

Letter to myself

(by Elena Rapley)

On December 30, 2019, at 5am, I landed at Shanghai Airport. I flew in from London. And at 6 am, my daughter landed there too, she flew from St. Petersburg, Russia. In November last year, my youngest son, who lives and works in Shanghai, became a father for the first time, and we decided to get together to see the baby and to meet the New 2020 together.

I remember that on New Year's Eve, with the chimes chiming, we raised our champagne glasses with the rest of the family on Wechat, wishing us all to meet together in London next year, so that my mother, our grandmother and great-grandmother, who will soon be 90, and who can no longer walk, could see and hug all her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Then for a whole week in Shanghai, we walked, admired the beautiful views, went to museums and movies, cafes and restaurants. And did not have a clue that the terrible virus has already begun its deadly attack on humanity. And started it right there, in China. Our main wish was not to come true. New life had begun. We were facing many worries and disappointments ... And a lot of losses...

But during the year we also gained a lot. New life experience, the understanding that although not everything in life depends on you, but you can change a lot in yourself, in your attitude to people, to the situation, and you can adapt to new realities.

A year later, on the eve of 2021, I remembered a Russian proverb: "If I knew where I was going to fall, I would lay straw on the ground there." I thought how nice it would be then, on the eve of 2020, to receive a letter from myself written from one year in the future.

This letter-with-advice would be a pile of straw for me to soften the falls and survive easier this difficult, strange, unusual year. I would write to myself something like this: You are facing a very unusual year. You will worry a lot. But these few lines of advice will help you become stronger and more confident in yourself and cope with all unforeseen difficulties and circumstances:

Don't make any definite plans. Go with the flow.

Play it by ear but play it by the rules.

Don't be scared, but don't be reckless too.

Look after yourself. You need to be healthy to be able to look after others.

Be positive. Stick on doing what you enjoying to do.

Be kind to yourself and to others.

Be patient.

Everything will be fine!