*Prompt: 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?*

As I turned on the ignition key, I heard stutters from the front accompanied by visuals of black smoke from the muffler of this 90s Toyota Kijang. I hurriedly hopped out, opened the hood, and was immediately presented with an overwhelming silhouette of the engine as it’s now covered with this ominous, viscous black smoke. I waited ~15 minutes. Once the black vapor slowly dissipated, a clearer view presented itself with seemingly different colored cables protruding out of the engine. Again… Seemingly!! My eyes cannot distinguish these colors as I was reminded of my protanomaly. Mixed feelings ensued: excited to fix the Toyota yet disheartened by my limitation that hinders me from investigating this object.

For years, people around me (distant family, family friends, etc.) had enforced a limitation upon me based on one flaw. Somehow, there has been this unknown stigma, “someone who’s colorblind CANNOT become an engineer.” It took a toll on me as it slowly pulled me away from my basic instinct. I was frustrated and wanted to disconnect from the world. It was tough, but this family heirloom turned 14th birthday gift has grounded me and become a force that fuels the engineering fire inside me.

As I studied this vintage’s engine, I saw the enthusiasm in my dad’s eyes. While his enthusiasm motivated me, it also served a strong pressure magnifying my fear of losing those looks. So, I disassembled all the cables from the engine in an attempt to fix it. Disassembling meant I had to know how to re-assemble them. Thus, my frustration rose when I tried to identify their colors. I couldn’t stick to my current situation: I tried enlisting my sister’s help to stay beside me as my color translator.

It worked, but it wasn’t a good solution. She couldn’t stay for the entirety of my attempt - which would take hours. I needed a better solution.

Inspired by my sister's obsession with *Sarasa* colored pens, I noticed that each pen has its own label indicating its respective colors. I borrowed her pen collections, spread them out on my portable workshop table, and began comparing the colors of the cables and pens side by side. It worked! It was a more sustainable solution. However, this created another problem, carrying hundreds of pens everywhere I go is inconvenient.

So, I shifted my brain into the fifth gear to search for a better and more practical solution.

Remembering my recent science class’s litmus paper experiment, I thought of an idea to create my own “color litmus test” device based on my previous Sarasa pen solution. It started out with a 7-by-4 cm sheet of standard white paper with varying shades of diverse colors and their respective labels as my first prototype. Next, I upgraded it using a *Rite in the Rain* waterproof paper and laminated them to make it more durable. It is now compact, portable, and sturdy.

A few days later… I called dad to the garage

Me: “I won’t guess the color this time. This is green right”

He had a surprised look accompanied by silence for a few seconds; it felt like forever. For each second that passed, I began to doubt my answer more. Then, a gentle smile appeared.

Dad: “You got it right on your own. I’m proud of you.”

The happiness in his voice was irreplaceable. I'm astounded at how I was able to create something so meaningful to me with just a pen and paper (and plastic). The greatest barrier in life is not the lack of skills. It’s how I let other people’s discouraging voices get to me. I learned to treat them as white noises and, eventually, learned to use them as fuel to drive my perseverance. Now, I’m grateful for what I have. Now, I will treat any challenges in life as temporary speed bumps acting as traction towards the finish line.