

## Porter's Death

**\*\*\* Please be advised that this story contains extremely emotionally charged and descriptive information that may be disturbing for some readers.\*\*\***

We often think we are lucky to have had the last week with Porter that we did. Porter had been waking up at night previously and Mike and I felt that perhaps we needed to spend a bit more "home" time with Porter. Mike rearranged his schedule so he would be off at work by 4pm and I rearranged my schedule so I would take Porter to the daycare later each morning. So Porter and I would sleep in a bit later and watch Sesame Street and Clifford the Big Red Dog while eating breakfast each morning and have some time to play before heading off to daycare. Mike picked Porter up at 4pm and the two of them went to the park, a bike ride or clean the garage. In hind-sight we feel so lucky that we made this opportunity happen. On March 20th, Mike picked Porter up from daycare at around 4pm, and the teacher said Porter had a bit of a fever (around 99) but not bad enough to call us. She said Porter did not take a very long nap. Mike recalls bringing Porter home and the two sat on the couch. Porter laid on Mike's chest and rubbed his back for a while until Mike feel asleep. When Mike awoke about 6pm, Porter was feeling a bit warm, so he took Porter upstairs to change his diaper and take his temperature. The temperature was around 102.4, so Mike gave Porter some Motrin and started dinner. Porter was a bit fussy, but his mood changed when the Motrin kicked in. When I got home from work about 7:10pm Porter was happily eating spaghetti in his highchair. He wanted to be held, like always, when I get home. Mike and I cleaned the sauce off of his hands and face and I picked him up. He gave me a nice hug and rested his head on my shoulder. WE walked into the kitchen at which point Porter immediately wanted some goldfish. I put him down and he grabbed his favorite bowl and I put some in there. We went out and sat in the living room. Porter was happily playing with his cars, eating goldfish, and laughing and making car sounds like usual. It appeared that nothing was wrong. The night continued wonderfully. I shared some of my diet 7up with Porter, and refilled his bowl of goldfish. We decided to let Porter stay up an hour later since he had taken a late nap. Another wonderful decision in hindsight. He was so happy and playful and both Mike and I were so patient and encouraging towards Porter.

Around 8:40pm we decided it was probably bath time and headed up the stairs. Mike and Porter walked up together, Mike holding Porter's hand on the way. He laughed and giggled all the way up the stairs. We got the bath going and put him in there with all of his toys. Mike and I both sat in the bathroom talking to one another and playing with Porter and his toys. He would occasionally squeal with excitement, or be silly by throwing his toys out of the tub. About 20 minutes later we got Porter out of the tub and he immediately started streaking down the hall screaming with excitement as he ran. We went into his bedroom and got him dressed on his changing station. Mike and Porter have a bit of a routine where Mike puts lotion on Porter's arms and back. Porter would always be one step ahead of Mike by unscrewing the lid on the lotion and say "arms" and point to his arms. He would then say "back" and point to his back. As Mike was screwing the lid back on the lotion, Porter took the lid off of the Vaseline

and said "nose." Mike put some on Porter's nose and then put his shirt on. While Mike and I Porter's bumper back on his toddler bed, Porter played with the toys in his room. I sat down on the chair and watched Porter grab the tiger and say with a huge smile on his face "ROAR." He pointed the tiger at Mike and then me as if to scare us with the tiger's ferociousness. We both smiled at him and asked him to pick out a book. He grabbed the book about animals and a small Christmas book. I put him on my lap and he snuggled close as Mike told Porter while closing the door to his bedroom "I love you, goodnight." Porter and I read the first animal story that involved counting the baby animals. I counted on his fingers how many animals there were in the picture and he laughed and looked at his fingers with amazement. We continued doing that throughout the story. When we read the small Christmas book, Porter quickly flipped through the pages as if not interested in the long story. I then grabbed Porter's favorite book Silly Sally. He sat there calm and content as we finished the story, a sign that he was interested and pleased with the book choice. After we were done I said, as I always do "night night time for baby Porterbean." I asked him for a hug and a kiss and then picked him up and laid him down in his bed. I pulled the covers up and asked for another kiss on the cheek. He shyly giggled and then gave me a big wet kiss on the cheek. I said to him "I love you sweetie, goodnight." I turned off his lamp, turned on his nightly nursery time CD that my mom wrote and closed the door.

