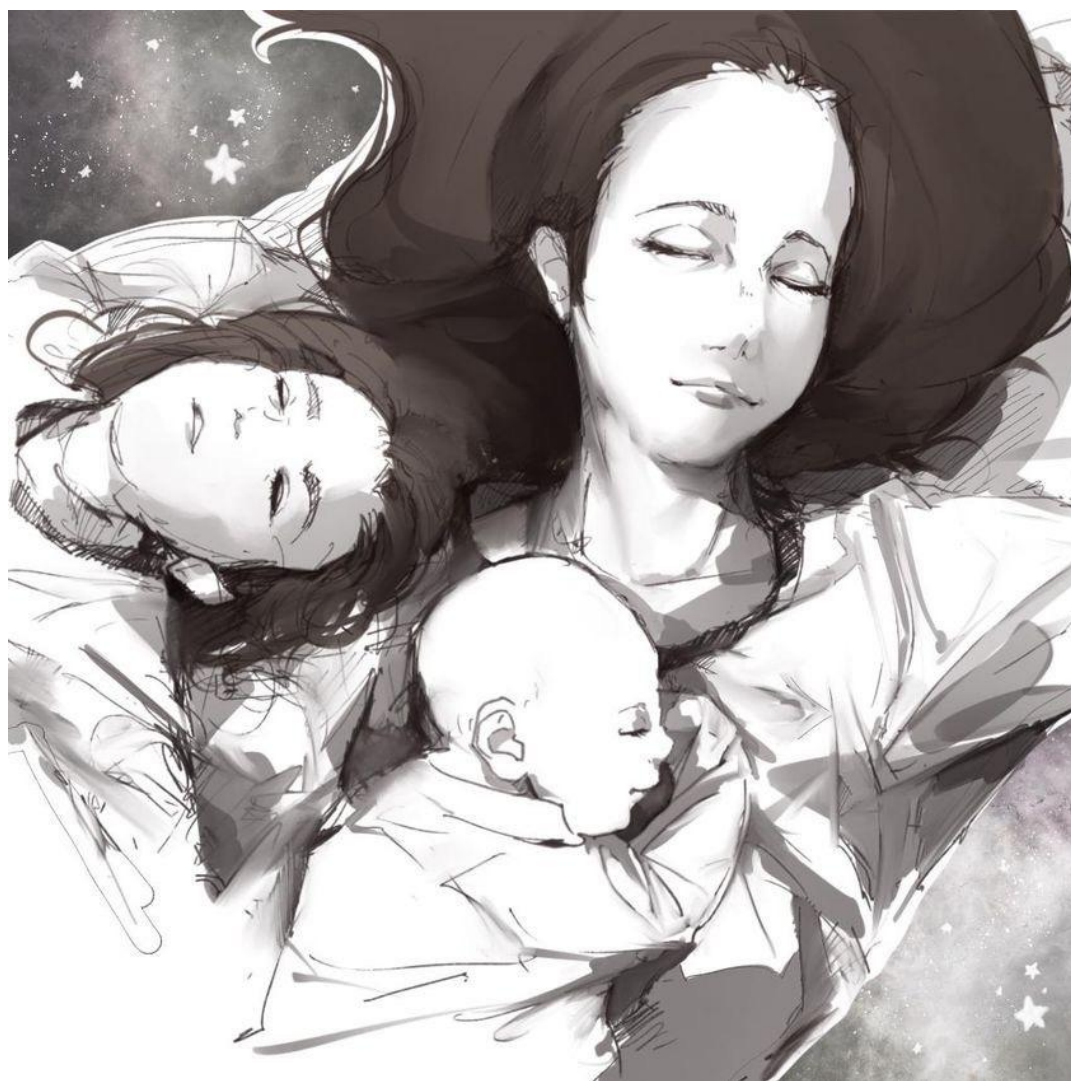


You must be so tired.



Poems, posts and solidarity
for mums of young ones.

Words by Karissa Jade.

