



# FOSTER CHILD

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Imagine a child living with its parents in a village. The village hugs the mouth of an estuary. The land is rugged and dramatic, the jungle dense. Islands dot its periphery, divided by deep waters. Close to the sea, the child fishes and dives for pearls. Its popularity grows as it trades treasures.


Then the child is given away, just for a time, fostered by a parent on the other side of the world.

So the child moves to the big city. It is shocked, bewildered. It rebels, gets hurt, but the child is resilient and begins to shape and strengthen.

As it grows, the child absorbs its foster parent's culture – fusing the beliefs, language, food, music, art and economics into its own. It adopts its foster parent's values - melding freedom of speech, democracy, individualism and the free market with its own.

The child becomes educated, travels, enjoys a higher standard of living and is protected by its foster parent. It prospers and revels in the esteemed and worldly melting pot it has become.

Over recent years, its natural parent also changes. It too begins to prosper and enjoy a higher standard of living, though under different circumstances and with different values – obedience, control, the community versus the individual - in some ways the antithesis of the child's. Its achievement is stunning and its influence becomes powerful. As the natural parent grows more affluent and begins to travel, it gradually develops and learns the ways of the modern global world.



The time for the child's return arrives. The child is passed back to its natural parent, bringing with it all the perceptions and culture of its foster parent. The handover is amicable between both custodians and the intention is good.

But the two parents differ greatly and the child loves what it has made of itself. It questions, "Will I be understood? Will I be valued for who I am?" It fears "Will I lose parts of myself that I love?" It worries "What does my future hold?"

It will change, it will survive and it will prosper because it has had to in the past and because it knows it can.

But imagine the child and how it must feel?

Now imagine not a child, but a country.