

FENIX

It was just one of those things, Carlisle had said. There's no predicting it, though premature delivery always increases the risk. Until about the eighth month, the fetus is still small enough to float around in the mother's womb and might be turned in any direction if he delivers early.

So why did Sam and Emily's baby come early? Bella blames the Volturi, however illogically, for stressing Emily early in her pregnancy. Carlisle thinks it was diabetes, a common condition among modern-day natives. For whatever reason, Emily's contractions began in July, almost six weeks before her due date.

Emily had planned to deliver her baby in the traditional way—at home with the help of a midwife. She had chosen Sue Clearwater—both a nurse and a midwife—for the honor. So when Emily's contractions began and didn't stop, Sam called his cousin Sue and was surprised to hear Charlie Swan's voice on the other end of the line. Charlie told Sam that Sue had the flu and she didn't dare expose Emily and the baby. Sue told Sam (through Charlie) to take Emily to the hospital.

Emily wouldn't go. She had a strong aversion to hospitals and, perhaps influenced by that, decided she wasn't in true labor. It was much too early and Braxton-Hicks (false) labor contractions are common in the latter weeks of pregnancy. It's like the body is practicing for the big event.

Sam was nervous, though, and when the contractions became sharp and long and didn't stop, he insisted she be examined. Emily told him to call Dr. Cullen. Though Emily well knows what we are, Carlisle had saved her life several years before and she trusted him.

My father asked whether I would come along in case he needed assistance. Rosalie was nearly as educated in human biology as me, but I had recently acquired some frighteningly relevant experience. Since this was just an exam, there would be no blood and so I agreed to go.

Carlisle loaded his medical bag and sonogram equipment into his car and we drove to Sam's house. Before we'd even gotten out of the car, the normally calm and controlled Sam threw open the front door and frantically beckoned us inside.

The situation we found there was much different than what we'd expected (or at least what I'd expected). Emily was in the bedroom lying on her back with her knees elevated, as Carlisle had suggested over the phone. She was having a contraction and was obviously in serious pain.

"Hello, Emily," my father began, pulling a chair up beside her. "How are you feeling?"

"My water broke, Dr. Cullen. Just before you came," Emily said in a strained voice.

"Okay. When did the contractions start?" Carlisle asked.

"About nine o'clock," Sam replied. It was now four o'clock in the morning.

"You waited a long time to call for help," my father observed calmly.

Sam, who was anxious enough for all of us, explained in a rush, "Emily thought they were false contractions, so we waited for them to stop. Then it got really late," he finished lamely.

"I wouldn't...go to...the hospital," Emily admitted between gasps. "Sam wanted me to..." She groaned and clasped her swollen belly.

“Well, never mind. I’m glad you called me, Sam. Your baby is coming today,” Carlisle declared. “We best get ready.”

“It’s too early, Dr. Cullen,” Emily groaned. “I’m only thirty weeks along!”

Carlisle put his hand on Emily’s shoulder and said gently, “The little one has already decided, I’m afraid, so we’ll just give him or her the best welcome possible, okay?”

Emily nodded, as tears welled up in her eyes. Sam stood helplessly nearby.

“Try not to panic,” Carlisle said, looking at both parents-to-be. “Let’s just find out where we are. How’s your blood sugar been?”

“A little high in the last couple of weeks. Sue said I had become borderline diabetic, but it probably would go back to normal after the birth.”

“That’s true. Gestational diabetes is not uncommon and it could explain the baby’s rush to be born. He or she might be telling us that his environment is no longer hospitable, in which case it’s just as well that he come early.”

As he reached the end of his sentence, Emily began to groan and her face screwed into a tight knot of pain.

“Eighty seconds,” I told Carlisle when she relaxed again. They were about one minute, fifteen seconds apart.

“I need to examine you to check how far along you are and make sure everything is okay. Is that all right?”

“Yes…” Emily panted and Carlisle touched his stethoscope to her belly. We could both hear the little one’s heartbeat which sounded robust, but Carlisle was exercising caution. He listened carefully for

any hissing that would signal blood leaking through a hole or an underdeveloped valve in the heart.

“The baby’s heartbeat is good and strong,” he assured the parents. Then, looking just at Emily, he said, “I asked Edward to come with me in case I needed assistance and since the baby is coming, it looks like I will. Edward is experienced and has some special skills, but we can call someone else if you prefer.”

Emily looked at me. “You delivered Renesmee, didn’t you?”

