

The story of my beautiful son, Jacob Vasquez  
Born 8/21/96 - Stolen from us on 11/28/20  
Fentanyl Poisoning in a counterfeit Xanax  
Gilroy, California

My son Jacob, my youngest child, my only son, was the light in our family. He was handsome, athletic, artistic and creative, adventurous, silly, sentimental, affectionate, joyful. He brought laughter and love to everyone, everywhere, always. On Thanksgiving weekend of 2020, Jacob flew home to visit. Less than 46 hours later, we found him dead in the bed of his childhood bedroom, his little dog Sophie next to him. In the anguish, despair and screams of disbelief that followed, we had no idea of what happened. The only clue found was a Xanax pill in his pocket, and a text to an old highschool acquaintance asking for some. There lay my son...under a yellow sheet in the entryway of our home. Seven hours until the coroner came to pick him up, and then Seven months to find out confirmation in his report, that he died from a counterfeit pill, dead from a normal looking pill that had hidden a lethal amount of illicit fentanyl, enough to kill five people, something we had never heard of and had no idea even existed.

To say that the holidays, since then, will never be the same is an understatement. We had already bought our Christmas presents for him. He had already bought his plane tickets to be with us for Christmas. My dear friends, who came to help me those horribly black days after my son died, put up my Christmas tree for me. I can not even begin to describe the feeling, seeing my dead son's unopened presents under the tree. The anguish. The despair. The trauma.

One minute my son was enjoying a holiday weekend with his family; the next minute, he was gone. From one. single. pill. All of his goals, plans and dreams, taken from him in an instant, poisoned to death by a pill. Our family is forever broken; the never-ending void and silence created by my son's absence is deafening. He had always been the wonderfully noisy one. My son loved deeply; we deeply loved him. The pain I live with, the hole in my shattered heart, cannot be described in words. Gone. Just like that. Our family will never be the same. I ache to see all three of my children in our family photos. An empty space, where he should be. My poor daughters, navigating life without their brother. Our little, broken family, forced into this hellish, horrible journey forced upon us. My Jacob, my angel...I love and miss you fiercely, my beautiful, beloved Jacob-boy. Forever 24.

- Jacob's mama  
Geraldyn Vasquez

His dad picked them up at the airport and was taking them directly to the beach, at Jacob's request; having moved to Oklahoma, he missed the beach terribly. I had been sitting home, prepping for Thanksgiving between my Zoom teacher meetings, when I heard the car pull up and Jacob drag his travel suitcase up the drive, his joyful laughter music to my ears, I was so excited to have him home! I was cooking all of his favorite things, had his bedroom all cleaned and fresh and ready for him.

We had a weekend filled with family, friends and activities. Right off the bat, Jacob made plans. He went to the outlets for Christmas shopping that night, hiked with his girlfriend Thanksgiving morning, went back to the beach near Monterey the next day, called his grandparents to see them on his last day before traveling back. He was filled with the love of life. That night he and I hung out in the kitchen as I finished up the last of the Thanksgiving weekend cleanup, he was working on his computer. It was so nice just to have him near, and I could feel our bond as we both did our tasks. I went to bed around 10:30. He came in about 30 minutes later to tell us goodnight, tell us he loved us. The last thing he said to me was "Get me up early mama, let's cook breakfast together. Don't forget, mama. I love you mama." Shortly after 2 am I woke up. I had a strange feeling. I could not put my finger on it. After an hour of tossing and turning, I decided that the house was too warm and went to turn off the heater. I noticed the light on under the door of Jacob's childhood bedroom...nothing unusual, he would often fall asleep with his light on. I tried the door handle to turn the light off for him, but it was locked. I wondered about this for a minute, why was it locked? I assumed he wanted privacy, that he had fallen asleep, and I went back to bed. I still could not sleep, I still had an uneasy feeling...3:45 am was the last time I remember checking the clock. I eventually fell asleep.

The next morning. At 8 am, I got up, saw his light still on. I decided to let him sleep until 9 before starting breakfast. His girlfriend came over about 8:15 am after visiting her family for the night. I told her Jacob was still asleep. Somehow she got into his room. A horrible, bone chilling scream...her scream. In that split second I knew he was gone, knew what had awoken me at 2 am. Knew the reason for the uneasy feeling I had in those early morning hours. His dad tried CPR while his sister called 911. I was in trance, I saw my son's beautiful face, saw his blue lips, touched his sweet hands, the warmth already fading. I knew he was gone. In the blink of an eye, my world came crashing down. My beloved son was gone. Gone. I repeated it over and over. Gone.

The paramedics pronounced him dead by 8:35. The deputies found a Xanax pill in his pocket. There was nothing else around. Phone texts showed that he had made contact with a former

classmate asking for Xanax. It didn't make sense. How could Xanax kill someone? For almost seven hours I lay sobbing over my son's body, covered with a yellow sheet. In the background the wails of his sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, friends...over seven hours of waiting, while everyone came to put their hands on our beloved boy, held his now cold hands, kissed his sweet face. My child, who died in the very room he had grown up in, the same room he had played in as a little boy, where I had read his favorite bedtime stories to him, where I took care of him when he was ill, where he had his buddies over to hang out with him. Gone. Someone dragged me away, sobbing, when they finally came to take my son away. I heard the gurney rolling away to the coroner's van, the van engine starting and pulling out of the driveway. Gone. My handsome, beautiful son, who I had just been talking to and laughing with just 8 hours earlier before that horrific morning, was gone.

On the evening of that awful, nightmarish day, my daughter did some research, and found one post on Facebook from another grieving Gilroy mom who had also lost her 17 year old son to Fentanyl in a Xanax pill...that was the first time any of us had ever heard of fake pills or Fentanyl. After a seven month coroner wait, this is what was confirmed. Why in the world was something as dangerous and as deceitful as this illicit drug being put into prescription looking pills not being warned about to the general public? Why did I actually have to search for information about it? Why was there no public service announcement, like there was for Covid, drunk driving, texting while driving? My son did not want to die. He had a weekend filled with plans, He was ADHD, and was most likely trying to calm anxiety. Instead, he was poisoned. He would never open up the present we had already bought and wrapped for him that Christmas, placed under the tree that my best friends had put up because they knew how much Jacob loved Christmas, how he looked forward to it.. I was in bed, unable to function, praying for God to take me too. How I prayed and prayed, for God to take me too.

A year and a half later, I am still shattered and heartbroken. I will never be the same. I cry for my son every day .I long to hear his voice, see his brilliant, joyful smile and twinkling eyes. I want to rub the top of his head, which he loved. I want to cook him his favorite meals. He had a beautiful girlfriend, numerous friends, his pet Yorkie, a business venture, so many plans and dreams. He wanted to get married, have kids, eventually buy from us his childhood home to raise his own family in, and take care of us in our old age. He was silly and spontaneous, artistic and athletic, sentimental and affectionate, adored and beloved. He was filled with light and joy. He was stolen from us by a single, fake pill. The dealer still walks the streets. He is alive, while my son no longer is. I will forever feel that his spirit leaving his body is what woke me up in those early morning hours of November 28, 2020. That he was letting me know. I will not be silent. I will keep telling Jacob's story. He will not have died in vain. My precious, sweet, baby boy Jacob. Forever 24. I love you and miss you deeply, my unique and spirited child.

Geralyn Vasquez