



# DUO DECIM:

Kaleidoscope of Wild Minds

# **DUO DECIM:** **Kaleidoscope of Wild Minds**

Class C Creative Writing Batch 2016



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## DUO DECIM: Kaleidoscope of Wild Minds

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Duo Decim: Kaleidoscope of Wild Minds

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## Preface

Our minds can create countless dreams and worlds in which we completely lose ourselves. As we grow older and learn more about the harsh reality the world nowadays consist off, we often try to flee or seek refuge in fantasy. One can read a book, go to the movies, watch a series on Netflix or TV to easily escape reality.

As creative writing students we were challenged to create our own reality escape.

We had to dive deep into our wildest minds in order to find the inspiration that we needed to create the stories in this book.

We were lucky that we didn't have to make the journey through our minds by ourselves. We were guided by a friendly yet strict guide named Miss Wedha, who made sure that we challenged ourselves greatly.

So, as creative writing students we ask you to sit back, relax and enjoy the countless of worlds that we created during our class. We hope that you find inspiration in our stories and maybe, if you're lucky, our call can summon your wildest dreams too.

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## **SCIENCE FICTION**

# Schatten der Morgenröte

## (Shadow of the Dawn)

Dimasndaru Damarjati

On the age that has seen science becoming reality, Germany has been the place for a lot of settled foreigners which made Berlin a region where *cyborg*<sup>1</sup> is another way to support the living. Most of them with low educational degree works in industrial manufacture as the operational robotic technology. Others who got higher education degree works in innovation following the era of *cyberpunk*<sup>[2]</sup>, and those without an educational degree in university or did not have any education would join the A.M.O. an Advance Military Operation, the most fierce military operation in all of Europe.

[1] A fictional or hypothetical person whose physical abilities are extended beyond normal human limitations by mechanical elements built into the body. [2] A genre of science fiction set in a lawless subculture of an oppressive society dominated by computer technology.



Looking back to where it all started, it was a windy night with the pale moonlight illuminating the sky of the first day in June 2074. A woman named Andrea gave birth to a beautiful girl. Andrea and her husband, Klaus had been married since the year 2069. After 5 years of marriage, they decided to have a child. It was the happiest moment in their life and Klaus couldn't hold back the tears the first time looking at their first born. At the moment where they could bring the baby home, they still did not have any idea for the name.

On the way home, Klaus was driving in his white BMW with his wife beside him and the newborn baby. That day was a busy day. People were driving in a hurry as if something chased them. It was true, something did was chasing them because they knew time was crucial. They were rushing to work even though public transport was very beneficial some people who chose to go to work by their private transportation. Klaus worked in engineering division which focused on robotic, as the head scientist in Berlin Innovation Industries. Klaus was

working on something that might change the future of A.M.O. in his secret lab because the world was yet to be ready for it. In the wrong hand, it might bring the worst to the world. So, he made it and hid it from the world in a place where he and only he knew where it was hidden. On the other hand, Andrea was a painter. She was into *surrealism*, where it was a rare talent for someone living in the late 21st century, and she was good at it.

Usually, Klaus also drives like a maniac, but not today. Today was a special day and nothing would hold him back, not even the time. While Klaus was busy driving, Andrea was playing with their baby. After 20 minutes of driving, they arrived at their house. It was a big, green house with a brown door. They came home tired and happy. All of a sudden, someone opened the door of the house. It was Andrea's parents, greeting them with joy and laughter.

With all of the sudden, Andrea said, "What about Allison?" with her innocent face she said.

“Really, love? Allison?” Klaus disagree with Andrea and said

“What about Minerva? So when she grows up, her friends could call her Eva.” with a smile he spoke

“Minerva? I like that. Minerva, it is,” Then she looked at the little Minerva and whispered, “Minerva it is.”

Then a drop of joy fell from Andrea’s eyes.

Fast forward to the year 2082, the last night of March. The dinner table was already cleaned except for Eva’s plate with a toast getting cold. The 8-year-old Eva was drawing all the colors of any crayon they could only for beloved Eva. Andrea and Klaus were smiling at each other while Eva was drawing.

“C’ mon, Eva. Eat your toast, it’s getting cold.” Andrea spoke.

“I don’t want to eat that mommy. I can’t chew the side of the bread,” said Eva while she was busily drawing.

Andrea got rid of the crust for Eva to eat the toast. “Here, now eat your toast.”

“I will eat the toast if you cut it in two,” she pointed at the bread to be cut in diagonally.

“You know what, for a girl your age, you pretty have a lot in mind,” sighed Andrea.

“Andrea,” Klaus gave eye contact, telling Andrea to just give Eva what she wanted.

“*Danke*<sup>[1]</sup>, mommy,” she said, putting the bread into her mouth.

“Mama, *schau*<sup>[2]</sup>, mama. It’s a butterfly,” Eva showed her drawing.

“It’s so beautiful, Eva. Why a butterfly?” Andrea asked.

“I want to grow up like a butterfly, mama. Free to fly everywhere I want.” Eva replied with her mumbling voice.

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[1] Germanic for “Thank You”

[2] Germanic for “Look”

Then, Andrea gave Eva a kiss and said, “You will, darling. Now, it’s past your bedtime. Give daddy a kiss and go, hit the bed.”

After Minerva rushed to her bed, Klaus and Andrea talked about their child’s future, Andrea wanted Eva to be a painter but Klaus wanted her to join the army like her grandfather. It was late at night that they were arguing about it and they both finally settled with their decision to let their daughter decide what she wants for her future.

It only took two weeks to shake their life, Klaus was having an affair with his co-worker, and Andrea found it out. However, little did he know, Andrea too having an affair with Klaus’ friend. Even though both of them still love each other, the sparks in their heart had died.

On the night before Christmas, they were arguing about their divorce in the living room. Minerva only watched from the stairs with her tears all over her face while she was squeezing her doll, so she ran upstairs to

her room and hid under her blanket until she fell asleep. All of a sudden she woke up due to a loud banging on the first floor. Minerva grabbed her doll, and got off from the bed and walked out of her room, She heard a bunch of things being thrown and the sound of glass breaking. She called her parents, no answer. When she put her first step down the stairs, she heard someone and she knew that they were not alone in the house, someone had broken in. There was a man with his right arm and left leg made from metal with gold carving all over it. The intruder strapped Klaus and Andrea in chairs facing each other. He was beating Klaus in front of Andrea.

“Where is the prototype?!” the man said.

In pain, Klaus replied. “I don’t know what you are talking about.”

With his right hand in Klaus’ neck, he said, “you know what I’m saying. We know you are working on something special, and we want it.”

As he tightened his grip “Where is the weapon?!”

In stutters, with a smile, Klaus said, “S-Screw you!”

The metal armed man then turned to Andrea and grabbed her chin, squeezing it very hard.

“No! Stop it. Deal with me, not with her!” Klaus begged him to let his wife go.

He grinned, “I like the way you beg, boy.”

The guy strengthens his grip as she screamed out loud to make him stop, but the scream caused him to crush her chin. Blood ran out from her mouth. With her dying breath and bloodshot eyes, she looked at the man, With his right arm, he punched her and crushed her skull.

“I’d die before I told you anything!” Klaus scream.

“Well, let’s make it official.” He said as he laid his metal arm in Klaus’ chest.

“You will never get...”He struggled to breathe as his chest was being crushed.

As he screamed, the man smiled and pushed his hand through Klaus’ chest.

The man then turned his head and saw a little girl standing in terror. Minerva watched her parents get killed in front of her eyes. Her body turned cold. Tears were nowhere to be found. She stared at the man as he walked out of the house, she then approached her parent's dead bodies and tried to wake them up yet it was all too late. So, she walked out of the house, knocking at their neighbor's house. was shocked at the sight of blood in her hands. As law enforcement came, she sat at the front door with no words coming from her mouth. When law enforcement came to see her, she did not want to speak at all. Later, her grandpa came to pick her up. Ever since then she lived with her grandparents.

Christmas passed and it was New Year's Eve, she was still drowning in grief. Minerva looked out the window, remembering what had happened. She could not even weep because of the pain. Then, she saw fireworks and sat down by the window.

“Happy new year mom, dad,” she said.



As she started to her reflection, her mind became crumbled as if it was talking back right at her.

Suddenly, it said, "Happy new year, Eva."

She was scared. As her body ran cold, she asked, "Who are you? Why do you look like me?"

"Because I am you, Eva. I won't hurt us, I'm here to protect you; to protect us. Don't be scared."

Little did she know, She was talking to her own reflection subconsciously, it was rather her switching her consciousness. She realizes right then that she had another personality. In order to protect herself, she refused to talk about it and hid her little secret from everyone.

Years went by, as she adapted to her other personality. Together, she was a little bit happy about life. She wanted to help others so they would not feel what she felt, the cruelty of the world. She promised to continue what her father had achieved, but her grandfather had other plans for her. Grandpa Max was General Officer in A.M.O. and she wanted his only

granddaughter became one, therefore he arranged her to the Dagger Task Force, one of the best divisions in *Black Ops* missions.

On her 17th birthday, the letter came and she was about to be transferred to one of the camps in Stuttgart Germany. Without her knowing the motive of her grandfather, she ran in anger, crying and banging her head to the mirror.

“It's okay, Eva. All that Grandpa Max wanted to do is make you feel better about yourself,” she said to herself, talking through the mirror.

“I don't want to join the army. I want to make the world a better place by continuing my father's works,” Eva replied to the mirror.

“Our father's. This is the way, Eva. Your father was hiding something from the world. We must find it and protect it from everyone who is trying to take it. By joining the army, you could get the experience to do it. I will protect us, but I can't do it without you. We will be

the best and no one will mess with us,” her reflection convinced Eva to join the A.M.O.

Minerva walked out from her room and approached Grandpa Max, She was willing to joining the A.M.O. with a heavy heart, she said.

“I will join you and your special force, grandpa. But consider this as you force me to do it. I don’t ask for it, and I want you to step aside from my life once and for all. Because this is the last thing you asked me to do, I won’t take anything from you ever again, even though you’ll be my general. I want you to not bother me.”

“Don’t lose yourself out there. Always remember who you are and never back down like our ancestors. Stay safe out there, Minerva *Adira*<sup>[1]</sup>.” her grandma said as she walked out from the house.

“I promise, grandma.” With her innocent looks, she smiled.

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[1] Germanic surname that connote a Warrior.

At first, she was scared as she arrived at the camp. The physical training was exhausting and dangerous, but she remembered her promise to her grandmother to never back down.

After 4 years of training at the camp, she became the best in her class and was finally sent back to Berlin to join the Dagger Task Force. Only in 1 and half year serving as a Corporal, she was promoted to Captain and 2 and a half years later she became First Lieutenant, codename: *Jäger*<sup>[1]</sup>. She wasn't exactly the Jäger, she was the one who was sent to kill the Jäger. She became cruel, ruthless, almost like her second personality who was merciless when it comes to a mission.

In the year 2099, she led her own Black Ops team consisting of 6 for a rescue mission in Paris, France. The mission was to rescue a young British scientist who worked for the Berlin government,

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[1] Germanic for "Hunter".

Barry Longbottom, and retrieve classified files that might be the key to secure the missing technology that was built.

Minerva had been given the order to secure the safety of the scientist back to Berlin. It was very dangerous due to the French government didn't want the other countries to find the technology first. So, they had built a defensive strategy to secure their assets. By that chance, there was no other way except to knock on the front door and slaughter the French defence. Though it was possible to do it with *H.A.L.O*<sup>[1]</sup> jump with a severe risk of getting detected. After studying the fields and blind spot, Minerva came up with a brilliant plan that would likely to complete the mission. It might be hard but with patience and perfect timing, everything will work as planned. The plan was getting into Paris by giving a distraction and draw

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[1] H.A.L.O stand for High Altitude Low Opening.

all the enemy defense system to their crucial spot, the Eiffel Tower. Strike down the Tower and let it crumble as when their defense was exposed, we sneak in with H.A.L.O jump to the place where the French had held the scientist.

The plan was accepted and ready to be executed, she expects the plan to be perfect and ready on the air in 2200<sup>[1]</sup> hours. At the 2200 hours, the team was preparing to jump by counting the bomb being dropped onto the Eiffel Tower. Once the bomb dropped, they came in hot down to the post where the scientist been held. With the *exoskeleton*<sup>[2]</sup> suit that made them be more powerful and fast, but still killable. From 30.000ft reported that Eiffel was down and they ready to jump led by Jäger in first then followed by Eva's right hand man, Victor codename: GoldFace. GoldFace was a mercenary hired by the US government to kill the North Korean supreme dictator Kim Ju-ae, the son of Kim Jong-un. After he had dived in, he was followed by Eva's best diver and

was the best navy in *Oceanology*<sup>[3]</sup> Dagger Task Force had, Arthur codename: Manta. Then all 4 followed Manta were Zatan, codename: Bible, the religious one. Wilson, codename: Eagle Eye, the sniper elite. Rico, codename: Hot Smoke, the bomb expert. The last was Komarov codename: Gunsmith. The Russian heavy weapon expert. Together all of them touched down in the post and began their operation.

Remembering that the operation was classified and one of them could not be compromised, no one will come back to save them. Since they were Ghosts, meaning that counties which are responsible for assigning the mission won't consider them to exist.

