

Brooke Ryter and Paige D. Ryter



**So,**

**Whatcha Think?**

**A Collection of Emotional Short Stories**

FIC003000FICTION / Anthologies (multiple authors)

So...  
WhatCha  
Think?

Brooke Ryter and Paige D. Ryter

Everyone has an opinion.  
Everyone is entitled to their  
opinion. Sometimes hearing  
different opinions gives one  
greater wisdom.

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***THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING  
THIS FREE CHAPTER.***

SO, WHATCHA THINK? IS AN INTERACTIVE BOOK. AN OPEN DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE READERS AND THE AUTHORS.

**This file contains one chapter from the book.  
Below is a description of the book.**

Have you ever felt numb, lost, alone? Have you ever felt spectacular, joyous? Have you ever felt so in love that it was fantastic and a bit scary? Have you ever felt so much sympathy or empathy that you hurt? Have you ever felt sadness so deep you could hear an echo? Have you ever experienced a day when your emotions ranged from one extreme to the other because of the events and interactions of that day? With each of these emotional experiences did you find yourself feeling alive? Emotions are what drives us, what can guide us, and what can drop us to our knees.

This book takes you on a series of emotional journeys through all these and more. There is blind love, sadness, fear, hatred, joy, desire, anger, happiness, deceit, control, freedom, peace. Many of these are intertwined in complex situations. You will have an opinion or two about the characters, their choices, and the outcome. Paige and Brooke want to know what you think and feel with each emotional experience along these journeys. The conversation is

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open and the emotions are real. So, read, allow the book to take you down an emotional path, and then join the conversation about what affect the journeys had on you. In other words, you are asked the question...So, Whatcha Think?

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**Mark your calendar!**  
**Anticipated full book publish date – December 2012**

## DEDICATION

### *Brooke's Dedication-*

This book is dedicated to my husband, Andru. He always believes in my dreams, helps nurture my ideas, and is my biggest supporter; even when the rest of the world thinks I am crazy. This book is also dedicated to my kids. When they were young, I tried to teach them to see the magic life has to offer. Now that they are grown, they show me the magic of life. And of course, my sister Paige. She understands me like few do. She shares my strange sense of humor and understands not only who I am, but who I want to be. All these people love me and accept me for who I am, faults and all.

### *Paige's Dedication-*

This book is dedicated to my wonderful husband Bryan, who has always supported everything I do. Thank you for always having my back even when I couldn't see it. I love you so! To my two amazing boys, who have become the godly men I knew they were as soon as I laid my eyes on them. I am so very proud of you both! And to my sister Brooke, who I can cry or laugh with until milk spills out of my nose. You are an amazing woman who can do anything you set your mind on. "Sisters by Chance, Friends by Choice."-*Author Unknown* This motto has been a constant through our childhood and into our adult lives. Thank you for being my friend and dancing down the aisles of the grocery stores with me.

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To our editor, you are the best! We could not have found a better grammar curmudgeon.

This is a fictional story based on a true life experience. Any similarity to actual people or events is completely and strictly coincidental.



## *CHAPTER 2*

### **OUR ANGEL BABY, OUR LOVE**

She stood still, her back pressed against the wall as she looked down at the kitchen timer clutched in her hand. The countdown from 5 minutes seemed to be taking an hour. The pregnancy test sat alone in the center of the bathroom counter top.

It had been 4 years since they first began trying to have a baby and her period has never been late. This month, it was late. She waited two full weeks before buying the test. Disappointment had become a monthly experience and she was trying not to get her hopes up. She could not help it, she was praying every day for a baby.

Last night she could not sleep and by 5:00 AM she could not wait any longer. She quietly slid out of bed so she would not wake Scott, gathered the

pregnancy test and the kitchen timer, and tip toed for the bathroom.

5, 4, 3, 2; she turned off the timer just before it buzzed. She had decided if the test was negative, she would not say anything to him. He wanted to be a daddy so badly. Lately they had been talking about adopting. His eyes lit up whenever they talked about having children, either of their own or through adoption.

She cautiously walked to the counter to check the test results. Her vision blurred with tears, her hands were shaking with anticipation. Inside the small square on the test were two lines. Was this right? Was she really pregnant?

She scooped up the test and danced around the bathroom. Being quiet was no longer necessary. She burst through the bathroom door spilling light into the darkness of their bedroom.

“Scott! Scott!” she yelled as she jumped into the middle of the bed. He was startled and sat up quickly.

“What? What’s wrong?” His eyes were still glazed and unfocused.

“Look! Look! We’re pregnant!” She handed him the test as she squealed with excitement. In the semi-darkness of the room he could not see the results.

“Pregnant?” he said, still confused and not quite awake yet.

“A baby! We’re going to have a baby!” She hugged him tightly. He hugged her with his left arm

while he lifted the test in his right hand and tried to see the results over her shoulder.

“We’re going to have a baby? You’re pregnant?” Excitement was building in his chest. He reached over and turned on the bedside lamp. His heart was beating fast as his eyes finally focused on the test results.

