1. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

Invisible to Invincible

“No, it's a waste of time”. Growing up my existence felt unsettled. I've never really fit in anywhere, split between geeks in the anime cliques or the athletes in my swimming team. Self described as a social floater, I tended to jump from group to group depending on my moods. Everytime i would move schools, I'd just brush it off as if it was nothing, and I moved a lot. Whether it was because of commuting or new academic opportunities, every 3 years my parents would assign me to a new school. Being a relatively introspective person, I would mostly break off contact with whoever I hung out with prior to my move. Standing out was a great fear that leveraged the way I handle situations and it inhibited me from achieving what my heart yearned for.

To add fuel to fire, my whole life was encapsulated with a bombardment of activities. A typical day of mine would spread out to an early morning swimming practice at 5am and ending the day on an English lesson with a side of biology revision to finish me off; It engulfed my energy and soon enough I had run out of “social battery” unable to really talk with anyone. I never knew exactly what I wanted, this feeling of despair and confusion was consuming me inside out. No one is to really blame but me. My refusal to participate in social pastimes has labelled me as borderline antisocial. This flaw of mine gleamed even brighter during my highschool years. Shyness emerged on top of everything else. I enkindled my own weaknesses and would rather stay alone than put on a general facade towards my peers. I had grown to be too comfortable and sheltered from staying away from the dramas of school life and much preferred lingering at home with my hot cocoa and piles of manga.

I didn't want this to last. Staying as an observer wasn't an option, just watching the world unfold around me in third person evoked a compulsion inside me. If an opportunity arose, I’d continuously attempt to make connections with everyone; my goal was to understand others and how they process the present moment. Quickly I realised the absolute elucidation of my life; it seeked interactions with others to begin with. The thing that gives meaning to my closed off approach to life was actually the utter impact I'd bring to someone. Regret towards my past self should not influence the way I seek future prospects. I took upon projects that had been deserted and managed to form a team where we helped underprivileged orphans learn maths every tuesday. I volunteered in competitions where it would require more group efforts, something I loathed doing in the past. Free myself from the unhealthy fixations on invisibility but actually shaping my whole life to leave footprints in other people's lives.

To others my image felt stagnant, but inside I was like a wanderer slowly reaching new heights no matter how cloudy they were. I have yet to know what future lies for me, but for one thing I knew I had to find out for myself.