

## Introductory Letter

Dear Dr. Mack,

My project is on transracial adoption. My Aunt Julie and Uncle Burt adopted a daughter, Mia, from China about a year and a half ago. When Julie and Burt went to China to get Mia, I went with them. After our return, I babysat Mia for six months, helping to rehabilitate her mentally and physically. I am intimately linked with their family, and this topic, in many ways; however, the most important is that I am named guardian of Mia in the event of Julie and Burt's death. I take that honor very seriously, and while there is very little chance I will ever have to assume the duty, I mean to be as knowledgeable as possible. I believe that part of my responsibility is to learn as much as possible about Mia's adoption and birth culture, in case one day I am the one answering her questions about where she came from.

At first, I thought researching the project would be difficult, but after finding the right keyword, transracial, I was undulated with academic sources. Unfortunately, this research revealed some truths I wasn't sure I wanted to know about. In one case, an article actually turned my stomach, and I warred with the idea on whether or not to use it. On one hand, it showed the absolutely despicable conditions Mia was being rescued from, and on the other, it destroyed any possibility of presenting the opposite perspective with any sympathy. In the end, I decided I didn't want to taint my project with something that even I found nauseating, and left it out completely.

This dilemma would occur a few more times in my project. Julie believes in not watching or listening to anything negative. She believes that it isn't necessary to include unpleasant things in TV shows,

*movies, etc. This made incorporating the negative aspects of transracial adoption a little difficult, especially since I wanted to write a project that wouldn't anger my aunt. However, I also felt that a few unpleasant details would have to make their way in to illustrate Mia's biological mother's plight, and to show why adopting Mia, and all the other Chinese girls, was so important. So, I kept in what I believed was absolutely necessary and hoped that Julie will understand my intentions.*

*My most intimate source was Julie and Burt. I thought interviewing them would be a snap, but I found that under the formal conditions of an interview they clammed up and only answered the questions briefly, like they were in a short-answer essay exam. They had little enthusiasm and I found myself scrambling to get them to truly open up. Eventually, we got the bugs worked out, and I was able to gain some valuable information from them. After all, there is no academic source that can capture the actual participants' feelings and emotions.*

*I am glad I decided to explore this aspect of my family. I learned about the social conditions that Mia came from, and I feel that perhaps now, if I had to, I could answer some of those questions that surely one day she will ask. Of course, I intend on being a big presence in Mia's life, and I hope that I will get to impart some of my knowledge even though I'm not in the guardian position.*

*Sincerely,*

*Katrina Reed*

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## Listen to Your Heart

Julie walked through her big, empty house. It wasn't a palace, but it was considerably larger than most family homes. Family homes, huh, Julie scoffed at the thought. Julie and Burt had bought this house thinking they needed more room for the children they were planning on having, but those children never came. Sometimes, the empty "guest" bedrooms seemed to yawn into an endless oblivion, reminding her each time she passed by that they were supposed to be the kids' rooms. The beige walls that they thought so classy at the time, reminded her of desert-like barrenness now.

Walking down the stairs, she turned toward the living room. Her footsteps clicked on the hardwood floor, and seemed to echo in the silent house. Stopping at a mirror, Julie swept her short, bright red hair away from her heart-shaped face and turned away from her disturbed hazel eyes. Julie flopped down on the couch and flipped on the TV. Her thoughts were jumbled, racing, disjointed like the channels she quickly flipped through. What was she going to do? She wanted so badly to have a baby, but it was quickly becoming apparent that is not what God had in store for them. What were the alternatives? To stay childless? No, no, no, no, she couldn't accept that.

Burt...Burt, he would make a wonderful father, but to whom? Nancy had told her to get something going and he would fall in line with it.<sup>1</sup> She had quickly responded that she couldn't proceed with anything without

Burt's absolute support and commitment.<sup>2</sup> Anyways, she didn't know quite what to proceed with.

She flipped the channel yet again and PBS was playing a panel talk show. It was the kind of show that is filled with experts who look like they've been with a book, and without a woman, for far too long. The monotones of the experts quickly melted into the background, yet it was a welcome distraction as it drifted in and out her thoughts.

