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One Little + Changed Our Lives Forever: A Teen's Journey to Motherhood

When an 18-year-old girl finds out she is pregnant, she calls her cousin for support.



{Holding my Goddaughter for the first time just minutes after she was born}

When Tiffany saw the + on the EPT pregnancy test she immediately threw up all over her mother's coveted, white marble, bathroom floor. She had trusted me to be with her when she took the pregnancy test. Tiffany and I were very close growing up because I was only two years older than her, and she had lived with me for 9 years until her mother remarried in 2003.

Tiffany, my 18-year old cousin, was a beautiful, athletic, popular, senior at Sullivan East High School in Bluff City, Tennessee. She had a 4.0 GPA, was president of student council, and had recently started seeing the captain of the basketball team. Tiffany and I were a lot alike.

Anything I did she wanted to do to. When I learned to ride a bike, when I joined the cheerleading team, and when I went on my first date, Tiffany wasn't far behind. We liked the same food and

the same style of clothing, but on February 16, 2011 we discovered something that would change us forever as individuals...Tiffany was a mother-to-be.

Let's Start at the Beginning: February 16, 2011:

The day we found out about the pregnancy my phone rang early, around 8 am, and I was still half asleep. I didn't open my eyes to read the caller ID because the screen was too bright. In my best, "I wasn't really asleep," voice I answered the phone.

"Did I wake you up?" It was Tiffany. Her voice sounded quaky.

"No," I said, lying through my teeth.

Nothing.

I knew something was wrong. She never called me in the mornings, and I rarely heard from her during the school week. In the past few years it was only weekends and special family gatherings that brought us together.

Concerned, I asked, "are you okay? Tiff, why aren't you at school yet?"

She was silent for a few more moments until, finally, she spoke, "I'm late. I mean, like me...my body is late. I'm not going to school today."

My brain was still in an early morning fuzz, and I wasn't following her correctly. I asked, "What? You woke up late, so you're not going to school today?"

Tiffany replied, "Brittany, I think I'm pregnant."

I hung up. Hoping I had dreamt the words I had just heard; I began to count the seconds.

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-RING!!!

I answered. "Hey."

This time she was crying, "Did you lose service or something?"

Trying to sound reassuring I replied, "no, I accidently hung up. You know how these stupid touch screens are." I took a deep breath. "Everything is going to be okay."

Sniffling, she said, "Will you take me to get a test?"

"I'll be right over," I replied.

The CVS Pharmacy on Virginia Avenue in Bristol, Tennessee is ancient; and so is everyone that works there. It was one of the first CVS's built in the Tri-Cities, and it still had that 70's feel to it. When I opened the door I was enveloped with the scent of strong hospital cleaner, and I was immediately reminded of all the times I had the stomach flu. Every time I would have to walk through that god-awful smell just to get some Pepto and Sprite. I began to feel nauseated, and my stomach started to gurgle. I walked as fast as I could through the aisles searching for the pregnancy tests. Ironically, I discovered them located between the condoms and the Advil.

I never knew there were so many brands of pregnancy tests. I chose EPT because it was the least like, "Pick me! I'm the very best stick to pee on because my box is intricately designed with flowers and swirly things to give you the feeling that I always give good news. Oh, and I'm cheap." The EPT box was small and purple with simple print and no tacky designs. It was also a little more expensive than the others, which I thought was a good sign.

After we returned from the pharmacy; Tiffany and I sat on the edge of the bathtub, in the big master bathroom her parents had just renovated. We watched the little stick as if, at any moment, the EPT was magically going to jump up, do some little tricks, and wave a big sign reading: “Not Pregnant. Carry On.” That was definitely not the case. After 5 minutes, which felt like an eternity, Tiffany got up to check the results. She picked up the stick and stared at it blankly for a few seconds. Then, she dropped the test, and in an effort to make it to the toilet, and to warn me, she covered her mouth, turned around quickly, missed the toilet, and spewed a pink, chunky mess all over her parent’s fancy marble floor. Luckily, I was able to avoid the explosion by jumping into the bathtub.

