

The Only One Waterfall

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Translated by First-Class Solutions Ltd.

White Color...

I always look at this white color for at least an hour every morning before getting up from bed. The sunlight coming through the window warms me up, but my body seems to be unable to move.

That white color is a ceiling in my bedroom. This morning, I lay in bed gazing at the ceiling as usual. I used to be a wise, dynamic, and active person, but sleeping calmly in a quiet place and looking at the ceiling is my new habit. This unprecedented change has not only happened to me but to the whole world.

The widespread transmission of the COVID-19 has continued for more than a year. Today marks the first day of a two-week lockdown. Let me repeat that—it is a two-week lockdown!

I was ill-prepared for either the pandemic or the lockdown. Everything surrounding me changed rapidly and it forced me to change myself despite the fact that I am a person who dislikes adapting. Finally, I had no choice but to adapt to this new complicated world.

I am Kung Kea, age 22, a writer of motivational books whose work is recognized by both readers and institutions. It's ridiculous that I could motivate a million people and yet still could not find something to inspire myself.

Since the outbreak of this pandemic, my entire life has undergone a complete change. Many programs have been postponed; the publication of new books have been cancelled; other new books could not be written; and my salary has become lower as a result. I sometimes see everything as being stuck like a balloon being inflated and becoming bigger and tighter, and yet remaining unexplored. After hearing the announcement on the lockdown measures, I immediately prepared some food and drew up a daily action such as reading books, doing exercise, and relaxing my thoughts. In reality, I didn't follow my daily action plan at all. Instead, I felt hopeless and stressed out as well as paralyzed from time to time. This new world situation has created an overwhelming pressure on our minds.

As a person who used to travel freely to everywhere, I am now forced to stay still in one place. Although I can go out, I am obliged to wear a mask and to frequently clean my hands with soap or alcohol-based sanitizer which sometimes causes rough or peeling skin on my hands. As a person who likes eating delicious food, I am now forced to be on a diet and cannot find my favorite foods. I have nice clothes,

but I don't know where I should go to wear them! I have ideas to do things, but then cannot take any action. There are a lot more troubles to name, but they are just minor factors that hinder our adaptation because we now know that we are losing the freedom of sophistication which has facilitated our work process. I cannot afford to be happy when the world is facing such big challenges. The bustling places have become quiet and daily communication is much more restricted than ever before while the world news all relates to how the COVID-19 pandemic has caused serious concerns for all of us every minute.

This is one reason why I lay in bed gazing at the ceiling in my room every morning because I lost who I was.

I lost my goals in life since I eked out a living by doing nothing but eating and looking at the ceiling during the lockdown. If you have a warm family, you wouldn't worry like I do. The most difficult thing in the period of lockdown is that I have to confront my father and my younger brother.

I am the eldest child and the only daughter in my family. My family had four members—my mother, father, my 16-year-old younger brother and me. Our relations are not very good because we haven't got along with each other since my mother passed away although my father is still alive.

In my whole life, I have never ignored or avoided anything. The only one thing I ignore or avoid is...

Dinner with my family!

It may sound nonsensical, but how could I avoid this dinner now that the government has declared a state of emergency and placed the whole country under lockdown.

I looked at the clock on the wall and saw the short hand pointing to 12 which meant lunchtime. Alright, I spent one hour looking at the ceiling and lunchtime arrived. I haven't had breakfast yet, so let's call this brunch. I decided to get up and walked awkwardly as my room was full of mess scattered untidily about.

The dining table was so quiet. It was not the dining table that was quiet but the people, sitting around the table, keeping quiet. My younger brother raised his glasses slightly and stared at me through his thick lenses. His name is Kiry.

Pok!

The sound of a woman's heeled sandals hitting the floor rang out. An old lady in red rope dresses with high heeled sandals appeared at the dining table with a lot of food in hand. Her face was covered with thick face powder and red lipsticks which made me feel that her makeup was not suitable for her.

The person is my father!

You are not confused; the lady in red rope dresses with high heeled sandals is my father. After washing our hands with soap, we sat around the dining table.

“The food is ready, let’s eat, my children.” His voice showed that he was very satisfied to be having a meal with his children today but there was no cheerful response back. I gazed at the food in a dazed and silent manner and did not look at his face. But I knew that he was vigilantly watching my facial expression. Kiry stirred his rice silently while my father just kept watching his children’s faces tensely. He exhaled deeply, smiled and said again.

“Please serve the meal, my children!” Then, my father put some food onto our plates. Kiry was likely minding his father, so he smiled and forced his food down. It seemed that the presence of my face at the dining table was harmful to his digestive system. I hadn't had anything in my stomach since I woke up. So I decided to put aside the eggs my father served and turned to the hot soup. At that moment, our respective spoons collided with each other when my father and I used spoons to take food at the same time. We looked at each other sternly without backing down. I pulled back my spoon and put some rice into my mouth.

