

I'M SEARCHING FOR THE BABY MY MOM ABANDONED

All families have secrets, but not like this one.

Imagine what it feels like to discover that your mum left her first-born baby at a London railway station.

Cathy, 32, tells her story to writer Angela Carless.

Written by: Angela Carless, UK



I'd just got in when the phone rang. It was Mum. 'I've got something to tell you,' she said tearfully. 'Your dad's got another woman - and she's pregnant by him!'

My heart skipped a beat. 'You must be joking!' I spluttered. 'No, I'm serious,' said Mum miserably. I dropped the phone in shock.

Mum and Dad had been together for over 30 years. He was a little possessive, but they'd always been so happy. There'd been no build up to this, no clues.

I raced over to Mum's house. We both live in London, she wasn't far away. I had to see her face to believe it.

'Oh Cathy!' she wailed as I came through the door. 'He loves someone else, he wants a divorce!' Mum looked so heartbroken, it made me cry too. It was a huge shock. But neither of us reached out to comfort one another. There never were many hugs in our family for me and my two brothers, Al, 36, and Joe, 34.

Mum was not affectionate to any of us. If I was ever upset, she'd just say: 'Pull yourself together, stop this nonsense!'

Dad never showed me affection either. I never felt close to him.

Yet on the outside, we looked like the perfect family. We did fun things together. Holidays and outings to Southend-on-Sea. As we got older, we all went to the pub together. Despite the lack of affection, I felt lucky to have my parents. Not to come from a broken home.

The news of dad's affair in August 1999 was a bombshell. I hated what he'd done and stayed away from him. He's not the type of person you can challenge or confront. I was wary of him. But Mum just kept on loving him.

She hoped he'd come back. She told everyone: 'My door is always open, he's still my husband. I'm not divorcing him.'

But then the other woman had a baby boy. She was about 40, Dad was 64 - ten years older than Mum. She kept harassing my dad to get a divorce and marry her.

Mum kept saying no. Dad got more angry and frustrated. Towards the end of 2001, he sent her a letter. Mum showed it to me and my brother Al. 'Look what your dad's written. He's threatening me now!' she said thrusting the letter at us. I read it first, my heart pounding as the shocking words leapt out from the page.

'I need this divorce,' insisted Dad. 'If you don't give it me, I'm going to the police to tell them that you abandoned the baby!' He alleged Mum had abandoned her own new-born child in 1967 at London's Drayton Park Railway Station.

'If you don't sign the divorce papers, I'm going to the authorities!' he thundered in the hand-written note. The room began to spin. I felt sick as I handed the letter to my brother. 'What does he mean?' 'What baby? What's going on, Mum?' I said, fear bringing me out on a cold sweat.

'I didn't abandon the baby - it was him!' she snapped, snatching the letter back. My brother and I looked at each other in stunned disbelief.

All families have their secrets, but this was one hell of a skeleton to keep in the closet. Our mother had abandoned a baby!

It must be true, or else why didn't she deny that there was a baby? She must have wanted us to know, or why show us the letter?

My brother and I talked about it deep into the night. If there was a baby out there - our brother or sister - we wanted to find it.

I'm a mum myself. I've got three kids, now aged four, 10 and 16. I knew what it was like to give birth and have a tiny, helpless baby. Whenever I'd seen an abandoned child on the news, my heart would go out to them.

What could have driven Mum to do this terrible thing? She had three babies afterwards who she kept. Was she raped? Did she have an affair? And why would Dad have helped her to abandon it?

She and Dad, both originally from Montserrat, were together - though not married - when the baby was born in 1967. Something must have gone seriously wrong.

I pressed Mum for more information. 'Whoever abandoned the baby, just tell me what happened!' I pleaded. 'Why did you leave a baby?'

Mum turned on me. 'Leave me alone. It was a long time ago. Forget it! It was Dad who abandoned the baby, not me!' she raged.

For weeks I kept on at her to tell me the truth. I searched everywhere for clues. Eventually, I uncovered another devastating secret - my dad wasn't my real father!

