



Postcards from Cookie: A Memoir of Motherhood, Miracles, and a Whole Lot of Mail

Caroline Clarke

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Postcards from Cookie: A Memoir of Motherhood, Miracles, and a Whole Lot of Mail Caroline Clarke Award-winning journalist and host of *Black "Enterprise" Business Report* Caroline Clarke's moving memoir of her surprise discovery of her birthmother—Cookie Cole, the daughter of Nat King Cole—and the relationship that blossomed between them through the heartfelt messages they exchanged on hundreds of postcards.

Caroline Clarke was born in an era when adoptions were shameful, secret, and sealed. While she wondered about her biological parents, she kept her curiosity in check, until a series of small health problems raised concerns about her genetic heritage and its consequences for her two children's lives and her own.

Though Spence-Chapin Family Service, the agency that handled her adoption, could not reveal the name of her birth mother, it was able to provide details that lead to a shocking truth. Caroline's birth mother and her family were related to a friend. The woman who gave her life was none other than Carole "Cookie" Cole, the daughter of iconic crooner and pianist Nat King Cole.

Drawing on details provided by the agency and her own investigative skills, Caroline embarked on a life-changing journey of discovery that stretched from coast to coast, forged through e-mail, phone calls, and post cards. The constancy, volume, and intimacy of her steady correspondence with Cookie filled the days and distance between them. Through brief yet poignant messages squeezed onto three-inch open-faced squares, mother and daughter revealed themselves, sharing secrets, taking risks, and ultimately building a bond like no other.

A heartfelt, inspiring tribute to both Caroline's adoptive parents and her biological mother, *Postcards from Cookie* illuminates the enduring power of love to shape and guide our lives.

Postcards from Cookie: A Memoir of Motherhood, Miracles, and a Whole Lot of Mail Details

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From Reader Review Postcards from Cookie: A Memoir of Motherhood, Miracles, and a Whole Lot of Mail for online ebook

Jackie says

Wow! What a story! I can't imagine having been Caroline. Discovering you are adopted is one thing. Can you imagine finding out you were given up for adoption not because the family couldn't afford to keep you but because they could? Not only that, but you've now known this family for 20+ years and didn't know they were YOUR family.

This hidden secret of a well-known, wealthy, dysfunctional family opened eyes and wounds. Caroline and Cookie got to know each other as well as was allowed, but in the end, did Caroline really get the answers or closure she wanted?

As you read her story, you're glad Caroline took the journey, but you wonder if Cookie was worth it.

D. George says

When she was eight years old, Caroline Clarke learned she was adopted. A few decades later, when wondering about some health issues, she went to the agency where she'd been adopted and was given a detailed report about her birth mother - and was stunned to realize she *knew* the family, and had been friends with one of her aunts since she was 16. The most mindblowing revelation - Caroline learned that she was Nat King Cole's granddaughter. (Tho that turned out to be the least important part of the story.)

In this very honest, candid account, the author shares how she told her adoptive parents about the search and its results, how she contacted her birth mother (the 'Cookie' of the title), and how Cookie and Caroline became a part of each others' lives and families ~ mostly through a slew of postcards.

Some reviewers felt that the author was too self-centered and arrogant, but I felt that she was really trying to understand Cookie's phobias and fears and hurts. After all, if I had just found my birth mother and she seemed overwhelmed with joy to hear from me, I too would be puzzled that she didn't want to meet me, and right away. Caroline suddenly had the pain of being an abandoned child - even tho her biological mother had been forced to give her child away, against her will - and that was just another hurt on top of it. And again, the author writes very candidly and very honestly about how she feels and what she experiences, including her relationships with her husband, children, and in-laws; her relationship with her newly-found relatives (and the ones she'd already known); and the death of her father, the man who raised her. There were a few areas where I felt she glossed over some things, but they didn't detract from the flow of the book.

I found the included history fascinating; of course I'd heard of Nat King Cole and many of the other great black musicians of that day, but I have never learned much about them, much less how they were seen through the eyes of an affluent black family. I grew up poor, but other than the difference in musicians we listened to, and that I wasn't taught to be proud to be white, the way Caroline was raised to be proud to be black, it felt very familiar. After all, we are just humans, trying to get along as best we can in the world.

I enjoyed the author's writing and storytelling ability - clearly a direct result of her journalism training. In

some cases, she also brought me to tears, especially when speaking about loss.

4.5 stars.

Winter Sophia Rose says

Moving, Compelling & Emotional! A Riveting Read! I Loved It!

Renee says

Excellent book.

Not every birth mother/adoptee reconnection will have this happy ending but this book has a lot of sweet and tender moments mixed in with growing pains of trying to get to know someone that is vastly different from you although genes are shared.

I recommend reading the book while listening to Re:Generations by Nat King Cole. The repurposed/remixed work of the mid 20th century artist greatly underscore the way we connect to families in the new millennium.

