

# Approved for Adoption

a discussion created by Therapy Redeemed

## *\*Facilitator's Guide*

**Ice breaker:** Welcome to Holland

*\*Where are you? Living room? Community space? Coffee shop? Basement while the kids are asleep? Local library? Mental health clinic conference room? Car on a road trip? Webex? Whatever your surroundings, this is a great place to begin. It's tender. And it's in your face. A poem meant to draw our thoughts to the joys and disappointments present in any given life circumstance. It really helps us come out from behind the curtain; adoption brings with it some real struggles, and we're not going to sugar coat it. As their facilitator, you're helping people settle into that vulnerable moment with each other, stir a feeling of universality while giving space for these unique struggles to breathe and maybe even begin healing. This group stage is called "forming."*

*\*After reading the poem together, it's completely up to you how you'd like to fan this flame, a suggestion could be, "Let's take a moment to read it together, then after 2 or 3 minutes, "What stuck out to you? What did you notice? What felt familiar? What needs clarification? What word or phrase caught your attention, was there a line or two you found yourself returning to?" Be ok with silence, at least ten seconds, in Back to the Future the DeLorean needed to get up to 88mph before it did its thing... that's what's kinda going on right now, someone ramping up to put their heart and soul out on the line, and by the end of this icebreaker... (in the words of Doc. Brown, "You're gonna see some serious sh\*t"). Don't rush it. But do embrace this very special dialogue you're creating together. Without y'all it wouldn't be happening.*

## Discussion:

*\*Please feel free to adapt any of these questions to fit the context of your group. Considering background, family situations, cultural context, everyone's comfort level, time of day, did we just eat lunch, are we at the end of the workweek, etc. You get the point.*

### 1) *"What's going on with my children?"*

- a. In this film, Jung navigates several stages in his adoption narrative. In one particular scene, there's a drawing of Jung's forehead with 3 empty drawers pulled out. You might have a sense of the kinds of things adoptees wonder about, at various ages. What have been some questions or comments that have already been expressed in your family, by your adoptive son or daughter? Which questions have been more difficult to hear than others? Or more difficult to approach?
- b. Jung seemed to be close to his sister. There was a scene during winter in which Jung asked if she thought of him as a real brother... she responded by asking Jung if he thought of her as a real sister. They both assured the other of their mutual experiences of "real" kinship. The adoption experience challenges traditional definitions of family, what is a mother, father, brother, sister, etc. How has this question come up with your children, "Are you my real \_\_\_\_\_?" What's your response? How about for families with both adopted *and* biological children (think of the scene when the kids were watching family videos/photos, "*you have mom's nose...*")?

- c. What did you notice about the nature of Jung's relationships over time? Not only with who (family, friends, out-group and in-group, cultural interests, etc.), but how (intensity, resistance, pursuit, vulnerability, intimacy and honesty, like and dislike, etc.)?

## ***2) Identity: Parent, Family, and Child***

- a. Jung's family system experienced challenges to its identity on multiple levels:
  - i. The scene with Grandma pointed to a multi-generational tension of being different. How has this come up in your own family circles? Other extended relatives?
  - ii. At the beginning of the story, someone tells the parents, "*No one would believe you were his parents if he got lost here.*" This points to external racial differences within an adoptive family, members within the family experience visible differences. How has this impacted your identity as a family in both public and personal spaces? This is a great question for anyone in the family.
  - iii. Jung is outwardly different within his own family *and* compared to his peers. Yet he finds ways to connect with others through his behaviors and beliefs throughout the film. These were not always healthy. This points to an internal tension of being different and the process of making sense of himself and those around him. He is shown playing with guns and fireworks, shooting chickens, taking ballet lessons, there's a period when he embodies everything Japanese as he repeats, "I don't want to be Korean..." How has this process been for the children in your family? How has this process been for you?

### 3) *Getting to know your child:*

#### a. *Communication*

i. Jung says, *“I avoided other Korean adoptees because they were a reflection of me, and I just wasn’t ready for that yet.”*

1. What did Jung mean by this?
2. What are some ways you could open up the lines of communication in your family? What does communication look like right now in your family? Who are the “communicators” and who are the “quiet” ones? Has it always been this way? What would it look like to “try on different hats”?
3. If someone in your family was angry, how is it generally expressed? Who about sadness? Anxiety? Fear? Hurt?
4. Could you share about a time when, as a family, you felt deeply connected with each other. Where were you? What were you doing? Who was there? What time of the year was it? What did you do before, during, and after that moment? What have been barriers to accessing these moments?

ii. How are things going?

1. What parts of this idea of communication and identity have shaped school, friends, family, hobbies, interests, energy, sleep, access to support, etc.?

**4) Getting your child to know you:**

- i. If you were to share about this movie with someone who hasn't seen it, how would you describe the relationship between the parents and their children?
- ii. What were your reactions to the "rotten apple" scene? The whip? How do you generally express your love? If you loved your family members, how would they know? What do they see and hear as you express this?
- iii. As we got a sense of the parents throughout the film, what feelings or experiences could you identify with? Think about the reactions each of the parents had in response to various events and circumstances, did any of that resonate with you?

**4) Check-out**

\*Some questions to leave with, "what's said here stays here, what's learned here leaves here..."

What was this like for everyone?

What will you remember most from this discussion?

Many people have shared tonight, I wonder who's idea had the biggest impact on you?

If you could sum up your experience with one word, what would it be?

What's one action you need to take after having watched the film and discussed it together with others?

What's one action your children need you to take after having watched the film and discussed it together with others?

Finish this sentence, "For me today/tonight was \_\_\_\_\_" (because \_\_\_\_\_...)

A message from Cam at Therapy Redeemed:

Dear facilitator and every voice in the room, thank you for serving. Thank you for your time and energy; and your commitment to everything that's possible through discussions like this. The best is on its way and I'm so glad to be building it together with you. Peace and grace to you <3

#### CONNECT

receive daily doses of challenge and inspiration | follow Cam on Instagram [@therapyredeemed](#)  
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## Welcome to Holland

*Emily Perl Kingsley*

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I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability—to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this. . .

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip—to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. Michelangelo's *David*. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say, "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine, and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower paced than Italy, less ashly than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around . . . and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills . . . and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy . . . and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say, "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away . . . because the loss of that dream is a very, very significant loss.

But . . . if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things . . . about Holland.