

The Other Side to Darwin's Theory

A year, seven months, and 12 days ago. That's when I packed up my luggage ready to cross the seas all the way to the opposite side of the Earth—to America.

Ninety-two days ago. That's when death seized away the backbone of my family—my beloved father.

Those were precise calculations I had made the day of my eighth grade graduation: one of which carried pride and the other carried pain. At the podium I stood, trembling in front of an enormously diverse audience, in an attempt to communicate my overwhelmed joy and gratitude *in English* for being in the valedictorian position. Yet somehow, I had to hide the intertwined fear and grief that I felt as I stood on my own. The audience waited for me to speak, but my words trafficked in a maze within. The Green light is on! Go! With effort, I held the speech up in my hands and remembered my teacher previously whispering to me, "Deliver it with passion!" and so I followed her advice. For the first time, I narrated my story to a plethora of strangers that I no longer felt estranged from, because I now shared their language.

Truth is, I wasn't totally on my own.

Among the crowd was my mother, in whose eyes I saw the image of a helpless newborn widow attempting to lock her intoxicated grief within and wear a smile for the sake of cheering for her daughter. I truly appreciated her effort. As I had my eyes fixed on her, her tears started rolling and so did mine. As for her, she was simply no longer capable of containing her heartache, and as for me—well; I suppose that I merely love following this woman's footsteps in everything.

At that moment, I wanted to step down from the podium. Run to my mom. Gather each and every one of those precious tears of hers. Moreover, I wished to hide my face from everyone, embarrassed by my own tears. Before I came to this move, however, I remembered that I was speaking of a girl whose hardships built her up and reconstructed her vulnerable heart into a firmer one...a girl whose blood runs with everlasting ambitions...a girl continually striving to survive all odds with her head held high. I can't quite tell how or when exactly I embraced that girl: whether it was when I spent many hours logging words into my English vernacular to be learned or when I made the promise to my unconscious father at the hospital to be the daughter that will always make him proud. It would have been a contradiction to speak of myself as a girl that had grown confident and determined in a matter of two years yet abruptly stop in the middle of my speech. I managed it. I managed to conclude my speech with prayers that God blesses us (the graduates of 2009), our parents, our teachers, and our nation. The crowd applauded zealously as I bowed, and my mother's face lit with a non-artificial smile that made my heart bounce with joy. It was an irreplaceable moment that I desired to treasure forever.

Today, as I stare at that valedictorian trophy with my name..... engraved, I remember the pain and pleasure this souvenir carried all at once. It now secretly speaks of a girl who has successfully adapted to a new environment, but in opposition to the renowned Darwin theory, she was *not* naturally selected. Her endeavor, her family's support, the goodness of individuals that were placed in her path and even the opportunities that she encountered in America all aided her, thus far, to become the person she strives to be. From Palestine, I came with a purse loaded with dreams, and when I return on one fine day, I would not like to be empty-handed. I would like my purse to be loaded with more than dreams; I aspire to carry a certificate of my accomplishments in one hand, and a better understanding of the world and of who I am in the other.