In an effort to calm my anxiety and overprotective nature, I went on the internet and looked up when to take your child to the doctor. The information I found seconded Mike's recollection of what the doctor told us last time we took Porter in for a fever. They all said 104 or higher, or a low-grade fever for longer than 24 hours. I told Mike he was correct in his assumption about the temperature and that we might want to take Porter in to the doctor tomorrow to get his ears checked out. He agreed and I felt content. I recall thinking I would set my alarm for 12:30pm, about the time the Motrin would wear off, to give him more. I decided that Porter would most likely wake us up with his cries, and I should just wait until then as that always happened. Later that night, around 10:30 or so, I checked on Porter. He was lying with his head on the pillow, arms tucked under the comforter facing up. I kissed him on the forehead, which felt fine. He stirred a bit, moving his head back and forth, and I quickly got out of his line of sight as to not awake him completely. When Mike came to bed around 11:10pm, we heard Porter in his room "peeping" or babbling a bit. We both commented on how cute it was. We went to sleep.

The next morning, I had to get up early since I started work about 8:15am that day. Mike came in to tell my goodbye and I asked him if he could check on Porter. We both looked at the clock which said 6:40am, the time Mike leaves for work. He said he had to go and I said it wasn't a problem and I could check on Porter. I was running a bit late that morning, so I finished getting dressed, made coffee, Eggo waffles for me and Eggo French toast for Porter. I put everything in my car and then went to grab Porter's shoes and coat. I headed upstairs around 7:05 hoping to get Porter ready to go and we would just head out to my car, a morning routine that takes about ten minutes. I went in his room and said "good morning, time to get up." The pillow was covering his body which is not completely abnormal. Porter tends to snuggle under there if he

gets cold at night. I remember thinking it looked odd, but put his shoes and coat on the changing station and went over to lift up the pillow. He was laying face down diagonal across his bed. I recall looking at his strawberry blonde hair which was completely messy and sarcastically thinking "it's going to be fun to do his hair this morning." I ran my fingers through his hair and felt the warmth and knew he was fine. I started singing and telling him it was time to get up as I pulled clothes out of his dresser drawer. I turned around and walked over to the changing station and thought it was strange that Porter didn't stir despite my singing and talking. I put his clothes down and went and stood in front of his bed. I looked down and he was still face down. I couldn't see anything but his little head of hair. I silently paused, and then leaned over to rub his back. It was still warm, but strangely stiff. I stood up quickly and my breathing got a bit faster as my heart rate rose. Puzzled, I thought I should watch his breathing. "Could he be dead" I wondered to myself. Quickly brushing that thought away as ludicrous, I continued to watch his back. I decided it was too difficult to see the rise and fall of his back through the loose fit bright red fireman PJ's. I continued to think it was a silly thought, and best just pick him up and put that thought out of my mind. I put both of my hands under his arms pits, his head facing me, he was slightly warm. This was the moment that changed my life forever. I lifted him up. His head did not flop around like usual when I pick him up from sleep, but rather was stiff. His arms and legs were stiff. His hands were in closed purple fists and his arms pulled in next to his body. I looked at his face which was pale white around his mouth, his lips pressed to one side. There was a pale white color like never seen before around his nose and eyes. His eyes, slightly open were glossed over and the usual sea-blue colors of his eyes were clouded. The rest of his face, neck and arms were a deep purple. The deep-purple splotches created a jagged outline against the paleness of his mouth and eyes. His feet purple and blue and held in place like stone.

I quickly laid him down face up and screamed in horror. My mind raced with disbelief. This could not have been Porter. It was as if someone had pulled a horrible joke and this doll-like child was put in Porter's place. It seemed as if the lights to Porter had gone out and just the stiff lifeless shell was left. I thought to myself that I needed to call Mike, but couldn't remember his number. I ran downstairs screaming "oh my god, oh my god," and went to the phone. I called 911. Screaming with terror and disbelief I sat down in the kitchen. As the woman on the other end talked, it occurred to me that I needed to do CPR as perhaps there was still a chance. I ran upstairs with the phone and tried to listen to the lady on the other end whose questions seemed pointless as I begged for help. After she asked me several times to confirm my address, and my phone number I calmed enough to speak clearly. She said sternly "ma'am is your phone number 626-3946?" I said hyperventilating "yes, yes that is it." Unable to understand me she said "ma'am what is your phone number?" I took a deep breath and calmly said "626-3946." She then confirmed that someone was on their way and she would transfer me. I pulled Porter's lifeless stiff body from his bed and put him on the ground. I tried to bend his arm, but it held tight as if made of cement. Horrible thoughts raced through my mind. "Why would his arm be so stiff"? "Has it been too long to save him"? I looked at his little fist. His fingers were a deep purple

and terribly cold. I went to move his thumb, but they remained frozen in place. Tears started to stream down my face as I began to think the worst.

