

I'll take anyone

by Melissa Ann Chadburn

When I woke up my face was damp with tears and the last thing I could remember from my sleep was umbilical cords. My birth mother kept my belly button and baby teeth and even though she was massively abusive and bat shit crazy I knew that she loved me because the debris of my body was preserved with such high regard. This also gave me an even stranger message, a codependent one, like chasing after me for momentos equated itself with love.

Later on when I entered foster care and my foster parents had their own children I noticed the vast blankness in the scrap books where I belonged. They kept their natural children's belly buttons and teeth also. As a result I initially left a mess in my wake hoping to weasel my way into these scrapbooks then since I was unsuccessful in that I became an overachiever and tried to forge my way in like that. That didn't work either. Today I try very hard to be notable. When you are trying to be something you want to be recognized for authentically it never works.

I eventually made my way out of bed and got ready to go to some friend's baby shower. They are a lesbian couple so the entire couple would be present. Traditionally baby showers are things that only women attend and in some gay couples only the femme side attends but really it's a silly ritual because it's for the baby and only having the feminine side there implies that only the woman will be tending to the baby. Even if I wasn't into it, getting gifts and eating good food should work for anyone right? Plus women can be really sexy when their horny and plump with baby envy. If I could make a hard-on I'd like to be around for that. On my way to the baby shower I passed the Silver lake walking man. And then I don't know if it was so hot I just started daydreaming, or I was remembering a dream I had previous. The cars blurring past made a hypnotizing monotonous back drop of noise. Like the metronome only the metronome sort of goes click-clack-click-clack

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and the cars in LA sound more like a rain stick ya'know more like "Shhhhhhhhhhh" then there's the occasional hiccup like a motorcycle or skateboard. "shhhhhh vroom shhhh tic tic tic tic." So after some walking I may have slipped into a day dream or recalled a dream I had previous.

I entered foster care and group homes when I was thirteen years old, in real life not in the dream. I thought I had found a nice home with foster parents but it didn't work out. I had sex with my foster brothers. I had foster brothers that eroticized me and wished they could fuck me. I lived in group homes. I stole stuff. My ex-girlfriend was adopted. Her parents love her. Her experience was different. In my dream today as adults we had to go back into foster care. She adjusted perfectly fine. I did not want to play with the other kids. I thought their games were boring and stupid. I answered the phone one day. There was a nice lady on the other line. Apparently the assuaging hold noise when someone is waiting to be transferred to a live-person is a running commercial for the different children that were available for adoption. "Meet Jimmy he is sweet, potty trained, plays ball and with dolls and his favorite word is ..." "Gimme" (in little 6-year-old Jimmy's voice).

Then I heard the lady on the line. The nice lady said she was so touched by the hold message she wanted to take all the kids home with her but she could only have two or three. I was sad. I knew at my age, 34-years-old I was not a candidate. I wanted her to be my mom. I came out of the dreamlike state still feeling sad that that nice lady could not be my mom and feeling the weight of not having any parents.

Once I got to the baby shower I tried to be of service to the parents-to-be's mothers because it's become second nature to me to want to appeal to other people's parents. I'll take anyone. In fact I guess that's how I got the idea.

I'll take anyone. Of course you have to use some scrutiny, like at first I thought if I wanted someone older than me, like old enough to actually be my mother or someone sort of young and hip. I decided that they had to be at least ten years older than me because my

girlfriend is ten years older than me and so they had to be older than both me and my girlfriend and also I'm really smart and quick to pick up on things and despite this story I'm pretty mature so I wanted someone that was more mature than me. Sixty seemed like a good age. On my way home I started combing the streets. I was at a stoplight on the corner where Gelsons is across the street from Trader Joe's. In the parking lot there was a sundries store, a dry cleaners, a nail shop-- which I tried not to stare too long at or the little heads of the women who worked there would perk up-- like they had a sixth sense for longing, or maybe it was grief they sensed.

Of all the emotions I appreciate grief the most because it is the most authentic. So I looked around at the people mostly young hipsters doing last minute grocery shopping on a Sunday afternoon and I realized that I did not want to have the type of parents, now was it parents I was looking for or just a mom? I think just a mom would be fine, a dad I'm not sure what I would do with. Anyhow I realized I didn't want someone that put off grocery shopping until Sunday. I didn't want someone that had to still work or punch a clock either someone that was free to do their shopping on a Wednesday afternoon. I also wanted a woman that was racially ambiguous like me but in a good way not a Fine Young Cannibals or Mariah Carey sort of way, although at various points in time I have been compared to both and felt it as a compliment. A couple walked past. The guy was wearing a black T-shirt, loose jeans, and a pair of converse and the woman a white and buttercup colored dress, a giant sun hat and sunglasses. She shifted her body to the side so she wouldn't hit me with her hat. The guy was smoking. I used to smoke so I smelled the smoke before I saw the couple and I wondered if she should smoke and I decided that there is probably something inherent in me that causes me to revisit the same injuries so she should smoke, that way if we ever get to really loving each other she will die shortly after and I can experience the same loss and abandonment I had before. Just when I thought I couldn't. I thought that also perhaps she should be wearing a scarf. I don't

know why I thought it but I did and just then a small thin, smoking racially ambiguous (yet I could tell was a black Puerto Rican and something about her told me she was not just a Puerto Rican but a Nuyorican), woman with a coral scarf came up beside me. Perfect Perfect Perfect. It was like when I sent my nephew a small doll of Glinda-the-good-witch from the Wizard of Oz and she came complete with stockings and heels, and a crown and magic wand and my nephew took her held her close nose to nose and whispered "You're perfect Glinda! Perfect."

"Excuse me?"

"Oh.. uh did I say that out loud?"

"Yes, I'm sorry were you talking to me?"

"Well, uhh I was just

"Huh?"

"I was just thinking out loud. Sorry"

My pulse raced I tried to do something distracting crack my back-no that would look too crazy. I reached up and cracked my neck. I think a lot of people must do that. I waited for the light it was taking a long time. Now was my chance.

"Do you have any kids?"

The light changed.

