

.Dan Naumovich: Someone had an unhappy birthday



By **DAN NAUMOVICH**

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Dear Maria,

How's it going, kid? Listen, I'm sorry your 11th birthday didn't go as expected. I could tell something was bothering you. I also knew what was bothering because you were rather forward in expressing your disappointment in your gifts. A little tact goes a long way in these situations. Remember that.

But hey, you did get the next two books in that series you're reading.

I know, I know — you wanted a cell phone. And despite my repeated assurances that you wouldn't be getting a cell phone, you held true to the dream that we'd come through to make our little girl happy.

It's good that you still believe that all of your wishes can come true as long as you keep hoping. It's a very endearing trait. However, life isn't a Disney movie, and you really didn't get a phone.

"You're so mean," you probably want to scream. Go ahead, if it makes you feel better, but I have my reasons.

Maria, you may have noticed that Mommy changes phones more than Daddy does. This isn't because she's a sucker for the latest technology. Something horrible keeps happening to her phones.

You know her as a loving and caring person, and she is. But Mommy has a dark side when it comes to mobile communication devices.

In her possession, cell phones have drowned. They've been dropped and abandoned. There's a rumor she once tied her phone to the railroad tracks right before the afternoon express was set to arrive, but I don't believe it. I can't.

I don't know where this contempt comes from, but I'm afraid it might be genetic. And I just can't bear the thought of signing a two-year contract only to find, in a couple of weeks, your new phone stranded at the bottom of a recently run washing machine.

So there's that. Daddy has money issues.

Then there's the matter of your age.

As you know, your mother and I decided that 12 was a good age for a girl to get her first cell phone. Now, I could try to pull one over on you and say that the FCC prohibits cell phone ownership by people under 12 — kind of like I did when I told you failure to eat broccoli is a police matter. But you're wise to me now.

We decided that by age 12 you'll have achieved the maturity required to responsibly operate such technology. It also seemed light years away from when you first started asking for a cell phone, when you were 9. The years kind of snuck up on us. We should have made it 14.

Unfortunately, your friends' parents have already purchased phones for their underage daughters. You're envious, aren't you?

There's an expression about "keeping up with the Joneses." (No, not the Jonases, although I'd prefer you not try to keep up with them, either.) Anyway, it means that you shouldn't fret about things that others have and you don't.

Now, this may seem hypocritical to you coming from the owner of a brand new iPhone 4G. It really is quite a device. Someday, when you're older, you'll have one of your own.

I know, I know — you are older. That's the real problem here. You're not supposed to have a cell phone yet because you're not even supposed to be 11 yet. You're still supposed to be our little girl, the one with the Fisher-Price phone.

So there's that. Daddy has sentimentality issues.

Don't be sad, Maria. One day soon, when your siblings are driving you crazy and you're feeling the pressure of being the oldest kid, we'll head over to Best Buy to get that phone.

Then, before I know it, you'll asking for a car. But not until you're 16. That's the law. I'm serious this time.

Love, Dad

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