

Praise for *Breathe*

“Reading *Breathe* is inspirational oxygen! You will inhale the words of this book and exhale hope. This isn’t the story of one woman; it is a call to action for all women to listen to our bodies and souls.”

—VICTORIA CHRISTOPHER MURRAY, number one *Essence* best-selling and award-winning author

“You won’t be able to put down *Breathe*! It is inspiring and another real example that God is still performing miracles. The hope in this book will stay with you long after you turn the last page. A must-read.”

—EARNEST PUGH, Stellar Award-nominated gospel singer and songwriter

“Angela’s story will stay with me. Of all of the rights of women, the greatest is to be a mother. Learning that women around the world are dying to have this right when they don’t have to is unthinkable. Thank you, Angela, for sharing your story, reminding us to have faith, and shedding a light on this crisis.”

—MALINDA WILLIAMS, Image Award-nominated film and television actress

“As a cohost of the TV show *Exhale*, I understand why women need to *Breathe*! Angela’s story is just another example of how important it is for all women to listen to their bodies and God, and to put their health first. I applaud my colleague and friend for sharing her story with the hope that it will help many.”

—RENE SYLER, host of numerous talk shows, including former host of CBS’ *The Early Show*; author, speaker, and founder of GoodEnoughMother.com

“As the editor in chief of the website www.momspark.net, connecting with moms and sharing stories is what I love. When I heard about Angela’s story, I knew of the difference it would make, and I was reminded of the incredible “spark” that moms have. This spark makes a difference in our individual homes and in the world. I am so grateful that Angela is here to share this story, and grateful that readers around the world can be helped by it.”

–AMY BELLGARDT, award-winning parenting
and lifestyle blogger at www.momspark.net

“I created my blog, Mocha Dad, to be a resource to help men be better dads. Although I didn’t grow up with my father, I had a loving mother who nurtured and molded me. Mothers add critical value into the lives of children and are the cornerstones of our society. I am so thankful that Angela and Samson Logan have shared their story. I know that their story will inspire, and it will make a difference in the lives of families everywhere.”

–FREDERICK GOODALL, cited by Cision, Babble,
and others as one of the top dad bloggers

“Motherhood has been a life-changing experience for me. My son has inspired my new career and ability to work online instead of in a newsroom. Angela’s story has far-reaching relevance for moms and the families who love them. I can’t wait to get my copy.”

–JOYCE BREWER, Emmy Award-winning TV journalist
and parenting blogger



WHEN LIFE TAKES
YOUR BREATH AWAY

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The Beginning of the End

(From Angela)

*N*ow that I'm dying, I wonder if my doctor will finally listen to me. That was my thought as I watched my doctor saunter into my chaos-filled room and take one look at me. His already pale skin seemed even more translucent as all color drained from his face, making him look like a ghost. Or maybe as if he'd seen a ghost.

I'd tried to tell him. For months I'd been trying to tell him that something was wrong. But no matter what I said, his response was always the same: "Nothing's wrong. This is your first time. Pregnancy is hard. You have to toughen up."

Over the months, he'd convinced me that I was nothing more than a high-strung mother-to-be. He was right; this was my first time being pregnant. What did I know? Maybe pregnancy was much harder than I imagined.

Even earlier tonight, I had heard Dr. Walters in my head and I told myself that what I was feeling was nothing, even though I knew it was something. Something was wrong.

The day didn't start out that way, though. It had been uneventful

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enough. I had spent most of the day in my chair, the one I'd been in for what felt like eternity, but it had really only been the last three months. That chair was my constant companion. I sat in it, ate in it, read in it, surfed the Internet in it, and yes, I even slept in it. With all the pain I was in, I couldn't do much else. I'd tried to go back to my bed, but I always ended up in that chair.

I wasn't used to sitting. I was used to moving, running, walking, and sometimes even flying by the seat of my pants. But now I had to live in this chair because, if I tried to sit or lie anywhere else, I couldn't breathe.

It was because of this life inside of me, a life that took my breath away, both figuratively and literally. At least that's what this little life I was carrying seemed to be doing.

It was ironic, really. Eight months earlier, the pregnancy test had turned pink and the baby I had wished for and prayed for had finally been conceived. Once I knew for sure that I was pregnant, she became the reason I *wanted* to breathe! She was my wish granted, the beginning of a new chapter in my life.