Why is it hard to eat this meal?

After having a spoon of rice, I put down the spoon and fork on my plate and walked to my room without forgetting to say,

“I am already full.”

Hearing me saying, my father hurriedly followed me to the room with the sound of his heavy footsteps echoing.

“Is it that difficult to have a meal with me, Kung Kea?” Hearing his loud voice, I turned to him with eloquent eyes.

I responded softly and steadily saying, “The rice was not bad, but my feeling was bad.” His face showed anger with the thick facial powder threatening to crack like dry soil.

“Maybe it is very difficult because you have tried to stay away from me for years...Please tell me what have I done to make you feel upset? I have never begged for money from you and I have also never asked for care from you whenever I was sick. I don’t know what mistakes I have made.”

Hearing my father talking like this sounded fairly ridiculous, but it was absolutely obvious that he had no idea what he had done to me. So, based on that, how could he evaluate the relationships between himself and his children?

I said “You have no will to look after me. I’ve taken care of myself my whole life. Father and mother got divorced when I was young. My mother accepted me to live with her and I took care of myself back then. I have also taken care of myself since

she passed away... The house you are standing now is the one I bought by myself...The only one thing you have done to me is..."

I paused while my father anxiously waited for me to finish. We both hold tears in our eyes because whenever we face each other, we do nothing but exchange antagonistic or hostile arguments. My younger brother Kiry walked in and stood behind my father with his tears. It is hurtful for him to see my father and I would rather shout at each other than talk nicely to each other. This is maybe the first time for me to not avoid my father but to express whatever is stuck in my mind. I continue...

"The only thing that you've done for me is a hollow promise."

"What promise?"

This painful question of my father caused a tear to trickle down my cheek. As I couldn't bear such pain, I immediately pushed him out of my room, locked the door, and then kept crying alone. This is why I don't want to confront my father as he doesn't understand and remember anything except his own selfishness. I don't want to encounter such trouble and I really hate such painful feelings.

By having our first meal together, our confrontation could almost have teared down the house apart. If we would have three meals a day, the house would be submerged into the ground. Given that I could not leave my house and enjoy meals with pleasure, I decided to do the one thing I had not had sufficient time to do, which was to clean and decorate my room.

I began to arrange my room around until my messy room gradually became neat and clean. I moved a closet slightly to the other side of my room and found an old drawing paper that I used to draw a picture and carry along with me when I were young. I fixed it on the wall and moved this big closet to hide it until I'd almost forgot that this drawing had been with me all along. I reached out to pick it up and looked at it with great emotion.

It was a sketch that my younger brother and I drew about the four members of our family visiting Bou Sra Waterfall. In that picture, I saw the water falling down from the top flanked by endless green forest on both sides, along with a picture of my mother, father, Kiry and I who are standing up and raising our hands up to look happily at the waterfall.

No one realizes that there are stark differences between real life and the life in the picture.

It was the day that my father promised me we would visit Bou Sra Waterfall and I vividly remember his every word and action. My father told my younger brother and me that he would lead us to visit Bou Sra Waterfall the next day when I was only 10 years old. He truly loved natural resources, which is why he named me Kung Kea and my younger brother Kiry. Kun Kea means water and Kiry refers to the mountain. He wanted to name his children after what he loved most.

The next day, Kiry and I were already dressed for the visit and then we left the room and walked toward our parents. The sounds of a big argument were blasting out. Kiry and I cried as we heard our father telling our mother that...

He wanted to be a woman.

My mother did not argue too much. She separated me from Kiry and left the house with me, and everything began to change since then. My parents got a divorce. I moved to live with my mother while Kiry continued living with my father. We had gatherings occasionally but I didn't like living apart like that. I missed my younger brother, my father, and a loud laugh at the dining table every evening.

Two years later, my dad promised me and Kiry again we would visit Bou Sra and my mom also agreed. I remembered that it was the happiest day of my life. I was ready and stepped out to wait for my dad downstairs but saw nothing of him for hours. After a long while, my mom called me upstairs and told me that my dad was severely ill and had been sent to a hospital. A few days later, I found out that he was not that ill, but he had managed to have transgender surgery on that day. This made him forget that it was the day he promised to take me to visit Bou Sra. His promises meant a lot to me. The already broken relationship was suddenly fallen into a more fragile state because of another such unfulfilled promise.

Since then, I've told myself that everything would not be like before and reminded myself not to fall into an unrealistic happiness.

A promise which is no way of becoming a reality...

If Dad had his dreams, I also had my own dreams.

If he does not remember me, I do not need to remember him either.

A few years later, my mom passed away due to illness. I was mature enough and had a permanent job. This was why I let myself live alone as an independent woman away from my dad. The relationship between my dad and me have faded away. It's not just the relationship between the two of us, but my brother and me as well.

One day I decided to visit Bou Sra for the first time. I went there alone and finally succeeded in my desire to reach it, though it took about seven hours to get there.

