

FROM
THIS
PLACE,
ME.



BY: ANGELA YE

August 24, 2032
Manchester, England
Unknown Building
Unknown Company
Job Application Interview
12:34 PM

Interviewer (CEO): Tell me about yourself.

Interviewee: My name is Angela Ye, I'm born on February 11th, 2008, and I am currently 24 years old.

Interviewer: Mhm.

Angela: Well, I am originally from the United States, and I came here to go to college at Oxford, and I just graduated 2 months ago. I have 2 cats, a Scottish fold and a Persian cat. I played badminton for 11 years and competed in some international tournaments and my three best traits are—

Interviewer: No, no. Tell me about you.

Angela: I don't understand.

Interviewer: You came here to tell me about you. It was in the description of the interview. This yellow file here contains all the works you are going to share, right?

Angela: Yes. Sorry. Nerves make my mind go empty.

Interviewer: Take this lightly, this company is for anyone, really. Let me start. My name is Narcissa Dolores. My first name, Narcissa, sounds like the word narcissistic — because I am. My last name, Dolores, means “lady of sorrows”. Many people fear me, and I have no idea why. I was born and raised in Berkshire, England; one of the places *Pride and Prejudice* was filmed in. Have you read it?

Angela: Yes, it was a wonderful novel. Miss Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy's story is really one of a kind.

Narcissa: Certainly. I come from a family of six, my father, mother, two older sisters, and one younger brother. I graduated from Cambridge and started my own company afterwards. Now, enough about me. Start telling me about yourself.

Angela: May you open the folder?

Narcissa: Of course. Oh! Lovely drawing.

Angela: Thank you, thank you. This drawing symbolizes the story of my name.

Narcissa: Your name?

Angela: My Chinese name. My English name is fairly simple. My mother and father chose the name Angela mainly because it starts with an A. Since my last name is Ye, they wanted me to have a name that started with A to balance it out, but throughout all my years in school the teacher always did roll calls by last names, going in alphabetical order and starting with the letter A.

Narcissa: Do you know what your English name means?

Angela: Angela - a feminine name: from a Greek word meaning "messenger". I'm guessing my parents had a preconceived conception of me being like an angel from the heavens: graceful, forgiving, healing, loving. They wanted me to dance with pointe shoes and play slow waltzes on the piano, but they got the opposite. Since I was born, I was an aggressive child, shouting and bumping my obnoxious head into casings of doors. My mother gave birth to a child who was a devil at home but an angel in public: stubborn, overly critical, and romantically clueless. Later in the years, I grew a love for badminton and had a liking in playing spontaneous pieces in piano; I completely disliked the idea of being graceful.

Narcissa: I have to say, our personalities are extremely similar. This is an appealing picture, mind explaining your Chinese name?

Angela:

We start with an empty canvas. A painting is supposed to thrive with bold strokes and beautiful colors. What's thriving? Nothing.

A boy with the name 叶蓬 (ye peng) is born in He Bei, China. A little seedling appears on the canvas, a tiny clump of dirt right below it. As the little boy starts growing bit by bit, the seedling starts growing its foundation: the roots. In the Chinese language, the character 叶 stands for leaf. The seedling starts growing and growing, becoming a green leaf, hoping that one day it will become a tree, stable enough to support itself. By the age 10, 叶蓬 moves from his suburban home to the big city of Bao Ding, China. This was the first difficulty in his life, the first mountain he had to climb. For his first year in middle school, 叶蓬 ranked close to last in the education system. With scraped knees, a dry throat, and a mentally tired self, tears fall down from his face, while showers of rainfall on the canvas. His older sister, 叶林 (ye lin), comforted him; 林 stands for forest. She was the one who wrapped old bandages around his knees, replaced his frown with a chuckle after a stupid joke, and most importantly, she was the one who pushed him to the top of the mountain. "Pain only makes you stronger, little brother," she would always say. Slowly, the rain showers that poured made the leaf grow into a branch, with more leaves growing on the sides of it. So much water also caused little sprouts of grass to grow on the soil, each stem with little droplets of water on it, similar to a morning dew. A forest made its way onto the canvas, acting like a deep green carpet, with damp, earthy air surrounding. 蓬 in Chinese means thriving; and after one tenth of a century, the canvas was slowly beginning to thrive. 叶蓬 placed in the top five in the next two years of middle school and throughout high school. He got into a great college, and met a sweet lady.

