

‘You’re One Of Us Now’

The day had finally arrived. Mother and Father were frantically preparing the last minute details of the “special” room while nine-year old Christine sat in her room sulking. Suddenly, Father burst into her room. “Christine! Aren’t you excited?” Father was pumping with adrenaline as he scooped Christine into his arms.

“Helen. That’s what we will call her! Do you want to follow us to pick her up at the adoption centre?” Father asked enthusiastically. “No, I do not want to follow you to pick her up!” Christine snapped haughtily, wriggling out of Father’s grasp. Father frowned. “If you say so,” he said softly, leaving the room. Hot tears started to roll down Christine’s cheeks as she heard the car pull away.

Christine hated everything about her the minute she saw her. “She is as beautiful as a princess, the exact opposite of me,” Christine thought grudgingly. While Helen had big round eyes, Christine had small, beady ones. Helen had soft brown curls that cascaded down her back, but Christine’s hair was long and stringy.

“Isn’t she lovely? This is your new younger sister, Helen!” Mother cooed. “Hello Jie Jie. You are so pretty!” Helen chirped. She was adorable. Christine felt a pang of jealousy immediately. Even her voice was melodious, sounding like tinkling silver bells. “You will never be one of us, you hear?” the vicious words came tumbling out of Christine’s mouth before she could stop them and she quickly ran and locked herself in her room.

Tears welled up in Christine’s eyes as she heard loud footsteps storming towards her room door. “Christine!” Father hollered. She heard more footsteps. Then there was silence. “Christine, open up. I need to talk to you,” came Mother’s gentle voice. Christine reluctantly opened the door, bracing herself for what was to come.

To her utter surprise, Mother enveloped her into a hug. “I know you hate her, Christine. I know this is a big change. There is something I think you should know about her too. Helen was born in Beijing. Her mother passed away giving birth to her and her father wanted nothing to do with her after that as she only reminded him of her mother’s death. She was then abandoned at the doorstep of an orphanage. Helen needs us and trust me, you are going to like her. Just think about the fun you can both have together! For now, can you please try to be the nice girl you really are?” Mother pleaded gently. “I just need time” Christine had mixed emotions as she whispered into Mother’s ear. Mother kissed her cheek and walked away.

Days passed by and Christine still felt every inch of her disliking Helen. Her angel-like face, her sweet voice, her adorable accent, she hated everything about her. She just could not bring herself to accept her as her sister. Christine would shut herself in her room every day after school and cry herself to sleep. Her parents tried to comfort her but nothing worked. Then, the most unexpected thing happened and changed Christine.

It was a humid Monday afternoon. Mother and Father were not at home and had told Helen to play in Christine's room while they were away. Christine was bombarded with homework that day and could not help but groan and moan. "Why must my life be like this?" Christine complained, grabbing her head as she was overcome with stress and self-pity. She heard Helen put down her toys and walk towards her softly. She rolled her eyes. "This is not what I need right now," Christine thought, extremely irritated.

Helen looked at Christine with her big expressive eyes and wrapped her chubby arms around her. "It's okay Jie Jie. Everything is going to be alright," Helen whispered soothingly. Christine felt like pushing her away when she realized something. She actually liked this feeling of being hugged by Helen. She loved the positive energy and love that bounced off Helen. She felt a twinge of guilt. After treating Helen so badly and the nasty words that shot out of her mouth, Helen still loved and cared for her. Christine fought back tears of regret and felt a rush of warmth flow through her.

"Thank you so much, Helen. I am sorry for being so mean. Welcome to the family, you are one of us now," Christine whispered into her ear and hugged her back tightly.