

Myra: I'm thirteen. I'm in seventh grade and in middle school.

Jena Heath: What do you like to do? What's your favorite subject?

Myra: My favorite subject would probably be band. I play the flute.

Jena: What else do you like to do?

Myra: I really like to swim.

Jena: Are you a competitive swimmer? Are you on a team?

Myra: Yeah. I'm on the local club team.

Jena: Yesterday when we talked, we talked a bit about your family's connection to your sister's birth family and what that experience has been like. What I wanted to ask you to do was just tell me about it. Tell me what you remember. If you were telling a story about meeting them for the first time, how would that story go?

Myra: It'd probably be somewhere along the lines of -- when we went to China, when we met them, it was in a hotel room. All the parents cried. My sister was a bit confused. We spent two days with them. It was a fun experience.

Jena: That was how long ago? How old were you?

Myra: I was eight.

Jena: Your sister was five?

Myra: Mm-hmm.

Jena: How long were you there?

Myra: We were with the family for two days. We were in China for two months.

Jena: Two months, wow. What'd you do the rest of the time?

Myra: We travelled around.

Jena: That's pretty cool. Did you go to Beijing? Do you remember some of the cities you went to?

Myra: We went to Beijing because my dad had a friend there. We spent a week or two there. That was fun. I remember we went to Hong Kong Disneyworld. My birthday was over that two months. That was a birthday present, almost. We spent five days there.

Jena: When you were with your sister's family, you were in the hotel. Did you go visit them at home at all?

Myra: No. They came to us twice. First time to the hotel. Second time we spent time with them in the park.

Jena: You were on neutral ground?

Myra: Yeah.

Jena: Was it just her parents? Did her siblings also come?

Myra: Her siblings also came.

Jena: What was that like? Were you thinking, "This is really weird, I'm meeting other siblings?" Was it more like, "I'm meeting new friends or cousins?"

Myra: I don't really remember. I remember being interested by them. I don't think it felt like either of that. It just felt like, "I'm meeting these people that my mom has spent so long trying to find."

Jena: I see. It was sort of like the end of the rainbow, in a way, after this long search that your mother had been embarking on and that you were aware of?

Myra: Yeah.

Jena: You went back again, you were telling me yesterday. How old were you when you made your second trip back to see them?

Myra: That was only a few months ago.

Jena: Tell me about that trip. At this point, you're thirteen, right?

Myra: Yeah.

Jena: Quite different from being eight or nine, much more aware of what's going on. Did you go to visit her birth family at their home at this point?

Myra: Yeah. We went to their village.

Jena: Tell me what their village was like. What was your first impression?

Myra: It was out in the middle of nowhere. That was my first impression. It was a little farm village. It wasn't very new. Everything there was made out of stone. It was really interesting.

Jena: It was a fairly small, rural village in the middle of the country?

Myra: Yes.

Jena: What was their house like? How did that strike you?

Myra: Their house wasn't like our houses. Each of the rooms were separated from each other. It's really hot where they live. Each of the rooms was open. I'm not sure if there were doors. It didn't really seem like that. There was the kid's room. There was the parent's room. There was the grandmother's room. Then there was the kitchen, which was separate from all of that. All of the rooms were their own separate room. They had an open wall that you could go out and go into the other rooms.

Jena: Was the kitchen in the same structure as the bedrooms? Did you leave that house and go to a separate place for the kitchen?

Myra: Sort of both. The kitchen wasn't connected to the main part of it, but it was really, really close. It's like going to a different floor, but not really.

Jena: That's pretty cool. What did you guys do when you visited them?

Myra: We walked around a lot. We visited their village. We visited with the family. We helped them make their food, which was really good. We actually went to a wedding on one of those days of their cousin.

Jena: Wow. What was that like? Was it a big wedding? Was everybody in the village there?

Myra: We didn't actually go to the ceremony. We went to the reception. That was very interesting. The food making was a big deal. It was all out in the open. There were tables and tables. Each table had their own small buffet.

Jena: That sounds really amazing. It's a huge, huge event. Everybody's going to eat very, very well. Do you remember any of the things you ate?

Myra: There was a lot of rice. There was fish. It was Southern China, not Northern China. There weren't things that you would normally think as Chinese food like dumplings. There was sweet and sour pork, but real sweet and sour pork, not American style. There was a lot of stuff.

Jena: Did you like it? How would you compare it to American Chinese food? Did you like it better or less?

Myra: It was very, very good. It's way better than American Chinese food.

Jena: How is this experience for you? Is this something that you look forward to in terms of an ongoing connection with this family? Do you want to go back again and see them? Do you feel like, "That was a nice experience, but I don't need to do it again?" How do you feel about it these days?

Myra: We call them every three weeks, about, with maybe an hour-long phone call so my sister can talk to them. They can know how our family's doing. That's nice. I'd like to go back to China again. Seeing them would be cool because I'd get to see my extended family. I feel like I'd want to go back more for the benefit of my sister than really because I want to that much.

Jena: It's more about helping her with her story and maintaining her relationship with them, it sounds like.

Myra: Yes.

Jena: I understand that. I totally understand that. When you have the phone calls -- I'm interested in this -- does a translator come over? How do you guys communicate?

Myra: There's a translator we have. It's a three-way phone call. They call her, and she calls us at the same time. They speak, and we can hear them speak. Then she translates it for us. Then we respond to the translation. She translates that for them.

Jena: That's pretty cool. She's somewhere else. She's not necessarily at home with you guys?

Myra: No.

Jena: That's very cool. Are the conversations pretty lively? Is there always stuff to talk about? It is sometimes like, "Well, that's nice, but time to go do my homework?"

Myra: I'm not there for a lot of it. It's mostly the parents and [indiscernible]'s thing. I don't really participate in them. We mostly talk about our lives and what's changed since the last phone call.