

3. ROMANCE: Should I Follow My Head or My Heart?

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“Mother, please help me, I simply can’t decide what to do.” Isabelle let out a huge sob and dropped her head on her mother’s shoulder. Carla gently ran her fingers through Isabelle’s hair. “Oh my child, please don’t make the same mistake I did,” Carla said in a tender voice. “Some people will tell you that you can’t survive on love alone; others will make you believe that wealth and power is more important than love.”

And Isabelle has chosen wealth and fame Here is her diary:

It all began with a dull, most uneventful evening in the University library in my freshman year, I cannot even recollect the date, or the day of the week, since it was such a commonplace day. After lessons, as usual, I went to the library to print out some notes. “Hi, aren’t you Isabelle, Could you help me with something?” I was just about to leave the computer seat and go to the printing counter when a boy stopped me with a wave. I looked at him, a tall, rather well-built figure, a sallow face, but with a bright smile, I did not think I knew him. But then, he added, “are you already working on Dr. Smith’s paper? So hard-working!” “So, he is from Literature 101”, I thought. “Could you spare some time to help me with the spelling of my essay?” I had not even got the time to give him an answer before he dragged me to the cheap tea shop near university. So, we became friends.

He was Mr.K, a year three student of my department, but was already 25, because he got an egg on HKCEE and had to spend several years on repeating before he could get into university. He was born in a classic broken family, his mother left him in the cradle, his father left the family when he was 12. He was brought up in a youth centre run by the government. In short, he had the typical background of many “success stories” of self-help manuals. Unfortunately, he was hardly a good example

of such a story. Instead of getting straight As on all subjects and becoming the chairman of the Student Union, he had a GPA lower than two, few friends at university, a now aged father to take care and heaps of debts to pay. To be honest, his life was bad, and I knew it from the get go. Our friendship stemmed from my sympathy.

I became his English tutor, and spent at least three nights a week with him for teaching him IELTS exam skills. Slowly, but inevitably, I got dragged into his world, a world I had never encountered before. The world of late night Mong Kwok hot pots, the world of doing 3 part-time jobs a day for survival, the world which shocked me but fascinated me at the same time. This boy who had only begun as a passing stranger of my life, gradually grew into a consonant in my life. I enjoyed telling him all the little ups and downs in my life (Such as, getting only an A-minus on a course), and had him making funny faces to cheer me up again. I got used to the smell of tobacco and the aura of beer, his two favorites. I cannot remember, how did he, bit by bit change my life so much. From staying up as late as 3 am to check his assignments to eating instant noodles on the street. But I was happy, he made me laugh, like nobody had ever done before . He treated me as if I were a princess, but also scolded me when I made mistakes, as if I were a child. We were very good friends, or so I thought, except I was occasionally troubled by some of his bitter laughs and strange utterances. “ Isabelle, surely someone like you would not love me, you are so pure, so good”; “ Don’t come too close, I warn you.” “ Go and get yourself a boyfriend” . I never understood any of them, never.

It was until I got a scholarship from university to study abroad, that everything became clear. “ I am going to England!” I told him in a breathless voice. “ Congratulations.” His reply was flat, wooden. “ Don’t you feel happy for me? “ I became angry. “ Oh yes, of course I do “. He was being sarcastic. “ I am sorry that I have told you this, I thought we were friends”. “Friends? Of course we are, nothing more. I know it, I knew it from the start. You are the uptown girl, I am the bum. But I love you!” He stormed out of the room afterwards.

What should I do? I was left totally helpless. Thus there was the scene of begging my mom for help. “ But only you yourself can decide what is the right thing to choose” Mom said, at last. The scholarship, the splendid dream I had always been looking forward to, and the first boy who had ever told me that he loved me.”My phone rang. Ms. Isabelle Chan, I have called to confirm that you have decided to accept our scholarship” “ The scholarship? “ “ Yes, are you accepting it? “ “ I.....” “ Ms. Chan, if

you are uncertain.....” “ I accept, of course I do!”

“ Isabelle, I am sorry, will you meet me tonight?” His message, a week after we last met. “ Sorry, it’s too late” I shut down my phone immediately after the message was sent, lest I would change my mind. I woke at 4 the next morning . “ “You don’t love me. But it’s okay, just take good care of yourself, I am leaving, bye.” These were the last words I got from him. I wish I knew it then, so I would not have deleted them. It was weeks later that I knew he had killed himself and I gave up my scholarship.

“Mom, I was wrong, was I not?” ” Isabelle let out a huge sob and dropped her head on her mother’s shoulder. Carla gently ran her fingers through Isabelle’s hair. “Oh my child, people have to make mistakes in order to learn ” Carla said in a tender voice. “