Kaomi Lee:

Welcome to season five, episode five of Adapted Podcast. And it all starts now.

Laure Badufle:

I had [inaudible 00:00:16] there with the life in Korea or life in France, and that's what they were telling me, "Laure, you need to choose."

Kaomi Lee:

Hi, I'm Kaomi Lee, the host of this podcast. I want to thank Jae Jin once again for the theme music for season five. You can find his music on Spotify and all the streaming sites. You can go to his website as well, jaejinmusic.com. That's J-A-E J-I-N.music.com. He's terrific. Check out all of his work. He's got quite a large catalog.

Kaomi Lee:

This week, we talk to Laure, a French Korean adoptee. I found her story so honest and moving. She went back to Korea at a young age and reunited with her birth family. And we'll find out more in this episode. She's now turned her experiences and things she's learned through the years into a practice where she helps other adoptees. There's more information in the episode on that as well. And so, without further ado, here is Laure.

Laure Badufle:

All right. My is Laure, French name, adoption name. My current name is Pak [inaudible 00:01:31], and I was born 30th of July, 1984 in Jinju, which is near Busan in South Korea. And I was adopted when I was one year to France, and I grew up in the countryside. But for the past 20 years I've been living in Paris. So, today I'm a 37-year-old. [French 00:01:57].

Kaomi Lee:

Laure, thanks so much for coming on the podcast. I'm so excited to talk to you. Why don't we start with where you were born? You said a little bit already. And what age you were adopted to France? Or France.

Laure Badufle:

Yes. Because I've been back to Korea and I met with my birth family, then I have a little bit more information. So, I was born in the summer of 1984, and I understood that my parents were not really married. They were young and they tried to live together after I was born. They briefly got married, living with my grandmother.

Laure Badufle:

And at some point, it just didn't work. My current mother tried to take me with her and leave with her family, her parents, but apparently after some time she came back and she gave me to my birth father who was living with his mother. So, after sometime as well, they decided to put me for adoption.

Laure Badufle:

So, I think I was around maybe eight months when I was given to the orphanage of [inaudible 00:03:47], near to Jinju. And I spent some time with, I think, a host family with a carer, a carer family in Seoul. And soon after, I was adopted by a French couple. When I was 13 months, I traveled to France.

Kaomi Lee:

And how old were you at the time you were adopted?

Laure Badufle:

13 months.

Kaomi Lee:

And your parents, the French couple, they didn't have children?

Laure Badufle:

No, they didn't. They couldn't.

Kaomi Lee:

And you grew up in the countryside. What was that like? Were you the only Asian person that you could see?

Laure Badufle:

Exactly. I think the first time I saw an Asian person, I was maybe 11-year-old and we moved to another place. We started living in north of France, north of Paris. And I don't even remember seeing an Asian person there. I'm not even sure I was conscious I was Asian, I looked Asian. Until very old, I thought I was white. I met another adoptee when I was, I think, 11. She was also from South Korea, and that's how I kind of started to wonder about my Asian roots and looking.

Kaomi Lee:

And tell us a little bit about living, growing up, your years growing up. What was it like?

Laure Badufle:

I have very few memories of when I was a child. I think I had a pretty happy childhood. I was behaving really well. I think I was a nice kid, working well at school and being nice, I guess. Only when it started to get hard it was when I was a teenager. And then I was quite difficult for me to be adopted, to be Asian-looking and not relating, not feeling belonging, having lots of questions unanswered, having a lot of conflicts with my parents. But yeah, the younger ages were quite happy, as I remember. I had a dog and-

Kaomi Lee:

Oh, go ahead.

Laure Badufle:

Yeah. I had a dog and I remember when my parents adopted me, they were told that there was no pet in Korea, so they maybe they had to get rid of the dog. But actually when I came, I was so happy to have a dog. And I remember it was sleeping at the front of my door of my bedroom every night. So, I have very happy memories with him.

Kaomi Lee:

Okay, okay. What did your parents do for work at the time?

Laure Badufle:

My father was an environment engineer and my mom was a teacher.

Kaomi Lee:

Okay. They were professionals. And were you the only child?

Laure Badufle:

My parents always wanted to have lots of children. The thing is, with adoption, it takes a lot of time. And when they adopted me, they wanted to have another child from Korea so we could share something. And then we had to wait a long time, around 10 years. They thought it was too late. They thought it wouldn't have happened. I mean, they were elder, but she arrived. And I remember going to the airport to welcome her. So, we have 10-year difference.

Kaomi Lee:

You have a sister. Okay. Do you remember your thoughts going to pick her up at the airport?

Laure Badufle:

I guess in our family to have children was... this kind of things of being adapted, going to the airport and picking up a child. I wouldn't really have this image of giving birth from your belly as a mother. So, for me it was just the way it was like, "Oh, this is how you have children. You just go to the airport and you wait. And after, you have a baby and you take her home."

Laure Badufle:

And so I was excited because being a single child is quite... you just want to play with someone else. So, I was very looking forward to have a sister. And also because, like my parents, we were waiting for of someone. I was waiting for her for a long time. So, I was very, very happy.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. Were your parents pretty... You said that you argued a lot when you were a teenager, and that's pretty normal, I suppose. But do you feel like some of it had to do with adoption?

Laure Badufle:

I think they were both things, like usual parents things of being a teenager, having to kill your parents symbolically and break free. I think in my case, I kind of censored myself about adoption. I never asked parents anything. And my mom had to tell me when I was seven-year-old. Like, "You are adopted. And if you want to look for your roots or your parents, you can." But I never asked anything. I never asked any question. And they gave me that box with the information about my birth parents, but I didn't really... I don't know. I didn't feel comfortable about it. I kind of wanted to not see it. I didn't want this to exist. I just wanted to be a normal child.

