

HOW TO AMERICAN



AN IMMIGRANT'S GUIDE
TO DISAPPOINTING YOUR PARENTS

JIMMY O. YANG

FOREWORD BY MIKE JUDGE

"The *Silicon Valley* star blends humor and pathos in his coming-of-age memoir, revealing the intricacies of life as a Chinese immigrant."—*New York Times Book Review*

PROLOGUE

"I eat the fish."

I said this to my roommate, in my thick Chinese accent.

"I know you eat the fish, but when you clean the fish, you can't just leave the fish head and guts and shit in the sink, because the whole house smells like a bait station. So you got to put it in the trash, then take the trash out. Do you understand?" my big, curly-haired American roommate explained to me, pointing at the leftover fish parts in the sink.

I stared at him, confused. And I replied, "Yes, I eat the fish."

"Motherfuck!" he howled in complete frustration.

The whole crew burst out in laughter. That was my second day on the set of *Silicon Valley*, an HBO show created by one of my comedy heroes, Mike Judge. It was my big break in Hollywood. My character, Jian Yang, is a fresh-off-the-boat Chinese immigrant whose struggle with the English language often leads to comical misunderstandings with his buffoonish roommate, Erlich Bachman, played by the impeccable T. J. Miller. It felt natural for me to play this character. I was once a fresh-off-the-boat Chinese immigrant myself. I was Jian Yang.

When my family immigrated to America from Hong Kong, I was a thirteen-year-old boy who looked like an eight-year-old girl. I didn't even speak enough English to understand the simplest American slang. On my first day of school in America, a girl came up to me and said:

"What's up?"

I stared at her, confused. I had never heard this term before.

She repeated, "What's up?"

I looked up into the sky to check "what is up" there. There wasn't anything. I looked back down at her and replied, "I don't know."

She finally realized I was either foreign or severely mentally handicapped. So she explained:

"'What's up?' means 'How are you doing?'"

"Oh, okay. I'm up. Thank you."

Then someone in the distance screamed out, "Heads up!" I turned to reply, thinking it was another American greeting. Instead, I was greeted by a weird oblong object flying right at me and hitting me straight in the gut; I later learned that was an American football.

This wasn't an episode of *Silicon Valley*; this was my life.

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CHAPTER ONE

HOW TO ASIAN

My life growing up in Hong Kong was like a bad stereo-
type. I played the violin, I was super good at math, and
I played Ping-Pong competitively. In China, people take
Ping-Pong seriously. It's not just a drunken frat house game;
Ping-Pong is a prestigious national sport. The Ping-Pong champs
in China are national heroes, like Brett Favre without the dick
pics. Everyone from your five-year-old neighbor to your seventy-
year-old aunt knows how to slice up some sick spins. My par-
ents signed me up for Ping-Pong classes early on. I had quick feet

and a lightning backhand. Soon I was competing in the thirteen-and-under Hong Kong championship leagues. I always had good form, but I was always smaller and weaker than the other kids. My dad would give me a pep talk before every match:

“Jimmy, even though you are short, even though you are weak, and the other kid is way better than you . . . You are going to do okay.”

He wasn't exactly Vince Lombardi, but thanks, Dad.

My tiny size eventually paid off when I was asked to test out a brand-new line of Ping-Pong tables with adjustable heights. They invited pro players to play with the kids and it was broadcast on the local news. It was a big deal. That was my big TV debut; I was ten years old. My perfect form and tiny stature made for an adorable display at the Ping-Pong table. The news camera found its way to me and gave me a personal close-up interview. The reporter asked me:

“How do you like these new tables?”

“I like them, because you can adjust them to be shorter, and I am short.”

It was *sooooo* cute.

