

The Diaries of a Birthkeeper

A glance into the unspoken truths about birth work,
from the perspective of the attendant.

By: Raina Brown

Date Published: Jun 19, 2025



Dear Diary,

Turns out Kyla is doing pretty okay. I finally got an update after her baby girl was born Sunday morning. They did in fact end up breaking her water around 8pm Saturday evening and gave her low doses of pain management. Thankfully she successfully had a vaginal birth and today we were able to have a postpartum visit together in the comfort of her home.

I was nervous walking up to her door. Not because I didn't want to see her, quite the opposite actually, but because I had been thinking about her birth constantly.

Replaying moments.

Questioning decisions.

Wondering if I could've done more, said more or... said less.

I wanted to soften the edges of how everything unfolded.

I was afraid she felt I had failed her.

Her birth did not go as she had originally hoped.

It was supposed to be a quiet, grounded home birth, surrounded by warmth, choice and reverence.

But when the plan changed, when we transferred to the hospital, I knew something had shifted.

I said a prayer and knocked on the door. When she opened the door she greeted me with a tired but genuine smile. We sat together on her couch in the soft stillness that only comes in the postpartum bliss. We talked and processed the sacred & messy story of how her daughter came earthside.

As we got into the details of everything that happened she did tell me that she is grateful to have been given the chance to try and that she gave everything she had before transfer. What she said to me was,

“Despite the complications, I did it as close as I could to the way I had planned and I realized I am a lot stronger than I thought I was.”

I felt so incredibly proud of her in that moment. Her words were carried with grace, not disappointment. Full of courage, not regret. She felt strength not weakness.

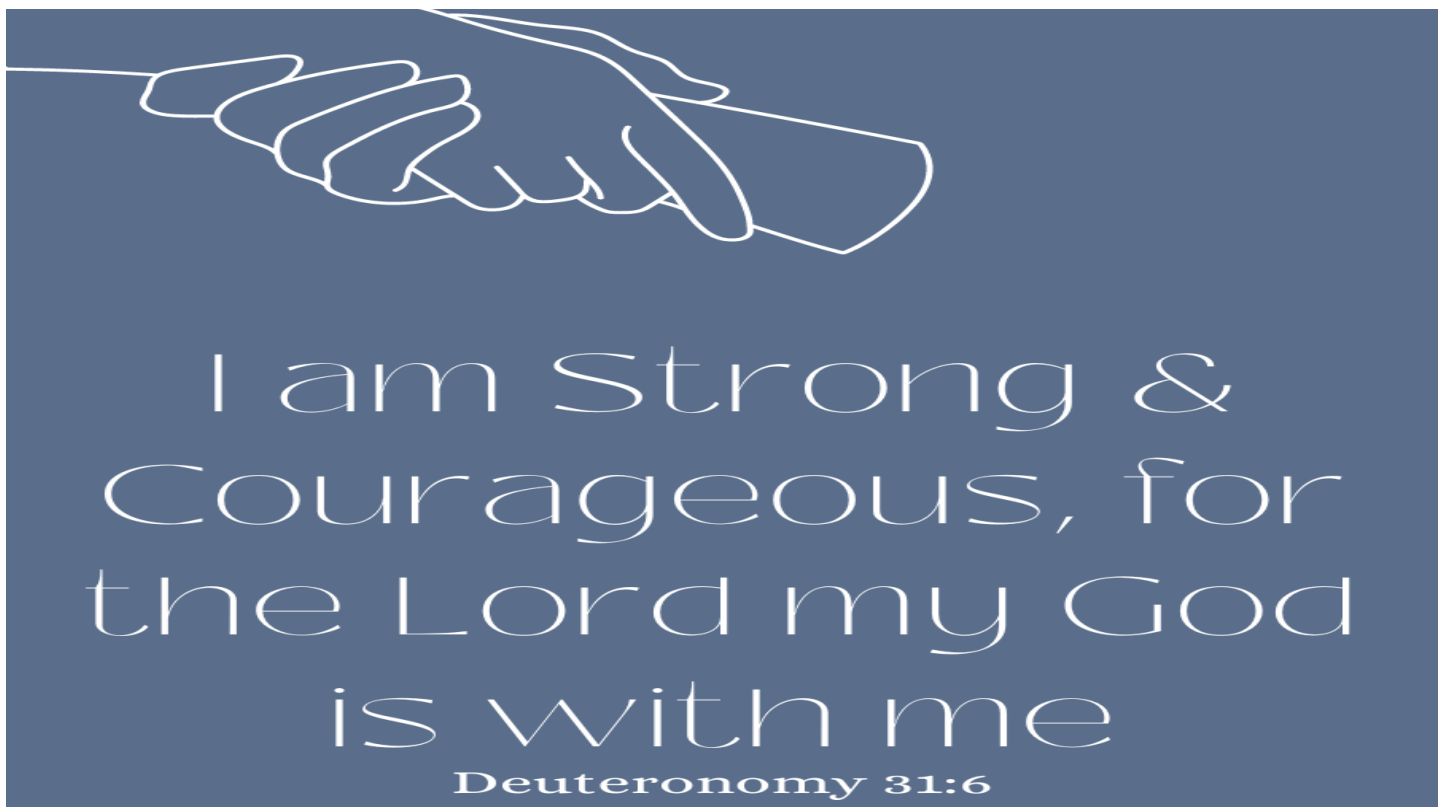
We continued to talk about some of the not so wonderful things that happened the morning of her transfer. Things like the abrupt shift in tone and demeanor from me. I gave her my apologies for the way I had conducted myself with the OB. She says she does not blame me, even shares my frustration with how the OB initially began her care; but she assured me

things started to get better once there was a solid plan in place that everyone was happy about. And just like that all the heavy fog I had been wading through lifted.

