

A Letter in Winter

Winter was coming. It was evening but the winter sky was dark. A freezing wind blew through Mary's thin clothes as she walked through the village on the way home from her junior high school. Mary walked alone on the snow-covered road, saw many trees without leaves, and felt that chilly wind blow on her face. Her face prickled. As she passed the houses, she saw some families eating dinner together. She felt lonelier so she walked as quickly as possible.

Winter was a season Mary hated most because it seemed that everyone should have happy reunions and celebrate Christmas or Thanksgiving with their family members. It was almost as cold in Mary's house as it was outside. The coldest season was not only freezing inside her house but also freezing in her mind. As she came home, she saw a man running into her mother's bedroom as if he was afraid of being seen by Mary. The appearance and the behavior of this man made her rage. Mary asked her mother angrily and loudly, "Why does he come again? I said again and again I don't want to see him. You never care about my feelings." After hearing those words which Mary cried out, her mother entered her room and slammed the door without any answer. She never answered her questions. Since her mother had fallen in love with that guy, Mary felt that her mother betrayed her father and her. From then on, she never talked to her mother even though they lived together.

Before her mother had a boyfriend, she was always in her room when both of them were at home as if she did not want to see Mary at all. They quarreled frequently and they cried after using scathing remarks to hurt each other. She could still vividly remember that day when breaking up with her boyfriend. She came home and told her mother in a very desperate voice, "Why do you never care about me? To make you feel proud of me and pay more attention to me, I enter many contests and practice hard to win first prizes. But you don't care at all. I can't share my happiness with you. When I encounter some difficulties which make me feel angry, sad and sorrowful, I wanted to consult with you and hoped you can give me some suggestions or just accompany me." Then, she grew more and more angry. She shouted, "Why do I never feel love from parents? I don't know what family should be. I don't even know how to love others because of you." After Mary cried out loud a series of questions which have been buried deeply in her mind for a long time, her mother still did not answer her. They each went back to their bedrooms and slammed their doors at the same time.

She was afraid of going to school because she did not know how to get along with others. On the first day of elementary school, she fought with her classmates because they laughed at her. They mocked her as a child whom nobody cared about

and no one wanted to take care of. She was extremely angry but she could not retort her classmates. She wondered whether her father left because of her. At the age of three, she had ever asked her mother, “Where is my father? Why did he leave you and me?” Her mother kept crying without answer. She also thought that her parents were like her classmates said. Therefore, she fought with them to release her irritations. This event influenced her deeply and she lost her self-confidence from then on.

On Christmas Eve, everyone had a meal or a feast with their family or dated out with their friend to celebrate. Mary went home alone just like before. She hoped something will happen at this special night. She looked forward to Santa Claus appearing and giving her a gift. Maybe she did not want any gift; instead, she only wanted a person who could accompany her and loved her. She went back to her room while thinking. All of a sudden the lights went out, engulfing the entire house in darkness. There was an electricity black-out in a large area around her house. She could not see anything so she hurried to the attic to find the flashlight. The attic laid in darkness. She never came here before; hence, she was not familiar with the place of things. Suddenly, she kicked a crafted wood box on the floor. Picking up that box and opening it, she found a pile of letters written by her father. In the first letter, her father wrote:

Dear Mary,

I had been diagnosed that I was in the final phase of stomach cancer. When doctor told me it was terminal, I thought of you who were still in your mother’s womb. I want to know what your color of hair is and I wonder whether you have big eyes like me. But I do not have time. I only have three months to live. I will write you a letter each day in the rest of my life and teach you what I learned and accumulated over my lifetime. Please remember I love you. I will accompany you even though you cannot see me.

Father

She sobbed, wept and cried loudly while she was reading each letter, each single word and phrase slowly and carefully as if she was afraid of missing any word her father wrote. She realized that her father loved her and was reluctant to leave her. She took that box to her mother’s room. “Mom, look what I have found,” she said. After her mother read those letters as well, they cried together. Her mother could not help keep crying and then she said, “I love you but I am afraid of facing you. I bury my head in the sand. I retreat from you and also retreat from myself. ” Mary asked, “Why are you afraid of facing me? I can accompany you going through those difficulties.” Her mother said sorrowfully, “You and your father look alike and your personality also take after your father. As long as I see you, it will remind me the fact

that my husband died. Until now, I still do not want to believe that I really lose my husband. When you asked me those questions, I felt extremely painful. I couldn't answer because I thought I was going mad. If I answered, I would lose control and have a breakdown so I entered my bedroom quickly." Mary lost control of herself. For 13 years, she has been waiting for her mother's love. She cried aloud, "I also feel extremely sorrowful. I also cannot accept the fact that I never see my father and the fact that my mother do not care about me at all." She was afraid she would cause her mother pain but she have to tell the truth, "Mom, there is a kind of love, love for the soul and for the heart that only parents can give. I need that kind of love." Her mother's eyes were tearful. She said sorry repeatedly and asked, "Mary, would you forgive me?" Mary hugged her mother and they hugged each other for a long time.

Every cold winter day they get through is one day closer to a nice warm spring. She remembered a word she has ever read: "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" The snow started melting. The sunlight came down through the trees. Mary felt the warmth of sun, smelled the fresh air, saw the green grass and flowers, and tasted the delicious food happily in the park with her mother.