The next day, the news station called my family and asked me to come back for a full studio interview. This kid was a fucking star! I went on the show with my dad and crushed the interview. There were three cameras in the studio and I was a natural,

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swiveling my head from A camera to C camera, charming seven million people in Hong Kong with every line I uttered. Everyone thought I was the star Ping-Pong prodigy. I became the coolest kid in school and the pride and joy of my family. Everyone called me the golden-boy TV star. I felt like a celebrity. A few months later, I competed in a youth tournament representing my school. I was the favorite to win it all. But I faltered in front of the whole school. I lost 21-3 to a no-name newcomer, two matches in a row. Everybody was shocked; it was like Mike Tyson getting knocked out by Buster Douglas. The boy they once believed in was just a fraud. I couldn't back up my hype with my skills. I was definitely more a looker than a player. I was an imposter destined to be an actor.

I've always felt like an outsider, even as a Chinese kid growing up in Hong Kong. Hong Kong was a thriving British colony with its own government, and people in Hong Kong often looked down at their neighbors from Mainland China. Even though I was born in Hong Kong, my parents were mainlanders from Shanghai. I'd speak Cantonese in school, Shanghainese back home and watch TV shows in Mandarin. These Chinese dialects sounded as different as Spanish and Italian. My schoolmates in Hong Kong always called me "Shanghai boy." I had to stand up for myself when kids made fun of me for speaking to my parents in Shanghainese, wearing clothes from Shanghai and eating the Shanghainese food I brought to school. I didn't mind the teasing, but I'd always felt out of place, even in the city I was born in. This turned out to be some early practice on fitting in when we immigrated to America.

Everyone in Hong Kong has a legal Chinese name and an English nickname. My legal name is a four-character Chinese name. My family name is a rare two-character last name, 歐陽, *Ou Yang*, and my given name is 萬成, *Man Shing*, which means "ten thousand successes" in Chinese. It's a hopeful name that is sure to set me up for failure. No matter how successful I become, I can never live up to my parents' ten thousand ambitions. Jimmy was my English nickname given to me by my parents.

I grew up in a tight-knit nuclear family with my parents and an older brother. My mom's name was Amy, because it sounded close to her Chinese nickname *Ah-Mee*. My dad named himself Richard "because I want to be rich," he explained to me. And my brother was named Roger, after my parents fell in love with Roger Moore's portrayal of 007. Roger Ou Yang never liked his English name; he thought it sounded like an old white guy. So he changed his English name to Roy, an old black guy's name. I asked my parents why they named me Jimmy. They didn't really have an answer. My dad said, "It just sounded pretty good."

My mom is a fashionable lady who is too ambitious to be just a housewife. She was the stay-at-home mom turned career woman, becoming the general manager at a high-end clothing store in Hong Kong, aptly named *Dapper*. Mom is a people person but she is also very blunt. It's definitely a cultural thing. Asian ladies will tell you exactly what is wrong with your face, in front of your face, as if they were helping you. I always have to brace myself when I visit my parents. My mom often greets me with a slew of nonconstructive criticisms: "Jimmy ah, why is your face so fat? Your clothes look homeless and your long hair makes you

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too ambitious to be mom turned career a high-end clothing om is a people per-cultural thing. Asian th your face, in front always have to brace ten greets me with a ah, why is your face long hair makes you

look like a girl." After thirty years of this, my self-image is now a fat homeless lesbian.

Mom has always been a shrewd shopper. She's not cheap but it's all about finding a good deal. I once bought a fifty-dollar T-shirt at full price; she almost had a stroke.

"Jimmy! You spent fifty dollars on that shirt?! Are you crazy?! I can buy you five shirts in China for ten dollars!"

Then my dad tested the quality of the material by rubbing his thumb and index finger on the shirt. "Not even a hundred percent cotton. Garbage."

It took me a long time to come to terms with buying anything outside of Ross.

My dad is a sharp businessman and entrepreneur. He started a thriving medical equipment business in the early nineties in Hong Kong and then later became a financial adviser at Merrill Lynch when we came to America. He is the ultimate critic. He is a food critic, a movie critic and a people critic. Every restaurant we go to, he complains about the food, the service and even the utensils. He's like a walking Yelp review:

"The beef is tougher than a piece of cardboard. This is worse than the crap I ate during the Communist revolution."

