

Withering Lily: Human Struggle to Face the Negative Effects of Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This creative thesis focuses on understanding the relation between using social media and social anxiety. The goal of this work is to understand what causes the disorder to appear after exposures to social media and the effect it has on someone. To reach that goal, this creative thesis uses the Presentation of Self Theory and Social Anxiety theory to understand how social media could cause social anxiety and how it affects their life externally. It shows that the problem comes from the desire to become “perfect” in society and after that it would lead to the heightened fear of judgement that is the trigger of social anxiety. Further, social anxiety would prevent someone from living a good social life. Therefore, by understanding people’s desire to be “perfect” and the effects of social anxiety, we can see that being overly afraid of being judged on social media could ruin someone’s life.

Keywords: Social Media, Social Anxiety, Presentation of Self, Screenplay, Cyberpunk

INTRODUCTION

During two years of my study, I was actively working on making various kinds of indie films. Through that, I saw the process of making a short film or a web series and realized that the core is indeed the film script or the screenplay itself. It is near impossible to make a film without a screenplay and it is just as impossible to create a great film without a great screenplay behind it. With that in mind, I decided to make a screenplay for my creative thesis. Along with that and my desire to explore a societal issue, I further decided to explore my hypothesis on the relation between technology and mental health and explore the danger of it in the form of a screenplay. To start this, I started reading journals regarding technology and mental health and decided to specifically explore the relation between social media and social anxiety. This project will try to figure out why it becomes a dangerous thing when social media is initially made as a way to help us connect with the world.

The technology itself is a product of knowledge made to make human life more practical as well as changing the environment. The technology aims to make things happen through using materials, techniques, tools, and various power sources to fulfill the original intention of it (Merriam Webster, 2021; Alghamdi, 2016). This project will specifically discuss one type of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that is Social Media. Social media is an internet application which focuses on content and enables people to exchange and generate it with others (Vannaccia, Flannery & Ohannessian, 2017). Any kind of technology, including social media, indeed has positive impacts, if anything it could outweigh all the negative impacts, but the problem is the negative impact of social media has been brought up only for the past few years and is believed to worsen in the next decade (Anderson and Raine, 2018). Social media have the ability to generate negative emotions when someone receives undesirable feedback from others through their social media and causes them to indulge in negative social comparisons which further could cause someone to develop anxiety. However, As much as 90% of young adults use social media, the majority of them have more than one social media which also means a bigger impact on them and they also use them continuously (Vannaccia, Flannery & Ohannessian, 2017). Seeing the heightened risk of social media in our lives this matter

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definitely needs to be brought up and mentioned to help people realize the bad situation they are in.

An article by Ellen Hendriksen, a psychologist at Boston University's Center for Anxiety and Related Disorder, gives a full explanation of how ICT could cause anxiety. Social media not only makes it easier to connect with other people far away from us, it also makes it easier for anyone to judge everyone else. It creates social anxiety and leads us to create a certain brand image to hold in public, as the result of fear of being exposed and criticized by the public. That brand image becomes another issue. It becomes a material for people to compare their own lives to what they see on social media. This will make people develop unhealthy self-awareness. (Hendriksen, 2018). Some other things in social media that could cause direct stress such as peer cyber-bullying, being exposed to stressful events happen to other people, and the pressure of maintaining updates and impressions of ourselves to others (Vannaccia, Flannery & Ohannessian, 2017). Seeing that social media has a greater impact on our mental health, I believe it is important for us to try to understand the danger of social media on ourselves and our society.

This work will put the focus on social anxiety. Social anxiety is the fear of people or any social condition that is caused by the fear of being judged, being humiliated, accidentally hurting someone and or being the center of attention. It is one of the most mainstream mental disorders that one could suffer. It could cause physical symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, dizziness, hyperventilation, diarrhea, etc (webMD, n.d). Social anxiety focuses on how people behave in front of others, whether they are able to satisfy others' expectations of them or going against their expectations. It is also related to one's expectation of themselves in terms of fulfilling their desire on how they want to be seen by others (Leary & Jongman-Sereno, 2014; Moddux, Norton & Leary, 1988). Therefore, social anxiety is usually experienced before and during a social interaction and it is caused by the thought that we should receive a good impression from others, but doubting our ability to be able to do so. After what people deem as failing on certain social interaction, their social anxiety will increase as the desire to create a desirable impression heightens as they thought that they need to do better after they failed before (Leary & Jongman-Sereno, 2014). The way people behave a certain way in front of others creates what would be called "the front stage", where people try to create the desired impression on people.