Laure Badufle:

And when I became a teenager, yeah, things got very, very rough with my parents. And I guess a lot of fears on this side, on my side, a lot of anger, a lot of frustrations, I don't know. I just got super exclusive as a teenager. And I would say only recently I started now to have more of a peace relationship with them. But for a long time, it was always very difficult, even if we love each other. It was just very hurtful.

Kaomi Lee:

Okay, okay. So, you felt like a white child growing up?

Laure Badufle:

White.

Kaomi Lee:

Yes.

Laure Badufle:

White.

Kaomi Lee:

When did that kind of change for you?

Laure Badufle:

Even today, sometimes I'm surprised when I'm looking at myself, but I guess I was kind of ashamed of the way I looked, especially as a teenager. I found, "Oh, I look ugly and my friends have this white skin and my skin is different and my nose is different, and my eyes as well."

Laure Badufle:

Only, I guess, when I returned to Korea, when I was 23 and I went past the teenage years, when you don't really look great. And at that age, I started to having lots of Koreans around me. I started to relate and to befriend my body and my face, maybe, and started to, I don't know, dress a little bit girly, put makeup. This body, this face, was something like a strange component, like a stranger. I felt very disassociated between my body and myself.

Kaomi Lee:

You said that you didn't really... you shied away from really exploring anything to do with Korea or your adoption growing up. Did you also feel like your parents did what is kind of... Well, I don't want to say typical, but a lot of our parents, they didn't want to make a big deal about difference. They wanted to really act like, "You're just like one of us. We accept you," and you just want to fit in.

Laure Badufle:

I think my parents wanted me to be kind of their natural child. So, there would debate about whether we are related or not. They wanted to kind of love me so much that they wanted this not to exist. But by doing this, the problem is they kind of denied my essence of being adopted, of being Korean, having this birth family and being different. By wanting to love me and care and integrate me in France, by not taking my first Korean name together with my French first name, for instance, they tried to do well, but they kind of... I felt a little bit robbed from my identity.

Laure Badufle:

The thing is I didn't want to feel... I was upset, unconsciously being upset against them. So, instead of just being accepting to be upset, I just had to cut with them because I don't know, it really hurt too much that I had those feelings about them.

Laure Badufle:

So you see, it's a bit weird, feeling guilty, I guess, to be upset or feeling upset to be upset. And that's how somehow I had to really cut with them. I had to cut with everything. Then when I went to Korea, I started to think it in different way, but maybe completely extreme in an extreme way, but it was the only way for me to start to take my life again, to take ownership of my life again, to kind of being born again, go back to this country and claim ownership over my life. Even if, as a teenager, I did it in very chaotic way. It was very, very chaotic and everything, but I guess it was the only way I had to cut and keep something.

Kaomi Lee:

So, for you, you really had to cut off all ties for a time to try to almost rebirth yourself, start from the beginning.

Laure Badufle:

I guess this love my parents had was so huge, so kind of invading that I felt really threatened. Now, with distance, I can look at it and I can recognize that they were trying to do what they could and they were also afraid. They were just protecting, reacting, but yes, I kind of feel I had to kill them, emotionally, so I could leave and then I could love them again.

Laure Badufle:

But the premise, by doing this, I was also very harsh as myself, very self-destructive, going into very dangerous behaviors. And I still have this tendency to kind of kill things around when they're upsetting me, but I'm really trying to get better with that

Kaomi Lee:

Yes. I wonder if that's also often related to adoption. Adoptees, I think, we are known for sometimes being very... cutting people off or being very black and white or just being self-destructive sometimes.

Laure Badufle:

Yes. I guess deep inside, having the impression that this is not going to last, that this bound I have with you will not last anyway. And maybe it's better if I can cut it first because I have control over it, rather than being the abandoned dog on the side of the road.

Kaomi Lee:

And so you went to Korea at age 23?

Laure Badufle:

Yeah. When I was 23, I didn't really plan for it, but I had some people telling me that I would go on exchange and then it would be a good idea if I go to Korea. I never really thought about it. I had to finish my studies with some period abroad. So, I thought, "Yeah, that's true. My school is proposing an exchange with Seoul National University, so I could go there."

Laure Badufle:

And once I was preparing the form to go there, then I thought, "Oh, well, maybe I could try to see if I can meet my birth parents." And the fact is actually I went to Paris to the French agency and very straight away, I got a lot of... I had information with them. So, before even going to Korea, I was in contact with Holt there, with the orphanage and the pos-adoption department. And it was kind of already settled.

Laure Badufle:

They found my parents and they were ready to meet. So, even before going to Korea, everything happened very fast. I didn't really gone and it just happened straight away. And I know some adoptees really struggle to get information and find their parents. But for me, it just happened very fast.

Kaomi Lee:

Oh, wow. So, your first trip back, it was already arranged that you were to meet them.

Laure Badufle:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Wow. That's a lot to handle, all at once. Can you tell us what it was like to reunite with your family?

Laure Badufle:

I'm still very proud. I'm trying to be a little bit softer, but I was very proud at that time. I wanted to do it by myself. So, I learned a bit of Korean. I arrived in Seoul with just one-way ticket in a guest house in [inaudible 00:17:26], which is north of a Seoul. And after a few days making friends with the managers of the guest house, I just asked them to help me.

Laure Badufle:

So, we called. I had the phone number of my grandfather and we just called him. I think I was in Korea for maybe a week, and straight away he organized a reunion. So, I guess the weekend I met first with his mother, my aunt, who lives in Seoul and my grandmother and some cousins. And the weekend after, I went to Jinju to meet with him because he was working, he couldn't come to Seoul.