On the ground they regrouped, Eva gave the orders to execute everyone who stood in their way. With no mercy, they engaged the post. Jäger and Manta rescued the scientist, GoldFace and Gunsmith secured

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[1] The military term on telling 10p.m mission hour

[2] Exoskeletons are wearable devices that work in tandem with the user.

[3] The person who studies science of marine resources and technology

the files while Eagle Eye watched their back on the vantage point. Hot Smoke was placing the explosives and set the timer for 20 minutes to lose the tail after retrieving the assets and Bible prepared the getaway plan.

When the plan had thought to be perfect, something unexpected occurred. General Hugo who was in charge in the post, knew they were under attack and saw Eva and her team. He decided to give an order to pursue them yet, Eva noticed something, that the General had a metal arm with the gold carving. Suddenly she stopped and stared at the general while he stares back at her, Eva knew that her pain would reappear, she began to remember about her childhood and Eva's alter-ego had gone. Without any words, she charged to Hugo while her team tried to stop her but it was too late and too risky. With vengeance in her eyes, she jumps towards Hugo. Before she had laid any hit an explosion knocks off her and when Bible tried to pull her up a shot penetrated his exoskeleton suit and hit his neck killed him instantly.



With anger Eva got herself off the ground, When she notices her exo suit was damaged, she decided to take it off. As she walked to get to Hugo, the bomb which Hot Smoke planted, went off. Minerva was knocked way off the place, luckily GoldFace picked her up and went out from the place back to the meeting point and in only one hour the team got back to Berlin. Eva had lost so much blood and almost lost her life.

A couple of days after the mission GoldFace and Manta were there to wait for their leader to wake. On the fifth day, Eva awake in her bed.

“I can’t feel my arms! What happened?!” said Eva.

With a heavy heart, GoldFace told her, “Your hands were amputated, Boss. They placed mechanical arms would be connected into your brain, so with that yo,u could use it just like human arms,”

Weeks after the accident. She was called by the General Officer, she came to the office just to find out that his grandfather was the one who called her.

“What do you want?”

“Eva. Please take a seat,” said Grandpa Max pointed the chair.

“I’m not taking order from you,” she said.

“Very well. I was here to tell you, that you are terminated from any task forces due to your last accident in your mission. What you did was very dangerous and you’d even disobey the order given from the Supreme Officer,”

In silence, Eva thought for a while, she could’ve blamed her other persona yet they would not take it as granted,

“It was him! The guy from the night my parents were killed! And you expect me to just stand there and go?! They were your daughter and your son in law! Don’t tell me you wouldn’t do the same thing I did,” explained Eva.

“This is not my decision, but you got your team member killed, our assets are in danger! Do you think that would get as bad as it gets? You carried my name in you, you pissed off the Supreme Officer big time. I could

lose my position because of your recklessness!" He replied.

In anger, Eva replied, "Yeah! And I lost both of my arms and I got terminated from any task force! And all you care about are just your position and your life?!"

"You're dismissed." said Grandpa Max.

"Shame on you. I wish grandma could see what you've done in your life,"

Grandpa Max furiously replied, "Grandma died 2 years ago and you weren't even there when she looking for you!"

"I was doing my job. And guess what, I'm not around because you send me to the camp! I only wanted a simple life but you've ruined it!" exclaimed Eva as she walked off.

"Our life will never be simple. Not when your father decided to make that weapon in his lab!" shouted grandpa Max, watching his granddaughter walking off from his office.

Eva stopped for a moment and went off to her office.

As she was walking out from the building, she threw all of her badges and ranked logo in her clothes and blamed her other persona about what had happened in France. She thought that getting rid of her personality was the only way to feel relieved.

She decided to find a person who could get rid of her other persona, and that person would be Barry, the scientist who was working on the lead of the missing tech. She searched for him and found him under the protection of A.M.O. They placed him in a highly secure area when no one will come in and out without being noticed. With the help of her fellows, GoldFace and Manta helped her to get Barry out from the area where only the 4 of them will know.

Eva convinced him to help her get rid of her persona yet Barry was not able to do it since the tech used to rid of the consciousness of a person is considered illegal. The only person who sold the tech was an Anorak,

the kingpin of the black market all over Berlin. If everything that is illegal and it was up for sale, Anorak was the man to make it happen.

The 4 of them were off to see Anorak on the far side of Berlin. When they've got there they were ambushed by Anorak minions, brought to Anorak's hideout. When they've met him, Barry did the talking. With so many bargains made they went back to the east side of Berlin in her father private lab. In the basement of her old house, there laid a scanning chair can be turned into the machine. The machines well built and were ready to use. After preparing, Barry was ready to execute the program.

All well done, her other persona had been given inside a device that could hold consciousness and could be reused as a program like artificial intelligence. In order to keep it safe so no one would use her consciousness to do something bad, she asked Manta to hide it beneath the ocean where no one would ever find it.

After a while, she decided to stay in her old house, living like a normal person. Woke up in the morning, eat her bread that cut in diagonal without crust in the side. For once she felt to be alive. In the morning while Eva ate her breakfast, GoldFace knocked on her door and told her that Manta was missing, and the device that supposed to be thrown away had gone missing. They decided to find Manta, so Eva came to prepare herself in her basement.

Upset that his friend had gone missing, she threw a bunch of things in her basement, when she runs out of stuff to be thrown, she hit the walls with anger, she punched the walls her robotic arm and it went through the wall. She looked through the hole and there it was, a mysterious looking room behind the walls, she grabbed a small amount of bomb, strong enough to tear the walls down. She saw the missing tech including an anti-matter gun and a nanotechnology arms. She replaced her robotic arms with the nanotechnology arms, and later met GoldFace in the rendezvous. GoldFace was surprised

about her new arms and the anti-matter rifle she brought with her.

Minerva gave the rifle to GoldFace and said, “Use it wisely, this was one of my father’s works. He hid it from the world because the world yet to be ready for these techs.”

“You got my word, Boss.”

“Where to?” she asked.

“Paris. Hugo held him in his hideout,” GoldFace reply.

“So what are we waiting for?” Minerva in Growled.

“My intel says that Hugo got your conscious, and he’s been putting your other persona in the clone of yourself.” In fear, he stares at Minerva.

“We’re going to save Manta and destroy that clone,” In calm Eva said.

With full hesitation he stated. “How we’re going to plan on doing that? This mission is already impossible and now it turned to a mission of freakin’ insanity. I

mean, with all due respect, Boss. You're the best of all of us, and your doppelganger got the same set of skills as you do, and it just us two,"

"We'll do this together," Eva convinced him.

"We'll lose," GoldFace replied.

"And we'll do that together too," Looked at him with her eyes indicate a killer eyes.

"We can't win this,"

"No, you won't," Eagle Eye.

As Eva and GoldFace turned; Eagle Eye, Hot Smoke, and Gunsmith approached them.

"And that's why we're here," said Eagle Eye

Hot Smoke "They killed Bible, I won't let his death become in vain,"

"It was my fault that he died. If I would've held my ground, all of this wouldn't happen,"

"It was our decision to follow you, and he knew that the price will be high. You are a great leader, an angry girl. We will follow your command," said Gunsmith in his Russian accent.



Eva nodded her head and smile.

The place was surrounded by motion detector walls, they did not have any other option as to call it from the west side of the Paris walls. In disguised, they went to Hugo's post supply checkpoint and smoothly sabotage the power that runs all of Paris by jamming the electric's transmitter line for only 5 seconds. That was the window to get into the Paris undetected.

Eva order Hot Smoke to jam on her command.

*“Drei, Zwei, Eins<sup>[1]</sup>.”* Counting down the order, and Hot Smoke jammed the transmitter.

With the exo suit they jump high over the wall undetected, soon when they were inside Eva split the team. Eagle Eye took the watchtower and used it as their vantage point. Gunsmith and Hot Smoke went to save Manta. Eva and GoldFace dray the enemy and find Hugo.

---

[1] Grmanic for “Three, two, one.”

They were all in their position, and ready to come in hot. GoldFace open fired in the hideout to draw everyone's attention, so Manta could be saved. And Eva followed him behind with her new nanotechnology arms that could be turned into any weapon she could think of, blades, plasma cannon, shield, and more. They were about to approached Hugo, but someone interrupted, it was Eva's clone. Eva ordered GoldFace to go after Hugo and she would handle her clone.

"Miss me?" said her clone who then jumped to Eva in quick pace "You got rid of me!"

"I am sorry, you did this to yourself," Eva's tried not to fight her and try to hold her punches.

But her clone did not care about that, she blamed Eva for getting rid off her 'friend'. The fight was getting intense and the only thing to stop her clone is to destroy it. It was like looking at the mirror, but it was different, this time the reflection tried to kill her.

GoldFace went after Hugo and got him by shot, made Hugo lost his metal leg. GoldFace then shoot his

metal arm and says. “No more the infamous Hugo ‘Carving’ Schmidt.”

As his being drag, Hugo said. “Kill me already, you piece of s\*#!”

GoldFace raised him by grabbing his neck and said, “Jäger is not done with you yet.”

In pain, Hugo said, “What does she want with no one like me?!”

“You tell me.” With a smile, GoldFace brought him to Eva.

On the other side, Hot Smoke entered the room where they held Manta, Gunsmith waited outside to cover Hot Smoke saving Manta. When they found him, Manta was tortured and very weak, barely even walk. So, Gunsmith carried him on his back and Hot Smoke covered their path.

In the fight where Eva tried to kill each other, with her new nanotech, she defeated her clone by turning her hand into an energy blade that could cut through

anything. Eva raised her hand and cut her clone in half. When GoldFace came to see what happened,

“Jäger.” he said, throwing him across to Eva’s feet  
“What are we going to do with him?”

Eva’s approached Hugo in fury. In terror, Hugo said, “What do you want with me?!”

“Remember me?,” before he couldn’t even say another word, she stabbed him with this hand. As Hugo died in a slow death with Eva’s hand was inside his chest.

“I like the way you die, boy,” said Eva, looking into Hugo's eyes, she could tell that he remember who she was.

After her vengeance had been completed, Eva and GoldFace went after Gunsmith, Hot Smoke, and Manta. The sun began to rises, the shadow of the 6 of them could be seen as they walked out from Paris using a boat in Hugo’s hideout.

“Where to, Boss?” GoldFace asked.

As she looked at her comrades with hope in their faces, “We can’t go back to Berlin with these techs. We

need someone and somewhere we could trust. So, that the tech won't be in the wrong hand, and definitely, I won't give this to my granddad. So, we'll go to London. I got my connection there, we'll be saved."

"London it is." GoldFace in smirked.

Back in Berlin *underground*<sup>[1]</sup>, Anorak heard that Jäger and her crew were attacked Paris with the missing tech. So, Anorak decided to tell the Berlin government that he knew where the missing tech was and who held the tech. He made an agreement with A.M.O. Supreme Officer and he got almost all of the Dagger Task Force in his command ready to pursuit. "*Jage den Jäger*<sup>[2]</sup>" he said.

-END-

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[1] a group or movement organized secretly to work against an existing regime

[2] Germanic for "Hunt the Hunter"

## **SLICE OF LIFE**

## The Girl on the Countryside

Mieke Thijssen

*Sofie is a 17 years old girl. She lives in a small village in the countryside of the Netherlands. She is living there with her mother and father.*

I heard Eva calling my name. She asked if I wanted to have a drink with her and my other friends. Yes, finally, a reason to not go home, because I really didn't want to go home. I needed this so much, it's 27 degrees outside and I was so sweaty. My blond hair stuck to my neck. This was the first real summer day so I could use a drink.

We ordered our drinks and while we were drinking the mood was so nice. Everyone was happy, we were laughing about everything, the weather was nice and my drink was so good. I was so happy with these friends; I could gossip about everything with them and I could laugh with them so hard.

The mood suddenly changed when Eva asked a question. The sun suddenly felt hotter, my breathing fastened and I felt my blood was getting out of my head. She asked why I was always wearing long clothes even if it's 30 degrees. Of course, I couldn't tell them, I prepared myself for this question a hundred times but now, that I really heard it. it's causing me a total blackout. I stuttered something like, "Uhm, well, my, uhm , skin... it's sensitive so, well, I want to avoid the sun". I felt so stupid, of course, they didn't believe me if I was saying it like this with a head as red as a lobster but I just couldn't tell them my story. I could read the faces of my friends; they look confused but none of them responded to my reaction.

After we finished our drinks we went home. Luckily, my dad wasn't home. My mom was home and I took a seat next to her on the couch. She asked me how my day was so I told her the story about Eva's question. My mom looked sad and said she was hoping the best for me in my life. But then why she wasn't helping? She



needed to know how I felt. She's always saying that she didn't want the village to gossip about us. If our secret came out, that would be a huge risk because we wouldn't be able to leave our house anymore and in the worse scenario, we have to move to another village.

The next day I went to my boyfriend's house Thomas. We were laying on his bed and watching a movie. It was warm in his room and I was sweaty but I couldn't take off my clothes.

After the movie was finished, we started to tease each other. I loved doing this with him. Then he started to kiss me, but in a way he never did before. We had a relationship for half a year but we had never done this kind of thing before. I started to panic because I couldn't let him see my bruises, even Thomas couldn't know. I stopped kissing him, feeling paralyzed and incapable to say something. Thomas noticed my reaction, he stopped touching me and turned away his face but I could see he looked disappointed.

There was a short silence and then I heard him softly said, "I am sorry".

