

(introductory music)

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MARYN: Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts, *Taking Back Birth*. I usually say on iTunes, but I remembered you can listen to a podcast anywhere nowadays. Anyhow, Maryn here in Minnesota. And today I want to talk to Margo about her birth. You're how many days postpartum?

MARGO: I guess four? Five? One of those. It's hard when it's in the middle of the night that you start the counting.

MARYN: Nice and fresh.

MARGO: Yeah. Sitting here nursing this little person.

MARYN: Sweet little Aero nursing away. Cool. So where should we start talking about your birth story?

MARGO: I don't know. I guess—

MARYN: Where does it begin?

MARGO: Where does it begin? Well, I had what I would call a really nice kind of early labor this time which was fun. And I didn't really have so much of last time. So that was on Monday night into Tuesday, right? Yeah.

MARYN: And by nice?

MARGO: It was just really mellow, and the contractions felt different really the whole labor this time than I remember them last time. They just felt like they were in the right place, if that makes sense.

MARYN: Like they were doing more or something?

MARGO: Yeah. They were low, and it felt like oh, that's opening and changing my cervix instead of, "Oh god. What's happening to my whole body," kind of feeling.

MARYN: Right. So if people haven't read the first story that would be good.

MARGO: Sure. For some frame of reference.

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: Because the first time around, it was more like 7 or 8 minutes apart right off the bat and never really got farther apart than that for the long haul.

MARYN: That's right.

MARGO: So they were like 13 minutes apart all night starting at bed time on Monday and—until waking up in the morning on Tuesday. And that was when you were in Phoenix, right? Yeah.

MARYN: Yeah. It was the night before I would see you. I was at my mom's and getting your texts about things starting and just hoping that I would make it.

MARGO: Yeah. So on Monday night, my daughter fell asleep. And I was still having them every 13 minutes, and I made Russell draw me a bath and put tons of Epsom salts in. I was like, "I really want these to go away. I want Maryn to make it." Just this weird—I just never had pictured that being part of the birth. It happening on the cusp of you getting here. I either thought it would be way before you got here and like, "Oh, crap." Or it would be like solidly in the time frame when you were here. Not as you were getting here.

MARYN: Literally on the plane.

MARGO: Yeah. So I feel like I had to be sad about that in my bath tub for a little while, and I was like just—yeah. Asking him to stay there for a little while longer and wait for you, if he would be so nice as to do that which he did.

MARYN: Yeah. He listened.

MARGO: He did. He listened.

MARYN: And I said the same thing out to him in the universe. Do what you got to do, buddy. You don't have to wait for anyone.

MARGO: Yeah. But you did. So yeah. It felt like nothing was really changing all night, but it was definitely consistent. And they spaced out a little bit the next day but didn't go away completely.

MARYN: So at that point, did you think that was early labor? Or what were you thinking?

MARGO: Yeah. I figured that I was doing something—some of the early work. And yeah. What time was that at? I actually asked my midwife friend, Chandra, to come over. I had asked her the weekend before if she would check me just like—because I was so—

MARYN: For fun. Yeah.

MARGO: Yeah. For fun. Just the first time it taking so long to even get a tiny bit of opening done, I was curious if my body had already started the process. Not that I would recommend other people do that. I don't think I've ever checked someone's cervix when they weren't in labor as a client.

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: But I was so curious. So I asked her on Monday. No. Tuesday. Sorry. While you were on the airplane, I think. First airplane. I was like, "You want to come over and just tell me what's going on?" And I figured it was going to start up again that night at bedtime. That was my sense.

MARYN: You were right.

MARGO: And I was hoping it wouldn't be before then. It's like every hour that it got closer to you making it here, I was like, "Okay. It's probably going to wait."

MARYN: That's how I felt too.

MARGO: Yeah.

MARYN: I was glad to be on the airplane for a couple of hours too where I couldn't look and like, "Okay. If the baby is still in when I get off--"

MARGO: It'll still be there. Yeah. It'll still be in there. So she checked me, and she said she thought I was probably two or three centimeters and 50% effaced. And I was very excited about that just because, again, the first time it probably took 24 hours to do that.

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: And I didn't feel super tired because I had slept in between my contractions all night the night before, and I felt like I was going into it rested. And it wasn't like--I don't know. It didn't feel like I was starting the process already pooped out or anything which was nice. A nice difference.

MARYN: Yeah. You're the poster child though for eating through labor and now resting the night before. People should heed the good advice.

MARGO: Yeah. I slept a lot during the day too. We watched three feature length children's films. I think we watched *Moana* and then *Frozen* and *Madagascar*.

MARYN: Oh funny.

MARGO: Almost all in a row. And I just laid and snuggled Celosia. It was really sweet. And I'd like fall asleep and then kind of wake up and was still noting like, "Oh, yes. Still having contractions," but they weren't quite as consistent.

MARYN: Yeah. I remember you texted me at some point that 40 minutes went by or something.

MARGO: That was the longest stretch. Yeah. I think I fell asleep, and it was like 40 minutes. But other than that, it was, I think--between that 13, 25ish, which--yeah. I was really mostly timing again for fun at that point. And they weren't like nothing. They were pretty strong. I was able to lay through them. But I was like patting Celosia's leg. I'd pat her leg, and then she'd pat my hand patting her leg. It was like how I'd distract myself which was really sweet. And I had wanted to hopefully be snuggling her through part of it. So that was cool. Yeah.

MARYN: What did that part feel like? Because I remembered your Instagram post talking about contractions feel, and that made me think that I don't even remember anymore. So while you're remembering, maybe.

MARGO: Yeah. I feel like they were pretty much the same as when I had done that post. That hot, sort of low, hot, achy, melty kind of feeling. And they weren't getting stronger, but they were strongish. But it was nice though because I was--the whole night before I was actually using a bolster and flipping between the sides like I did during the end part of pregnancy anyways and was able to just completely relax and lay through them which is cool because I don't remember there being really a part where that manageable with my first labor. Like laying down was just so painful right away that--and maybe it's just because I had already done it once that I found it manageable the second time.

