we would compare. And I had resisted doing too much of that for all the reasons that trauma can do that to you I suppose. But journeying for those that don't know is kind of a shamanic technique where you can access information almost in a dream state, but it's not

dreaming. And you're not sleeping. So it's a very powerful tool, if you can do it. And I've always been good at journeying. So I just needed the push from this teacher to be able to do it.

So this was a description of my journey. And this was on February 18, 2016. Before I write about the journey, I had decided that I might go to the medicine of the Cytotec when Margo returned from her birth center stint. So that was already on my brain mid February. And as I'll get to, he was born March 6. So I was considering my options more seriously at this time and felt like the time was approaching where I would use technology in a sacred way. So here is some details about the journey that I did around Sable.

"In many ways, it was just simple. Sable is an old man. The wisest with healing hands and few words. He is sort of above so much of this and has been around a long time. Didn't make a big deal that I had never acknowledged him formally until now and showed me future me in white light and holding life again. He is not this baby, per se, but brought this energy here to teach me. He says, 'The baby in there has allowed a strong tree of strength to grow. And now the baby must be released, but the deep roots of the tree will always remain.' I can let go of the baby now. It is not him. It is not this strength that I will retain. He says I can let go and that there is nothing to know. Sable will always be here with me as my guide and protector. He will not leave. I love him so much. The love I have felt for him as the baby is still there, deep and strong, as I hug his thin body under his robe. Death becomes life. Life becomes death.

"I have felt this to the deepest part of my being now. And I have strength that remains. I am letting go now. I can keep connecting with him and have released any expectation of it meaning anything. There is a strong tree growing and grounding its roots within me. This is gaining strength every day. And when the baby goes, the tree will stay. No need to worry about holding on. The baby will go, and the tree is to remain to give me more strength and power. Sable is relaxed, worry free, calm, and wise. There is no rush or hurry or anything wrong. Just like I have felt in every moment and even still. When the journey is complete, the process will move through. He says, 'No matter. It will all happen.' He does not say when. And the choice of Cytotec or not is really up to me. It will not change the outcome. But yet, I still feel that pushing the boundary, believing in my strength, and trusting the process is a greater lesson. I am not trying to see it as me being a hero. I have held it out that in a month I am prepared and ready to do these drugs in this form of sacred medicine, if that feels right, without judgment or regret."

So that was my journey. And the next day, February 19, I met with this teacher over the phone. And she gave me the exact same story. And we had not talked. We had not shared words or any kind of story around Sable. She told me exactly the same thing

the next day to the point where I was probably, if I remember, crying on the phone or shaking or something. She told me the detail about the tree, how he was an older man. He was kind of like a sage, wisdom kind of personality and that how the baby was kind of this separate being who came as a result to teach. And anyway, it was a very powerful experience that showed me that I can trust myself with those sorts of things. And I think that's kind of what I preach, so to speak, here all the time is that as women we know.

So that was a very powerful thing. And I went on the last couple of days of that month still hoping that it would happen. Still bleeding intermittently. I would have moment where I considered maybe I was waiting to Sable's due date, which was May 15. I had no idea, in some moments, what I would do. And I was doing fine. There were moments where it was hard, and I doubted. But like I said at the beginning of the journal, if I were to stay in the moment and remain grateful and just be present that everything was really fine. And so I know. It probably sounds kind of ridiculous in some ways that you could just continue on like this almost indefinitely. But, of course, I didn't. The beginning of March was when, again, I started to consider that I was going to use some sacred tools to get this baby out. I was bleeding more than I had been, and that was really exciting. But still nothing was happening.

So on March 3, and this would turn out to be just three days before Sable was born, I wrote this. "A weight has lifted off of me. I decided with Jason—my husband—that in a week I am ready to do something to get this baby out. I am putting it out really strongly to the universe now that that is my plan. and yet, anything could happen before that. In a week, I am ready to move past this. And for me, my relationship, and my family, I feel I have waited long enough. That and I know I want another baby. It's not because I do not trust. But because I have free will to say I do not feel more months of this is a positive thing for my mental health or anyone around me. I feel like setting this intention is powerful. And if my body wants to take the lead before then or give me some other sign, then I am open to that. If not, I will assume that my desire to move on is also very important. Not less important than being patient which I really have done so well. And I am so grateful to have done."

Probably the most patient I have ever been in my life. I am generally not considered a patient person, at least by myself. But this was a pinnacle of patience in my life. So let's see. There's actually a little bit more to that journal entry. Again, this would be three days before. "I put on my calendar for March 12 since I like 12s. The baby comes out today meaning the 12th. If it wants to sooner, it may. I am feeling free of my own expectations and my own judgment of myself. It is amazing what we can see when we look at ourselves a bit differently. For now, in this moment, I see myself having done everything. Tried everything. Been open to everything. And now the time has come when I set my intention in a different way out to the universe. I am saying I will accept

this space for roughly another week. If something is to be known or shown before then, I am open to it, and I am open to changing my mind. I welcome this baby sooner. But if not, I am trusting that because I am feeling that this is the END that it will coincide with seeing and feeling some really good signs and symbols that it all is well for me to direct what needs to be done.”

