

# The Sweetest Nightmare

by Alicia Griffin

As a 17-year-old teenager and a senior in high school, I should've felt as if the world were in my hands. The plethora of upcoming events should've been on the horizon—college applications, prom, graduation, and the like. It's a year full of promise and joy. Instead, what was ahead of me, was an unclear path that paved the road. It was full of uncertainties.

Seventeen and pregnant. That was my new reality, and very soon it was going to become my new normal. I had no idea what motherhood entailed. I was in for a huge awakening—all while I was walking into what I believed to be my worst nightmare. I was literally standing on a precipice with no safety net.

I remember staring intently at the self-test applicator in my hand. My eyes fixed on the double horizontal lines that appeared in a bright shade of pink, a shade of pink that can definitely represent the gender; if it was a girl of course. What was I going to do? How was I going to finish my senior year and graduate? Worst of all, how was I going to tell mom? I was overwhelmed in fear. This should be a time when a woman, preferably over the legal age limit, would be screaming with joy and excitement. Instead, there I sat on the toilet seat, pondering all the thoughts of uncertainties that lay ahead.

The months that followed only proved to be testaments of what was to come. Since the termination of my pregnancy wasn't an option, releasing the news to my family that I was expecting wasn't as hard as having to face my friends and the faculty at my high school. All eyes were on me as I walked the halls—sheer expression of disappointment on their faces. I felt out of place. The school administration recommended that I attend night school, since I wasn't the ideal example they wanted to portray for the other students. I was no longer welcomed. Though their reasons may have seemed valid, I had no intentions to finish the school year under those circumstances, especially when I was so close to crossing the finish line. My goal was to graduate with my class. Therefore, I fought extremely hard, and I got approval to continue with my scheduled classes.

To say that some teachers were ruthless would be an understatement. Even though they were to maintain a level of equality and professionalism, their judgment was evident. They disapproved of my attendance at the school. However, the few teachers that were always willing to help me achieve my goals to graduate, regardless how they truly felt about my pregnancy, were never left unnoticed. They were never judgmental, at least not to my face. They helped make my experience a little more tolerable. I will forever be grateful for their compassion and guidance.

As time began to draw closer to my due date, I was becoming extremely anxious. My inability to be independent drew concerns on how I was going to provide the financial stability that came along with the responsibility of being a parent. Would I even be a good mother?

When the day arrived, however, the uncertainties were washed away the minute I looked into the eyes of the sweetest little bundle of joy that was wrapped so tight in her warm blanket and placed in my arms. In that very moment, the unconditional love I felt was inexplicable. My heart expanded immediately. I didn't have all the answers, but I knew from that moment on, we would get through anything—together. ✨

Alicia Griffin lives in the Sunshine State where life experiences drive her writing ambition.