However, creating their "front self" would also mean people would have the possibility to heighten their desire for a specific public image which they might not be able to realistically fulfil. This will cause the social anxiety to worsen as people are more prone to what people say about or see in them (Leary & Jongman-Sereno, 2014; Moddux, Norton & Leary, 1988). The need to behave a certain way, causes as much as fifteen million of American adults to suffer specifically from social anxiety out of 40 million of people who suffer from anxiety in general. The symptoms are also shown equally between females and males. Social anxiety could also cause impairment during adolescence and adulthood. Most people who suffer from this would have poorer results in school or workplace and more prone to substance abuse (Anxiety & Depression Association of America, n.d). As much as 29.9% suffers serious impairment, 38.8% suffers moderately, and only 31.3% shows just a mild impairment (National Institute of Mental Health, 2017). Seeing the high number of people who suffer from social anxiety and how it causes impairment it is important to find a way that could help fix this.

As the relationship between social media and mental health seems to worsen and worsen, through this creative thesis I would like to bring up the topic of the danger of social anxiety in over-indulging ourselves in social media. Social media addiction causes social media envy which later will also trigger the feeling of anxiety as a result of the envy (Liu & Ma, 2018). Seeing that the current function of social media is to show-off our life to people, it causes people to believe that others have a much happier life than they are. However, it is not exactly

the case as what they see in others' social media is others' filtered life because no one would want to show their "uninteresting life" to the public or what we could call their real or "backstage self". This would trigger an endless cycle of social anxiety and social media addiction, as people with anxiety tend to use more and more of their social media as likes and positive comments they get could act as a relief from their anxiety (Vannaccia, Flannery & Ohannessian, 2017). Understanding the possibility of the endless cycle to happen and the realization of how many people actually over-indulge themselves in their social media, this topic should be brought up so people could be more mindful about their social media use.

This creative thesis will be in the form of a screenplay, with the thought that it will be turned into an actual movie. Screenplay is a vision and starting point for actors and crews about the story, dialogue, setting, and action in executing the creative vision and making the films (Turetsky & Dimitrova, 2004). I choose to make a screenplay because the film industry in Indonesia is growing faster than ever. Based on data from *liputan6.com* and *tirto.id*, the first Indonesian film to hit exactly 1 million audiences was *Quickie Express* (Djayadinigrat, 2007) and since then up to the end of 2015, eight years in total, there is only an addition of 21 Indonesian films that reached more than 1 million audiences. The highest record at that time was *Laskar Pelangi* (Riza, 2008) with almost five million audiences. That record was beaten in 2016 when *Warkop DKI Reborn: Jangkrik Boss Part 1* (Umbara, 2016) released and gathered almost seven million audiences. It became the most-watched film and followed by 21 other films with more than 1 million audiences in a span of only four years until the end of 2019 (Irwansyah, 2015; Ulfa, 2018). Seeing the last four years, it is safe to say the film Industry in Indonesia is indeed developed greatly.

The genre for this project that I would like to use is cyberpunk. Cyberpunk itself is a subgenre of science fiction with the characteristics of high technology, low life, and broken social order. It commonly portrays a world where the technology is over advanced to the point it is dominating over the human and human lives in a slum-like place laden with street culture (Zemei YU, 2012). Cyberpunk is the perfect genre to help explore my topic as it will help put the characters in a high-technology environment in an exaggerated manner. The overly advanced technology in the cyberpunk genre could help give portrayals of how technology would be if the human does not be more mindful about the use of technology. It will also force the characters of this creative thesis into an environment where it is hard to develop human relationships because of the technology surrounding them. Some cyberpunk movies that influenced my work are *Upgrade* (Whannell, 2018), *Mute* (Jones, 2018), *Blade Runner 2049* (Villeneuve, 2017), and *Elysium* (Blomkamp, 2013)

