



A Day like no other...

It's one up all up in this house, so once the one was up - we were all up! I waited a little while before I said, I have something to tell you! To which she replied - I have to have a needle today - yes you do, but Mummy is going to be there and we can do this. From here on in we are organised, calm and a surreal reality check is in place - is this really happening today - the end is in sight. We have to pay for the ordeal before it happens so last night I sent money from Australia to my card, messaged friends to find out what time the banks open and I was all set to go, every minute from 8am - to our 9am appointment was accounted for.

We arrive at the bank at 7:46am, time to spare so we sit in the car and just chat about who knows what. With about 8 minutes to go, I casually walk into the centre, go through the required security checks that always take a little more time, wander up to the ATM and can't find my card - I do the turning the purse upside down dance and as many times as I look it's still not there. I remember I went out on Monday night and used a clutch purse so all my cards were still in that bag - I had driven around on Tuesday with no license or ID cards. Briskly walk back to the car, drive home as fast as I can, even after 6 years of living in Africa, in my DNA when I have a 9am appointment I need to be there and be ready at 9am. Our guard has left for the day, run up the driveway, unlock the gate, pat the dog, open the front door, run to the bedroom, find all the cards and the cash from Monday night and hot foot it back to the bank. Of course now all the early birds are in the bank and there is a line with four people in front of me. I look at the line, look at my watch, look back at the line, no one has moved, decide if we don't leave here until 8:30am, we still have time to make it to our 9am appointment. I wait in the bank for 20 minutes, walk up to the counter and I tell you I was organised, I had all the details written down on a piece of paper so I didn't have to hand over my phone and show an email. The top line

said I&M Bank - I was in BK bank - one would assume that BK bank could transfer to I&M Bank - but no - not in Rwanda - so where is the nearest I&M Bank - oh 20 minutes away - have I ever driven this fast in Rwanda - nope probably not but we dashed across town in record time and made it to I&M Bank. The car park was 'full' apparently, even though I could see two spots - ummmm can't I just park there? No you can go to the underground carpark - you know what - I don't have time please let me park there - No, underground carpark - look I have a child in the car, she has a Dr appointment 20minutes across town in 3minutes time (it was 8:57am) and I need to go in and pay for the appointment - please let me park just here where I can see a spot - looks in the back seat of the car - sees Flora and say - oh ok! For the record I&M Bank is delightful - I'd go back just to visit and experience their absolute efficiency - you even took a number and waited your turn - in air-conditioning - oh a little taste of whats to come! I was number 119, but thankfully they were on 115, while it felt like forever it probably was the quickest part of the day. As I was standing at the counter just about finished, the little girl who was waiting in the car turned up under my armpit - um where is the iPad, Mummy's handbag, all your documents and both our passports, Mum don't panic I locked the car - but the windows are still down because you had the keys so I couldn't put them up and I hid the iPad under the seat!

Do I have to have my needle today Mum - well I don't know because we are going to be late for our appointment so lets see if they even let us in! We arrived at the IOM International Organisation for Migration I think around 9:25am, our name was on the list at the gate and we were number 14. Again after passing through security and a covid tent, we were soon on our way to a waiting room, to sit and watch people come and go before us and around us. Truly didn't feel like it took very long before Flora's name was called and she went upstairs to have her biometrics photograph taken - too easy - this is going to be a breeze! Next we are down stairs for height and weight measurements and an eye test - oops for over a year she's been telling me that she has trouble seeing the books at school when the teacher is reading them - yeah she failed the last line in her eye test - Mother of the Year Award coming my way!

