

A step back

She woke up every morning at the same time. The ceiling became similar in the same way a stranger's face seemed similar every time after years of passing in the same street. Eat, sleep, work, repeat. That's her life.

She never had any dreams. All she wanted was a happy life. Yet, even that she can't accomplish. How amusing.

"Kaera! Can you take care of this file, please" she was interrupted.

"Oh, Of course! Sorry, I was zoning out.."

Her colleague next to her looked at her with concern.

"You know Kae, you shouldn't overwork yourself, the next thing you know, you will be on a hospital bed."

"Oh, don't worry about that, I'm okay, haha" She brushed it off.

Kae was scrolling on her phone. She used to have a lot of hobbies but as time passed on, her hobbies started to fade away.

She thought about the comic that her colleague mentioned, should she give it a try? Finally, she gave in and clicked on the link.

The story was simple. It was about a cute little creature having adventures in their daily life with their friends. It's not anything special but... It brought a smile to Kae.

But then, Kae wondered. Can anyone really live like this? It's a silly question she thought, but she stayed up because of that.

It was a stressful day filled with anxiety.

Kae was on her train home.

She wondered how she had changed so drastically.

But now, that raging fire in her has faded away, almost empty. Life has changed her. Every day she wakes up thinking just one more day. Where had the adventure in life gone? How...

did her life turn out this way? She already has good grades, so why? Can she ever have adventures like in the comic?

Suddenly, Kae felt as if ice had melted in her neck and..

She blacked out.

She woke up in a hospital bed, the doctor next to her.

“You finally woke up Miss Pierce”

“What happened..?” Kae muttered

“It appears that you have fainted due to overworking yourself and your large amount of stress Miss Pierce” Said the doctor, flicking his notes

“Wha..? H-how about my work?”

“I fear we cannot discharge you immediately, you must rest in the hospital until we decide you are well enough. I recommend you to take a sick day”

The doctor explained the condition in more detail, and also answering her questions

“Ok, I must go now, have a good rest miss Pierce”

Kae slumped onto her bed. Stress huh? Well, now I need to send an email, she thought. She looked around the room and saw her work bag, she then continued her remaining work.

The next day, Kae woke up with a different feeling from herself.

It was a strange feeling, it wasn't relief it was... quiet. It wasn't the usual emptiness she filled herself with, for once her mind felt peaceful. She grabbed her work bag out of reflex, but then realized she was in a hospital.

She looked around, looking for her phone to answer her texts but then she saw something. It wasn't something surprising, she just saw a butterfly flapping its wings near a flower.

The butterfly landed on the flower gently. Its wings shimmered briefly in the light before growing still, trusting the fragile petals to hold its weight. The sun shone through the flower's petals, making it almost translucent. The flower seemed to glow with warmth, the color radiant. It was a beauty barely noticed by everyone. Suddenly, everything went still.

And then, a tear dropped.

Kae realized how tired she was. How all this time her brain has been filled with stress, work, and anxiety that she hasn't had any time to take a step back and enjoy life. All this time she felt empty as she thought her life was joyless, with no beauty to it. But all she needed to do was take a step back.

Maybe the thought scared her. The thought of taking a step back was... difficult. What would happen? Would that mean she'll lose all her stability in life she managed to build?

Then she thought about the comic. The simple joy of it. How the characters managed to be so seemingly happy. They didn't have any grand adventures, they were just eating ramen, and playing in the fields. But what makes it different is that they take a step back to enjoy it, to enjoy the small moments in life.

Kae closed her eyes. Maybe joy doesn't need to come from anything grand. And maybe life doesn't need to be perfect. Maybe it just needs to be small, maybe it just needs to be slow.

Maybe all she needs to do is take a step back.