

That Big Green Tractor

After I sit down from introducing myself and telling a little about myself and my family, I always watch for the stares. I feel like I will always get them, no matter who is in the crowd. Friends or strangers; I always wonder just what people really think every time they hear how I introduce myself. Really, it's pretty normal, except for the last sentence.

"I'm Dawn. I am married to Adam and we have two little ones. Zoe is two and a half. Knox would be 16 months but he died of SIDS in August 2009 at four months."

As I watch for the impending stares, that never actually come I still want to stand up, interrupt whoever is talking and scream with rage that my when my baby died, he didn't just leave. He was ripped from my arms and I can't hold myself together long enough to talk about him sometimes.

At home, Zoe is getting to be curious about her brother and where he went. She loves to talk about him, and even though it's been eleven months, I still can't bare to answer her when she asks me things like:

"Where's my baby Knaw (Knox), Mommy? Can he come play [with] me?"

It quickly turns into her comforting me. It shouldn't be this way.

"No cry Mommy, Knaw (Knox) in Heaven!" She is always chipper as can be about it, like there is nothing wrong with that, and it's been this way for so long that we should all just be okay.

To her, one year is a lifetime but to me it feels like it was just yesterday that his dad and I were sitting in Seattle Children's Hospital Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, waiting to be told if our baby had any chance to survive after finding him the way I did. They told me that I was lucky to have found him when I did, and I definitely made it possible for him to live this long. Obviously, it wasn't good enough. He still died.

The compassion of a two year old is astonishing to me. She has been unfortunate enough to learn through the death of her baby brother how to comfort people.

Since birth he was always perfect. When he was born on April 10th 2009 we were both enamored with emotion when our second child arrived into the world. We have always known we wanted four children, and this was just helping pave the road to our perfect future. When he was born the first thing I noticed about his little button nose was that he has a special saddle shaped spot, where his nose met his forehead. My lips have always fit perfect there for gently kissing his face. As he got older, when I would kiss the special spot, he would light up and grin with joy to have me so close to him.

August 17th, his sister was taking her morning nap, while I baked bread to go with dinner that night. He was in his swing, watching me sing and dance around the kitchen like a goof, to weasel as many of his adorable little grins as I could out of him. I remember after putting the bread aside to rise for the day, scooping him up and dancing around the living room with him in my arms, while Jason Aldean's 'Big Green Tractor' played on the radio. Finally, after playing we settled down, his sister got up from her morning nap, and it was time for him to head on down for his afternoon nap. About 1 o'clock, I swaddled him up, gave him a kiss, told him to stop smiling at me, we had plenty of time for that later, and he needed to sleep now. If I had known that we didn't have plenty of time for his smiles, and I would have just let him stay up with us, crabby baby or not.

Once he was airlifted to Seattle Children's Hospital, Knox's little body couldn't handle all of the trauma it had been through, and we were forced to either wait for his body to crash on it's own, or let him go peacefully. 13 hours after my world started crashing down, I realized that he had come back and hung on, all so his Daddy could see and talk with him one last time. Adam was at work when he got the frantic call from me, where I told him Knox wasn't breathing, before the Police Officer gently took the phone and filled him in while I bawled on the floor watching EMT's frantically try to save my baby.

The next few days was a blur. I vaguely remember making a few calls to friends just to tell them what happened. We had amazing family and friends who played liaison for us from the rest of the world. With much love and encouragement, Adam and I were able to plan a remembrance service and celebration of life for our little boy, and bring his cremated body home.

The next few weeks were worse. Life settled down for almost everyone around us, except for our close family and friends. We were invited to a barbeque by some friends who meant well, and I was shocked and angry that they could even have a barbeque when this had just happened to us. I was blinded by how much anger I had. In my rage, I threw away all of Knox's belongings; from his clothes and bottles, to his bassinet and bathtub. Even the crib he'd never slept in. I was very lucky to have one amazing friend of mine ask for his outfits that I had the best memories of him wearing. She took those from me, to keep me from throwing them out as well.

About three weeks after Knox died, I was trying to get on with my life. Adam needed to get back to work, and Zoe needed some stability. I was still a stay at home mom, even if I didn't care anymore. We went to a playgroup where I had lots of friends and support, and Zoe had lots of other children to play with. I left that playgroup early, drove him in hysterics, with the Big, Green Tractor song on repeat. I have always heard that life isn't fair. It has never been my place to judge or tell other people how to parent their children; in my grief I've become much more aware of how people treat their children, especially since I can't have all of mine with me ever again. My judgment and criticism

of other people was making me bitter and angry towards the world.

It's been just about a year now, and my anger has gradually turned into sporadic bursts of being upset and mad. It almost always ends with tears. I have no person to be angry at. I have no where to go to just feel better. There is nothing I can do to make myself forget. I look at any of the other people in my house and see his face in each person. I even see him in the mirror some days. The friend who took his clothes from me, made me a beautiful quilt I can look at and hold when I miss him so much that it hurts to breath. It still smells like him. I can't wait until I get to snuggle up with my baby boy again. I want him to tell me how proud he is of me, for being strong enough to tell other families who were hurting so much about him, and that I didn't worry about the stares when I told people who never knew a loss so devastating; all about my blue eyed, chubby cheeked little boy, and his saddle shaped spot just above his nose, where my lips always fit so perfectly.

Dawn Bennett is a young wife and mother of two children. Her daughter Zoe is 2 ½. She lost her son Knox, in August 2009 due to SIDS. She loves writing and paper crafting. Through the tragedy of losing a child, she is dedicated to helping other families who have been affected by SIDS. You can contact her through her blog, www.dawnsaddiction.blogspot.com.