

From Room to Street

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#1

(Niels' garden)

Noticeably warmer weather. Until yesterday, it was so windy that it was difficult to hear birds, but today birds are chirping and flowers are blooming.

Feeling drowsy, we made coffee and sat in the garden where the sun was dazzling all day. Flies fly nearby, and neighbors' kids are playing in the distance. He says if I'm lucky, a cat will come and rest on the sofa where I'm sitting.

(My room)

There are three small, crater-like spots on my desk. This desk belongs to our dormitory.

Looking closely at the shape of the craters, they look like they were created by moisture accumulating in small scratches where the wood was torn off. They are raised convexly as if I can gently spot and copy them with graphite and thin paper. And I was worried that I might unknowingly spill water and make the craters bigger.

Sometimes I want a state of a more intense vacuum. Of course, I have never been in a complete vacuum, even though I wanted to. If I sit quietly in the corner of my room, I can hear the sounds of people living on the same floor. A slight vibration from a chair dragging or an old closet door noise, and even the sound of someone abruptly draining the sink.

A little while ago, we were talking about the immigration office that I visited recently.

On my way home after finishing the jammed process that took over a year, I felt as if I had gotten closer to the top of the pyramid, the position I had always wanted to reach, without knowing exactly what or where it was. It was as if someone gave me a lift to get to a certain

point quickly, carrying me on their giant palm. Somehow everything seemed simple after I got a valid answer from them, and I felt bad about myself for instantly forgetting what I went through.

(Yet the streets)

I like the streets. People on the street. Of course, it is difficult to be in direct proximity to them. I want to sit for a long time, where no one can notice me, and see what they do and what faces they have.

I like taking buses and trams to get where I need to go. I sit by the window and watch the people outside rather than looking at the people inside the train.

Tags and spray marks are randomly written everywhere in the city. People with strollers. Babies yawn. Sometimes, when I look at people's faces, I become curious about each person's piece of life.

I like being here. I might regret what I said later, but at least it's good for now. Even though the sky is cloudy, the air is clear, and the stars are visible at night.

#2

(Thinking of outside inside my room)

I often intentionally try to increase the time I spend in my room. Intentionally shutting myself off from the outer world.

My mindset is bound to be different when I consciously calculate and spend time in my room.

It was a long journey to find comfort.

I left my familiarity and placed myself in surroundings where no one recognized me. Since then, exactly one year has passed. A lot has changed, and a lot remains the same.

Some of the things I'm thinking about these days include this: *people here seem relatively relaxed*. I don't want to generalize, but it's an impression I often get when I see friends around me or have a chance to look closely into someone's life nearby.

These people are less likely to feel pressured for time or struggle with their daily lives. There seems to be less anxiety about reaching the finish line they have set. Sometimes, the 'finish line' I think about is not a goal for these people.

In the past, I always felt a harsh phase at every turning point in my life, and I especially remember experiencing those extremes during my school days. On the contrary, here, the situation is already over before it gets to that phase.

Another thought occurred to me again as I met my friends here. It's always me who is late, running, being chased, and apologizing. Some friends wait for me, tell me it's okay, and tell me to release my stress and take time. When things go wrong, it's me who is desperate and tries hard to make up for it.

It's hard to tell whether this nervousness and splitting my situations into nano-sized parts are entirely due to my personality or the environment that I grew up in.

Meeting this friend went differently than I initially expected.

At first, I thought he wasn't that interested in me. He was a face I saw every time our school schedules overlapped, and we warmly greeted and talked to each other. However, I realized the conversation would only progress when I met him in person, so I didn't send any messages or have any expectations.

Perhaps because I felt comfortable telling him my story, I often sat with him and explained my situation for a while.

Each time, he listened with a serious face. Then, a few weeks later, we saw each other again, exchanged greetings, and he asked me how the situation regarding the story I told him had resolved.

At that moment, regardless of him and this situation, I threw away my conditions for the establishment of friendship. Before then, I had specific hurdles or conditions in mind before I could regard someone as my friend.

And now that more time has passed, I can tell this friend almost everything I experience. It's one of those friendships where it's not strange, even if I am at my lowest.

#3

(While I'm outside)

The conversation we had a few days ago is worth recording. It's about how much our appearance affects our existence.

In other words, before I left the place I used to live in, I rarely thought about myself as a person from the perspective of people around the world.

On the other hand, since I came here, I think about it almost every day, several times a day.

I think about how I will be seen, how I will be viewed, what I should take as truth, and more.

This is something I had never thought about before, so some days it just passed me by. However, when a specific stimulus with the right frequency from an external situation comes, the unnecessary degree of self-objectification becomes worse without stopping.

Then, suddenly, I feel so vulnerable standing in this world, so I tend to secure myself at home for the next few days until I feel okay.

Otherwise, I will not be able to handle the indifferent yet intense stares on the subway and the random aggressions in the air, even though they are not directly targeted at me.

Until I knew that I was quite strong and would not easily break down from any external stimulus, I had to keep myself like that.

The longer I stay here, the more I realize that these kinds of people are everywhere, here and there, and the fact that people are staring at each other with intense eyes actually has no intention behind it.

Another important thing is to recognize that even in particular situations, I have to distinguish those interactions that involve people who know *me* from those who don't know me at all.

When I learned this, I also realized that the latter was not something I should worry about in life. However, reality always hits differently, and I consider what I receive, regardless of what sort of reality it is.

Sometimes, when I'm walking down the street with different friends, I think: am I benefiting from this friend now? What would be seen as a benefit here?

I wonder which friends that I'm with are disturbed by strangers in the street and which friends are not. When I walk with some friends, I look like a person who has integrated well into this society.

No matter what, I'm always counting those things in my mind. No one knows whether it is true or a misunderstanding born of experience.