

Life will go on

Jane Li

This morning, I sent my mom a message said, "Happy Mother's Day!" She didn't reply me after an hour, which made me start to worry, because usually she would response to me message right away. Then I left my table, when I came back, I saw three new messages on my phone from mom.

"Thank you!"

"There is something I need to tell you. Don't worry too much. Your grandpa probably not going to make it this time. It's cerebral hemorrhage."

"It started from the 8th. He was in a coma for three days."

I couldn't believe it. I know my grandpa had this health issue for a long time. The same situation happened in last year, in May, which is funny because it is exactly the same time. But he survived and recovered, like a miracle. I guess there is a part of me insist that a strong man like him would never die. Yes, he can lay in bed, he can use the wheelchair instead of walk, he can stay in the hospital, in the ICU for a month. But he would NEVER DIE.

So I replied, "what did the doctors say?"

Mom said, "too old for surgery."

It took me a while to figure out what is going on. My mom is telling me a bad news in a particularly cool manner. The bad news relates to my grandfather. And what's worse, my whole family is trying to hide it from me. I guess I am the latest person in my family to know about it. If I haven't send the "happy mother's day" message to my mom, I would probably be informed about grandpa's death.

I understand my family don't want me to worry about it or to put unnecessary concentration on it, since I am studying and I am in another country far away from home. But this is unfair! Why do they deprive me of the right to know?

Then I called mom in anger. She didn't answer the phone but texted later, "Kind of busy now. I'll call you when I get back home". Maybe she is busying in managing everything at home. Make sense. So I called my cousin instead, ask him what is going on with our grandpa.

My cousin is 5 years younger than me. He said he just heads back home from grandpa's house. There are a lot of things he also feels confused, such as why there is no treatment, why grandpa stays at home this time instead of hospital, what would he eat if he is in a coma... But everyone is so busy and nobody have the time to answer his questions.

Then I asked, "who is in grandpa's house now? Is my mom and dad there?"

"Basically everyone. Oh, except your mom. She is taking care of your younger brother in the school. Your dad is there". Said by my cousin.

"Did you remember last year we went to hospital to visit grandpa. He was seriously ill, but he turned out to be fine. He can eat, he can walk..."

"No. Not this time. They said, I mean the 'grown ups' and doctors. It unlike any situation in the past."

"I... I even called him in the spring festival, he looked fine..." I still tried to argue.

He stoped me by saying, "Yes, he was fine, even the minute before the faint. They said he was talking about his traveling plan this year, and it all happened in a sudden. He rose from his chair, then he fainted and never woke up again. And you know what, he even walked half hour to buy breakfast that morning."

All of a sudden, I don't know what to say. it is all feels so real, even though I deny it's true. The worst finally happened.

Grandpa's situation is getting worse and worse every year. He dreamed of flying to the U.S. to visit my older sister, going to Beijing to meet his spiritual leader Chairman Mao, and spending the cold winter in a warmer place in the south of China. None of these came true because of his health issues. He can only go to the cities nearby to visit his relatives.

But he is very tough. He insists to take a walk in the neighborhood everyday as daily exercise even though his legs can barely stand him. He loves taking bus to go outside even though all the family members opposed that. A few years ago he was so painful, he even said to my grandma, "let me go". And somehow he survived. After, he used it also a joke, "see, it's not so easy to die. Maybe the god wants me to live, to see my grandchildren grow up, get married, and have their own kids. Then I can spend the last of my life with my grand-grand kids."

Unfortunately, we, his grandchildren, let him down. None of us have the plan to have kids. My older sister and her husband decide to be DINK. my older brother is too concentrate on his research of A.I. to have a serious relationship. I am almost 25, single, and remain a negative attitude to imitate relationship. While all my younger brothers are too young to talk about marriage.

Now, suddenly someone says he may never wake up. He still has so many things wanted to do, so many expectations for the future. How can he die with regrets?

After a while of mind blank, I called my father. I was calm before I called him. However, when I heard the dial tone, an intense grief comes from my heart. When I heard my father's voice, I couldn't stop crying. And he cried too. We didn't talk. We cried for quite a while, and he said, "you shouldn't call." I understand. He must have repressed his feelings for a long time. But the phone call from his daughter from another country breaks him down. Honestly, this is the first time I heard my father cry.

He then tried to keep calm, and updates the information with me. At the end, he said, "there is nothing you should worry about. We all know it would happen one day, we have prepared. Now you're abroad, you can't help us. Just take care of yourself, and I will take care of everything at home. I will tell grandpa you called even though he may not be able to hear that. You know, life will go on without him."

After a short break, he added, "Don't call me again."

He must feel ashamed for crying in front of hie daughter. Chinese culture believes that people's emotions should be restrained. Keeping your countenance is what a grown man should do. And that is what he needs to do. Now as the oldest son in family, he is supposed to be the mainstay instead of crying and showing the slightest sign of weakness. Surely he would dry his eyes in the corner and go back to work, pretending nothing had happened. I can imagine that.

After he hanged up, I cried for an hour. The whole thing is true and it is happening. I finally believe.

I wanted to write something about my grandpa, but I could not stop thinking about my dad. I can't imagine how painful he is. After all, he is the one who is going to lost his father.

At the beginning of the corona crisis in China in January, I really worried about my grandparents because the experts said older people are at higher risk. So I warned my family to wear masks everyday. Ironically, what killed my grandpa is not the virus but his disease. We lost a family member in COVID-19 who is not die in corona virus, and he died in the time when things are finally getting better in China.

I started to feel guilty of not being with my family at this very moment. I chose to study aboard at first because I want to receive better education, to find a better job, and to have a better future. While how can the future be better if I am not with my family. If the same thing happens to my parents in the future, and I am not at home, will I still be kept in the dark? It makes me rethink whether I want to live and work in this city. After all, family means a lot to me.

When I was growing up, I read and saw a lot of artworks about death. I learned how to face death, how to comfort others when they are experiencing death. But at this moment, I feel death is only easy to talk. it is hard, so hard, if it really happens around you.

I have a friend who lost her father last year. It was a car accident and it was happened in a sudden. The good news is her father didn't suffer. She said after the incidence, "I am still the same person, but I also feel there is a part of me lost somewhere. So I would never be the same person again."

My cousin's mom died 2 years ago when he was in high school. He never show his sadness to me. A year later, I turned on his phone accidentally and saw the top contact in his message is his mom. The latest text was the day before. He texted to the blank number, "I miss you so much".

Life will go on. This is not a comforting remark, it is the truth. And we all have our own way to recall the people we lost. But life will always go on.

I also remind myself, I need to finish my essay, to graduate, to write my CV, to find a job, to go to work and to get everything around me working smoothly as usual. We, adults, don't have time to grieve.

I pray so hard and wish my grandpa will get better this time though hope is frail. If not, this would be all my memories in times of corona in Amsterdam.