And my baby was a "she." I was being presumptuous by being so definite, but I was absolutely sure. I don't know if it was my intuition or if it was just that I wanted my baby to be a girl, all I knew was that I sensed "her" almost immediately. I was sure my little girl was going to be something with her daddy's looks and her mommy's personality. That's what my husband, Samson, always said too. "Our little girl is going to be a little me without the goatee," he joked.

Yes, our little girl was the most wanted baby in the world. I couldn't wait for her to get here, not only because I couldn't wait to meet her but because I wanted to get my life back. I needed to breathe again.

My husband jokingly blamed the pregnancy challenges on me. "You never do things the typical way, Angela," Samson said often. "You have to do everything the hard way." We laughed whenever he said that, but in a way it was true. Samson had told me that he'd fallen

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for me because I was a little different, unusual, even extraordinary. But he wouldn't have minded if this pregnancy was the complete opposite: uneventful, plain, and simple.

I squirmed a little in my chair, trying to find a way to be comfortable, when Samson looked over at me. "You okay?" he asked, pausing for a moment from stuffing his shirt into his overnight bag.

I nodded. What else was I going to say? I wasn't going to tell him about this mild headache that seemed to be crawling slowly toward becoming a migraine. I wasn't going to tell him about the contractions I'd felt earlier this morning that seemed to have gone away. And I wasn't going to tell him about the aches in my body or the pain in my limbs. Samson had heard it all before. So I said nothing and pretended that I was fine.

I once again found a comfortable spot in the chair, then watched my husband finish packing. He was full of excitement and flashed that smile I loved so much.

"This gig up in Toronto is going to be hot," he said.

I smiled at him, but the truth was that I was sad. I didn't want him to leave, not even for one night. But I knew he wanted and needed to go. And as a good wife, I wanted to support him.

This concert had been planned long ago and was the last event Samson had scheduled before our baby's due date. There was no way I could begrudge him. So I put on my brave face, even though I felt anything but brave.

With his bag in his hand, Samson said, "Okay, I think I have everything."

I smiled again.

"You sure you gonna be okay?" he asked.

"Of course," I said, telling him yes in as many ways as I could. "Definitely. I'll be fine."

Samson helped me stand up, then he held my hand as we slowly walked to the door. He kissed me on my forehead and then my lips. "I love you," he said.

Breathe

“Me too.”

“Call me if you need me.”

“You know I will,” I assured him.

He kissed me one last time, then I watched him retreat down the driveway, hop into our Cadillac, and slowly back out.

A deep longing filled me as I kept my eyes on the car. With the way I was feeling, you would have thought that Samson was leaving for a world tour instead of just an overnight gig. I stayed by the door until I couldn't see the car anymore, and only then did I back away. But before I closed the door, I glanced up at the darkened sky that was filled with masses of billowy black clouds. The clouds seemed to be gliding toward me and were so apropos as they matched my mood.

The storm that the weatherman had promised was making its way into Buffalo, and I hoped Samson would make it over the bridge in the quiet that always came before the storm.

It took a few minutes to waddle back to our bedroom, and once again I settled into my chair. I shifted until I found a spot that would keep me comfortable, at least for a few minutes, then I opened up my laptop and went to work.

About an hour later, I heard the whistle of the wind and the rustling of the leaves. Minutes after that, the branches of the young weeping willow we had planted began to tap on the side of the house. It sounded like this was going to be some storm.

I glanced up and shuddered but then turned my attention back to my computer. Maybe if I focused on something else, that would help. But it was hard to concentrate. Soon the taps of the branches turned to thuds. It felt as if the whole house were shaking.

I began to tremble along with the house. *Come on, Angela*, I thought, *there's nothing to be afraid of*. I tried to calm myself down, but it was difficult. I was still getting used to the sounds in our new house, and now as every branch hit the house or fell to the ground I shook in fear.

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Maybe if I stand up.

I pushed myself off the chair and made my way to the window. But then the glass began to quiver. Next came the rumble of the thunder that matched my headache that was now pounding against my temples. I tried to breathe deeply to relax, but when I heard panting I panicked.

What is that? It took me a couple of seconds to realize that the panting I heard was mine. My breathing had been so heavy in these last few months that I hardly recognized myself.

“Okay, Angela,” I said to myself. “You’re stressing yourself out for nothing.” I figured if I talked to myself aloud, I’d be able to get this under control. “Just relax,” I told myself again. I grimaced and laughed at the same time. Relax? Seriously? I hadn’t been able to do that in ...

Boom!