The waterfall was absolutely beautiful. This natural resource was truly as special as the names my dad gave to me and my brother. I stood staring at the strong waterfall, while the mist spread over my warm skin, which helped gradually moisturize my skin. But it could still not help let my mind free.

What does it mean? Coming so far alone like this...

No family, no dad, no mom...

Everything seemed strangely gloomy...

If this sketch made me recall so many of my stories, I had no other reason to keep it anymore. Facing the fact of this lockdown was already difficult, I did not need anything to remind me of those old unhappy memories anymore.

After thinking, I rolled up the paper, threw it into a trash bin, and placed it in the backyard of the house. I did not expect that the paper was coincidentally found by my dad when he collected trash. When I came out my room to get some water at night, I saw Dad unfolding the paper alone at the table in the backyard. I realized that he was very gloomy, and I was fully convinced that the problems between my dad and me had made each of us suffer, even my only brother. Seeing my dad sitting like that, I came to realize that the reason why we could not solve our issues was just because we did not make an effort to sit down and talk, to understand each other until we were stuck together in the house. By not getting rid of the issues, we ultimately had to face our individual fears.

Next morning, I sleepily came out of my room thinking about getting some water to drink. When I opened the door, I found my brother standing in front of the room, smiling. I looked back at his face without saying anything but questions piling up in my mind. But before I could think too much, Kiry pulled me by the hand to the backyard.

Once there, I saw my dad standing under the thick shadow of the tree. My dad was in a beautiful yellow dress while his neck-hair was tidily decorated. They were behaving strangely around me and I had no idea what they're up to. Then my eyes suddenly caught a big pool in the corner of the backyard, overlapped by big and small stones placed high up with water falling and a fountain spreading misty water over me. It was an...

Artificial waterfall...

I looked at the waterfall without blinking my eyes, as my excitement suddenly surged.

Did Dad spend the whole night to build it for me?

I was amazed and hardly able to speak. I just slowly walked into the pool. I managed to sit and lay backwards on the water-dropping stone. My body was gradually getting completely wet. Dad and Kiry stood still and looked at me with slightly heavy-hearted smiles. I took it easy, faced upwards, and relieved all my anger with the flowing water. Then I found a leaking faucet above, which instantly made me feel like laughing. In fact, this waterfall was just coming from a simple water pipe, but why did it make me so happy? Happier than visiting Bou Sra! The happiness brought on a feeling of excitement I had hidden for a long time, which made me burst into tears; the tears flowed like competing with the water in the pool.

I sat with my knees up, covered my face and just cried in the middle of the water dripping from the slowly flowing faucet.

Noticing me crying, my dad and brother quickly ran into and sat by my side to comfort me. Dad pulled me into a tight hug.

"I'm sorry, daughter," Dad sobbed, and my brother came to hug my dad and me tightly together.

"This is the most terrible waterfall I have ever seen," I complained, crying simultaneously.

"They locked down the country, and I only have this waterfall for you."

On hearing this, we both suddenly laughed but what was funnier was my dad's face.

"Your make up is ruining," I said crying and laughing, and then wiped my dad's face with my own hands. He shook his head and replied with laugh.

"No problem, if only you do not hate me for who I really am.

I replied,

"I have never hated you even though you are transgender. But I got angry that you did not keep your promises... But I do not mind. Look! You brought me to this waterfall, and I am not angry with you anymore."

What I wished for was only his being responsible for his words and I did not want this fault to be forgotten along the time.

Because his promise was of such great value to me!

The problems that have been happening for years may come to an end today.

In the time when the world is fighting against this global pandemic, many people may have to confront a lot of issues both mentally and physically. Not being able to escape from the situation, we feel stuck at one point and finally face the problems we always tried to avoid. However, there is no need to go anywhere or

wait for the country to reopen its doors in order to find happiness. It is all in our minds. Wherever we are, and whomever we are with, everyone could be happy in their own way.

In this hard time, what we have learned was to adapt and to accept. What I learned during this time was to be accustomed to staying in one place as being a person who likes hanging out a lot with busy profession. Learning to adapt to living with my dad and brother, between whom we used to have completely opposite ideas, made me realize what our problems were, understand them, and then move on.

The changes in lifestyle behavior in the time of the COVID-19 seemingly gave us an opportunity to realize who you were again. We had to change our way of life in eating, traveling, and job communication. I could not avoid these changes; just like I could not avoid confrontations with my dad. Learning to adapt, and realizing how significant this time was for us was very important.

I have found myself again...

I really could not imagine this lockdown would inspire me to find myself again. I had to forgive and should not allow us to be detained in the past anymore. In addition, I had a small warm family, and was not as alone as I used to think.

As the cold water flowed over my skin, it occurred to me that Bou Sra, while being the most beautiful waterfall in fact, might not be the most meaningful to me. Because this artificial waterfall from my family was the only one I needed.