

Revisions
by Natalie McNabb

CLARK ADOPTION

September 24, 2009

Oregon

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Dear Jennifer,

I hope things are going well for you.

I received a call from your ~~birth~~ daughter, Angela. As I am sure you know her birthday is right around the corner, and ~~this year is special since she is turning eighteen.~~ Angela is interested in opening her adoption.

Angela's adoptive parents recommended she call us to begin the process; ~~but we must be mindful of the emotional turmoil they too will experience with this event.~~ I met with them all a few days after Angela's call and met with Angela one week later. She is interested in ~~what you look like, where she comes from and hearing your version of the adoption story~~ learning more about you.

I know this may take time to digest ~~and that it may be scary and wonderful at the same time. You are not alone, though. Millions are affected by adoption, and it does not end when papers are filed.~~ While you are considering your own needs and wants, I am here to answer any questions you may have.

Washington

Vancouver
360-993-5607

Spokane
509-844-7000

Montana

Bozeman
406-599-1040

Sincerely,

Linda K. Clark, MSW
Executive Director
lindaclark@clarkadoption.com

www.clarkadoption.com

10/2/2009

Dear Linda,

I received your letter yesterday.

I would be happy to answer any questions Angela has about my pregnancy, about Rob leaving. He slams the door shortly after my eighteenth birthday. My body slides down against the rusted fridge with its smell that not even baking soda, vinegar, bleach or ammonia can remove. I rest with my cheek against the kitchen linoleum and realize I haven't wiped under the stove since my stomach began to protrude. There's a Cheerio and a belly up coffee bean I imagine looks much like I do. But, I feel more like the dust around the bean that softened its landing and cradles it now, the dust that will be wiped up after my stomach finally disappears. Rob runs off with someone who has shorter hair and a louder laugh. She loves popcorn at movies, barns, long drives and the countryside and hates skyscrapers and rush hour just like he does. I give birth at 2:37 a.m. I consider putting Rob's name in the father box on the birth certificate paperwork. FATHER UNKNOWN is all I write. We have nurses and social workers popping in and out, offering services for teenage mothers. "I'm 18," I tell them, "an adult. I'm fine." I want nothing but for them all to leave me alone. They say I look young for my age. One asks if I have postpartum blues. I turn toward the window and shake my head. They turn me loose with a wheelchair ride to a taxi that takes me to a friend's place. I struggle to feed you, but you can't latch onto my breasts. I can't satisfy your relentless need for milk. You cry, and my breasts and everything within me aches, wants to comfort, to feed, to nourish and to love. But, I can't. You cry and are only seven days old when my milk begins to dry up. You have to eat. I can't let you starve no matter how good they tell me breastfeeding is. I tell myself that I'm not into breastfeeding anyway, that I hate its public display and love the bottle's independence. For us, the bottle's best, and I plug your mouth with it. You eat ravenously and sleep in my arms while I stare. My hands and arms tingle and go numb. My ache to nourish and love is not quenched, but it dissipates within a few weeks. There is a void though in its place. No happiness. No sadness. No anger. Nothing flows inside of me. FATHER UNKNOWN on your birth certificate doesn't help us. Rob resurfaces anyway, but without that girl with the louder laugh. His parents push him for custody of you. "Considering your circumstances," they say, "and the mother's, it's for the best" and then take us to court. "But she's my baby," I tell them, tell social workers and a judge. Each takes a turn smiling, pretending regret. My lack of money, the pressure, my youth and the emotional flat line begin to close in. Rob's parents stare at me from across the courtroom as if they know what's best, as if they can lead you somewhere I can't, as if they'd like to wipe me away like dust that should not be near something so pure. I begin to believe it. Rob and I opt for adoption by a couple we've never met instead. Angela. Oh, my Angela. You were my baby, but my angel too late. Why does regret only come after? I wonder what the world offers you now at the ripe and wild age of eighteen. Just let me know what I need to do.

Sincerely,

Jennifer

~ Finalist / Top 10, The Micro Award 2011

~ Finalist / Top 8, The 9th Annual Glass Woman Prize

~ SILENT EMBRACE: PERSPECTIVES ON BIRTH AND ADOPTION, Anne and Amanda Angel, Catalyst Book Press