

"I Never Wanted You," My Mother Said.

"I never wanted you," my mother said to me one day as she was brushing my hair.

She murmured this statement matter of factly, out of the blue, as if it were an after-thought. The message was clear: I was the afterthought. Unexpected. Something that could not be prevented.

I must have been three or four at the time. "I never wanted you," she said. "When I found out I was pregnant, I went to the doctor and told him, 'Remove 'it...use a coat hanger, whatever.' But I'm glad I have you. In the end, I'm glad."

There are some things you never forget. No matter how many "buts" you hear later. No matter how many apologies follow, you never forget the words "I never wanted you."

Those words fueled every thought I had about myself throughout my life. There I was: unworthy. A reject. Someone who could be tossed aside for someone more valued, more loveable. Anyone.

It wasn't just Mother. As a child I was repeatedly subjected to family members' cruel rejection. I was never embraced by any of them, physically or emotionally, and I was haunted with the question "Why?" I wasn't an ugly child, but I felt unattractive. No wonder. How attractive can you feel when you are not just ignored, but invisible? I had dark hair and brown-eyes like my parents, but I always saw my hair as mousy brown and wildly untamed. My mother would brush and set it regularly, continually running after me with a comb in her attempts to fix me. I hated that never-ending fixing, which just reaffirmed what my gut was telling me: I just wasn't good enough.

Though I had an endearing smile, it's no wonder I didn't always feel like smiling. I was not a part of them. I was in the way.