

Strong & Confident Jeremy



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Translated by
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Acknowledgement

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Jeremy's dad is American. Jeremy's mom is Chinese. Most people call him "mixed."

To parents, caregivers, educators, and all those
committed to help dispel anti-Asian racism





On January 1st 2020 Jeremy took a flight from Chicago to Shanghai and then took a bullet train to Anqing, his mother's hometown nestled along the Yangtze river.



The Chinese New Year for the Year of the Rat was coming soon. However, a virus called COVID-19 was beginning to spread. To stay safe, Jeremy stayed inside his grandparents' apartment. The TV kept repeating to wear masks, wash hands, and avoid meeting others over and over.



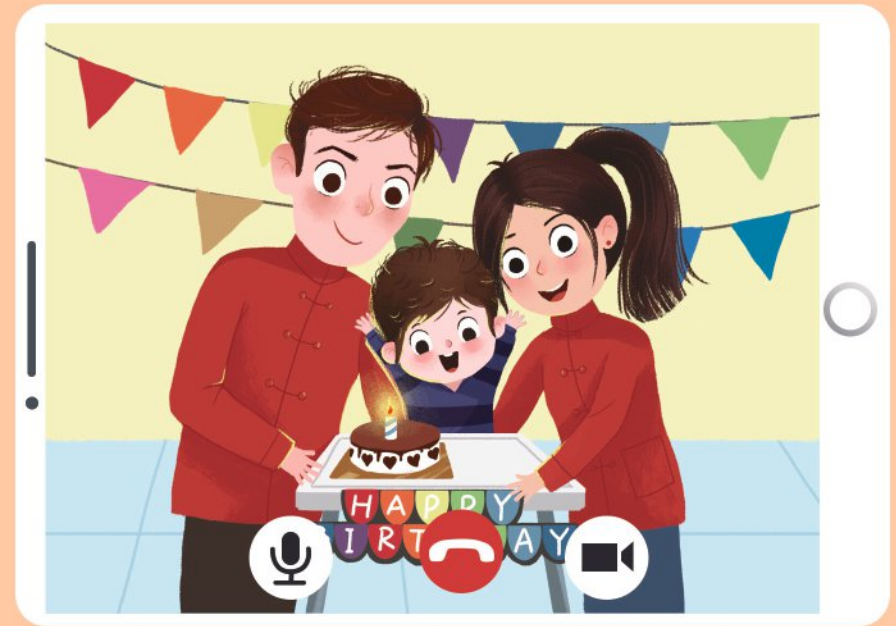
By February most of the flights back to the US had been cancelled. Jeremy's parents had to change airlines several times before they could finally go home.



From then on, his mom made sure that everyone wore masks outside. At first people in the store would roll their eyes at her when they saw her wearing a mask. Even so, she insisted that wearing a mask could protect themselves and others.



March, April, then May crawled by slowly while COVID-19 spread across the US. Jeremy could see the worry in his mom's eyes. His elaborately planned first birthday party was moved online to Zoom.



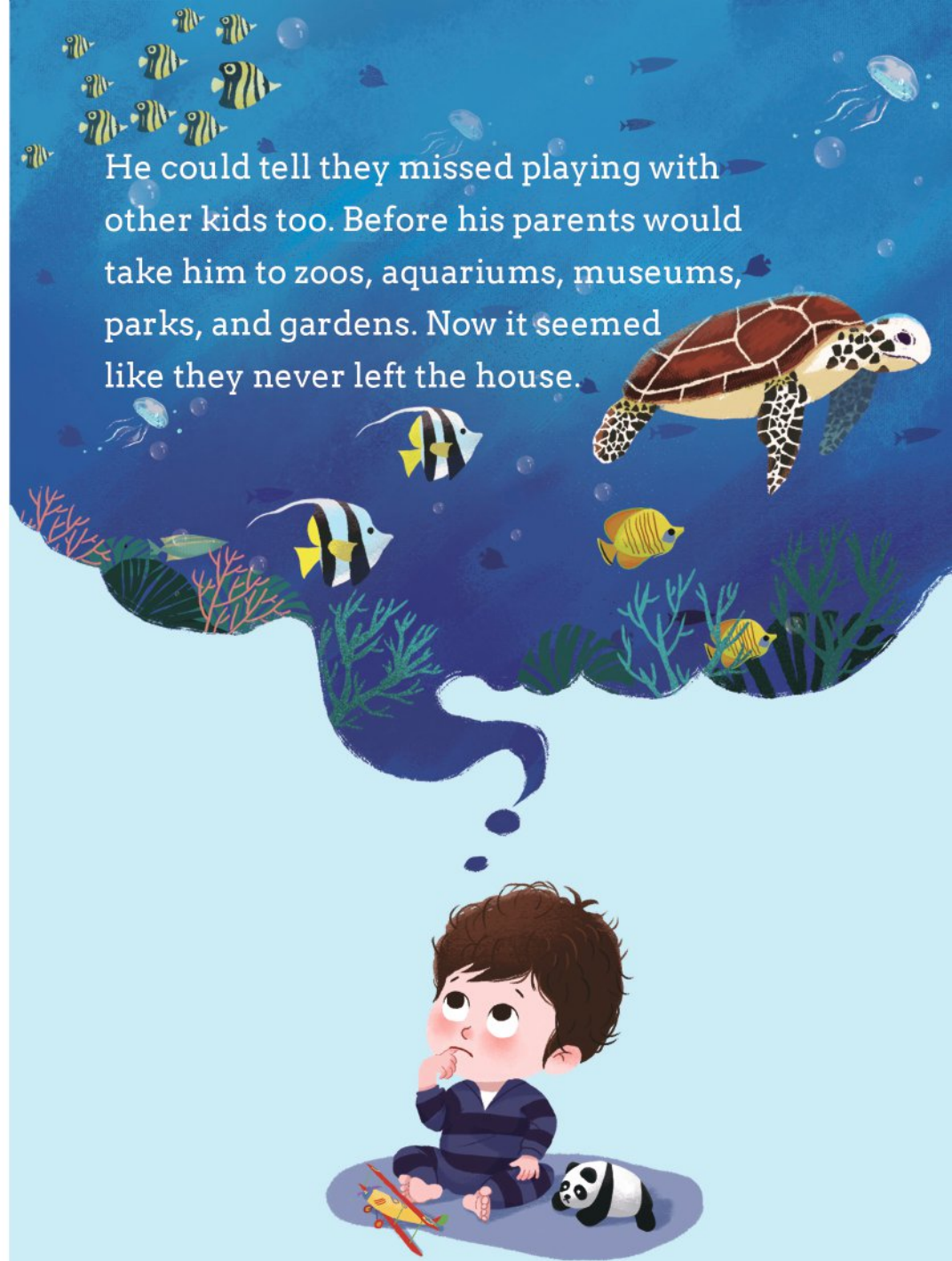
His parents did their best to make it special. They invited friends from all over the world and made the theme global harmony. Even though he couldn't hug his grandparents, he was happy. All his friends and family across the world could gather in one place, virtually.



