

有愛無淚 Tearless Love

By Ken Lee

Translated by Sky Ford

Throughout the course of our lives we will at times be faced with situations that make us feel helpless. It takes great wisdom, courage, care, and good luck to be able to turn danger into opportunity, misfortune into good fortune. If life is a journey, then my wife and I currently lead a veritable

“journeying life.” These past five years, we have traveled the 30 or so miles back and forth between Cary and Durham, North Carolina, every Friday and Sunday. To avoid the packed interstate I-40, we instead drive on a small country road connecting the two cities. In the 30 years we have spent in the United States, this stretch of road has been the most carefree and unforgettable stretch of them all.

On the roadside are pine forests and meadows of grass and flowers, as well as pastures, farmland, flower gardens, small ponds, and tranquil streams. Roaming around are serene sheep, cows, and horses, and all kinds of birds. The scenery shifts along with the changing seasons. Commuting through here is like strolling through a scenic park - it is a great joy. My wife often says, “taking a nap on the road is not bad either.”

Indeed, what is better in life than sitting in a comfortable car on an early morning, opening the window, and being rocked into sleep amidst soft music and a light breeze while lying beside a loved one? These past five years, all we have seen of this road is its joyful, happy side; until recently, we never imagined it would have a tearful, tragic side as well...

One morning, several months ago, we were driving on highway 64 not far from the crossroads with highway 55 when my wife suddenly called, “Since when is there a cross over there? When was there a fatal car accident?”

I looked to where my wife was pointing, and saw a cross about 2 meters high on the slope beside the road with fresh flowers at its base. I said perhaps it just happened recently. But perhaps it had already been a while, because this was just where the slope started and drivers might not easily see the cross. Yet how strange - this was a one way road with no intersections nearby - how could an accident occur?

From then on, we always cast a glance at the cross when we passed that spot, and we noticed the flowers at the base were changed out every couple days. Aside from some flattened grasses and shrubs from the rolling car, we couldn't make out any possible cause of the accident. A mourner frequently came here to pay tribute - who was it? What was their relationship to the deceased? Our curiosity grew. Yet the more we wanted to see them the less we saw. I began to grow anxious.

On a morning in the middle of April this year, knowing work would be especially busy, we left earlier than usual. It was on this day that we saw her. Not only did we see her, we also waved at her, and she waved back with a fist full of flowers. She was a white woman about 40 or 50-years-old who appeared dignified and kind. We guessed that the deceased was possibly her husband; otherwise, why would she come here alone?

From then on when we saw her, she was always on her own. This served to confirm our suspicions. But the strange thing was, the last time we saw her she had a large black dog and two black and white puppies by her side. After that, we never saw her again, and we thought she must have changed her visiting time or moved away.

What is a story without coincidence? One day I was shopping at a nearby grocery store. As I parked the car and stepped outside, I was shocked to see that woman we'd pined after and her unmistakable three black and white dogs. The woman was opening her car window to let in some air so her three dogs wouldn't get too hot. While she adjusted the window height she spoke to them as one would coax a child: "Mommy's going to go in and buy some food that you like. Be good and wait here, mommy will be back soon." Just like kids who could understand what she said, the three dogs sat patiently and looked at her. This was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to solve the mystery! I hurried to catch up with her and asked if she was the woman I saw bringing flowers to the cross on highway 64. She looked back and smiled, "Yes, I am." Then we shook hands and introduced ourselves. She said her name was Susan and she brought flowers for her only son who had died in a car accident. Hearing this, I felt both surprised and sad.

"He must have been young?" I asked.

"Yes! He had just graduated college, and had worked for only half a year." She answered.

"As far as I know, the site of the accident is a two-lane one-way road, and except for a slightly winding terrain, there are no forks in the road. How could there be an accident?"

She sighed and answered, "Neither I nor the police can ascertain the cause of the accident. Because aside from the emergency on the road and some grasses and shrubs on the side crushed by the rolling car, there was no way to find out. Someone said he must have lost control while swerving to avoid something on the road - certainly an animal, not a human. For if it was a human, and if they were not injured, they certainly would have stopped and called for rescue. So, it was probably an animal he swerved to avoid."

Susan paused before she spoke again: "My son Edward loved animals since he was a child. At home he raised all kinds of fish, birds, rodents, and even beetles and other insects. He spent all day together with them, feeding them,

speaking to them, playing with them. If one of them got injured or ill, he would go out of his way anxiously caring for their wounds or sending them to the vet. He didn't let anyone kill cockroaches, flies, or mosquitoes - only to drive them away. When a pet died, he always cried and held them a grand funeral. And if guests were 'disrespectful' or 'crude' to his pets, he would immediately stand up to protect his 'vulnerable peoples.'

