

Twogether is Too Complicated

- Mandy R. Clark
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Khylie and her mother have never had a typical mother-daughter relationship. “She was my best friend,” her mother Kyndra Garrett says.

T H U M P.

Khylie Zeschmann halted in the driveway. She could only stare as her mother collapsed to the ground.

Bruises, blood, and heartache.

And yet, her mom was once again falling for a guy.

Literally.

After nine and a half years in this abusive relationship, things should have changed.

Right?

Khylie's mom, Kyndra Garrett, could have found someone to treat her better. Instead, Garrett found her addict boyfriend.

Khylie's boyfriend, Noah Moore, intervened but took a crashing blow to the face for his efforts. Blood dripped from Noah's lip as he glared at his attacker, completely stunned.

In all the grunts, groans, and fury, gravity took over. Tears streamed down Khylie's pale face as she sunk hopelessly to the ground.

Blaring sounds sliced through the brisk night air. The police made their presence clear with red and blue flashing lights, but were too late. The fight had already come to an end.

Garrett walked somberly over to her daughter, kissed her under her dirty blonde hairline, and said, "I love you."

That was the last time the two saw each other.

"She (Garrett) knew that if she was to leave or use again, she wouldn't be in my life," Khylie says.



Khylie and Noah often spend time together. Their families have become so comfortable around each other that Khylie, Noah, her mom, and his mom all lived together for a little bit. Photo from Khylie.

Garrett left with her abusive boyfriend, while Khylie left with a scarring reality. At sixteen, she was permanently parentless.

Khylie could not remember a time when Garrett really cared or raised her like a mother should. Alcohol and methamphetamines had left Khylie as a side-thought. One day Garrett would be home with her and the next she would be incarcerated, leaving Khylie with her grandmother. Her father never showed up to help or support the family.

Instead of inviting friends over to play, depression and shame loomed over her constantly.

People talked and her ears would perk up, catching any word of her absent mother.

“Oh, I saw your mom. She was riding on a bike. She looked *pretty* bad.”

Khylie did not—would not—have a normal parent-child relationship. No one sang her to sleep, cut the crust off her sandwiches, or even wished her luck on a test. Her chance for regular passed a long time ago. So Khylie made her own normal with Noah.

“I remember the first night, I actually figured I liked him,” she recalls. “His one little brother was in church running around, acting crazy and seeing him be so nice kind of made me really like him.”

The two made it official in fifth grade. Ever since those few childhood moments, Khylie and Noah have been in an on and off again relationship. As the two grew up together, so did their relationship, love, and intimacy.

Some months ago, Khylie visited the doctor, throat aching. After a few tests, a diagnosis came back.

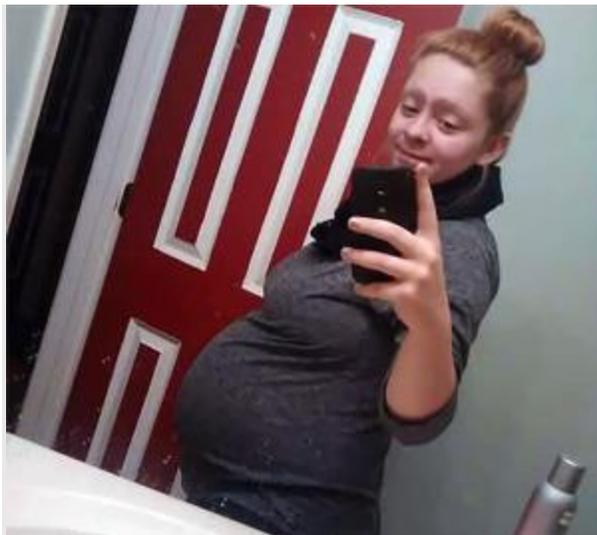
“Well, there’s nothing wrong with your throat, but you’re pregnant.”

“Oh...okay.”

Sure, they both knew it was a possibility. Neither used condoms or birth control, so of course it *could* happen but...neither thought it actually would.

Khylie isn’t alone. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 41 percent of teenagers did not use a condom during their last sexual encounter.

At first, fear immediately hit Khylie. One concern consumed her thoughts. She needed to make sure her baby lived a better, easier life than her.



