Roxanna Saremi - During and After Birth

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IN THIS EPISODE

The before, during and after experiment comes together: Roxanna Saremi and her partner Tom join Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC just eleven days after the birth of their daughter Olive to tell the story of her home birth — with audio Tom recorded during the labor itself, woven through the conversation. Roxanna was last on the podcast at almost 38 weeks, planning a home birth; now the two of them walk through how it actually unfolded, starting with her water breaking at 1:30 in the morning, a slow, cinnamon-roll-baking start, a midwife napping upstairs, a doula's hip squeezes, a movie night that turned into real labor, and clips that put you in the room for the heartbeat checks, the surges and the first moments after Olive arrived. How close did the birth come to the one they had imagined — and what did the audio capture that neither of them remembered?

About this transcript: *This transcript was created with AI-assisted transcription and reviewed by our team. It may not be 100% accurate — names, medical terms, and phrasing can occasionally be mis-transcribed. For exact wording, please listen to the episode audio.*

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the Informed Pregnancy and Parenting Podcast. You have tuned into something brand new that we've never done before. It is not only an after episode of a before and after episode. It is a before, during, and after episode. My guests today are brand new parents and they're cool enough that they decided to go along with my experiment of recording some audio periodically through the birth. A lot of the feedback that we get on the podcast is that these birth stories are very helpful for people. Obviously you can never have a trial run, but you could sort of hear other people talk about their firsthand experiences. And this time we wanted to try to bring you a little deeper into the experience.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The super cool parents are Roxanna and Tom. Welcome to the podcast.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yay.

TOM: Bye.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And Olive was on the podcast last time, just more of an internal appearance.

ROXANNA SAREMI: She was. Now she can make grunts and noises and we can communicate with her kind of.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's how I communicate with everybody.

ROXANNA SAREMI: She's on that level.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Grunts and noises. So I mean, this is fresh. This baby is like two weeks old?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Not even.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Not even two weeks old.

ROXANNA SAREMI: 11 days.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. So the story hopefully is still fresh in your mind. So last time we spoke, you were very close to being due. We didn't have Tom here on the podcast, so welcome Tom, not just the father, but the recorder of all clips that we'll share today. And from what I understand, a very, very hands-on dude dad. So at the end of the last episode, you were getting close to your due date. How was the last date of pregnancy?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Right after I talked to you, I started to get really tired. I was getting heavy and my ankles were swelling up and I was uncomfortable after that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: After talking to me? Yeah. That's amazing. And when we talked last time, how far away were we from your due date?

ROXANNA SAREMI: We were about two weeks out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And you got uncomfortable. Did you stay uncomfortable for the rest of the pregnancy or did it kind of come and go?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I was pretty uncomfortable.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Were you still active? You were kind of an active person.

ROXANNA SAREMI: I did some big walks on the beach, like puttering around the house, but nothing too intense.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. I mean, puttering does not imbue a whole lot of action as a verb.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Getting ready.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Were you nesting? Were you guys nesting?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Totally nesting.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What kind of things?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Like cleaning, folding things, laundry.

TOM: Organization. We redid our kitchen, we redid our closet just to get organized.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, there's not a ton of things you can do because it's still kind of pandemic-y.

ROXANNA SAREMI: It is. We were sterilizing bottles and stuff.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, were you washing your clothing and draft, the baby clothing?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Dreft.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. First draft is the detergent of first time parents.

ROXANNA SAREMI: It seems like number one, pediatrician recommended.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then when you have other kids, you don't give a hoot, you just put them in clothing. All right. So leading up to, did you have midwifery appointments?

TOM: We did,

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah.

TOM: On that Monday, Alex came to the house on that Monday.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How'd it go?

TOM: It went well. Yeah. I believe my mom came with us as well. It was the first time she heard the baby's heartbeat. The doula joined us as well, right?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah.

TOM: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And I mean, a lot of midwives don't. Did you get a cervical check?

ROXANNA SAREMI: No. I didn't get a cervical check until way active labor.

TOM: 1:30 in the morning.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's only partially true because I check your cervicals every time you come to my office.

