

**Excerpt #1 from *Entwined by Adoption: Our Story of Infertility, Teen Pregnancy and Faith***

## **Nancy's Story**

*May 1986*

I slammed the car door and peered across the top of my lime-colored sedan. The long and abandoned city street, still shrouded in darkness, held rare patches of dim light, mirroring the black void I carried within myself, a hollow sorrow.

I trudged down the street toward the high-rise office building where I worked. If I wanted to see the infertility doctor later that day, I needed to come to work before dawn. As I strode down the street at an unwilling pace, I glanced at my watch as I passed under a street lamp. The dial said 5:20 a.m.

Why was I doing this? I couldn't answer the question. The vacuum in my heart grew deeper with the constant march of time. As irrational as it was, I couldn't shake the longing to fill my empty arms, no matter the cost. I begged daily. "Lord, please, free me from the ironclad bondage of desire for a child."

But it was all to no avail.

I came to a storefront window. In the waning light of the street lamp my reflection stared back at me from the glass. That's me all right, the one always standing on the outside looking in. Always on the fringe of the "parent club," excluded from conversations about late-night feedings and diaper rash. Isolated and alone, I was the proverbial square peg.

For at least five days each menstrual cycle, I faced the perils of the transient world. Lying before me in the center of the sidewalk, I came upon a third man sleeping on a grate venting heat from underground. Clutching the straps to my purse and tote bag

tighter, I sloshed into the gutter to pass him by. Back onto the sidewalk, I glanced behind me, scanning for danger. I'm reminded of the foes lurking to devour my soul. Wolves of bitterness, envy, and doubt howled loud within me as I tried to keep my ire toward God at bay.

I lagged as the traffic light glowed WAIT but crossed the empty street anyway and arrived at my office building. Shoving an unlocked glass door open, I stepped inside. Sad moans of empty escalators greeted me, rising and descending in spite of no one using them. Padding onto a moving step, I ascended as I pulled my company ID badge from my purse.

At the top, I discovered the security desk unmanned. "Great. I might be the only one in the building." Passing the empty security station, I entered a bank of elevators and punched the UP button. As the elevator door slid shut, I closed my eyes and begged. "Keep me safe, Lord. And please, let me get pregnant this month. I don't want to do this anymore."

An ill-lit hallway greeted me as I arrived on floor thirteen. I tramped down the corridor to the office, opened the door, and searched the wall for the light switch with fumbling fingers. All the while hoping no vagrant hid sleeping under a desk somewhere. At last I snagged the elusive button, and lights flickered across the expansive room illuminating the entire southwest corner of the floor.

Like a mouse in a maze, I wove my way through the hallways constructed of movable four-and-a-half-foot walls. I plopped all my belongings onto the desk in my cubicle and removed my jacket. Navigating the maze again toward the opposite dark corner of the floor, I turned on more lights. After starting a pot of coffee, I returned to my desk, sat, changed my tennis shoes to high heels, and pitched everything except my pepper spray into the bottom drawer.

Snatching my mug, I returned to the coffeepot and filled my cup. Once back at my workstation, I peered at my overloaded inbox sitting on my desk and sighed. I sipped coffee and pushed the ON button to the computer. As it booted up, I leafed through the incoming work.

The clock on the wall read 5:35 am. It would be an hour-and-a-half before coworkers would start to filter in. So I focused on the mountain of work before me and hoped to conquer the stack.

The door creaked. A quick glance at the clock told me it was 6:00 a.m. My heart galloped and my fingers froze on the keyboard. I strained to listen, latched onto my pepper spray, and with great stealth stood and leaned over the desk. My short five-foot frame just allowed me to peek over the cubicle wall. Justina, one of my coworkers, walked the maze.

I stood tall. "Oh, it's you."

She jumped. "You scared me." She waddled toward her desk. "What are you doing here so early?"

"Have a doctor's appointment."

"Didn't you go to the doctor yesterday?"

