

Thank you. I really did appreciate you dropping me off that day.

I washed my new tattoo, put on a long sleeve to hide it even in that 90 degree weather, and I greeted you. The day went quick, the tears lingered, and this began a change from seeing you everyday to calling you maybe once every 2 months.

I was nervous, mostly excited, but I walked into that room with vibrant eyes and eager energy spewing out hoping to make brand new friends. What I didn't know at the time was my insecurities, lack of self-identity and worth, and comfort of my own self, created a wall, a barrier, a façade of a false pretense that people soon learned and walked away from.

I told myself lying, of course, cause I lied so much and so often, and I knew I was good at it. You definitely didn't know I was good at it. My mind could think of a scenario a believable scenario in a matter of 2 seconds and deliver it to myself or to anyone with a confident face and smile. "Oh, I just hung out with friends, we went to go bowling actually at Yerba Buena, it was pretty fun", as I hide the gift cards and cash in my back pocket from breaking into cars that day. Because lies are so much easier to deliver than being truthful and being fake hurts much less when disappointment hits.

"I enjoy being by myself, I can read a book, definitely not use my phone because I don't want to be one of thoseee people." As I sat there, like most days, alone, eating in the cafeteria. I wanted to try, did I?, I don't know, it was hard to tell. When I didn't know who I was.

I filled that void though, quite easily. Everyone on the East Coast likes a young Asian boy. Or so I told myself, when in reality how could I not find someone when I constantly looked on apps and talked to every guy on there.

I dated my first boy, messy.

Paid for a fake I.D., that didn't work.

Tried crystal meth, by accident.

And got an STI, not surprised.

I tried making friends, I really did. But when you make up about 3% of the population, and apparently half the people say you're too international, and the other half says you're too American what do you do. \*

It was then that I realized how Asian and how American I really was.

Drinking milk tea, watching anime, playing Nintendo games, listening to Studio Ghibli soundtracks, I lit up when finding that one person that could relate to something.

But learned quickly that, that wasn't it.

I missed you. I missed the broken Cantonese, the home cooked Chinese food, the incessant need to ask "Le sik fan mei ah? Did you eat yet?", and the random first-aid kits and flashlights you would buy me after reading one article about earthquakes.

I didn't miss the arguing of my "masculinity", the need to marry and carry on the family name, the truth that you really didn't support me at all in my career choice, and the discrimination you held towards all colored people except Chinese people.

I moved into my first apartment, I took all the habits you have with me.

Saving every plastic bag I used, including any ziplock bags that weren't sticky or wet. Reusing all jars and to go containers, washing my rice until the water became clear, keeping every program, notebook, papers, manuals, binders, books, post its, pens, rubber bands, in a box that I wanted to save forever, constantly overachieving and never learning, overworking myself for the fear of money instead of taking opportunities, becoming innately fearful of dark skin people because you told me to.

I didn't want to be you.

I don't want to be you.

All I remember, if you even remember at all, is that time when you were disciplining my sister and brother and me as a child told you, "You know, what you do to us, is what we'll do when we have kids."

And you stopped, took a breath, and walked away.

That was the moment that I knew I didn't want to be you.

That was the moment that disappointments were normal.

That was the moment, the way I felt affection and love changed.

That was the moment. That was the moment. That was the moment.

That was the moment, I had to be independent in order to be okay.

I learned I needed to love myself, because I didn't have enough love to give to anyone, not a friend or lover, and not even family.

And when I finally did love myself, I wished so much for independency that I didn't care anymore.

When you dropped me off that day, I felt free. But when you dropped me off that day, I wasn't ready, thank you. As I saw your tears fall down, I knew you knew it too. You knew I wasn't ready, you knew we would be even more detached not just by distance but by a wall we would both create with time, secrets, masks, and unspoken truths. So thank you. For sacrificing what could have happened between us if I stayed. Thank you, for letting me discover my own failures and successes. Thank you for being there, when I walked across the stage.

Thank you.