

Take Two

Crazy Cakes, her first children's book about her adopted daughter, Ming, was a bestseller. So naturally, Needham's Rose Lewis revisits the subject of children in her second book.

By Amy Yelin | May 27, 2007

I Love You Like Crazy Cakes was a runaway bestseller. Did that surprise you?

I am still surprised by its success. I guess it struck a universal chord, because it's about falling in love with your child, biological or adopted. The thing I was most humbled by was how this book inspired other women to adopt.

What about children's responses?

I remember when a mother introduced me to her daughter once, and I was with Ming. She said her daughter was a huge fan of the book, so I asked her if they wanted to meet the little girl in the book. The mother quickly waved me off and whispered, "No, no. She thinks the story is about her."

What is your new book, Every Year on Your Birthday, about?

The underlying message is the loving bond between any parent and child. I put it in the context of birthdays, because children love celebrating their birthdays. For their parents, I think it's more powerful. Who doesn't wonder "Where has all the time gone" after each birthday?

And why wait seven years between titles?

[The illustrator] Jane Dyer wasn't available for five years. I wanted to wait for her.

How did you two begin your collaboration?

I was a huge fan of Jane's, even before I wrote Crazy Cakes. When I contacted the publisher, I asked that Jane illustrate the book – I wasn't aware at the time that you're really not supposed to do that.

Why did you start writing?

I was looking for a book that summed up my own experience and what I wanted to say about adopting. . . . I decided to go after Jane Dyer's publisher because I was a big fan of her books. So I contacted Little, Brown – in fact, they were the only publisher I contacted – and they said yes.

Wow. That's almost unheard of.

It was wonderful.

You and Ming, 11, recently returned from a visit to the orphanage where she lived in China.

Why did you go back?

Ming has been curious about her birth parents since she was about 5. I know she will always have a hole in her heart because she won't know anything about her birth family. The trip was a way to help her fulfill some of that curiosity.

Did it?

There was something comforting about the experience. While neither of us said it exactly, I think we both felt that some questions had been answered, and we could now visualize Ming's beginnings. My hope was to give her a sense of place that she can refer to, a sense of where she came from – her roots.

– Amy Yelin

