

To: Charlie

by
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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
KELLY	Charlie's Mother	29	Female
ETHAN	Charlie's Father	32	Male

A bed sits on stage covered only in white sheets and a white comforter with too many pillows. It's a blank canvas. A woman in a white night gown lies on the right side of the bed and a man in white boxers and a white undershirt is beside her on the left side of the bed. In front of them is a camcorder on a tripod. Attached to one of the legs is a picture of a sonogram.

KELLY

It's 9:32. Ethan press record, okay?

ETHAN

Kelly?

KELLY

Yeah?

ETHAN

I'm nervous.

KELLY nods. ETHAN presses record and the beep of the camera permeates the silence.

KELLY

Hi baby...Hi. It's mommy. Charlie, we love you so so much. This is our video for you!

ETHAN

Hey buddy, think fast.

ETHAN throws an invisible baseball at the camera.

KELLY

What was that? You almost side swiped my ear. Edit it out, Ethan.

ETHAN

I was playing catch, like dad's do, right?

KELLY

Just...try not to curve ball my head. Where do we start with this thing?
I want to look at you Charlie.

ETHAN

Little Bud...

I wish we could get him light up sneakers. Those are the best.

KELLY

The batteries wear out to fast.

How do we start this, Ethan? I don't know how to talk to him. I'm scared I don't know what to say.

ETHAN

How we met...that's a thing he should know. Kell...look at me, we can do this. He's our little bud.

KELLY

Yeah-- okay I mean... I met you two years ago? When I ran into you?

ETHAN

Yeah at 3 in the afternoon.

KELLY

You remember the time?

ETHAN

Yeah. I fucking love you that much.

KELLY

Edit that--You can't just say things like that--we talked about this.

ETHAN

(To camera--ignoring Kelly.)

She's never been the most balanced of people Charlie, she's always running around, always escaping to babble land where her brain never shuts up, and because of that motor functions fall to the wayside. That day she had on hot pink roller blades with 80's lightning stickers that weren't as good at stopping as she thought. My kneecaps found that out fast.

KELLY

Well, if your dad hadn't just darted--

ETHAN

Um-I didn't dart, you plowed.

KELLY

If he hadn't just darted into the walk way than my pink skates would've just passed on by.

ETHAN

And that would have been terrible, because Charlie, I would have to run after her and god only knows running--not my thing.

KELLY

You wouldn't have chased me.

Ethan squeezes Kelly's hand.

ETHAN

I would always chase you.

KELLY

But yeah...that's how we met. Me and daddy. I knocked him over and he said...

ETHAN

Fucking ouch.

KELLY

Edit that.

ETHAN

And then I took her hand and said...

KELLY

Pizza's my favorite food, like an idiot.

ETHAN

Let me tell you Charlie, I was really worried for a second it wasn't going to work. But then she said--

KELLY

Me too. Like a bigger idiot.

ETHAN

And we got pizza and it was so hot, and the outside was so cold that I could see my breath.

KELLY

You blew on the window.

ETHAN

And drew a heart on it for mommy.

KELLY

(Hesitantly.)

Ethan--

ETHAN

I'm gonna play so much catch with you, bud. I even got you a onesie with the Cubs logo on it.

KELLY

You swore you didn't buy that! Ethan, it was 30-something dollars for a fistful of fabric.

ETHAN

And you swore not to get him the superman onesie with the cape but that happened too.

KELLY

Charlie, these are your parents arguing...being stupid, because money doesn't matter. Not now when we can look at you. And not ever because I secretly wanted the Cubs onesie too. Baby Ruth.

ETHAN

You are not allowed to call him that.

KELLY

Nicknames are mom accessories. If I want to call my son Baby Ruth I will and you can handle it.

ETHAN

I used to call you "legs" remember that?

KELLY

Not in the mood, Ethan.

ETHAN

Come on, Legs, dance with me, for old time's sake?

ETHAN tickles KELLY and she just looks at him with searching eyes clearly not ticklish.

KELLY

I don't want to laugh.

There is silence as Kelly stares straight at the picture and Ethan searches her face looking for any kind of joy.

ETHAN

We should embarrass him. Right? I mean how'd your parents make you blush as a kid? I'm prepared to assume my roll: goofy dad with a bow tie. Let's laugh with him. It'll make this better.

Ethan holds Kelly's hands sweetly.

ETHAN

My plight was the noise...I had a thin walled playroom, and I heard more than my fair share of just how in love my parents were. Sorry bud.

Kelly smacks Ethan on the arm.

KELLY

Ethan!

ETHAN

My GI Joe posters kept falling off.

KELLY

This isn't nice. I want this to be a nice neat tape. Nice neat couple. You know, suburb-y...I want to prove that we're capable.

ETHAN

Okay--proposal. All little boys have to learn from the examples of their fathers for decent proposals. And mine was good.

KELLY

You had a bum knee...you didn't even kneel. Can a proposal be good when the guy can't kneel?

ETHAN

Let it be known that the bum knee was a chronic condition from being plowed into by pink skates. It was great Charlie, I hired a teddy gram! Everyone loves teddy grams!

KELLY

You got your brother to be in the bear suit. It wasn't even a real teddy gram.

ETHAN

Yeah but it was my drunk brother in a bear suit with a one and a half carat diamond in his paws that I spent my entire life savings on, so I think that qualifies it as a pretty damn good proposal.

