

Commemorative Account of Ellise Sambora  
7th September 2005 – 1st September 2019  
Afka Ray  
16th August 2024

## **Ellise as a little girl**

Ellise Sambora was born as Ellise Leona Motyer in Cambridge on 7th Sept 2005 to mother Lorna Bell and Lee Motyer. Her mother had changed her name to Sambora and Ellise did the same when she was 11 years old to honour her mother's memory and be closer to her.

In 2007 Lorna and Lee split up at which point Lorna and Ellise moved to Maldon in Essex. I myself moved to Essex in August 2008 and shortly after became friends with Ellise's Mother Lorna, at the time she had just been given the all clear after having had treatment for breast cancer. Ellise was 3 when I first met her as an adorable chatty little girl. I can account for her life and what I know of her from this age.

When Ellise was little she loved all things princess and Disney, she was a huge fan of Dora the Explorer and wanted to be just like her. Ellise and Lorna had a playful Staffordshire terrier called Ragamuffin. Ellise and Ragga were inseparable.

Not long after meeting Lorna I found out I was pregnant. Lorna was overjoyed and even threw me a surprise baby shower.

Being new to the area I knew no one and her making such a beautiful gesture at such a scary time for me as a single parent cemented our friendship.

Lorna loved music and enjoyed going out to see live music. In 2009 I was pregnant so I was happy to stay in with Ellise whilst her mum went out for a bit of me time. Ellise would often say “you can practice being a mum with me.”

So at weekends I looked after Ellise until my son was born. We would play games like the floor is lava and pretend we were on adventure with Dora the Explorer. Ellise of course was Dora, Ragga joined in the fun. She would often talk to my tummy and asked if the baby would be her new brother.

Lorna and I both knew that because of my age and because of the effects of her chemo, that we would not be having any more children. So we decided that Ellise's idea was perfect. So when my son arrived Ellise was the first child to meet him, she adored him and we introduced him as her brother from another mother.

As Ellise and my son grew up I continued to watch Ellise at weekends so Lorna could have a break.

My son grew and Lorna then began returning the favour and we had arranged a deal that I would watch Ellise on Fridays and she would watch my son on Saturdays. So the children spent every weekend together as brother and sister.

Ellise did have a fraternal sister who she often spoke about but sadly never met.

As time went on I could see how clever Ellise was. She was an avid reader and read well above her age, her favourite books were Harry Potter.

She had a vivid imagination and was very good at art and loved music. She loved drawing and crafting with her mother. Lorna loved horses and Ellise was no different; they spent a lot of their time caring and riding their horse Ronnie.

Lorna was a Christian and we all went to church on a Sunday as a friendship family. Ellise was christened at the church and had 2 godparents.

It was my impression at this time, that Ellise saw her father Lee sporadically.

In 2012 Ellise and her mum moved to South Minster and I continued to see both of them. Ellise was excelling in school and had taken up drumming, as well as having a keen interest in anything theatre.

Ellise's ongoing love of Disney took them both to Disney Land.

Lorna was diagnosed with Terminal stage 3 cancer in 2013, she was given a year to live. Ellise was there throughout all

of her hospital appointments and treatment and often kept mum occupied with song and dance and making her laugh.

This is when Lorna recognised Ellise's talent for the arts and she enrolled her in theatre train which was one of Ellise's favourite activity, she went on to be one of the cast in a musical in the Royal Albert Hall. Ellise was so proud of this opportunity.

Lorna had a bucket list which meant Ellise and her mum went on amazing adventures such as Disneyland (again) Whale watching in Scotland and several camping trips and festivals. Ellise was happy and seemed to not fully be aware of what was to come.

Lorna was a fighter and lived 1 year longer than expected. In her final year I spent 3 days a week with them to help look after both of them and walk Ragga, as well as supporting Lorna's mum by giving her a break to do things like shopping and to return home to care for her husband, Ellise's grandfather who was also terminally ill with COPD. In this time, I became very close with Ellise's Nan

Early in 2016 I went to pick up Ellise for our usual weekend meet up to bring her to my home. Lorna was gravely unwell by this point. So I sat down with her and I asked her if there was anything she needed me to do for her on this earth when she is no longer here. She answered "Please look out for Ellise for me, and keep her close" I promised her I'd honour this wish. This turned out to be her dying wish, she died the following morning.

Lorna passed away on 17/01/2016. Ellise was at my house with me when her Nan arrived to tell her the devastating news. Ellise understandably broke down and we all grieved together. She was 9 years old this time.

