Our story is not a happy one per se, but it can not be an entirely sad one either. In 2011, I married my best friend, partner and boyfriend of 10 years. We had planned to start a family sooner rather than later—maybe in 2012—but after my grandmother died the week after our wedding we decided to speed up our plans. We couldn't bear the thought of another loved relative missing out on the little people we wanted to bring into the world and our little people missing out on meeting their remaining family matriarchs.

We started trying pretty much a week later and a little over a month later realized we had succeeded. We were ecstatic to say the least. This baby was going to be the first grandchild to all parties—my parents and my husband's mother and stepfather and father and stepmother as well as my remaining grandmother's first great grandchild—pretty exciting—out of her 14 grandchildren. We made preparations and found a new apartment in a family-centered neighborhood. We read, we dreamed and we rested.

In October, around 13 weeks as my morning sickness waned and my anxiety increased I had some spotting and made an appointment for an ultrasound to calm my fears. My husband Tim and I decided it wasn't necessary that my husband attend as I wanted the first possible appointment at my midwive's office and he wasn't able to get off work. I lay on the table waiting, looking straight ahead as the technician studied the screen—waiting for something terrible to come out of her mouth. After what seemed like ages filled only with the clic-clack of her keyboard she said "so you know you're having two..." and I matter-of-factly said, "No, we're not" as this seemed like a silly thing for her to say. She laughed a little and turned the monitor to face me, and my stomach fell through the floor. I felt like I was watching the event on TV, like it couldn't be real. Twins.

After the initial shock wore off I was thrilled but scared. I knew that a multiples pregnancy and birth could potentially be much more medically involved and difficult than a singleton one. But I was reassured by my midwife that, so long as no serious complications arose, we could follow much of my original birth plan with some modifications—no more water birth for me. I made the calls to family and close friends, and of course to my husband. We were all excited and started researching.

For the next 23 weeks I studiously read parenting and pregnancy books and ate an insane amount of protein, had an amazing baby shower, ate well and slept. I even visited NYC for the first time as a last hoorah before I became a mother. While there I picked up a little necklace with a wishbone charm at some market—it eventually became my token of luck and a sign that everything would turn out okay with the pregnancy and birth. We found out we were having two boys and they were growing and thriving. We were so excited to have two and joined our local Mothers of Multiples chapter and started connecting to anyone we could that had twins to try to prepare ourselves mentally, emotionally and physically. We had visions of little boys running around, yelling and raising hell—and we were so happy.

We were ready with the nursery and a list of names by 30 weeks and I was able to work until 35

weeks as my pregnancy was relatively complication-free. I started my maternity leave earlier than planned, as I was no longer able to sleep reliably due to extreme carpal tunnel. By the end, I was measuring near 50 weeks pregnant if I had been carrying a single child but still getting around okay.

At 35 weeks five days we took a walk, only about a mile, but that evening when I was making my usual shift from sleeping in bed to sleeping on the couch in the middle of the night I knew my water had broken. We went straight to the hospital and were in high spirits. I fought through about ten hours of natural labor before accepting Pitocin as a means to speed up the labor process in order to avoid a C-section. I took drugs to avoid major abdominal surgery and was okay with that. After another four hours passed with the Pitocin increased on the half hour I was no longer getting breaks between the contractions that kept me in a pain-induced haze. I managed to ask the nurse to turn the drugs down so I could speak to my husband. We decided together that I would get an epidural to allow the Pitocin the best chance to help us get our boys out safely, without surgery.

After the epidural was in place I had some blissful sleep. When I woke up I still couldn't feel anything but for some reason I felt like I was ready to push my boys out. I had the midwife check and sure enough we were there. I had to give birth in an Operating Room, pretty standard with multiples births just in case, and preparations were made. Our collaborating Obstetrician was there and at this point, 24 hours after my water broke, we were SO ready to meet our little men. After an hour of pushing, our baby A—Sullivan Archer—drew his first breath. I got to hold him and cuddle for only a moment before getting back to work to meet his brother. Another 13 minutes of pushing brought Emmitt Erving into our arms.

