

## Attraction

I arranged to meet my birth father in the July of 2003 on a pier overlooking Sydney Harbour. I had already made contact with my birth mother, and although we looked alike, I felt no immediate connection with her, however hoped that in time, a friendship would form. After a few meetings I asked if she knew where my birth father was, and a month later, he and I met.

It was one of those perfect winter days that Sydney proudly boasts. Brilliant blue glowing skies, and I could not have asked for a better day for this meeting. I waited nervously on the pier, watching the ferries drop off and pick up passengers. We had spoken on the phone as much as possible for the month leading up to our meeting, and I felt that my connection with him was going to be something very unique. I had lost my own father 10 years before, and really missed his presence in my life.

When we met, he wrapped his much larger frame around mine for what seemed an eternity. I felt more in that embrace than any words could have conveyed 23 years of loss, grief, and guilt. We continued to see each other as much as we could, and I would also continue to see my birth mother, however she lived an hour out of Sydney and was not as accessible to me. He would go out of his way to see me every lunch time, every weekend, as much as his and my schedule would allow. If we weren't together, life seemed almost unbearable. It is as though every emotion was magnified to the most extreme level it was the most surreal of times.

I started to feel confused a few months after our meeting. I needed to bond with him, and needed him to be as physically close as possible to me and yet the tightest of hugs and the warmest of embraces were not allowing me to be close enough. He felt the same. How do you bond with someone after 23 years? Smell their hair, smell their skin, touch them as much as possible? I would find myself sitting on his knee like a baby. I was trying to squeeze in 23 years of bonding in a comparative instant to make up for those years without him in my life.

We fought the urge to become closer for nearly a year, however one day, our relationship turned a corner, and this is when our rollercoaster ride to hell began! At the time, we both felt incredibly confused, however we were powerless to stop.

We lived these 2 lives for just over a year despite all of the warning signs to stop. I started getting sick, started to lose interest in socialising with my friends in favour of being with him. I would invite him to parties with my boyfriend and I, and in hindsight, it must have looked the most ridiculous sight, however the most important thing was that we were together. As far as we were concerned the world would not understand.

We would meet in hotel rooms in the country side, away from prying eyes and away from people we knew, and the secret and lies. To continue this existence were proving more and more difficult to sustain.

We both started individual counselling at PARC and then decided on combined counselling, and after a year, and my own will to regain what was left of my youth, and

his insistence that we had to live separate lives, I somehow became me again and he reluctantly let me go.

The separation left us both devastated, so much so that we did not communicate for 7 years. Following the birth of each of my 2 children, I felt a great loss, and attempted to contact my birth mother, however she was still not accessible to my emotions, and I realised that I needed him to play some part in my life again.

We have now been in phone contact for over a year, and I only very recently saw him again. I know that with the grounding of a husband, and children, my life now is a very different one to the one I had when I first met him. We don't talk about "that time", perhaps we will one day, however for now we are getting to know each other in the way that we would have liked to 10 years ago.

It was on reading different articles on the topic of Genetic Sexual Attraction (GSA) in the press recently that I felt that I had to convey my story not for any cathartic reason, but more so to give hope to those who may be experiencing these very confusing emotions, and to confirm that there can be a future after GSA you don't have to lose your parent all over again.

Name withheld