

Nine and A Half Months...

by Allison Towle

I remember so well the day my best friend Jasmine told me she was pregnant. I had suspected it for months but couldn't persuade her to speak the truth. On Christmas morning, she came to my house. As she walked up to the door, I looked at her in shock. As she walked closer, I instinctively stuck my hand out and touched her rather plump stomach and asked, "Why didn't you tell me?" No answer was needed. We both had tears slowly forming in our eyes, and at that moment it seemed as if the world had stopped. That was the beginning of the most exciting yet painful moment in each of our lives.

By the time Jasmine had shared her pregnancy with me, she was 6 1/2 months along and her pregnancy was becoming apparent. At her young age of 16, Jasmine was still a junior at a Catholic high school. Obviously she couldn't finish the year. She stopped going to school at the end of the semester with a doctor's note confirming she was under a considerable amount of stress.

During the next few months, Jasmine and I became closer than we ever had been before. She shared with me all her fears, her excitement, and finally her decision. In Jasmine's seventh month she made the generous and courageous decision that this child deserved more than what a teenage mother and absent father could give it. Jasmine decided her best choice would be to put her child up for adoption.

The thought of Jasmine giving up her child for adoption made me extremely sad. I was so excited with the thought of being an honorary aunt. After much thought, I began to realize the importance of Jasmine's decision for herself as well as for her expected child. I realized her decision was made with love, and I began to support her not just with words, but also from my soul.

Together, Jasmine, her mother Diva, and I looked over dozens of adoptive parent biographies. Jasmine finally decided, after much thought and intensive questioning of prospective parents, on a loving family, Mary and John, from another state. They flew out to California to meet on a personal basis and to help assure Jasmine of her decision. Everything was settled and we were simply waiting for the expected birth.

On the day labor was induced, everything went well. The room was very comfortable and intimate with only Diva, Jasmine and me. Jasmine's water broke at 5:40 p.m., and by 7:00

p.m. she was fully dilated and ready to push. The nurse got everything ready while Diva and I attempted to keep Jasmine calm. Jasmine's beautiful baby daughter was born exactly at 7:34 p.m. and weighed 7 lb. 8 oz.

I was completely exhausted, yet pumped with adrenaline from what I had witnessed. Jasmine was the happiest I'd seen her in months. I spent the entire day after delivery with Jasmine and the baby. As I sat there watching Jasmine hold her daughter, I couldn't bring myself to accept the fact that her baby girl would soon be gone. At that moment, I felt as if I knew exactly what Jasmine was going through, yet I knew she was going through so much more. Suddenly the two people I had put so much faith in to raise my best friend's child seemed completely inadequate. I felt overwhelming anger, as if they were stealing a part of me and leaving thousands of pieces to put back together. I felt confused by the fact that two people could be so happy and others could possess what seemed like never-ending pain. When I looked at Jasmine's quivering hands as she passed her child to the new parents, I felt more helpless than ever before. I couldn't begin to imagine what I could do to help Jasmine through the most painfully difficult experience of her life.

We left the hospital in complete silence, walking away empty handed while others left with the newest member of their family. The day was dreary and seemed to go on forever. The pain didn't subside and seemed as if it never would. Jasmine then took her needs into her own hands. After hours of crying, Jasmine called Mary and John and attempted to explain her complicated feelings. She explained that she felt that she hadn't had enough time and didn't get to properly say good-bye. She then asked if she could have her daughter spend the night with her. Mary and John willingly agreed.

The baby arrived later that evening and Jasmine was given the whole night alone with her daughter to express the things she felt had cheated of. The night alone with her baby gave Jasmine a chance to say good-bye in her own way, and most importantly, clarified for her what an enormous job and huge responsibility caring for a child is. That night assured Jasmine of the wisdom of her decision. When Mary and John arrived in the morning, the departure was not solemn. Jasmine was now confident with her choice.

I think back to two weeks before the birth. We were still

children, then, with children's minds. We never began to imagine the love we could possess for this unseen child. We completely miscalculated the depth of emotions we would have after seeing this child emerge into the world. Suddenly, unthought-of emotions took over and made the process almost unbearable, but the welfare of the child came first. Jasmine and her daughter will both now get the chance to live out the

childhood they deserve with love and support surrounding them.

With love,
Allison Towle

The names of all the participants have been changed.