

Kai Easton

the night kai died i felt his hiccups, that was the last i felt of him.

on our way to columbia st marys in mequon matt and i stopped at mcdonalds in saukville. the one right off of hwy 43, the one i cannot look at to this day when we pass by. i had a large orange juice and a yogurt parfait. funny what you will remember on the worst day of your life. cannot believe i didnt realize something was wrong when i didnt feel kai move after a large oj. sugar, sugar, sugar. hindsight 50/50 leads to so much early guilt. we go into our 36 week appointment as usual, trip to the restroom, into hospital issued gown, matt and i talk while i sit on the exam/ultrasound table about my really good friend rachel being at the birth of kai. she was then seeking out midwife certification. our dr came in. routine questions. dear Lord, routine answers. really jennifer? more early guilt so easily settles in. during the ultrasound i am asked to turn from side to side while our dr frantically searches for a heartbeat. she excuses herself from the room to bring in another dr to examine. he too cannot find kais heartbeat. it was all so surreal. i remember thinking they, the medical professionals, were wrong. there had to be a way their equipment had failed. as i held onto matt and tried to comprehend what my dr was explaining to us about the next steps i kept thinking that when we delivered kai was gonna come out breathing and they were all going to witness a miracle of Christ. our options, go home, take time to tell our family and friends or be induced right away, deliver kai on the 17th. please dont hear me say the first option is ridiculous because for many it is their choice, but i almost threw up at the thought of going home, walking around with my dead baby inside of me. unfathomable. i begged my poor ob to put me to sleep to deliver kai csection. i didnt want to go through labor and delivery, not that way. i didnt want to feel

a thing. to just wake up from anesthesia and try to pretend it was all a bad dream was ideal in that moment. it was a well fought argument that i eventually lost. her expertise and genuine care for my family outweighed my clouded emotions. we were escorted out a back door, not to scare any of the other healthy patients in the waiting room by my hysterics. traveled through the corridors of the hospital to the labor and delivery unit placed in a room and told we were to wait for our l&d nurse to come in. before i go into what we encountered next i want to say this. i consider my ob to be the best in all of wisconsin, the united states and even the world. i love her, i put my complete trust in her and the endless compassion she showed throughout this experience and even more so in my subsequent pregnancies. the nurse working the floor that day was also, kind, considerate and very compassionate. the rest of the staff from the anesthesiologist to the housekeepers were all extremely considerate. that said, here is why i remember in great detail, all of the things that made me so sad i wanted to run from the minute we ended up in that room. our room on the l&d floor was smack in the middle of all the rooms. women having healthy, live babies surrounded us. we heard everything as if every movement, every push, every first cry, every happy cheer was on an amplifier. in the midst of our worst pain, our worst heartache we had to hear all of those things and know we wouldn't have any of it. my movements were silent, matts, the drs, the nurses movements, all silent. the only noise i remember were the wheels of the warming cart rolling out of our room, empty. Lord how i wished they'd done that before we got there. just one more reminder he was gone. no need for a warmer. my pushes were silent among all the tears i shed while doing so. we waited and prayed with everything we had, in silence, but no first cry ever came, no miracle to be witnessed, just a silent sorrow that draped our room. family came in, no balloons, no flowers, no baby gifts, just more silence. immediately following kais birth i got to hold him for a few short seconds, then the nurse explained she'd take him out of the room to

clean him up, dress him and do countless other things i didnt pay attention to. so then i thought the worst was over. what could be worse than living through delivering your dead baby? i was of course wrong. when she brought him back to us he was all wrapped up in a baby blanket and had a hand-knit hat covering his dark hair. so my mothering instincts kick in and even though he's gone, and i know this, i still go to unwrap the blanket to peek at his tiny fingers, toes, etc. that's when our nurse, God bless her for ever having to explain this to anyone, tells me i have to be extremely careful with him because too much friction on his delicate skin will cause it to slough off. slough off are two words that when used in conjunction, i am sure i had ever heard before that moment, but i immediately understood the meaning. too tired and just too devastated to try to be gentle i simply wrapped him back up and cried all over the poor little guy. we never unwrapped him, i held him, matt did, and so did matts parents and my grandma. conversations that should have revolved around kai having his daddys nose, or how big a boy he will be growing up never happened. instead they all held onto him a little uncomfortably. understandably so. our pastor at the time, kirby andersen had also come to visit and say a prayer. when we were told he was outside our room waiting my initial reaction was filled with comfort, however when he stepped into our room the energy in it immediately changed. silly as it might sound to some, it was if he walked with a light all around him, a light of hope. it wasn't the meds or the deep grief, it was God, pastor kirby was enveloped in the Spirit and in that moment i wasn't sure how, but knew that all was going to be okay. he prayed over us with a prayer of hope and courage that brought me through many dark days following kai's death. as early as i ever remember waking we prepared ourselves to go home and face it all. i showered, reached for my lotion and automatically rubbed it all over my belly. something i had done for nearly 36 weeks to keep from stretch marks invading it. in the midst of doing so, i realized what i was doing and immediately coupled over sobbing

