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Literacy Narrative

One time in my primary school period, I was strolling around as usual, waiting for my parents to pick me up: they took good care of me, the only complaint I could have was they were often late due to their busy schedules. On the occasion of boredom with my eyes running over the stores, a newly opened bookstore caught my attention. The extensive use of wooden texture made it stand out in the row of white and grey buildings made of steel. Walking into it, the warm lights in the store blended with the gathering dusk from the window shed on me and I felt being wrapped up safely. Little did I know this unexpected visit would unveil a new world to me which I found solace in reading.

My eyes finally came to rest on a book called “The Little Girl by the Window” which described me perfectly. I looked around and then imitated others sitting on the ground along with the squeaking sound of the wooden floor. I still remember the touch of the yellowed and dog-eared pages as a sample book with the smell of ink. Coincidentally, the character was a girl of my similar age named “Toto”, but she was energetic and naughty like a “problem kid”. It was only about thirty minutes since I opened the book, and I was so obsessed with it that I almost forgot the time and barely noticed my dad’s car. In the next few days and weeks, I became a frequenter of this store. My favorite notebook with a fancy cover adorned with Disney princesses was filled up with my scribble with extracts of sentences in the book.

Reading this book gave me a brand-new experience with shivering: Toto was so mischievous in class, but I was a traditionally “good student” who followed every rule. It was like meeting a special friend with an opposite personality; My mood went up and down with her

when she was curious about everything around her, but this nature was repressed by her teachers. It always feels good to have empathy with the power of written words. I also feel that reading is a carrier for me to have mental communication with different people around the world when I read their stories and get to know their lives. More importantly, it brought significant influence to me at that time because it offered me a safe place and filled up the blank space inside as a kid who was always the one waiting for her parents.

Ever since, reading books became an addiction to me and it followed me when I went into junior high school.

This period was just a nightmare to me. I was not good at physics, and I never was. Looking at those abstract symbols and equations just made me dizzy; my brain got helplessly rusty, and the only lubricant was these extracurricular books that I secretly read in my desk drawer in physics class. Reading becomes a tool that helps me to detach from the heavy reality when I get overwhelmed with academic stress.

I still remember the scene when my physics teacher's face popped up in front of me with a scowl when I was about to close the book "The Handmaid's Tale". A sharp rebuke thundered in my ear with her unique high-pitched voice and my mind went blank. Then I was asked to stand in the front of the classroom and read it aloud to my classmates. I felt all my blood was rushing towards my head: my face flushed badly, my eyes got watery, my hands were trembling. I opened my mouth but only silence came out, and I heard a smothered titter come from nowhere. When I got back home, I took out the book and stared at it, finally bursting into tears.

Since then, this book acted like a trigger for my tears, and I decided to lock it in my drawer, as well as my reading habits. I don't want to blame the teacher, but it was truly a negative experience with my literacy study that I was reluctant to mention after so many years by

instinct. My passion for literacy reading was gone with my self-esteem shattering in those criticized words. The safe place of reading collapsed and left an unrecoverable scar deep in my heart. I stopped reading.

When God closes a door, he opens a window. My literacy experience underwent a big turn during my high school period thanks to my literature teacher Mr. Britt. Unlike other traditional teachers, he emphasized that there was no right or wrong thing in doing literacy reading or writing. He encouraged variety so that everyone got the chance to excavate subjects they were truly passionate about. Moreover, to enhance our literacy ability, he held a sharing session monthly, allowing us to have a deeper understanding through reflecting on ourselves. His teaching style meant a lot for students who felt confident in literacy studying like me because we had the flexibility to work on diverse things according to our own needs.

Similar scenes happened in his class. I saw the girl hanging her head with shame, just like the 14-year-old me, waiting for the “storm” to pour down. However, the words from Mr. Britt’s mouth broke the tension: “I love to see that you are interested in literature, but let’s do it after the bell rings, shall we?” I heard a sigh of relief, but I couldn’t recognize whether it was from her or me.

When I arrived home that day, I rummaged through chests and cupboards, only to find the key to the drawer where the book was locked up. I wiped the dust off the book, and I believed it was the time to gather these fragments up to rebuild the pure land for reading. Weeks later, I carried it with me in a book-sharing meeting. Again, I was standing at the front, but this time I was not abashed. After taking a deep breath, I started sharing this book which meant so much to me and ended up with a quote: “Live in the present, make the most of it, it’s all you’ve got.” Wrestling with self-doubt is hard, but I know I don’t want to be a coward anymore.

Reading now takes on a new meaning to my life: a medium allows me to acknowledge the past and have the courage to move forward.