

When a child is born, the journey of life begins and it continues until the heart takes its final beat. No wonder the baby cries when it leaves the womb for as the day turns to night so must the journey start.

It was a summer's day the 31st May 1981, when the three girls boarded the British Airway flight to England to join their mother in London, England. They had not seen her since the summer of 1976 when she left Jamaica to join her mother in England.

Perlène, being the eldest, held Antoinette's hand, the youngest of the sisters, and walked up the stairs to board the aircraft ; Camille walked closely behind, not exactly sure of what to expect boarding an aircraft for the very first time. The journey was long but the flight attendant was welcoming and as all three girls were under age (the eldest being 13 years old at the time), they were cared for by the staff on board the aircraft.

They landed in London, England on 1st June and it was a beautiful sunny day. Their mother was waiting at the airport impatiently for Perlène and her sisters to arrive and you can just imagine the tears of joy from a mother who had not seen her girls for five years. The girls also saw their mother's younger brother, Tony, who was born in England and was only five years older than Perlène in age. Anrol (Perlène's mother) took care of Tony after their mother's death and so he lived with her. He drove Anrol to the airport to meet them.

Perlène's mum was even more beautiful than she had envisaged her to be. She left Jamaica when Perlène was nine years old but she remembered her well. The memory of her mother was the foundation that kept her sane and also gave her hope. Perlène's mother was a kind and loving person who always showed her love and though she would discipline her children if they did wrong, it was never done out of hate or bitterness, but love and concern.

Perlène remembered when her mum was travelling to England, she told her that she would either send for them to join her in England

and if that was not possible she would return to remain with them in Jamaica. Perlene believed everything her mother told her as she never lied to her and so she had no doubt in her mind those words were true.

As a child Perlene always felt her mother's love, and most family and extended family members said that she resembled her mother. Her mother was a beautiful woman and so she felt that she was beautiful too.

In Jamaica where Perlene is from, adults usually give little thought to children's feelings. Often they will use words to describe a child without giving much thought to how it may affect them. She can remember her aunt saying that her sisters, Antoinette and Camille, were being beautiful, but they would only describe her as resembling her mother. Perlene did not know at the time that they disliked her mum because she left Perlene in her dad's care when she left for England and never returned to him. The sight of Perlene was a constant reminder, and the reason for them to describe her in that manner. However, this behaviour did not stop Perlene from loving her sisters as she naturally loved them and her mum embedded a sense of togetherness within them, so they had strong bonds.

Looking back, had Perlene not retain the memories of a loving mother who was her hero who would come and rescue her from an unhappy childhood, she may have developed bitterness in her heart even towards her sisters.

Perlene hugged her mother and the tears of joy rolled down her cheeks. She felt safe again; finally mum's promise had matured. Antoinette stared at their mother empty. She appeared not to remember who she was; she hugged her because Camille and Perlene did so. Perlene knew that life would get better being around her guardian angel (mum) and that no harm could come to her whilst she was watching over her.

Anrol was pregnant so was looking radiant. She was soon to give birth to Lorraine and though it was a surprise to the girls, Perlene felt very happy because she loved babies and would help to spoil her; well at least so she thought.

They drove to Willesden Green where her mother lived in a maisonette (flat) and she showed them their rooms and around their new home. It was lovely and Perlene was happy and safe from the violence, the verbal abuse, sexual abuse and the beatings. God had given her a second chance but this time she hit the jackpot and God had given her back security and a loving home.

Perlene's mum gave birth to a beautiful baby girl 12 days after they arrived and she was so tiny and cute. Lorraine was loved by all and she was constantly being held by the family. The girls helped to care for Lorraine. They had another sister too who was two years old (Adole). Adole accepted her big sisters as Anrol spoke about them constantly to her and prepared her in advance for their arrival. Perlene was very family orientated and so naturally played the role of 'Big Sister' as they all had the same mother who did not show favouritism in any way. They grew accepting of each other and there was no segregation even though they did not all have the same father or the same surnames. Sure there was sibling rivalry because they were children and had their individual demands.

School in England was quite different in comparison to Jamaica and she was now in the 10th grade. Perlene did not get to choose the options she would have preferred because most children chose their options at the end of year 9 and of course she was still in Jamaica. However, the options she took were OK and she worked hard to get good grades. Camille was in year 8 and Antoinette year 7. They were soon very well known in their new school because they were known to stand up for themselves and it meant that if they got into trouble for doing so then so be it.