I couldn't say anything. I was just staring at Thomas and so here we were, sitting silently together on his bed and looking sad. After a while, his mom saved me by calling us for dinner. During the dinner, Thomas and I were very quiet.

After dinner, I came home. As soon as I am in the house,

I heard my dad yelling, "Where have you been?!"

I was trying to act normal and answered him with, "I was with Thomas".

"You didn't tell him, did you?"

I became annoyed with his reaction and I raised my voice, "Of course not!".

Then he became a creature which I recognized as the bad side of my dad.

He yelled, "I don't believe you!" and then I felt a sharp pain on my arm.

He hit me with his fist. I screamed but as soon as I started screaming, I already regretted it because that's the sign for him to hit me again. This time he aimed for my stomach, the blow was hard and extremely painful. It's causing me to double forward. Tears were forming in my eyes. I was about to plead him to stop but then I felt a blow against my head. I get sent towards the ground and as soon as my head hit the floor it became dark before my eyes.

I felt the pain coming back and I could feel my legs again. How long was I unconscious? When I opened my eyes, I saw my mom was crying while washing the wound on my head. Shit, I realized I got a big bruise on my head. I couldn't hide such a huge bruise from people so I had to stay home for a few days and acted like I was sick.

I was so mad right now and my mom was trying to calm me down by telling me it's not his fault. Of

course, it's his fault! When my mom was pregnant, I had a twin sister. But when she was giving birth we lost my sister. My father couldn't take it and he blamed it on me. I didn't even know why but he never gave me love and it got worse. In the last 2 years, he had been hitting me. For the first time, it was only a few times a month but now he did it a few times in a week. My mom loved him so she didn't do anything because she didn't want him to go to jail.

That evening, I laid in my bed with a headache. Then my phone notification popped up. Thomas was texting me if he could come over to say sorry for what happened this afternoon. I didn't want him to see my father or me right now so I replied with a text saying that I was sick. His reaction to that message wasn't sweet. He was wondering what kind of sickness I have because I wasn't sick a few hours ago. He also asked me why he was never allowed to visit my family. He never saw my family but in my opinion, that's the best solution for him,

to not find out what was going on. I was a bit annoyed by his reaction so I didn't respond.

The next day was Sunday. I was about to go to the cinema with Eva but I told her I was sick. I stayed in my bed till 3 pm. But I was hungry now so I have to go down to eat something. I was slowly walking down the stairs because I didn't want my father to hear me. The moment I was grabbing my food in the kitchen I hear the footsteps of my dad. A hot feeling attacked me and my eyes were wide open and moving so fast so I could see everything around me. The noise was gone but I was not able to breathe because I was afraid that he would hear me. Was he nearby or was he in the living room? I didn't know so I stood there and I waited for a few minutes. After a few minutes, I didn't hear anything and I dared to breathe again. I thought the noise was in my head so I tried to relax. I grabbed my food and the moment I turned around to go back upstairs, I saw my dad standing at the door opening. A short scream was coming out of my mouth and for 1 second I was so scared that all of my

strength left my body, causing me to drop my food. After that, I tried to run back to my room as fast as I could. But my dad was way faster and he grabbed me. I saw my mom standing in the corner just watching without doing anything. He was hitting me again and I was waiting for the smash against my head. Everything was happening so fast.

Suddenly out of nowhere, the door flew open and there was a long silence. The moment I realized my dad was not hitting me anymore I opened my eyes and looked towards the door to see why my dad stopped hitting me. I looked up and I saw Thomas standing there with red roses in his hand. Shit, now he knew, my dad would hit him too and the whole village would know about our secret. In a way to try to protect him,

I yelled, "Run, go away, now!".

Instead of listening to me, he dropped the roses and ran towards me, pushed my dad off me and yelled towards my dad to stay away from me. Then he hugged me and asked if I was alright. I was not able to answer; I

was still paralyzed and afraid my dad would hit him so hard. I was waiting for that moment but that moment was not coming. When I looked to my dad, I saw him just standing there, watching how Thomas bent down and hugged me tightly. When I looked into his eyes, I saw something I never saw before. Next to pure hate, this time I also saw fear and love. Love? Did I really see the love in his eyes?

Thomas took me upstairs and called the police. I wouldn't be able to watch the part where the police picked up my dad so I stayed in my bed while Thomas was taking care of me. I was too tired to think about what would happen next.

It's two days later when I had to go to the police station to testify. Thomas and my mom were going with me because I didn't want to go alone. We were sitting in a dark room with a cop sitting in front of me. While I was telling the story, Thomas kept holding my hand all the time, he was so nice to me. As soon as I finished my story the policeman whispered something to another cop. The

other cop walked away and came back 5 minutes later. I saw someone else was walking behind him. I see it was my dad. I felt a chill run down my spine and I was so scared if he wanted to hit me again. I didn't speak to him in 2 days and actually, I never wanted to see him again if that was possible. But the moment I looked into his eyes, I noticed they were red. Was he crying? I never saw my dad cry before. He was sitting in front of me and for a few minutes, there was an awkward silence. We were just sitting there, staring to the walls and trying to avoid eye contact. Then he started talking. He sounded hoarse and he said sorry,

“I shouldn't have hit you and I should have given you more love because you're my only daughter I have left. The moment I saw how Thomas was treating you I realized I should've been the one who protects you. That's what fathers do, and instead, I treated you like trash. I'm so sorry about that and I know you don't want to see me anymore but I hope you could forgive me in one way or another. For now, I'm gonna sit here for a few



months and I will find someone who will help me accept the past and to become a better father”.

While he was telling this, he didn't know where to look and I noticed that this was something that was really hard for him to tell.

We were one month further now and we moved to another village, luckily close to the town where Thomas lived. The relationship between me and my father was a bit better but it's still a huge thing for me. He would stay in jail for a few months and I would visit him once a month but I was still a bit wary because I didn't fully trust him yet even though he was trying to be a nice person.

The good news after all the negative things that happened was, I had my best day ever. Today I went to the zoo with Thomas. The weather was perfect, we laughed a lot and we had a great dinner. After dinner, we went to his place and we watched a movie in the evening. While watching the movie he kissed me the way he did a

few days ago. This time, I was not afraid anymore and I knew I could fully trust him. There was so much love and he was so sweet to me that I know that I could fully trust him.

-END-

## **My First Task: Let's Go!**

Gusnaldi Satria Perdana Putra

My name is Rendra Aditya Dwi Putra but you can call me Ren. With that name, my parents hoped that I could be a smart and wise man. I am the second child from three siblings in our family which is why I got the name "Dwi" on my middle name. My mother loves flowers especially lotus. She gave me the name Ren from the Japanese language that means lotus flower.

My family lives in a house in the peak of a hill. Our house is fair and comfy especially for me. I could walk wherever I want in my house. From our house, I could see my town and south sea. There were a lot of ships passing by and lot of skyscraper seen from my home. My family and I could see the sunrise and sunset from our balcony. It was magnificent to watch it almost every day in my life.

The place that I like the most in our home is family's garden. There a lot of flower that our family had

planted. From roses, orchids, jasmines, Frangipani flowers, and even sunflowers grew there, it made me happy when I saw colorful place on my house. Beside of that since there were so many flowers planted there, it was warm there. My family was a gardener family because my father worked as a civil servant on weekday and gardener on weekend meanwhile my mother worked as a florist. That might be the reason why my house was full of flowers everywhere. On our garden and in every single corner of our house there was at least one kind of flower. My father's job was to supply flowers to my mother and my mother has a duty to string up the flowers and sell it. My sister always helps my mother to design and string the flowers. She had millions of brilliant ideas to make flower bouquets and I thought she will continue our gardening business. Sometimes I help my parents and my sister by watering the flowers. Gardening was a hard work and as a 3-years-old kid, I was still too young for doing something like that.

Today was a very busy day for my entire family. My father had to attend a meeting in town, my mother got a lot of flower bucket orders and have to take care of my little sister, and my sister had to go to school. At night, we wanted to celebrate my father's birthday. Of course it would be a surprise for him. However, to this day, my activity is just like any other day: playing with my little sister.

"Ren, where are you?" suddenly my mother called my name.

"Do you want to help me deliver these flower bouquet to your uncle and Mrs. Dian?" she asked me while stringing the flowers.

"Yes!" I replied to her enthusiastically.

"I will deliver those flower to our neighbor" I proclaimed.

"Good!" with her smile on her face. She must be glad when I wanted to help her delivering the flower bouquets with her.

“Just like our superhero on the movie, I am the life saver.” I thought in my mind.

“Oh and also one thing! Because there are a lot of flower bouquet orders and I have to take care of your little sister, I can't accompany you on your task.” When she explained that part, I was confused.

“Wait? What? I have to deliver all the bouquets by myself? I can't do that! I'm just a 3 year-old boy. What if there's a jeep stops near me and kidnap me? What if I fell down? Our house is in the peak of a hill!” I said while in my 3 years old brain I was figuring out the danger of going outside alone.

“You won't come with me?” I cried, my consciousness are shocked. “If you won't accompany me, I don't want to deliver it too!” I continued, exclaimed at my mother. My eyes started to glisten with tears.

“Ren, come here!” with her softly intonation she was calling my name.

“Ren, your sister one year ago also did something like this. You saw her delivering the flower and we also greet her together right? Your little sister will do it too when she is ready,” my mother was still trying to entice me.

“If your sisters can do it, then how about you?,” she was right and it made my pride as brother triggered.

“There must be a problem in your journey, but I think you can exceed it because you are our one and only son”

“Yosh! I will do it!” I exclaimed, in my heart I was asserting myself that now I am ready, mentally and physically. Delivering flowers from the peak of a hill was not an easy task but if I succeeded, it means everything. I've proved my family that I've grown up.

“Ren, please deliver the bouquet to your grandparents. You can reach your grandparents' house by walk down to the hill until you find a house with white fences and there is mango tree in front of his house.

When you've done with your task, could you stop by the supermarket and buy your father a chicken satay? Your father has been working hard for planting and gardening all these flowers right? You want to give him a present? Don't forget that this is a surprise" my mother asked me.

"Okay mom!"

"All of your belongings and what you need is in the bag already. Here it is and an umbrella because today, Mr. Sunshine shines brightly. For your safety, I give you this whistle. Therefore if there is a bad guy who wants to do bad things to you, just blow the whistle rapidly and loudly. You got it, Ren?"

I just nodded to my mother, it symbolizes that I understood and is ready for the task. My mother and I went to the terrace to put on shoes. There is the last word from my mother before I leave.

"Take care!" said my mother, waving to me as I exited the door.

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I began my journey after I opened our house's door and that was the last time I saw my mother and my little sister in this journey. Everything was under control until I made my first step and started to leave them.

"Good bye!" I said waving my hand towards my mother and my little sister.

"Now I'm alone in this journey delivering these bouquets and on my way to buy a present for my father. I won't let my parents disappointed and I won't lose against my older sister!" at least that was what I wanted to achieve.

It turns drastically when I saw the street, it was almost vertical and very rapid. In a blink, my braveness disappears. I ran back into my house and directly jumped onto the sofa.

"The hill beat me up this time!," I exclaimed in my mind, "I can't do that alone without accompany."

My mother was surprised when she saw me not delivering the bouquet but just lay down on the sofa.

“What’s going on Ren? You afraid?” she said. She started to be a bit worried that I cannot continue the task. At first I did not want to do this task alone and second, I was afraid of the descent. Of course, she cannot blame me. I was just a little child. However there was no tomorrow. She knows that if I was not doing this today, she would have thought that I would never want to do it.

My mother asked me to follow her to the front of our house. While my mother was stringing the flowers, I can see the street. Nothing happened until 5 minute later. Suddenly there was an old man walked down the hill. He did it alone without accompany and just assisted by his umbrella. Suddenly it gave me an inspiration to overthrow this problem.

“I will do it!” I replied, surprising my mother.

“Are you sure you want to continue what you have start?” said my mother, her face looks like she had found the second wind on me. I knew that she was still

surprised but she believed in me and she took her trust in me.

"I know I can do it." I told myself, I nodded and smiled to my mother. I'm sure that I will not fail this time. Without any words coming from my mouth, I grabbed my belongings and left my mother and little sister in the house.

I started to imitate what the old man did when he was walking with his umbrella. I had to use my umbrella upside-down so I can support myself with it while walking down the hill. It was difficult at first, but the more steps I made, the better I be. I started to know how to step down the hill. Even though at first I thought I can't do this because I was afraid. At least, now I can do it by myself and alone without any accompany!

This is the first time I stepped down the hill without my family accompanying me. Lots of people were looking at me, perhaps it was because I stepped down the hill alone. With happy feelings, I imagine what

my parents would say if I succeed in this task. They must be proud of me and I can be the true brother for my little sister.

After around 15 minutes, I thought I've found my grandparent's house. The last time I visited them was when I was a baby which is why I forgot about my uncle's house. I walked down the ladder and ran to the fence gate. I opened my bag, checked my task list and confirm was this the right house.

"That's it! This is my uncle's house" I said in my heart.

I opened the gate and straightly ran to the door.

"Grandpa! Grandma! Your bouquet order has come!" I shouted very loudly until they opened the door. It needs several seconds to wait for them to come. Suddenly the door opened and I heard the sound that I still recognize after long time ago.

