



物の哀れ - mono no aware

In Belgrade's Botanical Garden there is a Sakura tree - Japanese cherry blossom tree. Every early spring I wait with anticipation to welcome its blossom, this year I saw it on Instagram post of my professor. I love this particular species for its beautiful and fragile flowers, as well for the concept it embodies - mono no aware.

" Mono-no aware: the ephemeral nature of beauty - the bittersweet feeling of having been witness to the dazzling circus of life - knowing that none of it can last. It's basically about being both saddened and appreciative of transience - and also about the relationship between life and death. In Japan, there are four very distinct seasons, and you really become aware of life and mortality and transience. You become aware of how significant those moments are."

Today we are all living in an extraordinary situation. Dear reader, I am pretty sure your life has turned upside down, you might feel angry, scared or bored, but know that it will pass. Allow me to quote timeless Shakespeare: *"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."*

Month started very promisingly. On 3rd March, Gedy and I went to Tallinn for a seminar "Global Education in Estonia" organized by The Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the occasion of the publication of a national report on Global education in Estonia conducted by GENE. There we met Viktoria Rudenko, who was one of the key speakers during panel discussion and Sayo Hosoi. I have already presented Viktoria in one of my previous writings and Sayo is a student from Sophia University in Japan. Her professor Hideki Maruyama is a good friend of teachers from Loodusmaja, and some of his



students have been volunteering in our Center before. I was simply fascinated by Sayo and her cheerful spirit. Gedy and Aili gave me a task to organize Japanese cultural evening with Sayo, and to come up with an artistic design for one information panel.

Preparations for the event were going at full speed – we booked a room, made poster design, shared info with the info center, got the food, found recipes, planned activities, and made a presentation...



I also asked Nozomi, a Japanese student who was volunteering in TYPA to help us out. I love connecting people. I enjoyed working and talking with Sayo. For the first time I was not the only foreigner in Loodusmaja and Sayo is such a fun and joyful girl. We visited Tartu Botanical Garden and TYPA together, went to a music concert in Estonian National Museum (that was quite an indescribable performance and experience hahah) and played airsoft (my long desired wish has been finally fulfilled).

Next I had a great tour in Loodusmaja with Moldavian guests from Youth Centers. I was a bit nervous at the beginning, but when I got in the "flow" and saw they were genuinely interested and amazed, I became relaxed and comfortable.



Ever since I came back from Serbia, things were going steady, we were all preparing for various events... Oh, have I mentioned before that I have become a member of Tartu Erasmus Student Network? I wished to help them out with their events and meet new, interesting people. I was so busy and determined to experience every moment best that I can.

But, but, but, but...

sounds of running footsteps

rail squeal

high pitched whistle

conductor, a man with neatly shaped dark moustache approaches

breathe in

“Miss, you will kindly leave this train and switch to another one. There is no “but” ; another reality is already waiting.”

...Life turned to a completely different course.

On Friday the 13th it was proclaimed pandemic. All the public events got canceled. From following Monday, school will be closed. Borders as well. Everyone will start working remotely. Sayo had to go fast back to Tallinn, and catch the first plane for Japan. Can you believe that Hideki was also in Tartu at that time, but we could not meet with him in real life? Sayo was the last person I got the hug. It was a long and strong hug. I was sad.

You see, life is very random, unpredictable. I will end this report here, with my pre-quarantine memories. Now, I believe we must stay calm, focus our minds on positive aspects, manage with the present we are given, and the storm will eventually pass. Remember? *"There is nothing either good or bad..."* I say life is not either black or white; it is a mix of those two – grey.

“Mind if I stay? ”

(It is a lie that Sayo was last real hug.)

breathe out



Oh, how grey can be delightful color!



The *cell* is the basic structural, functional, and biological unit of all *living* organisms.
The *hug* is the basic structural, functional, and biological unit of all *lovely* organisms.
For the longer and stronger hugs after all this ends.
Stay safe. Stay calm.
Stay.

