Topic: A Discovery

Pictures: a book, someone looking curious, someone clapping and exclaiming, “Bravo!”

I would never forget that ordinary Sunday afternoon. Both my parents were out at work, leaving me alone at home and bored. I was only looking for batteries in my parents’ room. I never thought my search would lead to a life-changing discovery.

I roamed around my parents’ room, opening random drawers and cupboards, looking high and low for batteries. After searching for what felt like forever, I finally concluded that there were none. I was just about to leave when my gaze landed on something I had never noticed before.

There was one last drawer right at the bottom of the cupboard. It was in a slight recess, so I had never realised it was there. The drawer was half-hidden behind the door, as though trying to conceal itself from me. Not only was it old, but there was also a thick layer of dust on it, as if it had not been touched for ages. Unlike all other drawers and cupboards at home, this one had a lock. That just made it even more suspicious.

Something told me I should not be invading my parents’ privacy, but curiosity took over. As gently as I could, I pulled at the lock. It fell open with a click and I tugged open the drawer. I had expected to find some old boxes or awards my parents had won. But what I found was completely different. It was just a single, yellowed envelope sitting inside.

“What is this?” I mumbled in bafflement.

My parents had never mentioned anything like this before. “Should I open it or should I not?” I wondered. And once again, curiosity won.

I first examined the envelope. On the front were some tiny scribbles, far too small for me to read. Next, I carefully opened the envelope and pulled the paper out. It was neatly folded in half with some yellow spots. The two sides were stuck together, but with enough effort, I finally managed to pry them apart. The title showed two large words. The ink was mostly faded, so I could only read ‘A’ something ‘O’ something, something ‘P’ and ‘T’ something, something ‘N’. And on the second line, everything

was faded except for the letter ‘O’. In the middle of the paper was a long paragraph and at the bottom were both my parents’ signatures. I could not figure anything out, so I decided to read on.

Moments later, realisation dawned on me. My jaw dropped and I stood rooted to the ground.

Everything finally made sense. My whole life finally made sense. All the questions I had asked that my parents had refused to answer: Why was I so short when they were so tall? Why was my skin tone lighter than both of theirs? Why did they not have any baby photos of me?

That night, after both my parents came home, I told them that I had learnt their secret—that I was adopted. The colour drained from both their faces. After lots of begging and persuading, my parents finally agreed to tell me the whole story.

I was nervous because everything that I had assumed was true about my identity was now in question. Now that I knew the truth, I felt a surge of resentment towards my biological parents. How could they have abandoned me? Why did they leave me behind? My lower lip was quivering, but I forced myself to sit quietly as I waited for them to begin. When they finally did, I did not say a word.

It was 1942, during World War Two in Singapore. The war had forced my biological parents to flee the country for safety. I had just been born, and was too young, too fragile to make the journey. Seeing no other choice, they chose to leave me behind. Their neighbours—the mother and father I had known all my life—took me in and raised me as their own. My biological parents later died during the war, so I continued to live with my adoptive father and mother.

As the tale came to an end, my adoptive mother reached forward and enveloped me in a hug. “Your biological parents loved you to the very end, and we do too,” she said. “No matter what, we are family. I hope you remember that.”

I did not speak for the rest of the evening. The brutality of my birth story wrung every word from me. All I could think of was a baby being left behind while a ship slipped away from the harbour, carrying two people who would never come home. I had lost my biological parents before I was old enough to know them, but I had gained a family. For the first time in years, I decided to curl up next to my parents that night.

And as I drifted off to sleep, I knew: I am not just a child who was adopted; I am also a child who is loved.

Jannah, P6