

# New baby changes my world with surprise birth



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Thursday, July 21, 2011



What did I do on my summer "vacation"?

Worked on the house, visited with family members, played tennis.

Oh, yeah. I had a baby. Grayson Vanaski surprised us with his arrival May 10, weighing 6 pounds, 7 ounces.

Couple things about that: You know how women in TV shows and movies grab their stomachs when they go into labor? If you've never had a baby and you plan to, remember this: The pain hits in the back. So don't lie around thinking you just have a backache.

Make sure your gas tank is full when your due date nears. You don't want to have to stop at a gas station at 2 a.m. and scream at an attendant that you need \$20 on pump 5 right now because your wife is having a baby, like someone I know.

After we brought him home, the baby changed our lives in unexpected ways.

Being responsible for a human being can make you soft. Our son spent most of his first week in a neonatal intensive care unit, and just the whisper of a thought that something might be wrong with him turned me into an emotional heap of uselessness. Thankfully, he's fine. This brown-eyed, dark-haired boy already loves to laugh.

My first day back at work was not easy. I got up early to feed Grayson and he chose that morning to be as cute as possible, bouncing himself around and giggling, and I'm looking down at him and bawling.

Yet, the responsibility can make you hard. I'm not even this territorial with my husband. But if a stranger comes near our child, I become a different person. The other day, a child who clearly meant no harm tried to pat my baby's head and I heard someone bellow, "N-no, nonononono." Yeah, so now I'm one of those mothers.

Parenthood can make you indifferent to things once important to you. A good example: sleep. I remember when I used to love to sleep. I didn't believe in naps, because I reasoned that if you're going to do something, you should commit to it. Well, as Willem Dafoe might say, the worm has turned for me, my friend.

This new love can be unsettling.

Last week, a group of boys played within my earshot and a dispute broke out. A dark-skinned boy began yelling at another one who looked to be of mixed race, calling him, among other things, "white boy." Calling someone a "white boy" doesn't sound like much of an insult, but it's the implication that's the problem. That boy at the playground was saying, "You don't look like me and you're not one of us."

That's when I thought, "What have we done?" It wasn't regret, but a realization that I brought a child into a world where ignorance and hate could come flying out of the mouth of a boy younger than 12. The idea that our child could face that one day can be deflating.

Never before have I felt so vulnerable in the depth of my feelings as I do for my son. I've never felt so empowered about having to protect someone. That's love, I guess. It takes you up and down; it opens you up for the highest highs and the most heartrending lows.

You realize that if you're lucky, there's someone who feels the same way about you.