

Candle Love

by MaryAnn Diorio

“Go away, Tamara.” Four-year-old Keisha stuck out her tongue at her new baby sister. “I don’t like you.”

Keisha shoved the cradle.

Tamara started to cry.

“Keisha, be kind to your baby sister.”

Mama picked up Tamara. “It’s time to change your smelly diaper.”

Mama carried Tamara to the bedroom.

Keisha shank to her knees. She added another wooden block to her tower.

“Keisha,” Mama called. “Please come here.”

Keisha stood up. She kicked over her tower.

Crash!

“It’s all Tamara’s fault!”

Keisha climbed over the scattered blocks and headed toward the tiny bedroom she now shared with Tamara.

“I hate you, Tamara!” Keisha mumbled.

Tamara squealed on the changing table.

Mama held her hand on Tamara’s tummy. “Keisha, please get me a clean diaper from the dresser top.”

Keisha stood on tiptoe and reached for a clean diaper. She held it with one hand and her nose with the other.

Mama took the diaper. “Thank you, darling.”
Keisha held her nose with both hands.

“All done, Tamara. It’s time for your nap.” Mama lifted Tamara from the changing table and kissed her forehead. She put Tamara in her crib.

Keisha clenched her fists. “That’s *my* crib.”

“You’re a big girl now,” Mama said. “And big girls don’t sleep in cribs.”

Keisha’s throat tightened.

Tamara whimpered then fell fast asleep.

“Let’s bake chocolate chip cookies,” Mama said.

Keisha grabbed Mama’s hand. “You’re all mine again.”

Mama smiled. “Go get the mixing bowl and a big wooden spoon. I’ll gather the ingredients.”

When everything was ready, Keisha climbed up on a stool next to the counter.

Mama took two eggs from the carton.

Tamara screamed.

“Oh, no!” Mama wiped her hands on a towel. “I’ll be right back.”

Keisha frowned. “Why couldn’t Tamara go away forever?”

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