



*Lamp Above Me*

Chronicles of my pregnancy  
and delivery of twin hobbits

*Cris Evert L. Ruffolo*

## Prologue

I watched her wake up from a deep slumber.

From her curled up position cocooned in between white blankets and cream-colored pillows, she noiselessly yawned, stretched her long slender arms, and slowly opened her dark, brown eyes.

I stared at her.

Her gaze met my mine.

She smiled. I nodded...with an embarrassed expression on my face. I was not sure how to respond. Standing across the very bed where she fell asleep after nights of rereading *To Kill A Mockingbird*, I clasped my hands close to my chest. I hear the loud thumping of my heart reminding me of the reason why I was there.

I know. I had to introduce myself.

This was very important. I was told the first meeting will be awkward but it will also happen fast. Lightning fast, they said.

"You just have to do it," I heard myself saying.

My lips quivered. My hands shook. Yes, I was nervous. Very nervous.

Silence enveloped the room as I walked close to her; trembling both with excitement and fear. She opened her mouth and I reckoned she was just as excited as I am to say: "Hello, how do you do?" but I feared I won't be able to speak when words start to come out of her mouth first. So I said "hello" first.

"I'm sorry for intruding in your private space," I heard myself say. My voice still trembling.

She smiled and shook her head.

My throat was dry like some unknown force suctioned what was supposed to be my well-functioning salivary glands. I tried to compose myself. I cleared my throat and with all the strength I can gather, I reached out my right hand towards her and said, "Hi. I'm Cris."

One, two, five seconds passed...she did not take my hand. Just when I was about to drop my arms and run to the door, she accepted my hand. She smiled. Again. That intriguing smile that left a dent on the center of her left face. A dimple.

Upon closer look, I saw how we look a lot like each other: black hair, dark brown eyes, mole on right cheek, even that dimple on her left cheek.

I was not yet done examining her facial features when she let out a fit of giggles. Then a deafening laughter ensued echoing through the halls of that huge room that we were in. Her sound reminded me of the days that I was a reporter for a local newspaper, running after deadlines and bearing the unflattering words of an editor, who berated me for failing to run after a huge van filled with corpses from a sunken ship.

Was she mocking me?

I cleared my throat.

It took her a moment to regain her composure. She held one of my hands and led me to a corner. We sat down near a bookshelf, then she said: "I've been waiting for you, Cris. Far too long."

Pause.

"I'm Pregnancy. Your Pregnancy."

## Chapter 1: Reveal

"Twins."

That was the only word my first obstetrician said when Jeff and I told her we think I'm pregnant but we doubted it because two pregnancy kits presented conflicting results.

Across the narrow bed where I was lying in was a monitor - in all its black and white glory - presenting what she said was my uterus.

"Twins. They are about seven weeks old. Congratulations, you are so lucky!" the OB happily said.

I looked intently at the monitor and there they were: two dark shades of irregular shapes inside what seemed to be two small sacs. I stopped myself from blinking then quickly shifted my gaze to my husband who was sitting just behind the doctor. He was ready to collapse. I heard the doctor ordering her assistant to hand him a paper fan.

"Quick! He's losing it," the OB shrieked.

My eyes threatened a torrential downpour. My brain cells were racing in different directions. I looked at Jeff again. Beads of sweat on his forehead. Fan in hand. Labored breathing. The face of a man who just heard the impossible.

He looked at me. I looked away. What was I supposed to say?

"Don't mind him. Let him have his time. Let him collapse," my subconscious whispered. "This is your moment. Embrace it."

On that day, on that conspicuous day of 12/12/12, I met Lady Pregnancy.

I have read and heard about her, both nice and negative remarks from various people in my life who told me that having a human being growing inside you is

unlike any other life experience. I have talked to my Mom and my sister and my colleagues and best girlfriends about Lady Pregnancy.

I have read about Her. I devoured books that had Her as a subject. Everyone said She was difficult and that She was a painful companion. But I was confident, telling myself that if time comes that for Her to join me in my great leap forward as a woman of this world, I will be able to endure Her because I have very high tolerance for pain.

