No Chocolate Drop, No Happiness

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In the midst of a storm, the sun appeared in the presence of a two-year-old girl. The storm passed, but soon returned, taking the light from my life. This young child was the foundation of our family, and because of that, she was powerful; without her there was no family. Unfortunately, the day came when my family lost its foundation, and I lost the most important individual, whom I call my niece. My sky was no longer sunny.

To illustrate what my niece meant to me, think of life without water; we wouldn’t be able to survive. Her name was Terriah, and she was like a little chocolate drop, with hair like a cotton ball. I adored her so much because she reminded me of myself. She had a soft, squeaky voice just like mine, walked like me, and smiled like me. It was like she were my own. She was very smart, independent, and spoiled. Terriah was an only child, surrounded by six older people who focused all their attention on her; therefore, she got what she wanted whenever she wanted it.

Not only was she special to me, but she held a special place in the hearts of all of the Goodes family. Terriah was my brother’s first child, my mom’s first grandchild, and my sisters’ and my first niece. Everyone developed his or her own special relationship with her. The family cherished her because we had to go through a lot just to be a part of her life. She made everyone look at life with a different perspective. My brother matured, we all became more responsible, and some even changed bad habits to create a more appropriate environment for Terriah. She brought the family closer because we all wanted what was best for her, and in order to make that happen we had to work together.

Unfortunately, the sky couldn’t be sunny forever. Big dark clouds had to roll in at some point. I remember the day I received the phone call telling me my niece had been taken by the
state. My mom was crying excessively on the other end, and I was at the mall getting ready to
clock in for work. After that, all I can remember was breaking down, punching windows, and
screaming “Why?!?” My mother told me that there were false claims reported to the Department
of Human Services. It was brought to their attention that my mother was in and out of the
hospital frequently. They assumed that there was no one available to take care of my niece, but
my stepfather, two sisters, and I were all there to look after Terriah. During this time, Terriah’s
father was incarcerated, and he didn’t know what was going on and couldn’t do anything to help.
None of us knew why this was happening.

As a result, the family court system became our adversary. The ruling from the judge was
to place Terriah with my brother’s father. He had never known Terriah. My brother didn’t have a
voice when it came to placement for his daughter due to his incarceration. My brother and his
father don’t have a good relationship, so we knew if she was placed with him, he wouldn’t allow
us to see her. After the court order, things only went downhill. My mother became more sick, my
sisters started acting up, and the house became very quiet. There was not a ray of sunshine left in
the sky. The Goodes family slowly started to fall apart.

In honesty, the hardest part of the loss for me was dealing with the grief. Although my
niece didn’t die, the grief I felt was as if she had. I was not able to speak to her, see her, or
communicate with her in any type of way. The lawyers involved in the case kept telling me that
it would be awhile until I could see her. They even had the audacity to say it could be years.
Tears fell whenever my mouth started to form her name. I did everything I could to let her know
that I was still her aunt. I bought her school clothes and a new back pack, sent her gift baskets,
jewelry, and a photo album. What hurt the most was knowing that she didn’t know what was
going on. Although I was going through a hard time, I couldn’t just put my life on hold. I had to
maintain my 4.0 GPA, stay involved in extracurricular activities, and work. If you did not know it, you would have never thought that I was going through a hell storm. Being independent was already a challenging transition, but being independent during that point of my life when my family is falling apart was even more challenging.

Eventually, life got better. My sky is not as bright as it used to be, but there is sunshine. My family will never be the same, but we can only move forward. My biggest fear is becoming a stranger to my niece. Although she is young and will not remember the tragic events that occurred, she will also not remember the life she had with us. If I get the chance to see my niece again, I don’t want her to know about my pain of losing her. I’ll tell her that there wasn’t a day that went by that I didn’t think of her. I would want to rebuild our relationship so that we could move forward, leaving the past behind us. My sky could use some more sunshine, and I want her to be the one to make it brighter. Until that day comes, I use her as my motivation to keep going and to never stop, no matter how bad the storm is.