

## Basils Geschichte

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For Basilio Zanda and Fritz Iten, fate was their hunter. But neither of the Korean-born adoptees, 23, knew of each other's existence until two years ago, when Basilio began a personal search for the Korean family he didn't know. In 1989, he not only discovered he had a twin brother, but that he and Fritz had been living within 100 miles of each other in Switzerland since they were 6 years old.

Since that discovery, Basilio's odyssey has taken him across three continents. From Switzerland to the United States and back to Korea, where he was born. At each leg of his journey, he has been reunited with different members of his lost family: His brother, Fritz; his younger sister, Kimberly, 19; his mother and older brother in Korea. "To find your biological parents... I think that's the dream of everyone adopted," Basilio recently told The Korea Times. "It's what drives you".

The family's separation took place in 1973. Both boys and their younger sister, Kimberly, were given up for adoption by their widowed mother, Noh Bong-hee, now 53, he explains. "My father died at 35 due to high blood pressure in 1972," Basilio says. "He didn't leave any money. My mother was alone with four kids without a job and couldn't raise us." He and Fritz (then Hyun Wook and Won Wook Chung, respectively) were adopted by two separate Swiss parents; Kimberly by Americans.

Basilio still remembers the first day he met his Swiss family: "I remember when they picked me up at the orphanage," he says, "I had old clothes. My parents came and changed my clothes. In a way I was kind of happy and kind of embarrassed."

At home, among his new parents and four siblings, he attempted to communicate in the only way he knew how. "I talked with them in Korean, especially my father. He seemed to understand me. He always nodded."

Prior to learning about his Korean family, Basilio says he led a typical Swiss lifestyle. He speaks German, Italian and French and has traveled in Europe. And after public school, he became an international chef apprentice and later went to Great Britain to study English. But in spite of his happy childhood and young adult years, he was always aware that he was different. There were no other Asians around, he says.

Solothurn, his hometown, has a population of 16,000. "It is very small. I like the town and know the people on sight. It's safe, not noisy," says the new resident of Los Angeles. He has met few Koreans in Switzerland, but never developed close relationships. He seldom gave thought to his ethnic heritage. After all, why should he? His mother gave him up, he used to think. But that attitude took a sharp turn one day. His mother, he was told, had made recent inquiries about her son. After writing to his Korean mother, Basilio finally received two letters. The first one came from his uncle in the United States.

"I need to tell you some serious news. This might be overwhelming. You have a twin brother. He was adopted in Switzerland and still lives there." From the time he obtained that knowledge, Basilio began a six-month search for Fritz (Iten). "I tried intensely to find him." His brother, it turned out, had been living in a small village named Mollis - as far away as the distance between Los Angeles and San Diego.

The second letter came from his mother in Korea. Basilio then learned of Kimberly, his younger sister, who had also been given up for adoption in 1973. "Back then, it seemed the only fast way for all of us. She said she hoped we understand." The first reunion between brothers was a mixture of excitement and mild disappointment. Basilio had expected to meet an identical twin. Much to his dismay, they didn't look alike. Their personalities and interests were different. Sometimes they argued. When they looked at each other, they thought there had been some mistake. "I have very dark hair and it was long at the time. (Fritz) had very short hair. He had different ear lobes and eyebrows. His whole head shape was different."

But the second reunion, which brought the twins together with Kimberly was better. With the assistance of a Korean American friend and an adoption agency, Basilio and Fritz were able to locate Kimberly (Tessien) in Mankato, Minnesota. What took half a year in Switzerland took only two months in America. Kimberly became the center of attention between her two elder brothers and a mediator if they had a dispute. Last July - barely acquainted for one week - the three siblings flew to Korea to meet their mother and older brother for the first time. Upon their arrival at Kimpo Airport, they first passed through immigration. As the sliding glass doors opened, they spotted seven of their relatives, including their mother. An aunt urged them in Korean to give their mother a hug. Unlike Kimberly, who did so, the two boys just stood there. "We felt awkward."

Because they only spoke German and English, the three children were unable to communicate with their mother in Korean. Nevertheless, their mother seemed to convey her affection by hosting them in her yogwan (inn) and preparing typical Korean meals for her children. Such simple gestures rebonded the family. On the first night, "she made soup-noodles with green onions, salt and red hot sauce."

Since their return, all three adoptees say they want to revisit Korea, spend more time with their Korean family and learn Hangul. Most of all, they want to get acquainted with each other. Their adoptive parents have been supportive all the way, says Basilio. Fritz has since returned to Switzerland, Kimberly, who has a younger American brother, says two older Korean siblings offer her fresh comfort. "Sometimes it helps me

get through hard times. I remember the happy times in Korea," she says. As for Basilio, he harbors no bitterness. He accepts both cultures and families, especially his two mothers. "I'm dependent on both. One gave me my life. The other gave me the rest of my life and education," he says.

## Jan's Geschichte

My name is Jan and I was adopted at age 4 1/2 to a family in Switzerland - along with my older brother. Although I do not have any memories of the time in Korea and the first year in Switzerland I knew pretty soon that I will search for my birthmother.

I started in 1984 or 1985 by sending some letters. At first I wrote to the Korean Embassy in Berne but all I received were some promotional material about Korea. That was not the information I was looking for. The next step was the adoption agency. Here in Switzerland this agency is called "Terre des Homme". There I had more success. I received a file from the agency with some details about me and my brother.

Unfortunately the details on the files were pretty the same. We were told by the agency and by our parents that we were full orphans. But my brother and I knew and never talked about it. We had a birthmother... With those files on hand I thought that the search might be easier than I ever thought. I continued my efforts and put a lot of strength into this search.

In 1990 I participated at the YWCA summerschool and there I met Korean adoptees for the first time. There were so many from the Netherlands. During that stay (three weeks only) I got my paperwork with me and one day we went to the K.S.S. (Korea Social Service).

But we were hardly in the building when I had some really bad feelings. And when it was my turn the director himself told me what was more or less.

### How I found her

In 1994 I participated at the CCEJ World Conference For Young Koreans Living Abroad. It took place in August 1994 and started in Tokyo, Japan. There were delegations from many countries all over the world and the group of Swiss participants were the only Korean adoptees at this conference.

After Tokyo we went to Osaka, travelled then back to Seoul where we took some coaches and went down to Kyung-ju. We went on a sight-seeing tour through Korea, stayed overnight in a small village with traditional houses (it was very hot...) and watched some traditional Korean folkdances.

Back in Seoul we stayed at first at the National Reunification Center where we held some conferences and panel-discussions about how the reunification could be supported and how it should work. Later we also went on a trip to the DMZ (De-militarised Zone) at the border to North Korea. That time Kim Sung-Il just died and for that reason we were not allowed to go into Panmunjom. But I knew that place from a previous visit (YWCA 1990).

During that stay in the National Reunification Center I was interviewed by a journalist of the Chosun-Ilbo, which is one of the national newspapers. And on August 16, 1999 the following article appeared:



And the very day my family contacted me over the phone. I was almost paralyzed and after three hours of waiting I was there with my family. My birthmother came along with my two aunts and some cousins. I left the conference (it was the night before the last day...) and went to my aunt's flat in Seoul. We talked a lot (with the help of my small dictionary) and since I only knew a little bit Korean I was only able to get some information. The next day we went to the Chosun-Ilbo building in Seoul (thank god that my uncle owns a taxi...) and we met the journalist to thank him for his article. I was interviewed again and another article about my reunion appeared on August 19, 1999.

Jan Wenger

## July 4th 1999, Finding "Pangool"

This is the most important day in my life which i can remember.....

We left at around 11, heading for Suwon, where we were going to meet Min-Kyoung, the TV producer who made the documentary about me and the other European kads. After we hooked up with min-kyoung and her boyfriend, we drove to Kyungdong babies' home, the orphanage i stayed in for 3 months before i was adopted.

The staff knew i was coming, and they knew about the TV producer being there as well. It was very special to be back, I couldn't remember anything, but the original building was still there.

The director and some other of the staff welcomed us. The director was there even back in 1976 when I was in the orphanage, so she was very moved about me returning. Also the rest of the staff were very happy, but due to their lack of English and my lack of Korean, the communication was kind of bad. Luckily i had Shin Aey to translate for me.

I saw my file (and got a copy) from the time i came to the orphanage, and I found the name of the woman who brought me there, + her address! That is way more than i already had, when I contacted Holt, the adoption agency, some years ago, they told me all my files were damaged in a fire in the orphanage. There has never been any fire in Kyungdong babies' home, and all my files were there!!!!

According to my file i was probably born in 1974, not 75 as my official file say. My name Jung Ahn-Sun (or more correct Jong Ahn-Son) was given to me by the director, Jung (Chung) is her family name, and Ahn is because i came from Ahnyang city.

I also saw pictures from the period when I was there, but there weren't many, since I only stayed in the orphanage for 3 months. probably I wasn't on any of them.

I talked to the staff for a while, the director hugged me over and over, holding my hand most of the time. She gave me a necklace and an armband. I handed over the toys and clothes I had brought from Norway (the other half was given to Chechon Children's home the day before).

We got to play with the kids, and they were so cute. one little girl wouldn't let me go after I took her up, every time I tried to put her down she cried and clung to me..... She was about the same age I was when I was there.... Min-Kyoung videotaped most of my visit, and the kids were thrilled about seeing themselves on her little camera-screen.

I got to enter the room where I had slept, earlier called 'Chrysanthemum room', and I talked to two of the caretakers who were in the orphanage in 1976. None of them were in charge of me though.

I also got to see the youngest babies and hold them. The youngest was only a month old!

When we left the orphanage we decided to head for Ahnyang city, trying to locate the person and the address we had been given. But when we arrived, we couldn't find it, so we headed for the police station. Those who spoke Korean did all of the talking, I wish i knew what they were talking about. They explained the situation, Min-Kyoung caught most on tape, and the police searched through their database, trying to find the woman we were looking for.

After a while we found out that she had passed away in 1997, only 2 years ago. Note that this person was NOT my biological mother. But they managed to locate one of her sons, and the police guided us to his house, knocked on the door and explained the situation! they were very helpful, probably because of the presence of media.

The people we met were relatives of the named woman. Only her daughter-in-law were home, her husband was at work and wouldn't return until 9 pm. At this time it was around 5 pm.

We were invited in and the woman called her husband at work. I found out that he could remember the baby-girl they had 'found', and they called me 'Pangool', meaning (jingle)bell! (not my name). She also called a lot of other people who might know more about me, and finally she found out that I had been taken by her husband's family to a Catholic church. The church wasn't too far from where the house used to be (but wasn't anymore), which we had no idea about. The address we were given was no longer valid, the sectors and addresses had been changed several times in the last 20 + years.