ROXANNA SAREMI: What?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, your neck bones are called your cervical spine.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Oh, whoa. I did not know that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Anatomy lesson, mind blown.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Seriously? Wait, and so you could tell if I was dilated?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, it has nothing to do with the birth. It's just you have three regions of vertebra in your body of the cervical, thoracic, and lumbar. So a dad joke, you'll get used to them. All right. So that's on a Monday. And when and how do you go into labor?

TOM: Okay. So Thursday at 1:30 in the morning, the bathroom light turns on and I hear Rox go, "Tom, Tom." And I'm like, "Yes." And she's like, "I think my water just broke." And so I go in there and lo and behold, her juicy sweatpants are full of this fluid. Alex was like, "You got to smell it to make sure it's okay." So I smelled it. It smelled fine.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm sorry, what are you smelling for exactly?

TOM: Alex said to smell for a rotten smell and if it smells rotten, then we need to call her and wake her up right away. If it doesn't smell rotten, I can just text her and go back to sleep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sweet. Okay. That's sort of like what my wife does with the milk carton. Can you taste this if it's sour? Anyway, back to you. And I love that you mentioned that they were juicy sweatpants now also literally juicy.

TOM: Yeah. So we went back to sleep after that. Well, she went back to sleep. I stayed awake for hours and hours and hours contemplating how the next 24 hours will go in my mind. And then we texted our midwife and our doula just to give them a heads up and then we woke up the next day and kind of just prepared.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So a couple of questions, Roxy. Did you say, "I think my water broke," or was that like, "That's my water."

ROXANNA SAREMI: I said, "I think." I think it was either my water broke or I'm losing my ability to hold my pee.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Could have been either. So was it a big splash or little driplets?

ROXANNA SAREMI: It was a good amount, but it didn't gush everywhere. It was kind of slow. So as I walked, it continued to come out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. At that point, were you having any surges? Was there any contraction activity?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Nothing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, nothing. Okay. Was it hard to go back to bed? I mean, Tom seems to have been completely consumed with the idea that things were rolling, like water breaking is a clock starter. There's no going back. You just roll over and go back to bed?

TOM: Started snoring within like 15 minutes and I was like, "Oh my God. Now I have to sit up, stare at the wall and listen to her snore for the next hour until I fall asleep."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then when you text the midwife and the doula, did they respond?

TOM: Yes, actually, because Alex was out of birth, so she responded very fast and our doula responded within seconds like she always does.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh wow. So they were both up and just thanks for the heads up or any tips?

TOM: Thanks for the heads up. Everything seems normal and fine. They asked a few follow up questions and then we went back to sleep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Even Tom?

TOM: No, I tried to, but...

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So that's one o'clock in the morning, very early on a Thursday morning.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And how many days pro or after your due date is that? Where's that in relation to your due date?

TOM: We were about five or six days early.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So 10 days after my talk made you uncomfortable?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yep. Olive was like, "Ah, I got to get out."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then five days before your due date. And when did you get up? I mean, if you went to sleep at one something in the morning, when did you wake up for the day?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I woke up around eight.

TOM: Yeah. I'm looking at my text messages. At 7:16, I texted Catherine and Alex again in a little group chat just saying good morning and we followed up on some of the stuff.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In the morning, was there a lot more fluid?

ROXANNA SAREMI: It kept coming. I put a diaper on. It just kept randomly would just all of a sudden just start coming out. I didn't know that that's how your water can break. I though it was like a huge gush, like a one time thing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Niagara Falls?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I though it was going to be Niagara Falls, but during cinnamon rolls, it was still coming out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We're going to get there. Okay. So now still no contractions?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Nothing. Maybe some light like period-y cramps.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I like the word period E.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Period E cramp, just because I think women can relate to that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, period-esque. I mean, that's only six hours after your water broke, but is there any piece of you that's a little wondering where those contractions, nervous about it?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I'm trying to think about my head space in the moment and I was just so like, I want to be present. I want to just relax. I know this is going to be a marathon. And so I just kind of told myself let's do things to be in the moment. So my mind didn't really go to that place.

TOM: I remember she was feeling uncomfortable and I kept checking in on her to make sure, was that a contraction? And she was like, "I don't even know."

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah, it was crampy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And the midwife and the doula didn't express anything about that either?

TOM: No, they didn't worry about anything. They just told me to feed her and make sure she sleeps and rests. So we ate a big breakfast and we tried to sit on the couch and fall back asleep and watch TV and then -

ROXANNA SAREMI: Oh yeah we did. We did fall back asleep.

