About "Child of Mine" (written by Michaela Anne)



"I know you see the world different than me…"

All it takes is that first line to get her attention. It doesn't matter what she's doing; playing, crying, resting her head on my shoulder, as soon as I start singing that line, her head jerks up, eyes twinkling, wide and alert, searching for mine with an immediate smile. The way she looks at me while I sing is startling. It's the closest I've felt to true magic on this earth. It's cosmic and soulful, seeing such recognition and amazement on a 5 month old baby's face.

The song is Child of Mine by Carole King. It's a song my daughter has heard more than any other song in her young life, including her entire 9 months growing inside of me. In my own childhood, I don't have many memories of my mother singing to me. I remember asking her as I was older but she always scoffed and said she didn't have a good enough voice. She loves music though so to make up for it, she always had something playing. This was the late 80s, early 90s and VH1 was a constant fixture on the TV. Our cassette and cd collection was readily available on the shelf next to the boombox in the living room to push back the coffee table and have a dance party. For the quieter moments, one favorite cd in our collection was a compilation of lullabies. Child of Mine was part of that collection and one she played on repeat. So much so that 30 some years later, as soon as I found out I was pregnant, I immediately thought, I need to learn that song.

I brought this up to my mom early in my pregnancy and lo and behold, she still had the boombox and she still had the cd. I spent time learning the song on piano and guitar, diligently practicing to memorize the lyrics, determined to be prepared to have something to sing for my daughter when she arrived. For those first few months of pregnancy, everything was feeling hopeful, happy and exciting.

Then, when I was 5 months pregnant, on a rainy Friday afternoon in Nashville, my dad called and in a panicked voice told me my mom was in an ambulance on her way to the hospital. He thought she was having a stroke. My husband and I grabbed wet laundry out of the washing machine, threw it in a trash bag in the car and drove 10 hours north to Michigan. I was there by the next morning as soon as visiting hours opened at the hospital.

My mom had suffered a massive and debilitating hemorrhagic stroke. She had completely lost her ability to speak and her entire right side. She was having static seizures and ended up in an induced coma for several weeks ultimately remaining in the hospital for over 3 months. In an instant, all of our lives had changed. I spent the rest of my pregnancy living at my parents house splitting shifts at the hospital with my dad and brother. Due to the pandemic, only one person was allowed in the hospital room at a time so I spent many hours alone, day in and day out, staring at my mother's body, watching her breathe, memorizing her face, not knowing if and how she'd return to us. I had always heard it was beneficial to keep talking to someone in a coma and especially those with a brain injury. I wanted her to somehow know she had a lot to return to, a lot of reason to fight to live and

be well. So I sang to her, every single day, all day. I sang her Child of Mine, over and over, like a prayer I hoped she could hear. I hoped it would will her back to life.

By the time my baby was born, I had spent multiple stressful, exhausting months watching my mom struggle to slowly regain her cognition, speech and mobility. I watched in angst and pain as well as in wonder as she re-learned how to talk, chew, swallow, read all as my belly swelled and I came closer to becoming a mother myself. My mom had made miraculous gains in a short time but still had a long, unsure recovery ahead of her.

We made this video a week before my due date. At this point, heading into giving birth for the first time, I was exhausted, raw and scared but thankful I could at least call my mom on the phone and have a slow pieced together conversation. Every other plan had changed. She would no longer be coming to visit when the baby was born, no longer able to help and care for me through this transition into motherhood, no longer able to pick up and carry her first grand baby. But she was still here and working hard to regain it all. I can't help but wonder why this trauma had to happen at the time it did. Why was my daughter born into these painful circumstances? Why did it feel like I lost my mother as I had known her right when I was becoming a mother myself? My mother says it's because we needed an angel with us.

The last verse of Child of Mine has especially been a healing balm as it feels like it was written for this time in our lives, incredibly poignant for my daughter's entrance into this world:

> *"I know the times you're born in, may not have been the best,*
> *but you can make the times ahead better than the rest."*

When I took my daughter to visit my mom, I sang this song to her, as I do every day, holding her in my arms, rocking back and forth. My mom, still unable to walk or confidently move completely on her own, sat on the couch looking up at us. My daughter smiled and cooed in wonder the same way she always did but this time she wasn't looking at me. This time she held her grandmother's gaze the entire song. - Michaela Anne

More on Michaela Anne HERE.