Captions for Gallery 1 in Chapter 2

Lonely Childhoods and Missing Girls

1

*Located along China’s Yangtze River, the prefectural-level city of Changzhou is said to be 3,000 years old. One of China’s second-tier cities, it is an industrial and agricultural hub located 100 miles northwest of Shanghai. Nearly five million people live in Changzhou, as Maya and Jennie did during the first nine months of their lives.*

*2*

*Maya leans out from the top balcony of Changzhou’s Tianning pagoda. At a height of nearly 500 feet, it is said to be the tallest pagoda in China and perhaps the world. Rebuilt five times since the Tang Dynasty (618–906 AD), it dominates the skyline as it rises from grounds of the Zen Buddhist Tianning Temple. Below Maya is the city’s high school.*

3

*On blisteringly hot August days – the girls’ three-week visit coincides with a record-breaking heat wave in eastern China – Maya and Jennie walk a block from their hotel in Changzhou to descend into an underground labyrinth of air-conditioned, neon-lit passageways. There, they find nail salons and dress shops at each twist and turn.*

4

*In the early morning, before the heat sets in, city residents gather in People’s Park to dance, exercise, play cards and mingle. Women, in particular, are curious to find out more about Maya and Jennie; on this morning, they ask Maya where she was born, if she knows her Chinese mother, and why she has come from America to Changzhou.*

5

*Maya took this close-up photograph to remember this woman who showed great interest in learning about her life – from her birth in China to her family in America. When it is time for them to say goodbye, the woman tells Maya that she will be waiting in People’s Park when Maya comes back to Changzhou.*

6

*In China, toddlers often wear split crotch pants and are “squat trained” rather than potty trained. Squat-and-go is the centuries-old method called* kai dang ku *that only intensive marketing for disposable Pampers is altering. The boy’s curiosity about the camera matches the girls’ about his attire.*

*7*

*Some know it as Red Plum Park with its dazzling spring blossoms, but Hongmei Park (红梅公园) is the official name of Changzhou’s retreat of gardens, park rides, and historic pavilions. Umbrellas shade people from the relentless sun as they walk on the wooden walkway crossing a lake. Maya took this photograph from the top of the pagoda.*

*8*

*One afternoon Jennie and Maya go rowing on a lake in Hongmei Park. With an hour rental, two oars, and muscle power – Jennie’s in evidence, here – they loop an island, slide under a bridge, and emerge into a wide open section of this lake. On the shore, a bride and groom posing for pre-wedding shots catch their eye.*

*9*

*Being together on this journey “home” in China brings Jennie and Maya closer as friends. Each girl well understands the experiences and feelings of the other. When it is time to row, they work as a team – even if it looks as though Maya is getting a free ride.*

*10*

*Judy Garland was 16 years old – and playing Dorothy in “The Wizard of Oz” – when she clicked her magical ruby red slippers three times, repeated Glinda’s words “there’s no place like home,” and woke up in Kansas. Nothing magical about the red canvas shoes 16-year-old Maya packed when she left for China. Or is there?*