Kaomi Lee:

Okay. And what was it like to meet the family? Did you have a translator? Did someone help you? And did it feel just overwhelming?

Laure Badufle:

That person at the guest house, she translated. She wasn't part of any adoptee or adoption organization, but she translated. To be honest, I have to say, with the grandmother and the family of my father, it was kind of... Of course, it was something, but it was also, it was weird. I didn't really know what to feel, what to expect. I felt a little bit like putting a mask and not being myself, kind of being a puppet in a show and smiling and taking pictures, but it didn't feel very real somehow. It was a kind of a show, like we were putting on a show or something.

Laure Badufle:

But after, when I went to see my father and I was sick after we... We spent maybe a few hours, he took us, he drove us to see some very older sightseeing to Jinju, and I was with another friend who was translating, someone I met in Paris. And again, it was very weird, this time, to meet my father because we really look similar and he wasn't sure he was my biological father. I don't know what was the story with my biological mother, but then I saw him at the train station and [inaudible 00:19:52] was my face, but with 20 years more and as a man. It was just very strange.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. And so immediately you knew he was your father.

Laure Badufle:

Yeah. We have the same eyes, same lips. I mean, very...

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. You have very prominent features, I wonder... Yes. Was it the nose, the eyes? What exactly was the same?

Laure Badufle:

Yeah. The eyes and shape, the jaw, very strong jaw. The eyes. But the mouth is coming from my mother, because I met her after. But from the father, the shape, the features very much like him, and because I met also his children, my half brothers and sisters, we also have something, we share something with the face, very strong. Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Was he very sorrowful? A lot of guilt or... Do you remember his emotions or was he very closed?

Laure Badufle:

He was very sad. And to be honest, I felt a little bit ashamed of him when I met him, of the way he looked. He looked quite... I don't know, vulnerable or just simple. I don't know. Maybe I had an idea, but what my birth father would like. So, I was kind of a bit disappointed when I met him. And I felt sick because, I don't know, he drove us, we drank Soju, we had raw fish or something. He really wanted to give us a nice stay, but it was just so much. And then the next day, I think I stayed in bed for 24 hours and I was kind of stuck in the bed, like in coma state to something. Or maybe I had to process all of this information that was coming, but it was just very heavy. It was just kind of receiving something very heavy into the body.

Kaomi Lee:

It's like a shock. It's like a shock.

Laure Badufle:

Yeah, I guess. Some kind of a shock. But the thing is, on my father's side, I always felt there was some kind of... a lot of secrets and they were not really telling me the truth and they were feeling comfortable and they were not very straightforward. And I had this feeling and only recently I kind of understood that they made up the story because he was the one giving me to orphanage. He put on the paper, on my paper, the reason why I was abandoned and he put everything on the shoulders of my mother.

Laure Badufle:

And reality was more complicated than this. He kind of put some lies about her. And I lived with this until I met her the next year, when I was 24. And she gave me her own version. And only recently I understood that yeah, there was stuff happening. And I guess he's not feeling really well about this because he kind of tried to make it up, tried to protect his mother, the grandmother and the family, all the traditions and everything. And I guess she kind of decided what should happen. And I was not wanted in this story. So, they get rid of me and...

Kaomi Lee:

Oh, the grandmother, you think your paternal grandmother made the decision?

Laure Badufle:

Again, when I discover this, I was very upset. Now, I'm not feeling so upset about her, but... My father was orphan. His father died when he was young and he had two sisters, he was the kind of... He became the man of the family at a very young age.

Laure Badufle:

One sister was kind of... His younger sister was adopted by an uncle. And she went to the States when she was maybe six-year-old. And she never come back to Korea. She got married with a Korean American and has kids. And the other one, she got married with this kind of a wealthy man of Seoul as well, kind of the up [inaudible 00:24:06]. And he was the one taking care of the mother. He kind of replaced their husband.

Laure Badufle:

And she would live with her, with him and with his wife, of course. So, somehow she kind of choose the wife she wanted to live with. And I guess he felt obliged because in Korea, the elder one, you have respect them. They suffered the war and you owe them respect. You owe them their life.

Laure Badufle:

So, I guess the mother, the grandmother, decided that, well, my birth mother maybe wasn't a good fit. And what is funny is because my half brother and sisters, the elder one is only two or three years younger than me, which means that after my father gave me for option, he kind of married someone very quickly and he had the three children. And I met with this person. She seems to be very obedient, a very quiet wife, probably better fit for my grandmother.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. I hear it commonly, after we were relinquished, it was almost like what had to happen so that they could remarry or they could get married to sort of wipe the slate clean. And at the time, did you have any anger towards what happened or towards them or towards Holt?

Laure Badufle:

The problem with my father, he said at that time he was drinking a lot. I was drinking a lot as well. But when he was drunk, because he had my number, he would call me during the night. It would start to, I don't know, tell me things I wouldn't understand.

Laure Badufle:

He would start to, because my birth mother, after she gave me back, when she left, she cut link with them because she lives in the same city and she doesn't want to be found. She has a new family with her husband and her daughter. But my birth father is looking for her, it's chasing her because I guess he is obsessed about her. And when he was calling me, he was kind of making a confusion between me and my birth mother.

Laure Badufle:

And whenever I would meet my grandmother, she would be so upset about my birth mother. "How dare she did that? How dare she abandon you?" And blah, blah, blah. "She's such..." Well, the bad words about anything, about women, she would say, and she would get very upset. Very upset, very, very upset. "Where is she? And why she's not calling you?"

