

Romeo *and* Juliet



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Editor's Preface

The writing collection in *Soft Hour* was written by my Father during his sunset years. Father's writings represent his character and thinking. He is a very successful example, a great father, and a patient mentor.

Father is a charitable person. He deeply believes in education and is a master of time management. Most importantly, father lives a simple life, has a never give up approach to life, wisdom and financial management.

Wai Ling

2017

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New Year 2017

Today is January 1st 2017, many people will make plan for this year. Different age groups will have different plans. Young people have their own ideas, and middle age people have their ways of thinking. They are all preparing for their future, hoping to improve their lives.

The people who make their plans are all outstanding people. They have ideals, dreams and ambition, wanting to become better than average. However, most of them only set a plan, but do not follow through with action.

As with everything in this world, saying things without taking action will never lead a person to reach a stage of success. It is better to make a simple plan and complete that plan with persistence.

We must have a motto of persistence. We need to carry out our plan no matter how difficult it becomes. It is like sunrise in the morning, regularly and permanently.

Do not overestimate ourselves. We only need to be ordinary people doing ordinary things. However, if you are a persistent person, you are not ordinary and your character will develop. If you fear difficult things, you will linger in failures your entire life.

Fashion Master

Between the years 1980 to 1990, there was a very famous fashion designer. His name was Karl Lagerfeld. Due to his excellent designs, many male and female models wished they could have him design for them.

Why was Karl's design so famous? It was due to two events, which made him very popular and celebrated. The first event was when he revitalized Chanel's business, which at the time was at its low point. Karl designed many new and bold fashions for Chanel, bringing its business from its low point to new heights and from that time onward, Chanel was once again a powerful player in the fashion industry. The second event was when he and Oscar winning actress, Nicole Kidman, became good friends. Karl designed many fashion dresses for Nicole, who not only is beautiful, but also has a very sexy figure. When she wore dresses designed by Karl, even professional models were pale in comparison. She helped Karl become even more successful in his career.

One particular show that propelled Chanel to become a leader in the fashion field at that time was a show performed by a team of thirty young female models. All of them went on stage wearing pure black dresses of different designs made by Karl. The show was so successful that black color became the fashion trend that year. Karl later said this black color idea was from a dream he had.

Karl did not study fashion at famous schools, nor did he receive any diploma. He said his designs came about simply from impulses and improvisation. It is true to some extent, but not entirely so. In actuality, it came from many years of hard work. Karl had no family and he lived alone, but in his bedroom, hundreds of fashion magazines strewn about and every day he would draw fashion designs. There were times when he would draw over a hundred different sketches in a day, but he would only adopt a few for his dresses.

Ballet Dance

The best ballet dance in the world is in Russia. In Moscow, there are ballet shows every day and every night. Even during the Second World War, when German bombers bombed Moscow every day, Moscow still kept ballet shows going every night.

Ballet show is a high-class dance show, consists of over one hundred young female dancers wearing beautiful dresses dancing with waltz music in the background. In the show “Swan Lake”, all girls wear white dresses, a literal scene of human swans. Tickets of ballet shows are expensive. Many Russians cannot afford to see the shows. If you want to send gift to a person in Russia, the best gift is a “ballet ticket”. If you travel to Moscow or Saint Petersburg and wish to see ballet, you had better ask your travel agency to book your ticket in advance, otherwise you might not get ticket on the day of your arrival.

In America, there are also ballet schools that hold competitions for young dancers between the ages of nine to nineteen every year. There are about five thousand dancers in the entire U.S. Junior competitions are hosted in different cities, and only about three hundred best dancers will advance to the final dance competition in New York.

The final is an intense competition; the fate of these young dancers will be decided in this final competition. Every dancer has five minutes to dance in front of five judges whose marks will decide their destiny.

Many dancers come from different parts of the world. They come just for one dream, hoping they can be best in the competition, winning glory in the ballet world. Unfortunately, many of these dancers’ dreams will be broken.

Investment Crisis

This year the world may not be very stable, so we had better be careful with our investments, especially in the stock market. If the stock market shoots up quickly, the risk of it falling would be even higher. It may be that big shareholders are pushing up share prices artificially to induce small shareholders to buy at higher prices.

As far as investment is concerned, it can be basically safe if we handle it conservatively. Our life is consist of three stages, young, middle age and old age. For a young man, he needs to learn how to invest. Once he has acquired knowledge in this area, he can use it his entire life in any situation he faces. For a middle age man, if he has attained wealth beyond what his daily life requires, he can invest in real estate, which is real asset and relatively safe. Real estate prices can go up and down, but in the long run, it is safer and most profitable compared to other assets. For an older man, it is better to have some gold or keep money in cash at the bank; inflation cannot eat away his money too much or too quickly in a matter of a few years. Never buy stocks, which can be destroyed quickly during a financial storm in the stock market.

