

Gifts from this baby of mine

by Connie Brisson

When Gabrielle was just two days old, Marcel came home with two gifts for her.

I was still trying to navigate my sore and changing body, afraid to even touch Gabrielle, still grappling with the whole miracle of birth and baby screaming thing, and he was coming home with toys that seemed a little odd for a two DAY old.

The first was a ballerina Barbie and I suppose now, looking back, that he may have intuitively foreseen her love for dance.

Or, looking back (in another way) maybe the gift actually *gifted* her with a love for dance. Gifts, given with intention, have great symbolic power - so don't give them lightly. They're mystical and that's why in those old Disney movies, the fairies gave them wisely and thoughtfully.

The second gift Marcel gave Gabrielle, the movie *Dumbo*, turned out to be a life changing gift for me and, because of that, it was a life changing gift for her also.

Although I was almost 37-years-old when I had Gabbey, I had never seen *Dumbo* before. This animated 1941 Disney film focused on an elephant, Jumbo Junior, who was nicknamed 'Dumbo' and cruelly ridiculed for his big ears. However, incredibly, he was also capable of flying by using his ears as wings. It was a definite metaphor of how our idiosyncrasies are also our greatest gifts.

I really had a rough start with Gabrielle in her life (and of course, she had a rough start with me). She cried almost all the time, while my brother Gene was dying of cancer in one hospital and my mother had just had an operation to remove one of her kidneys filled with cancer in another hospital.

She was my only child, so I was new to this 'Mommy' thing in every way. But the thing that stood out to me, even throughout all the turmoil and all the anguish of what was happening to my brother and mother, was this immense, over the moon, *beyond this universe love* that I had for this beautiful, little baby of mine.

And then, what also became devastatingly aware to me at that exact same time, as those first days went by and my love for my daughter grew and grew, was the realization that I

knew my mother had *never* felt this kind of love for me - not even in ALL the years of our lives.

I want to pause here, for a brief moment, because a part of me died when I got that 'aha'. It was no small thing, that realization that 'I was less or different' (or my mother would have loved me more), and then the immense feelings of shame and despair that overtook me as a result. I almost drowned in it, but then I had this baby (of mine) to take care of, to put first.

Then, one afternoon, months after Gabrielle was born, while she was sleeping, I felt drawn to watch *Dumbo*. Of course, I had an instant immense empathy for Dumbo, for what made him different and the difficulty he had in dealing with that. But, that wasn't what touched my soul.

What touched me to the core of my being was the way that Dumbo's mother loved him SO much. When I saw her in that little jailed cell, communicating her deep love to Dumbo, I started to weep and I could not stop.

And then the song... that song was from God for me. I rewound the movie over and over to record the words and then I sang them to Gabbey, over and over the next months.

*Baby mine, don't you cry
Baby mine, dry your eyes
Rest your head close to my heart
Never to part, baby of mine*

*Little one when you play
Don't you mind what they say
Let those eyes sparkle and shine
Never a tear, baby of mine*

It's taken me years and years to understand whatever it was that my Mom and I had (largely good but mixed with some very deep hurt) and if I didn't believe in reincarnation and karma, I honestly wouldn't be able to reconcile it at all. I know we choose significant people, especially our mothers, on purpose. So the real learning/lessons come when we can look at why we chose them and what gifts they meant to give us.

Whenever I see an elephant with her baby, I *always* think of Dumbo's mother and her love for her baby. And then I instantly feel the deep love I have for my daughter.

She is a gift to me and I am a gift to her. What my mother could not see or appreciate in me, I *can* see in her. And that is how gifts can change us...



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