

Yenni Nguyen

Period: 1B

Memoir

What Freedom Is Worth

Discipline was beaten into me at an age of wonder and curiosity. Sympathy for the harsh, laborious life my parents once led. Fear of the disapproving looks on my parents face when they find out what this caged bird wants to do. The need to break free a veiled secret at the very back corner of my mind. Hidden, but still there.

Cooped. Suffocation from the close proximity of the same small familiar cage I've been kept in for sixteen years. The constant watchful, vulture eyes of my parents analyzing my every move. Their high expectations like a cave collapsing in on itself, pressing me down. The continuous pressure to be the ideal daughter who's too perfect to be real.

I grew up believing that any grade that is an A- and below is considered to be mundane. If all my letter grades didn't turn out to be an A, I would have a long banal lecture about how I wasn't putting enough effort into my school work. "You'll end up nowhere if you don't start studying harder." My dad would say. "If you choose friends over school, you'll regret it in the long run. Worry about your future, not theirs. You don't want to end up with no education and a horrible laborious job like your mother and me." With those words in mind, I studied hard to make my parents proud.

All work and no play described my life perfectly. If I asked to spend a few hours of my day to have fun with friends, it was quickly refused and looked down upon. To my parents, the more friends I made, the higher the possibility would be for me to lose track of my school work.

My life was always the same continuous schedule. I would wake up for school, spend about six and a half hours there, come home immediately, study, and repeat the schedule all over again. Weekends would consist of finishing up homework and studying ahead. Any free time I had was spent with my family instead of my friends. As much as I enjoyed spending time with my family, I always wanted something more that was missing from my life—freedom.

Freedom to choose how I want to live my life. Freedom to be able to spend some time with my friends. Freedom to have a simple crush on a cute boy at school. However, the freedom I wanted was a forbidden fruit. A huge temptation that was always right in front of me. It was something I desired but couldn't have.

Desire won in the end, and I sought out freedom. I made up my own mind on what I wanted to do with my life. I joined a few clubs at my school for a good college application and to have some time with my friends. I got up the nerves to tell the boy I've liked for the longest time that he was so much more than a friend to me.

The end result? Perfect. Perfect until everything came crashing down in sharp shards of broken glass.

That one boy who was my best friend, the one I've liked for so long, and in return had mutual feelings for me, turned into the boy I was forbidden to speak to. One of several rules in my family is no dating or having a crush on someone until after one graduates from college. I broke that rule, breaking my parent's hearts. The disappointment on their face was unbearable, but at the same time, I was angry with them. Angry at my parents for not giving me the freedom to be a normal teenager. However, I wasn't raised to be the typical teenager.

Family expectations, or freedom that led me to love, which one was I supposed to choose? I found something—someone—that I didn't want to give up on. Knowing that I had yet to decide on what to do, he made the final decision for me.

Dreams, happiness, and love. Is freedom really worth it if you end up losing it all? A cooped bird that sought freedom and finally broke free, only to be caught and placed back into the same ratched cage from before. The only difference is there's no breaking free this time. Sacrificing everything to end up right back where I started.