Her name was 凌雯 (ling wen). She had a smile that radiated the energy of a thousand suns, hair as smooth as the weaved silk of Arachne, and an inexhaustible spirit. If Joy from the movie Inside Out was a person, it would be her. They started to grow a liking for each other; going on walks on the grass, studying together, going out. A few years later, when the peony flowers were blooming, 叶蓬 and 凌雯 got married in a beautiful Chinese garden. 凌 means sky, when 雯 means beautiful clouds. 叶蓬 with his happiness at a trillion, a luminously blue sky appears on the canvas, clouds a vagrant white with the shape of cotton candy, as his loved one would say. This and this and that happened, they moved to America, more things happened...and they had a beautiful baby boy at the Washington Hospital in Fremont, California!

They decided to name him 叶阳, meaning "Sun" in Chinese. A sun rises on the thriving canvas, a dazzling but modest yellow, lightly warming the plants and trees below it, just like how the tiny, chubby baby warmed 叶蓬's heart. The Sun is an ecosystems main source of energy, and 叶阳 gave his father more motivation and energy to live a better life with his family just by one thing: love. The tiny sprout in the middle of the canvas slowly grew and grew into a sapling,

eager to keep growing. 叶蓬 and his family moved back to China, and he created an extremely successful company, creating a game that gives the player a power to create and control people, letting them interact with others and giving them the freedom to play with life. 5 years passed, and he and his wife did not want their son to be alone, so this and that happened, they moved back to America, and had another baby at the Washington Hospital in Fremont, California!

This time, it was a baby girl. They named her 叶兰, which means orchids. Orchids represent springtime; an orchid is supposed to have beauty and grace, symbolizing humility and nobility, and representing good taste and beauty. At this point, the painting is beautiful, but simple. What sparked it? It was thriving, it really was, but it was also just a simple view with trees, grass, a sky, and a sun. Where was the boldest stroke, the stroke that made the painting so special? The moment 叶兰 was born, beautiful orchids grew on the canvas, giving a moist lavender smell and a luscious magenta color. The feeling and atmosphere of springtime appeared, the painting thriving at its best.

叶蓬 and his family moved back to China, and lived in Bao Ding for another 4 years. At this point, it got him thinking; Was this the best life for himself and his family? He was extremely busy day and night, 叶兰 did not even have time to see him every weekday because of how early he left home and how late he came back. He had a choice: choose his family, or choose success, money, and fame. He chose his family. He shut down his company, moved back to America with his family, bought a house in Fremont, California, and lived the best life that he could with his wife, son, and daughter. The sapling in the center of the canvas finally grew into a tall, cedarwood tree. The cedarwood tree was the heartbeat of the whole canvas, and it was the most special part of the painting, bringing everything together.

How was his life going to go in the future? What will his life be like? He didn't know, but he did know one thing. He had his family, the painting was beautiful, and he was gifted with something special: love.

Narcissa: I— I'm speechless.

Angela: Sorry, was that a little too extra?

Narcissa: No! Of course not. I have interviewed many people before, but no one described their name this way. You really are unique, Angela.

Angela: ...

Narcissa: I'm saying that as a compliment.

Angela: Oh! Uh— thanks.

Narcissa: Being unique is important. It is good to stand out from the crowd and assure you have a place and special worth in this society.

Angela: I get what you're saying, but people who are unique get left out... Isn't it important to feel like we belong? Without a sense of belonging, it is easy to feel alone.

Narcissa: We have to dare to be different — do you really think half the people in this world have the same interests, hobbies, and likings? I don't think so. We are all too aware of blending in to feel like we belong in this society. We don't focus on what makes us different, and focus on what makes us the same. Or maybe we do, but I don't think we do. Let's say this: you're in a friend group, right? Are all of you the same person?

Angela: Of course not.

Narcissa: Exactly. Each person is different in their own way. But do you exclude them from your friend group? No, you don't. You love your friends, and each friend is different. When you guys are together, you guys are all unique but still feel like you belong. Uniqueness creates the world. Imagine if you were in a society where everyone was all the same person — that would be extremely boring, right? It's important to be different.

Angela: But what if people just don't accept you for who you are?

Narcissa: I think there are always going to be people who accept you, no matter who you are. Unless you are a mass murderer, of course.

Angela: But—

Narcissa: Let's move on. You're parents, their names are undeniably beautiful. But they met in China right? You didn't really specify how they moved to America in your story. May you explain in depth on how and why they moved?

