**July 25, 2019**

***A Crazy Decision***

One of my friends who had completed hundreds of Marathons kept encouraging me to join road running, but I always turned her down based on the reason that I ran just for fun, not for competition. It has never occurred to me that I would actually attend a half-marathon and cross the finish line in two hours and 26 minutes.

One afternoon in March, when I was having my lunch, a message from the Breast Cancer Foundation popped up inviting all members to attend the “ELLE Run with Style.” It offered a quota of 100 people free of charge especially reserved for breast cancer patients. Without any hesitation, I accessed its official website. Unfortunately, we were only allowed to register for the 4-km or 21-km run, but not the 14-km, which I preferred since it would be an easier goal for me to achieve. I got no choice but to register for the half-marathon, but I discovered my stupidity right after I clicked the registration button.

"21 kilometers? That's twice as long as my daily run in the early morning! Am I insane?" I thought to myself and started worrying about the impossible mission. I went to consult the friend who had completed hundreds of marathons. Under her guidance, I started my training with a 14-km run. Though it was only four kilometers farther than my usual run, it caused severe bruises on my toes. After two weeks, I started the 21-km run in spite of the sharp pain in my toes. The huge challenge was way beyond my imagination. Hardly able to raise my feet, I ran slower than walking for the last 8 kilometers. My friend reassured me that it would no longer be a problem once my body got used to it. Fourteen days later, I tried it again but did not see much improvement. Then, I figured that even if I stopped running during the last 8 kilometers, I could still complete the race by walking within the limited time of three hours. I felt confident again and stopped extra training to rest my legs.

Finally, it was time to release my burden. On April 20, I woke up at 5 a.m. and rode my motorcycle to Da-Jia Park. When I arrived, thousands of participants in white T-shirts had been lining up there to deposit personal belongings. I quickly joined them as the road run was to begin in half an hour. If I had arrived earlier, I could have played the games organized by ELLE and even won some prizes. Well, I only had myself to blame.

Right after the chairman of ELLE fired a shot, I began racing from the starting line with the other more than 500 runners. "Find someone who runs at a speed similar to yours and then follow her/him." One of my friend's tips popped up in my brain. The problem is in the first 5 kilometers, most of the participants ran much faster than I did. When I was about to give up searching, all of a sudden, I saw a lady running with a man and repeatedly turning back to make sure the man was behind her. Guess what? The man's running speed was almost the same as mine. I finally found my life-savers. Along the road, there were five resting spots providing water, desserts and fruits. I only rested when the couple rested, and I drank only when they drank. Despite my efforts to follow them closely, I still lost them 8 kilometers before the finish line.

Though losing support and all my energy like a drowning child, I persisted to keep running the last 8 kilometers, remembering my friend’s advice that it was better to run than walk. I felt as if I would die near the end of the 21-km run, but with unshakable faith, I eventually arrived and crossed the finish line. To my great surprise, I won the 110th place in a group of 505 participants. My friend told me that as long as I believed in myself, I would do it better and better each time. However, to me, the run was an incredibly difficult and extremely lonely task. I’d say it was quite enough to try such a crazy thing just once in a lifetime!