

Spell

Oliver had just woken up from his afternoon nap. We cuddled on the sofa for a while then I offered him scrambled eggs, his favourite meal. Helium balloons from his 2nd birthday were still floating beneath the ceiling. I put Paddington on to keep him company while I was in the kitchen, preparing the eggs when I heard him.

It sounded like hick ups, only different, consistent. I leaned out of the kitchen to check on him. He was laying on his side. He does that sometimes, I thought. I walked over to tell him to move away from the screen. What happened next is a blur yet the feelings that overwhelmed me still very intense.

Scrapped of expression and emotion, his face looked lifeless. Sparkless eyes stared into nothingness. Pool of saliva had dripped out of his mouth and collected on the sofa around his cheek. Bubbles gathered in the corner of his lips. His body twitched silently in the rhythm of the sound he'd just made. Desperate, I picked him up and saw his lips had turned purple. His distant eyes looked right through me. Face wiped of all colour. His body limp in my hands. His arms hanging softly by his sides.

'Oli!', I cried to the heavens begging to not take my baby away. Paralysed by grief, I feared I was holding him for the last time.

I was shaking. My heart was racing. Guilt, fear, and sudden awareness of the injustice and cruelty of this cold universe rushed through my mind. I need to snap out of it, I thought, and save my boy.

I thought he was choking, so I bent him over my forearm, felt his belly sink against it, and I started slapping his upper back. His arms stretched towards the floor. I was scared that I wasn't doing it right. Scared of stopping and losing him forever, but I needed to call the ambulance.

I could barely dial the number. As I heard the voice on the other side, Oliver's eyes closed. Maybe if I'd put his hearing aids on when he woke up, he would've heard my calls. I couldn't stand the thought he was in there somewhere, scared and alone in silent darkness without his daddy's voice to guide him.

'My son is choking!', I yelled with agony to the calm, almost cold and uncaring voice in the speaker. Her lack of urgency and empathy shocked and offended me. She told me to stop slapping his back, put him on his side and try to remove saliva from his mouth, but his teeth were clamped with impossible force. Help was on its way, she said as I looked at his face wondering if it'd ever light up again.

I begged her to hurry as I kneeled next to my boy feeling powerless and exposed. Eggs were burning in the kitchen.

The sound of the ambulance in the distance was getting closer until the blue flashing lights penetrated that black winter afternoon outside the window. He

was still unconscious, but still with me. You're gonna be alright, I said, you're gonna be alright.