



**CARING HOMES
FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN**

HOMeward BOUND

The Caring Homes for Orphan Children

Newsletter



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Love at first sight?

Nyet.

By Jennifer W.

Everyone said "You'll just know when you see your baby for the first time... You'll know it was meant to be..." But I didn't know – my heart didn't tell me "this is the one." That night, I buried my fragile heart under the covers and cried myself to sleep in the hotel. Such a long road we'd travelled to get to this moment, and now I wasn't sure it was right.

My husband Jim was sure, however. He'd been the first one to hold her that first spring day we met her at the baby hospital, and he said he knew she'd be ours from the first moment he touched her too-big pyjamas. So I swallowed a life's worth of tears and fears, and we kept going.

That was a Monday in April of 2003. On Tuesday, we picked up the scruffy but brilliant Canadian doctor who would give the baby a full physical examination and review her medical history. Other than the expected signs of under nourishment and infant illness, as well as a lack of physical stimulation, he declared her healthy, but said that she suffered a "poverty of love and affection." We had no reason not to move forward with adding to our family.

Still, I held her, and looked into her saucer-brown eyes, and waited for a "sign" that didn't come. On Wednesday, we saw her again, and a social worker came to meet us, and tell us what she could about her birth circumstances – which, in a town with close to 80% unemployment – were not so good. We had a little more time with her on this day, and the nurses let me give her a bottle filled with formula mixed

with kefir, and she fell asleep in my arms. It felt good to hold a baby.



On Thursday, we had to file the official adoption papers, which meant coming up with a girl's name for a child we thought was going to be a boy. We'd spent the plane trip over finally agreeing on a few boy's names, since we had said we'd be happy with either a boy or a girl, but had been told to expect a boy. We had no girls' names on our minds whatsoever, and none of our baby name books with us either! So we'd gone for a Russian dinner of trout and a favourite dish – a soup called *pelmeni* – and we wrote down all the girl-names we could think of that we liked. We narrowed it to two, and then – because we couldn't agree – I left it to Jim.

Until we sat down with a very formal Russian lawyer (who loved Canada) on Thursday morning, I didn't know that our new baby daughter would be named for my departed grandmother, and for me. Elena Anne, we called her, and I wept a little at the thought of those who helped guide us to Elena.

On Friday, we went to visit Elena one last time before heading to St. Petersburg for a week's adventure. She knew us now, and



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even smiled a little behind her dark, very serious eyes. It was April, but some hardworking nurse had absentmindedly chosen a threadbare sleeper with a red-and-green Christmas pattern to it that day. I kept thinking about how Elena was a gift to us.



On a sunny day in a Moscow courthouse in May 2003, Jennifer and Jim officially became parents to seven-month-old Elena. They like to think of her as their 10-year wedding anniversary gift, especially after riding the infertility rollercoaster for close to a decade. A few weeks ago, Elena blew two candles out on her "happy cake" in North Vancouver, BC, after a Russian feast of borscht and perogies. Like any parents, Jennifer and Jim say they can hardly believe how fast the time has gone; "that this jumping, dancing, talking, singing, bright-eyed love of our lives was ever the pale-faced, undernourished little babe we first met at five months old." They also say that in hindsight, they wouldn't do anything differently – except bypass the anxiety and grief of trying to build a family any other way than through adoption.

As our time playing with her in a sterile, crowded doctor's office wound down, the week caught up with me, and I realized in one tsunami wave of emotion that I'd soon be saying goodbye to our little girl for awhile. As I put her back in her crib, filled now with toys, photos and a special flannel blanket from Canada, a sob broke out, and then I cried and cried.

I knew in that moment what I have known every day since: That I love that little girl more deeply than I ever thought possible. A fellow adoptive parent and dear friend recently summed it up perfectly: How can you love a child more than "totally?" There was no "sign," but just like all things in life, I believe one has to know a soul before we can love it. It took me a few days longer to set aside a lifetime of fears and see the hope that filled Elena's soul - and a life-changing soul it is.



"Caring Homes for Orphan Children" is a trade name of Tzivos Hashem Canada, Inc., an intercountry adoption agency
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Moshiach is on his way. Make the world a beautiful place with acts of goodness and kindness.



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Alexander P. on your 3rd birthday on October 4th
Zachary T. on your 8th birthday on October 4th
Naomi S. on your 4th birthday on October 3rd
Aleksandr K. on your 1st birthday on October 7^h
Alyssa D. on your 8th birthday on October 8^h
Dominick M. on your 4th birthday on October 9th
Maya R. on your 6th birthday on October 18th
Evan A. on your 3rd birthday on October 20th
Julia S. on your 7th birthday on October 21st
Andrew F. on your 7th birthday on October 23rd
Elena K. on your 2nd birthday on October 23rd
Carter P. on your 5th birthday on October 24th
Michael A. on your 2nd birthday on October 24th
Andrea F. on your 5th birthday on October 27th
Gabrielle C. on your 9th birthday on October 28th



Sorry if we missed yours! ☺



Upcoming Events

Nov. 4, 2004, Toronto -- Waiting-to-Adopt support group. Discussion group for those who have started, or completed, their adoption home study. 7-9 pm. Adoption Resource Centre, 3216 Yonge St, 2nd floor, Toronto (west side of Yonge, north of Lawrence). \$10. Facilitator: Pat Fenton, MSW; Executive Director, Adoption Resource Centre, adoption social worker and adoptive parent. Infertility Network, 416-691-3611, admin@infertilitynetwork.org, www.infertilitynetwork.org

Nov. 7, 2004, Nanaimo BC -- Adoption Awareness Event. 2-4 pm. Nanaimo Aquatic Centre. By AFABC and MCFD. Cathy Gilbert, 250-722-3872

Nov. 18, Victoria; Nov. 20, Nanaimo BC -- "Attachment Strategies". Workshop for parents and professionals with Deborah Gray. By Adoption Education Committee and AFABC. \$25; \$35/couple. To register: Victoria: Carol Hale, 250-721-6798. Nanaimo: Cathy Gilbert, 250-722-3872

Nov. 18-19, 2004, Edmonton -- Adoption Month Training for Professionals and Families. Brenda McCreight. Thursday night conference, "Sharing the Journey: Tips for Successful Parenting", for parents. Friday session is a day of information and help for adoption professionals. Adoption Options, #304, 10109 106 Street, Edmonton AB T5J 3L7, 780-433-5656, aedm@adoptionoptions.com, www.adoptionoptions.com

Nov. 13-14, 2004, Toronto -- Ontario Adoption Resource Exchange (A.R.E.) Parents' Weekend. Held twice a year. Adoption Council of Ontario conference on Saturday; waiting children presentations on Sunday. Metro Toronto Convention Centre, North Building, 255 Front St., 416-585-8120, www.mtccc.com

December 4th, 2004, Toronto -- One-day International Adoption Seminar.

Full day in-depth educational seminar - prepares parents for an effective transition for them and their child and also assists in learning to cope with potential adjustment difficulties that they and their child may experience. Examples of course topics: Preparing for adoption and travel - emotional considerations, dealing with family and friends, positive adoption language; meeting your child; adjustments, medical issues & child development; attachment & bonding; talking about adoption with your child. \$275 + GST (\$294.25) per couple/ \$185 + GST (\$197.25) single participant - includes breakfast & lunch. Contact Sofie Stergianis to register (416) 483-0003, sofie@ica.net