I screamed as the sound of a cannon filled the room and then the light that followed brightened the entire space. In the light, my shadow loomed large against the far wall—the only thing was that there were two shadowy figures on the wall. I whipped around in a panic, trying to see who was in the room with me. Blinking quickly, I tried to focus but couldn’t. The room had started to move, and in seconds it was spinning. I tried once again to get control of my emotions.

Maybe if I sit down.

With the banging of the tree limbs, the whistling of the wind, and the roar of the thunder, I slowly walked back to the chair and then eased into it. But the moment I sat back, my throat constricted, as if someone had grabbed me and was squeezing the life out of me.

I put my hands on my throat, trying to rid myself of the choking sensation that was enveloping me. As the room filled with light, and then darkness, I couldn’t get away. I couldn’t breathe, and now I was consumed with pain too.

“Oh, God!” I screamed.

Breathe

Through the pain, I pushed myself up once again. *If I can just make it to the phone that was on the nightstand.* But when I tried to take a step, I couldn't move. No matter what I did, I was frozen. Had fear gripped me so thoroughly that I could not will my legs and feet to walk? I closed my eyes and prayed, then moved my left foot, then my right one. My steps were short, slow, and heavy. Each step was filled with pain.

If I can just make it to the phone.

Between the chair and the nightstand, there was a table I looked to as my savior. My plan was to get to the table, then I could drag myself to the nightstand. But when I leaned on the table, a searing pain cut through me like a knife.

Was that a contraction?

Then a bolt of lightning. Next, the crackling roar of thunder.

I screamed.

That fear seemed to drive me and I dragged myself to the nightstand and grabbed the phone. I pressed 9, the first number I needed for an emergency. But then I wondered what I was going to tell the police. That I was being attacked by lightning? That I was afraid of thunder? So I hung up and then dialed another number. I called the person I knew would rescue me. The man who always did.

My fingers were stiff as I dialed the number. After the third ring, I heard his voice. "Hello."

I only got out a breathy, "Dad!"

"Angie!" he exclaimed. Concern was already in his voice.


I wanted to say more, tell him everything that was going on, but I couldn't speak through my labored breathing. "Dad," was all I could say. That was all he needed.

"I'm on my way!" he shouted. Then I heard the dial tone.

My father didn't know what was going on, but it didn't matter. My protective and doting father was coming to save me. I collapsed on the side of the bed as the pain once again gripped every part of me. I needed my father here. I needed to get to the hospital.

Breathe

(From Angela)



As I sat waiting for my father to show up, I tried to figure out exactly what I was feeling. One minute my heart raced, the next it slowed down. Raced, then slowed. And in between I was scared—not so much for me but for my baby.

Was this just pregnancy nerves? No, it couldn't be—there was too much pain surging through my body for it to be nothing more than my nerves. Something was wrong and I had to do everything I could to save my baby.

In one of my slower-heart moments, I pushed myself from the bed, then waddled toward the closet. I tried to ignore the sounds of the storm that crashed through the walls. All of my attention, all of my energy, needed to be focused on getting to my closet so I could be ready when my father came, so he could get me to the hospital.

My hospital bag had been packed for weeks. For a while now, I'd wanted my doctor to induce labor because I'd been in so much pain, and because I was having such a tough time breathing. But, as always, whenever I complained about my symptoms, Dr. Walters merely said, "Toughen up."

With the way I was feeling now, I wasn't going to let anything stop me. I was going to get to the hospital, and this time they were

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going to take care of me and my baby. I was moving slowly, but my steps slowed even more as my world became unfocused. I blinked, trying to get my vision clear, but when I opened my eyes I was still unstable. I was surrounded by two images of everything: two chests, two chairs, two doors. I glanced over my shoulder—two beds. And then black spots appeared.

“Oh, God!” I whispered.

My dad didn’t live far away; it would only take him minutes to arrive, and then less than five minutes for us to get to the hospital. But still I wanted to meet him at the door with my bag so that we could leave right away.

It felt like an eternity had passed by the time I made it to the closet, but I had to lean against the door to catch my breath and garner some strength. In that moment I seemed to have every symptom that I’d had throughout my pregnancy: I was dizzy, my feet were swollen to the point where they were cracked and bleeding, and I was having a hard time breathing.

I’d never had all of these symptoms at one time. But tonight, every symptom, every pain, had descended on me. It felt as if I were moving in circles even though I was standing still.

“Maybe I should call an ambulance,” I said aloud. But then Dr. Walters’ voice spoke to me with the words he always said: *It’s all in your head*. Dr. Walters’ voice was louder than my own, and so I decided that I didn’t need the ambulance. I could wait for my father.

