

Empirical research: Restroom on the airplane

Issue: Does happiness (of vacation/journey/entertainment) really exist?

Looking at the tiny glaring light bulb embedded on the ceiling, thinking about nothing, suddenly, in this dark room, I realized that my body is experiencing a feeling that has disappeared long ago. I feel the weightlessness, which could even make me float in the air if I hold my breath for a while. I moved my body a little bit, trying to fall asleep. After I finally found a comfortable pose, I still feel strange. The weightlessness is so familiar to me, but I cannot recall any memory of it. I cannot stop wondering when did this begin. Peeking into the mirror on the wall, in the reflection of window I saw milky shiny dots moving across the little rectangle universe. Then, Alan's lighted cigarette just appeared in my head.

It's rare to see Alan, Alan Motoko, smoking. Rare, most of the asians I know barely smoke. Especially Alan, he is the guy who would be described by girl as "if you seriously argue with him, he would cry!". I cannot even picture him holding a cigarette in his mouth. At the second break of that ebz, he lighted up and keep holding his cigarette just at the beginning of our conversation.

"Are you gonna have your sandwich while you're smoking?" I asked.

We were having our meal during the one hour break before we go back to our own room.

"No. I don't wanna eat this shit anymore. Chicken or beef, beef or fish. Every ebz is the same." He threw his sandwich into the trash bin.

"You'll regret for that when you work next ebz."

"Maybe I don't need to work next ebz."

"Come on. You've been here so long. It's a simple contract thing. We work and they take us to the destination. There's no turning back! You know."

I bite my sandwich. He took a puff at his cigarette. I didn't continue to say anything for a long while. Both of us were staring at the mini garden behind the fence.

It's a long passage where we were. A place for break, where people can have a meal and talk. The display here is examples of what will be there at the destination. The beautiful mini garden in front of us is one part of it.

"Have you ever thought about what are those switches really for?" Alan broke the silence. It's weird what he is asking. These switch is for the power of the engine surely.

"Don't tell me you broke the machine, and you're wondering about the bad effect."

"Actually, because just before I left my work, my glass fall off my face because I was sweating, so I missed many switches when I pick it up."

"But you're still here. You're alright." It would be okay if we miss less than ten switches. We are told if we miss more than ten, the production of the power will be affected.

"No. The strange thing is that it was already over ten switches after I can see with my glasses on."

"Did you hurry to turn these switch?"

"Yes, I did."

"So maybe it's okay. Maybe you did it in time. What? You expect something bad happen? I'm just praying all the ebz to be informed that we've been reached the destination."

"Now I feel a bit regretted to join this program. Why do we have to make this long way to reach somewhere we don't even really know. We don't even know when this journey would end. It's ridiculous."

"There is no other way except patience, Alan. It's the periodic motion of planet."

The room temperature is getting higher. The scratch on my arm absorbed the sweat and it's burning.

The CLA has stopped the cooling supply during the sleeping time since the ebz 1605. The ebz that Alan was taken away. I heard of this from the girl working next to me. "He was just out of his mind! Randomly turned the switches on the board? And in front of a gar?! It's just crazy. He might break the engine. He deserved it! "

It was after three ebzs that he went back to work. And I worked next to him. I didn't ask him about his action ebzs ago, he seemed weak, and he didn't even frown during the whole eight hours of work. The ring alarmed, time for break. Again, after we got our sandwiches, we went to the display gallery, where mini garden and beaches are.

"Do you want coupon to get other food? I have some with me." I asked him.

"No. Save it for use after you reach the destination." Later he continued, "Actually I was just stayed at a totally same room, which locates at another level. But it's all the same as where we live every ebz, small as the flight restroom that you can see in the history book. All the same. So nothing bad happened."

"Oh... that's good. Most of the us are not sure what happened to you after that happened."

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"Do you think the flower there is real or not?" He asked me after he light up his cigarette.

"I don't know. They seem real. I didn't think about that before."

