

## Chapter 1

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# Who Am I?

WHEN CHARLIE ANDERSON was ten years old, he found out he was adopted. He could never forget that night. It was right after dinner. Charlie was watching television. Mom and Dad both came into the living room. Dad turned off the TV and said in a serious voice, “Charlie, there’s something your mother and I want to talk to you about.”

Mom looked very serious, too, and Charlie started to worry that something was very wrong. “What’s the matter, Dad?” he asked.

“Well, son, your Mom and I have waited to talk to you about this until you were the right age, and now that you’re ten, we think you can understand what we’re going to tell you.”

“What’s going on? Is someone sick or dead?” Charlie asked.

“No, dear, it’s nothing like that. We just want you to know that when you were born, we weren’t your birth parents,” Mom started to explain.

“What? What do you mean? You’re my parents.”

“Of course, we’re your parents, but what I mean is, we adopted you.”

ADOPTED. ADOPTED. The word rang in Charlie’s ears and thoughts. It was as if someone had hit him.

He knew he should have asked questions, but instead he just wanted to run away from his parents and not think about the information he had just been given.

He said, “You’re wrong. I don’t believe you. You’re just playing around.” When his Dad came to put his arm around him, Charlie pushed him away and ran to his room. He heard his mother crying as he ran up the steps.

The next morning at breakfast, Charlie asked some questions, and his parents tried to answer them. “Who are my birth parents? Where was I born? Why didn’t they want me? Do they know where I am now?”

Charlie found out that his birth parents had lived in another part of Wisconsin and were very poor. They didn’t have the money to raise another child, and so they put him up for adoption. An agency had advertised in the newspaper, and Mr. and Mrs. Anderson answered the ad. As it turned out, Charlie was one of a set of twins; his brother had died at birth.

“You mean I had a twin brother?” Charlie asked.

“Yes, Charlie, but he was sick and didn’t make it,” Mom told him. Charlie seemed more interested in this part of his birth story than anything else.

Dad continued, “We never met your parents, but we loved you from the first minute we saw you. You were in a blue blanket. Your thumb was in your mouth, and your curls were peeking out from under a little blue hat.”

Charlie said, “Now I understand about my hair. Everyone always said I don’t look anything like either one of you. You both have straight, blond hair, and I’ve got dark, curly hair.”

The first few weeks it was hard for Charlie to stop thinking about being adopted, but after awhile, he was busy with school activities. As a fourth grader he was trying out for the town’s all-star baseball team, and everyone said he had a good chance of making it. One day he ran in the door after school and shouted, “I made it! I made it! I’m on the team!”

Dad was traveling for business, but Mom was home. They went out for dinner, and he ordered a big piece of chocolate cake for dessert. When they arrived home, they called Dad at the hotel to tell him the good news. Dad was very pleased.

“I’m so happy for you, son.”

“It’s because you practiced with me all summer, pitching to me and playing catch. I never could have done it without you, Dad.”

Dad was quiet for awhile. Charlie couldn’t see that, on the other end of the phone, his father was wiping his eyes with a handkerchief.

“Are you there, Dad?”

“I’m here. I can’t wait to go to your games, Charlie.”