That’s right. I heard Dr. Walters’ voice again as if he were in the room with me. *This is probably just the beginning of labor. This is your first baby. This is how you’re supposed to feel*.

Even as the doctor spoke in my mind, I knew what I was feeling wasn’t right. Just like all the times when I spoke to him in his office, I knew what he was telling me wasn’t right. But he was the doctor. He was the one with the medical degree. What did I know?

I grabbed my bag and made my way out of the room. The breathing exercises that I’d learned from Lamaze were helping, but I wasn’t

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doing them for contractions. I was doing those exercises just so I could keep breathing. How long had it been since I'd been able to catch my breath?

It's in your head. There was Dr. Walters' voice again. One side of me agreed with the doctor. My baby had probably just shifted, pushing herself against my lungs. Maybe that was why all of my air seemed to be seeping out of me.

Finally, I made it to the door. I dropped the bag there, then collapsed at the edge of the stairs. I sat up. There was no way I was going to lie back down again. Time moved slowly as I listened to the passing seconds of the grandfather clock inside and the roaring storm outside. With each passing second, I breathed in, then tried to breathe out. It took every bit of my strength to do so, and I wanted to pass out because of the pain.

Then I heard it. The sound of rescue. The car tires screeched into the driveway and then a few seconds later, "Ang!" My father called out before he even got to the front door. "I'm here. I'm here!" he yelled.

"Dad!" I felt as if I were screaming, but the word came out as a whimper. I was grateful I'd given my father a key to our house when we moved in—you know, just in case. Especially since I was pregnant. If my father didn't have a key, I would have never been able to make it to the door.

My dad was wearing a raincoat, but he was still soaked, as if he'd been standing in the rain. It must've been coming down hard out there. Then I saw his face. My father's cocoa-colored skin seemed too pale as he looked at me. I guessed I was quite a sight, sprawled out at the end of the stairs.

"I was trying to get to the door to wait for you," I told him. "But this is as far as I could get."

"That's okay, baby," he said. "I'm here now."

"I don't know if I can walk."

My father stood there for a moment; both of us knew this was

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trouble. I had gained at least a hundred pounds during this pregnancy, and I didn't know how my father was going to get me to the car. In the next second he squatted, then hoisted me up into his arms. With a strength I didn't know he had, he carried me (though he staggered a bit) through the rain and into his car.

"My bag!" I said as we sped out of the driveway.

"That's okay," he said. "I'll come back for it. I've got to get you to the hospital."

Even though we weren't far from the hospital, every few seconds my father asked me if I was all right. I kept telling him that I was okay even though I wasn't. He knew that. My father could hear me breathing ... or rather struggling to breathe.

As my father drove, I felt every move of the car, every bump in the road. *I'll be okay once I get to the hospital.* That's what I kept telling myself. That's where I kept my focus.

My dad screeched to a halt in front of the glass doors to the emergency room. He jumped out and waved his arms, yelling, "Help me! Help me!" In just a few seconds two nurses ran out, one rolling a wheelchair.

"What do we have here?" one of the nurses asked.

"My daughter," my father said. "She's pregnant. I think she's in labor, but she's having a hard time breathing."

"Okay, let's get her inside."

I was grateful the rain had let up. It now felt like a shower as the nurses scooped me from the front of my dad's car and settled me into the wheelchair. I was going to be okay now. It was all going to be okay.

I was already preregistered at the hospital for my delivery, so when my father gave my name to the admissions attendant inside, she told my father, "You can roll her right up to labor and delivery."

Calm was returning as my father and one of the nurses pushed me into the elevator. "I have a new admit here," she said to one of the nurses at the desk on the third floor.

The nurse pointed and my father wheeled me right into a room.

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When the nurse settled me into the bed, I told her I had to call my husband. “Go ahead,” she nodded as she covered me with a sheet.

“Dad, can I use your phone?” I asked since I didn’t have a thing with me.

“Sure, baby,” he said. He handed me his phone and I dialed as quickly as I could. If I was having this baby, then Samson had to be here for the birth of our daughter.

I was both surprised and relieved when Samson answered after just a couple of rings. I wasn’t sure what he’d be doing, though I knew he was close to being on stage. From all the background noise, I could tell that the club where he was performing was packed.

“Baby, it’s me,” I said.

“Angie!” he said. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing now,” I told him. “But I’m at the hospital. Dad brought me here because I was having a hard time breathing. I wanted to make sure that everything was all right with the baby.”

“What?” Sam said. “Ang’! I can’t hear you. What did you say?”

