

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Sharlena Kuehmichel. I'm a senior in High School and an avid artist, in both dance and music. I've known Jared Krutke since I was about 8 years old. Our parents were in the same Bible Study, so every other week I would come over and Jared would watch Jasmine and me. As I grew older Jared wasn't just a babysitter, he became my friend. When he left for the military we remained in touch through e-mail. Jared and I had a great relationship and I always thought of him as another brother.

I will never forget the day I found out about Jared's death. I was doing my usual morning routine before hopping in the shower when the phone rang. My sister had just arrived at church, where she worked, and called me with the news. "Sharlena," she said she softly. "Jared Krutke died." Those three words hit me like a brick wall. I couldn't react. I couldn't do anything. I remember feeling numb as I collapsed on my parent's bed, clutching the phone. "How?" was the only word I could manage to get out. She briefly explained what she knew and then let me go. In a numb state of shock I called my parents, who were gone that morning. I numbly explained to them everything before calling my brother and sharing the news with him. I don't really know how long, but I was in a state of shock and couldn't react. When I finally did, I fell on the floor and lay there crying, I don't know for how long, but I just couldn't stop. When the tears started slowing down, I sat down at my piano, with a pen and paper, and wrote a song. I later sang that same song at his funeral.

For months I struggled with 'why,' but I received no answer. Everything people said was well and good, but none of it helped me. I had so many regrets, so many things I wished I could change, so many more times I wish I could have told him that I loved him. Four months later, I finally found my peace. I was at Summit Ministries in Colorado, watching a movie on radical Islam and it hit me like another wall. 'This was why Jared died,' I kept thinking over and over. I held back my tears throughout the movie, not wanting to cry in front of almost 200 young adults. When I got to my room, I lost it; I cried like he had just died all over again, but after that, I had my 'why.' The details of his death didn't really matter to me, but the fact that he was willing to give his

life to save me, to save our country from people like radical Islamists, that's what mattered. In my mind, Jared died fighting in this war, like a true soldier, like a true hero.

Through dying, Jared's life had more of an impact on me than when he was living. Sure there were so many things during his life that mattered and impacted me, but having him die, that made his life all more precious. His dedication to everything he set his mind to, to everything God wanted him to do, was so astounding! He was truly a man after God and he lived every moment of his life for God so that he could die with no regrets. That's how I want to live my life, with no regrets. Jared always had a great listening ear, and he usually had some good advice to come after all the listening, and I miss that. Sometimes I'll go to his grave and just talk to him, but I know he doesn't hear, and there's no more advice at the end, just silence. Jared also helped me see the important things in living, and how to make every day it's fullest! The lessons I learned from Jared will always be with me, no matter where I go.

Time has moved on and so have I, but I will never forget Jared Krutke. There will always be a void in my heart that he once filled. I'll always remember the last time I saw him alive. I almost didn't see him, but instead of going to Bible Quizzing at church, I skipped out and went to the Bible Study's Christmas Party. We had a blast together! He showed off his beautiful new baby girl, and I sang him a song that I wrote for him. We laughed and played games and I will never forget the smile on his face. He was so full of life, and living it! Two days later he left, and he never came home again.

Sincerely, Sharlena Kuehmichel

Sharlena Kuehmichel
2520 N 19th Street
Sheboygan, WI 53083