I nodded.

“Jacob told us about that. You saved Bella...”

“He did,” my father interjected. “Against all odds.”

“With Jacob’s help,” I added.

“I trust you,” she whispered and closed her eyes. “Sam will be useless when things get dicey. He can’t stand me to be hurting.” She smiled, remembering how Sam nearly had fainted when he tried to dress her wounds at home after the accident.

I smiled too. “I promise you that I won’t faint,” I said confidently, though I was anything but. Despite my many years in medical school, I’d never delivered a baby until Renesmee came and that was far from a normal delivery. Still, I had managed and Carlisle was here this time.

The other issue, of course, was the blood. Always before, I had avoided assisting Carlisle with any medical procedure where blood might be a factor. Having resisted the call of Bella’s blood for so long, though, I was pretty comfortable with my self-control. Emily’s scent didn’t have a fraction of the appeal to me that Bella’s had had—no one’s did.

Sam wasn't comfortable. He was pacing nervously and his thoughts were frightened and frenetic. He was pretty sure he didn't want either Carlisle or me there, but there was no other option. It was too late to move Emily and no other doctor would risk a home delivery under the circumstances.

"Do you want to know the baby's gender?" Carlisle asked, looking at the child's blurry form on the sonogram screen. He kept his voice calm despite the image displayed there of a tiny human with his butt planted securely downwards toward the birth canal. The situation was getting more dangerous by the minute.

"He's a boy, isn't he?" Emily whispered. "I've always thought so."

Carlisle smiled and nodded. "He's a boy and he's got a mind of his own, I'd say. He's coming to us in the breech position. That's not uncommon for premature infants, and his small size makes that less of a problem, actually."

Emily began to cry. "Is he going to make it, Carlisle?" she stammered. Sam, who was now holding Emily's hand, blanched.

"I'll do everything I can. Try not to worry. I've been doing this for a long time," he told the parents in a reassuring voice without a hint of irony. "We don't have long to wait. You're already at ten centimeters." He rolled the office chair backwards and pulled off the latex gloves he'd donned.

Emily started to reply, but the words got squeezed into a gasp and a groan. Sam leaned heavily against the wall. He had gone as pale as a paleface.

Edward, go get Billy, please. I'll call and tell him you're on your way. Take the car, Carlisle directed silently.

That was an excellent idea. Somebody had to look after Sam. I nodded and left, driving as fast as I dared over the dirt roads.

Billy was awake when I arrived and invited me in. I found him sitting on the edge of his bed getting dressed. Jacob was out patrolling somewhere. Billy allowed me to lift him into his wheelchair, though he could do it himself.

“Do you need anything? Something to eat before we go?” I asked him.

“No, Emily’ll have something there. So Sam is a mess, huh?”

“Emily doesn’t think he’ll hold up too well and Carlisle doesn’t need a third patient on his hands,” I said, smiling.

“He hasn’t told his pack.” It was more statement than question.

“I don’t think so. He wouldn’t leave Emily’s side to transform. They won’t be able to help anyway. He needs an experienced man for support. You’re the closest thing he has to a father, I suppose.”

“Yeah, that’s about right.”

I loaded Billy into the car, folded his chair into the back seat, and we took off.

“I’ll call Lily in a while. Emily should have a woman with her. Her mother lives on the Makah reservation and Sam’s mother is visiting relatives there now. Nobody thought the baby would come this soon.”

At Sam’s house, I lifted Billy, wheelchair and all, up the two porch steps and rolled him into the living room.

“Edward?” my father called. *Need some help, Son.*

I dashed back to the bedroom and found Sam in a chair with a blank look on his face. He appeared to be going into shock.

Get him to the couch, feet up, my father directed silently.

“Let’s go, Sam. Billy’s here,” I said as I slung one of his arms over my shoulders and half-carried him to the living room. “Lie down here, Sam.” I found an afghan and threw it over him and propped his feet on a pillow.

“Shock,” I mouthed to Billy. “Keep him here. Call if he turns cold or passes out.”

Billy nodded.

Carlisle and I busied ourselves setting up as sterile an environment as possible and creating a draft-free zone for the baby using sheets. While I was gone, Charlie had called to check on Emily at Sue’s request. When Sue heard that the baby was coming, she sent Charlie over with loads of sterile linens and all the birthing and pediatric equipment she thought would be useful to us.

Charlie seemed surprised when I came outside to retrieve everything he had brought.

