

Excerpt from Guilt — My Companion

When it comes to dysfunctional families, mine is at the top of the list. I have a problem calling us a family. There is something wrong with ours and I find nothing normal about our relationships. I was adopted as a child. You would think a family who makes the effort to adopt a child would treat them like their natural child. They had a natural daughter and she didn't experience the things I did. My dad wanted a boy and when he couldn't have one naturally, he went out and got one. The rest is a mystery of why they adopted me.

There is a theory that parents raise children as they were raised. I would agree with the theory if my parents were raised in the same environment in which they raised me. If true, then it would be understandable. Both sets of grandparents gave no evidence of being abusive to their children. None of my aunts and uncles were abusive to my cousins. So why was my immediate family out of sorts with the rest of the family? What made us abnormal?

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Fast forward to May 1994. I am at my daughter's wedding and sitting in the front pew of the church. I should feel ecstatic; this is a memorable occasion. Instead, I am in tears, cursing my wife for being absent. I am begging God to forgive my wife and me.

I am screaming at myself, *Why didn't you leave things the way they were? How stupid—now you are paying for it.*

As I recover from my crying, I try to refocus my attention on the wedding. I am thinking, *How did my little girl become such a beautiful woman? Where did the little girl who stole my heart go?*

In the absence of my wife, on the front pew, my parents are sitting next to me. Rather than sitting close with love and warmth, there is an iciness separating us. I look over towards Mother and she gives me a hateful sneer.

Will she ever let go of the past? Why is she trying to ruin this special day? Will she ever forgive me and accept me for who I am?