

(introductory music)

DISCLAIMER: Welcome to *The Birth Warrior Podcast*. In each episode, we feature the stories of birth warriors, women who have persevered to find their own truth in pregnancy and birth. As you hear these women share their stories of love, autonomy, connection, and power, it is our deepest wish that you will be inspired, empowered, and supported to find your own truth. We are honored these women have stepped forward to share their personal stories and to help us remember that we all have the power to choose what is right for us. *The Birth Warrior Podcast* is a presentation of the Indie Birth Association and is not intended to be medical advice.

TINA: Hey, everybody. This is Tina. Back again with another Indie Birth *Birth Warrior Podcast*. And today we're going to be talking with Regina. And she is coming to us today from Oregon. Hi, Regina.

REGINA: Hi.

TINA: How's it going?

REGINA: Pretty amazing. Laying day for a moment. Enjoying a moment of rest for my little baby.

TINA: Perfect. So tell us a little bit about you. Your family.

REGINA: Yeah. Well, my name is Regina. And I am 37 years old and have been really fascinated with childbirth since I attended my first birth when I was 21 years old and knew, in my heart that I wanted to study and become a midwife and just getting started after resisting the whole settling down, grounding out, and being on call aspect of the duty. And yeah. I am just transitioning from Northern California to Oregon for an apprenticeship that's lining up that I feel really, really blessed to be in. And I have an incredible 13 month old named Orion McKai, who was born here at grandma's and grandpa's in Seal Rock, Oregon. And I am expecting. I'm 13 weeks pregnant and just found out. I was doing my absolute best to not take the test because I just love the idea of not taking a test. But there is so much pressure around the apprenticeship and the move and trying to figure everything out and everybody is like, "Dude, we got to just know." And I'm lactating. So it's nature's way of—you just don't know. I'm like, "It could not be." So I'm like okay. And then as soon as I really found out, I'm like, "Oh god. I feel so pregnant." 13 weeks. So yeah. I was a massage therapist from 17 on, studied craniosacral, massage therapy, and then just got really into women's empowerment and birth and working with women around birth trauma and the deal. So it's a little bit about me.

TINA: Awesome. Awesome. Well, how did you happen upon Indie Birth?

REGINA: So yeah. I just—I was pregnant—big and pregnant. I was probably about 7 months pregnant. My girlfriend out in Crystal Creek where we lived out—where I lived out in High Palm. She was like, “What are you doing? Do you have a midwife?” And I was like, “No. Not really.” “What are you doing?” “I’m just kind of trusting the process.” And she’s like, “Oh, have you heard about Indie Birth?” And I’m like, “No. I haven’t heard of it.” She’s like, “Oh, you’ve got to—you’ve got to check it out.” So then I just got on and just basically listened to every podcast available and felt—I do. I do really feel like all the listening to Maryn and Margo and Maryn’s work together and just everything that all the women are doing at Indie Birth gave me the courage to have the empowered birth that I had. And I’m so, so grateful for it.

TINA: Amazing. You want to tell us about your birth?

REGINA: Sure. Yeah. So I’d love to just share a little prior—about my pregnancy too.

TINA: Absolutely.

REGINA: Okay. Because—yeah. Everything kind of led up to this birth. That’s what happens. So I actually found out I was pregnant right after my dad had a pretty bad, tragic fall that left him paralyzed from the neck down for 10 months. And then he ended up passing 2 months after my son was born. So Orion was conceived in the midst of the kind of the trauma of my father falling and what was going to happen and that realm. And my partner and I and his 12-year-old son were traveling. I ended up doing a 25-mile backpacking trip when I was about 14 weeks pregnant. And just a lot of nature, just—and he kept telling me, “Whatever you want to do. Whatever you want to do. However you want to have the baby, wherever you want to go, I’m—I fully support you.” And it felt really good to have that. He was very, very supportive. And he’s very primitive in his ways and very much trusting the instinctual guidance and not fearful. I’m so grateful it all—of childbirth and trusting me and my intuition.

And so I came to the choice to have our baby out on our land in High Palm, which is 45 minutes away from even a cell phone service. It’s extremely remote. And so I was like, “This is what I’m going to do.” And I kind of lined up with a lay midwife of sorts out there and ended up not really—we didn’t really fully resonate. And so I let that go. And so I was just kind of like, “Yeah. I just am really trusting this.” I just felt it really deeply this trust in my body and my body’s ability to do what it naturally is designed to do and felt very protective. This is before ever listening to Indie Birth. Very protective of anyone trying to tell me what to do basically. Very much like this is my experience and I don’t want anyone monitoring me basically and kind of telling me what to do. I’m very particular about who I wanted to be around even when I was pregnant, let alone actually giving birth.

And so I made up my mind that I was going to do it out there. And that was in June. And then June came around and July. And it got hotter and hotter and Northern California was just blasting. It was so hot. I was just having to soak in our creek and run cold baths. We have an outdoor bath tub and just basically all I could do was sit in the cold water. And finally, I was like—I literally was like, “I have to go.” There were fires. That was the year the Carr Fire, and Paradise happened later in September. But that was the massive fires. And I was just like, “This isn’t feeling very safe.” And so I just—my partner was out on an expedition. And I called his mom. And I just said, “Hey, how would you feel about us birthing up there? I know it’s kind of short notice,” because I was basically due in a month. Or a month and a half.

