

One night, while scrolling through the depths of Youtube, I discovered the concept of liminal spaces: areas that exist in the midst of transitions; neither present nor absent, but simply there.

At first, the idea that a place could exist in-between another seemed impossible. Yet as time passed, I couldn't help but notice liminal spaces surrounding me everyday. I saw them in grocery stores, where buying asian goods slimmed my culture down to a single shelf; I saw them dressing in hockey locker rooms before each game, the only girl on a boys team; and I saw them in the blank spaces of notebooks, where I could invent worlds with my words. Now, I see them within myself—in my culture, ambition, and creativity.

My culture comes from a deeply rooted vine within the rich ethnic tapestry of southwestern China. But my true origin exists in an age-old baozi restaurant nestled in the heart of Sichuan province. When I visit China to see my family, we're lulled in by the intoxicating scent of savory pork and sweet red bean paste coming from the kitchen. Yet eating and conversing with my relatives at the restaurant differs heavily from my life in the U.S., where store-bought baozi and empty dinner tables feel dull in comparison. Back home, I long for my Chinese family and feel I've left a part of me behind. Yet when I pop a frozen baozi in the microwave, I hear the sounds of a bustling street in the machine's hum; when I eat alone, I see my relatives chatting beside me; and when I think of the little Sichuanese diner, I think of the people waiting for me across the sea. The baozi restaurant—even when I'm not there—will always exist as a liminal space, bridging the divide between two worlds and anchoring me to my family.

I learned the roots of my ambition growing up amidst gleaming floodlights and clashing sticks. I found passion within aggression, letting the steel under my skates tell slicing stories across the rink. Every year, my hockey team competes in tournaments determining our national rank. When I gaze upon the uncut ice before these high-pressure matches, the stadium becomes a blank canvas. Before the rush of players crowd the arena, I imagine every indentation of my blade bringing us closer to success; the outcome hinges on my decisions and strategy. In these seconds of reflection, I view the ice for its potentiality of what could happen and how I influence different paths, much like the way I view my life. I've come to understand the rink as a liminal space, where the artistry of the game melds with my aspirations and ambition.

From the moment I could hold a pencil, writing became my gateway to creativity. As a kid, I always had my nose in a book. Years later, I found myself drawn to the suspense of gothic literature and similar genres. I used language to propel me through honors English classes, including writing an eighty-page speculative fiction novel for the IB Personal Project. Every character, concept, and story I write connects to my personal experiences. Though it's fictional, my writing reflects my queer identity, heritage, experience as a female athlete, and much more. When I look at a page, the margins between lines appear as a transitory space where my thoughts will soon transform into their own reality. The act of writing gives me a voice in a world overflowing with voices. My creativity is a liminal space where I can express myself with freedom, and bring life to stories that I hope to one day share.

Any ordinary place can be liminal, as long as the mind believes it to be. Maybe it's not really about the area, but about the body that occupies it. After experiencing liminal spaces all my life, I now see myself as one.