



Between Light and Shadow: A Guatemalan Girl's Journey through Adoption

Mr. Jacob R. Wheeler

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“An adoption professional once told me, ‘At its best, there is no adoption system as good as Guatemala’s. At its worst, there is none worse.’”—from the foreword by Kevin Kreutner

In *Between Light and Shadow* veteran journalist Jacob Wheeler puts a human face on the Guatemalan adoption industry, which has exploited, embraced, and sincerely sought to improve the lives of the Central American nation’s poorest children. Fourteen-year-old Ellie, abandoned at age seven and adopted by a middle-class family from Michigan, is at the center of this story. Wheeler re-creates the painful circumstances of Ellie’s abandonment, her adoption and Americanization, her search for her birth mother, and her joyous and haunting return to Guatemala, where she finds her teenage brothers—unleashing a bond that transcends language and national borders.

Following Ellie’s journey, Wheeler peels back the layers of an adoption economy that some view as an unscrupulous baby-selling industry that manipulates impoverished indigenous Guatemalan women, and others herald as the only chance for poor children to have a better life. Through Ellie, Wheeler allows us to see what all this means in personal and practical terms—and to understand how well-intentioned and sometimes humanitarian first-world wealth can collide with the extreme poverty, despair, misogyny, racism, and violent history of Guatemala.

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