Yuki Yamato

ENG 100

Formal Assignment #2: Narrative Project, Draft #1

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Speech Contest

I was looking at the dark high ceiling to relieve my tension. Even though it was cold because of air conditioners, I was sweating a lot. I felt like a criminal who would be judged in a court after a few minutes. I wanted to run away from there right now, but I was still too young to take a train or drive a car for dozen miles to go home by myself. Then I learned and lamented unreasonableness of life. As the time getting closer, my tension increased rapidly. I had a dry mouth, and my body started trembling slightly. I tried to talk to a person sitting next to me, but she looked like busy practicing for her speech. Thus, I did not disturb her, and I continued to wait until the moment of fate.

The summer in the second grade of elementary school, I was called to my English teacher’s room after my final class. I wondered why I was called by her because I had no idea what she would talk about. I was nervous a little bit, but I went toward the room.

After I knocked a white sliding door, she responded and opened the door in a few second.

“How are you?” she asked me gently.

“I am fine,” I felt strange a little bit, but I responded to her.

At first, she made a small talk for a while. I noticed that she tried to ease my tension and watch for a chance to talk about something important, but I kept responding to her.

“Do you have any plan for this summer?” she asked me another question, but this time, she seemed to read my thought.

“Yeah…I will go to my grandparent’s house with my family,” I responded to her although I wanted to go home as soon as possible and played with my friends.

“It is a nice plan…by the way, you were chosen as a participant of English speech contest,” she said after a little pause.

At that moment, the light went out of my eyes, and I felt like the time stopped for a short while.

“Sorry, could you say that again?” I asked her back unintentionally.

“You were chosen as a participant of English speech contest,” she repeated same words, but this time she said slowly and clearly.

In fact, I had already known that my teacher chose one student every year, and the student had to take part in an annual English speech contest. However, I did not expect that I would be chosen at all. This is because I often kept chatting during her classes and caused trouble, so I could not say that I was an honor student.

Before I left the room, she said, “this speech contest will be held in a big hall after three months. Good luck!” However, I could not hear her voice anymore because my brain stopped working.

When the girl sitting next to me stood up from the chair because her name was called by a chairman, my mind came back from the world of fantasy. At the same time, my nervousness also came back, and I was convinced that that situation was a real. I could not think that my turn would come next after her speech. I followed her with my eyes while she was walking toward the bright spotlight, and I tried to imagine that I would be under the spotlight a few minutes later.

While I was thinking many things such as possible failure, my name was called by the chairman. I wanted to stay the old wood chair forever, but I knew that I could not turn back. Therefore, I prepared myself for giving my speech and walked toward the spotlight. After I reached and stood in the middle of the stage, I could not see anything for a while. Also, it was very hot due to the strong light. My eyes gradually used to the brightness, but next, I noticed that there were much more people than what I expected. Maybe the number of audiences was more than 300. I felt some judges who were sitting in the front of seats were looking at me and could not move for a while. The audiences gradually finished clapping, and there was a silence.

Fortunately, I was able to remember all the practice which I did for the three months, and I came to my senses. I took a deep breath to calm my mind, and I started my speech with the first line which I repeated over and over again. Surprisingly, I had no memory after I said, “Hi! My name is Yuki Yamato. I am eight years old.” From the second line, all words came out of my mouth automatically. I felt like I was watching myself from above.

I could not control the movement of my mouth, but my mind was so clear and empty. I was very surprised the happening. At the same time, I worried about it because there was no way to check whether I made a mistake or not. While I was thinking about it, my mouth suddenly stopped speaking, so I realized that I finished my speech. In a few seconds, the stage was instantly enveloped in silence again. I tried to say something in the end. However, I could not stand the quiet, and I made a bitter smile in spite of myself. I was so embarrassed and wanted to run away from there right now.

I still have disliked speaking in front of many people since that day. Particularly, I am not good at making eye contact with audiences. It is very uncomfortable and painful for me. Of course, I had some chances to make a speech such as a presentation in my classes before, but I always recall the small but unforgettable trauma before making a speech.