MARYN: Sure.

MARGO: More perspective. But yeah. So I was able to just let it ebb and flow that hot, melty feeling. And it felt like opening which was cool.

MARYN: Yeah. That is cool.

MARGO: It felt productive. Yeah. Well, and so then you were going to be here at 8:30 was when your plane touched down.

MARYN: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: And so that morning I had asked my brother if he could go pick Maryn up, if it was the case that I was in more active labor. And he, very nicely, said yes. But I think it

was—yeah. Just later in the day I said, “Oh never mind. We can totally go.” Things had still been that far apart kind of way. But then at 7:00 is when it switched back.

MARYN: And that’s what you said.

MARGO: That’s what I had thought would happen. Yeah. So then it went to more 7 or 8 minutes apart, and they definitely got stronger. So I tried to eat dinner with my family, and I just couldn’t. Like I sat down for a minute on one of those hard chairs and was like, “I can’t.”

MARYN: Yeah. Hard chairs are the worst.

MARGO: Had a contraction. Stood there. I guess I’ll bring the food up into my little labor zone. And I guess I ate it. I did eat it. It was delicious. Some Indian food Russell made.

MARYN: Mmm. That was so good.

MARGO: So then we were like, “Actually, brother, you do need to go get Maryn because it seems like things are happening.”

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: So I feel like we were in a dream. The way it all kind of lined up that way. I was like, “Is this real life?” It added an extra weird layer, I feel like, to labor brain which is already kind of a weird thing.

MARYN: Right. It’s always weird though even when you’re not the one birthing. It just takes on this strange essence with time. So you don’t actually know. Only in hindsight is it like, “Oh, of course it looked that way or was that way.” But even on the way here, I felt like, “Is Margo about to have a baby or is this going to be tomorrow?” And anything seemed possible.

MARGO: Anything seems possible in those moments. Yeah. Yeah. But it added a flair of Hollywood—

MARYN: Drama.

MARGO: Yeah. Yeah. Just trying to be like—it would be different if you lived around the corner.

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: There would have never been any questions.

MARYN: Yeah. Traveling for births changes all of it.

MARGO: Yeah. And to be like—yeah. To be in labor while you're on an airplane was funny. I never had thought that would be how it would look.

MARYN: Yeah. Well, it just as easily couldn't have as we've reflected.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: If your waters had opened at some point, then flights don't line up often.

MARGO: Right. Yeah. And so it just—and it was funny because you've never been to my house before. So it's like the first time you show up at my house, and I'm like, "Oh, hello. I'm in labor. I'm wearing no pants."

MARYN: It was the best to see you though.

MARGO: I know. But it was just—it already was feeling surreal to have you in my house here. And be like, "Welcome."

MARYN: Well, that's what I mean. I was outside texting you saying, "Should we come in?" Because I didn't want to bother you and I thought maybe you wanted us to just go away for a little while. Anyway—

MARGO: Yeah. So that was really—I feel like that was one of the really memorable moments. Like Maryn is in my bathroom. This is really happening. But it's, again, that weirdly dream like kind of quality of, "What is,"—because I thought it would be like, "Oh, you got to town. We go to lunch and hike around and hang out and see my house." And then I'd have a baby here. But yeah. So it was just so funny to have it be so abrupt, and this is happening.

MARYN: Yeah. I guess we got to do that when you came to me.

MARGO: Yeah.

MARYN: So we weren't afforded two prebirth hangout times.

MARGO: Right. Yeah. Yeah. So that's that part.

MARYN: So then what happened from there? They started up again about 7:00. I got here at about 9:00, and you were definitely in the process of.

MARGO: Yeah. And, of course, I, at some point, came downstairs where you and Russell were in the kitchen because I think I was feeling bad. I was like, "Oh, if you want to go check out the place you're staying and get settled, you guys could sleep there and come back later." I just didn't know what to think if it was really going to keep going or how long it was going to be or anything like that. So I wanted to make it clear you weren't trapped in my house with all your stuff and everything.

MARYN: No. I thought it was funny because I knew that wasn't going to happen.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: And also, like I told you a million times, I couldn't wait to get here and just be up with you all night.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: It was the last thing I was thinking was, "When am I going to get to go to bed?"

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: I didn't care.

MARGO: Yeah. You're a trooper after traveling all day.

MARYN: Yeah. But that's so exciting.

MARGO: Yeah. It is. Yeah. So I remember going downstairs, and I was trying to—I feel like I was trying to play it cool. Like, "Oh, I'm going to go all the way downstairs," and like, "If you need to go rest or whatever,"—and I remember having—pretty quickly having another contraction and being like, "Oh god. This is really happening." I don't know. It just felt like a funny—I was pretending to be less in it or something than I was maybe. Or maybe I thought if I went downstairs it would make it not be happening as closely. I don't know. I don't know if that makes sense.

MARYN: I think people arriving can make you feel like that though. So now we know more how women feel when we arrive at their house, but I felt that too. Where it's like all of a sudden you feel a little self conscious of, "I hope this is really what I think it is. All these people are here now."

MARGO: Right. Totally. Yeah. So yeah. I guess I did that. I, very quickly, went back upstairs. I don't think I was down there for more than a few minutes.

MARYN: Yeah. To your cave.

MARGO: Back to the cave. Yeah. And that part of labor too felt really—I don't know. Just felt really smooth is the word I would probably use. I think I was listening to music I liked. And I was trying to dance through contractions like back and forth felt really good. Shifting my weight around. And I was like talking to myself a lot. Russell, at one point, thought I was talking to him, but I was definitely talking to myself just like, "I can do this. I can open. I can relax," and just trying to talk myself into believing those things.

