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Write Something New Genre 2 Final-Personal Narrative
Noah

“The umbilical cord is wrapped around his neck and we need to perform an emergency C-section as soon as possible. Do you have any questions?” *Um, what?*

These are not the words you want to hear just as you are preparing yourself to push out a baby after spending hours trying to induce your labor. I looked at my husband, and with no other option, we agreed to the surgery, and I was wheeled away to casually get my organs removed and thrown on a table to birth my baby.

My entire pregnancy had been so easy that I was blindsided by all the things that went wrong going into the hospital. Alex and I had very realistic expectations when it came to having Noah. We knew it would not be easy and I educated myself as much as I could for what to expect. I read online articles about the best gadgets and baby equipment, watched all the YouTube videos titled, “Things I Wish I Added to my Baby Registry”, and created a Pinterest board specifically for postpartum care. For anyone who is a parent, you know that all the books and classes never fully prepare you for parenthood. Regardless, I enjoyed my pregnancy and celebrated in the earlier months with a Zoom gender reveal and a drive-by baby shower amidst the pandemic.

The next hour was the farthest thing from the happiest moment of my life. I was still processing the fact that I spent each doctor appointment being told that everything was fine and there were no foreseeable complications. Yet here I was, shaking uncontrollably, nauseous, numb from my feet to my mouth, with an oxygen mask over my face. As someone who has never gone through any major surgery before, or given birth, this was quite alarming. *Am I going to die? Where is my husband? Are they done yet? Is the baby going to be okay?*

The C-section was a success, and I was eventually rolled back to my room. I can't tell you what it felt like to carry Noah for the first time because I simply don't remember. I recall the nurses putting Noah on my chest, but I was in such a daze and didn't feel that immediate connection that is supposed to be the best feeling in the world I was distracted by the nurses and doctors coming in and out of my room taking our vitals, asking questions, checking my incision and on top of that, I had this pounding headache at the nape of my neck. Then I hear, “Do you want to nurse your baby now?” There was no time to focus on myself, I had a newborn to tend to.

Over the course of the next four days, Alex and I learned the basics of taking care of a newborn. Looking back, these days felt luxurious compared to the days that followed minus the fact that I felt like a baby myself who needed help changing my own diaper, Because of the help and reassurance from nurses, lactation consultants, and doctors, we knew how to swaddle Noah, how to get him to latch, how to give him a sponge bath. As soon as we knew it, I was getting discharged from the hospital. We got this!

I was given a hefty number of medications to take at home to ease some pain from the incision and the lingering headache. Alex spent the next four days catering to both Noah and I because I was a useless, bleeding blob. It hurt to sit up, walk, do anything really. All I wanted was a shower, and even that was painful. After days of this unbearable headache, we finally

headed to the emergency room where they confirmed what I had was a spinal headache. If you've never experienced this type of headache, just think of your worst migraine times ten. Then tack on the fact that you need to nurse your baby every two hours and hold him constantly to get him to sleep. We also had no furniture due to our move, which made it difficult to get comfortable anywhere else other than the bed. Eight hours in the emergency room was worth it because I was able to get a blood patch to relieve the pressure from my head. After getting home, I finally felt functional as I could focus on eating, nursing, and getting some sleep (Haha, what's that?). As my physical health was slowly healing, things were starting to take a toll on my mental health.

There is a common misconception that becoming a parent is always blissful and life-fulfilling. Social media doesn't help when it's flooded with picture-perfect families and their Pinterest-boho-inspired nurseries. I often found myself comparing our life to what I thought it should be despite my husband convincing me we were doing great. I don't use the term *depressed* lightly, but I was starting to question whether that was what I was experiencing. I didn't feel an overflowing amount of love for my son, Noah stopped latching out of nowhere, I wasn't producing enough milk for him, and pumping took away any minute of free time I had. I took out my frustrations on my husband who had no control over any of it, but one of the biggest issues was that I felt alone. (Moved to second paragraph) (Moved to paragraph above)