For instance, in the year around 1995, there was a huge company called Enron. They said that if you buy their shares, you could get huge profits beyond your imagination. It is true that from 1997 to 2000, share price jumped from twenty US dollars to ninety US dollars. However, after one year in 2001, this company was bankrupt, causing world investors to lose huge amount of money. It was said in the finance circle that before the bankruptcy, the chairman of the company gathered one hundred forty high level officers to his mansion, and gave each one of them a check in the amount of five point six million US dollars as a bonus from the chairman. Actually, this money was money cheated from small shareholders.

Pacific Islands

There are so many islands in the Pacific Ocean, small and big alike. Those islands formed as the result of volcanic eruptions at the bottom of the sea during the past tens of millions of years.

When the volcanoes erupt, millions of tons of red magma flowed out and up to the surface of the sea. Cooled by seawater, the magma became solid rocks, gathered together and formed islands, big and small, spreading here and there in the Pacific Ocean.

As soon as an island is formed in the sea, human will come to live there if the island can supply natural water and trees. Animals will occupy islands that are deserted. Elephant seals will live on one island and penguins live on another island. Elephant seals eat penguins as food and penguins swim in the sea eat fish as their food. One kind of big beautiful bird, called Albatross, also live on one of the islands. In June of every year, many sharks will swim to areas near these islands, swimming back and forth, waiting to eat Albatross. It is because in June, young Albatross will start to learn how to fly and to catch fish. Many of these young Albatross will fall into the sea on their virgin fly, and become food for the sharks.

Some islands are flat, even a car can drive on it, but there are no human or animal living on such flat islands. Those flat islands only appear during the day, then at night, they will sink into the sea. Even fishes are afraid to swim to the flat islands during the night, fearing that they do not have enough time to swim to the sea when the tide fade away too quickly.

Pregnant Plane

Many people know that Boeing 747 is manufactured in Seattle. All new planes will start their virgin flights from Seattle to make delivery to different destinations around the world.

However, Boeing does not actually produce any plane, they gather all the plane parts that are produced in different countries, and then put all the parts together to assemble a perfect and safe plane that can fly in the air.

The fuselage and wings are made in other cities in the United States, the engines in England, wing tips in South Korea, wheel structures in Italy, tails in Japan, nose in some other country. But how do all these enormous parts get delivered to Seattle?

In America, there are four extra-large cargo planes. Such cargo planes are designed to transport the huge fuselage of 747 from production sites to Seattle. When the fuselage is unloaded slowly onto the ground, it looks like a baby is being born by a mother.

Of course, we know it is an extremely difficult task to attach the wings to the fuselage. But in past air disasters, there was never an incident of wings detaching from the plane.

Since the time when the Wright brothers invented their glider in 1903 up to the time of the appearance of Boeing 747 in the air, ticket prices have become cheap, allowing every person to travel to every part of the world.

According to air flight records, there are about fifty million flights each year, but not many air disasters. It is much safer than driving cars on the road.

Beauty Brings Disaster

In Chinese history, there were four beautiful women, but three died young, and one disappeared in a foreign land. Therefore, their beauty brought them disaster.

All Chinese know about the love story between Emperor Ming of Tang dynasty and Yang Yuhuan. Due to his deep love for her, Emperor Ming abandoned his duty to manage his country. Instead, he lived his life with her dancing, feasting and in many ways of enjoyment. Then, one day, a general in his army rebelled and attacked the capital. Emperor Ming had to run away together with Yang Yuhuan to a safer place. On the way, his royal guard army also rebelled, asking the emperor to kill Yang Yuhuan due to the reason that it was Yang Yuhuan's brother, who was then the prime minister, who provoked the rebellion. The emperor, in order to protect his own life, gave in to the demand of his royal guard army and had her executed in his presence.

Another one was Xi Shi, who did great job for her country in the war, but when the war was over, the queen of her country put her to death by sinking her to the bottom of a river, fearing her beauty might win love from the king, her husband.

The third one was Diaochan, who was involved in love affairs between a general and a prime minister. The general killed the prime minister and she became his wife. His enemy in the war then killed him. She committed suicide.

The fourth one was Wang Zhaojun, who was forced by the king of the Han dynasty to marry a king of a foreign country several thousand miles away in the desert. There was no historical record about her thereafter.

Beef Country, Brazil

Today Brazil is the world's largest beef exporting country. Brazil has two hundred ten million oxen in the whole country, more than its human population. Brazil's territory is so huge, bigger than the entire Europe, allowing the country to breed oxen in huge numbers.

In Brazil, the biggest cattle farm has one hundred twenty five thousand cows, employing a few hundred cowboys to manage the cows. They take the cows to far away land to graze. The journey takes a few days to go and come back.

There is also one farm that only breeds female cows, to be pregnant by artificial insemination, producing twenty thousand calves each month to supply the demands of cattle farms spreading everywhere in the country.

