



ALMOST PREGNANT

by Lisa Grunberger

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Synopsis: The main character, Becca, a 40-something married woman, has to creatively adapt to her condition of infertility due to “old eggs.” As an adopted woman who has no biological ties to her past, and as an infertile woman, she wrestles with her condition: she is, she says, in “eggs-isle.” Becca dubs herself a “genetic island” as she is adopted and her eggs are “mature” – a fertility euphemism for old. Joined by her alter egos, Estrogen and Lucky, two live puppets, who serve as the chorus, wise fools, and comic relief, the play is full of stories, tragic and funny, about motherhood, fate, the transmission of identity, nature vs. nurture and God.

Almost Pregnant gives you an unexpurgated insider's view of the art and science of what's been called, "sex without reproduction and reproduction without sex." Becca creatively reimagines her identity and how she adapts to her situation in a very Jewish, very human way, through humor, self-reflection and soul-searching. Get ready for a wildly imaginative journey through the Alice in Wonderland world-turned-upside-down of infertility as Becca talks with Gloria Steinem and Andy Warhol about her desire to become a mother.

List of Characters:

BECCA: A married Jewish woman, an artist and writer, who is 43 when she narrates the story about her life and her quest to become a mother.

ESTROGEN: The puppet/character/chorus. A dimension of Becca's internal mind as she wrestles with questions about infertility, motherhood and bioethics. Also plays Pam, a Catholic woman; Gabi, the Israeli cousin; Becca's mother and others.

LUCKY: The innocent puppet and character/chorus; dimension of Becca's internal mind as she wrestles with questions about infertility, motherhood and bioethics. Also plays Infertility Doctor; Administrator and other characters.

"GOD"/MUSE: On-stage violinist who accompanies characters through the show.

PROLOGUE

ESTROGEN AND LUCKY:

(They tick tock slowly accelerating with anxious speed, not in synch, for about 30 seconds)

Tick, tock, tick, tick, tick, tock

LUCKY:

What's that sound?

ESTROGEN: *(quick-minded, sharp)*

Do you mean that tick tock, tick tock? *(tick tock gets louder)*

LUCKY: *(slow, silly, obtuse, sensitive, childish)*

It's creepy. Sounds like a bomb.

ESTROGEN *(cheerfully dismissive)*

:

It's just time, Lucky.

LUCKY: *(ponderously, skeptical)*

No, *(listens and we hear more bells, and chimes, and tick tock gets louder and louder)*. I think it's something else.

ESTROGEN:

Lucky, it's time ticking away, clocks, bells, chimes, that's all *(firmly)*.

LUCKY: *(pause)*.

I beg to differ Estrogen. I think it's her....

ESTROGEN:

Spit it out Lucky.

LUCKY:

Her, biological clock.

ESTROGEN:

Or it could be a bomb ticking inside her....*(mockingly)*

LUCKY:

What's the difference?

ESTROGEN

Where are we?

LUCKY:

It appears to be a room

ESTROGEN:

But it's dark.

LUCKY:

It will be light soon.

ESTROGEN:

Parenting Magazine with a smiling mother and her little bouncy boy. It's like putting *The Wine Enthusiast* out at an AA meeting, isn't it?

LUCKY:

Or Martha Stewart's Favorite Desserts at a Weight Watcher's meeting (*sheepish*) You said the word.

ESTROGEN:

What word?

LUCKY: (*whispers*)

Mother.

ESTROGEN:

Don't be superstitious. We're in a fertility waiting room for God's sake.

LUCKY:

You said that other word.

ESTROGEN:

What word?

LUCKY:

God.

ESTROGEN:

What are you waiting for?

LUCKY:

I'm waiting to give blood. Daily. Vials of it. (*leans in, as if to frighten*)

ESTROGEN:

It is biblical, sacrificial, isn't it? We are making an offering here.

LUCKY:

You hate giving blood.

ESTROGEN:

I look away, count to ten, sing a song, "I've been working on the railroad" - for some reason when someone tells me, quick sing a song, that's always the song that comes into my head.

LUCKY:

For me it's that song, "I feel like a natural woman."

ESTROGEN:

It's either too hot or too cold.

LUCKY:

What is?

BECCA:

(*Estrogen and Lucky step forward*)

The waiting room.

LUCKY:

Remember the one with the TV set on the wall blaring some morning tabloid crap?

ESTROGEN:

She slept with her mother's boyfriend!

LUCKY:

And is pregnant with triplets

ESTROGEN:

Just the kind of thing infertile women want to hear before breakfast.

BECCA:

Before coffee. I've already had three shots in the abs.

ESTROGEN:

What are you waiting for?

LUCKY:

I'm waiting to see how many egg follicles have grown since I've been taking the hormones.

ESTROGEN:

I am waiting for the ultrasound, that cold gel on the belly, the computer screen with my name flickering in the corner. It's so personal and cozy.

BECCA:

In the waiting room, I'm waiting for a child.

ESTROGEN:

I am waiting for the endless push of the speculum, the feel of the fingers, the prick of the needle. I am waiting to see what my chances are, the thrill of victory

LUCKY:

—or the agony of defeat.

BECCA:

In the waiting room, I'm waiting for a child.

ESTROGEN.

Shhhh. I have become a specialist in waiting. It's the ART - assisted reproductive technology - art, get it, of -

LUCKY:

-- waiting. I get it.

ESTROGEN

They speak in tongues, these infertile people do. In code. It's a secret society of sub-fertiles, I tell you.

