**Prompt #5**

***Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.***

I had never really liked bracelets and thought that that would never change. The constant rubbing and movement of it left an unpleasant feeling on my wrist. I thought I'd never wear one again until earlier this year.

A slim black thread with a black bead strung along it like a rosary was wrapped around my wrist as I walked along the school corridors early in the morning heading to my class. It was a gift from Jocelyn. Despite the kindness, I was still itching to take it off. Minutes felt like hours with the bracelet.

“I’ll take it off after school when she's not around, ” I said to myself.

I’d always had this mental barrier against bracelets ever since I was a kid. This same phenomenon seemed to pervade other parts of my life. I was often hesitant to leap into new things or foreign environments, afraid I wasn’t up for it, afraid it just wasn’t for me. During my first year of high school, when appointed as the Student Council’s head of welfare, I found myself procrastinating over my duties and afraid of adding more responsibilities onto my plate due to fear of failing and pressure. When wanting to try new programming languages, fearing the difficulty of the foreign elements I'll need to learn in the future, I ended up not starting at all.

As the last class of my day drew closer, I was sitting at my desk when I was approached by Jocelyn.

“Are you liking it?” she asked.

I suddenly remembered the gift she gave me and looked over at my left wrist. “Huh.”

To my surprise, the bracelet was resting comfortably on my wrist. I’d completely forgotten about it. I realized that maybe my initial thought that bracelets not being my thing wasn’t true at all. I made baseless assumptions in my head. It was my mind that was hindering me. From that moment on, I promised myself that I would not back down from my future endeavors no matter how challenging or scary they may seem.

Being true to my promise, I participated in a hackathon with a team of 4 for the very first time that year. The hackathon required its participants to develop an application that provided a solution to a global problem of your choice and a business plan for pitching, all in just a day. Despite knowing I had close to zero experience in app development, let alone in pitching, I registered anyway. I didn’t want to succumb to my fear of failing and embarrassment and let this opportunity go away. With only a few days till D-Day, I studied as much as I possibly could and, to my surprise, placed second.

These seemingly small changes in my head changed how I approach my difficulties and opportunities. I was able to try out lots of new activities, take on new responsibilities in student council, and even did an internship. I stopped merely thinking about doing things and instead, learned not to be afraid, to take the first step, to seize the day.

As I’m writing this, it's only a few months left before the end of the year. I’m at my desk with my hands typing away on my keyboard as I stare at my monitor, the bracelet on my left wrist still visible in my peripheral vision. The bracelet, which initially felt like a shackle both physically and mentally, had now become proof and a constant reminder to me that my limitation – it was only my imagination.

Throughout my time in college and beyond, there's no doubt that I’ll be faced with various challenges, from participating in lab research, to hosting community events and working on my own start-up. Instead of worrying, I’ll face them head on and keep moving forward. I’ll wear the bracelet.

Hi Joe,

Thank you for writing and sharing this essay and also personal story. I think you have chosen a good lesson to write about – college is about stepping out of your comfort zone and admissions officers are looking for those who are willing to do so. While you have good bones for your essay, the story will be more impactful if the scale of your actions are amplified. How rigid were you with your comfort zone? How did that affect yourself and others negatively? What was the last straw that pushed you to change (you talked of Jocelyn, and I think there must be something bigger that led you to know you needed to change)? One stylistic feature that I really liked was the metaphor of wearing the bracelet and how you incorporated that until the end of the essay. Overall, very good structure and flow – just make the stakes higher!

C.G.