

Two Poems
By Zenobia Chan¹

a bowl of beef balls rice noodle soup

The power of motherhood can be represented by
a bowl of beef balls rice noodle soup
It helps me through whenever I am weak

When I was five, my mother took me to a noodle shop to have
a bowl of beef balls rice noodle soup
Based on this unforgettable experience
I became addicted to it, as it recalls my relationship with my mother

When I was pregnant at age 23, I suffered from severe nausea and vomiting
I could not eat anything, became weak and dehydrated --
I had no appetite at all, then
I returned to that noodle shop and ordered
a bowl of beef balls rice noodle soup
Once I smelled it my appetite came back
I ate a beef ball, had a mouthful of rice noodles and tasted a spoonful of soup
From then onwards
I was able to eat many kinds of food during my pregnancy

Now I am suffering from post-doctoral thesis writing stress that
upsets my appetite again
But I force myself to eat as I have to live on for my mother
I go to this noodle shop every weekend and have
a bowl of beef balls rice noodle soup

Whenever I see and eat the noodles, I have my mother in my heart

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She is the person who gave me life and introduced me to these noodles
I enjoy our intimate mother-daughter relationship--
a relationship that can be revisited whenever I eat these noodles
My mother's love for me is always within
a bowl of beef balls rice noodle soup

I wrote this poem because it is impossible for me to share with you
a bowl of beef balls rice noodle soup
But I can share with you my mother's love for me and my love for her
so as to celebrate mother-daughter relationships all around the world

God please keep my parents alive

When I was age five, I prayed every night in the bed with my head lying on the soft pillow and my hands clasped together tightly and my eyes with tears crossing down my face and then dropping down onto the pillow. My pillow had a sour smell even though the pillow case was changed because of the tears soaked through over several years.

I whispered to God to hear my blessing to my beloved parents:
"If I shorten my ten-year life time so that my parents can have more life, I am delighted to do this."

This blessing was repeated in my bedtime prayer every night in my childhood and it was the only issue I wished God to hear.

When I was twelve, I prayed occasionally in the bed with my body sitting on the hard mattress upright and my hands holding a book and my eyes looking at the book and getting spotty through the type. The words were my food for thought even I was tired because studying hard was the best thing to do to make my parents feel happy.

I asked God to tell me the truth:
"If I study hard so that my parents feel happy and then they can live longer,
I am delighted to do this."

This confession was repeated in my bedtime prayer every night in my adolescence and it

was the only issue I wished God to answer.

When I was thirty-three, I prayed seldom in the bed with my mind sleeping in my aching skull and my sick body lying on the hard mattress, as I am deadly tired and without a single breathe to whisper to God.

I dream across with God, He holds my hands and says, “Your parents will live in your heart and they will never die in your spiritual world.”

When I wake up, I feel a great relief as I know that God has great mercy to keep my parents alive forever.