

# **My Name is Roxanne**

## **by Roxanne Agur**

My name is Roxanne and this is the story of my adoption experience: not so sweet, but I survived, which is basically the point of my telling it. For anyone who is in fear of the unforeseen monsters that may be lurking around the corners of adoption: yes, as with anything, there are monsters to be conquered and there is that potential that they could gobble us up, which makes our actions so much more important. But please for a moment consider that as you are reading this, there is a child who is battling very real monsters alone. And imagine that when you make the commitment to take up arms, side by side with the child, how many unnecessary scars you can, as a family, prevent. That said, I offer you my story, for you grow and learn from, I hope, which I believe is the reason for our storytelling since time began.

In another time, at another place, another child was brought squalling into the world. Perfect and full of promise as a sunrise, the young mother joyous with that promise. Grandmother beaming near by, memorizing each moment to recount tirelessly to stranger and friend. Father "Unknown." This baby girl, a generous mixture of German, English, Irish and French via mom and Jamaican and American Indian from dad, does not yet know that she is "illegitimate" (as if the mother and child's existence holds no legitimacy!) and that the father is not at all "unknown," just unwanted, and that the mother would be woman who is prone to "phases" and random spurts of "finding herself" and that the child would not be included in mom's journeys and was in fact merely an aspect to a phase in her journey.

And so began my life. The first five years I remember as being a time of joy, surrounded by a doting parade of family and friends whom I would "visit" for various stretches of time; returning to home base, a small A-frame cabin nestled in the lush green hills of Snohomish, Washington, about 80 miles outside of Seattle, to spend time with "mom" whom I never called mom for reasons unclear. Until it ended one day, suddenly, brutally (although I can't think of such experience being anything other than sudden or brutal). After another of my "visits" with a family with three kids, my mother asked me if I would like to stay with them for "awhile." I remember this conversation so clearly! As one might remember a severe burn experience or car accident that leaves hideous scars and that you replay over and over in your mind: what you could have done differently to make it not have happened? I remember feeling strange, like waking in a safe and familiar home while knowing that something bad is there with you, but since you've been taught that monsters don't exist you blow it

off and go back to sleep. I remember her words - "They have horses!" and "You will have kids to play with all day" - so I said yes and rolled over and went back to sleep.

Thus, I was dropped in the laps of an idealistic adoptive family of "hippie" farmers who believed that with a full table, a lot of discipline and a little love you could conquer all. And so began the battle. Like the typical soldiers in a war we had neither created nor understood, we fought blindly. Both sides, I'm sure, wanted the same things: peace, love, understanding, support and respect. I remember only pain, confusion, abandonment and from that anger, anger, anger! An anger born from my mother's infrequent "mom for a weekend" trips, which for me were a source of extreme joy and crushing pain and humiliation when, after all of my desperate efforts, I was returned/rejected once again, not good enough to keep, to this simple family in a time and place when adoption was almost nonexistent and "open" adoption unheard of, not to mention therapy, unless you were "a little touched" and a candidate for the local loony bin. So in the grand old tradition, the situation was firmly brushed under the proverbial rug.

As time passed, the thing under the rug grew and festered into a black and ugly thing that overshadowed all of our lives. It led to verbal and physical abuse from my adoptive parents, sexual abuse from my adoptive brother, an all-consuming hate for myself and everyone else - except, of course, my birth mother and my little adoptive brother and sister whom I was determined to protect from the evils of the world (almost laughable considering I was the probably the source of that evil I sensed). Led to my running away and ultimately, at age 13, un-adopting myself and becoming a ward of the state. This was followed by a year of bouncing from various foster homes with, astoundingly to me now, no counseling whatsoever and foster parents whose chief motivation was to walk out and pick up the check from the mailbox; led to a year spent in a group home for "tough" girls. Apparently the government bought my tough act but these girls definitely did not and let me know in a countless variety of ways.

During this period in the group home, I was able to resume contact with the one stable, constant force in my life, my birth grandmother; and after a year, she was able to take me to live with her in Marin, California, where I was essentially reborn and allowed to be a child again, to be loved and worshipped as all children should. And also to receive the therapy and guidance I so desperately needed all that time to understand and heal.

Since then, I have contacted both my birth mother and adoptive family and we are slowly, through understanding and forgiveness, becoming one another's friends. And the healing still continues to this day, leaving a young woman who is a little stronger and wiser than before and a little more capable of dealing with life's monsters. The real tragedy is that in another time, in another place, we might have made it. With a little education and understanding of how great of a commitment this kind of thing is for all involved, we might have been okay. But in a time of adoption denial and secrecy, no.

A fundamental character of all humans is that we are flawed; there is no perfect person, we simply just live and survive and hopefully help as many people as we can along the way do just that. It amazes me how resilient we humans are. With a little guidance and support we can conquer anything, no matter how big the monster. What a wonderful trait.

*Roxanne is a reunited adopted person, currently living in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband, Jay. She is a past editor of Pact Press.*