I started CPR, but found it difficult to do so with the phone held up by my shoulder. I asked if I could put her on speaker phone and she agreed. She then stated she would be transferring me to someone else to help me with CPR. A man voice got on the phone and told me he would tell me how to do CPR, but I was already ahead of him. I recall the sound Porter made after I blew in air to his lungs. The sound of the exhale was ghastly and unnatural. The squeal of air as it flooded back out his lung made me recall my CPR training on the practice dummies. I never knew that sound was so accurate. I had some reassurance that I was performing CPR correctly.

I didn't keep track of the breaths or the chest compressions, but Porter's face went from deep purple to a paler color. The man on speaker phone was trying to explain how to position Porter for CPR using the word "she" and "her" over and over again. I got irritated and yelled out "it's a him." The man apologetically said "ok, him... you need to position him." The man said I needed to see if there was anything in Porter's mouth. I stuck my finger between he teeth and noticed the whiteness of his gums. His jaw was stiff and after a bit of a tug on his lower jaw I said "I can't get his mouth open." The man then said, "ok well tilt his head back." I recalled that this was a step I missed and stopped blowing in his mouth and positioned my hand under his neck. It was also stiff. I told the man as I began to cry with an overwhelming sense of panic and helplessness, "it's stiff I can't." In my utter horror I pleaded again for some help and he assured me that help was coming and to "hang in there and listen to me." I regained myself and focused again on Porter, his eyes still pale and slightly open. The man on the phone then said "ok pinch his nose and cover his mouth completely with yours and give him two breaths." I recall thinking "oh just two?" In my moment of panic I didn't think to count. I did that step and then he said to find the place above Porter's chest bone and use the heel of my hand to press down about a half an inch. I was frustrated as I had already done several rounds of chest compressions and here he was back and step two. He then said, "Ok now do that 30 times." Frustrated with myself I thought "wow, 30... I have to keep count." I was doing it too quickly and not paying any attention. "I have to do this right" I thought to myself. I started counting as Porter stiff and rigid body rocked back and forth as I did each one. I cried and continued to plead for help.

I could hear the sirens and asked him if I should go unlock the door. He said to "stay there." I keep telling him the door was locked downstairs, and he kept saying I needed to "stay there." Porter was not waking up and I was feeling an overwhelming sense of helplessness. All I wanted was for someone to take over and make this nightmare go away. It seemed impossible to do CPR on my child and at the same time try to grapple with the horror I was experiencing. I finally said loud and with frustration that the door was locked and they couldn't get in. He said "oh, well go let them in." I scooped Porter up and put the phone in my hand and went running down the stairs. I got to the door and put the phone in my mouth and unlocked the door. I ran down the walkway as the fire engine pulled up I yelled to the man on the phone "they are here," and hung up.

Two men were getting something from their trucks. I yelled "please help my baby" over and over again in tears. The first man walking towards me looked at me with a straight face. The second man put his bags down and grabbed Porter from my arms and said "we should go inside it is cold out here." He ran in. I fell down in the driveway. The other man held out his hand and said "lets go inside." I said ok. The phone in my hand rang and I looked at the caller ID. It said Remsa so I picked up. The woman on the phone said "don't hang up until we tell you to. Are they there?" I said yes crying and she said "ok you can hang up now." We walked into the house and the man who brought Porter in was knelled down behind the couch where he had put Porter on the floor. He wasn't doing anything. I said with a sense of hopelessness and absolute fear "is Porter gone?" He looked at me and said in a clam but somber voice "ma'am he's dead." I cried. I banged my head against the wall and my fists against the ground. I screamed hysterically over and over "no" with tears running down my face. The world has closed in too fast and I became so small. It was as if their words had solidified my worst nightmare. For the minutes I was alone with Porter I didn't have to accept the fact that he may not be coming back. It didn't have to be real. As the two men sat on the floor next to me not working on my son, or trying to save his life, I was flooded with anger. I glanced back at Porter lying face up on the floor, his body still posed for lying on his stomach. His pose was unnatural and his stillness and color were enough to bring the reality of his death crashing down.

The other man was kneeling down in front of me with a look of stoic sadness on his face. The room became busy as people came flooding into the house. It was as if time had no dimension and the world, that mattered, had stopped. I watched as they put a jacket over Porter's face. The reality continued to sink in quicker and quicker. An officer needed to question me about what had happened. I began hyperventilating and he said we should go sit in dinning room. He began asking me simple questions like "what time did I last see Porter alive," "what had been going on the day before," "did I have any concerns about Porter" etc. I could barely answer the man's questions, but just as he, I needed to know what happened. The man's hand was visibly shaking as he wrote down my answers. I began to feel sick and the police man asked one of the other people to bring over the garbage can. I glanced over at our living room door that the police had propped wide open. I watched as the officers put yellow crime scene tape around our front door. "Do they think I did this?" I thought to myself. The house that seemed so big and so lonely just minutes ago was full of people, the sound of police radios and a flurry of activity.