

1. Creativity with images: Hectic Hong Kong, Dice and Fate

George and the little boy Marco are playing airplane chess under the dim light penetrated from the four corners of the elevator. The sound of the dice hitting the ground resembles a moving clock. Time passes without their notice.

At the first glance of Marco, his son's appearance flashed George's mind abruptly. They look extremely alike; both possess small eyes and a pair of black glasses. Most importantly is the backpack; it is the same backpack his son had.

"You are going to lose the game." Marco giggles after throwing a six. His airplane advances by six squares.

As one of the directors of a small insurance company, George's workload has always been heavy. Worse still, the company is trying to expand their business starting from last year.

His has a full schedule today. He is going to meet with Dr. Lo, the head of other insurance company and discuss about the opportunity to cooperate, in Mong Kok at twelve o'clock, followed by an appointment with his client at three in Causeway Bay. On top of that, tomorrow is the deadline of his report and the day after is going to be his progress presentation section. He would like to return to his office, which locates at Diamond Hill, for better preparation.

George is a workaholic. He often works from Monday to Saturday. For holidays, he will bring a bunch of files back home. He allows himself to rest for half a day per week. For these six months, he even works nearly 7-24.

George was born in a rather impoverished family. Unlike most of his classmates, he did not have the opportunity to attend tutorial classes or buy additional exercises. He has climbed up the ladder merely with his own hands. This shapes his attitude and value system. He believes deep in heart that in Hong Kong, no time could be wasted and unless he tries his very best, he would be eliminated by the society at any time.

Sometimes George feels like his body is no longer belonging to him when he walks

down the street after work at night. He merely keeps moving with his legs without a single idea where he is heading to. His mind was empty like the bed of his son. But he has to keep going, keep fighting.

“Sorry, daddy is extremely busy today. Go with your mum.” George remembers his set phrase.

“Not a big deal.” George tried to console himself after his non-stop pressing to the “G” (Ground Floor) as well as the “F” (Fire alarm) button for five minutes but eventually no response was noted.

“Not a big deal.” But it was truly a big deal. Presentations and reports could probably be postponed, but how about appointments and meetings? “No, no, I am not going to stay here any longer!” George started screaming at the top of his lung again in the vain hope of being heard. The boy was yelling too. However, there was still no response.

Both felt exhausted and finally they gave up. They sat down listlessly. George was ashamed of having to live in this old building with poor facilities and management. But then, he had no choice. Despite the fact that he earned a considerable income now, flats in Hong Kong were way too unaffordable.

George exchanged a helpless gaze with the boy. “Tell me your name.”

Marco wins without difficulty in the first round. He is an expert in aero plane chess. “Any present?” He asks innocently. George stops for a while and replies with a naughty grin. “We exchange jokes.” Marco nods his head without hesitation. He loves jokes.

“Hey Marco, I ask you,” George coughs and then continues, “Bananas must put on sunscreen if they are keen to go to the beach. What is the reason behind? ” Marco shakes his head. “Come on boys. Make a wild guess.” “Because they...” Marco grips his hair. “I don’t know.” “That’s fine. Listen.” George clears his throat, “Because, because their skin could easily peel off!” Marco bursts into laughter immediately.

George saw shade of Marco when he laughed. Memories flooded in.

George's wife often complained about his ignorance towards his family. George found her words offensive. "I work for the family, for you and our son, not for me!" Undoubtedly it would have been better off if his son had behaved well. But instead, his son became rebellious as his grew up.

One day, it was already midnight when George backed home. He saw his son still playing computer games excitedly. His blanked worksheets were placed beside the computer. Anger surged and his face turned red within a second. "Turn off your computer! Right now!" His son opted to ignore him. George repeated his order with a stronger tone. He was not in a good mood, for his boss scolded him without rhythm or reason that day.