“We’re going to have a baby.” He hugged her, kissed her gently, then whispered, “I’m going to be a daddy and you’re going to be a mommy. Now I won’t be the only kid in the house.” He winked at her as a smile crept across his face.

Cindy made an appointment with her doctor to confirm the home pregnancy test results. Once her doctor confirmed that she was, indeed, six weeks pregnant, she called anyone and everyone she had ever known to tell them the wonderful news.

Over the next couple weeks Cindy cleaned and rearranged the second bedroom to turn it into the baby’s room. She knew exactly how she wanted her baby’s nursery to look. Every day after work she stopped by the mall to buy baby things. Adorable newborn outfits, pacifiers, baby powder, teething toys; she was so excited she was skipping as she shopped.

On a Monday morning just after Scott had left for work, she began cramping and spotting. She called her doctor’s office in a panic. She was only about eight weeks pregnant and she feared she was losing the baby.

“You need to be seen as soon as possible. We have an opening at 9:15.” the scheduling clerk said.

“I’ll be there.” Cindy’s voice was shaky.

Not wasting anytime, she called Scott.

“I’m spotting and cramping. I called the doctor’s office and they said I need to go in this morning.” He could hear the tears in her voice and feel his own panic in his throat.

“I’m on my way.” He raced home.

She and Scott arrived at the doctor’s office at 8:45 and checked in at the counter. The nurse ushered them into an exam room within a few moments. The doctor examined her and took some blood for laboratory tests.

“You’re still pregnant, but you need to stay as calm as you can. I also want you on bed rest just to be sure.” the doctor said.

“What’s wrong?” she asked him. Scott watched the doctor intently waiting for an answer.

“We won’t know until we get the test results back. You need to stay calm and stay in bed until we know for sure what we are dealing with.” He was so calm. “I want to see you in a week. I will have the test results by then.”

Scott made the appointment for the following Monday morning before they left the doctor’s office. There was silence in the car during the drive home. They were both lost in their own thoughts. After arriving home, she put on her sweats and got into bed. Scott sat on the edge of the bed and held her hand.

## SO, WHATCHA THINK?

“Everything’s going to be fine.” He stared down at her hand hoping she would not see the fear and worry on his face.

“What if everything isn’t fine? What if I lose our baby?” Tears were streaming down her face.

His eyes were filled with tears as they lifted to meet hers. She looked as scared as he felt. “The doctor said you need to stay calm. You won’t lose our baby, everything will be fine.” He was trying his best to reassure and calm her as he held her tight. She cried softly against his chest.

Scott called Cindy’s supervisor and explained what the doctor had said while she tried to watch television to take her mind off of all the horrible scenarios that were rolling around in her mind. Scott sat in a kitchen chair he had situated next to the bed and held her hand. He hoped holding her hand was as reassuring to her as it was to him.

Scott had to return to work the next day. Cindy spent the rest of the week filling out the long-term leave paperwork her supervisor had mailed to her, tried her best to read happy books, and watch interesting television to keep her mind occupied. She decided that staying calm and keeping a positive outlook was what she needed to do for her baby.

They were back at the doctor’s office the next Monday morning. Their wait time was again short before being taken to an exam room. The doctor entered the exam room after only a few moments.

“Let’s do a vaginal ultrasound.” he said as he gathered the necessary equipment and supplies.

She could see the ultrasound screen but none of the images made any sense.

“See, the baby’s right there.” The doctor pointed to the screen. This was the first time she had seen her baby. The image on the screen looked more like a bean than a baby, but for her, it was the most beautiful sight she had ever seen.

“Cindy. See? There’s our baby.” Scott’s grin could not have been any bigger. He held her hand tight as her gaze stayed on her little bean on the screen.

“I’m really pregnant. I can’t believe it. I can see the baby’s heart beating.” She could barely contain her giggles.

The images on the screen scrambled as the doctor moved the wand around. He was intently looking at something on the screen that looked alien to her.

The doctor looked at her and then at Scott. His eyebrows were furrowed and the frown lines on his forehead were more prominent than usual.

“What you have is a condition called Placental Previa. Your lab results suggested it and the ultrasound confirms the condition. A portion of your cervix is covered by the placenta. This is a serious condition that, I’m sorry to say, in most cases ends in miscarriage when it happens this early in the pregnancy. There’s no treatment, only preventive measures that can be taken. Even if you follow all the preventive measures, there’s no guarantee that this pregnancy will go full term. I’m sorry.”



“There has to be something we can do.” Scott was unable to mask his fear.

Cindy had moved her hand onto her belly. Her baby was in there and she would make sure her baby lived. She looked up at Scott as he placed his hand on hers.

“Our baby’s going to be healthy and happy.” he whispered to her. Her eyes filled with tears as she nodded at him.

“I’m going to have our scheduling clerk set you an appointment with a specialist. In the meantime, stay on bed rest. On your feet only to use the restroom, understand?” the doctor said with authority.

“Understood” she whispered as she wiped tears away.

