

Cultural Analysis 文化解析

In Taiwan it is common to share personal concerns, including family troubles, with only one's closest friends or relatives. The local culture encourages strong family ties, and families are expected to solve their own problems without too much dependence on outside sources. Nana could be responding here to the way she has observed her friends and classmates act when they face personal problems. She seems at first to want to carry her burden alone. Then she changes her mind and tells Cooper of her plan to return to her country. She explains why.

Westerners may feel surprised that Cooper does not offer Nana a gentle hug as the two of them say goodbye. However, even in a fast changing culture such as Taiwan's, public displays of affection may at times be somewhat rare. People do give hugs to others in public, but only under certain circumstances. The lack of a hug here suggests that Cooper and Nana are not romantically involved on a deep level. They may like each other and feel emotionally close, but they are not at this time in a serious romantic relationship. The lack of a hug in the story may also suggest that Cooper, a local Chinese guy, is perhaps more conservative, or "more traditional" than westerners his age might be. Nana appears to be following cultural norms by restraining herself from saying or communicating too much to him. Obviously, Nana does not offer a hug to Cooper.

Nana uses an expression with the word "death" in it (as in the sentence, "there's no sense in scaring myself to death"). While Taiwanese may be quite sensitive about the word "death," people from other cultures might use it somewhat casually. Occasionally people may even use "death" in a humorous way. "You'll catch your death of a cold if you go out on such a cold day without a hat on your head," or "That teacher will be the death of me" are acceptable but informal statements. Similarly, in Mandarin we may say "chi si le--angry to death--" as an exaggeration, simply to mean "very angry."

In this episode Nana asks Cooper to pray for her mother's health. In Western cultures, this is considered fairly routine when they bid each other farewell, along with "You are in my prayers" or "God bless!" or "God speed." It is not as commonly done in Eastern cultures, as people usually say something like "please tell your mother I said hi" instead—greeting one's family members. When one says, "pray for me," it may have a religious meaning, but could also simply mean, "Please wish me good luck."