**THE "KOMBUCHA CLUB" COLLEGE ESSAY EXAMPLE**

**Montage Essay, “Uncommon E3/16/2024xtracurricular Activity” Type**



I add the critically measured sugary tea mixture to the gallon jar containing the slimy, white, disc-shaped layers of the symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast.

Now to wait.

After exactly seven days, I pour the liquid into a fermentation-grade glass bottle with a ratio of 20% pomegranate juice and 80% fermented tea. I place it on my kitchen counter, periodically checking it to relieve the built-up CO2.

Finally, after an additional seventy-two hours, the time comes to try it. I crack the seal on the bottle, leaning over to smell what I assume will be a tangy, fruity, delicious pomegranate solution. and it smells like rotten eggs. The insufferable stench fills my nostrils and crushes my confidence. I'm momentarily taken aback, unable to understand how I went wrong when I followed the recipe perfectly.

My issue wasn't misreading the recipe or failing to follow a rule, it was bypassing my creative instincts and forgetting the unpredictable nature of fermentation. I needed to trust the creative side of kombucha— the side that takes people's perfectionist energy and explodes it into a puddle of rotten egg smelling 'booch (my preferred name for the drink- not "fermented, effervescent liquid from a symbiotic culture of acetic acid bacteria and yeast"). I was too caught up in the side that requires extreme preciseness to notice when the balance between perfectionism and imperfectionism was being thrown off. The key, I have learned, is knowing when to prioritize following the recipe and when to let myself be creative. Sure, there are scientific variables such as proximity to heat sources and how many grams of sugar to add. But, there's also person-dependent variables like how long I decide to ferment it, what fruits I decide will be a fun combination, and which friend I got my first SCOBY from (taking "symbiotic" to a new level).

I often find myself feeling pressured to choose one side or the other, one extreme over the alternative. I've been told that I can either be a meticulous scientist or a messy artist, but to be both is an unacceptable contradiction. However, I choose a grey area; a place where I can channel my creativity into the sciences, as well as channel my precision into my photography.

I still have the first photo I ever took on the first camera I ever had. Or rather, the first camera I ever made. Making that pinhole camera was truly a painstaking process: take a cardboard box, tap it shut, and poke a hole in it. Okay, maybe it wasn't that hard. But learning the exact process of taking and developing a photo in its simplest form, the science of it, is what drove me to pursue photography. I remember being so unhappy with the photo I took; it was faded, underexposed, and *imperfect.* For years, I felt incredibly pressured to try and perfect my photography. It wasn't until I was defeated, staring at a puddle of kombucha, that I realized that there doesn't always have to be a standard of perfection in my art, and that excited me.

So, am I a perfectionist? Or do I crave pure spontaneity and creativity? Can I be both?

Perfectionism leaves little to be missed. With a keen eye, I can quickly identify my mistakes and transform them into something with purpose and definitude. On the other hand, imperfection is the basis for change and for growth. My resistance against perfectionism is what has allowed me to learn to move forward by seeing the big picture; it has opened me to new experiences, like bacteria cross-culturing to create something new, something different, something better. I am not afraid of change or adversity, though perhaps I am afraid of conformity. To fit the mold of perfection would compromise my creativity, and I am not willing to make that sacrifice.