*"Today's topic: Transracial Adoption. With us in the studio today are..."* the TV caught her attention.

Adoption? Would Burt go along with that? Was adopting here even a possibility? They had fought so hard to have a baby! She wanted to look down and see Burt's smiling brown eyes looking back, see her mother's movie-star lips, and her pearly smile...could she let go of that?<sup>3</sup> What really defined a family? Could she love a child that wasn't biologically hers? But even as she thought that, she knew the answer. She would love any child that was her own.

But adopting in the states takes so long! Plus, there are so many complications, and too many horror stories. What if the mother came back, years later to steal the child away again? She didn't know if she could take it, to lose a child like that...to raise a child and then be told it wasn't yours anymore. Or what if the mother wanted to see the child all the time? With open adoption she could interfere with their lives. Plus, the birth mother

even gets to pick the parents now-a-days. Did she want to line up and be selected by someone who's looking at some cold dossier? Would that woman know how much she wanted a child? Would that woman realize that they would treasure that child above everything else?<sup>4</sup>

She had to move beyond that...beyond blood...beyond worry. Love, that's what's important—the only thing that's important. She had to trust that God would match them with the perfect child for them. But where is that child?

*“20,443 families choose to adopt internationally in 2003, a dramatic jump from the 6,587 adoptions in 1993.”<sup>5</sup>*

*“Many of these adoptions were from China...”*

Maybe that was it. China. They could adopt a little girl from China. Her interest piqued, she suddenly focused on the man with the bad comb over.<sup>6</sup> The name Toby Volkman appeared underneath his image.

*“The one-child policy, the Chinese state's attempt to curtail population growth, called for all couples to limit themselves to a single child. In many areas this became a 'one son/two children' policy: parents were allowed to try for a second child—a son—if the firstborn was a daughter. Enforcement measures included steep fines for 'over-quota' children, sterilization, and the threat of forced abortion in the event of future pregnancies.”<sup>7</sup>*

The camera spun to a woman who looked like a militant-Nazi-librarian, Helena Grice.<sup>8</sup>

*“The forsaking of female babies has been called an ‘epidemic of abandonment’...despite the fact that ‘forsaking’ baby girls is illegal in China.”<sup>9</sup>*

How could anyone just leave a child? She could feel the longing for a child, the desire that was so strong that it made her ill, and here people were abandoning the children they were blessed with. She threw the remote control to her right in disgust. She didn’t understand it. She would never – could never – understand it.

Her gaze slid out the window. She watched the trees waving, and through the open windows she heard the rustle. Somewhere, thousands of miles away, there was a lonely little girl without a mother, and here she sat, a woman without a daughter. They both had something the other one wanted. As the possibilities loomed in front of her, she could almost feel the little arms around her neck and the wonderfully warm pressure of baby hugs. Who cares about blood! Who cares about genetics?!

*“Ninety percent of the children in China’s orphanages are female...it [is] highly unlikely that a boy would be abandoned except under dire circumstances.”<sup>10</sup>*

Huh. Sexism gone wild.

All those little girls who need a home...maybe they could give a little girl what she needed. Pregnancy was so random, left to chance, but adoption was a measure of faith. Adoption is a conscious decision, yet a leap of faith, because the parents have to wait to love the child until they know who it is.<sup>11</sup>

*“...adoption by a Caucasian family offers the only alternative to prolonged impermanence.”<sup>12</sup>*

A new voice emitted from the TV but she didn't care, it barely registered in her mind. She had made her decision, and now she only had to convince Burt. Would he feel the same as she did? Would he care about not having a child who shared his DNA?

She reached over and grabbed the remote. With a defiant click, she turned the TV off. It didn't matter what comb over guy had to say, or what the Nazi-librarian's opinions were, because Julie knew what she was going to do. She walked over to the bookshelf and picked up the picture of her and Burt. The frame was engraved silver with two butterflies in the corner.<sup>13</sup> She looked at their smiling faces, and knew that a third face belonged there with them.