A friend of Mum's let it drop that she'd seen him in town and he'd complained about Mum not giving him a divorce. 'And Cathy's not even my daughter!' he'd told her.

I thought he was being spiteful, trying to get revenge. But when I asked Mum, she just said: 'Well, he always supported you, put food on the table. That's all that matters.'

'No, it's not, tell me about my real dad!' I yelled, shell-shocked by these new revelations. Again, Mum refused to talk.

I asked round her friends. One of them told me that my real dad had been Mum's landlord back in the 1960s. He was married to a woman who couldn't have children. But when I was born, he left the country. A chill went down my spine. If my hunch about the first baby being born after an affair was correct, then I could have been abandoned too!

I felt as if my life was falling apart. That everything I'd believed to have been true, was a lie. I didn't know who I was any more, my history, my family, my culture - or where my abandoned sibling was. When I confronted my mother, she was furious. 'You've no right digging into my business!' she yelled. 'Your real dad never wanted you!'

She had taken him to court for maintenance, but claimed he returned to his native Grenada. She was very bitter. And he was very wealthy, with a string of houses. But he never financially supported her.

It made me feel that the man I knew as Dad had taken me out of pity. With my real dad out of the way, he wasn't a threat and so he could accept me. Otherwise, I really believe I may have been abandoned too. I hated my mother for keeping these terrible secrets. I was so hurt and confused, I cried about it every day and stopped speaking to her for months.

My husband would hold me: 'Whatever she has done, she is still your mum,' he'd say. But she never rang or wrote to me. She's not one for saying sorry.

I wanted to track down my real dad and eventually found his sister living round the corner from me. She'd seen me walk by and knew who I was. She always hoped I would find her one day.

'Your real dad has done well in life,' she said, showing me photos of him. She gave me his address in Grenada and, in February 2002, I spoke to him for the first time.

I was shaking as I held the receiver. 'I always wanted to know you,' came the voice of an elderly man. 'Your mother wanted me to stay away.'

He welcomed me into his life and when I flew out to meet him in Grenada in December 2003, he gave me the biggest hug. But I never expected his unconditional love and it was hard for me to accept his affection.

Here he was, a wealthy man, with a massive house, a farm and several businesses. But I grew up in a three-bedroom flat on a council estate in Islington.

My life would have been so different if I had been brought up by him. I'd have gone to private school and not the local comp. He would have been able to give me what my mother could not. I was glad to meet him though. Now a widower, he gave me a memorable three weeks in his beautiful home and I did become fond of him. We call each other every week and he has even spoken to Mum on the phone.

She's still mad at me for delving into her secrets though. And I'm still determined to find out more - especially about that abandoned baby. It was important to me to find my real dad and I know it will be even more important to the abandoned child, to find us.

Recently, I've begun to wonder if he or she has the same father as me. Mum had an on-off affair with my real dad over several years. She was renting from him when the baby was born in 1967. I've begged her to tell me the truth, but she begs me to let it be. Yet I don't feel I can. My brother has spent hours trawling through old London newspapers hoping to find a report of a black baby abandoned 37 years ago.

So far, no luck. We'll keep on looking. I spend ages wading through reunion websites on the Internet hoping that our abandoned sibling may be looking for us. But I don't want to go to the police or the social services. Abandoning a baby is a criminal offence. However angry I am with Mum, I don't want to do that to her.

Now 58, she would have been about 20 at the time. I feel that she was bullied into abandoning her child and I know she has suffered. But I haven't done anything wrong. No one can blame me for what happened. I just want to find my lost sibling and I won't rest until I do.

* If you have any information which could help Cathy find her abandoned sibling please email in confidence: foundling.info@btinternet.com

**For information on Abandoned Individuals or more stories like these,
please visit The Keall Foundation.**

www.keallfoundation.com

Also note that Ms. Angela Carless always seeks UK foundlings for future stories.

**Please contact Janet Keall at media@keallfoundation.com or 604-786-8581
to connect with Angela. Serious interest only, please.**