Another reason is despite the growing number of films being made, there has not been any notable cyberpunk film in Indonesia. Three dominant genres in Indonesian cinema are drama, comedy, and action, followed by horror, war, children, fantasy, legend, adventure, mystic, teenager, musical, thriller, and animation (Briandana & Dwityas, 2018). There are only less than 20 known and acknowledge Indonesian science fiction films such as *3: Alif Lam Mim* (Umbara, 2015), *Foxtrot Six* (Korompis, 2019), and *Gundala* (Anwar, 2019), etc (Muhardika, 2020; Firstyana, 2017). Seeing the small number of science fiction films, and none at all specifically cyberpunk films, through this creative thesis I want to introduce and contribute to enriching the Indonesian film genre.

The setting of my screenplay would be set in a futuristic Indonesia in 2113 where the Information and Communication Technology in general is more advanced than it is now. The story will follow Clara in her journey of gaining fame and earning money from all of her social media platforms as an aspiring influencer. She will do everything in order to get the fame and money that she wants, even if she has to do things against her own values and beliefs. At some point, someone will use all of her effort against her and put her in the middle of losing

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everything she has built. This situation will push her through a lot more sacrifices from her mentally. This creative thesis will follow her journey in understanding her own situation and how it is affecting her much worse than she expected, it will also follow her journey to recover her reputation and her mental health.

OUTLINE OF CREATIVE WORK

2.3.1 Premise & Design Principle

The premise of this screenplay is “A new social media influencer seems to live around fame, money, and branded bags until a problem caused by her brother leads her to take extreme measures to guarantee her reputation and keeps her lies hidden.” The design principle that will be used in this work is, to deliver the story, I will show Clara’s efforts in building her fame. I will also show her real life behind the camera, where she is broke and suffers a lot. Her deteriorating relationship with her friend and her careless reaction towards it would also be shown as a result of over-indulging herself in her social media.

2.3.2 Pitch

The pitch of this creative work is:

- a. Clara, 20 years old, is a rookie public figure a.k.a Lily, who is starting to gain fame, followers and job offers, has to rethink and re-plan her career when she is asked to go back to her original family who is poor.
- b. In the effort to not lose her fame and followers, she goes through a rigorous journey of keeping what she shows in her social media as fancy and grand as it was before. However, an incident caused by her brother is threatening her fame and reputation.
- c. Even then, the incident forces her to realize that what she has been doing, to keep her career and fame, is damaging no one else but herself, both mentally and emotionally.

2.3.2.2 Synopsis

In the world where the famous and powerful people a.k.a the influencer, is being called Lily, a girl named Clara has made it to be a newbie Lily. However, not long after her career has gone up, she has to let go of her aunt’s wealth because of bankruptcy and goes back to her original family that is poor. Her career and privileges as a Lily are threatened. She gradually develops social anxiety as she is afraid that people might realize she has lost everything and is holding up her career with lies. She has also got herself a stalker, that further makes her social anxiety become worse. Some time after, she found out that her brother had raped her friend, that is also a Lily. Clara tries so hard to hide the truth in hope of keeping her career and reputation. She goes as far as trying to hurt her own family and even makes her mother become a suspect just to save herself. Near the end, she found out that the stalker is her own best friend that tries to make her realize the bad things she has done and to stop Clara from lying. In the end, Clara once again lost everything and had to get better on her own with the help of her best friend.

2.3.2.3 Step Outline

1. Clara is in the car with her aunt. She is going back to her original parents’ house.
2. Clara arrives at the house, with lots of suitcases. This scene shows the advanced-technology that every house possessed.
3. Clara is being welcomed by the home AI, instead of her family. Mike is sleeping in the living room, after getting drunk and high. Asking Clara to get him water, but she ignores him.
4. Clara goes inside what is supposed to be the house’s study room.
5. Clara goes to her room. She is being greeted by her room’s AI. Title scene.

