

## SHATTERED WITHIN!

Why isn't time moving or healing? It doesn't seem to work that way for me, every day is the same as the one before. Once Bobby was gone, living was unbearable; but living in his house was excruciating! Even though Brian moved in to support us all, the confusion (I believe) turned into anger between me and "R". Nothing felt right, which stimulated more aggression. I know people grieve in different ways and I shouldn't judge - so I won't. But... I flat out refuse to believe Bobby, my brother; took his own life. It just simply isn't true. I go over and over what she explained in my head with no solace. I go over and over the autopsy, my memories, anything for answers or clues. I will never stop, even as I write this journal now! I won't let it go; I can't let it go because everything inside me is the one in control.

My husband and I took the opportunity to move out. My dad received an offer on his house for sale. (In the past, Bobby had plans to help him move his belongings and relocate when the time came) It couldn't have come at a better time, tensions were high! We were all actually surprised of not only the timing, but how quick the whole settlement process flew. We all gathered to clean and pack, trying to soak in every last second with each other. I fought to change my living arrangements, but the contemplation of leaving my sons and brothers didn't seem fair. Brian was handling the business of the headstone and his job - doing a balancing act. My sons seemed just as angry as I, how could I leave them all? I was only there 6 months and again, I am moving! I want to be a better mother,

better sister and daughter. That wish is still there and I try real hard, but it's more difficult when I have to move a thousand miles away.

One of the last nights there something odd happened. I was finishing my research that night on how I could have heard the voice of someone already passed. Powering down the laptop and setting it back on the table, I turned toward the door to leave. The computer flashes in the corner of my eye. Desktop icons were changing in size, repeatedly as the light flashed brighter. I stood in front of it, trying to power off again; but the sequence just got faster and faster. I yelled for my husband to come look at what I saw. He enters the room just as all the icons were so big, each one took up the whole 17" screen. It was flashing so quick that eventually it just showed white. In between the blinking a picture started to form on the screen. My husband and I stood there confused, but interested what was next; that we didn't move. The strobe-like effect slowed down to finally see the picture it was displaying. A photograph of Bobby stayed there, getting bigger and bigger. I don't remember having the picture in my computer before. We both took the computer out for 'R' to witness and get her opinion. She is holding the laptop in her hands to see - nothing. It absolutely stopped to show a black screen. A sign, phenomena??



(Picture of Bobby displayed and later tattooed on Brian)

Reflecting back on the decision to move with my Dad has its good and bad points. He needed help and is hurting like the rest of us. It doesn't matter if you lose a son, a brother or an uncle; it all causes suffering. After all was said and done, we hoped a new environment would somehow ease the pain. I moved to a beautiful state with breathtaking views, I assume anyone would love to see. Nature has always given me some peace in the past. Regrettably, my bitter inner fury and gloom succeeded over any type of content. If I'm not sad, I'm angry; very angry! Not having a job, friends and new surroundings makes me kind of a recluse. Is it bad to say (or feel) that I prefer it that way? The thought alone of having to interact with another human being on any level or subject, repulses me!

I know everyone else hurts, but somehow I'm stuck! What is wrong with me? I look around and see life moving for everyone else, however I want no part of it. My dad is enjoying his long time goal of a new atmosphere. My sister gets to go back to her house, family, job and the awe of someone new in her life. Brian has successfully forced himself to return to work and also continue his education. My daughter has embarked on her teenage years, which gives her opportunity to create new and exciting memories. Even my wonderful husband has forced himself to find a job to support us. I am so thankful he is patient and understanding. Before we reunited, he lost his brother also. I used to try and help him reconnect with others and see the beauty in life. I guess I wasn't aware, then, how deep pain can go. When I think about it now, guess I do have another emotion. It humbles me to see how he and his family try to help ME, even in their own continued mourning. That humility makes me realize - I haven't been the greatest mother, daughter or sister in law. I'm sorry. Damn, I just discovered I'm not good at anything!!

I feel my husband, daughter and father don't like being around me. Who can blame them, I'm always negative with such a pessimistic attitude. It's rare to see a smile or even a laugh come out of me as hard as I try. Solitude seems to be what I'm complacent with. My head is already crowded with all my sorrow and morbid thoughts that reaches through to my heavy heart and weighs me down. See, only enough room for me and my new concept of reality!

HOW, how could Bobby of given up and not shared with me his extent of dismay? I thought we shared all our feelings and worked through them together as a team. Did he surpass me and I didn't see the sign, hear between the lines? NO!! He was always the person that gathered us together for any type of celebration and the one to make sure your drink was never empty. He would turn the music up loud and make everyone laugh so hard we doubled over. I could never forget my Mexican heritage as he would always try to sing Mariachi songs or my moms' favorite Vicente Fernandez. Having such ambition in life, he achieved a black belt in martial Arts (Tae Kwon Do) to pursue his career in security.