“Ah Ren! Finally you come! *Heh?* You come here alone? Where are your parents?” asked my grandpa after long time no see.

“Mama had to finish the orders with Andini, Papa had to go to the town, and Sekar went to school today.” I replied to his question.

“Wow, Ren! It’s been a long time not seeing you! You have grown up.” greeted my grandma while patting my head and pinching my cheek.

“Come, come into the house! I will give you present because you want to visit us and you can make it alone. That’s great, Ren!” asked my grandma. I just followed what she said. I entered their house and sat on the sofa.

“Here! Please eat it, this fresh mango from the tree beside this house. It tastes sweet and delicious, of course you like it.” My grandma offered me their mango.

“Thank you!” then I tasted the mango. It really sweet and delicious, I like this kind of fruit. I wanted to eat it as much as I can.

“Then what’s happen Ren? Do your parents requested you to do something? It's rare for you to come to visit us and it is also your first time to come alone.” My grandpa asked me.

*Ah!* I had forgotten about that. I came here to deliver the flower bouquet to my grandparents.

“Flower bouquet!,” I said, making the both of them surprised. I straightly opened my bag and pick out the bouquet. “Here is the bouquet!” I continued as I handed it to them.

“Thank you very much Ren!” my grandpa seemed to be proud to have grandchildren like me who could deliver the bouquet by myself after walking down the hill.

“Your mother still have this style on her bouquet, she never wanted to change her style” said my grandpa as I overheard him mumbling.

“How about we put the bouquet on a big vase to make it more aesthetic?” said my grandma suggesting a brilliant idea.

“You are right!” said my grandpa. “Let’s do it! Ren, you want to help too, right?” he continued.

I nodded as a sign that I accepted their request. We started from finding the most suitable vase for my mother’s flower bouquet. I got the part to choose which design that most suit with the bouquet since I liked the color white and red, I chose a vase with those color as the motif. My grandpa had the duty to lift the vase and filling it up with water. Meanwhile my grandma tried to redesign the model to be more proper with a vase.

Finally, the flower is ready! It had a beautiful shape, the vase even suits it well. My grandma said that the flowers will be placed in my grandparents’ room or in

the living room, so that she could see it every day. I didn't know why my grandparents adore this flower bouquet so much. Maybe it because my mother rarely gave them her bouquet or maybe they wanted to missed my parents? Well, only they know the answer.

We did a lot of things together on my first visit. My grandpa enticed me to play with him, my grandma showed me how to cook, and many other things that we can do together. It was exciting to play together with them.

“Ren, because you have succeeded to visit us alone, do you want to stay overnight here someday?” my grandma asked me to sleep in their house.

“Yes” I replied her airily. Of course I wouldn't miss this chance, it would be better rather than if I was not doing anything at home.

It was 4 o'clock in the afternoon. I had to buy chicken satay for my father too. I bade farewell to my



grandparents and I was sure that I will visit them someday, alone or with accompany.

“Take care, Ren!” my grandparents were waving their hands toward me when I continue to walk down the hill.

“Bye bye!” I said, my eyes were glazing when I was getting further from my grandparents’ house. I didn’t recognize that a tear fell down my cheek. However I still continue to walk down the hill.

5 minutes from grandparents’ house, I've finally made it to the supermarket. The chicken satay stall was near the supermarket. I was running to find the stall. After 30 seconds running, I found the stall which my mother told me. Apparently it was very hectic. A lot of people there and everybody seemed to want to order.

At first when I began my task, I thought that I couldn't make it. There were a lot of people there. I stepped backward because I was afraid there will be something happen toward me.

“No, not this day! I’ve been here! I can’t go back and let my father didn’t get his present. I want to make him knows that I have grown up!” I said it to my heart. This was just like when I walked down the hill.

“Excuse me! I want to buy 1 please!” I come to the guy who looked busy with grill and order from him. He looked surprised. Maybe he thought that I was lost.

“Where are your parents, kid?” he asked.

“I came here alone, sir, and I want to order chicken satay” I proclaimed.

“You can order on the cashi-“ he remembered that there was a lot of people queueing on the cashier table.

“Oh, you can order it from me. Where do you live, kid?” he asked.

“I live in that hill sir, in the peak of the hill.” I answered.

“You said you want to order 1 portion? Let me give another portion for you and it is free. However, you still have to pay the other on the cashier. You can do it right?”

The only thing that I could do is just to thank him and ran to the cashier. The cashier said that my order will be finished in 15 minutes. I could not wait that long while doing nothing! So, I went into the supermarket and ran into ice cream corner. I bought 5 chocolate ice cream for my family and me then I came back for my chicken satay. Apparently my food was ready. I took it up and thanking the cashier and the cooker.

On the way back home, I felt exhausted. It’s been 7 minutes after I left the supermarket. I thought the task ended when I bought chicken satay. Apparently I was wrong.

“I can do it! I can do it... I can’t do it! I can’t do it!” I became more and more pessimistic that I couldn’t walk up hill anymore. Then I took a break for a rest on the side

of the street. I opened my bag and took an ice cream to eat. But, wait a minute! Why the ice cream isn't frozen anymore? I forgot that the heat from chicken satay will melt all the ice cream. I realize if I don't run into my house right now, there will be no more frozen ice cream or when my father will just get a melted ice cream. Then I could not hold my tears. I got up and ran up the hill. I wanted to make my parents happy when I gave them the ice cream. I wanted to share the joy of it. My parents haven't told me and I was too young to face this journey alone. I cried a lot while running up the hill.

Time goes by and unwittingly I had arrived in front of my house. I stopped crying, wiped off my face, and braced myself. I didn't want my mother to know that I had been crying on the way back home. I looked on the family's garden and there was nobody there. I thought they were inside.

"I am back! Ma! Sekar!" I shouted loudly.

“You are back Ren!” my mother ran towards me and hugged me.

“How is your day Ren? You enjoy your task?” she asked me.

“It was great, ma! I wanted to deliver the bouquet to grandma and grandpa again. Also they asked me to stay overnight someday on their house.” I told her my precious experiences doing my tasks alone.

“Wow that’s great, then how about your father’s birthday present? You didn't forget about it, don’t you?” she asked me.

“I bought 1 portion of satay but the cooker gave me one more portion. Also when I was waiting for the food, I bought 5 chocolate ice creams.” I explained what happened on my task.

“Then where is the ice cream now?” my mother asked.

“There!” I said, pointing at my bag.

She opened my bag and was surprised to find out that all ice creams have already melted. She hugged me and said,

“you want to give these ice creams to us right? It's okay, don't be sad, I know you cried when you came back here. I could hear your house from here!”

Hearing that, I was surprised yet was too embarrassed to say anything.

“Now let's get prepared to celebrate papa's birthday!” said my mother.

In the end, my father arrived at home and we celebrate his birthday with joyful feelings. Our family shared the ice cream and chicken satay that I bought. Finally I succeeded my task even with problem. However that could be a lesson for me. it was my unforgettable experience and I'm ready for another task! Let's go!

-END-

## Beautiful Inside

Esther Deborah K

April 17, 2002. It was the day April least liked. Yes, it was her birthday, but somehow the delicate first grader felt that this was the worst day of her life. April stared at the long, colorless buildings that ran past her through her car's grey window. She sat still, buckled at the backseat, listlessly observing the gloomy sun which seemed to suck all the green spectrums of the willow trees lining up the bumpy, somber road. This new town--so dull! So tedious! Children were squatting in front of a convenience store with no smile painted on their thin lips. Their gazes were so absorbed on the marble game they were playing. However, as April's car passed by, they lifted up their tiny, lifeless faces towards the sound of the vehicle. The strange hum of the engine was a mutiny, breaking the sluggish stillness.

“Why so quiet, my Little Woman?” her mom called out from the front seat without taking a look at the back.

Perhaps April’s silent presence made her parents’ monotonous conversation come to a halt. She could feel her dad’s kind eyes studying her from the rearview mirror as he drove on.

“Quite boring, huh?” he remarked, reading her mind.

April nodded. Yes, she immediately disliked this place although it was her first time entering this town. However, she knew that her dad needed this job. Plus, there were no friends she knew who could celebrate her birthday with her today. How lonely she was.



“Let’s buy some doughnuts, shall, we? How does that sound?” her dad asked, glancing at April for the second time from the rearview mirror.

“I would like two rainbow sprinkles, please!” she exclaimed.

"Alright, that's the spirit! Then, rainbow sprinkles it is," her dad grinned.

Unfortunately, the joy that rainbow sprinkles brought to little April lasted only for a while. Every day at school, April's lonesome mind kept drifting back to Yogyakarta, her previous city which was so full of laughter and wonderful night fair lights. She shifted in her seat in her painting class as her thoughts traveled places along with each stroke of her brush.

“How pretty! Are those paintings of dresses?”

April looked up and found a lean figure hovering above her. A pair of glasses were resting on the lady's hooked nose and warmth shone through her eyes. What a beautiful teacher, April thought to herself.

"Yes."

"Why, you got a real talent in mixing colors!"

April smiled timidly, "thank you, Miss Dewi."

"Tell me about your painting. Come on, don't be shy," she smiled even brighter, squatting down to adjust her level with her student, "I would like to hear all about it."

"Um... I once got lost in a mall. I didn't realize that my parents were looking for me, because I was so busy looking at those nice dresses that older girls have in the women's section. Oh, they were so colorful! I could still

remember the ones with flower patterns, and the ones sewed with beads! Oh, oh, there's also the yellow ones trimmed with fur, if I'm not mistaken. After that..." April suddenly stopped.

"I'm sorry miss, I think I talked too much," April blushed.

"It's okay. Go on. What happens next?"

"Well," April hesitated to continue, "the security found me wandering alone. He took me to the big office where there were lots of tall people wearing name tags. They looked like my Papa's friends in the office at Yogyakarta. But, perhaps, they are the ones who work in the mall. Then, the security brought me to a lady with thick glasses. She announced my name and said that a girl in a purple dress was reported missing. Shortly after that, my parents came to me. I didn't realize I was lost in the mall."

“Why! How interesting that is. I would be terrified if I were you, to be lost in such a big place. Weren’t you scared?”

“No. I’m not. The colors of the dress carried me away and made me forget that I was lost.”

Her teacher chuckled, "Well, no wonder you did a great job working on this small piece of artwork. May I display your painting at our Art Festival next week?"

April was startled, trying to figure out what the word ‘display’ meant. Perhaps, ‘display’ is to hang something on the wall. That was what mom and dad would say when they bought new frames for a picture.

“Yes,” April said, after thinking for some time, “You may *display* them.”

Ms. Dewi did so, according to her little student's permission. April's painting of rows of colorful dresses stole the show. Many inquired who the painter was, including the principal himself. There was something different about that delicate painting—something that would feed the colorless souls of the audience who strived for the pure and innocent beauty of children. That particular painting eventually received the first place award and sparked jealousy among the young artists of Ms. Dewi's class. Adeline was one of them.

Adeline was a ravishing beauty with the unusual attractiveness of a child her age. She, of course, was the primadonna of April's school and the star whom the boys worshipped. Her lips were the shade of a rose and her eyes were sharp like an eagle. Her skin was light and fair, unlike the dark-brown skinned April. April couldn't help to admire such charm as the primadonna drew nearer to her table during lunch.

“You’re April, aren’t you? The first prize winner of our school’s Art Festival last week?”

Poor April could only nod helplessly, unable to find the matching words to equal the soothing voice of the fair primadonna.

“Congratulations,” Adeline lifted her proud chin, “I believe you are now an official competitor of mine. I couldn’t help thinking why a new pupil like you could place number one, although I’m used to take the first place. Tell me, what’s your secret?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing? Hm. Well, it’s about time that Ms. Dewi has a new favorite in class.”

For a second, April saw Adeline’s nose twitched, and her eyes turned stone-cold. Yet they returned to

normal as they met April's. Adeline's strawberry perfume fluttered in the air.

"People may say that you have such a beautiful work. I have to admit so, too. But, sadly," Adeline continued, "The artist is as not as beautiful as her work. You're ugly and dark-skinned, unlike your beautiful painting done on a white canvas."

A little pang hit April in her heart. She could feel Adeline's eyes scanning her from head to toe. Poor April. She only wanted to sink into the earth right at that moment.

Adeline's words resonated in April's ear throughout the whole evening. The words kept ringing and ringing inside her head, especially when April caught a soap advertisement on the TV on that same day. "The lighter your skin is, the more beautiful you are!" the fair-

skinned lady grinned wide, showing off a row of pearl-white teeth.

“White. Beautiful,” April murmured to herself as the girl in the mirror stared back at her.

Her eyes, bulging out like a toad. Her hair. Too thick, almost like a helmet. Her skin! Oh, her skin! How horrid! Black and toasted like an awful burnt bread! Adeline was probably right. The soap lady was also probably right. She was far from beautiful. She was far from the bright colors her painting offered.

“Are you okay, dear? You seem so skinny these past few days. The robust pink shades on your cheeks are now gone. I rarely see you laugh, except when you are around your painting teacher. Is something wrong, my Little Woman?” her mom inquired that night as she tucked April to sleep in her dimly lit bedroom.



“I’m tired,” April grunted, tossing her body towards the wall, hiding away her face.

“Alright then, dear. Ah, where are your paintings? I don’t see them sticking on your wardrobe anymore.”