It was two weeks before Cindy could be seen by the specialist. She followed her doctor’s instructions to the letter. During the weeks since her last appointment, she committed to herself that she would do everything possible to make sure her baby survived.

The specialist confirmed the diagnosis and put her on bed rest for the duration of the pregnancy.

“What are the chances that my baby will make it?” She sheepishly asked.

“The chances of your pregnancy surviving long enough for your baby to be viable are less than 5 percent. I’m sorry, but we’re going to do all we can to keep you in that percentage.” the doctor said.

The confidence in his voice was as reassuring as all the photographs of newborn babies that were displayed in the waiting room and along all the hallways in his office. Pictures of babies he had brought into the world; each one born from a high-risk pregnancy. This gave Cindy hope and a feeling of reassurance that this doctor knew what he was doing.

Scott felt helpless. He wished he could take Cindy's pain and heartache away. All he could think to do was buy her magazines and books, and he found several craft projects for her to work on. Every morning he would make her breakfast and pack her lunch and some snacks.

Every night before he left work, he would call her to see if she wanted him to pick up anything on his way home. Many times she would ask for the bean burrito with green sauce that she loved so much from her favorite Mexican restaurant. He would get her anything she asked; he was not sure how else to help her through this. He knew this was hard on her and that she was scared. He worried all the time about her and the baby, but did not want to put more of a burden on her by talking about his fears.

"I can't believe you get to lie around all day while I am stuck working." Cindy's Aunt Helen had been great about calling her every couple of days. The two had been close since she was a young girl.

“This isn’t great. I miss going to work. I miss talking to people face to face. I miss walking around. I even miss grocery shopping.”

“I can only imagine how hard this is. I wish there was something I could do to help. How’s the baby doing? Are you still bleeding?” Aunt Helen asked.

“The bleeding has stopped almost completely. Still a little cramping from time to time, but not like it was in the beginning.”

“That’s a good sign, right?”

“Yes, the doctor says that if everything stays like this, the baby will be born full term.”

“That’s fantastic.”

“I’m going to hold my baby, I just know it.”

“Yes you will. Don’t you worry, you will hold that baby.”

The specialist insisted on seeing Cindy weekly. Her Mondays were filled with ultrasounds, blood work, and examinations. At 13 weeks along, the doctor told her that the ultrasound showed that she was only 12 weeks pregnant, so they moved her due date. At 14 weeks along, the same thing happened. The doctor again said she was only 12 weeks and moved her due date again. She felt like the doctor was playing a cruel joke on her. She was beginning to feel like she would be pregnant and on bed rest forever. Time was moving slowly and all she wanted to do was to hold her baby. Hold her healthy baby in her arms.

At 18 weeks along, the doctor informed her and Scott that their baby was a boy.

“We’re having a little boy.” She was so excited. Finding out the baby’s sex was a moment that Cindy would never forget. That moment symbolized to her that the baby had made it; he was certainly going to survive. Although he was small, he was developing fine.

The doctor said that he felt safe releasing her from bed rest, but only to move to the living room. He reminded her to be careful and not to do too much.

“Monitor your activity, if you start to cramp or bleed get back to bed.” he warned.

Finally she was able to start moving around her home a little. She could get up and walk down the hall to lie on the sofa. She could stand in the kitchen long enough to make herself a sandwich. She welcomed the view from the sofa and the freedom, although small, to make her own lunch.

Scott began purchasing outfits, toys, and other baby items. He would wrap them in gift bags and tissue paper for Cindy to open. He enjoyed bringing her baby gifts and the joy on her face as she opened each of them.

At 23 weeks along, they headed out to her regular Monday appointment. This time, their wait time was almost an hour. This was unusual. It was always nerve racking and physically exhausting to go to these appointments but this time with the long wait, Cindy began cramping. Scott went to the counter.

“How much longer? She can’t sit in a chair like this for very long and it has already been nearly an hour.”

“It will only be a few more minutes Sir.” The girl behind the counter told him. “We’re behind today.”

After another 20 minutes, they finally called her name. They were taken to an exam room to wait for the doctor. Cindy was able to lie down on the exam table and that eased the cramps some.

The doctor finally came into the exam room.

Before the doctor had time to close the door, Scott burst out saying, “I realize that you’re behind today, but she can’t be up for that long. In the future should we reschedule when there’s a long wait time?”

“Sometimes things get backed up.” The doctor wasn’t his usual self. He seemed distant and unconcerned.

Scott looked at Cindy and she shrugged her shoulders. As Scott was about to ask the question again, the doctor said. “I have your lab results back from last week. I think it’s time we talk about ending this pregnancy.”

“What!?!” Scott yelled. “Have you lost your mind? How dare you say that to her. Last week everything was fine and now you want her to end the pregnancy? She’s worked hard to follow all your instructions so our baby will be born healthy. Why would you say this?”

“Look, the chances of this child being born alive, let alone healthy are slim to none. Save yourself the

heartache and terminate the pregnancy.” The doctor’s tone was flat and rude.

