Anonymous Storyteller 2

My sister was adopted into our family when I was 12 years old. My mother had recently lost a baby, her fourth child, and was mourning when her and my father decided to adopt a baby. We lived in a tiny town in East Gippsland.

I remember coming home from my first dance been called into their bedroom and my glowing mother telling me of their decision.

There was a process of interviews and background checks. We had social workers come to our house. My mother was very careful and had been told they would even check how many blankets were on our beds. They did not but they talked to us as we sat all dressed up and stiff. We must have passed muster as we were informed we could have a baby girl.

There seemed to be some matching process…colouring, racial background etc. I know my father wanted a red headed daughter, I am not sure if he mentioned this.

We waited. We went for a summer holiday to Mt Martha and every time we saw a young pregnant girl my mother wondered if it were her baby.

We got a call mid year to say a girl was available but she was having some health concerns and was already 3 months old also she had a birth mark on her forehead. I was surprised this was even mentioned. My parents decided this was their daughter and arranged to meet the social worker at Hallam Hotel then go to the foster home where my sister was staying.

The homecoming was amazing. My parents arrived, my mother holding my sister in the front seat of the car. She was beautiful. She has a big curl on top of her head and she smiled. We were all in love. The day was a whirl, the house was full, it seemed the whole town had turned out to welcome her. Even my very shy teenaged male cousin had bought her a present and came and held her marvelling at this beautiful little girl.

She soon became ill and had to be hospitalised. It turned out she was lactose intolerant and then soy milk powder had to be obtained at the chemist with a prescription. She spent what seemed like ages in hospital my mother spending most of the day with her as it was feared my sister would not bond with my mother.

From the beginning my sister was ours. There was never a moment when she was any different from any of us. She was told from the beginning she was adopted. My mother felt for her birth mother and wondered on my sister's birthday how she was feeling. We did not talk much about her birth mother more that we were so lucky to have my sister in our family.

My sister thrived and brought great joy with her. When she started school she had severe learning problems that were never really addressed. My parents had a messy divorce and my father died soon afterwards. My sister had a tough life after this. My mother did not work and depended on social security and my sister's life was unsettled. My mother entered a new marriage and her new stepsiblings did not treat my sister very well. My sister struggled to find employment and find a place for herself in the world.

When she turned 18 she applied for her papers. We were able to find her birth grandparents who were not very welcoming. We visited them, they were polite and showed my sister pictures of her birth mother and her other children who were born not long after my sister. They made it clear my sister's mother did not want to see her and that we were not welcome to contact them again. I do believe they never told my sister's mother about the contact and that my sister should look for her if she wants contact but she has never expressed that desire.

My sister has found a place in the world. She married an older man and had many miscarriages before having a very premmie son who is now 15. I wondered how she would cope when she had her child…. if it would make her wonder how her mother could have given her up but she did not talk about it. She loves her son and is proud of him.

While I love my sister I do wonder if she would have been better staying with her birth family. Maybe they could have offered her a more stable life and an understanding of genetic background. But that was not an option and I guess adoption is a lottery. No one knows how one's life will pan out.