

Found (English) by Caroline Sinn

They call us the stolen ones. The lost generation. The ones ripped away from their mother's breasts. Forty-Five years since I last saw my mother. Forty-Five years since I had heard my native language. Forty-Five years since I've felt at home. Now my chance is finally here. Link-Up says that they've found her. Do I really trust their word? After all, it was the government which took me away and now the government is supposedly bringing me back. Small mercies. How does one reconcile this? A part of me was removed that day, cut out, leaving me bleeding for years afterwards. In its place was an absence, it sits atop my chest, fossilising, becoming a permanent part of me, it merges with my bones. Now, there is some shred of hope. It doesn't stop the fears from swirling in my mind, but it's better than the aching silence of before.

The train moves forward. Pulling into the station. The woman from the department meets me at the gate. Greetings are exchanged. She's chatty and young and loud, her eyes dart up and down as she grabs my travel bag with a level of gusto I did not expect. Her blonde hair is swept back in a ponytail, it swings vigorously with each step she takes as she leads me away.

"Are you excited? It's such a godsend that we've located her! Since our founding in 1980, we've worked extremely hard in reunifying families, but unfortunately it's not always possible. You should feel extremely lucky as this doesn't happen very often!"

I bite back a snarky remark which would have included something along the lines of, "well, this would never have needed to happen if you didn't take us away in the first place." Instead, I manage a curt nod and a forced smile. Deep inside I know that it isn't this 20-something-year-old's fault, but somehow I still feel anger at her and everything she represents.

She seems to take it as a good sign as she continues on, "our records say that your mother speaks Wiradhuri, would you happen to know it?"

Wiradhuri. I repeat the word in my mind. Testing it. Turning it around in my hands. The first pang of grief sidles in. I never had the chance to learn it. That was taken away from me a long time ago.

I whisper a soft "no" and I turn my face away.

She looks down and says nothing as we continue to walk to the nursing home.

I breathe in. I breathe out. I push the door. I walk in.

And there she is.

Sitting in a worn out armchair. Legs crossed. White hair. Dark skin. Skin that looked like mine. At first I was still. Everything was still. Blood pounded in my head. I could no longer be still.

I ran to her. She held me. I held her.

Then she spoke. In the most beautiful language she spoke. Each syllable was laced with history and meaning and love. But I couldn't understand a word.

So I wept.

The pain etched in my heart is still there. It's not gone yet. The anger rises. A familiar sense of loss settles around me like dust. I breathe it in the air. It floats atop my hair. It's in my lungs. Coursing around in my veins.

Except I know that this time would be different. It wouldn't be as bad as the past decades of mourning. Because I wouldn't be facing it alone. Because she would teach me.

I am found.