April did not reply anything. Instead, she pretended to snore. She could feel her mom tenderly caressed her head, said a little prayer for her daughter and kissed her good night. Soon, April was alone in her dim room. The shadows of flowers and cats from her night lamp danced hazily on the wall. The world was quiet. It was too quiet that April did not realize rolls of tears were racing down her shallow cheeks, creating cold puddles on her pillow.

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"Why do I have to wear this traditional outfit, Ma? I don't like how the moon accessory has to be worn on my forehead. I look weird and ugly"

"It's not a moon, dear. It's part of our cultural identity. And you are *not* weird nor ugly," her mother remarked sharply, "now, your makeup is done. Run along now to the car. Dad's waiting for you outside. Have a great time parading your outfit around the town with your school friends!"

April did as she was told. She knew it was going to be a long day indeed. April kept quiet along the whole trip. One of her school's program was to parade traditional outfits once in a few weeks. April, unfortunately, did not find it delightful. Other kids kept making fun of her, sometimes jeering or whispering behind her back. All she wished for was to disappear into the earth if God allows her to have that superpower.

“Hey, that’s the girl!”

“You look like a devil wearing that moon-shaped horn, you know.”

“Ew... Adline does get a point. She's ugly and black, unlike her beautiful paintings!”

The noise around her was too loud. The whisperings were unbearable. More and more people made fun of April after buying those juicy gossips from that Adeline. What was more of a shock for April was, she was greeted with a shocking act as their parade arrived back at school. In the hallway where the walls displayed the honored paintings of the art festival works, April’s canvas was tainted with black sprays here and there. To April's surprise, mean words were scribbled down on the canvas. There was ‘ugly’. ‘burnt’, ‘freak’, and so on.

No, it can’t be, she thought. It can’t be!

“April. What happened to your painting?” Ms. Dewi appeared at the end of the hallway.

“No! You can’t see it! You can’t!” April said almost hysterically, taking down the painting from the wall and hid it behind her back.

“Why can’t I? I’ve seen it before during the festival. Why do you need to hide it?”

Ms. Dewi's kind voice couldn't seem to penetrate the thick hysteria raging in April's soul.

April didn't say anything. She froze in front of her painting teacher. Tears unconsciously streamed down her cheeks. Before she knew it, she dashed towards the girls' restroom with the painting in her hand.

“April! Wait!” Ms. Dewi shouted after her, running towards April’s direction.

“Open the door, April! Let me in! Let me in! What happened?” Ms. Dewi demanded.

There was no answer.

“April,” Ms. Dewi spoke sternly, “open the door.”

“No. You can’t come in,” April sobbed, “go away. You wouldn’t understand!”

“Tell me what’s wrong, April,” Ms. Dewi almost begged as she lowered herself towards the floor and sticking her ear on the door, trying to discern what was happening inside.

Again, there was no reply. Poor April. She tried to swallow back her tears but she couldn’t make it. It felt

like trying to swallow a cardboard down her throat. Instead, she produced an awful sob, which made Ms. Dewi even more confused outside. Hours and hours passed by. Still, April refused to click open the restroom lock. Without realizing it, it was already 5 o'clock and all the students are gone. They had departed to their own houses.

“April, it’s me. It’s Mom,” a gentle voice finally called from outside.

"Let's go home, shall we? Let's get a good rest at home, dear. I'll cook you your favorite pancake, and we'll watch a movie together. It's been a long time we haven't watch a movie together. What about that, my beautiful Little Woman?"

April stopped sniffing.

“Is there—is there—” she stammered, trying to control her breath between her sobs, “is there any rainbow sprinkles for the pancake?”

“Yes, dear. I’ve bought some rainbow sprinkles today. I know you like them best. Why don’t you come out now so we can go home together?”

“But, don’t laugh at me,” April said quietly after a momentary pause.

Ms. Dewi and Mother only looked at each other in bewilderment. Nevertheless, they said nothing.

“Yes, Ms. Dewi and I would not laugh, dear.”

The door of the restroom finally swung open, little by little. The light slowly gave a clearer image of the small face peeking behind the door. She stepped into the

light, and, oh, how shocked her mother and Ms. Dewi was!

"April! Dear! Why your face is all smudged with white!"

April couldn't take it in. She ran into her mother's warm embrace and cried her heart out. How speechless and overwhelmed she was! She couldn't find the right words to describe what she was feeling. Everything was chaos!

"Now, now, dear," Mother rubbed April's convulsing shoulders, "Shh...."

"I shall get her tissue," Ms. Dewi said, conscious of the personal mother-daughter moment.

She left for her office.



“Now, my daughter. Tell me what’s all this about,” Mother squatted in front of April, adjusting her level.

“I want to be white.”

April’s mother was silenced by a momentary surprise, and at the same time trying to digest what her daughter had just said.

"Today they made fun of me again. They called me black and ugly and looks like the devil. Oh, I'm not the devil, right, Mom? Right? Is it true that I'm not as beautiful as my painting? They sprayed all the black colors over my canvas after we got back to school!" April started crying.

“Good gracious! *Again?* So, this had been going on for quite a while!” she exclaimed, “Who called you that? Who did all those sprayings?”

“Adeline...” April whispered, “...and her friends. I know it's her. She's jealous of me because I got the first place for the art festival. She doesn't like me because Ms. Dewi likes to be around me, too. And she called me... Ugly. Ugly, mother!”

“I didn't realize how black and I am, how disgusting my skin is to look at. Here, Ma, look at my canvas. They sprayed black colors on it and wrote horrid words. I ran to the bathroom and locked the key. After that, I saw that someone had left white powder inside the bathroom, and...and... I just wanted to see how I look if I use that powder. It turned out that I'm still black and ugly as I am,” April's voice croaked, “I just want to go back to our previous city. I don't like it here. Oh, Mama! You wouldn't tell this to Papa, won't you? I don't want him to lose his job either, just because of me!”

“April! Stop saying that, alright? Whoever calls you ugly or spray those black colors on your work is a monster. A real monster indeed! I know you’ve been watching those soap commercials on TV. And I tell you, dear, by not being white doesn’t make you less of who you are. Those ladies parading their beauty soap on screen are all lying. The advertisements—they’re all lies, you hear me? Big, fat, lies! And by moving back to our previous city will not solve the problem. You will eventually meet those kinds of things again in your life. And you cannot escape from it every time it comes around, just like what you’re trying to do.”

It was for the first time April saw the fire in her mom's eyes.

“You have to know this. People will *not* like you no matter how beautiful you are, or how smart you are if you have a bad character inside. If you are beautiful outside, but bad inside, *then* you are the ugliest creature

on earth—like a monster trapped inside the body of a beautiful person. But when that beauty fades away, do you know what’s left of that person?”

April shook her head.

“Only the monster is left,” her mother squeezed her hand, “Only the monster inside that person is left. Remember this, dear: beautiful is *not* white, black, red, tan, or yellow. Beautiful is *inside*, April. It is from our heart. That’s what makes us all humans.”

April sniffed.

“Then, am I bad if I don’t forgive Adeline and her friends for hurting me?”

Her mom smiled a little, “Yes.”

“Do I have to forgive her?”

“Yes, April. It takes time and it’s not an easy thing to do. We should do what we should do—to love our enemies, as someone did for us many years ago on the cross.”

“Oh. So... am I a monster too if I don’t forgive Adeline?”

Her mom hesitated but finally opened up her mouth.

“Yes, April.”

April stared at the window ceiling above them. The sun was almost gone, and the constellations started to twinkle from the distance. The cold wind started to toy around with the leaves of the willow trees outside.

“Then,” April continued, “I just realized how ugly I am when I am not willing to forgive someone.”

Her mom burst into a fit of laughter so suddenly.

"I think we all are when we don't forgive someone, dear. Even the best people in the world stay super ugly when they don't forgive someone."

“Really, Ma? Even people like Aristotle or Da Vinci?”

“Yes, even great people like those guys,” her mom smiled.

“Ah, there you are, April!” Ms. Dewi called out.

She came in with an orange box of tissue in her hands.

“Here, you can use this,” Ms. Dewi offered her the box.

“Thank you, Miss Dewi. I’m sorry I locked you out a while ago.”

“Oh, no problem, April,” she grinned, “I’m sure you both have figured it out, right?”

Ms. Dewi turned to look at April’s mom.

“Yes, we do, although there are several things that we need to discuss, Ms. Dewi, regarding the environment of the school. But maybe we’ll get to that later. April and I must go back now.”

“Yes, please do. It’s getting late now,” Ms. Dewi replied.

“Alright. Come on, my Little Woman. Let’s get in the car.”

“We’re still having pancakes with rainbow sprinkles right, mom? And a movie night?”

“Of course! Now hop in the seat. Okay, that’s it. Oh, don’t forget the painting you left inside the bathroom, April.”

“Here you go,” Miss Dewi passed the painting to April who was already sitting beside her mom.

For a millisecond, Ms. Dewi’s eyes caught the sight of the black paintings and mean words sprayed all over the canvas. However, she only smiled and bestowed the work back to its rightful owner.

“Thank you, Ms. Dewi,” April said.



“No problem. Your paintings are beautiful, by the way. They do bring back my childhood memories when I was your age because I would experiment with colors. Like my mom used to say, beautiful paintings reflect the beautiful soul of its painter. And I think you are one of those people that my mom was talking about, April,” Ms. Dewi smiled.

“Thank you again, Ms. Dewi,” April blushed.

In a few minutes, the car pulled into the starry night. Somehow, the town looked merrier under the glow of moonlight with charming colors splashed about here and there. Why hadn’t she noticed it before? April now cranes her neck to look at the shimmering constellations above—the stars were shining fairly like the way Adeline’s skin glow. Suddenly, she felt pity for Adeline. Is Adeline a monster trapped in a beautiful girl?

No. April didn’t want to know the answer. She only prayed in her heart that someday Adeline would realize

that true beauty does not come from outside. From that moment, April knew that she is not ugly anymore. She is beautiful. She is truly beautiful inside. April finally fell asleep peacefully in the car. The strange hum of the engine was a mutiny, breaking the sluggish stillness.

-END-

## THE EAGLE

Matias NR

His name was Joe. He was 17 years old and studying in Shell Town Senior High School. He had black hair with the fringe-up kind of hairstyle. In school, Joe liked to wear black hoodie; his classmates thought that it made him look cool, but Joe had other reason why he wore it. Joe liked to eat 3 times a day; that was why he had distended belly. However, it was not seen clearly. It was hidden by his height, which about 180cm, and also with his black hoodie. Joe didn't like to count. That was why he didn't like math. When teacher gave him an assignment, sometimes he submitted it, sometimes not. Even though what he did looked rude, but actually he was a taciturn person. Joe didn't like to talk to people in his school, even his classmates, so his classmates didn't know him well. Sometimes, his classmates tried to communicate with him, but the result was only failure.

He would only listen to his favorite music without answering what his classmates said to him.

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One day, Joe was late to go to school. He tried to pass the security by jumping over the school's gate, but the security guard already knew it and caught him after he passed the gate. Then, he was taken by the security guard to the counseling room to be followed up.

"Joe, you know why we are in this place, right?", said the counseling teacher.

"To study," replied Joe.

"Yes, to study. So, if you know the reason, why are you always late!? You had been late for 9 times!" said the teacher.

Joe's mouth kept silent, signalling that he didn't want to answer the question and only wanted to leave the counseling room immediately.

After receiving some advices from the counseling teacher, Joe wore his headset and went to his class while listening to his favorite music that was coming out from his headset. While walking to his class, he passed the headmaster's room and accidentally met the headmaster.

"Hello Joe! Were you late again?" said the headmaster.

"Yes", replied Joe while removing his headset from his ears.

"Oh, I see," said the headmaster with a little smile pointed at Joe.

"You need help, sir? asked Joe.

"Oh yeah, almost forgot. Could you please accompany Nop to his class, in class A? He is our new student in here," said the headmaster.

"Nice to meet you Joe, I'm Nop," said Nop.

“I already know,” said Joe.

“Oh, okay,” replied Nop, looking a little bit shocked as he heard Joe’s answer.

“Okay Joe, You can go now,” said the headmaster.

Then, Joe accompanied Nop to his class.

“This is your class,” said Joe.

Then, he went away without waiting for Nop’s reply.

“T-t-thanks!” said Nop, as he saw Joe who was already gone.

Joe finally entered his classroom and followed the classroom activities. Finally, the clock in the wall signalled that it was the time for the students to go back to their home.

“You want to go home now, Joe?” asked Kevin, one of Joe’s classmates.

Joe just went away without answering the question from his classmate and put his headset again to his ears.

“Why is he always silent when someone called him?” ,said Kevin.

“I don’t know. I heard a story that he was a freak in the past,” said another classmate. “Why? How did you know?” replied Kevin.

“You can see it by yourself. Look, he always wore his hoodie in the class and never opened it. He is kind of a freak, right?” said the other classmate while pointing at Joe.

“Yeah you right, ha..ha..ha”, replied Kevin with a laugh.

The next day at break time, Joe went to the canteen to buy some snacks to eat. On the way to the canteen, he heard that someone was shouting in one of the classes.

“Why did you report me to our teacher that I was cheating on the test!?” shouted the student.

“Because it was wrong!” said the other student.

