

See you in two minutes, ma!

See you in two minutes, ma! The words echoed in the hallway as the front door closed and re-opened in a burst followed by a trundling of long legs up the stairs and down as quickly. All over in a blur and this time the silence left uninterrupted. Me standing in the kitchen ironing some innocuous piece of clothing in a mundane way on an ordinary Saturday evening, in an ordinary house in a Cul de Sac with a green area, where children kick ball and have tea parties with plastic tea-sets and he and his crew set up a tent to camp out, where they tumble wrestle with each other and take selfies, plan battles on xbox, dance, sing, shout, share a smoke behind a wall. Here in this ordinary life the unthinkable happened. My life was transformed forever that evening as that was the last time I saw him alive.

That scene plays in my mind over and over, etched forever in my memory as I examine those last moments with forensic determination looking for a clue, an indication, a something, there has got to be a something that could have, that would have changed the outcome, what did I miss??? But like a scratch on an old vinyl record the needle returns to the same thought processes, the outcome remains unchanged, he's no longer here, he left us by his own hand, his own choice. My mind is

screaming so many words but the truth is unwavering. He's fifteen years-old, he is supposed to be here! But he's gone. All over in a blur!

And so my life stopped and began again as the mother of a suicide victim. Those words sit uncomfortably in the air. What was he a victim of? Love? Teenage Angst? Troubled? Depressed? Are these the words associated with him now and forever more as some sense of this event can be attained and his absence means there is no defence. People can make up their own minds about what ailed him .

But, but, but, he was the life and soul of the party, the glue that held his crew together, the laughter, the joker, the music maker, the risk taker. He bustled in and out of the door always accompanied by mates. He danced around the kitchen, opening and shutting the cupboard doors looking for food that stared back at him from laden shelves as he declared there was nothing to eat. Boisterous in his enthusiasm for music and socialising, loving his friends in a deeply loyal way, things were never quiet in his wake. Mature in so many ways as his body grew and changed overnight into a manly composition. Hairy legs in training shorts, shadow over his lip. Hair gel and deodorant became prized possessions, almost a crisis if either were in short supply. Such a paradox of emotions emanated from him, such a typical teenager.

Boundaries were made to be reverberated against and tested and did he give that a good innings? And so when two minutes didn't return him home I thought not too much of it. Gone for a smoke I thought discontentedly, yes I knew he smoked and he knew I knew and I knew because he told me. He told me a lot of the things he and his friends did, hardly the typical profile of a young man contemplating suicide. In fact he had been at a party the night before and he was to fill me in on the details on the way to his fathers. I liked those short trips to and from his fathers. The car was a space where, uninterrupted, we could really connect. Of course some trips he sat earphones on, music playing and his enthusiasm for a song would find his hands drumming the rhythm on his legs. "Now that's a tune, Ma", he'd exclaim, having blasted the volume on the car radio. I enjoyed music of all genres and he liked to educate me on the latest. He and some of the crew had taken to learning Ed Sheerin songs, very wordy pieces with barely time for a breath and would perform them in front of my tv before leaving the room with an air of electricity generated by their intensity hanging in the air.

My mind leaps and I see him now down by the river, body rigid, eyes empty looking blankly ahead. I hear myself scream and cry out as I'm ripped apart inside in an instant to the core of my being. I wonder where he got the cord I see around his neck. It's so cold and he's been out there all night. There's a bite in the morning air still sharp as my lungs inhale.

The search party had widened into more friends and training was suffering with a lack of numbers as our search party grew. He has his winter jacket on, the one he loved, the one his dad bought for him, the one I constantly was grateful for as that particular coat was well insulated and good defence against the cold wet weather. He feels cold. I try to hug him, to hold him, to feel him breathing. I know it's not possible but I'm willing it to happen anyway.

