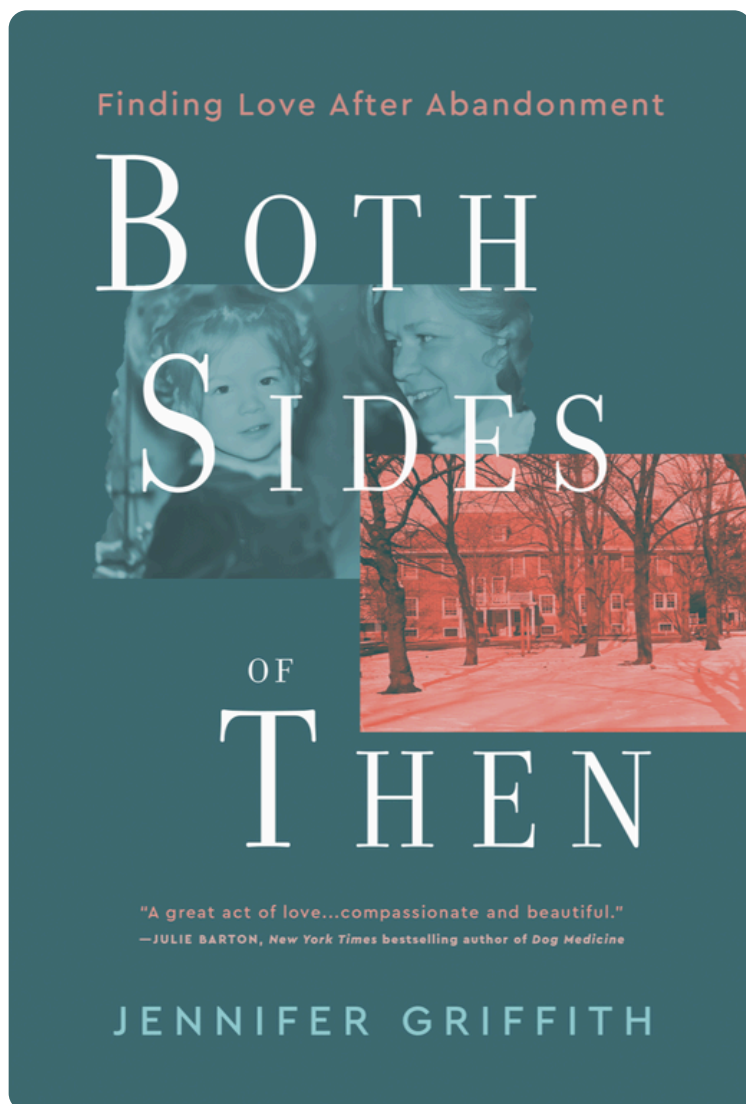


“A great act of love . . . compassionate and beautiful.”  
—Julie Barton, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Dog Medicine*

## **BOTH SIDES of THEN** *Finding Love After Abandonment* by Jennifer Griffith

With her brave memoir, *Both Sides of Then: Finding Love After Abandonment* (Regalo Press), Jennifer Griffith delivers a courageous, deeply moving and captivating book that explores generational trauma, the complexities of mother-daughter relationships, and the heartbreaking, concealed history of adoption in pre-*Roe* America.

Thirteen-year-old Jennifer grapples with the unraveling of her family when her mother, who lost her parents at a young age and was raised in a strict Baptist orphanage, reveals that eighteen years ago, unmarried and pregnant, she was forced to relinquish her infant boy at birth and give him up for adoption, and that she has finally located him. While trying to come to terms with her mother's secrets and the discovery of a new brother, Jennifer's world is once again shattered when her father announces his desire to leave their family. She begins to self-destruct, spiraling into emotional turmoil as she struggles to understand what's happening.