Laure Badufle:

That's the thing I had with them. I was in the middle of this fight they were still having with my birth mother, don't want to be found. So, she didn't want to meet me because she was worried that they would chase her and they would chase her through me. And I didn't really want to be in the middle of all of this drama. So, I was very upset about this attitude of... I was just worried. I didn't understand.

Laure Badufle:

And I didn't want this when I met them. I said, "I'm going to see them once." And then my life is going to be so great. But actually yeah, I got those two crazy behaviors coming. I changed numbers. But after some time, I had my current friends, they were like, "Oh, but this is your father. You should be nice with them." And I was trying, okay? I tried to go a day and then it didn't go so well. So, I stopped again this attitude with them.

Kaomi Lee:

Based on this history between your parents, was your mother... I mean, you said you met her a year later. Did it take some time for her to agree to meet with you? Or was she quite open about it?

Laure Badufle:

Apparently, when she was contacted, she said she would agree to meet with me, but a little bit after, Holt told me she didn't want to meet me anymore. And I had to insist. The first time I stayed in Korea was almost two years. I had to insist every month asking Holt if they had any news about her. And she would just say, "No."

Kaomi Lee:

You stayed in Korea for two years waiting, sort of hoping she would change her mind? Okay.

Laure Badufle:

I was staying longer. I was smoking two packs of cigarettes a day. I was going out 12 hours a night. I was drinking 12 bottles of Soju a night. I just numbing myself. I don't even know why I was staying, but I guess, yeah, I was staying to try to meet with her.

Laure Badufle:

Only one week before I left Korea, I just said to her, "Well, listen, I'm leaving now. So, it's now or never." And it was the 14th of July, which is a national day in Paris. And suddenly they said, "Yes, she wants to meet you. And you can go tomorrow to [inaudible 00:29:22], which is actually the place you were abandoned. You can meet with her tomorrow, if you want."

Laure Badufle:

I met her one week before this day in Korea. And this time, this meeting was very honest. I had really impression to meet my mother. I felt very connected to her. I felt flesh to flesh thing. It was just, wow. It was insane, actually. It was insane. It was very sad. But at the same time, there was no questioning. She was also very straightforward. I don't know. She felt like a very responsible person. I don't know. Yeah, it felt very natural to meet with her. And it felt very sad to say goodbye to her because I met her for lunch.

Laure Badufle:

And after she said, "Can I take you to Jinju? Because I want to buy you clothes," or something. So, it was just the two of us, we were not with Holt anymore. We drove to Jinju. We went to visit the castle, took a picture and she gave me the picture. She let me choose some clothes, pieces of clothes. And after she was taking me to the bus station to go back to Seoul, and we were holding hands on the bench and we were just crying. After when the bus came, I just jumped on the bus. And I remember I was just crying for four hours, the bus from Jinju to Seoul is about four hours. I just cried. Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

What a bus ride that must have been. And I can just feel, as you talk about it, now that just meeting her, it all kind of... You could tell this was your flesh.

Laure Badufle:

I felt like a baby.

Kaomi Lee:

Oh, go ahead. Go ahead. Yes.

Laure Badufle:

Yeah. I just felt like a baby. I felt we were back in time and I was one year old because also the way she was talking to me, she was talking to me like a baby.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. I heard that happens. And was it also her personality? Did you start to think, "Yeah, I get that from her. Or maybe I'm like that because of her."?

Laure Badufle:

I felt she had a very strong mind, a lot of pride as well, a lot of dignity somehow, or maybe because she wasn't talking too much, but yeah, her presence was very soothing. There wasn't any need to say anything. My Korean was a little bit better at the time, but we didn't really have to say anything.

Kaomi Lee:

You talked about... you came from, probably, would you say a well-to-do family or somewhat? They're professionals.

Laure Badufle:

Yes, my adoptive parents.

Kaomi Lee:

Yes. And then meeting your birth family. A lot of times we were given up because of not having enough money or poverty or being very vulnerable to upheaval and things. So, did you ever feel like that was a, I don't want to say an issue, but were you very cognizant of it? You came back with an upbringing that was more affluent than your birth relatives?

Laure Badufle:

I was kind of puzzled because I was confused because I was told they were poor, and then I met him and he had more children. I mean, he had a life and children, so I thought, "Well, maybe that's not so much because he was poor. Maybe it was another reason."

Laure Badufle:

And I think the reason why I was ashamed of my father is not so much about the profession that he was having. He works for the front [inaudible 00:33:27] of a bank. But I think it's something about the fact that he was just so obedient or so... what I call weak. I have the thing with weak men. I develop an anger against weak men, and I know they're not weak, but that thing that it was... I didn't know at the beginning, but I guess I kind of understood when I saw the grandmother. He was just obeying the grandmother, and he just renounced too even the love of his life, maybe. I don't know, someone he liked, like my birth mother, for his mother.

Laure Badufle:

I think that's what I was more ashamed about, more than anything else. Because after that, I've been to the house where they live, I even stayed, and yeah, it's quite humble and everything. They're not very educated. And I find it a little bit touching. I don't know, something, they're very naive for some stuff. They don't know much, they haven't traveled.

Laure Badufle:

In the end, it's just that I didn't feel very close because of this. We grew up in very different environments and it was just hard to relate with him, I guess, because of all those differences. And the thing is, when I went to Korea, I I realized how hard it is to live in Korea, how hard it is to be a woman. And first I thought, "Oh, I wish I was Korean, because... I don't know why, because people are so warm and they're so united, or I don't know, they're never alone. You have this thing of taking care of each other."