"He often said, 'animals are not as intelligent, dextrous with their hands and feet, and adepts at communicating as humans, isn't that pitiful enough? Yet humans not only do not pity them but humiliate them and kill them - what is the sense there!' From a very young age he hated fishing; he felt that for humans to make fish struggle on a hook for their own enjoyment was truly cruel and selfish. Seeing how much he has loved animals his whole life, I would not be shocked at all if he put his own life in danger to save an animal."

"Wild animals like deer and rabbits frequent here, could it have been one of those?" I asked.

Susan selected some fresh apples from the fruit stand, put them in her cart, and said, "Ever since he was a child, he never ate meat, so I became a vegetarian along with him." Then she smiled and continued, "My thoughts at first were the same as yours and most others. I also thought it was a rabbit or deer. Yet after many months of observation and consideration, I concluded it was not so, but rather a pregnant black dog."

Coming to a realization I said, "It must be that dog in your car?"

Susan nodded and said, "Exactly, her name is Elaine. The first time I went there to set up the cross and plant flowers, I saw her looking at me from a distance. I thought she was a pet dog of someone nearby and didn't pay much attention. But after seeing her two or three times in a row, I began to think it a bit strange. I tried to coax her closer, but she was hesitant and whimpered softly. I walked towards her, but she bolted. After that I didn't see her for several weeks. Then one morning when I was at the 'cemetery,' I saw Elaine lying at the base of the cross, suckling two black and white puppies by her side.

"Elaine looked at me with a frightened, sad gaze, but she did not move. I walked closer and saw she had fresh blood on the corner of her mouth, and there was a long cut on her left front leg which still showed traces of blood. I tried speaking to her in a soft and calm voice. Then I patted her head and petted her puppies. It seemed like she trusted me, so I inspected her wound, and used the water I'd brought to water flowers to clean it.

"It seemed like she had been in a fight. The injury was significant and it needed immediate treatment or it could get worse. She had no collar, and her fur was dirty - she was probably a lost or abandoned dog. If she didn't

receive care immediately, I was afraid not only would her own life be in danger, but the two wailing puppies would also suffer.

"I hurried to plant the fresh flowers by the cross, then rushed the three dogs to the vet. Fortunately, the treatment worked and Elaine recovered quickly; David and Angela also grew more lively and adorable. Now our family of four relies on each other - when I'm at work during the day, they look after the house. In the evenings we go out for walks together, and on the weekends we go play in the park or by the ocean.

"With their company, my grief was more bearable, and my joy increased. Many friends and neighbors say that ever since these three 'angels' came into my home, I have become a more open and free person." As she spoke she picked out a whole bunch of dog food bags from the shelf, and I rushed to help her put them into the cart.

"Do you have any other evidence that Edward swerved in order to save Elaine?" Susan turned her head to me and said, "It's a mysterious thing. I never dreamed of Edward after he passed away. Yet when I brought Elaine and her puppies home, for several nights in a row I dreamed that Edward came to thank me, and dreamed of seeing him and the dogs happily playing on the floor. And I also dreamed of my deceased husband congratulating me in my dreams for doing the right thing."

I asked in surprise, "Your husband has also passed? No wonder I never saw him."

Susan faltered then said slowly, "I didn't want to bring it up at first, not wanting to bring up too many painful memories. He also died in a car crash. It was as he was helping somebody change their tires, he was hit from behind by a teenager who had just got his license. He died from severe trauma on the way to the hospital. I heard the paramedic say the youngster at fault kept crying and holding my husband asking for forgiveness. He said he had just lowered his head to adjust the radio and didn't notice the car veering out of the lane towards my husband. Before my husband shut his eyes for the last time, he held that youngster's hand and forgave him, hoping he could go on to help more people in days to come."

Listening up to this point I began to exclaim bitterly, "God is not fair, why would such a good person have such a hard fate?"

"At first I thought the same way," Susan said while pushing her cart to the check-out line. "That was the reason that I left Texas, the site of the tragic incident, not long after burying my husband. But after a couple decades of life experience and reflection, my philosophy has changed completely. Even though I forgave that teenager in the eyes of the law and minimized his punishment, I could never expel the resentment from my heart. He often sent me flowers or cards on holidays. He told me how he confessed, how hard he was

working, how he was going to medical school, how he was volunteering to help less fortunate people in his spare time, and later, how he became a happy and successful heart surgeon, and how, in order to fulfill his promise to my husband, he worked tirelessly day and night in service of others. But all this didn't move me - I felt his success was not relevant to me, and no matter how successful he was, there was no way he could ever offset the loss caused by his crime. I wanted him to carry the pain and regret of that crime with him till the end of his days. But people are not as wise as heaven. Edward's death changed everything for me."

"Did you experience a miracle?" I cut in.

Susan lifted her head and said with a light in her eyes, "Yes! It was like a miracle. Because at noon on the day after Edward died, my neighbor Mary brought by a tall, light-skinned man in his 40s with a sad and haggard face. Mary introduced him as Frank. As soon as I heard the name of the man who killed my husband, my heart skipped a beat. Yet as I was feeling so fraught and beaten down at the time, I did not give any reaction and just stood there numbly.

