

# The Phone Call

Category: Abortion

written by Melissa Fournier | July 2, 2019

My husband picks up the phone. It's his mother.

A few weeks earlier, I had suffered a placental abruption during the twenty-third week of pregnancy with my third child. I am still spinning in a vortex of shock, grief, guilt and regret. Did we do the right thing? Should we have tried to save her? Why didn't we tell them to do everything? Why did I sign the DNR?

We were told that a baby born on the edge of viability would probably suffer profound neurodevelopmental impairments, require multiple surgeries, and may not live until the age of two, if she was born alive or ever left the NICU at all. We were told she would have to be sent by helicopter without us to a higher level NICU two hundred miles away, and that it was unlikely the other hospital would even take her as a patient. We were told there was no right or wrong answer; we were in an "ethical gray zone." That the choice was ours and ours alone.

I gave birth to her knowing we would hold her and that she would die.

Which she did. Die.

My mother-in-law says to my husband, after telling him she ate pasta for dinner, "Oh, you probably haven't heard, but the same thing that happened to Melissa just happened to your cousin's wife, Kristi."

"What are you talking about, Mom?"

"Well, Kristi went in for her twenty-week ultrasound and there was something wrong with the baby's kidneys I guess, so she had to have an abortion."

"Mom, Melissa didn't have an abortion."

"Well...you know what I mean."

My heart aches for Kristi, though I never met her. I imagine her spinning in the same vortex that has captured me. I think about reaching out to her, but I don't. I imagine how she might feel if the same thing did happen to her that happened to me: what if she had birthed the baby and held and kissed her? What if she saved a lock of hair? Made footprints? Taken photos? Had a funeral? Received sympathy cards in the mail?

I imagine what might be different for Kristi if she had a gravesite to visit or ashes to scatter instead of medical waste.

Today, eleven years later, I still wonder if she ever talks about it.

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