Laure Badufle:

But now I'm so thankful for having this European background and freedom to do what I want, to say what I want to say, and to be free because in Korea, I can see that you are never free and especially if you're a woman, so-

Kaomi Lee:

That's really interesting. So, you leave Korea and go back to France. You must have felt changed in some way.

Laure Badufle:

I felt very lost. I went back to France because if I stayed in Korea, I would've died with my lifestyle. And I had a feeling I had to come back. And at the same time, I was obsessed about Korea. I was in a job where I could travel a lot. That job was not at all what my ideas were, but I just took it because I could travel and go there. Unconsciously, because I wasn't done with Korea. I wanted to go back.

Laure Badufle:

And yeah, until I was 30 year old, I was in this kind of in the middle, in the between. I want to go back, but I don't want to go back. And who am I? And what I did is actually worse. I feel even worse than before when I didn't know. Why did I do this? And then my parents were kind of really worried. So, I was feeling guilty to open all of this for that. The visit was just more mess, more chaos, more suffering, more misunderstanding. And me just feeling like I was very mean somehow, like I provoked all of that and I was upset with everyone and everything was just worse than before.

Laure Badufle:

At the same time, I know it wasn't. It was just part of the process. It was this kind of a re-integration, leaving 23 years in a certain way, and then doing an upload. Suddenly, in those years in Korea, uploading everything about that part of me. And then of course, by the time things integrated, they were kind of... it was a bit like bumpy. But I needed to know. Today, I know that I needed to go there. Even if it was hurtful, I had to go through. I needed this. I need to shake things. I need to understand.

Kaomi Lee:

And during this time, was it hard to connect with your adoptive parents then when you were really focused on Korea? Do you think you drifted away from them?

Laure Badufle:

The teenage years were really the worst. I put myself into an abusive relationship with a much older person, which was my first relationship and it was kind of psychological torture. I also know I put myself there because I needed to... I don't know what I was doing. I was very confused and lost.

Laure Badufle:

At that time, it was hard with my parents. I think after it was just... I put a lot of distance, went to Korea, still I was giving them news. I was telling them what I was doing. I was sending them photo about my reunion. I wanted to include them. But the same time, I know they were just worried, I guess. They wouldn't say much. And after when I went back to France, it probably was a little bit better. It got a little bit better, but still I think I wasn't ready to let them into my life. I was very distrustful of them. I was afraid they would hurt me or I wasn't able to cope with them. I felt there was a danger.

Laure Badufle:

So, I didn't let them into my life until when I turned 30 and I started to do things to feel better. So, it was kind of, "I put you with some distance. Maybe it's not the right time to talk, but let's..." Something like this. "I don't forget about you, but I cannot really be near you right now." Because I feel I have to choose somehow. I had a feeling I had to choose either with the life in Korea or life in France. And that's what they were telling me. They were like, "You need to choose. You are confused. And you are still attached to Korea about something that is not possible. You can't choose. And this is why you're so sad." And I think still today, I don't understand that I don't have to choose between France or Korea because this is part of me, both of them.

Kaomi Lee:

So, your adoptive parents were kind of telling you, because you're not picking a country or an identity, that's why you're having trouble. And they were saying, "You need to pick one."

Laure Badufle:

Somehow they had the impression that Korea was just painful. It was just painful part of my life. For them, I guess... Something also is I think my birth father didn't really erase me from his family document.

Kaomi Lee:

Hojeok. You were still in the hojeok?

Laure Badufle:

I'm still there, and I exist in Korea with my current name. I was using it for the bank, national insurance. And it was just weird because my adoptive parents felt like it was unfair. I don't know, something about like I wasn't...

Kaomi Lee:

They didn't like that you had this Korean identity.

Laure Badufle:

They didn't like it. Yeah. And I have to say, so for me, it's confusing to have different identities in different countries because somehow I still live there as Pak [inaudible 00:40:56]. In this family, and at the same time I'm Laure in France.

Kaomi Lee:

How do you feel when people call you [inaudible 00:41:06]?

Laure Badufle:

First, when I went to Korea, I wanted to be the Korean girl I would never be. So, I did everything to be Korean. I dressed like a Korean. I wanted people to call me [inaudible 00:41:20], and I tried to do everything to erase about France. Today, I like when Korean friends call me [inaudible 00:41:28], but I don't make such a big deal about it.

Laure Badufle:

Today, I saw that [inaudible 00:41:33] is a beautiful heritage of beautiful genes, and it's a strength. But at the same time, it doesn't define me as what my soul and what my essence is. Neither as Laure defines me as my essence.

Kaomi Lee:

When you were in Korea for the two years initially, and maybe your trips back, did it also reinforce somehow that you are really French? Sometimes when I was in Korea, I started to realize that the way my mind works and my values and what I think is right, and I just think, "Wow, I'm really American. I would never really fit in here because I'm American." Did you have that feeling like your sense of being French became stronger?

Laure Badufle:

I did realize, yeah, how French I was. Still, I had the impression there's a fracture between the mind. And mine is very European and French, very analytic and critical and everything. But the body is very Korean. And something, for instance, when we were going to sauna, only people who had Korean, what they call Korean blood, we were able to stay in a very, very hot sauna. All the others, they couldn't stand it. And somehow, that proximity of, we have this Korean body I could relate.

Laure Badufle:

But it is true that everybody called me foreigner. And they explain, "She doesn't speak Korean because she's a foreigner." Because first they see the face and they think I'm fluent. And then they start to say, "What's wrong with her?" Or, "Maybe she's arrogant. She doesn't want to speak Korean." And after they say, "Oh, okay, I'm so sorry. You are..." I said, "I'm adopted." And then they're, "I'm so sorry." And after when they would present, they would be like, "Yeah, she's foreigner." It's a strong word, right? Because I don't feel foreigner. I do feel Korean. Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. It's interesting. You talked about being able to, with your Korean body, withstand the heat like that, really hot. Do you feel also... I mean, Koreans are known to have tempers. We wear our emotions very on our sleeve, kind of thing. And I don't know what French people are... The stereotype about French people are they more quiet... I don't know. They don't show it their emotions so much. I don't know. Do you feel like that the Korean side comes out sometimes? I mean, how would you describe French people, stereotypically?

