

As a father, you never expect to be delivering your daughter's eulogy. That's just not supposed to happen. You expect to be walking her down the aisle on their wedding day or perhaps attending their graduation, but never delivering their eulogy. However, life has a crazy way of turning all your expectations upside down and inside out. Yes, it's not fair, but I believe all things happen for a reason. I don't pretend to know the reason why her life was ended prematurely, but I will be on lifelong search to discover it.

Ellen and I share the belief that Emma was wise beyond our years. If you believe in reincarnation, then you'd have to believe that Emma was a wise old man from a former life. A wise old man that was granted one last chance to come back to the physical world to share a few life lessons with us.

From the first day we peaked at Emma in an ultrasound, she was cramped into a corner of Ellen's womb. Cramped in such a way that she didn't have much room to move around, so she would sit there... kicking the side of placenta to open up a space for her to move. Her small curled up body looked so compressed, so cramped... I affectionately referred to her as my little pierogie, after the small Polish dumpling that I ate growing up.

Her toughness was tested time and time again, and every single time she defeated the odds and survived. She had to withstand 2 laser surgeries and 3 blood transfusions while still in the womb. Once born, the hole in her heart caused her to occasionally shunt blood from one side of her heart to the other. When this happened, you'd see her writhe in pain, but then instantly perk up when you would pick her up to consol her. In the end, she held back the sepsis just long enough for her grandparents to fly in from the East Coast to see her for the very first time. She knew what was happening, but stayed around just long enough to share another lesson with us.

I will spend the rest of my life trying to comprehend what this wise old man was teaching us. I do know one thing though, this soul enriched my life like no one else has ever done before. Emma was a great kid, and I will miss her dearly. However, her life was not always a struggle; she provided us with plenty of good times too.

We used to kid with everyone that Emma didn't have parents, she had staff, and if you didn't care to her needs immediately, you would pay the price. "Her cries sounded like someone stepping on the tail of a sheep." Mwaah-ah-ah-ah. Every now and then Ella creates the same noise and I continue to think of Emma and laugh my ass off. That will ALWAYS be funny.

On one occasion in the hospital, the foam band that Emma wore on her wrist "got stuck in the velcro that was holding her breathing tubes in. Neither the nurse nor I noticed it at first, but Emma was screaming like a banshee." Mwaah-ah-ah-ah. "...The NICU nurse and I looked at each other confused, after a second of

realization, we both figured out what was going on and laughed really loud ... Emma was sitting there flailing with her right arm, trying with all her might to remove it from the velcro, but her arm just wouldn't budge. She was so upset, but it was so cute and so hilarious. She struggled with all of her might but yet she was still unable to budge the tiny arm stuck to the side of her head." Emma always fought with all her strength, regardless of the odds or her own ability to over come. You see, Emma is the new Chuck Norris.

Even though the sisters did not spend their last month together, they did recognize each other. While in the NICU, Ellen attempted to hold both girls together at the same time. She picked them both up and "almost immediately, the girls snuggled close to each other and [Ella grabbed Emma's](#) hand. It was incredibly touching." The nurse quipped that she had been in the NICU for over 10 years and this almost made HER cry. These girls have that kind of effect on people.

Then there was the marsupial phase of their lives, known as kangaroo care. You see kangaroo care is where a shirtless parent holds a child close to their chest. It's supposed to tighten the bond between parent and child. Tighten the bond indeed. One day I tried to hold both Ella and Emma during kangaroo care but "the girls were starting [to root](#). I didn't have a free hand (both of mine were holding a baby), and the girls immediately thought I was mommy and start sucking on my chest like leeches. Instead of [helping me](#), both our nurse and Ellen just sat there and laughed like crazy." This was both funny and embarrassing. However, I do believe in a father's dark humor. So Ella honey, I'll also be sharing the suckling your daddy story with your boyfriend in about 16 years.

One of things that consoled Emma was music. Music was very special to her. One day I started singing the Beatles' Yellow Submarine to her. I don't know why I chose that song, it just popped into my head. "Well anytime I stopped singing or sang another song, Emma got really upset...yes" Mwah-ha-ha-ha "I must have sung "[Yellow Submarine](#)" 30 times to her one morning. ...At that point, I officially hated that song." As Ellen can attest to, I am a HORRIBLE singer, yet Em loved to hear Daddy sing terribly. Now what I wouldn't give to sing it to her just one last time.

Emma also loved her mobiles. She would stare for hours at anything spinning above her head. On many occasions we'd find her spinning her head, as if watching a NASCAR race, as animals spun in a circle above her. Perhaps the funniest instance occurred at Children's Hospital in her cradle swing. The swing swung side to side and had spinning fish attached to the top of it. One day, I walked into the hospital to find Emma in her cradle swing, swinging side to side, while moving her head in a circle. It was classic. That's probably one of my most fond memories of her.

Emma was a fun little girl. She's shown me parts of my soul that I didn't know existed. She continues to live on in spirit all around us. Now that she's gone, Ellen and I have felt her presence increase with each passing day. She informs us that she's still a little upset at us for not keeping her warm on that last day. I can still hear that scream in my head now. Mwah-ha-ha-ha

I am so sorry baby. It wasn't supposed to work out this way. I promised, that if you could fight just one last time that I'd take you home. I wish I could hold you again, one more time and hear your scream. Sweetheart, you are the strongest person I've ever had the pleasure to know. I will continue to follow you. Every time I look at the sun, I will take solace in the fact that you are up there finally warm. My little pierogi, I love you.