

Adopting Liam. We Can, and We Will

Bianca Sorminis (May 12, 2012)



MOTHER DAY. A STORY FROM OUR BLOGGER, A SPECIAL ITALIAN MUM IN CHINA. "Like in a hospital nursery where new parents smile at each other, exchanging congratulations and commenting on their babies' hair, eye color, skin complexion and weight...so all of us new adoptive parents having dinner around a big Chinese table, peacefully talk about our children's 'imperfections': spina bifida, missing limbs, benign tumors..."

April 26th 2012. Liam officially becomes our son.... a journey started over a year ago when we first welcomed and fostered our little boy.

A new type of pregnancy, a different kind of labor...



After waiting for months we're finally invited to go to Henan Province to put in writing and an official stamp on what we already knew within ourselves, that we are a family.

We pack that bag, like the one I used to pack going to the hospital to give birth to my girls.... The same excitement, the same anticipation, as every birth is different and unique...

Big Hotel, many foreign faces with Chinese little bundles of joy... all living this moment after many months, sometimes years of trepidation, worries and often frustration....but showing now the delight of the incredible reward painted on their faces. All happy today, more or less comfortable with these new lives entrusted in our hands...

All strangers to each other, but at the same all truly close ...

We mingle with people we have never seen before but with whom we already have a lot to talk about, and when dinner time comes we spontaneously gather to go and try some local food...

There is us, with our girls and adoptive son, there is my friend from Shanghai with her little girl whom she has also looked after for quite some time, and there is a lovely couple from Colorado. They have left their biological children back home to be fully dedicated to their new adoptive daughter, who lies in her pouch, oblivious to the chitchat around her, nestled in her mum's chest, abandoned and trusting of that new mother whom she seems to have never been apart from.

And then there is big John, 4 adopted children waiting at home, (one 'traditional adoption' he says, which means a healthy Chinese girl, and then 3 more, all 'special', which translates to some sort of health issue), here to pick up his two new boys. Big John with two kids, one on each hip. "One is happy and eating well, this other one has me worried, he seems so sad".

Big John, big heart, big smile...big hands caressing his latest son's small head.

"Are you going for more?" dare I ask... "I don't know, you should ask my wife, she might already be browsing the website"...

A new child at your fingertip...just a click on a website link.

Like in a hospital nursery where new parents smile at each other, exchanging congratulations and commenting on their babies' hair, eye color, skin complexion and weight...so all of us new adoptive parents having dinner around a big Chinese table, peacefully talk about our children's 'imperfections': spina bifida, missing limbs, benign tumors...

Other adoption stories come up...the 10 years old boy that on the first day kicked and screamed refusing to 'comply with the procedures', resembling a newborn that reluctantly comes into the world and cries desperately wishing to go back into the safety and comfort of the womb... But more than the hugs from his new mum and dad do his little fingers on his new iPad...the next day he is settled and cheerful ...great idea for a new ad...: "IPAD, when technology brings your family together..."

But for all these love stories that seem to have a happy ending, there is always one or two that get us thinking...

Little Yuan Yuan, adopted a few months ago, 9 years old who never understood why someone would take her away from her real home, the orphanage, to place her in a new one. Months into it, she still desperately kicks and screams to go back into the orphanage womb... that makes me wonder what right do we have, if any, to play God 'assembling' families together...

All this unfolds under the eyes of the apparently uninvolved, seasoned adoption mediator, who like an obstetrician in a childbirth room observes things many times seen before... Who knows how many of these 'births' has she already facilitated, and what does she really think, does she feel for us, does she really comprehend? Or maybe we are just new numbers and new papers to process..., some this



week, some more next week , and the week after...

All around the big Chinese table, till yesterday total strangers, today human beings by fate put together to share a magic moment, to have so much in common.

And it's not just the children, the love and the pure joy, but the road that got us there and the one that lays ahead. For although a lot is left unsaid, we've all shared the same idea, the same dream and the same fears: with just how much can I cope? Should I dare or should I wait? Should I trade what's safe and certain for all of this unknown?

Because if adoption is in itself a challenge, choosing a 'special' child goes one step further.

And between a drink and chilly tofu, a cup of tea and delicious rolls, we carry on sharing our lives, and what yesterday seemed unthinkable today seems strangely manageable.

Spina bifida, cleft palate, heart defects ... what yesterday made these children 'special' today makes them just precious.

Like flipping a coin on the other side, what had been misfortune and bad luck for some, and made these children an unwanted burden, today becomes a gift and a blessing for others, for us...since there is no doubt that as we were all there dining together, contemplating our 'less than perfect' children, we were on top of the world, so happy and so proud, so grateful and hopeful (some of us openly, others a bit more secretly) that maybe, one day, we could try for just one more...

I look at family... my husband, my daughters who in their hearts adopted Liam well before I did myself, and my new son ...

I am overjoyed and a little guilty at the same time, the bittersweet awareness that what was your greatest loss Liam, your parents and the life you were meant to live, is what gives us the biggest joy.

Forgive us for this, we can't help but be happy.

But I also know that when your parents gave you up, placing you on that bench in the hospital's yard, probably watching from a distance until someone noticed you, they didn't really abandon you, they just put you in different hands, in the hope that what they couldn't do for you, someone else could.

We can Liam, and we will.

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