"How are you going to call yourself a high-end restaurant if you use disposable chopsticks? I feel like I'm eating at Panda Express."

"The waiter is such an asshole. Why does he have red hair? He's fifty years old. He looks like a degenerate gambler."

The only restaurant he never complains about is Carl's Jr. He can devour two six-dollar burgers in one sitting, an impressive feat for anyone, especially a seventy-year-old Chinese dude.

Food is the glue in every Chinese family, and ours was no different. Chinese people are the biggest foodies in the world; there's a saying in China: "People put food first." We took dinner very seriously. There are always four homemade Chinese dishes and a gourmet soup du jour with a side of freshly made rice. Dad was serious about dinnertime. Every night at seven, he would yell at the top of his lungs, "Come eat dinner!" If we were a minute late, he would storm into me and my brother's FIFA game: "Do you want to eat or do you want to starve to death? Dinner. Now!" We wouldn't dare hit another button on the controller.

Dad was the head chef of the family. He specialized in Shanghainese cuisine, like his perfect recipe for red braised pork. Every day, Dad got off work at four and started cooking at five. My mother was a decent cook too, but every time she made dinner my dad would criticize her cooking. "Amy, this is too watery. You need to broil the mushrooms in high heat, not simmer in low heat." He relegated her cooking duties to an occasional simple tofu dish. Dad was actually a bit embarrassed by his cooking prowess. In the patriarchal Chinese culture, the woman is supposed to be the stay-at-home housewife and do all the cooking. Once in a while, Dad made sure to remind me, "Don't end up cooking in the kitchen like me, that should be a woman's job. But what am I supposed to do? I cook better than your mom." Some might call this misogyny; in my family it was irony.

My brother and I were responsible for cooking the rice. And there was nothing that made my dad angrier than fucking up the

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rice. The amount of water I put in the rice cooker could mean life or death. Cooking rice is an art form. If I put too little water in the cooker, the rice would be raw inside; if I put too much water in the cooker, the rice became a mushy porridge. It was a lot of pressure to make it right, because the entire five-course meal my dad whipped up depended on the consistency of the rice. Every night I felt like the pit crew member who had to change the tire of a Formula One race car. It was a thankless job, but if I fucked it up, I blew the entire race for everyone. I'd be nervously sitting at the dinner table, waiting for my dad to take the first bite of the rice. If it was cooked right, there would be no compliments, but if it was not cooked right:

"Motherfucker!" my dad would scream to the high heavens in Shanghainese. "This rice is raw. Who made the rice today?" And I'd shamefully raise my incapable hand. It was always my fault; my brother cooked the rice perfectly every time.

We never had space for a proper pet growing up in the small apartments in Hong Kong. When I was five, my brother and I got a couple of tadpoles, and we managed to raise them into frogs. That was our puppy. Then when I turned eight, my dad surprised us with a few fluffy warm-blooded pets: he came home with three pet chicks. They were the cutest little baby chickens. We put them in a spacious cage on our twentieth-floor balcony with a sweet view of the city. We weren't allowed to take them out and play with them because their pecks were rather painful. But we got to pet them through the cage and I used to stare at

their cute fluffy yellow feathers for hours. We even gave them English names. My favorite was Gary; he was the smallest but the most energetic one. He reminded me of myself. Watching them grow was like watching a tadpole slowly transform into a frog. I was so proud of our progress. One day, I came home from school to visit little Gary and his friends, only to find the cage was empty. I panicked. I checked around the balcony, the living room, the bedrooms, and I couldn't find them anywhere. *Oh my God, did they fall off the balcony?* Then I went up to my dad in the kitchen:

"Dad, where is Gary?"

"He's right here."

Dad pointed to the wok in front of him, sizzling with fried chicken. And then I realized, Gary and his friends were never meant to be our pets; they were just farm-to-table dinner. I felt sick to my stomach. I was sure I would never be able to love again after that. I cried through dinner that night. But I have to admit: Gary was delicious.