Cover Art by Yuki Tsugawa @yuki_t_illustrator

*All profits from the sale of this book go to funding my new enterprise to help new mums:
a *sleep hotel - revolutionising rest alone, together.*

*If you would like to participate in the initial market research that kick-started this labour
of love - my MumMatters: Maternal Sleep Survey - please click the link or scan the QR
code below:*

<https://forms.gle/t2KSCs7XfDh8zq1u6>



**a dedicated room/ space booked hourly for one guest to nap/ rest.*

The mum trap (w)rap

I feel trapped inside a palace.
Wrapped in love that's laced with malice.

The tiredness, the wiredness, it's fuckin madness.

This exhaustion is bone marrow deep now,
like it's buried so far inside me all I can do is lay here and weep now.
My eye sockets feel like they've been hacked at with a handsaw,
my mouth spitting fire at its very life source,
unable to even stop to draw breath even after seeing they're burning and bleeding raw.

I want to get away; to get out...
But I have nowhere to go; no one can come with me.
No one can be me for my baby.
Nowhere and no way, so here I stay.
Sad and lonely, surrounded by my family. How can that be?
Angry and hurt, head swimming in irrational impossibility.

What if I go to work? You stay home?
Is that what you need? Is that what I want?
Could it even work?
Would we have enough money?
Would they be ok in the day without Mummy?

Maybe they're not ok with me.
I'm not ok with me.

Shadow work

They say that youth is wasted on the young.
Well, I say that new motherhood is wasted on new mums.

Shadows seems to darken every light.
Days feel unbearable due to the bottomless blackness of the night.

It feels like you're dying right before the eyes of new life...
A husband feels the loss of his wife.
A daughter thinks she's lost her connection with her mum.
A woman knows she's the only one.

The lonely one.

The one up by herself while everyone else sleeps.
Most of the pain in her head she keeps.

Their sweetness; their innocence; their gorgeous little faces.

So often ignored or taken for granted.
Because the work is so relentless!

Reaching hands are stopped.
Performances go without applaud.

...

Then, at night, when they're finally quiet,
Mummy feels mean that she stayed silent.
That she didn't stop to cuddle more.
That she forgot her big girl is only four.
But they just want more, more, more!
And I just need to fall in a heap on this floor.

I can't help but wish I was the man asleep with the snore.

Or that I simply was... no... more.

“It doesn’t work for me.”

(This poem was inspired by a struggling new mum of a four week old attempting to ‘sleep train’ her baby to help herself sleep more.)

The demand feeds, the frequent wakes, the not-long-enough-sleeps, the crying, the screaming, the constant needing.
It hurts, it’s hard, it’s exhausting, it’s world-shattering.

Their bodies, brains and spirits you dreamed of, grew and birthed,
and now all of them need to be nourished.

There is no time it stops, no time to clock off.
It doesn’t feel like it works for you because it’s not meant to...

It works for them; you work for them.
Yes, you matter too but it’s on you that their survival and future potential depends.
And as your baby grows and thrives and a clever, curious, capable, caring,
compassionate child develops before your eyes,
It is actually working for you both, you begin to realise.

Maybe motherhood is meant to break us apart
to put us back together, better, like a true work of art.

This reflection is not meant to induce guilt, blame or shame
But to remind us of the long game -
That a child’s emotions become an adult’s heart.

Bedtimes: his & mine

7pm:

Baby bedtime, early tonight?
Walks himself to bed, so cute!
First time for everything, right?
Breastfeed & lullaby, my favourite time.
Tickle & giggle, roll & wrestle.
Lay down, zip up.
Love you, goodnight.
Daddy's book, last goodnight is his.
Walks out, cue crying.
Eventually, finally, sleeping.

...

9pm:

Crying again, asking for water - "Dawta, dawta!"
Drinks, rolls back over?
Easiest settle ever.
First time for everything.

10:25pm:

Crying, Daddy's turn up.
Quiets down.

10:30pm:

My bedtime, late every night.
Brush teeth, kiss husband goodnight.
Listen to him get all his work things right.
Suggest a phone reminder to do it earlier?
First time for everything?

10:50pm:

He goes down but turns snore volume up.
Toss, turn, should I get back up to put earplugs in?

11pm:

Now the fucking cat!
Jumping up the door, meowing down the hall.
Bloody thing!

11:20pm:
Big girl, bad dream.
Talk, toilet.
Too cold, layer up.
Lay back down!