Hearing those words was all it took for Cindy. She immediately began crying harder than she had cried in years. Scott helped her sit up and then to her feet. “Don’t cry Honey, we’re leaving.” he said without looking at the doctor.

“Don’t worry, we’ll find a new doctor. This guy’s crazy. Let’s go.” He ushered her out of the exam room and took her home.

It took her several days to recoup from the doctor visit and she slipped into a depression. She was still cramping and spotting days later. She put herself back on bed rest to try all she could to save her son.

The doctor’s words kept running through her mind. She could never end her pregnancy. This was the baby they have wanted for so long. He was her little bean, her little boy. The doctor’s statement bothered her. She had spent months trusting and believing in him and his skill to save her little boy and now he was asking her to kill him. “Why?” She kept asking herself, “why?”

She and Scott did not stay at the doctor’s office long enough to find out what her lab results were. What information was in those results that made him sure her son was not going to make it? She thought about calling the doctor’s office and asking one of the nurses to tell her, but part of her did not want to know.

By the end of the next week, she was still waiting for her regular doctor to refer her to another specialist. She had stayed in bed and the cramping and spotting had stopped. She was officially 24 weeks along.

“I’m feeling good this morning and we will make it to delivery.” she thought to herself. She had an energy she had not felt since the day she found out they were going to have this baby. She felt good enough to lie on the sofa, make her own lunch; she even did a few dishes.

Around 3:00 o’clock in the afternoon, she began cramping, only this time the cramping was much stronger than she had experienced before. She tried taking a hot shower hoping that the warmth would relax her muscles. This had worked for her in the past, but not this time. She called Scott at work.

“I’m too far away. Call your mom and ask her to take you to the emergency room and I’ll meet you there.” He said.

Her mom arrived to pick her up within minutes of her phone call. They arrived at the emergency room about 15 minutes later. Cindy was rushed into an exam room. Because they had not found a new doctor yet, the specialist they had been seeing was called. The nurse informed her that the specialist had refused to come to the hospital so they had contacted her regular doctor and he was on his way.

The nurse examined her and confirmed that she was in labor.

“It’s too soon for him to be born.” Cindy told the nurse. “He can’t be born now. There has to be a medication to stop the labor. Please. Stop my labor. He can’t be born yet.” She broke down in tears.

Scott finally arrived at the hospital and was escorted through the door of the exam room by a nurse. He rushed to Cindy’s side.

“They said I’m in labor. He can’t be born this early. Do something!” She was hysterical.

“Shhh, everything’s going to be okay. Calm down. They’ll do all the right things.” Scott’s voice was soothing and calm. He stroked her hair while he talked softly to her.

Another nurse came into the room with an IV.

“We’re going to give you some medication to try to stop your contractions. Just relax and stay calm.” The nurse had a smile that reminded Cindy of her grandmother. A reassuring and strong smile. This helped her to calm down and believe that they would be able to stop her labor and her little bean would be fine.

They tried a medication but it was not working. So they decided to try another medication, but this one made Cindy’s heart race and it did not work to stop the contractions either.

They wanted to try another, but the doctor on duty said it was too dangerous. She was at risk of a heart attack.

“I’m sorry. We’re going to have to prep you for a Cesarean Section.” The doctor on duty said. “Your doctor is here and he’s scrubbing now. I’m truly



sorry; there's nothing more we can do." He patted her arm as he spoke. A nurse had walked up on the other side of her bed and was beginning to prep her for surgery.

The doctor turned to Scott. "Follow this nurse and she'll show you where you need to go to get scrubbed and gowned up."

The nurses had Cindy prepped and in the operating room in a matter of minutes. Scott finally came into the operating room dressed in hospital scrubs, wearing a mask. A nurse asked Cindy to roll onto her side, then she said, "I'll be right back." and she left the room.

Scott could hear her softly crying. He pulled a small doctor stool from the corner over to the operating table and sat down. He took her hand in his and looked into her eyes as he pulled the mask off of his face.

"Our son is going to be fine. He's strong, just like you. Don't be sad, today we get to meet the person who will be holding our hand when we die. This is a great day. Smile and have faith; I do. I have faith that a year from now we're going to go on a picnic in the park with our little boy for his first birthday." Tears that had run down his cheeks were dripping from his jaw but his face remained calm and certain.

"It's too early for him to be born. I'm so scared I'm going to lose him. I won't be able to survive it if I lose him." She was crying harder now. Scott caressed her cheek gently with his fingertips as they looked into each other's eyes.

“Oh my God!” Panic consumed her face.

“What? What’s wrong?” Scott said.

“My water just broke.” Her pretty face was twisted in fear. Scott released her hand and ran into the hallway.

“Help! Someone, help!” He yelled up the hallway towards the nurse’s station. A nurse ran past him and into the operating room. Scott ran in right behind her and returned to his stool. He held Cindy’s hand as the nurse told her to roll onto her back so she could check her. As she lifted the sheet, the expression on her face changed. Cindy yelled in pain and the nurse didn’t look up.

