

## One Day I'll Hold You

Friday, November 19, 1999 started uneventfully. The previous day had been fairly hectic, and being nineteen weeks pregnant, I was enjoying a slow and relaxed morning. I had written a letter to my grandmother, opening with 'All is going well with the baby.' I told her how excited and thankful we were to be expecting our third precious child. A short while later, I felt a small amount of fluid come away. I went to the bathroom to check what it was, and I found bright blood. Three-year-old Sarah and seventeen-month-old Jemimah sensed my nervousness as I phoned my husband, Phil, and asked him to come home. I also phoned the midwife at the Birth Centre. She told me to come straight in. I tried to convince myself that I could still feel our baby moving, and that everything would be okay.

When we arrived at the hospital, the midwife tried to find baby's heartbeat. Her face was serious as she gently said, 'This is not normal. I can't find the heartbeat, and I should be able to. We need to take you upstairs for an ultrasound.' We were taken to a room in the delivery suite. It didn't take long for a couple of doctors to arrive. After feeling my tummy and asking a few questions, they brought the portable ultrasound machine in. The screen was slightly turned away from me, but I could just see the form of our baby on the monitor. Phil was by my side and had a better view. After a couple of minutes of silent examination, the doctor smiled; and with the same gentleness as the midwife said, 'We need to take you to have a proper ultrasound. We need someone who's a better driver than I am.' It wasn't until he left the room to make arrangements that Phil remarked how still the baby looked.

We had to wait a while for the ultrasound. Phil left the room to make some phone calls. While he was gone, a different midwife came in and somewhat bluntly told me that I could get up and go for a walk if I wanted to, I didn't have to just lie there. 'Doesn't she realise,' I thought, 'that if I go for a walk I might make things worse?' I chose to stay put. When Phil returned he remarked, 'Every time I walk past the Nurses' Station they all give me sympathetic looks. I think they fear the worst.'

A different doctor performed the next ultrasound. He silently studied the screen and then said, 'It's not good news, I'm afraid.' I immediately asked, 'Why, what's happened?' For a brief moment he looked absolutely horrified, as he realised that no one had even mentioned the possibility of our baby's death in utero to me. He slowly turned the screen around so I could clearly see. 'Well,' he began, 'as you can see, there's no heartbeat, no movement at all. . . .' He paused. I continued for him. 'Do you mean our baby has died?' He nodded, and then quickly added, 'I'm very sorry.' The next little while was a blur of grief and tears. I went to the bathroom and wept even more as I said out loud, 'There's not going to be any baby!' A wards man arrived to take Phil and me back to Delivery Suite.