Kaomi Lee:

(singing)

Kaomi Lee:

Welcome to season five of adapted podcast, and it all starts now.

Kaomi Lee:

(singing)

Kaomi Lee:

Welcome to another season of adopted podcast. I'm your host, Kaomi Lee. It's a podcast that focuses primarily on Korean adoptees, and it is a podcast that is 100% run by me, a Korean adoptee. There's no outside help from non adopted people. It's entirely my own project. And I do so with the support of patron supporters. And I appreciate you all very much. I also want to give a shout out to our season five theme music. It's by Jae Jan, J-A-E J-A-N. He's a Korean American singer songwriter. You can find him on Spotify and other great places for his music, and his website is JJ music.com.

Kaomi Lee:

Apologies for the late start. I had a bit of travel this summer. One was, I just got back from the 25th anniversary of Also Known As in New York, the longest continuous international adoptee run organization primarily started focused on Korean adoptees, and it has since expanded to international adoptees from all countries. It was just such a wonderful weekend of community and friendship, and I really cherish these meetups for just being really life giving to me and a way to recharge.

Kaomi Lee:

And if you're in the tri-state area, I do recommend looking up Also Known As NYC as a great resource for you. And also of note this summer, I went to Denmark. Some of you may know I was able to meet with my biological half sister. In this episode, I dedicated to a discussion between the two of us where we talk after meeting in Europe this summer. And we've had a little time to decompress and process a bit about what it meant to meet each other and our feelings and fears. I wanted to start off this season with this conversation because I feel like it's a conversation that you might not normally get to hear so often between siblings who separated because of adoption may not have a chance to connect and know each other and begin to put some of the puzzle pieces together for our origin stories.

Kaomi Lee:

We don't have all the answers, but we are on our way to finding more about ourselves than each other. I want to give a shout out to some recent patron supporters, Alicia Mady, Nicole Dopkins, and Juno Park. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart for helping to support the podcast and all of our patron supporters for helping make it possible to pay the bills and keep this podcast going. Now on to the show.

Kaomi Lee:

(singing)

Lisa Beck:

My name is Lisa Beck. I'm 41 years old. I'm living in a little town called [inaudible 00:03:49] near Copenhagen in Denmark. [inaudible 00:03:55].

Kaomi Lee:

Okay. Nice to see you, Lisa.

Lisa Beck:

You too. Two weeks ago.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah, we met two weeks ago. Actually it seems longer now, doesn't it?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah it does.

Kaomi Lee:

Like maybe a month ago.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

So, for those that don't know, Lisa Beck is my half sister, and we met through DNA. Do you want to go ahead and just share with people why you decided to put your results in or to test for DNA?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. It was for fun, I think. It was like my brother got a DNA test in birthday gifts, and we talked about it, and I thought, I will do the same so I could know more about my origin. So I did. I used My Heritage, and I think maybe it took about five weeks to get the results. It was kind of are they in my [inaudible 00:05:30]? I think one day in March and I was just getting up, then I check my email, and I could see I got the result. And I was flipping through the webpage and looking at my origins. And then I saw, oh, DNA matches. I just have to check. And then you were there as a half sister, aunt, or niece, nephew, and things like that. Now I still thought can this be true.

Lisa Beck:

So I read it a couple of times and then I decided to email through Hy Heritage, but you didn't answer. I didn't thought that I'm seven hours between us. And this was in the morning my time, so I couldn't understand you didn't answer. I was just eager to know if she really was my half sister. Then a couple of hours later I thought I find you on Facebook. And I think I wrote something about is this really true? Are you my half sister?

Kaomi Lee:

Oh, so you didn't think about the time difference?

Lisa Beck:

No, I didn't. I was just ... That's okay.

Kaomi Lee:

Also Lisa, feel free to, if you want to ask me any questions too.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. I think maybe we should hear something about what you felt when you read my email.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. So I took the DNA test 23andme about I would say six years ago. And it was really exciting because I had heard about adoptees being able to find relatives, cousins, maybe even distant cousins. It was kind of a novelty. And not knowing anybody that I am biologically related to, it was exciting for me to try it. I was also interested to know about my ancestry breakdown if there was one. So I took it and I had just distant relatives, maybe like third, fourth, fifth cousin. Was able to find out I was mostly Korean and 23andme has adjusted its breakdown. Originally it said I was something like 60% Korean and 20% Japanese, and the rest was sort of ambiguously East Asian. And now when I log in it says like 99% Korean. So the it's changed over time.