And she has a little outdoor—it’s like an apartment off of their house. And she was, of course, elated. And, “Oh my god. Yes.” And she—I literally could feel the yes was so important to me. And could feel my cervix in that moment. I really did. I felt like wow. This expansion of this yes. This being received and supported because that was kind of the thing of like I wanted to have my baby in a really remote area in the middle of the wilderness with no wifi and this whole thing. But then the option of being cooler and having family support ended up kind of overriding that. And so I just threw all my stuff in my little RV and literally felt like I was escaping the heat and went to the coast and put my feet in the ocean. Was like, “Oh my god. Yes.” And I got out here. And, of course, Caleb was on board. It was a big change for him because he was like, “Okay. We’re doing it up here.” And I had already decided to do it down there. But he was like, “I support you of course.”

TINA: Mm-hmm.

REGINA: So we came—I came up here. And he was already up here. And we got settled in. And at that point, I think it was July 19th. My due date was September 11—no not 11. September 9th. My due date was September 9th. I ended up having him August 16. So I had him 3 ½ weeks early. And so then when I got up here—and of course, Grandma Bonnie is very trusting but also like, “So, what about the whole midwife thing?” And I was like, “Well, I was just wondering how you guys would feel if I had an unassisted birth? Or if we just did it. We could just do it.” And she was—she was in hospice. And she’s a nurse. And she got kind of excited. She was also like kind of, “I don’t know.”

TINA: Right.

REGINA: But she wasn’t—she wasn’t like, “No. We can’t do that.” So I was like okay. That’s cool. But I still had this feeling inside of me. I had a feeling from the beginning—and this was one reason why I didn’t fully resonate with the first midwife that I was working with in High Palm is just I was asking her questions like, “Are you certified in

neonatal resuscitation?” Or just kind of getting my ducks in a row. And she was—she’s very—I would say I know she’s a skilled midwife. And she’s also very traditional in the ways of like—she’s like, “Hey, if you think you’re having an emergent birth, maybe I’m not the woman for you.” And I’m like, “Huh. I really want to feel like I have someone that we can work out everything and then move forward.” The whole time I kind of just felt like I wanted to have someone there that knew a little more than me because I’ve been doing birth work for 15 years. And I’ve attended probably 25 births, 30 births, and I have caught a baby. It was not an intentional thing. But I do know a fair amount, but I didn’t want to—I wanted someone there that knew a little bit more than me but that was going to give me my total freedom to just be and then they would come if I needed them.

And so this cool synchronicity happened. So my partner’s son—his name is Isaiah. And his mom—her name is Breeze. And his—her mom is Lori. And all of a sudden one day, we get a message from Lori. And she’s like, “Hey, I was,”—she was a midwife 15 years ago. And she was traditionally apprenticed midwife. And not licensed. But she did it. But she hadn’t done it in 15 years. But she was like, “Hey, I just had this dream that I was at your birth, and I just wanted to offer if you wanted me to be there.” And this is my partner’s ex-partner’s mom.

TINA: Right. Amazing.

REGINA: But she’s like, “I just want you to know that I’ll be there if you want me to be there.” And I was like, “Oh my god. This is it. This is what,”—because when you’re in that place of just trusting and you’re down to the wire and you’re like, “Okay, people.” Because I would try—I tried to get online and look up licensed midwives. And it just didn’t—for me, it just didn’t feel like good. It was like I didn’t know this person. And they’re going to tell me what to do, and they’re going to be monitoring me which is their job. And I appreciate that that’s their job. But for me, it wasn’t something that I wanted. And so this was just the perfect scenario. And so I met her. We resonated completely. She ordered a birth kit because she—it had been 15 years. She was—took my blood pressure for the first time. I did all my own—I had the heart beat checked one time from the midwife in High Palm that I was going to work with. And besides that, I just—I’m like everything is perfect. I’m perfect, and everything is perfect. And so much empowerment, obviously, from listening to the podcast and being like, “Yes,” and just like all of the ladies’ teachings around it. I’m like yes. This is like I can do this.

TINA: Mm-hmm.

REGINA: It was crucial to have the influence of Indie Birth in that trust. And so the trusting and trusting and trusting and kind of looking at my watch going, “Okay, universe. I’m coming up on a month or a month and a half. And I need something to

really come through to feel like okay. This is it.” because I wasn’t 100% ready to just do it on my own for the very first baby. And mostly because I wanted support after the baby came. And just boom. Let’s get everything cleaned up.

TINA: Right.

REGINA: The unassisted is kind of like, “I don’t really want to be unassisted. I want to be assisted. I just want to be in control of my experience.”

TINA: Right.

REGINA: So there is a distinction in that for me. And so Lori was—we were just on board with that. And then about a week or two into that relationship, she kind of got a little cold feet. And she’s like, “Well, I can’t be the primary midwife.” She was kind of a little like—it’s like basically juggling responsibility. Who’s going to actually be holding this ball of responsibility? And I let her know at that point I’m actually the primary midwife. And you are assisting, and I’m going to do it by myself anyway. So it would just be more helpful if you were there. And that gave her that permission to not—because it is a—it is a scary thing especially if she hadn’t done it in 15 years. And so she was just being honest. So we worked out that kink where it’s like okay. I can do this. Okay. So we’re on board with that.

