

GUMBALL

By Elizabeth C. Myers

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CAST: one female

When I was younger, I used to have a real problem with the fact that I was adopted...I mean, well, in my little prepubescent mind, that pretty much meant that my mother and father didn't want me, ya' know? I can distinctly remember when I found out, too. I was in kindergarten and Mrs. Madison was talking about how families can happen in all different ways. One of the ways was that there are people who are adopted and how that means that they had one family and, for many different reasons, they get a whole new family. It didn't make all that much sense to me. I couldn't understand why someone would have a family and then not have a family and then have to get another family. So, I went home from school that day and as soon as I got inside the house, I flat out asked my mother, "Am I adopted?" ...and she just kind of got this funny look in her eyes and said, "Let's wait 'til your father gets home and we'll talk about it."

Now, I was only five years old, and usually when I heard "Wait 'til your father gets home", that meant I was in serious trouble. I hid under the bed in my room until my dad got home that night because I was so scared about what my mother had meant by that particular "Wait 'til your father gets home." When he did come home, it was this serious conversation with me sitting in this big chair and my mom looking over his shoulder.

So, being that young, I hated the fact that I was adopted...and even with all the explaining, it isn't like I could understand what it really meant to be adopted. Instead, I was ashamed of it...I lived in fear of the kids that I went to school with finding out what I had deemed to be my horrible secret. It wasn't too difficult to hide, because I look a lot like everyone in my family, so I guess it wasn't that obvious.

My mom and dad tried real hard to make it seem like being adopted was a good thing, but I still didn't understand. So when they didn't get that message through, they bought me all kinds of books about being adopted. I remember this one book that they gave me...it was this silly little picture book, and on one of the pages it had a picture of a

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gumball machine and the gumball that was actually coming out of the machine was a little baby. I can remember thinking to myself...so...I'm a gumball? My parents just put their money into a machine and hoped they got a good one? I hated candy machines. Whenever I went to Pathmark with my mom, she gave me a quarter for those machines, and I NEVER got the sticker, or the ring, or the flavor gumball that I wanted, I always wanted red...and I never got red. So what if my parents didn't get red, either?

Then there was my little brother. Whewwwwwww-we...did we used to get into fights about it. Ya' see, my mother originally thought that she couldn't have babies, so that's when they adopted me. But then, BAMBAM, two years later, she had my little brother. Eventually, I guess he was five or six, he got wind of the fact that his big sister was adopted and whenever we would fight, he would always bust out with "You don't count because you're adopted and I'm born-ded." It hurt a lot when he said stuff like that, and I always ended up beating him up. I was the big sister...it was required of me. Then I would get into trouble for pounding on my little brother...and then he would...well, needless to say it was a pretty vicious circle for a few years.

I think the worst memory that I have about this confusion over being adopted is of my mother. I know that sounds absolutely horrid, but bear with me. Whenever I would act-up when I was a kid, and believe me I was quite the upstart, my poor mom didn't have the standard "I was in labor with you for however many hours" guilt-thing that mothers can sometimes use to make their kids behave themselves. So instead, she would hold out this folded up piece of paper to me and say, "Here is the number of the adoption agency we got you from. If you don't like it here, you can always go back."

(long pause)

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