

Unfair expectations: my experience as an asian student

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I'm the stereotypical Asian student: I wear glasses and I'm quiet. I'm expected to be smart and to score well on every single quiz, test, and exam regardless of difficulty. I would do whatever it takes to meet their expectations; I've even deceived people into believing I had high scores. I masquerade myself as this perfect student who excels in academics without exerting a drop of effort. Somehow I'm able to reach that line where their expectations are met and sometimes even surpass them. When I'm left alone with my thoughts, however, I often wonder when I will become so exhausted that I will be unable to keep up this facade and inevitably disappoint those that believed in me.

I believe that I portray myself as a kind and generous person. I do not mind helping people; I would even say that I enjoy it. The problem is that most of my peers seem to associate with me only because of their warped perception of my intelligence; they expect me to help them as if I have no worries of my own. I do not want to be defined by that aspect of my character, yet I have fused with it and struggle to break free. A close friend once reassured me that failure is natural and that my grades do not define me; I wondered then, if not my grades, then what does define me?

I trudge into the classroom, dragging my feet behind me. The familiar chime of the bell resonates throughout the school as I take a seat. Suddenly the desks around me begin to shift, forming several straight rows. My stomach sinks as the realization dawns on me. My thoughts and heart race furiously, almost as if they were competing. I attempt to compose myself by taking deep breaths but ultimately find that I am unable to. My panic crescendoes as the papers reach me. The immense weight of the paper is unexpected,
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and it feels as if I am holding a death sentence. The text blurs together. I scour my mind for any shred of knowledge but my mind goes blank. I find myself unable to form any coherent thoughts. I quickly scribble what I can, praying for a miracle.

An alarm slices through the silence, and I reluctantly surrender the exam to the teacher. I meander over to my seat and collapse into my arms. Only moments pass before the thud of footsteps approaches me. An all too familiar set of voices bombard me with questions, seeking validation for their answers. My chest constricts, and I once again struggle to breathe. I steel myself, smile ready, and sit up.