

I was born in 1959 in Melbourne. For half my life I never knew which hospital, which was difficult as my all my siblings did.

I was born and named \_\_\_\_\_ by my natural mother, then changed to number \_\_\_\_\_, then to ..... in the babies' home. I was "collected" by my adoptive parents 48 days after my birth and named ..... I never knew for half my life who had named me but my siblings knew who had named them. My name was one with no connection to my adoptive family history. All my 3 biological siblings were given names connected to their real family. I understood this very early on in life and it was a huge rejection in my little mind.

When my new parents picked me up on \_\_\_\_\_ 1959 my adoptive mother was already pregnant. She ended up with 4 children less than 5 years me being the eldest and the only adopted child. I received all the infant stories about the chosen one. I had no idea what these stories were leading to and then one day bang I was told I was not their real one. It was me the book was about; I was "the chosen one"!! I did not feel chosen, I felt horror.

They disclosed my adoption as best they could, but to me at 5 years of age I was devastated. I ran away. My sister 11 months younger said they couldn't possibly love me if I wasn't real. I agreed. Of course I came "home" but my life had changed forever. I was given no information whatsoever about my adoption. I was too traumatised to ask. It was a forbidden topic and I was to pretend I was theirs. I never ever felt like I "belonged" despite being adopted by a family and extended family that to others cared for me like their real children. But all the love and care in the world does not tackle the emotional issues of adoption, that's what the government, lawyers and social workers forgot or could not bothered with and are still guilty of today.

Nothing could heal my traumatic wounds. I was not theirs and I was mortified. I had to accept my fate and try to fit into a family where I was clearly the odd one out. I can only explain it to readers as a type of arranged marriage or a form of kidnap. I was matched and chosen and forced to live intimately with a family I had nothing in common with. Most Westerners could not fathom being forced into an arranged marriage and would be outraged at a kidnapping of an infant. My baby brain could not deal with being forced into a chosen family.

The moral code of the 50's was to deport babies like me from women of disrepute to the ideal family the government and church decided I needed. In arranged marriages the bride shuts up and has to accept her fate no matter how miserable she may be. However at least she knew her family and where she came from and a divorce maybe an option. I have never met a person who likes the idea of having their marriage arranged. However for some reason the same people believe little adoptee should be happy in an arranged family situation.

The worst thing did not know the story of my birth. Who were my parents? What were the talents of my family? There were no answers but every other member of the family knew their origins. My adoptive mother's favourite topic was who looked like whom in

the family and who had inherited talents. This was a never-ending topic for her amusement. I squirmed and pretended I wasn't listening. My mother never once in the 50 years acknowledged me in these endless discussions. I was there as a completely false person.

I felt like an alien, as there was no story of my birth. How did I get here? I went through a period terrified I would lose my leg. This feeling made me ill and a sick feeling in my stomach I cannot describe. I have since learnt many other adoptees felt these feelings. Losing a limb was like losing my mother.

In my teens I was hospitalised and missed weeks of school. I had an undisclosed illness and lost a lot of weight to my already skinny frame. I received a lot of attention during this period and worried a lot of people. My GP, one of dad's best friends asked me quickly and curtly if I was worried about being adopted. I nearly had a heart attack. I wanted to scream yes, help me, but I quickly said no and he asked no more.

When it was our birthday the ritual was to get up early and go into our parent's bedroom and get into bed between mum and dad to open presents. All my siblings did this but I couldn't. I felt so sad for my real mother on that day and I never felt close to my adoptive mother. I didn't ever want her to kiss or hug me. I actually hated the smell of her.

When it was my adoptive mother or father's birthday I carefully chose cards that never said I love you. They cared for me well but too much was missing. They weren't honest with who I was and I did not have the courage to ask. What if the answer was, your mother is a criminal, or she is dead, or she kept 10 children but just gave you away? I was simply scared and I was a child with childlike thoughts. I was trying to deal with being adopted as a five year old. It was too difficult on my own. Absolutely no help or counselling was ever considered for me, apart from the GP's quick question.

I am 52 now and feel so sorry for the child I was. On the outside it looked like I had fallen on my feet. Private school education, university, holidays, gifts, everything material and I guess I am lucky to have all that. That's what I told myself, as the life I could have had may have been a lot worse. The fear of the unknown family kept me very loyal to the adoptive one.

My adoptive father was a lawyer and he often organised the legal work to "get couples babies". I now realise what he did was illegal and he contributed to the misery of the birth mothers and their stolen babies.