They. Were. Perfect. Nines on apgar, on the bigger side(for twins) little men at ~5.5 pounds each. They were beautiful and they were ours. They nursed right away and were perfectly healthy. They did have to have antibiotics due to my water being broken for over 24 hours, but otherwise totally healthy. We took them home when I was released two days after birth...and our lives were changed.

Emmitt struggled to nurse and regain his birth weight the first few weeks. We decided to start supplementing him with formula at two weeks postpartum and by three weeks he had successfully regained his birth weight. We kept trying nursing but he never really got it, so he would get 50% pumped breast milk and 50% formula. I nursed his brother exclusively until 10 weeks when I was preparing to go back to work. Both boys were doing wonderfully and meeting milestones. They were strong, lifting their heads while still at the hospital, trying to stand, rolling over—ahead of the game.

At their three month marker I felt like I could start to breath again, like we'd made it. By this point we had battled a nasty thrush (yeast infection) diaper rash, acid reflux and later a month-long case of oral thrush which provided hours of screaming in stereo nightly. By four months they were over all those troubles and coming in to their own. As they grew we started to get smiles,

real, melt your heart, provoked and awkward smiles—and our lives changed again. Emmitt was the first to smile and the first to give a real laugh. I happily captured examples of both on video. I hold these videos close to me now as the day the boys celebrated their five-month birthday we lost our Emmitt to what looks like SIDs (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), the Medical Examiner is still finalizing their report.

We had just returned from our first big road trip to Michigan. They boys did great on the trip and met a lot of family. They won everyone's hearts with their generous smiles and easy going nature. Emmitt always seemed to make friends with even the non-baby people. He had these faces that remind me of little old men and he always seemed to be saying, "What now?" A sentiment we find ourselves asking over and over these days.

We were at work and our wonderful and completely competent and intuitive nanny was home with our sons. She found Emmitt unresponsive after going to check on his brother who woke from his nap screaming. She is trained and performed CPR and called 911, but nothing anyone did got any response from him. He was just gone. Taken. As soon as she could she called me and my world stopped. After being assured that the medics were there I ran from my work and caught a cab home calling my husband on the way. I got into two different cabs that kicked me out—me a crying, soggy woman in distress (it was raining)—because they didn't go anywhere but downtown.

By the time I got to the hospital I had a good idea that everything, even the CPR our nanny administered, was for our benefit not Emmitt's. Somehow I knew the worst had happened the second I saw our nanny's name come up on my phone. My husband was still enroute to the hospital when I was shown into the room they were working on Emmitt. Again, I had the feeling that it was a TV show, not real, it couldn't be. Here was this lifeless body with wires and tubes and paddles that was supposed to be my son, the happy and sweet little boy I left at home earlier that day, but he was colorless and empty now.

The doctor, or staff member assigned to watch me, or communicate with me kept saying that "we need to think about stopping" and I just couldn't let it be. I kept waiting for the little 'bleep' from the heart monitor to signal that everything was going to be okay. But it just didn't; it wouldn't happen. Eventually I realized that even if they did bring him back there would be nothing left. I signaled them to stop and they cleared the 10 plus people out and removed as much of the equipment as they could. The details are fuzzy but I know at some point they showed my nanny in and I told her she should not be there when my husband arrived, not that she did anything, but that his first instinct might be anger. He arrived shortly after they showed her out and I had to do the hardest thing I have ever done. I had to tell my beautiful husband that our son was dead.

We held him and we cried and we got angry and we hugged, but mostly we cried together. At one point my husband heard one of the machines make a noise and he looked up hopeful...I don't think I'll ever be able to forget the pain in his face when he realized it was just some

standard sound as the machine powered down, that our son was beyond repair, beyond reach. The aftermath that followed is all a bit hazy. There were interviews with police, kind words from hospital chaplains, unanswered questions. Eventually we were allowed to leave to go home to our surviving son. The police asked us not to enter our apartment until they had a photographer out—they treat all cases with infants as crimes scenes. Our downstairs neighbors were around to hear our nanny's cries for help when she discovered Emmitt. They stepped in to watch our son Sullivan and lent their car to our nanny who, in her frantic state, had locked herself out of our apartment and was without her car keys. We waited for the police in their bed, snuggling our surviving son in a state of shock.

