

BRONZE AWARD

Low Xuan Hong

Roundabout

"Grandpa, why do you have a scar on your neck?" asked Samuel curiously.

"What? What were you saying?" I replied.

"Grandpa, I was asking why you have a neck scar!"

"Oh, you mean this scar! Before I tell you the story, you need to know that your parents don't want me to tell you this kind of story, but I think it is time for you to know what you need to avoid."

Storytime begins...

It all started when I was 18. I was a stubborn lad, a troublemaker. It was also the worst time ever in my whole life. My parents divorced, and I fought with my dad every day. I went out to live by myself. However, I didn't have any money or a place to sleep. At that time, I only thought of committing crimes to earn money, so I did many bad things. Then I saw a seller selling 'medicine', so I tried some and didn't stop. I took too much 'medicine', which was terrible for my health. I also had a female friend, and we were always together. Because we took too much 'medicine', sometimes we saw things that were not true. Employers didn't like people like us, so we couldn't get jobs. It all looked fine for 18-year-old me until my female friend disappeared one day.

The last time I saw her, she was hanging herself in a room. This incident broke me. I loved her. I wondered why she had left me alone and if my actions were good for myself and others. At that time, I was like a lost zombie who didn't know what to do, as if my

soul had been taken away. I was like that for a few weeks. I even tried to disappear, which was how I got this scar.

My uncle saw me one day and gave me a chance. I doubted for a while, but then he talked to me and inspired me to be better. So, I took the opportunity, and he took me to a centre where he was working. The centre was like a kindergarten. We exercised there every morning; instead of children, we were adults. My life was harrowing because I was addicted to medicine, but my uncle helped me. He taught me how to focus and discussed our society's problems. We exercised and went to do community work together.

Then after 5 months, I was no longer trapped with the demon addict for medicine. My uncle then suggested I go to school while working. He helped me find a job at a restaurant as a waiter. However, many schools rejected me, believing I had no hope. I was on the verge of giving up, but my uncle tried to encourage me at the time, furious like a tiger. I went out alone and ignored my uncle. I doubted myself once again. I didn't know what to do at the time. I was unwilling to give up, but I felt like the world had given up on me.

After a while, my uncle found me and told me, "You shall never give up until the very end, as you don't know what the future has in store for you." At that time, I calmed myself down and listened, then I asked myself if my uncle hadn't given up, why should I. So, we continued to find a school for me, and thankfully after a few more days, a school accepted me. However, because the job I had at the time was quite far from the school, I had to quit the job and find another, but with determination I managed to find a job to support my living cost.

My uncle was so supportive. He even paid for some of my school fees. Since I hadn't been learning for a long time, my basics were terrible, but my uncle had hope in me, and so should I. The time at the school was tiring, but I still managed to learn the basics for my age within one year. With that, I graduated and found myself in a better place. I told

"Oh, you're asleep! Goodnight, then. Have a good dream."

**medicine - drug*