TOM: And then started the rest of the day.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. We're going to take a little break and when we come back, we'll find out how the story unfolds and hear audio from the moment. We'll be right back. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. We are talking to Roxanna and Tom and baby Olive. All right, so kind of a slow start with water breaking and you going back to bed, waking up later in the morning, water still breaking and big breakfast and then back to bed. What happens next?

TOM: So we were in contact with the doula and the midwife and we were talking and from all the courses that we took and stuff, they were telling me to start tracking contractions and so I was confused and when she was telling me there was a contraction, I was tracking in an app and I talked to Alex about it and she was like, "It's way too early for that. So what do we do?" And she said, "Just continue to relax." And then Roxy was like, "Let's make cinnamon rolls." We made cinnamon rolls.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, that's my answer to just about everything.

ROXANNA SAREMI: It just felt like the right thing to do was to make something... Oh wait, Catherine, our doula said, "Get that oxytocin." I was like, "All right, I'm going to make some cinnamon rolls."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I don't know if she really meant bake cinnamon rolls.

ROXANNA SAREMI: I don't think she did either. I think she meant cuddle with each other.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, cuddle. But I mean, cinnamon rolls gets you ready for some good cuddles.

ROXANNA SAREMI: It did.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So what time of day is this now that you're baking cinnamon rolls?

TOM: About three in the afternoon.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So at three in the afternoon, this is more than 12 hours after the initial breaking of the water and there's some surging it sounds like going on, but not really a regular pattern of contractions?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Exactly. Some surging. I was talking to my friend, we were FaceTiming, I have to pause and be like, "Ooh, I feel something." But it was super mild and then it would just go away and they were like maybe 30 seconds.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And then you're eating cinnamon rolls. How long did it take to make them?

TOM: They're the quick ones. 15 minutes. It's not from scratch. We're no bakers.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So there's a little clip of you eating these cinnamon rolls.

TOM: Hi. Hi baby. How you doing?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I'm good. I'm just eating some cinnamon rolls, getting my oxytocin flowing.

TOM: It's three o'clock. Your water broke at 1:30 this morning.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Still breaking.

TOM: Still breaking. Wearing a little bikey. Can't really tell, but she's ready to come out. We'll see.

ROXANNA SAREMI: We're just hanging out.

TOM: Oh, bomb. Definitely.

ROXANNA SAREMI: They're so good.

TOM: Anything you want to say to Olive?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I can't wait to meet you back to the front, hands over heart, chin down, and don't play with the cord.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. So at this point, I mean, you're having fun.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Exactly. I was having, I was like, "Is this what a contraction is? This is nothing. I can easily do this."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Like what are all those ladies complaining about? This is easier than pie.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah, exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then also you gave your baby some instructions.

ROXANNA SAREMI: I did, because she was slightly posterior. And so who told us to talk to her? Oh, one of our classes that we were taking, our hypnobirthing class. I said, "Why don't you talk to her?" So I said, "Back to the front, hands over heart, chin down, and don't play with the cord."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I still sometimes tell my kids stop playing with the cords. Yeah. So you're having some surges, but you're fine. I mean, here it's just audio, but you're smiling, you're happy, you're enjoying that cinnamon roll.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yep. Yep. And I know that she's close because with your water breaking, you only have a certain amount of time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: At what point do you presume that your doula and/or midwife are going to come? Where in the process were you expecting that to happen?

TOM: So in my head, originally in the process, I thought they would be there that morning.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. You thought she was going to come much earlier, and then what was it that you said that was the key, like come now?

TOM: Well, I didn't say that. So she told me she's finishing a birth and she's going to come over and she asked if she could take a nap here and I said, yeah. So she showed up around four, checked rocks, just a heartbeat check and just to make sure everything is good and I guess just to see where we are. And then she went upstairs to go to sleep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Take a nap. So in the birth timeline, this is just about an hour post cinnamon roll.

TOM: Correct, yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And here we have a little bit of audio of the report as she's listening to your baby.

ALEX: It

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Really is.

ALEX: Two accelerations. Three accelerations. Maybe I've been listening a minute. Started three accelerations. Ideal. She's very happy, healthy, reactive baby.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. So that's great news. Baby sounds strong, healthy, happy.

