



A Mothers Tale!

The Story by Charmaine Mother



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I was born in a family home in the UK, one of three triplets, one had died. My father had his own shoe business in the family home. My parents had four children. With one sister three years older and a brother four years older, my twin and I were the youngest of all.

In 1939, the Second World War broke out. My family was evacuated, everyone, all around. By 1939, we were all evacuated in three different homes. My parents used to come and visit us. They would carry a torch as there were no street lights in those days, nighttime used to be pitch dark! I was very scared of the dark!

In the home that we were staying after evacuation, the father of the house would go out with a rifle where the bombs were overhead. Our foster parents were very strict. We had strict rules when we were eating, none of us was allowed to take our eyes off our plates; we had to eat every crumb, as you know the food was on ration.

My father was self-employed but, during the war, he had to work for an employer which did not really suit him well. On the other hand, my mother had to work in a factory where she had to make bullets. When the war was over, we went back to our family home.

The house-shop front of my father's shoe repair business had been bombed. After the war my father was never the same, he suffered mentally which is why my mother had to go to work to support us all.

My twin and I used to go to school, just a walking distance, whereas my brother and sister went on a bicycle to school. When I was 15 years of age I left school, I was a Sales Clerk in a Department Store.

When 20, my twin sister and her Husband, an engineer migrated to the USA. They planned on staying there for 2 years. Within a year after they migrated, I decided to join them there too. I was on the cruise ship, the Queen Elizabeth. I was on the ship for 5 days and 5 nights.

It was a lovely cruise, lovely food - 3 meals a day, and there was entertainment every night. We docked in New York City and we lived in Yonkers for about a year. Then my sister and her husband decided to return to the UK. I wanted to stay in the USA as I really loved how modern and up to date the country was, we had all the modern conveniences.

I was 21 and jobs were easy to get, I used to just knock on doors. I got a job as a cashier and a hostess at a 5-star hotel. I would serve coffee. At Cinderella, it was interesting; you would meet all kinds of people. "Step on the Scales, oh you have not lost any weight. Well, go to the toilet, oh you've lost a kilo!" and they would smile. And then we would put them on massage tables like buttons. The Cinderella job was in Queens New York.

Then, I left Cinderella and got a bookkeeping job; never done bookkeeping in my life. I thought that was the only way to learn but after a while I found it to be a bit boring - just sitting and sitting and the money was not that good. Forty-hour a week, forty dollars a week.

So from Queens, I would get on the Subway and go to Manhattan to do waitressing jobs. I had some very good jobs and they paid well. I would just knock on the doors, as I would say when you are young the jobs were dime a dozen, and the tips were outstanding. I met many people and movie stars.

Then, in Manhattan I went to a dance, that's where I met my husband, Charles. We married a few years later, I was very immature back then. We got married in New Jersey. His parents were living in Fort Worth Texas; they decided to meet us in New Jersey. Of course, they talked us into living in Fort Worth Texas so we stayed with them for a while; they were good people at the time.

Charles's dad was a lieutenant in the Army, at that time he was in Vietnam. Charles, while we were married, would move from one state to another - north, south, east, west, you name it. Moving so much he never kept a job. He was in sales and had the gift of the gab; in his shiny shoes and shiny suit.

We had two children, Susan and Keith. I got so tired of moving constantly. We never had any money. The only way we would get money was when Charles would call his mother and ask her to send us money. I told his mother that she should not send him money, he will never keep a job.

One day he said “Come on, we will move again. If you don’t come, I will take the children with me”. He was driving the Ute, I had no license. I had no money as I was financially depending on him as I had two young children. Then his mother came to visit us. They knew I was not happy in the marriage as I was tired of moving all the time. I decided to file for a divorce and when the papers were served, they stopped talking to me. They knew I would get custody of the children. So, Charles and his mother decided to run off with my children. It took me 18 months to find them.

In those 18 months, I hired different lawyers, one in New York, one in Fort Worth Texas, and then finally one in Alabama. I was very lucky at that time as I worked as a waitress and that paid very good money. It paid for all the detectives and lawyers from one state to the next. After 18 months, out of the blue, I decided to call Charles’s grandparents to find out where my two children were. The grandmother told me to tell no one and she gave me the box number of Alabama. So, I got a flight to Alabama. When I got to the airport I had no transport. I wanted to make some enquires, I needed a lawyer, I saw a man in a white collar and I approached him. I said, “Do you know of any lawyers around here?” He said “Yes, just around the corner of the airport”, and I thanked him.

The following day, I had all my papers and made an appointment with the lawyer. The first thing he said was “How much money do you have?” I said ‘How much money do you need?’ He said “Well, five hundred dollars upfront” And I said, “Well, they may not be there.” Anyway, the lawyer took me on and I stayed in a motel just around the corner of the airport. When I was at the motel, there were several knocks on the door, I was too scared to go to the door and it was obvious that my husband knew I did not know how to drive, so they knew where I was staying.

The next morning, I told my lawyer about the knocks on the door. My lawyer and his wife then decided to give me accommodation in their home, a lovely home; I really appreciated that. The following day we went to the Church, it was so nice, I felt so good. I had no money left. In the meantime my lawyer hired a deputy sheriff, he picked me up and we drove to the house in Alabama.

When we approached the house I saw my dog and said to the deputy, "There's my dog, the children are inside". The same time the deputy showed up and he got scared. He got into the car and he drove off and I got scared and nervous. I said if 'You run off it gives them time to run off' so the deputy sheriff called another deputy, so there were two cars. We drove up to the house again, the deputy told me to keep my head down in the back seat, I did. Five minutes later Charles and his mother and the two children came out from the front door, I sat in the car; the deputy brought over the two children, Susan and Keith, they were so happy to see me.

From then on we were going through a custody battle. None of us had custody of the children. So my lawyer told me the children had to go into a detention home until the court case came up, the court case was in Alabama. The Judge decided to postpone the court case. I was running out of money. The deputy said, "Why don't you and the two kids jump on the bus and just disappear?" So I decided to do that, I knew it was not the right thing to do.

We spent forty hours on the bus from Alabama to New York City. In New York City it was winter time, it was freezing cold, and we walked the New York City Streets. I was carrying Keith and Susan was at my side. And then I saw the Y.M.C.A, so I walked in there, and told them my circumstances. I said, "No way am I going back to Alabama." So the receptionist called my lawyer. He said, "Help her, she needs help." The receptionist got a passport for me and my children.

I was not ready to go to the UK. I had memories of the pre-war, and growing up when life was tough! So I went to Dallas where I could guarantee work. I got my old job back in Dallas where I could work lunches. It was good because I had to get babysitting for the children for two to three hours and on weekends I would work at the Steak House.

My older sister decided to come and visit me in Dallas, she was living in Australia. I was working at the club making good money and she supervised the two children. She could only stay for a short while so she decided to take my children for a visit to the UK and stay with my other twin sister in the UK. Then it was time for my older sister to return to Australia.

A few months later, my sister looking after my children in the UK, said it was about time that I returned to the UK. I arrived in England, it was wonderful to see my children again and they were doing well. I got a job straight away. The children were going to school.

A few years later my sister in Australia said: "Why don't you and the two children come to Australia?"

The children and I arrived in Bulimba, Australia in 1977. I stayed with my sister and her husband for a while then got my own place, a unit. I also got a job as a cook, at a nursing home, I was the head cook.