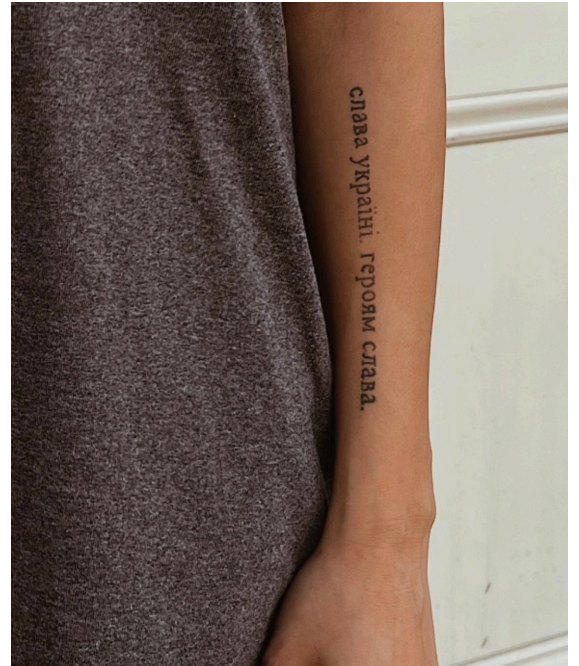


To My Birthmother

Alana Doucette



Who are you?

I try not to think of you, but I have often found my mind wandering to thoughts of you for the past twenty-five years. There are no specific moments I can pinpoint that trigger thoughts of you; they just happen, and they haunt me. You are my ghost. We are so close, yet so distant. I feel such a connection to you because you are my biological mother, but I don't even know who you are.

Sometimes I wonder why you did not keep me. You were only fifteen when you gave birth to me, so I cannot blame you for surrendering me to the orphanage in Ukraine. I always assumed the worst-case scenario could have occurred, such as assault, which would have driven you to give me up. That's what made the most sense to me when I was younger. But I'm starting to think that I created that scenario to make sense of it. In reality, I hope that was not the case.

You cared for me for six months as a homeless teenager in a war-torn country, so it is clear that you loved me. After you gave birth to me, you refused to give me up and chose to keep me as long as you could, despite being young and alone. That was so brave of you, and I can't say that I would have had the courage to do the same at fifteen.

D o u c e t t e

Where are you?

I don't know what happened that led you to leave me in the care of an orphanage, but I thank you for never abandoning me, especially in the first six months, the most crucial for newborn babies. I know other adopted children who struggle with feelings of abandonment, as they were left without any information about their birth parents. They were left to assume the worst.

Thankfully, I was given information about you as I got older, which eased the feeling of rejection. Although I was given some sort of clarity concerning why I was placed in the care of an orphanage, I can't help but feel longing for you and still the sense of abandonment any child would feel. I have noticed over time that this fear of abandonment has played into my romantic relationships and friendships, as I struggle to allow myself to feel fully secure with anyone. I always have one foot out the door and one foot in. I'm always ready to be the first one to leave, but I don't blame you for that—I kind of like being like that.

I can't imagine the pain and terror you must have faced discovering that you were pregnant at such a young age. You could have surrendered me the minute I was born and rid yourself of the burden of me, but you didn't, and you never did. I want you to know that I acknowledge and understand that you never intended for me to be adopted by another family, and I am sorry that happened to you. Whenever I find myself thinking about you, that is usually the thought that haunts me the most.

Who are we?

At times, I imagine what our life could have looked like together. From what I have heard, we look so much alike and have a similar disposition. I long for a familial connection with you. I want to be able to look at you, hug you, and speak with you. I want so badly to be able to walk down the street with you and have strangers instantly put together that we are mother and daughter. But unfortunately, that will never happen.

I know now you have had a few other children, and I wonder what was different about them since you kept them. I think it may be obvious, though. You were older and better prepared for children. Maybe you finally have the support you didn't have before. Whatever the case, I am glad that you are in a better place.

In the past few years, my thoughts about you have drifted from whether you have moved on from your life without me to how you have been affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. My friends who currently reside in Kyiv have told me that Mykolaiv was devastated by the Russian invasion.

I know you lived in Mykolaiv for some time, that I was born there. Now that it is destroyed, I find myself wondering if you are still alive.

I have spent years trying to find you on social media platforms with no luck. I know your maiden name, but maybe you are married now and have a different last name. A few years ago, I enrolled in 23 & Me, and I got matched with a woman from Israel who shares my DNA. She messaged me and told me that she could try to help me find out some information about you from her side of the family, although she lives in another country. I haven't responded yet because I am hesitant. I am nervous that if I do finally find you, you won't want to see me or have anything to do with me. I wonder if you married someone unaware that you had me young and that I was adopted. If so, would I put your marriage at risk? I know adoption isn't as accepted in Ukraine.

What I know

I believe that some things are better off not knowing. Still, I hope one day you are ready, that you gain the courage to reach out to me, because I believe a reunion will put both of our hearts at ease. I think about you and what our potential life together could have been, but everything happens for a reason, and we weren't meant to be together in this lifetime. Everything happened the way it should have. I was meant to be adopted by my family and live in South Boston. I had an amazing childhood full of love, and I have made a beautiful life for myself as an adult. If you were to see me now, you would see that I am happy, and I hope that can bring you as much peace as it has brought me.

Header photo by Vivien Hembree

“Слава Україні. Героям слава”

“Glory to Ukraine. Glory to Heroes”