TOM: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Does that make you feel good inside?

TOM: Yeah. Yeah, it did. It was nice.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Reassuring?

TOM: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So she still doesn't check your cervix. Are you having any more activity? It's only an hour post cinnamon roll, but is the oxytocin kicking in?

ROXANNA SAREMI: No.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Nothing?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Nothing yet.

TOM: I mean minor ones, not nothing, but very, very minor ones. So considered -

ROXANNA SAREMI: Nothing I can remember.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. And still too early for the app.

TOM: Yeah. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. What happens next?

TOM: So Alex gives me some advice and she told me to ignore Roxy and let her go through these contractions like they're nothing and to save my energy because she's going to need me later.

ROXANNA SAREMI: He kept checking on me. He could see that I was having contractions, but are you okay? What intensity was that?

TOM: Because in our birth class, they say when the contractions start, be present, be with your partner, make sure they're comfortable, do the hip squeeze, let them lean on you, all these things. But contractions started so early and I was walking around rocks and Rox was looking at me like I'm crazy and she's like, "Get away from me." So I just took a nap.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, and was that comforting to you, Roxanna?

ROXANNA SAREMI: That he kept checking on me?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, that all of a sudden he wanted to take a nap. So is that sort of what you were looking for or how did you feel about that?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I just remember just being so in the moment with myself that I really didn't care what he was doing, but it was nice that he wasn't checking on me as much.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. A little time to just go inside. And at this time when you're kind of on your own there, would you say that you were still thinking about things or were you really already starting to surrender to the deeper wisdom inside you?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah, I was still thinking about things.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Still in your head. What kind of things are going through your head?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Oh my gosh.

TOM: Just excited.

ROXANNA SAREMI: I was really excited. I was thinking about the next day because she's obviously going to be here. Oh yeah. And my best friend was also in labor. What? I was getting text reports. So I was still on my phone. I was texting my girlfriends. I was updating them about how I felt and I was getting updates about my other girlfriend who was pushing at that point.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. So I guess I was going to say the race is on, but I guess the race wasn't really on.

TOM: Yeah. We lost way back.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. We're just going to have a clip here of you laying on a birth ball and having a surge that seems to get a bit more, some would say intense and others would say productive.

ROXANNA SAREMI: I don't think she's vegetarian or she just doesn't eat corn.

TOM: Was that a bad one?

ROXANNA SAREMI: It was intense, yeah.

TOM: I'll text her and I'll ask her.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. So as you're getting deeper into your surges, what happens next?

ROXANNA SAREMI: This one we go watch Ratatouille.

TOM: Yeah. So we went upstairs and we kind of set the mood in our room and laid on the bed for a little bit and we put on our Ratatouille, the Disney movie.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Ah, that's some oxytocin right there.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Classic.

TOM: It's a classic. And -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No cuddles?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah, cuddles.

TOM: Cuddles, definitely cuddles. Little make out sesh.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, nice. Ratatouille setting the mood. Yeah.

TOM: Yeah. It's set in Paris.

ROXANNA SAREMI: It really got us going.

TOM: Yeah, it makes sense.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So right before the movie, things were intensifying. Do they continue to pick up during the movie?

TOM: Yeah. Yeah, for the most part. It gets to the -

ROXANNA SAREMI: It was a slow-

TOM: Slow build.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Slow build.

TOM: Yeah. And then towards the end of the movie, we decided to wake up Alex and have her come to our room just to double check. And this was probably just before eight o'clock or so. And she was saying that we're still super far away and there's nothing to worry about and just continue on our journey and she's going to go downstairs and make herself some food.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Wait, one of the things that she said was like, "You guys should go see a movie." That's how far out she though we were.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. Wait a second. Two questions. First of all, surges are picking up though. They're notably picking up. Can you feel a direct connection between cuddling oxytocin and things moving along or not really?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I mean, things started to move along once we started cuddling and when we were laying in bed together.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So it sounds like you could feel it.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then the other thing is, after they're moving along for this whole movie, you though you were getting closer, it sounds like, and then Alex telling you you're not that close means we still have a long way to go. And you've already come a long way. I mean, now we're talking about it's like 7:00 PM - ish and your water broke at one o'clock in the morning.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Well, it's interesting -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: 16 hours in.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah, but remember how we said the last time we talked, it's like Vegas where there's no clocks and you don't even know how much time has passed and 24 hours could feel like 12. That's exactly how it felt. It didn't feel like it was - 18 hours. Didn't feel that way.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. And that's even how I feel when I'm at a birth just doing my thing. It feels like you're in a casino, a room with no clocks, no windows. Time just is or isn't. You're just in the present, hopefully. All right. So the next time I hear from you guys is one o'clock in the morning. So you go back to bed after she says that?

