

# THE FAMILY WE WERE GIVEN

*Tiarra Knox*

**M**y family is very important to me—every single last one of them. I love them all, each one for a different reason. They are my support line to life even if I can't always show it. They irritate me more than I am willing to admit, but I love them nonetheless. I would be lost without them in my life.

There are days when I just want to be alone and shut the world out. My family sees it as me being evil, but that's not the case. When I don't feel like being bothered with anyone I just isolate myself from everything. I don't know how to open up to them and tell them how I feel. Even if I could open up to them I probably wouldn't because they run their mouths too much for me, meaning if I tell them something, the whole family is going to end up finding out. So to keep my business from spreading around I just don't

tell them anything. I feel like I'm a prisoner in my own house with nowhere to go and nothing to do. I have all this time on my hands and nothing to do with it.

Sometimes I wish I could just trade places with no one in particular so he or she could feel my pain and see what I have to go through on a daily basis. When things seem like they are getting too rough for me to handle, when I just can't take it anymore, when I need to get away from everything that I'm going through, I run straight to my aunt's house. There I can be a little kid again, whereas if I'm at home, I feel like I'm a mom who has been robbed of her teenage years. I feel like this all the time because there is no mother figure in my little brother and sister's life. I'm the closest thing they have to a mom, plus my dad puts pressure on me when it comes to my seven-year-old sister. She is like my child I didn't birth. I have to do everything for her and it's starting to take a toll on me. It's like she is grown but she isn't, she talks back to me, gets attitudes, she's just helpless. Sometimes it makes me wonder where my dad, brother, and sister would be without me. I'm their backbone.

My aunt has two daughters my age. They are like the sisters I always wanted but never received. My cousin Alice, who is seventeen, is one of my favorite relatives because we relate to each other so well. It's like she feels the pain I feel, and knows when something is bothering me. Alice is my soulmate. She's about 5' 9", 135, and kind of dark-skinned like the sun has kissed her. She is very intellectual and poetic. She wears braces, has average length hair, very long model-type legs. She has a beautiful personality when she isn't mad at anyone. There are not enough words in the entire world to describe her. She is beautiful inside and out. She is a very caring, loving, funny goofball who loves to have fun. She is also a very good dancer. It's like she speaks a whole different language with her body when she dances.

She knows me better than I know myself. I could sit up with her for hours just talking about how I feel and what's going on in my life. She is my best friend in the whole world. I trust her with my life. She helped me change my outlook on life and how I was living it. If it weren't for Alice I wouldn't be in school getting As and Bs. I'd probably be in the streets selling drugs, living dangerously and hurting loved ones. Just her doing well in school and making

the right decisions was enough for me to do the same thing. I have always looked up to her; she brought things out of me that I never knew I could do—such as writing. She keeps me on the right track when I feel like losing it by making me think about the consequences of my actions, and how they will affect me in the long run. It's true that I hear what Alice tells me all the time from the grown-ups in my life, but it's a lot different hearing it from someone my age who knows how I feel, what I have been through, and what I'm going through now. Alice knows and gets me better than anyone else, she knows when I want to be left alone, and she knows when I need love.

I look up to Alice because she has set goals for herself. She is doing something with her life, and is determined to be more than her mom and dad. She's not going to be one of those statistics you hear about—having babies she can't take care of, sleeping with countless men who don't care anything about her. She's not going to end up with a dead-end job, two kids, no babies' father, no car, no house, and no financial support. Her goals are to get in to college and become a writer or a psychologist. She also wants to make her family proud, something she has already accomplished with me. She just recently got a Bill Gates Scholarship that allows her to attend college in Washington state for the first year then after that she can go anywhere she desires for the last three. She is planning on going to the University of Washington for the first year.

I'm sad she is leaving me but I also know she deserves it. I feel that when she leaves she is going to be taking a part of me with her. She has worked very hard to get where she is. This is one of the main reasons why she is my role model. She is following her dreams and goals, even when it gets rough, and when she wants to give up she doesn't. She is my motivation, my inspiration.

I care about her opinion, and how she feels about situations that I'm in. I have to hear her thoughts on things because it matters to me that much. Her opinion matters the most to me because she's not going to tell me something I want to hear, she's going to tell me what she really thinks regardless of my feelings. She gives me good advice and has a lot of wisdom for her age. The things she says to me sound like they are coming from an elder person like a grandmother figure or something. It's like she has been on

this earth before and sees things through elderly eyes. Also she's my right-hand man, and even if she's wrong I'm going to listen to what she has to say. I may not use it but I listen nonetheless. I never had to be someone I wasn't around her, which took me nine-and-a-half years to figure out. The reason it took me so long is because I was spending all this time trying to prove to her I was someone I wasn't. I thought if she saw me as a cool, hard person then she would respect me. I then realized I never had to be someone I wasn't around her but myself, and she accepted me for who I was and who I am.

The number-one example I can give of how Alice helps me through all my drama is that on Wednesday I had a very bad day. I mean, nothing went my way at all. For starters my dad was supposed to pay me that day for help watching my brother and sister while he went to work and didn't, then I had my school picture retaken and what a big mistake that was. I should have just stuck with the original one because this one looks so ugly.

I was also having trouble writing an essay. I praise writers because this thing is harder than it seems. You have to have a lot of patience and great passion. I was so ready to give up, but my teacher wouldn't let me (I so don't like her right now) but anyway she kept pushing me like she was trying to get more out of me when I didn't have any more to give. When I was really about to lose it, Alice and I talked about how I was feeling. She told me that this was just a challenge and I had to push through it in order to come out on top and a winner. She said I can't always give up and punk out on things when they get a little hard because if I do then I would be doing that for the rest of my life. I still didn't want to do it but there was a lot of truth in her words. I wouldn't be hurting anyone but myself if I quit when I was so close to finishing. God, I hate her so much when she is right, it gets on my last nerve.

Alice is part of the extended family I was given. Sometimes I don't like my family, sometimes we don't get along, but when the lights go out we are still a family and that's not going to change. We fuss, fight, just like any other normal family, but I love them with all my heart. I may not like half (more like all) of them, but this is the only family I've known for sixteen-and-a-half years. They love and accept me for who I am. Even though I couldn't ask for a more annoying family, this is the family I was given.

...HAPPILY EVER AFTER



*Sixteen-year-old **Tiarra Knox** hopes to become a pediatrician one day. Until then you can find her singing, dancing, reading, and writing. Her cousin Alice, her little brothers, her sister, and her friends inspire her. What does Tiarra like most about herself? “My smile, personality, my eyes, my bottom lip, and my skin color.”*