Kaomi Lee:

But anyway, and I think maybe it was like a year or two later when I noticed there was a second cousin that popped up. And that was really exciting because that was really close. I hadn't heard of a lot of other adoptees saying they had matched with a second cousin, so that felt like something different. Same kind of thing as you, I messaged her on 23andme, and there was no response. And I waited even maybe like a couple weeks, and there was still nothing. And I was really disappointed because, wow, you got this match, but then they didn't write back. So then I also did what you did, and I went on Facebook and I tried searching for her, and I found her. And then I also found her husband because he also popped up. So I messaged ... Her name's Kristen, I messaged Kristen, and she lives in Chicago and I'm in Minnesota, which is not that far away, about a six hour drive. And there wasn't much I could see on her profile, but I messaged her there and also she didn't respond.

Kaomi Lee:

I think I was really disappointed about it. I was a bit sad about it. And I remember I was working as a radio reporter at the time so I did a story about Korean adoptees using DNA to find relatives. So I even talk about this whole thing about my experience of taking the test and this new hope that DNA can be used as a tool to locate relatives in a way that wasn't accessible to us before. So sort of in a desperation attempt, I messaged her husband. And I know on Facebook if you're not connected to them that these messages go into like this outer like email box or outer messenger box, so they might not necessarily see them.

Kaomi Lee:

Her husband saw my message and then he immediately told his wife, Kristen. And the fact is she hadn't seen any of the messages. That was such a relief that she wasn't just ignoring me, but she just hadn't seen ... And she's not on Facebook much either. It just all made sense. So it was such a relief actually. And so we were excited to find each other, and she flew up. It was right about the time I think before I moved to Korea in 2016. So she flew up from Chicago for a day and we met. Ironically, she had also been adopted to Minnesota and grew up not far from me where I am now. So it was fun. It was just nice to meet, and I don't think we look much alike actually, but it was just nice to know that this was somebody in my extended family in Korea.

Kaomi Lee:

So fast forward to this year, yeah when I got that message from you, so I had just woken up, and I got the message and of course I was shocked because you don't get that kind of message every day. I don't know, I think I was skeptical at first. I woke up and I thought, "Oh, okay. Maybe she's made a mistake or she's reading it wrong, or maybe we're not as close," because I think sometimes people get confused with, so the DNA is measured in centimorgans so like cm, and sometimes like the numbers get confusing and people think a number means a lot more than it does. I was just fully thinking that you had made a mistake and I was going to have to explain.

Kaomi Lee:

So I logged in, and in fact because you tested in my heritage it actually had taken my 23andme results, and I had shared it in a couple different databases because they're not all linked. So even like your connections in 23andme, if you only test in 23andme, you are not going to have access to potential matches in other databases because it's all kind of siloed. I had uploaded my DNA to a couple sites, and then I basically forgot about it. I didn't really ... It's not like I forgot about it, but I wasn't really checking those other companies. So My Heritage I was logging in trying to remember, because I think I must have created an account at one point, but just to remember what the password was and what was my username, I couldn't remember. But I got it to work, and then I looked at it and yeah, it said the same thing, half sister or aunt, niece. But then I looked at the centimorgans, and that is what blew me away was I think it's like 1600.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Kristen, my second or third cousin that I had matched with earlier, I think we match at 150 centimorgans.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

So I looked at yours and it was like 1,600. That was really shocking to me. That was like, "Oh wow."

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

And then I started looking at you kind of more, your face, and then I could see some similarities. And I think the thing that was just really unexpected for me is doing these DNA searches, I guess I knew there was a potential obviously to match with cousins and other extended relatives, but I was thinking more in The States. And then like 23andme, I think primarily it's based in the US, so a lot of Americans are in it. And then just also looking for whether perhaps like Korean diaspora who are in North America maybe. I'm just always kind of focused on Korea and like if we can find matches in Korea or Korean Americans whose family had moved from Korea. That's what I was really focused on. I wasn't really thinking like, "Oh, I could find a family member in Europe."

Lisa Beck:

No.

Kaomi Lee:

I wasn't at all like thinking about Europe, but I guess that's a good point that you can't rule out anything. And especially that you're another adoptee that makes sense that we can be as international adoptees, we were sent to different countries. And so then that kind of sunk in that okay, this is ... And then I think we started messaging and you said that you had checked with My Heritage and they said it's possible. This is a possible half sister. And I was so excited to say, "Oh, I found my half sister."

