Stella 12R Essay Workshop

“Nice drawing.”

I looked up to see a stranger hovering over me, watching my shaky fingers sketch the hooked outline of a nose belonging to the elderly woman that sat to my left on that museum bench. The shine of the golden badge clipped to his blue jumpsuit caught my eye. *Ah. The “*Janitor”. He looked like the sort of man they describe in those 2000s fantasy novels—you know, the old, wizened mentors with the all-knowing smiles and advice wrapped in a bundle of riddles that took ages for them to spit out. *His skin fits him well at least*, I thought. Copper and taut, like the statues at the entrance I was certain his calloused fingers had polished throughout the night. But what really perplexed me was his eyes; dark pools of brown that twinkled and seemed to hold the answers of the universe.

His mouth continued to move, asking me how I came to do art, and what I wanted to do in my future. My mouth moved back, singing that warbly, tangy note you do when you’re not completely sure of what you want to say, eyes cast down to my notebook. I was 11 and hadn’t even told my Asian parents yet about my interest in art; how exactly was I supposed to explain the complexity of my desire and fear pursuing this career to this complete stranger? Because that’s what we were—*strangers,* in a dingy, old, museum, sitting on a flimsy bench that’s probably going to crack under our combined weight. *Strangers,* and *yet*…

Something that felt too much like hope bloomed in me that day. Nobody had ever seen my life drawings before; the act itself was like a secret cigarette I puffed every day just to feel something in my ambitionless life. So having somebody notice that felt—well, frankly—*good.* We talked for a bit after, I bid him goodbye and we parted ways, back into the mundanity of our small, insignificant lives.

Now, I won’t lie and say that I immediately bought 1000 sketchbooks and micro-fineliners after our conversation or anything like that. I loyally stuck to my trusty metal-ringed notebook and my chewed-up ballpoint pen for as long as I could bear it. No, nothing *physically,* had changed. But inside, I think something had sparked. At just 11 I believed I could achieve anything I put my mind to; that, however, didn’t always mean everybody else thought the same of me. *Isn’t it?*

Those two words rang at the back of my head. *Oh, darn it all.*

The next 6 years flew by and I’ve sat a many different benches and drew many different outlines of noses. Only took the first 2 years of rigorous practice and many tears shed to start my skills from scratch, proving to my parents how determined and passionate I was in pursuing art. It was in that time that I found my all-consuming love and appreciation for animation. There was just something about the way in which you could fit into a sequence of pictures a mosaic of the little joys and troubles of yours and others’ lives on screens. See, animation wasn’t only the people

watching; it was the breathing life into characters I’ve yet to find; it was the way I was given a chance to express myself in a medium that best represented *me*—charged and nuanced—when to society, my voice as a young Indonesian girl had completely failed me.

In two words, somebody saw me and my life had changed. It takes only *one* act of kindness to make somebody feel seen—just imagine how many words a thousand pictures can paint. So though we are nothing more than strangers, on this terribly old and curiously charming planet, I hope that through the stories I tell, I, too, could help bring a spotlight towards other, potential filled, invisible children.

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(PLANNING FOR “THE JANITOR”):

U.S.

| **CATCHY**  **HOOK** | “Nice drawing”. Story of the janitor |
| --- | --- |
| **THE**  **STORM** | **VALLEY- EFFECTS, FEELINGS**  CHALLENGE: I wasn’t pursuing my goals and instead doing what, based on society, I believed I should do  EFFECTS: Had no ambition bc I wasn’t working towards goals I liked in my life FEELING: Felt unseen. I knew I had potential, I just felt invisible. **TURN- REALIZING THE NEED**  THE JANITOR: That one act of kindness; one compliment, and my entire career trajectory changed. For that one moment, someone had seen me. **CLIMB- WHAT I DID**  Worked hard for 6 years, watched youtube tutorials and everything, self taught myself and actually told my parents, PROVED my skill |
| **NEW**  **FRONTIER** | **What I learned**  - What is the significance of what you just shared? What am I excited to do next?  Sometimes all it takes is somebody to see you. I am excited to help others feel seen and give back to a community I consider home, especially for the people who look like me. |