Every being in this house stops me from sleeping.
Including my own mind thinking.
(Inhale) 10 deep breaths, (exhale) calm down.
Visualise body switching off from the toes up...
"Switch off head, it's time for bed".
Maybe they'll both sleep in?
First time for everything.
...

At some point Daddy gets up to keep Baby down.

4am: the wish-switch:
As the night grows longer
and my chance of sufficient sleep shorter,
my wish changes to wanting it to be over.
For my body & that damn sun to again rise
making breakfast & coffee the desired prize.
For poetry to turn to prose.
For my brain chemistry to turn angst back into energy.
For my natural circadian rhythm
to trick me into pushing the tiredness down and hidden.
...

(Sigh) 5:something am:
Everybody up.

It feels so bad

It feels so bad.
So insurmountably bad.
Each hour, each minute, of sleep not had.

Like a zombie with a confusing responsibility.
On top of 'Don't Die', keeping them alive is key
in this reality-show-meets-documentary-meets horror movie.

It's a low budget film, this one.
Who am I kidding? It's no budget.
You're spent. You're done.

"The day will end", Mum tells me.
Except that it won't.
As the moon rises high in the sky
So does my anxiety.
Light fades into dark.
Dark into light.
Day into night.
"This too shall pass", They say.
And I painfully nod away...
Somehow we've all survived another day.

But that's not what keeps me up.
It's the fact that I don't know when all these bad feelings will stop.
Chronic, acute sleep deprivation feels so bad.
So insurmountably bad.

Mourning this

I remember swapping stories of early parenting, my hairdresser and I,
Me sitting in the chair, struggling to focus my stare,
Her reminiscing on the sleeplessness, how she'd tell herself,
"I'm only tired, I'm not gonna die",
"I'm just tired, I'm alright".

But I... I don't feel there is anything 'only' or 'just' about it.

I often wonder how sleep deprivation was used as torture but was it ever used to murder?

I am like the walking dead after yet another night of musical beds.
Hugs and earplugs, retucks and wipes, kisses and feeds,
simultaneously tugging at my heart strings while making my eyes sting.
To the bottom, once again, go my own needs.

I feel like the sacrificial lamb.
Only this poor creature, clearly in pain, doesn't even get the honour.
Laying there fantasising about butting heads - if only I could be the ram.

It's so unfair that nature has designed this perfect pair:
My boobs and my baby,
A dyad of perfection.
And yet this mother's body still needs the same as it's maiden's -
- I give you an F for Fail, evolution!
Or is it because breastfeeding skipped my generation?
Will it feel easier for my daughter, if she has children?

I
am
here
this
morning,
at half mast cognition,
struggling to speak or listen,
mourning
this
here
am
I.

Under the thick cloak of darkness

10:25pm

I just want the day to end.

So my poor, sore body
and muddy, muddled mind can mend.

But you want your dream feed
Your this, that and the other need
met by me, or Daddy, but mostly me.

And me? I just want to be deep enough in a dream to not feel awake.
You are a dream but not the dream I need right now as I wince and ache.

“Blink and you’ll miss it”,

“Enjoy every minute”,

“One day you will miss this”.

You are right, you empty nesters,

But we will not miss the night.

Yes, you are wise owls but you are cleverer forgetters.

Your years have blurred the senses
and coloured rose your glasses.

For the boulders on our shoulders we carry - it is real, heavy weight.

But your fond memories of the good days warp the blanketless nights so late.

You see and feel light now and so look back at these times filled with nostalgia and love.

Looking down at us saying,

“The days are long but the years are short”, from above.

And, sure, sweet that sounds but you don’t remember that before it was weightless and
full of waiting for us to call,

it was wakeful, the constant calling out is weight full.

Midnight - still awake - yep you heard that right.

Fatigue is a long and thick cloak to wear, made heavier when laid on top
is the extra layer that it’s not.

(The mental illness of early motherhood.

Babies are bad for your health, man.)

On the contrary

Do I always feel like shit? No, quite the opposite.

Many things do depress me but other things stimulate me.

For almost every tale I tell of feeling and falling down,
I can spin another story about filling and firing up.

