



## Take Two— They're Small

Adopting first one, then a second little girl from Eastern Europe, a woman comes face-to-face with her own flawed self.

**T**HERESA REID, THE AUTHOR of *Two Little Girls: A Memoir of Adoption* (Berkeley), was in her late 30s, on a crowded city street, when she noticed a child's small hand resting on a man's shoulder, revealing an intimacy so profound, so tender, that what

had been the abstract wish to have a child became a passionate desire. Unable to conceive, she and her husband traveled to Russia for a little girl—"the princess of the orphanage"—and the adoption went smoothly. Natalie was almost 3 when Reid and her husband decided to adopt again. This time there was an unreliable agency, Kafka-like delays, mind-numbing bureaucracies, and painful choices, including the agony of refusing a child with physical abnormalities. Adoptive parents have to do more soul-searching than their biological counterparts, and Reid writes with remarkable

Motherhood is not for sissies.

honesty about what she discovered in herself—prejudice, jealousy, anger, doubt, and an endless supply of guilt. When Reid and her husband adopted the tiny Lana, they did so in spite of their worries about her health, her ability to bond, how she would change their family. The two girls did not get along at first, and Reid does not gloss over her own anger at both children. Lana was affectionate but indiscriminately so, and Reid wanted to feel loved as a mother. One day Lana pulled another child away from Reid and planted herself firmly there. That small but unmistakable act of ownership changed their world. A powerful advocate of adoption, Theresa Reid and her husband cannot now imagine a happier life than the one they share with their daughters. Raw feelings, she shows us, are a normal part of the process. Because of the generosity displayed in her candor, she proves that if we can face our demons, we can stare them down. And when that happens, then joy is ours for the taking.

—ABIGAIL THOMAS