MARYN: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: And yeah. Again, I think music annoyed me last time. But maybe it was too late in the process. So I really liked having my playlist on and having songs that I knew the words too. That was a nice distraction whether or not I was actually saying them or singing them. In my head, just to be able to follow along and be like—I don't know. That was really comforting this time. But yeah. I guess that's what I was doing.

MARYN: It helps pass the time too.

MARGO: Yeah. I was rocking out to some (inaudible).

MARYN: Yeah. Good music.

MARGO: Some Trevor Hall. Some pretty uncreative—that's mostly all I listen to.

MARYN: That's pretty much all I listen to too. The uncreative pair.

MARGO: Yeah. And well, I think, it was nice too. That part just felt very—I don't even know. There were at least two times I remember just laughing a lot about something. I don't remember.

MARYN: It was fun.

MARGO: I remember asking you like, "How did you experience this as not painful," kind of like a silly, funny thing. And you saying, "It's just pressure." So I think I said that to myself a lot too throughout the whole thing. But yeah. That's what that part was like.

MARYN: Yeah. The calm before the storm.

MARGO: Yeah. And that was probably—they were five minutes apartish.

MARYN: Yeah. You were flying through really. I mean now, in hindsight, you can see too. It goes so fast especially compared to the first time.

MARGO: Yeah. So much faster. Yes. Yeah. And then Celosia fell asleep. Tula snuggled her to sleep.

MARYN: Oh yeah. That was cute.

MARGO: I think that helped, obviously. I think around then is when I was like, "You guys can go lay down too," right? Did I say that out loud? I feel like I did, but—

MARYN: I know. I feel like I don't remember exactly.

MARGO: I know I at least said it to Russell because he was like—he gratefully went and just laid down for awhile because he, of course, thought I was going to take a lot longer.

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: But I felt like I had a good rhythm going. I don't exactly recall what. But that's when it really picked up was around 11:00.

MARYN: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: Yeah. You said you don't remember what you were doing. You weren't in here.

MARYN: Yeah. And I didn't sleep.

MARGO: Just hanging out.

MARYN: My baby probably cried at one point. Yeah. I really don't remember what I would have been doing anyway.

MARGO: I think you were downstairs. But I was laying on my right side, and there—every three minutes super like clockwork. But they were only 45 seconds long, so I know in my brain I was a little like, “Hmm. I want to be really excited about this. But I'm also,”—

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: And it also felt like—not easy to handle. But really manageable to fall sleep, get up on my hands and knees, rock for a minute, and that's when I was doing that holding my breath thing that I was talking about where I was like—I'd hold my breath because the breathing in and out felt like too much change happening on top of the sensation. So it was easier to handle it if it was just one thing.

MARYN: Stationary.

MARGO: Yeah. Stationary. So I did that for an hour, I think.

MARYN: That's probably when we did one of the lives.

MARGO: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Mm-hmm. Yeah. An hour, an hour and a half, and then you came up again. And then I said something like, “I'm having a really hard time relaxing through them now.” Maybe you heard me getting a little crazy up here.

MARYN: Yeah. I was like, “Is there any mucous yet?”

MARGO: The darn mucous. I have the shyest mucous.

MARYN: Yeah. Until—

MARGO: Yeah. I had nothing at that point. But I was thinking too I never have any bloody show. Oh yes. I kind of did at the end. But I guess we'll get there.

MARYN: Yeah.

MARGO: So yeah. You nicely suggested I perhaps take a bath which I don't know that that sounded that great in the moment. But I was like, "Yeah. I guess I'll try that."

MARYN: Yeah. Nice bath tub.

MARGO: Yeah. It ended up being perfect. It was so wonderful.

MARYN: Yeah. That became your place.

MARGO: It was my happy place. Yeah. That helped me relax a lot, and I think they kind of space out a little bit for a minute.

MARYN: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: But then came back with the same consistency but were easier to manage for sure.

MARYN: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: And I don't know. I was there a long time, but it didn't feel like a long time.

MARYN: Yeah. I don't remember either except—yeah. You had a chance to rest it seemed like. You were kind of resting in between—well, because I'm sure you were thinking the same thing maybe. Maybe not. Since you were the one doing it but just if you were going to rest—try and rest more just because you never know at that moment. It's either somebody is going to have a baby soon, or they're going to be up all the rest of the night. And you don't want them to be too tired.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: I remember thinking it was just so good that you could rest in there. That's what you needed.

MARGO: Yeah. Well, and it was different too. Again, referring the last time, I remember being in the birth pool with Celosia being born. And I remember being woken up like—and it would be so intense right from the beginning of the contraction. So that was really different this time because even at that point which I was probably almost all the way done. They still felt like they started lower and they still got really intense. But then they went away. It just started—it was more gentle or something.

MARYN: Yeah. Like more even.

MARGO: With her, it felt like bam. Each one felt like it started really—

MARYN: Maybe your poor uterus was just so irritated at that point or something.

MARGO: My uterus, I think, could be characterized as an irritated uterus probably.

MARYN: Well, only momentarily. It rocked both births.

MARGO: Yeah. Right. But yeah. So that part was—felt smooth too. Yeah. Like you said, it kind of just ticked along in a way that I didn't get to experience the first time which felt much more like I had always imagined labor would feel. So that's really cool.

MARYN: That is really cool that you've got to feel that now because you get to see it.

MARGO: Right. Yeah.

MARYN: And it's so easy to see.

MARGO: It totally felt how I've thought it looked in other people, if that makes sense.

MARYN: Yeah. I think it's cool to have the experience of seeing births which maybe we could talk more about at some point. But I just wonder if you don't know that, it's probably a lot easier to get lost in the abyss of the moment without being able to pull back and say, "But that hour was different than this hour," although there is many not helpful things about (cross talk) births too.