6. Clara is at a party with her Lily friends. They talk about getting new prosthetics limbs. There is a classic jazz band that is performing live in the party however the performance is being prohibited to be shared anywhere with the sound. Lilies privilege.
7. Clara is being dropped off in front of a mansion that she claimed to be hers.
8. Clara is in a dark alley taking her hidden stuff and wearing it. It is an oversized coat to hide her identity from everyone who might recognize her.
9. In a traffic light, there is an accident, but everyone ignores it including the police. Another significant event would be the difference in number between ordinary people and Lily that could be seen while waiting for the light to turn green.
10. Clara is back home. She changes her clothes then proceeds to count all of her clothing.
11. Clara is accusing Mike of stealing her clothes again. However, Mike is currently with a girl in his room. Clara panics because there is a stranger in the house that she assumes might know her as Lily.
12. Clara and Mike fight and they talk about how Mike once stole Clara's clothes.
13. Clara is in her room. She asks Kelly, her room's AI, to show her the recording of her room for the whole day.
14. Clara has been watching part of the recording, while Kelly declares that there is indeed no one coming to her room without her knowledge.
15. Clara goes to check the laundry room. There are lots of empty beer bottles on the floor.
16. Clara goes to her mother's room. The clothes she is looking for are there, because Fenny is trying to fix the buttons. She finds out there is someone who puts sound tapers in those clothes.
17. Clara and her best friend, Amy, are on the phone. Amy is in her room in the form of her avatar. Clara asks Amy if she knows what is put in her clothes and apparently it is a sound taper.
18. Clara is fixing her room when Fenny is suddenly telling her that she will be home late and that she should take care of Mike. Clara is frustrated on how to make her room look nice for her live streaming.
19. Clara and Amy meet up. Clara tells her about how ugly her current room is, saying that she needs a good one if she doesn't want her fans to leave her.
20. Clara is with her Lily friends. They are talking about how if a Lily does not have something that people think they should, people might think they are poor and not worth being a Lily.
21. Clara and the others are in the car. Clara checks the price to get a prosthetics, wondering if she could afford it. She asks her friend to get a matching prosthetic finger with her.
22. Clara is in Amy's house. She rants about how people will hate her if she does not get a new limb because people will think she is poor.
23. Amy asks Clara about the price of a new limb. Amy suggests that Clara should take a job if she wants the limb.
24. Clara is standing in front of a restaurant in her oversize coat.
25. Clara meets with the owner of the restaurant and she gets the job.
26. Clara rants to Amy again about how she should be hiding her face in case someone might recognize her as Lily.
27. Clara is at a garden party. The waiter gives her a letter. It is a paper letter which was a rare thing by that time because no one uses paper letters anymore. It is sent by an anonymous person that Clara thinks might be her stalker.
28. Clara is half-accusing Amy about the paper letter her stalker has sent her because Amy is the only one who knows about the reality of her life.
29. Clara is in front of another restaurant trying to get another side-job.
30. Clara is being accepted to work but with little payment.
31. Clara and Michelle are getting a new matching limb.
32. Clara is getting her new limb installed. She is being asked a question about her reputation for the surgery procedure of getting a new limb.