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

But then also I think afterwards I thought, "Okay, wait a minute. Maybe we're getting too excited." Of course I wanted you to be a sister, but there's a potential that I still could be your aunt or there was some kind of thing that way because I'm nine years older.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

But yeah. And I think you're beautiful, thin, and younger, so I think like my initial reaction was, oh, okay, she's a younger, more attractive version. So I was like, "Of course I'm going to be the old one." But no, that's just kind of joking, but I did kind of have that thought like, "Okay." But just that you're so ... Yeah, that, you're so beautiful. Initially you sort of just like stare at the other person and sort of their face. And I could see ... I know we've talked about this, but I could see some things that looked familiar like from my face.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. Me too. I had oh your nose, maybe some your mouth.

Kaomi Lee:

Well, I think especially like the nose. You have the same kind of ... I think yours is a little smaller than mine, but that kind of, I don't know, button nose.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. So I saw that immediately, and I was like, "Okay. That's interesting."

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Then we started messaging. How did you ... It's kind of interesting to talk about it now since it's been a couple weeks since we've actually met in person. So what did you think after our first zoom call?

Lisa Beck:

I was happy and I was confused really how do I get around this? How was your feeling and my feelings and how do we go around this to just certainly have a half sister? How do I do that? How do I do that? Because suddenly ... Then I message you maybe too much because I didn't know, and I was just, "Oh, I need to know, I need to know her better." And then it got to that stage that I got ... It took a lot of my time and my thinking because I was confused really.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah.

Lisa Beck:

So I think I needed some boundaries, and you were good to tell me, "Oh, it's a bit much to [inaudible 00:19:41].

Kaomi Lee:

I did. Yeah, that's true. I did.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. And it was really good for me because then I could relax a bit more in whole this situation. And because you have been in the game a longer time than I have been, this was just for fun for me. I needed to rethink a bit about my situation, my history. So it blew up all my adoption history.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. How did you feel about being adopted up until that point?

Lisa Beck:

I was fine with it. I haven't experienced racism a lot. I think maybe in my teens I had difficulties to find out who was I, but I think maybe it's quite normal for teens to figure out.

Kaomi Lee:

But at the same time, isn't it true that in Copenhagen people would speak English to you at first. They would assume you're not Danish.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah, but it's just in my adult years they can approach me with English, but not when I was young and in my childhood. I think maybe it was when I'm going into Copenhagen where there's a lot of tourists, they speak English to me.

Kaomi Lee:

Did you feel white inside growing up?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah I did. I felt white, and I was a little bit ashamed maybe that I looked different. When I got a little bit older I didn't want to be seen with other Asians because then I felt that I was really different. So all my friends was white. But it's kind of fun because my brother is black, and my parents are white. So I have a childhood where we accept each other and the color of the skin. So it's kind of strange that I felt I must fit in and be white.

Kaomi Lee:

Growing up did you have of curiosity about or did you ever wonder about your biological family?

Lisa Beck:

Not really.

Kaomi Lee:

Like your parents, like mother, father in Korea.

Lisa Beck:

No, not really. I thought they were poor, so that was a reason that they gave me up. I haven't got any information about my biological parents in my papers, so I thought maybe it was just they were poor so they just gave me away. When I was a little child I dreamed about I was a Korean princess, and they just lost me or something. And, I had play with my mom that she gave birth to me hundreds of times. And maybe I don't know if it's was a wish to be born that she gave birth to me or I don't know, but I played it over and over and over. I don't know if it's a typical girl thing to do, play family life.

Kaomi Lee:

Did you feel kind of lucky to be adopted then? Or did you feel like, "Oh, it was better that I was adopted?"

Lisa Beck:

I don't feel lucky. It's just I think maybe it was better that I got adopted. And I don't feel like, it sounds a bit odd, but I don't feel grateful. It's normal for me to just be me.

Kaomi Lee:

So it sounds like just the circumstances. It just happened. You accept it, and you didn't really think too much about it.

