

My water broke at 4:30 in the morning, gushing....I put on a folded up chucks pad and had some pregnancy tea with some Blue cohosh in it to make sure that my contractions started (we all know how I was afraid of that). I went back to bed. Contractions started, and felt ok, I was using this wonderful imagery of babies head widening my cervix, it looked like ripples of water on a calm lake when you cast a stone in. I kept having to put more pillows between my legs to feel more open. At about 7:15 am, I had to wake up because I was starving! I went to make myself some oatmeal and decided to do a labor project while I ate. We recieved this wonderful blank baby calendar, where you are supposed to fill in the numbers of the day when your baby is born, so the calendar starts on her birthday.....I was filling this out, and bouncing on my birth ball, until about 7:45. The contractions were coming, but I was still pretty aware through them, however my birth ball no longer felt, high enough, so I tried to pump it up more, but couldn't because it made the contractions worse, so I woke Chris up and made him do it for me, he then stayed awake to help prepare stuff, and look out for me. We called Rosanna at about 8/8:15, she was somewhat surprised to hear from us considering we were only 38 weeks, but said that she'd plan on coming after an appointment she had until 11am, which was fine by us, I figured we had a long way to go....I put on some Bob Marley and was just laboring around the house, doing dishes, cleaning, all the while having contractions and now having to focus on breathing through them,I'd grab on to a shelf or anything around waist high, and sway my hips back and forth as the contraction came and went, I kept feeling like they were really intense, and wanted to keep a "good attitude" so I'd try singing along to Bob...."I wanna love you, and treat you right. I wanna love you, everyday, and every night". I was getting tired of walking around, so I kneeled a lot on all fours, because sitting just didn't work, and neither did laying down I felt like her head was getting squished... Around 9/9:15 I wanted to take a shower, so in we went, we propped the birth ball in there, so that I could sit a little, my legs were really tired, but during the contractions I couldn't sit, because I could feel her head or my bottom bulging against the ball, so we hung a towel over the frame of the shower and during each contraction I would stand up and hang onto the towel, like a rope over a tree branch, is what I kept envisioning, it felt very native. Chris was extremely good at supporting me with breathing, he mirrored all my patterns, and he would do the "ovarian breathing" hand gestures we learned in class, it really helped to have his hand down near my pelvis for something to focus on and to keep my breathe low and centered in that area of my body. I kept thinking and wondering what or how I'd handle myself if he weren't there? Like if I was alone in the forest, or something and I think that really kept me going too. I was so greatful for having someone there to help me and support me, but I trusted that I was doing everything right, by letting this happen to my body, and not be scared of it or go against it, that if I was alone, I could do it. By that time I was having a little bloody show and a part of me knew that I was in active labor, and was pretty close to giving birth, but the feelings of

the contractions were so intense that I also kept doubting myself too, one thing I remember thinking over and over, is "what if I'm only at like 3cm and I can barely keep on top of them?" The feelings of the contractions is another issue, they weren't really that "painful" it was more like a widening of my whole being, like an expanding pressure that had only the walls of my body to hold it back and that was not going to stop it.... While in the shower I kept thinking I wanted to get out because I wanted to save enough hot water to fill the birth tub sitting empty in our office. Finally, around 10 we got out of the shower, and I told Chris to start filling the tub. We got out to the living room though and I must have gone into transition, because, I kind of lost it, everything started to feel a little fuzzy, and I couldn't really comprehend anything anymore, all I was aware of was that I didn't want Chris to go anywhere, except, for some reason his breathe and body odor were really starting to bug me, and I felt like I was gonna throw up, so I made him go take a shower. I leaned with my back against the couch, sacrum tucked and legs bent and spread, I think this was the only time I was actually on my back, and it felt kind of comfortable. I know I made him go take a shower but I don't really remember him being gone, or coming back for that matter. The next recollection I have is telling him he better call Rosanna again, and tell her to bring her birthing stool/chair, because I couldn't find a comfortable position to be in and wanted another option, I guess I was still thinking it was going to take a lot longer. I have no recollection of what time it was, but Rosanna said she recieved that call around 10:50 and called us back 5 minutes later. By that time I was "pushy" and Rosanna could hear that on the phone, I remember saying to Chris as he was talking to Rosanna, "unless I'm totally retarded, this baby is coming now!" Rosanna asked where our doula was, we told her that it was just us, our doula Treesa was in New York and I had talked to Jeanna our backup doula earlier and told her I really didn't feel like having anyone over. (once again thinking we had much more time to go and that she could come later) Rosanna said she'd be right over, on her way here she called Suzanne Andrews, who lives pretty close to come as support, as Pearl Yu, Rosanna's assistant, lives up in San Francisco and probably wouldn't get here in time. She told Chris that if I needed to push I should get on my side, but I said "no way" I needed to be on all fours....I was not moving....as I said before, I was "pushy" and this was such a different sensation than I expected, I didn't feel like actually pushing, but my body really felt like it was going to "expel" the baby, whether I was helping our not, so I just went along for the ride....much more vocal now than before, grunting and wide open mouthed guttural groans/screams....it was like my body just took over. Rosanna got here at about 11:45, we were set up kneeling next to the couch, with my upper body draped over the seat, we had a towel flung over the frame of the couch because whenever a contraction would come, I wanted to hang on to something and pull, I guess the counter pressure of pulling against the pushing really helped me to stay grounded. Chris was by my side with cool wet cloth, in between contractions. Later I found out that he was actually holding the other

