

A Moment in My Arms, Forever in My Heart Teenya Bennett

The quote is written in messy, tear stained hand writing in my scrapbook, next to a photo of me holding my birth daughter for the last few moments she was simply my daughter. When I try to explain how my life had changed from that point onward, I am at a complete loss. Some experiences are so incredible, even transcendent, that words become burdensome. This is my attempt to use words to explain how two pink lines on a pregnancy test taught me who I am, and who I am striving to be.

Those lines taught me that I was not the center of the universe. That does not take from my importance, but makes me part of a vast cosmos of humanity, interacting to create something bigger than me. I was the only one who could bring this child into the world at this time and this place, and that is nothing short of a miracle. I carried in my body another life, and that is an experience to special for words. However, because of my circumstances, I could not give that tiny human a life that I wished for her. However, I found someone that could and they gave not only her, but also me, the comfort of knowing that she would have all the things I had dreamed of for her.

She is a shining star in our lives. We came together to give her the world she deserves. The love baby Aliyah's adoptive parents have for me encompasses me and lifts me during my darkest hours when the pain of loss becomes almost too heavy to bear. I feel such a strong connection to them, and even the birth parents of their other children. It feels like the stars aligned and here we are a constellation that would not be complete without anyone of us.

My open adoption has taught me that there is a purpose for everything, even if it is deeply painful in the moment. I was hurt and angry, and felt the world was conspiring against me. And just maybe it was. But my misfortune and my grief made me strong enough to overcome even the worse of times. This level of sorrow and triumph have added new dimensions to my world. I may never be simply carefree again. But I will know the richness of a life that knows true love, and the joy of knowing I have added to a family and changed their lives forever.

Because of adoption, the baby I carried for months was a heavy burden both physically and emotionally. Now that has not to say I do not love my child and didn't cherish my pregnancy, but being faced with the end every day. The word adoption haunted me all 9 months. That is a heavy load that I wanted to trade in a heartbeat. I can remember how tiring it was thinking of the moment after delivery when I had to hand my baby over to another mother.

When leaving the hospital, physically I weigh less. Emotionally, I carried more weight than I ever had before. I was carrying a load that many withstand and few ever choose. I chose this knowing it was going to be painful.

Undoubtedly, I chose this because I have intense love for my child and deep down I knew I had the strength inside of me to conquer the pain. Now, my arms empty I had to remember and find the strength inside of me again.

Our flesh sometimes gets us into situations that may lead us to adoption. That is exactly how it happened for me. I allowed my flesh to run my life until that point. I felt that God wasn't big enough to help me get control over my desires. Because my flesh was weak, it also weakened my heart. It broke my heart into tiny shards because I had to tell my little girl goodbye in an effort to give her more. At that point, all I could do was look to God.

Right then I realized all I could really rely on was his strength. My arms were empty; my body expected the cries from a baby wanting to nurse... and yet there was nothing. This feeling caused me to want to run. Not physically run, but get rid of the pain. However, it is especially not going to go away if you run and don't allow yourself to deal with the emotions. Therefore, I had to allow myself to feel it. Feeling the pain of not being able to hold my baby, the pain of not being able to look into her eyes, or hear all of the little noise and cries she would make.

A journal excerpt from my time in pain says, "I hate everything right now. I feel like I am going to drown and even though I don't want to, I don't have the strength to fight it anymore. I am tired. Please someone

carry me, I'm begging you." This was my prayer, it was a desperate one. That prayer give me a visual of a woman on her knees at the end of her rope, a woman at the end of herself, a woman willing to do anything to survive. This is what I was seeing with my earthly eyes.

There are times when I look into Aliyah's eyes and it hurts me that she has no idea of the depth of the connection between her and I. I just think about the future because of her being adopted. Ultimately, my main desire is that we will see one another in heaven... and I will be reconciled to the child of my womb for eternity. Then, although there is so much I want to tell her, however one thing I will never tell her again is goodbye.

Many people still ask me why I chose adoption even though I knew it would be painful. My answer is so simple... I was incarcerated at the time of Aliyah's birth with a sentence of 13years and I felt forced into this adoption. Feeling of no hope of a release or sentence reduction, and not having the family support due to racial issues, and deep in my heart I knew this was the best thing for me and my daughter.

This feeling stays with you forever!