

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 both Porter and 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 crackers. I put him down and he grabbed his favorite bowl – a Grinch Stole Christmas cereal 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. He lined the cars up on the coffee table and then pushes each one off with a sound. 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 and he was anything but fussy, another wonderful decision in hind-sight. 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 put Porter's bumper back on his toddler bed Porter played with the toys in his room. The night prior Porter had a "blow-out" in his diaper so a bit of poo went onto his bumper and needed a cleaning that day. 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 as 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 composed 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 due to fever. 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. I was putting on makeup and doing my hair when Mike came in to tell my goodbye. We discussed the proposed plan of calling the doctor to get an appointment for Porter's ears. We agreed I would cancel appointments I had to take Porter to the doctor for his ears. However since Porter didn't wake us up last night I had suspicion that he might be feeling better. I asked Mike 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 him 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, noting 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 were purple and blue and held in place like stone. He felt like a plastic doll.

I quickly laid him down face up and screamed in horror. My mind raced with disbelief and sheer denial. 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. My brain could barely make sense of what was happening. It was too unbelievable to comprehend therefore I didn't know what to do. I stood in shock for a few moments until my brain caught up with what I was seeing. Porter wasn't waking up and it was clear I needed to do something—but what? 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 in the kitchen. There had been a phone in the office about ten feet from Porter's room but it had not registered. I called 911. Screaming with terror and disbelief I fell down against the wall in the kitchen. As the woman on the other end talked, it occurred to me that I needed to do CPR 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 but I was so panicked I couldn't think to respond. I reached Porter's room and stood next to his bed staring at him. I began bouncing up and down in panic since he was still the same. I convinced myself I needed to get a grip. I needed to get information to them so they could come and make this better. 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 "6-2-6-3-9-4-6." 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 saw his arms – pale with some deep purple splotches – I tried to bend his arm, but it held tight as if made of cement. I decided to pull a little harder, nothing. 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. I tried again without luck then leaned back still over his body. 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. "Perhaps this is working" I thought which gave me more motivation to continue and let the thoughts of horror sit at bay for a bit. 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 stopped my chest compressions and attempted to stick my finger between his teeth. I noticed the whiteness of his gums. The pink had faded and the color matched closely with his teeth except for a hint of blue. His jaw was stiff and after a bit of a tug on his lower jaw I said "I can't get his mouth open." I was flooded with thoughts of the worst again. 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 whimpered 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. This was not getting better. I was losing hope. 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 like never before. 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 next to the garage 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 tucks. I yelled "please help my baby" over and over again in tears as I ran. 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. I wasn't alone anymore, help was here. The other man held out his hand and said "let's 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 had knelt down behind the couch where he had put Porter on the floor in the living room. He wasn't doing anything. I said faintly with a sense of hopelessness and absolute fear "is Porter gone?" I sat against a wall kitty-corner to Porter and the EMT. 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 pounded 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. Before I knew it an officer needed to question me about what had happened. This tragic story became even more real and I began hyperventilating. He said we should go sit in dining room. I got up and sat in the chair he pulled out for me. 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. I recalled my mother's death a year prior and how my dad said one benefit of Hospice is that the police do not need to come to the house after she dies. I was able to understand that this was protocol but there was the even more devastating thought "Do they think I did this?" 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.

The police officer and I sat and he had me recount the events of last night. Another person had interrupted us and asked about my husband. I told them he was at work and she requested that we contact him. I could not remember his work phone number but knew it was in my cell phone. I directed her to the car where, a half hour earlier, I had put my purse, Eggo waffles and my coffee for what would have been a normal day. She brought the phone back to me and I scrolled through the numbers to find his work number. She dialed the number right then and there. As she spoke to my husband I began to cry. This *was* real now. She hung up and told me and the police officer and I Mike was on his way.

In the meantime the house grew more active. People were rummaging around the kitchen and going up and down the stairs. I could see one police officer directing a man to Porter's room "down the hall" as he pointed. The garage was wide open and people were now going through the car. I sat as the fog rolled in. I don't know how alert I was, but the police officer continued to ask questions. I felt sick and told him I thought I would throw up. He asked someone in the kitchen to bring over the garbage can. What only felt like minutes later voices started saying "the husband is here." Everyone kept saying it until the message made it inside. I leaped out of my chair and ran towards the door. I lifted up the crime scene tape and ran down the walkway next to the garage crying. Once I made it to the end of the garage I could see Mike's car against the numerous fire trucks, police cars, ambulances. He opened his door and put one foot out to stand. Our eyes met. His eyes showed sheer panic disbelieve. I cried "he is dead!"

Mike fell beside his car and he cried “no! no! no! no!” I met him at the side of his car and we embraced. Tears streamed down our cheeks. Mike’s shock and disbelief poured out and I found myself still grappling with what happened. I looked up to see a female officer standing near us crying. This seemed to bring comfort to me as everyone else had been stoic and without emotion. I glanced over and noticed our neighbors were in the lawns looking over at the commotion. It occurred to me that Mike had not seen Porter. I asked if he wanted to see him and Mike said breaking momentarily from his tears “yes, where is he.” A man escorted Mike through the garage to the door.

