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(Trần Nghi Âu Cơ)

Someone asked: How did you start your path on becoming a writer? With Asian parents I'm (only) assuming your parents wanted you to be in the medical industry. I'm really struggling with this and was wondering if you could offer some advice. Thanks.

My answer: Actually, deciding to become a writer was the easiest decision of my life. My mom, as you may have seen in my tags, is not your typical Asian mother. She's a writer and a musician. My childhood was filled with literature and music. I hadn't noticed till recently, but almost all of the life lessons she taught me when I was little was taken from a book. So I just kinda fell into the arts.

Honestly, though, I don't really know how to help you with this because most of the Asian parents I know are kind of old-fashioned in the sense that they think success and happiness equals money. And money comes from being doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc etc. I don't know if you're a boy or a girl, but I'm sure you know there are certain pressures for both. If you're a guy, it's kind of expected that you go into one of the careers I mentioned above, because how else are you going to become rich and successful? And if you're a girl, man, it's even tougher because you're expected to go into one of the above mentioned fields, but you're also expected to learn how to cook and clean and maintain a household for the doctor, engineer, or lawyer you're gonna marry. Our parents all but forbid us to marry an artist. All in all, any life in the arts if you're Asian is pretty much gonna be considered a shitty decision. Unless you're super famous and rich. Anyone else would tell you to talk to your parents, explain to them how much it means to you. But Asian families don't have family meetings and talk their feelings out. The word of the elders are taken as law. They just assume their children must do everything they say. They can't even fathom that their children might not want the same things they want.

If writing is your passion, if it is the one thing you want to do with your life, this is the only advice I can give you: grow a thick skin. People have certain ideas about artists. Most of these ideas, regardless of who they are, do not involve wealth. And the fact of the matter is, people judge you on how much you have in your wallet. So grow a thick skin. See the goal you want and work towards it, take your time, ignore everything else, that includes parents and relatives. You don't even have to make writing your main thing. Just keep writing. Keep writing through medical school, find ways to work the creativity into your assignments. But never relegate your writing into a hobby. Keep it at the center of your brain and heart. And hopefully, one day, your parents will grow to understand and respect you for following your passions rather than the passions of other people.

This probably didn't help you at all, but I hope it gave you some of the confidence you need in order to do what you love.

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