So then Caleb was actually about nine hours away milling wood for a structure. And I was like, “Okay. You have to be back within three and—a month.” I think I was like you got to be back within a month or something of my due date. And we were talking every day. But he wasn’t up here. And so grandma was just so unsupportive with everything. And I just—so basically, my intuition was like, “Okay. If I’m going to be without a licensed professional, what resonates for me is to have one ultrasound so that I can just make sure the baby is in the correct position,” because I couldn’t tell. I really just couldn’t tell. I’m not skilled in that way anyway of being able to tell where a baby is at. It takes a lot of practice to do that. And I don’t have that wisdom yet. And so I’m like, “Okay. I feel like that’s a good balance.”

So I got online, and I just searched a random midwife in Oregon and called her up and was like, “Hey, I’m doing this. And can you just write me a,”—because it’s—you can’t just get an ultrasound because they—they’re tracking everything and all the birthing women. So she was like, “Oh, absolutely.” She was so helpful, so supportive. This woman was just amazing. And her name is Amanda. And she was just like, “Yes. Absolutely. This is a great doctor.” So I was like, “Okay. Cool.” So on the 12th—it was two days before the baby is born. But we didn’t know that was going to happen. On the 12th, Grandma Bonnie and I went to Eugene and got an ultrasound. And at the end of the ultrasound, the woman who is doing the ultrasound kind of like—she—they kind of have to be really straight faced. It was just an interesting experience, and it lasted a

way longer than I thought it was. And I was like—I did not—I was telling her I don't want it to last. I just want a quick, "Hey, what position is the baby in?" That's really all I want to know. But they have protocols that they have to do. And I'm like dude. She was doing stuff for 35 minutes. And I'm like oh my god.

TINA: Wow.

REGINA: Because they have to clip—they have to take pictures of every little thing. And anyway, turns out the baby was so far down on my cervix at that point that she had to tilt the chair at an angle to even get the baby off my cervix to do the ultrasound. So that's when I realized yep. The head is down. And actually, the head is fully engaged and pushing on your cervix. And I was like oh. Thank God. Because I did not—I was like, "Dude. This is intense." I was definitely more and more like, "Golly. I don't know about another month of this," because it was so much pressure. And so anyway, at the end, she kind of gets this concerned look on her face. And she's like, "Well, I got to—I'm going to—I'll be right back. We have to bring in the doctor." And I knew oh shit. I'm like if the doctor is going to come in something is going on. And ugh. Of course, I did not want to deal with a doctor. So he comes in. And he's the doctor, and he's like, "Well, you have a velamentous insertion." Do you know what that is?

TINA: No.

REGINA: I'll just explain it for people that don't know what it is. So basically, the placenta—the umbilical cord comes out of the placenta. And then as it's going into the—well, let's just start from the umbilical cord. So the baby's belly button, the umbilical cord comes out. And then as it's plugging into the placenta, it loses its Wharton jelly at the very end to where there is just loose placental vessels going into the placenta. I mean umbilical cord vessels going into the placenta. And so he's like, "Oh, this is just like an extremely high risk situation." He told me that if I died—starting dilating and the placenta vessels were less than five centimeters away from where my cervix opened up that it could rupture the vessels. And my baby would bleed all of its blood out in ten minutes and die. And I was like, "Oh shit." So he's like, "So we have to do a vaginal probe, of course, to find out how far the actual placenta vessels that go into the—the umbilical cord vessels that go into the placenta are away from my cervix." Does that make sense?

TINA: Uh-huh.

REGINA: Okay. So of course, I was like—I'm like the last thing that I want is a vaginal probe.

TINA: They're the worst.

REGINA: Right. And I'm very upset about this word and everything. And he's, of course—the way they do it now is he's like showing me all these pictures on his phone of what the velamentous insertion looks like and telling me how risky it is. And their protocol—okay. Their protocol for this was if it was less than five centimeters away from my cervix that I needed to be hospitalized a month prior to my due date and then basically just be in the hospital just in case I went into labor. And when I did go into labor, then I would have to have a C-section. There was no way to deliver vaginally naturally if it was less than five centimeters away. So I was like oh my god. Okay. Do the vaginal probe. We have to at least find out—because the thing about the medical industry is they're good at diagnosing. I mean a lot of times they're good at—okay. They have the equipment to be like, "This is what's going on." I'm not going to be able to go to the midwife or anybody else and find out how close that is.

So I let him do it. And then it was seven centimeters. So he's like, "This is still a very risky situation. If this was my daughter, she would be in the hospital. We need to start talking about this," or whatever. And I was just like okay. Just get me the fuck out of here. Okay. I'm out of here. So I call Amanda, this woman who I just had randomly called for the ultrasound. And I'm like, "Can I come see you because I just got this ultrasound and I got this news? And I need to talk to a midwife about it." And she's like, "Yeah. Absolutely." I went. And I was like, "Have you heard about velamentous insertion?" She's like, "Yeah. Yeah. We see them all the time." She's like, "Usually, we only find out about them after the fact. When the baby is born, then you look at the placenta. And you're like, 'Oh, that's interesting. The Wharton jelly around the umbilical cord is gone.' Not a big deal," right?

