

Hunger games: acknowledgment edition



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Hunger, written by Lan Samantha Chang, is a novella that shares the story of a family troubled with a desire for a better life. The story is told from Min's perspective – the mother – and it is she who recollects the everyday life of the family. Within this story, Tian's hunger for acknowledgment can be seen as his desire for success overshadows his duty as a father. Tian's hunger for acknowledgment leads the family to its downfall as each member of the family chooses to gain acknowledgment from Tian rather than choosing to make connection with one another.

By focusing more on his own dreams, Tian fails to make any sincere connection with his family and therefore breaks apart the family. He chooses to work toward his own dream and in the process, fails to see his own family's desire to be acknowledged.

Tian, from the beginning of the book, desires to be successful through his music saying that there is “one thing that a person must do... even more than what his family wants him to do” (28). He wants to be acknowledged. His desire to be acknowledged motivates him early on to practice. Tian is motivated to the point that he “focuse[s] his desires on a different part of the house [...] this would be his music room”(15). By focusing on the music room, he fails to recognize his own family. Instead of finding motivation from his family, he instead, is motivated to work on the music room as it represents the place where he can perfect his music. This desire to be acknowledged is so strong that it blinds him of his family's own desire to be acknowledged by him. Rather than concentrating on his duty as a father, he focuses on his recital pieces because “the smallest issues [of the recital piece is] significant and demand[s] his private concentration (17). It is this

lack of focus on helping his family that acts as a catalyst to the downfall of the family.

As the characters try to gain acknowledgment from Tian, they forget their duties as mother and as children to make connections with one another and this eventually leads to the downfall of the family. In the case of Min, she could not make any connection with her daughters and fulfill her duty as a mother as she focuses all her attention on Tian. As for Anna and Ruth, they fail to form any sibling connection as the difference in their skillset acts as a gap that could not be crossed.

In Min's attempt at gaining acknowledgment from Tian, she fails to fulfill her duties as a mother. She focuses on Tian in the same manner that Tian focuses on his music: disregarding others and focusing solely on things that can make him happy. By focusing all her attention to Tian, Min forgets to acknowledge her daughters. From the moment Anna is born, Min did not acknowledge her as she "turn[s] [her] head to the wall, feeling frightened and alone..." because she feels like she has failed at her attempt to gain acknowledgment from Tian (30). Even in this moment, Min already fails to fulfill her duties as a mother by not showing love to her newborn baby, because she was too focused on Tian's opinion of her. As Min continues to try to gain acknowledgment from Tian, she also continues to fail at being a mother. When faced with a question as to why she did not interfere the night that Ruth was told to continue to play the violin even though she was in tears, Min could not answer and even thought that "Ruth was so spoiled that [she] felt that this taking-down might be good for [Ruth]" (60). By having this thought in her head, Min is trying to justify the reason that she did not

interfere by trying to justify Tian's actions. This plays a part in the downfall of the family as she is not able to speak up to protect her daughters from Tian nor is she able to stand up for herself and act how a mother should. Min fails to be a mother figure to both Anna and Ruth as she focuses on gaining Tian's acknowledgment; but, she is not able to gain it as Tian is focusing on his music.

Tian not only shrugs Min to the side, but he also does not seem to acknowledge Anna's presence. As a child, Tian "treat[s] her fondly, but in a detached way" foreshadowing what is to come as she grows up (33). Like Min, Tian could not connect with Anna as he treats her in a "detached way" because he is too focused on his music. With Tian focusing on his own desire to be acknowledged through his music, he disregards Anna and fails to be a father figure. This leads Anna to focus all her attention on gaining Tian's acknowledgment. She tries hard to gain his acknowledgement by attempting to please him through her practice sessions with him and going as far as trying to "learn the second violin part of a double concerto by Bach" because it is "[his] hope that Ruth and [her] would someday be able to play [it] together" (55). Even though she knows that she cannot gain her father's acknowledgment due to her limitations with the violin, she still chooses to go after it rather than focusing on making any sibling connection with Ruth. It is because of Tian's failure at being a father figure that Anna also failed at being a figure that Ruth can look up to. Anna, like her father, focuses solely on gaining acknowledgment that she ignores Ruth.

As Tian's hunger for acknowledgment grows, so does Anna's and it is this very reason that leads to the downfall of the family. Instead of connecting

with Ruth, Anna instead talks bad about Ruth. She describes Ruth as having “horrible tone” (58) when she plays the violin. She further says in a bitter voice that “[Ruth] had been terribly spoiled” to justify Tian’s action for making her to continue to play even though she was crying. This bitterness towards Ruth appears because Tian focuses all his attention towards Ruth – and not towards Anna – as he believes that she is the way for his music to be acknowledged.

But just as Tian fails to acknowledge his own family, his talent as a musician fails to be acknowledged as he describes being “passed over” by the university (33). When Tian finds out that he has been dismissed from the university, his desire to be acknowledged starts to slowly extinguish, but rekindles when he sees how natural of a violinist Ruth is. Seeing how natural Ruth is with a violin, he imposes his desire on Ruth and it once again blinds him of his family’s wants. This is seen when he declines Ruth’s suggestion to “do something else” as she gets tired of playing and further tells her later “You cry all you want!... You cry! But-play! One, two, and three-and one, two and-three.” (58-59). Choosing to ignore Ruth’s suggestion to “do something else” shows that Tian fails to recognize her attempt to be acknowledged and heard. Tian continues to ignore his own family to fulfill his own dream and it is this desire that leads not only to his own downfall, but the downfall of the family.

As Tian hungers for acknowledgment, the women hunger to be acknowledged by Tian and this ends up destroying the family as each character focused on gaining acknowledgment rather than choosing to do what is best for the family. Tian’s hunger for acknowledgement and success

leaves him focused on his music that he disregards his family members and fails to act as a father figure. Min focuses all of her attention on Tian that she could not be the mother figure that Anna and Ruth needed her to be. Anna also could not make a connection with her sister as she focused on gaining Tian's acknowledgment that Ruth easily receives. As for Ruth, she fails to make any connection with her mother or sister as Tian's will is being imposed onto her. In the end, the family came crumbling down as Tian's hunger for acknowledgment led him to disregard his family who wanted nothing more but to be acknowledged by the man of the house.