“It is a great act of love when a daughter works hard to fully understand her mother's life. In *Both Sides of Then*, Jennifer Griffith does exactly that. This memoir chronicles a daughter making sense of her own experience by unraveling the mystery of her mother's life. I wept, I laughed, and I wanted to call my mom after I finished this beautiful book.”

—Julie Barton, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Dog Medicine*

“In *Both Sides of Then*, Jennifer Griffith expertly weaves her story of a troubled childhood with her mother's experience growing up an orphan. We come to understand two fundamental truths: we inherit much more than we realize and the only narrative more elemental than our own is our mother's.

This compelling memoir expertly explores family history, abandonment, resilience, and ultimately, an imperfect but honest kind of love.”

—Shanti Brien, author of *Almost Innocent*

“Jennifer Griffith's steely, calm voice is a marvel of compassion as she boldly inhabits her mother's pain in order to understand her own. *Both Sides of Then* is a mesmerizing journey through empathy to forgiveness, written with clear-eyed bravery and love.”

—Rachel Howard, author of *The Lost Night* and *The Risk of Us*

# She Said, She Said: *Words from the Women Themselves*

When she was growing up, Jennifer always sensed something serious was troubling her mother, something that kept her distant, aloof and upset with Jennifer, but it was never discussed. *Both Sides of Then* solves the puzzle both for the reader and for Jennifer and her mother as she reveals her family's complex history through dual narratives—her own and her mother's—and gives us a human tale that weaves together a true story of survival, acceptance, and healing across generations.

## Jennifer Says...

“It’s a peculiar trait my mother has displayed throughout her life. She has faced the most difficult of life’s challenges and survived, but there are moments where she has frozen in the face of adversity, unable to accept a painful truth. As her daughter, there were moments in my adolescence that filled me with a sense of emptiness and disorientation and made it difficult to clearly see my reflection. My mother’s response then was to dismiss both my concern and pain as if they weren’t real.

“Oh, do I know pain! My life has been full of it,” she would say. By the time I was a teenager, remnants from my mother’s early life started to appear. When her past collided with our present, I began to feel an overwhelming sense of isolation from the woman raising me. I wondered what terrible things had happened to her and why it felt as if her pain mattered more. Was there something about my mother’s past haunting not only her but haunting me?”

## Jennifer’s Mother, Anna, Says...

“During my stay, [at the Florence Crittenton House, late ‘60s] we left the grounds twice. On these occasions, we were driven to a shopping mall and quickly shuffled through in the hope that no one would realize what we were – pregnant, unwed women. Our guardians followed us around closely, ensuring we didn’t speak to anyone. We were given fake wedding rings to wear in case anyone asked a question. While it was a taste of freedom, the pain we carried with us stripped any joy from the experience.

Letting go of my first child is where my life ended but also where it began. Of all the things that could have destroyed me, hearing his cries being carried out of the room broke the little girl inside of me. I realized that nothing in my life could have been worse than that moment. Not even losing Mommy, being placed in an orphanage by Daddy, and losing him two years later. Nothing undid my soul the way giving up my baby did, a hurt so vast it remained difficult to comprehend, one that would remain a secret.”

Jennifer and Anna’s stories provide vital historical context about the estimated four million single women forced to surrender their babies in the decades before *Roe v. Wade*. Through Anna's story, readers gain insight into both the Baptist orphanages that preceded the foster care system and the maternity homes where unwed mothers were sent to deliver their babies in secret. Through Jennifer’s retelling we also see the impact of how our own mother’s traumatic childhoods and early years, if not discussed and examined, can seriously impact our lives, our self-esteem, our ability to love.

# About Jennifer Griffith

*mother, daughter, author, and podcast host*



Jennifer hosts the popular *About Your Mother* podcast, which has reached the top 10% of podcasts globally. Her current series “What Happened Then” focuses specifically on mothers impacted by forced adoption before *Roe v. Wade*. Jennifer’s lived experience with generational trauma, familial secrets, and the hidden history of adoption is the inspiration for her work. In her writing and on her podcast, she focuses on honoring the complexities of motherhood, family, and the unique experiences that shape our lives. A portion of proceeds from her memoir will benefit the Concerned United Birthparents, supporting women affected by adoption separation trauma. Jennifer holds a degree in English from Washington State University.

