A basket of wild raspberries, with love

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I never thought a misunderstanding over wild red raspberries would send my mother-in-law out to the hills at dusk, just to pick an entire basket for me.  
It happened in May many years ago, during a summer I lived with my in-laws in their rural Zhejiang village. My mother-in-law had just called us all downstairs for dinner and, as usual, the table was already covered with a steaming selection of delicacies.  
But while sitting down to my spot at the table, I thought I had heard somebody say miaozi, the term for raspberries in the local dialect. The very possibility of dining on this jewel of a fruit, my favorite in May, was too tantalizing for me not to ask if there were some in the house.  
Turns out, I was wrong.  
But that didn't stop my in-laws from interpreting my question as a veiled request. So there was my father-in-law, urging my mother-in-law to venture into the hills and gather wild red raspberries, never mind the gorgeous spread of food we already had on the table.  
Of course, I was embarrassed by this suggestion and wouldn't think of sending her out to pick fruit, as we were all ready to eat and the sunlight was fading. I begged her to sit down and enjoy dinner with us, telling her I didn't need the raspberries. It was too much trouble and too late.  
So I believed that, when she disappeared into the kitchen with her placid smile, so had this crazy idea of gathering raspberries at sundown. But as the minutes passed by without my mother-in-law's return, I began to wonder.  
Sure enough, just as I prepared to leave the table, she appeared in the dining room, bearing a basket of the very fruit I explicitly implored her not to harvest. The fern leaf she had artfully arranged on top only added to the sense of guilt washing over me, knowing how she had delayed her own meal to do this.  
And as much as I shook my head at that basket of raspberries, I also recognized it for what it really was - another way to show how much she loved me.  
My in-laws have never told me "I love you", three words that have been a constant part of my family life in the United States since I was a child, nor have they ever hugged or kissed me like my parents do. But I've felt that same care and regard in unspoken ways. Like how my mother-in-law would secretly wash all of my clothes by hand, despite my pleas otherwise. Or how my father-in-law forced a thick stack of money into my hands - one I tried hard to refuse - when I left their home to visit Shanghai.  
While all this has meant learning a different language of love, I've come to appreciate just how far Chinese families will go to show their affection - even into a hillside at sunset looking for raspberries.

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