



Through Ella's Eyes

by Bob Magnant

An Introduction To Ella

Even before she was born, Miss Ella came to represent the spirit of hope, the power of love and all of those things that are ultimately beautiful in this life. Throughout the period of her mother's pregnancy, I was in the process of writing my first novel which I called *The Last Transition...*, a fact-based tale about the state of our nation in the aftermath of September 11th, as told from the perspective of a typical American family that had grown up as part of the postwar generation and was now caught up in the turmoil of a changing world.

The pending birth of our new grandbaby was my target date for completion of my book but the story grew as world events changed and Ella was already a year old before I wrote the last chapter. My tale is about friendship, love and hope for the future as we evolve globally with the promises of technology and the Internet era. That story ended on a positive note but I wanted to follow it with something more upbeat that I could be equally passionate about.

Through Ella's Eyes is such a story because it speaks to the humanity that's in all of us and reminds us of the optimism that children bring into the world with them, how the simplicity of their vision - before it becomes cluttered with the cynicism that society can introduce - can help us to see clearly the things that we may have forgotten or have never had the opportunity to see before...

Bob Bob - July 27, 2008



Friday, June 13th...

'Thaat's interesting,' said Ella pensively as she slowly looked up at me, still clutching my portable phone to her ear. I had turned her over to her 'Aunt Bra', my sister Barbara who was on the other end of the line, so that she could say 'hello' to Miss Ella. That had been accomplished about five minutes ago, but Barbara was still talking to her in one of her famous continuous-stream-of-thought monologues about God knows what. As I took the phone back from Ella, she chirped **'Ba-bye! Aunt Bra... I love you,** she cooed.

'I'm not sure what you were saying to her,' I told my sister, 'but I think that if you will try talking to her in shorter sentences, you'll find out that she's already quite a conversationalist.'

'I was just talking with her about going to school and asking her how she was doing,' replied Barbara. I smiled to myself, tickled that little Ella, still less than three years old, had already mastered the art of listening to my big sister. While this may not seem like any great achievement to you, and it most definitely wasn't to Miss Ella through her eyes either, it was another revelation for me and simply a byproduct of spending a day with her. Although I have been dealing with my dear sister for some sixty-plus years, I have never been able to wrap up a conversation with her as succinctly as Ella had just done...



I am in constant amazement of how this delightful little munchkin continues to interpret for me whatever she sees in the things around her. And by her doing so, she adds immeasurably to whatever understanding of the world that I have collected up to now.

How do I rate such special consideration? Well I'm married to Judy, her maternal grandmother, who she affectionately refers to as 'Da', which is a nickname carryover from her first grandchild Dylan. I'm proud to admit that I am her 'Bob Bob' and that she is 'Sweet Pea', my grandbaby, but she has the same magic reaction on so many of the people that she meets. Initially she charms them outright and then, by the end of an encounter with her, people appear to be totally bewitched. She is like sweetness personified with insights that goes way beyond her years. You have to keep asking yourself, 'How does she conjure up these thoughts or where has she heard these things?'

Although Ella will not turn three until July 27th that is just a measurement for others to ponder, because her age hasn't made any difference to her so far in her journey toward becoming a fully functioning member in the human race. She actually has started school and is quite proud of the fact. Ask her name and she will confidently announce:

'My name is Ella Addison Rhodes and I go to Discovery Day School! I'm a Caterpillar now but I'm going to be a Butterfly next year...'



And you instantly know that she'll get there. Her abilities to enchant have been in bloom for well over a year now. One of my favorite video clip of her was taken last January. She had spent the night with us and early on the following morning, after donning some 'pixie wings', she perched herself on our bed and created a wonderful story for us about the perils of a 'young butterfly' and her confrontations with an 'annoying monster' using George Soros' book about terrorism as her prop - which I guarantee you is not 'Flittery - Float - Float - Float - Butterfly' by Bea Humacheck! Good Lord knows how such a colorful imagination can be so delightfully packaged?

But I'm getting ahead of myself...

Ella came into the world in a flurry of activity on a Wednesday morning in late July 2005, just a little ahead of schedule... but she was ready. I had already identified her as a leading lady among the women of this family and included her as part of my novel, as I wrote about the preparations being made for the past several months on her behalf by all of them.