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33. Clara is getting another anonymous package after getting out of the clinic. The content of the package is a paper photo of her going into the clinic and into the dingy restaurant she works at.
34. Clara goes back inside the clinic demanding to see the CCTV.
35. Clara goes to the post office and asks about who might be sending a paper letter or pictures in that era. In the end, she got a call from Hanzo telling her to go to Kite's house as soon as possible.
36. Clara arrives at Kite's house that is so fancy it looks like a miniature of a jungle.
37. Clara is being checked for safety procedures in front of the door. She could not come in without being scanned. After she is done, the door is open and Hanzo is waiting for her.
38. Hanzo and Delz are telling her about what happened to Kite and her condition.
39. Clara is with Kite. She is trying to convince her to let Clara scan her ID.
40. Clara is telling the others that the invincible-government-ID is broken. The perpetrator broke it.
41. Clara is in her room calling Amy. Amy's avatar is in her room. Clara asks Amy where she could find someone who could repair IDs.
42. Clara and Amy eat at a restaurant near the ID repairmen shop. Clara tells Amy that she got a loan with the help of her boss. She also got a recording sent to her by anonymous. It is a recording of the conversation between her and Amy talking about her loan. Clara goes berserk and accuses the closest person to her to be her stalker.
43. Clara and Amy go to repair the ID.
44. Clara tells Amy about her stalker while they are waiting for the ID to be checked.
45. The ID's memories are restored. The repairing cost is expensive and both of them pay for it together.
46. Clara is projecting what's on Kite's ID on her wall. Amy is with her. Clara thinks that the perpetrator looks familiar to her.
47. Clara is in her room, chatting with Hanzo about Kite's ID. After that she looks up an article about her family. She realizes that she should fix this family problem before anyone realizes she is poor. In the end, Kelly tells her she got a visitor outside.
48. Clara walks out to the door passing by her mom who is sleeping in the living room.
49. Clara's visitor turns out to be an old style voice delivery robot. It delivers a message from her stalker saying they should meet in a playground near her house.
50. Clara goes back inside her house, trying to ignore what the robot has just said.
51. Clara decided to go to the playground and meet her stalker.
52. Clara waits for a few hours before deciding to go back home because there is no one coming to the playground.
53. When she is back, Fenny is asking her about Mike who has been missing for a week.
54. Clara is in her room, pulling out all the stuff her stalker has sent her.
55. Clara goes back outside to search for the robot.
56. Clara is checking through all the stuff hoping to find a hint of her stalker. Suddenly, Fenny is sending her a picture of Mike. Then she realizes that Kite's rapist is her own brother.
57. Clara is meeting her friends and she lies about not getting the ID fix, to prevent anyone from knowing about the perpetrator.
58. Clara is in Amy's room and telling her that she lies about Kite's ID. And tries to convince Amy to just forget about it.
59. When Clara just arrives home, she realizes Mike is finally home. She barges into Mike's room and yells at him about Kite's incident.
60. Clara goes to the kitchen and takes a knife.
61. Clara goes back into Mike's room and tries to stab him.
62. Clara is crying while calling Amy. She tells Amy who the perpetrator is and explains her worry that it will ruin her reputation.
63. Clara is on her bed and then stands up after she decides to report her brother.

64. Clara is in front of the police office building.
65. Clara reports Mike.
66. Fenny suddenly comes to her, telling her to protect Mike because policies are in front of their house. Then Clara admits that she is the one who reports him.
67. Fenny and Clara barge into Mike's room. Fenny is telling him to go hiding.
68. They are in the corridor facing a hidden panel up in the ceiling that would lead to the rooftop. Suddenly there is a police robot inside the house announcing to give Mike to the police.
69. Clara is in the kitchen again, checking where the police are because she wants to get away from the house.
70. Clara thinks of an idea, takes a knife and goes back up the 2nd floor.
71. When she is back, Fenny is beating the police robot with a bat. Clara just watches her when she suddenly slashes her own neck.
72. She runs to Mike's room and opens the window. But then she goes back in.
73. Clara runs to her room, cutting her hair and clothes in a random manner to make it look like she has been tortured.
74. Clara is in Mike's room again, yelling from the window asking for help.
75. The police outside realize she is Lily and try to help her.
76. Clara and Fenny fight inside. Fenny is trying to stop Clara.
77. Clara walks out the house faking a limp, holding her bleeding neck and pretends to pass out in front of the door.
78. The police check the hidden panel looking for Mike.
79. A police officer checks the evidence around Mike's room and finds out that the slashing perpetrator is Fenny and not Mike. Both Fenny and Mike became suspects.
80. Clara is making an article about what has just happened, when Amy comes to her.
81. Amy is trying to go inside the house.
82. Amy is looking for something that might lead her to Mike. After she finds an address she jumps out of the window.
83. A police officer notices that Amy jumps out of the window, and relays a message for the other police to keep an eye on Clara.
84. Amy forces Clara to come with her.
85. They are in a bar where Mike is working, they found Mike but apparently the police follow them there.
86. The police caught Mike. Then Amy confesses that she has been acting as Clara's stalker to make Clara realize how her family needed her.
87. Clara is in Amy's house. Amy's made her a pancake. She got a visitor.
88. The police come to Amy's house saying they need Clara's cooperation in the court.
89. The police declare they have caught both Mike and Fenny, and that Clara should attend the court.
90. Amy asks Clara will she tell the police the truth that it has all been her own doing, and her mother is not guilty. She chose not to tell. Then she got messages from her Lily friends insulting her after they found out about what just happened. Clara cries.
91. Amy comes home telling Clara that her family is arrested now. And that Clara should go to the Lily office to give over her title as a Lily.