The low growl of the garage door opening alerted her that Burt was home. She took a deep, slow breath, and waited. He walked through the door and he saw her standing by the bookcase. He smiled and walked over for the customary welcome home smooch. He stepped away and said, "I read something today, and it seemed like a sign or something. What do you think about adopting?"<sup>14</sup>

She smiled. A daughter! A little girl that would be theirs! One that would look up into Burt's brown eyes, watch her mother's movie-star lips when she spoke, and laugh at her pearly smile.



## Like a Mother in the Night

it's so cold my lips are numb so dark what was that can't be caught can't be caught they do horrible things to me to my baby but i have to please my husband he must have a son his father must have a grandson heir namesake quiet little one just for a little while don't cry not now there there that's better please don't let it be too cold for you so small yet strong you will live you have to live have to have to almost there we're going to make it it's so late can't see can't be seen they caught Mei while she pregnant with third baby they killed it now she can't have any more babies<sup>15</sup> i've been hiding for so long if they knew i was pregnant they make it so i can't have another baby<sup>16</sup> like Mei the others too no more tries for a boy<sup>17</sup> my husband would be furious a boy is the only thing my husband wants a boy is the only thing that matters he was so mad so mad you were a girl<sup>18</sup> if they catch me i'd go to prison yet yet couldn't do what husband wanted no no no he said should kill baby no one would know you ever were born<sup>19</sup> but i can't i can't i love you wouldn't let them kill before you were born i won't do that now i can't keep you i have no choice little one<sup>20</sup> no choice no choice so little time left soon too soon we'll be at the bridge<sup>21</sup> have to say good-bye i remember you always little one please guanyin take care of my baby let her be happy watch over her<sup>22</sup> there's the bridge this is it where where there no no must be found where maybe on that doorstep no under the light no no won't near the police station there there under that sign a giant peach<sup>23</sup> when someone comes you will be noticed will be found<sup>24</sup> goodbye little one stay safe stay warm now i can cry

# Someone to Watch Over Me

Here she comes again. Coming in after dark, she always waits until the other women are gone. The other women look so different from her with their shiny black hair and dark skin. Glowing white, with white hair and white skin, she enters with the moonlight. Then, she picks me up and tells me about my new life. It's the same every night, ever since I've been in the orphanage, almost the entire nine months I've been alive.

Each night, she whispers to me that my mommy and daddy are coming for me, and that they are going to take me someplace wonderful. They are going to take me home. Each night, I ask her what a mommy, daddy, and home are. She tells me that I will see soon. Finally, she snuggles, cuddles, and hugs me until I drift peacefully to sleep.

The very first time she came to me, she told me to call her Grandma.<sup>25</sup> I wasn't scared, since there was something about her that was so disarming, so peaceful, so comforting that it never occurred to me to be scared. At first, I thought that she worked here, but it soon became apparent that I was the only one that could see her. Realizing that I was special, I knew she was there just for me.

She makes me feel so safe and warm, unlike anything I've ever felt. Thinking about her all day long, I lie on my bamboo mat and look through the metal bars.<sup>26</sup> Next to me, the baby girl cries a lot. I think she's sick but the women just walk by her.<sup>27</sup> I don't cry because I know that I'm leaving soon. Even when they take us out of our cribs twice a day to feed us, I don't cry.<sup>28</sup> As they pour the sickeningly sweet formula down my throat, I close my eyes and think of Grandma, then it doesn't seem so bad.<sup>29</sup>

Looking forward to the night, for Grandma to come, I wait all day for the sun to go down. When Grandma smiles at me, it glimmers, and I feel like the light from that smile goes right through me. Grandma comes in, lifts me up and I feel happy. It's the best part

of my day. But she says that soon my whole life will be filled with moments like that. To me that doesn't seem possible, but how can I doubt her?

Then the day comes, the one Grandma has been telling me about, I'm leaving. The other women take me, and some of the other little girls, outside and we ride in a van for a long time. I've only been outside once, when they took my picture one time.<sup>30</sup> Never been in a van before, as a matter-of-fact, I've never been anywhere before, and my eyes gaze out the window in wide astonishment. Unknown objects whiz by the van window, things I could not name, and barely had time to register as we traveled to—to—where? To the mommy and daddy Grandma has been telling me about? I'm worried, Grandma never told me what a mommy and daddy was, and I wonder how I will know.

