

## Seconds

Seconds. Seconds it took for the abrupt stop of one life I had and the start of another. Seconds, it took my son on his bathroom floor to breathe his last breath. How do you start a letter to describe life as we know it after being changed forever by Fentanyl, Xylazine, and Kratom? How do I put in words the day I became someone else? That day my grandchildren stopped smiling. Our story is brutally sad. So sad that I have trouble telling it because I don't want the person listening to feel the sadness, we feel actually living it. It's been almost four years and in a lot of ways, it feels like yesterday. I used to sit on the side of my couch and say to Jordan, "If you don't change these ways, your children will be raised by another man" thinking words would somehow "fix" things and push him. Reflecting back now, this was a fast-moving train headed straight for our family, and I was powerless to stop it. Jordan wanted to stop it, Jordan didn't want this for any of us. Our story has so many places where intervention of anything could have changed the trajectory of the outcome, but it didn't.

To start this letter, I have to go back to the beginning. I guess the first time I saw difficulties was when my son Jordan started showing difficulties with ADHD. Medication was given and he was placed in "behavioral" type classes even as early as elementary school. His hyperactivity was grouped with children that had behavioral type issues. This is the first issue. Kids with learning disabilities should not be grouped in a one size fits all classroom. This shaped Jordan to be mischievous but the life of the party. Popular but disruptive. The medication was, I believe at times, needed but laid the basis for drug use in the future. This is my opinion on ADHD medications. But the facts are that kids who take ADHD medications are 1.6 to 3.3 times more likely to misuse substances.

Teenage life was difficult. He had minor issues with law enforcement. At 14, he and his friends accidentally set a small fire to a fishing dock. Jordan, with my encouragement, was the only one who came forward and owned up to what he had done. The dock belonged to a sheriff deputy. The deputy wanted to work with Jordan and agreed to do so. But later he turned him into the court system before giving that opportunity to have Jordan correct what he had did. This is the beginning of a long relationship with the judicial system. I respect our judicial system and I always have. I do not have rose colored glasses on to know that my son made the decisions he made that caused us to be where we are today, I can even pinpoint times when I failed as a parent. But, the system is broken. There are times when it becomes so impersonal and punitive not rehabilitative. At 17, he and his friends broke in a neighbor's house and car. Things that were took were sodas out of the refrigerator,

cigarettes, etc.. Jordan was given 10 years' probation under the First Offenders Act. Now while he should have paid for his crimes, a 10-year time on a teenager is harsh without supports in place. It is ultimately a "set up for failure". Jordan continued to have minor offenses and when he was 22, his First Offenders was revoked, and he was sentenced to 3 years prison time. Prison is where Jordan was exposed to drug availabilities like he had not had access to before. I begged the correctional system to place him where he could obtain mental health and drug counseling and was told by Georgia Department of Corrections" be careful they will put him in Milledgeville where *those types of inmates go*" After one year of being at a minimum-security prison he was transferred to transitional center where he broke a rule and was caught with cigarettes. He was then transferred to a medium security prison. This was the decline of the Jordan we knew. This place was harsh and had no rehabilitative programs for him. While he should have had consequences, medium security was detrimental to him and was what we thought as his family, overkill. This prison was basically an inmate warehouse. I wrote massive letters blanketing every state office I could, including governor's office, asking for help to get him where he needed to be and get the supports in place to transition when it was time back out in the community with therapy lined up. I received no response. Not one single letter or call. As a family we even paid 20,000 to hire an attorney to apply for Habeas Corpus but that later was lost. We knew with his background after prison time it was going to be an uphill battle and it was. Upon leaving the prison system Jordan was addicted to any drug he could get his hands on and he had deep depression. Prison reform is truly needed especially for private prisons but that is letter for another time.

