

Maybe I Never should've Been So Curious about Finding My Birthmother

*"I think the main reason certain things are temporarily brought into our lives is so that we appreciate the things
that we had instead of the things we went looking for"*

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*Note: I've changed the name of my birth mother in this essay for reasons that should become
obvious as you read the essay. -- KJ*

Facebook Message 10/21/2009, 1:41pm

From: Me

To: Porcha Cadenence

I'm just going to come out and say it then: I'm pretty sure I'm your daughter.

Desolate Confusion: Define a 'real' parent

I never realized the desolate confusion that would ensue until my journey was all said and done. Wonderment is a natural phenomenon and emotion we all feel, especially about our genetic makeup and our heritage. Upon telling people that I'm adopted, their first question is "Do you know your real parents?" this has been a reoccurring question as long as I can remember. What does that even mean? Define real. What makes a relationship real and what makes it fake? It drove me crazy that this was always the first question that people felt like they should ask me. I never really knew how to sound nice with my reply. It always came out bitter, something like "Well yea I know my 'real' parents, they raised me, just because you give birth

to a child doesn't make them your definition of my 'real' parents". Of course after the awkwardness faded and whomever I was speaking with had left, the wonderment still remained in my mind and faded slower and slower with each conversation. Nevertheless, years of explaining myself to people never prepared me for the two 4x6 pictures that were placed in my hands on my eighteenth birthday.

October 20th-21st, 1991: Backstory/My Homecoming

October 20, 1991 during their weekly phone call with their case worker at the Holston Homes Adoption Agency, my soon to be adoptive Mother was asked to put my soon to be adoptive Father on the phone as well.

"Sonny?" she yelled down the stairs to the basement,

"What?" he replied.

"Get the phone, they wanna talk to us at the same time."

"Hello?" he spoke into the phone.

"Hi Sonny, I just wanted for you both to hear this." The case worker said to them both, "Make sure you bring an infant carrier to your scheduled meeting tomorrow at the church, you'll be bringing home you little girl."

*According to my parents nothing really prepares you to hear that you're finally getting a child.
No matter how long you wait.*

For you to understand this next bit you need to know a little geography. My parents live on a 75 acre farm and on that farm live my Grandparents as well. My parent's built there house less than 20 yards from my Grandparents farm house and my Grandparents were the first to hear the announcement. After my Mom stopped blubbering long enough to watch her breath she burst through the front door, my Dad not far behind, and took off to her in law's house. Without even knocking she ran through their front door.

"We're getting a little girl, we get her tomorrow!!!"

Allow the tears, laughing, hugging, crying, and blubbering chaos to begin once again and let the phone calling start! Praise the Lord for church "phone calling trees" or it would've taken a lot longer than it did to get the word out that I was coming.

After a long and sleepless night, my parents left their home with all 4 of my Mother's sister's still in the kitchen decorating for my arrival. On October 21 they drove 25 miles from their home in Bluff City, Tennessee to Kingsport in order to pick up their little girl. I was born on October 1 so I was only three weeks old when the adoption became final. Three weeks is nothing compared to the five years of waiting my parents did while sitting dormant in the Holston Homes Adoption Agency database. Adoption takes time and people don't realize the patience these couples have to hold on to with only the hope of one day receiving their child to make them a family. According to my Mother it was the longest 25 miles she had ever endured. They arrived at The United Methodist Church at 2 o'clock and met with the preacher who blessed all the adoptions from that particular adoption agency.

After the blessing, the case worker led my parents into an office room and had them sign all the necessary papers and at 2:26 in the afternoon on that sunny day of October 21, my adoption papers were signed and I was officially their daughter. After the papers were signed the case worker went to the next room as my parents waited patiently once again for the next step. The door to the office opened and the case worker led in an older grey haired woman who was carrying me, she was my foster Mother, and coincidentally knew who my parents were, but was legally unable to tell them she was keeping their adoptive daughter for three weeks until they signed the papers. Mary Jane, my foster parent for the last three weeks, placed me into my Mother's arms and off we went to the party that was soon to commence at my parents' house.

I assume the only good things about having to wait for 5 years is that people have the opportunity to see through time just how badly you want to be parents. After the 41 minute drive back to our home, my Mom sat in the back of the car and cried the whole way home as she stared at me. As they pulled in the driveway, many more people had arrived than when they left with only 4 sisters in their kitchen. According the guest book and the present log that my Aunt kept, over 120 people came by that day. My parent's only had a crib and my room together as of the night before they received the call I would be coming home with them, but after my church found out about my arrival, my parents never had to buy a single thing, it was their waiting for them when they arrives back home with me. I wasn't kidding when I said thank The Lord for church phone trees!

After the party died down around 9 that night, the final family member left and my Mother was able to hold me for a full 30 minutes all by herself. After going to my nursery and holding me as she sat in our rocker, my Dad creaked open the door.

