

# Welcome, baby girl!

I had a feeling you were on the way even before your parents told me. It was Thanksgiving Day, and I had offered to bring cheese and crackers.

My father was hurrying around the kitchen, focused on potatoes and rutabaga and dressing, but he stopped to look at my cheese platter.

"I wouldn't have included soft cheese since Treasa is here," he said.

"Aha!" I thought inside. "Treasa must be expecting a baby! YAAAAAY!"

But outside I just murmured, "Mm-hmm."

I didn't say a word to your parents, as I kept that happy little secret. But I knew. And I was excited to have a new niece or nephew.

A few weeks later I took your mommy shopping. At the end of the trip, she told me what I already knew—that she was expecting a baby at the end of June. We joked that I had already known.

"It was the soft cheese comment, wasn't it?" she said. She had been just in the next room and heard the whole exchange. We laughed.

The days and weeks flew by. We found out you were a girl, and we started to imagine what your four big siblings (on earth) would think of you. So much excitement, so much anticipation, so much joy.

Then this weekend, on the morning of your birthday, the text messages started flying. You were on your way! Knowing you were arriving soon, our sons and I headed to New York to see their 10-year-old cousin starring in a musical. We talked about you during the drive.

When would you be born?

What would your name be?

What would you be like?

We arrived in New York, went to the musical, and headed back to your aunt's house. Just as we pulled out of the parking garage, my mother called, so we could all hear the news on the car's speaker.

"Your new niece is here!" she said, broadcasting the news not just to me, but to both our boys, and both their boy cousins in New York—all sitting in the car together.

We listened to every detail she offered—your name, your weight, the funny text messages that had been exchanged about your birth.

"...and your father thought her name was Feisty Hahaha," she said.

You have the loveliest name (not Feisty) and a beautiful family. And you have a whole gaggle of cousins who are excited to meet you. But, once we got home from New York yesterday, I just couldn't wait.

So, after dinner I drove down to the hospital to see you. It's a place where I have said other hellos and goodbyes. But last night as I held you in my arms, there was room for nothing but joy.

You're just the sweetest little child, born at the time of year when we have so much sunlight. It was streaming into your hospital room, even though it was after eight o'clock. You hiccupped and yawned and cried and gazed up at me with your shining eyes.

You don't know me, and I don't know you. But I can't wait for us to get to know each other a little bit every day.

And I love that I first learned you were on the way on Thanksgiving Day. Because all I can feel right now is deep, deep gratitude.

Welcome, baby girl.