

## Chapter one- Milly

If someone were to ask me to define the word family I wouldn't know what to say. Other kids might say "My mom and dad." Or "The people I share blood with" But for me it's always been more complicated than that. I was adopted as a newborn and raised by the greatest parents anyone could ask for. I never lost contact with my birth mother, Grace. Ever since I was little we would meet up maybe once or twice a year, doing things like playing at the park, or visiting the zoo together. 3 years after I was adopted my parents adopted my younger brother Cruz Who was 2 years old at the time. I never knew my biological father, Grace told me he signed away his rights to me before I was even born. I would often dream of him showing up, telling me how sorry he was offering me a reason as to why he didn't want me, but he never did, and I gave up on that dream a while ago. Grace's family is even more complicated than mine, she was also adopted, and has 2 biological siblings, Maya and Joaquin, who each had their own unique families and stories. I had met them each a few times, they were nice, and my parents always liked to point out how similar I looked like them, and acted like them. They weren't wrong, I had inherited Joaquin's sharp jaw, and thin lips, and Maya's small nose and her ability to talk for hours, and I definitely had Grace's long wavy brown hair. I liked all these things about myself because I knew where they came from. That's why I hated my tall lanky figure and sky blue eyes, I didn't know how I got them, was it from my Father who I never met? Or an Aunt or Uncle who didn't know I existed. Somewhere in the world was there a mini me? A younger sibling whose father decided they were worth staying for. These were the questions that kept me up at night, the questions that would probably never be answered.

When I was 16 years old Grace had a baby. It was a Girl and Grace named her Lissa, after her biological mother, my biological Grandmother. Part of me always knew this day would come. But when my Mom came up to my room to tell me I almost felt betrayed. How come she wanted this baby and not me, what had I done wrong, why did Grace just leave me behind and create her own little family. But as I thought about it more I began to realize that it wasn't about me, Grace hasn't given me up because she didn't love me. She did it because she did love me. She loved me so much that she wanted to give me an amazing life, and she succeeded, because growing up not a day went by where I didn't have everything I could've ever wanted to make me happy. I understood Grace which is why it made it ten times harder to understand what my biological father's reason was.

When Grace got home from the Hospital My mom and I went to visit her and baby Lissa. When my mom left the room to set the table for lunch I sprang the question I had been wanting to ask forever. "Grace" I said quietly, "My um my father do you have, I mean could you give me his name?" I could barely get the words out.

"Milly, have you told your parents about this? I sighed, I knew she would ask this.

"I just thought you would understand, you know I love my Dad. I don't want to hurt him or my mom. But I want to know where I came from."

"Believe me Milly, I get it. His name is Maxwell Smith. I cannot give you anymore, I mean I don't know anymore. The last time we talked was junior year. And legally he signed away his rights to you." I nodded. Something inside me felt hopeful though. I tried to suppress it, but this news, it just felt exciting. Like I would finally be able to know the part of me that didn't come from Grace.

That night when I got home I opened my computer and began the search. Maxwell Smith was definitely not the most unique name so I prepared myself for this to take awhile. By 2 am I

was about ready to give up. I hadn't found anything that would help. And honestly I didn't know what I was looking for. I'd never seen a picture, I didn't know where he lived, what his job was, if he was married, or whether or not I had any biological siblings. I closed my computer feeling defeated, thinking I would probably never find him. The next morning I woke up with a text from Grace. "His Father was a lawyer, he won Homecoming king the night you were born, and his wife's name is Mackenzie." I spent that entire day in my room, going through endless pages of the internet looking for a Maxwell and Mackenzie Smith. At around 3pm I finally hit gold. A newspaper article published last year about the Alumni of Grace and Max's highschool. On the second page was a picture of a tall smiling man. He had my eyes, well technically I had his eyes. He was standing next to a shorter woman with wavy blonde hair and warmish smile. She was very obviously pregnant, and definitely was looking to show it off by wearing a long flowy blue maternity gown, tight around her stomach. The caption of the picture read, "Maxwell and Mackenzie Smith, Homecoming King and Queen in their Junior year, and are now expecting their first child together." I now knew more about My biological father than I ever thought I would. And I had another younger sibling. I had thought that by finding him, seeing a picture knowing where he was would help me move on, but after seeing that I had to find him, I had to know more.

## Chapter 2- Milly

My parents hadn't been ecstatic when I told them I had basically stalked my biological father.

"Amelia, doesn't it seem like this man doesn't want to be found by you." My dad said in that stern voice of his that usually calmed me down, but this time it made me angry.

"I deserve to know him. And yeah, I know, he doesn't seem like he wants to know me but I share his blood." I exclaimed, "Doesn't that mean something?" My parents looked surprised. "Milly, just because someone is blood doesn't make them family. But yes, if you really do want to meet him we'll still support you, and we will 100% still love you."

Two weeks had passed since I told my parents that I wanted to meet Max. My parents had contacted the adoption agency that had processed my adoption, and got Max's contact information. My Mom had called him and he had agreed to meet me, on the condition that I wouldn't be "Expecting a second father" Those were the exact words he had said to my Mom over the phone. We had agreed to meet at a park 1 hour away from our house, but 15 minutes from his. He was bringing his wife Mackenzie, and two sons, my younger brothers.

The entire drive there I felt like I was going to throw up. I didn't know what to expect. Would he like me? Would I like him? So much was up in the air right now. I liked things better when I knew what to expect, but this, I had no idea what I was walking into.

It was a pretty nice day. The sky was that beautiful blue color, so bright it was almost blinding, it was cold and crisp but the sun still shined, and there was practically no wind. The park was mostly just a big flat grassy field with the occasional big tree sprouting up from the ground and providing a nice patch of shade. Near the parking lot was a mulch pit, full of red playground equipment. Next to the playground a woman sat on a red picnic blanket with her legs outstretched, she cradled a bundled up baby in her arms and watched with a smile as a tall man pushed a laughing little boy on the swingset. I almost wanted to turn and run, they all looked so perfect and content, their little family was happy, and I didn't want to disturb that. But

then the women turned to me and her smile shrunk, for just a moment, then it doubled. "Oh my gosh!!" She exclaimed.

"You must be Amelia! I'm Mackenzie, but please just call me Kenzie. It's so nice to meet you! Please take a seat." I looked back at my mom and she slightly nodded.

"I'll be sitting about 15 minutes away, there's a great local bookstore nearby that I wanted to check out." My mouth felt dry and I could barely choke out the words "Goodbye" as my mom walked away. Once she had made it to the parking lot I sat down on the edge of the picnic blanket.

"You must have so many questions!" Kenzie said lightly and with a small laugh. As if the fact that her husband abandoned me as a baby was some little joke.

"Well we'll start with the basics I guess. I'm Kenzie as you know! This is Alexander" she gestured to the sleeping baby in her arms "And over there with Max is Joshua. We call them Joshie and Andy though. Joshie is 2, and Andy is just 2 months old!!" I smiled politely, not knowing what to say. Kenzie seemed to be doing most of the talking anyway. "So, tell me about you!"

"Oh uh alright. Well I'm 16, I'm a junior. I play basketball and lacrosse for my school teams, which is really great and yeah that's basically it." I laughed to try to lighten the mood. Kenzie smiled and began a long speech about how being a student athlete is so beneficial and how it would definitely be a great thing when I began to look at college. She trailed off and I looked up. Max stood above us holding Joshie in his arms. He stared at me opening and closing his mouth until he found the words he was looking for. "Wow" he sighed "You look just like Grace."