

To my family...

Moe, Sofia, & Nicky - If you're reading this, it means that God has decided to take me home. Please share this letter as you see fit or keep it for yourselves. Whatever works to make the grieving easier. I don't have any wishes as to where I should be buried and I would be thrilled if you decided to cremate me and save the money to enjoy an experience together. Either way, you decide. I will be happy with whatever that is.

I've written one letter for all of you but I will write a special message section to each of you as well. I know this is the saddest thing you've ever experienced and I'm writing this because there's a couple of things I want you to know. First, please know that I'm okay. I'm happy and in heaven. I know today, it's really hard for you. It may feel like your heart will never get better, but one day, you'll wake up and it will feel a little less heavy. That's a good thing! Don't feel guilty for laughing. Don't feel guilty finding joy again. It's my greatest wish that you would be able to still find joy in life. When I was on earth I worked every day to make sure I carried out the mission God gave me. My life had meaning and purpose. I was definitely not perfect, but I tried to be the best wife, mom, daughter, and friend I could be. I sought work that was meaningful, friendships that were deep and loved like Jesus taught me. This is what I want for you!! Don't let life pass you by without enjoying the ones you love and the work you do. I worked hard and I played hard. I had the BEST life because I had the privilege of being your wife and mom.

I don't know why God decided to take me before you. We might never know. That may be really upsetting for you. It might make you feel confused or angry at God, but please don't be. Or at least - try not to be. I'm in the most glorious place right now. It's better than Poke Palace, or our hotel in Puerto Rico, or watching the sunset in Hawaii. Guess what - you can be here with me when God decides it your time too! This is why I ask you to not be angry with God. All you have to do to be with me here is believe that Jesus loves you and that he died for your sins, so that you can have access to this place and be reunited with me one day. Any mistakes you have ever or will ever make, he forgives them. You just have to believe it. I spent my mornings hanging out with Jesus. Remember all the times you saw me on the little green couch with my coffee and my blanket? That's when I would take my time with him. You can talk to him the same way you talk to me. The same way you tell me about your day, and what frustrates you and what you're afraid of... Those are all the things I would talk to him about. Some days I would talk to him in my heart, others, I would write in my journal. Often times, he would answer. If you ever want to know what I talked to him about, you can read my journals. Every time I prayed for you is in there. Every time I was afraid, or happy or confused I wrote it there. I've always prayed that you find your own relationship with Jesus like I did. Maybe this hard time is a way for you to experience that. A way for you to feel closer to me when I'm not physically there.

Now you can each jump to the special section I've written for you.

Babe, you're an amazing husband and father. I know I've told you while I was there but in this letter, the last thing I will ever be able to tell you, I want you to know how much I mean that. Being your wife has brought purpose to my life. You're a leader, you're discerning and organized, kind hearted, fair, respectful and trustworthy. You believed in me and inspired me to be better. Your strengths helped me where I was weak. You helped this once emotionally unhealthy and broken young woman grow into the woman God intended. You pushed me,

challenged me, supported me and celebrated me. You are my best friend and I love you even in eternity. I know we were supposed to grow old together. I'm so sorry I couldn't do that. I hope one day you can forgive me for breaking that promise. I can't promise you God will let you know why, but I can promise that if you talk to him, you'll find comfort. Even before you believed in Him he talked to you and told you to get your family back. Imagine that... we would have missed out on our life if He didn't! God is still there for you. He loves you! I know it's hard to believe but why else would he have told you to get your family back? He wants the best for you. There is no mistake you make, no anger you can hold, no failure you perceive that can change that. As a favor to me, *please*, just talk to him. Ask him to help you on the days it gets hard. He always helped me and I know he will help you. Lastly, there may come a day when you may meet someone else. It's okay to pursue it! It's okay to be happy. I won't be upset or jealous or angry at you. I *want* you to be happy. I trust your judgement. I know you will choose someone who loves you and loves our children. It may sound crazy to think about it now, but I wanted you to hear it from when while I still have the chance to say it. As for the kids, it seems silly for me to write this because I think you were always the better parent, but here is the secret to my mom super power.

