

# Red Bean Bread

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As I look around in the supermarket, I am surprised that the red bean bread made by Madeli is still on sale now. It was my favorite when I was 14. I often shared it with Anson and Charlene, but never with J since she was so “different”. She didn’t share common interests with us. Anson, Charlene, and me were familiar with Cantonese and English singers but J liked Japanese and Korean songs. More importantly, sometimes if she was pleasant then she would talk a lot; but sometimes she kept silence as if we had done something wrong. Her emotions were a mystery. Getting along with her required patience, which I lacked, unfortunately.

It was almost 9:30 on Sunday night. I was sitting in the classroom, waiting for the class bell to ring. In the class 2 of junior 2, other classmates were buried in their homework. But I was tapping my feet, looking around to make sure whether someone was ready to go, and no one noticed my action. Finally, the bell rang. I rushed out the classroom.

“Quicker! Quicker!” Anson was laughing next to me.

“OK, OK.” followed by Charlene.

We turned our heads backwards from time to time when we were running. The wind blew through our ears, echoing our clear heartbeats. Our sweat dropped along the faces from our foreheads. Sometimes it even got into our eyes, stinging them so that we failed to see the roads clearly, but we didn’t stop as the alluring red bean bread was waiting for us.

We were the first that arrived at the dormitory. Anson turned on the light in a second when she entered; I opened the lock of my drawer, then took out the red bean bread and ripped the package. Since there were many sesames on the surface of the bread, we had to put it above the trash bin so that those sesames wouldn’t fall on the floor and make a mess.

The palm-sized bread was round. Inside its golden appearance were red beans. They were half-

crushed and sweet. I tore the bread into 3 equal parts. We stood by the trash bin and began to gobble, looking at the door frequently to check whether there was anyone coming back. The bread, the sesames, and the most enjoyable red beans were playing in my mouth and running between my teeth and tongue. My mouth was a playground where the foods ran after each other. Suddenly, with one bite left, someone knocked at the door heavily. We quickly put the rest into our mouths. We didn’t want to share it with anyone else.

“Go open the door.” Charlene urged Anson.

“Let me finish it.” saying it, Anson opened the door.

It was J.

We pretended nothing happened. “Wow, you came back from the classroom early.”

“What’re you doing?” J was panting and trembling. There were anger and disappointment in her eyes, but no questions.

“Nothing. We are doing nothing.” we continued pretending.

J sat on her bed, and looked at us who were making bed, brushing teeth, and going to the washroom. She then took off her glasses. With her hands covering her face, J began sobbing. Anson, Charlene and I looked at each other, not knowing what to do. The only thing we did was shirking responsibility by assuming J’s weeping was none of our businesses.

When the bed time came, I lay on my bed and asked myself: Did I do the right thing? I knew it was shameful, but I didn’t like getting along with J since I didn’t know when she would smile or when she would cry. Thus, we continued playing as an evil friend for J.

After a few weeks, I asked Anson whether she would like to have the red bean bread



after the self-study time as usual. The abrupt “we’ll see” was what I had never expected. I was still waiting for 9:30 pm when they would go back to the dormitory with me as joyful as usual, but they ran away right after the bell rang without me. I was left. Thus, I turned to J and asked,

“Would you like to go back to the dorm with me?” I felt nervous, guilty and shamed as I treated her so poorly before. She said “yes”, and we set off. On the way to our dorm, she didn’t mention the red bean bread stuff, which I was worrying about. She was humming “Blue” from Big Bang, the most popular Korean group at that time. I had listened to some of their songs as J had recommended before. I tried to hum with her, but I forgot some tunes.

“Why don’t you go with Anson and Charlene?” finally she asked.

“They didn’t wait for me. I don’t know why.”

“Yeah, I don’t know either.” Then she kept silence, but I knew she got how I felt.

“Do you remember the first day when we came to school and met in the dorm? We were so delightful to meet each other, but you sat on your bed without saying anything. It seemed that you were sad because you were sobbing. We tried to comfort you by asking what happened, but there was no response from you.” I tried to break the silence.

“My brother forgot to bring my quilt. I didn’t know how to deal with it in a new environment that full of strangers.” J looked up at the sky. That was a cloudy night that I couldn’t see any stars. The cloud was moving, but I could hardly feel any wind.

“And fortunately, you explained that in the next day and talked with us happily. We were worried about you because you refused to say anything. We thought you were homesick.” I was sweating due to the weather, “It’s hot.”

“I’ve got used to it.”

We got to the dorm. When I threw the tissue which I used to wipe my sweat, I noticed that there were some red beans in the trash bin. They

were not the red beans that came from the bread but a bowl of soup, which I could tell it from their appearances. They lay in a plastic bowl, surrounded by some syrup. Then Anson and Charlene began talking about something that I wasn’t familiar with. They have abandoned me; I realized.

When we entered the high school, Anson and Charlene became more and more fascinated in K-pop. Meanwhile, J sang “难逃寂寞我也可参加这派对...(I may join the party even I must feel lonely)” in the campus competition. The song is called One Night City which is sang by Ken, who was Charlene’s favorite Cantonese singer..

Perhaps it is because we used to treat J in the mean way, she nearly hasn’t contacted us after graduating from high school. Every time when I see the red bean bread, I will miss J. Every red bean is different, so is every person. Common interests aren’t the reason why we are friends; instead, the willingness to accept the differences among us is. J used to be different from us in terms of interests and personalities, but if there’s a chance for me to go back to the past, I should have embrace and appreciated her rather than getting away from her. Maybe things will go differently.