

Actress Marcia Cross crushed over premature birth & death of baby boy

ONE baby's tragic death has broken the hearts of two loving mothers — the child's birth mom, who wanted a better life for her son, and "Everwood" actress Marcia Cross, who was set to adopt the boy and raise him as her own.

For years, Marcia, 43, a star on many soaps and the TV series, "Melrose Place," had dreamed of motherhood. But just as her dream was about to come true, cruel fate snatched it from her.

The baby, named Nickolas, was born two months premature on May and died seven days later on Mother's Day.

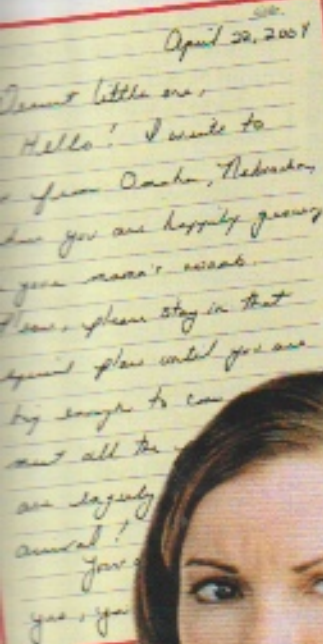
Earlier, just a week earlier, anxious Marcia — who played Dr. Kimberly Shaw Mancini on "Melrose Place" — had written a poignant letter to birth mom Jessica Ridner and her unborn child professing her love for the baby and begging him to go full term.

"Dearest little one:

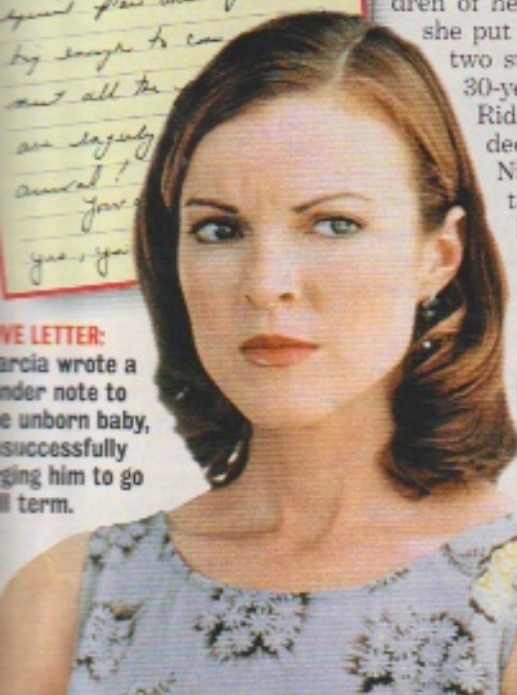
"You are happily growing in your mama's womb. Please, please stay in that special place until you are big enough to come out and meet all the people who are eagerly awaiting your arrival.

"Your mother, well, you have two mothers, are both so happy you are going to be a part of our lives.

"I have been waiting for you for many years and God has finally answered my prayers."



LOVE LETTER: Marcia wrote a tender note to the unborn baby, successfully begging him to go full term.



■ 'Melrose Place' star's dream of motherhood remains unfulfilled



ALL SMILES: Adoptive-parent-to-be Marcia Cross is flanked by Todd and Jessica Ridner, before Jessica gave birth to a premature baby boy.

Marcia, who is single, was crushed by the death, but it was just as upsetting for Jessica, who had her heart set on securing a loving, privileged home for her baby.

DEVASTATED

"I'm devastated," Jessica told *The ENQUIRER* in an exclusive interview. "It went from great to incredibly sad."

Jessica, 31, who has five children of her own, another child she put up for adoption, and two stepchildren from her 30-year-old husband Todd Ridner, made the difficult decision to put baby Nickolas up for adoption shortly after she learned she was pregnant.

Last December, the Omaha, Neb., mom answered an

adoption ad from a Los Angeles lawyer representing Marcia.

"I wanted the baby to go to a couple, but Marcia seemed so intent on becoming a devoted mother that I agreed to allow her to adopt him as a single parent," reveals Jessica.

"Plus, I wanted my child to go out of state, because I thought it would be too sad to run into him if he lived close.

"I also wanted my baby to have a better life than I could give him, and go to college one day. We all seemed like a perfect match."

In February, the adoption contracts were signed. But on May 2, each mother's worst fear came true — Jessica went into labor early.

She called Marcia as she was being rushed to the hospital.

Thousands of miles away in Los Angeles, Marcia was reeling from the bad news. Jessica can only guess at what she was thinking, but she believes the star panicked at the thought of raising a child who might have serious health problems.

"She called me again while I was still in labor, and said that the adoption

was off," revealed Jessica.

Jessica decided that it must have been a sign from heaven that she was meant to keep her baby. She named him Nickolas Matthew — Nick Knack, for short.

He was tiny — just 3 pounds, 4 ounces — but doctors were optimistic because he was able to breathe on his own.

STOPPED BREATHING

Sadly, on Mother's Day, May 9, Jessica was on her way to church when she got a call saying Nickolas had suddenly stopped breathing.

"He died before I even got to the hospital," she said.

"My mom called Marcia, and Marcia immediately called me. She was crying uncontrollably. I couldn't understand what she was saying. She was completely hysterical.

"A few days later, she sent a check to cover part of the funeral cost.

"Even though I was hurt and disappointed by Marcia's decision to back out of the adoption, I realize that she too experienced a loss. I know she has to be very distraught. Her dream of becoming a mother this summer is gone."

— ROBIN MIZRAHI



PREMATURE "Nick Knack" lived only one week.