

Love Through Thick and Thin

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Thursday, 19 January 2012 15:01



Sunlight falls onto Hu Feng-bao's face, revealing welled-up tears at the corner of her eyes. She sits alone in her living room, scanning the two hundred letters scattered across her table. It is unbelievable how many letters she had once sent him. Her vision blurs.

A home devoid of love

It is nothing short of a nightmare. Her father is shouting, her brother is wailing in pain and seven-year-old Feng-bao watches helplessly as her father hits her brother over and over again. She huddles in a corner, not even letting out a whimper, fearing she might be next.

Tired out, he throws the metal bar aside.

Unfortunately for the young ones, their father works in a metal factory so the piles of metal rods in their house then become convenient weapons for him. Their mother is not around because she is busy manning a roadside stall to help support the family. As a result, the three children become his punching bags whenever he gets mad.....

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Time and again, Feng-bao told herself she had to leave this house, a house that she could not call a home. After graduating from junior college, Feng-bao found a job in a publication company, which gave her a glimpse of the outside world for the first time. Her supervisor Lai Chung-fu took good care of his subordinates and was a good worker. Soon enough, the two of them got together. The first time Feng-bao held his hand, she felt warmth, something she had not experienced in a very long time. Feng-bao had never held her father's hand before, so this first-time convinced her that this man was the only man in the world she could depend on.

At twenty years of age, Feng-bao decided to elope. She left a letter, packed a simple carrier, and ran without looking back. After which, she and Chung-fu gave birth to a boy and a girl.



A broken marriage

Their marriage did not even last five years. Because of Chung-fu's job, he had this unspoken duty to entertain his customers. He would regularly go gambling and drinking with them, returning home at wee hours, drunk. Almost everyday, Feng-bao stayed up late, waiting for her husband to return.

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Her patience slowly and gradually wore down. One night, as she sat there staring listlessly at the television, she thought to herself, "It's already three in the morning. If he does not come back soon, I shall end it all." On the coffee table sat a fruit knife and a bag of pills. Her eyelids started to get heavier, either due to the pills or from crying endlessly.

The door slammed. Chung-fu swayed in. Feng-bao started to shout at him, but all he did was to ignore her and then proceeded to their bedroom. This demeaning gesture was the final straw. She flung her cup with all the welled-up anger within her. Her heart at that moment felt just like the broken pieces lying on the floor.

The influence of Da Ai Drama

Without anyone else to depend on, Feng-bao became the sole breadwinner. She manned the roadside stall from dawn to dusk. When she returned home she still had to care for her children. Having to go through this every day, it was no wonder she contracted Fulminant hepatitis. Even though Chung-fu took care of her while she was in hospital, he still did not turn over a new leaf. In the end, she decided to divorce her husband.

Chung-fu thought the divorce would be good for both of them. He assumed wrongly. Unfortunately for him, he sank deeper and deeper into his partying nightlife, and even resorted to misappropriating his company's funds. Adding to this, several incidents of drunk driving landed him a year and a half in jail.

Stuck in never-ending fatigue, Feng-bao turned to the drama series shown on Tzu Chi's Da Ai TV, and they became her biggest emotional support during disheartened times. She found herself relating to the plot, crying and laughing along with the characters. She finally picked herself up, along with the help of insights gained from the Jing Si Aphorism cited by the characters.

"A confused mind agonizes; an enlightened mind is at ease." "Be thankful towards those who hurt you in the past, because of them, you have grown stronger." These were some of the astute Jing Si Aphorisms she included in letters to her ex-husband while he was still in prison. She had not forgotten what it felt like to hold his hands.



Starting a new life

One day, she entered a Tzu Chi bookstore hoping to purchase a book to lift herself up. Little did she expect she would be received with the warmth she had not felt in a long time.

With eyes red from crying, she poured out all her sorrows to a Tzu Chi volunteer, who held on to

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her hand while offering comforting words. Her heart feeling much relieved, Feng-bao decided to write a letter to Chung-fu every single day, with the inclusion of various Jing Si Aphorisms. These letters not only illuminated Chung-fu's cold prison life, but also helped open Feng-bao's heart.

Feng-bao started volunteering with Tzu Chi's culinary team, recycling activities and promotional campaigns. She underwent training and is now an official Tzu Chi commissioner.

After taking part in the Water Repentance musical adaptation in August this year, she regretted having used violence on her children. Now that she is a 'Class Mummy' with the Tzu Chi Teenagers' Class, she has since learned to truly love. Now, mother and brood are inseparable.

The spark between Feng-bao and Chung-fu has since been reignited too. Up till today, Chung-fu still keeps good care of all 215 letters his wife wrote to him. He is also now a Tzu Chi volunteer. With newfound strength to start life anew, he is grateful towards Master Cheng Yen for her wise words and Feng-bao for standing by him through thick and thin.

He holds up one of his most treasured letter. On it is a lyric from the Da Ai Drama, Beautiful Dawn. "*Adversity is inevitable, but light will always prevail. One day, you and I will enjoy the sunrise together* ."

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