**Prologue**

At 2:30 am on August 12th, 2016, a rugby match was to be held in Rio, Brazil. To watch this game happening halfway around the world, I'd have to wake up quite early. So, I set my alarm for 2 am and went to bed.

My body had become accustomed to medication during the five months of anticancer drug treatment that I had completed. The sleep inducer tablets, “Myslee”, was becoming less effective and I had trouble falling asleep. The doctor had told me that I could take up to two tablets if I couldn't fall asleep. I didn't hesitate to take two.... and yet I was still having trouble to fall asleep. I would toss and turn in the futon, but time would just pass with my head very clear.

On January 19th, 2016 I was declared with stage IV terminal cancer (B-cell follicular lymphoma). Now that I think of it, I was lucky that I went to a big hospital in December of the previous year. They found five tumors all over the body. My attending physician, Dr. Shimizu, told me that these tumors could have been overlooked if it were not a specialist.

At the end of November, I went to a nine-day business trip to Mexico/Peru for an activity inspection of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). On my flight home, I felt like my stomach was bloating. On December 1st, the day after I returned to Japan, I decided to go to Keio University Hospital.

I had eaten burritos bought from a Mexican street vendor, which I couldn't say that it was very clean, as well as dined at a restaurant, or more of a garbage dump, at Cusco, Peru (the capital city of the ancient Inca Empire). I was a bit worried to have myself checked at a small hospital.

 Despite that I was an emergency outpatient, Keio University Hospital conducted various tests such as blood tests, X-ray inspections, and echo examinations. The doctor said, "I think it's a virus, but the lower abdomen does seem a little swollen." He told me that results of the detailed examination will come in about few days. So, I made another outpatient appointment on December 11th and returned to my hotel.

When I went back to the hospital to hear the results, the doctor seemed more concerned and had me redo the same examinations as the week before. At this point I had taken the matter lightly, and despite reserving an outpatient appointment on December 19th to hear the test results, I was too preoccupied preparing for the business trip to Fiji that I did not go. I received a message telling me to make sure I drop in at the hospital when I got back from the business trip, so I made an appointment for the morning of January 18th the following year.

I was supposed to already be at Narita Airport on the evening of January 16th, 2016, but to my misfortune, my return flight on the New Guinea Airline was cancelled and I had to stay a night at Port Moresby of Papua New Guinea and another night in Manila. By the time I arrived in Narita Airport, it was already the afternoon of the 18th.

As soon as I landed, I turned my cell phone back on. I don't think two to three minutes had passed before it started ringing.

It was a call from Dr. Shimizu of Keio University Hospital. I began to politely apologize that I was unable to be at the hospital that day due to my flight delay. The doctor didn't hear me until the end. All he asked was, "Would you be able to come in tomorrow?" I pondered a little and then asked, "Was it something serious?" The doctor took a breath and simply answered, "I'm afraid so." I apologized to Dr. Shimizu that I had not shown up at my appointment twice and made an outpatient appointment again at 1:30 pm on the following day.

After that, the days just flew by. I was hospitalized on February 4th and got a biopsy done. On the 18th, the doctors drilled a hole in my hip bone to perform a bone marrow examination. On the 23rd, I got a PET examination (an examination in which radioactive fluorine is injected into the body to see how much the cancer cells have spread throughout). More examinations followed until finally I was diagnosed with stage IV cancer. It was Stage IV out of four, not IV out of ten. My body was affected with the last stages of terminal cancer.

 On March 2nd, I started a chemotherapy called R-CHOP. The anticancer shot made it painful to sleep or stay awake, and even to breathe. Although Dr. Shimizu had warned me that this treatment was painful and there were many patients that give up midway because it was too painful. But R-CHOP was much, much more painful than I had thought, and I wanted to take my anger out on Dr. Shimizu for not warning me enough!

 There were to be six cycles of R-CHOP, injected every three weeks. The first one wasn't so bad. I only had slight difficulty breathing. I heard that this treatment strips the patient's physical strength, so I decided to tone up my body when I had the energy. I had the nurses take out the needle of the intravenous catheter at night so that I could challenge myself to do push-ups. At this point, I still had the leisure.

 The second cycle of treatments started, and on the morning of the 24th day, I found a ridiculous amount of hair on my pillow. I was told that I would be losing every hair, from my head and eyebrows to even eyelashes. Yet when I saw the strands of hair scattered all over the bed I was shocked. I thought it would be stressful to see my pillow like this every morning. I'd rather be bald. So, I made a reservation at Mrs. Saito's barber shop where I usually go to.