But now Brazil faces a problem. Due to the expansion of the cattle business, many forests in the flat land have been destroyed, causing pollution problem to nearby cities. This is the price Brazilian people have to pay.

Right now, Brazilian beef does not have brand recognition in the beef market, but beef specialists are studying hard to produce good beef at low cost to supply the world market.

The American beef, under the brand name Angus, is now quite famous in the beef market at a high price. The most expensive beef is from Kobe, Japan. This beef is the best in quality in the beef market. Only rich people are able to buy such good beef, not affordable for ordinary consumers.

Alcohol Win Friend

In China, especially in commercial field, alcohol is the instant way to win friends. Alcohol can change your quiet manner into exciting mood if you drink enough. In a Chinese poem, it said that if we met a good friend, we could drink a thousand glasses of wine together and still would feel not enough.

It is true that we can build instant friendship through drinking alcohol together. It is because with alcohol in our blood, we will talk more openly and frankly.

If you want to do business in China, you have to drink alcohol to make instant friendship with those whom you wish to sell to or to buy from; otherwise, you will fail in the competition of business.

From newspaper in China, we know many successful, super-rich businessmen, age around forty to fifty, died due to the illness of cancer. It is because they drank too much alcohol every day. They suffered the consequence by dying young.

Friends that drink together frequently are not real friends. They do not know each other so well. Today they are good friends at drinking parties, and tomorrow will be a “Hollo” stranger in the street.

We can see from one example. There was a painter who had gotten quite rich, and he wanted to spend his money by inviting his friends to his drinking party every night. After a few years, he got cancer and became a patient in a hospital. However, not a single drinking friend came to visit him in hospital.

China's Huge Constructions

Presently big constructions in China are getting attention from the world, especially in the past twenty years; China's progress in many constructions have overtaken the world.

For example, in 1989, China only had a few hundred kilometers of freeway, but now there are around fifty thousand kilometers. America now has forty seven thousand kilometers of freeway. So far, China is ahead of America in freeway kilometers. As an example of how to measure the distance, we can see that from East Coast of America to the West Coast, the freeways are two thousand kilometers; from Shanghai to Chongqing is one thousand two hundred kilometers.

In the world today, there are over one hundred tall bridges constructed across wide rivers or between two high mountains, or dangerous valleys. Of the one hundred famous tall bridges, China has about fifty. This is a high ratio among tall bridges in the world.

Now we all know we depend on the transportation of shipping containers from one country to another. There are ten large container ports in the world; six of them are in China. Inside China, progress is also fast. For example, in Shanghai, where it now has a population of twenty one millions, still ten thousand people are rushing into Shanghai every week from different parts of China. Residential spaces are now getting severely scarce. Shanghai now is building new residential apartments day and night to face the endless demands.

Love Yourself

In our everyday conversation, we always say, “I love you” or “I love him”, but never say, “I love me”. Actually, we have already shown by our action that we, ourselves, are the real persons we love. That is, “we are selfish”, though we do not admit it.

However, there is a borderline in the word “selfish”. To be selfish to protect ourselves is right, but to be selfish to take advantage of others is wrong. In the present world, there are not that many people who are fair. The majority of people are inclined to take advantage of others for their own benefit. We can suffer a little loss, which we can afford to accept, but we have to protect ourselves from suffering big losses when other people try to take advantage of us. Too big a loss will cause serious consequence in our life now, and even in our future. Therefore, we must be wise to protect our own benefit and welfare from being taken by other people.

There is a true example of “Love Yourself” from a frank conversation of a child. Not long ago, in a city in China, there was a family of five, grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, and a six-year-old girl. One day, grandfather was sick and the child asked what the meaning of “sick” is.

Grandmother explained that when a person become old, he would get sick and die. The child asked what the meaning of “die” is. Grandmother said “die” meant a person could not speak and eat any more and would be buried underground forever. After hearing this, the child began to cry loudly with tears from her eyes. The whole family was touched deeply by her sentiment for her grandfather. But when she stopped crying, she said that she did not cry for her grandfather. She cried only for herself that one day she would become old and die the same as grandfather. Thinking of her dying one day, she could not control herself to cry just now.

Dolphin Sad Story

Dolphins are now under protection all over the world, but decades ago, dolphins were considered food in some countries. Fishermen could catch them freely to sell in the market.

At that time, fishermen in one fishing village in Japan, called Taiji, depended their living on catching dolphins. Every year in September, dolphins, over twenty thousand in number, would migrate to some unknown places and they would pass the bay of Taiji. Fishermen would wait at the outside of the bay and when the dolphins arrived, they would make noise to frighten the dolphins. A few hundred would swim into the bay to escape the fear of noise. Then, the fishermen would block the bay with fishing net. There, hundreds of dolphins became prisoners in the bay.