Laure Badufle:

I would say we like to criticize a lot and judge, and think we are the best.

Kaomi Lee:

Like arrogant, right?

Laure Badufle:

Yeah. Exactly. That's the word.

Kaomi Lee:

[crosstalk 00:44:40].

Laure Badufle:

I do feel arrogant. I know my ego is quite big. Yeah, but about Korean, I think-

Kaomi Lee:

Strong-willed and...

Laure Badufle:

Yes. This power, right, and especially women. Women can be so powerful because they hold this lineages of coming from Mongolia or something. We have very strong genes. So, I do feel this. And in the past, I defined myself according to this very hot I temper I had. I know today that it's not serving me all the time. And it's also some kind of attachment about, "Oh, I am very hot tempered, and that's why I'm Korean."

Laure Badufle:

I think now I don't really need this anymore. I just feel like my heart kind of melt when I'm surrounded with some Korean sometimes. And we are with some Korean friends here in Paris. I feel very at home somehow, for some reason.

Laure Badufle:

I would say maybe Koreans are very straightforward, and I'm not sure... Well, French could be, but they like to provoke or something. I know that I'm very straightforward, and maybe... I don't know. Maybe Koreans, they kind of like to be ridiculous sometimes, so extreme, very, very extremes in their own ways. And I just feel comfortable with them this way. But I don't know. So, I grew up in the Southern part of France where people are very straightforward, outgoing, alcoholic. So, I don't know if it's coming from there or from Korea.

Kaomi Lee:

Maybe Parisians also are different.

Laure Badufle:

Parisians are very different, but there are very few Parisians. Everyone is coming from somewhere else as well. Yeah.

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. Very global. You said that French can be very critical. I'm curious about that. What does that mean? Critical of others and judgemental?

Laure Badufle:

Have you never noticed anything about French?

Kaomi Lee:

I've only been on a vacation, like seven days, so... I don't know.

Laure Badufle:

I have this feeling that we would see the negative part of things first.

Kaomi Lee:

Oh, like pessimistic?

Laure Badufle:

Yeah. Just very critical. And we are very self-critical as well and critical about others too. Because for us, if you say it's just as great, it means you're kind of boring and a bit stupid. Maybe especially in Paris, it's better to say, "Wow, I think this is not so good." Because then it shows how much knowledge you have or how special you are.

Laure Badufle:

And then you can even get worse. You cannot stop to have strong opinions because the strongest opinions you have, the strongest personality you have as well. And it's something that I felt very... I know at the same time, I'm very French in my mind, but it's something I felt very claustrophobic about when I was young, which is why I really wanted to travel, go to other countries, English-speaking countries. I always found there was more of a positive vibe, more enthusiasm, it's just more spontaneous. Not really spontaneous, but yeah just being warm, just leading with feeling, not being ashamed of feeling something, whereas French might just be like, "Oh, let's not be too enthusiastic because it doesn't look so cool."

Laure Badufle:

It's not that I really... I thought quite often, it was just too hard to leave. It was just too heavy. When I was a teenager, I felt there was no escape. I felt I just wanted to disappear because I had no idea how to be happy in this world, how to behave with others, haw not to be taken away by my emotions and being hurtful to others. This happened when I was teenager. And after I came back from Korea where I just felt helpless and I didn't really know what to do. And still, at some point, I think there was a willingness. Before, it was just self-destruction. I don't want to think, I just numb myself with... I had bulimia for many years. I had a lot of addictions and everything. I just wanted to numb myself and just not think, not feel.

Laure Badufle:

But at some point, I thought that maybe there was something possible. There was another way of living. And when I turned 30, I had kind of a bad breakup with an ex-boyfriend who... I kind of lost my belongings. And I was a little bit between houses, let's say. And then, I stopped alcohol for some time. And I went to Peru for work. And I had some ayahuasca ceremony. I took ayahuasca with a shaman.

Laure Badufle:

And you can ask a question to the plant. And I was asking to the... Because I tried everything. I thought, "Whatever I can try to feel better. I will try." And if it's riskier, I will try because even want to take... I don't care. I want to try anything.

Laure Badufle:

And there, I asked the plant, because you have to ask a question to the plant because it's the spirit, how to find inner peace. And I did this ceremony with the shaman, taking the plant, going on some kind of trip, with the eyes closed, with the music of the shaman. And somehow, the answer came. The answer came in a very, maybe like a bit childish way, but it was some kind of vision, and my shaman said it was helping me in this vision after what we talk about it.

Laure Badufle:

And it was somehow that I came from a royal family a long time ago, it was me or maybe an ancestor. And it was a vision of me being surrounded by people that I liked and people saying, "Oh, who is his person? She looked so happy and caring about others." And someone said, "Oh, she's coming from this royal family." And I asked the shaman, "Is it my French family? Or is it the Korean family?"

Laure Badufle:

And he was like, "No, no, it's a Korean family." I thought it's a bit stupid, a fairy tale, but I think from that point, something started to shift. And at the same year, because I didn't want to rely on substances to find peace, I think ayahuasca has to be taken very carefully because it can be very dangerous. But at the same time, I discovered Kundal Yoga when I went to London. And I've tried all the things in the past, but Kundal and yoga really did something to me.