“Looks like you’ve got this under control, I’m gonna go onto bed.” He said kissing us both.

My first night in my new home was spent in the Mom’s arms, all night long. I don’t think either of us would’ve had it any other way.

Adoption: What’s in a word?

Adoption had never been a taboo conversation starter in my house because it was just another word to us. We never feared from the conversation of adoption. I remember a specific time when one of my Mom’s friends was at our house and she was explaining the birth of her daughter to my Mom and it eventually came time for Mom to chime into the conversation. Instead of my Mom acting awkward in conversation she simply began telling the story of my Dad and her going to a church and getting me from the adoption agency. I don’t really remember when my parents told me that I was adopted but according to my Mom it was ever since she could remember holding me for the first time.

Eventually, like every other kid learns words they don’t understand right off, I learned what adoption meant and never cared to talk about it. I can’t pin point that time either, the day I knew what adoption meant. I wonder if it’s simply instilled in us to understand what it means.

My opinion of adoption was a graceful thing that was clearly a product of my parents telling me,

“Your Birthmother loved me so much that she wanted to give you to a family who she knew could give you things and provide for you in ways that she knew she never could.”

I’ve often wondered how long it took them to think that up; the way to explain to your daughter her birth Mother could have possibly abandoned her. This being said, I always assumed they would be ok with me finding her one day, oh and the fact that my parents literally said,

“When the time comes and you’re 18 and want to find your Birthmother we would love to thank her for making the decision to give you up for adoption and making us a family.”

October 1, 2009: Two 4x6 pictures

On October 1, 2009, my 18th birthday, it started exactly like all my other birthdays, with my parent’s coming into my room and singing to me. Little did I know at the time, this birthday was going to end very differently. A million conversations ran through my head as I stared at the 2 pictures placed into my hands after my birthday dinner. My Mom walked over to the couch where I was sitting and my Dad sat on the recliner and stared at me as she handed me a white mailing envelope and said,

“In that envelope are two picture of your Birthmother, the agency said we could give them to you when we thought the time was right or you were mature enough to handle it. Her name is Portia and he’s your Birthfather but we don’t know his name”

In my hands were two 4x6 photos of a seventeen year old girl at prom and one on the beach. As I examined these pictures and in examining the details I realized by the date on the back of the picture at prom showed that she was pregnant with me at the time the photo was taken. To the outsider's eye this was simply a prom photo of a girl embellished in glitter and jewels with big blonde curly 90's hair and poise with her man on her arm, my birth Father.

The picture essentially looked like me with blonde hair. The second picture was of her and my Birthfather at the beach standing by a huge beach house with a sign reading Sannabell Island. Her sun kissed cheeks displayed innocence and they seemed as if they were the poster high school couple. The date on the back read that I wasn't in the picture yet but that didn't make it any less personal.

Did I feel betrayed that over the past eighteen years my parents never once told me they had pictures? No. Confused? Yes. For the first time in my life, I saw a person that I genuinely resembled, my nose, my eyes, and my height. I had always resembled my parents, we had the same color hair and I had my Dad's eye color, my I was taller than both of my parents and built completely different than my Mother. In that Moment I was overwhelmed with needing to feel closure and decided to venture out and find my Birthmother.

Feeling, Feelings, and More Feelings

At the beginning of my journey, if I had known that my Mom was going to be heartbroken at the idea of my finding my Birthmother I can't say I would've stopped. My curiosity was flaring and I just wanted answers and no one could've stopped me. But now looking back on it, I should've seen the sign of my Mom's dismay when I began searching for my

Birthmother. Venturing out to find a birth parent is a difficult subject because in the end the parties must agree that they will in fact never understand where the other person is coming from or what they are experiencing. On the end of the adopted, they simply want closure and questions answered, much like myself. From the side of the adoptees, they feel like their child isn't satisfied with them and that they are losing them to the person that gave them graciously in the first place.

All in all, the idea of never being able to understand what the other person is feeling, but understanding they are going through some hardship is key. I would never understand how my parents felt and they would never understand the feeling of having so many questions. Understand me when I say that I had the American Dream parents. The whole idea of the nice house and white picket fence with the apple pie baking in the oven with a family portrait over the mantel, my parents were these people. They were the exact good hearted Christian folks that everyone would want raising a child. I never wanted for anything in my entire existence and had the biggest and most supportive family that an only child could dream off. As I say there thinking of her and how different my life could have been, the discussion of why I needed to find my Birthmother came to a head with my parents.

There was no doubting that I was happy and satisfied with my life, but no matter how many times I attempted to convince my parents of that after telling them I was searching for her, it never sank in. With all of these emotions flying at me in a span of fifteen minutes while sitting in front of my parents with tears in their eyes, I grabbed my computer and went to the internet. Within 2 minutes of searching through Facebook, the woman who gave birth to me

was starring me in the face from a picture behind the computer screen. Eighteen years difference was the picture in my hand and the picture on the computer screen and all that had seemed to happen in that time, was that we looked like twins.

