

"Worthy"

By Courtney Cook

I grew up with the nickname, "ugly" which was bestowed upon me by the parent that raised me. I found out in my teens that it was used because I was in fact quite pretty, but by the time this was disclosed, the damage had been done. I mean, you must be one truly ugly motherfucker for your parent to nickname you such. So, I moved around in the world believing that not only was I tragically unattractive, but I also felt unloved and unworthy. One parent wanted absolutely nothing to do with me and the other never called me smart, beautiful, or any other positive words that parents heap on their children on a regular basis.

Once I was old enough for hormones to rear their head, I did what anyone in my predicament would do -- I went searching for that elusive thing called love that everyone talked about. I became boy crazy. If any guy said something nice to me, like, "hi" or "your friend's cute-hook me up" I swooned and did everything in my power to make him believe I was exactly what he wanted and needed in his life. This usually didn't work. So, I took it a step further and began to have sex hoping against hope that if I did this ultimate act, that he (any he) would have no choice to love me. I suffered many broken hearts.

I'm not sure if you're aware of this, but one of the consequences of sex is *gasp* pregnancy. That's in fact what happened to me. I literally sat up in bed one December morning and said to myself, "Oh my God, I'm pregnant". I just somehow knew. I was a senior in high school and terrified out of my mind. I called the father and he ...well let me put it this way. The term "ghosting" was created just for me. Not only did he change his phone number and pager number; this dude MOVED! Yeah, that lonely feeling I'd always felt was just multiplied by a trillion.

So...I hid it. I hid my pregnancy from everyone except a very close friend. I went to doctor's appointments alone. I went to ultrasounds and heard a heartbeat all alone. I had morning, afternoon, and evening sickness everyday throughout the entire pregnancy-alone. At about 6.5 months, I couldn't hide my belly anymore, so I told my parent. They immediately scheduled an appointment for an abortion and took me into a clinic to begin the process, even though I was entirely too far along (which is another reason I chose to hide the pregnancy).

On a bright and sunny August morning, I realized that the feeling of needing to go to the bathroom was in fact, my being in labor. A friend drove me to the hospital where I arrived at 12 noon. My son was born at 12:25pm. It happened so quickly that there was no time for drugs of

any kind. The doc actually broke my water on the bed! Two days later, I left the hospital in one direction and my son was carried out in the other. You see, I just knew I'd be worthless as a mother. I mean, my parent didn't like me, boys used me, and the baby's father was absent. How was I, someone with the ink on my high school diploma still wet, going to be a good parent?

So, I decided that adoption would be the best thing for my son. During my pregnancy, I also secretly went to an adoption agency. And I found an amazing couple to be the parents for my child. You see---they were worthy. They were smart and fun and gorgeous, and they loved each other. That's the type of household my child deserved.

My son is now 19 years old and while I know that adoption is one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life, there's also a piece of me that wonders. Had I just realized back then what I know now--then maybe things could have been different. I now know just how worthy I am, how worthy I have ALWAYS been. And just maybe that knowledge could have been enough all those years ago.

Thank you.