Laure Badufle:

Waking up that vital energy at the base of the spine, doing some movement with the body. It made me feel home in my own body. It made me feel safe and having some trust that there was something good within me, that it wasn't bad inside, and then I could start to dig and look.

Laure Badufle:

So, that really was the turning point. And from that, I've been doing other things. Kundal Yoga has been on my path. I started to learn and teach. And I also started to change life slowly because my life wasn't aligned. I wasn't living a life which was making me happy. It was telling me a lot of lies, somehow. I wasn't very honest.

Laure Badufle:

And I'm still on this process of letting go of things. I guess it was quite of a spiritual... Spirituality, that connection with somehow, whatever you call it, infinity, reconcentrate with myself and my story, because I felt welcomed. I felt supported by something bigger than me. And I opened that beautiful part that I saw and I try to cultivate every day.

Kaomi Lee:

That's really interesting that you had that kind of... You started to realize that there was something good in you and that you liked being in your body. And I wonder if adoptees kind of... We kind of embody the bad, either something bad happened in Korea and to make things better, we had to leave, we had to be abandoned, we had to be relinquished. And then somehow whatever pain or suffering, was the cause, then it lives in us or we might feel like it does. And I think it's really interesting that part of your healing had to do with the body and liking yourself and feeling that you were good.

Laure Badufle:

Yeah. And also, because now I've been developing this program for adoptees, and I've been putting some topics I find interesting. And for me the relationship about self-mothering. Because when you're a baby, even if you are in the womb of your mother, you see the world through her and you are in complete connection with her through the senses.

Laure Badufle:

And when you're born and still, she's warm, her smell, her touch, her warmth, her heartbeat. This is home for the baby. And there's something very into the senses about this home feeling. And I guess for us adoptees, we hold that pain of the abandonment, of that story, as a baby we thought it was our fault. If we were abandoned, if you were making people sad, if we were creating suffering within our birth parents, and it was inside.

Laure Badufle:

And also, remembrance of us looking, if we are transracial adoptees, that we look Asians, this is kind of remembering every day that we were abandoned because we were not supposed to be here or something. Because our own existence, it's just creating suffering. Unconsciously, that's what I still believe. I know it's not rational. But it comes so quickly just like this. It's just come like this.

Laure Badufle:

Like, "You are not welcome here. You're not really worth, or you shouldn't really be here." Something about existence and body, and the fact of... If you do yoga, or if you do something with your body, of mothering your body, just taking a bath or messaging yourself or something, you kind of do this, you're mothering yourself.

Laure Badufle:

And something happens about it that you're saying to yourself, "You deserve to exist." Me of today, I'm here for you, my little me, who's afraid. I'm here for you today because I'm sure we have plenty of us within us. We have the child and-

Kaomi Lee:

Laure, when did you start sort of doing healing sessions with adoptees and how is that going?

Laure Badufle:

About this, I have to say I was a little bit ashamed because it was just such a painful story for me. I didn't really want to put this up front, but I had a very bad car accident in 2017. And that year, a friend, just by coincidence, said he wanted to make a movie inspired by my story with my birth parents, because he was there when we met with my father some years ago.

Laure Badufle:

And because also he has Asian family, coming from Cambodia, and some kind of also identity questioning, he wanted to make a movie out of that. We started to work on this. And from that moment, because he was really looking into all the world about adoptions, organizations, all the trips I never really want to look at it because I told you I was so proud, I wanted to be unique and do it in my own way.

Laure Badufle:

But I started to look at that and see more adoptees with similar stories, started to feel close to them. I guess when I came back to Paris, I started to look into organizations, meet with the community. And this year, as I keep up training with yoga and coaching and other things, I realized that everything in my life I was looking, learning, exploring was because I was adopted, because of this very special situation I am; being transracial, being adopted, having issues to create balance with others, having issues to relate, to have role models. And also, these things about abandonment.

Laure Badufle:

Everything I searched was because of this. And in the end, I never really found a therapist who was adopted and who could really show me like, "Hey, this story is great. And this one is shit." And whatever it was. [inaudible 00:59:25]. And I had to do it all, kind of created a multidisciplinary that didn't exist. I was trying to build it because it didn't exist. I couldn't find any website or anyone.

Laure Badufle:

And now I thought this year, yes, actually, this is what I could offer to the world. This notion about [inaudible 00:59:47], what could be your reason of being. I've been there. I almost died. I almost killed myself several times, but I'm here today and this is not for nothing because I can share this with other adoptees, and I meet adoptees in different ages. And when I see them maybe in their 15 or 20s, and I can recognize myself in some of them, in the situation they are.

Laure Badufle:

And somehow, if I were their age and I would meet someone who would tell me, "Hey, you're not alone. And of course everyone is unique, but some stuff can be very helpful and I can show you." Yeah, I would've enjoyed this, I guess.

Kaomi Lee:

So, what exactly do you offer these days?

Laure Badufle:

What I offer is, I do a customized coaching sessions between five to 10, over a period of three to six months, which is kind of the usual coaching. And we can talk about anything, but I designed a four-month course, which there's an online part that the adoptee can do at home. And we also have sessions where we can talk about the program, but we can also talk about anything else on this process. And there is a bit of yoga or meditation, but there's not very much. I mean, it's not focused. You don't need to do yoga or even enjoy. It's just some tips of how to befriend your mind, your emotions.

Laure Badufle:

So, have some theory and you have some practices as well. And this also, I decided too, this is really mainly about adoptees. It really explains how I feel adoptees are unique, have unique needs or requirements, but also this program could be taken for a parent. So, a current adopter or future adopter. Someone who thinks about adopting a child and wonder how it is. Or it could be also for a sibling, like a brother or sister who maybe wants to feel close to her or his brother or sister. Or friends.

