



# Am I Lost

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Published on Stories Space on 03 Mar 2014

Sweetheart, we seem to have a problem, you don't exist.

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Where does one start to look? Since you're not really sure exactly what you're looking for, how do you distinguish exactly who you are now. I remember being called a brat during my growing up years and into my pre-teens. I remember being called names that I don't even like to think, much less repeat. I was married when I was 15. Some people referred to me as a young person, others referred to me as a child. Then there were those that said I acted like an adult. I'm not sure what I thought I was, all I knew was that I was running away from a place my folks called home, away from two alcoholics that called me their child, and that was when they were in a good mood. I woke up one night and realized this stepfather that insisted I call him dad was trying to turn me into a woman, I have never been so terrified in my life. So I ran, I didn't feel like an adult, but then I didn't feel like a child either. I know I felt very alone, unloved, unwanted and I was sure at this point that I was in major trouble because I was a runaway. In my more sane moments I felt like a fugitive. Sometimes I just felt free. It was all

right, but I could never be called by my name. I got a job in a bar and passed myself off as an adult. It was very hard work, but I knew no one was going to bother me. Everyone seemed to accept me. They really didn't care who I was as long as I did what they told me to do. I was used to that as I had been taking orders for as long as I can remember. I decided one day that I needed some kind of identification. So I went to the Bureau of Vital Statistics. I asked if I could get a copy of my birth certificate. Of course you can honey, it will cost you \$3.00, just fill out this form. I was trying very hard to read all the information and be sure that I put the correct answers in all the right places. I finished and was very proud of myself. I thought now I was somebody. I'll have a birth certificate and that will prove that I'm a real person. The nice lady came back smiling. She said, "Sweetheart, we seem to have a problem." I asked her what was wrong. She said, "You don't exist." "How can it be since I'm sitting here in front of you?" "The only answer to that is most likely you made a mistake in putting down who your parents are, or what state you were born in." I know I had a dumbfounded look on my face, I was trying so hard not to cry. After all, I'm an adult, right? I apologized to the lady. I felt so stupid, but I accidentally put my stepfather's name down. I knew or thought I knew that my mother had only been married three times. I knew for a fact that it wasn't the last husband and I had just ruled out number two. I asked if I could have a new form. "Of course, you can, this happens all the time," she said as she gave a little laugh. I wasn't laughing but I was being very brave, smiled up at her and told her I was really sorry I was so much trouble. "No trouble at all little lady, let's just fill out this new form." I was very happy to find out that I had a name and a birth father of record. The world would now think of me as a real person. Maybe one day I would ask my mother who my father really is. Not that it matters, I am a real adult with a legal name and the world is good. As the days and months flew by I couldn't help but wonder who I really was. It wasn't long though that I forgot about that part of my life, and I became another person. Quite by accident I met this very nice man, he came into the bar where I worked. He was very sweet and treated me very kindly and because I worked in a bar, he thought I was 21. We knew each other three months, and one night he announced that he thought we should get married. After I could stop laughing, he asked me what was so funny. I had to tell him that I was not old enough to marry. Not only that, he was the only person I had ever dated, if milkshakes and a ride to my apartment counted as dates. And I wasn't sure I wanted to get married. I was quite sure there was more to the world than running away, acting like an adult, working 8 hours a day, going for rides with a man that acted like he was scared of me. I would have to give this some thought. Life has a way with circumstances that makes you look at things a lot differently. First of all, I found out from a friend that the law was looking for me. I knew it was only a matter of time before they picked me up and took me to child services. When that time came, it seemed like I was an old friend, I had been in their system since I was six weeks old and they all seemed to know me. The lady was very kind. She said that the first time she held me she knew that the day would come that she would have to deal with me as a juvenile. It broke her heart to see that the day was upon us, she told me. Several times when she came across my records, she would remember me and pray she had been wrong so many years ago, but alas... My file was very large so I made the statement that this was the first time I had ever been in trouble, and no one had ever told me about my childhood. She said it was

just as well, that she was going to help me. She asked me if I knew anyone that would be responsible for me and I told her yes. "Good," she replied, "You talk with them and tell them that the state will pay them to keep you until you're 18 and then you come back and see me and we will square it away." I left and went straight to work. After work, my friend showed up and wanted to know if I wanted to go out. "Yes, I would love to, as I need to talk to you." "So what is so important, have you decided to marry me after all?" "Can I ask you something? Just what are you expecting of me as a wife?" "The only thing I want you to promise me is that you will never leave." I thought I was in love even though I was very young and we had only known each other a very short time, but somehow I just knew this was the right thing to do. I knew this man's promise to always take care of me and never mistreat me came straight from his heart, so I said okay. What does one truly expect out of life, a fairy tale? I started out as an abused child, then I felt I was a real person because I had a birth certificate. Then I was a married woman, a wife, and not even 10 months later, a mother. Does that answer my question of who I am? Somehow I don't think so, I think I'm searching for the identity of the person that uses my name. Does she really exist? Take away the child, the wife, the mother, what do you have left? Did I find out the meaning of life? Did I truly do what I was supposed to do with my life? I have had a good life, I have not wanted for anything except to know who the person is that lives inside me. Maybe the answer is all of the above, or none of the above. I truly hope that I find out before I go home to meet my maker.