

Lost and Found

By Emily Cameron

"Mom! Mom!" I heard someone shout behind me. "Mom! Guess what, Mom!" I smiled. I knew that voice. My daughter, Emily, was sprinting toward me. My son, Alexander, and I were at Emily's school. We had decided to pick her up early today. I turned around and beamed broadly as Emily, panting, stumbled and stopped right in front of me. Papers were falling out of her unzipped backpack.

"Hi, there," I said, ruffling Emily's untangled hair. "What am I to guess?" Emily's eyes were bulging in excitement.

"You know, the megaskills assembly on Friday? I'm going to get the certificate for trust! Isn't that great!" she yelled happily. Twenty times a year, every student in each class would vote for which two students were the most trustworthy, or honest, or whatever that month's megaskill was. You were not allowed to vote for yourself. The teacher would vote, too. This month's megaskill was trust. I was thrilled that Emily was going to be awarded it!

"Excellent!" I said. "Do you want me to come to see you?" Parents could come to see the winners if they wanted. The winners would go on stage and get a certificate and a new pencil. I wanted to see my daughter on the stage, holding a certificate and a pencil. Besides, on Friday I wasn't doing anything, and I would love to go see Emily.

"Sure," Emily said. Alexander let out a loud squeal. Emily grinned. "Are you excited, too?" she asked with a giggle.

Alexander replied, "Yeah! I want to come!"

"Okay," I said. "You must come anyway. No one else will be looking after you."

On Friday, I took Alexander to the Multi Purpose Room where there was a big stage for Emily to stand on with the other third-grade winners. Emily's class and all the other classes were already there. The principal, Mr. Barber, was talking.

Finally, it was the third-grade teacher's turn to come up and tell the audience who had won. Emily's teacher went first. "My class is really

trustworthy, but the two most trustworthy kids were--" Alexander interrupted with a squeal, and the teachers laughed softly "--Emily and Abanav!" The teachers and the children screamed and clapped. I watched as Emily, blushing, hurried onto the stage. Her teacher shook her hand and gave her the certificate, and the principal gave her a pencil. Another Indian boy, Abanav, marched onto the stage, too.

I took many pictures of Emily holding her certificate. It had a golden star sticker on the bottom and the signatures of her teacher, the principal, and the vice principal.

When it ended, Emily gave me her certificate. "Take it home. And take care of it, okay?" She kept reminding me, and I nodded.

"Go, now," I said. "I will take care of it, I promise." With one hand holding Alexander, and the other holding a cooler bag, I tucked it under my armpit.

"Actually--" began Emily, and she took the certificate from me. I didn't notice, and I thought it was still safe and sound under my armpit. Emily went off with her certificate, but I didn't see her waving it triumphantly in the air. I thought I still had it with me.

When I was halfway driving back home, I gasped and pulled the car to the side of the road. I turned it off and searched wildly around. Where was the certificate? Lost? I had promised Emily I would take care of it! It was gone! I looked under every car seat. Maybe I had dropped it when Alexander and I had been walking back to the car. Emily would be really angry. I had to find it. I had to. So I drove back to school.

I opened the car door and looked around. Which direction had the wind blown it? I pick up a handful of grass and threw it into the air. The grass floated away to the right of me. I turned toward it and started to look under every parked car I could see. The certificate wasn't under any one. I became frantic. What would Emily say after I told her I had dropped it and the wind had carried it away? Would she scream and yell and cry? I didn't want my oldest child to be unhappy because of me. I was the most untrustworthy mom ever. I had promised Emily I wouldn't lose it, and I had. I peered

inside the bushes. I asked passerby if they had seen the certificate. They said no, but they promised they would look for it.

Thirty minutes later, I was distraught. I had searched every single inch of the school, and was now starting on the busy roads. No certificate. I spent forty-five minutes looking and looking. The minutes seemed like hours. At last I gave up.

"It's only a paper," I told myself firmly. "Emily will understand."

But we weren't finished looking yet. Alexander and I headed for the office. I told the secretary, Sara, if anyone had returned Emily's certificate. Sara shook her head. Then, seeing the sad expression on my face, she said she would print another one for me. I felt better, but I was still very unhappy with myself.

Five minutes later Alexander and I were driving back home. We rested for a while until it was time to pick up Emily. She would be upset with me when she found out I had lost her treasure.

Emily came running toward me after school. She was holding something in her hand. A paper. A paper with "Congratulations to Emily Cameron for being TRUSTWORTHY" written on it. The certificate! I frowned. Had someone found it and given it back to her? I stood there, waiting for Emily to come up to me and scowl disapprovingly.

But when Emily came up to me she simply said, "Here you go" and shoved the certificate into my hand.

"Where did you get that certificate?"

"I got it from the megaskills assembly, remember?"

"I know. Did someone give it to you?"

"Yeah."

"Who?"

"My teacher."

"You mean someone found it and gave it to him and then he gave it to you?"

"No."

I just stood there for a second, my brow furrowed. And then I understood. Emily had taken the certificate back from me after the assembly, but I had still thought I had it. And all along, Emily had had it safe with her, and I hadn't lost it. Suddenly, anger took place of my relief. "Why didn't you tell me that you took the certificate back from me? If you had just told me then none of this wouldn't have happened!"

Emily was bewildered. "Are you alright, Mom? Have you lost your mind?"

I laughed. Then I told Emily the whole story, of me thinking I had lost it and spending the forty-five minutes looking for it and all the events that had happened to me. In the end, Emily told me she had taken it back and she had taken it with her into the classroom and that I was just imagining I had it under my armpit. I found myself smiling.

And that's how THE LOST CERTIFICATE became THE FOUND CERTIFICATE!