 On March 26th, I saw my head skinned with a hair clipper without any of its length adjustment cartridge attached. I began to really feel like a terminal cancer patient. Mrs. Saito said, "This one’s on me. As long as you promise to come again after you are better!" I politely thanked her and promised her I would come as soon as my hair grew back in and rode the taxi back to my room.

 At this time, I had a white blood cell value less than one-fourth of an ordinary person, and the hospital instructed me to always wear a surgical mask when taking the subway or bus. But I had no physical strength to ride either of them. I took the taxi everywhere. Since salads and fruits have bacteria on the surface, I was not allowed to eat them. The hospital recommended me to eat completely sterilized ready-made foods and frozen foods.

 The molecular targeted drugs of R-CHOP treatment made you nauseous. I took tablets to prevent nausea before my IV drops, and since these tablets had side effects on the stomach, I needed to take medicines for that as well. Furthermore, the treatment strains the heart. Patients are given pills to weaken the activities of the heart while taking medications that vigorously pumps it. This deteriorates the physical strength to its limits and prevents the bone marrow from making blood. Thus, the patient's immunity is stripped to almost nothing. My white blood cell count was one-fourth the typical range, and my red blood cell count was half. It was unwise for me to go out. In my case, I was hospitalized for the first nine days. Then I moved to a service apartment, which provided housekeeping and bedmaking services, fairly close to the hospital. From there, I took the taxi to the hospital, two to three times a week.

 I had a girlfriend and we were planning to get married in July. But I didn't think I would be able to survive terminal cancer and asked her to break up with me on the fifth day of my hospitalization. She cried and did not listen to me, saying she would look after me. I asked her parents to sit in on our discussion and we officially broke up. I didn't tell her my new home address, but I kept in contact with her via phone calls and text messages, because I was worried about how disheartened she was. Yet, it was myself who needed those calls and messages. I was the one disheartened. I don't think I would have been able to continue with therapy without her mental support. During my fight with cancer, I went back and forth in between feelings of regret from breaking up with her to forced affirmation that it was the right thing to do.

What kept me going throughout my painful treatment and solitude was most definitely the sense of responsibility that I had to protect the 200 employees of my companies and schools, and undoubtedly her existence.

 Oh! and one more thing! On April 16th, the day I finished my second cycle of treatment, the rugby team at my school, Ba Provincial Free Bird Institute, challenged itself at the national high school championship (similar to Hanazono championships in Japan) in Fiji and came in second place. As I mentioned before, in 2010, the year I took office as chairman, the school was out of rank. it gradually became stronger and became national champions in 2014 and 2015.

 I found out about the result of this match in Fiji Times (a newspaper in Fiji) on the web. I was really encouraged by their fight and I received many messages of support, encouragement, and sympathy via Facebook. One person said,

"It's like the Fiji version of the Japanese drama 'School Wars'!"

But I wanted to reply,

"No way! It started a lot worse than School Wars."

The school was really terrible when I undertook the office as its chairman in September 2009.

In "School Wars", the lead character, Coach Kenji Takizawa, arrives at his new school. Fushimi High School was in bad condition with its glass windows broken. But my school didn't have glass windows to break. It was a school with only window frames! (lol)

Okay, back to my cancer. It was May and I was to begin my fourth cycle of R-CHOP at Keio University Hospital's tumor center that day. My tongue, gums, and throat had started swelling from the day before. I showed this to the nurse and she cancelled the R-CHOP therapy and immediately sent me to the hematology. Even while I was waiting for my turn in front of the examination room, I could feel my strength falling steadily, and by the time the doctor saw me, my tongue had swollen to about two cm in thickness and I could no longer close my mouth.

 I had told my ex-girlfriend via LINE messenger about my swelling tongue while I was waiting. Worried, she immediately came to the hospital. I saw her for the first time in a while. Seeing me in the wheelchair, she started scolding me like a mother about my carelessness and lousy health management, despite the fact that she was much younger than me. Then she took care of the admittance process for my emergency hospitalization. Afterwards, she went to my service apartment to pick up my stuff.

 By then, I looked like one of the Japanese ghouls that mimicked a Japanese lantern form with a long tongue sticking out. Truth be told, I didn't want her to see me like this, but it was inevitable. I was too weakened to even move myself from the wheelchair to the bed.

I wanted to stay as that cool guy she once knew. Yet, here I was-- as the most pathetic person on the face of this Earth.

