



Jennifer Angeli's story of

Emma



I am writing to you and about you on my birthday. My first birthday with my daughter. I am surely blessed. Where do I start?

I just want to tell you I miss you. You would like Sapphire Mignon. When she smiles at me my heart explodes and all is perfect. All is as it should be. How did you feel when I was born?

Niña and I found the letters you kept when you and Tim first met. Love letters, definitely crazy, young, idealistic and madly in love. Your world was so open, so full of possibilities, traveling, music, art. Side by side with your eternal love. Were you disappointed you had children in your first years of marriage? Any regrets? Did you disappear a little bit? Did you fulfill any of your dreams?

Emma Marie Gioacchini. Born in Boston Massachusetts, October 1, 1941. Parents: Carolina Anna Maria Tauro and Americo Flavio Gioacchini. Immigrants from Italy. The youngest of six, three boys and three girls. The only one born in a hospital. A Catholic family (but you could never understand confession, you said, so you started making them up and eventually turned against organized religion altogether).

What was your childhood like? In your high school annual you were voted “the girl with the most interesting clothing combinations”. You were close to Dolly, your sister. Gabbing all the time, laughing, finishing each other’s sentences. You were close to Grampi, your Pop. There were always instruments around, and Grampi was always playing, drinking the wine he made in the basement, friends over, a lively atmosphere. Music and dancing. Your mom, Nonni, NEVER drank. One sip of Champagne on her wedding night. Quiet until she’d had enough, and then would let it be known.

Who did you take after? Were you the lively social party girl, or the quieter one who sat and watched? I remember a bit of both. It seemed rare that you drank, but when you did you were very happy and lively, cheering to all and everything. Cheers lamp! Cheers floor! Cheers light bulb! Mostly you would sit back and watch all of the goings on with a smile on your face and a rock in your sit. Enjoying the atmosphere, throwing out a zinger comment every now and then, sometimes fierce but never malicious and always with a knowing and wise laugh behind it.

You were definitely a mother, you felt like a mother. Mom. Although when I was little, you seemed distant, maybe not sure if this was the life you wanted, maybe wanting to escape?

After high school, you went to The Pennsylvania Academy of Art. You loved drawing and painting. You worked as a librarian’s assistant in the art/music section which gave you a high appreciation for classical music. You also worked very hard at losing your Bostonian accent. You said you never wanted to be identified from any one place. You didn’t finish; you went back to live with your parents in Lynn, Massachusetts. Why? Your sister Dolly had 2 children and you helped with the babysitting. That’s where you met Tim. He lived beside Dolly. Tim was attending the Boston Museum Academy of Art, and you met at one of his all night Greek music love fests. You got to know each other, similar likes and dislikes, same ideals and thoughts about the world and its politics. And you fell in love. Tim was 19 and you were 23

This was 1965. The Vietnam War was heating up. Friends were being drafted. Tim was NOT going to go, fully supported by you. The year of the love letters. You stayed in Boston, trying to make money for your future together, while Tim worked on a dude ranch in Colorado. And this is where the correspondence really took off: planning your life together, professing your undying and eternal love, planning your escape if the draft board came after Tim. Two love crazed idealistic people who just wanted to be together side by side, painting, playing music, traveling the world, each other’s muses, surrounded by the great chance of war that could dash their dreams and lives forever.

You got a job at a radio station for classical music as a programming coordinator. But then turned it down to move to Colorado and marry Tim. You married on December 14, 1965. You lived in a small cabin in the woods. "Uncle" Charlie's cabin. He was dead. One morning you woke up with blue paint smeared by a man's hands all over your body, not a speck on Tim or the sheets.

It was getting harder to feel free with the impending draft hanging over Tim's head, so you fled to Nova Scotia, and lived in an apartment and then the garage in Tim's family's summer home. You were only in the apartment for a couple of months when you conceived Niña. That night you said you saw two little faerie-like girls coming up the stairs to your apartment. Meanwhile, this "draft dodging" was NOT ok with Tim's family. So after being shamed and blackmailed by his parents into doing his duty as an American, you returned. Tim turned himself in, and by some extraordinary fluke the government sent him the wrong orders which temporarily excused him. Pregnant with Nina you moved to New Haven Connecticut where your sister Dolly now lived. Niña was born, December 27, 1966. Sixteen months later, I was born, April 30, 1968.

