

My Dent in the Universe

Dual Identity: Part 1

Yes, first semester sucks
But second semester is so much fun
Everybody told me that
Which is why it hurt so bad
When my senior year ended so soon
So I hid away in my blanket cocoon

I wasn't even sad about my YouTube graduation
Or the fact that I didn't have a prom
Because I still had college to look forward to
College is the best time of your life
Freshman year is when you meet all your friends
Everybody told me that
Which is why I was so devastated
When I learned I would be staying home
While others were together I would be alone

I really miss my dad
He's lived in Shanghai for four years
I haven't seen him since I was sixteen
My mom told me I had to focus on school
So that I could get into a good college
Don't worry, you'll visit him after you graduate
Study now and it'll all be worth it later
Everybody told me that
Which is why I am so angry
About the pandemic and the travel ban
I guess I've just been dealt a bad hand

Dual Identity: Part 2

I know there are greater problems in the world
Than just my own. People lost their family
People lost their jobs and livelihoods...
I remember so vividly
When my local Chinese restaurant was vandalized
Racist words spray-painted on their walls
And burned into my brain
I saw it every day on the news
I felt like I couldn't escape it, it was following me
Another Asian person attacked for merely existing
Blamed for a pandemic that they too are a victim of
I asked my mother why she wasn't mad
She said, *It's the price you pay for being an immigrant*
The American hazing they all must face
Every immigrant has known of it
And most have survived it
They swallow their pride
They accept the racism and perpetual hostility
They feel that it is what they owe
For posing as an American
For having the luxury of stepping foot in these doors
For even dreaming of existing in this Western world
My mother told me that she knew she succeeded
In raising a true American
And that her years of suffering
Of being tricked and deceived
Of working night shifts cleaning computers
Were all worth it in the end
When I looked her in the eye
Like Stone Cold Steve Austin
And told her I would correct this injustice
I told her that I would bring about change
She laughed and told me my sureness
My unjustified brashness and willpower
Were clear evidence of my American birth, she said
America had raised an undoubtedly American child
With heaps of unearned American confidence
Exuding through her Chinese pores.

A Confessional on April 6th, 2020

Dear Diary,

I have an awful confession
Tell me if it's so bad
That I'm marginally glad
That there is a pandemic
That forced my graduation online?
Don't tell anyone I said this
This stays between you and me
I was so nervous about graduating
About walking across the stage
And no one cheering for me
I imagined the awful radio silence
While my peers quietly wonder
Where are her parents? Where is her dad?
Did none of her family come to her graduation?
But now I feel much better
That no one will know
And I will graduate silently and secretly
Alongside all of my peers
Placing no dent in the universe
Just the way I like it
We are all on the same level now
Is that bad?
I know that I shouldn't say this
At least I'm not admitting it aloud
I'm just writing it down.

With Love,
Michelle

My Mother

My mother told me she was the most beautiful woman in her whole village.
That she was hand-picked out of all the girls to represent her village on TV.
It wasn't until later that I found out that her little "village" in China was the size of Los Angeles.
But still, I don't doubt her.
She is ridiculously beautiful.
I know everyone thinks their mother is the most beautiful woman in the world.
But my mother is just exceptionally so.
Anyone who knows her knows that I am being truthful.



Yesterday Night

I watched my mother as she worked at her desk
Set up in the corner of her bedroom
Post-It notes colored every inch of her walls
A reminder of her seemingly endless to-do list
Her California king bed seemed too large for just one person
But even if she felt that way, she would never admit it
At least not aloud
Seeing her sitting there
Working alone on her glaring computer
Drinking her 6th cup of coffee at 1 a.m.
Made me want to work harder
I walked back to my room
And returned to my desk
Filled with a renewed energy
I'll keep studying hard
One day, I'll be able to pay her back
For all she has given to me
And sacrificed along the way.