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Age: 17 years old.

This Time, That Year

"New Year is the best time to do something new, be a better self, and new resolutions" Yes, I agree with all that. New Year is the time when everyone's freshening up themselves, and trying to be a new person. The environment of that time always makes me joyful. It really makes me want to change something. Something around myself. Something in me. But every time I just let it pass. Stayed the same. I have never reached my resolutions. Actually, I have not even had serious resolutions before. I think that was a reason I haven't changed anything much. I was a super simple girl. I did not really have potential to do anything. I never set my goal of life. Until 2 years ago, I saw a light, a dim one.

Talking about my future, I always think about my future, and I have been for years. Two years ago, I really wanted to be an exchange student because I really wanted to find memorable experiences, even if it was bad or good ones, just unforgettable. It seemed like I was so serious about that, but at some point, I almost gave up on my thought of going abroad. It was almost the end of a year. I took an English test in order to be an exchange student. Unfortunately, my scores were low for the first organization, but that was not the reason I almost gave up. Then, I decided to take the test again, from the same organization. This time, I passed both writing and interview parts, without any conditions. I was so glad. But then, my determination was disrupted, again. My parents told me it was too expensive to go. "All right." I kept saying that. I had given up on my intention for 2 months. And here it came, a new year. Abruptly, my same old determination came in to the brainstorming space in my head again. "I want to be a foreign exchange student!" I kept thinking that. I did searches about exchange organizations. And I found one. This one was a small organization, with reasonable costs. I told my parents again that I was going to take a

test. So I did. I passed. Also I got a scholarship from that organization. Although it was not that much of money, but it still made me proud of what my intention did. This time, my parents let me do what I want.

September 3, 2016, when it all began, new experiences, new people, and new life. 26-hour-long flight was so exhausting. The first stop was in Japan. I waited for 2 hours, then, it was time to fly to the USA. I arrived at the local airport around 7 p.m. I was so tired, but also excited, very. It was the first time that I got feel the vibe of the western world. However, my plans and thoughts were not go like I imagined. Instead of being HAPPY at the beginning, I was lost. Because nobody knew me, and somehow, I didn't even really know myself. Right from the start, I thought that I was going to be able to make friends easily, speak with people fluently, and be happy with my exchange year. But, I was wrong. I always thought I was GOOD at English, but everything turned upside down. I was super shy and could not understand what people said, so that made me feel down and disappointed. Many former exchanged students shared their experiences about their first day at school that friends and teachers were so interested in them and the culture, but mine was blank. Only few people greeted me so I was confused. What did I do wrong? I was out of control for a while. Days at school were so empty and I did not know why I went there. But then I got a new concept. Sometimes people do not want to get to know strangers first, like myself at the beginning. The solution for this problem is to be open-minded. So I moved forward to them. I greeted them first. I talked to them. All those made me know many kinds of people. I know how to make friends. Good relationship is all around.

My living was complicated. I mean, I was complicated. I do not like when I can't get along with people well. My host family, they were so good to me. But I felt like I didn't get along with them that well. I was so far away mentally. But they let me stay at their house for almost a year, they took care of me. Whenever I was sick, they always looked after. But somehow, we could not be closed to each other. Their lifestyles were not like mine. My lifestyle was neither like theirs. This struggle is one of the difficulties

which pushed me forward. I needed to find somewhere where I could fit in. So I started to be in some clubs which are Drama Club and Scholastic Bowl. I was super shy in general back then. I decided to join Drama Club because I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and get new moments of life. My decision was worth it since everyone was so nice to me and I got a role for a school play. I was afraid at first. But eventually everything was just fine. Scholastic Bowl, the loving academic team, was amazing. I thought that the "Academic Team" was going to be very strict and serious, but it was not. Students in a team were silly, but they were also smart. Even though I was not good at academics, they never blamed me. They always encouraged me. I was genuinely blessed.

It was almost that time of the year again, New Year. But that time was more special because I was on abroad. I was invited by my friend's family to countdown at their house. They had many pets such as dogs and cats which I liked to play with. I went to their house and spend time with the family. We were all blissful the whole time. At around 10 p.m., one of their dogs was missing, so we went looking for it. Unfortunately, we found it dead, by a side of the road. People in a house near the road said they heard a loud noise not so long ago. We assumed it was a crashing noise from a car and that dog. Everybody was suddenly mournful. They drove me home a few minutes later and I countdown to a new year with my host mother and host sister instead. All was confusing, shocking, and sorrowful. Sometimes what we have just seen, may be gone forever in just a few moments.

My exchange year has much taught me. It has made me to be a person who is brave to start some new journey, and new thoughts. I am more tolerant and calm. I have gotten many lessons of life from that and I have reached my goal. I saw joy, confusion, and depression. I found my memorable experiences and changed myself in a good way. I am glad that I have made the right decision.

New Year is the time when all your hopes and wishes are new. It seems like everything is new. The word "New" is so influenced to us all. Somebody likes this word, but sometimes they do not. And Just because of this term, people are going crazy with it. Sometimes something that is new is great, but at the same time, people just like the old ones more. Yet, new is new. It is different. It may be better than ever, you never know. Still, at least it is all experiences and it will give us some lessons to learn from. Therefore, you should prepare yourself to overcome difficulties and step forward.