

## The people who has influenced me.

“Present !” – a sonorous voice disturbed my train of thoughts when I was checking my new class’s attendance as a monitor. As I cast a glance at where that sound came from, engraved in my mind an unapproachable face. That vivid image, together with my uncomfortable feelings about that voice, still remains genuine in my recollection of the first day at middle school, when I met him – my alter ego : Nguyen Thanh Khoa.

Since then, Khoa’s resonant voice never ceased to amaze me why he was forever reading out lessons at the top of his lungs, which struck me that he just tried to capture everyone’s attention. Justifiably, “conceited” was what I deemed to be his middle name. Much to my surprise, however, his conducts towards everybody in class did not make my point but conversely, the meek and virtuous image quickly superseded the delusionally snobbish one. His inactivity, by degrees, was juxtaposed with his introversion to conjure up his wholesome portrayal, which made me find him an exact mirror of my own. We distanced ourselves from other students of the class and barring the exchange of some courtesies with our “neighbors”, we seemed to be shrinking into our own world. Our schooldays, still not faded out in my collection of reminiscences, was nothing but a monotonous routine. Together with our total absence from class and school activities, discreetly going to class and back home day after day, which was somehow “programmed” for us, turned us into an even more self-effacing image. These certainly were not expected of a monitor so not for long, I was demoted but henceforth, I, the second most mild-mannered member of the class, struck up a friendship with Khoa.

Three years of studying in the same class strengthened our ties of companionship but we were then divided into different majoring classes in grade 9. He went for Computer Science while Literature was my preference, which provoked a big upheaval in our characteristics. Burden of Vietnamese essays stuck me to my introspective life: retreating into my shell and having no close friends but him. Khoa, on the contrary, by himself added zest to his dull image. A class where boys heavily outnumbered girls forced him to come out of his shell, which according to him was a matter of life or death: Bright colors would be painted on an “open book” and vice versa, seclusion just got you pushed out. The color, from where he stood, was of your own making. Khoa had chosen the first. He extended his circle of friends, defeated his timor and made a name for himself in regular school plays or even attending a sports club . His changes did pay. Khoa went from strength to strength and those left me with my own battles. Half vexed.Half pensive. Sheer perversity, “I must be myself”, held me on to the path I had trod, whereas my wisdom demanded from me a change of heart. The two things had been fighting non-stop in me, posing a challenging question as to changing or not - a change of personality.

In the tenth grade, I decided to shed my tedious image and mingle with everybody. Emerging from the shell that was made by myself, it dawned on me that the world outside was poles apart. The old inhibited boy now have ardently participated in almost all of extra-curricular activities. As a monitor again, I led my classmates to take part in school activities and instilled zeal into them. Dispelling my former cowardice, I voluntarily acted in my class’s play, of which I was also a playwright, in our school music show. My cherished dream of being a designer came into being when for the first time, my handmade card was chosen for

the school competition. I did not succeed all the time, though, but I could always find what I had been doing a constant source of happiness. I took pleasure in the fruit I harvest as my endeavours did not betray me. I also got enjoyment from my failure since owing to it, I was able to realize that this life is full of colours. Coming into contact with diverse fragments of life fired me with verve and social relationships helped me wake up to the fact that life is a vast ocean, which offers no chance for any anchored ship. Riding huge tidal waves may make you seasick but the enormity of the ocean is bound to train your maturity...

It has been three years since I became an agile and confident class monitor in my High School, but the sound “Present” still comes out by my ear. It jogs my memory about my intimate, Nguyen Thanh Khoa. It takes me back to his vivid words : “Present yourself with everyone and you will get presents” - Once again, a sonorous voice but in me, a congenial feeling...