

Human Nature

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When Elsa saw the smiles on their faces, she closed her eyes. Memories flashed across her mind. What had happened still remained clear and vivid.

Elsa was fortunate to have married the one she loved. They had promised to stand by each other no matter how life would change. However, war broke out. Men were requested to join the army to fight against the enemies. Elsa's husband was not exempt from conscription. Dozens of years passed and nothing was heard from him. Elsa lived in sadness like a widow.

Years later, the country was stricken by a famine followed by an epidemic. Without young men, the farm land was left unattended. The women and the elderly were too weak to do men's work. To make it worse, their only harvest was given to the army for tax payment. People were dying.

Surprisingly, Elsa's village did not suffer from this problem. They had food to eat though it was mainly vegetables. At the end of each month there was even meat equally distributed to each family in the village. It was like a jewel among the stones. No one asked where the meat came from. Elsa was old and was satisfied with what she had.

In addition to the mysterious meat, there was another strange rule in her village. Whenever there was a new born baby, the oldest person in

the village had to leave or commit suicide. This time Elsa was chosen. Knowing that it was time to meet her husband, she just wanted to see her old friend, Sally, for the very last time. Sally cried painfully when she knew that Elsa was the chosen one. Elsa told Sally that she would kill herself. With her fists clenched tightly, Sally wanted to say something, but words got stuck in her throat. Instead, Sally hugged Elsa heartily and said 'goodbye'.

Climbing up the mountain made Elsa exhausted. Yet she felt quite happy to end her sad life. On the cliff, she could see the smoke of gunfire. With one step more she would fall down the cliff. She closed her eyes, ready to step forward.

At that moment, someone held Elsa's hand. It was one of the villagers. Before Elsa realized what was going on, a knife was stabbed into her chest. Elsa fell onto the ground. She heard them whispering "... Meat..." Elsa finally understood what Sally was trying to tell her. She realized what they had been eating at the end of each month. She wondered what had happened to the world. People's desire for food had made them go out of their mind, and they wanted nutrients especially for the teenagers, who could work for them. Sensibility has no place in a hunger-stricken country. Elsa closed her eyes slowly, and everything went silent...