You said it was very eerie and uncomfortable for Tim, so few young men around, always the questions and disapproving glances. So you decided to move to Canada, you liked the politics there. We moved back to Boston to stay with Nonni.....your pop had died shortly after Niña was born....then you, Tim, Dolly, Niña, and Nor went to Montreal to find a job. I stayed with Nonni and Kyle. Though both Tim and Dolly found jobs right away, you hated Montreal, you found it dark and cold and the divide between the English and French was very palpable. So you went back to Boston to make alternate plans. We settled on Toronto, though the place you really wanted to live was British Columbia. You heard of the wilderness and freedom there. We lived in Toronto until September of 1971.

Then, our family, with 2 other families decided to leave, our destination, British Columbia. So 5 kids, 5 adults, 2 dogs and 6 cats, got in a station wagon with U-Haul, and drove across Canada to find a plot of land on which to grow our own food. We ended up on a 14 acre wooded property we bought for \$5,000, 7 miles up a dirt road in a district called Black Creek. Tim built our house sans electricity or plumbing and you grew a garden. We had goats, ducks, geese, chickens, dogs, at one point 16 cats (until you freaked out one day and we had to take most of them to the dump with one can of sardines to fend for themselves), guinea pigs, rabbits and two horses. We also built on our land, with the help of other searchers and expatriates, a geodesic dome, a cabin, a teepee and a tree house. Needless to say, there were always new sleeping bags to wake up to.

Somehow Jehovah Witnesses would always find our place. And one time they came all dressed in their Sunday best, knocked on the door and you opened it, naked and smiling. And you, always the gracious host, invited them in for tea.

You and Tim had an open relationship for a while. Whose idea was that? You fell in love with him and left us. We were in Colorado and you hopped the bus home to be with him. It was in Boise Idaho that you made the choice to come back. My very clear image as I ran past the door was you sitting naked on the bed with Tim and crying. Was It harder to leave us or harder to come back?

Both you and Tim taught me to stand up for what I believe in. And you led by example when you took the School Board to court so Niña and I didn't have to go. Eventually when we decided to give school a try, our lifestyle became more settled.

Tim made custom jewelry and continued with his art and you supported him, doing the books, making jewelry yourself, taking various cooking jobs. But what about your art? You were a beautiful drawer and

painter. Were any of your dreams being fulfilled? Eventually you found a great group of women and did the illustrations for those support books, and also pursued your love of photography. And you were always there for Tim and us and our large extended family. Did you know three of our dearest friends felt you were their best friend and I'm sure if I asked a number of others, they'd say the same. I wonder if you were aware of the impact you had on so many people's lives?

You weren't the typical mom. There weren't a lot of sit down meals prepared. Though you made sure we had our daily dose of peanut butter, garlic and cayenne pepper and tons of Vitamin C. Keeping us clean certainly wasn't a priority, nor was a set bedtime. When we were in our teens and wanted to try acid and mushrooms, you said fine, though you preferred we were at home so you could make sure we were ok. Sex too was fine, but again if we were home you knew we were safe. In the end I think your way worked.

I look at Sapphire and her baby brother River and wonder if I can be that open and free with them. All I know is you gave me a safe and supportive place to think and grow, and always with the utmost respect. It's funny, as I write this I find I'm only thinking of the good stuff. I wonder if you were alive today, if I would have any issues with you.

In 1987, a year after I left home, they found the brain tumor. You had to move from your peaceful, quiet home in the woods to an unfamiliar, empty house in town. And you hated it. I hear from friends you were scared but you never told me or talked to me about your fears. Did you try? After the operation you lost a lot of vision and became very dependent on Tim, a struggle for you both, but you made sure to see my plays, always so supportive. I was Grusha in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and you loved it. I remember seeing you in the audience and noticing you had your eyes closed. How bad was your vision? We never talked about it. You were changed, scared, timid (you could never be considered timid before), you carried now an unsure-ness with you. Your great verve for life diminished, though your amazing spark was still there.

Two in the morning, Tim called, choked out the words 'Emma is dying' taken to hospital in Victoria. He asked if I wanted to see you before they took you off life support. I said no, I didn't want that to be my last image of you. Did that hurt your feelings? I've always wondered. Tim said he felt a powerful energy enter him as you were dying in his arms at home in the bathroom. You had just come back from an evening walk with Tim and Judy, our dog.

We were just getting reconnected again. I felt I was just getting interested in you again, wanting to know about your life, your childhood, your dreams, your thoughts. I feel ripped off.

When I dream about you, are you stopping by to say "Hi"? You always have a big smile on your face and give me a hug and then off you go.