

THE MIND-BOGGLING SHRINKING WOMAN

by

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Female pain exists in a crossroad of stigma, disbelief, and misogyny. The same world that tells us to be female is to be weak and fragile expects us to understand that to be female is also to grind our teeth through pain. We are expected to buck up and shut up about our discomfort so we don't embarrass the same people who have the audacity to tell us our bodies are embarrassing.

Female pain must be regarded as legitimate. It is more than important that we talk about our health free from stigma or embarrassment. It is necessary. Because disbelieving and delegitimizing female pain is a form of oppression.

Caroline Reilly

CHARACTERS

THE MAGICIAN

Empty stage. There is a spot light
on THE MAGICIAN, his voice is
everything to you.

THE MAGICIAN

You will now listen to my voice.

My voice will help you

and guide you still deeper into the tiny world.

Every time you hear my voice,

with every word and every number,

you will enter a still deeper layer,

open, relaxed and receptive.

I shall now count from one to ten.

On the count of ten, you will be minuscule.

I say one.

And as you focus your attention entirely on my voice, you will
slowly begin to relax.

Two.

Your hands and your fingers are getting warmer and heavier.

Three.

The warmth is spreading through your arms to your shoulders and your neck.

Four.

Your feet and your legs get heavier.

Five.

The warmth is spreading to the whole of your body.

On six I want you to go deeper.

I say six.

And the whole of your relaxed body is slowly beginning to shrink.

Seven.

You become smaller

and smaller,

and smaller.

Eight.

On every breath you take you become smaller.

Nine.

You are tiny.

On the mental count of ten you will be feeling almost invisible.

Be there at ten.

I say ten.

You are now facing decisions everywhere. Little ones. Big ones.
Decisions you can't make.

You are crying. A tiny being crying.

And you keep shrinking.

But you have to stop.

Find help.

Now.

You have to stop shrinking or you will end up ticking the boxes
that ask if you ever think of hurting yourself or the baby.

Stop shrinking.

This is enough.

You are picking fights with strangers. You want to fight but
they are not the right people and yet you still fight them.

Without knowing how the hell did you get into it.

Awareness comes in the middle of the fight. As if you were drunk when you started it.

You are a pacifist and these are the wrong people to fight.

You can't fight the ones who made you shrunk. The giants.

All those doctors. Those nurses. Those midwives. The giants. I know they stepped on you a million times. I know they are the ones who shrank you. But you cannot fight them. You will never win.

You behave weirdly with acquaintances now.

You don't know yourself anymore. You can't navigate this boat. This is a tiny boat in a storm in the ocean. You can't navigate it while you keep a baby alive through the thunders and the waves.

Stop shrinking.

Sometimes it feels it's either you or the baby like if you both won't make it.

You are lost. Aggressive. Sad. Overwhelmed. I know you are breastfeeding but exercising? Working and Working out. Feeling pressure. Sleep deprived. Sleep deprived. Resentful. Weak. Mentally weak. Mentally exhausted. Tiny in a hostile world protecting a baby. Sleep deprived.

Thoughts of hurting yourself or the baby. The baby is so fragile you could break one of his little arms in a second.

Get out. Get lost. Go away. Sleep deprived. Go away and find yourself. You miss yourself terribly. You need yourself.

Where are you?

You need to be with yourself but there is no mental space while you keep a useless being alive.

There is no space or time for you, even though you are tiny.

No space.

It will pass, they say.

It will pass.

But this is now.

You are in a therapy session with other moms. The therapist says: "This will pass, this can change" and you reply "sure, this can change to worse". The other moms laugh and you apologize feeling absolutely right. That's something you do a lot lately, apologizing. Weirdly.

Everything around you is weird because you don't recognize yourself anymore. You were a giant yourself before all this shit fell on you.

Please, grow back!

Thoughts of hurting yourself or the baby. Never. You keep finding stories on facebook about moms who hurt their babies. How the

fuck did that happen? Facebook knows everything. you spend all your time on it.

Shrunk. Weak. Mentally disabled. Disabled like a bomb. Defused.

I won't snap my fingers now.

You won't wake up.