



Forever Mine | Anna Bedyńska

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The author's version of the publication is available for sale.

The Japanese justice system is based on **19th-century family law principles**, which do not recognize **joint custody** and do not consider parental abduction a crime. As a result, **over 150,000 children lose contact with one parent every year**.

Japan is the only **G7 country** where, after divorce, sole custody is granted to just one parent, while the other loses all parental rights. They are not entitled to know where their child lives, where they go to school, or how they are doing. **They have no right to visitation.**

"One day, you are a parent; the next, you are not. The police and the court say: 'Go home, forget that you were ever a parent! Imagine that your child is dead,'" recalls one of the people featured in the series.

But parents cannot forget. **Tomas Savicas** last saw his daughter, **Gabriele**, over **eight years ago**. He still catches himself looking into strollers on the street, searching for his **nine-month-old daughter**—the age Gabriele was when his ex-wife took her away.



"Under the current Japanese law, the parent who manages to take the child first will be granted custody," explains **Richard Delrieu**, a professor at Kyoto Sangyo University and chairman of the **SOS Parents Japan** association, who himself lost custody of his son.

"The court tolerates child abduction," Delrieu adds in a documentary on Japan's family law. After **six months** of the child living in a new residence, the **abducting parent gains a legal advantage** over the other spouse. Custody is then granted to them.

In many cases, a parent who has lost custody must—despite having no contact with their child—**pay child support until the child turns 21**. Between **10% and 30%** of these payments **go directly to the lawyers** who helped secure the court ruling.

Anna Bedyńska

Her focus is always on **people**. She directs her camera toward those living in the **shadows of the wider world**, often on the margins of **social and economic life**.

She strives to capture the **social changes** shaping contemporary society, such as the **evolving role of fathers** or the **situation of women in social, cultural, and political contexts**.

Her projects **Dad in Action, Clothes for Death, and Kids Go Home** have been used as **social campaigns**, advocating for the **humanization of death and birth**, while the **Spot the Dot** photo series was created to support **skin cancer prevention efforts**.

Anna Bedyńska specializes in **reportage photography**, often addressing **taboo topics**. In her project **Forever Mine**, she combines **photography and sound** to tell the story of **parental abductions in Japan**.

Winner of the **World Press Photo Award** and the **MKiDN Award (2013)**. She graduated from **PWSFTviT in Łódź** and the **School of Documentary Film and Theatre in Moscow**.

Her Russian series "**Innocently Convicted**" won **Photo of the Year** at **Grand Press Photo 2017**.

A former member of the **Canon Ambassador Program (2013–2018)**, as well as **Women Photographers** and **Polish Women Photographers**. She has lived and worked in **Warsaw, Moscow, Tokyo, Hong Kong, and Bucharest**.

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The **dummy book** of *Forever Mine* (2021–2023) was a **finalist** in the **Hong Kong Dummy Award 2023** and, as part of this recognition, is currently traveling to **photobook festivals worldwide**.