Looking at me from the outside you would say I was a success story in the adoption world. I was married for 27 years, 5 years university educated, 3 children private schools, lawyer, science graduate and one still in school. I own properties, luxury cars, endless holidays, work when I want to, very caring adoptive family and extended family. I was never physically or sexually abused.

So what is wrong if everything turned out so well? Just how the social workers said it would?

How could anyone ever **see** adoption was wrong for me?

My answer is to my birth mother who I thought about every day since it was disclosed to me I was adopted at the age of 5. I had no idea who she was or what she looked like or where she came from but I knew I loved and wanted her SO badly.

I simply wanted my real mother. No false mother or family or millions of dollars could take away this natural desire.

And I believe all adopted people feel this desire. But to the birth mothers out there we are so conditioned by our chosen families not to want you. We were coerced like you. It is like Stockholm syndrome. I was taught to be grateful for all the things I had been given.

I believe that is why the reunions go so wrong. The initial elation then our ungratefulness to our adoptive families torments us and we shy away. When I discovered my birth mother at 26 years of age my adoptive father stopped talking to me. How did that make me feel?

When we met I fell head over heels in love with you. We looked identical more than any mother and daughter I know.

I felt your pain straight away. I could not believe what you had endured, me being ripped away from you at 19 for not being married. Disposed of by your mother, sent interstate, treated worse than a criminal in the hospital.

We were identical in what we loved, our hobbies, our passion for sport, the outdoors, the water, and the sun and our love of children. My dreams of how I wanted to live my life as a child were how you lived with your subsequent 2 daughters. It was incredible, mind blowing and the best advertisement for not being adopted.

You had wanted to keep me but there was no support. I understand. You got the powers of the day to place me in "a good home". That happened. You did your very best under the circumstances of the day. You tried to get me back, but the authorities would not let you. I understand it was not your fault. You wanted me so much, it has affected your life to a degree that is totally unfair. Never-ending heartbreak and despair, illness and depression.

Reunions do not get back the lost years. I arrived back in your life like the long lost dead. You gave me all the information about me and the identity I had been craving for. Suddenly I knew who I was but I was still living under an alias in my other life, which was my Stockholm syndrome way of life. How were we to adapt to each other? There was no counselling 26 years ago and no one is offering it now.

Our reunion was euphoric then fizzled. More reunions came and went. Imagine being married to your partner for 26 years and then in walks a person who says well I am your real partner. Just get on with life, try and love each other and accept all your partner's new family and the partner have to accept yours. Try and do this with your original partner still around. It is and was a recipe for disaster.

You have not been part of my life due to the secrecy of my adoption. I was a closed adoption and it was not to be talked about. I grew up telling lies about who I am and I still do at 52. We have contact but it is too late for us to be a family. I still suffer Stockholm syndrome. I want my adoptive father to talk to me. I could not stand his silence. I cannot "come out" in this society that loves adoption, as there is no support for me. I am so jealous of the gay community. Being different is celebrated there and support is everywhere.

How can I tell people how I feel about adoption when celebrities are out there celebrating mothers ripped from their children? The media hypes up all the good parts, poor little rescued babies in the arms of stunning millionaires in LA homes with famous parents the public thinks is all you need to live a happy life. There is no way I can speak out, without being told how lucky those little babies are to be in these designer families.

Every adoptee grows up with a different experience and a different personality. My adoptive experience was probably textbook perfect according to the social workers and church leaders however it affected me in every way possible. I have 3 non-adopted siblings. I always felt second best to them. I am the only one who doesn't have brown eyes. I was the maniac sporty one and still am, it is in the genes. I was forced to go to church till 15 years that I detested. The rest of the family embraced religion. As previously mentioned my adoptive mother just loved to talk about genetics and who had inherited looks and talents. She was obsessed with this topic; she never ever considered my feelings about this.

Nothing was disclosed to me about who I was or where I came from. No birth story, no talents, looks, nothing. From this I developed much insecurity, hidden well behind my mask of pretend. The worst was being forced to act I was not adopted. This happened by never acknowledging who I really was.

I was such a good liar about me as a person. My adoptive parents had literally taught me to tell lies. I married in my early 20's to a man of "very good standing". a lawyer like the rest of the adoptive family. He went to the same private school as my adoptive father, adopted grandfather and adoptive brother. I also had famous father-in-law. I had done well, landed on my feet, what an adoption success!

