

LONGING TRADITION

written by

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EXT. STREET MARKET. EARLY AFTERNOON.

An array of food stalls selling street foods to the crowd during this peak hour. Standing right at the corner is an old man in his forties wearing a traditional bamboo hat and thin shirt covering his singlet. He is struggling to fill out every order from his customers. This is Carrie's father who runs a traditional snack stall called tutu kueh. Sitting beside him on a stool, cross legged is a young girl in her primary school reading her textbook. This is Carrie.

CARRIE'S DAD (TO CARRIE)  
Carrie, can you help?

CARRIE (TO DAD)  
No, Dad! I want to study!

Carrie's dad sigh in disappointment as he struggles to serve his customers while Carrie continues to read her textbook.

TWO YEARS LATER.

The same array of food stalls are busy serving their customers while Carrie's dad is still struggling to serve his long queue of customers. Standing beside him is Carrie in her secondary school years, texting on a phone.

CARRIE'S DAD ( TO CARRIE)  
Carrie, can you help me?

CARRIE (TO DAD) (RELUCTANTLY)  
Fine, I 'll help !

Carrie drags her feet and stands beside her father. Her father passes the tutu kueh in the plastic bag to her. He told her to pass them to the customer in front of them. Carrie snatches the plastic bag from her father and drops them in front of the customer.

CUSTOMER (TO CARRIE)  
Hey! What type of service is this?

DAD (TO CUSTOMER)  
Sorry! I am so sorry!

The customer walks away and shakes his head as he is angry about the service he receives. After which, Carrie's dad continues to struggle serving his queue of customers while Carrie is texting on the phone.

EXT. STREET MARKET. LATE EVENING.

Carrie's dad packs up after his business closes. He picks up his equipment with his shaking hands and straps them on his hunching back. He walks behind Carrie back home. Both do not say a word.

INT. CARRIE'S HOME, LIVING ROOM. LATE EVENING.

Carrie's dad struggles to step into the house while holding his heavy bags of equipment. His hands and legs are shaking when he is just standing at the corridor. He sees Carrie walking into her room while texting on her phone. Carrie's dad is disappointed as his daughter refuses to help him.

Scene slowly fades to black as Carrie's dad is still disappointed with his daughter.

TWO YEARS LATER.

INT. CARRIE'S HOME, KITCHEN. EARLY MORNING.

Sets of metal containers, packets of ingredients and baskets were all laid out on the kitchen floor space. Carrie's dad is preparing to set up for business. He goes into Carrie's room and wakes Carrie up. Carrie is now in her first year of university.

INT. CARRIE'S HOME, CARRIE'S BEDROOM. EARLY MORNING.

Carrie's dad opens the door gently as he slowly goes over to his daughter who is still sleeping. He gives a gentle nudge on her shoulder.

CARRIE'S DAD (TO CARRIE)

Carrie, wake up. It's time to set up for the business.

Carrie squints open her eyes as she turns and look at her dad.

CARRIE (TO DAD)

No, dad! I don't want to help! Besides, you have been doing it for years and it still does not earn us enough money. It is a complete failure!

Carrie goes back to sleep. She is ignorant towards her dad's emotions. Carrie's dad is now in shock and feeling helpless. He arches his back and his hand rests on his forehead while sitting on Carrie's bed. He keeps thinking whether it is his fault for not providing income for his daughter. Then, he slowly makes his way to the door and gives one last look at Carrie before closing it.

FOUR YEARS LATER. INT. MINISTRY OF LAW BUILDING, PANTRY AREA. EARLY AFTERNOON.

Two lawyers in their smart formal attire sitting and talking at the round table. They are Carrie's colleagues. Her colleagues are long time patrons of Carrie's dad's stall. Sitting beside them is Carrie who is also a lawyer.

COLLEAGUE A (TO COLLEAGUE B)

Hey! Do you know about this tutu kueh stall at Jurong East street market?

COLLEAGUE B (TO COLLEAGUE A)

Yeah! I used to go there when I was a child. However, recently when I went there, the quality of the food was not there anymore.

COLLEAGUE A (TO COLLEAGUE B)

Yes. The owner kept coughing and missing out orders. He also ever missed out mine!

COLLEAGUE B (TO COLLEAGUE A)

I wonder if his children ever thought of helping.

After listening to their conversation, Carrie falls into silence. She looks down at her reflection in her cup and wonders what has she done wrong to make her father ill.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP NEAR CARRIE'S DAD'S STREET MARKET. LATE EVENING.

Carrie looks for her dad after work at the street market but to no avail. Suddenly, she hears a loud cry from the opposite end of the street market. She follows that cry and later finds herself at a coffee shop where her father is. He is lying on the table and surrounding him are crushed cans of open beers.

CARRIE'S DAD (MURMURS TO HIMSELF)  
 Why am I such a failure? Why can't  
 I provide the best for my daughter?

Carrie feels guilty for not helping her dad after she reaches university. She walks toward her dad and drapes his arm over her shoulders as they walk back home together.

INT. CARRIE'S HOME, LIVING ROOM. LATE EVENING.