MARGO: True. Yeah. No. Yeah. It totally—yeah. That's a good point. I felt like it followed the road map a little bit more than the last—a lot more than last time which—yeah. I felt less lost. That's a good word.

MARYN: But did you feel doubtful that it was actually happening?

MARGO: I feel like it was kind of too easy. Yeah. Not that it was easy easy. But—yeah. That part felt like I just couldn't believe I was getting to the end, which I guess is the next part.

MARYN: Yeah.

MARGO: That then all of a sudden as I was relaxing pretty well, I had a contraction where the end was involuntary pushing. Just the last few seconds. And everybody was like, "Huh?"

MARYN: I think that got written down.

MARGO: Yeah. I said—what did I say? Do you think that was a fluke or something?

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: I don't know what that even means because I certainly wasn't thinking I was close to that point. So I was like, "Of course that means what it probably means then." It's just hilarious that—

MARYN: Yeah. But it's so normal that you would say that because your first birth was so long.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: And that goes for anyone I think. Having a subsequent baby when they've had long labors. Your body knows what it's doing, but your mind can still question, "Is this right? Or how could I possibly be at that point?"

MARGO: Right. Yeah. So that was really exciting.

MARYN: It was very exciting.

MARGO: So I feel like that was part one of the story. That was all really nice.

MARYN: Are we telling part two?

MARGO: I would do that part again. Yeah. We can tell part two. Yeah. So then I guess I probably did another one or two in there, and they felt kind of the same. And then I got out because I think I was like, "Oh, if I get upright, that will probably really bring on the urge," because I was laying way back in the tub.

MARYN: Right. Almost on your back.

MARGO: Yeah. I was on my back totally relaxed and even had the urge. So it was like, "Oh, dang. I bet if I get up it's going to shoot out." That's what I was hoping was going to happen. And you asked if you should wake up Russell, and you did. And I remember Russell has since said he thought it was crazy that he was being woke. He's like, "There's no way it's going to be soon."

MARYN: Yeah. I wasn't sure that he was going to get up, by the way he (cross talk).

MARGO: Not understand. Yeah. He's a skeptic after—I mean he's only been to two births now.

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: And the first one—yeah. Anyway, so he got up, got all the cameras set up, and I kind of made my little zone where I had pictured having the baby all along which was at the foot of my bed. He got chux pads out. I was like—I think I said, "I'm just going to breathe this baby out. This is going to be great." I was so excited. And then I don't know what happened. What happened, Maryn? We hadn't called Alicia at this

point because—I mean I don't know. I mean I just didn't think, in the—even when they were 3 minutes apart, I wasn't like, "Oh, it's going to be soon."

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: Which, in retrospect, is really silly. But it worked out.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. It did work out. Yeah. It just—I don't know. It felt like it wasn't the right time to call her before that.

MARGO: And then all of a sudden, I was pushing a little bit. And I was like, "Oh shoot. Now it's not really a good time to call either," because she lives 45 minutes away.

MARYN: Right. She probably won't make it.

MARGO: She probably won't make it. Ha, ha. But—so yeah. I don't know. This is where it gets a little blurry for me.

MARYN: Yeah. I don't know. It's—I mean it's blurry for me in a different way. Just that it was hard work for you. And it was painful, which you can talk about obviously.

MARGO: Mm-hmm.

MARYN: And maybe places or parts you didn't expect.

MARGO: Yeah. It was like—the urge disappeared essentially when I got up instead of getting more intense which was really interesting because I thought for sure it would be like all of a sudden uncontrollable. Instead, it was just—it felt like the same kind of contractions but more intense but they weren't doing anything. I mean they were. But they weren't. There was nothing left to do really. I don't know. They just felt very unproductive, I guess, as compared to the other ones. And yeah. I was rewatching some of the video that we took. And I mean I remember peeing on the floor thinking—I think I was trying to push a little bit with a little mini urge I had gotten at one point. And just getting really frustrated. Still no mucous. That was confusing.

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: And then trying to hang on the door with the rebozo over it. And I said something in the video like, "Ugh. There is a lot of butt pressure," which I—is good. But nothing feels like it's moving. And I wasn't pushing. I was still trying to relax through them.

MARYN: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: But it was getting harder to relax through them, not easier. And then also no change. So I don't know. I just kept thinking like, "Okay. Maybe if I do this three more

times, then it'll be the one that changes," but I kept not changing. So I don't think my back was hurting that bad at that point. But it started to at some point.

MARYN: Yeah. I know. It's a little fuzzy.

MARGO: Yeah. So eventually, we did call Alicia. Once the baby was clearly not shooting out of me, we called her, and she did make it. By the time she got here, I was back in the tub.

MARYN: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: Because I remember looking over and seeing her show up and being like, "Oh, hi, Alicia." And I don't remember if I got in because my back was hurting or not. But it seemed like I needed to relax better than I was doing because I could not relax out of the tub, and I didn't have the urge. So yeah. Oh, I made you check me. That's what happened in between.

MARYN: That's right. Yeah.

MARGO: Because I was very confused about what was happening. You tried to talk me out of it.

MARYN: Yeah. I tried. I tried to talk you out of it, but I also know you. And I knew that your brain needed the info. I mean not that I would have not done what you wanted anyway.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: But yeah. I mean there was hardly any cervix there at all. Just that classic little anterior—I mean lip is such a strong word because that implies that it shouldn't be there. Yeah. Or that it was swollen. And neither of those things were true.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: The baby just wasn't ready to come down yet is what I felt. And then I mean, like we keep saying, in hindsight too it all just looks really normal. I mean it does often get just so unbearable before your body switches over.

MARGO: Right. Yeah. Yeah. so that was very encouraging. That, at least, made me not lose my mind. That was good.

MARYN: Right. Because a little part of you was like, "What if I'm only 5? And then I'm going to be sad."