Sometimes, the kids just need to be seen by us.

For Nicholas, that means, sometimes he needs someone just to hug him to help him regulate his emotions. But regulating his emotions doesn't mean completely stuffing them down. He doesn't talk as much as Sofia so you have to check his emotions for clues. His stomachaches are also a clue that something is going on. I know you think he needs to toughen up, but his emotions are *his* superpower, please let him express that freely. I didn't have to tell you this before because it was part of how we balanced each other, but especially now, they will need this from you. I am gifting you the best part of who I am as their mom so you can be equipped to take care of them now that I'm gone.

For Sofia, she just wants you to listen, a LOT. but listen without judgement. Don't offer her solutions. Don't worry she'll ask you when she needs them, but she's pretty amazing. She will often talk herself right into her own solutions as she shares with you. The trick is that if she senses you're bored, or busy or only half engaged, she'll stop sharing, but allowing her to verbally process at the end of the day is what helps her to regulate herself. She needs that.

To my amazing children Sofia and Nicholas...I know it hurts you that I won't be there to help you through the other milestones in life. This was always my greatest fear when it came to death. Not that I would miss my life, but that I would miss yours. For this, I am so sorry. I know you may be mad at me for leaving you. Please know that it was never my wish. I find comfort now in knowing that God has blessed you with so much family. Such a huge support system to draw from that you may not have otherwise reached out to. I know it will never feel the same as having your mom there, but know that I am always there in your heart.

Sofia, my beautiful little girl, watching you grow has been one of my greatest joys. You are smart, beautiful, kind, driven, motivated, thoughtful and strong. You are a loyal friend, considerate gift giver, captivating public speaker, and delightfully eager student. You listen to what people need. You pay attention to those needs and you find ways to meet them in unexpected ways. These are just some of the things that make you special. Don't ever let any person or event take that away. God has given you these gifts to share with the world. Don't hide them, but rather use them to bring joy to yourself and others. When you do that you will be walking in your purpose, and you will experience the joy life that I was able to experience while I was here.

To my sweet, kind and caring Nicholas, your personality is a joy for the world. We love to see you laugh, smile, dance and create. You are thoughtful. You know just how to cheer people up, whether its dancing randomly with them in the kitchen or coming in for a quiet hug, your empathy for others is what makes people want to be around you. You are smart. Watching you think through the mechanics of a problem is fascinating. It's a joy to watch you listen to a set of instructions and create something of your own in minutes. This is a gift God has given you. Use it well. You don't ever have to try and be anyone but your true self. People want to be around you because of the way you love them, not because of what you have accomplished. You get this from me. I always thought I had to be the best at everything for people to like me. When I realized that I could just be myself, and love people the way Jesus loves me is when I found deep joy in my life. This is my greatest wish for you.

Lastly, to my moms, dads, brothers, sisters, and friends.... I can't write letters to each of you because otherwise I would never be finished, but I will say this that applies to you all. If you're one of those people who knew me enough to mourn me when I'm gone, then we've shared multiple deep conversations. That was always my intention. Creating lasting relationships with people is what brought me joy in life. We sat and listened to each other, advised each other, laughed together, and cried together. When those times come and you wish I were there to help you make a decision or think through a problem this is what has always served me. I pray that God opens the door if this is for me and close it if it is not. This prayer has never failed me! When thinking through a difficult relational problem, I ask God to help me see the other person the way He sees them. This prayer has helped to give me the empathy I needed to love others when it was hard but also love myself enough to set boundaries.

I write this letter to help you in your grief. You'll go through many different stages. You'll try to hold it together for those around you and cry at other times. Everyone has their own way of dealing with it. This letter was intended to help you make meaning and find purpose in my death. I wanted to leave you with the pieces of me God intended for me to share. I love you all and know that one day, we will all be rejoicing together again in heaven.