Then, the other student kicked him on his belly and he fell onto the floor. Joe saw it quietly from a window and recognized that the student who was lying on the floor was Nop. However, after seeing that happened, Joe did not do anything; he just continued his way to the canteen. Then, it was 12.30 o'clock already, a sign that that the break time was over. Joe contemplated during the class hours; he was still thinking about the incident he saw earlier.

“What are you thinking of, Joe?”, asked the teacher.

“Nothing,” replied Joe.

“Stay focused, Joe,” said the teacher.

“Okay,” Joe replied.



The next day, he went to the canteen again and passed Nop's class. He saw that the class was empty and there were no signs of yesterday's incident. Again, he continued his way to the canteen. It was almost 14.30 o'clock, and all of the students were ready to go home. Then, Joe finally went home.

On the way home, Joe saw Nop was taken away and beaten up behind their senior high school's building. Joe approached to stop them.

"Hey, stop! What are you guys doing?" shouted Joe.

"What's your problem?" said the student with his friends.

"I saw you kicking him yesterday. What happened!?" replied Joe while pointing at Nop.

"He reported me to teacher that I was cheating on the test," said the guy.

"A-a-and it was true," added Nop.

“Shut up!” said the guy.

“Okay. Now, release him, alright?” said Joe.

“Why must we do that?” replied the student.

“Because this is not worthy with what happened to him,” said Joe.

“Ha..ha.. this is Shell Town, *bro!* People in this town always do that when they see something wrong, right? Or you never see it? Ha..ha” mocked the student.

“Yeah, and that is the reason why I hate this town. Everyone's the same. When someone tried to do something different, they are mocked and bullied,” said Joe in anger.

“Yeah, same as you. You always wear that black hoodie. Why? Are you a freak? Ha..ha..ha” the student mocked his friend.

When they were still laughing, Joe gave a sign to Nop to run, but the student and his friends knew that.

When they tried to catch him, Joe kicked one of them on the belly, The student fell to the ground. While his friend helped him to get up, Joe and Nop could finally escape.

Then, both of them rested for a while.

“Good kick,” said Nop in exhaustion.

“Thanks,” replied Joe.

“So, you think that this is what happened to this town?” asked Nop.

“Are you asking about what I said to that bullies?” asked Joe.

“Yes,” answered Nop.

“Yeah. That is what I think about this town,” said Joe.

“Why do you think so?” asked Nop.

Joe’s fell silent for a while.

“Nice to see you. I will go back home now,” and Joe went back home, leaving Nop.

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After the incident, no one reported to their teacher about that incident; not even Joe, Nop nor the bullies. It was so because that incident happened after class hours are already finished, and they had no intention to report it. After the incident, Joe and Nop also started to become friends. They always went to the canteen together. Sometimes Nop went to Joe’s house to meet Joe.

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One day, when he arrived at Joe’s house, he heard someone shouting “*kriiak!*” inside the house. Nop quickly went inside the house and searched for Joe.

“Joe! Joe! Where are you? Are you okay!?” shouted Nop.

“Oh, hello, Nop. What are you doing here?” asked Joe.

Nop explained that he heard someone screaming. Joe explained that it was him that screamed. Joe showed his room and he was watching the traditional Shell Town dance. He was also listening to his favorite music, which was traditional music. Joe said that it gave him some spirit, and if he got the spirit, he will shout "*kriiak!*"

Nop was a little shocked that Joe liked something traditional.

He laughed at him and said, "this is modern times. Why are you listening to that song? Ha..ha..ha,,"

After hearing that respond from Nop, Joe became silent and sat down on his chair.

After seeing Joe's reaction, Nop tried to apologize and said that it just a joke.

Joe forgave him and said something about his past.

"You know, Nop? I was the same as you when I was in junior high school until in high school. I always

reported my classmates when I saw them cheating. Other friends considered it a normal habit. But for me, it was not. Then, they bullied me until I entered high school. I tried to get up again. I entered traditional dancing because I like it. It is different from other dances, and I saw many people in this modern times never know about it. So, why can I not become the first to do it, right? But the result was, my parents did not agree about that because it would disturb my study. My friends and classmates laughed at me, like what you did before. They bullied me and gossiped me. The boys kept kicking me and punching me after the class hours ended. Because of that, I entered martial art class, so the boys would not mess with me again. It became the reason why I always wore my black hoodie. This is because I had tattoo on my right hand,” Joe showed me his tattoo on his right hand.

His tattoo was an eagle. The name of the place where he learned martial art was Eagle Martial Art Community. So, he made the eagle as his tattoo. But, in martial art, Joe learned how to calm down. When he

entered The Shell Town Senior High School, he became a taciturn person. The other reason he became a taciturn person was that he feared his classmates would do the same thing to him; to never appreciate his idea or what he is doing.

After hearing that story from Joe, Nop tried to help him. He gave Joe some advices to start to opening himself to others.

“The past is always the past. It will become the present when don’t rise up,” said Nop to motivate him.

Then, Joe tried to open himself to others. He started to open his black hoodie first when he entered the class. He continued to communicate with his classmates and tried to help them when his classmates had problems. Joe also did not listen to his song anymore while he was in class. Because of that, his classmates who were first shocked seeing him, now started to approach him. His classmates also knew about his tattoo and the story behind it. They tried to support Joe, although some

of his classmates sometimes gossiped about him. However, he tried to prove it with his achievement. Joe brought his school to become a winner in martial art competition.

Day after day, month after month passed. Now, Joe and Nop graduated from school.

“So what will you do now? Leave this town?” asked Nop.

“Yeah, people in this town is still the same. I’m bored with this town, ha..ha..ha...” replied Joe with a laugh.

“Ha..ha...ha... you’re right. But don’t forget about this town. Later, when you’ve gained much knowledge from outside this town, come back here. Share your knowledge, so this town can be transformed. People can finally come out of their shell,” said Nop.

“Yeah, you too, *bro!* So, what is your plan?” asked Joe.



“Good question, ha..ha..ha... Maybe I will stay in this town. So, when you come back, you still have one supporter to support you transforming this town,” replied Nop.

“Right, ha..ha..ha...” Joe laughed.

Then, they went their own ways for a while in finding new ideas, new knowledge and reason to transform their town. Like an eagle flying high, so are they.

-END-

# **FANTASY**

## A Rose Among Others

Prisca Rutwasih

It was at the beginning of summer. Early in the morning, Vivienne and Lionel who owned the Blossoming Garden—where Red and many other roses lived in—decided to divorce because of circumstances that the flowers didn't even understand. The meaning of this phenomenon was Red and half of the garden had to move out with Lionel to another garden, which happened to be a florist. She was introduced to her new environment. The sudden change made her worry about what she would be going through. She noticed that not only the place what changed but also their petals colors. Insecurity invaded her personality, which affected her ability to make friends with everyone like she used to do in the previous home. She had no friends, except for Queen Rose, the yellow petal-colored rose.

Red was a rose. She was a rose, a very ordinary one. Her color was extremely red, which resemble

human blood's color. In the world she lived in, on the very first day she and the other roses were born, everybody's color was white. So white, so pale without any colors that can make them argue for the honor of being the most beautiful colored rose in the world. They enjoyed their lives and supported each other. They absorbed the same sunlight. They drank water from the same source. They relished the same love from their parents. That was the last time Red felt the joy of being a rose. She often wished that she could turn back the time to those good old days, especially when she was facing hard times.

The new activity which the roses should get accustomed to in the new garden was the fact that Lionel would go to the roses after he had a short conversation with different strangers who came and went every morning.

“Give me three white roses and two bright red roses. I want to give them to my girlfriend for her graduation.”

The stranger's soft voice echoed to Red's ear. Lionel slaughtered three white roses and two bright red roses not far from Red's pot and arranged them into a flower bouquet

"Here's your flower bouquet, Sir. Have a nice day!" Another day, another stranger spoke to Lionel

"I want a flower crown made of cream roses" then the cream roses met their fate. She began to worry about her future. She wondered whether she would be made into a flower crown or a flower bouquet.

She looked around at her friends to see that their colors changed based on their names: Red, Red Love, Pink, Lavender, Green, and many more.

"They are really beautiful and carry good messages," she murmured in a soliloquy. "Those humans choose the most meaningful color for their loved ones," she continued her self-conversation.

"Is there anybody who would pick me?"

“Your color is beautiful. I believe they will pick you.” Red was surprised by the yellow petal colored rose’s saying.

“I’m Queen Rose, you?” the rose tried to open a conversation.

“I’m Red.” Then, they discussed random things until the sun went down in the west.

Queen Rose offered Red a friendship right in time when she felt so lonely in the world of colorful roses. She promised herself not to be afraid to make friends so that she could get rid of loneliness, which slowly killed her. She wanted to have a meaningful fate, that her death would give a meaningful meaning not only for the roses but also the humans that would use her either to be a flower bouquet or a flower crown. She tried to get herself together, and then she made friends with Pink and Lavender. She felt relieved by the current situation. She knew that she would show her true color in no time.

Blue, orange and purple colors were scattered on the sky above the Blossoming Garden. The sun appeared from the east. It woke the roses all over the garden up. Red was an exception, she had already woken up for two hours. She found nothing unusual until her eyes caught Lionel who brought a pair of scissors and went to where Queen Rose was. She didn't have the energy strong enough to prevent him from doing the activity that would change both of Queen Rose and Red's lives. Lionel separated Queen Rose from her pot, where she absorbed energy. Then, he arranged her into a flower bouquet. There was a burst of sorrow coming out from Red's eyes. Yes, she just lost her only friend, but what hurt her more was she lost her motivation to live in that garden. She began to shed her petals and some of them started to brown. At the same time, a stranger asked Lionel,

“What color of the rose should I buy to express my regret?”

“You can choose deep red roses,” answered Lionel, Red was astonished by what she overheard,

“So that’s the meaning of my color.” Then, she saw Lionel approaching her. Instead of taking her to be a flower bouquet, he plucked off her petals and walked past her to other roses which had the same colors in her surroundings. This very time, once again, she had to learn to make friends with her old friends: Loneliness and Abandonment.

-END-



## The Hunter: Legacy

Bentang Rakai Tanggen

“By God! I’ll kill that self-proclaimed leader!” said a dark-skinned man while he cleaned his clothes from trash and dirt. After he cleaned his clothes and hair, he left the alley and walked to the main street. The *evening sun* shone through the gap of the buildings forced him to cover his obsidian-colored eyes with his black fedora hat. Although it was not snowing at the moment, the thick snow from last night covered the pedestrian sidewalk. “What should we eat for dinner? Hey, Urak, are you listening?” Even though that man asked those questions, there are no responses, more accurately; there was no one that responds. “By whichever God you are worshiping, I’ll send you to the depth of hell if you don’t respond, you make me look like a fool.”

A few seconds later, a jet-black crow appeared from nowhere and landed on his shoulder. “Come on Ali, you know that I can’t appear in public until the bureau

permits me, right?” said the crow that was called Urak, a crow was sent to monitor the dark-skinned guy, Ali Salde.

“I got a mission.” said Ali while pulled a letter out from his pocket.

“From the Boss?”

“Yes”

“Ugh...”

“I know, I know, but we have no choice” Both Ali and Urak’s expression were looking grim. It was clear that the letter was not good news for both of them. Even if it was not good news, they must have opened it. If they did not open it, a worse fate would wait for them.

“Let’s go back to the HQ first okay” Said Ali, the official name was ‘Headquarter of temporal and Spatial Disturbance Bureau’. However, it was actually an old bureau. It was established in the era of time travel when the timeline was stabilized. All members usually called it as HQ. “We’ll be damned if we didn’t report this mission to the chief,” said Ali while dragging his feet to another alley. He disappeared to the shadow.

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An hour later, Ali and Urak stood in front of a brothel. The sun has been completely set. The shops in the red-light district began to open. Both of them opened the door and greeted everyone. Some girls were hoping that they'd get some customers to rent them.

"Ah, I thought it was a customer!" said an old woman in the reception desk, holding a smoking pipe and a folding fan. People called her as "Madam", she was a top ranked courtesan before her retirement, now she trained new girls in the service industry.

"Ah, madam! How are you? You look younger. are you taking a facial treatment?" Said Ali, flattered the Madam.

"Cut it out Ali. When you praise an old woman, there must be something that you want no?"

"Ah, you know me very well, is Chief here?" said Ali, straight to the point.

“That old drunkard? He’s in the back. Ah, and He’s looking for you,” said the madam, pointing on one of the doors.

“Thanks, madam.” Ali and Urak’s plan was simple, went to the back room, meet with the chief, listen to his grumbling, report the mission, and went straight home.

But it was not that simple, yes indeed that the chief is here, but he’s not alone. A pair of men and women sat in front of the chief, the tension of the room is dire.

“Uh... should we close the door?” said Ali awkwardly. Then he stepped back and prepared to close the door before the Chief called him, both of them actually, him and Urak.

“Is this the one that you recommend?” said the female guest while inspecting Ali from head to toe. “Are you sure?” said the female guest, clearly doubted Ali’s ability.

“Can I hit this woman chief?” said Ali while asked with the politest manner.

“Stop it, she’s our client,” said the chief while he rubbed his head, it seemed that it’s a big problem, even for him.

“So? What’s our job?” Ali asked the chief while looking for some energy bar in his pocket. He only found a letter from the big boss. “Ah, almost forgot this one!” said Ali to Urak while the chief was talking to the guest.

“Should we tell him now?” asked Urak.

“Maybe later, it seems that the chief is quite busy now.”