She had just finished auditing a Masters program in psychology at Palm Beach Atlantic University in her mommy Mollie's tummy. But no one had been prepared for an emergency delivery on that particular summer day. Fortunately strong hearts and a great medical team brought everyone safely through this first crisis and we all cheered. At 10:25 AM on that blessed morning, a 5 lbs 8 oz perfect little girl came into the world.



In addition, her mom was a beauty and her dad, Adam, was truly a handsome guy who called her 'his little burrito' as he helped to swaddle and care for her in the hospital. Her life was off to a great start.

My late-in-life experience with newborns was limited for the most part. I learned early in the game that there was absolutely no good reason to compete with the ladies when it came to having any rights or privileges or access to a new baby, especially with Julia being the third woman in my immediate household, not to mention the assortment of aunts and all the other surrogate moms that waited on the fringes. Adam's work was cut out for him in whatever direction he turned and I heartily cheered him on.

Initially I didn't understand the passion of grand moms for grandbabies but Judy quickly clarified this for me. In caring for Ella she was, for the first time, experiencing something that she had never been privileged to do before. As a working mom, she'd had only two weeks of maternity leave when each of her three children were born before she had to go back to the office. In helping Mollie with Ella two or three days a week, she was giving herself a deep mothering experience that she had never had the luxury of with her own brood. In exchange, Ella was on the receiving end of an intense love and a level of care that she could never have come by in any other way, which was one step above and beyond the warmth and tenderness of two very wonderful and loving parents.



Ella simply enchants...

Ella talks with a vocabulary that is way beyond her years, that's a given, but it's the way that she speaks that is so enchanting. Her voice has the softness of a lover's whisper mixed with the lilt of a young bird and the warmth of a summer sun. And not knowing what she'll say next always adds an air of excitement to talking with her. For example, here are some snippets taken from some recent conversations that she had first with Judy and then with me:

'Da, I have a story for you...'

'OK, what's the name of your story?' asked Da

[pause] 'Hmm, that's a very good question, Da...'

'Well tell me about your story then...' continued Da'

'Everything was nice and gentle because everyone was kind... and the Easter bunny put jelly beans in my basket and the butterfly said 'goodness gracious' and they lived happily ever after... The End!'

'Wow, what a nice story, Ella...'

'Yes it is!!'



'I'm watching you close... I've learned from the best...'

Even her name is musical!

Calling her name is like singing a song... ella! Ella!! ELLA!!! And she will respond in kind... And she can actually keep a tune... several tunes as a matter of fact! But don't ever tell this young miss to sing louder because her sweet range suddenly becomes all volume.

She gets the most requests to sing '*Over the Rainbow*' and '*Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*' and the latter one actually earned her the first dollar of her career during lunchtime at the Royal Café. She'll sing most anything – including whatever she may be telling you at the moment - but she most enjoys adding animation to '*Itsy, Bitsy Spider*'. She sang her first pop tune on her second birthday, a spirited rendition of Carrie Underwood's '*Wasted*' while she accompanied herself on her pink and white guitar. One morning after a delightful rendition of '*Over The Rainbow*' I remarked:

'Wow, that was very pretty. Do you want to sing another one?'
to which she quickly replied, ***'Oh no... that's enough songs...'***

And as she goes on about the business of play, Ella will sometimes do other totally unexpected things for reasons unknown to us mere mortals:

'I'm gonna go into my bedroom and pout.' In a minute, she returns.
'Hi, I was pouting in my bedroom.' Why? ***'Because I'm not listening!'***



Her polite playmates...

Through the constant efforts of Mommy and Da to make sure that she is receiving all the benefits of a totally-fulfilling childhood, along with proper socialization and sufficient playmate interactions, whether she was with YaYa and DeeDee, visiting us or playing at home, Ella has had Disney's entire cast of characters and a veritable posse of Disney princesses at her side since the day she was born. Three-inch versions of Aurora, Cinderella, Snow White, Jasmine and Belle have served as her constant playmates, bath mates and bedmates and have helped her rule over her Fisher Price kingdom of Little People from the start. She energetically leads them in interactive dialog about everything and anything as if they were flesh and blood. Collectively they have all taken their 'princess-polite' philosophies to a new level and have almost made it an art form.