Angela: This one is hard...I don't really have much information on this topic.

Narcissa: Just give me the main reasons.

Angela: OK.

How I Ended Up In Fremont

By: Angela Ye

After 叶蓬 and 凌雯 graduated from college, they both had many dreams and goals they wanted to accomplish. 凌雯 continued to stay in college to get a bachelor's degree, while 叶蓬 found a job and worked there for a few years. He was getting tired of this boring life. He wanted to do what he loved and be with the people that made him happy. He wanted to pursue his dreams. Ye peng decided to take a JRE Test in China and applied to the University of Southern California. He got in with a full scholarship, and he and 叶蓬 moved to America.

The first thing they did on the plane was to figure out what their English names would be. Ye peng named himself Eric, while ling wen named herself Wendy. Eric studied in USC for a few years to get a bachelor's degree in computer science and engineering. During Eric and Wendy's time in America, they experienced a completely different life. They liked the diversity, individualism, and land of the US. After Eric got a Bachelor's degree, he and Wendy had a big decision to make. Were they going to stay in America, or move back to China? This question wasn't so hard for Eric. The political and social systems were great, he liked the working system, and the different diverse landscapes. Wendy, on the other hand, faced great difficulties with this question. She did not want to leave her home country because that was still her safest place.

After a while of discussing, they both agreed to move to America. They bought a house in the small city Fremont located in the Bay Area. The house was fairly tiny and not in the best shape, but that was the only thing that they could afford. They had a baby boy and named him Aaron a few years later. Eric and Wendy went back to China for three years, and then came back again. This time, they had another baby, and it was a girl. They decided to name her Angela.

I asked them this question so many times. "Why did you guys move to America?"

Everytime, my mom answers, "I do not have a clue either!"

And my dad answers, "I like it here."

Narcissa: You said you didn't know much about this.

Angela: I get carried away sometimes...

Narcissa: Don't worry, it's great! I love your stories—they are pleasing to hear.

Angela: Thank you.

Narcissa: OK. Enough about your parents. I want to know specifically about you now. What makes you, you? How did your parents moving to America affect and change you? The place you live really affects you. Let's start from there.

Angela: I have everything prepared.

Narcissa: Great. Should I open the folder?

Angela: Yes, please.

Narcissa: Another story!

Angela: I wrote this when I was in eighth grade. Looking back at it right now, my writing skills back then were definitely better than my writing skills right now.

Narcissa: We all think that the things we wrote in the past are better. The past always seems better than the present. I think we all have rosy retrospection; a cognitive bias that causes people to remember past events as being more positive than they actually were.

Angela: How do you know all these things?

Narcissa: Boredom. OK, let me read this.

My Neighborhood

Angela Ye

I grew up in Fremont, California. My parents bought a house on Cedarwood Drive long before I was born; located in a middle class suburban neighborhood, it was built with beige concrete walls and a patterned asphalt shingle roof. I was born on February 11th, 2008, the younger sibling of an older brother, who was 6 years older than me. Since I was young, my favorite part of my neighborhood was always the atmosphere. The orange autumn tree leaves with tints of yellow falling, filling the sidewalks and streets. The smell of petrichor after pouring rain. Middle notes of jasmine, gardenia, and peony in the air when spring came. Chilly days even when the bright sun was out. Sunlight reflecting off of every house, sidewalk, and street during three to four PM, the scenery looking like it would be in a coming of age movie. Light breezes hitting my face, the fresh smell of pine trees in my nostrils, the warm sunlight on my skin. I loved it all; and my family and I called this home.

What creates a home? Many people say this quote when they are in love: “They say a home has four walls, but home is whenever I’m with you.” To create a home requires emotional connection and a sense of belonging. Whenever my family and I come back from traveling, the first thing my dad says is “Home sweet home”. I think home is a place that holds special memories we will have for a lifetime. I think the thought and feeling of home will always give us a feeling of warmth and a sense of peace.