On the second day, the Taiji village was so busy because many aquarium trainers from all over the world came to buy good quality dolphins for their own country. They paid high prices to buy. But their demands were limited, twenty to thirty were the maximum.

The remaining dolphins were killed for food. All dolphins were killed in the bay by very sharp forks to pierce through their hearts to let them die quickly. At that moment, the seawater would turn to red, which is very sad indeed. Then, those dead dolphins were pulled to the fish market for sale. The scene was cruel because of such huge number of dead dolphins lying together.

Care

American people always say, “Home, sweet home, home, home sweet.” Why home is so sweet and important? It is because home is the foundation where care come from. We care for our family and our family care for us. If we have no family, we have no body to care for us, and at the same time, we have no body to care for.

Still, in this world, somebody is lonely. Nobody cares for him and he cares for nobody. In the Novel “A Tale of Two Cities”, written by Dickens, told the story of an English lawyer who loved the wife of a French nobleman. When the revolution army arrested this nobleman and sentenced him to death, the English lawyer suggested to the nobleman’s wife that he would risk his life to rescue her husband. The lady, despite such offer from the man who loved her without condition, could not accept his proposal. But this English lawyer said to her: “I have no one to care for and no one cares for me. It is meaningless for me to live in this world.” Finally, he rescued the nobleman and died in his place.

Therefore, if we want to have a happy life, we must have someone to care for, and we need to be cared by someone. That is why we need a family, which is the only thing to care for and to be cared. Between friends, there is no care, only sympathy.

If a man and a woman are in love, they will care for each other, but if they cannot become husband and wife, they will eventually separate. Then the care they have for each other will disappear.

Tiger Life, A Dream

In Asia, tiger is the king of animals. Lion can only be king of animals in Africa. Tiger lives in the deep and high mountain, overlooking its territory in a wide range. When any animals see the tiger, they will swiftly run away to escape. Tigers now only live in South Asia, such as Malaysia, Thailand, and in India, where there are more tigers. Of course, in the South West of China, there are tigers too, but not so many in number. In America or in Europe, there are no tigers whatsoever.

People kill tigers for their skins and bones. Skins for making coats and bones for medical purpose. Now the government prohibits people to hurt or kill tigers because in China, tiger is getting fewer and fewer in number.

Tiger is king of the forest, but in real life, they also face sad disasters. In a documentary, we see that in India, in a forest in the high mountain there lived a family of tigers, which consisted of a father tiger, a mother tiger, and three tiger cubs, living happily together in a long-abandoned temple. One day, a young, wandering male tiger invaded their family zone and, of course, the father tiger fought against the invader. As a result, the father tiger died in the fight. The mother tiger, seeing the disaster, rushed out to some near distance place to attract the invader to follow her. The mother tiger knew that if the invader had entered the temple, the three cubs would be killed. The reality was that the mother tiger was forced to leave the temple to follow the invader to a new place, leaving the three cubs unattended.

Seek Imperfection

Whatever we do, we should not ask ourselves to be too perfect. In this world, nothing is perfect. What we can do is to live with imperfection. Therefore, we must keep a philosophy that imperfection is perfection.

Especially with people, we must not ask too much of them, otherwise we shall never be satisfied with what they have done for us.

Even when we hired a maid, we should not expect too highly that she can do everything for us. They are poor people and not highly educated. They cannot think the same way we think. Better to lower our expectation and accept what they have done for us.

But, to uneducated persons, we cannot reason with them, instead we can only use force. In modern days, we can use our right to fire them.

That is why in the ancient days, many male and female servants working inside the palace where king and queen lived, they were not subject to the law outside the palace; rather they were under the control of the king and the queen, who could put them to death if those servants made mistakes. Therefore, all the servants in the palace were very obedient, fearing they could be put to death without a trial.

Nowadays, humans and animals are under the protection of law. We cannot punish anyone by our own liking. It is important for us to be lenient and patient should anything unpleasant happen to us. Actually, except our lives, there really are not many big things worthy of us to pay serious attention. Learning a philosophy of accepting imperfection is the best way.

Spanish Construction

When we travel to Spain, the first thing is to see bullfighting. This is the traditional spectacle of Spain. We must see it. Bullfighters must be trained at a young age, mostly from poor families. If one of them is successful, he will be a star in the eyes of the Spanish people. He can have wealth and glory, away from poverty forever. It is an exciting but cruel game. Both Spanish people and tourists like it.

The Spanish dance “flamingo” is also famous. The dance music is a combination of Arabian, Jewish and Gypsy. Flamingo means that this music belongs to poor and homeless people, with pure sentiment.

The standard of Spanish construction is also high. It is because in the medieval, Arabs invaded Spain and administered Spain for three hundred years, leaving a great deal of culture in Spain, construction knowledge was one of them. If you go to mosques in Spain, you will find you are in the realm of God. Inside the mosques, you see so many thin long pillars, supporting curve roofs where many famous paintings are painted. When you are in the pillars forest, you do not know where you are.