I sighed. The music was too loud. Would he ever hear me?

“Ang’!” he said again. “What’s wrong?”

“I’m at the hospital,” I repeated, a bit louder this time. “I can’t breathe!”

The phone went dead. I wasn’t sure if Samson heard everything or not, but I had a feeling that he would be right here. He was only about ninety minutes away and he wasn’t going to let me go through this by myself.

A young blonde doctor entered the room just as I was handing the phone back to my father. By her youthful appearance, I figured she was a resident. “What’s going on with you, young lady?” she asked me. She seemed rather chipper for someone who was on the late-night shift.

I managed to force a smile. “I hope that I’m having a baby tonight,” I told her, “but I’m actually here because I’m having trouble breathing.”

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“Well, let’s get some labs on you and see what’s going on,” she said in a tone that was filled with concern.

Once I was back in the room, the doctor asked a nurse to draw some blood while she examined me. When her hands gently squeezed my legs, the smile on her face faded away. She lifted the sheet and inspected my legs and feet. “You’re swollen,” she said.

“I know. I’ve been this way for months,” I told her.

With the sheet drawn back, she squeezed my leg again and when her hand left an imprint, her smile completely disappeared. “Okay, let’s get a fetal monitor in here,” she ordered.

Within seconds, a machine appeared. After she hooked me up, she did a pelvic exam. “You’re two centimeters dilated,” she told me. Then she added, “Did you know that you were having contractions?”

“Not really,” I replied. “I’m just trying to breathe here.” We both laughed a little.

“I’m a little worried about your blood pressure,” she said, “which is quite high right now.” I nodded because I didn’t know what she wanted me to say. “Let me get the results from your labs and I’ll be right back.”

When she left the room, my dad made his way to me. “You’re in the right place now,” he said while patting my hand. “They’re going to take care of you.” He was always the reassuring father. He stayed by my side until the resident returned just a few minutes later.

“Well, I’ve got some news,” she began. “I’m recommending that we induce labor.”

My head fell back and I looked up toward the ceiling. “Thank you,” I whispered to God, to the doctor, and to myself. Finally! Relief washed over me. Tonight would be the night that my baby was going to come and I was going to feel better.

As she held the paperwork in her hand, the doctor explained, “We found protein in your urine, your blood platelets are low, and with your shortness of breath and high blood pressure I think it’s a must that we induce you.”

Breathe

“Okay,” I said, nodding my head as hard as I could. I wanted to make sure she knew I completely agreed with her.

“All I have to do is confer with Dr. Walters,” she told me, “and then we can get your Pitocin started.”

The doctor stepped out of the room and the small smile on my face went away. *Oh, God! She has to talk to Dr. Walters? Why?*

“What’s wrong, baby?” my father asked. We were so close, so tuned in that my father could feel the change in my mood. I shook my head as if I were okay, even though the hope I felt a minute ago began to fade.

Knowing Dr. Walters, he was going to stop it. He was going to tell the resident that it was all in my head. That I was a first-time mother who just needed to toughen up. She was going to walk back in here and tell me that I’d have to do this for another month. And I knew that I wouldn’t make it. Not for thirty days. I wasn’t sure if I could make it through another day.

Please, God. Please, God. Please, God!

When the doctor returned to my room, I wanted to cover my ears. She said, “Well, Dr. Walters said that since you’re here and admitted, we might as well induce you.”

If I’d had any energy, I would’ve pumped my fist into the air. I could tell by the resident’s tone that it hadn’t been an easy call. Dr. Walters was probably hesitant, still wanting to leave me in all of this discomfort and pain. But he had finally said yes and I was going to have my baby.

“I’m going to send in the nurses who’ll get you set up and going,” she said. “And then I’ll be back to check on you soon.”

Between my slow breaths, I thanked her. I was sure she could hear my relief. I waited until the doctor stepped out of the room before I turned to my father. “Sam’s not here,” I said. “If they’re going to induce labor ... suppose he doesn’t get here in time?”

Just the thought of Sam not being with me made my breathing more labored. I couldn’t do this without him. After all we’d been through with this pregnancy, I wanted—I needed—him here.

Breathe

“Calm down, honey,” my dad said. “Don’t get excited. I’ll give him a call and find out where he is.”

“Okay,” I said.

Inside my heart I called out for Samson. And then I heard him shout my name: “Ang’! Ang’!”

I thought I was imagining it. Hardly an hour had passed since I called him. There was no way he could have gotten to me this fast. Then I heard him again: “Ang’!” he yelled.

