

Practically Perfect

Disappointment: the only word I can ascribe to how I felt that day. That week. That month. But then I moved on. I felt as empty as an abandoned bird's nest. My head ached like I'd been forced to hold my breath too long, and the truth is, I had been. I'd taken a deep breath because I'd been let up, let up by my GPA.

I earned my first "B" my junior year. The letter has always carried a bitter resonance of disappointment, for it was the mark of being imperfect, and perfection was my passion. I swore I'd never go to school simply for grades, but I did. Like every other student who's ever had a 4.0, I worked tirelessly to keep it. Upon entering high school, I cared about learning, yet after freshman year I cared about keeping my grades above ninety-five percent. I had teachers joke about giving me my first "B" while trying to instill a deeper message of learning over grades, but I ignored them, even priding myself on my utterly disgusting addiction to "A"s. In fact, it was not until I broke down trying to get an "A" that I realized the whole concept of grades was asinine. Defining people by numbers tells us nothing. I can say with certainty I'd rather be a starving artist than a passionless billionaire; at least then I would have perspective in my life. The same day I got a "B", my friend's grandma died. Having lost two of my grandparents earlier in my life, I understood what he was going through, and I was brought back down to earth. This same friend later comforted me by referencing *Harry Potter*, remarking, "Not even Hermione had perfect "outstandings" on her OWLs." That's when I forgot about my "B". That's when I stopped and thought to myself maybe it doesn't matter, maybe it won't really change anything. Yet at that moment it did. At that moment I stopped thinking about myself. It was then that I realized how little I had actually learned in IB Chemistry that semester. My desire to earn an "A"

had been one of selfish necessity, necessity for my own sanity, and now I had fulfilled my quest. A sanity called contentment had bloomed within. My reason for getting out of bed progressed into simply wanting to become a better person. I'd loved grades so much because they'd given me the opportunity to be the best in comparison to a bantam proportion of the world, but they'd also turned me into a conceited perfectionist. I was forced to accept my "imperfect" grade as adequate, for perfect is as far from flawless as the Earth is from the sun. Our own destruction comes from the seemingly attainable glimmer of light that we grasp unrealistically, soon learning that our own humanity is a product of nature's impeccable imperfections.

Word Count: 481