MARGO: I would be very sad. Did my mucous plug come out around then too?

MARYN: I feel like it probably came right after—or no.

MARGO: I think it came before.

MARYN: Before? I don't know.

MARGO: (cross talk) before. I think it was before because I was—

MARYN: Yes. That's right. You're right.

MARGO: Yeah. So at one point, when I was on hands and knees next to my bed, I looked down. And I was like, "Oh, my mucous plus," somehow had plopped out without me noticing which I think is also funny.

MARYN: Yeah.

MARGO: Maybe when I was trying to do a little test bear down or something.

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: And it was just as big and giant and weird and bloody as the one I had with Celosia. It was huge.

MARYN: Yeah. It was very—

MARGO: Like 5 centimeter across or something.

MARYN: Yeah. It was very huge and very bloody, so that was all the proof.

MARGO: Very amazing. Yeah. But with her, I had lost it exactly the same kind of mucous plug, same size, weird, giant thing at—I think it was 9:00 the night before she was born. So it was 18 hours before she was born or something.

MARYN: Yeah. That's so less typical though.

MARGO: Right. So—but in my head, it was, of course, like, "Does that mean?"

MARYN: It's a trap.

MARGO: Yeah.

MARYN: Brain trap.

MARGO: Is this the same clue as last time or a different clue? So I think that it helped a lot to know, "Okay. My body is open." We just have to figure this how to get the baby out part out.

MARYN: Yeah. It's amazing how you'll just keep comparing experiences. I mean everybody does it. It's the craziest things with birth, and no two are ever the same.

MARGO: No. They're not.

MARYN: No. Never. Never. Never. Never.

MARGO: Never. So I got back in the tub.

MARYN: Got back in the tub because that's where you were comfy.

MARGO: To try to relax. Yeah. And I felt like I was just—it felt really similar, again, comparing to hers—to Celosia's birth—similar in that there were all those hours of her too of just waiting. Waiting for the urge. Trying to let my body figure it out on its own kind of. So that part felt very familiar. But yeah. Again, I can't remember when my back started hurting. I think it was maybe when I got out of the tub. But yeah. I was in there for awhile. And I don't know why I got out. That was part of my story I don't recall. I might have just got bored. Or it was cold or something.

MARYN: Yeah. That's my theory is it just was getting—we were adding water and taking it out.

MARGO: Yeah. I was in there like half an hour. Got out again, and I think that's when I was really hurting. My back. Which is a weird—I don't even know how to—

MARYN: And your hips too.

MARGO: It was my hips, my back, my stomach. At one point, I said my stomach was hurting. My muscles. Everything was freaking out or something. So I think at that point you had asked me, "What if you just try and bear down? What happens? Does it hurt less?" And it didn't. And so that was hard because it was different than with my last birth where pushing kind of—it never really hurt. It was tiring, but it wasn't painful.

MARYN: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: And it wasn't the pushing that was painful. It was my back that was hurting. And I was trying to push, but it was like, "Ow."

MARYN: I know. That's confusing because that's what I was thinking too when you were saying it hurt. Is your body on the outside, your structure or inside?

MARGO: It was my structure. Yeah.

MARYN: Yeah. I mean that's just so unfair. Nobody needs a structural problems on top of a person coming through.

MARGO: Yeah. And I didn't have any through the pregnancy. That's what was so confusing. I mean I had occasional SI joint pain or occasional pubic bone pain. But nothing unmanageable at all. It was a really easy pregnancy in terms of I felt pretty good.

MARYN: Yeah. You were moving around and walking.

MARGO: Yeah. I saw a chiropractor. And I was getting massages all the time.

MARYN: I know.

MARGO: Yeah. Things felt good. So it was kind of out of the blue, and—yeah. I don't even know how to describe it. But it was the—my hips, the sides. My SI joints hurt. My sits bones kind of hurt. And at one point, it was going up my paraspinal muscles.

MARYN: Oh gosh.

MARGO: Into my midback. It just hurt everything.

MARYN: Yeah. It was pretty high on your back.

MARGO: Yeah. It was weird. And so I was trying to push, but it felt like I couldn't do a very good job with that pain on top of it. And nothing was doing anything. It didn't feel like it was moving the baby at all in all those different weird positions. So then I think I made you check me again.

MARYN: Yep. Just two times.

MARGO: Oh, I guess because that was one theory. Like, "Oh, maybe it's hurting so bad because there's cervix left, and it's starting to get in the way."

MARYN: Right. And even though—right.

MARGO: That made no sense. But it was like a theory. A working theory. And then—yeah. I was—I guess my thought was check me again and see. And if there is a lip, just—I think I just told you to shove it back over the baby's head. I don't care what you got to do.

MARYN: Yeah. I know. You were desperate at that moment which is totally understandable.

MARGO: I was quite desperate.

MARYN: But it didn't feel—I felt that feeling of a cervix.

MARGO: That was holding a baby back. Yeah.

MARYN: Yeah. God forbid.

MARGO: And it wasn't.

MARYN: No.

MARGO: No.

MARYN: Because that feeling is like, "Holy crap." And the strength you actually need is pretty incredible.

MARGO: To push it back.

MARYN: Yeah. You're kind of shaking to do it. This was—there was no tension there. The baby just wasn't coming down yet.

MARGO: Right. And well the other—and the other thought was just maybe having more direction. I think I asked you to push where I'm supposed to be pushing. Maybe I'm just not doing it right which again was probably just my brain going back to last time because that's what really helped get Celosia out was to have some more direction as to where.

MARYN: Yeah. It seemed like it helped you just to know that he was moving. It was nothing anyone else was doing. But I could feel that when I was touching your cervix. I didn't need to pull it back. But I could feel him descending, and that had to be encouraging.

MARGO: Right. I was skeptical. I was like, "Are you sure he's moving?"