"I have never seen someone water them. They must be fake. And that what those plastic company do, producing those real-like fake things."

"Maybe you're right. Yeah, it might be fake. But who cares? "

"It's just the smell. I once doubted the smell is artificial freshener."

"That's a tricky one. It's really hard to tell between the real natural smell and the well-made fake one."

"You're totally right."

"So just ignore the judgement, regard the smell as the natural one. "

“No. That would make me feel awful.”

“Alright, then go ahead to use your giant brain nerve to see what it is exactly.”

During the next few ebzs he looked better. And everything went well, until things I could never imagine happened on that morning. Thinking about this, I got up and watch the outer universe through the small window on the wall. But it's still peaceful out there. Nothing happened.

It was this ebz, ebz 1630. In the first break before the work hour, he found me in the gallery passage. We just had a normal meal, and a normal conversation first. Actually he was happy that ebz, he smiled a lot. On the way we hurry to the hall for work, he stared at me several times, trying to say something but he held it back. When we were at end of the hallway and headed to different working zones, he stopped and said to me,

“Now the aircraft has reached the nearest zone to across the barrier to the destination, right? And I decided to see if there really is a destination behind the barrier.”

“What do you mean by this?”

“I got a pass for a small air vehicle. If you want to go with me. Stay at your unit when the work is over. What's your unit number?” He didn't get my response, the preparing alarm rang. I turned around and start to go to my unit. He followed me and asked me again. I clearly remembered it was after three steps I answered him, the three steps are so long for me.

In a fast and low voice, I said, “β-3-G-K.”

I missed the switch many times. I cannot help my self from looking at the giant digital clock screen on the wall. Every movement of turning switch decomposed, and inside the every time gap between noticing the signal LED light and my hand going to turn the switch, I was thinking about why he is doing that and what I'm gonna do when the alarm rings. I went through all the images, trying to have little information about the reason he would have to start this unknown action.

And the alarm rang.

People are rushing to the gate for the second meal. I stayed and tried not to look for Alan. Someone grabbed my arm, trying to drag me. It was Alan.

“Come with me!” He said in a low but heavy voice.

“No. It’s dangerous. It’s against the contract. And people will arrest you.” I stood my ground.

“I have the pass!”

“Then? What for? Waiting to be shot?!”

“I’ve ran out of my patience staying at this fucking boring aircraft!”

People are almost gone. It would be really weird if we keep standing there. We started to walking toward the gate, trying to avoid the workers.

“It’s just a journey, you know, you have to spend time on this.”

“But how can you tell we’re really going to somewhere at the end?! If the destination is real, then the NEA is evil because they didn’t take us to there when they can. It’s just a barrier! ”

“You have to learn how to deal with every ebz life! And be patient!”

“Do you really think it would be meaningful to be patient for something you don’t know if it’s real or fake?” We were already outside of the hall, standing in the empty passage leading to the food dispenser.

I became speechless.

He suddenly grabbed my arm, dragging me toward another direction of the passage. I started struggling. His actions are so violent that I had to punch him on his back several times.

He finally gave up.

“Alright. I’ll just go by myself. I’ll come back and tell you if I made it. And if I made it without any effort, you would know that the NEA was lying. They never want you to stop working.”

Before he finished his words, I was running away. “No, Alan, I warn you, don’t do that. It would be dangerous.”

I ran into my own room and lied on my bed with gasp. I guess it has passed five hours. And there is no official alarm or any report popped up on my device, which “might” means, that Alan did it. One hour later, it would be time for the first break and another work period. And when and how is he gonna pick me up, or whether he really found the destination, these questions will be answered. I think I have to sleep for a while in the last hour to gain some energy.

It was with a small shake, I woke up in a daze. In the dark light, I see the door is still closed and no one else is in this tiny room. Everything is the same. Then I noticed the warm color reflected in the mirror, it does not come from this dark room, it comes from somewhere outside the window. It’s fire or something burning far and far away.