TOM: So Alex goes downstairs to make some food after she napped and she starts to hear Rox making some interesting noises as she put it. And so this is around just before nine o'clock and she comes upstairs to check on us again and eats her food in our room while Rox is having these contractions. And I said, "Should I start timing them now?" And she's like, "No, we're still early. Don't

worry about it." And Alex is just sitting there telling Roxy to surrender and let things go on her exhale. We went through an hour of that with her and then just around like 9:30 - ish, Alex sees my face and she's like, "Maybe you should text Catherine, who's our doula, and get Catherine over here." Which

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is

TOM: What I did around 9:30.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Seeing what on your face?

TOM: That I needed a little more support in the doula kind of way.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. I mean, Roxy, do you remember this consciously, what's happening at this point?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I remember the conversation that you guys had and her saying maybe you should call Catherine. And then I remember Catherine walking through the door at 10:00 PM.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So she came pretty quick then.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Oh, she lives right down the street.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that's helpful. And do you remember how you were feeling though during these surges that are picking up?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I was so uncomfortable. I was able to talk between. I was like, "Yay, Catherine's here." Five seconds later, and then just hitting a wave. And they were definitely more intense.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do you know about how long they were lasting?

TOM: Yeah. So those ones were lasting just around a minute. Most of them less than a minute, a few seconds over. And they were getting closer together, but still pretty far apart. I actually did stop tracking them when Alex told me I shouldn't, and Catherine the doula took over tracking the contractions when she came in.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And Roxy, where are you feeling them? I know you said you're getting uncomfortable. Are you feeling in the front, in the back, down low?

ROXANNA SAREMI: All lower front area.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How would you say it relates to period cramps?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Second day of your period and it's a heavy flow.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I know what you mean.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah. And you haven't had maybe like you missed your last period, so this one's a little extra.

TOM: Came with a vengeance.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Came with a vengeance.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The return of the period.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah, exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Are there things that help you in that moment feel comforted?

ROXANNA SAREMI: So I was obsessed with the birth ball, most of the labor. So I was definitely laying over that a lot, a lot, a lot. And then keeping my head on the edge of the bed, leaning over the ball.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So yeah, you're sitting in front of the bed.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And at this point, if we can just take a check on what's going on in the mind, are you still thinking everything through? Are you starting to surrender more?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Less in the mind at that point.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

ROXANNA SAREMI: I even had birth affirmations posted all on the wall. I couldn't even look at those. I was so, yeah, I was going in.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Going indoors.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Going indoors.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. That seems like a great time to take a break. When we come back, we're going to find out the rest of the story. We'll be right back. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. We are talking to Olive, Roxy, and Tom. And you guys are now knee deep in labor. Your mind is going inside, your body's heating up. You're having surges and they're lasting a minute a piece on average. You're feeling a lot of pressure like day two of your period after a cycle, a missed cycle. Everyone knows what that's like. So it feels like that and it's just picking up more and more. You love the birth ball and what happens over The next period of time, the next hour?

TOM: The next few hours with Catherine there is really when my day two of our birthing class really kicked in and I did all my hip squeezes and pressure on the back and things like that.

ROXANNA SAREMI: That helped so much. The hip squeeze. During a contraction, the hip squeeze was everything.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And what kind of things is the doula doing?

TOM: We were switching off her and I doing hip squeezes and stuff like that. At the beginning, I was doing it for a while and then when Rox threw up for the first time, I grabbed the bucket and cleaned it afterwards and the doula took over the hip squeezes and kind of rubbing her back and tracking the contractions.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you see the throwing up coming? Were you nauseous?

ROXANNA SAREMI: It hit me suddenly and then I just, I think I made a gesture to you.

