

## **The Sandals That Saved My Life**

①

My time in junior high is the most difficult in my life. I have no friends except for one girl. She tells me that we will be “friends forever.”

I believe her with all my heart and I take her as the only friend in my life. However, she often spends time with her other friends at school and rarely talks to me if we meet in the halls of our school.

One day, we meet online in a chat room. I am so happy that I invite her to see a movie. After a long pause, she replies, “No, I don’t want to see a movie with you. I don’t like you anymore. I never want to be your friend.” Then, she signs off.

I am so surprised that my only friend will do this to me. After several minutes, I go to my mom and start to cry. She comforts me and says it will all be OK. I can’t sleep that night because I feel so alone.

The next morning, my mom says she has a doctor’s appointment and will be back later. I sit on my bed and think about what to do. Then I have an idea: I will kill myself. That way, no one will have to pretend to be my friend, and other things that bother me—like my grades—wouldn’t matter anymore. I decide to take pills, so I put them on the table by my bed.

When I am ready to take pills, the phone rings. It is my mom. She wants to know my shoe size because she finds a cute pair of sandals for me. Then she says the words that I need to hear, “I love you.” I put down the phone and wonder how I almost forget that my family love me.

When my mom comes home, I don’t tell her about the pills. I never tell anyone about it and never blame anyone but myself. My mom’s phone call makes me realize that committing suicide is not the answer. I just need to hear “I love you,” to remember that my family are always there for me. True friends, like family, care for you and are there whenever you need them. I am very lucky to have my mom as a true friend.

## **Going Green (Solar Power)**

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When I say the word ‘green’, what do you think of? Do you just imagine the color or does the word mean more than that to you?

“Going green’ is a phrase we are hearing more and more. People who ‘go green’ are people who care about the environment and want to look after it. They think about their life at home, at school or when they are outside and make choices to help make the world better.

Let’s take the example of being at home. There are many things we can do to ‘go green’. We can turn off our computer when we are not using it. We can turn off the lights when we leave a room. We can turn off the tap while we are brushing our teeth and take shorter showers in the evening. We can also remember to recycle all of our metal, plastic or paper items.

But while everyone can do small things to help, it is governments who have the greatest role to play. One of the biggest ways is through providing ‘green energy’. An example of this is solar power.

Solar power takes the energy from the sun’s light and changes it into

electricity. It is often done through large panels on the roofs of houses and other buildings. Solar power is great because it can be generated anywhere, even on a cloudy day. Best of all, it makes a clean, pure energy that shouldn’t hurt the environment.

‘Green energy’ is important for many reasons. One of the main ones is to stop world temperatures from rising. A hotter world will make it harder to grow food. Corn, coffee and grapes are all among the first things that will be affected. Less food will be a problem for everyone as prices will go up and some people will not be able to get enough to eat.

So ‘going green’ is really important. Whether it’s something big, like solar power, or something small, like turning off a light, we should all help to protect our world for the future.

## The Lottery

③

"It's a secret. Don't tell anyone!" Maya crossed her heart. "I swear. I won't tell anyone.

What's the secret?"

Tina looked around. She wanted to be sure that no one could hear her. Then she whispered into Maya's ear: "My parents won the lottery. We're rich!" Tina and Maya then talked about how different her life would be. "I guess I'll travel around the world now. And get new sneakers. These are falling apart." She looked down at her worn-out shoes. Then, she kicked them off. "I'm sure that now that we have money, my mother won't complain if I just throw these away."

It was getting late. They headed home for dinner. Tina waited for her parents to announce how much they had won. But dinner was the same old thing: rice and chicken wings. They didn't talk about their riches. Tina figured they were waiting for just the right time to tell her.

Maya met her sister on the porch. "I've got something to tell you, but you have to promise not to tell anyone." Then she said, "Tina's rich. Her parents won the lottery."

Her sister didn't understand about secrets. She burst through the

door and yelled, "Tina's family won the lottery!" She was loud enough for all the neighbors to hear.

There had been talk around town for days about the lottery. Someone in their town had won. The winner had not come forward. So everyone was guessing about who it could be.

Tina's father was doing the dishes when the first neighbor arrived. Her mother opened the door. "Excuse me," Mrs. Hanly said. "But we are having some trouble with the rent. Could you lend me \$100 please?" There was soon another knock at the door. Then another. "My car is broken down. Could you maybe help me get it fixed?" asked one. "We need just \$50," said another. "Just enough for a bus ticket." Soon the house was full of people. All of them needed something.

"We would love to help," Tina's parents said. "But what makes you think we are so rich to help everyone?" One by one, they mentioned the lottery.

"I did win a lottery," Tina's mother said. "At my work. It was a drawing to see who would get next Saturday off. And I won."

## **Police Crack the Case of the Raincoat Ghost**

④

Have you ever seen a ghost? I know ghosts aren't real. But sometimes we see something we can't explain.....and we turn to superstitions to find the answer. That's what happened recently in Changhua County. One evening, someone was waiting at a stoplight in Xizhou (溪州) Township. They saw something that nearly scared them to death. It was a yellow raincoat, floating over the zebra crossing. The raincoat looked just like a person was wearing it... ....but there was nobody inside!

It was so strange because there was no wind that day, and nobody else was nearby. So, the frightened person took a video with their phone. They watched the raincoat drift around for more than two minutes, with no explanation.

Local security cameras saw it too. Soon, the videos were posted online. People from all over Taiwan began to share their theories. Some people said the raincoat was pulled by invisible strings. Other people said construction workers put the coat there, to keep cars away from their work site. But, the Changhua police didn't find any strings,

and the workers said they didn't do it either.

There were a few people online who said the coat really did belong to a ghost. But the police wouldn't believe that. In the end, they used security cameras to find the man who was responsible. It was all a silly prank. The raincoat belonged to a local man. He was a plumber named Chung(鍾). He said he filled the raincoat with hydrogen gas. Chung also taped the hood and the sleeves shut, so the gas would not get out. Because hydrogen gas can float, it made the raincoat float around like a ghost. Why did Chung do it?

He told police he thought it was funny. But police say his prank scared people, and could have caused a car accident. Now they are charging Chung with a crime. So, there may not be any such thing as ghosts...but there are a lot of pranksters out there.