And This Brings Us Back to the Scene We Started With

She looked up at me, with tears streaming down her face, and determined to break the silence, and sound supportive, all I could think to say was, “Um, congratulations.”

Two Weeks Later: March 2, 2011

The baby’s father bailed. Upon finding out about the little life growing inside of my cousin, the beloved all-star packed up his stuff, told his parents he wanted to move back in with his grandparents, flew 1,000 miles away to Colorado, and left Tiffany to make something out of the mess that he had helped create. She was devastated.

Nine Months Later: October 20, 2011

Tiffany's pregnancy was normal with very few complications. Seven months had gone by since she had first heard her baby's heartbeat. It was this sound that made her fall in love for the very first time. Luckily, our entire family became very supportive, and everyone was looking forward to the baby's arrival. Tiffany opted not to know the sex of the baby until it was born, and she asked me to be in the room with her, for support, when she delivered.

I was very hesitant about witnessing the birth at first because I don't do well with blood, guts, and gore. I had never actually seen anything give birth before, but the things I heard about delivery were violent and scary. I finally gave in and agreed to be in the room- with the exception that I have a chair and bottle of water handy in case I felt like I was going to faint or be sick.

The Delivery: October 28, 2011

At 1:45 am Tiffany's mom called me and said that they were on their way to the hospital because Tiffany's water broke. I immediately got dressed and jumped in the car. When I finally arrived at Bristol Regional Medical Center I rushed through the two automatic entry doors and headed straight for the receptionist's desk. A large woman, with curly black hair held in place on top of her head with a pencil, sat behind the desk typing on a computer. I gave the receptionist my cousin's name and asked which room she was in. The woman frowned, clicked her fingernails on the desk, and hatefully directed me to room 209. She advised me to hurry because visiting hours had been over for a long while, and the doctors might not let me in.

I've always had the fear of being trapped in an elevator, and I try to avoid them as much as possible. Unfortunately for me, the only way to the second floor is by a rickety old elevator.

When I was ten years old I had to ride to the third floor of the hospital in it to visit my sick grandmother. It bumped around and made awful noises the entire way up. I hated that elevator then, and I really hated it now. I felt a lump in my throat as I pushed the “UP” button, and then I took a deep breath. When the doors opened I slowly stepped inside and pushed the button for the second floor. The elevator bumped and screeched just like I remembered it. I braced myself against the back wall until it came to a stop, and when the doors opened I walked through them as quickly as I could.

Luckily, I didn't have any problems making it to Tiffany's room, and when I arrived things were in full swing. Tiffany's doctor explained that there was no time for an epidural, and that Tiff would have to deliver naturally without the use of pain meds. The doctor stated that because Tiffany was fully dilated the baby was on its way, and the delivery would go very quickly. The doctor was right because what happened next is still a blur. Nurses and medical students were entering the room hooking up all kinds of cords and monitors. The next thing I knew I was holding Tiffany's hand and she was pushing. She squeezed my hand so tight that it cut off circulation to my fingers and they began to throb.

I focused my eyes on the picture of a sailboat that was hanging on the wall directly in front of me. I didn't want to risk fainting by looking at what was going on between Tiffany's legs. I just wanted her to be comforted by my support and to see her baby for the first time. Tiffany pushed eight or nine times until the doctor said, “Ok, make this one really good because baby is almost out!” In a split second she was there; a perfect, healthy, beautiful baby girl. The doctor cut the umbilical cord and wrapped her in a blanket, and Tiffany, too shaky from the pain, motioned the doctor to hand the baby to me. My heart melted onto the floor. I loved her so much

and had only known her for two minutes. Tiffany reached up to touch her baby's hand, then she said, "We're so glad you're here sweet girl, meet your Godmother Brittany."