

CROSSING THE HORIZON

When Solon and Liam died, all boy noise ceased. Silence replaced lively conversations, music, movements -- Fat, ugly, disturbing silence. What does a grieving parent do with the sudden silence? You have to find a way around it.

Just as an amputee continues to feel the presence of a severed limb, after the fire Chris and I awoke expecting to hear the joyful noise of our sons. Silence screamed the reality of their departure until slowly, sadly, we could wrap our minds around their absence. It took years.

Angry, hurt by the silence early on, I started creating boy noise myself. I downloaded the boys' iTunes library, and listened intently, flooding my brain with happy memories. I played Solon's piano and wailed on Liam's drums. Tears flowed, but filling that surrounding silence with boys' music comforted. I wondered, could our boys hear my music too from their afterlives? Did they know how Chris and I were feeling?

From the moment they died, I craved the sound of Solon and Liam's voices. I still do. Thank goodness Chris had saved two of the boys' phone messages. In one, Liam asked Dad to bring milk home because we needed more. In the other, Solon told Dad about a movie we watched and says a sweet goodnight. In those early days, I listened to both over and over again, crying tears of sadness and tears of joy. Precious memories still ring out when I listen to these. It hurts like hell, but feels really good too.

As happy as I was to hear the boys' recorded voices, I longed most for conversation with them, the sounds of interaction -- relationship negotiated in real time. Silence screamed, "Your relationship with your sons is over!" Yet, I couldn't allow that to happen, couldn't bear for it to be true. I had to find a way to communicate through the silence, to continue our relationship.

As I wrote *Crossing the Horizon*, the boys struggled with the very same issues I was facing. They dealt with separation and silence in a whole new world. They struggled to communicate with me and Chris back home. They needed to find new ways to communicate safely with one another. When they realized they couldn't simply talk to Chris and me, they eventually found they could communicate with us in other ways.

In many ways, writing *Crossing the Horizon* filled that heart-wrenching silence. It wasn't simply something to fill the time. Letting my thoughts flow freely on the screen gave me relationship with the boys again. Our relationships are different now. They are full of a different kind of sound -- the inner noise of loving thoughts crossing the horizon. Always.

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