As his mother, I was desperate to get him the help he needed. I pleaded and begged for family support which was lacking, I set up medical appointments to get him on some type of medication that may help. The effects of medication weren't fast acting enough to control the urges for the fast-acting drugs he could obtain. Jordan was encouraged and required by the judicial system to attend a rehabilitation program. The family is left to locate this rehab with no resources out there to give guidance. One rehab I found, a resident slid me a note that said" do not come here if you wanting to get clean" Jordan was finally admitted to a Christian men rehabilitation program, and he grew weary and he walked away. Covid hit and there were no outside meetings held in our area such as NA, AA, etc. Due to Covid, the courts allowed Jordan to remain at home. He fell through the cracks. He had very little oversight. He eventually attended another men's rehabilitation program, and this is the beginning of a descent into pure heartache as we know it. This rehab wasn't monitored as it should have been. This rehab Jordan had to bring his own bed, and he had to ask his family once to pay the lights for the home as the rehab had not paid it. The lights were about to be disconnected. This rehab is where he was exposed to heroin for

the first time by a roommate. He knew this wasn't good and he had always prided himself that he wasn't an IV drug user. But this he found settled his thoughts, made his depression subside and he thought this was his answer. Once he realized he could not afford this drug, he tried the methadone clinic route. But all this did was trade one drug for another. We tried this on and off for two years. We traveled a good bit as a family and had to find methadone clinics in each town each day when we traveled for him to receive his dose. We even found one out in the middle of nowhere in Montana. I'm sure there are methadone success stories, but it is a business making money, no doubt. The decrease of milligrams is long term. He saw no end in that, and he eventually quit the clinic as drugs on the street were easier to deal with. Jordan truly tried to handle the methadone as a gateway to becoming free from drugs but to no avail. The process was time consuming and hard.

One time I drove him 1200 miles from home to stay in a cabin to detox himself. It was a desperate attempt to detox and start fresh. As a mother, this was terrifying to watch. To watch your child change skin colors and being so sick during detoxification was frightening. Meanwhile his son of 4 is playing in snow as he is oblivious to what is going on around him. Upon leaving the northernmost part of the US that we could go, we searched for a methadone clinic as we found we could not detox ourselves. We truly were out there trying to handle a problem, and we were not equipped to handle. Upon arriving in Boston, a clinic was located but he had to wait 2 days for admission as required. This is a problem as well. Within these two days, he had asked someone in the parking lot where he could find something, and his heroin use began again.

This struggle continued. Friends/drug dealers contacted him daily to sell. He would change his number and try to be not available, and they would leave notes and samples of drugs in his mailbox. There was no escape. Jordan was not spared of any of this. One dealer was an elderly man on dialysis who sold to half the county and had a sheriff deputy that lived across the street. Everyone knew he sold and he still sells to this day. What is brutal is his vehicle is the same as my best friends, so I wave at it constantly thinking its someone else instead in actuality I'm waving to his drug dealer who supplied him with heroin and opioids. Talk about being slapped into reality.

As his mother, I was constantly trying to figure out how to stop this vicious cycle we all were living. With my encouragement, Jordan went to the Amen Clinic in Atlanta and completed extensive brain scans. We paid for this out of pocket. He was prescribed herbal medication but the effects for a drug user was not enough. He tried to find consistent employment that could be a career but the criminal background he had prevented most jobs. Energy levels was also affected due to heroin use. It became a cycle of pain that he remained powerless over.

Things started to turn slightly, we were on the upswing after many years of battling depression, legal issues, and drug addiction. Jordan was finally grasping the need to change, the need to be happy, and the need to live. I tried to offer tough love and made it work most of the time but I also know I enabled. We agreed that he no longer would obtain money from me or anyone for any reason other than small amounts until he was able to get back on his feet fully. That last morning, he came by eager to start his new life after being clean for over 30 days. He kissed his 14-year-old autistic daughter on her forehead and said he had big plans for the day. He asked for 20.00. I gave him 20.00 thinking this was so small and would do no damage.