Even though I broke up with her because I thought that was a cooler thing to do, I was being looked after by that same ex-girlfriend. I was being looked after by nurses. I didn't even have the strength to operate my smartphone. I was disgusted with my weakness.

 In the evening, the doctor was concerned I would not be able to sleep with the acute pain in my tongue. He shot me with legislative drugs. To do so, it required me to sign consent forms. All I remember was being explained about it by a pharmacist and signing the forms. The rest, I don't remember. My ex-girlfriend dropped off my baggage and went home when I was drifting off, a bit out of consciousness from the anesthesia. I felt extremely alone.

 I heard from the nurse later that I had been in a critical situation. When your immune system starts failing, even the indigenous bacteria in your mouth starts playing tricks. We were not able to identify whether it was herpes or fungus in my case, but my air passage had become so small that I could barely breathe and yellow liquid, a mix of disinfectant, palliative drug, and saliva, just kept flowing out of my mouth which I was not able to close. The liquid had stained everywhere around my pillow.

 Most of the people who die of lymphoma die from contracting an infectious disease due to the extreme deterioration of their immune functions. I brushed my teeth eight times each day and washed my mouth every hour. I did not eat anything that might have bacteria, but somehow it made its way into my mouth. As reference for the treatment I was receiving, I read blogs of patients who were fighting the same disease. It seems that there are many who contract a communicable disease, and unfortunately most of the blogs either abruptly end or a family member makes closure comments on behalf of the person.

After my third hospital stay for 11 days, I went home alone in the taxi that the nurse had called for me.

 The side effects of R-CHOP accumulate, and so the pain builds up--- second cycle is more painful than the first, the third cycle is more painful than the second. After the fourth cycle, my eyebrows and eyelashes started falling out. Since I looked goofy without eyebrows, I wore a knitted cap for skiing deeply on my head when going out. I did not want people to see me like this as much as possible and I usually became badly out of breath when I walked home with shopping bags in my hands. So, I mostly did online shopping.

 Summer had finally arrived, and I heard cicadas crying from outside. I received my final cycle of R-CHOP on July 7th and 8th, shortly before the opening of the Rio Olympic Games. Once the Olympic games started, I would check out Fiji's rugby matches on TV during the day when I was feeling better or at night when I couldn't fall asleep.

 Fiji is a rugby powerhouse. At the World Cup in 2005, shortly after I became chairman of a school in Fiji, the national rugby team won against New Zealand at the final match of rugby sevens. I saw this moment on TV in Fiji. The New Zealand team had several immigrants from Fiji and came to the match accompanying a fine medical team, dieticians and masseurs. Contrary to this rich team, Fiji was so broke that they could not even take all of its registered benchwarmers. So, all of Fiji broke out with joy watching Fiji beat New Zealand! When the game broadcast ended, the main street of Nadi was full of honking cars decorated with the blue flag of Fiji and people dancing with banana leaves because they didn't have any of the blue blankets or towels at hand.

 In this team was Ryder, who worked on asphalts during road construction, and Bobo from the corn farm. At the victory interview, the captain, Serevi, was asked what he wanted the most and had answered "a house." I was astonished that this 'diverse' team was able to win the World Cup.

 Fijians are proud of their rugby sevens. After a while, a citizen's holiday was fixed in celebration of becoming World Cup champions.

 The Olympic games must have delighted the people of Fiji again. Though I was not in Fiji due to treatment, I was able to easily imagine their joy. Members of this year's team were all excellent and had strong pass work. They definitely were one of the strongest teams. But, I certainly did not think that they would get this far at the first Olympic rugby sevens game.

 At the Finals of the Rio Olympic, Fiji's rugby sevens team overwhelmed Britain, the country that dominated Fiji during its colonial era, at 43 to 7. They became gold medalist team for the first rugby seven Olympic tournament.

I was truly encouraged.

 There was a high school teacher who sent five of his players to this Olympic team. His name is Meli Tora and is my benefactor. He is currently the principal and rugby coach at the national high school, "Ba Provincial Free Bird Institute" where I serve as chairman. 15 years before meeting me, Meli Tora arrived at Fiji's third largest city, Nadi, as the principal of Ratu Navula Secondary School. The school was in a devastating state, with the number of students drastically reduced to 190. Principal Tora passionately rebuilt the school with his strong leadership and love for rugby. He fostered that high school rugby team to become Fiji's National Tournament champions. Three years after I took office as chairman at our national high school, I headhunted, without hesitation, Tora who had just retired as our school principal and chief rugby coach. He is now working as my right arm.