Jeanette says

So few reviews on this one, so I'm a bit daunted on only 3 starring it. Which is a good rating. But not a great rating.

Which fits this memoir completely, because it holds no more than a 3 star content. It's written with precision, oftentimes hour by hour events, with the entire story being of more than a minimal interest to any celeb or music fan, for sure.

But overall- it is like a wonderful 8 line ditty that was elongated to become an opera. The padding added is not musical, but emotional nuance, baggage, and random aftermath feelings. Of value- yes. Some points were especially valuable as reading for those who have or want birth family search or knowledge in later adult life over their own infant adoptions. Then a higher star rating may occur from the informational enjoyment?

But if her extended birth family had not been as famous as it was- the book would hold much less interest. Every case is different for the later in life "reveal"- this is true. Also birth family acquired prime knowledge can never be assumed as having a positive or happy/peaceful outcome for the adopted after the fact, and I rather think this book omitted that direction of concern for others' discoveries. Maybe I am wrong- I have never been without knowledge of genetic family, so I might be. But it certainly has a downside for others I have known who got specific contact.

Ironically I saw a case very similar to this novel's acquired surprise knowledge that occurred in my ex's

extended family. Although no birth records or files or an social work was ever opened to names or attempted, half siblings recognized each other upon happenstance meeting when they were in high school. Too many coincidences of looks, medical, location facts staring them in the face.

This is Caroline's story from her viewpoint. I do not doubt that she figured it out for herself or that the relationship was how she describes. Or that the people that bridged them both kept their secretive insights either. That's the way is was.

Denise Billings says

Loved the intensity of the emotions Caroline shared with us. The meticulous attention to detail. The research behind the stories. The joy we shared with her once she found and finally laid eyeballs and hands on her birth mother.

Thank God for the social worker at Spence-Chapin. She was limited in the information she could share with Clarke about her adoption, but she said, "I would encourage you to follow up on whatever you may be feeling." The search could have ended here but this nudge lead Caroline on a journey of discovery, filled with ups and downs.

At times it was challenging to keep the family lines straight. It's is a big old family with branches growing in every direction. The chapter titled Da Blues was one of the most moving for me. It was Cookie's journaling about what happened and what she felt during the period before and shortly after Caroline was born and taken. I'm all about the feelings.

We are nearly 200 pages in before Caroline finally meets Cookie. It has been months of deeply emotional long distance correspondence. I finally cry then. I thought I would cry through the whole book, but mostly I was anxious to see how things would unfold.

Clarke's description of Cookie's house was so lovely and inviting, I wanted to stop by and visit. After all it is very near to where I actually live and she gave the address. Don't want to say more and spoil it for you.

I nearly went to the ugly cry at the welcome party Cookie set up for Caroline. Especially Uncle Dinky's declaration that he and his wife Margaret wanted to adopt Caroline but Maria would have none of it. That Maria was a piece of work.

The story really resonated with me as I have a lot in common with Caroline and Cookie. Books, collected treasures, ripe bing cherries, sweet potatoes, the color red and saved journals and correspondence.

Oh, and did I say, I met the author at an intimate book signing at our friends' home. This of course made reading Caroline's story that much more personal. Great read.

Dona says

Very well done. I loving tribute and engaging story by Caroline Clarke who discovers her birth mother, Cookie Cole, the adopted daughter of Maria and Nat King Cole. Cookie, who gave birth as an unwed mother, was sent off to New York City alone, to have her baby to avoid the scandal that her pregnancy might have on her family. Cookie never stopped the baby girl she was forced to give up for adoption. When her telephone rang thirty-seven years later, with her daughter on the line, she answered the call that she had been waiting for all those years. Clarke relates it a delightful way, how they forged a bond and developed a loving relationship that ended much too soon.

Linda says

For me, the first 30% of this book was just OK. I think it all came down to the fact that there was no tension. Caroline Clarke described her life as being as about as perfect as a life can be. Perfect is wonderful, but it is boring as a plot for a book. Clarke created a little suspense by trying to have it both ways. On one hand she said she didn't want to find her birth mother, but clearly she did. I just didn't care. I even skipped a lot of chapter three, because I was bored.

But...once the relationship between Caroline and Cookie was established, I found it interesting. I liked Cookie from the first conversation when she said that she would have to deal with Timmie and her Mother, later. It was something a little harsh and street wise about the comment that intrigued me. Cookie turned out to be the exact opposite of harsh or streetwise, but, nonetheless, fascinating. My interest peaked at about the 50% mark, then I went back to not caring.

This is a sweet, sentimental book. If that is what you are in the mood for or you need some reassurance about adoption, this is the book to read.

Katie Lynn says

I think I would have liked it better had it been culled and edited more. But it was okay

Mary says

I loved this book.
It's about motherhood, quest for identity, and
the author Clarke really knows how to write.
A true page turner. I'm giving it to
all my mother friends for mother's day!