My father grinned. “He’s here.” He moved toward the door to greet my husband.

But before my father could get to the door, Sam burst into the room in full panic mode. “Baby, I’m here,” he gasped as if he were out of breath. As if we were in a movie, he rushed into my arms and we held each other. My heart had called out to him and he appeared.

Samson stepped back as if he didn’t want to get too far away. “What’s wrong?” he asked, looking from me to my father and then back to me again.

I broke it down into the fewest words as possible. “I couldn’t breathe,” I told him, “but it turned out that it was probably just contractions.”

“Contractions?” he shouted.

I nodded and tried to take a couple of deep breaths. “They’re going to induce me.”

He leaned over and squeezed me even tighter. As he held me, I could feel his relief. “So we’re going to have the baby tonight?” he whispered.

“Our baby is coming,” I said as I nodded.

When Sam sat on the edge of the bed, I turned to my father. He was smiling, but his eyes were weary. He had to be tired. Not only had he rescued me, but he’d had to endure my pain, which was something he wasn’t good at. He could take a lot, but he couldn’t stand to see either of his daughters hurting.

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“Dad, why don’t you go home, get some rest, and then come back,” I suggested.

My father frowned as if he had no intention of going anywhere.

“You know how long these things usually take,” I continued. “It’ll be a couple of hours, and now that Sam’s here, he’ll call you when it gets closer to the time.”

“Are you sure?” he asked.

“Yes.” My father’s tiredness was only one reason I wanted to send him away. I wanted him to go because if he’d had a hard time watching me already, I didn’t know what was going to happen to him when I had a contraction that I could actually feel. Between breaths I tried to smile to reassure him. “It’s okay,” I said. “Really. We’ll call you when I get to seven centimeters.”

It took my father a moment to agree. “But I’m not going home,” he said. “I’ll go get some coffee, but I’m going to be close by.” He leaned over and gave me a hug.

“Thank you, Daddy,” I whispered.

He kissed my forehead, hugged Sam, and then left us alone.

Sam picked up my hand and held it between his. “So this all happened right after I left?” he asked.

I wanted to answer him, I wanted to tell him everything, but a contraction seared through my body much like the pain I’d had at home. I had to focus on breathing.

“Baby?” Sam whispered.

I closed my eyes and tried to breathe more deeply. I had a feeling that if I thought my pregnancy had been difficult to this point, it was about to get much harder.

Just as the contraction subsided, two nurses entered my room. “Okay,” one of them said to me. “We need to insert a Foley catheter.”

I only had two thoughts: *You need to insert a what? And you need to insert what where?*

The nurse must’ve seen Sam’s and my confusion because she

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went on to say, “This is standard procedure with labor and delivery. I just need for you to lie back.”

“Lie back?” Sam and I said together. I hadn’t lain flat on my back in well over three months because whenever I did I couldn’t breathe. That was my biggest complaint to Dr. Walters, but I could never get him to listen to me. I couldn’t get him to believe me.

“No,” I said, shaking my head at the nurse. “I’m already having a hard enough time breathing. You have to find another way.”

The two nurses looked at me as if they were not about to allow me to make their jobs more difficult. “This is the way that we do it,” the nurse who had been doing all the talking said. “It won’t take long. We’ll be done in a minute or two and then you can sit right back up.”

“Does she really need the catheter?” my husband asked. “Isn’t there another way you can do it without her lying flat?”

The nurses gave us a look that said, *Look, we do this every day and you’re trying to tell us what to do?*

Finally, the other nurse spoke: “The doctor said you have to have the Foley.”

“What about my breathing?” I asked. “I haven’t lain flat in months.”

“You won’t be lying down for long,” the other nurse said as if none of this were a big deal.

Why did I have such a hard time getting anyone to listen to me? “I came to the hospital because I was having a hard time breathing,” I told them. “I’m afraid this will make it worse.”

“Listen,” a nurse said, “if it’s pain you’re worried about, I’ll give you some numbing gel and you’ll be fine.”

The other nurse added, “Like I told you already, this will only take a couple of minutes, but we have to do it now.”

I was so tired of fighting. And the numbing gel sounded good. I looked to my husband for his opinion and he shrugged. “I guess we have to do it,” he said.

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The nurse closest to my bedside hit the button for the bed to recline. As I slowly went back, I grabbed Sam's hand and focused on the relief that was coming. In just a few hours this would all be over. Our baby would be born.