The woman came with us to the church, bringing her cell-phone. She told me (via the translators) that I was very brave to come that far to search for my roots, and she was moved to see me. The church was a huge building, with a large Jesus-statue on the roof. We entered the yard, and the woman went inside to talk to the staff. While waiting in the yard I saw this sign appearing just above the yard-wall: baby sale. I cracked up, what an ironic sign to post just above the place where I was brought in as an orphan!

We waited for a while, the woman talked to the staff, and told us to go out for dinner while she was calling around. No records were left in the church, they had been transferred to city-hall, and were probably not there anymore. So all they could do was trying to call people who might know more.

After we were done we returned, and there was a while to wait inside the church office. The woman and the staff had managed to find out about a case which could be mine, about a halmoni (grandmother) and her son, who gave up a child around the time I was brought in.

After several more phonecalls, one of the staff brought us to an older woman who might knew this halmoni. The man who guided us said he'd seen me as a baby and I looked the same! He could also recognize me from my referral pictures.

We finally found the older woman, she didn't know the halmoni we were looking for, but she took us to another of the women who might know more.

So we were on our way again. We found some older women sitting outside a house, and one of them was the one we were looking for. We explained the situation, and she said she could very well remember the halmoni with the little girl. When they told her that the girl was me, she really hugged me.

We went inside and she called some more people who might know where this halmoni might be. We couldn't find out anything, but she saw copies of my referral pictures, and said 'yes, that's her!' She also told me that I had an 'opa' (older brother, about 2 years older than me), and one of my pictures looked a lot like him.

According to this woman, my father was the oldest son. Everyone said 'umma' (my mother) was a very nice person. My father was in some kind of trouble, probably had a car-accident and ended in jail. At least he was often gone/away from my mother.

Most of the conversation was in Korean, but my friends tried to translate for me as best they could. I probably lost a lot of details, but I understood that umma had to work a lot to support us (be gone from us), and one day halmoni refused her to come home, since she had already given away my brother, and planned to get rid of me too.

My brother was given up first, the day after umma left. The woman we talked to had been asked to help placing me in an orphanage, but refused. Instead I was taken to the person mentioned in my file (the mother-in-law of the woman who decided to help us search), handed over to her, and she took me to this Catholic church, who again took me to the orphanage.

After hearing all this, I was pretty sure that this story was mine and I wasn't mixed up with some other orphan. So many details came up, linked to eachother.

I found out that I probably am older than my registered date, the old woman said I was about 2 (Western age, 3 Korean age) when I was given to the orphanage, while my file says 1. So I guess I really am born in 1974. My brother had been sent to live with a school-teacher in Incheon, a coastal city.

My mother had been very sad and upset about losing us, and probably didn't know anything about what happened. Halmoni and her family moved shortly after, to 'escape' from my father, who was a shame for the family (since he was in jail).

We went back to the church, since many people said they could remember my halmoni, but not her name. They went through lists, the pastor came down himself, a lot of people got involved in this search, and everyone were more than helpful.

My halmoni had been observed 10 years ago in a nearby church, with a congregation of 20 000! Some people from the first church went with us and we drove to the other church, talking to the pastor and others of the staff. More phonecalls were made, but no one could remember my halmoni's name.

Finally we had to leave, it was over midnight, we'd been searching for more than 12 hours, and Min-Kyoung had to get ready for the morning-show at KBS (Korean TV station)! Both pastors promised to read up an announcement the next day at morning mass, hoping that someone would recognize my halmoni.

By the time we got back it was 1 am, and we were all tired. I was in chock after really finding out more about me and my background!!! I had no information at all before I went to the orphanage, and in one day I am really close to finding my own halmoni!

I wouldn't be able to do all this without my fantastic 'crew' of helpers, my very good friends. I am very grateful for their efforts, they sacrificed their entire day off to help me, They have called around, talked to a lot of people and been amazing! The daughter-in-law of the person who gave me to the church were with us for over 7 hours, I didn't even know her and she wasn't prepared at all! Her involvement was the most incredible of all.

I know that many of these 'doors' were open to me because I had media with me. I doubt that the police would be so helpful if I hadn't gone public with my story and brought a producer. so her PSB/KBS employment was defenetely powerful.

Time was working against me, I had to leave Korea before I was able to find any of my relatives. But the search is going on, and I will return in not too long, and hopefully I'll be reunited with my mother, father, brother and the rest of my family.

Anyway, at least I know a lot more than I ever imagined, about myself, why I was put up for adoption, who my parents were + +.

The entire story, incl. photos, can be viewed at Sunny's World (<http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Shrine/8654>)

sunny jo pangool

## Letter to my Birthmother

Dear birthmother, June 1999

This letter is dedicated to the wonderful woman who gave birth to me the 19th of April 1972. It is dedicated a birthmother with a heart of gold. No matter how much evil life had shown her, then she took against me with open arms and love.....

This letter is dedicated you birthmother. By that goes my love. You told me that you did not like to see yourself on pictures. But why? You are beautiful. Do you know what makes a person beautiful? It is the person's ability to make other people smile and making them happy. When you held me and told that you love me my heart was filled with pride and happiness. When you stroke my hair I was happy. You have no idea how happy you have made a small person on the other side of the BIG BIG world. This is what makes you beautiful. Thanks to you. I love you.

Relax and enjoy this letter. Make yourself a cup of coffee and relax. Seeds from a silent tree.....it begins to grow.....

Once when I was little I saw a shooting star in the black night sky a cold December night in 1979. Everything was covered by fine white snow. I looked at my small hands and made a wish:

"Dear God, I wish to meet my birthmother, please let my dream come true!", I whispered. I could barely hear myself. Tears filled my eyes.

My adoptive mother held my hand that night. She knew what I was thinking. She knew of my feelings. She did not say anything. She did not have to. She was just there waiting for me to sleep. I remember I turned to face her and tears running from my eyes. She just smiled.

How many times did I wait for my Korean mother at kindergarten? It was very often. I sat nearby the window waiting for her instead of my adoptive mother. I imagined my Korean mother coming on a flying carpet picking me up and taking me with her back to Korea. I imagined her with long black hair; very similar to that of my own. I was interrupted in my thoughts of my adoptive mother's gaze as she sat there on the edge of my bed.

"Do you think that my Korean mother will come here?", I asked silently. Then I looked away afraid if I had hurted my adoptive mother's feelings. She just looked at me while she still smiled. Nothing had changed.

"No matter what, your Korean mother will always be there. You are a part of her. You probably look like her", she paused for a while and she stroke my long black hair.

"She is as beautiful as you are!", she finished.

When she had left my room I raised from my bed walking over to the big mirror in the corner of my chamber. I looked at myself in the mirror and imagined my birthmother standing on my side. I traced with a finger the lines on my face and smiled. The Hanbok, which my adoptive parents had bought me hang in the closet. I took it out and held it in front of myself. I dreamed about my life in Korea. I dreamed about walking down the streets with my birthmother. I felt her arms around me. I felt asleep in front of the mirror. My adoptive mother found me next morning laying on the floor dressed in my Hanbok.

During Christmas 1979 I thought very much of my Korean family. I told my adoptive parents that I denied going to school. I just wanted to go when I had got blue eyes and blond hair. I wept a lot. My adoptive parents were always there to support. My adoptive father had bought small Korean tales told to children at bed time. He knew I would love them. He read about a rabbit who wanted a place to live. A family took well against him but the rest of the small village hated him because he was different. He was poor and he did not look like them. He was sad and every evening he prayed to God about better times to come. The family lost everything because of him and he had to escape.....the tale reminds me of my life as an adoptee. After Christmas my life continued as usual:

"You are ugly...you are not like us, go home!!", the other children mocked me and yelled at me. I was alone sitting in the shadow under a tree during summer. During winter I was sitting alone in the class room while the other children played. This time I was reading the tale about the poor rabbit again.

"You are all bugs", I thought. "I do not need you! I do not need you!"

While I was sitting for myself reading the book and avoiding the other children a boy stood suddenly in front of me. I looked up.

"What do you want?", I asked him.

He took my book and threw it to the floor. He pulled my hair. He beated me in my face as he had done so many times before. This time I had enough. I got on my feet and I turned around and kicked him. He fell to the floor and I continued kicking and beating at him. He screamed. The other children came over to see what was going on. They were stunned. The little girl with black hair did actually did fight back. Two teachers arrived trying to control me. I beated at them and threw almost all furniture after them. I cried. Nothing and no one should treat me like the poor rabbit in the tale. Why was the world so evil? Why?

Three other teachers arrived and the five adults tried to control me and calm me down....but I had enough. I would not let them win. I looked at my class mates. Suddenly I understood. It was so clear. I was different from the others. Should I not be proud of that? Did I need to be like them, act like them or look like them? No, I did not have to. I was proud of my black hair, my look and my position. Suddenly I had something that the others did not have....my own power and ability to stand alone. I did not need them. I smiled; not an inner smile. They could easily see it. My teachers looked at me as did my class mates. They did not understand. From that moment I was not afraid of standing alone against all the others. I was not afraid of being different. I would turn against the whole crew everytime needed be.

"Why are you so afraid of things you do not know about?", I asked a teacher once. "Why do people always react with evil designs when they are facing unknown things?", I kept on asking. I wanted to know. I wanted some clear answers.

The teacher looked at me. He feared me because I knew so much about myself and about life, which was not given children at that age to know.

"Life is never that easy. But you seem to handle it. Be proud of it and use it!", he just said.

During spring I prepared my birthday. It should be different. I decided to invite my class mates. Yes, It should be different. Normally I did not celebrate my birthday with anybody other than my adoptive parents. By that I would show my class mates that no matter how much evil the world and life could bring, nothing should force me to walk the path of darkness. I would show them that they could not harm me. Surprisingly everybody showed up. I turned 8 that year. At the birthday party my adoptive mother and me made Korean food, such as Kimchi, Pulgogi, and rice. I sang: "San togi togi yah....."; you know, the song about the rabbit jumping over the mountains. I showed them, what they had feared and I did it without anger. I showed them in a good way what they had mocked me about; something they did not know anything about, and by that that they had mocked me without reason...and what they had feared was a beautiful thing; a beautiful girl proud of the Korean culture. They were stunned. They loved the food and they had a great time. From that moment everything changed. They asked me about things according to Korea. They loved to see me dressed in my Hanbok. I danced for them. I showed them my drawings of things from Korea.

"Do you want to go there....to Korea I mean?", a class mate asked me one day. I looked at her and smiled.

