A Volunteer Service Meaningful to Me

Life is made up of various experiences. It could ecstatic moments like achieving career goals, obtaining a prominent award or a mother giving birth to an adorable baby and so forth. It could be experiences of sheer melancholy, such as suffering a bereavement, wounded by the cutting edges of a friend’s verbal vituperation, or despaired by a complete failure. Some memories flow away with the rapid lapse of time, while others influence us profoundly. You replay, re-replay the scenes in your head as if a troupe rehearsing for a public performance. They are engraved viscerally in heart eternally. Such is the case with a volunteer program which I took part in during my sophomore year in high school.

“A bell ripped over the cavernous room, cutting the suffocating silence right open, announcing the start of my very first midterm exam in high school. All of the students proceeding in synchronized moves, flipping the pages of the seemingly endless examination questions. The atmosphere was tense and compressing. It felt like the depths of a strikingly cold winter and I felt as if I could faint at any second. A monstrous vermin messing up with my stomach was threatening to devour me.” I could still clearly recall how frightened and insecure I first entered high school as a freshman. Everybody in my class seemed to be all so confident and sophisticated that I strongly feared that I couldn’t keep up. But with days of untiring diligence and as I gradually grew intimate with my peers, I found life in high school extravagantly enjoyable.

The summer when I turned into my sophomore year, I made up my mind to enter a volunteer program organized by my school to help students in their freshman year with clubs, schoolwork, relationships……etc, anything that linked to their daily lives. I was assigned to help a particular girl who told me that she lacked confidence in absolutely everything. I was totally thrilled to get to help her because that was how I felt exactly in my first year. Now as a top grade student in class, even if I am particularly good at some subjects, I would never appear stingy and close-fisted to share what I know with fellow classmates because I believe that teaching and learning promotes each other and that when a person grows indifferent and aloof to other’s problems, he or she is cutting off important feeling and experiences which could have otherwise been an opportunity to learn more and broaden horizons.

I gave Winnie, the girl I was going to assist through her freshman year, a teddy bear handmade by myself as a present the first day we met. I told her that she could count me on in whatever difficulties she faced and that it would be a pleasure if she viewed me as a sister and friend instead of a tutor. I think I saw moisture brimming her eyes as I spoke. We checked our schedules and agreed to meet twice a week on Wednesday noons and Friday mornings.

During the initial weeks, it was all about schoolwork that we discussed. I was baffled to discover that I had pretty much forgotten everything taught in my freshman year especially Mathematics and Social Studies. So I had to do some secret review work everytime before we meet, lest I gape like a total idiot at the questions she asked. Thanks to that, I found my preparations for the college admission test going quite smoothly how in my senior year.

However, I could still sense a peck of insecurity in Winnie’s big, wonky eyes during our brief twenty-minute meeting. Finally on one drizzling Wednesday noon, I inquired her about it. She
confessed that she had major problems with her English because no matter how hard she endeavored to memorizing the vocabulary, or understanding the principles of grammar, her grades just won’t improve. I recommended her to read English novels, saying that it is universally the most efficient way to adopt a language. I lent her several of my favorites, including the hailed Harry Potter series by the talented J.K Rowling, The exciting Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins……etc.

Afterwards during our meetings, we found ourselves immersed in the magical realm of the Harry Potter World. We were casting patronuses on spooky demonters, howling at the full moon with were wolves, chewing delightly on Bertie Bott’s Every Flavored Beans, laughing our heads off with the mischeivous poltergiest who always succeeds in driving the caretaker Filch mad, stirring potions in the dampy dungeons with the sulky face of Severus Snape, soaring through the lofty goalposts playing Quidditch……, having the time of our lives.

At the end of the semester, Winnie hopped dancingly in front of me, a jubilant smile on her face and showed me her English grades. “What a progress!” I exclaimed. Her improvements were far beyond my expectations. We hugged and cried and went crazy. The pride blossoming in my chest was indescribable.

A year passed swiftly and the volunteer program was coming to an end. On the farewell party, Winnie and I wailed like childish crybabies. We made each other swear that we would continue to phone and text. It was hard to utter out the words with the upheavals of my chest continuing so fast one after another, with a struggle, I quoted Dr. Seuss’ words and told her “Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened.”

The flame Winnie and I ignited throughout that year was truly remarkable. Through this particular volunteer service, I’ve found a wholly different version of myself, a person who is capable of conquering lofty obstacles, a sympathetic girl who thrives on helping others and whose life time goals would be fulfilled in making even a progress too imperceptible to be noticed. I aspire to be a willing volunteer in the rest of my life.