Like this voice gift I sent to some friends who had given me a lift:

“Ngangkiparingga: Kaurna for Women’s River

The river; she’s full, so I am full.

Her banks are swollen, so my heart is swollen.

The women are full, in my circle, so I am full.

The community is full, so I am full.

When The Women’s River overflows, we all fill up our cup.”

Now don’t get me wrong,

I’m not all about hashtag Yeah The Girls #YTG

I’m also all for hashtag Yeah The Boys #YTB

Boys do do it for me:

my husband’s sensual touch,

my baby’s joyous laughter,

my brothers’ bassy voices.

I love loud, male, yang energy - forward it propels me!

But quiet, female, yin energy is important - it says stop; just be.

Yin and yang. Moon and sun.

Light and shadow, always.

All skies exist in all of us, from ink black to light blue

And all are ok to talk about, your truth is all of you.

I have this vision... so I am making it my mission:

To bring the usual reprieve of midnight sleeps

into the hours that daylight keeps.

Light and shadow, always.

For without shining a torch on a dark path,

how is one supposed to get past?

Light and shadow. Always.

My nightly shower affirmations:

Three deep breaths to begin:

One looking up, one looking straight ahead and one looking down.

During the next three deep breaths, mentally recite the following words:

(Breathing in on the first half of the sentence, then breathing out on the second half.)

1. In comes the night, out goes the day.
2. In comes the rest, out goes the play.
3. At night the sleep comes in and the work goes away.

Resume normal breathing.

(This will be true one day) - February

(It was true on my birthday!) - June

(This is mostly true these days) - August with hubby on nightshift

(Not true these days) - October.

My sleep-time wind down

This meditation/ visualisation was inspired by the ancient Indian art and practice that is yoga and my ultimate yogi, Annie. As well as my favourite meditation app, Headspace, especially anything by Founder, Andy Puddicombe's, voice. I am not a good student at either discipline. But I do them regularly. Usually.

In bed, when you're completely comfortable, right before drifting off:

First, lying down in shavasana (Sanskrit for 'corpse pose') -

Flat on your back, legs slightly apart with feet falling outwards, arms out by your sides, palms down for grounding:

10 deep, belly breaths - in through the nose, out through the mouth.

Second, bring your legs together, crossing one foot over the other and placing your hands over your heart, either one on top of the other, or one hand on your heart and one on your belly.

Focus on the sensations in each area as you do this body scan slowly:

Switch off toes,

Switch off feet,

Switch off ankles,

Switch off calves,

Switch off shins,

Switch off knees,

Switch off thighs,

Switch off hips,

Switch off bum,

Switch off belly,

Switch off back,

Switch off chest,

Switch off shoulder blades,

Switch off shoulders,

Switch off elbows,

Switch off hands,

Switch off fingers,

Switch off neck,

Switch off ears,

Switch off eyes,

Switch off mouth,

Switch off face, switch off head, it's time for bed.

(If my mind still races, I gently remind myself that there is time for work and time for rest so it can wait until the morning.)

Not Postpartum & other losses

All these ideas and stories that I've got.
But only enough emotional bandwidth to load what I'm not.

The mother diving down trying to stay under the covers
but finding herself in a deep, dark sea?

Or the baby still curled up trying to stay warm unaware she's already been born and has
lost her blanket of safety?

I think I know who I am but I don't.

Broken

The broken step.

The broken chair.

The broken cot.

Her tantrum, my rage, accident or not.

The promise that next time, I will stay calmer.

That I will remember to “enquire before anger”.

I’m sick of breaking shit.

I’m sick of all of it.

Lullaby

You know who really needs a lullaby?

Me! My husband! What about a mummaby or a daddaby?

We, too, deserve to feel safe and loved with a beautiful melody to drift off to sleep by!

COVID19 Social Isolation Day 34

A morning in iso:

A sleepy, weepy start to a rainy, cold day

Banana bread and babycino

Mummy milk and coffee

Jamface jam and toast

Video calls to Nana

Dancing to YouTube

Barbie on Netflix

Instagram inspo

Messaging friends

Tickles and 'cuggles'

Wishing it all away

While also hoping here to stay.

Instagram Posts: poems & prose from my first 5 years of motherhood

* All names & places removed to protect my family's privacy.