"Yes, one day I want to go home!", I answered. Suddenly emptiness filled my heart. I realized that I did not know at all what home was. I did not know my birthmother. I did not know Korea at all. By that I realized with horror that I was a child of an unknown heritage. It was a big black hole of nothing, and I was just falling, falling, and falling. But I wanted to go home. I felt that I belonged to Korea...a place to where I dreamed at night. When I cried alone in the black night where no one could hear me, I dreamed of the Land of Morning Calm. I dreamed that my birthmother sat on my bed side singing the soft lullaby....San togi togi yah.....

At school I made many assignments about Korea and Korean culture with many feelings involved. I made paintings and showed to my class. I told what I knew with pleasure, pride and tears in my eyes. I told about my feelings about being an adoptee and I grew in knowledge, experience, and power. The mockery in my early years had really helped me. That, I realized by now. I visited schools and talked about Korea and my life as an adoptee. From the hard time where I had been mocked I learned to face a crowd and telling them the truth that everybody had avoided in ages; the different and the unknown. I knew what to do and my path was clear. I knew what I wanted; finding my birthmother. I fought against my own fear of my unknown heritage and I fought against racism in Denmark in general. Racism is based on unknown things connected to other peoples, such as cultures, attitudes, mentalities and religions. Denmark is a multi-ethnic society and therefore there are many racial problems still and still I fight against it. I fight for my own rights as human being and I will keep on fighting to the day I leave this world!

"Mother, I want to tell you something", I began one evening. I hesitated. I had told her before about my dreams about finding my birthmother, but in my adoption records it was told that my birthparents were unknown. We all knew then that it was almost impossible to begin to dig in the past to finding some fertile results. I drank my cup of tea waiting for her to answer. She looked at me. She knew what I was going to say but it was difficult for her to find the right words.

"You are your own, you are responsible for your own life. Therefore you must find yourself in yourself. What you might find does not live in your birthmother. It does not live in me either. No, it seeds, grows, and lives inside yourself. It is like seeds of a silent tree. No matter what you might find, you have your own power, your own identity, and your own "I", which tells you who you are!", she said in a soft understanding voice. I began to cry and she held me tightly as she had done so many times before. And I sang "San togi togi yah".....

In my teenage years I spent much time with other adoptees from Korea. I struggled with my own identity. I struggled with my unknown heritage. I learned to accept that I was adopted. I learned to love myself and my life. We made Korean food, talked about Korean culture and learned much more about that. Many of the other adoptees had experienced the same things as I had. I still felt that I belonged more to Korea than Denmark. In the following years I looked at myself in the mirror and thought about "umma". I imagined her

hugging me and telling me that she loved me and what she did once back in 1972 was to give me a better life. She did it of love. I knew if I found her what I would tell her....

"I love you and I will always love you!".....

I surely looked like her and I was proud of that. As I got feminine shapes and curves as I grew during the years I thought much more about my look and how much of how my birthmother looked like. Yes, I was proud of her. I had black hair and I was proud of being born in Korea. But who was I?...Again my adoptive mother's words came to my mind...." No matter what you might find, you have your own power, your own identity, and your own "I", which tells you who you are

In 1987 I went to Korea with my adoptive parents. They had decided to give me a journey to my motherland, Korea, from that day they held me in their arms for the first time in Copenhagen Airport the 12th of December 1972 when I had just arrived from Korea. I faced what I had been missing in my whole life; my motherland Korea. I was stunned because it was so different. I realized with horror even though I had talked about Korea so much, how little I really knew about Korea. I realized how much that I had overlooked. My past was indeed a black hole. Now it was my turn to react on something of which I knew very little. Suddenly I understood my class mates. It reminded me of my unknown roots and unknown heritage. I felt dizzy and my heart acted with pain. My roots seemed to be a big black hole of nothing and a never-ending nightmare. And I was just falling, falling and falling.....When walking the small streets in Korea I realized that it was a life that I missed so terribly. I saw people and how they looked like me...I sat down in the middle of the street in Seoul and began to cry. People came to help. My adoptive parent held me....I thought about how many mothers who abandoned their children in the streets and the emptiness filled my soul and darkness and sorrow took over. I felt that I belonged more to Denmark than to Korea; I was sad. It was a terrible feeling. I did not want to feel in that way. The journey was an experience from which I learned a lot the following years. By that I struggled more with my identity than before and my fear for the unknown heritage grew. But I fought against my fear. I would not let it control me. I learned to live with it and control it with cold overview. I kept on thinking about the journey and kept on learning more about Korea.

"Your Korean parents and family are unknown", that was what was said in my adoption records. "Your name is Kim, Young-Mi and you are born the 19th of April 1972. I had been to Nam Kwang Orphanage and referred further to Seoul at Korean Social Services for adoption", that was the only thing I knew then.

We asked at the orphanage about further information but I was too young to get more information. After I turned 18 I was allowed to get more information according to the Korean Law. I decided to get more information when I was old enough and ready.....

"It is here I gave birth to you!", my adoptive mother said once when we reached Nam Kwang Social Services. For her, my life began here among the other cute little babies. When looking into their dark eyes, I knew that they were yearning after love, a set of parents who loved them, and arms holding them for confidence; something that I had had.

It reminded me of my own destiny. It reminded me about my own yearning. During my childhood I hid food under my bed because I was afraid of not having enough. I was afraid of starving. It was a touching moment to visit Nam Kwang Social Services. I was sad. I wanted to adopt all the children and bringing them back with me to Denmark. Why was the world so evil? Why? Again I asked myself these questions. Why was the society in Korea so rough? Why was there no help for single mothers so they could keep their children? Why did they not have the same rights as women had in Denmark? Why were Korean women forced to give their children up for adoption? Many questions showed up during the following years.

"Why was I given up for adoption?"

I wondered if I was not good enough and my birthmother was not satisfied. Maybe she was disappointed. During whole my life I was afraid of making mistakes. I was afraid that people walked away. I dated many boys and slept with them from the age of 12. I slept with them but I did not want a relationship. I was afraid of being alone.....but why?....because I have been given away once. Maybe that could happen again.....

I wanted that people; everybody, should love me. This was one of the reasons why I dated many boys. I did also want that the whole entire world should love me. In this task I did a lot. I lied to get attention....but I was not good at it. People walked away and I lost many friends when they discovered what I was doing. Once I had lied to my adoptive mother. I had slept with a guy and I told my adoptive mother that I was pregnant, which I was not. She found out when I got my menstruation a month after. She came into my room and was very upset.

"Why are you lying to me?", she asked. I was reading a book. I looked up.

"What?", I had heard what she had said but I played very innocent. I wanted it to be a bad dream. I just wanted to dig myself down below earth and never show up on the surface again.

"I do not know what you are talking about", I continued. I felt really stupid. I looked away not daring to look at her eyes which knew people so very well. Reality was reflected in them.

"I really do not....ehrrmm...I would never lie to you", I said in a low voice barely heard. Raindrops felt heavily outside.

"You know damn well what I am talking about...and do not make that grimace!", she suddenly yelled at me. I raised from my chair and wanted to leave the room but she pulled me back.

"Do you dare touch me again!", I screamed. Still I avoided her gaze. I walked away. Then I turned to face her. Eyes full of tears, mind full of anger and a heart filled with emptiness I gazed her with hatred...

"What is it you wanna hear!!? How good life is as an adoptee? How perfect my life is? How happy you and dad are to having a child!!? Do you want to hear how well you have raised me!!? Now I want to tell you the truth and the whole truth and nothing but the truth!!", I suddenly paused gasping for air. I realized how tears were running down the face of my adoptive mother. I just became more angry. How could she feel sorry for herself when it was me who was the victim? I did not realize that it was me she felt sorry for and she suffered because I did. I did not realize that she understood more than I knew or would accept. No, anger and hatred burned like fire within my body.

"Mother, I have not chosen to live here in Denmark! I have not chosen to be your child, your daughter. No, I have not chosen the destiny. But I am old enough now and I am the one who has the right to choose my own life!", I yelled. "I have not chosen to be born into this damn world. But I can choose if I wanna die!!", I continued.

"Of course you are your own. You are the only one to choose what you want, but think twice!", my mother said calmly. She gazed me mildly. Still she wept. She sat on my bed toying with a teddybear. The rain felt heavily now and twilight had just fallen. I walked over to sit with her. Surprisingly she stroke my hair.

"Look back at what you have done. You have done a great work Young Mi. You have worked a lot to make your life great. You have worked on the issue called adoption. Father and I, we have just supported you and been there when life was too heavy and difficult. Look, I am still here. And do you know what I see now? I see a beautiful young woman of 16 years, still growing. But do you know what I also see? I see a part of you which still feels abandoned and alone. This part is the small child who was left at the orphanage in 1972. This part is what you have forgotten and trying to avoid. This part has not been allowed to grow. It is a part that hurts. You have feared it and reminds you of your unknown heritage. This is the big black hole as you call it. This part needs comfort and love. When you told that you were pregnant, it was a cry for help!", she paused for an instant.

Yes, she was right. I realized with sadness that I had really avoided this part of myself. I realized that I was more afraid than I thought I was in the first place, that people should walk away from me and I should be abandoned again. I looked at my adoptive mother and she smiled through tears.

"The little baby yearns for love. You must let it grow. You are strong enough to make it one with the rest of yourself and also, you are strong enough to accept it. By that you will be able to accept your life as an adoptee. You have been ashamed of this part, but again, I am still here. I do not walk away", my adoptive mother said. She still stroke my hair.

"Young Mi, now it is time to let it out!", she finished. My adoptive mother stayed with me the whole night. I wept.

The dark part became brighter and brighter, and the small abandoned child grew, and time went by. I learned how to allow the small child inside me growing and letting it out. In the years where I was mocked I stood alone. Already then I knew what loneliness was. By knowledge and experience I let it out and I found myself. All the answers dwelt in my own heart. All this was what my adoptive mother had told me but I found it by my own feelings. She just opened the doors even though it hurt so much. She opened my mind so I could see who I really were. I found myself. By all this I could work on the issue adoption in another perspective. All my knowledge came to my mind. She opened my heart and showed me that love was also dedicated me. Yes, it was easy now to accept that I was adopted. I liked myself as I was. I was proud of it.

I began to travel. I went to France. I loved this country and I loved speaking French. I loved sitting in a restaurant at Champs-Élysées and enjoying spring and a bottle of red wine. When I was 19 years old I went to France to work. I got an apartment and I worked at a hotel as receptionist. I talked with clients from all over the world. I felt that my heart was lost in Paris. I decided to live here forever. I called my adoptive mother and told that I was in Paris and I wanted to live here forever. I told her about my work and apartment. She was happy that I succeeded but sad that I had not told her and my adoptive father that I had sold my apartment in Denmark. But she knew that I could easily get another one when I would go back to Denmark.