I had walked into this visit carrying so much. So much uncertainty, so many questions. Had I done enough, did I do too much? Did I make the right choices or say the wrong things when the plan started to unravel? Did she feel disappointed in me or in herself?

I was afraid she might look at me & see a mirror of what didn't go as planned. But instead she was at peace. Not because the journey was perfect, but because she had the freedom to try. The freedom to choose. And ultimately the freedom to birth.

She reminded me that even when birth doesn't go according to plan, it can still be powerful and it can still be hers.



But here's the thing...while her story was one of strength, what I witnessed in that hospital room was something else entirely. I left Kyla's birth knowing I would never again attend one like it-in that setting. This birth, my first in-person attended birth, marked something in me. A line I didn't know I would cross.

The moment I walked through the hospital doors I felt it begin:

The subtle side-eyes, the dismissive tones, The condescension, the spoken & unspoken messages that I wasn't welcome. But more than that, I saw how my client, this strong, intuitive, powerful woman was treated. Like a body. Like a patient. Like a problem to be

managed, rather than a woman to be honored. The way her voice was overshadowed by policies, by pacing, by people who seemed more interested in managing than in listening. And the way I, as her doula, was treated; as if my presence was an inconvenience, rather than a support. I watched her autonomy shrink in the shadows of protocol and power. I watched her voice get smaller. I stood there, aching, as I witnessed decisions made around her, not with her.

Something in me broke.

It was more than frustration. It was heartbreak.

A deep, gut-level realization - that I cannot keep showing up in spaces that do not honor the laboring woman as sovereign. I cannot stand by while autonomy is stripped and decisions are made for instead of with.

My voice is for informed consent. My presence is safety for full-bodied yeses & powerful no's. My advocacy is for birth that is chosen, not just endured. My calling is rooted in presence, not compliance.

I CANNOT...and WILL NOT stand quietly while obstetric violence wears the mask of "standard care."

Being a doula isn't just about holding hands and timing contractions.

Being a doula is walking into the most vulnerable, transformative hours of a woman's life and saying, You are safe here. You are powerful here. You are allowed to be in control.

It's about protecting a space where women can remember they are sovereign, even in their most vulnerable moments.

It's about reminding them they are allowed to say no.

That they deserve to be heard.

That their bodies are not battlegrounds.

But inside the walls of captivity, I couldn't say that with my whole chest because there, it wasn't true. What I witnessed in that hospital room was a deep, ingrained disregard for the laboring woman & anyone who dares to stand in advocacy with her.

I was treated like a disruption.

She was treated like a liability.

So today, I made peace with walking away from hospital births.

While I can honor a mother's right to choose her setting, I am accepting the truth that I cannot be everyone's doula.

I can no longer bear witness to obstetric abuse and pretend it's healthcare.

I can no longer walk into spaces that activate my fight or flight.

The system often strips birth of the dignity and autonomy it deserves.

And I refuse to be complicit in that.

This is not a decision I make lightly. But it is one I make clearly!!!

The path God has set me on is to protect, to uphold, and to fiercely guard a woman's right to birth her way, even when her plan changes. And while I will always walk with mothers wherever they go, I will no longer, electively, step into systems that silence them.

This work is holy.

And I will not stand in rooms that do not treat it as such.

I will keep showing up in living rooms.

On birth balls.

Beside birth tubs and toilet seats.

I will keep walking with women who choose their births outside of captivity, and continue on even when the journey changes course.

And to the mama who unknowingly helped me draw this line...thank you. Your courage lit the path I didn't know I needed to take.

This work is holy. And I will not compromise its sacredness. I will carry mother's with Grace, servitude, love and respect.

XO, Raina

Disclaimer: Each entry is a true but anecdotal birth story from my perspective, taken directly from my personal birth journal and may not always reveal the entirety of the birth's details. Nothing from this blog is to be taken as medical advice.

Names may be changed or redacted in order to preserve the family's identity.

The diary of a Birthkeeper offers a unique glimpse into the world of autonomous pregnancy and birth. These diaries will reveal the deep bond and connection that forms between the attendant (me) and the families I serve during one of life's most significant moments. Each entry captures the emotions, challenges, and joys experienced within the physiological birthing process through personal stories and insights. It highlights the importance of support, love, understanding and connection during this sacred and transformative journey. It is my hope that by embracing these stories, it will enhance how we view birth and the impact it has on our community. I want to thank the women who have taught me, supported me, mentored me and encouraged me. I truly wouldn't have made it this far without y'all. I want to thank my birth bestie for always giving me a safe landing, every time I feel like I'm going to crash and burn. I want to thank the families who have allowed me to

walk alongside them during their pregnancies and births. Most of all, I want to thank God for bestowing my path with purpose and meaning.

Thank you for being a part of this very vulnerable journey with me.

Let's create a Revolution together. God Bless.

XOXO ~ With love, Raina

The Revolutionary Birthkeeper