I mostly plan how my life goes. I survive with to-do lists and tasks to accomplish. Welcoming Her in my life was not part of the plan until I reach 35.

I was 26 when news of the twins was dropped like Hiroshima bomb on a boring Wednesday afternoon.

I thought meeting Her will be a breeze. I thought it will be as easy as getting my notebook and pen to conduct an interview with random people then leave for another news coverage. I thought it will be as fun as doing voice overs. I thought it was going to be as effortless as telling stories to kids which I have been doing for ages.

But my first meeting with Lady P was anything but easy.

It was surreal, emotional, out of this world.

It was like being handed a bottle of wonders but when I opened it, I found myself lost in a plethora of marvels and visions. I had no idea how to face Her, let alone live with Her. And yet, even in the middle of confusion, I felt calmness and a certain sense of happiness. Meeting Her was divine. It was one of those moments when I felt that Heaven exists and that God is right there all along because what is happening to me is an amazing testament of what many called a miracle.

## Chapter 2: Stay

From the very beginning, Jeff was clear: he wanted to have a child within the first year of the marriage. My husband is 29 years my senior. At that time, I was 26 to his 54 and he felt that if we wait say five more years before having a baby, he will be too old to play hide and seek with our children.

“I don't want to be 60 and changing diapers,” he said.

A very valid point.

But I was not that keen about having a child immediately. I felt it was too soon. I just wanted to enjoy the joy of being a couple, getting to know each other more after our whirlwind romance that was nurtured by writing love letters.

I wanted to wait for at least five years before having a baby.

Besides, he was based in China while I was based in the Philippines and having a baby will mean the end of our long-distance arrangement, which I found convenient and efficient. I had a flourishing career and he was the Olympic expert in China.

To me, it was not time to have a baby.

Don't get me wrong.

I have always wanted kids. I adore them. In my prayers, I have always asked Heavenly Father to give me twins when the right time comes. I've been a good Catholic girl and prayed my rosary and my novena. I was five years old when I made myself believe that I was really a princess from a faraway kingdom with a twin sister. I believed that somewhere, my twin sister is waiting for me. In my fantasy world, my Queen of a Mother was just waiting for the curse to be broken; then she will pick me up in a gold carriage and will bring me back to our castle where I will be reunited with my twin sister.

And I will live happily ever after.

That's the way the story goes.

I have always wanted twins of my own. But at 26, at that time I felt I was NOT YET ready for them. I felt it was NOT YET the right time.

I envisioned Jeff and I living together for a few years while excelling in our respective careers – me with my journalism and social development projects and him with his passion for sports and public relations. I have daydreamed about working together in the kitchen, exchanging Italian and Filipino recipes in the kitchen, and creating fusion recipes. I was excited about traveling together in different countries to satisfy our happy feet.

But the control freak that was me was humbled by the Ultimate Masterplanner who knew better. Heavenly Father is a comedian.

Pregnancy was not on schedule on the 26th year of my life in terra firma.

Then I realized that my silent prayer of having twins was granted. So I cried harder feeling the love and confidence given to me by Up Above. My tears were overwhelming responses to two gifts that

I secretly and silently asked for. These gifts were freely given to me with no questions asked.

I can only marvel at His greatness.

On revelation day – during which I learned that my body is now home to two innocent creatures – I felt Lady P easing her way inside me. I could feel her power just below my stomach. She was stretching me, testing my patience and my endurance. I was scared. I feared that climbing up the short flight of stairs to my office will hurt the babies. I feared that walking around will affect their emotional and mental states. I feared that monsters and beasts - and all other supernatural creatures – will come and visit me and take away the twins from me, leaving me lifeless and bathe in my own blood.

Jeff, my staunch partner and cheerleader, showered me with hugs and kisses every time fear crept in. I would scream and cry and be totally paranoid about chocolates and cakes, blood pressure, kicks, ultrasound reports and monsters. But he would

calmly whisper in my ears: "You are greatly blessed, Cris. You are under His protection and love."