MARYN: Yeah. He was.

MARGO: Yeah. So I was kind of weirdly on my back with my butt hanging off my bed, which is on the floor which is probably not the best position. But I was there for not that long.

MARYN: Yeah. But there's something about that position that your body kind of likes.

MARGO: Yeah. And I know I tried McRoberts at one point which did not last.

MARYN: It was—yeah.

MARGO: Awful. Yeah. Which is funny because, again, no births are the same. Last time that felt totally fine surprisingly when we tried that. So I was sort of surprised and like, "Oh no. That didn't work." I think that made me feel desperate too. It was like, "Oh god. If the tricks that got the other hard baby out don't work this time, what other tricks do we have?"

MARYN: Oh I know. Again, that's so hard to separate that because I look back on it. And I'm like, "Well, it was all just really pretty normal, and it just wasn't time." But you wanted it to be time because you were just so uncomfortable, right? Is that a—

MARGO: I think. I mean I think—I don't know.

MARYN: - good assessment or no?

MARGO: I guess here's one of my questions. If I had stayed in the tub with the urge to push and I just been like, "Fuck this. all right. I'm done," would he have been out 15 minutes later? Do you think? Or did it really take those hours? Were those necessary hours? This is what I always wondered with Celosia too.

MARYN: Were they necessary hours? Well—

MARGO: Would I have just—I don't know because it didn't feel in my body anything changed between 1:30 and he was born at 4:23. When I got out.

MARYN: So you mean without you applying effort. Is that what you mean?

MARGO: If I had decided I was just going to push him out.

MARYN: Earlier on?

MARGO: Yeah. Would it have gone exactly the same? Or did something, you thin, change in those hours other than his astrological sign, of course?

MARYN: Right. I know. I mean that's my big picture answer is that's how it needed to be for him.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: But I don't know. I mean I know that when you were in the tub that's where you felt the most progress. So I mean I'd like to know more too just about whatever goes on internally with different people's bodies and it feels good for him to feel like you needed to be that way to get onto your pubic bone or something. But I think it's—I mean it's probably the more reasonable answer which is just the molding that needed to do or whatever. I mean even though we act that doesn't—or shouldn't happen with babies that aren't the first baby, it does.

MARGO: Mm-hmm.

MARYN: And it can.

MARGO: Right. Yeah. It just felt like—I guess we can—I'm skipping ahead now. Okay. So I got out of the bath. You checked me again. I was trying to push in all these

weird positions that, to me, made sense. I know I should be upright. And oh—and then I stomped around and said—my back was really hurting. In the video, it's sort of horrifying.

MARYN: Yeah. No. I know.

MARGO: I'm like, "(Cross talk) on my back."

MARYN: You were really hurting.

MARGO: And I definitely was like, "Oh, I could go and get an epidural. That's a thing, right," in my brain. And then I was walking around. And I guess I had said that walking made it feel better. But it was this weird walking of—it just felt very frantic or something.

MARYN: Well, doesn't that make you think—I mean you weren't thinking the same way that you are now. But that maybe it just wasn't the perfect fit yet or something for him. I mean who knows.

MARGO: Right. Yeah. I don't know. Because I guess—I'm trying to think if there is anything else before getting back in the tub part. I guess you guys rebozoed me.

MARYN: Yeah. We tried.

MARGO: You tried. You pressed on my back. I whined a lot. What else did we do? I ate some apples and cheese and grape juice.

MARYN: Yeah. You kept eating. And there was no magic thing anyone, sadly, could do to make it better. You just persevered.

MARGO: I whined more. I hung on Russell. That actually kind of felt good.

MARYN: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: I don't know why. I was feeling like a human instead of a—

MARYN: Yeah. That's what you said. I remember this.

MARGO: - exploding ball of pain.

MARYN: Yeah. I remember you getting up to—you were in here. For every contraction you would get up and walk into the bathroom and come back.

MARGO: Uh-huh. Yeah. And then, at some point, decided to get back in the tub again.

MARYN: Yeah. I guess.

MARGO: Did we even heat it up? I don't even know how—I don't remember any of these things. But I think I just said, "I'm done," right? Did I say that? Did you know I was—I was thinking that?

MARYN: Yeah. I feel like I felt that from you. I don't know exactly what you said. But it also felt like baby was coming soon.

MARGO: Yeah. I mean I think in my brain I was like, "I'm going to get in there. I'm going to push it out. That's what's happening now."

MARYN: Oh, okay. Yeah. Yeah. That's what it—

MARGO: I think so.

MARYN: That's what it felt like.

MARGO: That was my only other idea.

MARYN: Well, right. Because by the third time in there, I think you were like, "This is where it's—this is where I'm feeling it."

MARGO: Yeah. That's where I felt the urge more the first time. Yeah. I figured I should just stay put.

MARYN: Mm-hmm. And it seemed—by that third time, it definitely seemed stronger. and your body was pushing more on its own.

MARGO: Did it?

MARYN: Well, because the first time, wasn't it just—what did you say? At the end of the contraction.

MARGO: Yeah.

MARYN: Yeah. I mean by the last time it seemed not that way.

MARGO: Yeah. See in my crazy brain—

MARYN: I guess you have video to look at though.

MARGO: Yeah. We should do that. It didn't really feel that different between—

MARYN: Maybe it was just your determination.

MARGO: I might have just been trying. Yeah. Well, yeah. When you had checked me the second time and I was making myself push without the urge, maybe I—maybe it

didn't—maybe you couldn't tell from the outside which ones were real versus me manufacturing them or something.

MARYN: Sure. Or you felt like the permission, in a sense, that you weren't going to hurt yourself.

MARGO: Yeah. That was super helpful. So yeah. I got in there, I think, at 4:10. Something like that.

MARYN: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: And I think I was in the first couple contractions with me being like, "I'm just going to push as hard as I can," I felt him finally move.