“You’re helping Carlisle?” he inquired suspiciously.

I merely nodded. There was nothing I could say to Charlie to explain why that made sense and he was learning not to ask too many questions.

Edward! Carlisle called silently.

“Gotta go,” I said to Charlie. “Thanks for the supplies.” I turned and hurried back inside.

“Put your hand here,” my father directed, indicating a spot on Emily’s belly under a sheet.

I looked at her with my eyebrows raised, silently asking permission. She nodded with a grimace.

“Can you feel this arc?” my father asked.

I ran my fingers lightly over a roundish shape just above Emily's naval. "Yes."

"That's his head."

Once Carlisle had pointed it out, I shut my eyes and followed the shape around with my fingers until I felt another slight bulge beneath that. "The shoulder?" I asked.

"The left one," Carlisle said, smiling. *Can you hear anything from him?* my father asked.

I shook my head. "Nothing I can make out," I said softly, "possibly a slight hum. I'm not sure."

If it changes, let me know. It could be a sign of distress. We'll both monitor the baby's heartbeat.

I nodded and then there was no more time to talk.

Delivering Emily's baby turned out not to be that difficult. It was nothing compared to Bella's delivery, that's for sure. And there wasn't much blood to speak of. The hard part was listening to Emily's suffering during the middle stages. In the late stages, determination seemed to crowd out distress. Lily had arrived by that time and she held Emily's hand and encouraged her while she struggled.

Breech delivery is considered risky, but it caused no particular problems in this case, probably because Carlisle knew exactly what he was doing. The baby was facing away from us—the preferred position—so the back of his behind emerged first and then the top of his thighs. Carlisle used a gloved finger and thumb to wiggle the first leg out and then gestured for me to do the same with the second. After that, I supported the baby while letting the weight of his legs pull his left shoulder down and out. Carlisle wiggled the left arm free. Then the right shoulder naturally rotated down and out

and I freed the right arm while Carlisle made sure the umbilical cord wasn't pinched off. After the nape of the baby's neck appeared, Carlisle grasped his ankles between three fingers and raised his feet back and straight up, causing the baby's tiny puckered face to appear.

What a tremendous thrill that was! Carlisle looked up at me and grinned. My face opened into a broad smile and I had to press my lips together to keep from cheering and laughing.

"I heard him, Carlisle," I said in too soft a tone for the humans to hear. "He's disgruntled." I grinned again. "He's not too sure about the big world." It wasn't a thought, of course, more of a feeling, a sort of tightening in the child's mental hum.

The baby was unbelievably tiny except for his large scrotum, which seemed strangely oversized to the rest of his miniature body. I found myself hurriedly counting his fingers and toes as the back of his head slowly emerged and revealed a covering of thick black hair. The brand new child was smaller than Renesmee had been when she was born. He also looked more wrinkled and less fully developed, which I suppose he was.

Carlisle laid the child face-down on his mother's belly and pinched off the cord, then let me do the honors of cutting it. After Carlisle drew the mucus from the infant's nose and mouth, the four of us watched, rapt, as he took his first breath. He didn't cry, but rather yawned and put his tiny thumb into his tiny mouth and we all chuckled.

I cleaned off the baby with some cloths and a basin of warm water that Lily had brought in, and then I laid him into his mother's arms just as I had done with Renesmee. And just like Renesmee, he turned to the breast, only he had no teeth with which to bite.

After Carlisle finished the delivery and called for Sam, I left the room, but not before taking a look back at the little family. Sam was kneeling beside the bed and both mother and father glowed with joy. I turned and went outside to phone Bella with the news. It was one of those moments when I wished I had Renesmee's gift and could show Bella the whole experience. It was remarkable...life-altering...a miracle.

On our way home, Carlisle admitted that that was one reason he'd asked me to come with him. After the trauma I'd been through with Renesmee's birth and Bella's death, he thought it might be a healing experience for me to witness the miracle of birth without the accompanying terror of loss. He was right.

The child's parents named him Fenix William Uley, his first name in recognition of the tribe's new beginning, the birth of the next generation of Quileute; his second name in honor of Billy, who has been more of a father to Sam throughout his difficult life than his own father was.

Fenix William Uley

b. July 21st, 2007

9:45 a.m.

The first thing I did when I got home was grab my wife and kiss her long and hard. The second thing I did was pick up our miraculous daughter and hold my precious family in my arms.

Edward

Ω