“Good idea.”

While Ali and Urak continued their talk about the letter, chief already finished the talk with those pair. After the pair left, it’s time to fill in the details to Ali and Urak.

“Before I told you about the job, I believe that you two have something to report right?” asked the Chief. Ali pulled the letter from the Boss from his black overcoat’s pocket and presented it to the chief.

After he read the letter carefully, he sighed. “So, why did the boss give this kind of information to you,” asked the chief to the dark-skinned man in front of him.

“Maybe he’s still angry because her wife cheated him and went to the motel with you?” asked Ali while tilted his head. The chief was a womanizer, and it can be said that he made some unnecessary enemies because of his personality.

“Ugh, please don’t remind me about that anymore, I already got my lesson after all.” said the chief while rubbing his forehead. “Back to the topic, the content of this letter has some connection with the mission of our client.”

“So, in short, we will take those two missions, altogether, right?” asked Urak to the chief. “So, what are the missions?”

The chief’s grinned ear to ear, compared to his expression before, it could be concluded that it was some crazy missions. It needed two crazy members to complete it. Looking at the chief’s face, Urak immediately

regretted his choice while Ali could do nothing but sighed. He thought about what kind of hell that the chief would bring them into.

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Sound of tens of thousands of footsteps could be heard throughout the ruin, a single man ran through the corridor as fast as possible, behind the man, some kind of greenish flood could be seen, in a closer inspection, those were not water, but hundreds of thousands of goblins, chased the dark-skinned man throughout the abandoned ruin. "I'll kill that bastard and send him to the depth of hell!" swear Ali while running through the ancient ruin that has been abandoned for a few hundred years. Why did he come to this kind of place you said? Of course, It was because of the mission that he took.

To know what happened, we should go back to a couple of hours before, in the chief's room.

"Shutting down an ancient ruin? Are you kidding me?!" Ali was snapped, he knew that he handled odd-

jobs, but shutting down entire ancient ruins were just crazy.

“I know, I know, but if we don’t do that, there would be a monster outbreak and there will be a lot of casualties, and maybe she too will....” said the chief while frowned, the huge grin he had before has completely disappeared.

“Alright! Okay! Okay! I’ll take this mission, damn it!” said Ali while grumbling. “Just don’t use her to persuade me again or I’ll burn you alive! understand, you damned chief?” said Ali, threatened the chief a little.

After discussing the payment, Ali went home with Urak, actually, Urak could be hung in a branch somewhere, but his main mission was watched for Ali and monitored his activities.

“Ugh... Urak, could you fetch me a cold beer? The highest alcoholic content if you can” said Ali while laying down on his bed.



...And that brought us to the present time. A scenery where a large horde of goblins chased a single man.

“Nala!” Shouted Ali to the control hatch, a few meters above the surface. “Can you shut that damned thing faster?” Ali asked the red-haired girl that stood in front of the control panel.

“Wait a little bit longer, this thing is more complicated than any ancient technology I had seen so far,” said Nala through the intercom.

“How long is a little bit longer is?”

“Less than an hour”

“I’ll die by that time!” shouted Ali, still ran around the corridor and narrow space. To be frank, Nala was one of the best researchers in the whole capital city, and Ali choose her because of this, he also asked a few friends to help him to finish this mission, well, now their job was to protect Nala when she turned off the system.

A less than an hour later, Ali laid down in the ruin’s floor, drenched in sweat, he finally able to stall

enough time to turn the system off, and suddenly, all the goblin laid motionless, like a puppet that got its strings cut.

“That’s one mission done, now, Nala, do you find anything when you seal the ruin?” Ali and Nala’s mission were to shut the ruins down and find a certain item, the legacy of the ancient.

Nala brought a golden ceremonial dagger; it had a unique pattern that was engraved in the blade and the heel. “I have identified the blade; it is one of the ancient relics, should we brought it to the chief first?”

“We should, before that, is the sword has a name? Named item is a quite rare right, maybe we could get an extra payment for this.” Said Ali with a broad grin on his face.

“The name is... ‘Cursed Dagger of Maar’” said Nala while using a special item to identify the item. “Did that name rings a bell?” asked Nala “I’m sure that I have heard of Maar before but where...” when Nala was deep in her

thoughts, almost no one could bring her back. Before she lost in her own thoughts, Ali shook her body lightly.

“Come on, we got our objective, let’s meet with that old man and accept our payment, I want to take a bath.” Persuade Ali.

Back to the reality, Nala finally able to get rid of her thought and follow Ali to pack their things and went back to the HQ.

=====+++++=

A broad grin appeared in the chief’s face, he understood that the team has been succeeded and they would return to the HQ with a treasure in their hand. “But still, the dagger of Maar, how long since I last saw that kind of treasure, this will amuse me!” the chief laughed like some maniac before he was silenced by the madam.

In the next day, the team has returned to the HQ, brought all the relics they found in the ruin yesterday.

“So? What do you get?” asked the chief to Ali, the captain of the team.

“Treasures, a lot of it, and this,” said Ali while he took out the dagger from its scabbard. “Tell us how much it's worth, chef,” asked Ali, unable to wait any longer.

“The treasures worth around 680 Gold pieces, quite a load of sum for an abandoned ruin, and the dagger... I cannot tell yet, would you mind to wait for a few minutes?” asked the chief after inspected the items for a few hours.

“I can wait, but how about you three?” asked Ali to the three people behind him.

Nala gave a nod, while two others shook their heads. “Sorry Al, but we have a new mission from the Boss itself, and we already late, could we just take our share and go?” asked one of them, a man with huge plate armor, heavy knight Jino, true that he now brought his prized battleax, something that was not usually brought when one tried to sell something.

“Before the clock rang, we shalt leave” the slender man with a long robe talked in a strange way, “Ul said that they should leave immediately,” said Nala,

translated the word that he said. Ul is a mage, and he got this kind of speech from his teacher.

“Just give us some extra cash and the dagger is yours,” said Jino while he prepared two leather bags used to carry coins.

“Okay, so I’ll put 190 for each of you, is it acceptable?” asked the Chief to the two men.

“Sure, pack it up and we’ll leave,” said Jino while Ul lost in his thoughts. “Dang, we could spend a few months lazing around with this money, but why did Boss give us another mission! Arghhh!” said the frustrated Jino

“Well then chief, we will take our leave,” said Jino, grabbed the leather bag while Ul already had a chat with madam; it seemed that madam could understand Ul’s speech even though he combined both normal and archaic way of speech. After the two leave, the chief got up from his chair and went out, Ali and Nala followed the chief even without him asking.

“Listen here you two; the shop that we will visit is not an ordinary one, so keep your behavior in check okay?” said the chief while opened up the door in a certain alley, it doesn’t look like a place where someone bought something. A plain colored paint, cracks in the walls, and some old woods as the floor.

“Old smith, are you here?” said the chief loudly. A moment later, a huge shadow came out from the shadow inside the store, in front of them, a huge muscular man was standing, glaring at the three.

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My name is Ali Salde, people usually called me as Ali, I handle odd-jobs for the bureau, when I said odd-jobs, it ranged from searched for a lost cat to the assassination, what can I say, people must make money to survive, and I’m doing just fine. The only problem was that I could not remember anything until I joined the bureau, but it’s not a big problem.

After handled the payment to Jino and UI, the chief stood up and began to walk away from HQ, after a

brief discussion, me and Nala decided that the chief wanted us to follow him, well, he brought our named dagger after all.

He brought us to some shady shop, when he called someone, a huge muscular man appeared in front of us and even Urak suddenly appeared in my shoulder, his aura is too intimidating after all.

After a short greeting, the chief asked us to follow him and we arrived in a huge workshop, it seemed that everything was huge.

For a few minutes, the chief and the huge old man discussed something while once in a while glanced at my way, honestly, it was somewhat creepy. After some discussion, the chief came this way, he then stood in front of me, and suddenly said “Ali...”

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“...this dagger is a special dagger,” said the chief, Ali was prepared for something worse, but hearing the chief said that, he’s relieved.

“What do you mean by special? Is it gold?” Asked Ali greedily he just couldn’t wait to spend all the money on a new suit and stuff, especially his communicator.

“Well, it can’t be sold,” said the chief hesitantly

“Wait, what do you mean it cannot be sold?” Ali was shocked, after all, he was waiting for his payday.

“Nala, first of all, would you mind if I give this dagger to Ali?” asked the chief to Nala who was now sat in one of the old golems.

“Well, I can, but can you explain to me first? What this dagger is? Or the effect?” asked Nala, full of curiosity.

“Tell me too won’t you, what do you mean by ‘can you give this dagger to Ali’ stuff?” protested Ali.

“Sorry, sorry, let me explain this,” said the huge muscular man. “The name is ‘Memory Dagger’ it’s an old artifact from the age of discovery, it was told that the head of the Maar family at that time created this dagger to cure their crown prince of his severe amnesia because of a certain accident, it has the effect of returning the



memory that was lost” said the huge man. “The name’s Oun,” said Oun, the huge muscular man.

“So, finally an Item to recover my memory huh...” said Ali in a soft tone, of course, he wanted to get his memory back, but the dagger is not his, it’s a property of Nala too.

“Isn’t that Great Ali? I mean, you finally able to get your memory back!” said nala excitedly.

“How about you? I mean, it’s not like I own this dagger right?” asked Ali while he stared nala with his obsidian eyes.

“Just take it, you need it after all”

“No compensation?”

“Just take it!”

“Well, alright. Now, chief, how should I use it?” asked Ali while he observed the dagger.

“Stab it to your heart!” said the chief loud and clear.

“What?”

“Stab it”

“What do you mean by stab it? Do you want to recover my memories or kill me?!” shouted Ali angrily.

“No no no, it was a magical dagger; stab it to your heart and the magic would activate” instruct the chief.

“Hell no!” shout Ali. “I want to recover my memory, not to kill myself”

“Do it!” said the Chief

“No!”

“Come on, it would probably sting!”

“Hell no!”

“Too slow,” said Nala while she took the dagger and stab it to Ali’s heart

Before he realized what happened, Ali’s feet went limp and he fell to the floor.

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Ten minutes have passed since Ali faint, the chief scolded Nala and said that she must consider what other people felt when she conducted her experiment and to think twice before she even conducted the experiment.

“Ugh...” a groan came from one of the staff’s beds; Ali regained his consciousness and woke up, just to see Nala scolded by the Chief.

“How is your feeling?” asked the chief.

“Sorry chief, but I guess the dagger is a little bit old,” said Ali while groaned.

“Well, we could not expect the best from an antique,” said Oun

“Sorry Al, I think that you can finally obtain your memory,” said the chief apologetically.

“Worry not a chief, I think it must be my bad luck,” said Ali while he made a sad face.

“Hey Al, can I take this dagger? I want to study it” said Nala while she held the dagger.

“Sure, would you mind chief? Oun?” asked Ali to the two old men.

“No problem, I’ll stay here for a while, you two can go home,” said the Chief while he continued his talk with Oun.

Outside the shop, the sun began to set, the alleyway got darker and darker each minute past. “Well, Al, I think we should go home” said Nala with the dagger in her hand.

“Can you put the dagger down? It’s quite scary in your hand you know” said Ali while remembered what happened a few minutes ago. “Just, just don’t stab other people with that dagger okay”

After a short talk, Ali separated from Nala and walked to his house, in his way, he felt a little bit uncomfortable and saw a huge black dragon stood behind him. For a few seconds, Ali cowered in fear, but he soon changed it into a broad grin.

“Well well well, if it isn’t Urak” said Ali while he stared at the huge dragon, his tone was different from the usual, not a carefree tone like the usual. “Have you gained some weight?”

“You have had your memory back huh?” asked the huge dragon. Urak’s appearance was not a crow anymore, but a black dragon, as dark as the moonless

night itself. “What will you do?” asked Urak while he shrunk his body.

“You know what I want, partner” said Ali, provoked his partner in crime.

“But space and time disturbance has been fixed,” said Urak while he swam freely in the air and landed on Ali’s head. “But for the creator of the disturbance itself, it should be easy for you right?” provoked Urak, now it seems that the two characters provoked each other.

“Then, shall we depart?” said Ali while he created a dimensional hole that connected that place to a different timeline and jumped to it, leaving nothing behind except silence in the dark alley, now, the one that was hailed as the destroyer of timeline has revived, and he only had one mission, to sank the world into chaos and fear.

Meanwhile, in the HQ, a siren has been rung, a sound that has never been heard since the end of the time traveler era. Finally, after a long slumber, the Bureau of temporal and spatial disturbance

extermination got a new mission, to hunt and kill Ali Salde before he destroyed the world.

-END-

## **A Pen Change Your Life**

Dinda Lestari Tuan

Looking through the windows, it seemed the snow was falling down. The winter was coming back again, which made me remember my parents. Now, I was in my final year of senior high school and it had been two years since my parents left me alone. It was quite difficult for me to let the sadness goes away and face reality. As an eighteen-year-old boy, I used to have a dream that one day my parents would be the first readers of my writing. But now, it turned to dust. I could only write by myself and read it alone. There was nobody that I could share with.

After winter break, it was the first day for me to go back to the place which I really hate, including the people there. That was my school. You might be curious; why? How come? Somewhere when people really enjoyed their school life, met their friends and did an

activity together, while I was still trying to avoid all of these.

