

I must have been about 10 or 11 years old when my mother got the news she was going to be a FIRST TIME GRANDMOTHER. My brother, Robert and his girlfriend, Kristen, had just found out they were expecting a baby. Big Deal, I thought. What was all the commotion about, just a baby, all they do is whine, and cry, need to be fed, need to be changed, and constantly looked after. My mother went through all the normal grandmother stages, going absolutely crazy buying everything in sight that had to do with babies. My father however, took a little bit longer to kick into the whole "grandpa groove", but as soon as it kicked in my father took my (then 15 yr. old) sister, Marlena to J.C. Penny's , handed her his credit card, and said "Here you go, whatever you think the baby needs, you buy it". Needless to say Kayla was completely spoiled, as any first grandchild would be. I just sat back in amazement and thought, "All this "hubbub" over a baby?"

Well the months passed and my brother and his girlfriend ended up moving in with my mom, my step dad and me. I couldn't believe how big Kristen had gotten. I didn't know babies got that big. As she got further and further along in her pregnancy, I kind of stayed away. I didn't want anything to do with that whole baby mess.

Well the day came when little Miss Kayla Lee DiGregorio was born. I wasn't there. None of our family was, but, of course my brother got it all on tape for us. When I got home from school my mom sat me down to watch my niece's birth. At this young age only one word sprung into my mind. ADOPTION!!!! I can't honestly say watching that tape of the birth mortified me to no end, all of the screaming and everything else that comes along with child birth was too much for me.

The day then came when Kristen came home from the hospital with Kayla. From the moment I saw her I was entranced. She was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. So tiny and innocent, helpless even, being held in her mother's arms. It was an instant fascination for me. From that moment on I wanted to be a part of EVERYTHING that had to do with Kayla, feeding, changing, rocking to sleep and especially PLAY TIME!!!! Oh I loved to play with her. The way she looked at everything, seeing it for the first time, it utterly amazed me! And I would sit there and wonder if I did the same thing and my mom would assure me that, yes I did. I tried to remember, or even imagine what it would be like to look at everything and see it for the first time. Although I could not remember, I could imagine. I found myself a little bit jealous of Kayla for being able to do this.

I remember the day I came home and my brother, Kristen and Kayla were gone. I was so sad. I had lost my new "toy" basically. I know that is a bad way of classifying a baby, but that is how she became to me, my favorite past time. My brother and Kristen had found their own little apartment about 15 miles from where my mom's house, and so I saw her less and less. Time went past, my brother and Kristen broke up and went their separate ways but they kept touch for Kayla's sake and for visitation. My brother had gotten married and Kristen had found a boyfriend. The next time I got to see Kayla was on her 1st birthday. She had grown so much and had that dark brown hair and those dark brown eyes just like my brother. She was his pride and joy, a true daddy's girl from the start. Kayla was his world, utterly and completely.

The last time I saw Kayla was at her 1st birthday party. After that things got pretty bad with my brother and Kristen. Kristen wouldn't let my brother see Kayla. This effected our whole family. She was the first grandbaby after all. It would be 3 more years before my brother would see his daughter, and even then she had no idea who he was. When I was younger I didn't know the complete impact this had on my family, most of all my brother. He tried to be strong for everyone, but how can one be strong with their heart soul, their entire world is gone?

Kayla turned 12 this past May. This matter, though it might not seem like it could have taught me anything, has taught me a great deal. Family is the most important thing. And the bond between parents and children is eternal, and can never be broken. I am hoping that this "story" has a happy ending. I would love nothing more than to see my niece again. Now that I am older I know what an impact one small child's birth had on my life. It made me see things in a totally different way. And I didn't realize that Kayla was the reason for that change until I wrote this essay. So in a way, she is still teaching me and making me realize things. Such a big thing for such a little girl to do.