TOM: The first time I think you said you were going to throw up. And then the second time you just made a gesture.

ROXANNA SAREMI: No, I didn't feel nauseous. It just hit me suddenly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you feel good after you threw up?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I did. And it was like I had a contraction and right after I needed to throw up and then I felt better for a few minutes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Was it the cinnamon roll?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Cinnamon roll did not come up. I think it was orange.

TOM: The smoothie of the chicken and rice.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Oh the chicken.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, yuck. Okay. So a few hours of that. And over that time, I mean you're not really monitoring contractions anymore, right Tom? Now it's the doula.

TOM: Yeah, she's on it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But are things seemingly continuing to intensify, get longer, closer together?

TOM: Very fast. Actually Alex came in just to check on us and she assumed because of the timeline that we had a long way to go, but when she looked at the tracking of the contractions and how intense they were for Roxanna, she -

ROXANNA SAREMI: Seeing me, hearing me.

TOM: Yeah, hearing you and seeing you. She was saying that we're moving along at a really good pace.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We have this clip at right around one o'clock in the morning and I'm not going to lie, you look pretty uncomfortable.

ROXANNA SAREMI: I've never been able to re-watch it. Oh my God. Everywhere.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. So I mean things are clearly picking up. I mean, has anybody talked about the chances that this is transition happening, this moving into the climactic period of your labor?

TOM: Yeah. So right after we took that video is when we discussed transition and we talked about going into the shower, which in hindsight was a pretty big mistake.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, how do you mean?

TOM: We went into our shower, Rox and I, and we think she transitioned - In the shower. In the shower because that was the worst contraction.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Long contraction?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I mean one long contraction to the point where I asked Tom like, "Help me please."

TOM: Crying. I didn't know what to do. She was telling me to help her and I don't know, there was nothing I could do. I just had to hold her in the shower. We were both naked and wet naked and she was crying and I was crying and it was a tough moment.

ROXANNA SAREMI: And that was 10 minutes in the shower and then we got out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Are you sitting on a ball?

ROXANNA SAREMI: No, we have a little

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Bench

ROXANNA SAREMI: In the shower.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: A bench? But you seem to like the ball. Yeah.

TOM: So we got out of the shower,

ROXANNA SAREMI: We went back to the ball.

TOM: We went back to the ball.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Were they surprised to see you back so soon?

TOM: They kind of heard us and I quickly threw on some boxers and I was like, "Katherine, come here."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Are you getting excited knowing that when you hear the word transition, I mean it's the final stage here of labor. Are you getting excited? Are you nervous or is there any point in either of your minds of doubt?

TOM: No doubt.

ROXANNA SAREMI: You go because I was not in a head space thinking this is transit. I was in the cosmos.

TOM: Well, I was getting tips from Kaylee, the midwife assistant and Katherine. They were giving me tips. They weren't really telling Roxanna how we were progressing, but I was kind of listening to what they were saying on the progress. So after that transition point, Rox went back on the ball and that's when Alex came in and said that we should probably check her. That was about 1:30 in the morning.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did that feel like a good time to be checked?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: This is now 24 hours after your water broke.

ROXANNA SAREMI: That made me excited that I was getting checked. For the first time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: For the first time. How did getting checked feel?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Fine. Totally fine.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That was your first time being checked all pregnancy?

ROXANNA SAREMI: All pregnancy, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. And what did you find?

ROXANNA SAREMI: She didn't tell me anything.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You didn't want to know?

ROXANNA SAREMI: No, she just didn't tell me. I asked her, looking back on it now, I'm so glad she didn't tell me because they kept me in the dark. They told Tom I was around seven?

TOM: Yeah, six to seven. And so they said that we're going to start the tub.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You want to deliver in water?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I really wanted to try.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. It takes a little time to get it filled up and temperature ready.

ROXANNA SAREMI: A really long time.

TOM: Yeah. So they started the tub and -

ROXANNA SAREMI: I kept asking, "Is the tub ready? Is the tub ready?"

TOM: And Alex still though that Rocks was far away because she was still kind of making jokes in between contractions.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that is not surprising to me.

ROXANNA SAREMI: I was thinking of you and one of the stories that you were telling me because I was like, "I'm okay in between. I can still crack up and jokes and dance slowly."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Slowly. Let's not get crazy. Oh, that's so fun. I love that you did that and I'm not surprised. So now it's like almost 2:00 AM?