uncontrollably. why'd i do that, it's empty, i know it's empty. ugh. i dressed and we walked out of our room to try to make it to the doors, but were stopped by the nursing staff who told us we needed to wait for some paperwork. by that time my patience had run out. we said something about not spending another minute surrounded by all the pain, and were let go. we were escorted out to the main doors. just let go. sent with our box of items from the floor. no baby in tote, just us. i hobbled about 2 city blocks to our car, too stubborn to let matt get the car for me. or maybe cuz i couldn't stand to be in the door way of the hospital alone. i climbed into the car and immediately noticed the baby car seat base i had installed weeks prior. i dont remember the ride home. i made matt stop at home so that i could take the car seat base out of the car before going to pick up our daughter from our aunts house. as if taking it out would somehow erase her memory of the past 36 weeks and the baby we planned for and talked about every waking moment. i also went into the house to throw the box from the hospital in kais nursery, i was sick just walking in his room. i took one quick look at all of the love we put into it screamed in sheer anger, locked and closed the door. that door stayed locked for over 6 months. i pretended the room wasnt even there. we went to our aunts to get halia. it was excruciating. i knew she'd know something was wrong. and there it was, besides missing us because we had been gone all night, she immediately noticed my stomach was quite a bit smaller. her question, where did the baby go? yeah, i thought. where did the baby go? so now her baby brother was an angel. though she didn't fully grasp what has really happened i sure did. while an angel is lovely and pleasant to think of watching over us, it doesn't compare to a brother she could have cuddled, watch grow, play with, sing songs with, make up silly plays with, even fight with. there are days when I think that the three babes i've got are a handful enough, but truth be told, i'd give absolutely anything to have the craziness of four. days were short that october and the nights seemed torturously long. some days i'd sit by my fireplace writing the

thank you cards for the memorial service we held for kai and cry and cry. healing was a long rough road, but eventually i got there. a place of rest, a place of forgiveness for myself. I think it helped that we were able to peg a cause for his death. after he was born and before he went to be cremated he went to a geneticist who examined him, as well as the placenta and umbilical cord. they found blood clots throughout the umbilical cord and placenta both and assumed with 95% certainty that's what ended his life much too soon. so basically it was my body which produced the clots that killed my son. yep, a tough pill to swallow indeed...more guilt. so the forgiveness i mention up there, didn't come as easy. there are still days i am saddened to think of the disease i'd been carrying ended his life. dvt...deep vein thrombosis. never heard of such a thing. never suspected a healthy 28 year old would be prone to it either. the real kicker? for me, it only comes on when i am pregnant. post pregnancy and pre pregnancy tests come back with flying colors. here's what the medical professionals say about it, "thrombosis is more likely to occur during pregnancy because of changes in blood circulation. blood flow in the legs slows down (a condition called stasis) because of pressure from the uterus on blood vessels and because of changes in the blood and its clotting mechanisms. blood clots occur in less than 1 % of all pregnancies." love that last statistic they throw in there. 1 percent. only one. me. so i found all of this out from a lovely gentleman dr at waukesha memorial hospital who i didn't fall in love with on my first visit, but maybe by the second or third visit when i could appreciate his mannerisms and pure wealth of knowledge he had for my condition. he and a another dr ran what is the only pregnancy coagulation clinic in the country. read that again...in the country. heres where Gods work begins to line up in a very obvious way and offer me the hope i so desperately needed. i just so happened to be in the care of an obgyn who had worked under this dr. early in her career. just so happens that she is still in contact with him. just so happens that the ONLY pregnancy coagulation clinic in the