We had just moved from Michigan to Texas before having Noah. Our family and friends are scattered around in Hawai'i, California, Colorado, Michigan, and Korea. We had no support system besides each other, and the pandemic did not make things any easier when it came to finding a community. I also quit my job as a teacher to become a stay-at-home mom while my husband began his career as an Army chaplain. This is where I found myself without an identity, unfulfilled, and disconnected from the world. I rarely left the house and going anywhere with Noah was such a chore and a lot of times not worth it. I couldn't share these frustrations with my friends because none of them are married with kids. I was jealous of my husband for being able to go to work and not have to worry about feeding, changing, soothing, or entertaining a baby all day long. After a while, we didn't know where to go from here, but we knew something had to change.

Slowly but surely, things got easier just as people had promised. As every parent knows, there are trials and tribulations that come with each milestone your baby makes. One week they are sleeping through the night and the next they're at a regression phase which causes them to wake every few hours. Alex and I have learned to take each phase one day at a time and to prioritize our marriage over anything else. Don't get me wrong, some days are still so hard and I long for the days when I could nap at my own leisure or go on a spontaneous date night. However, we came to the realization that love takes sacrifice and having Noah in our lives has been such an overwhelming blessing.

As I am sitting here with my almost 6-month-old son, looking back at this experience now feels like a blur. Perhaps these memories have been shadowed by new memories of Noah laughing when we play peek-a-boo or watching him slowly doze off to sleep on my husband's shoulder after a long day. I know these days will not last forever, and soon he'll be walking, talking, and won't need me to do everything for him anymore. I am beginning to understand people who say, "Enjoy this time while you can" and "They grow up so fast." These clichés are somehow meant to help you get through the newborn stage when really, it's a reminder that it goes by quickly and you will miss it. Noah isn't sleeping through the night or holding his own bottle yet, but one day he will, and I'll look back at this time and recognize the strength I had to

keep moving forward. I am not the same person I was five years ago, or even a year ago, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. I am evolving and embracing this messy and unpredictable journey with the reassurance that Noah was brought to earth to help me become the person I was always meant to be.

Genre #2 Writer's Memo

I chose a personal narrative as an attempt to reflect on a monumental moment in my life and put into words how I navigated this emotional roller coaster. The last time I wrote a personal narrative was during my undergraduate studies in a literacy class and I wrote about the broken relationship between my dad and I. Ten years later, I have evolved as a person physically, emotionally, and academically. Though my story is about my pregnancy and postpartum life, my intended audience is any adult looking for the transparent reality of parenthood.

After completing our course readings and having experience writing a personal narrative in the past, I anticipated this genre would come naturally to me. However, I struggled to find the perfect words that conveyed my raw emotions of being scared, frustrated, and helpless. I found myself reading each sentence over and over, replaying these moments in my life to make sure I was getting every detail correctly. After getting the little details, I shifted my lens to make sure it sounded like a coherent story.

I began my narrative at the turning point of my birth story as a way to grab the reader from the beginning. A story is not always linear, and I was going for the nonlinear approach, shifting paragraphs back and forth, jumping from the present moment to having flashbacks of earlier memories. This can be difficult for a writer, even for students, when deciding where to place certain events and how much time to focus on each moment. I found the concluding paragraph to be the most difficult because I wanted to end my narrative with a sense of acceptance and hope. Majority of this story is me complaining about all the bad things that I endured but wanted to shed light on having the strength to move forward and that things will get better.

This experience has changed my disposition of writing because I have more knowledge of how to incorporate the elements of writing effectively. Writing is sometimes counterintuitive where you end up straying away from the outline you anticipated. This is a process I want to encourage with my students to guide them in figuring out a clear purpose of their writing. Personal narratives can be difficult for writers who struggle to process their experiences or emotions, so I would anticipate my students would need exposure and scaffolding to create an authentic piece.