"Yeah, they have to draw blood every day this week until they find it's the optimum time to make a baby."

"Really?"

"I'm beginning to feel like a pin cushion. The doc is planning to send me home today with a vial and a syringe. That's so my friend can stick me with it on Sunday. Even on the weekends, I'm fair game."

I sat and resumed typing. "I'm glad for your company. It's spooky here all alone."

Justina shuffled to me and dangled an arm over the short wall. "I bet. It's harrowing to come in early. Seems like a whole different world out there before six forty-five. No one manned the

guard's station. What's up with that?"

"Still?" I scrutinized Justina's form with envious eyes. Her eight-month pregnant belly protruded from her open coat. "Somebody's falling down on the job. It's unsettling. Who knows what kind of unsavory character could be roaming these dark halls?"

She removed her coat. "I don't know why you want a baby so bad. You know what I keep telling you. You'll lose your freedom and sleep the minute its head pops out."

I set my jaw and stared at the computer screen. "That may be, but you'd go crazy if someone took away your kids."

"True."

"I rest my case."

Justina leaned against my cubicle wall, holding her empty coffee mug. "I've got a doctor's appointment, too. He's just a few blocks away. I'm glad I don't have to come in as early as you do. It's hairy enough as it is. Did you start a pot of coffee?"

"Yeah, it's waiting for you."

My fingers pounded harder on the keyboard than necessary, as Justina lumbered off. "Why, God, do you bless a woman like that with children?" I whispered under my breath. "It's not fair. She's never been married. Yet, You've given her four. I feel cursed, like You're punishing me. What have I done so wrong?"

My attention caught John's handsome face staring back at me from his picture on my desk. I hated the toll infertility treatments had on our love life. Drained of all spontaneity, doctors, basal thermometers, and blood tests now ruled our lives. Our passion—now reduced to a duty to perform, or abstain from, overtook our freedom of intimacy.

I battled tears threatening to spill over and swallowed hard.

"Please, Jesus, if You don't want us to have kids, then please take

this desire away. Help me not to want a baby. I don't understand why I want one so bad."

## Kelly's Story

Molly sat next to me staring at us. "I have to get going. Do you want me to come by later when you're discharged today?"

I shook my head but kept staring at Alex. "Keyes is coming to get me, with a friend. I think it's better to not have anyone else here."

"Okay, I'll be waiting at home for you."

I glanced up at her. "Thanks, Molly, for coming and for . . . everything."

She brushed away a tear. "Of course, you're my daughter. I wouldn't be anywhere else."

A lone tear trailed down my cheek. If only I could be somewhere else.

After she left, I stared out my window, watching raindrops pelt against the glass. Today my heart would be shattered into a million pieces. Keyes would be here soon, so I dressed and I relished the time alone with Alex. I fed him and changed him once again, only this time I changed him into an outfit I had bought for him. Tiny blue airplanes were scattered all over it. I found it a few months back and knew I must buy it for him. I hoped the new parents would keep the outfit.

It took a while for me to figure out what I thought would be the best plan. I agreed to place Alex in cradle care for two weeks, so that I could be completely sure of my decision.

When the social worker called early that morning to tell me what time she would arrive, I grew nauseated. Could I give my child to a stranger? Or to anyone?

I held Alex close, kissing and hugging him, hoping to leave

some part of me with him. Does he know how much I love him? Could he feel that love?

I dreaded the moment the social worker would arrive. Keyes showed up right before she did.

When a woman walked in with a car seat in her arms, I wanted to run away as fast as I could with Alex. I pulled him closer.

"Hi, Kelly. I'm Amy from Social Services." She showed me her badge. "I'll be taking your baby to a foster mother."

A lump in my throat forced tears to flood over. I looked down at Alex sleeping in my arms. *How do I make myself walk to her?* Each step toward her felt like my feet were encased in lead. My chest ached as I struggled to breathe. My heart began to fracture like thin ice cracking under my weight. She reached for Alex. I just couldn't let him go. I pulled back. *I can't do this, Lord, help me, please.*

I stood there paralyzed by grief. Openly weeping I looked to Keyes for comfort. He too fought tears as he stepped forward and put his arm around my shoulders, giving me strength. I tried handing Alex to Amy once again, but my arms wouldn't let go.

