

Name

Instructor's Name

Course

Date

The year 2020 began with fireworks painting the night sky and loud music filling the busy streets of our neighborhood. Our long dinner table filled with a carpet of home-cooked meals. My mother cooked her special soup recipe, me and my brother's favorite ever since we were kids. My father, mother, brother, and I were staring at the television placed in the wall just beside the dinner table. We were waiting for the countdown to hit zero and greet the New Year with a toast of our wine-filled glasses. And that we did. My father raised his wine glass with one of the brightest smiles I have ever seen and made a toast. "For our family, for the year 2020." He yelled as he wrapped his arms around my shoulders.

Three months later and the coronavirus pandemic has spread through the world like wildfire. Small businesses began dying while larger ones did their best to stay ahead of the pandemic. My father was one of these small business owners. He owned a laser printing company based just outside our city. He would visit the office thrice a week to check on the workers and the status of the business. He would come home around 6 pm, take a shower, eat dinner and go to their bedroom. We tried to limit our family engagements to avoid possibly spreading the virus. My father would often eat dinner by himself or only with our mother since he is the only one frequently going out. As the days go by, I could feel a rift in our relationship as a family. It felt like I have not

talked to my father for years even when it was just about three months since the community quarantine started.

One time when I was walking past our parent's bedroom, I heard him crying while talking to Mother. I didn't hear what they were talking about but I realized that something was wrong. My father is a strong-willed man, he was patient and has endured a lot of hardships to get where he is now. That is why I was in shock to hear him cry. I went back to my room and laid my back on my bed. I began staring endlessly at the ceiling, focusing on the cracks and fading paint, thinking how I could help the man that raised me. I couldn't sleep. The man that once signified strength and was ecstatic about life is now broken. The very person I looked to for advice and guidance is now on the end of his ropes. I want to make it better, I want to help, but I have no idea where to start.

Early in the morning, I woke up with my mother and father sitting at the dinner table. My father was holding my mother's hands firmly. At first, it seemed that they couldn't look at me. My parents' face was filled with sorrow and despair as if a great tragedy had occurred. I could see tears building up in my mother's eyes. She is trying hard to keep the tears from falling off. My father looked me in the eye, paused for a brief moment, and told me to sit down. "We have bad news, son." He said to me with a hoarse voice. I sat down on the chair beside my mother. I put my arms around her to tell her it's ok.

"Your brother. He's gone." My mother said before bursting into tears right beside me. My brother lived and worked in another city. The last time I saw him was on New Year's Day. I didn't speak to him after that day. I was just not that kind of brother. But as I sat there, with my father holding my shoulders and my mother wiping her tears away, I

couldn't help feeling regret. I wished I talked to him even once. I wished I asked how he was doing and what was happening with his life. I wish I was a better brother. I wish I was a better son.

I thought my father was crying because of his failing business. I thought he broke down because he was afraid that we would have nothing. It didn't even come to mind that something bad might have happened to our family. I always felt that we were safe... felt that guardian angels guarded us as we went through our everyday life. That we are one of the lucky ones and the pandemic would just pass by. That it would be another memory to tell my children and grandchildren.

Four more months have passed and the long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are still rampant in our city. Many people have lost their jobs and some, like us, have lost their loved ones due to the virus. It was a difficult time for everyone. It made me realize how important family and communication are. My father's business is still suffering and I am trying to help him regain the losses the company has experienced. With the passing of my brother, I felt the need to become a better son. To be more engaged in the life of my family members. I don't want to feel that regret again. I don't want to look back and realize I'm standing alone.