

When the Storm is Coming

It is 9:00am now. I have been queuing for the opening of the pharmacy for almost 6 hours. There are over thousands of people queuing. The wind is howling so hard that I can't even open my eyes. I pull my puffer jacket tightly around my neck and put on my woollen hat. I try my best to curl myself up. I miss my warm quilt but I am not allowed to leave now, because of COVID-19.

Many patients died because of this serious lung disease. Fear spreads quickly in the city. It is not easy to buy surgical masks and disinfection supplies unless you line up early outside a pharmacy like me. I have only half a box of masks left at home, so I must strive for a box of masks for my family.

Behind me is an old man who only wears a thin, worn jacket. I guess he is about 70 to 75. Although he is trembling in the violent wind, he seems to be determined to stay. He holds his crutch tightly.

A few minutes pass and a delivery car arrives. Everyone rushes towards the car like hungry wolves. They plunder surgical masks and disinfection supplies like zombies, and I am no exception. I snatch a box of masks successfully. At that moment, I am a winner, among those who gets nothing.

That poor old man, unfortunately, can only go home empty-handed. He is too old and has difficulty walking. How can he compete with young people like me or other housewives? He can only give up.

"Do you have more masks? I need them for my son. Please help me..." He

begs the staff of the pharmacy. "All the items are sold out. I am sorry that we can't help you," The staff answers with pity. "Maybe you can try next week. There will be more supply of masks." He adds. "Next week? How can I wait until next week? My son has to work every day. We only have 2 masks left. How can I wait?" He yells. "We are at our wits' end. Sorry," The staff answers.

He sighs helplessly, staring at those "winners" who successfully get what they want. Suddenly, an idea just comes to him. "Excuse me, can I... hmm... can I buy this?" He asks a woman who is holding 3 boxes of masks. "Are you kidding me? I have been waiting for 7 hours!" The woman rolls her eyes and leaves immediately. "Excuse me, can I..." he tries to ask every "winner", but all he receives is disregard.

Should I help him? But I have only got a box of masks and I have been waiting for almost 6 hours. That's a long time! I don't want to queue anymore! I decide to leave before the man asks me. I need a nice sleep after I go home.

"Do you need masks?" Suddenly, I hear someone's voice. A man aged 25-30 talks to the old man. "Yes! I need them!" He opens his eyes widely. "I have bought 2 boxes of masks. I can give you one." The man smiles and passes the box to him. "How... how much does it cost..." he said with tears. "A gift for you. It's cold now. You'd better go home immediately." The man leaves quietly after his statement.

The wind is still howling hard. I gaze at the old man, who bursts into tears

after the man leaves. Oh... It seems that he really needs them. But what have I done? I have done nothing in front of a helpless guy. Humanity can still be seen clearly in the storm. But I am an ugly one; I am not like the rainbow after storms.

On my way home, I see a member of the Legislative Council distributing free masks to the elderly. Some of them are wearing ragged clothes. Some of them even sit in the wheelchair. Some of them are holding bags of groceries. It seems there is nowhere else they can go to get any masks. Perhaps... I can do something for them, like what the man has done.

"Excuse me," I said. "Yes?" said a volunteer who is helping with the distribution of masks. "Oh girl, do you need masks? I am so sorry that these masks are for the elderly. You know, some of them wear a mask for several days. That's not hygienic." She points at the long queue. "No. I want to do something for them... Here are some clean masks which are not used before. I just bought them. Could you please give them to the people in need?" I take out half the box of masks and pass them to the volunteer. "Thank you, girl. You are like the rainbow after storms!"

I would like to thank the man who shows me what a rainbow is really like. If we can do more to help others, the storms may not be so disastrous. We will see hope instead.