

Dear Reader,

I'm writing this letter just days after the Atlanta mass shooting that killed six Asian women in March of 2021. Asian Americans across the nation united in protest, despite dangers of becoming victims of people or pandemic. By the time you read this, will our cries still ring as loudly, or have they shriveled up into a distant whisper like with most Asian American issues?

You may feel angry, hurt, misunderstood and everything in between. I hear you. When my beautiful hometown and community became scapegoats for COVID-19, I felt the same frenzy of emotions. After being silent for most of my life, I poured my heart into a webcomic called "The Wuhan I Know". When it unexpectedly went viral, I received countless heartwarming notes from people around the world! The one that struck me the most was from a mother with two young Asian American daughters. Scared of the world her girls will grow up in, she thanked me for creating something that will help them be proud of their identity.

I was elated but hesitant. Was a simple, 10-panel comic enough to accomplish such a feat? Furthermore, was I, a 23-year-old still playing identity tug-of-war with my poor therapist, a qualified narrator? I wanted to scream at the screen, "but I can't even use chopsticks correctly!" However, as I started writing a response for these girls, I realized there was someone else I desperately needed to talk to: younger Laura.

And that's how this book began.

My search for identity and home never tied neatly into the perfect hero's journey. Honestly, I'd rather face a 10-headed dragon over myself any day. Wounds inflicted by a dragon will heal as cool scars you can show off. Wounds inflicted by yourself and those around you are constantly reopened, scraped with salt, and covered up by bandages of shame. My identity was the beast trapped in those wounds. No matter how far I tried to run from it, it always crept closely in my shadows. But when I finally listened to it, I realized it was never malicious. All it desired was to be my greatest companion.

So to all the younger Lauras reading this, please treat your beast kindly. Because one day it'll become your roar. This book is my anthem and I hope you laugh, cry, unravel those bandages, and let out your beast with me.

Love, Yang Yang.

