I had no idea when I would be ready to write this. Part of me thought it would be early on, when I was still really feeling the pain of what happened. I thought I would sit in the corner of my bedroom with the lights dimmed, just rolling off my thoughts. I’d have a glass of red wine, cozy up with a blanket, and finally get the chance to address “what happened”.

Instead, I’m writing from the downstairs couch, still cozied up in a blanket but buzzing from a morning of friends and fried chicken. I’m reading off countless notes from my phone — thoughts that have randomly popped up in the weeks since. I didn’t really know how I would start this, no matter the room or state I was in, but it feels right to begin with a thank you. For weeks, our floors have been covered in flowers of kindness. Notes have flooded in and have each been read with our own teary eyes. Social media messages from strangers have consumed my days, most starting with, “you probably won’t read this, but…”. I can assure you, I did.

But I will tell you, some of the best letters started with, “You don’t have to respond to this, but…”. After we first lost Jack, I found myself incredibly worried that I wasn’t able to thank everyone for their extreme kindness. Many shared incredible personal experiences, some shared books and poems. I wanted to thank everyone, share our story with each individual person. But I knew I was in no state to. For me, the “no need to respond” note was such a true relief. I thank you for each and every one of those.

One of the standout moments from that morning (or evening? I have no idea) was me going through the halls of labor and delivery, and John saying “What, is there a fucking party going on here??” Here we were, just wheeled down to a new floor, me covered in a thin blanket to hide, knowing I was about to fully deliver what was supposed to be the 5th member of our beautiful family, a son, only to say goodbye moments later. People cheered and laughed right outside our door, understandably for a new life born and celebrated. You kind of wonder how anyone is thinking about anyone but you.

At this point I had already come to terms with what would happen: I would have an epidural and be induced to deliver our 20 week old, a boy that would have never survived in my belly (please excuse these simple terms). I was previously on bedrest for over a month, just trying to get the little dude to 28 weeks, a “safer” zone for the fetus. My doctors diagnosed me with partial placenta abruption. I had always had placenta problems. I had to deliver Miles a month early because his stomach wasn’t getting enough food from my placenta. But this was my first abruption. We monitored it very closely, hoping for things to heal and stop. In bed, I bled and bled, lightly but all day, changing my own diapers every couple of hours when the blood got uncomfortable to lay in. I actually became an adult diaper expert for my own personal entertainment, truly appreciating the brands that went out of their way to not make me feel like an actual shitting baby. Some were blush colored, with drawn delicate flowers. I got to the point where I was actually like, “hell yeah, throw me the pink ones!” — something I never thought I’d be excited for. But there we were.

I could have spent these days at the hospital, but not much of a difference would have been made. I was still seen by doctors at home, silently twisting their negative words into positives, thinking that everything might still turn out okay. Finally, I had a pretty bad night in bed, after a not-so-great ultrasound, where I was bleeding a bit more than even my abnormal amount. My bleeding was getting heavier and heavier. The fluid around Jack had become very low — he was barely able to float around. At some points, I swore it was so low I could lay on my back and feel his arms and legs from outside my belly.

After a couple nights at the hospital, my doctor told me exactly what I knew was coming — it was time to say goodbye. He just wouldn’t survive this, and if it went on any longer, I might not either. We had tried bags and bags of blood transfusions, every single one going right through me like we hadn’t done anything at all. Late one night, I was told it would be time to let go in the morning. I cried a little at first, then went into full blown convulsions of snot and tears, my breath not able to catch up with my own incredibly deep sadness. Even as I write this now, I can feel the pain all over again. Oxygen was placed over my nose and mouth, and that was the first picture you saw. Utter and complete sadness.

I had asked my mom and John to take pictures, no matter how uncomfortable it was. I explained to a very hesitant John that I needed them, and that I did NOT want to have to ever ask. That he just had to do it. He hated it. I could tell. It didn’t make sense to him at the time. But I knew I needed to know of this moment forever, the same way I needed to remember us kissing at the end of the aisle, the same way I needed to remember our tears of joy after Luna and Miles. And I absolutely knew I needed to share this story.

