

Wish Dragon

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As I cooked dinner for my three-generation family household, I overheard some of the content my great grandmother and niece enthusiastically watched. Captivated by the sound of a dragon flying in the air, I eventually put down my apron and sat beside them to watch *Wish Dragon* on Netflix. The self-consumed wish dragon Longzhu stirred a deep memory I had, for I realized he was a representation of a man I once knew. Longzhu saw the world as black and white. The world was quantifiable for every action was an x to produce an outcome y. The y would be measured in secular standards such as money and prestige. There was no emotional considerations and integrity in his x factor. He ruled China with all the gold and riches one can have, but eventually had no one by his death bed. On the other hand, sweet, innocent main character Din was everything I was. He didn't need gold or prestige but simply his family and lover. *Wish Dragon* depicted how the Chinese Confucius value “*Ren*” is the virtue our lives should be built on. *Ren* is categorized as “benevolence, a primary leadership characteristic and the underlying belief that relationships define an individual’s humanity” (Woods & Lamond 673). Din transformed Longzhu, the man who once ruled China with the greatest power, into a selfless man at the end. This was truly a victory for it showed love won all. It showed the virtue “*Ren*” exists in everyone, something I try to remind myself even when circumstances show otherwise.

When I was 18, I found out I was a victim of a vicious green card fraud. Targeting low-income minority households with no visa status, the scammer impersonated a high executive member and lawyer of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. My parents first introduced the FBI agent to me when I was 11 in elementary school. My mother gave him the nickname “savior” as she thought he would save us from our current circumstances and give us an opportunity for the American dream. For the next seven years, the so-called savior demanded an impossible amount of money and absurd requests. A lot of people ask my parents now “Why didn’t you know he

was fake?” My parents would look at each other in despair and exhaustion as the man demanded another 10K, but they still hoped he could help our family. It was as if my parents recognized the depths of trouble our family was in, yet they could not find a way out.

My mom explained that when reality is too hard to handle sometimes, we lose sense of the most logical things. Fear grips us. Fear also strips us of our built knowledge and rationality. We had already given the man so much money, that there seemed to be no going back. Our family became slaves at the feet of the scammer bounded by hopes for a green card. We thought our freedom would come when he gave us the one thing he promised. In high school, I would come home to the man laying down on my living room couch demanding I make food for him and to wash his feet whenever my parents were at work. These little requests soon snowballed into bigger requests. I told my parents of all the requests as a cry for help. After eight long years, we made the decision to admit our mistakes. My family and I walked to the town’s police station and told our story.

At the police station, I had to vocalize every event that occurred within the past eight years as I was the only one who could translate the story from Korean to English to the detectives. I described how the scammer approached us and the amount of money he demanded every year and showed the paper agreements with his signature. Narrating the daily routine of our lives was devastating to my parents and the detectives. I thought deeply about the kind of person the scammer was. He was a civilian with whom you could have sat next to on the subway, gone to class with, or had lunch with. Yet the things he did stemmed from corruption of power and authority. He did not see people eye to eye. Rather, he saw the monetary value they could provide to him. In the small interrogation room, I made a promise to myself I would always protect the weak and the marginalized. I have shame and guilt that I did not protect my parents

from the scammer. I was too young. Therefore, it has become a life mission of mine to always transfer my knowledge to others in order to equip them for anything in life. I would want to prevent at least one person from going through what my family did.

It's important that I become everything the man wasn't. I want to become strong not out of self-pride, but to protect the weak. One of my favorite scriptures reads "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (*English Standard Version*, Ephesians 4:31-32). I am a firm believer that resentment eats the soul of a person. Hurt people hurt other people. Therefore, we must forgive and recover from the struggles of our past. Of course, we should always learn from our mistakes. I forgave the scammer fully and wished he too could transform as the wish dragon had. It is never too late for anyone no matter how far in crimes or sin they committed to incorporate *Ren*. Grudges only deprive the person of his potential happiness. The way we can recover is starting with the virtue of *Ren* (altruism).

I aspire to become a financial analyst in the renewable energy industry and serve as a mentor to younger people. I would want to show that you can become successful with resilience. As a graduate student studying Finance at Baruch College, I stand to defy the norm by possessing the virtue of *Ren* and being successful in investment banking. All the relationships I have in graduate school and work are grounded in the fact I see my relationships with everyone as worthy of love. In a big corporation, it may seem we are just a mere number or asset to their business. This kind of perspective strips any employees of making groundbreaking relationships within the business. One must first recognize his own integrity and character in the workforce to overcome difficulties. Through the virtue of *Ren*, I want to change my future company culture to

a more nurturing atmosphere where we give each other applause for each other's success such as a high end of the year performance review or promotion. I am an intern now learning under experienced professionals in my sector. One day, I want to be in the exact same position giving interns positive constructive criticism, professional mentorship, and truly conveying the virtue of *Ren*.

The main difficulty I have is how my kindness and willingness to help others can be seen as weakness in the eyes of some of my colleagues. My coworkers say, "Young Sin, you must learn to say no, or you will burn out". Every Saturday for the past 3 years, my sister who is CPA and EA certified and I have been dedicating our time to community outreach programs for minority groups. At the Presbyterian Church of New Jersey, my sister and I set up a program where we offer free financial advice to non-native English speakers and people with less educational access. The kind of responsibilities we carry range from filing an elderly's taxes, translating utility bills from English to Korean, or taking them to the DMV to get their IDs renewed. It is important to recognize that there are programs such as Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) sponsored by the IRS, but there is a lack of accessibility and resources that the immigrant elderlies face. I think back to the time when my family encountered the green card scammer and am reminded that there was a lack of resources available to my immigrant parents. My parents, like the elders of the outreach program, did not know of the proper way to obtain paperwork in United States. My time spent with these seniors is the best way for me to attain the virtue of *Ren* on a weekly basis. It reminds me of my roots and where I came from. I treat the seniors as if each one of them were my great grandmother. As an aspiring financial professional, I envision a future where everyone of all different professions gives back to the community on the very virtue that exists within all of us: *Ren*.

Works Cited

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