TOM: Yeah, it's probably around 2:00 AM, just before 2:00 AM and Rox also gets in the mood to dance. And so she asks if we could turn on her favorite song, which is -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Which is?

TOM: Called Enigma.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Return to Innocence by Enigma.

TOM: It is just this interesting song and she is just digging it and she gets up off the birth ball and starts to dance and move her hips between contractions and I put it on repeat for some reason.

ROXANNA SAREMI: The song played for an hour.

TOM: It played until Olive was born.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. I mean, did dancing make you feel good?

ROXANNA SAREMI: It did. It did emotionally.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I kind of feel like an hour ago you were more uncomfortable than you are now. Is that possible? Did you go through a phase where it was more intense on you, more difficult, and then all of a sudden as things progressed deeper into what seems like transition now, you got more comfortable with it?

TOM: You surrendered.

ROXANNA SAREMI: I surrendered.

TOM: I think you really just let it go and just - Yeah.

ROXANNA SAREMI: I also think that before, because remember I was saying, no, no. I was really fighting them. It was so uncomfortable. I never felt that before in my life. So I was yelling, no, no. And Catherine asked me, I wonder if you can change that to yes. So finally when I got into the tub and I started to have feelings that I needed to push through my butt, but feeling like I needed to push, instead of saying no, I was yelling yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my God. Okay. Sadly folks, we don't have any of this audio, but we can picture it.

TOM: I was in the moment. I couldn't -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, of course. Of course not, but I can totally picture it. And then I just have one question about getting into the water. Are you a bath girl to begin with?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So how did it feel when you got in there?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Initially it felt amazing. And then as I started to push or just involuntary, the feeling of needing to push, I didn't have enough grip in the tub. It was too slow.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you were sliding around?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Sliding around. At one point I was on my back and Kaylee came in to check Olive's heart rate and that was the one time Olive's heart was lower. She didn't like the position.

TOM: Yeah. They checked her heart rate every 30 minutes from basically 100 PM till 3:00 AM and that was the only one where the heartbeat wasn't as strong. So we adjusted.

ROXANNA SAREMI: So I tried to do not squatting, but like child's pose in the tub and that lasted for, how long was I in the tub for?

TOM: So this was around like 2:30 - ish, 2:20 - ish when you got in the tub and you got out of the tub, I guess it was closer to 2:40 - ish. Because I went downstairs to grab a snack when she was in the tub at the end and I needed to ground myself. So I went downstairs and sat outside for a minute in the grass and just kind of recollected. And then I remember Kaylee came downstairs and was like, "Hey Tom, so we're going to have him start pushing soon, so you should see your baby anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour." So I got really excited and I looked at the clock and that was 2:45 on the dot.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. And so did you find a way to get more comfortable in the tub?

ROXANNA SAREMI: We had that gardening mat.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, to kneel on?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah.

TOM: Yeah.

ROXANNA SAREMI: So I kneeled on that for a little bit, but my knees couldn't spread wide enough.

TOM: She pushed in the tub for about 20 minutes or so, and then Alex was like, "You're not going to be able to push her out in the tub because you can't get wide enough." Hold over this squatting stool, this birthing stool.

ROXANNA SAREMI: It was like a metal, it almost looked like a walker.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Birth stool. Wait a second. During the pushing, are you just pushing when you feel like it or is there any coaching?

ROXANNA SAREMI: No coaching, just pushing when I feel like it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay.

TOM: I remember maybe you were pushing during contractions or was it -

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah.

TOM: So you were taking deep breaths and relaxing and then when the contractions started thing, then you started pushing.

ROXANNA SAREMI: It was almost like I couldn't help it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. And nobody was telling you not to push. You were just doing what you felt like instinctually.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. And do you remember what those pushes felt like? Some people say they're relieving, some people say they're more painful.

ROXANNA SAREMI: They were really painful, but then I pooed and it felt better.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you poo like you had missed a poo? Was it one of those or just was a little sliver of poo or not in the tub. In the tub? In the

ROXANNA SAREMI: Tub.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay. Poo in the tub. But you got out of the tub because you got the birthing stool?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah.