Lady P was starting to mess up with me – and I felt that She was messing my relationship with my husband.

I started to despise her and the thought of having to endure nine, long months with Her is revolting.

## Chapter 3: *Fad*

Lady P was an unusual companion on the first three months after the twin discovery. Because of her presence, I was a total mess.

I hated mornings because they made me feel lousy and unproductive. Her hovering presence brought out fatigue, nausea, vomiting and irritability. I dreaded my favorite Visayan dish called inun-unan or paksiw na isda (fish cooked in vinegar and garlic). Because She brought with Her two creatures growing inside me, back aches and gas pains were unwelcomed mainstays.

Worse, I was not excited with showers and baths. My body was changing. I was getting bigger and bigger and I did not like it at all. My jeans struggled against me. Dresses, which used to be loose, are now hugging me tightly. Where did my killer curves go? Where did my hourglass figure go?

I was getting used to reminding myself to take five kinds of vitamins recommended by my new doctor. Yes, I changed my OB. She was not anymore the doctor who told Jeff to stay calm.

Why?

Because she failed to answer my text messages and queries. I felt our personalities did not fit.

Yes, go ahead and blame hormones with this decision.

To top it all, I felt so ugly. Acne was showing up on my face and my hair was sticky and oily. I was doing penguin walks and my belly was causing the unflattering imbalance. I was huffing and puffing like a mad wolf ready to tear down the houses of the three little pigs.

Work continued as usual. I could not just say I quit because I felt unattractive. I had a book project that I needed to finish; a book that will document successful corporate-community partnerships in the Philippines. The 1,000 copies had to be released and launched on March 2013, which means that I had to actually give birth to a booklet while I look like the human/woman counterpart of Noah's

Great Ark! I was exhausted from all the weight gain but I have worked so hard for that book and I did not want to drop it.

I knew I had to be strong.

But Lady P was making it hard – and heavy – to live my life.

Every single day, I found myself in a dark forest with no visible trails left for me to find my way back home. But every single day, I reminded myself that there are two grand prizes awaiting me in the finish line. I have always loved prizes because they remind me of the sweet smell of success when I won that Spelling Bee Contest when I was 12 years old after two previous years of failing to make it to the finals. The thought of having two prizes usually awaken my competitive spirit and encourages me to plan out my way out of the forest.

But the lingering question was: how soon can I get out?

## Chapter 4: Surprise

On the third week of February – three weeks before its scheduled launching – the book came out, after almost one year of writing the stories, fact-checking, sending them to editors back and forth, and hurdling the meticulous pre-press process.

KaleidoSCOPE: Stories of Corporate-Community Partnerships", a booklet published by the German Agency for International Cooperation and Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) was launched in an event attended by 200 people on the occasion of PBSP's 25th year anniversary in the Visayas on March 20, 2013.

I was beaming with pride. I was pregnant with pride – literally and figuratively. I just entered the second trimester of my pregnancy, and Jeff was coming down to Cebu so we can both visit the doctor to check the twins' sexes.

"I think we are having two girls," my husband said as we were waiting for my name to be called out by the secretary. He said he was told by his doctor in the U.S. that he has high chances of producing more females than males.

"Ruffolo!" shouted the secretary.

"Oh, that's me," I said.

"That's us," Jeff corrected.

There I was again lying in the all-too familiar maternity bed with clear gel spread all over my belly with the doctor-on-duty holding a device that glided around my bump. She asked the usual questions and made the typical comments.

Is this your first pregnancy?

Do you have twin genes? From which part of the family?

Your children will be so beautiful because they have a foreigner for a father...

It will be great if they have hazel blue eyes like their Dad.

Finally, she said: “So let’s check what Twin A is.”

“And Twin A is...

...

...

“...a boy!”

Jeff was ready to collapse (again!).

“See that thing that protrudes over there,” the OB pointed to the monitor. “That’s his penis. Now let’s see Twin B....”

Twin B is...

...

...

“...a she!”

“You’re having a boy and a girl!” the OB squeaked, sounding more excited than we were.

