



'Her Story'

(As told by Jeanette K. Regnier & Emily Franz)

A Special 4th Anniversary Update (October 18, 2009)

When I hear her calling me in a dream, I forget for the time being that she will not be there when I awake. Having her voice in my head is like having her with me still. I try to stay asleep and remember her words as there is no longer a well-spring of comments and humor and laughter to draw from. Emily can no longer give me her perspective, on her daughter, or anything else. All thoughts are drawn from a past moment in time.

And yet, I am awaked more than once nightly now. Always the same thing: An urgent "MOM" comes to me from Emily. It has been building these last few weeks. But in the four years since her passing, it had only happened once. She called me then, years ago in the same manner and I awoke to a sobbing I realized was coming from me. I did not know that you could cry tears in your sleep but lately, I have a wet pillow more often than not.

But, I hurry to bed in the hopes of hearing her voice: A voice that I miss so dearly; a voice that sounds like she needs me. Ugh, why can't I just have her back...no answers there. I am not living in a dream world. She, my Emily, my baby, my adored daughter is not here and no amount of praying or wishing will return her to her family.

I must admit to a small luxury though. Emily's voice remains on the answering machine at the business her Dad owns and so, on occasion and late at night when I know the machine will pick up, I call. Joy! That is the first emotion. Pure, without presence of mind, just Joy! Then the sadness envelopes me and I want her.

Each encounter with Emily's and Matt's little girl reminds me of what my granddaughter is without, and we, the rest of us are without. I cannot reconcile this. It's wrong and I want my daughter to hold and love her own child.

Cecelia is well: Lanky and thin; happy and healthy. And Cecelia has a very funny trait of her Mother; she speaks so quickly that our ears tend to not hear as fast as she speaks. Classic Emily! Does it mean something less than respectful if I wish that it were Emily raising her own daughter? Does it come off that I don't appreciate that Cecelia has a loving Mommy in her life if all I want is Emily to be

there, reading her stories, reveling in her good school grades and crawling in to bed with her to laugh and cuddle? I do love that Cecelia has Audra in her life. The arms of a Mom are the ones we should always be able to run to and thanks to her, Cecelia has that.

These past few weeks, as the anniversary of her death draws closer, I am overcome with the total emersion of feeling that Emily is disappearing from thought and memory. I seem to be one of the few people who say her name or remember out loud that she was funny, smart beyond reason and mean as a yard dog at times.

So, let's get everyone updated:

Matt is still working at the same job for X-L Machine. Things got considerably slower but his job appears secure. Audra has started a home sales business and works diligently to be successful there as well. Matt and Audra gave Cecelia a busy summer of T-ball, day camp and play dates. Matt's parents continue to do well and last October Matt's sister Tonya, (Emily's dearest friend) married and is happy. Still preparing each summers end for the large, St. Joseph county fair. Something her office is charged with and it is a HUGE undertaking.

Liz, Emily's younger sister gave us a new baby to adore: Grayson William was born last March. Emily would have wanted to be there at his birth, coach her sister and be the third person to hold this enchanting new boy. At a whopping 9 lbs., his arrival was an arduous one. Emily would have shined to see the mother that her little sister has become, soft, loving, nurturing and fierce! We are all fortunate to have Liz and Chuck as family and blessed beyond measure to share in the love and wonderment of a new baby boy.

Of course, Emily would have wanted to know Marshall and Laura's wee man, Marshall Jr. He is so much like his Daddy was as a busy baby with boundless energy and the desire to figure out why things move. And move them, if he can. They are doing okay with the exception of some health problems for Laura. For the time being, she is managing nicely.

There are many more blessings than hardships since Emily passed away. I try not to focus on the downs of life, the economy or the familiar hopelessness that has permeated the country.

But at least once a day, every day I sing a restaurant jingle out loud. It's from Chili's...you know..."I want my baby back, baby back, baby back..." I just leave off the ribs part.

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