In 1492, Christian came to power. Jews were driven out of the country, Mohammedan privileges were abolished, and the Arabian language cancelled. In 1610, all Arabs were driven out of Spain.

In Spain, there is a famous palace called “El Escorial”, which is very glorious, took twenty one years to build by the king of Spain, Philips, the second. The palace is rectangular in shape, the length is one mile long, and built on more than ten square miles on a green flat land, no forest and no other buildings are on that green land. It is a unique and graceful building in that green landscape. Inside the palace, there is a big church, with many famous paintings; the most famous one is about Jesus taking off his dress before he was to be crucified. The drawing was so expressive that we can see Jesus’s expression of pain and helplessness at that very moment.

Nobody Helps You

Most of us have the mentality that when something happen to us, someone will help us. It is possible that our friends will help us when we ask them for help. But there are two things that nobody can help us, they are money and health. Money is essential to our life and we have to acquire it by ourselves. Therefore, we absolutely have to earn money by ourselves. Money will not come to our pocket by itself. In order to get it, we have to get it lawfully either by labor or by brainwork. If we can make money legally, we can enjoy our life peacefully. But if we get money illegally, we shall have disaster afterwards. After we have made money, we must know how to keep it, or it will disappear like cloud in the sky or like falling flower on the stream, we cannot guarantee that what we earned today we will earn again tomorrow.

As far as health is concerned, we absolutely have to depend on ourselves. Doctors can only help us temporarily, so we have to take care to prevent illness from developing in the first place. Therefore, we have to pay attention and take great care with our daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, exercising, and our digestive health, in order to build up our body's immune system to become as strong as possible to prevent any kind of illness, which can attack us at any moment.

Young Nobel Girl

In 2014, the winner of the “Nobel Peace Prize” was a twenty-year-old girl from Pakistan. Why such a young girl could win such high honor and large amount of award money? Many people all over the world wished to know what had she contributed to the peace of the world. That is because in Nobel’s history, no one at such young age had been a winner. According to the records, the average age of a winner is sixty-two. Therefore, newspaper all over the world paid a lot of attention to this girl.

Of course, there must be a reason for her success in winning the peace prize. The story went back to when she was in primary school. She rode school bus to school every day. One day, a gunman shot at her bus, wounding her left-brain. Luckily, she was saved, and survived. This shooting attracted attention from all the newspaper reporters, who found that this girl had spoken out and advocated for the equality of education for girls. That was the reason that the gunman wanted to kill her.

But, it was not so. She was just unlucky and was wounded in an act of terrorism. However, her bravery was that after she was shot, she continues to cry out loudly for equal education for girls, fearing nothing of being shot again by gunman.

From that time onward, she became famous around the world. Her photo appeared on the front page of “Time” magazine, and she was received by the Queen of England and the President of the United States. Finally, she won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

Now Is Forever

Sunrise and sunset, it is a normal thing of nature that is everlasting. For millions of years in the past, and millions more in the future, it will never change. But we are human, and when we come to this world, we immediately face a life of reality; sadness and happiness, disgrace and glory.

From infant to our old age, it is a long way to go. We live in everlasting time. We grow and die as a “must”; no one can escape from this cycle. But, “everlasting” give us today, “now”. Therefore, we must seize the very moment “now”. One philosopher said: “Action produce habit, habit produce character and character produce destiny.” Then what is the destiny that is “now”?

We can see our destiny is “now”. “Now” will determine our destiny, good or bad, depending on what we do now. We are human, made of flesh and blood, not a spirit that does not eat and only a shadow. We need to eat when we are hungry; we fear cold and hot, itch and pain. We have happiness and sadness because we live in reality, in the material world.

Therefore, we must seize “now”, do what we should do, fulfil duties that we should fulfil. Do not think life is too short and live a playful life. Do not ponder the past, which is gone forever, whether the past is glorious or disgrace. Do not depend on tomorrow. Tomorrow is mysterious and unknown. Depend on “now” which is the only moment to bring you happiness.

King Lear

“King Lear” is a play, one of the thirty-seven plays written by Shakespeare. The most famous Shakespeare’s plays are “Hamlet” and “Romeo and Juliet”. But all Shakespeare’s plays are good.

This story described a medieval King of England. His name was Lear. He considered himself old, so it would be better to retire from the duty as a king in order to enjoy life the rest of his declining years. One day, he summoned his three daughters to his presence and told them he wanted to give his kingdom equally to the three daughters. The first and second daughters spoke nicely to the king and received their shares of the kingdom smoothly. But the third daughter could not speak well and offended the King. The king was angry and cancelled her share of the kingdom. Instead, her share was divided and given to her two sisters.