I was beaming from ear to ear. I was pretty sure that I did something good in the last 26 years of my existence on Planet Earth for me to be given these gifts.

We still can’t believe our luck – others call it Destiny – when we stepped out of the clinic. But I know for certain that we were a happy couple – one Asian, the other Caucasian – completely happy by the fact that we are parents to fraternal twins.

Around this time, Lady P was very kind to me. She made me feel attractive while sporting a body which looked like it swallowed two watermelons. But... I felt great!

I was already adjusted to my belly bump. I was back to my old self. I put on make up, updated my wardrobe, and managed to buy more accessories (pairs of earrings most of the time because they are my favorites) to add more color and glamour to my pregnant fashion statement.

My hair felt softer and my acne problem disappeared. People were complimenting me that I look more beautiful than ever.

Pregnancy glow.

During this time, I still managed to travel abroad – mostly to Guangzhou and Hong Kong. My travels were often accompanied by medical certificates and signed waivers for the airline.

In China, I was greeted with rain and my husband's warm hugs. Jeff and I had time to visit Hong Kong Disneyland with my Filipino friends, the Jabido family, who were also touring Hong Kong incidentally. I was the blooming pregnant woman with prime access to all Disney shows because Jeff insisted I should be on a wheelchair. It turned out, the wheelchair served as our passport to get VIP treatment.

During these times, I rarely saw Lady P. Her mean entourage particularly the ones named Nausea and Vomiting were absent. But because the twins were wiggling and squirming inside me, I knew Lady P was there. I knew she was just there and was not keen about leaving early.

Not yet.

True enough, as the third trimester unfolded...

## Chapter 5: Control

...some of Lady P's mean minions returned with a vengeance.

It was led by Irritability. This was followed by Backaches, who became more and more unbearable as the days passed. By the seventh month, my OB said my lab results showed I developed gestational diabetes and I had to see a diabetes specialist to talk to me about diet. That means: less rice, no more chocolates and cakes, and go slow on your fruit juice consumption.

She referred me to a diabetologist, a young, soft-spoken doctor named Dr. Tan, who told me to monitor my blood sugar level using a glucose meter. She gave me basic tips on what to eat and what not to eat.

When she said “skip the pastries”, I was ready to slit my wrist.

But I reminded myself about the concept of trade off: that in this world, you can't have it all and that to get something really worthwhile, you have to give up some things.

I rushed to my local pharmacy and bought myself a glucose meter. I had to check my blood sugar one hour every after breakfast, lunch and dinner for three consecutive days and text Dr. Tan the results. If my sugar level remains high (should not exceed 125 mg/dL in my meter reading), we would have to result to oral medications. If it's really that high, we say “hello” to insulin shots. I didn't want that to happen.

So I went on a diet.

It took a large dose of discipline and spewing a couple of expletives here and there.

To go on diet was a major struggle for me. Because you see, the non-pregnant me ate like a hippo. With me and the two people inside me, we eat like there's no tomorrow.

As if going on a diet (and stopping myself from eating tiramisu) was not enough, I was informed the following day after a routine ultrasound that there is a 22% growth difference between Baby Boy and Baby Girl, which, my doctor, said is not good. To be sure, she suggested that we do two things: a biophysical profile and doppler velocimetry.

The first one, she said, will monitor the heart rate, muscle tone, movement, breathing and the amount of amniotic fluid around the babies. The other one checks the blood flow between the uterus and the placenta and will enable us to see if the babies are getting a healthy supply of blood.

Don't ask me about how much we spent for all these because there is no insurance in the Philippines that covers pregnancy the moment you announce that you're expecting. Healthcare, sucks!

With my diet, a little bit of exercise, and constant monitoring, we found out that the growth difference went down to 14% after the thorough scans. However, Dr. Galindo said she will have four dosage of corticosteroids injected to me every 7 hours to hasten the maturity of the twins' lungs, just in case the twins come out earlier than my due date which was July 29.

The difference later went down to 4% then 2%, 11% then back to 4% two weeks before I reached full term.

