It’s a Girl!

Soap opera fans have been expecting General Hospital’s HIV-positive character, Dr. Robin Scorpio, to have a baby. The stork is finally on the way!

November 1, 2008 By Kellee Terrell

In 2006, when ABC daytime drama *General Hospital* (*GH*) first paired Robin Scorpio (Kimberly McCullough) with her dreamy doctor-beau Patrick Drake (Jason Thompson), rumors popped up in soap glossies and on fan websites that a pregnancy story line was gestating. But ABC revealed few details, only telling the press that such a plot would unfold in the “near future.” Then on this year’s January 18 episode—a year and a half later—*GH* granted our wish. Robin found out that she was expecting.

The past nine months haven’t been easy for the Port Charles couple—they broke up, reunited and faced their fears of mortality. But with all that drama behind them, they’re free to focus on their bundle of joy, who’ll be delivered to viewers on or around October 30. And McCullough can hardly contain herself. “This is so exciting because when my [character was diagnosed with HIV in 1995], this story might not have been possible to tell,” the Emmy Award–winning actress tells *POZ*. “It’s [been] a long time coming.”

A long time indeed. Not only for McCullough, who has been playing Robin on-and-off since 1985, but also for HIV-positive mothers whose real-life dramas of childbirth have yet to be affirmed on television. HIV is no stranger to daytime TV, but in the past 20 years that serials have tackled the epidemic, this marks the first time that an HIV-positive lead character will give birth. “I know so many people who didn’t know it was possible to give birth to a healthy, [HIV-negative] baby [if you are HIV positive],” McCullough says.

Those who doubt a show that brings people back from the dead can deliver a coup de grace against stigma or prompt HIV testing should tune in. This story line will very likely dash misperceptions and ignorance about HIV-positive parenting. Studies show that 50 percent of Americans get their health-related information from television programs. And with an average 3 million viewers daily, mostly women (a group that comprises almost 30 percent of all new HIV infections in the United States every year), the show’s message could make a much-needed impression.

Some die-hard *GH* fans have expressed discontent with the network for avoiding HIV in the past. One fan, Kimberlee Pociengel, who moderates Scrubs, a popular Robin and Patrick online fansite,

hopes that the birth of Robin's daughter will be handled in a way that redeems her faith in the show. "This isn't like the other pregnancies. I hope that there are conversations about whether or not she should have a C-section or vaginal delivery [to illustrate the risk factors involved with both]," Pociengel says. "I also hope they do follow-up testing to see if [the baby] is HIV negative." Most important, Pociengel wants the show to relay the following key message to positive women: "Don't let HIV hold you back from living."

While this historic TV event has the potential to banish hurtful misinformation and inspire people with HIV to consider having children, we're not naive: It wouldn't be a soap without an over-the-top twist. So, we wonder: Will Robin's water break while she's trapped in a car that's teetering off a cliff? Will a dodo bird run off with her newborn dangling from its bill? McCullough wouldn't divulge any spoilers. But she does hint at a happy ending. "I'm almost positive the baby is going to be healthy," she said.

Good. Now all we ask is that they don't name the child Apple.

Set your TiVo. General Hospital *airs 3 p.m. ET, 2 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday, on ABC.*

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