I cannot express how little I care that you hate the photos. How little I care that it’s something you wouldn’t have done. I lived it, I chose to do it, and more than anything, these photos aren’t for anyone but the people who have lived this or are curious enough to wonder what something like this is like. These photos are only for the people who need them. The thoughts of others do not matter to me.

After hours, I was able to relax, and decided I wanted to wait until I really, really knew it was over. I stupidly compared it to dogs I had “put down” in the past — how I never wanted to let go until we absolutely knew it was time, that they were suffering far too much. I texted this to my doctor and she said “absolutely.”.

Later that night, I went to the bathroom, looked down into the toilet (I had been doing this for months) and broke down again. The sheer amount of blood and clots showed me exactly what I had been waiting for. It was time.

I’m not sure I’ll ever forget the experience. I had always laughed about how much I loved epidurals…not so much this one. I laid there for hours, waiting to be told it was time to push. I obviously never had to dilate much, he was still a tiny little guy. I had been laying on my side, switching sides every hour or so, whenever the nurse told me to. I remember laying on my right side, looking opposite of John, when I was told to make my switch. I opened my legs and started to turn to face John and just like that, he was on his way out. The doctors yelled for a bit and…I don’t know what to say, even now. He was out. My mom, John and I each held him and said our own private goodbyes, mom sobbing through Thai prayer. I asked the nurses to show me his hands and feet and I kissed them over and over and over again. I have no idea when I stopped. It could have been 10 minutes or an hour.

I dunno how long he had been waiting to be delivered for. That will probably always haunt me. Just writing it makes my nose and eyes tingle with tears. All I know now is his ashes are in a small box, waiting to be put into the soil of a tree in our new home, the one we got with his room in mind.

People say an experience like this creates a hole in your heart. A hole was certainly made, but it was filled with the love of something I loved so much. It doesn’t feel empty, this space. It feels full.

Maybe \*too\* bursting full, actually. I find myself randomly crying, thinking about how happy I am to have two insanely wonderful little toddlers who fill this house with love. I smother them with love while they “Moooooooom!!!!!” me. I don’t care.

I also cry when I get mad at myself for being too happy. Sometimes I read things that make me gut laugh, or see an instagram post worthy of a like (yes, I’m gone but I’ve still been creeping!). And, I always forget I’m not pregnant anymore. I hold my belly when I walk around. I have a moment of freak out when the kids jump on my non-existent bump. The clarity after these moments always make me sad.

I feel bad our grief was so public because I made the joy so public. I was excited to share our news with the world. Stories leading up to this had been chronicled for all. It’s hard to look at them now. I was so positive it would be okay. I feel bad that I made you all feel bad. I always will.

But the moments of kindness have been nothing short of beautiful. I went to a store where the checkout lady quietly added flowers to my cart. Sometimes people will approach me with a note. The worst part is knowing there are so many women that won’t get these quiet moments of joy from strangers. I beg you to please share your stories and to please be kind to those pouring their hearts out. Be kind in general, as some won’t pour them out at all.

These strangers always tell me that life will move on, just differently. They tell me to not let anyone tell me this was “God’s plan”, or that we will “have another soon”. Thanks to you, I will block this out forever.

I worry that people feel uncomfortable sharing their joy with me. I’m currently surrounded by the pregnant bellies of many close friends, and I can swear to you, nothing makes me more happy. I know your joy and I love you.

I wrote this because I knew for me I needed to say something before I could move on from this and return back to life, so I truly thank you for allowing me to do so. Jack will always be loved, explained to our kids as existing in the wind and trees and the butterflies they see. Thank you so much to every single person who has had us in their thoughts or gone as far as to send us your love and stories. We are so incredibly lucky.

With so, so, so much love,  
Chrissy