The dark haired women take all of us from the van into a tall building. How strange...the windows have no bars. We end up in a small room. Bright and colorful, the room is so unlike where we live. A strange rumbling of voices comes from another room, alien, different from the dark haired women's voices. Suddenly, the women start taking us away one by one. I tremble, and look wildly around, and as I look up, there is Grandma.

I look at the women, the other girls, but they don't see her. If she is here, then I am safe, and relief spreads through me. Finally it is my turn. Carried into the next room, the one teeming with strange voices, I see all the little girls. Grandma follows and I know that this is it. There is a woman with white skin and bright red hair smiling at me. She stands next to a tall, bald man.<sup>31</sup> A man! I've never seen one!<sup>32</sup> I've heard the dark haired women talk about them, but to actually see one! The red haired woman takes me in her arms and smiles, and it's the smile, Grandma's smile.<sup>33</sup> That same feeling that Grandma gives me comes over me, and I hear Grandma say "this is a mommy and daddy" before she fades away. Hmm, I wonder what a home is.

## Culture Shock<sup>34</sup>

Cast:

Julie  
Burt  
Trina<sup>35</sup>  
Tour Guide  
Restaurant Employee #1  
Restaurant Employee #2  
Restaurant Employee #3

*Setting: A large room—an airport terminal—with seats lining the walls on the left and right. The seats are filled with Asian people waiting to board their planes. A balcony, with a restaurant, overlooks the stage below.*

*A long line of Caucasian people stand in the middle of the room. Each has a large cart filled with luggage, and each either has a stroller or a baby carrier strapped to them.*

*An Asian woman, the Tour Guide, comes down the line, speaking loudly in English to the parents gathered there.*

**Tour Guide:** Here are your boarding tax vouchers. You have to give it to the guards to get on the plane. You have only 15 minutes to get through the line once they call your flight number! After that, the gate closes and you will not be permitted through the gate. Have everything ready so you can get through the line quickly...

*Three people stand at the back of the line, one young woman, Trina, and a middle-aged couple, Julie and Burt. Julie carries a baby in a carrier and a backpack. Their cart of luggage comes up to their chests, and three carry-ons are stacked on top of one another (Julie steadies it).*

*Trina leans on the luggage, looking very pale and miserable.*

**Burt:** How ya feelin' Trina?

**Trina:** Oh God, I think I'm gonna die.

**Burt:** *(laughing)* Well, they tell you not to drink the water...

**Trina:** I didn't! I must have gotten a drop in the bottom of a glass somewhere along the way...

**Julie:** Aww, you poor thing. We'll be on the plane soon, and then you can sleep.

**Burt:** *(looking around)* I wish we could've gotten something to eat before we came, I'm starving.

**Julie:** I think there's some snacks in the backpack.

**Burt:** I'm not digging through there. *(Looks around again, spots stairs)* I'm going to go look for a bathroom.

**Julie:** Well, you'd better hurry because when they call our flight number we have to hurry.

*Burt waves a dismissive hand as he walks away. Trina leans further over the luggage cart, and lies completely on top of it.*

**Julie:** Trina, you've got to get up! You've got to look normal or we won't make it by the medical area. They'll quarantine you and you'll end up stranded in China. Now smile or something.

*Trina forces a horribly fake, pained smile. Julie grimaces.*

**Julie:** That isn't much better. *(Looks around)* Do you have any idea what your mother will do to me if I don't bring you home? *(Sighs)* I hope Burt doesn't have to go too far to find a bathroom.

