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Global - Mr.Tillman Period 1

Struggling to Balance

Where there is a will, there is a way. In Dori Jones Yang's novel, Daughter of Xandu, Mongol Princess Emajin is a fierce girl who struggles to become a soldier in the male-dominated Mongol army. She is told to spy on Marco Polo to find for weaknesses in the lands of Christendom. Emajin struggles to balance her desire to join the army for glory and her gradually blossoming love of Marco. As Emajin fights and negotiates through these struggles, she demonstrates three levels of Maslow's Hierarchy, safety, love and belonging, and esteem.  
 First, Emajin's struggles demonstrate the need for safety. Emajin essentially gravitates toward the life threatening situation of fighting for the Mongols. Suren, Emajin's cousin, was sworn to protect Emajin. Under orders from the Khan, he was to persuade Emajin to flee from the battle against the Burmese. To secure Emajin's safety, the Khan had Suren swear to protect her and get her to flee. This ultimately fails with Emajin choosing to fight in the battle. During the battle against the Burmese army, the author writes "I felt a hard thud on my right arm and realized that a mounted Burmese soldier had hit me broadside with his sword. With my left hand, I reached for my mace and swung with all my strength. The spiked ball whacked the enemy on the face and knocked him off his horse," (Emajin 225). Emajin's life was threatened by Burmese soldier, and to secure personal safety, she harmed the enemy. Therefore, Emajin's struggles demonstrate the need for safety.   
 Secondly, Emajin's struggles with intimacy and her family demonstrates the level of Maslow's Hierarchy regarding love and belonging. Emajin and Marco have shown signs of falling in love with each other, however a relationship between a princess and a foreigner would not be judged lightly. In the text, the author states before the battle against the Burmese takes place that "I (Emajin) could tell that Marco wanted to embrace me, but there were too many soldiers around. We could not show any emotion. I took his hand in mine and held it longer than I should have, wishing I could experience one more bacio (kiss)," (216). Having satisfying her need for intimacy would have made Emajin develop further. This eventually does happen as Emajin persuades the Khan to make peace with Christendom and allow her to travel with Marco back to Vienna. In addition, Emajin also longs for belonging among her family in the beginning of the novel. The author states "'I (Emajin) know you (her father) wish you had a son," I said, choosing words carefully. "Let me be that son. I will go to war, and if I fight well, it will bring you honor." His face darkened. "If you fought in a battle, it would bring me shame,"' (24). Emajin wishes to please her entire family in this situation more so than just her father. If she had been born a male, she would be first in line to rule. Going into battle is Emajin's way of making amends for being born a female among her family. Thus, Emajin's struggles with intimacy and her family demonstrates the need for love and belonging.  
 Finally, Emajin's struggles speaking with the Khan shows the growth of self esteem throughout the book. When Emajin fell off her horse during her trial to become a soldier, the Khan said "'A Mongol always keeps control of his horse.." I nodded, feeling miserable and stupid. "Especially a soldier." I swallowed hard. Why had I made a fool of myself in front of everyone I knew by making such a request," (42). Emajin took a shot to her self confidence since she failed one of her first trials. However, she was assigned to spy on Marco. Eventually, she has another meeting with the Khan. Yang writes that "...I had the choice of betraying Marco or my homeland. I knew the Khan was testing me..."I would like to fight against enemies of the Empire, but not in Christendom..." But finally the Khan had said the words I had ached to hear: "join the army." I had already betrayed Marco. It was time to be loyal to my dreams. Calm confidence flowed through me, " (131). In a manner of several weeks, Emajin had grown enough to speak up a little against the Khan by adding in that she would not like to fight against Marco's homeland rather than show complete devotion to Khan. Once Khan approves of Emajin, she regains her confidence. Hence, Emajin's struggles speaking with the Khan shows the growth in her confidence.  
 To conclude, as Emajin fights and negotiates through the struggles of battle, intimacy and family, and interactions with the Khan, she demonstrates three levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of development, safety, love and belonging, and esteem. Her growth eventually leads to a fine balance between her loyalty to her empire and her love of Marco. She eventually convinces the Khan to make peace with Christendom and to allow her to travel to Vienna with Marco. Arnold Schwarzeneggar once said, " Strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is strength."