I had many memories growing up. My neighborhood is fairly small—most people know each other and help each other out every now and then. Since kindergarten, I went to school at Harvey Green Elementary. Out of the Fremont district, Harvey Green was the small school, each grade only having two classrooms. Every student knew each other, and every teacher knew each other. The sense of togetherness in my elementary school was amazing, but not everyone in the world is a good person. A boy in my grade started vaping in sixth grade. He lived in a small house with his family and his cousin's family, and his father owned many antique cars. First it was one. One week later his friend started vaping. Two weeks later two of his other friends followed them. By the end of the school year, eight boys in my school were vaping occasionally in the boys bathroom. Many people call Harvey Green the “ghetto” school where all the “drug kids” go and learn. I think many people in Harvey Green were good people who wanted to spread kindness.

The year after, I went to Horner Middle School. COVID-19 hit the US, and we stayed in virtual learning for a year. In the year of eighth grade, the district turned back to in-person school. One thing I like about Fremont is the diversity. A numerous number of people with different cultures live in Fremont. It makes people feel like they belong more in society. I like that. There are so many people with different ethnicities in Horner, and the leadership class honors diversity a whole lot. When different religions, views, and ways are shared with one another, miracles happen. Aside from that, there are many, many eighth graders in Horner, some having the same interests and hobbies as me. I have made many friends that shared laughs with me, each different in their own way. I am still trying to find myself. What I live for, what I love, what my goals are, what makes me happy. Sitting in my room while listening to *Ribs* by Lorde on Spotify is not helping. At least I have my home.

Narcissa: I love the song Ribs, too! The song is so old, but the nostalgia it brings to me is unlike no other.

Angela: Lorde was one of my favorite artists as a child, and to this day, I still love her as much as I did before. What other artists do you like? Oh— let's talk about that later. Were you going to ask something?

Narcissa: You said you had many memories growing up as a child. May you explain some of them?

Angela: Yes, I was getting there. I think if you open the folder, black and white maps with red circles on it are in there.

Narcissa: Ah, yes. These...red circles certainly look like they are just being randomly placed — but I know there has got to be something to do with it.

Angela: Yes, I mean, now that you point it out, the spots I circled are relatively odd. I guess my brain just remembers weird things.

Narcissa: Our brains do remember the weirdest things for no exact reason.

Angela: I wonder why! Okay, let me get started.

Point of Interest #1: This happened when I was four years old. My family and I have just fully moved to America and my brother and I were riding our bikes around Bush Circle. My bike was bright pink with a picture of Cinderella on it. I went in a clockwise direction; I started at my house and went left first. By the end, when I was about to reach my house, a black cat appeared out of nowhere. I was only four at the time — and I had a fear of cats (for a reason I am unsure about, I mean cats are my favorite animals in the world right now). The cat's creepy, awful golden yellow eyes were staring right at me, and I started to cry. I started to weep right then and there, yelling my brother's name in Chinese and jumping around. My dad described it as a mental breakdown; my mom thought I was absolutely insane. After 10 minutes my brother finally heard me and carried me back to our house. This memory is just stored in a special part of my brain, and I would always want to keep it like that.

Point of Interest #2: I think this happened when I was four, too. I was taking a neighborhood walk with my grandmother, my father's mother. She had this antique Chinese radio that would fit in her pocket, and she would play her favorite songs while we were walking. As the flowers were blooming, the lyrics of the song were "A round face, a beautiful smile, a precious love..." It was describing the singer's love. I asked my grandmother, "How was grandpa like? Can you describe him?" My grandfather passed away before I was born. It was at that specific spot where my grandma described what he looked like, how he was like as a person, and how he would react if he saw me. Thinking of this memory comforts me all the time.

Point of Interest #3: This was around the time I was in first grade. It was almost nighttime, and I was walking with my grandma and grandpa (my mother's parents). At that specific spot, you can see the statue of THE BLOCK and Pacific Commons, with signs of all the restaurants and shops. I thought that was the Bubba Gump Sign that was located in the CityWalk at Universal Studios, Los Angeles. It looked extremely small from where I was standing, it looked like LA was just that far away. I think when I was young, I thought the world was extremely small.

Point of Interest #4: I have many memories here. This place is called Southlake, a mobile home park. One of my childhood friends lived here — his name was YoYo. During first grade, no one would talk to him during school and considered him weird, when he just wanted a friend. My grandpa and his grandpa were close to each other, and we played on the swing set every night in the community. Other days in the summer, my grandmother and I would bring bread from our home and feed it to the ducks in the lake. It was my favorite place to go to as a child, and I do not even step foot in it anymore.

