



I HADN'T SEEN MY DAUGHTER SINCE
I'd given her up for adoption when she was a newborn. Then, a few months after her eighteenth birthday, I made contact. We exchanged pictures, talked on the phone a few times, and finally planned to meet at the local botanical garden.

With just a couple of days to get ready, I was nervous and excited. It would be such an important moment, and I wanted every detail to be right. Most of all, I wanted her to like me. I joked that it was the most important blind date of my life.

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I went from store to store, looking for just the right skirt: one that would be hip, comfortable, and feminine. I'd already sketched the family tree, gotten together the pictures I was bringing, and arranged a play date for my kids.

Underneath it all, there were more-important preparations for me to make. I had a grown daughter who'd been gone from my life for eighteen years. That was nearly two decades of grief to work through.

The day finally arrived, sizzling hot and bright. I double-checked the directions to the restaurant where I hoped we would go for lunch and balanced my checkbook to make sure I had enough money. I cleaned the trail mix and library receipts from my car in case she rode with me. I checked the batteries in my camera, packed bottles of water, and finally left for the botanical garden thirty minutes early.

In the gazebo, where I would wait for her, I dropped my heavily laden purse on the bench. It was ninety-five degrees, and the air was still and silent. Each time a car drove by, I perked up. Finally one parked, and I heard footsteps. I stood up and saw a tall young woman in jeans and a t-shirt, her hair in a ponytail, striding toward me. She looked happy.

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