“There we go Mom. You’re doing fine.” The nurse said.

“What’s happening?” Scott’s voice was now panicked.

“Almost there.” The nurse said as the doctor came into the room and stood behind her.

“Look what I found Mom.” She said as she held up a tiny baby boy.

The room filled quickly with staff. The doctor took the baby into the corner of the room and started working on him. Cindy could not see him.

“Is he alive? Is he breathing? Is he ok?” No one turned around. No one answered her questions. She just wanted someone to let her know if he was all right.

“Why won’t anyone tell me what’s happening!?!” She screamed so loudly her voice echoed through the room. Suddenly she felt very

sleepy and everything went dark. She had not seen the anesthesiologist take his seat at the head of the operating table. He had administered medication through her IV to calm her and help her sleep.

Scott's eyes were wide as they darted from doctor to nurse, back to the doctor, to another nurse. The quickness in their movements and intensity of their attention on his son was alarming. It confirmed what he thought he saw. A tiny baby, not any bigger than his hand. He really thought the baby would be bigger. He was terrified for his son and his wife.

A couple of hours later, Cindy awoke in her hospital room. Scott was sitting in a chair next to the bed staring at the floor.

"Is he alive?" Her eyes filled with tears as she lifted her head to look at Scott.

Scott quickly looked up from a solemn spot on the floor. "Yes, he's alive and they're taking good care of him." Scott reassuringly squeezed her hand. She closed her eyes and put her head back on the pillow.

"So, did you finally decide on a name?" A crooked smile crept across his face.

"We had talked about so many, which name do you like?" She asked.

"I think you have earned the right to pick his name. After all, he wouldn't be alive if you hadn't sacrificed so much to make sure he had every chance of surviving." Scott was so proud of her.

“How about Jeremy? I like Jeremy more than the other names we talked about.” She felt much better knowing her little bean was alive and that she was able to pick his name.

“Jeremy it is.” Scott sounded as excited as she was beginning to feel. He stood, leaned in, and kissed the tip of her nose.

The door to her room opened and the doctor was smiling when he entered.

“Well, how’s Mom doing?” he asked her.

“I’m fine. How’s my baby?” she replied.

“He’s breathing on his own, which is fantastic and unexpected. He’s so premature that his lungs aren’t fully developed yet, and he weighs only 1 pound, 11 ounces. He’s very fragile and not out of the woods by any means. I made arrangements to have him flown to Children’s Hospital. They are the best at treating preemies. The Children’s Hospital team has already arrived by helicopter and they will put him on a respirator. You can see him before he’s transported. I’ll have the nurse come get you when they’re ready for you.” He stepped forward and patted Cindy’s leg as he said, “You did real good Mom.” He smiled at her, turned and walked toward the door.

“The nurse will be in to get you in a few minutes.” He said to her as he opened the door to leave.

“He only weighs 1 pound, 11 ounces?” she said in disbelief.

“He’s perfect, Honey, and he’s going to be fine.” Scott was trying to convince himself as much as he was her.

The nurse finally came into her room pushing a wheelchair.

“Come on Mom; let’s go see your baby boy.” The nurse said as she stretched out her hand to help her into the wheelchair.

“Here Dad, you push Mom and I’ll show the two of you where to go.”

They went down the hall and instead of going to the Nursery, they went into another patient room. “He’s not in the Nursery?” Cindy questioned.

“We made a special room just for him.” the nurse replied.

The room looked so large because they had removed the hospital bed and in its place was a tiny incubator. The incubator seemed so minuscule in this room.

“He’s all alone.” Cindy thought. She wanted to hold him, to kiss his little forehead, and sing to him, but she was not allowed to even touch him. He was locked in a plastic box. She leaned forward in the wheelchair and rested her forehead on the side of the incubator. Her vision blurred and tears tracked her cheeks.

There he lay, naked, much too small for a diaper. He had a little blue cap on his head, the respirator covered his mouth, and the tape to hold that in place covered most of his cheeks. A mask covered his eyes. All Cindy could see of her little bean’s face

was the tiny tip of his little nose. There were tubes and wires on his chest, stomach, and under his cap. His skin was transparent. It looked as if it would be painful for him if she were to touch him. She still wanted so badly to hold him. As her forehead stayed pressed to the flat plastic wall separating her from her little bean, more tears rolled down her cheeks and fell to the cold tile floor. Scott leaned forward from behind the wheelchair and hugged her as he cried softly into her shoulder.

The helicopter medical crew entered the room to take her baby away. She wanted to fight for him to stay or for her to be able to go with him. She knew that neither could happen.

“Come on Mom, we need to let them do what they need to do.” the nurse said as she put her hand on Cindy’s shoulder. Cindy did not move. She kept her forehead on the side of the incubator and her eyes fixed on her son. This was the closest she could get to him and she did not have the will to pull away. Scott put one hand on each of her shoulders and gently eased her back in the wheelchair. She could not take her eyes off her little bean.

