

Dear dad,

I write to you in a language you don't understand and I know you will never understand this letter. I want to thank you for working so hard in life to give me and my sister this life we have now. It must not have been easy to live in the times you did struggle with poverty in rural China, or moving to Suriname and having to work very hard in a new country. You never talk about it negatively though, every story you tell, if you do tell a story, always has a positive glimpse, hardships are part of life but at least life is worth living, is what I see when I look at you.

It must be hard, with grandpa in the state he is in now, to go through those emotions. When you told mom you wanted to cry but you didn't cry, I felt very sad for you, or when you went out to the casino more often in that period I felt worried. Why I think this is hard for you is because as the only son, you were expected to work hard, to honour our family name and to return the gratitude for living this life to your parents. But you moved and had a life somewhere else, and never got to do as much as you wanted for grandpa and grandma. You wanted to take them to the Great Wall which they have never seen, it was all planned out, and you were so determined to go, then corona hit and we didn't travel for two years. Then grandpa walked out the house and got lost, found by authorities and brought to the hospital, he got sick, stopped making sense, then stopped moving, then couldn't move even a finger. He is conscious, knows he is where he is, but that's all he can do. So, it must be hard, maybe you felt like you disappointed them, or failed. It must be hard to not be able to cry, or to console with friends, why don't you have friends? You were told to work, work hard for a better life, you were never told to feel, you never had time to feel, the opportunity to feel. But now you have space to cry, but you can't. If you have never been able to cry, to show someone you can be vulnerable, that these mountains you carry, you did not pick up yourself but were dropped on your back to carry, how can I know? How can I feel what you feel? How can I see you for your wholeness if you were never taught to be whole.

It's paradoxical that you are taught that the way you are the man of the house, the way you succeed as a father is to work. To provide for your family, this makes you a good father, this is presented as your way to connection with your family. Yet, as you work more, you get to see your family less, experience them less. The less you can connect, therefore you are expected to walk an eternal circle never reaching the people around you. It must be lonely.

I am not angry with you. Because mom told me that you want to connect, you just don't know how. We don't speak the same language, not fluently, not enough, it's not enough to ask you if work was busy, if I have eaten yet, where mom is. For me it's not enough, but it has to be. Even if I learned this language fluently, I have become too expanded, to grasp me in my time frame, in my culture, in my community, is like climbing a land slide.

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