

Hey there,

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 as 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.

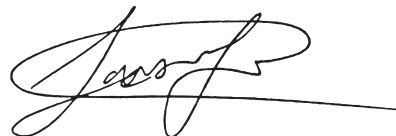
I was elated but hesitant. Was a simple ten-panel comic enough to accomplish such a feat? Furthermore, was I, a twenty-three-year-old still playing identity tug-of-war with my poor therapist, a qualified narrator? I wanted to scream at the screen, "But I can't even use chopsticks correctly!" However, 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 ten-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. Only by letting it out could I truly start healing.

To all the younger Lauras reading this, please treat your beast kindly. Because one day, it'll become your roar.

This book is an anthem sung from the deepest parts of my heart. Thank you for letting me share it with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura", with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.