

Not Me

By Danny O'Neill

“I have good news for you Bob, we've been able to locate your mother and she has agreed to talk to you”, she continued, “She's waiting for your call.”

I stood in the middle of my kitchen and felt all light-headed and buzzy. This was a moment I'd always fantasized about. All those times staring at faces; in stores, on streets wondering if we were “related”. Always looking for glimpse of myself in the eyes of others and never finding it. For me there's never been that feeling of relatedness that I hear about and often see in others. A mystery. A mirage. A deep longing.

There has been a deep, dark hole through the middle of me since I was a child. Who was I really?? Why did I feel so disconnected?? Was I really that disposable??

I had seen the file, my file. I saw the copy of “my” birth certificate. This one looked real, unlike the ones I'd been given, that just said that Robert Danskin exists and was born on October 13th 1955. No time. No place. No context.

I seemed to have no history, no essence. I had “parents” but they weren't actually mine. I had always felt that they were doing me a favor. And often, so did they. I was 9 when I offered to reimburse them for the costs of raising me. My offer was \$100,000...seemed right to a 9 year old. Real money in 1964. High maintenance, a burden.

I sat down in the middle of the kitchen floor, legs crossed, heart pounding. I could suddenly smell everything more intensely. All my senses were in over-drive. I put the phone down in front of me and just stared at it, willing it to transport me anywhere but here. Time seemed to stop. My ears rang and I tasted vomit. There seemed as if there was no going back. Or forward.

My “real” name is Michael, Michael James Sullivan and I was born in Jersey City, New Jersey to a 26 year old single mother, Wanda Crabtree who had come up from her home in the Deep South a few months earlier so that she and her family could avoid the shame of my existence. My name is Michael? But I’m Bob. I am known to me only at great distance and often at great risk. That birth was 38 years ago.

I can do this. Really. Just DO it. Why am I so afraid?? I feel like such an alien in my own body. I’d overheard an older woman once giving advice to a younger woman who wanted to adopt; she said...”don’t take someone else’s trash”. Am I? So afraid.

I grabbed the phone and dialed the number, heart pounding even harder, no spit, barely able to breathe. It rang once. Twice. Maybe she’s not home. Three times and then....

“Hello”, the female voice drawled lowly. My ears began to ring; I am so going to puke.

“Mom?”