She watched and waited. "It's okay, Kelly. Take your time. I know this is hard."

What a horrible job she had! How could she stand taking babies away from their mothers? I closed my eyes as I held Alex out for her to take. *I can do this, I think.* When she took him from me, my arms felt empty and I longed to snatch him back. I fought the urge to yell at her to give him back.

Amy placed Alex in the car seat and buckled him in. He looked too tiny. I felt the light of life leave me, and I thought I would die.

Amy handed me papers. "You need to sign on this line."

My hand trembled so bad I barely held onto the pen. The pen shook in my hand as the ink bled with my tears on the paper. *How do you expect me to hold a pen let alone sign my name?* Somehow I

signed something close to my name, and Amy took the paper. She grabbed the car seat and swiftly left the room.

I collapsed.

The cold floor enveloped me as I heard her footsteps echo away. *What have I done?*

Keyes patted my back, lost for words. Finally, he said. "It will be all right."

He lied.

How could he think it was going to be all right? Anger welled up within me, and I longed to lash out at him. He couldn't possibly understand how I felt. The other part of me knew he was just trying to be supportive. Didn't he realize a huge piece of my heart had just been ripped out and carried away? It would never be okay.

They released me soon after Alex left. I took the long walk down the hall, passing other new mothers holding their babies. I hated their happiness. My arms were empty while theirs were full. Keyes led the way, and I trailed behind him, not caring where I was going. Before Alex's birth, he had been the one person I loved most in the world. Because of that love, I now lived the worst possible day of my life.

\*\*\*

I wanted to die.

My swollen abdomen ached in emptiness. My soul shattered like a thousand shards of glass, cutting deep as they pierced my inner core. The child I sheltered in my womb for the past nine months was gone. Life held little meaning to me now. The hollowness within engulfed me into a dark void. I wept for a dream that couldn't be. The roar of blood pulsed through my ears beating a mantra I didn't want to hear.

My breasts, heavy and laden with milk, protested against

the ace bandage that bound them. There would no longer be a baby to relieve them of their heavy burden. I stood before the window of my bedroom and the images outside blurred.

So this was loss. How did anyone survive this?

My hand trembled as I reached for the phone on my desk. The number I knew by heart. I tried to dial, only to fumble and dial the wrong number. Over and over again I attempted the call that must be made. Against my will the familiar voice on the other end of the line crackled forth.

"This is Jeanie."

I swallowed past the mountain lodged in my throat. "It's me."

"Kelly? I've been so worried about you, how are you?"

"Not good."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes." The words fell out in a constricted voice. "Call Nancy . . . and . . . John. Tell them . . . they have a son."

"Are you sure?"

Holding back sobs, I forced the word I didn't want to say. "Yes."

"If you need time to think about it . . ."

My whole body trembled. I closed my eyes to form the words. "No, it's right, he's their son now. I have to go."

I hung up before she could say another word. I curled into a fetal position on my bed and sobbed. The hollow feeling in my chest hurt beyond words, yet I knew in my heart I'd done the right thing. Alex deserved a life I couldn't give him, and if I truly loved him, I had to let him go. I would not bring him into my own life of rejection. No, I had to let him go.

Perhaps it was those moments of truth that began to mend my broken heart. Looking back twenty-two years now, I know I did the right thing. I'll never regret giving Alex (renamed Bryan)

up. I have been fortunate enough to be a part of his life these past years. I didn't raise him, but he'll always hold a place in my heart. I'm grateful to his parents for raising him to be the man he is today.

Keyes and I broke up not long after the adoption became finalized. I finished high school and then graduated from college where I met my husband. God's hand surrounded me. Looking

back now,

I can see fully just how much God has intervened in my life.