

The pursuit of Happiness

“Goodbye China and Hello America!” I shouted in my heart. As the plane was descending, I leaned over the window and delightfully observed the glittering lights of Detroit city. America has always been my dream place to further my education and now it is right before my eyes. As soon as I got off the plane, I took a deep breath with the refreshing thought that America is where my previous dream’s destination and the start of other dream.

“Carefree” is the only word I could think of to describe my first month at Michigan State University. Academically, almost all the materials covered in my chemistry and statistics class fell within my domain of knowledge I gained in my Chinese high school, so I did not need much effort to complete the homework and score perfectly in periodical exams. Also the Human Development class failed to “threaten” me, as I possess a strong memory to memorize all the main points described in the textbook. Boasted myself as nearly an “professional” writer, I even chose an honors writing class, which was deemed as an audacious decision, as probably no speaker of English as a second language had ever taken this class in the history of Michigan State University. As the only international student in the class, I still managed to a decent grade on my first article summary. Everyday I go to class joyfully. Walking in the sun, across the grass, over the bridge, I wonder if I was living in a dream: never have I seen the sky so blue, the river so clear and the squirrels so lovely as they cross my path. I hang out with both Chinese and American friends, go to rock concerts, watch movies and even started learning swing dance, the last activities I would be good at. Such a life in college is exactly what I dreamed of, as if the sunshine would never cease.

I was so happy; it frightened me. As a Chinese proverb goes, “Good things never last long,” I somehow felt that there was something in the air foreshadowing a pause in this happy life I was leading. Before long this “disaster” came. I received a zero on my second article summary! It could not be true! I rubbed my eyes, only to see that score of 0/5 on the title page. I almost cried out when I got the article summary back. This could not be true: I spent two hours to read through and interpret the article full of abstruse vocabularies and sentences; other hour to make detailed notes on the main points of the essay and other three hours to write the three-page summary and type it into computer. I stayed up until three in the morning to complete this summary and now it received nothing! I could almost see my dreams were falling apart in front of me. It was not that I had never encountered the downs in my life; I seemed to be cheated out of my basic understanding that all the endeavors would pay off. As soon as I reached my dorm, I finally lay on my bed and cried, when the sunrays shone brightly through the curtains. For the past months I had never shed a single tear, and I thought I never would, even though nostalgia haunted me and the thought of living by myself in an alien country terrified me. However, at that moment, tears began running down my cheeks. I cried not only because of the pitiful zero on my article summary, but also due to the horrible implication that my endeavors in the college life might not pay off as well. However, I successfully controlled my emotions before I set off for the appointment I made with the language lab especially designed to solve the writing problems international students might encounter. I still refused to believe that this would help. The counselor was friendly, as all other faculties I met. After analyzing my article summary, she smiled at me and gave out the

most ridiculous comments I could have received. “Bessie, the only problem you have is that you studied too hard.” “What did she just say?” I said to myself, “in China teachers say ‘you can never study too hard’.” I looked at her in bewilderment. She continued, “You see all those notes you made. When writing an article summary, you do not need to exhaust yourself by trying to include everything in the essay. Try to summarize what you have read and then come up with your own ideas which can best summarize the main points. Yes, I said ‘do not study so hard, but try to have fun and study smartly instead of studying stressfully’.”

Her words clung to my head as I made my way back. “Do not study too hard!” At first it seemed too silly for me to take it seriously. Then it began making sense as I retrospect my recent college life. The chemistry and statistics class started beyond my domain of knowledge, and several exams were approaching. Everyday I was enslaved by homework and exams and I rarely participated in exercises and entertainment for the past two months. Everyday the great expectations my family in China had on me and the sense of the huge responsibility nearly suffocated me. Suddenly her work struck me. My college should not be as sullen as the gloomy weather. I came here not only to excel academically, but also to succeed socially. As a freshman in this land of opportunities, I should be out there fully experiencing every minute of my fantastic college life and even making a difference on campus instead of withdrawing. Thus I began truly engage myself in the college life. I continued swing dance, helped organizing the events in Chinese Students Association, volunteered in Academic Council, went to numerous art exhibitions and study abroad fairs and applied for a on-campus job. Although the weather was not always pleasant, sunshine filled my college life again, as I

appreciated the friendliness of faculties on campus, the precious friendship I made with students from diverse backgrounds and cultures and the stimulating thought that I will try my best to make my four-year college life glorious and splendid.

I know my journey to success may be arduous with possible difficulties, but the happiness is also just somewhere near the corner. I will carry out my pursuit of happiness with enthusiasm and confidence.