

Jordan was born on January 18, 2005. I can still picture the moment when the nurse lifted him up and showed him to me. There, under the glow of the hospital lights, I felt like the whole room had filled with sunshine. I saw a spotlight pinpointed on my son, who was the most perfect looking little person I had ever seen. Somewhere behind me I heard my husband say, "He has your lips!" I saw before me a future filled with laughter and love, a perfect picture of what our life would be like with our newborn son.

For 18 beautiful hours, Jordan was with us. We held him, fed him, stroked his face, examined each miniature feature. Jeff took many pictures, marveling over the resemblances we discovered. "He has my ears," Jeff declared, and took a picture of Jordan's as well as his own, to prove it.

Those 18 perfect hours came to an abrupt end when a nurse walked into our room for a routine examination of the baby's vital signs. She paused and noted that his breathing seemed odd. Without warning, our baby was taken away and our nightmare began. Hours passed while the two of us waited, without our baby, in the hospital room. As the time slipped by, there was no longer any way to reassure ourselves that everything would be fine. And when the doctors finally did come back with the news, it was more horrific that anything we could ever have imagined. We were informed that Jordan had a massive tumor in his heart.

The nightmare spiraled into a chaos that seems surreal to me now. We were rapidly discharged from NYU and transferred to Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, where we were told, Jordan would be seen by specialists to determine whether the tumor was operable. The doctors gave us this news stoically but the grim looks on their faces betrayed them. They looked as shocked and confused as we felt. Absolutely none of this made any sense at the time. I just could not fathom how we found ourselves in this situation.

There was no forewarning of this. My pregnancy had been uneventful. I had gained a normal amount of weight, had been blessed with no morning sickness or fatigue. All of our routine tests had shown the baby developing normally. I had actually enjoyed being pregnant! Jeff and I had busied ourselves in the months before shopping for the baby, taking child birth preparation classes, breastfeeding classes, newborn care classes. I had read every book I could get my hands on to learn not only "what to expect when expecting," but also everything I would need to know for our child's life from birth through adolescence. We thought we were prepared. However, none of these books or classes taught you what to do when you were given the news that your baby might die.

And that was the reality we were faced with. At Columbia, we were told that the tumor was significantly compromising the heart's ability to function. There might be a chance it could be removed, so they would attempt surgery. And so, I allowed myself to hope – for just a moment. I so desperately wanted Jordan to live, I allowed myself to believe that the surgeons could repair his heart, despite all the warnings they had given us to the contrary.

This small glimmer of hope was quickly extinguished. After surgery, the doctor informed us that the tumor was so embedded in the walls of the heart, that removing it completely was impossible. As it stood, Jordan's heart function now was marginal. He was hooked up to a life support machine. Our only chance to save him would be to find a donor heart to replace the one unable to keep him alive. And because of the nature of the life support he was on, our window of opportunity was 3 – 5 days. Each day on the machine would increase the chances that Jordan would suffer internal bleeding. We were also thoroughly warned that the odds of finding a heart from a newborn to match Jordan's was slim to none.

After that, I felt like a fog had descended over me, and it became difficult to think. When I was at last allowed to see our baby on his life support machine, I felt my soul wither inside me. I could not mentally accept that the baby I had spent 42 weeks carrying would not live. I replayed his birth in my mind, and the hours we had spent holding him. And I thought to myself, will these be the only memories I have? I cursed myself for not holding him all night long, for putting him down for even a minute. I pulled my eyes away from all the tubes and wires protruding from his body, and focused my attention on his face, which remained the face of a perfect newborn baby asleep.

In the days that followed, our friends and family united in a tireless drive to bring media attention to our situation. It still amazes me how quickly they acted and harnessed all their creative energies into reaching out to every person they could think of. In turn, we met with reporters and television producers, and tried to communicate not only how desperate our need was, but that organ donation was something to think about to benefit others out there as well. We kept telling ourselves that even if Jordan did not receive a heart, maybe someone out there would benefit from our message. We kept hoping that Jordan could put a face to the need that exists.

And during this time, we stayed with our son. We sat by his bedside and talked to him, and prayed, and cried and watched him fight to stay alive. I cried tears of grief as each day passed and I felt my dream of a perfect little baby boy slowly slip away. But, as we kept telling ourselves – as long as Jordan remained alive, there was hope.

On January 26, the fifth day of Jordan's being on life support, I received a phone call from one of the cardiac care doctors. She said simply – "We have a heart." And with that bit of news, that simple sentence, we were all reborn. Events transpired rapidly, the heart was flown in from Illinois, and transplanted that evening. When the head surgeon came out of surgery late that night and told us all had gone well, you can imagine the cheers of joy that arose.

Few people get a chance in their lifetime to become heroes. Jordan is here today because another mother made a heroic decision in the midst of her own tragedy. She gave a gift more precious than any I have ever known. She donated her beautiful daughter's heart to my son and allowed him to live. Her daughter's name was Breanna.

I am more grateful to Breanna's mother than I can express in words. She gave us back our son – our dream. Late at night, when I am unable to sleep, I look into Jordan's bassinet and watch him. I marvel at how perfect he looks, how his life was saved, and I wonder how it is we were so lucky. I think about how Jordan's life was spared through the generosity of another human being, and I am awed by the goodness that exists in this world. There is hope and generosity and humanity out there - as shown by Breanna's gift. I will never forget this, and hope that by talking about Jordan's story with others, I can remind them as well. Through organ donation, we all have a chance to be heroes. I pray that Breanna's soul rests in peace and that her mother will find solace in knowing that her child's life was not in vain.