

The day we became a family

We had never met.

This little boy had seen our picture—and we had seen his.

And yet there we were, standing in a government office in Hunan Province, being united forever as a family.

John and I were nervous and excited and in awe. I can't tell you how Leo felt. I just know that four years ago when we met him, our new son stood there, hiding his face behind one hand as he tried to take us in.



He was the most beautiful child I had ever seen, and I could hardly believe I would get to take him into my arms and heart and home—forever.

Yet there we were, surveying each other, communicating with few words as tears ran down our faces and Leo tried to figure us out. There must have been other people in that room—including some of our best friends in the whole world—but in my memory of that moment, I am aware of only three of us.

I remember looking at our child, who had just turned 2, and then holding him. We offered him apple juice and a toy airplane. We admired him quietly and aloud, marveling at every detail—his hair, his eyes, his warmth, his size, his clothes, his little shoes.

He was perfect. And I remember hoping and praying that I would and could be a good enough mother to him. It's an ongoing prayer.

We met Leo in December in China, and it was decorated for Christmas everywhere we went.



There were trees and lights and Santa Claus pictures taped up in windows. And the signs all said, "Merry Christmas."



And so this time of year, when we celebrate Leo's "Gotcha Day," I can easily place myself back in China—back in that moment when we were new parents, a new family, and falling in love with our child more every day.

Those two weeks in China weren't always easy. There were tears and challenges, of course. But there was also so much joy. When I look back on that trip, I think of it as a family honeymoon, a time for us to get to know one another—to discover as much as we could about our son, but also, for me, to encounter John as a marvelous new father.

We had never met this child before that day. But by the time we arrived home, it was

almost impossible to believe we hadn't known him forever.



You might also like to read last year's post, Three Years Ago Today.