** Unfortunately the very important emojis (I use heaps!) in each post could not transfer due to formatting requirements but a thousand words...well, tell a thousand words ;)

(Images of professional kindergarten photographs)

Kindy Girl

My big, little, kind, helpful, clever, beautiful, kindy girl.

Parenting this child often drives me wild.

Then she surprises me with how caring & sweet she can be.

Like today after I said I needed a rest she cocooned me, literally!

Or yesterday when she decided to put her chairs up to keep her brother safe (cos now he's a monkey).

She's a mirror to all the work I haven't done but also a reflection of all that my heart has won.

(Image of Daddy holding one child in each arm)

Hands full, heads fuller, hearts fullest.

(Images of homegrown sunflowers & homemade soup on my doorstep & Uber-eats delivered Maccas coffee in my kitchen)

This is a shout out to the sunshine & sunflowers in my life & a reminder to all who need to hear: it's ok not to be ok, it's ok to reach out & it's ok to ask for & accept help. This week has sucked. It's been grey & pouring. This morning was stormy & I cracked. Taking care of sick kids on very little sleep, on top of the usual spectacularly strong will of a 4 year old & an extremely active 1 year old, is too much to handle alone. We're not meant to do this alone. So I messaged & called my friends (you know who you are), my mum & my husband. Because of their beautiful hearts & my honesty, I have received the most thoughtful care; from time spent listening & responding to homegrown, home cooked & even long distance ordered. I couldn't do this without out you all. I wouldn't want to. #village #ruok #heardseenuvalidated #kindnessmakestheworldgoround

(Images of first hold of newborn son in birthpool in black & white then full colour)

*This is the extended version from my iPhone Notes. An abridged version was posted on Insta.

We made it.
You, in all your smallness,
Me, in all my rawness.
All those moments of just us.
We made it to one.
The first 12 months are done!

I can't say I'm not glad
But I'd be lying if I said I'm not sad.
Why is this happy celebration tinged with sorrow?
Is it because I won't have a baby tomorrow?
Or because today brings a new dawn;
A realisation that all those times I wished away are actually gone
That all the firsts are now in the past
That while we record all the milestones, we forget when each time was the last
You've already started walking so when will be the last time we see you crawling?

Your daddy and I agree you are so much fun
But we also think our family is now done.
We can't decide if we will ever again have this roller coast ride.
Will this first birthday mean I've had my last birth day?
Will we never meet another pair of precious tiny feet or breathe in that newborn smell so sweet?
Is that why, celebrating you, our boy, our pride and joy, makes me want to cry?

Happy birthday our sweet & cuddly, wild & crazy K... Koala!
Thank you for filling our home and hearts with so much laughter.

Overflowing with gratitude that you joined (and possibly completed) our family
Last year, as the sun rose on the 10th of February.

(Image of me 9 months pregnant in black bralette & black shorts next to me holding 9 month old son just in blue nappy)

9 months in, 9 months out
<name concealed to protect precious you>,
I wished upon a star for you
And 18 months ago, that wish came true
Our baby boy, our little son
A playmate for your sister, you 2 have so much fun
Another piece of my soul has been lost to the night
But you sure a blessing and delight so right.

This is what we know about you at 9 months old:

You are a speedy one!
Fast to come in, fast to come out, already super fast crawling about.
Any day now I'm sure you'll run!

You are strong, even doing chin ups in yoga today!
Always wanting to stand, never happy to lay

You look just like me when I was a bubba
But lately we're seeing more and more of Papa

The smiley-scrunchy nose face is your latest thing
Getting everybody copying and laughing

Down in The Meadow is your favourite song
Bopping excitedly along

You really are my little koala
As another insatiable feeder and my first baby bedsharer

Though intense and ferocious you can sometimes be
I am eternally grateful to be to your mummy.

#stillcantbelievewemadehim

(Images and video of baby boy's toes first touching the sea)

Saltwater baby

Welcome to the ocean, son

The best kind of first.

