

Meagan To

Submitted on January 1st, 2023

Junior at George Washington High School

Dear Māma and Bàba,

You can't even imagine the time I spent rewriting this letter. You've created a comfortable environment where I'm capable of talking to you about anything and everything however, this is one topic that I find too vulnerable to share through open words, so I am writing you this letter to express my gratitude.

I remember vividly how hot tears rolled down my face when you both walked through the front door of Pópo's house at midnight. I felt crushed with ambivalent emotion, not knowing whether I should act out on betrayal or be grateful that you had remembered that it was my birthday, even if it had ended just a few minutes ago. It was my 8th birthday, and I lacked maturity, not understanding why you had left for work, not knowing that love drove you to leave my brother and me to the care of extended family. Thank you for the mildly sweet fruit cake, for making me feel special, and for the warm hug that 8-year-old me desperately needed.

I apologize for the times I mocked your improper pronunciation and grammar when speaking and writing in English. Despite your challenges with speaking perfect English, you still cuddled me in your loving arms and read to me, hoping I would have access to better opportunities in this Western world. To use this privilege to undermine and make you feel inferior was incredibly selfish of me. To this day, one of my fondest memories as a young child was

when you took turns rereading ***Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*** by Bill Martin Jr. to me despite feeling worn out from a day of industrious work.

Sometimes I wonder what life would've been like if you had been more selfish with your own lives. Who would I be if you had not neglected your dreams, aspirations, hobbies, and friends? To be so selfless and sacrifice your interests in hopes of being able to provide me with all of the resources to make sure I could succeed and live the American dream. Thank you for gifting me the privilege of being able to try out the career paths and activities that intrigue me. My past and future successes and accomplishments are a result of your selfless love and endeavors.

Being uprooted from your childhood home and moving to the U.S. with nothing, but your family and suitcase must've been frightening. Is the culture shock a reason why you don't seem to trust Western medicine? Also, do you speak little of your illnesses to me out of fear that I'll become worried and distracted from my studies? You often tell me of your body aches, tendon pains, and shaking hands; but you refuse to seek help from a doctor. In contrast however, you rush to bring me to the doctor even if you distrust their advice at times: this is another example of your selflessness.

Thank you, Māma, for breaking generational sexism and raising me to believe that my dreams are limitless. I wish you had the same upbringing as I do. I am beyond fortunate to have a strong and encouraging mother who is there for me at every milestone of my life. Thank you for teaching me that it's good to be vulnerable at times and for comforting and building me up for my next battle. Whether I reach my dreams or not, thank you for helping me learn that my first dream sets me up for my next dream, even when I can't see them.

Thank you, Bàba, for keeping an uplifted spirit despite working tiresome graveyard shifts to financially support my afterschool activities. I remember feeling so embarrassed when I woke up to Māma telling me that I had fallen asleep while writing a diary entry about how much I missed you. While my cheeks flushed bright red because my diary was private and unfiltered, I'm glad you saw how much I genuinely missed you while you were gone, working all night and taking additional opportunities during the day.

Because of your combined support, I have the opportunity to achieve my dreams and become a healthcare professional in the future. Thank you for listening to me rattle on about my day and aspirations every night until you can't anymore and accidentally fall asleep. This letter can't cover everything I'm grateful for, but I just wanted to let you both know that your love is my guide and privilege in this world.

With love,

Meagan

