

Ms. A's story

Interview and story written with Zichen Xu



Illustration by Xue Xu. @yumigou_

Ms. A is a frontline worker in the restaurant industry

Ms. A worked at an automotive factory prior to the outbreak of the pandemic. Her job involved using large metal pliers to make car doors; her hands would be sore and numb afterwards up to the point of feeling pain when driving. Though she visited a doctor and took medicine for the injury, she ultimately quit her job to work at a restaurant.

Restaurant work was not much better. Ms. A worked for eight to nine hours straight, with only a fifteen-minute meal break in between. She would still feel sore and tired after work, and decided that she couldn't carry on. A friend eventually introduced Ms. A to her current restaurant job in 2019; based on her strong work ethic, apt for quick learning, and the English she picked up in ESL classes, she was the best candidate to handle the demands of food delivery platforms.

Life was never easy for Ms. A, and her struggles were only exacerbated by the flood of troubles brought on by

the pandemic. Her son had graduated with an aviation major just prior to the pandemic, and was unable to find a job, resignedly waiting for responses from employers. Ms. A's relationship with her daughter has deteriorated from the confinement of the pandemic. Her daughter was also diagnosed with depression during the pandemic and has started taking a drug newly available in March. Whenever Ms. A thinks about this, she becomes upset, often causing her to lose sleep at night.

"No matter how grim our finances are, I will persevere," says Ms. A. "I want my children to be mentally and physically healthy; I want everyone in our family to be healthy."

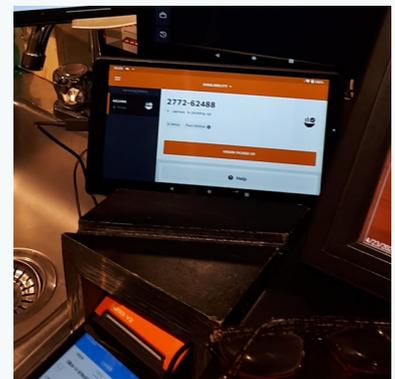
Ms. A also faces constant pressure at work. Despite her exertions, she often receives complaints from entitled customers commenting on her attitude and demanding her manager replace her. Though she deals with difficult customers and a demanding boss, Ms. A continues to work hard to alleviate the financial burden on her family.



Image of the restaurant window from the outside. The restaurant provides service on many delivery platforms. Photo by Ms. A.

When confronting these various injustices, Ms. A says: "I don't engage in politics or do petty things; I just want to do things well, finish what I start, and earn every cent fairly."

Ms. A has little confidence in the Canadian government's ability to contain the pandemic. When it first broke out, she trusted the government's plans, but as the cases increased, so did her doubt. Every day, Ms. A rinses her mouth with salt water and takes traditional Chinese medicine to reduce the likelihood of catching COVID-19. When asked



Multiple tablets are used in the restaurant for delivery platform service. Photo by Ms. A.

about her opinions on the government's current pandemic policies, she mentioned that in her home province of Guangdong, and even within the entirety of China, the pandemic is mostly a thing of the past. People are already living normally, leaving the house and filling the streets.

Ms. A hopes that the Canadian government can adopt similar pandemic policies as China to quell the outbreak here. At the same time, she hopes that the government will also remain mindful of youth employment during the pandemic. If there were more opportunities for meaningful employment, people like her son would be able to contribute to the family finances.