

Oh, what a day!

Written by Joanne Kjaersgaard.

Here I sit, thinking about kids. Our wild child has just turned 15, and is trying to be 24! 15 years ago, all I could think about was 'is she going to make the next hour?' Now all I can think about is 'am I going to make the next hour?'

I want to tell you a story. A story that is sad, but has the funniest moments in it, and all thanks to the wild child.

On December the 30th, 1992, I gave birth to our fourth daughter. She had died in utero two days before. I was 37 ½ weeks pregnant when she died. After the birth, my family arrived to see her. There was a picnic to be had, thanks to the nurses, a baby to be held, and a lot of looking and crying to be done. That is, if you were not the wild child! If you were the wild child, then you had picnic to be eaten, the bed to jump off, the remotes to play with, a baby to hold, a hallway to run in, a toilet to put things in, and grandparents to be cuddled by (if they could catch you!).

Yes, she was 2 ½ and it felt like she had been living on high octane from birth. The one thing you can be sure about with her is to expect the unexpected, and she never lets you down.

It was the day of the funeral. 'The girls will be looked after', I was told by my mum, 'don't worry about them, there will be plenty of adults to do that for you.' We drove up to the car park and the girls were let out. Two of the girls stood quietly whilst one went on an adventure. I wish I could of given a crash course in 'Ariana 101', for they didn't know what had hit them.

Ariana had found the duck pond, so pretty and tranquil, and promptly took action, taking off her pink trainer pants and dropping them in. My neighbour was on route to Ariana as she saw the pink go plop. She dived in for the rescue, but decided to drop them back in when they came up with black mud on them! Not so bad, it was only the knickers and not the child, which wasn't beyond her around water.

We now had a knickerless child in a very pretty dress being gently guided back to the crowd. In we go. As we approached the small coffin, I see that people have covered the area with flowers and cards, and so could the girls. 'Can we see?' said one of the girls. 'Sure' I say and start lifting them up onto the marble table. The first two girls move around looking at the gifts and flowers, as does the third, but unlike the first two, the third one doesn't 'stop and smell the roses'. Oh no, she decides to do a lap on her hands and knees around the marble table, checking out the flowers. The knickerless state is not obvious, not that Lars and I knew anyway, we hadn't seen her since she left the car!

To Ariana's great surprise, she found 4 buttons on the side of the marble table around the back. Imagine this....four people standing just off to the right of the grieving family - my parents, the funeral director and my brother. They could all see what was going to happen and froze. My dad went white, my mum thought to herself 'the coffin is going to disappear in front of them 20 min early and she's going to loose 2 of them in one go'. The funeral director nearly hit the roof, and my brother was catapulted into action by the funeral directors

flinch and jumped forward to grab Ariana just as her finger was on the button. Phew. And would you believe it, Lars and I didn't know any of this was happening. Mind shattering numbness can do that to you.

It's not over yet. Ariana now finds herself in the grip of her uncle and starts to wiggle. He puts her down and surreptitiously watches her. She finds the step in front of the rise and climbs onto it. As she stands up, she realises there's a bunch of people looking at her (not really, they were looking to the front, she just happened to be in their line of vision). She tries on the 'I'm shy' act and grabs the bottom of her dress and pulls it up to her face! Now everyone in the place knows she is knickerless except her mum and dad! Imagine this.....you are sitting in the pews at a baby's funeral, the sadness is overwhelming. You look up and see...! People didn't know what to do. Muffled sniggers and giggles were heard, but not by Lars and I, we were still in our world.

Ariana now realises she has a captive audience. No one has stopped her on the steps (not possible without disturbing the unaware parents), so she gathers herself, steps down and starts doing forward rolls! Fantastic. How do you catch a wild child at her sister's funeral without making a scene? The easy answer is, you don't. Now we have a white bum flashing by followed closely by black patent shoes. Oh dear.

She was captured before her parents saw her (by rolling into someone in the front row), and she was then firmly gripped by her grandmother until the coffin went. We headed outside to be surrounded by our friends and family. That would be all but the wild child. She spotted the beautifully manicured lawns that framed the driveway. These lawns were prettily separated by a white chain on low rises. 'Look at that', thinks the wild child, 'someone made me hurdles!' And that is how the pretty white chain came to be off the rises and on the ground, and how her pretty dress became grass stained.

Believe it or not, I didn't know any of this until months later. People told me things that happened, or what they saw happen, as time went by. I'm so glad I didn't know on the day, and so much for 'we'll look after the kids'! What a hoot. Would you believe this if you were reading it in a magazine? Probably not. How could one little child get into so much at a funeral? Easy, her nickname is 'the wild child' for good reason. You should hear the one about the time she ran away from school before she was 8! What a day.....

So there it is, the two sides of life. The death of our baby is still mind shattering, and the life of Ariana is still amazing. Did I appreciate Ariana more because she had lived through her CDH? No, not really. She never allowed me to wrap her in cotton wool (she would have set fire to it if I had), because Ariana innately knows that life is to be lived, and that is what she does at 110%, still today!!!! We love her to bits, and she drives us crazy, she never sits still long enough, and every single day is to be loved.