I tried to be the usual upbeat, joyful me every time I visit the laboratory. But even my sunny self was overshadowed by fatigue and boredom. The trips to the white-walled building coupled with injections and the blood sugar monitoring drained the happiness out of me.

It was just horrible.

I felt I was treated like a specimen of a laboratory test, not as a woman or a mother expecting two children.

I saw Lady P across my bed the moment I cried out of frustration and disappointment. Wearing her flowery knee-length dress and her hair up in that classic French twist fashion, Lady P beamed that supportive smile. She came up to me, reached out both of her hands to touch mine. She assured me that things will

be fine and all will be well. Weird, but during those times I actually felt that our love-hate relationship was the most comforting thing in the world to me.

Jeff was in perpetual agony too.

We lived in separate countries and though we never missed a day not talking to each other, it was still difficult. My Mother must have felt like this when my Father was away sailing the high seas while she was left pregnant with her fourth child and three mischievous creatures were screaming at each other wanting to get more hotdogs for breakfast.

During my bad mood days with Lady P, I would often tell Jeff horrible and harsh words.

"You said you know? You said you understand? No! You will never know! You will never understand because you don't know how it feels!"

"Where are you? Don't you know I waited for four hours online so I can talk to you? It's easy for you to leave because you're not pregnant!"

"You will never get it because you're not a woman!"

Jeff, the ever patient Jeff, never fights. He sighs and just ends my litany with, "You are doing a great job. I love you with all my heart."

As I was nearing the end of my pregnancy, I turned to Lady P to let her know how disappointed I am with nature for giving women the sole responsibility of carrying babies. I endlessly wished there is a mechanism that allows man and woman to co-bear/co-carry a baby (or babies in our case) while they are being cooked inside the mother's womb.

Lady P responded with a faint, dainty smile.

My brothers – Hendrix and Kevin – and my cousin, Bonbon were my constant companions when I was going through this entire ride. They were my sounding boards and I was glad they were there to keep me company in most of my doctor's visits.

## Chapter 6: Scream

On June 29, I had my usual ultrasound and visit to my OB.

I was beyond tired. It's been three days and sleep has evaded me. I grew to 189 lbs at 36 weeks from a pre-pregnancy weight of 150 lbs. My OB said everything is alright so my brothers and I headed straight home.

I went to the restroom to pee. But what I saw made me scream.

Blood. There was blood. Lots of blood.

I screamed.

I called for Hendrix.

I called for Kevin.

Hendrix held my hand and told me to breathe. I saw Kevin running outside my apartment's garage to hail a cab.

Within five minutes, I was already in a speeding vehicle to the hospital. Oh, how it hurt. My belly was a ball of painful sensation. I called Jeff and told him I might be giving birth earlier than the expected date of July 29. My husband panicked and in retrospect, I can only thank the Heavens for brothers like Hendrix and Kevin, who was there to be my support system. Hendrix booked Jeff's ticket from Hong Kong to Cebu and all I need was to relax and wait for my labor to progress.

I told the nurses to contact my OB and tell her that I am in the hospital. There was magic when they heard that I am having twins because suddenly I was surrounded by nurses and resident doctors asking me the usual line of questions I have answered before.

Then one of the doctors performed an internal examination on me – the one thing I hate the most about being pregnant – and that sent me to hell. I screamed!

One of them even scolded me because I was too noisy. I told her she should be thankful that I am in pain or I would have smack her in the face.

“You don't tell me it's okay because it's not!” I reprimanded her.

That shut her up.

But other than that incident, I was very accommodating and developed a friendship with the nurse who, upon learning that I was a reporter/writer told me that she writes poems and was part of the school newspaper in high school. She abandoned her dreams to become a reporter because her parents said it's not a practical choice. Nevertheless, she continued to write short stories about the people she meets in her line of work.

Inside the labor room, I waited. Minutes. Hours. I waited and waited and waited.

