



Broken Bridge

Bless the Lord who crowns you with tender mercies (Psalm 103, NKJV).

Imagine tucking your baby daughter in a blanket, placing her in a basket and abandoning her at a bustling district of the city. The basket would obviously be discovered, officials would be contacted, and the child would be taken to join the multitude of other infants housed in a crowded orphanage.

On the surface it seems to be utterly inhumane. Indeed, what could possibly motivate a young mother to do this?

She was married with another daughter who would have been delighted to spoil a little sister. How could she do it? I'm reminded of a healthy newborn baby boy recently discovered by a worker in a restroom at the Tucson International Airport. Washed and wrapped, the tiny infant carried with him a message:

Please help me. My mom had no idea she was pregnant. She is unable and unfit to take care of me. Please get me to the authorities so they can find me a good home.

The infant girl left in a basket also carried with her a note—a note written more than twenty years earlier and some seven thousand miles from Tucson. In this case, the mother, Qian Fenxiang, was neither unable nor unfit.

She was living in Hangzhou, China at a time when the government was strictly enforcing its one-child per family rule. She and her husband, Xu Lida, were caught in a bureaucratic quagmire, the local officials threatening to tear down their house—and worse—if she refused to have an abortion.

But she couldn't do it. Instead she and Xu fled to the Suzhou canal, some eighty miles away, and there on a watercraft she gave birth to her baby. We can only imagine the heartbreak of her holding their darling little girl to her breast, knowing she cannot keep her.

It wasn't as though the couple didn't try

to find her a home. They pleaded with relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers and anyone else who might take her as their own. But there were too many unwanted babies at the time, and who would take a girl if a boy might be available?

There were no other options. Their baby would go to an orphanage. And it was Xu, not Qian, who left the basket near a busy intersection. We can picture that grief-stricken mother at home weeping, consoled only by her other daughter who could not comprehend her mother's anguish.

But hidden under the infant was a note explaining how they were forced to give up their baby whom they dearly loved. Their deepest desire was that she would find a loving home.

And then, in what seemed like an odd request, they asked to meet their daughter in ten or in twenty years on the famed Broken Bridge over West Lake in Hangzhou. Ten years to the day they wait at the bridge. No news. They return home heavy hearted.

But then there is a stunning development. A local TV station reports that a "scout," frantic to find a baby's birth parents, had been delayed and had asked a film crew working on a project at the bridge for help. The story goes viral.

In the following months the birth parents would make contact with the adoptive parents, but it would be years before Kati Pohler, living in Michigan, would learn that Qian and Xu wanted to see her.

Soon Kati and her birth parents are writing to each other and Skyping and making plans to be together.

Just imagine that meeting. Here's a beautiful grown-up daughter last seen in person a million tears ago in a basket with a note. Television crews were there, this time to film *the rest of the story*—a story of tender mercies on Broken Bridge.

More than that, a story of hearts broken no more. □

—Ruth Tucker