And this is where the fairy tale ends... the blood test, we sit in the chair, the man ties a rubber glove around her arm - it's too tight, she asks for it to come off, he can't find a vein in her arm, he tries for the back of her hand, make a fist, keep still, make a fist, this hand, that hand, starts wiggling and squirming - seriously if he made a fast decision we wouldn't have a story to tell - but he couldn't make a decision and the story goes on and on and on. He writes her name on a container for her to pee in - the concept of peeing in a small container is too much for this girl to wrap her head around - more anxiety! Long story short for everyone who has asked me how it went - it took five attempts to have the blood work done - 5 - we sang Jesus loves me for those who said try singing, we did all the pep talks, you don't have to be brave - you're allowed to cry, but you do have to sit still and have it done - don't look at it - look out the window - but I want to see what he's doing I want to watch the needle go into my arm - I'm telling you you are better off not to watch it - Mummy's going to be here and we are going to be ok, you're going to be ok, we can do this - do you want a chocolate donut - lollipop - ok well you cant go to Australia if you don't have this done - Mummy will go and you will have to stay here in Rwanda (don't judge my parenting I thought I'd need 2-3 hours off work - it took 6!!!) Nanna and Pa will be so sad if you don't go and visit them - why can't they come and visit me - not he point - I have chased documents for 6 years to get to this day - have the jolly blood test! (No - I wasn't laughing yesterday - yes you may laugh now) I said long story short didn't I - I'm not leaving here until you've had the blood test - on the 5th attempt the staff asked me to leave and it took seven - 7 of them to pin her down and force her to have a blood test and what could I hear from the other room, you're hurting me, I don't like it, stop covering my eyes, get off my legs, you're hurting my legs, you're too tight, I can't breathe, I need water, where's my Mum - Muuuuuuuuummmmy! All the while I was waiting and holding myself back so they could just get it done. All I could think of was my child protection training where we tell children to use their words and no one is allowed to hurt their bodies when they say no - nope none of that happened, this child was distraught and 7 - that's 7 adults were restraining her and holding her down - poor kid.

If you don't know Flora you won't know that she has a huge sense of justice v's injustice, if something is not fair she wants to make it right and make it fair. Well this day was not fair in her mind - it's not fair Mum how come you don't have to have a needle to go to Australia -

you're right sweet girl, it is not fair, it's not fair that your Mumma died, it's not fair that your Daddy was deported, it's not fair that you're not growing up with your sister, it's not fair that I can't be with my family, it's not fair! You know what though, the first time when I came to Africa I had to have 14 needles before we got on the plane and that was not fair either!

Now that the child is completely dehydrated they hand her the little cup to pee in and wonder why she can't go - two and half litres of water, one and half hours, and nine attempts of holding a cup under so she can pee in it later and we are finally outta there! There was not another soul in the waiting room, most of the staff had left for the day and it was just us in a skanky bathroom without a toilet seat. This girl has a bladder of steel which of course is a gift when you are on safari, but when you're in a Dr office the gift is not so precious anymore.

What a day - and that was with an incredible support group like you behind us praying along the way, I just can't even imagine what it would have been like without the gift of prayer warriors - I truly thought our results would say 'incomplete' and I thought after all the chasing of documents and all the everything we have done for 6 years I cannot leave here 'incomplete'.

Tonight when I put her to bed she prayed, Dear Jesus I'm thankful for this little cutie pie next to me - for this gorgeous Mumma, the best Mumma in the whole wide world - so I guess she's forgiven me! And then she asked; Mummy, how long did my other Mummy, my Chocolate Mummy - how long did she know me for? Well she knew you for 9 happy beautiful days, and then she went into hospital and when you were 19 days old, she went to be with Jesus and I became your Mummy. I was so lucky Jesus chose me to be your Mummy! F: Yeah but I wish you had chocolate skin too, if Jesus gave you chocolate skin like me we could go outside at night time and we could both camouflage! No-one would see us would they Mum!

In February 1999 while visiting an orphanage, a sweet little boy highlighted my bible in Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say Rejoice. While we are still waiting for a final decision re our adoption Visa, we have so much to rejoice in - we have come so much further than we ever thought or imagined. We have broken down barriers that others thought were the unbreakable, we have persistently, sometimes with angst and sometimes with great patience waited as the red tape and bureaucracy unfolds before us, we step up and stepped out in faith and obeyed the call of God to say Here I am send me to be the Mumma of this sassy, full of life little girl. Others advised me to place her in an orphanage and I'm so glad I didn't listen. Whatever the outcome is of this visa application and everything in our hearts wants it to be a resounding yes you can have permanent residency into Australia, but whatever it is we can honestly sit here tonight with the torrential rain on our roof and say we rejoice in the Lord always and again we say rejoice.

Please rejoice with us and continue to pray for us that we will receive permanent residency and that Flora will NOT need any more blood test, and then for wisdom on how to navigate a massive life transition from Kigali and all Flora knows to my 'normal' in Sydney and how I support her through that - when it happens. And there will be so much more but I will save that for another day.

Many blessings to you all - we love knowing we have you as our prayer support team, we have 300 people receive our newsletters and 176 receive our prayer letters - so thanks for being one of the 176.

Michele and Flora xo