

Stars Within the Shadow of the Moon

“No way!” he yelled. His face was turning red with anger at the disobedience of his daughter’s words. I stared into my father’s eyes, but I was shocked by **fire burning** in his glare. I looked to my mom for support. The room was **dark with shadows** dancing **from the** single lamp in the room. She could see me looking for help in making my case, but she turned and sat down in **the** seat behind my father. Her face turned into almost a perfect poker face, the stoic expression showed no hint of disagreement with my father. She appeared to **blend in with the shadow** of my father. She would never speak out against my father. I knew well, it was not common place for a woman to argue in my **culture** at this time. I felt my hope fade as I realized I was all alone in trying to make my case. “Wait, but why?” I replied. This conversation all started from the news I received at school this morning.

Earlier that day, the sky was dark and cloudy. I heard the thunder was rumbling like it was angry. I was at my school and people were chattering and mumbling some words that I couldn’t catch. **I walked** to my home room and reported my name to the teacher. She handed me an envelope. I opened my envelope and saw the report provided by the school which said I passed all the exams and finished my final year at high school. I was so happy, and that means I can go to my favorite college with my friends. I left my homeroom and I looked around. I could see some of my classmates from different homerooms screamed and shouted with excitement. They must have received the same news as me. In the other corner, I saw a group of friends huddled together, and one of them in the center covered her face with her hands and sounded sad. I guessed some friends received terrible news. I grabbed my bag and rushed back to home. I couldn’t wait to show the news to my parents, especially my dad.

It was dark in the evening, **and the air felt heavy** as though rain was **approaching**, by the time I reached my front door. “I want to attend Tarumanagara University and pursue my engineering degree.” I told my father; my eyes were opened wide with excitement. But the response I received completely took me by surprise. “You are not becoming an engineering. That school will trap you for years and years before you could even get a job. I want you to find a job in administrative office management such as a secretary, or you can take a cooking school. You should be doing normal job women can do, but NOT engineering.” he exclaimed. “Those school don’t take forever, and you can get a job right away after you graduate.” he added. “A woman has certain responsibilities. After high school, they work for a little bit, get married, have children, and stay home to take care of the family.” he lectured.

I couldn’t believe the words that I heard from his mouth. His **perception** about what I can or can’t do just because I am a woman shocked me. This was insane and shocking in this age **of equality**. I tried **to grasp for any sense** in his words, “But, why didn’t you stop me and say anything when I was on the 12th grade, so I didn’t have to waste my time to take all of this science classes and put so much effort into my studies.” I said. “You know if you don’t want me to go to the engineering school, I could have taken language classes instead.” I added.

I was completely **blindsided**, like a rollercoaster coming **to** an unfinished track, **my emotions** were **derailed in a spectacular crash**. My heart was **broken** into **pieces**. I ran into my bedroom and slammed my door as hard as I could, and I locked my door. **My heart pumped** quickly, and I felt the pit of my stomach filled with the **anger and sadness** feelings from the conversation with my father. My eyes filled with tears. I bit my lip harder to muffle the sounds of my crying. I didn’t want “that guy” hear that I was crying, yes, I said “that guy”, my father. Suddenly, I felt that I hated him so much.

It’s all gone, and I felt **my great dreams faded away**. All the memories of talking about getting accepted **into the** same school as my friends are gone. I opened my window in my bedroom. My heart is sinking. I promised to myself that I won’t go to college at all, if he still not allows **me** to

get my degree. My mind was wandering carried away by the weight of his words. I tried to sleep, so I could forget, but I couldn't stop replaying the events of today in my mind. I felt so tired, but I couldn't sleep. My thoughts began to drift.

"Knock, knock, knock," there was a knock at the door. I ignored it and waited for the silence to return. Then it came again and this time it was louder, "bang, bang, bang." I covered my head with my pillow and pretended like I was sleeping. I hoped staying still would numb my heart and induce my body into a state unfeeling stone. Louder, "bang, bang, bang." I jumped out of bed. I hated the door. Nothing good could come from outside my room. As I recited these words in my heads, I realized my feet had already carried me across the room, closer to the pounding that threatened my sanctum. I felt each hit deepening the pit in my stomach, making me sick. I was betrayed, my body pulled my broken mind like a parent dragging a resisting child by the arm. I couldn't stop my hands as they reached for the door knob. I opened the door and I saw my father's face.

"Yes, what's up," I said. I peered outside a little bit from behind the door. I don't want to let him come inside the room. "Can I come inside," he said. I opened my door wider and I threw myself onto the bed. He grabbed a chair and placed it next to my bed. Then he started to talk, "I don't want to make you upset and I think you are misunderstanding what I want for you. Do you realize how much money you need to attend the school that you like? We don't have enough money to put you into that school," he explained. "You can go to a school that is designed to fit the demands of office administration and get a job right away." he kept talking the same bullshit that he said earlier.

My mind is wandered somewhere, and I tried to remember back to the moments in my high school. Yes, I remembered, my parents never paid for my tuition, my aunt did. With Five children, it was tough for my parents to put every one of us into school. I had been lucky so far, for having my aunt help my family so much and paying for me to attend the Catholic School. With the realization of my father's words I felt nothing left but hopelessness. The foundation of my strength was gone, and I had nothing left to keep me from drowning in the empty abyss of reality. I found my home in the sadness that my future and dreams were out of reach. As I opened my mouth, I couldn't hold my tears back anymore and through the choking in my chest I managed to ask "But what will I major in? I don't want to just choose something random that I don't like." I struggled to gather myself to present myself with the strength and maturity I had boasted about only hours ago. I wiped away my tears and racked my brain to piece together all of what my dad had been trying to tell me.

My dad got up from the chair, and he walked to the window and opened it. I felt the breeze that came in through the window. It looked like the rain had stopped, and the clouds were clearing up a bit. Even though the night was still approaching, I could see the sun's glow glistening off the moon. It was as if the moon had grown in size and the brilliant pale light danced through every seam in the clouds, unable to be deterred or held back. My dad turned his body towards me and faced me. I could see the wrinkles in his expression that outlined a tormented mix of pride and deep, deep sorrow. Suddenly, I felt so bad. I should not have forced him into such a situation and forcing him to be the bad guy. I should have understood earlier just how hard he works every day to provide for our family. I should have known that he only wanted me to be happy. I was too shy to admit my feelings to him at that time. I got up and sat on the edge of my bed. My dad came towards me, touched my head and said simply, "You will be alright!" Then he left my side and walked out of my bedroom.

I looked out the window. It was dark, but I could still see the lights from the stars and moon as they crossed the sky. I tried to find the moon that had shown its face not so long ago. It was nowhere to be found but the stars almost seemed to be staring back in its place. I wink my eyes back to the stars and started to think, maybe in life we need to settle for the stars. They seem so much further away but there are so many you will never find them truly out of reach to those who go looking for them.