Social Media do Your Thing

It took me three weeks to get up the courage to send her a message and before I sent her a friend request on Facebook. I had a friend send her a friend request first so I could see her pictures and attempt to get a feel for her before I decided to contact her or not. Exactly three weeks to the date that her pictures were placed into my hands, I sent her a message asking if she possibly knew who I was. I don't really know what I was expecting to receive back or if I was hoping that that spark would come back and she would instantly see that I looked exactly like her and that I was the baby girl she gave up 18 years ago, but that didn't happen until later.

After receiving a message back from her saying that she didn't know me but apologized if she should, she then asked where I knew her from so that maybe it would rack her brain. Instead of simply stating who I was I wanted to make sure this was the right woman because no matter how much we looked alike it could've always just been in my head. After explaining that I didn't want to seem off base or too personal, I ventured to ask if she had given up a baby girl eighteen years ago for adoption. Within two minutes I had a reply and after one hundred Facebook messages we told each other all about ourselves and talked about how we were exactly alike.

• Conversation started October 20, 2009

10/20, 9:51pm

Me

Hi! ♥

umm I'm just wondering if, by any chance, you know who I am?

• October 21, 2009

10/21, 10:52am

[Porcha Cadence]

No my dear I do not know who you are....should I? So sorry!

10/21, 11:06am

Me

This is going to sound really odd but did you have a daughter when you were younger?

10/21, 1:24pm

[Porcha Cadence]

That does NOT sound odd sweetheart, but I am very curious as why you are asking? But to answer your question.....YES, I did have a beautiful baby girl when I was very young.

10/21, 1:41pm

Me

I'm just going to come out and say it then: I'm pretty sure I'm your daughter. If you would like to call me I would be more than happy to explain to you. I know this is crazy! Trust me!

10/21, 2:50pm

[Porcha Cadence]

You have no reason to explain ANYTHING to me....I knew when I looked at your photos Kimberly! This is not crazy at all trust ME! You are a beautiful angel!

That night we had our first phone conversation and I began learning about my history and how she exactly came to the decision of adoption. I think I was secretly scared that I would see the scared seventeen year old girl who gave me up and so desperately wanted to see a woman who made something of herself despite her stereotype of having a child so young. Like every other big reveal in this story, I was not nearly prepared for what I was about to find out. After hours of talking, I gathered that my Birthmother was from a very wealthy family that came from Ireland 20 years before she was born and owned a huge HVAC company that later sold for millions of dollars and that my Birthfather, who was not in the picture, was the son of an Italian mobster who lived in downtown Malibu and just came up for the year to visit family when I came about. Not only did I come to the realization that I had quite a bit of anger running through my veins being 50/50 Italian Irish.

Explanations

I later became more grateful that I was even alive, learning that upon telling my Birthfather that she was pregnant, he threw her down a flight of stairs on her house and even after the restraining order, at eight months pregnant he hit her with his car outside her house. There is no there is no other reason I should be on this earth other than to make a difference somehow. I think it was in that Moment that I began to feel indebted to her for saving my life because I was positive he would've killed me if she had kept me.

After waiting a few weeks and mustering up enough courage to ask my parents if they were willing to speak with her they agreed. My parents and I met her at a Starbucks and as tears flowed I realized how different these two women were and how differently my life may

have turned out is I was never adopted and stayed with my Birthmother. I tried and tried to make this woman a part of my family, inviting her and her husband and my half-sister to family events, church, and family dinners. It wasn't until now, while looking back, that I realized how insanely awkward it was for my family to accept this women when they were terrified that one day I would wake up and want nothing to do with them.

Thankful

There really needs to be a self-help book on this junk! I can't be the first person to dive into this! Over the span of the next few years I realized why I found this woman, and that our time together was meant to be temporary. My Birthmother and I tried to make our relationship work for a full 4 years but after the third year things began to get rough. Things began to fall apart when her marriage crumbled and her immature seventeen year old self immersed. Having such an age difference between my Birthmother and Mother I wasn't really prepared for the immaturity of my Birthmother and the decisions she began to make while going through her divorce. All in all I think there was a bigger plan at work, we were never meant to be in one another's lives.

After making the executive decision that it was best for us to end our relationship based on the sanity of my family, a weight was lifted. I think the main reason certain things are temporarily brought into our lives is so that we appreciate the things that we had instead of the things we went looking for. In the end I was left with a better appreciate for my 'real parents', the ones who raised me and their selflessness to sit back and allow me to attempt to find

myself in another person. Finding where you come from doesn't grant you closure, but finding out where you can go in your future makes all the difference.