

# Josie's story from China

## Part Three

The day after Josie arrived in Perth, she started working at a Fremantle laundry. It was very hot and humid there. All day, she carried heavy loads. One day, after this backbreaking work, she returned home and saw two immigration officials at her flat door.

'You don't have any work rights,' said one of them. He said this because Josie had applied for political asylum.

Josie answered, 'What am I to do? Do you want me to steal? If I were to fall sick, I don't have Medicare to pay for a doctor. I have to work to survive. Even better, I pay taxes.'

'Well, you must at least give us your passport,' said the man. 'You cannot leave Australia while your asylum claim is processed.'

Josie gave them her passport and they left.

In 1994, after working at the laundry for one year, Josie had saved up some money. She bought a video-hire shop in the middle of Perth, and rented out videos of Chinese television serials.

Between 1993 and 1995, many Chinese could not return to China because of their political asylum claim. They were very homesick and watched these Chinese videos to remind themselves of home. Josie's customers would hang out at the shop. It became their cultural centre. Josie's business became very successful.

One day, a Chinese couple told Josie that they wanted to sell their restaurant business because the wife's father in China had cancer. The couple wanted to return to China as soon as possible. As post-graduate students, not political asylum seekers, they were allowed to travel. The couple asked Josie to advertise their twenty-five thousand dollar business for sale.

Josie's video shop customers were very excited to hear this. Many were already working as chefs and kitchen-hands. Everybody thought that this was a great opportunity, but nobody was willing to invest.

Finally, Josie bought the restaurant. She told her customers, 'I invest. You guys make the money. You just give me a little bit of interest.' That restaurant gave Josie a crash course in management. When the restaurant was short-handed, she cut

onions and chopped meat. When the food was not good enough, she took the chef to other restaurants to taste their food.

During this time, the Immigration Department was processing Josie's political asylum claim. She sat for an English test and submitted many more documents. She showed the Australian government that she paid taxes and that her businesses were creating jobs for others.

In 1995, Josie received her permanent residency.

Josie had not seen her parents for five years. Eagerly, she returned to China. Many of her friends there had become successful bankers. Josie helped one of them to start an import-export business and closed the first deal.

But Josie found that she did not enjoy living in China. For one thing, her friends would only say unpleasant things in indirect ways. The Chinese call this 'saving face'. But Josie spoke plainly, even when she wanted to say something unpleasant. She felt that she no longer fit in.

So Josie returned to Perth. She sold her two businesses and enrolled in a bachelor's degree in International Business. Later, she won a scholarship to study a Masters in Business Administration. In her spare time, Josie tutored students to support herself. Through this, she found that she enjoyed working with people, more than she enjoyed working with money. She therefore also enrolled in a Graduated Diploma in Education.

Today, Josie teaches Chinese at a school in Australia and looks after the international students at the school. Occasionally, she travels to China to recruit new students. These students pay a lot of money to study in Australia. Josie is a great asset to her employer.

Looking back on her many adventures, Josie says that she did all that to try to fulfil her soul. She strove to become a professional. Her love of literature never left her. Now, she tries to inspire her students to love literature and to love life. She wants them to think critically, to understand themselves and their purpose in life.

As a migrant, Josie feels that she has had to fight for everything. In the past, she sometimes felt sad because so many things were unfamiliar. Today, she drinks wine, eats cheese and follows Australian politics. But deep down, she doesn't feel completely fulfilled.

Maybe, she thinks, this is not because she is a migrant. Perhaps it is just part of being human.