And so I'm like okay. Two different stories, of course. And so she's like, "Let me call the doctor. I'm going to get a clear idea about what's going on. I'll call you tomorrow." So I'm just like, "Okay." So I'm feeling very fragile. Very fragile. Like, "Oh my god. These vessels are not contained in the Wharton jelly." And so it's just amazing how fearful that energy can be. But I still was just like, "Okay. This is happening for some sort of reason. And I'm going to trust this process." And so Amanda called me the next day. And she said, "I talked to the doctor." And she said, "This is what I want to do." She's like—and this is—she just took it on. She's like, "I'm totally open to being your midwife." She said, "I want you to birth here in Eugene because it's close to Sacred Heart hospital, which is a really good hospital just in case you need to go." She's like, "You can,"—she would literally open up her home. She's like, "You can come stay at my home. I have a teepee. I have an outdoor bathtub. We can set up the teepee, and you guys can just be out here. And we'll just monitor you. And if anything goes astray, we'll go to the hospital. But I'm pretty confident that we can just do this naturally at the house."

And I was like so elated and so bummed at the same time. Because I was like, “Fuck. I want to have this baby in my home and not be monitored and not this whole thing.” But I was like, “Oh my god, thank God. I don’t have to,”—there’s someone else that’s saying we’re going to do this out of the hospital because then you start getting so much pressure. And then I’m the one that’s responsible if something did happen and all these other doctors and whatever were telling me I needed to do it this other way. So it’s like—I just felt grateful for Amanda but also very disappointed and sad because I didn’t want to leave my sanctuary to go anywhere else even if it was a beautiful midwife’s home on her land in a teepee in a bathtub, which is the best scenario. So I called Caleb, and I was really upset and sad.

And he’s like, “Okay.” He had two days left to be up there. So he was coming on the 16th. And I’m like—he’s like, “We’ll just go. We’ll go to Amanda’s. We’ll set up the teepee. And we’ll just make it cozy. We’ll stay there for a couple weeks. We’ll just hang out in Eugene. And we’ll go hiking. And we’ll make that our sanctuary.” So I was like, “Okay. That feels good. When you come up here, we’ll go over to her house,” because I had never even been to her house. We actually met at her prenatal office, so I never even had seen her home or went to it or anything. And I just met this woman once. She opened this all up. She was just so sweet.

TINA: Mm-hmm.

REGINA: And so that was on the—I talked to him on the 13th and told him all that. That was our plan. He was coming back on the 16th or something like that. The 15th or the 16th. And so then on the 14th—I think August 14th. Yeah. That’s when he was born. So on the—this must have been the 13th. Sorry. I’m a little confused around the dates. But you get the idea. It’s like—very all close together. I think I got the ultrasound on the 11th and then talked to him. And he was planning on being back on the 15th. And so on the 13th, I woke up, and Bonnie had offered me some of this leftover seafood stuff. And I ate it. And I got diarrhea. And I was like, “Oh, I must have had some allergic reaction to this seafood.” And so then that whole day I was just—basically, Amanda had sent the big list of all the towels and all the wash cloths and the birth list of things to get. So me and Bonnie went out on the 13th to get all the supplies that we needed.

We were kind of just—even though we didn’t need it for another 3 ½ weeks. We were like, “Let’s get on it.” But then that day I was like just had diarrhea. And I definitely was having some Braxton-Hicks, but nothing like too strong. And so then that night we always eat dinner together. And that night—and I always. I was—I’m still—now we laugh because I’m pregnant and nursing. And I’m just like plowing through the food. It’s funny. So I’m like—every night I’m like just scarfing down. And then this night—on the night of the 13th, I just couldn’t eat. And I was like—I just had—I barely could eat. I remember I could barely eat a cucumber. And I was just like I just thought it was

whatever this diarrhea was. I'm like I've ate—I didn't want to tell her because I didn't want her to feel bad because I ate that seafood. And so I just was like whatever. And then you don't always want to share your personal stuff like that. So I was just kind of like—I was just kind of like, "Well, I'm not going to say anything." And, of course, she's like staring at my plate the whole time and what's going on.

I was like, "I don't know. I just don't have an appetite. I don't know what's going on." And she was like, "Okay." So we always go for a walk at the end of the day—at night after dinner and do a little loop around with the dogs. And I was on this loop with Grandpa John—with Caleb's dad. And I just could barely—barely make it. And I'm like I don't know, man. And he was just laughing. He's like, "Oh, you got another three and a half weeks. You just wait," because I hadn't even really popped. That last three and a half weeks is when the stretch marks really come in and just that oh my god. I have this big baby. There's so much growth that happens. And so I mean I had popped obviously. But I wasn't huge. But that—the baby was just sitting so far down on my cervix that I was like, "Holy shit. What is going on?" He's like, "Oh, you just wait. You'd better keep walking." I'm like, "Oh man." And so I'm like, "All right," and I went—gave Bonnie a hug. And she was like, "Okay. Just if anything happens, just—I'm right here." She said that that night. Just let me know if anything happens.

