

Sandcastles and Waves

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Life as a teenager is often described as “the best of times,” but also *confusing times*. For the teen who was adopted, it may seem even more confusing. I was there, I know. I was adopted at birth. All I knew about my adoption: it was a private adoption through a local lawyer and the hospital where I was born. As you can see, not much information was shared with me. My parents explained that it was a closed adoption and no identifying information about my birth parents was even available.

Building Sandcastles

I vividly recall putting on my makeup in the mirror and thinking ... “*Who do I look like?*” Keep in mind that I grew up in a loving family, with two parents, two sisters a dog, cat and fish. Regardless, I still had my questions.

If I was unhappy or in a bad mood, I would daydream about my birth parents -- *what did they look like and where they were from?* When I was angry with my parents, I would imagine a loud banging at the front door. It would be my birth parents coming to “rescue” me. Off we would go to live in a castle far away. All of my teenage worries and concerns would melt away and life would be “perfect.” Arguments with my parents would usually end with me demanding: “*I want my ‘real parents!’*” At other times, I would dump all of my possessions in a mound outside my bedroom door and sulk. I felt alone.

The Wave

I searched for my birth parents as a grown up. I was not looking to replace my parents, but still wanted answers. I needed to fill that emptiness I had been carrying through my life.

The phone rang. I was at work and expecting a call on a project. When the woman introduced herself from the adoption registry, my mouth dropped and I felt queasy. “Do you want the good news, or the bad news?” she asked. The good news – they had found my birth mother. The bad news – she had passed away. No! I felt like I had been punched in the stomach. Tears welled up in my eyes as I listened to the information about Brigitte, my birth mother.

Two weeks later my birth father was located. This too was a disappointment. While he was alive and living in the same state, he had a family of his own and

feared telling them about me. We met for lunch. We talked, looked at some old photographs and compared hands. He was full of personality: a shark fishing, scuba diving, airplane flying, and successful businessman. He was short, stocky and Italian. He had a wife and three children, who he referred to as my brothers and sister (they were really half-siblings, but whatever). At the end of lunch, we promised to stay in touch and he said he would tell his family about me "when the time is right."

It has been over ten years since that lunch and I remain a family secret. We speak and email on occasion and I feel happy to know him. But being a family secret is painful. It is.

Going Home

As you can see, finding my birth parents did not work out how I had imagined. All of my longing and daydreaming was just that ... a daydream. The waves have come and washed away the sand castles of my youth. And who is standing there, who remains? My parents, waiting to walk me home.