

Con gái
(Girl)

An imitation of the "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid

These are the basics of your Mâm Cỗ: chicken, pickled vegetables and Banh Chung; a girl worth marrying is someone who can cook and prepare a good Mâm Cỗ; don't make vegetables too sour or sweet; learn the ratio of mung beans to pork belly; a Vietnamese woman must know how to make her own; wrap your Banh Chung like how you wrap yourself, layers after layers, if you show any inch of yourself, it means you need to cover up more, another layer; a man does not appreciate a slut, darling; a man does not appreciate a bad cook; a man does not appreciate a woman who does not know how to wash his khakis or how to iron his suits; do not listen to your dad about how a powerful and smart woman scares away men; the right man does not appreciate an uneducated and overdependent woman, my child; *shouldn't my right man love me for everything that I am?*; Yes and no, get that Hollywood nonsense out of your head; love your man but love yourself; if he is not making you happy, there shouldn't be any reason to stay; this is how to organize your books and notebooks for classes; men hate messy and sloppy women; *but mom, why does everything have to...?*; men do not appreciate women who talk back at them; this is how a man hurts you; this is how you fight for yourself; if he continues to hurt you, fuck what I have taught you; don't be like me, learn this now: women do not appreciate men who abuse them; do not listen to your dad, violence is not an act of love; *mom, where did dad go?*; this is how you plan for your future; motherhood completes a woman; no, love completes a human; families are the roots of those weeping willows grandpa used to grow; if you ever mess anything up, come home; if you ever feel lost, come home; if you ever feel unprotected, come home; if you ever need anything, come home; if you have been gone for a while, just come home; this is how you act around someone you don't like; this is how you voice your opinion without being called disrespectful and aggressive; this is how you persuade someone; this is how you persuade someone who doesn't like you; this is how you get things done without being called bossy and bitchy; this is how you behave when people say women are too emotional and unstable; show them that I did not put you through school just to be some man's housekeeper; be like me, be successful and stable so there is no reason to stick around and endure; the place for a woman is at home and in the kitchen; be the kind of woman that the place for you is wherever you choose to be in.

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