I sat in the driveway. Someone knelt beside me and asked if they could call anyone for me -- work, family members, anyone? I realized I had a booked schedule of clients today and they would be waiting for me. I requested the person get my day planner from the car. He brought it back over and I quickly circled the people and numbers that needed to be called to cancel. The person inquired further about a family member or pastor to call. I thought of my family back in Washington and realized “I can’t burden them with his.” I couldn’t think of anyone who could handle this information. We didn’t have any family here. I remember my supervisor/mentor for my MFT license who told me once to put the love I felt for my deceased mother towards my son. When he had told me this I was still grief stricken from her death and had the thought if someone had ever happened to Porter I would be lost. I knew he had a 24 hour line and requested that someone call him. The person left and another woman told me I needed to go inside it was too cold out here. I had not noticed the cold temperatures. The frost still covered the grass and driveway that was not warmed with sun and steam had filled the air where people were talking. I got up and went over to a sunny patch of grass. A person told me that the chaplain was on his way and would be here to talk with us. Before I knew it the Chaplain was there. He offered his coat that he hung over my shoulders. I remained in a fog, disassociated from the events that were happening. The chaplain provided words of encouragement and a listening ear. I suddenly remembered the fight Mike and I had last night about Porter’s fever. Mike didn’t appear as concerned as I was and I had told him “kids die from fevers!” Mike’s reply had been “not anymore!” My fuzzy memory on child deaths from my studies in school, and a Tyler Perry Movie we watched weeks prior leads me to believe Porter’s death was a recipe for divorce. This was the first time I had accepted Porter’s death long enough to explore life without Porter. The chaplain provided some support which brought me back to tears.

Mike joined me outside and the chaplain offered his car for Mike and me to sit in. We sat there listening to the hum of the engine as the reality set in. He told us the police were going to escort us to the station for questioning in separate cars. I didn’t want to go in separate cars. I wanted to be with my husband, but my mind and body was too numb to care. The chaplain had arranged for us to see Porter once before we left. We both agreed. I walked through the garage door into the house to see Porter lying there. The coat had been taken off of his body, probably by Mike. We knelt by his body crying. I ran my fingers through his beautiful hair and kissed him on the forehead. Mike held Porter’s hand, still balled up like before. I felt overwhelming feeling of

letting Porter down. I was supposed to care for him and take care of him and because of this it was clear I didn't. I told him "I am so sorry. I love you so much." The unnatural presentation of his body hit me again and it was too difficult to continue. I turned around and saw his favorite truck on the stairs. I grabbed it and looked around at the rest of his toys in the play area adjacent to his body. The future struck me again. No more would Porter play here. No more would his laughter fill our house. No more would our lives ever be the same. I sat down, Mike right next to me. We cried. I put the toy truck back and we headed out to the police car. A woman had both Mike and I sit together in the back of her red car. We pulled away.

The ride was surreal. The world had kept on going. Stop lights still worked. There were people on their way to work others getting their morning Starbucks and kids walking to school. I had disassociated from the world but said aloud "this is a nightmare." The rest of the ride to the station was quiet. Once we arrived we walked into the lobby. People were waiting in waiting area staring at us as we entered. We went with the woman detective into the elevator. Once we arrived at the designated flood Mike and I went into separate rooms. The walls were a dark gray and there was a table with chairs in front and behind. A two-way mirror was on the wall next to the window. The chaplain had sat with me briefly. He explained that the detectives were going to ask me some questions. Some of the questions were going to be uncomfortable but it is just protocol. I agreed. Then the woman who escorted us to the station had come in my room. She began asking me questions similar to the questions the first police officer asked me. However, the questions would often become accusatory. She said "how much Motrin did you give Porter?" after I told her Mike was the one who gave Porter the Motrin. She asked if I had given Porter Children's Cold Medicine to which I responded "no." She then inquired if I knew that Children's Cold Medicine has been responsible for several child deaths. She inquired about the Motrin again but asked "what time did you give Porter the Motrin." I told her again that Mike was the one who gave Porter the Motrin. She asked if I was aware of a prescription written for Mike that was found in the bathroom. I had forgotten, with everything that was going on, that I had forced Mike to go to the doctor's a while back to which he was given a prescription he never takes. Once she told me what it was for it suddenly clicked. After the line of questioning she requested I walk her through what happened. I started the story again and fell into tears. She joined me on my side of the table and put her arm around me. I felt comforted. After I said as much as I could she left the room. I sat alone...again.

