

## Zi Xuan Wong

I stood on the edge of a wide porch, facing thick foliage that blotted out the sun. In my hand a camera was clutched tightly, and my left eye, peering intently through the eyepiece, bulged. Though it was uncomfortably hot, I kept my spirits up. I had spent hours working on this, and I wasn't ready to give up.

Finally, a flowerpecker settled on the spot that my camera was aiming at. My eye watched in trepidation as my fingers frantically adjusted the focus to acquire the best possible resolution of the snapshot. I had enough time to snap one picture before the bird flitted away.

As my eyes beheld the picture, my heart swelled with euphoria and jubilation, and I would have leaped in the air in celebration if I wasn't clutching my camera so tightly. To this day, I can confidently say that that moment was the happiest I had ever been in my life.

That was my thirteenyearold self whittling away time by birdwatching. I was supported only by my optimism and positive attitude. Had I adopted a pessimistic attitude, I would have given up in the first moments when success did not come served to me on a gilded platter. I would have promptly denied all possible future opportunities for success at once, and reasoned with myself that no doors would open up to me, simply based on a negligible amount of time.

For example, three to four days from the former incident, I was birdwatching at a different hotel with my friend. At the time, I felt impatient which badly affected my usually positive foresight to the problem at hand. My fingers and hands were taut and strained, my back and legs felt stiff and painful from standing in one spot for too long. My friend, on the other hand, was still, patient and kept his focus sharp and whetted. Perspiring profusely and covered in bug bites on his leg and hands, he nevertheless exuded an aura of positivity. On the contrary, after a meagre number of failed attempts, I aborted and retreated back into the airconditioned comfort of the hotel.

Two hours later, my persevering friend was showing me the fruits of his labour beautiful photographs of the birds that he had captured. While I admired him then and marveled at his work, something inside me changed that day. That experience brought to me an epiphany. Success had eluded my grasp due to my lack of persistence and optimism, but my friend had achieved his goal due to his resolution to push forward with resilience and confidence.

These two experiences taught me that in time, what I wish to appear will show itself to me in a glimpse of brilliant light and it is up to me to seize it. But should such a moment pass, I must wait patiently and attentively for another such moment to knock at my door, and I must be poised to seize it.

## **Niharika Singh**

Imagine you're in the midst of a blizzard trudging through layers of snow smoothly blanketed across the ground. You can't feel your feet. Or arms. Or face. Yet, you continue to struggle through. You can make out a faint trail in the gaps so graciously left empty by the snow; the trail leads to a cascading tower of jagged rocks, ice and snow. Eight thousand eight hundred and forty-eight metres above the ground lays your destination. The top of the tallest mountain in the world. Happiness to me had always seemed equivalent to climbing atop the snow-white summit of Mt. Everest; near-impossible to achieve, but worth every second of hard work. Once I grew older, however, I realized that perhaps I had been wrong because happiness is not the breathtaking view you find waiting at the end of your arduous toil. Rather, it is like the constant voice in your head motivating and encouraging you to continue walking. It is the voice telling you that you can do it, and in life you have two choices: believing that voice or giving up.

On the 7th of February this year, I decided it was time to trust that voice. It was the day of the ISSFHK U20 Tennis Division 2 playoffs. There was a chill in the air and a certain stillness about the location of the match. This year felt different. While warming up, I caught a glimpse of the deep-lustrous gold I had so desired for the past three years. I could almost feel the medal in the palm of my hand; I could almost see the admiration in the eyes of my coaches; I could almost hear the applause of the entire Athletics department. With adrenaline coursing through my veins, I felt prepared to overcome even an opponent of the greatest calibre.

Instead of the yellow-brown hues of gold, unfortunately, I ended with the consolation of silver. I should have been devastated. The strange thing? I could not wipe the grin off my face after the competition. I clapped for the winners, rejoiced in the appreciation my teammates and I received and realized that a different colored medal would not have changed the feelings I had about the day. That day I had made a choice. Instead of letting a medal dictate my happiness, I chose to be happy. I realized that a positive mindset does not always ensure the best results, but it definitely puts you in a better position to achieve them. If I had not aimed for gold, I may not have won silver.

Slowly, I've instilled trust in the voice inside my head and in doing that, I've won half the battle already. I may not be strong enough to climb the Everest of my life just yet, but I do have the tenacity to get through whatever challenge life throws at me next.