I asked if I can keep my phone but the nurse said I can't because it's hospital policy to take any electronic gadget away from the patient. But she told me I can hold on to it for an hour or two provided that I sign a waiver. I agreed – handwritten, self-composed statement featuring my cuneiform signature.

I was able to communicate with my brothers that Jeff was taking the midnight flight from Hong Kong to Cebu and that everything is alright.

“Nothing to worry. Relax.” My brother Hendrix's text message.

In there, I met another woman, who was only five months pregnant. It's her fifth child supposedly. She had four miscarriages, and now on her fifth, she is already bleeding. I silently prayed for her with the intercession of St. Gerard Magella to protect her and her unborn child.

At 6:00 a.m. on June 30, I woke up to a voice – a nurse – telling me that my husband has arrived. I was instantly awake. I told the nurse that there's no need for a wheelchair because I can walk but they insisted so I had to meet Jeff in that situation.

My husband was the image of a man who just came from a war in Afghanistan. He was not that man in white polo I met on the first day I saw him at the Hong Kong International Airport. He was not in suit, his signature look on Sundays when he goes to church. He looked stressed out with his disheveled hair and beads of perspiration on his forehead.

But I didn't care.

I was just glad he was there.

He told me to just sleep, and he would take care of everything.

Before noon time, my doctor told me that my husband decided that since my contractions had stopped and if I don't feel any pain, I should be out of the hospital to properly rest at home. It was June 30.

"It's perfectly safe. Just relax and don't get stressed," she said.

She reminded me that we need to have an ultrasound the following day to check on the twins.

Jeff said we will be there.

Before noon time of the 30th of June, Jeff and I walked out of the hospital.

He surprised me when he said we should go to a hotel so I can have another babymoon at the Marriott Hotel.

He was right.

As soon as my body hit the bed, I dozed off. Jeff said I looked like a kid who played baseball the entire afternoon.

## Chapter 7: (Almost) Done

On the first of July 2013, after a routine biophysical profile scan, the ultrasound OB said Nicholas' amniotic fluid is below normal and his umbilical cord is wrapped around his neck. With Jeff, I immediately took the results to Dr. Galindo who said we need to have an emergency C-section because of the boy's condition.

I was nervous. But I was back in the same room where I was two days ago so when I saw everyone, I just said: "Hi, I'm back."

Everyone laughed and then treated me like a VIP.

My husband was not allowed inside the operating room but we prayed together before I was wheeled inside the room. After which he said: "I'll see you and the twins a few hours from now."

That night, on a Monday evening that fell on the first of July, I was surrounded by doctors and nurses of different kinds. I was chatty and upbeat as I saw several familiar faces inside the operating room - most of them were my schoolmates from the University of the Philippines (UP).

Then my anesthesiologist, Dr. Ilano said he is also from UP.

My close friend Dr. Lady Juit, another UP product and a resident pediatrician of the hospital, dropped by and got me giggling reminiscing our crazy college days as classmates in a Physical Education class dancing to the tune of a novelty song performed by a sexy dance group called Sex Bomb. Then my OB announced that operation will commence. That meant "Stop talking Cris! We are slicing you any minute from now."

For a moment there I thought she felt out of place because she is not from UP. But she smiled at me when she told everyone: "We are starting. Let's pray."

That was the most comforting line I have ever heard that night.

Before they cut me open, Dr. Ilano rolled me to my side to administer regional anesthesia. I heard him giving questions to the resident doctor and I managed to tell him, “Go easy, Doc.”

He laughed.

Then I was on my back again. I looked up and saw the huge, yellow light hanging on top of me. It was very bright. I was already groggy but I can hear them talking and I was all ears, waiting to catch someone saying anything offensive because I was taking notes in my head and I will surely give them a lecture on sensitivity after the operation.

Then I felt it.

It was like someone traced a finger on my belly. Dazed but awake, I stared at the image reflected by the operating room light and I saw what was happening. I saw them cutting me up, red liquid coming out of my body, fingers with gloves, shiny silver pieces equipment being handed from one hand to the other. I didn't feel any shrivel of fear.

