

The goal

(by tydsh)

In a mountainous village, there used to be a postman who works diligently. To fulfill his duty, he leaves home early and stays up late, regardless of blowing wind and pouring rains. He enjoys his reputation among his colleagues. "All mails and packages shall be delivered on time", he promised, "no matter how dangerous the route is". The promise was printed on a flag, carried by him, and seen by others. People praise him with thumb-up, parents told their children about honors and glory, using him as an example.

Many years had passed. One day, the postman left the village in the early morning, in a blowing furry blizzard, and hadn't come back for 4 to 5 days. Rumors spread that he must have fallen to the valley when walking into a dangerous pathway towards his destination. People feel sorry about him. "A misfortune to a good man!", someone cried, but no one was willing to find his body in that dangerous place and rested him in peace. The client who asked him to send the package to a relative, regret losing the package unluckily, and forgot the incident.

Time flies and people talked about it seldomly. Except when bad weather comes, the memory that includes a man and a flag, reoccurred.

A few months later, the postman came back to the village, in disguise. He didn't carry the flag, walked in lame, and spoke with a hoarse voice. He asked people about the postman who tried to fulfill his last duty and got different answers. Someone told what they heard, someone criticized that he ran risk of his own life, and some others even laughed at his stubbornness trying to achieve an impossible mission.

The postman finally asked the client. The client replies with a voice in sorrow: "oh, I am really sorry for him. Such an accident is unexpected. Uhm, unexpected and this is his duty. I can do nothing but to show empathy."

The young man was heartbroken. On that day, he took a dangerous shortcut in the presence of blizzard, in order to get to the destination faster. In the blizzard, he slipped into a valley and fell into coma, breaking a few ribs. Fortunately, a girl walked by in that evening and sent him to the nearby hotel. As a result, he survived but had his right leg severely frost-bitten.

He became lame forever. It had become an impossible mission for him to deliver on time.

The postman stayed in bed for a few months. He was depressed by the irrecoverable disability, thinking about the rest of his life. When he recovered, he insisted to visit the village again, wanting to see the response of his utmost sacrifice, from the villagers. He still remembered that he had been praised by the old, admired by the young, regarded as important and respected as the best. He was motivated to work hard and to run the risk, because of the compliment of the others.

"If I come back, maybe they will welcome me as a hero and help me wholly-heartedly."

The girl made fun of his innocence. "Maybe you can go back in disguise and read what they think first," she suggested, "and decide your next move". He took her advice, went back to the

village, only to see the villagers have already forgot his deeds. He was disappointed and left with the lame leg.

For a few days, the young man couldn't sleep well. What he did was not earth-shattering, but at least worthy of heart; what others say was from their self-interest but still reasonable. Everything seems fine, but why he feels so heartbroken and depressed?

The young man couldn't find an answer. The girl smiled and said:

"That's human's nature. Humans admire the elite, despise the despicable and forget the dead. You feel disappointed just because you build yourself on the honor given to you. Driven by the external compliments, you never know what is the most important to you. Ten years have passed, and you serve their desire and need. They give you smile, and you lose yourself."

"Thank you. You enlightened me."

The young man sighed, deeply. He tried to recall his old days. Nothing was there but his work: he got up early, delivered and came back late at night. Over the ten years, he lived in a plain apartment, and saved little money for himself.

Knowing his situation, the girl didn't charge his stay. However, the young man is determined to leave. On one sunny day, he thanked the girl and chose to go.

The girl asked him: "What is your destination?"

"I have no choice." he replied with a bitter smile, "I will come back to the village. Hopefully I could borrow some lands from relatives to survive. My honor has gone and never come back."

When he was about to leave, the girl showed him the flag, and the package he dropped in the valley on that day of blizzard. The young man looked at it, grabbed it and disappeared at the end of the road. The girl regretted. She wept.

She knew him so well.

"He has the determination that few of us have. Let him go."

Two months later, the girl visited the village and found his apartment. The house was there, but the young man was not. She found the family sending the final package, and they told her a horror story, with a pale face and an upset voice:

"The other day a shadow came to my relative's house and knocked the door. It was twilight with dark, cloudy sky and blowing cold wind. My relative opened the door and saw a human-shaped figure. He held the package. His body was covered by dust and blood, too terrifying to stare at. My relative got super scared. She thought that it was a ghost rather than a human, pushed the ghost out and slammed the door. When the night shrouds the earth, she dared to open the door again, and no one was there."

The girl left without asking more details. She wandered around and was surprised to see a monument of the young man somewhere in the village. In front of the monument, there were flowers, candles and objects for resting the dead in peace.

She asked the people nearby. They told her the ghost story again, concluded that he died in pain and sorrow. Concluding that his soul was not at rest. the villagers hurried to fundraise to build the monument, all in one month.

She read the epitaph that recorded the achievement of the dead. She saw beautiful handwriting, elaborated sentences and well-designed decorations.

Thinking of his destiny, sadness came from her heart.

"He died. Nothing left behind. All of them are just useless junk. "

She murmured. The twilight came. The sun was about to set. People come back from their daily work and started to enjoy life. Boys playing, girls dancing, youngsters flirting with friends and elders sitting calmly and smiling.

Everyone seems to be relaxed.

She turned back, paying attention gently to the sculpture of the young man. With the flag on the shoulder and the package below the armpit, his eye gazed afar, and his face appeared solemn.

"Once you are on duty, you are not free. Day and night, your step is hasty; spring and fall, you enjoy no leisure. Finally, you leave us with your deeds hidden in the history, and never be mentioned again."

"Is your entire life worth it?"

The girl didn't know the answer. All of a sudden, her mind was enlightened by a spark, and her sadness is relieved:

"At least, in this final journey, you fulfilled the goal not because of the external compliments, but just because of yourself, because of your determination."