MARYN: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: And I hadn't been pushing that hard. It's like I couldn't push that hard when I wasn't in the pool—or in the tub.

MARYN: Yeah. I know. Something about the angle.

MARGO: I couldn't even get—oh, I know. He woke up. I couldn't even get the strength behind it that I wanted to. Does that even make sense? I don't know if that makes sense.

MARYN: Yeah. And I mean I guess the million dollar question on this side of the coin is just how many hours would it take before your body did push him out.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: Because I think we have to believe that would happen.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: But this is real life. And it was very painful.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: What if a person can't make it that long for one reason or another?

MARGO: Totally.

MARYN: Really.

MARGO: That's what I was wondering.

MARYN: I mean that's a reasonable question. And it's a choice that women should be able to make for themselves.

MARGO: Well, and I remember thinking that in the bathroom—I was by myself at one point, I think, between some of those really painful ones where I was walking around and just feeling super desperate. I just thought like, "If this goes on, maybe I'll go clinically insane."

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: "Maybe I'll become—just a person who has to live in a mental institution." Because it's so, so intense. But yeah. So for some reason being in the tub and the angle and the—maybe the permission, the knowing I wasn't going to destroy my cervix, and knowing that I did it last time that way, I was like, "Whatever. Last time I had to do it like this too," kind of. I can do it again.

MARYN: You've been there.

MARGO: So I'm glad it didn't take longer than the couple of really good pushes to feel him start moving down. And then it was pretty quick from there.

MARYN: Yeah.

MARGO: I'd say really fast actually. I mean it's funny because in your own body it's like probably only a few inches. But it feels like fast. Like a giant head coming through so fast and a far way. It feels a long way.

MARYN: Yeah. I mean there's so many different sensations with that path.

MARGO: Yeah. I totally felt his head fill up that space. It was probably two or three contractions before I was like, "Okay. He's at the top of the runway," kind of feeling. He's ready to go. And then it was—I think it was only one contraction where I finally moved him all the way down, in, and I was like, "Whoa."

MARYN: Yeah. And you were feeling (cross talk).

MARGO: Yeah. Totally at the bottom of the curve. And then the next one I got him around the bend. And then the next one I got his head part way out. So it was pretty quick considering I was on my back and making myself. And at some point, the urge did happen again.

MARYN: Sure.

MARGO: I was pushing really hard. But once I got him down into my butt then I think most of it was automatic.

MARYN: Yeah. It's like that pelvic floor point. That's so interesting. We'll have to talk more about that at some point.

MARGO: So yeah. I reached down, and I could feel. I think at one point I—maybe the second contraction where I really moved, and I felt in. And I could feel him. And I said, “Oh, I can feel it.” And then the next one I thought his head was going to come out because I was quite determined. I was like, “Get out now.” And it was—there's the photo people can check out on Instagram or whatever where there's—it's not like crowning all the way. But he's almost.

MARYN: Yeah. It's like a quarter. A quarter crown.

MARGO: Yeah. And then I gave one extra bonus push at the end of that contraction that was not—it was just me deciding to because I was like, “Maybe I'll get the head out.” And then I didn't. And then that's when I said—or just got out of the tub. Which I had moments before been like, “I'm not getting out.”

MARYN: I'm not going anywhere.

MARGO: “I'm not going anywhere.” So then between the contractions, I leapt out of the bathroom somehow.

MARYN: Very gracefully.

MARGO: And you had had the foresight to put down some chux pads outside of the tub probably guessing that I would do that. And that is what I did last time too. Pushed on my back most of the way. Not quite to that point. and then got up.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's really cool.

MARGO: Yeah. So yeah. And then I think his head just kind of came out either with the next contraction or with the leaping out or something. I couldn't really feel.

MARYN: Yeah. You didn't really seem to exert anything extra to make that happen. It was kind of like—yeah. By the time you got in that runner's pose, right? It was out.

MARGO: Yeah. It was already out.

MARYN: The head.

MARGO: But it felt huge. It's funny.

MARYN: That's the craziest feeling.

MARGO: Yeah. But it's funny too. I mean his wasn't as molded as much as Celosia's. I wonder if that's why it felt so—but I mean his neck is not bigger. I don't know. It just felt like there's a head out. And the rest is still in. And what the hell? Why?

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: Because with her, she just blooped right out moments after her head was born essentially.

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: And he took a couple contractions, and it felt like a long time to me. But I also knew he was going to come out. But like I told you, I also did have a plan in my head of what I was going to crawl to if you needed to reach in and get a shoulder out of me. I had manufactured the plan in those 30 seconds or so.

MARYN: That's funny. Crazy labor brain.

MARGO: Yeah. And I think I yelled, "Get it out of me," a few seconds before he was actually out. I didn't feel any change. It was just like thunk. It was kind of the feeling.

MARYN: Yeah. I mean I don't know. Everybody is different, but I feel like even with Cove it was just waiting for the next one. There wasn't really any change in between.

MARGO: Except for you were like so patient. Like, "I can wait a minute and like la, la, la." And I was screaming.

MARYN: Well, I was just talking myself. Yeah. All the births are different. But I feel like what I've seen more often too are heads that are out. So now you get to know.

MARGO: Now I know what that feels like. Yeah. It was a crazy feeling.

MARYN: It is.

MARGO: Yeah. And I think I asked Celosia to come closer because I really wanted her to—she had said she wanted to catch the baby which she didn't but was really close and right nearby which is so special.

MARYN: That's so cool.

MARGO: Yeah. And it was like one second he was—felt sort of stuckish and the next second he was out. I don't remember what the feeling of that was. But it was really cool this time to be able to reach down and feel the head out because I didn't do that last time.

MARYN: Oh yeah. That's so cool.

MARGO: Last time I just froze in my hands and knees position. So that was really fun to be like whoa.

