

A True Story: Love on Thanksgiving 2020

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Abstract

Because of the outbreak of the epidemic in 2020, I was laid off by the company and my daughter had to stay at home to take online lessons. Our life has changed suddenly, many plans could not be carried out normally. This made us stressful and some quarrels occurred between us. However, our love for each other will not change. 2020 was crazy and variables. What did not change, though, is that our Thanksgiving was blessed. Thanks to 2020, I understood more on how to appreciate how simple and ordinary life is! That is what I want, and it is the most cherished!

1

The last Thursday in November is Thanksgiving in the United States. This is a holiday for expressing love and gratitude. It is also a time for the family reunion, gathering with relatives and friends, and celebrating the harvest.

We used to have a big party on Thanksgiving. However, 2020 is not normal, so I canceled the festivities. But Fang, a classmate of my daughter at Johns Hopkins University, contacted me and expressed that she'd like to spend Thanksgiving with us, stating she was in good health and had not been outside for several days. Fang has never returned home after coming to the US from Shanghai, and could only take classes online from her rented apartment for most of 2020. She said she felt very lonely and helpless.

My previous job was working with international high school students, so I deeply understand how hard it is to be in a foreign

country without family. So, how can I refuse a visit from a young girl who left home for a couple of years? In the past on the holidays, especially on Chinese festivals, I would gather the Chinese students together to do something: go hiking, visit museums, watch movies, or make big meals at my house. Delicious homemade Chinese food also made them feel back home and comforted their homesickness. But two weeks ago, the company laid off many employees, including me, and asked that we not keep in touch with the students after we left.

My English tutor, Liz, has been living alone since her husband passed away a few years ago. I meet with her once a week to practice my oral English. When she asked me how to plan the coming Thanksgiving, I invited her to celebrate the holiday with my family. Therefore, Thanksgiving this year would consist of five members: my husband, daughter, Liz, Fang, and myself.

2

My daughter has been under an immense amount of pressure recently. She is earning her master's degree and is an intern in a real estate company. She will go to the west coast to work for a while in a month, and then work in Japan. In spite of so many things squeezed into a pile, she also led a fundraiser.

She was a team leader of the Asian Culture Club and the Taekwondo Club before she graduated from the United States of Naval Academy. Some students of these two clubs could not go home this year. For this reason, she raised funds from the alumnus to buy Thanksgiving meals for these two clubs, raising a total of nearly \$1000.

On the night before Thanksgiving, I was marinating the turkey and vaguely heard my daughter crying in her room. I knew there was huge pressure on her, as she was unable to complete all the arrangements for the fundraiser in the limited time. I went into her room and gave her a hug, but she started complaining that I did not help her at all. Suddenly all kinds of frustrations and sadness struck me. "Why do you desire so many things and make your schedule so tight? Who do you think who you are?!" I said angrily and slammed the door shut. Two weeks ago, I was suddenly laid off by my employer, with HR giving me one day to leave from work. I didn't even have time to say goodbye to the students, their natural parents in China, the host families in the U.S., and all those who I had been responsible for over the years. I understand that the company's situation is tough; however, my little wish is that someone we could communicate to, but what we received was disappoint. There is also the endless pandemic, the annoying presidential campaign, and the sluggish economy; all is such painful.

3

I woke up early on Thanksgiving Day; the weather was so good and full of sunshine. My

daughter already left home to deliver Thanksgiving food. My HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training) coach arranged a class on Zoom in the morning. While she was instructing, she shouted, "Hit the pandemic! Thanksgiving! Give it your best! Give your all!" I followed her with the music: jumped, kicked, and hit, panting and sweating. After the class, I felt relaxed. The frustration of arguing with my daughter last night, the disappointment of being laid off, the depression from the yearlong epidemic seemed to have been shaken off by sweat. I told the coach, "Thank you for this class, I got relaxed and relieved!" She said, "Dear, I really want to thank you for being together with me. In this year's darkness, we all need support and company!"

At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the turkey would be done, the delicious smells came out of the oven. I put the red-shaped maple leaf placemats on the dining table and lit two beautiful, scented candles, their slightly beating flame making the house full of warmth in all corners.

At this time the doorbell rang signaling my daughter came back. Through the glass door I saw she was smiling in winter's bright sunlight, her shiny black hair blowing in the wind. As soon as I opened the door, she said, "Mom, Happy Thanksgiving! I love you!" Her voice was full of joy, and then she told me, "The event was great. The students were so happy and moved when they received the food. It means a lot to me! I'm tired from the trip but I am so happy!" I looked into her eyes and said, "I love you too! You know what, I'm so proud of you," then I gave her a big hug.

Not long after, Fang and Liz arrived. The Thanksgiving dinner was just set. My husband said a grace before the meal. He said, "Dear Lord, thank you for the plentiful food in such a difficult year. Thank you for this holiday that we could be together with family and friends. Please continue to give us

courage and strength to fight the pandemic away as soon as possible and let people's lives return to be normal..."

Everyone eagerly started to dig in. They all praised the delicious turkey and dishes. Fang and Liz were so happy and thanked us for the incredible and unforgettable holiday.

After dinner, we played a few rounds of Mahjong. What a perfect Thanksgiving!

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Recommended Citation

Crone, Y. H. (2021). A true story: Love on Thanksgiving 2020. *Made in Millersville Journal*, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.mimjournal.com/paper-67>