

An Elderly Immigrant's Story

Before I came to Canada I heard a great deal of wonderful things about Canada from my friends and colleagues: that Canada was an advanced and modern country, a friendly people with peaceful living environment.

My husband was a university professor in China and I worked in the Department of Science. Even though we were not wealthy, we lived rather happily and comfortably until my husband's unexpected death. Then I received a short letter from my daughter asking me to come to Canada. I felt she needed me and so I left China and went to Canada.

It was night time when I arrived in Canada. From the plane window I could see the beautiful, bright city lights. Canada was so beautiful! No sooner had I walked into my daughter's house than I noticed that she immediately gave \$100 to her husband, saying that it was the payment for her mother's staying in the house. This was rather odd for Chinese. According to Chinese custom, a mother-in-law's visit is an honor to the family. She shouldn't have to pay for her stay there.

The next morning when I just got out of bed, my son-in-law scolded and yelled at me. He said, "You didn't come to Canada to enjoy happiness and prosperity. You came to help with our house chores and cook for us." Then he threw me a cleaning cloth so that I could start working right away.

All through my life, I had been familiar with friendly, good mannered and respectful people. I was not used to quarrels and poor manners, and didn't know how to handle that when it happened. I just stood there, and could not utter one word until he left. I blamed myself for not knowing how to react.

I stayed in their home for two weeks. One day he asked me for money, saying that my money was also his. He hit me, choked me, and tried to force me to give him the money. Just at that moment my daughter returned home. She told him not to hurt me but hit her instead. We finally managed to run into a bedroom and lock the door. We just sat on the floor and wept. Later on that night, my daughter said, "We must run away from this place." The next day we left home and sought refuge in a women's shelter.

Three weeks later we rented a basement suite. It was a small suite with one very small window. There was no bed and we had to sleep on the floor. It was very cold there. Since my daughter was still unemployed, we could not afford better accommodation. We lived like this for one year until I discovered that I had a problem with my legs and they were getting worse. I could not continue to sleep on the floor. Finally, through the help of some of our friends, I was admitted into a seniors' apartment.

I am now 80 years old. I realize that I cannot escape from the natural law of life. I still have one good eye and one good ear, and I am retired. I still want to learn English and to

become a volunteer. I'd like to help people who have problems. I can help with babysitting, writing letters, filing law suits (in Chinese), etc.

I have been taking lessons and exercises and participating in community activities. I even took part in essay contests twice and won both times. Although there are things I'd like to see improved and changed, such as the medical system, overall I believe the Canadian government is a good government – a people's government. I love Canada!