This all changed when a friend who he thought was a friend gave him something that was pure Fentanyl and Xylazine for that 20.00. I do know Jordan wasn't aware this was his mixture. I have to live with that for the rest of my life. The so-called friend has to live with what she done as well. I've screamed out in court when the judge was arraigning her for other drug charges that she killed my son but was cut off by the judge and was told I couldn't speak at this hearing. But I was heard! She met him that morning. This transpired in my driveway, out of my view, while I worked at a computer. While I was working away having good thoughts about the future, my son was dying on his bathroom floor three miles from my house. I was the one who found him curled up face down with knees bent while his daughter of 12 ran upstairs to tell him we had brought lunch for him. I believe God was with us that day to let me find him and not his daughter.

We lost Jordan 05/25/2022. This loss affected so many people. Jordan was 32. He loved fishing and spending time with his children. He loved history and watched every documentary I believe that was available. He loved the Civil War, riding dirt bikes, loved to read, and riding around in his truck. He was eager to travel and see the world. He had really big dreams. He was loved by many. He was important and had a loving heart. A mama's boy some may say. The trickledown effect has rippled down and will continue for generations. At the time of this family tragedy, Jordan's children were 14, 12, 10, 6. We live in a town that has a population of less than 50,000. Fentanyl/Xylazine wasn't discussed by anyone. There was no support from local and state officials in regard to drug education, good rehabilitation programs, or community involvement. Our DA office wasn't on the same page as our law enforcement.

That day forward, we were all changed. Pain and sadness were on a whole different level. Nothing prepares you for watching a six-year-old try to climb in the casket of his daddy. Nothing prepares you for a 10-year-old to say "It's my fault I didn't spend more time with daddy" as kids tends to blame themselves. Nothing prepares you to answer a 9-year-olds question later "Is daddy bones now in the ground Maim Maw"?" Nothing prepares you for

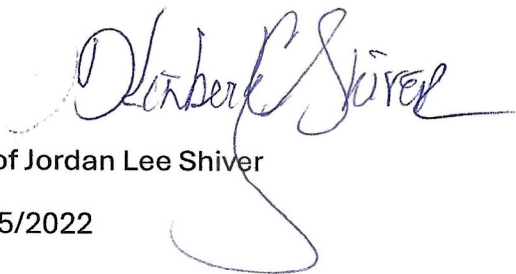
the only 1 of 3 times his autistic nonverbal daughter has cried was the day he died as if somehow, she knew. Nothing prepares you for the youngest child of 6 who lost his mother a year later to a drug overdose. At her funeral I watched this child take a shovel with his grandfather and bury the casket themselves with dirt. This child lost both parents and was instantly orphaned. For two years after his death, I made payments to his last rehab that wasn't paid for. Now I'm raising 2 of his 4 children in my grandma years. One has lost 2 parents to drugs and the other lost 1 and currently has a missing MIA -suspected drug use – other parent.

We are almost four years into grief, and we all are affected in all aspects of our life. His children are forever affected. There is the before and there is the after. Daily times as his mother still have moments where I feel like I have been kicked in the stomach. One of his daughters is now 15. She needs that father to teach her how to drive, offer her guidance on boys, the day she needs him to walk her down the aisle, and he isn't here. All of the kids are affected as are the rest of his extended family. His sister has been affected. So many times siblings are not discussed enough and how this affects them.

The system is broken, we need reform and oversight in the correctional, judicial, and rehabilitation programs. We need extensive education and “drugs off the street” incentives. Law enforcement needs to work closely with the court system. Compassion needs to be taught to and demanded by law enforcement and prison workers. Had I been there and had Narcan, Narcan would only have reversed the respiratory depression caused by fentanyl. It would not have counteracted the xylazine. **We need Xylazine listed as a federally scheduled drug** that is increasingly mixed with fentanyl, making it even more deadly.

I am stronger than I think and I know this isn't all of the story. Seconds, is all it took to change our lives forever and seconds it will take to breathe again and move forward.

Kimberly C Shiver



In loving memory of Jordan Lee Shiver

12/22/1989 – 05/25/2022

Forever 32