 It was September 2009 that I took office as a chairman. School buildings and facilities were terrible, as most people did not pay tuition. In February 2010, I decided to host a ceremony and invite Ambassador Yoshizawa of the Japanese Embassy and Honorable Bole from the Ministry of Education. I made every effort to improve the school during the four months until that ceremony.

 All roofs were leaking. Th roofs were made from simple tin. Whether its because nails were directly driven into it or because the overlap is small, it leaked everywhere when it rained. After the tropical squalls, our feet became soaking wet even in the classrooms.

 And there wasn't one place where the water pipe was working. All four toilets in the school wouldn't flush. The vast school grounds next to the school building had a very noticeable height difference in various places. After heavy rains, you were able to catch eels in dipped areas.

 At such a school, the teachers had completely lost their passion to teach and the students taught by such teachers had lost their passion to learn. I am a super super optimistic person, but even I thought I took on an overwhelming job when I saw the dull faces of teachers and students at pre-inspection.

 Nothing will change unless something is done. It is easy to not do anything, not change anything, and just complain. So, I analyzed the essential problem of this school.

 After investigation from various perspectives, I found out that the financial statements handed over to me from the previous chairman were made irresponsibly. No matter how much I look over it, calculations don't match up with the report. Yet, the clerks who arranged my undertaking as chairman kept asking me nonsense questions such as "When will you construct a swimming pool?" and "When will there be a computer room?"

 I looked in further and it quickly became clear that the school were unable to collect more than half of semesterly tuition of 120 Fiji dollars (3,000 Japanese yen). I immediately sent out letters to the parents notifying that students are not qualified to come to school if their tuitions are not paid.

 Fijians are really nice people. When hanging out with Fijians, I notice their purity and at the same time become depressed by my own wickedness. It must be noted that they do not have any bad intentions of not paying. I persistently asked them to pay the tuition, and they came up with many wild ideas such as making a 120 times payment to pay a dollar a day or paying after graduation. None of these ideas were realistic.

 I still urged them to pay, and this time, there were students who came in with bundles of cassava potatoes, taro potatoes, and fish. Let me note that in Fiji, cassava potatoes and taro potatoes grow naturally everywhere. I do not need someone to go out of their way to harvest them. However, for Fijians, who hardly had any cash income, that was the most they could have done.

 So, I decided to gather the entire student body to hold a meeting. There weren't many students who could pay the tuition, but there were many students eager to learn. Moreover, they were geniuses at making friends.

 On the other hand, students whose parents could pay the high tuition at private high schools in Japan are not as motivated to learn or not so good at making friends and cannot enjoy school life. I thought that maybe Fijian students can help cheer up students from Japan or become their friends and take care of them.

In a nutshell, this was what I proposed: If this goes well, it was likely that tuition for all Fijian students could be waived. I had not received approval of this idea from any of the board members (and to be exact, this was over exercise of authority) but declared to them,

"If you take care of students from Japan, then I will waive your tuition."

The Fijian students cheered like children.

"Yeah!!!!!"

This is how "Ba Provincial Free Bird Institute" became the first tuition-free high school in Fiji.

I quickly calculated that if more than 50 students from Japan enrolled in this school in Fiji, it will cover the tuition of all 600 Fijian students, though it would not yield any profit. Well then! I must first start looking for students in Japan! 　But for that, I had to fix this worn-down school. It'll probably cost a lot, but I had to fix the roof, the windows, the water pipes, the toilets, EVERYTHING! Plus, I needed to find a new school principal. I could not rely on this easy-going principal to change the school. I would need someone who was strict to him/herself and to others. I negotiated with the Ministry of Education to find me one. At this point, I had roughly decided on what I would need to do.

First and foremost, I had to do something about the water!

I ended up spending the first month digging for a well.

I had to return to Japan for a while afterwards. As I was arranging plans for the new program of studying abroad at a high school in Fiji, I received a video from Fiji via email.

"We found well water!!!"

 From a well dug in a section of the school grounds, clean well water was shooting up with great force. We inspected the water quality to find out that it was good enough to be able to invite a mineral water factory!

 The following week I received a picture of the beautifully painted school building. The following month, I received a picture of the newly built toilets and shower rooms. Our school was getting better and better! 　The Fijian teachers were beginning to feel this way, and thought they were only standing by at first, they gradually became proactive and started to help us.

 The next time I visited Fiji was in November. I could tell right away that light in the eyes of the students who witnessed the school reformation changed. It may even be said that I saw their eyes glowing. This crazy Japanese chairman who does everything by himself may really change this school. I think everyone was beginning to feel that way.