

children have special needs makes it a useful resource.

In fact, this book includes too much information. At nearly five hundred pages, it may be daunting for a woman with little spare time. Each chapter, however, is brief and can be read quickly—ideal for the mother of a special needs child who is practiced in the “grazing” style of reading. A future edition could benefit from an improved layout that would lend itself more readily to scanning.

*More Than a Mom* is a well-researched, in-depth handbook for any mother facing the particular challenges and demands of raising a child with special needs.

## **Adoption and Loss: The Hidden Grief**

Evelyn Burns Robinson.

Christies Beach, South Australia: Clova Publications, 2000.

### **Reviewed by Ruth Nemzoff**

The first part of *Adoption and Loss: The Hidden Grief* reads like a novel and should be required reading for anyone thinking of relinquishing a child through adoption, adoptive parents, and legislators. Robinson’s account of her impregnation by what is now known as date rape, her subsequent pregnancy, relinquishment of her child, and lifelong agony should convince readers that adoption is always a profoundly difficult and life-altering decision.

The author’s experience is typical of so many young women who were told they “would never think about ... [the] baby again.” Robinson did not have any warm feelings for the man who impregnated her, she did not want to have a child, and yet she suffered enormously from the trauma of birthing and giving up her child. Her story firmly rebuts the argument that the birth mother will forget her baby.

The second part of the book I find troubling. Robinson argues convincingly that both the adopted child and birth mother have a right to know of each other’s identity. I agree that it is a travesty of justice and human rights to obliterate birth certificates and pretend that birth parents never existed. Every child deserves the right to know his or her origins. However, Robinson mitigates the validity and power of her arguments by suggesting her own experience is characteristic of most adoptive situations. For example, she states that “some adopters allow themselves to think that the children they were adopting were unloved and unwanted and that they were doing not only the children but also society a favour by providing them with a home and a family . . . in most cases, we know from biological mothers, and to some extent fathers, that the

children were adopted because they were very much loved” (186). While this may be true in many cases, it is not true in all cases.

Robinson claims “adopted people cannot grow and develop to their full potential without a connection with their history and heritage.” In fact, many children do grow up not knowing their histories. And, while they may long to know of their pasts, they are able to succeed in the world.

Robinson continues to simplify the complexity of adoption: “while birth is traditionally considered an occasion to celebrate, adoption is *never* a reason for celebration. Every adoption is a tragedy because it means that there has been a family breakdown” (214). Clearly, adoption is much more complicated than Robinson implies. A tragedy for the birth mother can mean great joy for the adoptive parents, and a chance for adequate food, education, and socialization for the child. Adoption triangles are intricate and to describe adoption as tragic is only to describe one part of the experience.

Robinson argues that “adoption is ethically and morally indefensible”; she envisages a society that is supportive of single mothers, and supportive enough of troubled families so they can nurture and educate their children—a society in which adoption is unnecessary. Her argument is based on the false assumption that only biological mothers can adequately mother their children. In fact, her assumption that biological mothers are always preferable to non-biological mothers is not supported by current statistics.

Despite these criticisms, *Adoption and Loss: The Hidden Grief* makes a compelling case for open and honest adoption and the need to change the laws and social customs governing adoption. Robinson may tell but one side of the adoption story, but it is an important story nonetheless.

## **Adoption and Recovery: Solving the Mystery of Reunion**

Evelyn Burns Robinson.

Christies Beach, South Australia: Clova Publications, 2006.

### **Reviewed by Sarah J. Duncan**

*Adoption and Recovery: Solving the Mystery of Reunion* is a companion volume to Evelyn Burns Robinson’s first book, *Adoption and Loss: The Hidden Grief*. The author, trained as a social worker, combines her clinical expertise in grief counseling with her personal story as a mother who gave up her child for adoption more than twenty years ago.

The book is divided into three sections: Personal Recovery, Interpersonal Recovery, and Questions. Robinson conceptually connects the established theory and literature of grief and loss to the feelings experienced at the time of adop-