NO, No!! Here comes the darkness again, this horrible cloud that I swear, literally succumbs me. It's a vicious circle to get out of, just to have it suck me back in. If I smile or laugh to catch a glimpse beyond it, it instinctively reminds me of my location - over here, in this cloud. I'm starting to think 'stuck' doesn't represent where I am anymore, I'm trapped! Maybe one day my screams will be heard on the outside.

Naw, I don't believe my brother ended his own life! If he felt like this, like me now; I would have noticed something. I call the detective (again) on the case to get a copy of the police report, any report. It's been months since the case was closed and even longer since he's returned my call. How can that be? The movies just don't portray detective work correctly. The cops that responded that night sucked!!! But the Detective was worse!! God - I wish I could tell you his name! No matter. Acquiring my dad's own curiosity, he was able to go beyond unanswered calls and reach his superior. In the quick conversation, we were assured a reply from Dec. 'M'. Once we finally spoke to him, we were shocked to find out my brothers case is NOT closed! As we start talking about events of that night, he can't answer my

questions! They made a point of doing residue testing on my husband and I, (in front of my family still waiting for answers behind the crime scene tape) but he doesn't know where or if testing was done on my brother or his girlfriend?? SO, I was held in a police car for six hours having to deal with the sudden death of my brother alone, so they could do their investigation... that was possibly not even done?!?! Converse Police Department is inadequate! Bexar County is inadequate!!!!

All these things start coming to my mind as I share with the Detective 'M'. (I won't do specifics) Even though, it's nice to let out what is in my mind, Detective 'M' states the case isn't closed because 'R' refuses to take a polygraph test or even another interview. He, himself is having difficulty getting calls returned. My instructions are to wait on him to get back to me. I know my brother was dealing with a lot and under pressure. I have the impression that night was intensified with their combined frustration of the argument, reaching its limit. I am hoping one day his case is closed and I'm satisfied.

Have you ever noticed how the mind keeps nursing the cuts of a 'broken heart'? Always running the story of what happened to us, continuously gnawing on the "what ifs". Like my tongue constantly returning to a hole from a tooth; just removed by a dentist. It just won't let go, can it? I visit all these places, grand in nature, even on some people's bucket list. Why can't I enjoy it and appreciate its marvel? It does not matter where I live or what I'm doing, my heart will not let me take that pleasure. GOD, it just hurts so freakin' bad!! I have this impression of being very small, tiny inside this dark space that covers me. I can feel it sooo DEEP, it's making my whole lower abdomen tremor as my ears start to ring and buzz louder. What is different or wrong with me?

Maybe, I have some sort of brain tumor to match the one I had near my heart. Persistent stomach pain finally led me to see a Doctor, back in

2006. It was the time my husband and I were fully covered under health insurance. Going along with all the tests, I was scheduled for an MRI. I've had one before, so the actual appointment appeared normal. Incredibly, I received a letter from the Radiology Department quicker than they even specified. All read normal until I came across the word "mass" of something. That was it. Apparently, the area in question was cut off from the picture enough, to display the edge of an object that did not belong. The response from the second test made me answer the phone when Doctor Vaughn called the very next day. Holding in his hands, were the results of my test which he recited briefly, but very to the point. The Magnetic Resonance Imagine showed a "mass between seven and nine centimeters large." It apparently rests in an area beyond his expertise. Even though I had so many questions, all I could do was listen. I jotted down all the information for the appointment he already made with, Doctor Stam, a cardiologist. Two days I had to wait before the meeting was scheduled. Two days!!! I know others have waited longer, as I respect, but; forty eight hours of non-stop anxiety is grueling!

His office was not hard to find since I did a practice run earlier, in anticipation. For once, a parking spot was not only available; it was right in front of the entrance! Good, because I could not be more in a hurry to find out what is inside me! Did I swallow something that grew, was it cancer, how did it get there? With all my fears, I stepped through the door of his office. There was not any time to lose weight or shrink, but I swear it felt like I could have measured only inches high. Everything and everybody seemed so much larger than me. Making my way to the window, I recite my name to the receptionist. Geeze, the small amount of words coursed my throat like sand. All my other correspondences were given with a slow motion nod; that did not bother nor surprise any of the nurses. I do not think I can speak without showing how petrified I am. I was not even embarrassed to hand over some forms I filled out with shaky writing.

