

Jennifer Pan: A Tragic Victim of Circumstance

On November 8, 2014, Jennifer Pan and a few other accomplices deliberately staged a robbery so that she could eliminate her parents. On the surface, Jennifer Pan's murder of her mother and attempted murder of her father may have seemed like a senseless act planned meticulously by a young psychopath, but in reality, her acts were the expression of a desperate, depressed and scared girl crushed under the weight of her parents' expectations. Far from being a one-dimensional villain inspired by lust and avarice that the media depicts, Jennifer Pan is a tragic victim whose actions were influenced by the overwhelming weight of the responsibilities placed on her shoulders and the nature of her amoral friends.

The actions that parents take while their children are developing morally and mentally have huge effects down the line as their children become mature and functioning adults. Children raised in "tiger" households – ones that are strict and unforgiving – express simultaneous lack of personal motivation and the desperate urge to please others. In the case of Bich and Hann Pan, the overwhelming pressure they placed upon their child led to the terrible tragedy that befell their family. In their haste to live up to the racial stereotype of the "model minority", to establish themselves as nouveau riche, and to push their daughter to great heights, they ignored her unhappiness, mental well-being and depression. To please them, Jennifer attempted to weave a web of lies to please her parents that devolved from occasionally changing report cards, to transcripts, to finally falsifying records and convincing her parents that she had been accepted into a prestigious medical school. When her parents finally learned the truth, they sought to control every aspect of her life in a last-ditch attempt to make her life a success. Under this control, their daughter, formally a "golden girl," transformed into a dispassionate killer that hated her parents with a passion.

In most cases friends are guiding forces that allow children to grow and develop social skills. Sometimes, though, these same friends can be a corrupting influence, causing children to take up bad habits, and in Jennifer Pan's case, to consider murder as a solution to her problems. Jennifer's boyfriend, Daniel Wong, was a deadbeat, once convicted for having over a pound of marijuana in his trunk. Her childhood acquaintance, Andrew Montemayer, professed his interest in killing his own parents. Lenford Crawford, who she knew through her boyfriend, was a ruthless and mercenary killing machine. All these people came together in her life, convincing her that murder and crime, rather than rational discussion, was the answer.

Ultimately, Jennifer holds the blame for the crime she carried out. However, though Pan's actions were heinous, they were entirely preventable. If her parents had been more open-minded or considerate of their daughter or if Jennifer had not made such poor friends, this event would have never occurred. Because of this, Jennifer Pan's hired murder of her parents is truly a human tragedy.