

When children are snatched especially from their mothers, a void exists which has a negative impact that lasts forever. This is the story of a young girl and her brothers who have to face isolation and lack of self worth in an orphanage. Through others' goodness, they learn to cope, survive and believe that they are worth saving.

Memories Under the Giving Tree

by Cecilia Yates

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Memories Under the Giving Tree



Proof that all children are worth saving

A Young Girl's Memoire

Cecilia Yates

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Table of Contents

MEMORY 1 - BEFORE THE JOURNEY BEGINS.....	1
MEMORY 2 - BEFORE THE JOURNEY EXTENDED	3
MEMORY 3 - JUDGE TIME.....	5
MEMORY 4 - THE LONG ROAD – PART 1.....	8
MEMORY 5 - THE LONG ROAD – PART 2.....	10
MEMORY 6 - OUR FIRST DAY	12
MEMORY 7 - TO THE NURSERY.....	15
MEMORY 8 - NOW MY TURN	17
MEMORY 9 - HERE GOES – TROUBLE	20
MEMORY 10 - DISCIPLINE AND ORGANIZATION.....	22
MEMORY 11 - NEW YEAR AND A NEW LIFE	26
MEMORY 12 - BACK TO THE BEGINNING. THE LONG ROAD, PART 3.....	29
MEMORY 13 - MY FRIEND - A PEACEFUL AND GENTLE SPIRIT.....	31
MEMORY 14 - HAPPENINGS	34
MEMORY 15 - FORT KNOX, HERE WE COME.....	37
MEMORY 16 - SPONSORS	39
MEMORY 17 - SPECIAL OCCASIONS.....	41
MEMORY 18 - GOOD ANGEL	45
MEMORY 19 - ANGEL – REALLY NOT	47
MEMORY 20 - PIANO LESSONS.....	49
MEMORY 21 - HEALTHY KIDS.....	51
MEMORY 22 - THOSE CRAZY THINGS	53
MEMORY 23 - COOKIE MONSTER MEETS THE FLOOR BY NIGHT (CIRCA 1957)....	55
MEMORY 24 - <i>MOVE OVER DAY</i>	57
MEMORY 25 - SR. REGIS	60
MEMORY 26 - LOTS OF WORK TO DO.....	62
MEMORY 27 - SUNDAY VISITATION	64
MEMORY 28 - AN OLSEN CHRISTMAS	67
MEMORY 29 - JOYS OF LITTLE ONES.....	69
MEMORY 30 - SUMMERTIME VISITS	72
MEMORY 31 - SUMMERTIME BLUES	75
MEMORY 32 - JANUARY WEDDING	78
MEMORY 33 - FUN, OH FUN.....	80
MEMORY 34 - TROUBLE	83
MEMORY 35 - WE GET A GYM!	86
MEMORY 36 - GOOD USE OF OUR GYM.....	88

Cecilia Yates

MEMORY 37 - SR. HUBERTA 7 & 8	90
MEMORY 38 - THE LIBRARY	92
CHAPTER 39 - THAT SUMMER 1960	94
MEMORY 40 - SUMMER 1960 2 ND PART	96
MEMORY 41 - BUS TO SCHOOL	98
MEMORY 42 - HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE	100
MEMORY 43 - REAL WORLD LESSONS	103
MEMORY 44 - TRUST	105
MEMORY 45 - THE VERY WORST DAY	107
MEMORY 46 - ANOTHER THOUGHT, ANOTHER DAY	109
MEMORY 47 - MY SOUL SISTER	111
MEMORY 48 - APRIL 23, 1965	115
MEMORY 49 - OUR FIRST CHRISTMAS TOGETHER	118
MEMORY 50 - THE PLAY'S THE THING	120
MEMORY 51 - BOUNCING BACK	122
MEMORY 52 - OUR WEDDING DAY	124
RANDOM REFLECTIONS	127
REFLECTION ON THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIFT	128
REFLECTION ON "IT'S ALL ABOUT FAMILY"	130
REFLECTION ON "FATHER"	132
REFLECTIONS ON "DADDY'S LITTLE PRINCESS"	138
REFLECTION ON ST. JOE'S TODAY	140
REFLECTION FROM A MOTHER'S HEART	142

Memory 1

Before the Journey Begins

Who are these people and why is Mommy not going with us? I don't understand. Don't cry Mommy! We will be back I promise.

