## ESSAY

**The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?**

A pair of aged, beige curtains attempted to block the sunlight from creeping in. The sterility of the room overwhelmed my senses, forcing me to confront my discomfort. As the coldness of the gel coated my torso, I watched the doctor whisper to the nurse as they called my mom. I listened to my heart throbbing against the cage of my chest, synchronizing with the ticking of the wall clock, counting my life away. Dazed and confused, I sat with my mom next to me. “Your daughter has an ovarian tumor”.

It felt as though an alternate reality came into play in a snap as I walked out of those doors.

The next few months were filled with fear and uncertainty. Faced with the fact that the pain could crawl in anytime made me close to breaking up. Stomach cramps, heavy medication and doctor visits seem to be the common cycle. Mundane tasks like walking to the bathroom became a privilege. I felt like a liability, unable to fill my days doing the things I love most. I could neither exercise nor spend my Sunday afternoons baking in the kitchen. I felt as though this body of mine was soullessly degrading, a darkening sorrow slowly creeping my heart. A sorrow I had to mask behind a smile because I couldn’t stand watching people pity me.

I was adamant not to victimize myself, especially in front of my parents. Determined not to worry about them, I resorted to constant prayers and meditation as way to cope. I imagined all the milestones I look forward to in life: going to Bali with my friends after graduation, drinking hot chocolate at the Christmas markets in Europe, scouting for my first apartment. I was glad that these bubble of thoughts cleared the withered room off of its dust. My trial ultimately became my fuel: daily doses of purpose injected into my veins, slowly but surely leveraging the effect of my actual medication intake. What does not kill me makes me stronger, literally.

Amongst one of many goals I set my mind on was starting a business. I decided to invest what savings and conscious hours I had into growing “Ourdrobe”, an online fashion marketplace. I always saw fashion beyond aesthetics and the synthetic buzz that oftentimes it entails; thus I challenged myself to devise a fresh interface and user experience such that genuine happiness and value can be generated for and by all my stakeholders, from sellers to buyers. Receiving new clothes in the mail and playing dress up in my mom’s closet were always something that brought me this rush of excitement: an adrenaline I wanted to be present on the buyer’s end. What this ultimately did was stashing my mind away from the negativity and feeding it with hope and joy in utilization room.

From that proud moment of seeing the final iteration of Ourdrobe’s icon set in place to the love and positive feedback we received from our social media channels as more partnerships came to fruition, the organic growth I try to sustain with my venture seem to be reflected on both my mental and physical health as well. Every time I got the jitters before a doctor’s appointment, I redirected that butterfly energy into developing more social media content instead. Whenever I felt pain which I couldn’t handle, I imagined Ourdrobe advertisements on top of Google SEOs as I play buzzwords in my head.

It was definitely a moment when my doctor declared that my tumor was no longer in me. Yet it was the push and grit that I eternally thank for the strong and smart mentality I now possess.

Being a secondhand marketplace, Ourdrobe highlights the value of old clothes by giving them new life and meaning. This is indeed a testament as to how everything deserves a second chance, myself included.

*Hi Raisa!*

*I applaud you for having gone through this tough journey coming out victorious. Congratulations!*

*This edit simply serves to polish the tiniest bit that this solid piece already is. I wish you the best of luck in your application!*

*- Matthew*