

It was almost dawn when we found him. Barefoot and slightly drenched, Pa was leaning against a streetlamp. I shivered. The sky was still rumbling softly from last night's thunderstorm, like a deep purple monster refusing to be woken up. Anxiously, we hurried towards our father. In the unearthly yellow light of the lamp, his face looked even more alien than I could remember, and his eyes were closed. As we neared him, my brother spoke first. "Pa."

Pa gave a small turn of his head, but otherwise remained still and gave no other acknowledgement of our presence. Taking it as a safe sign to approach, my brother shifted closer so that he could use his umbrella to cover all three of us. Hesitantly, he reached out a hand and placed it onto Pa's shoulder. As expected, he opened his eyes, but I saw his face hardening before he shrugged my brother off.

"Pa," my brother repeated again, slightly louder this time.

I watched Pa's expression carefully as the sky gave an unsettling roar overhead, but his face was inscrutable. I looked at his lined face, at his shirt damp with rain.

"Pa, come wear your shoes first ... wear your shoes first," I tried to sound as encouraging as possible, but my voice only came out pleading and strained. Pa's face remained unreadable, but we held our breath as he lifted up his leg slowly, allowing us to help him slip on his sandals. Suddenly, a crack of thunder tore through the air, and me and my brother jumped.

That seemed to bring Pa back to his senses, and he straightened up and began to walk away, but not in the direction of home.