Watching American action movies was the thing to do in Hong Kong. We were obsessed with all the larger-than-life American action heroes: Arnold, Stallone, Seagal and Van Damme. We watched *Terminator 2* every other weekend on our VCR. The opening sequence with the killer robot revolution scared the shit out of me, but then Arnold would drop out of the sky naked and save us all. One of our favorite local celebrities was Stephen

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My dad RICH-ard, my brother Roger, aka Roy, my mom Ah-Mee and Jimmy the washed-up Ping Pong star.

Chow, a comedy legend in Hong Kong who later became an international star with *Shaolin Soccer* and *Kung Fu Hustle*. Stephen created a genre of comedy films in Hong Kong called *mo lei tau*. Translated from Cantonese, it literally means "nonsense." He mixed slapstick humor with his signature deadpan demeanor, much like Leslie Nielsen in the classic Jerry Zucker films like *Airplane* and *The Naked Gun*. Stephen was my hero and his *mo lei tau* films were my first comedy inspirations. My favorite film of his was *From Beijing with Love*, a spoof of the 007 series, featuring Stephen playing a bumbling low-end Chinese spy. The physical and prop humor were topnotch. The Chinese 007 pulls out a top-secret gadget kit. It has a mobile phone that is actually a shaver, a shaver that is actually a hairdryer and a hairdryer that is in fact a shaver. The creativity of these gags gave me some of my fondest

childhood memories. Stephen Chow was my Hong Kong version of the Three Stooges, Laurel and Hardy and Peter Sellers.

HOW TO PURSUE YOUR DREAMS WITH ASIAN PARENTS

In America, people always tell me:

“Money can’t buy happiness. Do what you love.”

In my Chinese family, my dad always tells me:

“Pursuing your dreams is for losers.
Doing what you love is how you become homeless.”

The most important values in American culture are independence and freedom. The most important values in Chinese culture are family and obedience. And by no choice of my own, I am caught in between the two worlds. Having emigrated from Hong Kong to Los Angeles, I live my life in an often difficult duality. I grew up believing in the Chinese values my parents instilled in me, but I longed for the American value of pursuing what I loved. I have always been jealous of American kids and their freedom to do whatever they want. It’s so simple for them; they don’t have to follow a different set of Chinese rules back home. They get to frolic around the neighborhood streets and play in their tree houses by themselves with no parental supervision. My mom didn’t even let me cross the street by myself. I had to hold

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her hand until I was fourteen years old. Asian parents are more protective than a lioness with her newborn cubs. Ever since we moved to America, I had to ask myself, *Am I Chinese or am I American?* I was caught between the two cultures and their polarizing beliefs. Should I follow my family's rules and be an obedient Chinese son, or should I follow my freedom and be an independent American man?

TOP FIVE CHINESE RULES

1. Respect your parents, your elders and your teachers.
NEVER talk back or challenge them under any circumstance.
 2. Education is the most important thing. It's more important than independence, the pursuit of happiness and sex.
 3. Pay back your parents when you start working. We were all born with a student loan debt to our Asian parents. Asian parents' retirement plans are their kids.
 4. Always call your elders "Uncle" or "Auntie," even if they are not related to you. NEVER call them by their first names.
 5. Family first, money second, pursue your dreams never.
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Whenever I tried to challenge my dad on his Chinese beliefs, he'd sternly put down the hammer: "You never ever talk to your father like that. It's disrespectful to challenge your father. I'd never dream of doing that to my father." How could I argue with

that logic? So instead of forcing my parents to accept the American mindset, I quietly rebelled. I obeyed my parents' rules inside our Chinese household, while I pursued my dreams in the American world outside. I promised my parents I'd finish my college degree in economics, but then I turned down a job in finance to pursue a career in stand-up comedy after I graduated. My dad thought I was crazy. But I figured it was better to disappoint my parents for a few years than to disappoint myself for the rest of my life. I had to disappoint them in order to pursue what I loved. That was the only way to have my Chinese turnip cake and eat an American apple pie too.