As soon as the power of administration was transferred from the king to his daughters, situation changed drastically. The first daughter refused to let her father live in her territory in fear of his father’s one hundred loyal bodyguards, that they might rebel against her one day. Lear was forced to go to his second daughter, who also refused as her sister did. The king then realized that he had made a fatal mistake, but was now too late to regret. At the end of the play, the king and the two daughters all died, and how they died, you will have to read the play.

Destiny of Snake

In America, there is a town with a big forest nearby where many different types of snakes live. This town is famous for producing snake products, such as snakeskin handbags, wallets, shoes and boots. Every year there is a festival of snake celebration. Many American snake experts go there to join competition, winner of which can get large amount of money as well as recognition and glory. Some entertainer will draw a square that is one hundred square feet in size and erect a wooden fence around it on the ground. He will then lie on the ground inside the fence and his assistant will put a few hundred poisonous snakes inside the fence to test his bravery.

There is also an old American woman who depends her living on snakes. She lives by the foot of a big mountain where it is full of snakes. She knows very well which holes the snakes live in. When snake hunters come to this mountain, they will ask the old woman to be their guide, with the condition that she gets fifty percent of the snakes they catch.

Some Hong Kong people like to eat snake meat. When autumn comes, large quantities of snakes are exported from China to Hong Kong. Some Hong Kong snake restaurants supply snake dishes specially. Some young girls who cannot get jobs in other fields will work in the snake restaurants, where over a thousand snakes are kept in cages. When the girls see the snakes for the first time, they are so afraid, but as time goes on, they can handle snakes easily, same as we handle our noodles. They have to handle a few hundred snakes every day. First is to cut off its head, and then peel off its skin, cook its body a little while, then the last step is to take out the bones, and finally the meat can be cooked in any style.

Romeo and Juliet

This story was written by Shakespeare, who is known all over the world. But the content of the story is not fit for young people whose minds are shallow, unable to analyze the true meaning of love.

In the story, Romeo is only a sixteen-year-old boy and Juliet a thirteen-year-old girl. They did not know what love is. They only felt that by being together, they felt fun and happy. The worst thing was they got married after knowing each other for only three days.

Due to the difficulty of Shakespeare's writing, most people only know the general idea of the story. They did not study the story sentence by sentence. Therefore, many people think that Romeo and Juliet represent the meaning of true love, pure, unselfish, and everlasting, neglecting that their love was very childish and lacked the foundation of reality. That is why when they came back to reality, the ending was a tragedy.

Now, let us talk about the story. Romeo and Juliet were born to two different rich families that were hostile to each other. Juliet was a family girl, knowing nothing about the outside world. Romeo was a playboy, fooling around in the streets with his friends. One day, Juliet's family held a masquerade party, and Romeo came to this party with his friends. At that party, Romeo met Juliet and they felt in love with each other. After only three days together they went to the church, went to a priest they knew privately and asked him to witness their marriage. The priest thought it might be a good thing that if they marry each other, the hostility between the two big families could melt away. He witnessed the marriage. But because of his so-called good intention, tragedy happened afterwards.

Free Style Trip

Nowadays many people like to travel. But if you like to travel, you have to join a tourist group whose professional knowledge can lead you to the places you desire. However, they can only show you the places for a very short time and do not allow you to stay longer to enjoy the places more deeply. It is just like when we ride a horse, passing the scene of beautiful flowers quickly.

Therefore, you must not expect that you can see the sceneries of seven countries in seven days, you are actually only passing by the seven countries. If you really wish to see the country, it is better to have some friends going together and join the local tour of that country. At the same time, you can reserve your own time for more private sightseeing.

For example, if you want to go to Finland, you can go to the capital Helsinki, where you can find a local tour guide who will guide you to anywhere you like to see. Of course, you must have private time to enjoy sauna bath, which is now popular in big cities around the world. However, the sauna in Finland, the atmosphere there is entirely different. You can go to a sauna bathhouse that is located at the side of a river. When you stay five to eight minutes inside the sauna room, you will sweat as if it is raining from your body. You have to rush out and throw your body into the river, which is cold all year round. You will enjoy the feeling of extreme hot into extreme cold in a matter of a few minutes.

Now, many people also like to go to Africa to see animals. In Africa, there are many camps in the animal zones. Those camps are like hotels, which supply everything for the tourists' needs. Such camps are in the middle of the animal zones, but it is quite safe there. At night, guards will be on duty to protect tourists who can see animals of different kinds during the day.

Slow Heartbeat

Turtle can live up to one hundred years, but rat only live two years. Why? It is because turtle is slow and rat is fast. The result is “Fast heartbeat, live short, slow heartbeat, live long.”

We are human. The fastness or slowness of heartbeat also determine the length of our lives. For a young person, fast heartbeat is not harmful. But for a middle age person, fast heartbeat will cause him to get older quicker. For an old person, fast heartbeat is surely dangerous to him, leading him to die earlier.

Therefore, football and basketball are only good for young people. Those sports are not fit for middle age people. For old age people, any strenuous exercise will be a killer to them.