"Mary kept apologizing that she never told me she knew Frank and frequently updated him about my situation. She said that a few years ago, one of her relatives went to Houston for a heart surgery - the surgeon was Frank. When Frank found out Mary had come from Cary, he immediately tried to find out any news about me, and found out she was my neighbor. He was very excited and asked all sorts of questions as soon as he found a free moment, and the topic always revolved around me. She asked why he cared about me so much, and he required her to keep it a secret before he told her anything. She agreed.

"When she heard Edward passed away in a car accident, she notified Frank immediately. At the time, he was performing a critical 10 hour long surgery on a patient and could not extricate himself. Once the surgery was complete and the patient was taken care of, he jumped on the first flight from Houston. Except for a one or two hour nap on the plane, he hadn't slept at all in 30 hours. When Frank saw me just standing there not saying a word, he thought I was still angry at him. He said that regardless of whether I would accept it, he was determined to stay until Edward's funeral was taken care of and I was settled in. Saying this, he and Mary promptly began to take care of the arrangements.

"They contacted the funeral home, police bureau, hospital, insurance company, church and so on. The next day, a woman came by bearing fresh flowers and said Frank had hired her to clean the house, prepare food, and look after me. Frank and Mary came a little while later. Besides wishing me well, Frank also measured my pulse and blood pressure before leaving to take care of other things.

“On the third day while saying goodbye to Edward at the funeral home, I was surprised to find that there were a couple hundred attendees, filling up the room to the seams. The ceremony was simple and solemn. The farewell remarks of a couple of Edward’s colleagues and classmates were particularly moving and unforgettable. When I first entered, I spotted Frank, but from that moment until the funeral at the cemetery later, I did not see him at all. Later Mary told me that half way through the ceremony, he had to rush back to Houston for urgent patient care.

“Mary said she had never seen anyone so busy and so earnest. All day he dialed up Edward’s colleagues and classmates, and looked for a priest and other staff at the funeral home to take care of all the details of the ceremony. And at night he often stayed up to communicate with the hospital in Houston or his wife who was about to give birth. He was truly a superhuman, with a bottomless energy reserve. Before he left he also kept pressing on Mary to take good care of me, and after his surgery was over he would call and check in.

It had come to Susan’s time to check out. Waiting until she had finished checking out I eagerly asked, “And did he really call?”

Susan said, “He really called. He called at noon of the next day, and first asked if he had woken me up. I said he had. He said he wanted to call much earlier but was afraid to wake me up, so he decided to wait, but ended up falling asleep himself. He wanted to report to me that he saved another person’s life. He moved me, and I began to care for him, urging him to go home and rest earlier. Who would have thought that the more I urged him, the more he spoke. It was more than an hour before he hung up. Following this, he called every two or three days, as if he was anxious to make up for 20 years of lost time. He told me many moving stories. I’ll tell you only the most moving one for the sake of time.”

I stopped in the doorway waiting for her to continue.

She said, “Frank told me that after I forgave him and the judge let him off with a light sentence, he felt very ashamed. In a moment of desperation, he downed a whole bottle of sleeping pills. When he woke up in the hospital, a kind and serious faced doctor said to him, ‘Good boy, so you have finally revived. Did you think death would make you clean? You have no spine. Your death would not resurrect the one you killed! Your death would only make your sins more serious, for it would make those who love you and help you hurt even more. I have heard you are quite intelligent and enthusiastic. Well, if you have the guts, show me it’s true! I save about 100 people a year, can you do better?’

“These words inspired him. Leaving the hospital, he started working very hard, and in the end he was accepted into medical school and became a heart surgeon. Now he is saving more than a hundred people a year.

“Hearing these words made me reflect deeply. Imagine if my hate had sentenced him to death that year - the world would now be short one doctor so eager to save people’ s lives. This would have done no one any good, and I would have kept living a sad and hateful life. What a pity that I wasted 20 years like this. Edward’ s death made me wake up to the costs of my hate.

“Love can cure all pain, and can also bring about hope and joy. Though the price I paid was very high, the rewards were even higher. I lost two, but I gained six.”

“What six?” I did not understand.

Susan laughed, “With Elaine, I got three. With Frank, I also got three. Does that not add up to six? Oh! Right, I forgot to tell you. Frank’ s wife recently gave birth to a baby boy. Frank said this was my grandson, so now I have become a ‘Grandma.’ I plan to go see them soon.”

I sincerely congratulated her. I saw tears flash in her eyes, immediately brightened by a smile, “I don’ t cry out of sadness anymore. If I cry, it is because love has melted my heart. They are tears of joy, of gratitude.”

Suddenly we heard a dog barking. It was her three precious dogs in the car barking in excitement at the sight of their “mommy.” We hurried to push the cart towards them.

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