When my parents found out I was frequenting comedy clubs, they prayed it was just a delusional phase I would grow out of. Bankers, doctors and scientists are what make Asian parents proud. Being an artist in China is the peasant work of a lowly clown. Stand-up isn't even a thing in China. My parents still refer to stand-up comedy as "talk show." My mom would ask me:

"So you are doing your talk show tonight?"

"Sure. Just like Jay Leno."

I stopped correcting her after a while.

The closest form of stand-up in traditional Chinese culture is a two-man act called *xiang sheng*, or "crosstalk." It's a live stage act, usually made up of a big buffoonish character and a straight man doing sketch comedy routines, often singing along to a rhythm. It's like Laurel and Hardy meets Jay-Z, in Mandarin.

A few years ago, I finally mustered up the courage to invite my parents to my stand-up comedy show. It was at one of the

accept the American rules inside the American dream. I finished my college job in finance to graduate. My dad disappointed me for the rest of my life. I pursued what I loved. I ate cake and eat

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Chinese culture is a live stage act, and a straight man long to a rhythm. I learned. I had the courage to invite was at one of the

nicest clubs I'd ever performed in: Brad Garrett's Comedy Club inside the MGM in Las Vegas. When I was ten, my family and I stayed at the MGM on a vacation from Hong Kong to Vegas, so surely my parents would know this was a legitimate five-star establishment. I sat them down at the best seat in the house and made sure all of their food and drinks were taken care of. They were the VIPs and I was the star that night. I had a killer set. Everyone in the audience was laughing head over heels. I finally proved to my parents that all the time I spent doing "talk shows" at comedy clubs wasn't in vain.

After the show, my parents came out and saw the crowd of adoring fans surrounding me. They waited in line with everyone, and I made sure to take my time greeting each audience member so they could see just how loved I was. When they finally reached the front of the line, my excited comedian friend Jack went up to my dad and asked him:

"So what do you think about your son? He was great, right?"

"No, he's not funny," my dad flatly replied. "I don't understand."

Jack's face dropped as he awkwardly looked over to me. But there were no tears on my face, not even a hint of surprise. Most people would have been devastated at their father's disapproval, but that was the exact answer I expected from my dad. I knew he wasn't going to understand stand-up. And I knew he was too honest to lie about how he felt. But I wasn't upset, because the joke was on him: I had spent the better half of my set making fun

of him. This was exactly how I got my material. This exchange with my dad at the MGM would eventually make it into my set.

When my dad finally watched an episode of *Silicon Valley* he said, "I don't think your stand-up is funny, but I think *Silicon Valley* is very funny. You and your big white roommate are funny together." That's probably the nicest thing he'd ever say about my career. In a Chinese family, we never say, "I love you." That was his equivalent of a crying father hugging his son after winning the state championship football game. "I love you son, I'm so proud of you." After all, Dad wasn't a full-on hater. He didn't understand stand-up, but the dynamic between me and T. J. Miller on *Silicon Valley* was like the *xiang sheng* that he grew up with in China, and my deadpan delivery was like the Stephen Chow movies we watched back in Hong Kong.

My dad is also an actor. But I didn't come from an acting legacy like Angelina Jolie and Jon Voigt; Dad started acting after I did. When I finally started booking some roles he said, "If it's so easy you can do it, I can do it." *Fine, I'll show him how hard it is.* So I called my agent, Jane, the next day and asked if she'd be interested in signing my dad. "Sure, I can use an old Asian guy on my roster," Jane said. Apparently old Asian dudes are rare commodities in Hollywood. This would surely show him the trials and tribulations I had to go through to become an actor. I'd give it a month before he called it quits on these grueling auditions. Two weeks later, the old man started booking everything. He booked four out of his first six auditions, an unheard of success rate. My dad called me, "I booked another one! This is so easy, why isn't everybody doing it!" My dad was a natural and I was a struggling actor. My plan completely backfired.