Despite all the negative attention Khylie received, she managed to keep a positive attitude, looking forward to the day Leo would arrive. Photo from Khylie.

After pondering, Khylie wandered into a new perspective. Her fear diminished and instead she imagined the love her baby would bring. Suddenly, Khylie was overjoyed.

“I remember when I first found out,” Khylie says with tears in her eyes. “Coming home and telling my boyfriend...it was pretty exciting.”

Finally, Khylie called the last person she still needed to tell.

Garrett, incarcerated for drugs, listened as Khylie delivered the shocking news.

Mixed emotions flooded through Garrett as she remembered her own teen pregnancy. She knew how hard it would be for Khylie. Yet, Garrett also recognized how strong, loving, and caring her daughter is.

I know she's going to be the best mom, Garrett thought.

At ten weeks, Khylie scheduled her first appointment with the doctor. With no real parental guidance, Khylie was left clueless in the process. She never even signed up for any parenting classes, until about eight months in when she moved to her aunt's house. Khylie transferred to Millard West High School, where her QT teacher suggested she take Child Development.

Walking around the new school made Khylie realize just how much West differed from her old school. Big and filled with many students, Khylie passed one green locker and another until she reached hers. Unlike the other students bumping shoulders, Khylie had her space. Not many people befriended her. Khylie lost the smiles, waves, and laughs she was used to at her old school. Instead students constantly looked at her swollen belly, refraining from commentating.

“People stare at me and some days it feels like it's worse than others,” Khylie says.

Although no one said anything to her face, words were exchanged behind her back.

Did you see the pregnant girl? Who's the dad? I bet it's him.

“I find it so silly that people sit there and say that when obviously I'm pregnant and going to high school. I have enough on my plate. I don't need you talking about me,” Khylie says.

Eventually, Khylie found friends and they stayed by her side. No more walking to the locker by herself, because someone would be walking with her.

As Khylie neared the end of her pregnancy, everything seemed to be working out.



Khylie says Leo is enough for her and that she does not plan on having any more children right now. Photo by Khylie.

When it was time, pain struck Khylie while she was sitting on the coach with Noah. She jumped into the small passenger seat. Her aunt zoomed down vacant roads, her dark green car blending in with the night. The doctors almost sent Khylie home, but then her water broke.

5:54 am.

Baby boy Leo entered Khylie's complicated world on January 25th. All the evident criticism could now disappear.

Teenage pregnancy isn't uncommon. According to the United States Department of Health & Human Services, as of 2014, 249,078 babies were born to females ages 15-19.

Khylie now plans on getting an IUD (a form of birth control) until her late adult years.

A little after birth a name popped up onto the phone of Khylie's screen.

Garrett.

Her mother was released from jail and anxious to contact her daughter.

Khylie opened up the message. Her mom said how proud she was of her.

“Khylie, she’s just perfect. Her personality, she’s just so bubbly and just happy. She was my best friend,” Garrett says, wiping the tears away from her black eyeliner.

A text message didn’t change reality.

Khylie thinks of her mother and pictures the self-invested brunette who abandoned her. She stuck to the no-contact plan. Her mother would not come back into her life.

“She still chose [drugs] over not just me now, but my son, and I don’t have any feelings towards her because now it’s not just hurting me, it’s hurting my son,” Khylie believes.

Garrett is now working on earning her love back. She’s two months clean.

And Garrett is pregnant.

Leo will soon have an aunt or uncle to play with.

However, Garrett is still unsure of her future plans. She must decide between going back to rehab or attending college.

Either way, Khylie knows her future is with Noah and Leo.

“I just fell in love I guess,” Khylie says laughing. “In August, we plan on getting married.”

No fancy wedding, or even a wedding at all. Khylie just hopes to sign the papers, move into an apartment, and raise their son together. She will also complete her upcoming senior year in high school and someday wants to become a drug counselor.

“I hope that things do work out for them. I really do hope and pray every day that they’re happy. They need to be happy,” Garrett says.

Drugs, alcohol, and abuse all entered Khylie’s life, setting her up for failure and destruction. Instead, she looks forward to the future, because now it’s hers to control.