The doorbell rings and Carrie's mother rushes to open the door. She sees Carrie carrying her dad on her back and decides to help. She also starts to worry after looking at Carrie's dad drunk again.

CARRIE'S MOTHER (TO CARRIE)  
 Has he been drinking again?

CARRIE (TO MOTHER)  
 What do you mean again?

CARRIE'S MOTHER (TO CARRIE)  
 I'll explain it to you later.

INT. CARRIE'S HOME. CARRIE'S DAD'S BEDROOM. LATE EVENING.

Carrie's Mum carries her husband to his room while Carrie stands outside of their room. She expresses guilt by looking down and wondering why her father is drinking recently. Carrie's mother comes out of his room looking very disappointed.

CARRIE'S MOTHER (TO CARRIE)  
 Your dad has been drinking and coming home late ever since you start working. Every night, he drinks and murmurs out the same sentences why he is such a failure and why he cannot provide the best for you. His drinking habit is also making his health worse.

CARRIE (TO MOTHER)  
 I never know that he will turn out to be like this.

CARRIE'S MOTHER ( TO CARRIE)  
 I hope you will understand how he feels and maybe start considering to take over the business.

Short Pause.

CARRIE (TO MOTHER)  
No, Mom. I still see no  
significance in his business. Right  
now, I do not even see him as an  
inspiration to be successful in  
life.

After saying that, Carrie goes back into her room and shuts the door, leaving her mother disappointed.

INT. CARRIE'S HOUSE, CARRIE'S FATHER'S ROOM. EARLY MORNING.

Carrie's father opens his eyes and sees a blurry image of his room when he gets up from his bed. He makes his way slowly towards Carrie's bedroom while touching every single object he passes.

INT. CARRIE'S HOME. CARRIE'S BEDROOM. EARLY MORNING.

Carrie is rushing to go to work as she slings her blazer over her shoulders and flung her suitcase on the bed. Just then, her phone rings and her dad comes into her room. He taps onto her shoulder with a gentle smile on his face.

CARRIE'S DAD (TO CARRIE)  
Carrie, do you want to help out?

CARRIE (TO DAD)  
No, Dad! I still need to go to  
work.

Carrie quickly rushes to the door in the living room and shuts it as she leaves the house. Her dad is dishearten by her reaction as he slowly walks back to his room.

INT, CARRIE'S HOUSE, CARRIE'S DAD'S ROOM. EARLY MORNING.

Carrie's dad takes out his recipe from his tin box and looks at it with tears in his eyes. He wonders who is able to help him take over his family business. Then, he starts coughing heavily. He reaches for his medicine beside him but because of his shaking hands, the bottle drops instead. Carrie's dad ends up coughing badly.

INT. MINISTRY OF LAW BUILDING, CARRIE'S OFFICE. EARLY MORNING.

Carrie's phone rings and Carrie picks it up.

CARRIE  
Yes, hello?

HOSPITAL SERVICE (TO CARRIE)  
Is this Ms Carrie Lim?

Pregnant Pause.

CARRIE (TO HOSPITAL)  
Yes.

HOSPITAL SERVICE  
We need you to come to the  
hospital. Your father passed away.

CARRIE (TO HOSPITAL SERVICE)  
(TEARFULLY)  
Okay.

INT. CARRIE'S CAR. LATE MORNING.

Carrie drives to the hospital with tears in her eyes as she reflects on her mistakes as a daughter who never spends time with her father.

INT. HOSPITAL, ICU WARD. LATE MORNING.

Carrie sees the sheet covering her father's dead body. Tears start flowing uncontrollably down her cheeks as she kneels down on the ground. Her mother taps on her shoulder and passes Carrie the recipe.

CARRIE'S MOTHER (TO CARRIE)  
Your father has been holding this  
recipe until he reaches the  
hospital. He has been looking for a  
heir to take over his family  
business. Thus, he wanted you. But  
after knowing you had no interest,  
he was upset.

Carrie is in shock.

CARRIE (TO MOTHER)  
But why me?

CARRIE'S MOTHER (TO CARRIE)  
Because he trusts you. He trusts  
that you can bring this business  
into the modern society and  
continue the tradition that is  
diminishing in the society today.

After listening to her mother, Carrie looks at her recipe and thinks back about her past. She now realise why her dad always put in so much effort in his business. She regrets for not helping him one last time before she goes to work this morning.

FLASHBACK SCENE. INT. CARRIE'S HOUSE, KITCHEN. EARLY MORNING.

Carrie in her primary school years is watching her dad cooking the ingredients for his business. She is standing in front of her dad but not helping him at all front of her dad but not helping him.

BACK TO PRESENT. INT. CARRIE'S HOUSE, KITCHEN, LATE EVENING.

Carrie starts to learn the recipe by hard as she practice cooking it every night after work. She starts to find joy in learning the recipe as she starts adding her own creations to the recipe and modifying it.

3 MONTHS LATER.

EXT. STREET MARKET. EARLY MORNING.

An array of street food stalls are busy serving the crowd. Standing right at the corner is Carrie's tutu kueh stall named " Ah Pa's Tutu Kueh." A long snaking queue of customers waiting for their order as Carrie serves her customers and gives a smile every time they leave the stall satisfied.

END.