



Dear Mother,

I know that we don't have perfect chemistry together, that's why I'm making this letter for you to show my respect. You're the only one that protects me and stick with me for all these years from beginning till the inevitable end. Now as I'm writing this, I just realize all that you struggle to get me here and to make me that person I'm today.

Do you remember, when you at the valley and wanted to move out. At first, I didn't agree to the move because I had friends and some childhood memories, but we did. It was a risk for both us, getting out from our comfort zone and restart our life. You teach me a lesson about leaving the past At the time I wasn't proud of your effort, I question your decisions. Now I realize how hard it was to keep me fed while you were looking for a stable place to live. Usually, we move to different hotels every time we will run out of money. We will go back and forth..., it was hard but we manage to do it. It was more of a challenge buying a place with our little money. I remember always seeing you on the computer, checking your wallet daily, and planning your days. I do have more to tell, but I feel that I'll be telling that same thing. We did stay with a guy for a couple of weeks and we can both agree that it was one of our worst experiences. Now we live in a homeless shelter but we are looking for a place to stay. At the time I'm writing this, we already found a place and now we are getting to that part of moving. We are in better situations, we been saving money, I'm happy about it. I'm also happy about your gift, your best one yet, Eddy (My purple computer). Eddy is best accomplishment that you gave me, I use him more than anything, it's part of my life. I'm not saying that I'm obsess, just that this computer change my life, and I proud that you gave me that device. I'm using for writing, drawing, and music, maybe I will start a career with those hobbies, but now I'm taking it slow.

You aren't perfect. There is somethings that do annoys me. I do hate when you take me to class, by the door where all of my friends can see me. I do want it to stop. I'm thirteen year old and I need to be independent. We can make a schedule of times you can come, like Tuesday and Thursday you can give me a break. There was this one time that really annoys me, when you overreacted in the class and told everybody that you were going to sue them, we haven't talk about it but it was awkward. I didn't understand but you always change your emotions, like some days you will happy then be angry and cranky.

Christopher Papouloute Bravery Award Recipient

Now as I'm writing this, I just realize all that you struggle to get me here and to make me that person I'm today.

Mom shouldn't be the only that need to improve, I should be more thankful for all the things you did. You did help us when we were broke, buying all the foods, getting the clothes that fit me, and getting up early for the train. Usually, I will try to ignore you or say something negative to you, or I will try to act cool. It make it better, it made it worse, you will felt more bad and not appreciated. I was rude to you.

Like Isay we don't have a perfect chemistry, there are I like about you and I dislike about you. You are a interesting mother, you aren't perfect but you are still my mother. In the future, I hope that you can live long enough to see me becoming a success, maybe I will tell other people about my story. I hope you will be happy when I get old enough, you will find happiness with someone else and be happy. I'm say that because I'm writing letter, I'm say this because I really mean it. Again, You are my mother.

Sincerely,

Your Son, Christopher





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Kazi Salsabil

Reflection Award Recipient

Dear Abbu and Ammu,

You two are the world to me. I feel really awkward writing this because I usually don't express my feelings to you, but today through this letter maybe you will be able to understand what this family means to me.

Since I was little, I have always been daddy's girl. I loved hanging out with you, Abbu. You are very special. You always told me to score the highest, and when I struggled through school work you would encourage me to keep going. You put me into programs to gain experience and keep gaining knowledge to help me cope through the reality of the world. Abbu, you are my booster, you always encourage me to aim high and not give up easily, to be competitive, committed and brave. Your desire to provide us with a comfortable life drives you to reach farther and accomplish more in life, you are always motivated and committed.

From you, I learned that giving up is never an option and that we can be anything we desire. You have so many expectations of me that sometimes I feel overwhelmed, but to be honest, you actually helped me be motivated in accomplishing many things. Thanks to your influences, I was able to win competitions and get good grades. I really appreciate how you praise me for doing this, however at points, I hated how you always bragged about me. As I matured, I realized that bragging is your way of showing love and respect. I started to realize this is your way of feeling relieved about coming to America. As an immigrant, you faced many challenges. You had to juggle two to three jobs just to provide for us. You never complained about your long night shifts. I noticed that whenever you saw me accomplishing my goals you felt relieved that I was taking advantage of the opportunities in America. Seeing me doing well in school gave you the hope of not regretting coming to America. You left behind your job and our luxurious house just so my brother and I can have a better future. Thanks for believing in us and risking your future for ours.

Ammu, you on the other hand are very strict, yet loving. You always expected more and wouldn't let me slack off. You had high expectations of me to get good grades and get chores done at the same time. When I would bring in certificates, not once did you say, "Good job." You always kept your feelings to yourself. But as I hit high school, you seemed to open up.

"I hope in the future, I can be your support system and be able to preserve all the things you guys have taught me to be set in life."

Whenever you see me stressed out, you say, "Don't worry sweetie, as long as you can keep your humanity, you will be one of the most successful persons." I never understood what you meant, but as I grow up, I am getting the hint. Your expectation for me to follow the path of God and be honest has led me to try doing difficult things, to follow God and have faith in myself. I remember when I was a little kid, I thought only Abbu loved me. As I grew older and stepped into the world of high school, I experienced a lot of stress and started to lack confidence but thanks to you Ammu, I am finally at my third year of high school and you're helping me cope through my stress gets me through it all. Though I still struggle to accomplish my goals, you never stop encouraging and giving me the confidence I need to face the world while accomplishing my goals. You are showing me the path to becoming a successful adult, one who is honest and respected for that.

