# LXR-CA-PS-V13

5 am in the morning, the12-year old me, scurry on the street of Beijing. No street lights on, no daily hustle and bustle but total darkness around. The crsip chilly wintry air seems piercing through my thin down jacket right to the bone, yet I head resolutely forward.

It is just an ordinary day and a norm for me that every single vacation I go to mathematics training camps.

Born in a family where Father graduated from Standford in Math and Mother from Oxford, I have been set a high aim from the very beginning. Since childhood, I have been forced to learn mathematics with my father, for not to be outcompeted by my classmates. However, I have never been the top student in my class. Always mediocre, but never the best. I seem to be the only one in the family struggling for academic prominence.

It was more so after junior high school, when Father made connections to put me in Beijing’s best class featuring top-rank students and the fiercest Nei Juan, or literally rat race. From the first day, I always lived every day under tremendous stress, both physically and mentally. Feeling trapped in endless classes, assignments, quizzes and tests, an irresistible reluctance and pointlessness emerged deep within. Passion seemed alien to me and I felt like a walking zombie mindlessly idling in the human world.

The accumulating miseries finally erupted. When again being interrogated why I only reached 6th in the 300-people training camp, all the grievance, depression, agony and resentment stormed out like a shot.

"Why can't you see my improvements?"

"So what? Isn't this your fault? "

"Can't you just praise me just for once?"

"I can't believe you're so shameless! "

I felt my head just exploded. I couldn't understand why I deserved no credit, not a bit. Tears bursting out of my eyes, I grabbed my backpack and rushed out of the house. When I regained my composure, I found myself again on the path to the camp inadvertently.

Then the question crept on me: what on earth was I studying for? Do my efforts really paid off? Unable to find an answer and on the verge of breaking up, I was left no alternative but return home.

It was nearly midnight when I opened the door, only to find both my parents sitting at the dining table. When our eyes encountered each other, we simultaneously turned heads away. No one spoke. I strode to my bedroom and locked the door.

The question kept haunting me, drowning me in an acute sense of isolation. Tossing all math-related books aside, I immersed myself fully for two days in exploring uncharted territories: either the history's immutability to individual feats or blunders regardless of monumental strides or grave mistakes, or the guitar's soothing value for emotional expression, or psychology's revealing power to unearth the roots of my earlier uncompromising drive: a yearning for parental validation. I've found much more to learn and an innate gratification emerged from within. That was it! An epiphany stroke me that what I truly in need is not external recognition but internal acceptance.

The war ended on the third day. I walked out of my room, and over these long years I have for the first time found connections with my own parents and relish the light-heartedness after the reconciliation. With a long chat between me and my parents, we made clear that I was pushing myself to prove I was worthy of my parents. I yearned for perfection myself. I preferred to stand out myself. My parents were simply an externalization of my own desire and aspirations.

Up till now, I am always walking on the same road everyday on vacations, 5 am in the morning, but with no more shivering nor complaining. Instead, I find myself filled with inward joy and spontaneous overflow of inner drive.