

1 - Left by Mother

For many people who have a loving mother, it's hard to imagine her deserting her child, but that's exactly what happened to me. My mother left when I was two years old and never came back.

I was born weighing eight pounds and fourteen ounces in Kalamazoo, Michigan, a small town just outside of Grand Rapids. According to my birth records, my father took me home from the

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hospital because my mother was unable to be at home due to an extended illness. I was the last of six children that my father and mother birthed together. As the baby of the family, my siblings called me “Gracie.”

At the age of two, I was told, “Your mother left, she doesn't want you.” My grandmother, who passed away in 1991, fondly remembers my cute, innocent, yet strong reply, “Well, if she don't want me, I don't want her needer!” Because of that reply, my grandmother believed I was a strong, resilient child who would not be deeply affected by this tragedy.

Boy was she wrong! Those unbelievable words, “your mother doesn't want you,” devastated me! My cute, innocent

reply was my way of “laughing to keep from crying.” And that is exactly how I went through life... laughing to keep from crying. My mother’s leaving left me with feelings of fear, insecurity and rejection. “If my own mother didn’t want me, then who else would want me?” I often thought.

As I grew older, my school mates asked me, “Where is your mother?” I answered, “I don’t have a mother.” When they inquired further, I replied, “None of your business!” Questions about my mother re-minded me of those turbulent

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days when I was told she didn’t want me. The thought embarrassed me and I did not want my friends at school to know anything about it. Yet, even with the embarrassment I endured, I never blamed her for leaving.

Though I was only two when my mother left, I still remember many things about her, both good and bad. For example, my mother often walked around the house singing Christian songs, like, “Jesus Loves the Little Children”, “This Little Light of Mine”, and “Love Lifted Me.” I loved that about my mother and I longed to be just like her!

I recall sitting in church beside my father, looking up, and seeing my mother playing the piano on the stage. I wanted so badly to run up there and be with her. I hoped to play the

piano, too! One day when I was in the church day-care center, my mother came in to take me home. Before we left, she proudly showcased how smart I was to the daycare workers. She asked me, “Where is God?” When I pointed my finger up to the sky, she hugged and told me she was very proud of me. That made me feel terrifically smart...like I was her special little girl.

During the day, I stayed with my mother at home while my father worked and my brothers and sisters attended school. I watched as she cleaned up the house. I wanted to do everything she did. One day she sprayed wood cleaner on one of the tables in the living room, gave me a dusting towel, and let me wipe the dust off the table. My mother told me, “Great job. I’m proud of you.” Her compliments made me feel like I was a great housekeeper...just like her!

When I was not helping my mother clean up the house, I would go to my parents’ room, slip into my mother’s closet, and dress up in her clothes and shoes. Those moments were the most fun I remember having while my mother was still with us. Wearing her clothes and shoes made me feel like I was just like her.

There were a couple of not-so-pleasant moments also. My mother, a sweet and giving person, made some homemade cookies one evening for my siblings, the neighborhood children and me. The cookies smelled good and I wanted