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Dear Mom, Dear Dad,

I have heard your story too many times, those poor Chinese villages, the nights your eyes have seen under the stars with an empty stomach, horrible ghost stories of the past too many nights and struggles you have faced in China, the ways you suffered in your youth and into your early adulthood, and the hopes you gained when you first heard of a new life and smelled that fresh air of the United States, the fresh start that you, my grandparents, my aunts, and uncles smelled when you first stepped foot on American soil are all too familiar to me. Your son has seen it all, heard it all, and felt it all. But have you ever felt what it is like to be someone who must tackle his culture and his homeland with a foreign one, someone who must climb mountains under the weight of all the dreams others have for him, someone who must work toward a life that he doesn't even want? I want to open my book, so you can hear the story that has been pushed on the shelf for so long, waiting for someone to open it. I want to tell you who Matthew Wang is, but you must listen. I cannot say it in perfect Mandarin, nor will my struggles ever relate to the hardships that you have faced in China. However, I need you to listen to me.

Mom, Dad, I am Matthew Wang, and the story I must tell you does not start with "Once Upon a Time". I was born in a homeland you call foreign. Born with a language I call mine, but you do not own it. I am a Chinese American high schooler. I remember everything was perfect when I

was your baby. I remember the trips we went on and the even longer car rides we spent together when going to places like Walt Disney World or New York City. I remember the music we played, the sing-alongs to old-fashioned Cantonese songs on long car rides to trips where our bonds grew closer. But all trips have a destination point B. Although it is the journey that counts, every journey ends at point B. I am now sixteen years old; I am not a child anymore. Since I could remember, I had to carve my path with a weight given at birth, a weight both your hopes and dreams gave me when I first opened my eyes. I know how much you loved me when I was dancing around in a diaper and speaking Mandarin to you, but I've always felt that kind of love was more for a commodity who could find success and make you proud rather than love just for a son. I have had to tackle my born culture and the one I adopted. I will never understand Chinese culture and ways like you know it. I have never once stepped foot in China. Even a trip or two will not change the fact that I have American blood in my veins. I hope you understand that my identity might not match how you see me. However, I want to be accepted and loved by my parents for being me.

In truth, however, I do owe everything I am to you. You've spent days and nights thinking about work, just to get me the best education I needed because you did not have it when you were my age. You've spent hours upon hours pulling a ball of string to sit at the dinner table with me, making sure my brother and I did not sit alone, eating our food, and wondering whether our parents would come home before the food was cold. Those days we spent watching shows together, the nights we spent talking, just talking, in your room were when I got to see what you gave me. You've given me everything my heart needs and desires. I have always wanted more, but I know that you have already done everything you could have for me. Time flew from your life spent hushing my life in the dark. Nights spent reading a million fantasies to me, giving me

compassion, hope, and wonder. However, you have also given me some of my worst traits: my worrisome nature and stubborn attitude come from aspects I have seen in you. But you have taught me to use them better than how you used them. I now use my stubborn attitude to never give up on anything and my worrisome nature to show compassion and patience for others. I owe everything to you, both my good and my bad, and this person I call my own.

But this person I call my own, he has to be heard. He needs to feel he is loved and spoken to as a son. I am your son, but I am not you. I cannot carry your dreams and hopes for me the way I want to. Mom, Dad, I want to live the way I want. I know that you want someone who will achieve grand things in life, eat the best foods on this Earth, or never look back when spending money. I understand that you want someone who will make a claim to fame and fortune and retire early in a mansion with a beautiful wife and children that you can call yours. But these are what you dream, not me. Eventually, I will be unable to carry this weight any longer. There are only so many ways you mold a figure, so I cannot be what you want me to be. I cannot be the Chinese-spoken, rich, big business company person every parent wishes their child will grow up to be. I cannot achieve those straight as in school or achieve something that someone else has gotten. I yearn to be the person I wish to see in the mirror. The person who backpacks around the world, seeing and believing in new sights and sounds and never stopping. I wish to see a child's heart in my chest, someone who loves Disney and will look at life not as what it is but as what it could be. I want to see a person who is happy with themselves, someone who is living their lives not by standards set on them but by standards that I set for myself. But I cannot do that if you continue to keep the weight of your hopes and dreams on me. I cannot do that if I am constantly reminded of the life I have received and the life that I should be working towards because you don't want me to see the same horrid nature you have seen. I need your support because you are

my parents, the people I should trust the most but don't, the people I should get comforted by when I score low on a Physics test but are too scared to encroach near you. I need you to understand that I have already made myself and it does not fit in with your image, but I hope for the love and admiration that I had once received.

But my story is not finished, the love and admiration I want are not far from gone. I love you with all my heart and I always will. The bond that we have is still there but as time goes on, it shifts and bends, breaks, and rebounds when it finds the other half again. I miss the days when life was simple when music and laughter between point A and point B were the life we knew. But I am sixteen years old now, I need to let go of the weight I have carried since birth. I want to break out of the mold you have placed me in and be my person. But know that I will never lose sight of those who gave me everything I needed, who lifted me when I was sad, taught me the best of what I know, and loved me when I needed it. I love you Mom and Dad, then, now, and forever, even if it shifts.

Love your son,

Matthew Wang