

THE IMPOSTER

Thirteen-year-old Nicholas Barclay disappeared on his way home from a basketball game in San Antonio, Texas. He was never found and was eventually assumed to be dead.

5 Three and a half years later, Nicholas's family were contacted with the news that the missing boy had been found in Spain. Carey, Nicholas's sister, travelled from Texas to Spain to take her long-lost brother home. It was an emotional reunion, and when she took the boy home to Texas, the family embraced him and told him how much they'd missed him. Nobody in the family questioned why Nicholas, who disappeared in Texas, ended up in Spain. And more surprisingly, nobody questioned the fact that this boy looked nothing like the
10 missing boy. Nicholas was fair-haired and blue-eyed. ¹ ____ This is the amazing story of twenty-three-year-old Frederic Bourdin, a mixed-race Parisian who, in the late 90s, adopted the identity of Nicholas Barclay, a sixteen-year-old American.

In 1997 Bourdin was living in a home for young people in Spain
15 and was planning to run away. He needed a new identity, so he tried to **pass himself off as** the missing boy from Texas. ² ____ He read on the flyer that Nicholas had a cross tattooed
20 between his right index finger and thumb, so he got a friend to give him a tattoo using a needle and ink. There was nothing he could do about his brown eyes, but he decided that
25 he would say his eyes had changed colour as a result of the traumas he had been through. When his disguise was ready, he presented himself at a local government office and said that
30 he was Nicholas Barclay.

When Nicholas's sister Carey came to pick him up, Bourdin was sure that she would instantly **see through** his disguise and realise he wasn't her
35 brother. But instead, Carey rushed towards him and hugged him. ³ ____ She even **swore under oath** that he

was her brother and an American citizen, and he was granted an
40 American passport.

On the flight back to America, Carey showed Bourdin photos of the family and he listened carefully, learning everyone's name so that
45 he could recognise them later. He was worried that the family would reject him, but they took him in and he quickly blended into family life.
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50 Not long after Bourdin had settled into his new home, a TV station heard about the extraordinary return of the sixteen-year-old Nicholas and hired Charlie Parker, a private investigator,
55 to look into the disappearance of Nicholas Barclay for a TV show. Parker and the TV crew turned up at Carey's house to interview Bourdin. Right from the start, Parker **wasn't**
60 **taken in** by Bourdin. ⁵ ____ Having once read that ears are distinct, like

fingerprints, he told the cameraman to zoom in on his ears. Once he was back in his office, he studied the
65 ears of both boys and found that they didn't match. He passed on his suspicions to the police. He then called Nicholas's family to tell them what he had discovered, yet they still
70 believed that Bourdin was their son.

In the end, Bourdin found it impossible to **keep up the lie** and he finally admitted to Charlie Parker that he was Frederic Bourdin. He
75 was later sentenced to six years in jail.

Many questions remain unanswered: how could the family not recognise that he wasn't their flesh and blood?
80 Were they really taken in by Bourdin or were they **covering up** a more sinister truth?