

Emma's dream day

Doctors had given us the most devastating news and now our little girl had one final wish. We had just days to make it happen. By Alina Edwards, 39



Emma

Listening to my daughter, Emma, chatting to her boyfriend, DJ, I couldn't help but grin.

'We're going to get married, then have three kids,' she said. 'Maybe we can get a dog too.'

My Emma was eight going on 28, and had her life with DJ all mapped out!

They'd met at school and had been inseparable ever since.

DJ's mum, Ronna, brought him over most Sundays so they could play together, and we'd often hear them chatting about their future together. It was just the cutest thing.

But soon after, Emma had a few bouts of illness.

'She's throwing up again,' my husband, Aaron, said one morning, as we were getting them ready for school.

I ran upstairs and found Emma on the bathroom floor in her pyjamas. She was white as a sheet and looked exhausted.

'I don't feel well, Mum,' she cried, as I wrapped my arms around her.

'No school for you today,' I said.

She'd been complaining

that her legs hurt too. We'd put it down to growing pains at first, but after yet another bout of sickness, we took her to hospital.

Emma was taken for scans. And afterwards, Aaron and I spoke to the doctor.

The news was like a punch to the gut.

'Emma has acute lymphoblastic leukaemia,' she explained. 'The cancer has started eating away at the bones in her legs, which is why she keeps falling down.'

She reassured us that it was a common and very treatable childhood cancer, and as Emma began medication and chemotherapy straightaway, we held on to her words.

The treatment took its toll on her little body. But one thing always lifted her spirits, even when she seemed to barely have an ounce of energy left, and that was a visit from DJ.

When Halloween arrived, we couldn't risk Emma going out in the cold and rain. But Ronna brought DJ over and we set up sweets at all the doors in our house, so they could pretend to trick or treat.

But almost a year on from Emma's diagnosis, we were told the treatment wasn't working.

And when we spoke to

her doctor, the news was devastating.

'I'm so sorry, but the cancer is terminal,' he told us. 'There's nothing more we can do for her. The best thing you can do is make her comfortable.'

Tears began streaming down my face as I asked: 'How long has she got?'

'Just days, I'm afraid,' he said.

We were devastated, and telling Emma was awful.

She looked so confused as

we said: 'There'll be no more treatment, we're going to take you home to rest.'

Back at home, we also had to explain to her siblings, Michael, Aaron Jr and Hailee, that they were going to lose their sister.

With Emma settled, I perched on her bed and said: 'Is there anything you want to do? A trip to Disneyland, maybe?'

'I want to marry DJ,' she

'No school for you today'



DJ and Emma



DJ and Emma at the altar

replied.

I remembered a teacher once telling me they'd arranged a wedding ceremony during indoor play time when they were younger, and so I spoke to Ronna about Emma's last wish.

'Let's make this happen,' she said. 'DJ will do whatever makes Emma happy.'

Ecstatic that they had agreed, I couldn't wait to tell Emma.

'I have something to tell you, sweetie,' I said. 'What is it?' she asked.

'DJ said he would love to marry you!'

A big smile swept across

her face and her eyes widened with joy.

'I can't wait!' she said.

We only had days, so we knew we had to throw it together as quickly as possible.

And after putting the word out to family, friends, neighbours and charities, we managed to put a wedding together in just two days.

I couldn't believe how many people wanted to help make Emma's wish come true.

So many donated things and volunteered their services, including photographers who would take pictures we'd be able to cherish forever.

When the big day arrived,

we dressed Emma in a pretty lilac gown and tied her hair back.

She looked beautiful and she was so excited. But just getting dressed tired her out.

'No pain medication today, Mum,' she said. 'I don't want to fall asleep at my wedding.'

Emma had been so secluded while she had treatment, so she couldn't wait to see all her friends and family.

We put her in her wheelchair before Aaron came in to see her.

'You look beautiful,' he said. 'I can't believe I get to walk my daughter down the aisle.'

Emma chose her best friend, Kinley, as her maid of honour and our friend, Chad, officiated. DJ and Emma had even picked out their own rings.

More than 100 guests came to watch them tie the knot — her doctors, teachers, family and schoolfriends. We couldn't believe it.

We'd set up chairs in my mum's back garden, and a wedding cake was donated as well as lots of toys.

Aaron walked Emma down the aisle to her favourite

hymn while DJ stood at the altar waiting for her.

'With this ring, I promise to share my heart and hold you up in friendship and faith from this day forward,' they recited, one at a time.

When we'd been given the news Emma's cancer was terminal, I thought I'd never get the chance to hear her say 'I do' or watch her husband pop a ring on to her finger, and I sobbed all the way through.

'You can give her a kiss if you want,' Chad announced.

DJ bent down to give her a peck while the guests giggled and cheered.

One of her teachers made a

speech about how their relationship began and a friend read out a verse from the bible. It was perfect.

I knew I'd treasure the memory of this special day forever.

Although Emma was exhausted, it was the happiest I'd ever seen her.

'It was the best day of my life. Thank you,' she said, as we tucked her into bed that night.

Emma had been so brave and put up a strong fight since she was diagnosed and I was so proud of her.

After that, her health deteriorated.

DJ visited every day, but two weeks after the wedding,

we were with our little girl as she died peacefully at home.

We're still heartbroken, but we're comforted that we were able to make Emma's dream come true and that we got to share that memory as a family.

We're still in touch with DJ and Ronna, and he still comes over to play with Emma's dog.

He'll always be a part of our family.

The wedding



Me and my girl