A Broken Fantasy

All of my walls were breaking down. Yet through all the shattered glass and smoke, there was a light. It seemed insignificant, especially compared to the dreadful masses of rubble, but it somehow outshined the darkness.

No one suspected the resentment building inside me. I was viewed as a perfect face of model minority: a timid, Asian "genius," who never got into trouble. At times, I held my head high and smiled proudly at the praise I received for my intelligence and goody-too-shoes image. It made things simpler and even fulfilling to reach what seemed conventional.

However, I always felt embarrassed about my Asian, more specifically, Chinese heritage. Whenever my last name or ethnicity was even mentioned, I'd get a bit defensive depending on whom it was. With teachers, I'd inwardly cringe and slouch in my chair, head cowering in shame, wishing they would call me by my first name instead. At home, things were a bit rockier. If my parents, my mother in particular, wanted me to embrace my culture, I would shout at her "I don't understand you," "speak English," and "I'm *American!*"

The problems I experienced with my parents went unnoticed for years, even though it felt like falling into a never ending chasm. It was the same cycle over and over again: fight, pretend nothing happened, and act civil. My parents put high expectations on me in terms of academics, discipline, and appearance that I eventually took to another level. These prospects perpetuated by my classmates, parents, and *myself* became too much pressure.

There have been some … interesting occasions where I displayed my sensitivity over the inability to reach perfection. I've cried over events as ridiculous as my mom calling my seesaw drawing ugly, my dad failing to test me on spelling properly, and getting incorrect answers on math problems. I scoff at how melodramatic these "issues" were. Nowadays, I'm able to maintain a slipshod attitude when I make minor mistakes. Although these incidents seem incredibly foolish to me today, they bottled up inside me for years, contributing to more significant events.

Tears were spilling from my eyes in uncontrollable amounts as I pounded on my door. Too stubborn to admit anything I did was wrong, I'd yell "Let me in! Stop being so mean! I HATE YOU!" My ears would perk up, hoping to hear what I thought I wanted: my strange reality. The lock would click open and I'd be able to go into my own world where I just watch TV, read, or do homework all alone. Instead, I realize they've noticed it too: we're not fixing our problems; we're ignoring them. So, my tears dry up and all the pounding and yelling stop. The wind blows in my hair, the sun shines bright, and the garden looks simply effulgent. I sit and lean back against the wall, refusing to disturb the peace. Maybe it didn't make a difference no matter where I was because I was alone either way.

Of course, I was eventually let in, but the cycle still repeated, even if I was no longer thrown out of the house. Nonetheless, I was able to convince *everyone* that I was still the perfect model of academic achievement through my high grades. No one ever realized how anti-social I was or how my procrastination was getting progressively worse for each consecutive assignment. I was

misled into thinking there would be no consequences because I was coming out with good grades on all my work and therefore, maintaining my image.

Unfortunately, once you get a taste of something, you can't stop. Every little habit seems impossible to break, and gets longer and longer each time. You're stuck in your isolated bubble of thoughts until it gets too full. BOOM, the bubble bursts open and you have a deadly realization.

Every. Single. Person. On. Earth. Is. Going. To. Die. Humanity is going to end. It's all going to become nothing. This is a cold, hard, reality that can be interpreted and twisted in many ways. Sadly, I took the destructive path.

My fantasy of a flawless world was broken. No matter how much effort I exerted, I would never reach my idea of a perfect person. Even if I did, it wouldn't hold much significance because all I'd ever be is an extra - the boring filler that's skipped through, a one dimensional character based on a stereotype, or the dead girl nobody cares about. I would never be my favorite heroine whose legend lived on to inspire billions of people. You know what? Scratch that. Katniss Everdeen is going to die one day too.

Each day dragged on, leaving me stuck in an imaginary coma. I would sit in bed all day, staring at the walls, feeling nothing at all. I was too weak to make a choice: live my life to the fullest or just end it once and for all.

Understandably, my parents were incredibly upset that I wasn't going to school. My absences were the trigger that let everyone know that I *wasn't* a perfect student anymore.

One day, everything got out of hand. There were no longer any means of escape left for me when my computer and books were taken away. I sound like an extremely spoiled brat, but my favorite books and shows were my only *happiness* at the time. They allowed me to live in *better* worlds where I didn't have to face reality. With my fantasy broken, I felt like I had to make a choice.

Tears falling down my face, I decided that dying seemed like the best option. Angrily, I exclaimed that I would drown myself in the bathtub. It seemed the most painless to end my existence. Even at this state, I was too afraid to take the physical pain of a knife slicing through my wrists, or worst my heart.

My mother dared me to do it, so I made my best attempt. I sat in the bathtub and fumbled with the handle as I turned on the water. Fortunately, I didn't get my wish. Before even a drop of water could come out, I was pulled out of the tub by my mom and dad.

My therapist was told of my stunt and I was considered both potentially homicidal and suicidal. The police were going to come to collect me and bring me to the hospital, if the psychiatrist deemed it necessary. On the same day, I received a letter from my friends showing their desire for me to get better. It genuinely made me feel *happy,* but unfortunately couldn't heal a wound already so deep.

I was admitted into a hospital focused on adolescents dealing with depression. Over my 5 day stay, I was able to achieve happiness through the friends I made. Due to my difficult experiences, I have been able to achieve a better understanding of *myself* and how I view the world.

Like a lightbulb being switched on in my head, I had an epiphany. Life was never my perfect fantasy. It's full of depression, racism, sexism, homophobia, poverty, and a billion more issues that would take forever to name. Each and everyone one of us goes through struggles that nobody will ever understand. Human beings are not mind readers; we will never experience someone else's thoughts and pain. Yet, we face the truth and *hope* for a better society. The most beautiful thing about fiction, especially for teens, is that they show a heroine's willingness to fight for an improved world. I'll never be my favorite protagonist, but I don't need to be.

Despite the hardships these experiences brought, I would not erase them from my life. Without them, I wouldn't be who I am today: a flawed, capable, strong, intelligent Chinese-American girl. I felt like I wasn't needed in the world, but my friends and family believed that I should be here. Their hope and care, along with my own, is what makes my life significant in its own small way.