

A MOTHER'S TEARS

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Andre's mother stood at her kitchen window looking outside at a bright day and she was crying. For the past year she grieved for Andre. It was Sunday, the day that she missed him most. She read a letter over and over.

"We are sorry to inform you that your son is missing," she read in the letter sent from the Trinidad and Tobago Embassy in the USA.

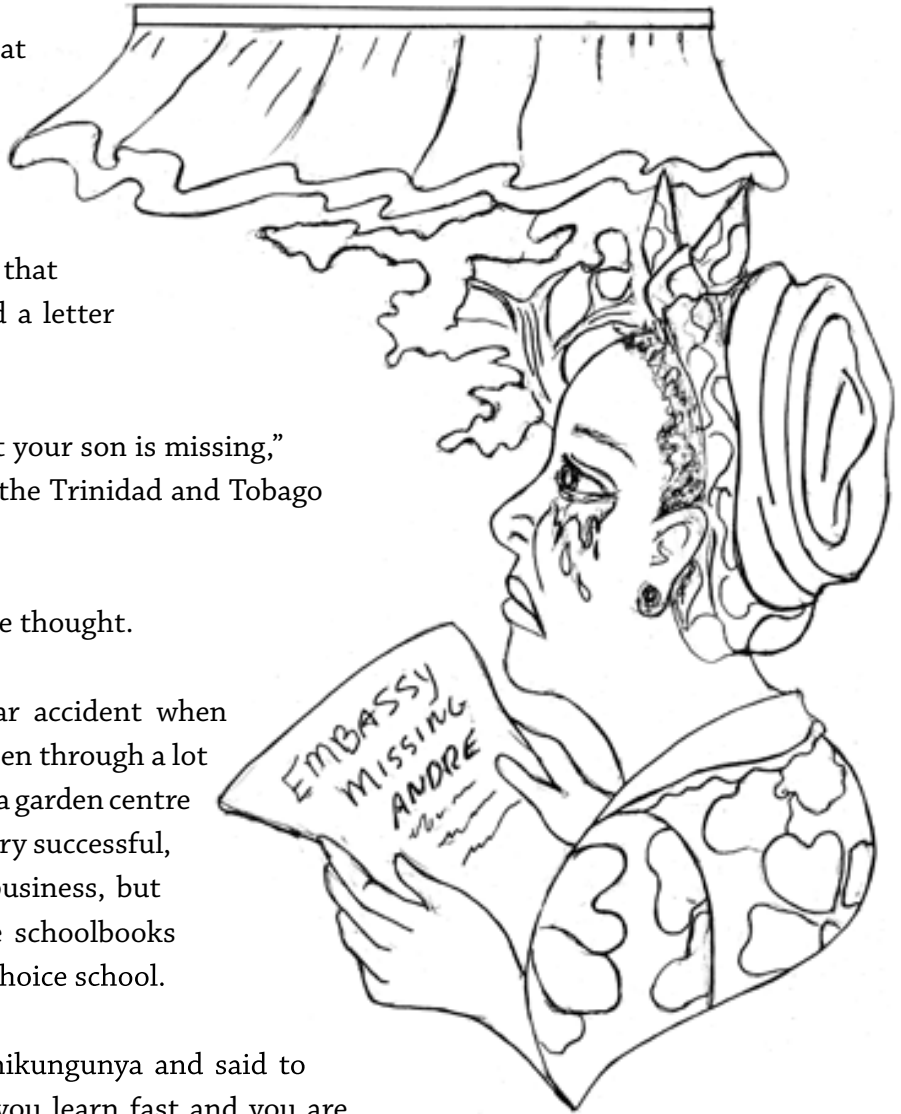
"Surely, it must be a mistake," she thought.

Since her husband died in a car accident when Andre was aged four, they had been through a lot together. She started working in a garden centre to pay for their home. She was very successful, learning everything about the business, but it was a struggle to pay for the schoolbooks when Andre passed for his first choice school.

Then Mr Lei, the owner, got Chikungunya and said to her, "You have a green thumb, you learn fast and you are not lazy. How would you like to be manager?"

For the next eight years Andre helped around the garden centre and loved plants so much that he decided to study Agriscience at university.

"You know, Mum, I think I'll study in the USA," he told her, "I'd like to specialise in organic farming."