KELLY

Edit that. Ethan this has got to be--

ETHAN

No...no fuck that. I don't really want to edit anything anymore. It takes two more seconds to say Edit that, than it does to just continue like we're not screw ups so let's just...keep on. I don't want to edit this.

KELLY

Okay...are you okay?

ETHAN

Not really.

ETHAN kisses KELLY's cheek tenderly

KELLY

Our wedding day was a total disaster so we eloped last minute to Arkansas.

ETHAN

Visit Enchanted Rock at least once, okay?

KELLY

Your dad was super fond of all the baby ducks, Charlie.

ETHAN

Leave the ducks out of it. I'm manly.

KELLY

Daddys can be sensitive Charlie, you just gotta butter em' up so you can get the extra cookie when mamma says no.

ETHAN

I wish he knew that.

KELLY

We wish you knew that Charlie. You can talk to him Ethan. It's okay. He's right--there.

KELLY points to the camera with the sonogram picture.

ETHAN

I don't want to...Kell, I can't.

KELLY

Yes you can. You do. We just...don't know the right things to say. You're the best baby a mommy could ever wish for.

ETHAN

Kelly I'm not ready to say this.

KELLY

It's okay daddy.

ETHAN

Don't call me that, Kell. Not now.

KELLY

Hey...hey there. Stop it.

ETHAN

No. This is weird. Let me...I want to talk to the camera.

KELLY

To Charlie? Okay, no one's stopping you. Charlie, daddy wants to talk to you.

ETHAN grabs the camera so it's painfully close to both of their faces.

ETHAN

People should experience things--you should experience things---Charlie.

(ETHAN grabs KELLY's hand and kisses the back of it.)

Know intimately the way it smells when the sheets are freshly washed and dried.

Know the feeling of a mother tucking them under your chin and rolling you up like your one big burrito in a bed.

Know what a burrito is.

Try burnt popcorn at least once, some people actually like it. You are never too old to put a quarter in a machine to get a fun stick on tattoo. Pick a penny up and no matter what throw it away again so that someone else has all the luck in the world. Give away your favorite thing as a birthday present. Cough on your worst enemy and give them a cold. Make a best friend in kindergarten that you make irreplaceable mud pie pacts with and never let them go. Know that as soon as you realize how great it is to be carried places-- you're too old for it. Make your mom bring you water at night cause she always will. Even when you're 49 and just visiting.

You have to adventure--do all the things I haven't--Charlie.

Go stand on top of a skyscraper and look at the ant people that you smoosh with your make believe giant thumb.

You have to know the feeling of religion, bowing, feeling itty bitty like the shit of the world only to inflate yourself with personal fulfillment and use it to make this place good again.

Love how it feels to put your head on a woman's boobs at any age. Fuck at least twice every time, once for her and once for you. Let off steam and deal with the after math of the fogged up mirror. Hold grudges as long as you want but make sure your forgiveness is twice as big. Never ever tell someone you love them until you do-- and when you do-- say it every other half a second so that the first thing on their mind is ALWAYS your love. Find a girl who gives you good advice and marry her because she is the edge that lines up with your biggest missing pieces. Scream into a pillow every night just for fun to see who hears and who comes running.

Because I will.

Charlie, you need to know how it feels when someone like me or your mother says your name over and over again like a prayer because you are the most worshipped cherished person that has ever been. Kiss your babies boo boo's. Poke your bruises, it makes you stronger. Play baseball. And always know that the second I held you, you were and are enough for me.

Silence as Ethan stares at the camera and Kelly stares at Ethan.

KELLY

See Charlie, I don't know why daddy is scared because he's wonderful. He's yours.

ETHAN

That was all bullshit.

KELLY

It's my fault. I said I love you too soon didn't I? My mom always told me not to get attached to boys too soon...don't say I love you first unless you're willing to hurt. Cause they won't say it back.

ETHAN

Everything I thought I would get to be and say and represent is bullshit.
This video is bullshit.

Kelly he didn't say it back because he was strangled by his own umbilical chord.

KELLY

Edit that.

ETHAN

I can't. He was never born.

KELLY

Edit that...Ethan. I don't want to hear that. I don't want that to be on the tape.

ETHAN

I won't edit him. He's dead Kelly.

KELLY

DELETE THAT SENTENCE ETHAN. DELETE THE TAPE!

(KELLY lunges for the camera and ETHAN grabs her waist. She's hysterical as they fight until she's exhausted.)

ETHAN

All those things I said are the useless things I've learned after 32 years that I will never get to make relevant. And that's not fair.

KELLY

I said I love you. I told him I loved him.

(To camera)

I just wanted to love you. Charlie. I just wanted to fucking love you that much.

(To Ethan)

I had socks for him and now I have tiny socks that I'm supposed to do what with? Frame? Resell? Can you resell a stillborn babies socks?

He was supposed to be alive, Ethan. I'm not a mother who was supposed to outlive her children.

Silence as KELLY Grieves.

What do I even know about my son?

KELLY settles back into the bed as if getting ready to fall asleep.

ETHAN

Time of birth: 9:32 pm
Weight: 6 pounds and 8 ounces.
Gender: Male
Name: Charlie Michael Jenson
And that's all I know.

There's a pause of heartbreak.

ETHAN

Kelly...that's all I know about my kid.

Silence.

Kelly?

KELLY softly cries. ETHAN kisses KELLY's forehead and struggles to crawl across the bed grabbing the sonogram off the tripod. He puts the picture between them and rolls over and falls asleep. Their backs face each other, and the picture. The camera beeps to signal low battery.

EXIT.