

The Beginning



1:43 PM—PARAMEDICS RECEIVE CALL ABOUT BABY
IN DISTRESS.

1:44 PM—AMBULANCE LEAVES STATION WITH FULL
TEAM.

1:54 PM—AMBULANCE ARRIVES ON SCENE.



“We’ve been looking for you,” the office manager said. “You have a call. You can pick it up privately in my office.”

“Hello?” I said into the receiver.

I recognized my neighbor’s voice at the other end.

“You should come home right away,” she said with forced calmness. “Your baby isn’t well. Please don’t ask any questions, just come home as soon as you can.”

“Okay. But what . . . ”

“Don’t ask,” she cut me off. “Just come home.” She hung up.

I called home. No answer. Not a good sign.

I tried the upstairs neighbor to get more information. A child picked up the phone and told me her mother was down the street. An ambulance siren in the background was all I needed to hear. Numb but composed, I turned and walked through the office. Everyone knew something was very wrong.



2:09 PM—AMBULANCE RUSHES BABY TO HOSPITAL,
SIREN BLARING.



I jumped into a cab. The twenty-minute ride home seemed like forever. I sat there next to the driver, deep

in thought. My wife, the kids, the baby. . . . But I remember two things distinctly.

The first was a miniature black and yellow soccer ball dangling from the rearview mirror. Week after week this sphere has millions of people around the world jumping and screaming when it makes its way into a twenty-four-by-eight-foot net. I thought it was funny that this ball, the cause of all the excitement, was dangling at the end of a string. Just hanging there . . . right in front of my eyes.

The second thing I recall was the wailing of the siren as an ambulance whizzed past us in the opposite direction as we approached my neighborhood. I knew Ellen and the baby were in there, but in the time it would take us to turn around, we would lose sight of them. The ambulance was going so fast . . . and to which hospital? I felt so helpless. Now I wasn't sure who was dangling from a string—the baby, the ball, or me. I let the driver in on what was happening. We were just a few minutes from home.



2:16 PM—AMBULANCE ARRIVES AT HOSPITAL



As we pulled into my street, it seemed too quiet for the middle of the day, especially for a cul-de-sac where more than four hundred children live. Two women were waiting outside my house. “Just turn around and go to Hadassah Hospital,” they said.