



Dear Zaria,

We hold tight to the life that was yours before you were taken from it.

Every morning, before you even opened your eyes, we would hear your beautiful voice calling out, “Momma!”. I’d be waiting for that moment, every morning, and come running to your gorgeous sleepyhead with your warm tea bubba and hugs.

The slow, quiet mornings waking up with snuggles and retelling of dreams, walking Milo, making breakfast, feeding Cake, fashioning your hairstyle for the day, getting a warm cloth to wash your perfect face, choosing the first background sounds of music or cartoons, letting you drive what and where our day would take us, talking about what we would learn about together that day, and turning ordinary days into something bright simply because you were in it.

We remember your determination, your confidence, your curiosity, and the way you met every person, question, creature, and challenge with your whole heart. You moved through the world with a wild, gypsy spirit all your own—free, creative, fearless, and completely uninterested in being anything but yourself.

We remember your love of clothes: pants under dresses, tank tops in the winter, woolly sweaters in the summer, layers of legwarmers as armbands, and socks that had to have the toes cut off—no seams! Stacks of jewellery and treasures were chosen because they delighted you rather than because they matched. Your hair transformed according to whatever vision had captured your imagination that day. You made yourself into art.

You loved freedom—the freedom to explore, create, climb, wander, question, dream, and discover. You loved nature and the small wonders other people hurried past: plants, sticks, bugs, colours, rocks, flowers, water, birds, sounds, leaves, frogs, changing skies, the feeling of dirt and every living thing that invited a closer look. You saw possibility everywhere.

You dreamed boldly and without apology. Every blank canvas became a world. Every path suggested an adventure. Every trip north held excitement and the promise of discovery. Every new person was someone whose story you wanted to know. You approached life with openness, intrigue, and a remarkable belief that something wonderful might be waiting just around the corner.

We miss hearing you sing every word to your favourite songs and watching you dance like a wild-hearted flower child from another time—barefoot in spirit even when you were wearing your most elaborate outfit. We miss hearing you beg for one more hour of glow-stick hide-and-seek after dark, one more jump on the trampoline, one more climb up the apple tree, one more hunt for chicken eggs, one more mushroom foraging trip, one more scavenger hunt, one more blank canvas to transform into a masterpiece, one more treat, one more adventure, one more movie, one more story, one more song, one more dance and an one more snuggle.

We miss your miraculous laughter—the kind that erupted from the most random silliness and made everyone around you laugh harder simply because you did.

We remember pizza and spaghetti, clams and turkey dinners, cucumbers with salt, watermelon, strawberries, fried sage, chocolate pancakes, candy stashes, and the simple comfort of knowing what made you feel at home. We remember your love for Milo and Cake, your imaginary cat Smokey, your endless love of cats, your chickens, books, clothes, jewellery, art, music, church, karate, family traditions, and every small ritual that made up the world you knew.

Most of all, we remember that every moment with you felt precious because it was. You were safe. You were known – not as a case number to be managed or a child to be exploited by judges, lawyers, agencies, and industry players – but as the extraordinary, bold, hilarious, adventurous, tender, fiercely original human you truly are.

Remember the daily affirmation you would recite: I AM STRONG. I AM BRAVE. I AM SMART. I AM KIND. I AM ZARIA! Yes, you are baby, you are Zaria Rose.

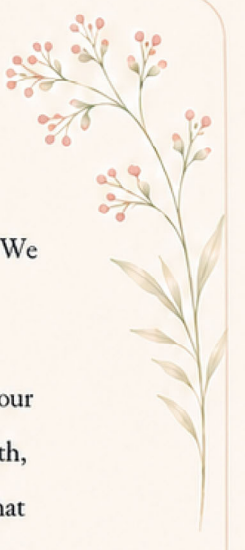
You were surrounded by the people and animals who had loved, raised, comforted, encouraged, and protected you from the beginning. You were free and empowered to be loud, curious, unusual, critical, imaginative, determined, sensitive, joyful, and entirely yourself – free to feel any and every feeling that your heart wanted to express.

That world was not imaginary.

It existed.

It was yours.





And Zaria, my love, we owe you an apology. And we know words can't take back or fix what happened. We expect and understand that you are mad at us. We are mad at us.

Knowing what we know now—after a year of desperation, grief, and despair—we should never have let our guard down for even a second. We should never have trusted that the justice system would see the truth, protect you, or do what was right simply because the truth was in front of it. We never imagined that surrendering to its authority, its power, its hunger to see you hurt and us suffer, would be used to disappear us from your life.

We are sorry we could not stop them from taking you and we are sorry we put you in the place that allowed that to happen. We are sorry that we believed the people and institutions entrusted with protecting children would protect you. We are sorry for putting our faith in a justice system controlled by predators — a naivety we relive with raw and overwhelming regret every second of every day and carry like a million pounds of chains. Your screams, your cries, your desperate pleas for help do not leave our ears.

Had we known that you would be denied your mom, your family, your home, and every expression of our love, we would never have taken you to be taken by him.

Since that day, I have begged for shared time, supervised time, any time. I have begged for a telephone call, a visit, the chance to bring you a gift, hold you for one moment, or simply let you know that your Momma was still here. Even our attempt to reach you with a paper airplane was followed by weeks of police attendance, surveillance, threats, and pressure.

That response revealed how determined those exercising power over your life were to keep even the smallest expression of our love from reaching you.

But they have not erased us from your soul, and they will never erase you from ours.

We cannot return the days already taken from you. We cannot undo the moment we trusted a system that failed you. But we can promise you this: we will carry the grief, the shame, and the regret; we will face every institution and every barrier; and we will not stop until we have done everything in our power to repair what was done and bring you home.

We are so sorry, Zaria.
We will never stop trying to make this right.





You are the heart of this family, Zaria. You are still and will forever be loved by your Momma, Jim, Mima, Mo, Kath, Mark, and all the family and friends who continue to speak your name, preserve your memories, and stand for your truth without pause.

Every day apart deepens the loss.

Every memory strengthens the promise.

We have not forgotten your voice, your spirit, your freedom, or who you were before others tried to break you, silence you, control you and redefine your truth. We have not accepted your erasure – I pray you don't let them either.

We are fighting to restore the life, love, safety, family, freedom, adventure, and belonging that were taken from you—and we will not stop until you are home.

With all of our love and determination.

Always and forever,

Momma