"I'm not fooling. I said RIGHT NOW!" George clenched his fist. "Later." His son murmured. It was probably the most irritating response George had ever heard. He cut the electricity supply of the computer. To his son, it was also the most irritating response as all the memories of the computer vanished. They argued heavily and even fought on that night. At last, George lost his control and threw the computer screen onto the floor; at the same time he swept everything on his son's desk away. His son paused. George remembers the pink backpack which was dropped on the messy floor.

George's son jumped out of the window that night. And three months later George got divorced.

George feels deeply regretted for his deeds. Although "trying his best" is still his maxim, he understands that there is something in the world weigh heavier than money and career. In retrospect, he imagines what changes could be made if he has spent more time with his family? Further, what if he was born in a wealthier family and no longer forced to work from day to night? But then, it is too late, everything is determined.

It has been half a year after his son's death. In these six months and five days, he does

not know what to do except keeping himself busy. Only by immersing in the business world can he get rid of the images of computer screen broken on the ground, his son's gaze that night, that last night.

Thirty five minutes has passed, still, no one notice the disappearance of George and Marco. Apart from the fact that they are living in a small building with few residents, another crucial factor for the indifference is that, today is Sunday. However, it should never be a sufficient explanation here. People are pretty busy on Sunday in this hectic Hong Kong. Like Marco, he is going to attend an extra tutorial class which starts at ten thirty.

What a strange space, George looks around when it is Marco's turn. He stops worrying about his job anymore, so as the sorrowful event took place half a year ago. He gradually loses the sense of time inside the elevator. Outside, people are trotting and shouting, vehicles honking, non-stop advertisements speaking to the air, traffic light sending out "bling, bling , bling" on a regular basis..... And here, only silence is heard. When was the last time I stopped and sat down and played a game of chess? George wonders.

Marco beats him once again in the second round. He is an expert of aero plane chess. "I know the technique very well," Marco says proudly, "I play it every day with my friends and I bring the chess with me so that whenever I desire to play I can play." George enjoys eyeing Marco and listening to his voice.

"So, it is impossible for me to beat you." "No, no." Marco shakes his head emphatically. "Every game is new. The dice is fair. Although it does require practices, luck is important. I do not cheat."

"Every game is a new one." George repeats himself. "Sure. Every game is a new one." Marco whispered when he stands up and has a slight stretch. Marco's words are like the roar of thunder which shock George up. He finds that those confusions surrounding him suddenly vanished. He has never thought in that way before. In the past six months, he believed that life was a game of chess and his game had ended together with his son's; but now, he is told that life is the culmination of numerous chess games. Whatever ending it is, a new game began.

"Learn from the past, your game is not yet ended." George is amazed at how

children's words are always inspiring. He believes that his son and his ex-wife would forgive him and love to see him move on.

“So, let's tell me another joke.”

“Boy, I am not in the mood of telling jokes.” Little tears appear in George's eyes. “How come, are you not feeling well?” Marco reaches out and tries to put his hand onto George's forehead. George grits his teeth. “I am not sick. Don't worry. Let's play another round and I will tell you a story, a story about myself and a boy like you.”

The dice is rolling on the floor. A new game kicks off. George becomes the leader unexpectedly, Marco throws a successive six but at the time he is celebrating, he throws another six and his aero plane is forced to fly back to the starting point.

A hubbub is heard outside during the game. Firefighters' faces appear between the closing doors. George would like to finish the game first. But he refuses to keep those firefighters waiting. “A draw. Right?” Marco asks with his head slightly down. “Sure.” George gives him a warm smile and Marco looks relieved.

“Thanks for giving me a wonderful time.” George crouches and hugs Marco after they have been rescued. “Who call the police?” George inquires the fire fighter on a whim before he leaves. The fire fighter points to a middle-aged woman behind. “She said that she heard the sound of a rolling dice inside and thought that someone was trapped inside.” George smiles and replies with thanks, both to the firefighter as well as the woman, and steps out of the entrance relaxingly.

(1719 words)