The Things I Carry

My dad told me he had a cat, its name was Mizai. But he died a year before I was born. My dad said I am Mizai reincarnated, because my neck bone was shaped like “ren”, which means “human” in Chinese when I first came to this world. Later, the shape disappeared, and Mizai became my nickname.

I am not quite sure if I am Mizai reincarnated, since I never met him. My dad doesn’t have his pictures, but somehow I recognized his species out of millions of different cats in a big picture book. He was orange, with tiger stripes.

I am not sure, but I still believe my dad.

Work hard and study well, understand? Dad always says that.

On normal school days, I carry a green pencil bag, a student hand book, a TI calculator, my home keys, a stainless steel lunchbox, a bottle of water, a comb, a Chinese-English dictionary, binders and books—depending on different days and classes. The total weight is not over 10 pounds.

I weighed 6 pounds when I was born. Mizai might have weighed 10 pounds when he died.

Mizai was different from the other cats. He was alert and sensitive to the environment. He was timid, and he didn’t care too much. But he wasn’t lazy, not too cool, and very close to human. Now I carry his eyes, his ears, his feelings, and his emotion. I don’t care what others say about me, but I hear. I felt uncomfortable at HKIS, but now I don’t care—I am used to it. I don’t like to speak in English, but I like to smile, and I would become so talkative if I could speak in Chinese. Only I hardly have this chance at school. But I don’t care, I can speak English now. I am not good at everything, but at least my personality is good.

As for my brother, I believe that he is reincarnated a dog. I call him Fat Dog. He learns swear words quickly, but he never barks at school. He only barks at home. On normal school days, he carries the same things as I do. He carries a blue bag, a lunchbox, a bottle of water, a dictionary, and pencil bag, binders and books.
Both Fat Dog and I carry a tough soul—with love, hate, fear, loneness, stress, and hope in it—every school day. Both of us carry our father’s expectations.

Work hard and study well, understand? Dad always says that.

Both of us felt uncomfortable at HKIS. But I am lucky, at least I have some good friends to talk to. Unlike Fat Dog. Only a few people actually understand him. Like Nicola Cheung, she has been his good friend since the first day we came to HKIS. Others? Not his fellow students, not his dean, and not even our parents. Only pure friend like Nicola, and me.

The relationship between Fat Dog and me is very good. We hold hands. We are very close. And also, we are the same height. People ask if we are twins.

No, we say.

We tell each other everything about our school life.

I hate my dean! He said. She is evil! You know, she looks down on us! She asks me to check my IQ, ear testing and stuff. Dad spent 500 dollars for the test and the results show that I am above average! Now she says I need to receive a new IQ test! What the hell she is thinking! Her brain is made of shit!

Why she never understands that we are not stupid at all! We just don’t understand English.

Exactly! We don’t understand, and that doesn’t mean I can’t hear! That doesn’t mean I am mentally retarded! Stupid dean go eat shit!

Totally agree!

We always convert bad feelings into hearty barks.

One day she suddenly asked me to find her when I was having class, he said. You know what she told me? She told me to have language barrier testing! She said, “I will find you a professor to test. If the test fails, your dad has to pay 5000 dollars to take a further test.”

What?! This is nonsense! We speak Chinese fluently!

Something is even more nonsense.
You know what, he continued. She selected subjects for my next year, and now she wants to select universities for you!

*What?*! No way! I won’t let her do anything for me! I swear I will *never* tell her my major subjects!

I won’t too! She abuses her authority to control and destroy our future! You know what I want to tell her? “Eat the damn shit and shut up!”

Beside the light physical weight, Mizai’s spirit, father’s expectations and a tough soul, I also carry my “selves”, 10 “selves”—self-respect, self-confidence, self-love, self-dependence, self-knowledge, self-examination, self-discipline, self-help, self-image, and self-protection—in case people like the stupid dean don’t understand me or look down on me, I still have me.

These are the things I carry.