And so—let me take a drink of water here. Oh yeah. I got to see how much percentage. I got 15. Okay. And so then I had been sleeping out in my RV on—outside because the ocean air. And I just like sleeping outside. So I was laying in my RV. And I was sleeping. And I woke up to water just coming up my butt crack. And I literally had a thought. I'm like, "I didn't just pee on myself." And I'm like, "Nope. That wasn't pee." And then I got up, and I got a Mason jar and put it under there because I just wanted to have—be like, "This is what it is." I don't know. Just my thought was like, "I got to save this." Whatever. I'll do a ritual with it or something. This is some sort of fluid I've got to save. And so I'm like, "Okay. Hmm. My water just broke." And I was like everything in me was like yes. Yes. I was just like yes. The universe wins. We win. Whatever. I'm not going anywhere. And this is exactly the way it is supposed to be, and I trusted it completely. There was nothing in me—not a cell in me that thought anything other than just yes.

And so I went inside. And I texted Caleb even though I knew he wasn't going to get that text for another eight hours. I know enough about birth. Like hey, man. I could still not even be having a contraction by then. So I just wrote him. I said, "My water just broke. I'm in—this is starting. So you should probably come like now. Not tomorrow." And so I just put that away. And I hadn't had a contraction. And so I was like, "Okay. What do I need to do?" I need to sleep. I need to sleep. That's definitely what I need to do. So I went and got my dog because she was still in the RV and brought her inside. And I laid down right where I'm laying right now actually in this bed. And I just laid down in

the fetal position. I just held my belly. And I just was with myself. And I was literally just by myself and holding myself and holding the baby. And just like, “Okay. This is it. I don’t know how it’s going to happen, but we’re doing it.” But I still was kind of like, “But obviously not in labor,” because I haven’t had any contractions.

TINA: Right. Mm-hmm.

REGINA: I don’t even know what a contraction feels like. So that was at 1:30 in the morning. And at 2:30 in the morning, I had my first contraction, and it was literally—if there was a bulls eye, like a target, it was literally like in the bulls eye of my cervix. I could just feel it right in my cervix. And it was like, “Hello. Hello. We’re here.” And I was like, “Oh, hello.” And it was like, “Hello.” And I was like okay. So that’s that. And then I just let it—I just let that be. And I—that lasted for an hour. I actually was trying to write down when they would come. But I couldn’t—it was dark. And I was like I’m not going to write this down. So I actually downloaded an app. And I’m not tech savvy. But I just looked up contraction charts or whatever. You just press the button when you have one. Press one to five on the strength. And then press the button when it stops. Or you press stop—start, stop, and then the how strong it is.

And I just did that. I just did that for an hour. And I was just like boop, boop, boop, whatever. And then I looked at it after an hour. And I was like, “Wow. These are two and a half minutes apart for 45 seconds long.” 45 seconds consistent. There was nothing—there was no messing around about it. It was like on time. And I was like, “Okay. Okay. I’m in labor. This is happening.” So it’s 2:30 in the morning. I got up. And I started a fire in the fire—in our fire place. And the fire was a really important element in my life. And it’s very grounding, and it’s also—connects me to that primal space of just that ancient wisdom of everything that fire holds and purifies and cleanses. And so I lit that fire. And I got some cedar, and I knew that I needed to let go of Caleb not being there. Really let go of him not being there. And I just prayed that—yeah. Just that I could have the strength and the courage without him—without being able to lean into him.

And I put the cedar on the fire. And that moment I put the cedar on the fire, I’m just like it’s on. It was like everything in me. It felt very natural actually to not have him there when it came down to it. And I just let that go. And I said the prayers for protection and just—I remember I didn’t want to get anything messy. I got the stainless steel bowl and was just kind of squatting and on the couch. I was like holding on to the couch and squatting over the couch. And I was like I got to put on my birth playlist. And I put on my playlist. And I did that. I rocked it from 2:30 to 3:30. I did that. Oh yeah. So this was 3:30 to 4:30. I was kind of just rocking it in the living room with the fire and the playlist. And it just felt so good to be alone. It just felt really natural to be with myself and to really be experiencing it and just trusting. And then at 4:30 in the morning, I got

a text from Grandma Bonnie. And she was like, “How’s it going over there?” And she must have heard me messing around with the fire, messing around with the music or whatever.

And I said, “Okay.” I said, “Don’t freak out. I’m in labor. And everything is going great.” And she wrote back, “I’m not going to freak out. But I’m coming over there.” And so I was like, “Fair enough.” So she came over and wanted to make herself busy. Boil some rags or something. And she’s a little bit later—about 30 minutes later, she’s—she said, “Well, we should probably call Amanda.” And I told her—I just said right then. I said, “I’m not leaving. I’m not leaving.” Very clear. There was no question. I was like, “I’m not—there’s no way I’m getting in a car and driving two hours right now to a place I have never been before to have this baby.”

TINA: Right.