Staci Newring says

I absolutely loved, "Postcards from Cookie," a memoir of motherhood, miracles, and a whole lot of mail. From the beginning you feel like you are on Carolines' journey to connect with the mother that gave her up for adoption. Caroline had a happy childhood and was raised by parents she loved. Her trip to the adoption agency was not because she wanted to meet her birth parents, but instead to seek medical information. To her surprise the minimal information she leaves the agency with, is enough for her to piece together the identity of her birth mothers' family. Because this was a closed adoption, the social worker could not confirm the identity. She did however, say enough to confirm that Caroline was on the right track. Magically enough, Caroline discovers that she is the granddaughter of the great, "Nat King Cole." As if that isn't enough to take in, She realizes that she has been friends with Nat King Coles' daughter, and her own aunt, for many years. She has also been in the presence of her grandmother. The blessing for Caroline, is that her mother Cookie greets her with warmth and love from the moment she speaks to her on the phone. The disappointment is that they live in two different parts of the country and her birth mother, Cookie is afraid to fly. The book navigates Caroline's feelings for this new relationship with her mother. The writers eloquent prose makes "Cookie," jump off the page. You want to meet this woman and give her a big hug. "Cookie," is both flawed and fabulous at the same time which makes you appreciate her humanness. Despite the fact there were not many face to face visits between them, Cookie made up for that by sending post cards and gifts to her daughter. The sad part for me came half way through the book when I remembered that I had previously read, Natalie Coles', book, "Love Brought me Back," a few years ago...and realized what was in store for Cookie. This is a story of magic, miracles, and synchronicities, but most of all, it teaches us that there is no barrier that love can't overcome.

Cosima says

Caroline Clarke's memoir about finding her birth mother is well-told in "Postcards from Cookie". You would think that the connection to Nat King Cole would have been the most extraordinary element to their connection but the twists and turns kept coming. Their story is crazy enough to be a Lifetime movie (this time I mean that in a good way).

Clarke's journalistic side shows in both the attention to detail and in her refined and reflective writing style. The conversations are so detailed it almost seems as though they must have been recorded. The blossoming relationship was deep and beautiful even though Cookie and Caroline unfortunately didn't have much time together.

There were a couple of times when certain conflicts seemed a little exaggerated, and where Clarke seemed to be in denial. There's nothing wrong with adoptees being curious about their origin, even if they were lucky enough to be raised in a great family. At the same time I can understand her desire to not want to hurt her parents.

"Postcards from Cookie" is very touching story about a mother and daughter rediscovering each other that truly resonated with me.

LiteraryMarie says

Investigating details from the adoption agency report and contacting a college friend starts Caroline's journey to connect with her birth mother, nicknamed Cookie. A life-changing relationship begins and grows with phone calls, e-mails and so many postcards that Caroline has to empty drawers to store them all.

Postcards from Cookie is an extraordinary true story of discovery and the appreciation for written communication. Not every adopted person wants to seek their birth parents. Simple curiosity wasn't Caroline's intention. However, I was filled with warm feelings as I read and saw their mother-daughter relationship develop through correspondence. It wasn't always roses and smiles. They had disagreements like any family, which made me root for them more. Caroline is a passionate advocate for adoption. I recommend this memoir.

FULL REVIEW ON www.literarymarie.com

Suzy says

Chapter 9 Cookie has managed to fill nearly all the white space on the card. There is a quote from James Baldwin, a short poem by Sue De Kelver, and her succinct critique of a little-known book of haiku by Langston Hughes. But it is her note regarding the photo on the postcard itself that stops me cold: Is it that a picture is worth a thousand words or is it that sometimes words just get in the way?

Donde esta mi nina? A simple question in any language, yes? What does this simple question imply in the mouth of the man in this photo? In the mouth of a butterfly, a panda, or a woman named Alice? Donde esta mi nina? A simple question. A loaded question. A political question? A silent question stuck inside one or ten zillion mouths for nearly as many years... .

Maureen says

This book made me want to read other books by Caroline Clarke. I picked it up because it was an adoption-related book, but I enjoyed it for so many more reasons. It was well written and flows well causing the reader to want to continue on to the next chapter to see what will happen next. Although this is a non-fiction book, it reads a lot like a fiction book with plenty of things to keep the reader guessing. I imagine part of the draw is celebrity aspect that Caroline Clarke is related to the famous Nat King Cole and Natalie Cole, but she is also a truly gifted story-teller.

After some health issues, Caroline goes in search of information about her birthmother. What happens is that she actually determines who her birthmother is and that she has had connections to the woman since she met one of her college friends. Caroline is not sure how Cookie will react when she introduces herself (via a phone call), but the reunion goes well and the two women connect. While most of the reunion is surprisingly smooth and happy, it is also realistically good to hear about the couple bumps in the road they encounter as they try to reconnect into each other's very different lives.