I met a guy and he was really romantic. I felt in love with him at once. We met in a café and same night we just made love to each other. He was just so great. I promised him to stay with him forever. As did he. He was a good looking man but one day I found out that he had been unfaithful to me. When I went to his place after work one hour earlier than usual I entered his apartment. I had bought a bunch of blood red roses to him. I looked forward to sit in front of the fireplace enjoying a bottle of red wine with him....I could hear that he had visitors. I heard a voice and someone who laughed. I heard a woman's voice. I entered the livingroom. Right there on the floor was my boyfriend. But he was not alone. He had a date...no he made love with two

women. I was shocked. I remember I beat at him with the roses. I screamed at him. It was like a bad movie, like *La Boème*. I ran out of the door with tears in my eyes. I could and I would never forgive this. How could he!? Today I know that he was just a poor fool. Yes, like I was in my teenage years. I have learned to forgive. Like I have forgiven myself for hurting dates who really loved me. Life is not easy. It is always easy to forgive oneself but harder to forgive other people.

I called my adoptive mother. I was sad after what had happened. I just said what had happened but she did not answer on that, She told me to come back to Denmark at once. She told me that my father had just died of a heart disease. I asked her to repeat it and so she did. I wept. I ran back to my apartment and took as much of my stuff with me. I bought a ticket back to Denmark.

I do not remember much from the funeral but I hoped that my father would come back. I could not accept that he was not there anymore. I would not face reality. I tried to forget. I waited for him at afternoon to come home after work. When cooking I made a portion for him also. I sat on my bed waiting for him to say good night. I waited to hearing his tales and what else he could tell. But he did not show up. I remember when I was 12 years old he talked with me at bedtime. We were talking about death that night:

"Dad, I love you!", I said looking at him. He smiled and stroke my hair. "You may not die. But when you do, you know, flying to Heaven, then will you promise me that you will look down at me every day?" I kept on asking. He nodded. He did not know what to say. Then he nodded again.

I had to accept his death but I could not in the first place. I just wanted to leave this world. I wanted peace and the pain to stop. I wanted to go to Heaven to be with my father. I did not want to stay in a cold and evil world where nobody understood. I went to sleep every evening with the wish never to wake up again. I needed somebody to talk to. I began to lie again to get attention and people walked away. When I told the truth people did also walk away. My adoptive mother had also her own chagrin and pain. She had lost her husband. In fact it was two different persons that we had lost; my father and her husband. We could not work together nor could we help each other. I felt very alone. I felt that nobody understood. I felt that everybody hated me and that they did not care. I wanted to die. I decided one night to take a glass of sleeping pills. I held the glass up in front of me and looked at it. Then blinded by tears I realized how much I loved life and how much that it was up to myself to get the best out of it. It was my own responsibility to create a life worth living. I threw the glass away. I could accept that father was not there anymore; oh yes, he would always be in my memories as the ideal father figure. He was the one who played with me. He was the one I talked to when life was too hard. He was the one I teased. He was the one, whom I thought was childish when he in an age of 50 loved building sand castles near the beach. On yes, he was the one with whom I could be childish. I could laugh and cry with him. My dream had always been to become a pilot and fly the jet fighter. My adoptive father worked at an air base and he tried what he could to let me in. I could talk with him about my dreams. But I was not tall enough and I had a bad sight; a short-sightedness, I think. It has been a big dream flying high up above the night sky.

I was proud that I had had such a great father. I felt indeed that he looked at me from his pink cloud in Heaven. He would always be there. No one could take away the good memories. They would be there forever. Yes, that was something that I could be proud of. I began to write down my feelings in my diary. I began to paint and draw very much. I dreamed of my adoptive father. I made a big oil painting which represented my dream which I dreamed very often. It showed my adoptive father and me walking along the beach while sun was setting. The shadows were long and symbolized the strong connection between us. It also symbolized strong ties between us. Sun was reflecting in the big ocean and the sun itself was a big and red globe up above the sky. It represented the love I felt for him.

My adoptive father did not have the opportunity to live but I had. I had whole my life and I was still young. It was up to myself to create a life which was worth living. I could do it by myself. It was my own responsibility. I began to appreciate every single moment of my life. When walking for long walks in the forest nearby my place I relaxed. I enjoyed the green leaves during spring, flowers during summer, countless of red-yellow nuances during fall, and the fine white snow during winter. I enjoyed sitting nearby the lake dreaming, writing and singing. I enjoyed sleeping under open night sky counting all the stars. I walked in nature. I tasted life. By that I realized how much good I had in my life; a thing that other people did not have; the ability not only to exist but also to live. I began to study. I strived toward a new goal; to become a translator in English, Danish, Spanish, Latin and French and German. I enjoyed learning. I would not stop. I would be the best. I believed in myself. I believed in my own power. I traveled to France. I lived in the Quartier Latin. This quarter is romantic and shows French culture. I enjoyed walking in the big parks of Paris when spring had just arrived and children were playing. Yes, I looked back at my past and I saw how much knowledge and power I had experienced and by that I saw how much I could gain. I would always be my own. Nobody could control me. I finished high school with great results. I enjoyed life and I was putting things into my life, which I loved. I could do it. Still I fought against racism. I fought for those who suffered. At school we made many assignments about racism in Europe comparing to that in the United States which were one of the reasons to crime, hatred, war and murder.

Again I dated many guys but I could not really fall in love with them. I would not bind myself to a life where I was not allowed to think and use my brain. I was not ready to create my own family. I would enjoy and taste

life first. As a mother I wanted to have something valuable to give my children. I would raise my own children with happiness and I wanted them to have a happy mother who had done much in her life. By that I would have so much more to give my children. I wanted my own freedom. And freedom I got. I still have it and will always have. A relationship can last forever if both love each other and give each other right to live as human beings and so both will be able to trust each other. I found my real love and it was Joergen. He was understanding, he was handsome and respected me as I was. I could talk about everything; which is an important thing in a relationship. We could talk about problems and we were always there for each other to listen. We could argue and laugh and cry together. We could be ourselves. We could show each other our feelings. He gave me what I needed as woman. When I get my own children one day they will grow up with a set of parents who will always be there for them with love and support. I am sure that Joergen will be a great father. As a mother I will be able to give my children a good start in life. When my daughter takes her first step, I will be the proud mother. When she gets teeth I will be there when it hurts. When she has learned to say her first words I will be so proud. I will be the proud mother when she tells about her first day at school. When she is sad I will be there. When she has had a nightmare and wants to sleep by my side I will hold my arms around her and lull her into sleep. I will be more than happy to tell her about my Korean heritage. One day I will surely have the chance to take her with me to Korea; then she will see her mother's beautiful country; The Land of Morning Calm. I will show her the world. I will support her when she tries to find her own strength and when it hurts. I will be so proud when she tells about her first date and she is in love. Life is a wonderful thing. Her name will be Daniella. I thought about my unknown heritage again. Of whom was I a child? Who had brought me to the orphanage? Why was I given up for adoption? What had happened in the past? All these questions showed up again according to my own thoughts about having children one day.....

In 1998 I got the opportunity to go back to Korea again. Joergen and me lived together. I worked as an Internet and Computer Programmer and translator. We had got a great apartment nearby the place where I grew up. I was ready to go back and face reality. I was ready to return to Nam Kwang Orphanage to know the whole truth. We traveled with a group of other Korean adoptees on the Motherland Tour 1998.

I was really nervous the day we should go to Korea. I could not eat. I could not sleep. I was so excited. Now I had to face my Motherland which I feared last time. I was also afraid of what I might find in my adoption records. If indeed I was abandoned, then could I handle to getting it confirmed again? If my parents really were unknown, would I be able to live with that?

We landed in Kimpo Airport Seoul the 10th of October 1998. I was very excited and so were the other adoptees. When we waited for the luggage I got a fear that I could not explain. It suddenly showed up. I thought that I was dying. I could not breath and my hands were shaking. It was a kind of panic fear.

"I wanna go back to Denmark!", I said to Joergen. I found a chair and sat down. I realized that it was a reaction from the Motherland Tour of 1987. Oh no! Not the same reaction as the time when I sat down in the middle of a street in Seoul because it was too much and I was afraid!! What I had feared was my motherland and now I had returned to face it again, right now! I was strong enough. If I could not handle this, then I would not be able to handle the result at the orphanage nor to meet my biological Korean parents. I could do it. Yes, I could do it! I raised from the chair and went to the group who waited just for me. The fear vanished. I smiled and we went to the hotel in downtown of Seoul. I felt asleep at once. I was tired.

It was arranged that the whole group of adoptees should go to their orphanages; either Holt or Korean Social Services to get information about their adoption records. I was nervous. I remember that we sat down for an hour. The orphanage looked like itself as it also did back in 1987. I read a book because time seemed very long. The director came and told that I was the first who should go with him to his office to get what they had of information. It was now or never.

"Joergen I do not think that I can go through this. I am so afraid!", I whispered. "I just wanna go back to Denmark and forget all this!", I continued. The director waited for me in the doorway.

"You have nothing to be afraid off. Hard times in your life have made you ready. So no matter what the result might be, then you will be able to handle it!", Joergen said. I turned and walked out of the door with the director.

At his office was a desk and two chairs. I sat down in front of him. He placed my case on the table and looked at me. Then he looked at my adoption records. My heart beated and I gasped for air.

"As far as I can see, your name Kim, Young-Mi is your right name. Your date of birth the 19th of April 1972 is also right!", he looked up. He gave me a picture of myself taken at the orphanage before I was adopted. It was similar to that I have had; both in my Korean passport and visa and that which was attached with my copied adoption records. I just nodded.

"Your grandmother brought you to Nam Kwang Orphanage!", he continued.

"What!?!", I was stunned. It was like a lightning which has just striken me. I could not move. "Will you please repeat that!?!", I asked. He did so. I could not believe what I had heard.

Then he continued while looking through all the papers: "Your mother was unmarried and your name...on I think that I mentioned that before...hm...let us see...well, I can tell you so much that your grandmother's family name is Park!", he said, like he was only talking to himself. I raised from my chair. I went outside to smoke a cigarette. My hands were shaking and I wept. Through my tears I recognize my own strength and courage again. I was indeed strong enough. I went into the office again with a bright smile. He looked up at me while smiling. "That is all that I can tell. You will get further information at Nam Kwang!", he finished.

I ran back to the building where the other adoptees were waiting. "Joergen, Joergen!! I have some news for you. My name and date of birth are right!! You know what? My grandmother named Park brought me to the Nam Kwang Orphanage!! I cannot believe it. I am not just abandoned, left in a basket wrapped in dirty newspapers or old carpets! I am not left in the street nor on the steps of the orphanage. My grandmother had been to the orphanage!!", I screamed. Joergen and the group of adoptees listened when I repeated all the new information. The director came shortly after to talk to one of the other adoptees. Yes, she was also nervous to hearing what news he had for her.