#spring #haiku

(Image of kids at 6 months old & 3 years, 9 months respectively smiling & cuddling in my bed)

Isn't it weird how the hardest times in life are also somehow the best
#brotherandsisterfun #friendsforever

(Image of baby in black starry Bonds zippy lying on white starry muslin wrap next to "Today I'm four months old" cardboard sign)

Four months; four moons,
Boy you give me all the swoons!
Sometimes it's a literal shit show
Sometimes the stars align though.
The barely-slept seatbelt-battles are, for me, the hardest bit
But the gurgly-giggly, squeaky-squawky chitter-chatter is by far my favourite
#lightandshadow

(Image of daughter catching a bubble in B&W & video of son's first giggles with Daddy in colour)

Plan-schmlan #thesecondyougetsmug is my mum motto lately - missed the class but had a couple of hours to myself & a bit of exercise at least. Now I'm refreshed & excited to go back home, cuddle my chubby-cheeked children & make brunch for my beautiful best friend #lightandshadow

(Image of Mum & one of my aunties - her sister - in & around my house with my kids & I)

Two Nanas for a week, what a special treat!!

Thank you to my Mumma & Aunty for delighting in my daughter, celebrating my son and helping this new-again-mum #missyoualready #makingmemories

(Image of birth announcement of our baby boy, 3 days old asleep in his eucalypt koala jersey wrap next to knitted koala rattle with both Daddy's hands placed around him)

..& then Daddy whispered to what to tell Mum & she said...

"It's a boy!"

An early Valentine's Day present for us! ♥ Introducing...<name concealed> Born Wednesday, 10/02/21, 4:51am, 3.6kg (7.9lb), 53cm. Midwives: J & J, Doulas: N/ B, Location: Birth pool in our dining room. We're over the moon as we fall in love with our darling son and adjust to life as a family of four ♥

#bestvalentinesever

#yesahomebirthWASplanned (this time) lol @snugglehunnykids

(Images of our girl at her birthday party, at home & at a friend's house)

Our Daughter is 3!

Your last birthday riding solo before you're a sibling

Watching you growing and learning is nothing short of amazing

(Now if I can just transform your tantrum throwing into my character building)

#171217 #christmasbaby #brotherorsisterduevalentinesday

(Images of 20 week ultrasound sonographs & big sister-to-be <not looking very happy> with her gift to him that she chose; a knitted koala rattle)

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are...
A little Miss or little Mister...
Either way, this one's going to be Big Sister!
Halfway today, Baby is due in February

(Image of daughter on father's shoulders walking along the beach the day after our wedding got cancelled due to the first pandemic lockdown in South Australia)

Practising gratitude. 'Cos what we've got is a lot!

(Image of dark blue evening sky at sunset, colouring the clouds pink when I was beginning to dream of consciously conceiving another member of our family)

Pink sky, crescent moon

The new year will be here soon.

(Image of almost 3 year old daughter relaxing on her floor couch with our cat, post-meltdown)

The calm between the storms

(Image of quote found on internet: "I am the moon and the moon is me" with illustration of two hands appearing to hold 7 moons in different phases up in the air, like a juggling act, above two flowering branches - Anonymous)

Love this

(Images of artefacts from my second teaching placement: My first printed *You Are Enough* children's book collaboration with the 5 year old students, hand-made giant thank you card by the whole class & many school staff, thank you notes & drawings and university notebook)

2nd placement completed. 2nd portfolio submitted. Reward massage enjoyed. Feels fantastic!!! I couldn't have done it without some very special people though, especially Daddy, Nana & Nannie. There have been many times I thought that I could not (and should not) continue with my academic and professional goals since becoming a mum but thanks to my awesome support network I have not had to give it all up.
#teamworkmakesthedreamwork #ittakesavillage #nearlyhalfway

(Images of me & my 2 year old daughter pulling faces & kissing)

My girl <insert loads of opposing emojis, e.g. devil & angel, laughing & crying, happy & angry>

(Video of me walking down our local esplanade at sunset, overlooking the ocean and the hills)

There are worse places to 'have to' wait 40 minutes for take-out. I 'got to' walk the espy
#beachlife #replacethatwithgetto

(Images of me 9 months pregnant in black bralette & black skirt next to me holding 9 month old daughter just in purple nappy)

9 months in, 9 months out

We weren't ready when we found out we'd been chosen, but you were.

We weren't aware we were about to welcome a daughter, but you were.