So kind of goes on to be a little prayer to the universe to just start to bend the road in one direction. And really as I’m reading this in hindsight, I think I was often really hard on myself. Am I being patient enough? Am I being trusting enough? Walking this path of patience and trust in birth. Am I able to do that? And I was able to do that. So I think, in this last journal entry, I’m also giving myself permission to stop being so hard on myself. And not because I wasn’t patient. Just because the time had been enough. And I was choosing it from a very intentional part of myself. I wasn’t choosing to do anything because I wasn’t feeling patient or trustful. It was simply because it was time. Time with a capital T.

So on March 4, I just wrote, “I’m feeling really good about this. I had a dream where I was moving into a new house and was excited and ready. Funny how release comes to us in different ways. Sometimes philosophical release is what we need. When we have been waiting to see it happen mentally or, of course, physically. So much to hold onto in this life.” So I went on to prepare myself for his birth, which, like I said, I had put on the calendar for March 12. I knew Margo would be back by about a week. And she was somebody I definitely wanted present. But here is the way life goes.

I woke on March 6, 2016 and wrote, “Why wait? My body has birthed so many times. I am asking my cervix to open, and this baby to come out today with help from Diane.” Diane had offered to bring seaweed and massage and, of course, I had Cytotec. “You know that place when you seem caught between wanting to honor timing and exerting what you know is your power to create whatever you desire? But here I sit. I sit here still sitting. Not wanting to push the (inaudible). But knowing and believing that my body can do this with a gentle nudge. It is time.”

And so, it is. Sable was born on March 6, 2016 at about 10:30 at night. You can read his birth story on our Indie Birth website. It’s called *The Birth/Death of Sable Sage*. And honestly, I think it’s a beautiful birth story. It was a beautiful experience. It was a beautiful seamless birth. I used just the tiniest bit of Cytotec, which I called the sacred medicine. And honestly, I don’t even know if that really did anything only because it fell out very soon after I had placed it inside my body. And his birth was beautiful. It was fast. It was easy meaning there wasn’t a lot of bleeding. There wasn’t a lot of pain. Yes. It was emotionally painful. But I couldn’t have asked for a more graceful physical and emotional experience than was given to me.

So you can read that birth story. I'm going to read just one or two more journal entries, which kind of try and tie it up even though it's not something that can be tied up. So the day after his birth was March 7, 2016. "And so life goes on. Sable Sage born March 6. Forever 14.3 weeks and perfect in every way. Today I sit in bed and write and process. My world and my brain are spinning. My body is strangely calm and feeling unaffected and great. My hormones are not understanding why or where my baby is. Why he sits in a box away from me when it has been hardwired in me to feel his warm skin and his heartbeat and his latch. My body and soul are at peace but yet so confused. His birth was a beautiful one. So much easier and graceful than I ever imagined. Feeling so grateful for the protection and grace that has surrounded me knowing that I can go on and everything will be okay."

So that is the day after his birth. And in the week after, there's all kinds of multiple journal entries as you might expect. All of the emotions that come with grief and loss and death and exhaustion and feeling sad and lost. And just spending a lot of time alone. I lit a candle every day for Sable until it felt right to not do that. And I honored him. We did eventually do a fire where we offered his body and placenta to the fire, and I was able to keep some ashes as remembrance of him. My body, of course, continued to heal and really got right back onto a very fertile cycle. So that was a nice bonus. Something about waiting so long was not knowing when fertility would return. And that was something that I considered, as I said, in one of the journal entries. I considered that very much because I really did want to have another baby after him and didn't want to hurt my fertility in any obvious way. Of course, no one really knows. But that was one of the things that had been told to me.

So to tie it up around the end of March, I did get a tattoo, which is really beautiful. And it was everything that this experience was kind of in pictorial form. So there is a tree of life, which, of course, represents not just the tree of life but the tree that Sable was. The wisdom that he grew and left in me. And other symbolism and things like the triple goddess moon. Birth, death, and rebirth. Kind of the cycle of life. And everything about it, honestly, was perfect. It was in perfect timing. It was not a tattoo I had considered getting ever. But it was shown to me and, again, was just a perfect way to commemorate not only his death and birth but the whole entire experience and my journey as a woman and a person, who lived through such a thing.

So we did, like I said, do a fire for him. That was on March 12, 2016. And went on for many months more to process how amazing my experience was, how amazing my body was to hold him for four months. And just generally, being amazed. And honestly, that's still how I feel. Obviously, reading some of my own words about this death brought up some emotion for me. But I'm not ashamed or anything about that. I think that's totally normal, and that's the way especially as mothers we feel whether we've

held a baby for days or weeks or months. It doesn't matter. Once you're a mother to something in this life, you continue to be.

So I hope this was inspiring. And if you know somebody that has experience a loss of any kind, know that there is this resource and many other to support them. I will say, again, that I just think women's bodies are amazing. And that miscarriage and loss are just part of this birth cycle. It's not something we always want to embrace. But sometimes we are shown that that is the lesson. And we are shown that we can embrace it and be as strong through it as we can in any other birth. So thank you for listening to me express my emotions and my story around such an intimate and sacred experience. I really appreciate that even though I can't feel you listening right now. I know many people do, and I thank you for your kind words and emails and messages that often come after you've listened to a podcast that has touched you.

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(closing music)