

Two Girls:

I have a young friend at the Farmers' Market whose name is Rosanna. She wears long and brightly colored 'plain dresses' and has the smile of an angel. Her mom and her sisters are possessed of the same heavenly aura. It becomes them. She wears her hair up.

I have a granddaughter named Ella. She dresses in skinny jeans and nail polish and smiles as though the sun were in her pockets. She wears her hair in a new style whenever it suits her. Her mom and she live in California and the place suits them.

Ella and Rosanna met this summer at the Market. They are the same age, give or take, but from such completely different worlds that I wondered, at the time, whether they would find each other interesting or even tolerable. Silly me. They are children, after all and children have a way of getting past the little obstacles that seem to throw grownups for a loop. The fact that they looked different and speak different from each other is no problem at all. The fact that one inhabits a world that is secular and humanistic and liberal did not deter her from reaching out to a girl from a world that is Theo centric and conservative. If you put them together in a photograph and showed it to a stranger the stranger might just assume that the girls are from different countries.

But none of that matters to them. They became fast and, I hope, lasting friends each anxious to show the other what they knew, what they liked and what they were good at. They shared phone numbers and stories and promises. They played games on an I Phone and toured the market as if they were sisters at the church picnic. As I watched from a distance my heart ached for those pure friendships wrapped in the ease of youth. I remember being that way. I remember that we were all that way. No strings, just trust, all now. No 'what ifs' and no 'yes but'. They take each other at face value and leave speculation to the adults.

By the end of their first morning they had given each other gifts of flowers and food and trinkets. They promised to write letters and make phone calls. I have no idea where it might go. I do have the notion that the next time they meet they will pick up precisely where they left off as if time and location don't matter, as if living thousands of miles away from each other should not be allowed to interfere with their bond.

They are possessed of generous hearts. They see a stranger as one is seen in the old Irish phrase, "friends who have not yet met". They expect good things to happen. They speak joy and optimism to a world that professes far too little of either quality. I think that makes all the difference in a life, don't you? The power that positivism bestows on its adherents is truly awesome. It is delightful to watch.

I know two girls who are completely different from each other and exactly the same.