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妈妈,

There's so much I want to say to you. So much hate, anger, and love I have that cannot be conveyed through spoken words. I feel too scared to confront you, and I should think you will never read this, because if you do, then I wouldn't be too honest with myself. I really want to know if one part of you ever hated me for being your child. If you ever thought about seeing a different face on the hospital bed. A more perfect one. It pains me to look at you. I'm always on the verge of crying when I think you will never be satisfied with who I am or who I will become. I think I'm insensitive, reckless, and stupid in your eyes. Though, I know that's not how you feel...far from how you feel. Sometimes I think I'm always putting the way I see myself to explain how others see me, including you, but you always tell me not to. I have disappointed you. I have never upheld the invisible expectations that linger in our conversations or through your reprimands. What do you expect of me? Why can't you accept me for who I'm trying my best to be?

I have always been a burden your strained back has to carry. At each doctor's appointment, you held my hand, telling me everything will be okay. It was just the two of us in the waiting room, waiting until people started to trickle out, and before we knew it, the day had become cold and dark. We would then walk to the supermarket right around the corner. You would buy the seabass along with the AA 菜 I love to eat, and we would walk the way home. I'm not perfect. It's harder for me to accept myself than you do. How can I not hate myself when I am the child born with a birthmark and Teratoma, already landing in the hospital at age six? Remember that beautiful memory of me in the hospital, tugging you to play the PS4 with me despite my aching arm? How about that blue drawing book with horses you got me from the bookseller in the lobby? What about the Gatorade and Sprite I happily chugged so they can get a clear

X-RAY image? How painfully stupid was I, but now we just laugh it off. Sometimes I wish for things to be the same, but then I remember the pain behind the smile that never reaches your eyes. I wish I wasn't the child who knocked on your room in the middle of the night because of my nose bleeds. To this day, you probably still don't know I stopped knocking because I was ashamed so I fell asleep with the blood souring my throat. I hated myself for the never-healing holes in both of my arms because of my weekly allergy shots on the 8th floor of Queens Crossing. One part of me longs to know if there is a part of you that detests me for being such a disappointment, for always needing you behind my back. I'm shaking as I write this because I pity myself. Pitying myself for always being frightened. So dependent on you. Shaking as I hear you talk about your aunt's younger son who is working hard to pay off his \$4000 monthly tuition in medical school. I never do enough and can never be enough.

Look where we are. We have our own house now (no need to rent a stuffy room for the four of us). We have a car— a Toyota —that can do the job. And we have a restaurant. What you initially thought would lighten your worries now came tumbling down with more things that kept you awake at night. Trust me, I thought it would solve all our financial problems and bring our family closer together too. From working once a week to five times a week, including my weekends, I have ultimately considered the restaurant my second home. *Our* second home. You spend six out of seven days in the restaurant. It must be stained with sweat and tears from your endless toils. 妈妈, I'm so proud of you. But, I hope you understand how I feel too. I know those calls in the middle of the school day to alleviate angry customers will never end, and that business 1099 tax form would not have corrected itself if not for the over 30 back-and-forth emails between Grubhub, Uber Eats, and Doordash. I really hate how the restaurant is creating a distance between us — a barrier between already fortified walls built in my head. This world is different now, and I am trying to cope too.

I love you so much. I love when I extend my arms for a hug from you and you warmly embrace me. I love how selfless you are. I love how you don't care about judgments and criticism from others. I love how

you have so much faith in my potential. You are my never-subsiding cheerleader. You believed in me even after I completely bombed my SHSAT. That memory has now turned into a life lesson you warn me about - *Always bubble in your answers!* You believed in me so much that you are still sure to this day that fate has brought me to one of the top three specialized high schools in New York. There are so many things you are still learning. Learning how I'm trying to find myself too. I love when we sat down and talked about my eating disorder. It really shows how we *both* are making an effort in trusting one another. I know it's not easy to understand a concept you're unfamiliar with. An eating disorder? *We ate everything we could possibly get.* And I feel ashamed, but I want to mend the generational gap, the misunderstandings, and the cultural hindrances between us, so I chose to brace myself for what little courage I have to tell you. It was not easy when my mind was rushing with the potential arguments of ungratefulness at the tip of your tongue, waiting for its chance to unleash. I can't forget the anger in your eyes and the edge in your tone, demanding that I was normal. How could your child possibly have a mental disorder? I cried for days at that time. I cried for myself. How I wish I was what you saw in me! But, at the end of the day, you continued to care for me. Asked me how I was coping with it. You accepted my request for a psychiatrist, even though, it might've been seen as shameful. In the end, you are always here with me, and I can't ask for any more than that.

You are now in your 40s, and I'm only 15. But, in those 15 years of my life, your unwavering motherly love will always keep me going. The memories I look back on when I feel lonely. There is one night when I was six, however, that will forever be engraved in my memory- that pouring night with the stars glistening in the sky. I pointed at the different animals I could trace until droplets fell into my eyes. We didn't have an umbrella, so I ran through the rain across the street, with my hands entrusted in yours. We were waiting for the bus, a taxi, or dad to pick us up. You knew I was hungry so you brought me to the Dunkin' Donuts nearby and went back outside, when thunder along with rain began to pound harder onto the ground, just to get me Halal food from a food cart. In those two minutes I was so scared, but I felt like the happiest kid out there. I could feel the love when you opened the plate and passed me the one set of

utensils and patiently looked at me while I ate. I remember you refusing when I asked you if you want. You pushed the plate towards me and smiled: “妈妈不要，你先吃。” No one can replace that motherly love I always felt from you. I hope you also remembered that night.

There are still so many words left unspoken. Still, so many things undone. So many promises waiting to be fulfilled. So many places I want to take you to. So many nights I still want to live while talking to you about the silliest of things. So many laughs I want to hear from you. Smiles I want to bring to your face. So many memories I still want to make. We will get there together.

I am like a caterpillar inside my cocoon. I want to break free. And when I do, I want to become that beautiful butterfly. I want to become that shining butterfly in your eyes. That perfect daughter.

Thank you for choosing to be strong for me,

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