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I love you

Anna Grant

5 years of residency.

June, 2008: Goodbye Manitoba. Goodbye 1 bedroom apartment, cozy den. Driving to Kingston, ON, 7 months expecting, in The Vincent Massey Class of '99 grad gift: Pontiac Sunfire. Towing a Uhaul with everything we own! Mmmm, sipping coffee. First home! Zero money down! (That's great because we don't have any!!) Awesome mortgage: prime - 1.1%, 5 yr variable. Summertime, hot, still pregnant, no air conditioner. 2008 Nissan Rogue.

July 2008: I'm an "Independent Practice" Family Physician! Locums are busy, but this is awesome. I'm doing it myself! You're a brand new anesthesia resident — and you're on call for internal medicine your first day of residency! You're gonna be great!

September, 2008: *A beautiful baby boy.*

How do I not know ANYTHING about breast-feeding? I'm a family doctor - I should know how to do this! You're on call 1 in 4, and I'm sorry you can't come home. You're doing great; you're the best resident and the best Dad and the best husband. He'll stop crying. He'll go to sleep.

January 1, 2009: New family medicine practice. This is BUSIER than being a locum.

I'm overwhelmed. Maybe moving to a new province with no friends or family, having our first baby, starting anesthesia residency, and a family medicine practice wasn't a good idea. Who's idea was this anyway? There are not enough minutes in 24 hours to do all this. This was not well thought out.

Hired a Nanny = Godsend.

November, 2008: Hello Manitoba. *Goodbye Papa.*

Back to work for both of us. More new patients. More new rotations. Busy baby boy. Long days. Long nights. Early mornings. We're doing ok. We're doing this together. It's snowy in Kingston! Christmas! Santa came! How did he get in without me seeing?? Mmmm Christmas coffee.

Zoom, zoom: He is 1 year old! Big birthday party in Manitoba. Busy, long days. So much to teach, to learn, to discover, to touch, to laugh at. So much to SAY! So many places to pee! So much to spill, to smear, to take apart.

September, 2009: *A baby lost, unaware.*

June, 2010: Nanaimo, BC. Harbour City. The ocean, family time, walking in the rainforest. Throwing rocks in the ocean. Small condo. Don't make a sound!! Stay crouched down - he's almost asleep! Whispering: "How was your day? I love you". Coffee. Wishing for the *lost baby*.

Back to Kingston. More patients. More call. Early mornings. Anything that starts with 4 is not supposed to be a wake-up time for the day! Quiet evenings after he's asleep.

Summer 2010: Soon to be parents again! How to raise TWO children? Stop getting out of bed. How many times can he get out of bed? Samuel L. Jackson: Go the **** to sleep: Yes. Yes, that sums it up. Busy times. Tired. Coffee. Coffee is fine when you're pregnant - in fact, it's probably good for you! More of the same. Long days. EARLY mornings. It's-still-nighttime, early mornings. I have a few night stay in hospital & a trip to the ICU, but I'm fine. The baby's fine. Buy a Hyundai Santa Fe.

Goodbye Granny.

March, 2011: *Another beautiful baby boy.*

Best big brother in the whole world! Grinning, proud, big brother! We thought one boy was busy. Two boys are busy. Dad and big brother are best

pals. “Mom has to take care of your baby brother”. He understands. Dad’s going to Ottawa for 2 months. Daddy’s ALWAYS come back. Long days. Good boys. Tired mom. Proud, happy Mom. Lonely sometimes. Mmm coffee.

October, 2011: Back to work. So nice to see all the patients! We’re all doing very well, thank you. Yes, they’re busy, but they’re so good. Coffee. 2 boys on the move simultaneously. This is a challenge! Eyes grow out of the back of my head, and surveillance capabilities improve. Patients. Playdates. Parks. Splashpads. Learn to skate, to swim, to jump, to run. Laughing, chasing, crying, Long days. Long nights. Early mornings. Coffee. “Exam is coming ... I’m sleeping in the basement ... for A YEAR. Let’s just write this exam once”. Single-parenting. Toyota Sienna. It’s a van. A van for my 30th birthday. I couldn’t feel older. Thousands of hours of single-parenting while Dad’s studying for his oral & written exams. Lots of Coffee.

Wednesday, December 12, 2012:
Tongue cancer. Moderately-well differentiated invasive squamous cell carcinoma.

How can that be? That spot on your tongue’s been there forever! It was biopsy-proven lichen planus over a year ago! “It’s true ... It changed into cancer ... Yes, I talked to the pathologist. He’s sure.” Devastation. Prognosis: 50% overall mortality.

Time has stopped. Unbelievable. He never smoked a cigarette in his life, and barely drank. Ok a little at Steep Rock back in Manitoba. Now what? Keep studying? Change life plans? Travel? He says so loud, so sad: “I don’t fucking want to die!” I’m completely numb and broken. I can’t be a widow at 30 with a 4 year old and a 1 year old to raise. He is almost done residency. What if he never finishes?

Don’t tell the kids. I don’t want the kids at school to find out and tell him. Let’s tell your parents. It’ll have to be on FaceTime. They’re too far away. Your mom walks away. Your dad drinks his wine. So calm.

One thing at a time.

CT scan negative. Big sigh of relief. That really improves survival odds.

December 26, 2012: Partial glossectomy on Boxing day. I would do anything for those doctors. They are super-humans who saved my husband’s life. Frozen section margins negative. Final pathology: clear margins. It’s only stage I. Five year survival is like 70%, and the ENT surgeon says it was really superficial — so maybe much better???

Tomorrow is better.

Scare - neck lymph nodes big? No, no they’re fine, just reactive. We love Dr. F: “You’re not special. I’ve seen lots of people like you. This isn’t going to

shorten you're life. If a node pops up, we'll deal with it. It's not game-over if you get a big node." So much relief. Happy tears.

Keep studying. Such a supportive study-group of residents. You can still speak just fine. You sound great. You're going to be fine by the time you have your orals. Eating is getting easier everyday. Another day. Coffee is STILL good. My family is the 3 best boys in the whole world.

Written exam, felt good.

Oral exam, done.

We're buying that house.
"The house we totally can't afford if I don't pass my exam? I haven't got my marks back!"
Yes, that one.

Accepted offer on new house.

June 20, 2013: FRCPC!!!! Jumping into the air from a seated position and a great big WHOO!!!

Relief.

I love you all sooo much. Together again. Bunk bed sleepover. Family days. Pancake breakfasts. Van rides. NO more Bubble Guppies. Smiles. Hugs. Big strong hugs. Hiding, and finding. Chasing. Roaring. Sunshine. Cozy rain days. Coffee is good.

Five years of life.

I promise, the best is yet to come.

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