After the police left and we went home—home...it didn't feel much like a home anymore—we crawled into bed, the three of us. I can't say I slept much. My parents arrived from out of state around midnight. I'm thankful for them; we probably wouldn't have slept or eaten much for a week and we would have been lost with moving forward without them. In time we made plans for a celebration of Emmitt's life, back home in Wisconsin, hoping the distance would make things easier. And it was. I wrote an obituary for my baby, something no one should be able to say.

Friends and family swarmed to us. Our Mothers of Multiples group planned to handle our meals for awhile when we went home a week later. Everyone was so nice and willing to help. We were and are so grateful for them, for everything they did and still are doing to support us. But nothing really helped us cope. Being reminded of Emmitt or of our own pain left us crying constantly. Instead, we focused on trying to forget a little. We made plans to do things, take Sullivan places, make new memories—memories without Emmitt in them. We knew sitting around the house would be like poison and we decided to try to get back to work within two weeks. We spoke with our companies HR departments and they were so accommodating and asked people to let us return to work with business as usual.

Everything moves forward—it may not be easy or fast but time passes and every day the pain is more manageable. Sullivan has become, more than ever, our light. Our life. A side effect of losing a healthy baby to something like SIDs is the almost complete and total erosion of your resolve and confidence as a parent. The fear some people feel that first night or week home from the hospital is magnified by 100 even though you know there is no real way to prevent or change anything. You question your past choices as a parent...come to the realization that you did everything right, or right enough and at least, that what happened wasn't your fault. But the questions and doubts still linger. I felt myself constrict from the parent I was, and was becoming—the free-range, go-with-the-flow parent with the two healthy, well-adjusted kids—to something else. Enter the breathing monitor, the video monitor, the suffocating fear that you might lose again and know that the price would be greater, much greater this time.

I find myself thinking guilty thankful thoughts, thinking how if it had happened even two weeks later in his development I might never have left my neighbor's bedroom that night. Within two weeks after Emmitt's death Sullivan was laughing and cracking up at everything—generously

throwing out smiles that could light up a room, babbling. If I had witnessed the two of them forming a real bond I think I might not have been able to stand it. Or maybe I tell myself that to make things seem better than they are. In either case, Emmitt deserved a lot more than two weeks, he deserved everything...and there's that anger again, that "Why him, why us?" that we've grown so accustomed to in such a short amount of time.

This complicates things on a practical level too, of course it does. "How many kids do you have?" "Is he your first" and on and on. I am one of those open book people, a person you might describe as brutally honest. I am adjusting to this new role, the one where I don't tell the checker at the grocery store my whole life story. It isn't that I mind, but I realize they don't actually want to know and I really don't have the time or the emotional energy to tell them.

So forward we go. It's all we really can do. At some point in the process the Medical Examiner required our nanny to reenact the scene in my sons' nursery using a doll...That day was hard. The whole process seems poorly thought out. Wait six weeks from your child's autopsy for final lab results, another four weeks after those are in and the reenactment is done to possibly have an answer. Possibly. Because after all this they still might not give us a label, even 'SIDs' would be a kind of closure. With SIDs, there is no cause of death, it is unexplained with no doubt or evidence that anything could have caused the death, but it is an ending, some kind of answer—sometimes they just label an infant's death "undetermined". My husband and I each got a locket urn to have Emmitt with us always in a tangible way. I replaced my wishbone token with a silver heart locket urn. It sounds a bit silly, but when I feel myself breaking into tears on my train ride home, I find strength when I hold the locket, his locket.

So we wait and we breathe and we watch. We watch as Sullivan begins to crawl, tries his first spoonful of bananas and splashes around in his first bath in the big tub, and even with all the love and joy that those moments bring, we can't stop feeling that we were robbed, that someone is missing and always will be.