However, in the first few weeks of marriage, my husband cheated on me when I was pregnant. This continued until I finally left him after 27 years. Why did I put up with it? Because I had low self-esteem and everyone loved him. He made me look good I thought. I was used to lies and living with them. I could stay married to him, bring up 3 amazing children and have a blood family for the first time. I was not going to lose this.

A few years ago, following years of souls searching I did leave my husband. I had been “chosen” for convenience, I believe he didn’t really love me. I was just putting up with it like I did with my adoptive family.

Then I met a man who really loved me. I was able to make the choice to be with a new partner that was solely for love and not to appease the child like adopted me. With a huge amount of counselling tackling the adopted self, I had the courage to choose someone simply for compatibility and love. We were pleasing only ourselves in our choice to be together. Maybe this sounds such an obvious thing to do but my past choices had been made to please my adoptive parents so they would not reject me. We are still together six years later and I cannot believe what true love is, unbelievable. It is the first time in my life there is no pretence.

The part of divorce I cannot handle is letting my husband’s new partner have anything to do with my school age child. Or even my adult children and grandson for that matter. It has taken more counselling and thousands of dollars to manage this situation. I have to let them live their lives and not the legacy of my adoption. I become irrationally upset at them having any dealings with her. This is due to the fact I think all children should be with their real mothers from my adoption experience.

I have suffered immensely, most of it internally and spent tens of thousands of dollars on counselling here and overseas. It has almost killed me, the legacy of adoption without doubt.

I wrote this poem in the depths of despair a few years ago. Luckily I didn’t kill myself. It was very close.

### **SHINE ON PETA**

Hush little baby  
Stolen away  
This is best  
We are doing it this way

**SHINE ON BABY  
JUST SHINE RIGHT ON  
BUT HOW CAN I?  
MYMOTHER IS GONE**

Mother doesn’t come  
Defences build  
The pain is blocked  
It is “me” you’ve killed

Now sign the papers  
And with Peta's new name  
She won't remember  
Her real birth day

SHINE ON BABY  
JUST SHINE RIGHT ON  
BUT HOW CAN I?  
MYMOTHER IS GONE

Don't tell the truth  
Play a game of pretend  
A new identity  
Till the very end

Dried up tears  
Emotions all gone  
Come on little baby  
There is nothing wrong

SHINE ON BABY  
JUST SHINE RIGHT ON  
BUT HOW CAN I?  
MYMOTHER IS GONE

Her parent's mumble  
You were the "chosen one"  
'But I don't want to be'  
I want to run

Be grateful she is told  
Thanks, she cries,  
But her real feelings?  
She is dead inside

SHINE ON BABY  
JUST SHINE RIGHT ON  
BUT HOW CAN I?  
MYMOTHER IS GONE

The pain stays forever  
She tried to stay  
Tragically found dead  
On her 48<sup>th</sup> birthday

May 2007

Summing up my story I can honestly say my adoptive family loved me and my extended family did too. I was cared for like I was their own. daughter I had everything money could buy. I had a wonderful education. I love my siblings.

But it was not enough compensation for not having an identity and adopting a life with a false one. I did not know who I was, where I came from. It was explained to me at the age of 5 and that was that. I have been dealing with it as a five year old. I am still a secret.

One of my favourite quotes is “ Read history or repeat history”. It is a breakthrough to have this inquiry, reading history. But all around we are repeating history. With all the new fertility techniques millions more children are loosing their identity. I am telling the members of this inquiry, love is not enough. No amount of care and love can replace this adoption loss.

Respect one another. Everyone deserves to know who they really are and where they come from, it is a basic human right.

The relinquishing mothers and the adoptees are the ones who know what it is like. No body else. The government needs to help us and needs to learn from this inquiry to stop it happening again and again in the generations to come. How many children are out there now growing up like I did, not powerful enough to have a voice?

Children do not always have the power to be honest. As an adult we find our voice but the damage has been done. How many adults are in therapy for sexual and physical abuse that occurred in childhood? These child victims couldn't stop it at the time, they were too small. What about the children sent out on the boats from England and put into institutions? They could not escape. Emotionally abused children can't get away. Adopted children had no say but as adults we finally do. Let us learn now from this inquiry for the future of all the vulnerable children.

Finally to my mother . I am so sorry what happened to you. I have always loved you and have had the utmost compassion for you and all the other mothers forced to relinquish their beautiful vulnerable babies.

I know you loved me and wanted me. I am sorry the lost years prevented a full reunion. Maybe if this inquiry decides to “help” us and all those affected we can try again.