This was the scene as Social Services arrived at Grandfather's shack on River Road. We never had company come up to our house in a car like that one. We rushed out of the shack to find out what was going on. Maybe these people were lost. We would soon find out. A strange tall man and pretty woman got out of the car. They greeted us and asked for Martha Belle Johnson Stultz. I had never heard anyone by that name. To my surprise my Mommy stepped forward and said that was she. The man walked over to her, opened his folder and showed her some papers. She said, "No, that can't be right. Not today." They were talking quietly and by the look on Mommy's face she was getting upset. Grandfather took Bobby's hand, looked at me with that "get inside" stare he had and took us inside. The lady went with us. I was wondering who she was, but she never told us. She kept looking around and writing on a piece paper in her book. She didn't look very happy. I kept trying to talk to her, but she wasn't interested. Bobby cowered behind Grandfather.

Finally, Mommy came into the shack and took my hand to go outside. We walked toward the car. The door had been left opened. Mommy told me to get in the car, so I did. I expected Mommy was going with us. Only she didn't get into the car. After helping Bobby, she closed the other door. The man started the car and we were off. Bobby and I were in the back seat. No wait. I want Mommy to go with us. Looking out the window, we could see Mommy and Grandfather standing there still as they could be. I didn't like this at all. Something was not right.

One of the earliest pictures of Herbie, Bobby and myself.



*I was known as 'little mother'
Probably before we were
taken to the Orphanage.*

The lady tried to make small talk, but I didn't want to answer her, so I didn't. I had a lot of things going on in my head, but I couldn't get the words out. I wanted to cry but knew that I couldn't because Bobby would cry, and I didn't want to upset him. Why was this happening? We sat in silence.

We arrived on a busy street in front of a yellow-bricked building. We got out of the car and were taken up steps to a very heavy door. Going inside, we could see halls in all directions. Bobby stayed with the man. I hugged him and told him I would be right back. The lady took me down to the very end of the hall where she opened a door. Inside was a bed, a sink and a chair. She told me I would stay here until tomorrow morning, Why? I asked. "You will be safe here" the lady said. Then I noticed the bag she had been carrying. "Here are some things you will need. Change into pajamas, get to bed, and go to sleep. I will be back for you in the morning." I couldn't talk. She closed the door and was gone. She left me alone. I was scared and just stood there for the longest time. I didn't notice something when we came into the room. There was a small window in the upper portion of the door. There were bars in the window. I was in jail.

Memory 2

Before the Journey extended

I bawled and bawled. Then I screamed to get out. No one came. Wearing myself out, I finally slid down the wall, sat in the corner by the door and cried myself to sleep. I didn't awake until the next morning when I heard a key in the lock. When the door opened, the lady was standing there with more stuff for me. She had a coat, new dress, shoes, socks, a comb and brush, toothbrush and toothpaste. "Where is Bobby?" I asked. She responded that I would see him as soon as I got ready. "Is Bobby here?" She answered that he was not here and was still asleep. "He is fine, and you will see him soon. Don't worry." she answered.

Don't worry! Well, worry I must until I see for myself that he is okay. You don't know him. How can you possibly say he is fine, that he is okay? The more I thought the more anger boiled up inside me. The lady sensed I was not happy with what she had to say about Bobby. So, she said, "I will take you to him as soon as you get cleaned up and dressed. How's that?" I nodded yes and decided the faster I cooperated, the sooner I would see and could be with Bobby. She stayed and helped me get ready.

While I was getting cleaned up she kept talking and talking. I wasn't listening with Bobbie on my mind. It was in the middle of a sentence I heard her say something about seeing a judge that morning. What is a judge? What does he do? I had no idea what she was talking about. While I was thinking, she kept on and on. Finally, I heard "sometime this morning and you are to answer the questions with the truth. Mommy had told me I must never lie I remembered the time I went out into the garden and ate those tomatoes that she wanted for supper. I told her I didn't but the juice from the tomatoes was all over me. So, I guess that is what the lady was talking about. I will do what Mommy told me and not lie. What if I don't know the truth or what the question means? What do I do then? I guess it will be fine if I don't lie or make

something up. Mommy says I am good at making things up. Oh no, what if I do that and it isn't the truth. Maybe I should just not say anything. Then I won't lie. This truth thing must be a big deal.

Memory 3

Judge Time

What is a judge? What questions? I am just a little kid, why is he going to ask me anything?

