

My Story ~ 12. An Ordinary Road



“Go forward, never look back - travelling on an ordinary road is my way.”

I still remember that night I picked up my wife after work, but we didn't say a word. When we came to a corner my wife suddenly held me and burst into tears. She said: "I hate you! I have never washed so many bowls in my life time in one tonight!" I took her hands, and rubbed and stroked several strands of her messy hair, smiled embarrassedly and said: Whoops! How many bowls my wife's tender hands have washed and they have become rough! From now on, I will wash all the bowls at home." My wife stopped crying and started to laugh.

Since coming to Australia that was the first time she went out to work - someone introduced her to wash bowls in a restaurant. Before coming here, she had done chemical laboratory analysis in the domestic cement plant. Although she was not a white-collar worker, the life of sitting in an office was comfortable and leisurely. Since she had never suffered such a hardship, all night washing bowls roughened her hands. At that time we didn't have a car, and I still remember the second-hand bicycle I pushed that night. Except for the bell ring, the creaking noise when pushing the bicycle it was a silent, quiet road. That night the wind was howling and it kept on howling in my heart.

The road is just like this, and I must go forward.

I still remember that year my daughter came to Australia, she was only a child, who knew nothing about the world. Just because I was here she clamoured to follow and always said: "I will go anywhere my father stays." But she didn't know how much strength she would need if she wanted to obtain a foothold in a strange land. Suddenly she became a young adult, had part-time jobs and finished her school courses. No one told her the reasons but she knew that if she wanted to stay here, she must possess a capable identity and most important of all was language ability. So she applied for TAFE (Australia Technical and Further

Education) in a language school and studied for two years. She learned language very well and got an associate degree. Hardworking and thrifty child as she was, she never asked us for extra money except for tuition. She said: "Look, father, I settled by myself."

That was July, 2006. My daughter was only eighteen and had just graduated from high school. At that age she was supposed to enjoy a beautiful life but she had to shoulder important tasks for the whole family. In fact, she not only settled herself but also the whole family. Relying on our daughter, my whole family got the right of permanent residence. And slowly, we started to get used to living relying on our daughter: she was our family's "ambassador" when we went to the bank or visited a doctor. My wife and I were both ordinary working-class people in China with a junior high school diploma and we didn't learn any foreign language at that time. Once I drove home after work, and midway I was stopped by the police. I was scared and didn't know exactly what mistake I had made. I guessed hard and thought maybe I was driving too slowly on the expressway. At the same time, two workmates were also sitting in the car but they didn't know English either. The police said lots of words but we didn't understand anything. We dared not to look at the police but only showed the driving license to them. Maybe they realized that I didn't know English, so they helped me switch on the car lights and let me go. Without the company of my daughter, I didn't know how to continue walking on the road we had chosen.

However, my road was not smooth from the beginning. I was going abroad through an intermediary agent. After I arrived here, the agent helped me find a job in a steel structure factory; I worked as an electric welder, technical work. To work in an Australia factory you must pass an examination. The Australian people who conducted the examination taught us how to operate, weld the front side and then the opposite, or "back gouging" in jargon, which was the most important thing. But after being taught, we still couldn't cut deeply, not enough for back gouging. As a man who had never touched such automatic welding before (there was not only full automatic welding, but also half-manual and semi-automatic welding but in China only manual welding), I was blindsided and failed the examination twice. Finally, all the others passed and went to work except me. The six of us came here together, but I was the only one who didn't pass the exam and had no job to do - just stay at home. I felt like being abandoned by life. I still remember the scene: I smoked in the room alone, punched the wall and the

distress in my heart was so dense as to form a block. In our eyes, if you start to work, you are going to enjoy a better life and will be closer to the day of paying off your debts. For me, I handed over one hundred and eighty thousand yuan before leaving China. The domestic factory where I worked for twenty-two years had experienced the transformation from being a state-owned enterprise to being a private run company. The factory restructuring changed my identity as a worker. Because I was a laid-off worker and being paid out for my length of service, I got twenty thousand yuan compensation. Added to almost one hundred thousand yuan that I had saved, plus 70 thousand I borrowed from friends, I finally raised enough agency fees to go abroad. For me, so much debt on the shoulder was like a huge mountain that made me feel out of breath. Now I had finally arrived, but was wasting my time. There was a big lawn outside the factory and I just squatted on that ground, helplessly crying with two hands masking my face. That afternoon the sunshine was so good and warmed my face but somehow it failed to warm my ice-cold heart. That was man's desperation, bottomless and overwhelmed with sorrow.

Fortunately, I passed the third exam two weeks later, I passed. I worked desperately, trying to make up the two weeks that I lost.

Those were the days when I first came to Australia, at the end of 2005. I had never thought about what my road would be like in the future, but the beginning of the road was much more difficult than I had expected. Someone once joked that looking at my name one would predict that I would have a bright future ahead. My name is "Glory," which is a very common name from the Cultural Revolution period and it implies the family's expectation of "glory". In fact, my life has been full of hardships, thistles and thorns.

Our family status in China is just a little bit higher than the lowest class. The hardships we suffered at home were just like thistles and thorns. However, those days when we first arrived in Australia brought us great pressure and loneliness in addition to hardships.

Starting from working as a waitress in a restaurant at the Burswood Grand Casino, my daughter, through her own efforts and adjustment little by little now is a bartender of a VIP lobby bar. My wife changed her job from washing dishes at a restaurant to that of a cleaner in a Chinese hotel, from helping to make fried foods to working at a butcher's. The path we have taken has not been smooth.

Sometimes it is hard and other times it is not hard. At the beginning, we did work day by day. Sometime later, we had two-to-three-days a week doing part-time jobs and finally we got stable employment. Although the road we travel has twists and turns, we rejoice that finally we have been able to settle down. Now our family with three members has taken roots and sprouted in this land.

Without high status and a luxurious life, I am still an ordinary worker, but my life is full of harmonious happiness. My daughter has married; my wife and I plant some flowers and take a walk after work. Life is easy and comfortable. I cherish the small coins of what I experienced, though they seem of minor importance, like a cup of plain boiled water, I appreciate what my life has offered me.

I have experienced difficulties in life and cried my eyes out, and I have tasted the hardship of living but have also sought joy amidst the sorrow. I walked with the crowd, at times feeling depressed, frustrated, and disorientated; until I realized that ordinary life is comfortable enough for me. Go forward, never look back - an ordinary road is my way.