REGINA: Like I’m staying right here. This is what my body is doing. There is something here that is wiser than me. And I’m not leaving. She said, “Okay. Fair enough. But maybe she’ll come here.” I was like, “Okay. You’re right. I’m down.” So I called Amanda, and she didn’t answer. So she said, “Okay. Well, you should call Lori.” So at this point, Lori, once she found out I had the velamentous insertion and we switched the plan to move—to go to Eugene to birth, she was like, “Well, I’m not going to come all the way to Eugene to be your doula or whatever.” She is a really busy woman. So she’s like, “You guys got it.” So at this point, she completely had let go of being in the birth at all.

So I called Lori. And I was in a very frisky—I was very frisky. I was very frisky, in a frisky mood. And I said—I was like, “Lori, come to me.” And she answered. She’s like, “Hello?” I was like, “Lori, come to me.” She’s like, “Who is this?” I was like, “It’s Regina, and I’m in labor.” And she thought I was asking her to come to Eugene and be my doula. And she’s like, “Girl, you guys got this. I’m going back to bed.” She’s a restaurant owner, and she’s actually a—she’s doing a lot of work in the world. And she’s like, “You guys got this.” And I was like, “No. No. No. No.” I was like, “I’m in Seal Rock. Amanda is not coming. I’m in labor. And will you come and be with us?” And she was like, “Oh, girl.” She was like, “Okay. Talk to me through a contraction.” And I was like, “Okay. I know this routine.” And I was just able to tell her, “Okay. Boom. It’s right in my cervix. It’s been right in my cervix since 2:30 in the morning. It’s—they’re completely on time. They’re consistent, and they are strong.” And then there was a point through the contraction that I could talk. And then I maybe made that last a little longer just because I knew that she probably wouldn’t come unless she knew—because it had only been two hours.

TINA: Mm-hmm.

REGINA: And so she said, “Okay. You guys keep me posted. I’m going to get some sleep. And I’ll come back in awhile,” because I’m only two hours. It’s my first baby.

RINA: Right. Mm-hmm.

REGINA: So I’m like, “Okay. Cool. Fair enough.” And so then right after that, she texted. She said, “I’m on my way.” She’s like, “I’m on my way. I’m coming right now.” So I was like, “Okay.” So then I was still really enjoying being alone. And so I wanted—I had that feeling of wanting to be alone. So I went upstairs. There is a little tower area with a view of the ocean. And I remember walking up there and looking at the bed and just being like—having the thought that I’m sure many women have during labor like, “I just wish I could go to sleep. Sleep the night through and then start this in the morning.” Because at that point, I thought this could still be a very long—you just never know especially your first one.

So I was like, “I’m just going to lay down.” And I just lay—I laid down on the bed. And for the very first time since 2:30 in the morning, I missed that next—that contraction at 2 1/2 minutes. So it was 5 minutes without a contraction. And I was like, “Oh my god. I’m one of these women that go into labor at night and stop in the morning,” because it was getting close to 5:30. And I’m like, “Oh, I’m just going to stop labor.” I was just like, “Okay. Well, maybe I am going to go to sleep.” I’m like all this happened just because I didn’t have one contractions because they were so on point. And I just kind of curled up. And then all of a sudden I actually was in transition. And my—I just—that was when that shifted from dilation to the actual uterus pushing out the baby. And so I had my first pushing contraction.

And of course, I had heard a lot about physiological birth, and, of course, that’s what I wanted. And I was like, “Oh my god. My body,”—I was like, “Oh, I got to poop.” I was like I just felt immediately I had to poop. And then I was like I’ve been to enough births to know that stuff is really happening when that urge comes on or when that feeling comes on. And plus because I had had—I know this is a lot of information. But because I had had that diarrhea, the safest place—it just felt so safe to move to the toilet. And I was just like move to the toilet. That way I felt everything could be open and there wouldn’t be any messes made. And so then that began kind of the pushing contractions that last—the pushing contractions were 45 seconds long. Maybe 35-40 seconds long every 4 to 5 minutes.

And so I had a couple, and then Lori came upstairs. “How you doing?” And I just—then I had another one. And it was like just that guttural like, “Ugh.” Just that feeling of—I call it the train. The train of the universe. The universal train has docked. It is coming down. And we’re—it’s on tracks. It’s like the force of the universe coming down, but it happens in this—for me anyway, I was so blessed to have it happen in this way that felt

like the most intense thing I had ever experienced in my life for that 45 seconds. And then nothing. Just stretching. Just peace. I wasn't having back labor. And so I'm like—she was like, "Oh, that's changing." It changed. So she's like, "Okay. Well, let's get you downstairs." So then they immediately went into putting the plastic stuff on the bed and remaking it and kind of doing the—so at this point, I've got two grandmas. I've got my partner's mom and my partner's son's grandma and me. It just makes me cry thinking about it because it was so old school. And that's the way I wanted it. I just wanted it to be just the roots of what's happened so many times before and will happen hopefully so many times again if we can all keep trusting that this is a natural process that is very much—we have all the tools. We have all the tools inside of us.

And so much of it has to do with just letting go and just being with the experience. And I don't know why some women have to have really long labors and end up pushing—really having to push their babies out. I didn't have that experience. And I'm not an expert at understanding why that happened. But I know, for me, it was literally just the sensation of my uterus pushing the baby down. Exactly what that would feel like. Yeah. You could say it's painful, but it's more just intense.

TINA: Mm-hmm.