Lisa Beck:

No, I didn't. And maybe my parents exposed me and my brother to this adoption environment from we were small kids. They were members of a club called Society and Adoption. So we went on a lot of weekends with other adoptees from different kinds of countries. So maybe-

Kaomi Lee:

But it's kind of run by parents, right?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah, I think so, yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Do you think the vibe is kind of different when it's run by parents?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. I was so young at that time, I can't remember, bits of it. I think maybe it was also so the parents could have some others to talk to in this situation. I don't know, but I had fun.

Kaomi Lee:

You did have fun. So you didn't feel ... You weren't ashamed to be around other Asian kids at that time?

Lisa Beck:

No, not at that time because it wasn't all Asian people. It was from where they have adopted kids from, children-

Kaomi Lee:

Different countries.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. Different countries, Africa, India. Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

And all the parents were white?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. After I think we met, were you a bit stressed too? Because I, I think I felt a little stressed.

Lisa Beck:

I was because-

Kaomi Lee:

Because ... yeah, go ahead.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. Because I used a lot of energy to think about you and all this adoption.

Kaomi Lee:

And I think this is something you and I have in common is that sometimes when there's something you're focused on or some kind of problem or something that you kind of play it in your mind over and over and over. And I do that too.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

We similarly do that kind of like they say like a broken record, it plays over and over.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah, over and over.

Kaomi Lee:

And you can't move on or get it out of your mind.

Lisa Beck:

No. Overthinking.

Kaomi Lee:

Overthinking, exactly.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

And I just remember thinking that we met and you were really nice. It was fun to talk to you.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

But then I was getting messages every day, and there's the time difference. And so every time I woke up, there was a message. And then I felt like, "Oh, I've got to answer it." I do admit that I was feeling ... You know, I told you, I was feeling a little suffocated a little bit because every time I woke up there was a message or some question. It felt like you just wanted to connect contact with me. And you know I'm a very ... Now some of it's my personality too, right? I'm not blaming you. I'm just saying like I live alone, I'm a pretty independent person. I'm not in touch with even some of my closest friends that much. So just every day getting a message of somebody wanting to talk to me.

Kaomi Lee:

And also like not just someone, but obviously you being a new DNA relative, but also like just trying to wrap my head around how to be with you, our relationship. I didn't have a sister before, so like I didn't have a sibling that I talk to that often. I had brothers, and I think it's a different especially now that they're married or my one brother that I'm closest to is married. We don't really call to talk to each other that much. So I think for me it was kind of stressful also because it's like ... It's also a bit scary too, and you probably have those same feelings, but it's sort of like, okay, so there's a new person in my life, but you kind of wonder are they going to be crazy? Are they going to want more attention from me than I can give? How about for you? Is that similar to what you were thinking or feeling?

Lisa Beck:

No, I was just eager to know more, and as you said I needed boundaries. I needed that. Maybe that we did some ground rules or something because I couldn't ... I was so confused. So just like we talked about, I was overthinking it. I just need to get in contact with you somehow. And it also was stressful for me at that time because I thought maybe how do I get around this? I need to write to her. Oh, when it got too much, "Oh, should I wait or how long should I wait?" It was so crazy.

Kaomi Lee:

It's really like, it's funny. It's really like dating in a way because like, "Oh, how much is too much? Am I bothering them?"

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. Well, it was so crazy.

Kaomi Lee:

Are they going to reject me or walk away? Those are things that are totally natural to feel.

Lisa Beck:

It was stressful, but I really like that you said, "Oh, easy now, calm down." Even though at first I was just, "Huh? Why did you say that?" But then I was [inaudible 00:31:33] it was good for me.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah.

Lisa Beck:

I really [crosstalk 00:31:36].

Kaomi Lee:

Sometimes I'm a little blunt too like I just say what I think, and sometimes ...

Lisa Beck:

But it was really good for me because I really relaxed afterwards.

Kaomi Lee:

Oh good.

Lisa Beck:

I was just okay.

Kaomi Lee:

And then it was easier for me because then I didn't feel pressure to have to respond every day. I can understand at the same time. I can understand and that you're excited, and of course I was excited too, but I think we just showed it in different ways. I knew that I wasn't going to just walk away or that I wasn't ... Even if wasn't messaging you every day, I knew that I wasn't going to forget about you or cut you off or say it's too much, but of course you don't know that. And so if you're worried about that, I think the instinct sometimes is to try to be in constant contact.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

So like kind of a reassurance, like ...