Laure Badufle:

And I guess more broadly, it's really about the effective bond. This is very... a topic. People who are not adopted can have this issue, but really as an adoptee, we have this in a very specific way, I found. And more broadly, I wish that we could just create those kind of schools, where we really had a lot of disciplines and research and cross-countries where, as an adoptee, as an adopter, you'd know where to go and you don't have to feel like nobody can understand you.

Kaomi Lee:

So, this is all based on your own... what you've learned through the years of trying to heal yourself, and there's no formal study, right?

Laure Badufle:

I know there are some adoptees who are doing research about this, but I haven't really wrote a PhD or done this kind of research. I read some of those papers and also meeting other adoptees and discussing and sharing. But yes, there is very little investigation about... yeah, that's typical.

Kaomi Lee:

It's kind of a new thing, right? A new field. Especially put together with adoptees in mind.

Laure Badufle:

Yes. [inaudible 01:03:36].

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah, because just in my sort of social network, I have seen more and more adoptees creating spaces and discussions, circles and retreats and things like that, which... I mean, it's good. It's good to see that there's... and maybe there isn't an institute you go to get credentialed for this. Adoptee are almost, I mean, we are the experts in our own experiences, actually.

Laure Badufle:

You can get credential in a specific field. So, in this type of yoga and this type of neuroscience, but really a degree about adoption, it doesn't exist yet, but I could be really interesting to create such a thing. Not only adoptees, but also orphans or people who had any kind of a- [crosstalk 01:04:50].

Kaomi Lee:

Trauma.

Laure Badufle:

Yeah. And then the family, now we have very... You might not be adoptee, but you might have felt, somehow, abandoned or had to integrate with some people who we didn't... this kind of abandonment and adaptation. Maybe you have limitness in certain ways.

Laure Badufle:

I also wonder, is it because this is getting more important or is it because we are more aware about it that we are going to sit as well? Because maybe existed in the past, but we didn't sit. Before, I never thought anything because I wasn't looking. And now that I'm looking for it, I can see many things happening and I meet many people. Isn't it strange?

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. I think it's probably a combination of things too. More like the idea of mindfulness and healing. I think these are self-healing and I don't know, I feel like there's more of that happening. Yoga's become more popular globally, and meditation. But also, as adoptees, it's been 70 years of international adoption and we are getting older and we are seeking things in our 40s, 30s, 50s, 60s, that we weren't seeking when we were younger.

Laure Badufle:

Yeah. We are reaching the edge of... We are starting to get mature, right?

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. We're seeking things and we're also doing things because there is demand for it, so...

Laure Badufle:

And especially current adoptees, we are in this close age gap, right?

Kaomi Lee:

Yeah. So, how can people learn about your program?

Laure Badufle:

It's on my website. And my website, because I created a brand upon my spiritual name. My spiritual name actually was kind of... I had this dilemma about, "Am I French? Am I Korean? My French name, my Korean name." And this name is a spiritual name. So, from the yoga tradition. But it means embodiment of grace. And I call my activities upon that name because I found that name powerful.

Laure Badufle:

So, the name is RAJAVTAR, R-A-G-A-V-T-A-R. And with this name, you can find the website and you can find a presentation of the program, a webinar. And also, if you're interested to go more, you can book a session and we can discuss about what we could.

Kaomi Lee:

Everything is online, or do you do anything in person?

Laure Badufle:

It's all online and it's done in French and in English, the whole program. And also in person in Paris, I have a yoga studio and I can also do in person. But I like the fact that it's online and it can be with anyone here on this planet, beyond the distance.

Kaomi Lee:

Your full-time job is yoga practitioner? And you have a studio?

Laure Badufle:

I left my yoga studio, my previous job last year, and now I fully dedicate myself to this activity around yoga art. And also, I created some conscious clothing brand around yoga, made in Paris.

Kaomi Lee:

A clothing brand. Cool. Oh, yeah. Okay. Are you connected with the Parisian adoptees or the... What is it? Racines Coréennes. Are you connected with them?

Laure Badufle:

Yes. Yesterday, we celebrated 26 years of Racines Coréennes. We were at the Korean Cultural Center in Paris, which is a very beautiful building. And we had a whole day of activities. And for this association, I offer a yoga class once a month online for the association and the members.

Kaomi Lee:

What has it meant to you to be part of this group and to connect with other adoptees locally?

Laure Badufle:

It's one of the reason why I just like Paris so much that I'm able to connect with this group. I feel a little bit we are family, or we're just like some kind of cousins. And yeah, there's a family feeling. And also because some adoptees have children, then when there are reunions, you have the adoptees, you have the children, and it's very laid back, and it's quite active as well. And there are events often.

Laure Badufle:

I also volunteer with Goa'l in Seoul as well. I help with the translation and I also help with the birth family research department, especially when it comes to use the French language. And I really like this organization. I met them when I was living in Korea and they helped me when I decided to live there, with the visa and other things. So, I'm very glad to work with those two associations. One in France and one in Korea.

Kaomi Lee:

Thank you, Laure, for sharing your story. It's so powerful. And thanks again for being part of this project.

Kaomi Lee:

If you want to get in touch with Laure or find out more about her programs, you can go to RAJAVTAR.com. It's R-A-J-A-V-T-A-R.com. If you also want to help support this podcast, as it continues into its fifth season, you can go to Patreon.com/AdaptedPodcast to find out more how you can financially support us, if you're able. That's it for now. We'll see you in another few weeks. Be well and stay safe.

Jae Jin:

(singing).