A few minutes later, I saw a tiny little alien being pulled out of my belly. It was 7:16 in the evening. I waited for the alien to cry – and it did.

Someone said “Baby Boy” and I knew it was Nicholas Louis.

He was named after Saint Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra (or Santa Claus) and Jeff's father, Louis. I watched as they brought him to the left side of the room, had their pediatrician Dr. Najarro check him, wrapped him up and I waited for what seemed like eternity for the nurse to bring him to me for our first kiss.

I kissed him twice.

Oh, that feeling... Like chocolate chip cookie and hot milk on a rainy day.

I wanted to cry but I did not have the energy. So I called Dr. Ilano and said, “Doc, one out, one more to go.”

He said: "A lot of time to joke around huh? Some energy you got there."

Then I waited for my girl to come out.

The clock was an impatient object hanging idly on the wall when I glanced at it.

Every tick was annoying. I was staring at the lamp above me trying to check if my baby girl is being pulled out to see the new world. Had it not been for the medicines, I would have aggressively coaxed the doctors and her assistants to fast track the job. I looked up and saw the doctor's hands slowly maneuvering its way to pull out what appeared to me was a mound of flesh covered in goo.

It was her butt.

She was in breech position.

1, 001

1, 002

1, 003

1, 004

1, 005

1, 006

I counted six seconds before I heard her cry.

Then I heard the same voice said:"Baby girl."

The beautiful cry of my Antoinette Elena, named after her two grandmothers.

Doing the same routine, another nurse brought her to me and I kissed her – twice – and it was then I felt that I am the most successful woman in the world.

## Epilogue

Having these two babies is a major achievement for an overachiever like me.

I wish there is an award-giving body that hands a plaque or trophy to every woman after delivering a baby or in my case, babies. I had my fair share of awards but nothing compared to delivering not just one but two individuals of my own flesh and blood.

I heard Dr. Galindo say: “Thank you everyone. A successful operation.”

That was the time I remembered to breathe. That was the time that I felt that Lady P was easing her way out of me. I was fighting my eyes from closing its lids when I searched the room for Her.

Where was Lady P?

There she was right next to the door, beaming at me, her signature smile which radiated in her flowery, knee-length dress accented by her classic French twist hairdo.

She smiled that smile.

I remember that smile from the first time we met.

She waved her hand.

Goodbye.

Just when the door closed to signal Lady P's departure, another woman came with a big grin on her face.

I felt funny.

She feels familiar.

It was Lady P's sister.

Her name is Miss M.

It was time to say “hello” to Motherhood.



## *Nicholas Louis and Antoinette Elena*

### *The Twin Hobbits*

Born in 2013, fraternal twins Nicholas Louis and Antoinette Elena were born via C-section in Cebu City, Philippines. They spent the first two years of their young lives travelling around the Philippines, China, and the United States of America. They are currently based in the US with their parents, Jeff and Cris. They are now the older sibling to their newborn sibling, Jeffrey Peter Jr.

You can follow Nicholas and Antoinette's adventures as well as of the entire Ruffolo family at the Reading Ruffolos ([www.readingruffolos.com](http://www.readingruffolos.com)).



Photo by Eva Marie Gamboa

## *About the Author*

Born and raised in the Philippines, Cris Evert Lato Ruffolo started her professional career as a business and economics reporter for Cebu Daily News – Inquirer Publications Inc. She eventually left full-time reporting work to study Chinese language and culture in China. She later joined the Philippine Daily Inquirer as a news and feature correspondent. Her passion for community service inspired her to take a job as a social development worker for corporate-community partnerships under a joint project of the Philippine Business for Social Progress and the German Agency for International Cooperation. She married Jeff Ruffolo and gave birth to Nicholas and Antoinette in 2013. She is now pursuing graduate studies in Language and Literacy Education while actively running the family blog, Reading Ruffolos ([www.readingruffolos.com](http://www.readingruffolos.com)). She is due to give birth to another bundle of joy, Jeffrey Peter Jr., on September 2015. Cris loves to travel and has lived in the Philippines and China. She is currently based in the USA with her family.