The crew secured and gathered all the equipment and wheeled her son out of the room. Scott pushed her wheelchair into the hallway as the crew wheeled the incubator down the hall. The farther they went, the harder she cried. Then the crew and her little bean disappeared through a door. The bang of the door closing echoed through the hallway.

“Scott, let’s get her back to bed.” He had been so intent watching the incubator carrying his son that he had not seen the nurse walk up and her voice startled him.

“Oh, yeah. Yeah, okay.” He rubbed Cindy’s shoulder. “I’m going to get you back to bed now.”

She did not respond and her gaze did not leave the closed door they had taken her son through until Scott had pushed the wheelchair around a corner and the door was no longer in view.

Not long after Scott helped her back into bed, she began crying again.

“Honey, please don’t cry. He’s going to be okay. He’s in good hands.” He did not know exactly what to say or how to hide the overwhelming panic that was seeping into every fiber of his being.

“I can’t stand the thought of him there alone. Someone needs to be with him. Please go be with him. Please.” She was sobbing.

“I don’t want to leave you by yourself.”

“I’m fine. They’re not going to release me until tomorrow. But you’re not stuck here like I am. Please go be with him.” she begged.

“Okay, I’ll call your cell every hour and give you an update.” He gathered his jacket and headed for the door. As he opened the door he turned to her.

“I love you Cindy Ann.”

“I love you too. Now go.”

He called her an hour later. Scott told her that Jeremy was stable and that was about all he knew at that point, which was not exactly the truth. Jeremy

was stable, but the doctor had told him that Jeremy's chances for survival were slim. He felt there was no reason for Cindy to be reminded of that information, at least not yet. He called her every hour and gave her happy updates.

The next afternoon when she was released, Scott was there to pick her up. Before they had made it into the hallway from her hospital room, she was already asking to be taken to see her little bean.

"That's exactly where we're headed. I knew you wouldn't want to go home," he reassured her as they got onto the elevator.

It seemed to take forever to drive to Children's Hospital and even longer to scrub and dress for admittance into the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Once inside, Scott escorted her past several rooms along a long hallway. Each room held six incubators. The last room along the hallway was where her baby boy was.

When she entered the room, she knew exactly which incubator he was in. She looked down through the plastic top of the incubator at her little bean. She put her hand on the top just above his chest as she smiled down at him.

"How's my little man?" She said softly. When she spoke, Jeremy stirred. She and Scott looked at each other.

"He hasn't done that while I was here." Scott said. "Talk to him again."



“Hey Jeremy, can you say hi to Mommy?” He stirred again. When she looked up, Scott was gone. He returned a moment later with a nurse.

“Watch this and tell us what it means. Go ahead Honey, talk to him.”

“Jeremy, can you hear me, Sweetie?” Again, the baby stirred. The nurse smiled.

“That’s a good thing. He knows your voice. He can hear you. Talk to him. Talk to your son. It’s good for him to hear you; to know you’re here.” The nurse patted Cindy’s arm and left the room.

Scott moved a chair next to the incubator for Cindy to sit in. She sat in that chair and talked to her baby non-stop. She told him stories about her childhood, about every pet she had ever had, about vacations, about anything and everything she could think of.

When the Neonatal doctor made his rounds, he introduced himself to Cindy and asked that she and Scott step into the hallway so they could talk. He explained to her everything that the hospital staff had done, what still needed to be done, what everyone was watching for, and that he would need to stay in the Unit for 3 to 4 months. He explained that Jeremy’s chances for survival were very slim. She was overwhelmed and scared. She could not allow the thought that her little boy could die to linger in her mind.

“Thank you for talking with us and explaining things. Is it all right if I go back to my son now?”

“Yes, of course.” He responded.

She slipped between Scott and the doctor and was back at her son's side.

"Do you think she understands that he may not survive?" The doctor asked Scott.

"I think she understands it, but I don't think she will choose to believe it." He was terrified that his son would die and worried what would happen to Cindy if that happened.

Scott returned to work and spent his evenings at the hospital with Jeremy and Cindy. For the next 6 weeks, she left the hospital only to attend her own doctor's appointments. The rest of her time was spent at her son's side. There was a chair by each incubator that folded out into a type of cot. She never slept long, just an hour here and an hour there. Jeremy responded to the sound of her voice and his stats remained good while she was talking. If she was quiet for more than about an hour, his stats would begin to drop.

The end of her maternity leave had not crossed her mind. When her doctor released her to return to work, she called her supervisor and explained that she needed to be with her son to talk to him. Her supervisor was sweet and understanding, but the protocol was clear. Return to work or you lose your job. She could not lose her job that would mean she would lose their health insurance. She did not want to leave him, but she had no choice. The following Monday, she returned to work. After work that first day, she went straight to the hospital to be with him.

When she arrived, she found extra monitors had been hooked up to him. The nurse explained that all day his stats had dropped to dangerous levels. When she began talking to him, his stats went back up.

“I wish there was a way you could stay like you used to. He needs the sound of your voice.” The nurse said.

Cindy felt panicked. What was she going to do? His health was in jeopardy because she had to work. Their health coverage was in jeopardy if she did not.