REGINA: Intense. And so I came downstairs. I got on the—in the bathroom downstairs because I definitely wanted to be in the bathroom. Or on the toilet. That was my instinct. And then the women were—the grandmas were rushing by kind of getting warm rags and doing this and doing that and knowing that it was closer and kind of like, "Oh, this is happening really quick," which is obviously most commonly when it happens quick everything is going to be okay. I mean that's just in the scheme of things. And so but also Lori is aware that—and I am—I actually wasn't even—I wouldn't even think about the velamentous insertion, to be honest. But she was aware that—of that and of the potential possibly it becoming—basically the umbilical cord coming off. Once the head was out or—you know what I mean? She was aware that there was some things that she needed to be aware of.

And so anyway, the women would walk by. And as I would have another contraction, I would literally just reach my hand out and grab them by the arm or shirt or hair or whatever I could grab and just pull them into my legs. They needed to be right there. I was very—like making the noises. They just did it with me. And then it would stop, and then I'd let them go and be like, "All right." Just kind of hanging out in the bathroom waiting for the next one. And then all of a sudden I just got this urge because I was like, "I do not want to be inside. I want to be outside." And that basically makes it safe too to if I did use the bathroom or whatever, there was blood or whatever, it's like okay. And I just felt like I just wanted to be able to connect to the earth, and it was that beautiful time of 6:00 in the morning. The twilight is coming on. The birds are coming on. And so I

just went outside. And underneath this Japanese maple tree, and I just let what happens happen which is just that baby coming down and then stretching around my cervix and in my birth canal. Just coming down, stretching, coming down.

And then the ladies were like, "Where did you go?" And I'm like, "I'm out here." Of course, Lori is like, "You can't—you got to come inside." And I'm like, "No. I'm not going inside." And so she's like, "Well, you have to at least get on a towel so I can see what's coming out of you." And I'm like, "Okay. Fair enough." We met in the middle. I got on a towel. Grandma Bonnie is—she's like, "Well, you don't have to have your hands on the towel. You can have your hands on the earth." She was kind of mediating. And so oh my god. We laughed about it so hard because I started videoing. Because I'm like, "I got to video because Caleb is not here. And this is happening." So I started videoing, and I'm actually making a little movie about my birth. Because what ended up happening was I felt so peaceful and calm during the—in between the contractions, that I was really almost doing a tutorial and explaining what was happening. I was very together, very cognitive.

And anyway, so I just had that recording happen. And Bonnie and Lori were out there. And the head was just coming down. And I was saying some prayers. Just praying that everything is okay and this is—we're just feeling really empowered and excited. And then his head came down. I told Bonnie to record it. And his head came down. And then when it crowned, I was like—that was really intense, and it burned. It was like burning. I'm like, "It burns." And Lori is like—she's on the video. She's like, "It's going burn, Regina. It's the ring of fire." And she's like—and then his head came out, and it felt so good when his head came out. But there was a pretty good gush of blood that came out with his head. And I felt it, but it felt good to me. I was like, "That felt good." But she was like, "All right." That was when she took—and of course, it's that moment. It's that moment. That is the hard moment that trust comes into play where it's like okay. Can we wait for the next contraction? Can we allow the baby's head to be out and be calm? But we weren't taking fetal heart tones. We weren't monitoring. So we didn't really know.

And obviously, you can be a lot calmer if you do know for sure that the heart tones are good. But that moment of just allowing the next contraction. And we didn't do that. It didn't happen. She was like, "Okay. Get the baby out." She's kind of messing around back there. And I was hitting her hand like, "Leave me alone." We were kind of fighting a little. And she was like, "No. Push." So I pushed one. I was like, "Okay. Fair enough." I pushed one good push. And right before I pushed, I was like, "Oh, it's a boy." I knew it was a boy right before I pushed. And sure enough. I looked down. And I literally just got him. I was on my hands and knees. And I had—the chair was right there. I was leaning on this wooden chair. And I just pushed him out, and I picked him up. And he was so perfect and healthy and pink and cried a little bit but not too much.

And just it was like literally when it was all—it happened so quick. We were all just like, “Oh my goddess.” That just happened, and we just did that. And the baby is alive. And we were just on top of the universe.

It just felt so empowering. And then, of course, the oxytocin is rolling in. And it was just the most fabulous moment of my life for sure. Just how everything worked out that I didn't have to go anywhere. And the magic of the timing and everything. And so I just scooped him up, and they got me in the bed for the delivery of the placenta, which came out perfectly. And he just latched on, and it was just the sweetest thing. And that was at 6:44 he was born. So 1:30 my water broke, 2:30 contractions started, and then 4:30 Lori got called, 6:44 he was born. So it was all pretty compact in that timing. And there was a lot that happened in that little short window. And it all just fell together in a really graceful, beautiful way. And Caleb, he didn't check his text messages. He just called me at 9:00 in the morning, and I was just so—I mean oh my god. I was just on cloud 27.

TINA: Right. Right.