*Lights fall on center stage, and the lights come up on the balcony. Burt is standing there looking down on Julie and Trina. Immediately behind him is a restaurant with two employees standing at the counter. He walks over to them.<sup>36</sup>*

**Burt:** Hi, do you speak English?

*Restaurant Employee #1 and Restaurant Employee #3 shake their heads.*

**Burt:** Oookay, how about a menu? A-a menu? Mennnnnnnnnnnnnu? *(mimes the opening and closing of a book).*

*Restaurant Employee #3 hands him a menu. Burt looks at it and groans.*

**Burt:** It's in Chinese! Of course it's in Chinese... Do you have beef? Do you understand beef? Beef! No chicken *(shakes his head as he flaps his arms)* just beef. Do you understand?<sup>37</sup>

*Restaurant Employee #3 nods and points to a section of the menu. Restaurant Employee #2 comes out from the back, and stands at the counter. Burt points to something on the menu.*

**Restaurant Employee #2:** Oh no! You no want that!

*Burt points to something else, and R.E. #2 speaks in Chinese rapidly to the other two, then they walk away. Burt walks to the railing and looks down on Julie and Trina. Lights fall on balcony, come up on center stage.*

**Julie:** I'm starting to get worried about Burt. He should have been back by now.

**Trina:** Maybe he's getting something to eat.

**Julie:** No, he knows how important getting through the line is. *(She looks around, upwards toward balcony and around the room).* He wouldn't do that to me. What if something happened to him?

**Trina:** *(her head rests on the luggage, with her face turned toward Julie)* Like what?

**Julie:** What if he got into some area in the airport and he can't get back? What if the security guards stopped him? He doesn't have his passport! I have it! What if he can't get back?!

**Trina:** I'm sure he's fine. Do you think they would care if I lie down on the floor?

**Julie:** Don't you dare! You've got to look normal long enough to get past those quarantine areas. Keep practicing your smile. Ooooo, where is Burt? I'm gonna KILL him!

*Lights fall on center stage, and come up on the balcony. Burt is back at the restaurant counter, R.E. #2 is gone.*

**Burt:** I need it to go. I'm in a hurry.

*Blank stares come from the two employees.*

**Burt:** To go? Leave? Take with me? *(Mimes "to go" actions, walks away and comes back, keeps miming until the employees nod).*

**Burt:** I'll need some chopsticks. Chopsticks? *(mimes chopsticks)*

*Burt grabs a pen off the counter, snatches a pen out of R.E. #3's pockets, and uses them as chopsticks. They nod. Lights fall on balcony, come up on center stage.*

**Julie:** Trina, you've got to look normal!

*Trina stands upright and a pale green spotlight shines on her face. She looks completely miserable, like she's going to pass out.*

**Julie:** We won't make it out of the country unless you pull yourself together. Oh God, where is Burt? What if the security guards have stopped him at some checkpoint? He could be stranded somewhere, without his passport, in trouble and I'd be standing here buried under this luggage! I've got to go find him.

**Trina:** Are you insane? You can't leave and risk missing the flight. Besides, he could come back while you're gone. Oh, no, I think I'm going to pass out.

**Julie:** You are not going to pass out now. You are going to pull it together and get on that plane. I am going to kill Burt.

*The line begins to move. People from the seats lining the walls rush into the line and begin to push. Julie begins to try to push the cart, pull the carry-ons, and steady the baby as she goes.*

**Julie:** Oh no! the flight is boarding and I can't find him! Trina, look normal for God's sake! Where is he? Where is he?!

*The line moves quickly, Julie and Trina are propelled quickly along. They both look panicked as they look around for Burt.*

*The light comes up on the balcony. Burt sees the line moving, cursing, walks quickly away, just before the Chinese girl comes out with the food. Light falls on the balcony.*

*Julie and Trina have reached the gate, and have stopped next to the Tour Guide. Julie is frantic.*

**Julie:** I can't find Burt! I don't know where he's at!

**Tour Guide:** Who? What is wrong?

**Julie:** My husband is gone, I have his passport, his taxes, everything! I can't find him!

**Tour Guide:** Give them to me. I'll give them to him.

**Julie:** What if he can't get here in time?! Where is he? Where is he?

*Burt strolls casually up, and slips through the gate.*

**Julie:** Where have you been?

**Burt:** Oh, I've been watching you the whole time...

**Julie:** BURT!

*Julie lets luggage cart and carry-ons there, and storms away.<sup>38</sup>*

# The Family Home

It used to be so quiet. So quiet I could hear my bricks settling into their mortar. When I used to hear them talk about getting a child, I didn't know if I was happy or sad. After all, I'm a new home and I'm pretty, and I didn't want some kid scribbling on my walls! Parents will scrub away the waxy lines, but the scars remain.