LUCKY:

Doctors and fertility clinics love Acronyms, the Morse code of infertility talk.

BECCA:

So, I'm in my 2WW after 7 AIs and 3 IVF's one with DE and I had a PFP so many times .I've checked my BBT and we're done with BD and B/W, had the dreaded HCG. My DH has been great; I have DOR and during the DPO, DPR, DPT, DP3DT. I was Dx'ed with ENDO and after my EPT said I was pregnant it turned it was a false positive. This time 'round I had an FF, Molly, and when she signed her emails FTTA; my heart just opened. My HCG wasn't good; IF is real and it's ignored, I mean it affects like 7 million people in the US alone.

LUCKY:

FTTA?

ESTROGEN: (*sarcastic, explaining*)

Fertile Thoughts to All, Lucky.

LUCKY: (*surprised*)

One in eight couples?

ESTROGEN:

I have to drive home.

LUCKY:

Then what?

BECCA:

I'll lie down on my bed, peel myself open to check the viscosity of my fluids. My cream. My female jizzum.

LUCKY: (*He walks away*)

You are being vulgar.

BECCA:

I'll call for my husband. Call for him again. I'll say his name in two syllables Daa-vid, sing-songy, like you're calling a child to the dinner table from playing outside, Daa-vid, come and get it!

LUCKY: (*sarcastic*)

Sounds romantic.

BECCA:

Oh, fertility sex is the best. Primo.

LUCKY:

Don't forget to put your legs up.

(End prologue)

BECCA:

I'm 29 years old. I've just moved in with my new boyfriend in a new city. The boyfriend is a Jewish intellectual, a Woody Allen type. It's 2:11 am and we've just had sex. It's 2:27 am and I'm downstairs getting a glass of water.

LUCKY:

It dawns on me something's missing.

BECCA:

In the tumult of moving from New York City to Maryland, I realized ...

LUCKY: (*Gasps and turns*)

I hadn't gotten my period in two months.

ESTROGEN:

And I'm a regular bleeder.

A new relationship, embryonic, the beginning, when it's sex, sex, sex, here and there, on the stairs, in the shower, in the car, you know how it goes.

BECCA:

I wake Jake up and say I haven't got my period, it's missing, my blood it's gone. He's not cool, he doesn't roll over and go back to sleep and say dreamily, so we'll have a baby, so, come here, baby...

(Becca explains to audience)

Oh no, this man is going to run for political office one day, this man is three years younger than me and 26 for a man is like 16 for a woman - there's at least a 10 year difference emotionally, developmentally.... This man begins to pace, back and forth, a naked nebishy tall Jewish man pacing and I think,

LUCKY AND ESTROGEN:

If he calls his mother, I'm outta here.

BECCA:

He's fumbling with his jeans, sweat pouring off his face. Where are you going?

He's driving to CVS to get a pregnancy test.

(They all walk en masse and share a facial expression)

In the house alone, my things in boxes by the basement stairs, it dawned on me he hadn't yet created a space for me.

I should have known then this was not daddy or marriage material.

I waited for him to return, sitting half naked on the leather couch, my flesh sticking to it.

He hands me the bag. He doesn't look well.

I sit down to pee. Nothing. *(Estrogen and Lucky start to pace)*

I turn the faucet on. Wait for the pee to flow. He knocks.

LUCKY:

So?

BECCA:

I begin to pee and quick, place the stick between my legs trying to aim the pee on the stick to saturate it. I smell my urine fill Jake's bathroom, pull up my panties, look in the mirror -

LUCKY:

-- at my 29 year-old face

ESTROGEN:

mascara-streaked.

BECCA:

tired. I look at the pregnancy test lying innocently on Jake's sink and see the colors begin to develop. I wish they'd disappear.

LUCKY: (*excited, hyper*)

Two parallel lines!

ESTROGEN: (*tone is 'what are you so excited about?'*)

Two lines had appeared on the stick.

LUCKY:

Such an abstraction.

ESTROGEN:

What does this mean? Two lines?

BECCA:

(*Estrogen and Lucky sing "walk the line, walk the line" behind her*)

Two pink lines appear like magic, and you read the lines as though they are hieroglyphic marks, and they tell you: You are pregnant, that Jake's sperm mixed with your eggs and that the beginnings of an embryo is taking shape inside your body right now.

(*They stop singing and dancing*)

I spent the next years walking, side-stepping land mines, bad men, handsome bachelors who didn't want to be fathers but liked sex, sex without reproduction that is. I walked those lines stiff-lipped, stoic, hysterical, angry. Walk the line, don't look down, it's a long way down, an abyss.

I leave Jake's house. I walked into Planned Parenthood. Left two hours later, and there were no lines. I was still 29 years old, it was the end of summer, the end of love, little did I know I would spend half a decade trying to get pregnant, reproduction with and without sex, trying to make those two magic lines re-appear, like magic, like science, like art.

(*Estrogen and Lucky look at her compassionately, hug her, slow dance, a tender moment*).

Years later I meet a man and fall madly in love. He wants to be a daddy, he's ready to start a family, we've both walked (*Becca rises*) that line of losing mothers and fathers, so much loss, don't look down, and we walk and walk....into a fertility clinic. On our sixth date. There they tell me that my egg follicles look good. His sperm look good. Our first pregnancy ends in a miscarriage. Our second is ectopic.. I had a miscarriage at 13 weeks with my third pregnancy. We moved to IUIs and more miscarriages.

When I walk into the first waiting room I...