You two may have different mindsets, but your advice made me who I am: a believer, an honest and committed person. I know that you have done a lot for me, but we still lack on showing our love for each other, we can't communicate properly.

In order to build a strong bond among us, I want to start eating dinner together. I know we are busy, but during dinner we can be together and share stories of our heritage used to tell me stories about grandpa, a teacher whose knowledge caused him to be rewarded by the Bangladesh government for being a great writer in English. In his days, there weren't many English writers or teachers in our country. He was very famous for his advanced knowledge. This story would always inspire me to be someone as respectful as him and I want to know more about who we are. Through stories like this, I learned some valuable lessons about our family, when we put our mind to a goal, we can change and accomplish anything. I know this because I saw the way you guys handle many family situations.

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Though it would get hard, you showed a commitment to figuring out a solution on behalf of our family. From you I learned that family is the only thing that will push you and support you through life.

In the future, my goal is to provide you with a luxurious house and a comfortable life. I know how much you both have struggled as immigrants, even now that we are US citizens you are still struggling to make a living. Especially you Abbu, I know how much you want to buy a house and drive around in a BMW. I want to dedicate my future to providing the comfort you deserve. I am sorry that I haven't been that great of a daughter but thanks for understanding. Not all parents have the capabilities to see through their kids. I hope in the future, I can be your support system and be able to preserve all the things you guys have taught me to be set in life. I love you.

Sincerely, your daughter,

Kazi Salsabil

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Abdullah Habib Proposal Award Recipient

Dear Mom and Dad,

It's me, Abdullah, your son. My uncle always told me you both are coming one day. It has been 5 years since I have seen you both. Life is really hard for me when you are not with me. I am waiting for you to come and see me. I really miss the days that we all were together in Afghanistan. Mom, I remember when I was in middle school, you called me in the morning to wake up. I remember how you yelled at me when I didn't wake and wanted to sleep more. I remember how Dad always wanted me to achieve my goals and to get whatever I wanted. Today, I am so far away from you both. Even I don't know where to find you. My whole life is like darkness without you two. I miss your voice. I miss when you yelled at me in the mornings to wake up and go to school. I remember your beautiful smiles and voices and I remember my dad when he was talking and reading magazines in the morning.

My dear Mom, I am in high school now where I wanted to be. I am going to college in the next two years. I am going to achieve my goals. I know you and Dad brought me here from Afghanistan so that I could have these opportunities. My life would be so different if we were still living there. I remember it was so dangerous. Everyday when I come to home from school, my uncle always hugs me and always tells me what to do. I have nobody else except my uncle. I want you two to be in my life. I wish you could watch me today. I want you to call me in the mornings and yell at me to wake up and go to school. I want to see your beautiful face and my dad's smile. I remember how you two were angry at me when I was watching a movie or wasting my time. I remember you both trying to show me the right way and I didn't want to listen and I wanted to be alone. I wanted to be far away. Today, it is different. I am completely alone.

Without you two, my life is nothing. Even sometimes when I listen to Mom's song on Youtube I cry a lot. I yell at myself and say to myself, "I want my mom and my dad." I am really sorry about my behaviors. I am really sorry about the days that you wanted to show me the straight way but I showed the wrong reaction. Today, I realize that what you two wanted me to be. Today, I realize that you two were the only people who wanted me to achieve my goals and get whatever I wanted. I am really sorry.... Please forgive me.

Now as I'm writing this, I just realize all that you struggle to get me here and to make me that person I'm today.

Mom and Dad, both of you are like a billion dollar or treasure. I am pretty sure you two are healthy and I hope you two have a great life and are happy. I will try my best to be a hero for you. We will be together eventually, but I don't know where to find you two. I don't know you being far from me is making my life harder and harder. I wish before I die I get to see your faces, smiles and love. I wish you could receive this letter and read it. I am sorry for everything wrong that I did in the past when I had both of you. I hope you can forgive me. If you receive this letter please come to me. I miss you. I love you both.

With Love, Your Son, Abdullah Habib





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Angel Navarro Resilience Award Recipient

Dear Dad,

I didn't think I could ever forgive you. My brothers and I went through a lot because of you. It seemed like every time we spoke you wouldn't pay attention to me. I hated you for so long because of all the stuff you did to us. Every time you would come home drunk I remember that all of us would run and hide because we were all afraid of you. I felt so bad for my mom because she couldn't hide from you. She would protect us and most of the time you would hit her. Every time I saw you do that, my hatred towards you grew.

I still remember the day when I decided to actually confront you. I was 15 at the time. You came home and as always you were drunk, but this time it was different because you tried hitting my sister. I didn't plan on punching you but every step you took toward my sister got me angrier and angrier. Before you could hit her, I punched you. You looked at me and said, "Ah, so you think you're a man now?!" Shortly after that we got into a fight. You threw me to the floor but I got up and started choking you, but since my sister was crying I let you go and I took my sister and we went to my aunt's house.

Life didn't change. My mom convinced us to go back and the problem just grew until the day you died. A week before my birthday the alcohol and your bad decisions finally ended you. When we found out that you had crashed into a fence and passed away, only my mom and sister cried.

But... I've been thinking about this for almost a year now and I've talked to my mother and sister. After hearing their versions of you, not everything was bad. Sometimes we all would have fun and everyone would be happy. I don't know if this is a "thank you letter" but at least it's an "I forgive you card" because in some ways you made me the man I am today.

Sincerely, Your son Angel

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