School for the kids next door moved online too.



Sometimes Jeremy saw them playing soccer in their yard so close that he really wanted to join them. But his parents shook their heads and told him that right now, it wasn't safe.



He could tell they missed playing with other kids too. Before his parents would take him to zoos, aquariums, museums, parks, and gardens. Now it seemed like they never left the house.



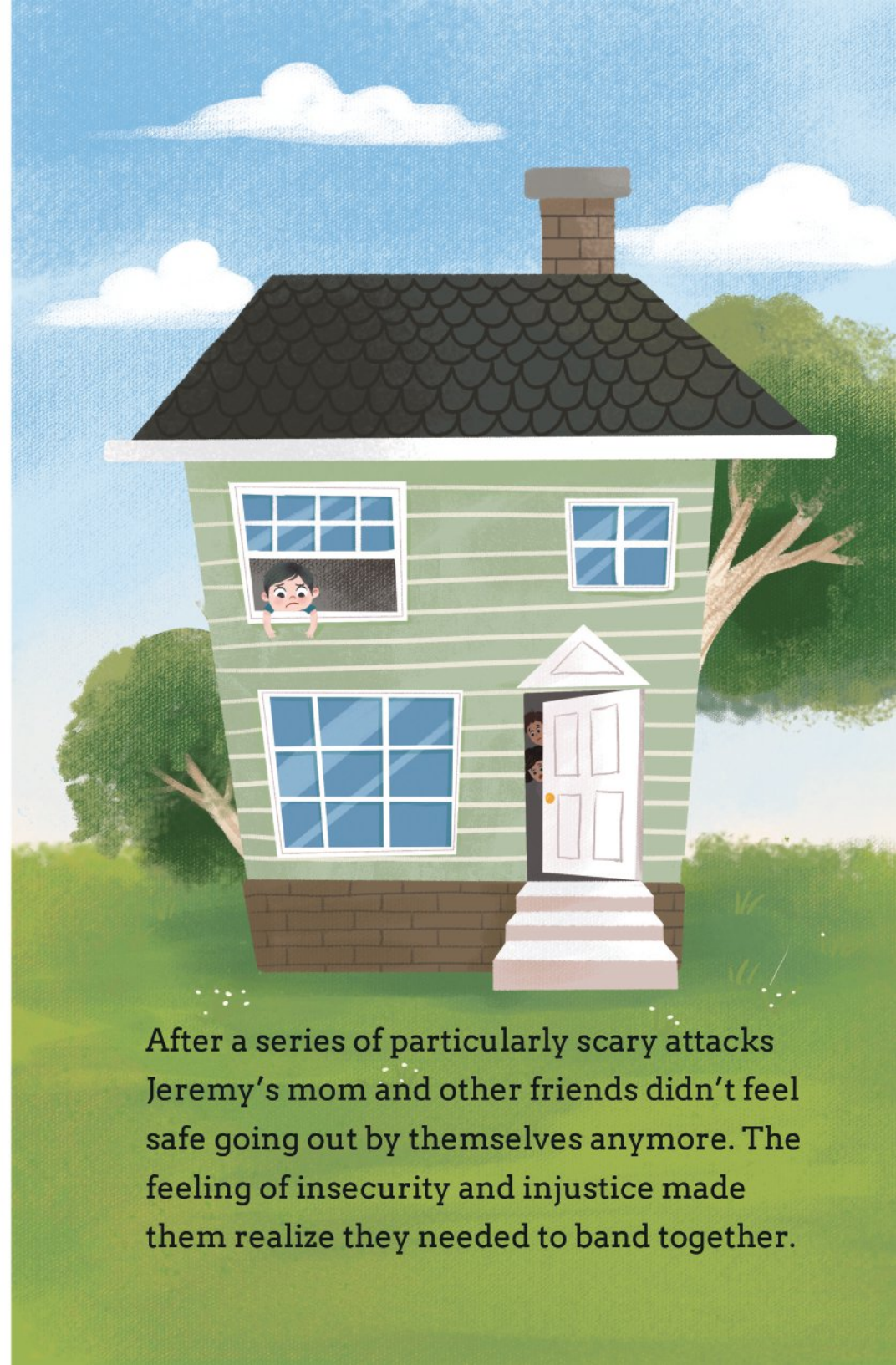
Before he knew it February and the Chinese New Year came around again, but this year was different. Jeremy's mom and her friend shared traditional food to ease their homesickness. Nobody knew when they could go back to China again.



