



**WAY IT WAS:** "I believe Amber was an angel from God," mother Patty Calistro says of daughter.

## Mother's Heartbreaking Story of . . . The Love That Death Couldn't Steal

Amber Calistro died of cancer in her mother's arms on Oct. 30, 1988. She was 4 years old. What had started as a tiny lump on her neck in July 1979 grew into an inoperable tumor that penetrated her brain. She spent the last months of her life snorkeling and fishing in the Bahamas. "Amber was so dazzled by the sea

she spent days drawing pictures of the beaches, shells and fish," 27-year-old Patty Calistro recalls. The story of this mother and daughter from Milford, Conn., goes beyond tragedy. It is a story of love and joy — and a special relationship death could not steal. It is told here in Patty's own words.

Amber taught me that death is just changing from one thing to another. "Don't worry, Mommy," she used to say. "When I die I'm still going to be Amber. I'm just going to be different."

We slept in the same bed the night before she died. I knew very soon she would stop breathing. I felt in tune with her, like we were riding through this experience together.

I knew the end was coming and she wouldn't have to suffer anymore.

There was only one time I really lost control. Just before she died she began to cry.

One last little tear began rolling down her cheek. She was afraid to leave me. She was worried about me. I told her I would be all right. I tried to reassure her.

And then, suddenly, she died. She just closed her eyes and stopped breathing. All of a sudden my body felt as though there were thousands of ants running through it. My body was buzzing so much I couldn't move. I felt as though, when she died, her spirit exploded and dispersed in billions of particles. I felt this incredible energy.

All I could say was, "Thank You, God." I felt as though He

**By PATTY CALISTRO**

was there — like He Himself had taken her. Then the buzzing stopped, but the energy was still there — and I knew

that Amber had become part of my body again.

For all the heartbreak Patty Calistro endured, knowing her child would die, she is now a woman at peace.

In the beginning I was fearful of what it would be like when she died. I didn't want to face it. But now I've learned to understand it — to savor it.

I know this sounds outrageous, but I feel as though I was chosen by God.

I feel like Amber was sent to me to teach me about Him, life, people, love. I believe that Amber was an angel from God.

Sometimes I ask myself, "Why me?" I'm just ordinary. But now I think it was always my destiny to be chosen.

Even when I was pregnant I knew I was going to have Amber. I knew exactly what she would be like.

I used to draw pictures of her and have conversations with her.

One night after she died I heard a steady knocking. Seven or eight times throughout the night. It was her. I felt the same energy as the night she died.

I saw spots of energy around the dresser, like little



**DEVOTED** mother Patty has kept all of her daughter's possessions.



**CUTE** little Amber: "She was worried about me," says her mom, Patty.

sparks. Suddenly it subsided and I felt my body change. I was able to relax.

Now that it's all over, I feel wonderful about it all, her birth, her life, her death. I look forward to being reunited with her in heaven.

I went shopping just before she died, and I saw this big brass key.

I bought it and gave it to Amber. I told her it was her key to heaven.

She asked me if she had any trouble opening the gate would I be able to help her. I told her of course I would. But I know Amber never needed anybody's help to get through heaven's gates.