

Amanda



You start teaching a child at a young age and they accept it as a norm because they don't live in another household. They think that's how they're supposed to be treated. So I didn't think about the abuse. I just accepted it.

My name is Amanda. I was born in Japan, and I was adopted around five and a half years old into an American family. My adoptive father was in the Air Force, and the whole family was stationed in Okinawa.

There was a big write-up in the newspaper and everything when they brought me home. "American family adopts a Japanese Girl," and this, and that. They made it into a big issue that, "Hey you know, we're such good people, we adopted this Oriental child."

They went out and bought me a kimono. Curled my hair to look like a poodle. They were trying to make a good impression and say that they were doing this heroic thing by adopting me. To me they were devils, because of the way they treated me. I don't think a child – any child – should ever be treated that way.

As soon as they brought me home, I was starting to be trained to be a housekeeper. How to clean house, how to cook and do the laundry. This was when I was five and a half. I was never adopted to be part of their family, I was adopted to be a servant.

I remember sitting on the floor with Reiko, who was training me. She was helping me translate the Japanese into English. When I didn't pronounce the word right, I got slapped. So my English was very poor, because I was afraid to say anything. I still have problems with the English language, because I didn't use it for the longest time.

When the family returned to the U.S. of course they brought me, too. And, everything continued like it was in Japan. I had to do the vacuuming, I had to do the wash. I cleaned the yard, including the pool. And I also cooked. I got up at five o'clock in the morning, and then I was the last one to go to bed at night. A lot of times I would miss school, because if I didn't get all my chores done I wasn't allowed to go. And when I did go to school I was given only ten minutes to get home.

When you're growing up, you just know the environment that you're in at that particular time. You might have a feeling that something is wrong – that this is not what a family is supposed to be like. But who do I have to talk to? I had no one, you know? I didn't have any uncles, grandparents, or



“The only time I remember having a doll was the first Christmas in Japan. They bought me a pretty big doll, and I accidentally left it out in the front and somebody stole it. Otherwise, my Christmas gifts were usually regular clothes – socks and underwear. Not toys.”



One of the many Tinker Bells that decorate Amanda’s home along with dolls. These items help her as an adult to feel the magic of childhood.

any friends — because I was shut in. I was hidden.

My brother used to try to slam my hands in the door when we got out of the car. He broke my thumb once. Or he would sic the dogs after me. The whole family was abusive. There was physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.

I got picked up by cops when I was sixteen, because my brother found my father and me in the bed. They put me into the back of the police car, and off to juvenile hall. I stayed there until the court hearing, when they saw I was innocent of any wrongdoing. My father was kicked out of the service, though. My sister blamed me for it all.

It’s degrading the way they treated me. I wasn’t anybody, you know? I wasn’t a child, I wasn’t an adult, I was just a thing. I didn’t feel like a person at all. So, I had to pretty much recreate myself as a person when I finally got out. And it took me a while to realize that it wasn’t my fault,

you know? It wasn’t me. I was just the receiver of the abuse.

To this day, I still dream about the orphanage. It was like a farm there, and I remember those pigs were *huge*. I mean, at least they seemed huge at the time. I remember going down the slide, and playing with my best friend, Bobo Chan. In the kindergarten we used to have dancing on the stage. I remember that! I used to love the dancing. And I think that’s probably why I go back to dreaming about the orphanage, because at least that was part of my childhood. I lost my childhood when I got adopted.

I’ve gone through hardship, and I don’t know what’s around the corner. It could be bad, or it could be good. My granddaughter makes fun of me because I’ve got Tinker Bell kinda scattered all over my house. But it’s a magical thing, you know? The fairies kinda represent hope, for better things, and the childhood that I never had.