

The amount of times that I have stood and watched my dad leave for what seemed like the thousandth plane in a week without moving to say goodbye are insurmountable.

I stand frozen, pathetic, seemingly apathetic to the one person I love most, watching as my mom and sister make up for my seeming lack of emotions by giving him a heartfelt hug, an emotional goodbye—or just anything. Any action rather than just standing there. He somehow still finds it in him to wave goodbye to me. Smiling while he says it to me, waving bittersweetly as he turns around. He is gone, and a silence composed of a million words cascades heavily onto all three of us. We all carry this silence with us, everywhere we go. It lingers in the car, accompanied by his occasional shifting and fiddling journeying from island to island on static phone wire headed to turbulent hearts. It dances between our ears on the dinner table when all potential for virtual conversation falls defeated to the mere sound of spoon scraping plate as he gazes at us through the screen. Truth is, I really want to run and give him the biggest, warmest hug before he leaves. Every time. Yet, I always never do. Instead, I am standing paralysed, disconnected, desperately yearning for my body to magically move, to visibly display even the littlest bit of the monumental love I feel towards him. Yet, I always never do.

One might state that this hardship faced is one typical for immigrant children. The disconnection, disjunction, and detachment that we seem to have from our beloved parents. They led a very different life. They led a life full of hardships. A life that I know I could never bear. A life that was tailored at every seam in order to fit my destiny perfectly. Bearing this knowledge has always created a concoction between pure pain and guilt and a sense of duty. Sometimes all it surmounts to is guilt. Pain weighing down on nights where I cannot bear it anymore. I cannot bear the thought that I may be responsible for all the racism they face. I cannot bear the thought that, had I not been in their life, they would have led a much better one. I cannot bear the thought that I may be the cause of their trauma. Never in my life have I ever pronounced those thoughts aloud. I try, sure I do. I try numerous times. Yet I cannot mouth it without tears bubbling, without a sob breaking free, embarrassing me in front of them while they sit there patiently. Waiting for me to express my feelings. Waiting for me to mature. Waiting, waiting, waiting. It feels as though all that I have forced them to do is wait. Wait one more year until I finish an important schooling year so that they can reunite with each other past the islands, and when the time comes, I force them to wait an additional year because oh so selfishly I have other commitments now. They have never objected though. Always reassuring that they will do whatever they can to meet my needs, however selfish I may think said needs to be. Somehow, when my father looks at me just once and smiles saying that I shouldn't feel guilty, it manages to erase months worth of debates and heated arguments between myself and I about how horrible I must be. His words stick with me for a few weeks until they don't. I'm a machine, constantly needing the oil of his words to polish me so that I can keep going without creaking, without malfunctioning and breaking down. Unlike me, my father has never hesitated to show his love to me. To say his goodbyes to me, or to pull me in for a hug. Those mere signs of affection always seem to come at just the right time too. They always come when I am standing in the kitchen, devouring my inner lip as I ponder whether he hates me for never properly greeting or seeing him out. How all I can muster is a wave and a stuttering goodbye at most, and just in that moment, when I have

almost made my conclusion that he must think of me as a horrible daughter, he comes in sweeping me in a hug. A simple embrace, a simple kiss on the forehead and a chuckle as he looks at me and smiles before gently moving away to help with the dishes. The moment stays with me, a cherished record embedded into my muddled brain. It's on repeat on the days when I miss him most. It's on repeat on most of my days.

A claim I have never understood was "*All immigrant children want to grow up to be one thing— and that is to be as much unlike their parents as possible.*" The statement does nothing but fill me with vitriol, with pure fury. *Don't the people who wrote this know how much their parents sacrificed for them? Don't they understand how much selflessness and love a parent must have for their child in order to turn their life upside down and travel to a foreign country; just so your majesty can have a better upbringing than they did?* To be frank, I have always thought the exact opposite to this entitled statement. When I grow up, I would be elated if I found out that I have even half of my mother's courage to stand up for herself. When I grow up, I would shed tears of joy if I found out that I have some of my father's wisdom and calmness when approaching problems in his life. When I grow up, I aspire to be as resilient, kind, and loving as my parents have always been. On nights when the stresses of this fickle life threaten to consume me, the hope to impress and make the people I love most proud is the shimmer of light that I cling onto. It pains me to see statements such as these being made. It kills me further to imagine my parents ever reading them and thinking that I may agree. But whenever I see a similar statement and the rush of adrenaline pumps through me to go denounce any similar insufferable statements that may cross their mind, to finally express to them all of the tightly locked bubbling anger— I can't. I am unable to. Paralyzed, chained, and tied down through my own cowardice. Or is it cowardice? I never know. I will never know. Whenever I come to express my admiration, my gratefulness for the both of them, nothing comes out. The occasional sob or cry may come out instead, just to spite me, but no other meaningful words come out. Some days I wonder whether they know how much love I hold for them. Some days I wonder whether they know that I genuinely want to hug them and cry. Cry and wail over wasted opportunities, wasted chances of being the one to initiate the hug, instead of just being hugged. I'll never know what they think of me. I'll never know because I won't ask. I don't have it in me to ask and know the truthful answer.

You would think that, due to my lack of ability to properly display my emotions, a raft would have been created between me and my parents. A void that I will never be able to fill, until it consumes us all. That void is non-existent, however. They haven't let it manifest yet. As always, my parents are out on the forefront fighting for my well-being. Only this time they fight against my awkwardness. They fight against my pathetic hesitancy and reluctance to show emotions towards my own parents. After having written this, I now sit and ponder. For the first time, I have confronted myself about my own shortcomings when it comes to my relationship with my parents. I have no one to blame but myself, and no one to look to for help but myself. To my parents, I find no words to express my remorse other than: I'm sorry.