For Katie

I’m the one who gets to be step-mother to the kindest, most thoughtful 14 year old around. You are sincerely happy to see me with a bright smile and a hug. A “how was your day?” followed by a series of questions helps me know that you’re interested in my life away from you. With you beautiful blue eyes and Clark smile you share with your dad, I see someone looking back at me with genuine love.

I’m the one who gets to drive you places and find out what you think about the world. A simple trip to Target can reveal school crushes, new friendships, and even hurt feelings. In turn, you listen to the details and concerns I have about my students, my family, and our lives.

 I’m the one who is fascinated by your maturity and talents. In the kitchen, you slice, chop, and cook with ease. Your adventurous spirit is willing to taste new foods and attempt a variety of recipes. My addiction of Food Network has spread to you and for that I am thankful for your added knowledge.

 I’m the one who plants seeds of sunflowers, zennias, cantaloupe, and angel trumpets into small black cups to grow. Last fall, we collected dried seeds from a variety of flowers and put them into small baggies with labels: small sunflower, giant sunflower, and red sunflower. Our good intentions of organization are met with unexpected excitement as we watch and wonder what’s growing in small plastic containers. With water and sunshine, the seeds have grown into small green leaves, some with soft pink undertones. Now, they are in the ground lining the fences on both sides each day a little higher. Like the flowers we watch with anticipation, I watch eagerly as you grow day to day—each day more beautiful and more kind.

 I’m the one who gets to share your name and your home. Your gentle nature reminds me to be more thoughtful and patient with my words. The energy you bring to me, our animals and your dad constantly teaches me to see simple moments with more joy. Sid, the stray black cat with one and half ears, appears at the door and you rush to offer food and water. And Lucy, my brown beagle who destroyed your Daphne doll as a puppy has become “the prettiest girl in the world.” Thank you for letting me be the one.