

AMANDA

By DonnaMarie Vaughan

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CAST: a young female

(Lighting” should be a steady circle on the face of the actress; the surrounding area should not be seen until almost the end of the monologue.)

Everyone in the apartment building was so happy for us, and they came to see her, wondering at little fingers and little toes. Joe and I, we were happy, too, at least in the beginning.

Amanda cried all day and all night long. It concerned me, a new mother and all. Mrs. Beatty said it was probably colic, and I should check with the doctor, but I knew we couldn't afford to do that. Other people said it was normal and not to worry. She'd get over it.

I tried not to worry, but I did, always, everyday. Nothing seemed to help. I would hold her and rock her, then walk her, until I, too, would be in tears.

I think it was me who realized something was wrong first, but maybe Joe knew before me; I don't really know, I never asked him. Funny how the things you want to say the most are never put into words.

About six weeks after we'd brought Amanda home, it was a beautiful spring day, so I took her to the park. By then she hardly cried at all, which I was glad for, but she also didn't sleep, just made these funny sounds. Joe was worried and didn't want me to take her outside so soon, but I was hoping maybe the weather would help Amanda sleep. We got to the park, and I sat down by this friendly looking woman with her baby, whose name was Sally. Sally had a really nice color to her, all pink and white, and she had chubby little cheeks. She was only five months old, but she could already sit up by herself! I could tell the woman felt sad for me when she looked at Amanda, 'cause her skin looked so gray. Amanda was nearly four months old then, and I don't know why, but I lied. Maybe it was Amanda's dry, pale skin, or the fact she *looked* so much smaller. I told Sally's mother that Amanda was only two months old.

Sally's mother and I talked for a long time that afternoon. Joe would have been mad if he'd found out I talked to someone, but it had been weeks since I'd talked to any other adult besides Joe, and it felt good. Sally's mom did most of the talking, which I was glad for. Sally's mother told me all the details of Sally's five months on this earth, and even some of the months before. She even made the pain of childbirth sound enviable. For one, long, evil minute that day, I wondered what would happen if I had taken Sally home from the park, and not Amanda.

That night, Amanda started crying like we'd never heard before. I remember thinking it was almost odd how so much noise could come from such a small, little being. I watched her little fists moving back and forth and tried to hold her, but it seemed like no matter what we did, she just wouldn't be happy.

Then Amanda started making these funny sounds, sort of like crying, but not quite. It reminded me of a long time ago, when I was little, and our dog, Peanut, got hit by a car, and my mom waited for my dad to come home from work to take us all to the vet.

I wanted to take Amanda to the hospital, to a doctor, to *someone* who could tell us what was wrong. Joe and I had a big fight, and it was then that I understood, though he still hadn't said a word, that he knew, and was just as scared as I. Joe said the police would be looking for both of us. We had to wait it out.

Joe took Amanda from me then and tried to walk with her, talk to her, and I tried to do other things around the apartment so I wouldn't worry so much. I couldn't help but think about Amanda's *real* mother, the one who could have really shared those stories with Sally's mother about elbows and knees cresting along her belly and little baby hiccups in the middle of the night. I thought, maybe we were being punished, Joe and I. We should never have taken Amanda, and this was God's way of telling us so.

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