



NEW YORK STATE

My Brother's Keeper

Pre-Masterclass Essay

I played with the strings of my sweater and studied the wet soil beneath me as I stood a few feet away from my Dad, who used the rain as a way to mask his tears. He was trying his best to keep it together, to be strong, but in that moment, he was heartbroken. February 20th is the only day my dad is heartbroken. From the gray clouds, to the rain, to the tombstones all over, melancholy and sorrow was very much present. It suffocated my dad; it suffocated my family, and in that moment, I thought, this is it. This is the time. This is when I become the sunshine.

Seventeen years ago, my family went on vacation to Florida with the hopes of escaping the brutal New York winter. Relaxing poolside and wearing shorts was significantly better than shoveling snow and wearing so many layers, mobility was sacrificed. Florida was their escape. Escape from school, work and reality. But little did they know I had different plans.

Arriving in Florida on February 17th, two days passed and I was ready to make my entrance. They've had enough fun already and it was time for me to make my impact in the most unforgettable way possible. The relaxing vacation poolside soon became a life changing experience in Arnold Palmer Hospital, as I decided to enter the world weeks earlier than expected. Dolphins leaping in and out of the water and seeing princess you have idolized for so many years, such as Cinderella, twirl and smile right in front of you in real life is breathtaking, but giving birth to your daughter and seeing your baby sister is much more fulfilling, and 17 years later, I like to think my family grew to realize this.



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Florida was a way to escape reality, but more importantly, escape the storm my family endured a year before when my grandmother passed. However, after every storm, there's a rainbow. After the gray and sorrow sky clears, the beautiful, bright sun comes out and for my family, I was the sun. Originally expected to come March 15th, 2002, the day my grandmother passed, I came about 3 weeks earlier on February 20th. Three weeks earlier and yet still on time because February 20th is my beloved grandmother's birthday.

This caused my family to call me their "sunshine" baby, for I was born in the sunshine state of course, but more importantly because I add new meaning to February 20th. Contrary to the day being a reminder of another year my grandma could not experience; we celebrate her and myself. Resembling my grandmother from my sideburns to my dimples to my smile, I believe she lives through me and I was meant to be the sunshine during not only my family's darkest days, but my friends', for my grandmother always uplifted others.

So as my dad stood there, barely holding it together whilst looking at the gray headstone contrasted by the white and pink carnations, I walked over to him, smiled and embraced him. To me, I was embracing my father who was hurting, but for him he was embracing me and the spirit of his mother. He was embracing the sunshine that came with me seventeen years ago.

