

The Lost Daughters of China: Adopted Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past

By Karin Evans

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In 1997 journalist Karin Evans walked into an orphanage in southern China and met her new daughter, a beautiful one-year-old baby girl. In this fateful moment Evans became part of a profound, increasingly common human drama that links abandoned Chinese girls with foreigners who have traveled many miles to complete their families.

At once a compelling personal narrative and an evocative portrait of contemporary China, *The Lost Daughters of China* has also served as an invaluable guide for thousands of readers as they navigated the process of adopting from China. However, much has changed in terms of the Chinese government?s policies on adoption since this book was originally published and in this revised and updated edition Evans addresses these developments. Also new to this edition is a riveting chapter in which she describes her return to China in 2000 to adopt her second daughter who was nearly three at the time. Many of the first girls to be adopted from China are now in the teens (China only opened its doors to adoption in the 1990s), and this edition includes accounts of their experiences growing up in the US and, in some cases, of returning to China in search of their roots.

Illuminating the real-life stories behind the statistics, *The Lost Daughters of China* is an unforgettable account of the red thread that winds form China?s orphanages to loving families around the globe.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
The Lost Daughters of China is that rare book that can be many things to different people. Part memoir, part travelogue, part East-West cultural commentary, and part adoption how-to, Karin Evans's book is greater than the sum of its parts. Evans weaves together her experience of adopting a Chinese infant with observations about Chinese women's history and that country's restrictive, if unevenly enforced, reproductive policies. She and her husband adopted Kelly Xiao Yu in 1997, and anyone curious about adopting from a Chinese orphanage--which houses girls and disabled boys--will learn about the mechanics and the emotional freight of the two-year process. Borrowing an image from Chinese folklore, Evans conveys herself, her husband, and their daughter as tethered by a red string that yoked them across an ocean and an equally awesome cultural divide.

The elegant prose is spiced with bits of ironic cultural dissonance. A discount shopper, Evans "felt more than a little strange buying China-made [baby] clothes with which to bundle up a tiny baby, one of China's own, and bring her home." On a bus tour through southern China, she is one of a "bunch of Americans with Chinese infants singing 'Que Sera Sera' in the middle of a sea of traffic. Will she be happy? Will she be rich?" To suddenly hear Doris Day over the horns of a Kowloon traffic jam is heady stuff indeed.

The Lost Daughters of China is at its best when describing Evans's tally of emotional loss and gain. At one point the bureaucratic adoption process is unaccountably delayed, but her father dies during that time and she's able to sit by his bedside. The most mysterious example of this emotional calculus is Kelly's birth mother. Evans invents many plausible scenarios that caused this unknown woman to abandon her three-month-old daughter at a market. These incomplete, necessarily provisional stories help give a face to the larger cultural processes that compel new parents to abandon 1.7 million girl babies annually. The stuff of headlines--human rights, infanticide, rural and urban poverty--is rendered personally relevant in Evans's compelling book. *--Kathi Inman Berens*

From Publishers Weekly
After a 22-month-long adoptive "pregnancy" filled with heaps of paperwork, a U.S.-China liaison rang Evans and her husband one October evening in 1997 to say, "You have a daughter." According to her Chinese documents, the little girl was "found forsaken." While it is illegal to abandon babies in China, Evans reports that the number of "lost girls" is frighteningly high: "Babies, female babies, it seemed, were found everywhere, every day." Currently more than 18,000 Chinese-born children, predominantly girls, have been adopted by Americans. Evans's first trip to mainland China included the brief whirl of bureaucratic negotiations, sightseeing and eating in restaurants, leading up to her introduction to Kelly Xiao Yu, her year-old adopted daughter. Yet in the author's effort to understand the forces that shaped her daughter's situation, her lack of familiarity with China results in a heavy dependence on such sources as the writings of Confucius and Jasper Becker's 1997 book, Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine--and few fresh insights. Evans shines, however, when depicting her new daughter's immediate affection for her and, following their return to the U.S., for the family dog and Harley Davidson motorcycles. In these lovingly wrought sections, devoted to exploring the mysterious process of adoption itself and Evans's quick fall into love with her newly "found" daughter, her narrative is both perceptive and moving. Agent, Barbara Moulton. (May)
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From Library Journal

Each month, approximately 350 Chinese infants, almost all of them female, are adopted by Americans. Most of these babies were abandoned, left on the side of the road or in front of orphanages or community centers, by parents desperate to produce a son. Evans, who adopted daughter Kelly Xiao Yu in 1997, traces China's one-child policy historically, along the way scrutinizing the nation's male-centric bias. Her look at misogyny is riveting, but she takes great pains not to demonize the Chinese people. Instead, she eloquently assesses the conditions that force couples to abandon their offspring and chronicles the emotional anguish that accompanies the decision to give up a child. Her sense of ironyAthat her joy in adopting Kelly required others to relinquish a newbornAopens an evocative window on "intentional" parenting and bicultural socialization. Full of questions and insights about family and the morphing of cultures, this book is essential reading for those interested in adoption, population policy, or the politics of domestic arrangements. Recommended for all public libraries.AEleanor J. Bader, Brooklyn, NY
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