In China, we have many kinds of exercises, which we call “Kung Fu”. Among them, only “Tai Chi” is the most popular and long lasting, and fit for middle age people, especially for older ones. Other “Kung Fu” exercises are for younger generation.

Another way that can cause your heart to beat faster immediately is uncontrolled anger. Many old people died instantly because they were too easy to get angry, which made their heart blood vessels unable to bear the fast speed of blood circulation.

If we wish to delay our aging and not die accidentally, we have to keep our mood peaceful all the time. Never get into anger against unpleasant things that we may encounter.

King Yongzheng

Yongzheng was the fourth son of Kangxi. After he got the throne, some people said he had secretly changed the contents of Kangxi's will. But the rumors might have come from the mouths of his brothers who were jealous of him for getting the throne.

Yongzheng was not as great as Kangxi at extending the territory of his country, but he was a diligent king, working long hours every day to attend to his duty. He became king at the age of forty, died at fifty-three. During the thirteen years of his reign, he worked extremely hard to handle the affairs of government, and at the same time, he had to watch with particular attention to his brothers who wanted to overthrow him from the throne.

Yongzheng, however, was not an honorable man. The night before his coronation, he invited a group of his assistants who had helped him become king by doing evil things when he was a prince. But in this party of thanks, he poisoned all those people to death in order to keep his evil doing secrets forever.

He also had a romantic affair when he was a prince. Decade ago, his father sent him to a distance province to get something done. On passing a village, he fell in love with a country girl and had sexual relationship with her. When he went back to the capital, he had forgotten all about his romantic affair. One day he met a beautiful maid in the palace. He took her as a concubine. Then days went by, from her conversation, he found out that she was the daughter of his girlfriend decade ago. He was quite upset by this unexpected event.

Yongzheng died at fifty-three from overwork and from taking some pills, which had poisonous effects on his body.

Hu Xueyan

Older Chinese all know the name Hu Xueyan. Hu was a government supported businessman near the end of the Ching dynasty. He was regarded as the richest person in China at that time. It was so from the surface, but actually he was not as rich as many people thought he was.

Who was Hu Xueyan? He was a junior staffer at a small Chinese bank in Hangzhou. One day he lent the bank's money to his friend who needed money to go to the capital for further examination to get a high post in the government. Of course, his employer fired him for this impropriety.

Later, when rebel forces surrounded Hangzhou and food was scarce inside the city, Hu Xueyan, with the help of his low class friends, smuggled rice into the city and he made huge profit. When the rebellion was over, Hu established a small bank called Fukang in Hangzhou. Later he met a general named Zuo Zongtang and he became a purchasing manager for Zuo's army from which he made again large amount of money. Then Hu Xueyan set up many branches all over big cities in China, and the Shanghai branch was the biggest one. He offered high interest to depositors, and consequently, he got big deposits from all walks of life. He used the bank's money to buy silk from farmers and then sell at high prices to the market. At that time, he thought that if he could monopolize the business, he would earn much higher profit.

He started to use all the bank's deposits to buy silk, which was then stored in warehouses, waiting for good prices to sell. But his competitors, seeing his bank was now short of cash, spread rumors that Hu's bank was about to go bankrupt. The result was that all depositors rushed to Fukang to withdraw their money, forcing Fukang to close its door and declared bankruptcy.

Seize Initiative Today

The “initiative” is not to other people, but to ourselves. The true purpose is to ask ourselves to live positively, a meaningful life, to throw away our bad habits. We are human, we like easy life and hate to labor. This is the nature of human. However, we need to change our character and seek a balanced life. That is to enjoy and to work as our way of life.

To have initiative is to seize the moment to do something useful in our life. For example, if we want to lose weight, we must not only think about how to lose weight, but actually take action toward losing weight. Seize the initiative and start today. Simply eat a little less every meal, and little by little, in due time, our weight will slowly go down. If we have bad habits like drinking or smoking, start by drinking and smoking a little less each day. Then slowly, we shall find ourselves living a life without alcohol and cigarettes. The important thing is to start, so seize the initiative and start today.

We have friends, of course, and have dinner parties, maybe few times a week. We may think going to these parties waste a lot of time and wish to cut down on the frequency. Now, today is the time to start making adjustment. We can reject invitation from friends who are not important and slowly we can cut out unnecessary parties. We may also wish to start doing exercise to keep our body fit, but we do not start, instead keep on delaying. Today, seize the initiative and start an exercise you like.

Whatever you do, the most important thing is to keep persistency. Nothing can be successful if you do not persist. Therefore, you must build your character to be persistent. If you cannot continue what you want to do, then do not start.

New Year Snail

Today is the first day of Chinese New Year. As a tradition, relatives and friends will visit each other in the New Year to say greetings and good wishes. Most people do not see each other during the year and now they use this New Year holiday to renew friendship.