The result was after 17 adoptees had talked to the director, that only two of us had some new information. The rest of them had nothing. What an evil world. My Korean family loved me and had hearts of gold, so they had done the right thing. They had brought me personally to the orphanage, I was proud that my Korean family had been so brave. I was not rootless in the same way as before. I was not abandoned as I had thought in my whole life. The big black hole seemed already then to become smaller and smaller. I was not falling that quickly into it anymore.

The other adoptee got her birthmother's person number and therefore the orphanage could find her within a day. They had contacted her but she was very upset and she totally denied having given birth to her. That was very evil. I do not understand how cruel a person could be. Maybe she had been married to another man but therefore she could have told that instead of that evil answer anyway. The adoptee was very sad of course.

We left Seoul to fly to Cheju-Do and after that to Pusan. I loved walking the small streets of Pusan. I loved being in Korea again.

"Well, Young-Mi, was this what you had feared back in 1987? It is indeed a wonderful country. You are a fool, how can you fear this?", I said to myself. Nobody hurts you and nobody bites. This is just wonderful. I loved the small shops and the street life. The small child inside me had indeed grown. The wounds were healed.

The group arrived at Chagalchi Fish Market. Our tour guide thought that we should experience that. He suggested a living octopus for dinner. Only two persons; not the adoptees but the parents of some of them, they had courage enough. They ate a raw living octopus and drank sochu after that. We just looked. I would not try. The rest of us found a McDonald.

The next day we went to the Nam Kwang Orphanage. I could barely wait. I wrote my diary and prayed to God and my adoptive father that there was more, so I could begin to search. The orphanage had changed a lot. Now it was a nice place with many green areas which surrounded the main building. Also I faced the orphanage which I had feared. It reminded me of the unknown past when I visited it in 1987. Now it was great to visit. I confirmed for myself many times how much I had worked on the issue about being an adoptee from 1987 to 1998. Much had changed, The director of Nam Kwang Orphanage told us welcome and kept a nice speak. She was a nice old lady. After that one from the staff told me to follow. Joergen went with me into the office. Another lady looked through my adoption record. She looked at me.

"Your name is Kim, Young-Mi, born the 19th of April 1972. Your grandmother's name is Park Ok Nyo. Her address is Dong-Gu Goa Chon-Dong-4 Dong San Yi-6 10-1!", she paused waiting for me to finish writing down the new information. Then she continued in a monotone voice: "Your mother's name is Choi Kyung Sook and your father's name is Kim Ji Sang!", she finished calmly. When I had written all down I screamed, wept, laughed and screamed again. It was like an exam with a great end and great results..

I ran out to the rest of the group and told them all this. I jumped up and down. I ran to the director of Nam Kwang Orphanage and embraced her. I kissed her.

"You are just a darling-dear!!", I said. Then I ran down behind the building and ran many time around the court where children were playing. They must have thought that I was totally out of my mind. I must have been. "I love you Koreans and I love Korea!!", I screamed. The director asked me if she should call Korean Social Services so they could begin the search. Of course they should.

"Yes do that at once!", I said firmly. I was shaking all over my body of excitement and happiness. According to the Korean law it was only Korean Social Services who was allowed to do the searching. After that we went to Kyoung-Ju, Taegu, Taejon, Korean Folkvillage and back to Seoul again. It was a great trip. I realized that I had feared without any reasons and I was happy about that.

When we took off from Kimpo Airport in Seoul I wept. I wanted of whole my heart to stay in Korea to the day I died. They had not found my Korean family yet. I got the number of Korean social Services so I could call when I had returned in Denmark. The person who made the searching was Mrs. Kim.

When I got back to Denmark. I was feeling great. I called Mrs. Kim many many times. She kept on saying that I have to be patient. It could take a week, a month or a whole year. Yes, I kept waiting.

Once a friend told me about experiences of searching for biological families according to being a Korean adoptee. She told me about the Korean attitude which was strict. Also it was often that Korean parents did not want to have anything to do with their children when they came back and found them. It reminded me of the adoptee whose mother had denied having given birth to her. Many new questions showed up. Would my family see me again? What would they say and how would they react when I was raised in another country? Maybe they were not alive anymore? If they wanted to see me, was it because of my money? Would they accept my way of behavior? Would my birthmother deny that she had given birth to me? What if she had got married again to another man? Would she meet me then? Did she tell him about me? What about siblings? At last but not at least would the orphanage be able to locate them at all?

I made a homepage on the Internet according to the Motherland Tour in 1998. I wanted to sharing my experiences, feelings and thoughts with other adoptees from Korea all over the world. During the months I made many new friendships. In my dreams I wanted to travel from north to south of Korea with all the Korean adoptees of the world to share justice, goodness, love and power with Koreans. I wanted in my dreams to change their points of view on adoption in general. I wanted to fight. Even in Korea prejudices for adoptees existed. I knew that after much talking to many Korean adoptees on the Internet. In my dreams I would contact Kim Dae Jung and make him helping all of us in over request for understanding and an open dialogue with Koreans who did not understand. This would make more reunions coming through among families who were separated because of adoption. During this time I was very mad at the system and how people could judge without knowing anything about it. Again, why was the world so evil, why? Only because we had been to an orphanage, then people looked down at us. I did not care. I would be the first to speak to the whole Korea and telling how proud I was to have been to an orphanage and how proud I was to be an adoptee; a child of to wonderful nations. I would mock them back in their faces and show them how little they really knew about life and the world outside their small home. The other adoptees agreed with me on this idea. They had had the same dream and wish. We lighted our fire by chatting and e-mailing during the months and talked a lot about our lives as adoptees. I really got many things on the right shelf. I was not the only one with the feelings.

One day a nice man named Choi Tae-Jin had written me. He had seen my homepage and he knew that I lived in Denmark. He sought his brother who was adopted to Denmark. Choi Tae-Jin lived in Pusan. He ask for my help. I promised him to do what I could. I love to help people and I will do everything which stands in my power to find his brother. I asked him to help. I asked if he knew of my Korean family. I gave him all the information I had. He did not know my family but he promised me to help also. The group of adoptees with whom I traveled in Korean in 1998 gave me much support. Friends and family supported me. I have spoken and webt with Joergen. My dream about finding my family seemed to disappear again. At least I knew who had brought me to Nam Kwang Orphanage. I had names of grandmother and my parents. I could accept it as it was now, just if....

The orphanage still tried to locate my family. We celebrated Christmas with my adoptive mother and her new husband. Many months went by and I still had not heard from the orphanage. Around the 5thth of Marts I got a sad message from Korean Social Services. They had not been able to locate anything. Mrs. Kim even said that they names could have been made up and the persons maybe did not exist. It was like something broke inside me. Yes, it was my big dream which blew away all hope like a balloon. Again my surroundings supported me all they could. I was sad. I had called my adoptive mother many times crying and telling that my dream seemed almost impossible. I have many times when visiting her thought that life was hard and I had given up. But she gave me the belief that I would succeed. Should I give up now? Could I stand more hard truths? Should I?...no!!! I had worked so hard. I would not just give up now. I wanted this to succeed. If not, then I would know that I had tried to the bitter end. I would not just sit and watch while the world was passing by! By all Gods, no!!

I made an appointment with Tae-Jin to come to Korea and broadcast my search both through Korean Broadcasting System and in Pusanllbo. The meaning was that a reporter would make an interview with me in front of Nam Kwang Orphanage. Finally I had the chance to tell everybody how proud I was to having been to an orphanage and gladly I would share my experience as an adoptee with people who did not know much about life in general. Gladly I would tell them that they were more than welcome to look down at me. What difference did that make on me...nothing! They could come to me and I would show them things they did not know anything about. After that they would probably kiss my ass. That should be a GREAT pleasure of mine.

The appointment was that I would arrive in Korea the 10th of April with Joergen. I would stay in Seoul in a couple of days to get use to the time difference. We would stay with my friend Choi Myoung-Shin. The meaning was that I should make an interview at Korean Broadcasting System before continuing to Pusan to make the Interview in front of Nam Kwang Orphanage.

Before going I talked to the reporter of Pusanllbo and a government officer. I asked the government officer what he could do to locate my Korean family. I gave him all the information I had. He did not know of them

but he would try his best. We e-mailed each other. I looked forward to go back to Korea and I loved preparing for the journey. I called it "Operation-mum and-dad".

Then, it happened. A Saturday the telephone rang. It was the 1st of April a week before we should travel to Korea. It was Choi Tae-Jin.

"We have found your grandmother and your mother!! We have found your grandmother and your mother!", he said eagerly. I could not believe what I had heard. Then it had only taken them around three days to locate my Korean family. They had found them!! After hanging up I jumped up and down. I screamed and I cried. I was happy so happy. Joergen and me webt together. I called friend and family. I talked to my adoptive mother. She was very happy. The same day I received e-mails both from Choi Tae-Jin and the government officer. They told the great news again. The government officer told that my grandmother wanted to meet me. I was so happy. My heart was filled with love and happiness. Everybody supported me and wished me good luck. The group of adoptees from Motherland Tour helped me and supported me.

Choi Tae-Jin, the reporter, the government officer and I, we agreed to make an article about the reunion instead of the interview in front of Nam Kwang Orphanage. I should meet my grandmother the 13th of April. Wow! I was so happy.

It was told that my Korean mother was alcoholic. It was the first thing which was told about her other than she lived in Taegu. The first impression was always the most sensitive. I was very worried. I had heard many alcoholics who could not stop drinking and they destroyed their own lives. This should not happen for my mother. Again the attitude between Korea and Denmark is different. In a Danish view an alcoholic is one who drink 60 beers every single day and if he is not drunk then he fights to get more and more alcohol. He cannot live without alcohol. When he wakes up he has to get alcohol to make through the morning and he has to keep drinking all day long to get through the day.

I was very worried. I wanted to help. I would have suggested support groups for alcoholics and be there to talk with her. I knew she had suffered and life had been so rough...if I really could help I would. I wrote a letter to my birthmother...but I decided to wait and see how bad it was before I did something. I felt the burning love I had for my birthmother and my Korean family.

We arrived in Seoul the 11th of April. We met Choi Myoung-Shin at the Kimpo Airport in Seoul. It was great to seeing her. We spent a couple of days in Seoul. It was great to be in Korea and it is indeed beautiful during spring. I walked the small streets again and this time I realized that I now got the opportunity to get a life which I have always wanted. I webt together with Choi Myoung-Shin.