Andre's Mum was very pleased, especially when he won a scholarship. She knew she would miss him but she also knew that he would be back home in just three years time.

Sometimes he called and wrote or sent text messages.

"Been to see the Statue of Liberty. She winked at me," he wrote.

She read it for Mr Lui and they laughed at the joke. The years passed quickly, but then, around the time of his graduation all letters and calls stopped. His mother tried reaching him but nobody knew where he was.

It was all over the local news, and it was posted on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram but nobody found him.

Through her tears she saw the yellow flowering Poui tree in the corner of the garden and beds of colourful flowers that he planted before he left.



"You must believe that Andre will come home. Have faith," Mr Lei kept telling her.

One day when she was busying herself with gardening at home, she heard a car stop just outside the hibiscus fence. A man with a beard got out. He had a suitcase in his hand. He stood still at the gate.

She knew he was watching her but because she was crying she did not look up. And she did not want to speak with a stranger, so she stood up with her back to the man, dusted her hands on her jeans and started to go inside quickly, when he said, "Good morning, Mum."

She heard the gate open. Panic gripped her. She could not breathe. Then the sky and earth were spinning. As she fell, the stranger held her. She began to scream.





"Mum! It's me, Andre. It's okay. Hey Mum, it's me, it's me, Andre."

"Andre?" Her body shook, happy tears rolled down her cheeks. She squeezed him against her. "Come inside," she said, "have something to eat and drink, and tell me what happened to you."

"Well, I bought a motorbike to do some sightseeing before coming home. But I had an accident and was knocked unconscious. When I came out of the coma I didn't know who I was. The State welfare put me in a home while I was recovering. I used to help with the garden and discovered that I really liked plants."

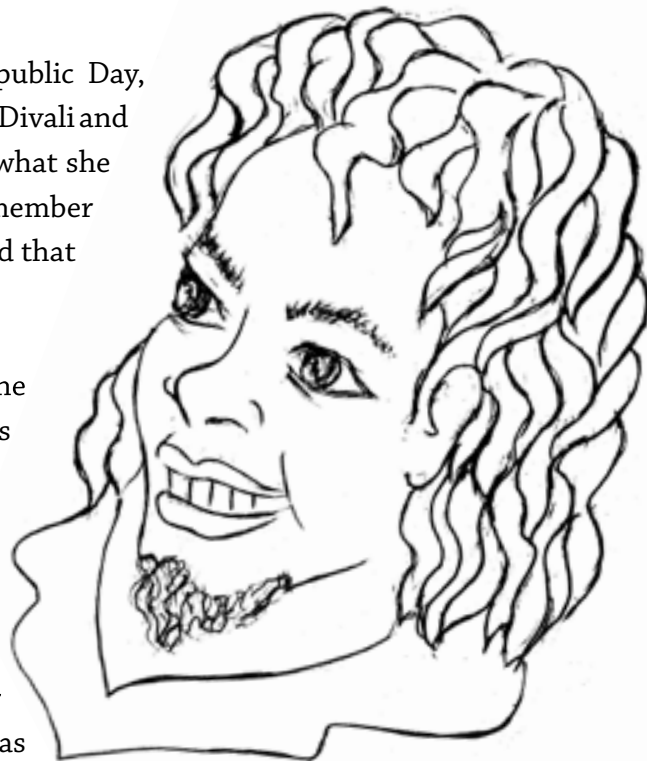
Andre's Mum's eyes did not leave his face as she listened to his story.

"So, I got a job in a nursery and then one day a Trini came to buy a plant. She recognised my face. She said that a year ago I was in all the papers. She gave me a hard time asking me how come I couldn't remember myself, how could I forget callaloo and pelau and corn soup?"

"She called out all kinds of Trini things, like Republic Day, Paghwah and Indian Arrival Day, Emancipation Day, Divali and Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day, but I didn't know what she was talking about, until she said, 'Boy you must remember something ... what about doubles and Carnival?' And that did it. I suddenly started remembering stuff."

The first thing he wanted to do was see his Mum, he told her, and the Embassy helped him to get back as fast as possible.

Mr Lei was happy to see Andre who told him of ways to upgrade and expand. Andre's Mum sat watching him, eyes bright and smiling as she glanced at the graduation certificate he had never collected but which she had received by post. It was framed and hung on a wall.



THE END