The bed continued its slow recline until I was flat on my back. I took a deep breath and waited for trouble to come, but my first thought was about how good it actually felt. I hadn't been in this position in so long and my thoughts went to all the nights when I'd tried to get a good night's sleep while propped upright in a chair. It was impossible and uncomfortable, especially after all of these weeks of being in the chair.

I felt gloved hands pushing my legs apart and then the cool gel was applied. "Now, you might feel a pinch," one of the nurses said, though I couldn't see which nurse was speaking.

I closed my eyes, squeezed my husband's hand, and stayed focused with positive thoughts of my baby.

"Okay, it's in," she said.

Instantly I was relieved. Like the nurses had promised, that hadn't taken much time. And I was okay.

"We can lift you up now," the nurse said.

I heard the buzz first and then felt the slow rise of the bed. I waited a couple of seconds before I unpeeled my eyes and looked into my husband's. "That wasn't too bad."

He smiled. And then ...

I gasped and choked and struggled to get one breath out of my body. Fear and panic filled me. I opened my mouth, trying to pull air inside. But that didn't work. I turned to my husband with my eyes wide. I fought to breathe. I fought to speak. It took a moment, but three words finally squeaked out of me: "I. Can't. Breathe!"

Sam's smile turned upside down. "Ang'! What's wrong?"

"I. Can't. Breathe!"

We turned to the nurse, and together we said, "Help!"

I had a feeling that single word might be the last word I would

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ever speak. Every fiber of my being knew that life was leaving me. Rapid-fire thoughts passed through my mind. But it was strange—even though I was fighting to stay alive, I was more alert than ever. Every one of my senses were working overtime.

This is it! my mind told me.

The nurses looked at each other and practically rolled their eyes. One of the nurses walked over to Sam and the other to me. At almost the same time, they patted us on our backs, patronizing us as if we were children.

“She’s having a panic attack,” the nurse who had gone to my husband told him.

I guessed the fact that I was dying meant nothing.

The nurse who hovered over me said, “There, there,” in a voice that was supposed to be soothing. “The Foley is in. You’ll be okay now.”

My eyes bulged inside my head. “I. Can’t. Breathe,” I repeated. I felt like I was screaming, but my words were no more than a whimper.

My nurse shook her head and waved her hand at the same time. “You’re going to have to calm her down.”

Samson took his job much more seriously than the nurses. He turned to me. “Ang’, calm down,” he said. “You’re okay.” Those were his words, but in his expression I could see his panic—the way his eyes widened, the shallow breaths that he was taking.

“I. Can’t. Breathe!” I told him like I’d told everyone else. If anyone would believe me, it would be Samson.

“Calm down, Angela,” one of the nurses said in a sterner voice than she’d been using. As if being stern was going to save my life.

I wanted to scream again, but I didn’t have enough air to say another word. My mind took over and began to play out the many scenes of my life. As life drained from me, I was reminded of all I’d lived. At the same time, I saw everything I would never see.

Like my baby! *Dear God, my baby!*

Would my baby live? I prayed she would. And Samson would

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take good care of her since I wouldn't be there for her. He would be a great father.

Father! My father! What would he do when he found out that I'd died and he wasn't by my side? He would never forgive himself. "Get my father!" I struggled to say to my husband.

As life drained from me, I wanted my father there. If I was going to die, I wanted the last people around me to be my father, my husband, and my unborn baby.

Hold on, Angela. Hold on. Even though that's what I kept saying to myself, I didn't think I'd be able to hold on until my father got there. I was fading fast. I fought to scream again. "Help me, please! Somebody help me." I was filled with such desperation that I barely recognized my own voice.

When the nurses didn't respond, Sam went into action. He pushed past the nurses and went screaming into the hall. "We need help!"

In less than a minute, more nurses rushed into the room, rolling machines on carts, then pushing needles and tubes into me, hooking me up to life machines. As soon as I was connected to the machines, they shrilled warnings that something was wrong. The machines told the nurses what I'd been saying. I was in trouble.

I heard the patter of running footsteps and the room filled with more hospital personnel. "What's happening here?" I heard someone yell. If I could have answered, I would have told him that I was struggling to live. But the words wouldn't come out as I held myself up using the bed rails.

Chaos filled the room. Nurses pushed in crash carts. The doctor yelled out orders. And the whole time I screamed, "Help me!"

Another nurse ran into the room and her eyes locked with mine. "Hello, beautiful," she said as she shone a light into my right eye, then my left. Her words, her tone, showed me kindness. "I'm going to help you," she said. "Tell me what's happening."