Finally the day came where Joergen and me should go to Pusan. I had not slept the night before. I had written in my diary, talked, webt and laughed. We had decided to go by train. It was a beautiful experience to travel in Korea by train. All the mountains and the great nature. The big fields and the green trees. Spring was really beautiful. Too bad that I had forgotten my water colors and my drawing equipment. I was really excited and thrill of joy filled my soul. I was so happy, so happy.....a light in my soul and a dream coming true.....

Dear birthmother, we arrived in Pusan the 13th of April. Sun shined. The government officer, the reporter from Pusan Ilbo and another person, whom I do not remember very well, picked us up at the station. I realized how much my hands were shaking. I had not slept last night and I looked very tired. The trip through Pusan and to grandmother's home lasted in years, I thought. I was nervous now. I looked out of the window of the car thinking and thinking. I looked at the buildings. I looked at people. Grandmother called at the mobile phone to hearing when we would arrived. She probably felt the same as I did. I could barely wait to seeing her.

She would meet us at the big road and follow us from there home to her house. I stepped out of the car. So did the others. We stood for a moment. I was now shaking all over my body. I got some kind of panic fear again. It was now I should face my unknown heritage and my unknown past.

Suddenly the government officer pointed and said:

"There is your grandmother and your cousine!",

I looked at the other side of the road. There were many people. I saw a woman. She looked at me and I looked at her. It was like my heart stopped beating for a second. What I saw was a woman not taller than me. She waited for us to cross the street. She was my biological grandmother; of flesh and blood!! Blinded by tears I followed the others when there was green light. The woman looked very nice, handsome and cute.

The next thing I remember is that she held me and said something in Korean. It was so great to feel her and look at her. I really enjoyed holding her like she held me. We walked in what I thought was very looong. Sun beamed. Small shops lined the street with fish, clothes and all kind of sea food. It smelled of fish. It was difficult for me not to cry. All this, it was something that I had missed in my whole life. People enjoyed spring. Children played and old people sat outside their houses enjoying the sun of spring. The quarter was very nice. It was very Korean and looked like a picture I had seen according to history of Korea. It reminded me

of my assignments I made about Korea at school. I had seen such a quarter on movies. Now it was right here in reality. My grandmother lived here.

"This is here I belong!", I thought. I smiled an inner smile. This is here I can call home.....

Finally we reached her house. It was a nice home. Now I was at grandmother's house. I was with my biological grandmother! An experience that I had never thought that I should have. We sat in her living room. Cousine made something to eat. I was not very hungry. All the impressions and strong feelings had made satisfied. Grandmother caressed me and began to cry. The government officer translated what was said:

"Because of our fault, Young-Mi has sought after me and her mother. I thank her a lot. I feel terrible that we could not keep her. All these years I have had a bad conscience!", grandmother said.

My friend Choi Myoung-Shin had taught me to say in Korean:

"I am honored that you wanted to see me again. I love you, I have missed you and I will love you forever!",

We all wept. This was a very strong moment. I could not stop looking at grandmother. She looked like me. She was as strong as I was. The shape of her face was very similar to my own. I was feeling that I had come home at last. I felt that I belonged and I felt like a whole person; a human being. I felt that I belonged both to Denmark and Korea; in fact, more that I did before. I looked around and I loved her place. Then cousin brought us something to eat. I just remember that there were many people. I was happy.

The first night at grandmother's home I wept. I felt her arms around me. I heard her soft voice. She caressed me. Again tears ran down my face. I was tired, happy and I was not feeling rootless anymore. Now I had something to live for.

Dear birthmother, when I go to bed, the last thing I think about is the great memory to sit in grandmother's livingroom and hearing you talking. In my memories we eat rice, pulgogi, kimchi and strawberry. I hear your voices and your laughing. So no matter what I will be with you forever in mind, spirit and body. When you go to sleep every evening my spirit is with you and holding you until you sleep. Then I hold you and telling how much I love you. Just remember that. I will soon see you again. Do not worry I will never disappear again. When I think of this I smile and happiness fill my soul before I sleep. The picture of me and you stands on my night table so I can look at you. By that I send you all my love. No matter what, I will always be there. When I look at the ring that grandmother gave me, I know that she will always be there too.

I met all from the family except from uncle in New York. I hope to be able to meet him one day. It was strong feelings when I met the rest of the family. They were very very nice. Now I know where I have my strong mind from. Now I know where I have my positive mind from. Uncle looks like me very much! I am proud of my Korean family. I was glad that they accepted me as I was.

Grandmother told that I had siblings. She told that you had been married again but unfortunately that you husband had died. It was a sad story. I wonder how my sister and brother would react when they saw me. Would they be sad or would it annoy them that suddenly a sister showed up?

The day where I should meet you I was nervous. I had never been that nervous before in whole my life. I had spent much time on grandmother's roof to write diary and talk. I had been to an Internet Café and writing friends and family. Oh God, I was really nervous.

I sat in grandmother's livingroom. I had just been on the roof. Suddenly grandmother called:

"Your mother is here! Your mother is here!"

I wanted to jump out of the window and ran away. I was shaking and my heart was beating very fast. I could barely breath. I thought about hiding in grandmother's closet. But why was I nervous? Oh, maybe your reaction. How would you react when you saw me? Would you think that I was too Americanized? What about when you knew that I was raised in another country?...I had been given up once...that could happen again....

I raised and went out of the livingroom. I closed my eyes in a second. Then I looked into eyes which were dark, intelligent and beautiful. I saw a face very much similar to my own. I saw you for the first time. You were wonderful. I remember that the first thing we did was to find a lighter. We both were very nervous and you were probable as afraid as I was. You were also afraid of how I would react when I saw you. Finally we got a lighter and finally we could sit down relaxing and smoking.

I looked at you very much. You looked like me. The next thing I remember is that we looked at each other. You traced with a finger lines in my face. You began to cry and so did I. I loved holding you. I still cannot explain how I felt. I was just very very happy. This was my biggest dream coming true. I enjoyed holding you. You told me about your life and my heart was melting. You told about my father and anger rose inside me. I did not understand all you said of course, but I think that I got the main point. He was just a looser. When we meet in October this year, I want to hear the story again and exactly what happened in 1972. My soul cried with you. That was so great to see you. How many times after had we hold each other tightly? It was many. You stroke my hair and told me how much you loved me. You told me how bad you had felt that you had to give me up for adoption. We did a lot during the time we were together. It was great to be with

you. I did things that I thought was not possible to do; being with my biological mother and family. Finally I could tell you how much I loved you. Finally....I was home.

When I looked into your eyes for the first time, I realized what real love was. I realized that it had always existed in my life. It had always been there. Now I understood my adoptive mother's words:

"No matter what, your Korean mother will always be there"....

Dear birthmother, you were always there to hold me. You were there to caressing me and striking my hair. I loved hearing your soft voice and when you talked to me. When you webt mother, I would so much be there to hold you and be there for you. I loved holding your hand and looking at you. It was difficult to let go of you. You know what, even though I wept, then you were there to hold me. No, you do not have to say anything. The most important thing was that you just held me. It means everything to me. To cry is a taboo but for me it is a thing which brings people close to each other. It meant a lot to me even though you did not know what to do in the first place. You found out that words did not have to be said.

Do you remember when we both wanted to stop smoking? I suddenly took our packets of cigarettes and jumped on them? I remember that clearly. You promised me no more socho, not even when I am in Denmark. Ok, I believe you and believe in your strength.

Mother, we looked like each other and we acted in almost the same way. We both do things in general without thinking twice in life. We want other people to respect us but we want to do things in our own way in life. We both cry easily in life. When I think of all this a smile is on my lips. We both liked to be independent...only if there always were people to whom we could go to and getting help when needed be. We were both very afraid of making mistakes towards each other and hurting each other's feelings. In this task we also did things very alike. We both did not want to lose each other again. We both thought that it was difficult to look into each other's eyes. We both tried to avoid each other's gaze. We were both very afraid of losing each other again and therefore we tried not to make mistakes. We were also afraid if we did not do things well enough. Wow, this is caused by love and love it will always be. Life is full of mistakes. Without them the life would be boring. I still smile when I think of the good memories. Even though we come from two different cultures and mentalities, then we behave in the same way. We think in the same way; yes, great minds think alike. If I should tell you what I think about you...well...then all I can say is that you are a great mother and I love you of whole my heart. I am proud of you. I am born of a strong woman and strong you really are. My adoptive mother showed me the strength which lived inside me. She showed me the gift in life which came from you.

When I look up in the night sky today I know that my biggest dream has come true. I have not only seen my birthmother. I have also met my whole Korean family which I am very proud of. I have met my beloved grandmother. I have met my wonderful sister and brother. I am so very happy.

When I see a shooting star at the black night sky today I thank God and my adoptive father for letting my biggest dream coming true. I think of all of them who have been there to help. I think at my dear orphanage who have helped and supported me. I think of my friends and family who always are there to listen. I think of my beloved adoptive mother in Denmark and to her goes my love. I think of my fiancé. At last but not at least I think of Tae-Jin, the government officer and the reporter at Pusan Ilbo. I cannot thank them enough. By all this go my love and thanks to them all.

Now when I look at the clear night sky with the thousand of stars I know that this chapter in my book of life can be closed. All my questions have been answered. I am also proud that I have been able to go through all this and that I have had courage enough to face my unknown heritage which I both missed, loved and feared. Seeds from a silent tree have grown and a happy person I am. I have become a human being and a proud adoptee of to wonderful nations; Denmark and Korea.

Your daughter

Young-Mi

This document is © by Janne Mi Petersen. It is also available as a .pdf-file (56'852 Bytes). Check out her Website ([home8.inet.tele.dk/jannemi/default.htm](http://home8.inet.tele.dk/jannemi/default.htm))

## **We gave him up to save his life**

For five increasingly horrific years, the adoption agencies insisted that Chad Ostrowski's memory of a father in Korea was fantasy. When Anne Marie and John finally learned the truth about their beloved boy, they made the ultimate sacrifice.

By Peg Tyre

On August 11, 1989, a pale, anxious 8-year-old boy wearing a thin cotton T-shirt and shorts walked through the arrivals gate at Kennedy airport and into the arms of John and Anne Marie Ostrowski. They held balloons inscribed mom and dad in Korean, the only language their new son, whom they had already named Chad, understood. A shy, skinny boy with liquid brown eyes, his gleaming hair teeming with lice, Chad had no luggage, no toys to occupy him for the 24-hour journey.

"He didn't carry a teddy bear, a blanket, a stuffed animal, nothing," recalls Anne Marie, a slight, intense woman with the physical exuberance of an aerobics instructor. "Not even a jacket for a flight halfway around the world."

