



The Reason I Am Still Alive

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"First Child Guide of
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This spring, I came across a book titled "The Reason I Am Still Alive." Now, I will introduce an excerpt from that book. "Why am I here? Is it okay for someone like me to still be here?" ...Being exposed to such questions about the reason for one's existence from an early age, even from a young age, is heartbreaking. Such questions were once the concern of bedridden elderly people who felt they were no longer useful (or so they believed), relying solely on others for care. Alternatively, they were the concerns of adults feeling extreme discord in their work or life, lost on the path of life. However, in modern society, such questions confront even elementary school children, not just teenagers. They harbor deep within themselves feelings of self-denial, for reasons they don't even understand, as well as anxiety and resignation. By Kiyokazu Washida, Kadokawa Sophia Bunko, p.29 The part I most empathized with was the statement, "In modern society, such questions confront even elementary school children, not just teenagers." I myself experienced isolation from classmates and teachers during elementary school, going through a tough time. What may seem trivial to adults is a serious mental issue for elementary school children regarding human relationships. Because they tend to believe, "This suffering will continue forever." In my case, fortunately, my human relationships improved with class changes, freeing me from "isolation." In hindsight, I think it was necessary to "have a broad mind." Isolation does not last forever. Human relationships can suddenly change at any moment. If you forgive the other person, they will disappear from your heart. Time is necessary for everything. For me, having a broad mind means being able to face this reality. The reason I am still alive is that beside "isolation," there are new encounters, and beyond the "darkness of the heart," there is a "light of the heart" waiting for me.



The Blissful Time of Doing Nothing

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I live in front of a road walked by the Tosa clan samurai during the Edo period during their Sankin-kotai duties. This Sankin-kotai road is called "Kitayama Crossing," which was first crossed by the 6th lord of the Tosa Domain, Toyotaka Yamauchi, in 1718. The Tosa Domain used to travel by sea, but it seems they changed to "Kitayama Crossing" because it was relatively safer and less expensive. Due to its location in the mountains, away from national highways, there are few houses around, and the number of children at the local Naro Elementary School is decreasing. But when I imagine more than 500 samurai and their families from the Tosa Domain walking along the road in front of the river into the Shikoku Mountains over 300 years ago, I feel delighted about living in an area with such a rich history. I commute to a high school in Kochi City by bicycle. It's a 2-hour round trip, but I love nature, so it's a fun time for me. Since this spring break, I've taken over from my sister as the caretaker for our dog.

In short, I spend one hour each day walking my dog along the deserted Sankin-kotai road and the nearby paths along the river. I listen to various genres of music like K-pop and J-pop while walking, but my mind is always "empty" during that time. Even at home, when I have free time, I "gaze vacantly" at the road and stream outside the window. The time spent "vacantly" in nature is a blissful time that calms my mind. Last November, the "TOKYO Do-Nothing Contest" was held at Toranomon Hills Oval Square in Tokyo. The main aim of this contest was to reconsider the work styles and lifestyles of modern people who have no time. Participants apply in groups of three and, on the day, just spend 90 minutes "artistically doing nothing in poses that utilize their occupations or statuses." Perhaps doing nothing is a trend. I plan to get a job after graduating high school. I'll probably be much busier than I am now, but even so, I hope to create time to "do nothing" in nature and live a peaceful life.