end of the towel for me, so I was pulling against his strength not the couch frame. (He's so sweet!) When Rosanna checked me I fully dilated with just a little "lip" left, and when she said that I could almost feel where that lip was, and was able to let my body and the baby's head push against it to make it go away. Then I could feel Amalea's head starting down the birth canal, the sensation of her coming down and then kind of sliding back up....stretching gently and molding gently. Then came crowning, and I realized how scared I was of tearing and kind of started freaking out, I wanted Rosanna to do the perineal massage, but when she touched me, I screamed at her to not touch me, she encouraged me to do it myself, but that didn't feel comfortable either, reaching down was hard, my arms didn't seem long enough.

There was a point when Rosanna couldn't get the heartbeat of the baby, and I remember her saying that out loud, I think she wanted me to change position so she could get a better angle, but I couldn't even comprehend moving in that moment, so I went inward, I connected with the baby and felt her moving and adjusting herself, it almost felt like she was pushing against the contractions to come out too. I remember saying that "I can feel her moving, I can feel her moving" to reassure everyone in the room, or to avoid having to move to another position.

The baby was crowning or almost crowning, and in between contractions I was in this space of timelessness, it felt so long in between contractions, I remember almost falling asleep and being so relaxed, then I'd feel another wave starting and say "fuck, here comes another one" FUUUUCCCKKKKK!!! That's how Suzanne found us actually, from my loud screams, she'd never been to our house before, and we lived in a fairly large apartment complex with lots of buildings.

Then the baby's head was born and Rosanna realized that the cord was around her neck, I remember her saying something like "you need to get this baby out now" and that was really startling to me, the only time that I remember feeling scared that something was wrong, or could go wrong.... all this while pushing, not really pushing, but letting my body expell the baby and i felt like I didn't know HOW to push, when the midwife was now asking me to push, so I tried to push without a contraction and remember straining and waiting for one, then finally one came and out came the baby. I guess Rosanna caught her and laid her on the floor, I remember lifting my knee over and around the cord to an almost squatting position and looking down at her, not really even realizing, although I already knew in my heart that she was a girl... but hearing Christoph (sounding very far away, but he was right behind me) say "It IS a girl?!?!!" I scooped her up and sat down against the couch waiting for the placenta in this timeless space looking down at this little alien being who had lived in me for so long and was so familiar yet so new. She looked like my father, she looked almost asian, with her slanted dark almond shaped eyes and dark hair and skin, was she really mine? I don't know what I expected but this didn't seem like it was it..... I brought her to

breast and she started suckling right away, it sort of hurt and also felt natural at the same time.

The cord had been cut for cord blood banking, and I gave her to Chris to birth the placenta. A little while later the placenta came out. I told the midwife that I was feeling a bit light headed and I think she was worried a bit then about me and the amount of blood I was losing... right after that I passed quite a large clot, and felt better. I told them I felt like I had a bit of low blood sugar and requested a freezer pop to munch on, after all, it was like 96 degrees outside.

After nursing a bit more and getting somewhat cleaned up, the midwife's assistant and doula asked me if I'd like to shower and clean myself up. I did want to, so back to the bathroom we went for a short shower. Now that I was all cleaned up, I felt much better and got cuddled up in our bed with Christoph and our new little girl.

We still had yet to name her, all the names on our "list" didn't seem to fit. The first name that came to my mind for her was Amalena, I told Christoph this, and after saying it out loud a few times we both decided that the "n" had to go... Amalea would be her name. Amalea Michelle Deborah Thijssen, the 2 middle names after both her grandmas.