Chad had been placed with the Westchester couple by New Beginnings Family and Children's Services, a Mineola, Long Island, agency specializing in the adoption of foreign-born children. His birth mother was unmarried, New Beginnings had told the Ostrowskis, whose first son, John II, was 10 years old. Chad had no other family, they were told, and his mother, too poor to raise him, had abandoned him at an orphanage near the southern tip of Korea.

Chad, who was soon wearing spanking-new jeans and a black Members Only jacket the late-eighties uniform of every suburban kid -- immediately began to struggle with English. It wasn't long before he was able to make himself understood. But what he told his American parents in his halting English shocked the Ostrowskis and launched them on a painful journey that would stretch over a turbulent decade. Before it was over, their dream family would be in tatters. And Chad, their beautiful, bright child, would be on the brink of self-destruction.

"You say you are my family, but I already have a family," Chad told Anne Marie and John. "I have a father, brothers, and sisters back in Korea. Aunts and uncles, too. My father loves me, and I want to know what happened to him."

Nine years after Chad uttered those words, the Ostrowskis would travel with him back to Korea to reunite their son with his biological father. It was a heartrending decision, the Ostrowskis say, because they love Chad as much as any parent can love a child. But after years of battling doctors, psychologists, the courts, and adoption agencies here and in Korea, Anne Marie and John say they did what they knew was right. Chad had showed them over and over that he could not -- would not -- live a lie.

"I needed to know my family," he says simply.

Now nearly 18, Chad -- born Yong Seong Park -- lives with his father, Ki Joon Park, near Chinju in southern Korea. And even while the Ostrowskis continue to talk almost daily with him and plan for his college education, this week they are filing a multi-million-dollar suit against New Beginnings and its Korean partner, charging the agencies with negligence, breach of contract, and fraud for allowing them to adopt a child they claim the agencies knew from the beginning was not the orphan they'd been assured he was.

Thousands of foreign-born children are adopted by American parents each year, and experts say most of these adoptions go smoothly as once-abandoned children and their newfound parents cleave together to become a family. Foreign-adoption horror stories, the ones that make the news, are the exceptions to the rule. Mentally impaired kids -- those suffering from fetal alcohol syndrome or those with catastrophic emotional damage -- are palmed off on eager would-be parents whose love and financial resources are quickly tapped out. Every year, a handful of parents of these difficult and sometimes dangerous children essentially throw up their hands and return their adopted children to the care of strangers. Officials at New Beginnings insist that is what happened with the Ostrowskis.

"From our records of our counseling sessions with the Ostrowskis before they returned Chad to Korea, it was clear that their intention was to sever ties with their son," says Tim Sutfin, executive director of New Beginnings. "Once they took Chad back to Korea, they took his passport and his green card in order to ensure he never came back."

The Ostrowskis angrily deny that assertion. They say they allowed Ki Joon Park to take back his son in order to give the boy a chance to live the life he ought to have had all along -- not as Chad Ostrowski but as Yong Seong Park.

"People ask me, how could you give up your son," says John Ostrowski, wiping away tears. "But they don't understand. We love Chad. We felt we had to act to save his life. Any parent would have done it."

John and Anne Marie Ostrowski seem like the kind of well-to-do, good-looking couple you'd find on the sidelines of a suburban soccer game. They live in a big wood-frame house on a tailored country lane in the heart of post-and-rail northern Westchester County -- a place where bridle paths can be better maintained

than back roads. There is one of the newer homes on a subdivided estate; it's spacious and light and modern, surrounded by manicured beds of perennials and dogwood, apple, and plum trees -- gardening is Anne Marie's passion. Tall and solid, John Ostrowski speaks with the steady deliberation of a man who knows his mind. After 22 years of marriage, John still inclines toward his wife when they talk, and there is something about the Ostrowskis that makes you think of two teenagers on a date.

John has made a good living as the operations director of a New Jersey-based real-estate trust. Throughout the house there are snapshots of the family on the beach during their annual vacation in Cape May, from winter trips to the Caribbean, of Chad and John II with Mickey during one of the family's eight trips to Disney World. In most of the pictures, Anne Marie, then an executive at Marine Midland bank in Rockland County, looks tanned, happy, and slightly hassled, like any mother of two on vacation. John II has a carefree smile. As a boy, Chad also grinned at the camera. Later on, he would only scowl, typically adolescent and moody. The Ostrowskis' photo album reflects an average family. But Anne Marie knows that those pictures tell only a small part of the truth about their life.

It was 1989, a decade since their first son was born, and Anne Marie, in her mid-thirties, found she could not get pregnant again. After a few bruising attempts at in-vitro fertilization, the Ostrowskis decided to adopt. Anne Marie herself had grown up in foster homes and had thrived. Maybe it was her destiny, she reasoned then, to become a life raft for other children without parents. She dreamed of a large family, maybe five kids in all. But she and John agreed to start off slowly, with a baby and maybe a 6-year-old. They opted for an overseas adoption -- and paid New Beginnings some \$9,000 to find their first child.

The caseworker at New Beginnings, Anne Marie says, showed her pictures of Chad-- then 7 -- and promised that if the placement worked out, an infant would quickly follow.

From the first weeks they spent together, Anne Marie and John could tell Chad was very bright. He picked up English quickly, excelled at math, and became passionate about basketball and running. He could almost keep up with John II when they biked around the neighborhood.

But from the outset, Anne Marie recalls, Chad seemed emotionally withdrawn. He could not respond to loving words or small gestures of affection. He could not talk about his feelings. He had a hard time striking up friendships with other children. Even as a small boy, he seemed determined to keep his feelings to himself.

When Chad did talk, it was about his childhood in Korea. He told his American parents that before he was taken to the orphanage, he lived with his father's mean girlfriend. His father would visit, laden with gifts of clothes and toys. After he left, the furious girlfriend would break the toys and throw away the clothes. During his first Christmas with the Ostrowskis, Chad happily tore through the wrappings on his presents. A few hours later, John found the presents in the trash.

"I won't play with them, they're broken," Chad said, his boyish features puckered in an angry scowl.

Troubled by these revelations, Anne Marie and John called New Beginnings. The caseworker dismissed Chad's claims as "pure fantasy," Anne Marie recalls, but promised to research Chad's history with Eastern Child Welfare Society, the Korean agency. The news from Korea was sobering: The Ostrowskis were told that Chad had been badly neglected as a small boy; while his mother was at work, Chad had roamed the streets, fending for himself until she returned at the end of the day. The Ostrowskis say the news only made them love him more. They also became fiercely protective of him.

"He had been a street kid," says Anne Marie. "He'd made himself tough just to survive. And I was ready to deal with it. After all, healing takes time."

While Anne Marie spoke to Chad about the importance of love and trust in their family, Chad responded with memories of his father. He was a towering man, Chad remembered, who'd taught him math on an abacus. Although family circumstances had forced Chad to stay with his grandmother and aunt, he remembered that more than once he'd run away to be with his father. Oddly, Chad never talked about his mother.

Eastern had sent Anne Marie a picture of Chad taken at the orphanage. A scowling Chad is holding an identity card bearing what the Ostrowskis were told was Chad's Korean name, Yong Seong Kang.

"He hated that picture," says Anne Marie. "He told me his name was Park, not Kang, but they made him hold that card anyway. The day that picture was taken, Chad said, they took away his real name, along with his father's business card and a prized denim jacket that his father had given him."

Anne Marie called the caseworker again. This time, word came back from Korea that the man Chad thought was his father was a married boyfriend of his mother. "He would struggle with these memories, trying to piece them together," Anne Marie remembers.

The Ostrowskis assured Chad that in time they would help him get the answers he needed. For now, they urged him to build emotional connections to his new brother, his schoolmates, his community. Slowly Chad's memories of his old life began to fade. But the fissures never completely closed. Although his grades were good, he had few friends, and in the nearly all-white environs, he was an outsider.

Eventually, he started acting like one. Some of his teachers wrote him off as a troublemaker. The Ostrowskis' idyllic life began to turn upside down. Anne Marie was on the telephone constantly from her office, mediating, soothing, trying to manage an increasingly chaotic household. Her parish priest suggested sending Chad to a local Catholic school, where classes were smaller. But while he did very well academically, he became increasingly disruptive. He would bully kids who were smaller and meeker. Other parents began to complain. Teachers caught him lying needlessly. After a few months, Chad was expelled. "It shook my faith," recalls Anne Marie. "I didn't know what to do I was super-stressed at work. Weekends were a nightmare. Chad wasn't getting any better."

John II says it wasn't all bad. He remembers sprawling with his brother in the den, watching videos, sharing English-muffin pizzas and soda.

"At first when he got into fights, I defended him," says John II, now 20 years old and a student at suny New Paltz. "I'd tell my mother, 'Give him the benefit of the doubt. You don't know how rough other kids can be.' "

But Chad was soon expelled from another parochial school after joining a ring of runty robbers to steal money from the teachers' cabinet.

The family had moved to a bigger house in a more affluent neighborhood, and Chad entered eighth grade at John Jay Middle School, midway between Katonah and Lewisboro. Anne Marie knew they were running out of options. By then, she had quit her job at the bank and made Chad her full-time occupation.

"I became obsessed with him," she recalls. All the attention seemed to finally pay off. In early adolescence, Chad began to blossom. For the first time, he formed real friendships: Chad, Aaron, and Phil -- three boys from the same neighborhood -- became an inseparable trio. They caddied together at Waccabuc Country Club, watched videos, and just hung out at Phil's house and talked. As always, Chad excelled in academics, tackling test after test like a competitive sport. He also discovered music, playing guitar with a garage band, and developed a love of drawing. He usually signed his delicately rendered illustrations Yong Seong Park.

Yet the emotional thaw his parents prayed for never came. Chad was still unable to express love, even warmth, for his adoptive parents. "It was like I had these words in my head," he says of that time. "I knew what they were, but I could never, never say them. They just wouldn't come out."

Instead, he raged at the Ostrowskis, especially his father and brother, with an inchoate frustration. The handyman was frequently at the house, repairing a window sill or a door frame broken during a physical confrontation between Chad and his brother. Still, Anne Marie defended him.

"I didn't want him to fail," said Anne Marie. "I would be constantly mediating between him and the rest of the world. My husband became bitter. He would say, 'You know, you have other family besides Chad.' "

In the winter of 1995, Anne Marie, always policing her son, picked him up after school and was driving him home past snow-covered pastures and well-tended horse barns. "I said, 'Chad, you're doing so well. You're on the high-honor roll, you have friends, but still you don't seem happy.' " Chad watched Anne Marie for a while as she drove, unable to speak. Then he did. "I can't be happy," he said quietly, "until I know what happened to my real father."