Scott arrived about a half hour later. She explained to him what had happened to Jeremy’s stats that day.

“What are we going to do?” She began to cry.

“I don’t know. We’ll figure something out.”

Cindy’s cell phone rang and interrupted their conversation.

“Hi. Just wanted to call and check on you guys and that beautiful baby boy.” Aunt Helen said.

Cindy explained the events of the day.

“I don’t know what to do.” Cindy told her.

“Cindy, don’t be upset. I have an idea. Let me call you back.”

About an hour later, the nurse came in and told Cindy she had a visitor.

“Who would come here to visit me?” She asked Scott.

“Well, you won’t know until you go find out.” He smiled.

She followed the nurse to the door that led out of the Unit. When she walked through the door she saw her aunt standing there.

“I picked these up hoping they would solve your problem.” She said as she handed Cindy a microcassette recorder, a case of tapes, and replacement batteries.

“Record yourself talking to him and while you are at work the nurses can play your voice to him. It’ll be like you are with him, even when you are not. I hope this works. It was the only thing I could think of.”

Cindy hugged her aunt tighter than she ever had.

“You are the smartest woman I know.” Cindy was nearly giddy.

“Go on. Go make some tapes for your son. I love you and I’ll call you tomorrow to see how he is.” The two hugged again and Helen headed for the elevator.

Cindy returned to her son’s side, set up the recorder, and began to tape herself while she read him a children’s book. Scott leaned against a wall and watched as the woman he loved taped herself reading to the baby boy he loved with all his heart. He was so proud of both of them. She was giving every moment she could to their son and Jeremy was fighting for his life.

She stayed up all night reading books, singing songs, and talking to him, taping every sound.

The next day before she left the hospital to go to work, she explained to the nurse to keep the tapes playing all day. The nurse promised she would.

That evening when she arrived back at her son's side from work, the nurse reported that his stats stayed good until the tape stopped. But as soon as the nurse put a new tape in the player and pressed play, his stats would rapidly get better.

"This is an excellent idea. I think we should invest in some of these to have around the Unit for all the babies," she said.

Over the next few months Jeremy gained weight and got stronger. He was not out of danger yet, but with every passing day his chances for survival increased.

He was finally moved out of the closed incubator and into an open one. Cindy was finally able to touch his skin, to hold him, to kiss his little forehead. She would spend little bits of time rocking him in a rocking chair until the nurses made her return him to the incubator. Holding him in her arms was the most magical feeling she had ever felt.

When Jeremy's actual due date was about a week away, the doctor told them that if he was strong enough, he could go home on that day. In preparation for Jeremy's homecoming, Cindy's mom and some of her friends had carefully completed the task of turning the second bedroom of Scott and Cindy's home into a nursery. It was perfect.

On Jeremy's due date, Scott and Cindy anxiously awaited the doctor's determination after examining him. He asked them to step into the hallway to talk.

"I'm sorry. He can't go home yet. He just isn't strong enough. I want to move him to another area of the Unit where it's quieter. I want to observe how he does in conditions similar to a home environment. Many times, premature babies don't do well in quiet conditions. If he does well in the new area and gets a little stronger, he may be able to go home in about a week." the doctor explained.

"That's fine. I don't want to jeopardize his health in any way. I'd love to be able to take him home, but if he isn't ready, he isn't ready." Cindy was determined that her little boy was going to survive.

It was not long after he was moved to the new area that he began to show signs of deterioration. The quiet environment was too much for him. He was moved back to his original room. The doctor informed them that with this latest development, it would be at least another month before he could go home.

Three weeks and four days later, they were told their little boy was strong enough to go home. Finally, she would be able to rock him for as long as she wanted. She could hold him in her arms all night long. She could watch him sleep in his crib instead of in a plastic box.

She rode in the back seat with him on the ride home from the hospital. Upon arriving home, they were greeted by friends and family. There were

balloons and casseroles. Many baby presents were stacked neatly in the corner of his nursery. Everyone was caring and kind, and fussed over little Jeremy.

After everyone had gone except for Cindy's mom, the two women stood side by side watching him sleep soundly in his crib.

"He's beautiful Honey." Cindy's mom said.

"How long does he have to be on the monitor thing?" She asked.

"Until the doctor says otherwise. It alerts us when his heart stops. It stops from time to time. They taught me how to perform CPR on him. The doctor says it's common with premature babies."

"Doesn't that scare you?"

"No, I know he's going to be fine and the monitor lets me know when there's a problem. I feel so much better now that he's safe at home." Her mom hugged her and kissed her cheek.

Later that evening, Jeremy's monitor sounded. Cindy rushed to him and used two fingers to press on his chest, just like the doctor had shown her. Soon the monitor signaled that all was well. She decided to sleep on the floor in the nursery so she could be close to him. About 3:00 AM his monitor sounded again. She again used two fingers on his chest, but this time the monitor did not signal that his heart was beating again.

"Scott! Help me!" she yelled from the nursery. Scott rushed in.

