

About A Friend

He wasn't a guy of big words¹⁾, and he seemed to live entirely in his own world. I remember that during the days he worked with us none of us exactly knew who he was, where he came from or what he was looking for, and afterwards he disappeared. Nobody knew where he had gone, what he was doing or if he had friends or a family to stay with. I guess, we didn't even know his name— —and even if we did, I've forgotten it anyway.

Those days were more than hard for all of us. There seemed to be no escape from the greyness²⁾ of our everyday life which was the only colour that surrounded us. The huge concrete blocks we lived in was grey, the grey of the factory dust, even the colour of our clothes, that once might have been white was grey. It must have been a bright and shining white. . . and I can't exactly recall how much time I spent trying to imagine the kind of white it might have been. Since white was the colour of the kind of paradise³⁾ I so much longed⁴⁾ to live in some day, grey left behind nothing more than a bitter taste of emptiness⁵⁾ and depression. I can remember how I noticed once, that any other colour must be a symbol for something, a feeling or whatever. Only grey seemed to stand for absolutely nothing. This was the world I lived in, and so did he.

Having our job in the factory was still luxury though, considering the fact that most of us had families to feed. And not long after he started to work there, I would always find him working at the machine next to mine. We'd work for hours next to each other, staying quiet, with our thoughts drifting away⁶⁾ to a different place but still aware of our hands doing the same movements over and over again. We were doing that until the bell would ring to end the work for the day. I used to work in a mechanical way, following the same rhythm over and over again, and so did he. But every time I was about to give up, he would lift his head and give me a little smile, as if he could guess my thoughts. I think it was actually his eyes that impressed me most. They were so dark and straight, and though they seem to be hiding anything, I couldn't get rid of the impression that somehow he must be hiding something.

Since I first saw him, he had always been around, and every time he gave me one of those smiles, he would spread a bit of warmth into my heart, a bit of friendliness. I guess, at the end of the day it must have been him who gave me the strength to go on somehow, just by being there.

Well, to make a long story short, he died only a year after he started working with us. It was a car accident and he didn't have to suffer very long. I must have been his only friend in town, at least that was what I thought when I went to his funeral. The only person I met there was an old lady, maybe his mother. She told me that he had lost his family just the year before and after that he didn't speak any more. He hadn't said a single word. First I didn't believe her. I just thought that he was a fairly quiet person; besides there was nothing much to say anyway. But suddenly I realized that I couldn't recall ever having heard his voice at all. Only then did I realize it.

He gave me so much and I knew so little about him. He had been my friend and now I had lost him without having had the chance to give anything back. He had been so strong that he was able to give whatever had happened.

I felt weak in those days. And guilty⁷⁾. But after that I started to care for the people around me. I think I started to live.

□by Claudia Duwe

一个朋友

他不是一个大话的人。他似乎完全生活在一个人的世界里。记忆中，在他和我们共事的那段日子里，我们中没有人能确切地知道他是谁，来自何方，或者在寻求什么；之后他便消失了。谁也不清楚他去了哪里，他做些什么，究竟他有没有朋友或是家人。我想我们甚至无人知晓他的姓氏。或许听到过，但是我却记不清了。

那段日子对我们来讲真是艰难无比。似乎没有任何办法能摆脱围绕我们的灰蒙蒙色调的生活。我们居住的巨大的混凝土楼房是灰色的，工厂的尘埃是灰色的，甚至我们的衣服也是灰色的，而它们原有的颜色或许是白色，而且一定是那种雪亮的白色……我记不起多少次我曾努力地去想像那究竟是一种何样的白色。既然白色构成了天堂——我梦寐以求的来世之家——的色调，那么灰色给我留下的除了空虚与压抑之外，还是空虚与压抑。我还记得我曾注意到每一种颜色都是一种事物、性格或是其他什么的象征。惟有灰色没有任何的意义。这就是我，也是他，生活于其中的世界。

不管怎样，在工厂做工对我们已属难得，因为我们多数人还要养家糊口。他来厂里工作不久，我便总看到他紧挨着我的工作台干活儿。我们常常默默无语地一干就是几个钟头，双手一遍又一遍地重复着同一套动作，可思绪却飞到了不知何方，直到收工的铃声响起才停下了手中的活计。我一直就是这样机械地、一遍遍地、以同一种节奏做着工。他也是如此。而每一次我正要打算放弃时，他总会抬起头，送给我一个淡淡的微笑。似乎他能猜出我的心思。我想实际是他的眼神深深地打动了我。它们是那样的深邃、坦荡、无掩。然而我还是感受到他心中有一种难言之隐。

从我头一次见到他起，他便总是出现在我的周围。每次他向我投以微笑时，他同时也将一丝丝的温暖和友情送入我的心房。我想每一天结束时，一定是他给了我无论如何也要继续下去的力量。

好了，长话短说。他与我们共事一年后便去世了。是一次没有让他受苦痛的车祸夺走了他的生命。我肯定是他城里惟一的朋友，至少在葬礼上我是这样认为的。我遇到的惟一的一个人是位老太太，或许是他的母亲。她告诉我说，就在一年前他失去了家庭，从此便没有开口说过话，再也没有说过一个字。起初我不信她的话。我只是一直觉得他是一个寡言少语的人；再说，本来也没有什么好说的。但是猛然间，我意识到我确实想不起曾听过他的声音。此时此刻我才明白。

他给予我如此之多，而我对他的了解却如此之少。他一直是我的朋友，而我还没有机会回报他便失去了他。他始终是那么坚强，无论发生什么也在无私地给予。

那段日子里，我感到很弱，也很内疚。可是从此以后，我开始将关心投向周围的人，我开始了新生。

NOTE 注释：

1. big word 大话，吹牛
2. greyness [greinis] n. 灰暗，灰色调
3. paradise ['pærədaiz] n. 天堂

学英语，练听力，上听力课堂！

4. long [lɒŋ] vi. 渴望，热望
5. emptiness ['emptɪnis] n. 空虚
6. drift away 慢慢散去
7. guilty ['gɪltɪ] adj. 内疚地，心虚的