That February, Anne Marie wrote another letter to the adoption agency, asking for help. Three months later, the agency in Korea responded. A mistake had been made. The woman the agency thought was Chad's mother was not. They had located Chad's father, now a ginseng salesman in Chinju, and he missed his son terribly. The agency refused to include the father's address but agreed to act as a go-between for the families. A price list for forwarding and translating letters was enclosed.

"It was unbelievable, a bombshell," says John. "For five years, we had begged for information, only to be told that Chad's memories were wrong. Now it turns out they were right. What could we do?"

Anne Marie sets her mouth with anger when she talks about that day. "A child is not a rubber ball that you can reshape."

Tim Sutfin understands the Ostrowskis' anger. But, he says, according to his records, Chad's father was willing to give him up but had left the task to his girlfriend. It was the girlfriend, Sutfin claims, not Eastern or New Beginnings, who gave Chad's last name as Kang instead of Park. Both agencies took her word over that of the 7-year-old child.

For Chad, the news was all the proof he needed. He quickly wrote a letter, in English: "Dear Dad," he wrote, "this is your son, Yong Seong." He told his long-lost father about his sports activities and asked about his brothers and sisters. After a few months, he got back a carefully worded letter from his sister. At the time of his adoption, the family had been scattered, she explained. "Don't resent your father for what he did," she wrote. "We will always be family. But stay in the U.S. and get a good education."

For the Ostrowskis, those letters marked the beginning of Chad's plunge into darkness. The fighting at home veered out of control. Punished, he would be sent to his room, where he would systematically vandalize his bedroom furniture. He punched his walls so hard they were dented.

"One time I woke up from a nap to hear Chad pulling down his bookshelves, throwing chairs at the wall," recalls John II. "My mother had gone into his room, and he was screaming, 'Don't tell me what to do! You are not my real mother.' I put my pillow over my head and thought, 'I can't believe this is my life.'"

Between imbroglios, Chad would try to come up with practical, if adolescent, solutions to his inner turmoil. If he improved his behavior, would Anne Marie and John let him become a foreign-exchange student? Would they let him spend a year in Korea?

"We'd tell him if his behavior improved, we would work out a way for him to return," Anne Marie says. "He would try not to make mistakes, but it was almost like he couldn't help it."

But the "mistakes" grew more frequent and more serious. They worried that Chad was stealing money after he brought home an expensive guitar, valuable comic books, and stacks of CDs. He hot-wired a neighbor's boat and returned it to its slip with much of its equipment ruined. A few times he ended a violent family fight by running away.

"I always had these questions in my mind. My family was on the other side of the world. It brought me down," says Chad. "I didn't try to get in trouble. But somehow I needed to make myself feel better."

The Ostrowskis enrolled Chad at an exclusive boarding school in northern Connecticut. Just as they were drawing a sigh of relief, the school called. Chad had put his hand through a plate-glass window, cutting himself from wrist to elbow. By Halloween, he had run away and was expelled. They enrolled him in a public high school, but he was suspended after three days. The psychologist he was seeing then told Chad's parents their son was talking about suicide.

"I thought about it a lot," said Chad, with chilling calmness. "But I just couldn't bring myself to do it."

Chad would tell them -- often at the top of his voice -- that he needed his father in Korea. After one blistering fight, Chad slammed the door of his bedroom and shouted words at his parents they will always remember.

"You're not my parents," he screamed. "You wanted a son, and people were willing to sell me and you bought me." By this time, it seemed to the Ostrowskis that their decision to adopt Chad was all wrong. "We knew we had to do something. We had to fix this terrible thing," says John. "We didn't know if bringing him back to Korea would help, but we had so few options."

Almost ten years after they were united that day at JFK airport, the Ostrowskis told New Beginnings they wanted to take Chad home. The agency flatly rejected the suggestion. John hired a lawyer and began a series of negotiations to get Chad repatriated. After being contacted by the Ostrowskis' lawyer, New Beginnings came up with a distant relative of Chad's in Dallas and suggested they send their son there.

"In our opinion, returning him to Korea was too drastic a measure," said Sutfin.

"It was so frustrating. They didn't seem to get it. The point was not to send Chad away; the point was to give him back his father," John said.

In February, Chad got in a fight so bad his opponent's father threatened to press assault charges. Anne Marie no longer trusted him to be in the house alone. His grandmother refused to be alone with Chad after they'd had a screaming argument. To compound matters, he was smoking pot and drinking.

"I was afraid for my parents," says John II. "Afraid that he might hurt them." Last April, Anne Marie, John, and Chad boarded a plane for Korea. Not even Chad's grandparents knew they were going. He left his books and sports jersey in his locker at school, and his beloved guitar at home in Westchester. Officials at Eastern were aware the Ostrowskis were coming to reunite Chad with his father but had promised them nothing. The Ostrowskis left a folder of documents with their congresswoman, Sue Kelly, and a lawyer in New York, in case they ran afoul of Korean immigration officials.

"We simply didn't know what was going to happen," said John. Maybe Chad's biological father would turn out to be inept, or cruel or criminal. Maybe a short visit would change Chad's mind. "But we had to do something." On their second day in Korea, the director of Eastern met John and Anne Marie without Chad and did his best to dissuade them.

"The director said, 'Don't leave him here, there is money in the U.S.,'" John recalls with disgust. "I said, 'This is a child, not a commodity.'"

That afternoon, the agency finally produced Ki Joon Park, a small man with a weathered face carrying a crushed fedora. The Ostrowskis and Ki Joon Park sat staring at each other in an airless room, unable to communicate, while Eastern officials supplied spotty translation.

"They took advantage of us because we didn't know the language," said Anne Marie. Ki Joon Park seemed nervous and listened passively, with downcast eyes, as Eastern officials argued with him. But on one point Ki Joon was clear -- he wanted to sign the hastily drawn legal document the Ostrowskis had brought. With the stroke of a black pen, Ki Joon reclaimed his son.

The Ostrowskis and Ki Joon decided to leave Eastern and the hectoring officials and reconvene, with Chad, at a nearby restaurant. John, Anne Marie, and Chad were ushered into the private room upstairs. There they

were greeted by the entire Park family -- Ki Joon, along with Chad's brother, sister, aunt, and niece. Ki Joon Park struggled to his feet. Chad's biological father, the "towering" figure in Chad's memory, stood a head shorter than his fully grown son. The resemblance between them was unmistakable. Park began sobbing, hugging Chad and hanging on his arm. Chad stood frozen.

"It was surreal," says Chad. "I was being pulled in two directions. Pulled apart." From the look on Ki Joon Park's face, Anne Marie Ostrowski knew in a flash she would lose her son.

"I saw Chad was not reacting, and I realized that he was holding back for our sake," she recalls. "He looked at me, and I said, 'Chad, it's okay. It's your dad. You can have feelings for him. It won't hurt us. This is for you. You can love us both.'"

With many breaks for tears and translation, the boy's real story finally emerged. His mother died when Yong Seong Park was an infant. His father, destitute and mourning, left him, the youngest family member, with the boy's aunt, grandmother, and eventually a girlfriend, who mistreated Yong Seong. She eventually brought him to Eastern, which provides children to adoptive parents overseas. She convinced Ki Joon Park that the boy would be better off. Two days later, though, Ki Joon Park says, he changed his mind and tried to get his son back from the agency. Eastern apparently had no record of a little boy named Yong Seong Park, only Yong Seong Kang. Not realizing that his son's identity had been obliterated, Ki Joon Park continued to register him on the national rolls, hoping the boy would find his way back. Over and over, Ki Joon thanked the Ostrowskis and apologized for giving up a son he'd never stopped loving.

"We had terrible doubts about what we were doing," says John. "But seeing Chad and Ki Joon together erased our doubts. We saw the boy we hadn't seen in years."

Today, Chad lives in a remote part of Korea. He is struggling to relearn the language and misses his American friends. Every morning, he takes a fifteen-minute bus ride to Chinju, a city of about 25,000. At school, he is expected to learn his lessons by rote, and his teachers aren't afraid to dole out slaps and punches to lazy students.

If Ki Joon drives the family one and a half hours to Pusan, Korea's second-largest city, they can gorge on Pizza Hut and Popeye's chicken. At home, the American food Chad cooks, like spaghetti and meatballs, baffles his family. He is taking guitar lessons and Tae Kwon Do. Recently, he has asked Anne Marie to send him a personal computer and a care package including grated Parmesan cheese, spices, and an Italian cookbook. He hopes to attend college in the U.S., but he is no longer Chad Ostrowski. To get a visa here, he will have to resolve his legal identity and probably will have to serve three years in the Korean military.

"If the Ostrowskis hadn't taken his passport, he could just swallow his pride and go to the airport and say, 'I'm Chad Ostrowski,' and get on the plane," says Tim Sutfin.

That, the Ostrowskis say, is exactly what they have come to expect from New Beginnings. "He's not Chad Ostrowski -- and he never was," Anne Marie insists (though the Ostrowskis themselves continue to call him Chad). "Forcing him to assume a false identity took us to hell and back." She wants her son to return to the U.S. as Yong Seong Park.

Chad seems bewildered by these problems, and he expects his mom in Westchester to somehow work them out for him. Despite the challenges of his new life, he says, for the first time the part of him that was unfinished feels complete. "I like spending time with my family," he says. "Especially my sister, who can tell me what life was like before I was taken away."

Anne Marie and John sit alone in their living room in Westchester, struggling with tears when the talk turns to their lost son. Anne Marie still has the shorts Chad wore the day he arrived, and just looking through the box containing his old primary-school drawings can ruin the day. She figures they spent more than \$15,000 on travel costs, lawyers, and translators to reunite Chad with his father. And the bills haven't stopped coming. They send Ki Joon \$500 a month to help with expenses. They spend almost \$300 a month simply to hear Chad's voice over the telephone. They have been beseeching their elected officials to help their son get a passport so he can come back to the U.S. and attend college. They say they'll pay for that too. More than anything, they want to visit his Korean family again and talk. "I share a child with a Korean man," says Anne Marie, bewildered and amused. "I'm not married to him, and he speaks no English, but we share a child."

Tim Sutfin sympathizes with the Ostrowskis but insists there is little more New Beginnings or Eastern could have done. In 1995, he points out, the Korean government stopped the overseas adoption of older children. In their darkest moments, Anne Marie and John remind each other of what Chad told them before driving off with Ki Joon to begin life with his rediscovered family.

"I know what you have done for me," the boy told his sobbing mother. "I know what it took for you to bring me here." Then he said the words that Anne Marie and John had walked through fire to hear: "I know that you love me. And I love you."

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