After what felt like forever, a social worker and county nurse had come into the room and offered their sympathy. I was still unsure at that point if I was going to be interrogated further as their message to me was very heartfelt and sincere. They also shared that Chuck Holt, my MFT mentor was here and wanted to join me. Chuck had come into the room and sat with me. He didn't know what to say but provided his sympathy. He reminded me that Mike and I will need to stick together and this will be an especially hard time in our marriage. Mike had joined us—his eyes red and puffy. Mike gave Chuck and hug and the three of us sat. The chaplain also came in and provided a bit of a lead to our conversation. He provided a bit of information on what

to expect after leaving here. I was living so much in the moment I didn't know what to do next. The chaplain said the police were still at our house and we would not be allowed back. Chuck said he could take us to his office. They released us with little information. We both got into his car.

It felt strange leaving. It was the first time in Porter's life where I didn't know where he was. I didn't know if he was okay. I didn't know what would happen to him. My responsibility to him was gone. It was painful. It was like a piece of me was missing. Chuck stopped off at 7 11 for some food. He got a few yogurts and granola bars and we headed back to his office. Once inside we sat. The sun beamed in the window as the birds chirped happily outside.

Chuck recommended that we call our family. The feeling of burdening them still remained by my denial had lifted enough to know this was not getting better. We agreed to call my dad first, but requested that Chuck make the call. He did. The call was short "Hi Dan, I am here with Mike and Becky and a terrible thing occurred this morning. Porter has passed away and they need you to come to Reno." The call ended as soon as it began and Chuck put the phone down and noted "he is on his way." We started making calls – first to Mike's friend/co-worker Jim who had not yet made it into work before Mike left. Jim agreed to come to Chuck's office. I called Jackie, a friend from school, who agreed to meet us here as well. Then we began calling Mike's sister. We had a free flight tied up in a trip to Disneyland I planned to make in a few weeks and worked with Southwest Airlines to get it switched over so Vicki and Kyle, her son, could fly down today. After a painfully long process, and only 10% of our brains being logical and functioning, we were able to get her flights book. We also called my good friend Lesa from Seattle and Mike's friend Jason they both agreed to fly down. Meanwhile, Chuck had called the police station and there was still no word on what caused Porter's death. An autopsy was to be performed but still nothing. We have finally been given permission to return home.

Jim showed up and we began making plans for the evening. I did not want to sleep at our house so Jim booked us a hotel at the Nugget. Jackie had arrived and we sat in their comfort. I moved from disbelief, to guilt, to anger to depression. I would often dissociate from the world, lost in my own thoughts, and rejoin the world again. I couldn't eat, I couldn't think and I couldn't make a decision. Jackie suggested that Mike and I might need to go to our house to get clothes and underwear. I didn't want to go back and Jim was willing to go there for us. We tried to explain where everything was and it became clear it was too difficult. We both reluctantly agreed to go. We said goodbye to Chuck and agreed to make contact with him if we heard anything.

Jim drove us back up to our house again. The police cars had left and the house was closed up. It was as if everything was normal except Porter was gone. Once inside the house, the memories of the morning flooded back. The crime scene tape was in our kitchen garbage. The house had been rummaged through. It went to get my belongings but couldn't help but be brought to tears by the sight of Porter's toys, his pictures

hanging on the wall. I requested that Jackie look for our cat Marble who either ran away from the chaos of this morning or hid for her life. After some looking she found Marble under the bed. We grabbed our things and left for the hotel.

We checked into the hotel and made it to our room. I requested that Jackie get me some Vaseline from the gift shop as the skin under my eyes was worn raw from the tears. Mike and I both agreed that we needed to lie down. The rest of the afternoon was a blur. People started arriving from out of town and both Jackie and Jim passed off their shift to those who had arrived. I hadn't eaten all day. I didn't care to eat. I recounted the events of the morning over and over again with each arriving person. The sun had begun to fall behind the mountains and the day was coming to an end. Those who had flown in had also booked rooms at the Nugget. It was late that evening when we both felt tired enough to fall asleep. The night's rest was minimal. It was the first time in my life where I wake up from the nightmare. Where my dreams seemed like relief from the horror we were experiencing.

After two days we finally went back home. Our family and friends helped clean up our messy house and put order back into the chaos. We finally sent out an email to friends, family and co-workers about Porter's death. Jason called funeral homes and made arrangements for us to meet with one for the memorial. The detectives stopped by to let us know they concluded it wasn't our fault and perhaps a "virus" or something caused this tragedy. Flowers and cards to express sympathy came streaming in and filled our empty house with beauty. I could no longer sleep without horrendous nightmares and called the doctor for sleeping pills. I incessantly searched online for anything that resembled Porter's death as the guilt was tremendous. The days grew long and the nights became a time of sheer horror for me. It was obvious that I was suffering from acute stress disorder (a precursor to PTSD). I couldn't be alone at night. Night time was unsafe. My son's room terrified me in the dark because it felt like something took him. The medical examiners report had finally come in and my sister spoke with the doctor. It was concluded that Porter died unexpected as a result of Influenza B. Mike and I spent our days preparing for Porter's service, one in Reno and one in Spokane. Shortly before the Reno service our family and friends flew back home. Our house had become quiet and empty. My dad agreed to stay with us as long as needed which provided tremendous support during the long days ahead.