



# **The Emily Updates (Vol. 1): One Year in the Life of the Girl Who Lived (The Emily Updates (Vols. 1-5))**

*Vonne M. Meussling-Barnett, Thomas P.M. Barnett*

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Seventeen years ago, authors Tom and Vonne Barnett were suddenly confronted with every parent's worst medical "bolt from the blue": their only child, 30-month-old Emily, was diagnosed with an advanced – meaning metastasized – pediatric cancer. At the time, the thirty-something couple was living in northern Virginia.

What followed was the defining crisis of their now 25-year union: an intense 20-month battle to keep their first-born alive. About six months into the struggle, Tom started writing a weekly update on Emily's progress (or lack thereof) for interested parties. Vonne contributed to this blog-like diary, and it was sent out by email, fax and regular mail to several hundred relatives and friends who spontaneously organized themselves into their family's extended support network. Over time, the couple came to view the updates as something more important: a real-time memoir that would someday prove crucial to Emily's understanding of how she became whom Tom and Vonne hoped she would become.

The journey from blog diary to this eBook serial is worth recounting. The original diary ran about 400,000 words, or somewhere in the range of an 800-page book. In the late 1990s, Tom edited the text down to approximately 200,000 words and posted the 45 updates online at a website he created specifically for that purpose. Having received a lot of positive feedback from readers, they sought publication as a regular book, but then fate intervened in the form of a new job for Tom in Rhode Island and the project was – pun intended – shelved.

But the recent meteoric rise of eBooks has convinced Tom and Vonne that now is the time to give publication another try (Vonne, for example, is a Kindle fanatic!). After all, the Emily Updates basically constituted a blog before there were blogs, so eBooks struck the authors as an entirely appropriate venue for the material, especially since they're interested in making it easily available and they know - from first-hand experience - how parents and relatives of patients experiencing medical crises typically turn to the Internet to locate sources of information, comfort and inspiration in their time of need.

What you now have the privilege to read in this series of eBooks are the original weekly updates as Tom wrote them – with Vonne's continuous inputs – across all of 1995 and into early 1996, a period encompassing the last 14 months of Emily's treatment protocol. Those 45 updates constitute Chapters 3 through 9 in the series: Chapter 3, which concludes with the birth of their second child, is included in this volume; Chapters 4 and 5, which cover the difficult summer of 1995, make up Volume II; Chapters 6 and 7, which chronicle the family's final push on the chemotherapy, fill out Volume III; and Chapters 8 and 9, which encompass the post-treatment diagnostics – and Make-a-Wish trip to Disney World, constitute Volume IV.

The first two chapters presented in this Volume I are actually recreations of the events surrounding the initial diagnoses (Chapter 1) and the beginning of in-hospital treatment (Chapter 2) in July of 1994. Tom put these diary-like remembrances together in June of 1995 to mark the one-year anniversary of the diagnosis, and they are based on the voluminous medical records from that time period.

The concluding fifth volume in the series is written from today's perspective, to include that of a grown-up Emily - the girl who lived!

The authors haven't made an effort to "improve" the updates from today's perspective. Tom and Vonne now claim to be wiser on a host of subjects that arise in this family memoir, but a lot of that wisdom stems directly from these experiences, so they felt it made most sense to share them with you, the reader, in this unaltered format.

If this eBook serial helps you better understand an analogous past experience or ongoing crisis in your life, then Tom, Vonne and Emily have accomplished what they set out to do by sharing their intense story.

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