Lisa Beck:

Yeah like that.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah, that she's not going to walk away.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. And then the funny thing because here in Denmark we do a lot of emojis and you don't. So when I wrote your texts sometimes I was just insecure about is she mad. Is she ... Because here in Denmark we just use a lot of emojis to tell how we feel.

Kaomi Lee:

I do too like with friends and stuff, but I think on one hand you're a stranger. So I don't use emojis with people that I'm not close to like either like a business relationship or for work or whatever. I think that I didn't know, but I could see that, like if you thought, "Oh, she's not using emojis."

Lisa Beck:

Yeah, because we are different and in that time we just needed to know each other a bit better.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. And then you can, obviously now you've gotten to know me a little more and so you can see that I'm just ... I don't know, it's weird because sometimes I don't think I show my emotions as much, but then sometimes I do. I'm not really sure, but maybe I felt a bit guarded.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. I think it's quite normal not to let everybody in.

Kaomi Lee:

I think like even because I have this podcast and I've met and heard a lot of stories from other adoptees. I think it's quite natural when you're meeting this family member just kind of setting boundaries and expectations and just trying to figure out what does the other person mean. And of course there's kind of a cross-cultural with us too even though you speak English, so that's a big help because a lot of times people are reuniting with family in Korea and can be difficult or maybe ... Yeah, so a lot is lost in language. I think luckily for us you speak English so we can communicate more that way, but there's still culturally you're European and I'm American, and we have a different style maybe of doing things.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

You know, it's kind of funny because I don't know if it's our personalities, but I just felt like I naturally started to act like the bigger sister.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. Maybe, yeah maybe.

Kaomi Lee:

I don't know. Maybe it's just my personality.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah maybe.

Kaomi Lee:

Like we're going to do things my way. But you're very easy going, so it kind of ...

Lisa Beck:

I'm just easy going, so there's [inaudible 00:36:19] all right.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. So you were easy going, so that was a relief actually.

Lisa Beck:

But I think maybe with boundaries for other people to meet siblings or family, biological family, it's important to say out loud that you need boundaries. For me, it was a bit difficult to say.

Kaomi Lee:

Well, you don't want to hurt the other person's feelings. I also thought about that. I didn't want to hurt your feelings. And I just thought to myself, how can I say because I was feeling like the more messages I got, the more kind of annoyed I was starting to feel, and I didn't want to feel that way about you. But it just started to feel like it was too much. But I did think about, okay, what if I say this like I don't want a message every day, will that hurt your feelings?

Kaomi Lee:

It's kind of like for me I felt like if I don't say something eventually might not be happy in this new, new relationship. But on the other hand, I thought if I do say something she might take it the wrong way. But in the end I'm not really sure exactly what I said, but maybe just like, "Let's not message every day," but you did take it well.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. I think it's necessary to have that kind of talk.

Kaomi Lee:

Like we've talked about, there's not a manual.

Lisa Beck:

No, there's not, and we reacted [crosstalk 00:38:17].

Kaomi Lee:

And you don't know. There's not really like a guidebook on, okay, what are the things that happen when you meet a new family member or a new sibling or [inaudible 00:38:34], and what are the things that are going to come up and how do you deal with it? Luckily, I have a therapist who's a Korean adoptee. She's wonderful. And that helped a bit to talk to her. Anyway, it's all good though. And yeah, I guess that was in Marchish we started talking.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

So then of course the coronavirus. But I think it was June, I was kind of watching and that June Denmark opened up to visitors. I think maybe it was the EU, right, or there were some countries.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

I think you guys opened up to other EU countries first.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah, we did.

Kaomi Lee:

So when I saw that it opened up as of, I think it was like June 25th, then I immediately looked at flights. Yeah, so I was just excited to come over. I had never been to Scandinavia before. I was excited to go, and I've said this before, but Copenhagen or Denmark wasn't really high on my list to visit. It wasn't really a bucket list item, a place I needed to go before I die. It really wasn't even. But now that I've been, Copenhagen's really a cool city. I did like it a lot.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. And maybe it got more special to you because we met, but also you did see the city differently because you had almost a guide.

Kaomi Lee:

No, it's true because I wasn't just like total tourists. I mean I had locals to meet up with and show me around. And so of course that you live there that's ... I got on the flight, and then you were waiting for me at the airport. What thoughts were going through your mind?

Lisa Beck:

I was nervous and excited and also kind of, "Oh, could we postpone this? Could we do this another day?" It's like sticking my head in the ground. It was exciting and too much at the same time.