2.3.3 Characters and Supporting Character

1. Clara Purnama
20 years old

Clara is an ordinary girl at heart who wishes to be nice all the time to people she likes. She has a mid-length jet-black hair, a bit too skinny figure, olive skin, dark brown eyes and a proportion of a model. She is a people pleaser in the name of peace and happiness, but her beliefs often fire back at her as she would often be taken for granted by others. She spent 10 years of her life

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living with her poor and chaotic family until her aunt adopted her, seeing her as having potential in life to be successful. Clara excels in school both academically and non-academically. During her high school, she decided she wants to be a Lily, the elites who become the dream of everyone else who are not. However, Jane's bankruptcy forces her to go back to her original family. Clara loses all the financial and emotional support she has always got during her career-building. Now she has to live with people who always have the desire to sell her branded goods for some drugs and stench and bottles of beers all around the house.

2. Mike Purnama
17 years old

Mike is Clara's younger brother who never gets the chance to feel the good side of life. He has the same jet-black hair as Clara with a spiky style, a thin but muscled body, tan skin, a few tattoos on his arms and chest, black eyes and a sharp jawline. He has always lived with his mother in the ratty old building and very little food prepared for him on a daily basis. He finds his freedom between all the thugs in the slum area of the city. From there, he is introduced to drugs and girls and all the night and thug life. For him rape, murder, drugs, even human-trafficking which surprisingly still exist in the slum, is an ordinary and everyday happening on the city where everyone agree to ignore.

3. Amy
20 years old

Amy is Clara's best friend from middle school days, when Clara had not decided to be a Lily. She has reddish-brown short hair, fair skin, doe-brown eyes, almost as tall as Clara with a curvy body and freckles on her face. They have lots of things in common. Clara never leaves Amy's side even after she has made it as a Lily, however she hides the fact that she is friends with Amy from people which Amy also agrees to do. After Clara is "adopted", Amy would also get the benefit as Clara would also secretly spoil her. One thing Amy never expects from Clara is how evil she could be when things just are not always in her favor.

4. Fenny Purnama
45 years old

Fenny is Clara's real mother who is an alcoholic and a burden to the family. Her hair is dark brown, with a small and freckled face, black eyes, olive skin and petite body. She does have a job, but she is only working to buy herself more alcohol in the future. The house smelled of alcohol because of her. So many bottles of beer are in every corner of the house either empty, half empty or a full bottle. She has never cared for her kids whom she considers to be a mistake in her life.

2.3.4 CONFLICT

This creative work will bring up two types of conflicts and that is Man Vs Self and Man Vs Man. The first one, Man Vs Self, is a type of conflict that is happening inside the character's mind such as self-doubt and questioning one's own nature. It drives the character's thoughts and actions as the mind is the core of every character (Masterclass, 2020). The second type of conflict is where the struggles come to the protagonist from facing their antagonist who keeps stopping the protagonist from reaching the protagonist's goals (Cascio, n.d). In the story of my creative work, Clara as the main character would be facing herself as she is trying to hide who she really is by creating another "too perfect" character of herself. However, the goal to hide her "real self" is to fulfill her other goal, that is to fulfill her own expectations of how she wants others to perceive her. I believe these two types are the most common and suitable conflicts that my main character should be put through.

CONCLUSION

This creative work aims to give a glance of what could happen to someone who is too deeply indulged in their social media life hoping it would be a reminder for people to be more mindful. Aiming to present a “perfect” image in social media could lead someone to social anxiety because it heightened the fear of being judged or humiliated which is one of the core reasons of social anxiety. Moreover if what they show on social media is far from the truth, it could worsen social anxiety. Like what happens to the main character of this creative thesis, Clara, she gradually develops social anxiety as she feels her “ugly” real life is threatening her reputation. Aside from that, I also want to show how the social anxiety caused by social media could affect the people around someone who is too indulged in it. I want to show how it could change people for the worse too, if they become so self-absorbed by their social anxiety that they become ignorant about the people around them. In the story, Clara becomes more and more ignorant about her family and she is even the one who tries to hurt her own family for the sake of keeping her reputation. However, in the end the effect of her social anxiety fired back at her and she lost everything once again including her title as a Lily.

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