Then again, there was something missing. I could never place my hinges on it, but I felt empty, like before they moved in, when I was a newborn house and not yet a home. As the weeks ticked by, their excitement grew and I couldn't help but start to feel the same. After all, a home absorbs the feelings of those who live in it, and I was soaking in their electric enthusiasm. I was so nervous that I felt like my boards were crawling—like I was infested with termites, but in a good way.

Their conversations, their worries, their anxieties, I heard them all as the day drew closer.<sup>39</sup> But I knew—I knew they would be okay. Watching them over the last two years that they lived in me, I knew that they were going to make good parents. Yet, I could sympathize with their anxiety. I remember when I was a new parent, just after I gave birth to the garage.



Finally, the day arrived. They were leaving to go get little Mia. The week they were gone was the longest of my short life. Growing anxious, I watched out all my windows for their return. When their car turned into the driveway, I was so nervous I almost leaked into the basement.

They walked in laughing and I felt their laughter. Some of their family members had gathered to greet them, and I was an extension of that greeting party. The laughter didn't stop for a long time, and in a way, it never really has. Mia has thrived and I watch over her, determined to withstand even the fiercest tornado to protect her. Emptiness is no longer an emotion for me. As a matter-of-fact, sometimes I have trouble remembering what it felt like; it seems like such a distant memory. All those anxieties about wall scribbling were without foundation, since Mia has never strayed, with any writing implement, near my classy beige walls.

Happiness has soaked into every splinter of my being, and my trim swells with pride to be a part of this family. There is talk of a second baby coming soon, little Olivia, but I know now what to expect. The excitement is growing again, and I can't wait to welcome another child into the family.

# ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy is Julie's older sister.

<sup>2</sup> In my October 7<sup>th</sup> 2005 interview with Julie, she said that initially she was unsure whether Burt was fully committed to adopting a child. Nancy, her sister, convinced her that Burt would follow her lead and to quite hesitating.

<sup>3</sup> In the Oct. 7<sup>th</sup> interview with Julie, she mentioned several times that people can be bias towards adoption because of genetics. They want children that are genetically linked by blood, and people have to realize that genetics aren't important.

<sup>4</sup> All of these concerns about domestic adoption were mentioned by Julie and Burt in their October 7<sup>th</sup> interviews. The reason they adopted from China was due to the problems with domestic adoption.

<sup>5</sup> This is paraphrased citation from Patrick Mason and Christine Narad's article "International Adoptions: Myths and Realities" page 483.

<sup>6</sup> I did no research into what Volkman looks like, and I am unsure if he has a comb over, so this is just a creative detail.

<sup>7</sup> This is a direct citation from Toby Volkman's article "Embodying Chinese Culture" page 33.

<sup>8</sup> Again, I have done no research into what any of my sources look like.

<sup>9</sup> A direct citation from Grice's article "Transracial Adoption Narratives" page 127.

<sup>10</sup> A direct citation from Grice's article "Transracial Adoption Narratives" page 125.

<sup>11</sup> In Julie's October 7<sup>th</sup> interview, she said that with pregnancy the mother loves the baby as it grows in the womb, but with adoption, that is impossible. You love the child on sight, but pictures and documents just don't make the connection. She had to wait to hold her daughter before she knew without doubt that it was love.

<sup>12</sup> A direct citation from O'Brian's article "Transracial Adoption in Hong Kong" page 1.

<sup>13</sup> A symbol of true love in Chinese culture is a pair of butterflies (Liu 244).

<sup>14</sup> Per Burt's Oct. 7<sup>th</sup> interview, Burt read a passage in the bible when they were contemplating adoption and it convinced him. He felt like it was a sign from God.

<sup>15</sup> According to Grice, population officials also "detained women for abortion, sterilization or IUD insertion; beat up those who resisted" (125).