Kaomi Lee:

So you were there with your parents?

Lisa Beck:

I was there with [inaudible 00:41:19].

Kaomi Lee:

And your boyfriend, Gusta?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah.

Lisa Beck:

And a film crew also. It didn't make it better, but yeah. And then my mom was totally nervous on my behalf, I think, so it made me a bit calmer.

Kaomi Lee:

Oh, your mom was nervous?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah, on my behalf, really nervous.

Kaomi Lee:

Right. And didn't you say you were trying to calm her down?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah, just Mom don't be nervous. It's going to be okay.

Kaomi Lee:

It's not about you.

Lisa Beck:

It's not about you. It's me that's nervous. Shut up. Yeah. But then due to COVID you couldn't get out of the exit probably. You had to use another exit to get out of the airport. We stood outside and waited for you and not in the airport.

Kaomi Lee:

Okay. Got it. Yeah, so when I was coming out and then there was, because there was a producer there from Al Jazeera, I saw him just this white guy, and he came up and said, "Are you Kaomi?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "Your sister's waiting outside." So it wasn't a total, like I was like, "Okay." I could say he sort of warned me that you were waiting. I just said, "Okay, here's the moment." [inaudible 00:43:08] Did you wait a long time [inaudible 00:43:17]?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah, yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

I'm so nervous. Nice to see you.

Lisa Beck:

So nice to see you.

Kaomi Lee:

And I've seen this happen in other stories where an adoptee meets her birth family in the airport. They kind of meet with like holding luggage. And so I've seen these kinds of first time meetings before. So I really, it's just, it was very kind of surreal to think it was happening to me.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

That I was-

Lisa Beck:

The one.

Kaomi Lee:

Having that story. Yeah, where I was dragging my luggage, my roller bag, and then also kind of looking out and just kind of waiting for this thing to happen to me.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. I was just nervous. And we talked about do we cry, cry, do we not, the emotions. [inaudible 00:44:16].

Kaomi Lee:

And also I think it's we knew we were being filmed, so it's like, okay, will I cry when I see you? Will I be a cold hearted person if I don't?

Lisa Beck:

I think maybe I cried because I was nervous and it was a relief, you are finally here.

Kaomi Lee:

Maybe it was like a buildup, right. It was building up and then maybe it like a combination of happiness and also relief that I could let out a breath.

Lisa Beck:

I think it was that because normally I don't cry. And we talked about it, oh, we don't cry. It's okay. Yeah. And then I thought, oh.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah, to be honest, you came over, I was wearing my mask, and then we hugged and I could just tell. I knew people were watching, and I could feel you kind of with your body your emotion, like you let out some kind of emotion and some little tears, not huge waterworks, but I could tell it was really emotional for you. It affected me too because just to know that someone that you can have that reaction, that someone can have that reaction towards me. I remember just mentally thinking like, wow, that someone can have that kind of feeling towards me or just the fact of meeting me. But yeah, then it was like, okay. I thought that I'd just introduce myself to your parents and your boyfriend and the camera crew that were there.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Very surreal. And then we got into your car and we drove away or we drove to my hotel.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

And it was good sort of to get to know each other that way even though we were being filmed, but it was good.

Lisa Beck:

It was a good first day.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. You must have been so exhausted maybe that first week, right? I know you had to work and then we'd meet after work. You would come get me, and then we would go off and go to dinner or something, and every day ... I mean, that's got to ... I mean, were you tired to do that every day?

Lisa Beck:

I'm so tired. When I got home, I was just, "Gusta, I don't want to talk. I just need to sit here by myself with my phone just flipping pages and look at my Facebook or read the news or something." And then I got ...

Kaomi Lee:

What did your friends and people ... Did you tell people about this was happening?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. And it was just amazed that we are going to meet each other, and they were, "Oh, you have a half sister." And also they were like, "Oh, do you want to do all that media thing? Oh, it's too much. And oh, it's not ..." And then I was just, "Yeah, because it's fun, and it's a fun way to know you, and we can have something to do during the day." So it was quite a fun to have the media thing we with this.

Kaomi Lee:

I thought, "Oh, sure, that's a great way to get the word out about our story. Maybe it'll get picked up in Korea." So sure, I was very much like, "Let's do media," but I could see where other people might be ...

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. It's too much, and I don't want to get on TV or ...