Point of Interest #5: I was in fifth grade when this happened. My mother and I were strolling down the streets of Pacific Commons Shopping Center, finding new clothes for me. My friends at school felt disgusted that I wore almost the same clothes everyday. I was never considered a popular and stylish kid in elementary school, but those judgements really affected me. My mom had a sense something like this happened, and when we were strolling down the parkway going from Burlington to the Designer Shoe Warehouse, she said this: “Do not change yourself for the people around you. What other people think does not matter as much as what you think.” That statement really stuck with me after.

Point of Interest #6: This happened in fifth grade too. My dad, my mixed partner (Caden), and I just got back from a badminton tournament in Chicago. It was the end of May and my dad and his mom wanted to celebrate us getting into the top four for the first time. We went to Milkcow Cafe in Boscell Road, and I am telling you with all my heart, it was the best ice cream I have ever had. Caden’s mom said a well known quote I will never forget: “Without ice cream, there would be chaos and darkness.”

Point of Interest #7: I have gone to this place at least 50 times (no exaggeration). This place used to be called SuperCue Cafe — it served a variety of boba tea flavors and little bites like popcorn chicken, fried rice cubes, and waffle fries. My friends and I would go there every Saturday after badminton training, and we always had a ton of fun. After COVID-19, the place got shut down, and renovated into a place called Mr. Green Bubble. It is so surprising how things can change in just the blink of an eye.

Point of Interest #8: Out of all the 8 points of interest, this one was my main one and the most memorable. On the map it is an Econ World Trading Incorporation. This building used to be my old badminton club called United Badminton Club (UBC). I have been there since I started playing badminton in the summer of 2016 until June of 2020, three or four months into COVID. It was my second home — the people, the coaches, the atmosphere. I didn’t care how old it was, or how dirty the carpets were, or how many times I did torturing physical exercise in there. I loved being there with the people that made me the most happy. In June of 2020, the owner of UBC sent out an email to all the parents saying that it has been bought by an incorporation that sold all kinds of needs and equipment. He stated how all the student players would all be going their separate ways to different badminton clubs, and he would retire. The building changed from a place of warmth where people from all over Fremont went to play a sport that was fun, to a rip-off IKEA. When I heard the news, I cried. And I cried. But nothing lasts forever, and sometimes it's good to have a fresh start. The new badminton club I go to, Synergy Badminton Academy, is starting to be my second home. It will never be the same though.

Narcissa: That was heartbreaking, but you certainly cannot dwell in the past. The past has no power over the present moment.

Angela: Right.

Narcissa: By the way, you have an outstanding talent of remembering things. I know I said the brain remembers the oddest things, but I have figured that you have an amazing ability to memorize things.

Angela: Thank you, thank you. I have a question—

Narcissa: Yes?

Angela: Why are you asking me to describe myself? Why is this interview just me describing what makes me, me? I thought job interviews were supposed to have questions like, “What are your top three qualities?”, “Why did you apply for this job?”, and etc.

Narcissa: I think it is important for me to know you first. I have a better understanding of what you want in life after hearing about what makes you, you. I want to fully know the people I am working with and not just treat you guys as regular co-workers. What’s the fun in that?

Angela: Yes, you have a good point. Sorry for asking such a stupid question.

Narcissa: No question is stupid.

Angela: Right.

Narcissa: There’s one last piece of writing in the folder, may I see what it is?

Angela: Of course. It is a poem I wrote about my heritage.

Narcissa: Wonderful! Let me have a look at it.

Heritage

By: Angela Ye

From my mother,
Diversity of jewels and sand from the old
A beautiful tune on the piano
A voice in my head reminding
Enjoy the Moment.

From my father,
Perseverance of a lifetime
Strength for a treasured sport
Family in China saying
You look just like him.

From my brother,
A pair of supporting arms
Untold wonders in films
A less hardworking child
The strife of comparison

From my aunt,
A public persona
Curves and lines on my body
Watching my surroundings
Fearing assault

From my grandparents,
Journeys through steep icy mountains
Fairytales and stories,
A message from heaven
Love persevering
Grief
Tradition.

From my family, I have learned
The hardships of Love

Narcissa: I love everything in this folder! All of these works of art are amazing.

Angela: Thank you, thank you.

Narcissa: You know, you should really be a writer. Maybe publish a book?

Angela: My writing is far from amazing. But maybe, I will write one for myself and not publish it. Maybe name it, "From This Place, Me."

Narcissa: Not publish it?

Angela: I'm unique.

Narcissa: You're hired!