

# Unforgotten

The monitor suddenly showed a tiny heartbeat and I felt VJ's grip tighten. She looked from the screen to me with an expression of pure joy and relief. Her third surgery, six months before, had been much easier than the others but the recovery was as painful as ever. Still, it had done the job. Since then she had fallen pregnant and I was to become a father for the first time.

There's so much to plan at a time like that. When will everything happen? What hospital do we choose? Where will we put a nursery? The planning went on for a long while but we had months to go. It's a time of great innocence and sweet expectation. I enjoyed every bit of it.



For some reason so many of the big things in life seem to happen after midnight on a Saturday. I remember VJ's face, pale and stricken, and the blur of the hospital and wards and tests. It had been a good time, but it was over. That tiny heartbeat was no more. You could see the staff felt bad about it — they needed to tell us our baby was gone, but had to leave us alone to wait for a doctor who could make the call officially. For two hours babies cried all around us. Like many before me who found themselves standing in a small white room I had to grow up fast.

The next day, while VJ was asleep, I took the dogs out by the row of big old pines. Always at these times the urge is strong to see the sun and sky, to look out over the land. The pup ran with his usual excitement, but Saxon stayed close and attentive. Dogs can't talk but they often say the right thing anyway.

It felt like a double hit. Our child was gone, and I wondered if we'd be able to keep trying after what had happened. I had seen the expression on VJ's face the night before and it was that of someone who was completely done with it all. Nobody could blame her. All those trips to the hospital, the operations and tests, all that hope and expectation gone so suddenly. It seemed too cruel to be real.

Ours was a loss that touches many families but is not often spoken about. Those who have been there don't want to share it for fear others won't understand. Some don't want to waken sad old memories.

The battles of the Great War left many men with no known resting place. If you go to those quiet fields today, the stones that mark those lost soldiers are often simply inscribed 'Inconnu', unknown.

We planted a cherry tree by the old rose garden that we were slowly rebuilding. It seemed such a small thing to do for our own unknown, unnamed and lost. Every spring it is covered, however briefly, in blossom.