REGINA: I was just so oh man. Just having that sweet little baby, and he latched on right away. My colostrums was coming in. Everything just felt like oh my god. I don't have to leave. I don't have to leave. And I'm here. And it happened. And it was just—felt so good to have trusted and that the universe just—and that he was supposedly, unless I was way off on my due date which I don't think I was because I know when my last moon was. He came at 36 ½ weeks. And he was perfect. He was premature at all. He was just done in that moment, and a higher wisdom helped that happen so that we didn't have to go through, “Oh, is everything okay? And we might have to go to the hospital.” And the velamentous insertion. It was just like boom. It was happening. And so anyway, he called at 9:30. I told him I birthed. I birthed. And he was like, “What? Oh my god.” He was literally supposed to come back the next day.

And I was like—we—I lit that fire at 1:30 in the morning or 2:30 or whatever. We kept that fire going until he got home which was about 9:30 at night. It took him about 10 hours to get here. And then I kept the placenta attached to him and his umbilical cord intact until papa got here. And then he introduced Orion to the fire. We took him to the fire place, and he introduced him to the fire. And then he cut the cord 10 hours later or whatever.

TINA: Mm-hmm.

REGINA: It was just so sweet. Yeah. So that was our sweet little story. So empowering.

TINA: It sounds perfect.

REGINA: Yeah. It was our sweet, little, empowering birth story. Yeah.

TINA: It sounds like all the women in your family are very aware and in tune with their intuition.

REGINA: Yeah. Yeah. I feel very blessed in that regard. That I wasn't up against battling fear.

TINA: Mm-hmm. Exactly.

REGINA: That's what a lot of times it comes down to is someone has to take the responsibility. And I really believe that through I wouldn't be able to actually have had that birth if I wasn't willing to accept what could have happened.

TINA: Right.

REGINA: And I think that is the ultimate path of being able to really have an empowered birth with that level of trust is taking responsibility myself and then knowing that if something were to happen that that would be my responsibility.

TINA: Mm-hmm.

REGINA: And that I would have to accept it. That's not easy. That's the hardest thing to do. And I'm not suggesting that that's everybody's path. It's not a lot. And things do happen. And a lot of times it is really good to have a licensed professional or someone that knows what the hell they're doing in a situation because I just want to say—yeah. Most of the time everything goes really well. And sometimes it doesn't. So I think it's—I just think in life, in general, balance is a good way to go. You know what I mean? It's like trust and tie up your camel.

TINA: Right.

REGINA: Have your ducks in a row and then be able to let everything unfold. And that's kind of my thing because—yeah. It's interesting. It's a very slippery slope with birth. It is. It is.

TINA: Well, life is just a slippery slope really.

REGINA: Yeah. Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. So Orion McKai was born on August 14th. And my dad got to see him on video. He didn't ever get to hold him. But he got to see him. And it was kind of a—it's just a very auspicious thing. Him coming into our lives as my dad was transitioning. And just wanted to say that too. Yeah. Birth is so exciting and beautiful and—yeah.

TINA: Powerful.

REGINA: So powerful.

TINA: Thank you so much for sharing that with us.

REGINA: Yeah. Thanks for letting me. Yeah. Thanks for letting me. What did you say? It cut you off.

TINA: I said it was just amazing.

REGINA: Oh, yeah.

TINA: What a wonderful testament really to the way it can be.

REGINA: Right. Yeah. I don't take it for granted at all that that was my story and to think just the level of trust and allowance and surrender has so much to do with how our bodies open and allow the baby to come. It really is. It's very connected physiological and psychological and just healing that. Healing the birth trauma, our own birth trauma, and our own cellular memories of limbic imprinting and all kinds of different things. I've done a lot of healing work with myself and other people in 17 years. And I think that all has a lot to do with it. And so yeah. Thanks for letting me share. And it feels really good to tell that story and remember that moment and praying for another empowered birthing experience and—yeah. I just want to say to anyone that's listening that might be thinking about having their baby with just themselves or with people who may not be licensed or have a good idea of what they're doing that the choice in that is it's so—it's just so important for every single woman to follow the deepest part of their own intuition. And that's what I really believe is like every woman is going to feel a different way about it because they've got a different thing going on. Some women are like, "Oh, I need to have support." And some women are like, "Oh no. I can do it." It's just that deep feeling of okay. What do I want? What do I need? And to be able to trust that even if it is—like for me. I'm so anti ultrasound, but I was like I need to have an ultrasound. And I did.

And then we knew that that was happening. Who knows what—I mean I don't know what would have happened if not. Anyway, I just wanted to say that. following our own personal intuition is I feel like the most important thing. And that could be a lot of different things. A lot of different things across the spectrum and that it's every woman's choice to be supported and respected in those choices. That's empowered. That's an empowered birth. You're choosing. That's the empowerment. Not that you do it alone outside. Dah, dah, dah, dah, dah. That's not. It's just that you get to choose. That you're not feeling like someone else is in control of your experience.

TINA: Exactly.

REGINA: So that's all I want to say about that. Yeah.

TINA: Well, you are fantastic, and I thank you again for your wisdom and for your trust and for allowing us inside of that experience with you.

REGINA: Yeah, Tina. Thanks. I feel honored and appreciate the time and appreciate everybody listening and appreciate all the birth warriors in the world and all the mamas giving birth right now in this moment and everything that it takes for mamas to be mamas. It's exceptional. The whole gambit.

TINA: Yep.

REGINA: Yep. All right, Tina.

TINA: Thank you.

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(closing music)