## Jennifer Says...

“In my writing, I explore the complexities of motherhood and the extraordinary moments that shape our lives. My lived experience with generational trauma inspired my memoir, *Both Sides of Then: Finding Love After Abandonment*, which honors the power of the female voice even after it’s been silenced.

My podcast, *About Your Mother*, serves as a source of inspiration for people around the world. Guests on my podcast include notable actors, screenwriters, educators, influencers, producers, thought leaders, *New York Times* bestselling writers, and more. In our conversations, we “go there” and uncover the unforgettable experiences that shape our sense of self. My guests are incredible people doing real work and opening up in a way that will stop your breath.

By sharing my story as well as my mother’s, my hope is other families might gain the courage to share their own and free themselves from the pain and secrets that have threatened to destroy their lives.”

## Questions for Jennifer & Topics of Conversation

### Growing Up

- When you were thirteen, your mother revealed a secret she’d been keeping all your life, that you had an older brother, a baby she was forced to give up for adoption years before she met your father. What were you feeling and thinking during this revelation? How did this revelation change the way you saw your mother?
- Your chaotic home life—your mother’s secret, your father’s departure—started to take a toll on you in high school: your grades plummeted, you drove under the influence, you developed an eating disorder. If you could talk to your teenage self now, what would you say to her?
- Your mother would often dismiss your painful feelings by claiming her experiences had been much worse than yours. How did that make you feel?

# Questions for Jennifer & Topics of Conversation

## On Your Mother's Experience

- Your mother lost both of her parents at a young age, grew up in an orphanage, and felt the world owed her for taking away so much. How did that attitude impact the way she mothered you?
- Your mother's older sister, Eve, a mother-figure to her, thrived once she left the orphanage. Why do you think her post-orphanage experience was so different from your mother's?
- The doctor your mother saw to confirm her pregnancy told her, "Florence Crittenton homes are adequate. They are homes for wayward women like yourself. Safe, clean, and they ensure your baby is adopted by a wonderful family. You will have staff who direct you to upbuild your self-respect and character. Women of your kind will be together. Once it's over, you can return to your life and try to make good on your mistake. Perhaps then, you'll have a chance at a normal life." Hard to believe this is how pregnant women who weren't married were spoken to in 1968. Tell us about the societal pressure your mother faced being unmarried and pregnant at that time in history, pre-*Roe*.
- At the Florence Crittenton home, your mother was told, "Forget the father, your child, forget it all. You are doing the right thing giving up your child to parents who can love them and give them a better life. A life not based on sin." How did that contribute to your mother feeling silenced and like she had no agency over her own life? Did her feelings silence you?

## On Storytelling

- You say that *voice* is the essential ingredient in all of writing, that finding your authentic message and owning your story are key to the process. How does one go about finding their voice? Where do you begin?
- Your mother was so reticent to tell her story, yet you do a beautiful job of recreating it in the book. What was that process like with her? How did you get her story down on paper and how much involvement did she have afterwards?
- Many times, you mention that your mother's sister Eve looked like Grace Kelly. In a film adaptation of your memoir, who would you cast to play your mother? Who would you cast to play yourself?
- You host the popular *About Your Mother* podcast, which focuses on honoring the complexities of motherhood, family, and the unique experiences that shape our lives. What are the top three questions that you ask your guests to get them to open up?

## Today...

- As an adult, you found tremendous solace in running. Tell us about that. How did running make you feel?
- Has your mother read *Both Sides of Now*? What does she think? Did writing this book alter your relationship?
- *Generational trauma* is a key topic in your book. Have you interviewed many other women who've experienced this kind of trauma?
- Are you writing anything now? What's next?