We weren't sure how you were going to join us earthside, but you were.

We aren't perfect but you, our baby girl, most certainly are.

This is what we know about you at 9 months old:

You are a master of surprise

You have tripled in size

You like being read books

You give very judgy looks

You love watching the cats

You roll and spin off all the mats

You crawl only in the reverse

You think lying down is the worst

You charm with a tilt of your head

You prefer naps in the pram over your bed

You have a mullet and a mohawk

You babble dad, bub and nan when you talk

You dance, clap and sit

You laugh and our hearts sing, "That's it!!" #stillcantbelievewemadeher

(Images of my bubble bath with tap running, wooden bath caddy holding bowl of maltesers & my favourite mug of chamomile tea)

After my longest and hardest week yet, it's finally time to relax and unwind (even too tired for yoga) #bath #lavender #chamomiletea #maltesers #mindlessmedia #mind(too)full #mumma #masters #masterofnone

(Images of walking with pram covered in knitted blanket along local espy & jetty)

Springtime walks by the sea; my favourite place to be (and baby's favourite way to nap)
#springisfinallyhere #goodriddancewinter

(Image of baby in pink bunny t-shirt, white pants & socks & white lace headband lying on cream blanket next to "Happy three months to me" cardboard sign)

Three months today!

The fourth trimester's over; the Nutella's all gone and the birth affirmations put away.

No longer a newborn, just look at your chubby cheeks

I cannot believe what we've achieved together in 13 weeks!

Never have I been sleepier or happier

The noises when you sleep, the crinkle in your nose when you smile, just one look at you and everything is more worthwhile.

I'm so lucky to be your mummy, you sweet little bunny #ourlittlegirl #threemonthsold #wheresallthemarshmallows? #onechubbybunnytwochubbybunny...

(Image of 6 week old baby in grey starry Bonds zippy sat up sleeping next to new pillow that says "I LOVE YOU TO THE MOON AND BACK")

I didn't even know about the special moon tonight and I had bought this pillow (cos we say this to the kiddies) then sent this photo to my family today! #cancer #ruledbythemoon #supermoon #bluemoon #lunareclipse #loveandlight

(Image of 4-square layout with: full moon, "Today I release what no longer serves me",
"A certain darkness is needed to see the stars" & black starry night sky)

(Image of selfie of me smiling tiredly with 4 week old baby snug inside beige soft wrap carrier, asleep on my front)

My new accessories: bags under my eyes and baby on my chest @hugabub.carriers
#whatevenissleep #newborndaze #ytg

(Image of close up of 3 week old baby's face asleep on my arm post breastfeed)

"I can't believe we made her!" @<handleconcealed> I used to say this about our furbaby, <name concealed>, cos she is our first baby girl but we really did create this gorgeous little human purely from our love - so incredible and still unbelievable!! These sweet moments of peace are worth the hard nights of exhaustion...just #babylove #amidreaming?

(Image of birth announcement of our baby girl 3 hours old awake in her white giraffe muslin wrap next to grey bunny comforter toy with both Daddy's hands placed around her)

Our early Christmas wish was granted! Introducing...<name concealed> Born Sunday 17/12/17, 7:37pm, 3.3kg (7.3lb), 48cm. Midwife: Daddy. Location: Our bathtub. We're all doing well as we fall madly in love with our darling girl and adjust to life on little sleep #bestchristmasever #noahomebirthwasNOTplanned lol

(Image of 3-square layout with: my partner on one knee proposing at our favourite holiday beach, the full view of the special bay where it happened & him holding a ring that says "WILL YOU MARRY ME?" in both hands next to my pregnant belly)

Yes! A thousand times, yes. In this world and the next. @<handle concealed>
I love you! #kangarooisland #proposal #12October2017 #timetofindmeadiamond!

(Image of me 6 months pregnant in white top hanging white baby singlets on our clothesline in our backyard)

Getting excited to meet you little one! #boyorgirl? #baby #duechristmasday #11weekstogo (hoping Santa visits early this year!) @<handle concealed>

*
*
*

Thank you, dear reader, for listening to my thoughts & feelings & for buying my book! <3 <3 <3

**Rest well,
Karissa zz**