

Earthquakes

Yena Seo

They gave me a chance, and I failed at succeeding. I felt like I was trapped in an abyss, with lightning ready to strike down on me. My family shook their heads with disapproval - I had not met their expectations with the family tradition. “We are earthquakes - strong and capricious, persistent.” My grandfather looked down at me with disapproval. My siblings tried not to break out into giggles as my mother was giving them a stare. I scanned the room and found nothing but faces of disappointment. “Please, just one more chance...” I beseeched. Everyone in the room shook their heads. With tears welling up in my eyes, I dashed out of the room. *Is breaking the tradition that big of a deal?* I thought to myself as I ran. *It wasn't even a tradition, anyway.* I desperately tried to stop the tears. *So what if I wanted to become a doctor, not an environmentalist?* I finally reached my room, the end of the everlasting road. I sniffled and looked at the textbook on top of my desk, the Medical Studies Book. It was huge, covered with my notes, and neatly stacked between my other studies. I was a magnet to it; no matter how I wanted to stay away from it, my mission seemed impossible. I abruptly stood up and examined the textbook. I had a burst of energy surging up in me. *I will go to medical school.*

Every discouraging word turned into spirit, and every encouraging word seemed to uplift my energy. Even during school, I brought my textbook along. “Maw, please put that book away” Mrs. Wilson, my teacher, called. Reluctantly, I put it away everyday. But one day was different from the rest. That day, there was an earthquake. The floor hopped up like a baby rabbit playing, and the lights flickered on and off as if we were in a haunted house. Worst of all, my whole class

had become chaotic. Even though I was determined to become a top doctor, I wanted to see a smile on my family's faces again. So I quickly and nimbly did what I had to do.

“Everybody, stay calm and clamber towards a desk near you. Go under it to have protection. Hold tightly around your head and the leg of the desk. It may be cramped, but it will be worth it. This includes you too, Mrs. Wilson.” I hollered over the frenzy. If everybody followed my rules, they should be fine. I crossed my fingers and hoped with all my might. And the spirit and encouragement I had heard paid off. Everyone was uninjured and alive. My teacher even shared that we could help others from the aftershock. I realized that I wasn’t just thinking of carrying on with my family's tradition; instead, I had thought of keeping everyone safe. I also realized that this was a very small earthquake, and I had led everyone to safety from it. Maybe I didn’t have to make big changes like a big earthquake, as they can be destructive. Maybe I could make small changes that can lead to bigger changes in the future, just like a small earthquake. I would be my family’s first small earthquake, and the first one with a different occupation.

“A few years ago, Maw had shown us nothing but dissatisfaction. But now, today, she is one of us, but also unlike us; a small earthquake, and a top tier doctor.” My grandfather announced, during my ceremony. An applause followed his statement, and I felt a wave of pride, happiness, and relief come over me. Maybe this was lame, maybe this was unnecessary. But to me, it was the best job, the best life, and the best ceremony.