During the New Year, children are so happy because they can play all day and get lucky money from adults. As for adults, they wish to have a peaceful year this year. For middle age men, they wish to make more money for their enjoyment. Old men pray for their good health to live longer.

Now we are going to talk about the philosophy of New Year snail, which will be useful to middle age and old people alike. To snail, its shell is very heavy, but it carries its shell wherever it goes. The shell is its house without which it cannot live. To carry the house, snail needs good health to support it. Therefore, snail must keep its health in sound condition.

We are human, the house we live in is like the shell of a snail, and we cannot live without a house. To keep the house, we need good health. House is also wealth; therefore, we need to have good health and wealth in our life, like snail and its shell. The situation is now very clear that we must pay full attention to have good health as well as wealth, we must be fully aware that lacking of either one will bring us disaster.

It is entirely dependent on you how to deal with your health and wealth. The principle is that you must have wealth in your lifetime, just as a snail has its shell while it is alive.

Life by a Thread

In May 1939, the small town of Portsmouth in the east coast of America was a submarine base. One day a submarine sailed twenty-five miles out to the sea to practice their routine training. This was their 19th training, but in this training, accident happened. The tail part of the submarine was damaged and seawater rushed in, killing twenty-six crewmembers in a few minutes. The captain gave order to close the door in the middle part to save the crew at the front part where there were thirty-three crewmembers, including the captain himself.

Many ships on the surface of the sea were searching desperately for the sunken submarine. Finally, they found the buoy from the submarine. Using the telephone found inside the buoy, rescue team knew that there were still survivors in the sunken submarine.

This was the headline news all over the world. How to save the crew from the bottom of the sea was a problem the navy did not know how to solve and could only hope for a miracle. By God's grace, one man appeared, a Swede, who was also a navy man, with a device he invented. He spent his entire life studying how to rescue people from sunken submarine. He invented many devices, but the navy authority rejected them all. Finally, he invested his own money to build an iron barrel, ten feet wide in diameter and twenty feet in height. The bottom fit the submarine escape hatch. The barrel was tied by iron chains, slowly lowered from the ship on the surface to the escape hatch of the submarine to allow the crew to get in, and then lifted up to the surface. Miraculously, this device saved all thirty-three people in the submarine.

Blackbeard

Many people know that Blackbeard was the nickname of a Caribbean Sea pirate. His story was made into a movie. The movie beautified the pirates to some extent, making people think that pirates were not so terrible and cruel. However, pirates are pirates; their jobs are to kill, to rob and to set fire. They are not rational people, with a philosophy to live only for today.

In the Caribbean Sea, there were many pirates; Blackbeard was the most renowned and famous. Where did the pirates come from? They were sailors who once served the English Navy, but when the war ended, Anna, the Queen of England, abandoned them. In order to live, they became pirates in the Caribbean where they were quite familiar with the area and knew very well that law could not control them. The sailors elected Blackbeard as their captain to lead them. The rule of pirate is fair to everybody. Money and goods robbed must be equally divided to everybody. To say it simply, everything must be equally shared. Such rule even applied to human relationship.

One day, Blackbeard went ashore to a village and there he met a family girl and fell in love with her. He married her in a solemn ceremony witness by a priest in a church. He stayed in the village for a certain period and afterwards he brought his wife to the ship. But after boarding the ship, he must follow the rule of pirate, that his wife must be shared with every crew in the ship. His wife was so sad to face such destiny.

Finally, Blackbeard was shot to death by a bullet in a battle with the British Navy, thus ending his rebellious life.

Panama Canal

During the 1860s, there was a French man, called Ferdinand de Lesseps, who built the Suez Canal for Egypt. It was really a grand construction, allowing steamers to sail back and forth on a river in the middle of a desert. His name was known to all parts of the world.

In 1879, Ferdinand was seventy-three. That year he thought to bring the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean together by a canal to save eight thousand miles in ship voyage. From the map, he found that the shortest distance between Pacific and Atlantic was through Panama. He went to Panama and asked the Panamanian government for the right to build a canal. The government granted his request on the condition that he must arrange his own financing. Due to his record of success with the Suez Canal, he was easily able to obtain enough funds from investors.

He started from the Pacific side, and in the beginning, the work was quite smooth. But when his work progressed up to Panama, he met extreme difficulties. Over there, heavy rain fell day and night. Many of his workers suffered unknown disease and many died. In addition, his company faced financial problems and was forced to declare bankruptcy. He died soon after in regret.

Seventeen years later, in 1904, American President Theodore Roosevelt, with the benefit of his navy, continued this failed project. American engineers used another method by using a dam system. After huge financial investment, the canal was completed in 1914.

We should remember this French gentleman Ferdinand de Lesseps. If he did not start the Panama Canal project, he might have lived a long life and enjoyed the fame of Suez. But without his starting and failure, today's Panama Canal might not exist.