"What's wrong?" He was half asleep.

“I’m doing CPR but his heart isn’t beating on its own.”

“Let’s get him in the car and go to the Children’s emergency room. We will be able to get there faster than an ambulance can get here.” He helped her get the monitor while she carried the baby in her arms and continued the CPR compressions. His lips were beginning to turn blue. Tears filled her eyes, but she never gave up the rhythm on his chest. She sat in the back seat of the car with Jeremy in her arms continuing the compressions while Scott drove to the emergency room.

When they arrived, Scott ran inside for help. He returned to the car with several staff who took Jeremy from her and rushed him into an exam room. Code Blue was called on the overhead. Scott and Cindy were told they could not go into the exam room and a nurse ushered them down the hallway.

“They need room to work. There’s a small waiting room right here. Let me show you.” The nurse was compassionate and kind.

“Can I get either of you anything? Water? Coffee?”

“No, thank you.” Scott answered.

“Please tell the doctors where we are and that we want to know what’s going on.” Cindy’s voice was shaky as she spoke.

“Not to worry, I’ll make certain the doctor comes to see you as soon as he can.” She left the room quickly.



## SO, WHATCHA THINK?

Cindy held her hands together just under her chin and silently rocked back and forth in her chair. Tears streamed down her face. Scott could not sit. He stood and paced back and forth. They could hear people rushing up and down the hallway, but no one had come in to talk to them.

“How long before they tell us something?” Cindy demanded.

“I don’t know. I wish someone would come in here and say something; anything.” Scott replied.

They had been in the small waiting room for nearly an hour when the doctor and a nurse came in. The doctor walked over and sat next to Cindy. Scott sat down in the chair on the other side of her. The nurse lingered near where Scott was sitting.

“Well? What is going on with my baby?” Cindy asked.

In a calm, soft tone the doctor said, “I’m sorry. We did all we could. I’m truly sorry.”

Scott slid from the chair to his knees, burying his face in his hands. “No. Oh please no, this can’t be happening.” The nurse kneeled on the floor next to him and tried her best to console him.

Cindy broke her silence with a scream that could be heard through all of the Emergency Department.

*The loss of a child is devastating. Would you survive the pain and heartache?*

*So, Whatcha Think?*

Lynda Naranjo lost her son, Johnny Giovanni, in March of 2009. She survives by pouring her emotion into her work creating memorials for other mothers who have lost their children. Her website; Angel Baby Memorials, is designed for families enduring the tragic loss of a child. If you have lost a child, let her help you memorialize your Angel Baby.

Angel Baby Memorials

**Visit the website at**

<http://angelbabymemorials.blogspot.com/>

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Brooke Ryter

Brooke has always been a story teller. Bedtime stories for her children rarely came from a book. She would begin a story and have the children help create the rest. So, instead of reading a bedtime story, a story was custom made every night. Even simple emails to her friends and family usually have a story in it somewhere.

She has always been a person who sees the bright side and looks for the good in all situations, even the bad ones. "It could be worse" is a common statement. She went to great lengths to teach her children to see the magic everyday life offers. Now she tears when she hears her children teaching their children how to recognize and enjoy that magic. Sharing her magical view of life with others has always been a part of her life.

She began her first book more than a decade ago with her Aunt. Many hours were spent by the two laughing until they cried during the creation of the novel outline and much of the content. When her Aunt was diagnosed with cancer and became very ill, the project was shelved. In the years since,

her Aunt has battled cancer four additional times and every time has survived. Brooke has attempted to bring the project off the shelf a couple of times, but Auntie is too busy living life and enjoying the magic of every day. Brooke has learned through her Aunt's journey that nothing is impossible, the odds are what you make of them, and living life to the fullest and laughter are the best medicine. That book will be completed one day, just not today.

She is currently working on *So, Whatcha Think?*, an interactive novel with her sister, Paige. She is also working on the *My Friend, My Hero* children's book series and the novel *Where the Ocean Meets the Sky*.

She currently works full time as a technical document editor. She organizes art events, paints, and writes as much as she can. She gets up early every day to get in some writing before she heads off to work. She carries a spiral notebook with her so wait times for appointments do not go to waste. All of her stories begin in that spiral notebook. The story outline, or skeleton, as she calls it, is completed longhand before she sits down in front of the computer.

## SO, WHATCHA THINK?



Paige D. Ryter

As a child, Paige would pretend all the time. Her imagination was something to be reckoned with. She was filled with stories. For example, as a child one of her chores was to do laundry. She felt it was terribly boring work, so to make it interesting she turned that chore into a completely different world. The clothes in the washing machine were alive and the dirt on them was killing them. She would stand on a step stool so she could see into the washer, and she would talk to the clothes. She was their doctor and was about to save their lives. Many stories were born through her imagination...the wonderfully active imagination of a little girl.

As an adult, her imagination is still as active as it was when she was little. Her children grew up listening to her stories and playing along in a wonderful world filled with magical things only an imagination like hers could create.

She truly hopes you enjoy the stories she and Brooke have created for you.