

HOLY NIGHT

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It happens every now and then infrequently enough to make it unusual but often enough so that it is not rare. The special timing of this latest case makes it worthy of reporting. Almost every obstetrician-gynecologist, at least once in his or her career, has had a patient come in complaining of abdominal pain and, upon examination, found an unexpected, well-advanced pregnancy in the process of labor. Nearly always the patient is not overly endowed intellectually and, nearly always, also is extremely obese.

On the night of Christmas Eve, Jim Venable was called from out of town by the family of a patient he had not seen in six years. The family reported that the patient was having severe abdominal pain and vomiting and was already on her way down from Manchester to meet him at the emergency room. There, abdominal palpation and vaginal exploration revealed she was pregnant and in the late first stage of labor.

When confronted with the diagnosis, the patient was not only flabbergasted but also indignantly adamant in denying the possibility. It was absolutely impossible, she said, since she was now divorced and her last sexual encounter had occurred well over one year ago. Nevertheless, within the hour, a healthy, squalling seven-and a-half-pound newborn boy made his appearance.

The mother went to the recovery room and the baby to the nursery. Within a few minutes there was a call from the charge nurse in the nursery. No pediatrician's name had been assigned to the baby.

"What do you want us to do with it?" asked the nurse.

Jim's replied, "Wrap it in swaddling clothes and find it a manger."