

This Can't Be True, But I Remember It

by Jowell Tan

Dear Reader,

Do you remember the day of your birth?

Being in your mother's womb when the moment arrived?

Did you hear the commotion as she maneuvered herself into clothes, out of the house, all the while enduring pain and hoping you wouldn't make your appearance too soon?

And in the car, as your father broke laws and unspoken motoring rules, were you moving around, hands brushing against the lining of your womb, saying your goodbyes to the home where you had lived in preparation for this day?

Was your mother fast asleep as the doctors cut her open? Or was she wide awake and screaming, straining to push you out?

Do you remember the bright light that suddenly appeared overhead, you looking up when you felt its warmth? As you crawled curiously towards it, were you aware of its significance? Could you even imagine what would happen when you reached it?

I don't recall anything about my birth - Not my mother cradling me, not the other babies crying along with me in the nursery, not the doctor giving me my first vaccination jab, not the ride to my new home and its strange new toys.

But I sometimes dream of a strange light that fills my entire vision, increasing in intensity until it reveals itself to be the fluorescent light of a hospital room. I'm lifted up by a man in a surgical mask and placed in the arms of a young woman who looks remarkably like myself. Hair is sticking to her face from sweat. She's pale and breathing heavily. Yet, as she holds me in her arms, her smile is radiant, emanating from her eyes and her lips and her teeth.

She calls me by my name. She says I am her daughter. She rubs noses with me. And then she looks up. And then she disappears.

Sometimes I dream of the moment of my birth.