Two gardai are there, his dad and...oh my god! I have to ring his sister, how can I tell her what's unfolded in front of me? His older sister, Ciara, in her first year in college, who stayed over in her boyfriend's family home for the weekend as she has begun to do, this weekend unwell with a fever and throat infection. I feel a lurch in my stomach as I dial her number and ask her to come as quickly as she can trying to hold back the devastation in my voice until she can arrange to get here, but she knows the gravity in my tone and responds in a gasp as her voice trails away and she hangs up. I see his friends standing shocked to the core as they witnessed the tragedy they came upon minutes before me and his dad. It looks as if the air has been physically punched out of their bodies. The ashen faces! The uncharacteristic silence as they stand and stare blankly ahead! I can hear and see but I'm suspended in disbelief. Is this what they are feeling too? They are too young to be experiencing this for the second time amongst their peers. Not six months ago they buried their

14 year old friend who left this world also by his own demise. Has my son followed him?

These three lads helping us look for him didn't expect this outcome, nor the rest of them who roamed and checked the usual hideouts and hangouts they frequented. We had been out. his crew, me, the gardai, not weeks before looking for another teen who showed up cold and embarrassed by the attention it captured.

I'm drawn to the river as all the while it runs alongside the scene and the chaos that's erupting as word spreads and the crowd gathers. The constant flow without interruption, without need to alter its course in the wake of its banks holding a horror show. I'm slammed back to the scene at hand as Ciara arrives screaming to see him, as the garda tries to hold her back." Let her see him I scream, she needs to see him." I follow her to his side, her father having completed the task of untying his son and laying him on the ground, grasps hold of his daughter to support her in this moment of horror. She kneels by her young brother and strokes his face and coat much like I did and tries to hold him and hug him but his eyes wide and staring colder than the December air never blinking in recognition for any of us. She stares at his eyes and exclaims "he's not there anymore. He's gone. I needed to see that or I'd never have believed it."

My mind can't understand the evidence I see before me. This cannot be real. That cannot be him, there must be a mistake. He is frozen in time, my child, my son .The sounds that escape my mouth come from a place I didn't know exists in me. I hear something similar from his sister, his father subdued in to a stunned silence, we each trying to processes a scene that has no resemblance to our lives to date. Time stops, bears no meaning and somehow I reach into myself and begin to call my family, our nearest and dearest recoiling in despair as each respond to the devastating news with a resounding, ' NO!' A shroud of disbelief overwhelming each one and I'm struck once again by the water, relentless in its flow, oblivious to the pain and the tragic circumstance on its banks.

And then it's back to the house without him, I feel so empty, I want to be with him. A doctor materialises offering injections of valium. I decline, Ciara accepts, my ex-husband Dave gone to tell his partner and face the dilemma of whether and what to tell their 4year old son.

The words out, the network's been alerted and people begin making their way to our little house in our street in the small town we live in. The town, shaken to the core by this breaking news for the second time in six months. I wrestle with the pain, the disbelief, the need to call my

sister Louise, barely landed in Australia on honeymoon. I take myself to the quiet of the bedroom where he usually lay and dial her number. Once again I have to say the words out loud. "Our beloved Darragh is gone."

Again the shock waves are audible across the miles as this news tries to land into her consciousness. He, who dug the garden, and helped decorate the marquee for their ceremony, he, looking so handsome at their civil partnership only months before, he, at their send off dinner in a city restaurant only a week before. He cannot be gone surely? She and her new wife Lisa have to make the long journey home. I assure her we will wait for them.

The house fills, people arriving incredulous, shocked, sympathetic. Neighbours, friends, family, colleagues - most unable to find words. Some carrying big pots of warm soup, stews and plates of sandwiches covered in foil as they arrive. A friend offers to take away the laundry, standing in the kitchen on a rail and dry and iron them. I am deeply grateful.

We find ourselves, his father sister and I, in this strange hue of disbelief, irrevocably changed by the events of the hours before. Each one of us in our own chamber of horrors as we grasp at fragments of information, piecing together his last hours as best we can. A photo taken that day on

a phone as he helped decorate the community centre for the Santa's grotto is scrutinised for signs of impending devastation. He stares back at me from his mates' phone unmoved by my desperation to know something. And so begins the days of the rest of my now altered life.
