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Dublin C2 Center

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Stanford Prompt

Prompt: Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.

The Inheritance

I remember the first time I set eyes on that picture; I was only nine years old then, but I could see myself, yet older, grasping the hands of my fellow competitors in a great sweep of victory and pride. I was on top of the highest part of the podium with a heavy, gleaming medal around my neck; the color of it was gold. I could see the absolute ecstasy on my face, overwhelmed with excitement, contentment, and the knowledge of knowing that years of hard work had paid off and transformed into well-earned success. The spotlights of glory and pride were literally covering me in a bright and powerful light, and I could feel myself become untouchable as thousands of eyes watched me graciously celebrate my feat. But as I came to my senses, and I took a step forward to get a closer look, I realized that it was not me standing confidently in the picture, it was someone I knew very well. It was my father.

Like most nine year olds that idolize their dads, I always thought of my father as perfect. In fact, I still do. He has the supernatural ability to excel at everything he does whether it be sports, academics, public speaking, looking mean and scary, and even cooking. In seventeen years I have never seen him sick or cough even once, and he never has trouble in adapting to the circumstances given to him to make the most out of what he has. It was as if I were living with Superman. And his greatest talent is also his one true passion and love in his life: Taekwondo.

Taekwondo, a traditional Korean martial art and Olympic sport, has always been a part of my life. No, not a part of, it has always *been* my life. This is due to the fact that my father had the extraordinary fortune of taking up this sport as a child and, in the few years that followed, became the 1976 World Taekwondo Champion. Fatefully, I would inherit his love for this sport and also demonstrate some talent in it as well. So talented was I that I declared a life-long goal for myself: be a world champion. It was at this moment that I became afraid.

Perhaps that was when I truly met my father for the first time. I don't mean meeting him physically, but meeting him as an individual, as a man, as a champion, and as someone whom he would be able to share his knowledge, wisdom, and experience with. Before I opened my eyes to the world of Taekwondo—into the world that my father slept, ate, and lived in—I just saw him as my father, someone who would only be there to keep me out of trouble and give me the basic principles of how to live my life. Now, I see him as someone who was born and bred for something greater. I see him as my future and hope, as he sees me as his past and pride.

I remember the last time I set eyes on that picture; it was about a month ago. I looked at the year of my father's accomplishment—1976, making him seventeen when he obtained the title "Champion of the World." But *I'm* seventeen years old right now. What fear and respect I have for this picture, for this is a picture of my dream, passion, and hope, yet still an impossibility for me at the age of seventeen.

However, it isn't my father that I fear, it is I. Because of my talent in Taekwondo, which has given everyone high hopes of my potential, I fear that I will fail. I fear that I will not be able to achieve such a glorious feat and outstanding career. But most of all, I fear I will disappoint my

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father. He has never pressured me into becoming a full time athlete nor made a do-or-die situation of competing and winning, and has never complained as to what I want to do with my life. But I could see it in his eyes; his true desire to relive his glory days through me and to share with me this amazing high only great winners are able to experience. His eyes—eyes that are of an experienced champion who has seen and done things far more daring, extraordinary, and extreme than a hundred people combined—tell me everything. But how do you compete with Superman?

It seems to me that life is always harder for the sons, daughters, and heirs of great people because not only are they expected to achieve the same level of mastership and respect as those before them, but also to go above and beyond what they had achieved before. This is a feeling unmatched to anything in the world; it is a constant mind-numbing pressure that shrouds your entire life and can literally suffocate you to death. So why continue torturing myself with this pressure when I know the chance of failure is exponentially greater than my chance of success? It is the fact that my father has shown me that with great obstacles come great awards. The fact that I know there are so many ways to fail is the reason I keep going, for I have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reach a reward so magnificent that my pride and perseverance outweigh my fear of failure.

What am I? I am a boy born under monstrous pressure and looked upon with great expectation, just like my father before me. I am an athlete born with the curse and raw talent to be the best, just like my father before me. I am a man that fears for the future, who hopes to get a taste of real glory and success, just like my father before me. I am my father, as he was once me, only I have the potential to be something greater.

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