MARYN: Oh, that's the best feeling in the world I think.

MARGO: Yeah. I even have a cool photo of that one too. That moment.

MARYN: That feeling of a head in your hands I hope never leaves my memory because their heads get bigger. And he still has the perfect birth size head. Fits in the palm of your hand.

MARGO: It's so crazy.

MARYN: It really is.

MARGO: Yeah. Well, and it was cool too to have him come through forwards. Last time I had him kind of handed to me through my legs—or had her handed to me through my legs which was cool too. But yeah. It was nice to just have him there. I did not pause. I definitely grabbed him right away. I feel like I was frantic about it.

MARYN: Well, you worked really hard for him.

MARGO: I did. It was hard. It was hard and not hard. It was labor felt so smooth. When I finally decided to push him out, it felt smooth. It was that weird limbo time that was—yeah. I'll have to reflect more like, "What could the purpose of that be," in the bigger scheme of things or lessons or something.

MARYN: Well, and just I think the way different people describe it. Because I feel like I know what you mean but I just have a different—I've had different experiences than that. But yeah. Kind of before they're ready to come out is the hardest. And it doesn't matter. I think if it's one minutes even though—yeah.

MARGO: Right.

MARYN: That's quicker and maybe nicer. But that's always the part I feel like—I always say the earth shatters. It's just crazy intense, and you have to surrender to it. But you can't in a way.

MARGO: Yeah. Yeah. And I still feel like I'm going to be like wondering about this back pain. And it continued after, I guess, would be the other part of that story. So if anyone is listening and has any theories for me, because I feel like I could have been patient for a long time and done the whole waiting to see if the urge would really kick in if I hadn't had that back pain.

MARYN: Oh, I know. I know.

MARGO: Oh my god.

MARYN: Yeah. And that's what I honestly mean. You had to do what you did.

MARGO: Oh my god. Yeah.

MARYN: You have to weigh your options.

MARGO: Because it would be cool. I think it would have been cool to wait and see in so many ways. So maybe that's a lesson. I wasn't supposed to wait and see.

MARYN: Yeah. You obviously weren't.

MARGO: But it would have been nice because I'm really—and that was—yeah. I guess that was part of it too. I felt like I was so patient last time. That was something I sort of prided myself on, so I felt very like, "Oh god. Why am I being so impatient?" But that feeling was so weird.

MARYN: Right.

MARGO: Yeah.

MARYN: Well, like you say, maybe that—the lesson the first time was to have patience. I mean with her. And so it has been. So different lessons. I mean labor is like one of the only times in life I feel like that you really can't screw up. You can't. Because it's so raw and you're not able to think really. You think you're thinking.

MARGO: You think you're thinking.

MARYN: But you're actually sort of not in the best case of scenarios.

MARGO: You're being a weirdo.

MARYN: And so you weren't because you weren't under other weird stresses. You were able to access information, but it was not your logical brain. So how can you—I mean people do. But shouldn't doubt that.

MARGO: Oh, I don't know why that reminded me, but I thought the other cool part this time was we just didn't listen at all to him in labor because I could feel him moving the whole time which was cool because he didn't necessarily always do that. Wasn't always the easiest to feel. But even especially in the bath tub, I feel like I could feel him kicking around in there, and I didn't feel worried about him during labor which was really nice. So that was kind of part of the other story. So that was cool to have be different this time and just be like—I feel like he always sent that message very strongly. "Don't worry about me. I'm just fine."

MARYN: Yeah. That's so cool and so neat that you have that experience.

MARGO: Yeah.

MARYN: Because I really always hope that for more women.

MARGO: Yeah. I felt pretty connected to him in labor in a way that I feel like his pregnancy I didn't necessarily always. I kind of did. But he's been sort of a mysterious little person. Not so much now. Now I know who you are.

MARYN: That's crazy.

MARGO: Yeah. Yeah. Then after the birth, I feel like there wasn't anything too exciting. I bled a lot like I do. But I felt good.

MARYN: Yeah.

MARGO: I got my placenta out lickety split.

MARYN: Yes. You did.

MARGO: That was easier and pretty nice and straightforward this time around. Yeah. What else? That's kind of it. He's a boy.

MARYN: He's a boy.

MARGO: His name is Aero. Aero Vale. It took us a few days to come up with his name. But I think it suits him.

MARYN: Yeah. It's a great name. Yeah. And so much to look forward to if you're listening to this. I'm sure Margo will have many other cool reflections and parts of the story maybe we forgot and I'm sure a written birth story and the video and all kinds of clips and really cool photos. So if you're a birth nerd, this is just the beginning.

MARGO: Oh my water broke right before he came out.

MARYN: That was so cool.

MARGO: That was cool.

MARYN: Nice clear fluid.

MARGO: Yep.

MARYN: Yeah. And he came out so ready to go.

MARGO: Crying. But not freaking out. Just a nice little newborn cry and chilled out.

MARYN: Very good adaptation to human life.

MARGO: Yeah. Happy transition. Yeah.

MARYN: It all sounds just such a great, normal, wonderful home birth story.

MARGO: Yeah. It's very exciting to have gotten to do it twice now. Oh, you're not sucking anymore. I see.

MARYN: Cool. Well—

MARGO: That was fun.

MARYN: Thanks for listening everyone. Like I said, stay tuned for more from Margo's birth. I'm so happy to be here with her. Us sitting on the same bed to record this podcast which happens very rarely.

MARGO: I don't know that it's ever happened.

MARYN: Yeah. I don't know if it's ever happened. So this is history in the making here. And of course, congrats and love. Little Aero is so beautiful.

MARGO: Thank you.

MARYN: And such an honor to see him come this way and I look forward to getting to know him. All right. Check out the indiebirth.org site for more exciting information. We'll talk to you soon.

(closing music)