



Literacy Volunteers of America

Essex & Passaic Counties

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90 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003 | (973) 566-6200 -- 195 Gregory Avenue, Passaic, NJ 07055 | (973) 470-0039

**New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning
Adult Learner Writing Contest 2017**

First Place – Memoir

Biography:

Seung Hui Kim, a former teacher in Korea, left her country due to her husband's job relocation. Erin, as she is known to her friends, is an advanced Basic Literacy student and says she still gets nervous when she speaks English, although her competency would make a native English speaker envious. Erin said, "This is why I love to write instead." She also stated, "I am grateful for this peaceful break, away from the hectic life in Korea. Most of all, I am grateful for the opportunities here, given to me to be an English learner, a thinker, a reader and writer again."

Title: Yes, I'd Love to Have Some More, Mom
Student Author: Seung Hui Kim
Tutor: Charles Bateman

What were the most common words you ever heard from your parents when you were a child? If I asked my friends this question, most of them might have answered; "Did you do your homework?" or "Go to your room and study." For me, my mother's shouting "Seung Hui, come here and eat this!" was the one.

I don't remember her yelling at me to do my homework or study when I was a school girl. However, she always made sure I had eaten three meals a day and some snacks she had prepared. Every morning, a bowl of hot soup and warm rice was set on the dining table. She never missed my breakfast. Even when I went to school at 7 in the morning, she got up early to prepare breakfast and made sure I ate before leaving. She sometimes went out to eat with her friends, but she always prepared my meals first.

When my family had a meal together, my mother would give the best part of fish to my father and then the second-best part to my sister and me. She sometimes didn't touch the fish at all. I asked her one night, "Do you not like fish? Why are you not eating it?" She smiled and answered, "While cooking it, I get tired of the smell. I don't want to smell it any more. You eat it." After dinner, I saw she was eating what was left, not much except for the head and tail of the fish. It took many years for me to learn she actually loved fish. She just wanted to give her family most of the food back then.



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Even after I got married and moved out, she didn't change at all. Whenever I visited her, she offered me lots of food. She often watched me eating with a proud and happy smile on her face. After a while, she always asked me, "Do you want some more?"

Well, I am sure my mother is not the only person who is quite obsessed with feeding her children. A humorous Korean saying goes, "The biggest obstacle to losing weight is your mother." I surely agree with it.

I guess one of the reasons mothers are so worried about their children's meals is that when the parents were young, food was scarce in Korea. Older generations still greet each other, asking "Have you eaten?" This is like "Hello, how are you?" in English.

Younger people, including me, don't use this expression much any more. We live in the era of worrying about obesity and overeating. This shows the fast economic development of Korea and its impact on the generation gap. Now that I think of it, I am sad to see the value of food fading and the way we care for each other changing. The younger generation might be more excited when they get extra money or a new cell phone than getting three meals a day cooked by their loving mothers.

I didn't always appreciate it, either. When I was going on a weight loss diet, my mother's "Come here and eat this!" really bothered me. I used to come up with some good excuses to avoid it and say no to the food she offered. When I refused to eat, she looked sad and disappointed which made me feel quite guilty.

Now I am older than my mother was when she had me and raised me. I can finally see her objectively from a woman's viewpoint. Now I realize how much she has sacrificed for the family. Also, her "Come here and eat this!" is her way of saying "I love you." and "I care about you." Still, I will never be able to fathom the depth of her love.

In late August of 2017, I was on the bus to the airport to catch a flight, heading for the states. I already said farewell to my parents and was waiting for the bus to leave. Unexpectedly, I saw my mother walking to the bus again, holding a plastic bag. Without saying anything but with a slightly sad smile, she almost threw the bag to me from the bus's entrance and hurried out. It was a bag of Danish pastries she just bought outside of the terminal. She must have been worried about me skipping lunch on the bus. I felt a lump in my throat and no words came out of my mouth. I was sure she felt the same way. No words were spoken but the image of her sorrowful smile and the bag of pastries kept telling me "I love you" again and again all the way to the airport. The voice in my head still resonates with me.

All of the memories of my mother and her shouting "Come here and eat this!" makes me miss her so much. I can't wait to hear it again when I go back home. Next time when



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I hear it, I will give her a big hug and whisper, "Thank you. I love you." Then, while finishing a bowl of rice, I will gladly say, "I'd love to have some more, mom."

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