Kaomi Lee:

But you were always, you were open to it. You were pretty good nature about it.

Lisa Beck:

I was just, let's let's do this and we'll see what happens.

Kaomi Lee:

Let's do it.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

And then we went on Danish TV.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. That's fun. And really, I was really nervous that they at that shooting, it was just, "Oh, what I'm going to say," because now it's in Danish and everybody can see.

Kaomi Lee:

And everyone in your country would know about it.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Did you get anyone that ... I guess a lot of people watched it, right?

Lisa Beck:

A lot of my colleague watched it, and yesterday I went to a school thing with [inaudible 00:49:40] class, and then one of the children was, "My father saw you on TV." I know. And her teacher did also see it, so I said, "Yeah, I know. I was on TV."

Kaomi Lee:

Did people ask you questions about ...

Lisa Beck:

They were just, "Wow. That is crazy. How do you feel about meeting your sister?" They want to know the story, so you making out the short story, the short words because it's also kind of private, I think, maybe, to tell about your feelings. Now it's just a short version.

Kaomi Lee:

Everybody wants this to be like a happy ending. And I feel this pressure of like a fairy tale or like a long lost sister or ... And everyone's, "Isn't it so great? Isn't it so great? And I'm happy for you." But I also like, and I get that because that's what we are all conditioned to like our response should be.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

But also it made me think it's not such a happy thing. I mean obviously I'm happy to meet you and know about you and have you in my life. But when you really think about it, I was not having happy feelings. I was thinking like, "Okay, now that I see you in the flesh and I've met you it made me think about what happened that we couldn't know each other before." And what happened that we had to be adopted, and where are they, and why did they separate from us? That's not happy.

Lisa Beck:

No.

Kaomi Lee:

Even being interviewed on the program, I just try to be honest too, because I think people just don't know what it's like, and they don't think about this other part about we are reunited, but we still, we don't know who our first families were.

Lisa Beck:

No.

Kaomi Lee:

And we're separated and pretty sure we were sent away. We were given up not because of happy things.

Lisa Beck:

No.

Kaomi Lee:

And it does bring up for me, it doesn't answer questions for me.

Lisa Beck:

No.

Kaomi Lee:

I feel like there's just more questions.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. Before I met you in person, it did make me feel that I need some more answers from my adoption story. I did, as you know, contact the Danish adoption agency and did make a petition to get some more information in Korea. And I think I would not have done that if I hadn't been in contact with you. So it creates more questions.

Kaomi Lee:

Do you want to talk about what you found out or not? If you want to keep it private, we can.

Lisa Beck:

No. They told me, KSS told me that my parents were married and they gave me up because they already had three daughters and they wanted a boy.

Kaomi Lee:

How did you feel?

Lisa Beck:

At first nothing. It was just like okay because I didn't know what to expect. So I was more angry about the history, they had that information all the time, and we didn't know. And they have the names on my parents, your father and my father and my mom. They have the names.

Kaomi Lee:

How do you know?

Lisa Beck:

They wrote, we have the names, but we don't know if it's the right information, so they sent the case to the other agency in Korea, the [inaudible 00:55:11].

Kaomi Lee:

NCRC.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

National Center for the Rights of the Child.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

They told you they have the names, wow.

Lisa Beck:

But they don't know if it's really.

Kaomi Lee:

If it's the right.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. And still no word?

Lisa Beck:

Still no word. So I give them ... I wrote to NRC, what you call it. I wrote to them, but they haven't respond. So now I think maybe I just give them a month more and then I send them an email. I know they are busy, so you will see. But at first I wasn't surprised or angry or sad about the information about they gave me up because I wasn't a boy. Its really because that they didn't tell us, told my parents.

Kaomi Lee:

So what did your parents receive when you were ...

Lisa Beck:

Oh, nothing. I was an unknown child, no parents.

Kaomi Lee:

That's all they ... Did they get like a file or anything?

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. The file was parent unknown. They just knew my birthdate and my name.

Kaomi Lee:

So it's not like they didn't send the file. The file they sent was due different than what they had.

Lisa Beck:

They didn't send any file. They just sent me an email. I didn't get a copy of-

Kaomi Lee:

No. I mean, when your parents, when you were adopted, they got a piece of paper that said parents unknown.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. Just a file parents are known, official stamp on parents unknown.

Kaomi Lee:

But all along, they had.