His dad sometimes turned off the radio or the news and shook his head. The way people would say words like "Wuhan virus," "China virus," and "kung flu" was hurtful. He was afraid Mom would hear. The truth is anyone can get infected with this virus, and anyone can spread it to others.



This disease was not the fault of any race. But sometimes peoples' fear and anxiety caused them to lash out at Asian people or even people who looked Asian.



After a series of particularly scary attacks Jeremy's mom and other friends didn't feel safe going out by themselves anymore. The feeling of insecurity and injustice made them realize they needed to band together.



They protested in many places hoping to stop the hate crimes against Asian people.

They were proud of their traditions of loving peace and harmony, respecting elders, and cherishing the young.

After Jeremy's mom got her vaccine shot at the hospital, his parents took him to Washington DC. The protest was already over. The people had all left, but many ducks were still resting peacefully under the moonlight.



"Stop Asian Hate," "Protect Asian Lives," "We Protect Ourselves," "Respect the Elderly," "We Are United" ...these chalk marks were the cries for help that the protesters left behind. They wanted their voices to be heard.



We should treat each other with fairness and respect and use science and cooperation to address world health problems, especially big ones. Jeremy learned that he needed to be a strong and confident Chinese person as well as a fair and just American.



Even more importantly he learned that he needed to be a responsible world citizen. Everyone should be proud of their own unique identity and respect those of others.



Spring slowly came around again. The peony planted when Jeremy was born bloomed beautifully. This year his birthday was also different. He spent it in the yard with his American grandparents and some friends. He talked to his Chinese grandparents on Mom's phone. They told him next year they would see lotus flowers together in Anqing.

About



Yuanyuan Liu (she/her/hers) is a Chinese language instructor at UMBC - University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She graduated with a master's degree in Applied Linguistics from Beijing Language and Culture University and a second master's degree in Intercultural Communication from UMBC. She has been an enthusiastic Chinese teacher for 9 years. Before she came to the USA she worked at Jiangsu Educational Channel as director of several children's TV programs and the Third Future Golden Microphone Competition project manager. She just leveled up to become the proud mother of a two-year old cutie.



Yan Yao (she/her/hers) graduated from Nanjing University of the Arts, and also holds a master's degree from Wuhan University of Technology. She teaches Animation and other college level fine arts courses in China. Her work Ensemble stood out among many talents and is collected in the first Illustration in China

Exhibition 2019, organized by The China Artists Association and China Literature and Art Foundation. Her work Ranran Doesn't Want to go to Sleep won the Excellence Prize in the 7th Anhui Arts Exhibition in 2020. She is the loving mother of a young boy who also shows great passion for painting and drawing.

A Letter to Parents

Covid-19 hit the world hard. The Asian community suffered not only from the virus itself, but also from the virus of racism. It has become critical to protect our children, especially children with Asian heritage. In this disturbing political and social climate, parents need to be more proactive. The traditional Chinese character "听/聽" teaches us to listen with our ears, eyes, and heart.

We should validate anything children may feel due to experiencing racism. No feelings are too small to address. Rolled eyes, a shrug, a verbal insult or physical violence all need to be carefully handled to avoid damage to their self-esteem. We parents need to be all ears to their worries, concerns, and confusion. We may not have all the answers for them yet, but we have arms to embrace them to open up.

For those who have little toddlers like mine who are too young to understand this topic directly, use action to slowly guide them to build a stronger and happier personality. Confidence is not built in one day. We need to constantly be aware of what is going on in their tiny but powerful brains that absorb any information. We need to guide them to choose when to listen, what to listen and how to listen critically and rationally. We also need to show them how to actively search for help and band together.

Celebrate diversity, celebrate differences. Learn from each other. Integrate with each other. Let children use their imagination to establish a little world of their own. I believe the future they build will be a whole lot wider and brighter.

Yuanyuan Liu !!
May 7, 2021



