

PROLOGUE

At first, I could only see little feet covered in dried blood. Doctors, nurses, and paramedics moved quickly about the emergency department exam room. As I came closer, I saw my eight-year-old son, Kamron, clothes cut off his limp body, and blood on the floor. I grabbed his little hand and kissed his hot cheek. He was so hot!

They seemed to be speaking to each other in code. “What is it? What’s wrong with him? Why won’t he wake up?” I yelled over the panic in the room.

I lost it. A nurse took me to a stool and pushed my head between my legs to stop the hyperventilation. She put a cool towel on my neck as I tried to get my breathing under control. I rushed to his side once again to tell him how much I loved him. I wanted him to know that more than anything.

“We need to get him to surgery now!” The lead doctor stopped working and flipped the brake on the gurney.

I ran alongside the bed, screaming in agony as they took my only child, unsure of whether or not I would see him alive again. All I knew was that life was not life without him. I was no longer a mother without him.

The ER nurse took me to the critical care floor to wait while Kamron was in surgery. Friends and family started to gather. They hugged me and tried reassurances, but were also respectful of my space. I excused myself and went to the chapel.

I tried to piece together the events of the morning. My husband, Travis, and Kamron were out of town over the weekend, visiting family in our hometown of Craig, Colorado. They were returning early Monday morning so Travis could go to work. A little after 7 a.m., my cell phone rang and I hoped it was my husband telling me he was almost home. Instead, it was an unrecognizable number, which I almost ignored.

“Mrs. Portenier?” a timid female voice asked.

“Yes.”

“This is Pioneer Hospital in Meeker. We have your husband and son here.” She paused. “Um...they hit a deer this morning.”

I was at my kitchen table, writing down a list of school supplies. I put the pen down and my heart dropped to the floor. “Are they okay?”

“Your husband has a few cuts and bumps. We need to get a CT scan. Your son...” She trailed off into silence, probably not sure how to say what she had to say. “Mrs. Portenier, he’s unconscious and badly injured. The doctors are working on him now.”

I stood. “Oh, God! No!”

“You should make arrangements to get here as soon as possible.”

I screamed and fell to my knees, hanging up on the nurse in the commotion. Alone and on the floor weeping uncontrollably, mind racing, I tried to pull it together to figure out what to do next. My body shook as I called my friend Terrie, whom I was supposed to work with that morning.

“Travis and Kamron were in a car accident! Kamron’s hurt and I need to get to Meeker! Help me, I can’t drive!”

“Honey, you need to slow down so I can understand you. Who called and what did they say?” she asked.

“The hospital in Meeker. They need me to come! Help me, please!”

Terrie called the hospital, and then called me back. Fortunately, they disclosed the information even though she wasn’t a family member. “Change of plans. Kamron needs a

trauma center immediately. They decided to fly him to Grand Junction so you can be together.”

“He can’t die, he just can’t!” I sobbed.

“I’m in the car now, coming your way to pick you up so we can meet the Care Flight.”

I paced for what seemed like hours while I waited for my ride to the hospital. I called Travis’ parents and my dad. Craig was less than an hour from Meeker. I hadn’t talked to Travis yet, but knew he was still at the hospital getting a head scan while they flew Kamron ahead to Grand Junction—there was no time to waste. His brother, Tyler, who also lived in Craig, was on his way to pick Travis up.

The chaplain was waiting when I arrived at the emergency room. I took this as a bad sign, but he assured me he was only there for comfort and to update me on the helicopter’s arrival. I didn’t believe him. Terrie took my cell phone and called people in the contacts. I was still inconsolable, unable to gather my thoughts.

When the nurse burst into the private waiting room and rushed me down the hall by the hand, I knew our life was about to change, especially when I saw Kamron’s motionless body and the fear in people’s eyes.

Alone in the chapel, I couldn’t stop weeping, so scared of the outcome. I wanted to be mad at someone, at God, but I needed Him more than ever. And I needed some answers. Travis and I hit a deer before, completely unscathed. What happened on Highway 13 that morning? I looked around the scantily decorated sanctuary, expecting someone to answer my questions. Prayer candles flickered and reminded me of other people’s prayers, other people’s pain. I wasn’t the only one tugging on God’s pant leg.



Fate pulled the trigger—August 13, 2007—the first in a long line of tragedies and challenges that our family faced over a six-year span. Major surgeries, a scary health diagnosis, deaths, and the emotional turmoil attached to those events. What did it mean to my journey, my purpose in life? I often wondered—can our family make it through this in one piece?

We’ve been told on several occasions that if we didn’t have bad luck, we would have no luck at all. Welcome to my life... Please excuse the mess.