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One of the roles he booked was playing a Chinese mob boss on a Chinese television show called *Little Daddy*. It was a meaty three-episode arc that shot in San Francisco. I didn’t think much of it when he landed the role, assuming it was probably some second-tier production. *Little Daddy* became one of the most popular shows in China. It went on to sweep the hearts of a billion Chinese people. All of our relatives and family friends from China called and congratulated my dad on his brilliant performance. My aunt from Shanghai called him and exclaimed, “Richard! You were so good in that role! Your son must have taken after you! I hope he succeeds just like you.” I fucked up.

However, this apparent curse did eventually lead to an unlikely breakthrough for me. When my dad was killing it as the hottest old Asian dude to hit Hollywood since Mr. Miyagi, I was scraping together small, two-line parts on TV. Then my dad got an audition to be a scientist on one of my favorite TV shows, *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia*. It was a prominent role and they were looking for an older actor to play a Mandarin-speaking scientist. I was so jealous of this opportunity, and my dad had never even heard of the show. When he called me the night before to run lines with him, I reluctantly agreed. It felt like a girl that you like calling you to tell you about another guy she likes; it was pretty painful. The next morning, Jane, our agent, gave me a call. She asked bluntly, “Hey, do you think your dad can handle this role? It’s a lot of dialogue in Mandarin and English.”

“Yeah, I think he’ll be fine.” That was half a lie. My dad might have been killing it in his earlier auditions, but they were mostly commercials and Chinese television. This was a comedic part on

an American improvised comedy show. But I vouched for my old man because, well, he's my old man.

But Jane's agent spidey sense was tingling. "Maybe I'll call the casting director and tell them to bring you in and read for the part instead."

I couldn't say no, but I also didn't want to throw my dad under the bus, so I just passively responded, "Whatever works."

"Okay, I'll call them." Now I had less than two hours to prepare for the audition for myself, and I also had to explain to my dad what happened. I called him right away to catch him before Jane.

"Hey, Dad, I think Jane wants me to audition for the part instead," I said sheepishly, waiting for him to punch me through the phone.

"I think that's good, I don't think I'm ready anyway. You will do better than me."

I was surprised by this rare moment of vulnerability from my dad. This time, he ran the lines with me. I didn't have time to second-guess myself when I went into the casting office. *What do I have to lose?* This wasn't my part to begin with. Then I got the part, my biggest role yet, on one of my favorite comedy shows, thanks to my dad. And it just so happened that particular episode, "Flowers for Charlie," was written by the writers/executive producers of my favorite drama on TV, *Game of Thrones*, David Benioff and D. B. Weiss. I fanboyed super hard when we took a group photo with my favorite drama show creators and my favorite comedy show actors. David, DB, the gang from *Always*

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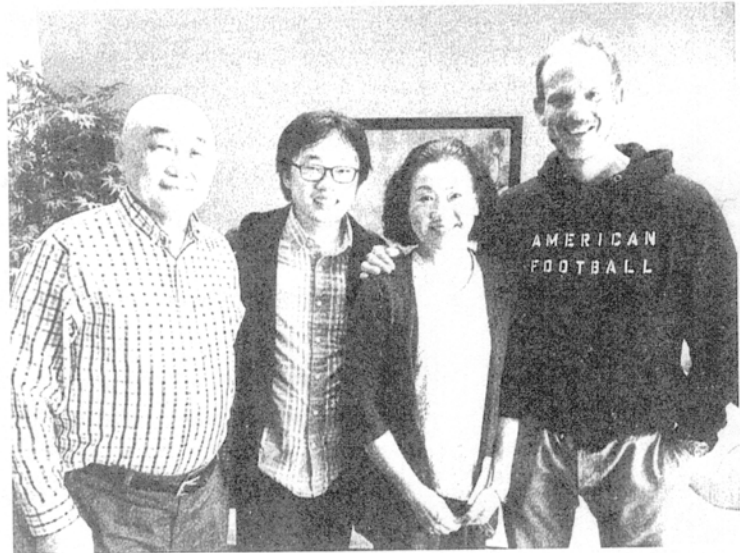
Sunny and I posed inside of the gang's pub. My dad becoming an actor led to one of the brightest highlights of my acting career.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Glenn Howerton, D. B. Weiss, David Benioff, Asian kid who took the job from his dad, Charlie Day and Rob McElhenney.

