

## Act 1

### Unbridled Good Fortune

#### Scene 5

#### Rosh Hashanah

In the middle of Central Park, in the center of this frenetic city, Turtle Pond is an oasis. On this insanely beautiful day, the sun was just slipping behind the treetops. A redwing blackbird perched on a cattail. A white heron gracefully fished along the far shore. Five turtles, lined up on a log, stretched their necks toward the afternoon's last rays of sun, toward the impossibly blue sky. The pond was framed by weeping willows, the willows framed the Manhattan skyline. This might be my last Rosh Hashanah. Would I live long enough to marry Michael? To help Julia grow up?

I walked back to Lenox Hill. I was the only one in the now shadowy waiting room, except for Jim, the young, black-haired radiologist, and his white-haired assistant, Jane, who were staying late just for me. The incandescent lamps had turned off, leaving a bluish glow over the reception desk. They ushered me into a fluorescent-lit room and hooked me up to an IV, which made my mouth taste like aluminum, and dyed my glowing uterus and ovaries—and whatever hard and unwelcome mass was growing in them—purple.

Directed by Jane over the loudspeaker, I lay down on the metal tube, which transported me inside the human-sized white cylinder, a sterile and profoundly lonely place. I wished I'd asked Sue to come to the hospital with me. Between repeated immersions in the cylinder, I glimpsed Jim and Jane through the glass window. Their faces, which I tried to read for clues, looked troubled and confused. Jane apologized over the monitor. "The X-rays aren't clear. We'll have to run it again."

When they were done, I sat in the chilly waiting area and fell asleep.

"Mrs. Cohen. Mrs. Cohen." Jim was gently shaking my shoulder. "We did find something in you, Mrs. Cohen."

"You did?"

"We found a baby."

"What?"

"We found a baby."

"What?"

"We found a baby in you. Congratulations, Mrs. Cohen!"

Obviously, this is a dream. I argue with him in my dream.

"That's impossible."

"Well, yes, we're surprised. Your medical records say you're in menopause, and we didn't expect to find a baby. It's not customary to diagnose a pregnancy with a CAT scan. Not recommended. Nevertheless, as I say, there is a baby in you."

"I don't believe you."

"We found a baby."

Maybe this is a semantic misunderstanding—a slapstick "Who's on first?" dialogue, with "baby" a proper name standing in for something else. I try to figure out the joke.

"What do you mean by 'baby'?"

"I think you'd better come to the ultrasound room and see for yourself."

I can tell it's a dream by the script. It has that hard-boiled, noir dialogue of movies and dreams: "*We found a baby in you, Mrs. Cohen!*" "*I don't believe you!*" "*You'd better come to the ultrasound room and see for yourself!*"

Since my identity is predicated on my infertility, the statement, "Mrs. Cohen, we found a baby in you." Made no more sense than if he'd said, "Mrs. Cohen, we discovered that you're a man." Or, "Mrs. Cohen, we found out that you're black." Or, "Mrs. Cohen, the CAT scan revealed that you're a billionaire, or a dog, or a registered Republican, or a right-to-life lobbyist." However, I'm beginning to believe the radiologist, in the way you believe

what a dream character tells you, no matter how lunatic it might be. In fact I'm beginning to warm up to this idea of being A Little Pregnant instead of having A Big Tumor. Given a choice between a few life-affirming embryonic cells and a lethal mass of cancer cells, I'll take the embryo!

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## Act 11

### What I know

#### Scene 1

### Days of Awe

Rosh Hashanah. Saturday, September 11, 1999

This is what know.

1. I'm six months pregnant.
2. It's a boy.
3. It's too late for an abortion
4. I'm not in menopause.
5. My cervix is likely to dilate at any time.
6. My uterus is small and deformed.
7. I can't carry a baby past six months.
8. A baby born at six months will probably die. If it survives it's likely to be severely disabled.
9. In six months of pregnancy, I've had no prenatal care, no weight gain, X-rays, CAT scans, lots of meds, lots of Italian red wine.
10. I took synthetic hormones every day of the pregnancy.
11. Synthetic estrogen causes birth defects. It caused my birth defects from DES.

12. Exhaustion, nausea, anemia, frequent need to urinate, sore breasts, sore hip joints, and reflux are all symptoms of pregnancy.
13. I didn't need to take estrogen.
14. I took prescription pregnant horse estrogen for fourteen years.
15. I was never infertile.
16. A home pregnancy test is only accurate in the first trimester.
17. Dylan was right when he told me in March that I was pregnant.

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