My arms barely touched the chair rests to sit back down, and a nurse with pink scrubs appears at the doorway. She says my name out loud, "Linda Donnelly?" Jumping back up, not as if I had won the lottery; but even the sound of my own name startled me. I am led to the back room, which looks like it may be the Doctors' actual office. Again, with the pacing, things were moving along too quickly. That was it! I could not sit in the chair and look at the pretty pictures on the wall anymore. Actually, I could not sit altogether, because my heart felt like it was pounding its way out of me. What did they find? Am I going to die?? OH, I should have prepared more! Hearing the small tap on the door finally brought a deep breath into my lungs. A middle aged man wearing a three piece suit, walk in and introduced himself. No time for pleasantries was the impression I got, as he sat down at his desk with my file and x-rays in his hands. As he glanced through them I was not sure if he was reading to himself or trying to think of a way to break some awful news to me. He then stood up and walked toward me, pulling up the other chair to sit down. "Do you know what a Teratoma is", he asked. "A what", I thought and said out loud.

I was diagnosed with having a tumor since the time of my birth. This tumor grew along with me, sucking up all my nutrients my entire life. This is referred to as a Teratoma, situated between my right lung and heart. I was shocked to find out it is laying over my lung with so much pressure to affect its function! I am urged to schedule surgery within two weeks before my lung loses its' ability to function and collapses!! Wow, maybe the idea of swallowing something would have been better to handle. Doctor Marc Stam picks up his desktop calendar and places his finger on 3 days away!! "Can you make arrangements for this date", he says. Well... I think the real question should be, "Can YOU make arrangements for that date?"

I have had three children, survived three car accidents, sought treatment for pain in the past; and never have Doctors seen this "mass"?

Now, in approximately two weeks my lung could be flattened! There was no easy way of telling my Mom, I knew that! The words will have to come out of mouth this time, a nod or the look of disparity cannot be heard. As usual, my fear obscured any tone of reason I wanted to portray. Even though she is by far, overwhelmed, I hear her confident expression; "everything will be ok." My family did not hesitate and packed their suitcases. My Mom, Dad, brother (Brian), my son and daughter drove over 1300 miles in one car; to help me face seventy percent odds.

Ok, now I want you to count down from ten, please. I took a big breathe before starting and hoped it was not gonna be my last voluntary one. Happy thoughts, I try, happy thoughts... Boom!

I wake up absolutely freezing and see my family all around me. My Mother-in law was able to drive up and be there too! Reacting so thankful, I try to lift myself up to hug them all until I am tugged back. Oh, my goodness, there are tubes under my blanket attached to this pumping machine! A catheter, maybe? Slowly lifting up my blanket, I traced it going under my robe. Hmm, kind of thicker tubes for that, I thought as I raised the corner to take a peek. Ewh, what are those? I wished I could have been told of having chest tubes beforehand, for the very least of the shock value. Of all the pain from recovery, I will state, removal of my chest tubes were, downright the worst!!

After the extraction of my teratoma, I was told of its' certain 'qualities'. The size was larger than anticipated and one of my nerves was somehow wrapped in it. The doctor had to inform me of future "discomfort". But, that is not the biggest characteristic to mention. The laboratory was fast to examine this accumulation of growth, not to be malignant. However, when this grapefruit sized mass was opened; everybody was taken aback. They sifted through human hair to also find some teeth! Oh, my goodness!! It did actually grow along with me, possibly

a twin inside me?? I don't need to go any further than that... I try not to visualize it at all.

So, if the tumor does not answer what is wrong with me; maybe I have some type of ability. It is a fact that not every human brain operates the same way. I have been told and read certain abilities can be hereditary and passed down generations. I witnessed the power of prayer along with my mom's hand to achieve what medicine could not. You have read that I am not the only family member to have certain visions, visits and premonition dreams. I wish one day, I could reunite with my extended family to explore more.

Maybe you are reading an insight to a severely depressed person. You, my readers, will be my crutch on getting better. Perhaps this feeling is normal after losing someone close and being a part of the crime scene. I have never felt such long lasting misery that I could not stumble through - I feel BROKEN. It really frightens me how long some of my episodes can last, giving lots of time to always replay the event. Maybe, I'm all of the above... ha ha.

I honestly, think it is time to find answers and no more excuses. I cannot keep going on like this. I am scared. My own thoughts rationalize the odds of how this world does not need me. Last tally, the odds were not in my favor. I demand to find out WHERE my brother, Bobby is. Since he spoke to me after his death, meant he still exists; he is still some where!! I bet my life on it!! If I can prove that, I should be able to explain (or try to) life after death. Could any of my (our) phenomena's really happen? I must stop doubting they occurred so I can figure out how and why instead. I know what I have seen, what I have heard and dreamt. No time like the present to find those answers and have my brother, Bobby, be my inspiration!