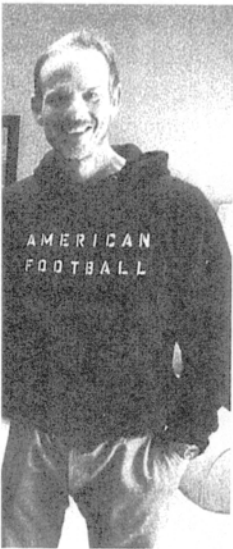
Three years later, I made my big-screen debut in *Patriots Day*. I returned the favor and got my dad a role to play my dad in the movie. In the drama I played the based-on-real-life hero Danny Meng, the Chinese immigrant who was carjacked by the two terrorist brothers responsible for the Boston Marathon bombing. It was an honor to play Danny and get to know him in real life. Peter Berg was the director and Mark Wahlberg was a producer and the star of the film. We made sure to portray every detail accurately to honor the real-life victims and heroes of the tragedy. When Danny is first introduced in the film, he is facetimeing his parents back home in Sichuan, China, speaking Mandarin.

Originally, they cast a Chinese actor from Boston to play my dad, but unbeknownst to the filmmakers, he spoke Mandarin with a thick Cantonese accent. Since I was born in Hong Kong to parents from Mainland China, I was fluent in both dialects. Although the American audience wouldn't know the difference between Cantonese and Mandarin, it meant a lot to me to get it right for the Chinese-speaking viewers. Pete trusted me and agreed to recast the dad. And I asked him, "What about my dad? He's an actor." They flew my dad out to Boston the following week. He played the scene brilliantly. It was a big deal for my dad to make his feature debut and share this experience with his son.



On the set of *Patriots Day* with director Peter Berg, my fake mom and my real dad.

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One of the shining moments of my life was taking my parents to the *Patriots Day* premiere at the world-famous Grauman's Chinese Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard. We shared the red carpet with all the stars from the film, Mark Wahlberg, Kevin Bacon, J. K. Simmons, John Goodman and Michelle Monaghan. I couldn't believe I was part of this incredible cast, and so was my dad. It was wonderful to share the red carpet with my parents and sit by them when they watched my movie debut. The highlight of the night was the after-party. My parents and I were seated across from Kevin Bacon, who is officially one degree separated from me. (Sorry, I know this joke is played out, but I had to.) My dad kept nudging me in the arm and whispered, "Hey, you think we can take a picture with Kevin Bacon?" *For once in my life, I'm on the same level with Kevin Bacon, why can't I just enjoy it? I don't want to be a fanboy!* But I relented, knowing that selfie would mean a lot to my parents. So I went up to Kevin with my parents satellited around me. "Hey, Kevin, nice to meet you." This was the first time we'd met, since we didn't have any scenes together in the film.

"Hey!" Mr. Bacon enthusiastically replied. "Nice to meet you too."

"Kevin, these are my parents, and they are big fans of yours. Can we take a picture with you?"

"Of course!"

Kevin was incredibly nice. He leaned in and said to my dad:

"So, what do you think about your son in the movie—he was great, right?"

Oh no! Kevin Bacon is making the same mistake Jack made outside of the comedy club in the MGM.

I braced myself for my dad's response:

"Yes, yes, my son was in the movie. You know, I was in the movie too."

Dad was too busy giving himself a plug, instead of throwing me under the bus. Thank God. He took out his phone and snapped a selfie.

All the years of disappointments from my parents seemed to have vanished after this Kevin Bacon selfie. To see them happy was a bigger achievement than any accolade I could get from Kevin Bacon. I've learned to embrace my dad as a fellow actor, but he'll never see me as an actor; I'll always be his son who fucked up the rice.

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This fanboy moment has turned out to be one of our favorite family portraits.