<sup>16</sup> In Helena Grice's article she quotes a population official that said "[W]e go out at night...we take the woman away...she is sent...to get sterilized in the middle of the night by half-asleep nurses and doctors. The woman usually screams and kicks, and our men hold her down for anesthesia" (126).

<sup>17</sup> If a couple gets caught after the birth of an over quota child then they may not get another chance due to the practice of enforced sterilization (Grice 127).

<sup>18</sup> Volkman wrote that "Mothers who gave birth to baby girls might be 'subject to verbal and physical assault from unhappy husbands and in-laws'" (33).

<sup>19</sup> In Grice's article she says that "families in China sometimes commit female infanticide at birth in order to avoid detections after having an unplanned baby girl" (127).

<sup>20</sup> Volkman states in his article that "most couples...felt under intense pressure if they failed to produce a son. Many couples felt they had 'no choice' but to abandon second or third daughters" (33).

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<sup>21</sup> In Burt's Oct. 7<sup>th</sup> interview, he said one of the few pieces of information they received about his daughter's origins was that she was found by a bridge.

<sup>22</sup> According to Liu, in the Buddhist religion, Guanyin is the Bodhisattva of compassion, who hears the prayers of those in need (237).

<sup>23</sup> In Liu's article, she says that peaches are considered a symbol of long life in Chinese mythology (242).

<sup>24</sup> According to Volkman, when children are abandoned, it is in secrecy; however, they are left where the parents think they will be found (33).

<sup>25</sup> Per Julie's Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> interview, during the adoption process, Julie's mother, Violet, died. As the adoption date drew nearer, they would often pray for Violet to help watch over their daughter.

<sup>26</sup> During Julie's follow up interview on October 16<sup>th</sup> 2005, she mentioned that when she was in the airport in L.A. she talked with a man that went and visited his daughter's orphanage. He said that he didn't get to go into the interior, but he did see where the children slept. He said it was dirty, and there were flies everywhere. He also said that the children slept two to a crib. The cribs had metal bars and only bamboo mats on the bottom for the children to sleep on.

<sup>27</sup> In "International Adoptions: Myths and Realities" the authors write that "Medical problems are treated inadequately or not at all" (Mason 484).

<sup>28</sup> Sometimes children in orphanages are kept confined all day long or tied down to make them easier to watch (Mason 485).

<sup>29</sup> Often meals are unpleasant in orphanages, feeding is done hurriedly, and is usually 'shoveled' in. The food quality is horrible too as it is usually filled with sugar for cheap added calories (Mason 485).

<sup>30</sup> Per Julie's October 16<sup>th</sup> interview, the adoption social workers told them that Mia would probably be Vitamin D deficient, and to expect her to have never been outside.

<sup>31</sup> Julie is a red head and Burt is 6'3" and bald.

<sup>32</sup> Per Burt's October 7<sup>th</sup> interview, the adoption social workers told them that Mia may never have seen a man, since women usually are the only ones to work in the orphanages.

<sup>33</sup> One of the inherited traits that runs strong in Julie's family is her mother's smile, Julie and each of her sisters has their mother's smile.

<sup>34</sup> Per their October 7<sup>th</sup> interviews, they both expressed negatives about their trip to China. Julie said that the worse part for her was that it always felt like they were being watched, and there was always a fear of violating some unknown law and being taken away. The feeling of being an "outsider," and unable to communicate, was the worse part of the trip for Burt. I try to portray these feelings in this play.

<sup>35</sup> As I said previously, I went with them to China and this actually happened when we were trying to come back. Some of this comes from their interviews, and some of this comes from my own memory.

<sup>36</sup> All of the incidents that occur in the restaurant were taken directly from Burt's October 7<sup>th</sup> interview.

<sup>37</sup> Burt is allergic to chicken, so making the restaurant employees understand that he wanted beef was very important.

<sup>38</sup> Julie has never forgiven Burt for getting food while she panicked down below, and teases him to this day about it.

<sup>39</sup> Per their October 7<sup>th</sup> interviews, in the weeks prior to going to China, Julie and Burt often asked parenting advice from others.

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