The time came, we had gone to another bigger building with shiny halls and big doors and benches. It seemed we must have been there until the next day, but we weren't. We went down the hall and stopped in front of the biggest shiniest door I had ever seen. I noticed Bobby had settled on one of the benches. So, I went over and sat beside him. He seemed to be okay and I was surprised how calm he was. I was also pleased to see him smile. He was a beautiful child and the constant pain he endured made a smile so hard to show. The gentleman opened the door. Inside the room I saw all kinds of shelves with books, a huge desk and an even huger man sitting behind the desk. He stood when we came in and I saw he had on a long black dress. I didn't laugh because I was too scared. The Judge greeted us. The lady helped me into one of the chairs and then she stood behind me. Either she was afraid I was going to fall out of the chair or try to run away. Silly lady. I was frozen. This little girl was not going anywhere!

The REAL questions began after the Judge asked me some real easy questions like 'what was my name, age, and where I lived. Did I like candy, vegetables, and would I like an ice cream cone when we were finished?' Then he started with who lives with you? Does anyone come at night and stay with you in your room? Do you eat every day? Do you play in the street? What does your grandfather do at night? Does he go to work during the day? Does your Mommy have a friend? Does she work? Who cleans the house? If you had a choice, would you want to live with your Mommy or your Daddy? That last question made my ears perk up. Why would someone ask you to choose between your Mommy or your Daddy? Mommy was here. Daddy lived

somewhere far away, and I only saw him when we would take the Greyhound and visit for a while. We always left quickly and most of the time Mommy would cry on the ride home. I would hold her hand and tell her everything was going to be fine. I didn't really know or think that, but it seemed to bring a little smile to her lips. His last question was if I wanted to live with my Grandmother, my Daddy's mother. I was unsure of how to answer that question if I could have answered. It seems whenever Grandmother was around, Mommy was not happy and nervous. She would shake and smoke and smoke and shake. It made me wonder why Mommy was like this only when Grandmother was around. The only answers I knew were Yes and No. It didn't matter what I thought since those small words would just not come out.

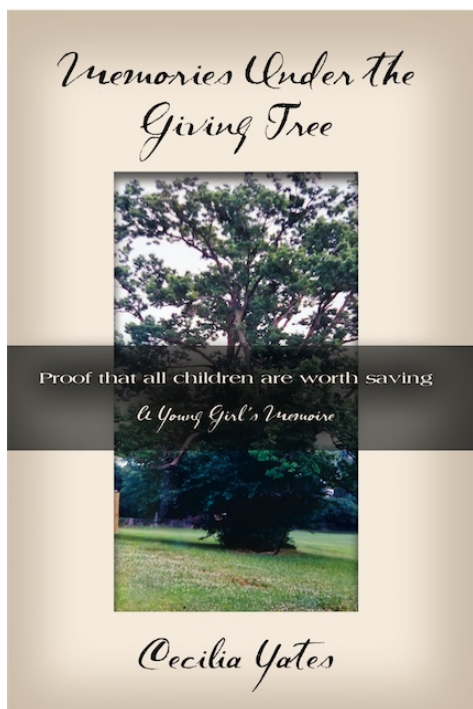
Finally, the Judge remarked to the lady something about this is just not working. He looked at me, gave me a half smile and said I could go. Evidently, I did not do well. The lady took me to get that ice cream cone and then back to the yellow-bricked building where I spent the rest of the day with a coloring book and crayons. The afternoon seemed to go by quickly as I think I might have taken a little nap somewhere along the way. The lady brought me a hot dog with mustard, chips and milk for supper. I love hot dogs. When we had then at Grandfather's, we would all pretend we were puppies, not dogs but puppies, and make that little puppy sound. That was fun. Right then I remembered how much I missed Herbie, Mommy and Grandfather. From the looks of things, I don't think anyone is coming today to take me home. Then I got on those pajamas and was so worn out, I went right to sleep. Bobby seemed to be calm, even without me telling a story or trying to make him laugh. I guess he was doing fine.

The same lady came the next morning with another dress which I put on and was ready to leave. Someone brought me a bowl of sweet cereal, milk and juice. When I finished eating, it was then I found out I was going to my new home. Immediately I was

excited because I thought we would finally be all together, Mommy, Grandfather, Bobby, me and Herbie.

The car was waiting for us and sure enough, Bobby was in the back seat. We hugged and hugged each other. I asked the lady if we were going to get Mommy and Grandfather. The man and the lady looked at each other and she finally said, "No, not just yet. You will be going somewhere else. You are a brave girl and will take care of your little brother."

That didn't make sense. What was she talking about and why did I have to be brave? Something was not right, and I didn't know what it was.



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