TOM: Yeah. So this is like, I go upstairs after my little snack and it's like just before three and she's pushing one last time in the tub and that's when Alex says that her knees aren't going wide enough and it's going to be better to push outside, to deliver outside the tub.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Was that okay with you at that point?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Asked me if that was okay.

TOM: Yeah.

ROXANNA SAREMI: You said yes. There was this contraption stool that I'd never seen and towel over it. And so my butt was hanging in the back, kind of like hanging squatting.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes.

ROXANNA SAREMI: And Alex goes, "Okay, I can see your head. Do you want to touch her head?" So I did. Oh,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Hello. Oh, she remembers.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Sorry about your bird, dude. So I touched her head and then Alex said, "Okay, bear down." And I just pushed maybe once and she flew out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Painful when that happened?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Relieving.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Relieving.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Nothing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No ring of fire. Wow. I mean, Tom, you're just barely over your snack.

TOM: Yeah. I'm literally still chewing. With the protein bar, I was really chewing. It was a terrible choice.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow, that's incredible. And then you're not in water, so then you just get back into your bed. What did you do after that?

TOM: Yeah. So this is like 3:09 on the dot. The olive comes out and so they're checking her and they asked me to make the... I'm not too good with those situations, so I excused myself to the bedroom and just made the bed for Rox because she was about to come into bed. And so after I made the bed, like a minute or two later, Roxy, with the baby on her chest, walks over and gets in bed with me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. So we do have a clip. I think this is literally right after the baby came out, 3:09 AM and Roxanna, you're holding the baby and we're hearing these newborn cries. Such a fast

ROXANNA SAREMI: Push.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And it also makes me literally teary eyed. And then you get into bed and you go for the first latch and -

ROXANNA SAREMI: That nipple so fast, this one.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, have you had any difficulty with breastfeeding?

ROXANNA SAREMI: No, not at all.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Pizza ocake, pizza cinnamon roll?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Not as good as a cinnamon roll, but -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's a lot of oxytocin.

ROXANNA SAREMI: A lot of oxytocin.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: With the feeding, with the breastfeeding. What about delivering the placenta?

ROXANNA SAREMI: I don't really remember, but I remember laying on the bed and Alex and Kaylee telling me to push and that it's not going to hurt as bad because there's no bones. So I remember giving one, two, like uh-uh and then it just kind of coming out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And here is what Roxanna and Olive were doing just before the placenta came out.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Hi dear. You did such a good job. Yeah, we both.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Amazing. Well, that is quite an incredible birth story. I mean, in retrospect, based on what you planned and based on what you had envisioned for each of you, how was the actual story?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Pretty darn close.

TOM: Yeah. I had my reservations at first for doing a home birth and both my sisters just had their babies and they both delivered them in hospitals within the last month or two. And so our route was different, but I wouldn't have changed it for the world. I think it was the best thing ever and I couldn't imagine a more perfect way for my first child to come to the world.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You guys are making me cry again.

ROXANNA SAREMI: It was pretty special.

TOM: Yeah, it was pretty awesome.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Tell a joke. Tell a joke. I have this one last clip. This is the next morning at around 10:00 AM and it's a family of three.

TOM: Morning, baby.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Morning.

TOM: Morning, mommy.

ROXANNA SAREMI: We're parents.

TOM: We are.

ROXANNA SAREMI: This is Olive.

TOM: Hi, Olive.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Say hi. Welcome to the world, boo boo. She's a laughing, dude.

TOM: She is?

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah.

TOM: Nice to hear her swallow. Yay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And that was just 10 days ago.

ROXANNA SAREMI: I know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wild.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You guys look amazing, first of all. I mean, it's incredible. And despite probably being pretty tired, you're quite glowy.

ROXANNA SAREMI: We're pretty tired.

TOM: We're pretty tired.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I am so grateful to you for taking our before and after episode to a new level, before, during, and after. And I think people will really enjoy the story and you're brave and

courageous for sharing it in this way, and I appreciate you.

ROXANNA SAREMI: Absolutely. I'm so, so, so happy we got to do this with you and that Tom captured a lot of my birth.

TOM: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: There's a lot of poignant clips in there, so thank you. And at home, thanks for listening to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. If you would like to share your birth story, if you would like to suggest a topic, if you'd like more information, just visit us online at informedpregnancy.com.

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