The weight of my head was too much for me to hold it up, so I let my chin fall to my chest. "I. Can't. Breathe," I wheezed.

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Over her shoulder, I saw another woman rush into my room. Her eyebrows were bunched together as if she were trying to assess the situation. “Where’s her labs?” Her tone was stern, but then she looked at me and her expression changed. She was warm and inviting.

She glanced down at my chart before she moved toward me, wearing a gentle smile. “We’re going to help you,” she said softly as she placed her hand on my leg. But when she touched me, her smile went away. “She’s got at least a plus two edema.” As she backed away and shouted orders, she nodded to a couple of nurses who turned to my husband.

“Mr. Logan, we have to ask you to step out of the room,” one of them said.

“No!” he shouted. I knew Sam would never leave my side.

“Mr. Logan, please.” I watched as two nurses pulled Samson away.

“Ang’!” he yelled. “Ang’!”

I garnered enough strength to hold myself up, keep my head still, and lock eyes on my husband. Suppose this was the last time I ever saw Samson? I wanted his image solidly in my mind.

As Samson was dragged through the door, another man came in pushing a cart. He didn’t speak a word, but he looked at me. His eyes spoke to mine without uttering a word. His gaze said, *I am here to help*, as he eased his cart next to the bed. He lifted my arm and I’m not sure what he did next.

Then ... I saw *him*! Actually, it was more like I sensed him. I managed to turn my head and there he was, entering the room. Dr. Walters. My doctor.

Slowly, my eyes made their way up his blue-mist-colored scrubs, to his face that seemed to be growing paler by the second. Then our eyes locked. He seemed transfixed, though he kept moving toward me. It was as if he were being pulled into the chaos, drawing closer to me and closer to the truth that this was all happening because

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of him. It was happening because he hadn't listened to me. It was happening because he hadn't treated my symptoms.

Even though what I was going through was Dr. Walters' fault, I was desperate, and so my mind pleaded with him: *Please, help me!* But just as quickly, the plea in my mind was followed by, *I tried to tell you that I couldn't breathe. And now, because of you, I'm dying.*

Dread and doom were in his eyes as I labored to breathe. And he labored the same way. As the air left my body, it seemed to be doing the same to him. He broke his gaze and his eyes took a slow tour around the room filled with frenzied doctors and nurses. When he turned back to me, his entire essence seemed to say, *What have I done?*

I wanted to scream that this was all his fault. He was the reason I would never see my baby. It was because of him I wouldn't get to love my husband anymore. It was entirely his fault that my father would blame himself for the rest of his life.

But I couldn't scream any of that because that was the moment I felt it. My last ounce of strength was being squeezed from me. In my mind and my spirit, I knew this was it. This was the end. I had to conserve my remaining energy and this moment wisely. With all the strength I had left, I lifted my head and raised my eyes toward the ceiling. I inhaled, then exhaled, calling out, "Jesus, please help me."

That was it. My fingers relaxed, and with nothing to hold me up I crashed back on the bed. I heard the thud as I fell back. I was in the position I feared the most—flat on my back.

This time, I didn't want to scream. I felt no pain. All I did was close my eyes and give in. I gave in to the white light.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Angela Burgin Logan is the president of Nia Enterprises. A highly sought-after personality, she has appeared on television shows like *The View* and been featured in print and digital publications like *The Huffington Post*, *Essence Magazine*, and others. As a content creator, Angela produced the feature film *Breathe* and founded the go-to women's online destination *LadiesLiveandLearn.com*. As a multimedia strategist and influencer, she has created award-winning digital campaigns and worked with brands like A&E/Lifetime Television. Angela is also a pop culture and lifestyle authority who serves as the Director of Social Media for *Uptown Magazine* and *Hype Hair Magazine*. She considers her most important job and greatest honor to be that of mother to her children. She is married to Samson Logan, and the family resides in Buffalo, New York.

Samson A. Logan is a recording artist, actor, and producer who now adds author to his many accomplishments. As a *Billboard* recording artist, Samson has had two top twenty hits, "Atmosphere" and "Future Anniversary," and has performed and collaborated with stars across musical genres, such as gospel legend Shirley Caesar to rap stars like Tupac Shakur. As an actor, Samson has starred in award-winning film, television, and stage productions, such as Tyler Perry's *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* and Je'Caryous Johnson's *Love Overboard*. In addition to producing music projects, Samson has produced film projects, including coproducing the film *Breathe*, which was lauded by top film festivals. He is married to Angela B. Logan and lives in Buffalo, New York.