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Unit 1: Education Narrative Essay

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Father's Back

My father has always been strong and hard-working in my memory. However, in the spring of 2020, he began to bend over like a shrimp. He always curled himself up in bed, trying to decrease his pain. Due to the pandemic, my mother was the only one supporting the family. My responsibility was to take care of my father since he refused to go to any hospitals. However, I didn't do a good job at taking care of my father. I failed to understand how seriously the sickness had broken him mentally and physically. I treated my father like a healthy person instead of a sick person. Naively, I thought my father would get better soon and everything was going to get back to normal soon. However, everything changed as I saw his ribs showing through his chest. I realized his back was so thin that his spine poked through his skin. My heart dropped again as I moved my eyes upwards towards his face. His eyebrows were twisted together in pain. His eyes sunk in his eye sockets like the bottom of a well. His cheeks were dented like it was chopped away. I questioned myself deeply, where are my father's full red cheeks? Where are his brightening eyes? All these images screamed at me, forcing me to face the reality that my father was severely sick. He was on the thin line of death. This sickness could take away my father at any time.

Due to the pain my father was having, his personality changed drastically. He became aggressive and constantly yelled at me when taking care of him. His personality changes also caused many fights between him and my mother. I was constantly stuck between their fights

because the only ending of the fights would be my mother crying that we should go back to China and I should quit school to go back with her. I was terrified every single time because I didn't know how to comfort my mother and I didn't want to go back to China. I cried to my older sister for help, but there was nothing she was able to do. She gave the best advice she could — stay quiet and don't get involved in between their fights. I felt alone and scared. I didn't know when this would come to an end. The only thing I was able to do is put my head down and focus on helping my father recover while doing school work.

At the end of May 2020, my father was rushed to the emergency room for surgery. Since I was the only English speaker in my family, I had to squeeze out every little time I had to translate for him over the phone. Physically being there with him was not an option at the time due to COVID protocols. When my father returned, it was again my mission to take care of him. I would clean his wounds and change his gauze every day because I was the only one able to do it. My mother, on the other hand, was scared to look at the wounds on my father's stomach. I was responsible for connecting with his doctor, managing his medicine, and scheduling his second surgery. It was a horrible experience for me, especially when I also had online school going on while taking care of him. I felt alone and hopeless. Still, I was happy to see some physical features of my father slowly returning to his original state. I felt like my life was finally back on the right path and that I could stop being an adult for my father.

Finally, when time passed, my father was ready for his second surgery. It was stressful. My heart went up and down like rollercoasters from the news about my father. I was terrified by the sounds of monitors beeping and the sounds of nurses speaking. Every word that came out from the nurses and doctors felt so cold that it froze my blood and took away my ability to process anything. Luckily, my father was able to get through the recovery. As a process of taking care of him, I skipped classes to translate for my father during doctor's

appointments. However, my father was angry with me. I remember clearly on this one day when my mom got off work and I finished the school day, we both went to the living room to chat. My father laid weakly on bed in his room and cried, "I am dying here and you only care about your stupid education. You are trying to murder me by making me wait for my doctor's appointment". I was devastated and didn't know how else I could smooth out my father's anger. Although my mother backed me up against him, his words remained in me like a needle, pricking me day and night. Looking back now, I understand that he was mad at the situation he was in. After this horrific experience, I finally began to taste the adulthood waiting ahead of me. I realized I needed to be more than just my parent's child. I needed to be the child they can rely on as they get older. I began to flip open the blanket my parents put on me as a newborn. I slowly wrapped this blanket around my parents and held them as tightly as I was held by them.

To the present, my father has survived the sickness. He still needs to have follow-up meetings with his doctors and take medication to control the disease. I take it as my responsibility to manage all his medical-related things, such as medication and making doctor appointments. This event has changed my way of thinking and viewing the world. For example, in fall 2022, my freshman year of college in Long Island. It is the first time I left home and had my own control over decisions. The process of taking care of my father has made me survive my first year of college. I was able to manage time better and I was able to take care of myself instead of causing trouble to my roommate. It benefited me in college to be more on task and manage to finish every assignment on time. Even though I was away from home, I still had to make time for my father as his doctor needed translation from me through video visits. I sometimes also need to make time to go back to the city to walk him through his doctor's appointments and rush right back to Stony Brook University for my education. It is tough, but I manage to push it through as hard as I can because I am the only

one my parents can rely on. It forces me to be a strong and independent person. Even though it was a horrific experience, I am still grateful for the things it forced me to learn and develop.