

“Having a baby is a psychological revolution that changes our relation to almost everything and everyone.” -Esther Perel

Only once in my life have I experienced the type of suffering that I did after my daughter’s birth.

And that was when I first became a mother.

I thought perhaps I’d be spared from postpartum depression this time.

I had barely survived it before, but I had come so far since then.

I knew more, I was better prepared.

I was powerless to stop it.

At times I feel consumed by my love for my children.

Simon and Sylvie are the air I breathe.

There are other parts of me too, but these are forgotten after I give birth and I lose myself in the darkness.

At first, I’m still me.

I’m running on a cocktail of hormones - adrenaline, oxytocin, and sheer bliss coursing through me.

My love for my newborn baby feels palpable - I can’t believe I made her.

I manage the night wakings by myself.

It’s a badge of honor I wear proudly on my chest.

I’m in awe of her.

I don’t even realize those old thoughts beginning to take hold of me.

Soon the feelings become impossible to ignore.

Like an unwanted house guest who knocks at my door, I have no choice but to let her in.

She’s been here before and sits down to make herself at home.

It feels the same as it did 3 years ago.

I look down at my daughter and I see my son - like he used to be, when I was in the darkness before.

I'm hypervigilant - fearing the depression is returning.  
But maybe I'm just having a bad day.  
I obsess about whether to take medication.  
They ask me what I need.  
I shrug my shoulders and tell them I'm fine, just tired.

I only have eyes for my children.  
Their needs matter more.

My heart feels like it's going to beat out of my chest.  
I lie awake while everyone sleeps.  
I know what this is and I'm terrified.  
*Please*, no.  
I'm just having another bad day, right?

The thoughts are becoming stronger.  
You can't do this.  
You're incapable.  
What's wrong with you?  
Why can't you take care of yourself?  
It's never going to get better.

It's as if I'm looking into a dirty mirror.  
The depression clouds the glass and I don't recognize myself.  
Vacant eyes stare back.

I get back on medication.  
I join a support group.  
I tell a therapist I'm broken.  
I write in my journal.  
I force bits of food in my mouth.  
I go outside.  
That's what normal people do.

I do everything I'm supposed to do.  
It doesn't help.

I'm lost and can't find my way back to myself.  
It takes everything just to get through each day.  
This is my forever.  
I'm so scared.  
It's hard to breathe.

I have moments of clarity, but I'm pulled down into the darkness again.  
It wasn't supposed to be like this.  
*Please*, not again.

It's sunny outside, but it makes no difference.  
Inside I'm at war with myself.  
They tell me I'll get better.  
I don't believe them.  
I'm not strong enough.  
I'm not me.

I hear the words - this isn't *it* for you.  
I keep talking.  
I increase my medication.  
I let people in.  
They cook, hold my children, take my hand.  
They reach towards me and gently bring me back to myself.

Slowly, it begins to lift.  
Sylvie smiles at me.  
I laugh with Simon.  
I look in the mirror, and I see me.  
I'm forever changed.