country is located an hour away from my home. all coincidences? not so much. hmm...yes, my God is great. it was only 3 months after i lost kai that i became pregnant with makaio. please don't ever think i replaced one baby so quickly with another. that was the farthest thing from my mind. i knew how much i loved my kai and i also knew that he would not be my last just because i had lost him. so there i was pregnant and very scared that the same thing might happen. but the fear didn't overwhelm me as you might think. God's love was all around me. i had matt, who remained positive and assuring through every apprehensive ultrasound, every waking moment he fed the Word, Gods promises to us, and spoke life into my soul. i had a beautiful baby girl to love on me, to hold onto and to be strong for. i had family and friends who encouraged me, who listened to me and lifted me up in times of doubt. i had the best obgyn in my corner, a dr who SAW who i was and the pain i had endured. she offered all of her available resources to comfort me, doppler readings a plenty, endless stress tests that sometimes lasted much longer than necessary just because i needed to hear makaio and kauais heartbeat for 'a few more minutes'. she never questioned my wish on delivering both boys a month early just so they wouldn't get to 36 weeks. she never tired of the endless list of questions i came in with or called about. she cares, shes genuine, she loves and she is another gift sent from God directly to me. i also had an amazing ob specialist who also was completely on my side. he offered hope and encouragement in every word, every action. every time i drove to milwaukee to see him i would think how blessed i was that he was in my life. i must be on some list of crazy women requesting ultrasounds during pregnancy because i had one every time i had an appointment, which was a lot. God bless the ultrasound tech for never turning me down to see the boys heartbeats right away, before going into measuring and all the technical stuff. aaafter the first 3 times, i didn't even have to say a word, the gel went on, the scope found the heartbeat, then we could all relax a little and enjoy the rest of the scan. for my

entire pregnancy with makaio, i was on a low molecular weight heparin injection, lovenox. i love typing all those words and actually saying them is even better because believe it makes me sound very educated. that, and it was one more thing that gave me hope through my pregnancies. the daily injections weren't fun, especially for a girl who cannot stand needles, but it needed to be done in order to keep the clots at bay. all the needle marks and bruising on my huge belly were completely worth it. induced early with makaio at 35 and 5/7 weeks, i delivered him with great anticipation. with the best team of medical professionals in my room, he was born on september 11, 2007, a healthy 6lbs, 9 oz. a short stint of not breathing due to his prematurity landed us in the nicu for a week and sent home with a heart/lung monitor for a month, but that all reminded us again just how fragile life is. he is now a very healthy, very loved 4 year old miracle. so, 3 months after delivering makaio, i was pregnant with our third son, kauai. all of the same fears and doubts crept up, and all of the same positive influences in my life helped beat them down. in the morning on my drive into kohler, i'd come off of 23 via the long, circle exit that leads into the village. there is a point when you come around the trees that the eastern sun literally blinds you and makes you second guess whether or not you have just entered heaven or are still on that drawn out exit. every time i was hit with the light, i became overwhelmed knowing that it was a sign that Jesus was with me. i felt His presence all around me and i knew my day would be blessed. i saw the same drs in my pregnancy with kauai, they were all very familiar, how could they forget in just 3 months time, Amen?! i needed again to follow the rules of once daily injections of lovenox to insure a healthy pregnancy. and again i delivered early. i was induced at 35 and 6/7 weeks. kauai was born on september 24, 2008 at 6lbs, 10z. he was strong, healthy and so beautiful. his birth was a great celebration. there it is, the end of my difficult story of losing kai and trusting that it wouldn't happen in my subsequent pregnancies. I think one of the best things we've done to help us heal besides

staying as close we can to Christ is just talking about kai on a daily basis. I don't think there has been a day when someone in my family doesn't mention his name. i guess it would've been easy to ignore he was here. my boys wouldn't know any better if we never mentioned him and halia would have eventually put it in the back of her mind. in the beginning it was really hard to talk about him, but as the days, months and eventually years went on i was so thankful that we decided to keep him a part of our prayers, discussions with others and in stories with our kids. even our 2 year old kauai will tell you he has a brother in heaven. our kitchen table has 6 chairs. nights when we sit down for dinner i look at the empty chair and a piece of my heart sinks deep into my chest. but sometimes one of the kids will say i am sitting next to kai, right momma? and every time my response is, yep say hi to him. they always do. so if you are reading this and you've lost a baby do try to talk about them. no doubt it will hurt, but the pain will get less and less difficult and i promise you that no matter how long the road, it will help you heal. my grief never gets any easier, but it is different than 5 years ago. i miss kai every day. i look at his picture at night before bed and wish to kiss his soft cheek, to play with his dark brown hair while i read him a story, to love on him like a mommy should. There is a day that I will be able to do all those things, i just have to remind myself to be patient and wait, his brothers and sister are in need of this ol momma first. but when that day finally comes it will be so much more beautiful than i have imagined it to be. all this earthly pain and guilt will finally be gone and i can cradle him in my arms and hum him a tune i've wanted to for all these years.