

The Story Behind 'October Baby'

"I've waited a long time for this moment."

The words spoken by a complete stranger struck a chord so deep within Gianna Jessen that she didn't need a formal introduction to the woman standing in front of her.

"As soon as she said that, I knew who she was," Jessen said.

The moment took place six years ago, just after Jessen spoke at a **pro-life** conference. For years, she wondered if this opportunity would ever present itself.

And without warning or buildup, that moment was standing right in front of her. *She* was standing right in front of her.

Jessen was looking in the eyes of her birth mom, who had tried to abort her nearly 35 years ago. Only, Jessen survived that saline attempt.

The bitterness, however, lived on.

"You are an embarrassment to me," Jessen recalls those biting words that greeted her from her birth mother.

Fighting back the tears, Jessen regained her composure just long enough to tell her: "I forgive you."

"I don't want you to forgive me," her birth mom responded. "I don't want you to talk to me."

And just like that, the conversation was over. Jessen has not seen her birth mother since. But she doesn't hold a grudge.

On Friday, a movie that was inspired by Jessen's life story will hit the big screen. *October Baby* is about an **abortion survivor**.

That's right. Abortion survivor. Two words you don't normally hear in the same sentence.

Featuring a strong pro-life message, *October Baby* delves deep into the power of forgiveness, an issue that Jessen has had to wrestle with—especially during that short meeting with her birth mother.

This is not happening, she was thinking to herself during the confrontation.

For all the obstacles Jessen's had to overcome in her life—she was only two pounds when she was born with Cerebral Palsy, and doctors said she would never be able to hold up her head, crawl or walk—she could have chosen to be furious with her birth mother.

"There was so much anger on her side," Jessen said.

Instead, she decided to forgive, just as she has been forgiven by her heavenly Father: "Over and over, I've chosen to let the Lord define me," she said. "The Lord spoke to me, 'You have to let it go.'"

Jessen was taken into foster care by a woman named Penny, who has been a mother to 56 foster children. Penny's daughter eventually adopted her.

By age 3, she was able to walk with the help of leg braces and a walker and by age 28—April 30, 2005—Jessen completed her first marathon (Boston), then ran another one (London) the following April.

"For me it was huge. I wasn't even supposed to walk," said Jessen, who finished in seven hours and 20 minutes. "Everyone else had gone home, but I didn't care."

Jessen has traveled the world telling her inspirational abortion survivor story, from the U.S. to Ireland to England to Australia, and most recently Italy.

She talks about issues such as forgiveness and identity and the Lord Almighty who saved her.

“Your biggest fear is that you’ll be forgotten,” said Jessen, who has met former President George W. Bush and former Prime Minister Tony Blair. “God’s been telling me, ‘I’m going to define you,’ and ‘you are not forgotten’ and ‘you are loved.’”

For Jessen, it’s been a long journey: “When your father and mother forsake you, God takes you up.”

And that journey now includes promoting *October Baby*, which will be released nationwide on 400 screens. When first approached about the movie by producers Andrew and Jon Erwin, she couldn’t get away fast enough.

“I wanted nothing to do with this. I ran from these men,” she said. “It’s hard to be defined by this one thing.”

Then Jessen watched the movie and not only did she laugh and cry throughout the film, but by the time the credits rolled, she had healed.

Jessen’s single “Ocean Floor” is now part of the movie’s soundtrack.

“The Lord just worked it out,” she said.

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