### **After Lorna's Death**

After Lorna's death, Ellise's Nan was in mourning for her daughter. She was at a very difficult junction and Ellise spent time with me and her godparents whilst they sorted through the funeral arrangements. Ellise's Nan was granted kinship care of Ellise.

Ellise moved in with her Nan and she had her own room decorated with butterflies, and a desk full of art supplies and a stunning princess bed with lots of teddies. Ellise's favourite animal was a duck so she had a collection of ducks of all kinds

Ellise's nan was a secretary at sea cadets and enrolled her not long after Lorna's passing. Ellise became a core member of the troop.

Ellise settled in well and her Nan adored her. Ellise struggled to get on with her grandfather who often passed judgement and had traditional values.

Due to this Ellise began isolating herself in her room. Ellise spent her weekdays with her Nan and her weekends with

my son and me. I wanted to stay true to my promise to her mum, Lorna, so I continued the arrangement with her nan we had since she was 3. This also gave Ellises nan and Ellise some respite and time to recover.

Throughout this time I continued to have Ellise and she began to see me as her second mum...me often introducing her as my step daughter and her introducing me as her step mum. Step as in 'stepped in' for her mother after her passing.

On weekends, we would go to the gym and trim together as a family. We would go roller skating, swimming and have regular visits to Southend on Sea to Adventure Island.

Ellise had a core group of friends who sometimes came to visit. At this time she seemed to be very happy. She created lots of tic toc content and danced and did Miranda impersonations which made us all laugh. She really loved doing impressions and being on centre stage. She continued with Theatre Train and Sea Cadets.

Ellise appeared to have settled in a bit and was doing a lot of voluntary work with the sea cadets, she even won an award for the most volunteer hours of any young person in Essex!

We were all so very proud of her. Ellise enjoyed helping the community and she was working with Theatre Train to

improve her acting and stage presence. She was involved in several performances along with my son and her team. She seemed very positive and happy.

Despite this, she began to exhibit some disturbing behaviour throughout 2016 and 2017, and had several visits to A&E to get support for her mental health. She was diagnosed with low mood, panic attacks, anxiety, self-harming behaviour and self-esteem issues.

Ellise started at Lower Plume in September 2018 and was doing well at school and enjoyed English and was top set in Maths. She had a school counsellor she spent most of her time with in her office when she felt anxiety, just chatting about her dreams. Ellise enjoyed working with animals and often spoke about becoming a Veterinarian

Ellise was again admitted to A&E in February 2019. I received a call from Ellises nan stating that Ellise could not be released into her care due to her health issues. As a result, Ellise moved in with us on 25/02/2019 full time.

Myself and my son lived in a 2 bedroom home. My son was more than happy to share his room with her. Ellise's mood drastically improved living with us and all of her school reports reflected that.

Whilst Ellise was staying with me full time, her father Lee began spending more time with us at my home. He had arranged to visit once a week to join our family dinners.

I stayed focused on social care and working to try and become her foster parent while Lee, Ellise's father, focused on attending appointments with her and EWMNS. Sadly, things took a real turn for the worst in 2019. Ellise had difficulties with her mental health,

As a result, and as a last resort Ellise moved back in with her nan who was terminally ill at the time.

### **The Impact of Ellise's death**

On 02/09/2019 I had a call from Lorna's cousin, saying Ellise had died, she had taken her own life the previous evening. Ellise was only 13 years old.

I was destroyed, that is not even the word for it. I had tried to honour my best friend's wishes and due to all of the commotion and lack of support and tooing and frowing with no direction from EWMHS and Social Care we were left broken with serious mental health issues ourselves.

I had a breakdown, became isolated and could not return to my home, my work or my friends in Essex. I never went back home. I couldn't process anything and got to a stage where I was having nightmares at night and feeling nothing during the day. I'd blocked everything out. I couldn't make sense of any of it.

I stayed in Lancashire with my friend and his father. They supported me and my son during this time. I finally got the



strength and 6 months later to go back to Essex and get my things.

Now that Ellise had died I no longer had to stay in Essex so they arranged the move to Lancashire where I now live.

After her death, no one called, no one did a welfare check on us, No one cared.

My son has been broken by Ellises suicide. He at first physical symptoms of grief. He was then sent to counselling initially after her death. He is suffering from insomnia and he often has nightmares of Ellise. He has and has been in desperate need for support and has been on the waiting list for trauma for almost 3 years now with CAMHS

I have been diagnosed with complex PTSD and anxiety, panic attacks. I am getting better but we will never be the same again.

My family and my life has been shattered by our encounter with all of this and we want justice both for myself, my son and Ellise, but also for every person whose life has been destroyed by Essex mental Health Services and the Social care system.