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To China

We were there. We were finally in the waiting room, and she was actually on her way. It was mere minutes until I met my new sister for the first time.

It had been months since I heard that my family was adopting again. My parents told me so that I could pray for the little girl. The news incited pretty much only positive thoughts in me; my two Vietnamese sisters, who were seven, had grown and fit into our family quite well. We adopted them as newborns, though, so our culture and life were the only ones that they knew. This time the little girl was four years old, not an infant by any stretch of the imagination. I knew that my life was shifting to a place that I had never been before.

When my parents told my two brothers and my two sisters that we were adopting, they were pretty excited. They couldn't wait to have a new sister. My parents then told their siblings and parents. They too were excited, but I thought that some of them also had their reservations.

As time went on, nothing seemed to be happening. We seemed to be waiting on the process to happen instead of moving the process forward. Because of the agency we were adopting through, we had to go to China with a group of others who were also adopting, so we had to wait on a group to be ready too. We were informed that a group was going in September and I grew anxious. I found out that because my dad had to work, he couldn't stay the whole

two weeks that were required. I was offered the chance to go so I could help my mom, and I accepted. When August rolled around, I was getting myself mentally ready to go.

In 2008, however, the World Trade Show was to be held in Beijing. This meant that there would be a lot of people in Beijing in September. We were advised not to go with that group due to this fact, but at the same time we were informed about a group that was going in November.

We planned to go with that group, and as the time to leave drew closer I started to prepare again. It was the week before we were to leave and everything looked like it was going to work out. We all had our passports, and our tickets. We had family lined up to take care of my siblings for the time that we were going to be gone, and I had everything set up with my teachers at school. Then the day to leave came. We left our house early in the morning to board our first flight at the Portland airport.

We landed in Beijing after a short layover in Tokyo. As we walked through the deserted floors on our way to customs, I could already sense that we were in a country that was nothing like the one we had left. It wasn't the Chinese characters that always accompanied the English on the signs, nor was it the different architecture of all of the buildings in China. It was something in the atmosphere. It was as if someone did not want us there and was determined to, if nothing else, make me feel as uncomfortable and alone as possible.

The few days that we spent in Beijing crawled by. It was really interesting to see all of the history and to learn about the culture and the little that I did learn was good for when we were in Guangzhou.

Arriving in Guangzhou was an instant shock. The climate was so warm there. In Beijing it was cold and windy, but in Guangzhou there was normally only a light breeze accompanying the moderate temperature.

But now we were in the room waiting for Eden, my new sister. We had made it through the most of the waiting, through the plane rides and jetlag, through the culture shock. After getting through all of that, I was now nervous. A part of me was wondering what she would be like, was wondering whether she was going to be crying or happy or unemotional. I also wondered what would happen after we got her. I also worried about how she would do back home and what would happen as this little girl grew in our family.

While we were waiting, my mom asked me to film the other families in our group and their new adopted children. I panned over family after family, many of them new friends. There were crying babies, and there were quiet babies. There were babies contentedly hugged close to their fathers, and there was even one baby who was smiling! It was great to see them all, but it made me that much more anxious to see Eden. It wasn't until after every child had come in and been received by their families that Eden entered the room led by two women.

Eden was led to us and my mom got down on her knees so she would be on Eden's level. The first thing that Eden did was to hand my mom a piece of candy. It was so sweet and cute. We sat her down on a bench and we were introduced to her by her escorts. My mom was called "Ma má" and my dad was called "Ba bá", which is Cantonese, the Chinese dialect that Eden knew, and means "Mother" and "Father". I was called "Go gó" which means brother. My parents had to talk with the two women and fill out some paperwork, so I picked up Eden and carried her out into the hall. It was very peaceful in the hall, away from the crying, so I held her

as we walked around the hall. As we walked I talked to her, about nothing specific. I commented on the rooms that we past and about the sucker that she was eating. I knew that she would understand nothing I said, but it was the only thing I knew to do and it seemed to keep her calm and content.

We returned to the room and I set Eden down as we waited for all of the families to finish up talking with the women who brought their respective children. Some of the families who were done came by to see Eden and to introduce us to their new child. One of the children was crying. When Eden saw this, she took her sucker out of her mouth and offered it to the little girl. We gave her a new sucker to give to the crying one, but the whole act was so selfless, especially for a four year old. It surprised everyone.

I spent the next week wondering at the love that I had for Eden. She went from being a complete stranger to being my little sister in a matter of seconds while we were in the waiting room. I already felt like she was my sister and thought of her as my sister. It wasn't by any act that she did, it just was. I didn't understand it but through it I caught a glimpse of God's love for us. It isn't based on what we do, it just is. He loves us, maybe not what we do, but he loves us. Since then, no one has any ability to tell me that God does not exist or that He doesn't love us. Only a loving God could have, would have, orchestrated the events that took place to get Eden home. There were too many hurdles to jump over and too many provisions that took place. I am confident that as Eden grows, we will be blessed by her presence in our family as much as she will be by us.