Lisa Beck:

They had the information on my parents.

Kaomi Lee:

What did your parents say to that when you told them?

Lisa Beck:

They were just like we can't. You have heard the stories before that the information could be wrong. So they were just ... I think maybe they just listened to me and my thoughts about this topic because they didn't really respond to it. I don't know. They didn't get angry. They maybe a bit surprised but not a big reaction really. I think maybe it's so many years ago now and they got me.

Kaomi Lee:

So like you said, we're nine years apart. And for me I was a bit surprised also to hear that you have three older, if the story is true, that you have three older sisters, we believe we share a father, not a mother. So yeah, it does kind of make me wonder.

Lisa Beck:

Where do you fit in.

Kaomi Lee:

Where do I fit into this story, to our father's story.

Lisa Beck:

And maybe you're not the oldest one.

Kaomi Lee:

He doesn't know about me.

Lisa Beck:

But maybe you're not the oldest one. You never know, you know. I assume you may be the oldest one and then three sisters between us, but you don't know.

Kaomi Lee:

It could be possible that he doesn't know about me.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

You know, the one thing I thought when I heard about the information you got is I was a bit like I was happy that you had some information because that could help me.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

That could help Kristen. That could help us because otherwise the trail is dead for now. But the fact that apparently if your parents were married, there may be a good chance they would want to reconnect with you, that you wouldn't have been a secret to them anyway. That was also encouraging because I thought, okay, if they're open to meet with you then maybe a next step is maybe they can learn about me. Maybe they would be willing to ... It would be wonderful, I think, to know who my father is and perhaps we could get information about who my mother is. But it's all just like, what if, what if, what if.

Lisa Beck:

And you never know, maybe they are passed away. You don't know.

Kaomi Lee:

But then also we might have more sisters.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. You have more half sisters.

Kaomi Lee:

And you have more full sisters.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. It's kind of crazy.

Kaomi Lee:

I got back I guess two weeks ago.

Lisa Beck:

Two weeks ago.

Kaomi Lee:

So how has life been since?

Lisa Beck:

It's been overwhelming. I have been so busy with work and my kids going back to school, so I haven't got time to process.

Kaomi Lee:

Do you feel like you might be changed somehow?

Lisa Beck:

No, but now here when we speak I can feel a warm feeling and also kind of nice that we can talk a little bit deeper regarding our feelings. And I like that because it's important to me to know you on all levels. It's maybe just now we can do that after some time away.

Kaomi Lee:

So I think you have processed even if you're not aware, even if you're not conscious about your processing, I think you have done some.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

And me too.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah. But do you feel ...

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah, I don't think we could have talked at this level when I was in Denmark because we were just meeting and getting to know each other, but then there was some time away, I came back. There's time to ... Even though let's say you're not thinking about the meeting and the trip every day, but I think like unconsciously, both of us I'm sure have done and processing so that now we come together, we can have more discussions about our feelings. And also just because there's some distance from the trip. In looking at it now in hindsight you can think about what was I feeling at the time.

Lisa Beck:

And it feels like it's easier now to talk to you. It feels good because we haven't talked to each other since the trip.

Kaomi Lee:

I just figured I guess we both have just gotten busy.

Lisa Beck:

To be honest, I need some distance to shut down and just focus on my work, my kids. I just need to ...

Kaomi Lee:

And, I don't know, hopefully maybe we can see you in the US next.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah, I would like that.

Kaomi Lee:

Do you have any advice? What would you tell others who are searching or about the DNA experience?

Lisa Beck:

Just do it. Do it and keep it maybe a little bit light so you don't get too disappointed. Many things in my life I have taken a bit easy so when I get something negative or something, it's easier to come through it because I don't know. Keep it light. Keep it as a fun way to see if you can find some. And don't get too upset if you don't find any family.

Kaomi Lee:

And have a good therapist.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

That helped me. Well, yeah. Well, I guess it's the beginning of getting to know each other and hopefully ... And now I have a good reason to come back to Copenhagen.

Lisa Beck:

Yeah [inaudible 01:04:13], and it feels easier today.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

(singing)

Kaomi Lee:

Thanks again, for listening to the first episode in the fifth season of adapted podcast. If you, too, would like to support us as a patron supporter, you can go to patron.com/adapted podcast. Until next time, stay safe and see you on adapted.

Kaomi Lee:

(singing)