
fine lines

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Dear Mom

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We met one day in August. To be exact, it was August 19, 1980. I do not remember you. Newborns do not usually have much of a memory. Sometimes, I wish I could have seen your face, just once. I wish I could have burned it into my memory.

It seems so strange that you're my mother, the woman who gave birth to me, yet I know so little about you. I've thought about you a lot over the years. I gaze at myself in the mirror and wonder how much I look like you. It hurts when I see those families who look so much alike, when I can only sit and imagine.

I wonder if you ever think of me, if late at night, you wonder what's happened to me, where I've ended up, or how I've turned out. Did you hold me when I was born? I know that most times the mothers choose or are told not to hold the babies before they're given up for adoption, in case they become attached and change their minds. I always like to think that you held me in your arms, just once, before they took me away.

I can't help but wonder just how you ended up pregnant with me, anyway. I've always assumed that I was a mistake. Was it your decision to put me up for adoption? The only reason I ask is because, sometimes, young girls are forced or tricked into giving up their babies, but if you decided on your own, I understand.

You've got to be the bravest person I have never met, to carry and bear a child at the tender age of fifteen. I decided once that you must have loved me a little to choose life for me. Those nine months must have been hell! You gave up your life to give me mine. I can't even begin to tell you how special that makes me feel.

It's only been five years since I found out about my adoption, yet I think, somewhere deep down in my soul, I always knew. There is something missing in my family life, something I can't quite put my finger on, yet I know it's there. I love to watch other families together. I marvel at their closeness and how genuinely happy they are to be together. Then I look at myself and realize that I don't even know how to be close to someone. It

terrifies me, the fact that I'll be turning 18 soon, and I don't even know how to hug!

I'm not saying that my family is bad. I had a comfortable childhood. They provided everything I needed, and I was happy, but somehow, underneath it all, I always felt like an outsider, an uninvited guest observing a family of strangers. I don't know what it was that made me feel that way. I'll never know.

Ever since that October day when I first learned of my adoption, I haven't stopped thinking about you. I wonder what your life is like now, if you have a family to love. I wonder if my creativity and my love of nature and adventure were inherited from you. I wonder if you're the one I got these crazy eyes from. My exotic, chameleon eyes that are too green to be blue, too blue to be green, and too gray to really be either.

I wonder about my father, too, though not as much as you. Was he a nice guy? A guy who would have stuck around had you decided to keep me? Or was he one of those guys who knocks a girl up and then splits instead of taking responsibility? I've seen lots of girls who look more like their fathers, so it occurs to me that maybe I inherited everything from him.

What if I've already met them? I sometimes wonder. What if you're one of those people I've bumped into on the street and never thought twice about? I love to watch people, partly because of my writing, and people watching helps me build characters, but I think the real, underlying reason is that somewhere, deep down, I think that if I ever saw you I would recognize you. I know it's just a crazy, childish dream, but I keep imagining that I run into you and look into your eyes, and at that moment, I just know, as if there was a bond that somehow spanned our 18 years of separation.

I do feel close to you, even though we've never really met, perhaps, because I talk to you so much. When I'm happy or sad, when my heart is breaking or bursting with joy, I find myself telling you about it, as if you were sitting right there beside me. I've started other letters to you over the years, wishing that I knew where to send them. Instead, I ended up crumpling them and shoving them into the bottom of my trash can, afraid that someone might find them and not understand.

People ask me all the time if I plan to find you, someday. I really don't know how to answer them. I would like to know your name and see you just once, and I really would love to talk to you. I'm just so scared. What if you don't want to see me? What if you're disappointed in me? I don't know if I could handle that.

We've missed out on so much of each other's lives! Little things like Christmas mornings, birthdays, the Tooth Fairy. You weren't there for my

first steps, my first word, or my first love. You never got to tell me about Santa Claus or explain to me just how things work between girls and boys. We've never been on a family vacation. We've never even been shopping together.

I wonder, how different my life would be had you not decided to give me up. I wonder where we would be living, if we would be happy. I wonder if you and I would have the kind of mother-daughter relationship I've always wished for, yet never experienced. I wonder if I would have lots of brothers and sisters. I've always dreamed of having a big family. I wonder if you would understand me in a way my adopted family has never been able to.

My eighteenth birthday is coming soon; I wonder if you remember that. I can legally start searching for you when I am one year older. I could have found you earlier, but I would've had to have my parents' permission. I don't think they would have let me find you. A few months ago, I was supposed to have my family medical history for my college records. I asked my mom if we should find out in case I ever needed them. She refused. Since then I haven't mentioned anything about finding you. They just don't understand, but that's okay. This is something I need to do by myself anyway.

I've been dreaming of the day you and I would finally meet. The scene plays over and over in my head like a movie on rewind. I change little things every time, hoping to make it perfect. Do I call you by your first name, or would it be too presumptuous to call you Mom? Do I try to hug you, or would a handshake be sufficient? Do I try to stay in touch with you, or would you rather put the past behind you and forget about me, completely?

I'm probably digging up a lot of things that are best left buried, and I am sorry, but please try to understand that I wouldn't be doing it unless I had a good reason. Just once, I would like to see you and talk to you and have you actually sitting there listening and talking back to me. Just once, I would like to hear your story: how you met my father and how I came to be. Just once, I would like to know the truth about my heritage and be able to speak of my ancestors with knowledge and pride. I want to know my birthday story: what happened that day and what time I was born. Most of all, I would like to hear someone say, "Wow, she is just like her mother!" Just once, I wish I could hear someone say that and know they were talking about me.

I know this probably comes as a huge shock to you, because you've probably spent the last eighteen years trying to put all of this behind you,

but please, please, understand that I wouldn't be doing this unless I had to. If you never want to see me again or don't want to be a part of my life, I promise I'll understand, just please give me this one chance. Give me one day, so I won't have to wonder anymore, so I can put all this behind me and get on with my life. I know it's asking a lot, but please, just think about it.

I sit here, writing an impossible letter, yet somehow, I find myself still clinging to the dream that it will all turn out perfectly. I can only pray that you'll understand what I'm trying to say and just how much of my heart I've poured out onto these pages. What I really hope is that I can somehow find the courage to drop this into a mailbox and start piecing together the parts of my life that have been missing for so long. I love you, Mom. I just wanted you to know that.



Chase :: Jimmy Reistad