

A few days after my wife and I adopted our newborn daughter, I went to a baseball game with some co-workers. The slow pace of the game allowed me to reflect on the open adoption experience we had just gone through: meeting our daughter's pregnant birthmother and her grandparents in the "Gold Country" of California's Sierra foothills, being chosen by them to become the adoptive parents of the baby about to be born, and the incredible love that we all felt as we hugged at the hospital before carrying our daughter to the car for the drive home.

At about the seventh inning of the game, a fitting metaphor for our adventure emerged in my mind and I wrote some notes on the back of my game program. When I got home that night I wrote this story, which I have dedicated to my daughter Allis' birthmother, Christine, and Christine's grandparents, Elmer and Pearl.

"The Nugget"

In the shade of the mountains in the Way Out West,
Where the hills are incredibly old,
In the rivers and streams and deep underground
Was this bright shiny stuff called GOLD.

Everyone wanted this bright shiny stuff
To make into beautiful things
Like necklaces, bracelets, watches, and coins,
And of course very valuable rings

The trouble was, it was hard to find
It took shovels and picks, heavy toil
Some people used pans to dip into streams
To rinse away the soil.

Christina and I wanted gold too,
For almost three years we tried.
We worked and we searched and we hoped and we prayed
And once in awhile, we cried.

Then one day a rumor we heard
About a secret place.
Close to Mt. Elmer, next to Lake Pearl
And soon we were on the chase.

Through the tunnel and over the bridge
We would travel week after week
To a cute little bubbling, babbling brook
On the map it's called Christine Creek.

On a cool and peaceful Thursday eve
On August Twenty Seven,
Our heads were down when we heard the splash
As if it came down from heaven.

We held our breaths and dipped once more
In the waters of Christine Creek.
"This one's heavy," we said as we shook the pan
And nervously took a peek.

In the bottom of the pan, half covered with sand,
When the water stopped its swirl,
Was a seven pound, 20-inch solid gold nugget
In the shape of a little girl!

It was then that we saw a miracle
As we marveled at our prize
With a giggle and a coo, and a wiggle or two
The nugget opened its eyes!

"Yippee!" cried Christina. I shouted, "Hurray!"
Our joy we could not contain
We would rush her home and tuck her in bed
And name her Allis Jane.

But before we left they thought it best
To take another look
To make sure we had the blessing
Of the bubbling, babbling brook.

We bent down close and listened
And were sure we heard a voice.
"Please take her home and love her,
I've got no other choice.

"There's been a drought, it hasn't rained
And my water is too low
To keep her shiny and polished and bright
So it's time for her to go."

A tear dropped out of Lake Pearl
And Mt. Elmer sighed the wind,
But they both knew this was the best way
For this baby's life to begin.

For Christine Creek would fill with water
And someday be as great as the sea,
And meanwhile Allis Jane will grow
To be all that she can be.

So Mama and Papa waived fairwell
And promised to do our best.
Who could have thought we'd find such a price?
Who could've ever guessed?

Who needs watches or bracelets or coins
Or necklaces or rings?
This little girl is worth so much more
Than any of those things.

We'll always remember Christine Creek
Close to Mt. Elmer, next to Lake Pearl
For the treasure so special, so shiny and bright
The nugget that turned into a girl.

Twenty years later the nugget revealed itself in a different form. Allis Jane became pregnant and decided to adopt out her baby. In an effort to find meaning and clarity in this difficult emotional situation, and inspired by the love and support of everyone involved, I resurrected the Nugget parable and wrote this sequel while waiting in the maternity ward's lobby.