The other morning I was listening to Ella from the kitchen as I made her ***'raisin toast and cream cheese, please'*** for her breakfast. She had lined up all of her princesses on the arm of the living room couch and I could hear bits and pieces of the conversation as she told them about the action adventures that she had in store for them that morning:

'Would you like to take a ride in the carriage, Snow White?' says Ella

'Jasmine and Sleeping Beauty already went on an adventure...'



'Wait just a minute, Belle... It will be your turn next...'

'Okey dokey smokey!' she acknowledges for Snow White

'Now it's your turn... Oops-a-daisy', she said sweetly as she puts Snow White into the front of the plastic princess-mobile

'We're almost to the castle!... We're here!... Oh, nice to meet you guys. I'm so happy you're here because I couldn't go to the ball...'

'Well I'm going to stay here for a little while... Cinderella? Cin Da Rella? Hel lo!...'

'Oh, Hi Princess Ella!... I'm looking for Cinderella...'

'Hi!... Oh, Hi!... Come on George, come on... horses to the rescue, horses to the rescue... Da, I lowered the draw bridge!'

Most of the time her voice simply sings. It has become a nightly tradition that she calls to profess her love for us or to tell her Da of her adventures at school at the end of her day, after her bath, usually around 6:30 PM:

'Hi Da! I love you more than all the stars in the sky, the moon in my room and the happiest day ever!' It doesn't get any better than that....



Ella is a natural charmer...

Ella even charmed Santa Claus on a trip to Gardens Mall last Christmas! Any conversation with her is always a treat because you never know what she is going to say and you almost never get replies from her that you'd expect, which makes talking with her so engaging and interesting. She had recently lined up an assortment of her animals from her playroom to the living room when Mollie asked her what she'd like to eat for dinner.

'That's a very good question,' Ella replied. ***'I think that I'd like to eat an elephant!'***

'Oh, that's silly,' replied Mom. ***'You can't eat an elephant!'***

'OK then,' chirped Ella. ***'Then I think I'll eat a giraffe.'***

'Ella, you can't eat a giraffe!' exclaimed Mollie.

'Mom, I was only kidding,' said a very serious Ella.

Stifling a laugh, Mollie continued, asking Ella if she'd like to try some macaroni salad. ***'What is that?'*** asked Ella. ***'It's macaroni mixed with mayonnaise and spices,'*** replied Mom.

'Well,' said Ella, ***'I like macaroni and I like mayonnaise.... so that would be good.'***

Sometimes it's hard to remember that she's only closing in on three...



***Ella's visit with Santa David at Gardens Mall was pure magic
You could hear sleigh bells and almost see the reindeer...***



***Ella and Santa were kindred spirits and instantly in sync
These timeless pictures captured the moment...***



***'Surprise! It's Mommy and me at Pirates and Princesses!
I bet you thought it was really Snow White and Pocahontas.'***



***'This is my Mommy and Daddy in real life.
I have his blue eyes and her good looks.'***



***'Are you sure we're going the right way?
Look, there's Toojays! We're almost there...'***



SAFARI



'Up-and-under!'

Miss Ella is the perfect Florida girl, a true water monkey who is fearless in any form of water, be it in a pool, in the ocean, at a fountain or in the tub! Watching her frolic in her Little Mermaid pool is a joyful experience, but in truth, watching her do anything can be a joyful experience!

'You're gonna love this! This will be very special...'

There is a knock at the door early on Saturday morning and there is Ella, in pigtails and pink Crocs, ready for a visit to Da and Bob Bob's house....

'Da! Guess what! I saw two rainbows!'

I assure you that there's no better way to start your day. She always speaks with an energy and enthusiasm that's contagious. Maybe she is lugging her Mrs. Potts tea set with her and we'll be invited to a tea party...

'Look what I found! A blueberry muffin! And two crackers!'

And that evening, after I had cooked macaroni and hamburger for her...

'Bob Bob... my dinner was very appetizing...' We're in love...



***'Reach for the Moon, Miss Ella...
You are the Princess of all the Planets!'***



A Little Critters Book
Through Ella's Eyes



Made on a Mac