

Do Hyun Kang  
Auckland, New Zealand

### **A Stranger's Bucket List**

A man sat down at the table next to mine and waved an orange in my face. His hair was shaded gray and his cheeks were hinted with wrinkles, but it was harsh to consider him an old man. With a puzzled expression I swallowed what was left in my mouth, pointed at the orange, then at myself. He nodded. I took the orange from his hand and thanked him. He reached for another one from his bag, and began peeling it. The fresh smell of citrus entered the air and dissolved the scent of bread.

As I struggled to peel the orange, the man turned his body to face me and tried to catch my attention. After a few minutes of awkward fidgeting, he reached inside his jacket for a piece of paper. He handed the paper to me along with a pen. As I grabbed the pen from his hand, he spread the paper on my table and trailed his finger down until he reached '72'. I didn't need to speak Hungarian to know what the piece of paper was.

I stared blankly at the sheet between the two of us, and he quickly responded with body language. Whether entry 72 read "share an orange with a beautiful tourist" or not was insignificant in affecting the novelty of participating in someone's bucket list. Beside every entry were dates and words, which I assume to be the names of places. The man took the pen from my hand, crossed out 72, wrote today's date, and gave the pen back to me. He pointed at a blank space next to the date. Taken by a sense of duty, I contemplated on what to write, and halfheartedly ended up with just "thank you." To my relief, he seemed to like what I wrote. He reiterated the two words again and again in an unfamiliar accent.

Then he took out his wallet and flipped it open. On the right side of the wallet was a black and white picture of a woman I assumed to be his daughter. He held it up and kissed her. I took another glance at the piece of paper. It was very worn. And then I noticed that the numbers of the list and the numbers of the dates were written in different handwriting. The man took his lips off the picture, smiled at me and said, "my wife."