“The Nugget – The Sequel”

Fast forward two decades to Berkeley
Past the stroller that never was used
Past the naps that were never taken
Unless she got in the carseat and cruised

Past the daycare near Colby with Shelby
Where a seed was planted and grows
To last forever and ever
Her friendship with Alida the Rose

Past ballet and gymnastics and soccer
Past the rowing for Berkeley High Crew
Past pets Kabuki, Lizzie, Poppy and Mo
And Sammi the thoroughbred too

Past the tough teen years, the struggles with tests
The secrets, the mysteries, the fights
That had Christina and I scratching our heads
And worrying through the nights

To the moment of vulnerability
With Christian who offered his love
In an instant a life was created
As if directed from heaven above

But inside she knew it was early
She had more learning and living to do
She thought of her own start and the life that she had
And the answer came out of the blue

A golden beam shot up to the heavens
And was spotted - none too soon -
By the watchful gaze of the fluffy white sphere
Marsha the Marshmallow Moon

The golden beam's message was urgent but happy
And didn't seem strange or odd
to Marsha the Moon; it made perfect sense
Since she had a direct line to God

She quickly beamed down to her mountain friend Rocky
Who kept track of the word on the street
He heard from a friend's neighbor of a mom of a son
And the triangle was complete

A couple of prospectors from the Springs
Named Sparklin' Crystal and Happy John
Had a half dozen treasures that were lost
And different search was on.

They learned of the friend of the neighbor
From Happy John 's mom, Happy Nancy
About a special circumstance
Something simple, nothing fancy

A young woman who herself was adopted
Was ready to pass it on
They met and made the connection:
Allis Jane, Crystal, and John

Seven months later, the moment arrived
When the connection would be put to the test
Allis was ready to do her part
Love would take care of the rest

An entourage gathered to help where they could
With the texting world tapping their prose
And all the way back from Philly:
Her BFF Alida the Rose

Even the Marshmallow Moon paid a visit
And enjoyed the scene looking down
Shining on all in attendance
Wearing her best Harvest gown

Aunt Karen, John's mom Nancy, and I
Waited in the lobby below
As glow of the Moon cast a silvery light
We were sleepy but rarin' to go.

With her mom holding one leg, Alida the other
John and Crystal nearby, full of joy
Allis calmly presented a nugget of silver
In the shape of a baby boy

"He's awesome," said Sparklin' Crystal
"Hi-yo Silver!" said John with a grin.
Jaxon reached out his long fingers
And gave everyone there a high-ten

The nurse turned her focus to Allis
With one more pass of the ultrasound
She sees something totally interesting
And calls everyone to gather around

With the monitor hooked up to an iPad
She positioned the wand just so
At an angle looking up toward her torso
She saw what they needed to know.

They saw moving shapes and squiggly lines
But what were they were looking at?
The nurse said "No worries, thanks to Steve Jobs
Now there's an app for that!"

With a swipe of her fingers a shape appeared
As a burst of warm color and pulse
As soon as they saw it everyone knew
It couldn't be anything else

Suddenly a piece of the puzzle
Had fit into place like a trick
Revealing to all who were wondering
Just what made Allis Jane tick.

The answer that couldn't be Googled
Or pulled from a book on the shelf
All these years after being discovered
She needed to discover herself

Now it was obvious, how did we miss
The signs that were there all along?
Compassion, laughter, generosity, love
That she put out to the world like a song.

She had called on these strengths to summon up courage
To give the best gift she could make
And later will use them to guide her
On whatever path she chooses to take

Now here on display was the source of these traits
Inspiring the awe of the crowd
But didn't surprise me or Christina

And we couldn't be more proud
There...framed on the screen of the iPad
Like valuable object of art
A seven pound solid gold nugget
In the shape of a beating heart.

Then, she held him.

Her... heart... skips, then starts again
But in a different rhythm
Soft skin, cute lips, two freckles
Is that ALL that she has to give him?

The room started spinning, she felt queasy inside
And her confidence started to quiver
Her choice seemed so right, Jaxon's future so bright
In her head...but her heart begs to differ

She thought, "Is this the right thing, 100 percent?
"Should I have taken my time and waited?
"Changing my mind would be hurtful to all
"Is my heart really only gold-plated?"

A day or so passed and the voices calmed down
Doubts remained but it still seemed best
To put pen to paper and say her goodbyes
And hope that she passes God's test

The answers can't be Googled
Or easily put into rhyme
The one who will tell her the truth of her choice
Is her new BFF called Time.