"Hey, you dumb boy. Are you still talking with your stupid book?" said Alex while laughing.

"Come on man, do not make Josh mad or his parents will tell us," said Tom.

This was how I pass my day in school. Hearing those words from my seat at the corner had become my everyday menu. I just listened in silence and poured my feelings in my book. The ringing sound was the sign to start the class. One and a half hours, I ended the class without my mind inside. I didn't put my attention to the lecture, but it was okay. No one cared, even the person who stood in front of the class that I thought I could rely on. When it came to lunchtime, I felt like being hunted by a group of hungry wolves.

"Take him out, Brandon," said Alex

"Let's go, Josh. We are going to do some exercises. Do not make Alex wait." said Brandon



As usual, my collar was being pulled and ended up in an uncrowded place around the school. With those rude hands, I was pushed to the wall and I accepted their big punches until blood was coming out from my face. They treated me like a slave. I could not do anything to fight back because I had no power. Those were the worst gifts every time I enter the school.

On the way back home, inside the bus, everyone was looking with pity on their eyes at my bloody face. Knowing this, I took my earphone out and acted like nobody was there. This was not the first time for me to face such a thing. I felt the world wasn't on my side.

\* \* \*

A few days later, I started my day by eating my breakfast and watching the happy kids outside who were playing with snow. Then, I decided to get close to them and try to get along with them. While I was having fun with the kids, suddenly, there came a tall woman who was wearing a black trench coat with her scary face looking at me. She started yelling at me, "How dare you!

Do not ever try to play with my kids anymore". She took her kids' hands roughly and went away from me.

In the next day, when I went outside to a store near my home. I felt that there must be something wrong with my body. Everyone who walked through me speeds their movement as fast as possible so that they could judge me from my back. I stopped my steps and went back home because I could not handle this. In times like these, I really need both of you, my parents.

Walking through the house, I directly went to my parents' room and tried to recall my memories about them. Then, when I turned back, I saw that there was a door behind the curtain. My curiosity pushed me to open the door. I just noticed that my parents had a secret library. While I took a look at the room, my eyes caught on something interesting. There were a pen and a piece of a handwritten letter. I took the pen and read the letter.

*Dear my beloved son, Josh.*

*I know you love to write and I hope you can use  
this pen wisely.*

*Best, Dad.*

*\*\*\**

The last day of this year, I looked back on to all the experiences that happened to me throughout the year, either good or bad. I took my father's gift and began to pour out my emotion on a paper.

*December 31*

*I wish I can meet someone who really cares about me and I hope it will be a girl. She would have a heavy blonde hair, blue eyes, pretty smile, and a petite body. It would be better if she wants to be my friend so I can share my feelings. I hope she is not only beautiful in her appearance but also in her personality. In the end, I hope she's the one that I can believe on.*

*To my friends who treated me bad, I wish you could feel how scary it is for me to go to school just because of your behavior. How does it feel when you are being punched in your face? How will you react if you do*

*not have friends in school and bullied by the other students?*

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As the teacher entered the class, she was not alone. There was someone behind her. It felt like *déjà vu*. She was a pretty girl who had blonde hair, blue eyes; she looked exactly the same as what I wrote that day. Her name was Helen. Although her appearance was the same as what I wrote, I did not have high expectations of her. All my negative thoughts disappeared when I looked up and our eyes were meeting. She was staring and smiling at me while introducing herself. She chose to sit next to me in the corner. She was the first person that became my seatmate.

“Josh, where are you going?” Helen said.

I kept walking and did not look back. I went to the library where I could hide from Alex and the others, but what I found was Helen who was also in the library, reading a book. She came closer to me and asked a question that surprised me.

"Josh, do you have a problem with the others?" she asked. I said no, and asked her why.

"When I asked about you, they seem did not care and told me not to be friends with you".

"Okay, now you know that everybody hates me. Then why did you come here?"

"Josh, I do not care about what other friends think about you. I want to be your friend and there is no one that can judge me because of it."

We spent the lunch break in the library while talking and getting to know each other. After that time, Helen and I were always together at school. I became more comfortable with her. We talked to each other about our problems, but it was more about mine. She gave me some advice and told me to keep thinking positively. As time went on, the sadness and loneliness began to disappear. Every man in the classroom seemed to be jealous of me.

The shocking moments in my life was not done yet. When I was on my way to have lunch, I saw Alex and

Brandon were being bullied by our seniors in school. Both of them were being punched on their face. There was no one except me in that place. Suddenly, I thought about what I wrote about having new friends and how the others that usually treat me badly would also face the same things. It was just like the saying; 'You reap what you sow'.

As time went, I realized that all my wish that I wrote using the pen that my father gave to me came true. I became more confident and changed from an introvert to an extrovert person. I did not spend my time alone now, I had more friends. My friends at school no longer treated me badly. Every time in school, something strange happened to my friends. It started with their books went missing, gums on their chairs, and they always got punished by the teacher even though they were not doing something wrong. While they were being shocked and confused, I at that time smiled sarcastically because I knew the pen worked. Now, I believed the pen

had a magical power that could make all of my writings  
became real.

-END-

## Making Waves

Nerry Suhartono

*“Sorry, Lia. Papa’ll be a bit late today. Be home at 8.”*

Lia was a bit disappointed after seeing the short message, but she also knew that her father—Handoko Antara—was a busy man; being a single parent after her mother passed away three years ago. Her father had to continue to manage the oceanarium that Lia’s parent had built together. Her mother, Jessica Antara, adored the ocean animals and Lia adored her mother’s passion towards them.

Lia had hoped that her father would come home sooner to celebrate her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday today. Waiting for his father, Lia then started going through her family’s photobook. Lia cherished the photos with her mother in them, especially photos of her birthday because they



were all smiling. Her mother always baked Lia's birthday cake and then decorated them with different sea animals each year. The sea lion one was Lia's favorite—there were sea lions made of chocolate on it.

Suddenly, Lia heard noises coming from the corner of her bedroom. There was only a small wooden table in the corner and an aquarium for her pet turtle on top of it. She approached the table and looked at Rex, the small green turtle she got from his father as last year's birthday gift.

“Hello there, Lia”

“Eek!” Lia jumped back a bit when she heard a high-pitched voice coming from her pet turtle.

She looked at Rex wide-eyed.

“Rex, did you just.... talk?”

Rex swam a bit closer towards Lia in its aquarium.

“You can hear me?!” Rex's little front feet kicked excitedly at the glass.

Lia stepped closer, still unsure if this was a dream or not.

“Are you—is this real?”

“Of course, I’m real! Here, try asking me to do something!”

Lia nodded.

“Uhm, okay, let’s see... Try circling the aquarium once.”

Rex did it.

Then, Lia kept asking Rex to do many things and Rex did all of them.

“Do you think I can talk to other animals or just a turtle like you?” Lia asked curiously.

“Why don’t you try it out, then?”

“You told me the place is not that big, but this place is HUGE!”

Lia had brought Rex to the oceanarium the next Saturday.

“Well, you are a little turtle after all,” Lia giggled hearing Rex’s reaction.

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That day, Lia tried to talk to every animal in the building. At first, the animals were as surprised as her, but they were glad that there was a human that could understand them. Lia spent her Saturday in delight, and the next day she came back with Rex to talk with the animals again. After experimenting for a while, Lia found out that she could only talk to aquatic animals and turtles.

Since then, Lia always brought Rex with her everywhere and spent more time at the oceanarium whenever she could. The more Lia talked to the animals in it, the more she understood how they felt about living in the building. They all missed the sea, which made Lia felt sorry for them. She then decided to help them by

asking her dad. Her father was a good man. Lia was sure that he'd understand.

"I'm sorry Lia, but I can't do that".

Lia had told her father about her request after dinner and now they were sitting in the living room talking about it.

"Why not, Papa?"

Her father's answer sounded final, but she couldn't give up yet.

"The animals are safer in the oceanarium, Lia. They don't have to worry about food or danger."

Lia chewed the inside of her mouth.

"But, they...they look so sad, Papa. They miss their home, in the sea."

Lia hadn't told her father about her new-found ability. She was afraid that his father wouldn't believe her or made him worry.

“Lia, the sea is different now. Your mother and I saved most of the sea animals because they were hurt by the plastics and oil waste. Your mother...she wanted to help as many of them as she can...” His father continued talking, “some of them are also endangered. By keeping them safe there, we can prevent them from going extinct... from disappearing.”

Lia frowned. She remembered the dolphins inside the oceanarium.

“But some of them hated it inside, Papa. They want to be free...”

It was true. The dolphins were the unhappiest animals in the oceanarium. They told her that they missed the feeling of riding the waves; how they could feel the sea current on their smooth skin. In the sea, they could swim anywhere they wanted, but in that place, they were trapped.

Lia had never argued with her father like this before and this was the first time she felt strongly about

something. Maybe that was why her father looked confused; his eyebrows knitted together as he was thinking.

“Believe me, this is the best for them, Lia.”

When Lia didn't say anything, her father asked her to go to sleep since it was past her bedtime.

Inside her room, Lia kept thinking about the conversation she just had with her father. For the first time, Lia felt alone and not alone at the same time; she couldn't tell anybody about her ability but she also had made new friends because of it. Lia was determined to help them, even if that would make her father angry at her.

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After planning for nearly 2 months, today was the day Lia would try to release the dolphins. Lia chose the dolphins since their water tank had a separate tank used to maintain the water flow from the ocean and the dolphins' place. Plus, one of them was currently

pregnant, and Lia wanted its baby to be born free in the ocean. Lia had learned how the place works for the past months, and today the oceanarium was closed until noon. It was still 7 a.m. and there were only a few staffs inside the place. Lia could easily walk past them since they already know her. After making sure there wasn't anyone nearby, Lia made way to the where she could find the control of the dolphins' water tank to open the first water gate so the dolphins could swim through.

Lia didn't have much time before someone realized that the water gate was opened. She hurriedly went outside using the door with 'Staff-Only' written on it. This was the hardest part. Lia had to open the second water gate manually, but she had to cross a bridge that was right beside the ocean to reach the button inside a small building. Lia was afraid of the ocean waves—the ship that her mother was in got drowned in the sea. Thankfully, she brought Rex with her. Rex helped her to overcome her fear, distracting her by talking.

“Come on Lia, you can do it!”

Then, Lia carefully crossed the bridge. The ocean was on her right, and the dolphins were on her left. Her sweaty hands were gripping the handrail tightly. Lia could hear the waves roaring from the distance.

“Just a bit more Lia, just a few steps more,” Rex’s small voice encouraged Lia from the inside of her breast pocket.

Lia finally reached the end of the bridge. She quickly went inside the small building and pulled a handle to open the gate. Looking back at the building, Lia saw a few people were coming out from it.

“The staffs are here! Everyone, quick! To the sea!” Lia shouted to the dolphins.

The gate was halfway open now, creating a way big enough for the dolphins to swim through. Lia saw them one by one passed the gate. By the time Lia was caught, the dolphins’ shadows were no longer seen under the rolling waves.

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*“I don’t know what happened, doc. She started to bring her pet turtle everywhere after her birthday a few months ago.... Then a few weeks later, she asked me to release the animals in the oceanarium.... She never acted like this way before....”*

*“We will help with the best of our ability, Mr. Antara. She will be treated with the utmost care.”*

*“After I lost her mother, Lia is the only one left in my family, doctor. Please, help her.”*

*“Don’t worry, Mr. Antara. Your daughter will be in good hands in our facility.”*

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The man sitting on a chair in Lia’s bedroom door was smiling kindly at her. He was the first person she saw after her father put her in a house arrest. He said he knew about her ability.

“You can help me?”

The man nodded.

“Yes, and we also help others like you Lia, special people like you.”

“But I want to help my friends. Many of them are still trapped...”

“One day, you’ll be able to help them all, Lia. For now, we have to wait.”

-END-

## **A BROKEN SWORD**

Ludia N.G Kaomaneng

What kind of strange feeling was this? I was familiar with this kind of situation, but somehow, I felt like my body had its own mind. At this cold winter, my eyes seemed like a shark that was looking for prey. I had been walking this road and all I could see was snow, I didn't remember taking this way before. I was all alone. Wait, what was this? Was it a diamond? Why was it on my hand? No! Ah, my eyes... It was not! It was a sword. Who was I? What kind of robe did I wear right now? Never mind! I needed to find a place to survive in heavy snow like this. At the same time, there was a bunch of thieves. I didn't know what they wanted to steal from me, I had nothing. All I had was myself and this robe. Why they were wasting their time to tail me just to gain nothing from me? I pitied them. They seemed like people with good postures; their skin looked healthy and there were no bones sticking out from their skin. Then why? I

didn't want to think about this, but somehow, I felt like they had a preparation. It was clear now, they wanted this sword. Well, at least I was going to die anyway, but not today, today I fight. When the snow was getting harder, they came at me one by one. I could see clearly that there were five of them. Three of them were coming toward me. They swung their sword right in front of me but I was lucky I could avoid that. From afar, the two thieves who were standing behind the trees shot their arrows and one of them scratched my right arm. I could feel my blood flowed down throughout my arm and it ended on the grip of my sword. Immediately, I became stronger than before, I could feel my blood boiling inside of my body, my eyes felt hot and I suddenly swung my sword back and forth, up and down—aiming for the weak spot of my opponents. The sword cut deeper than I thought. I swung my sword as if I had used it before. Their blood felt warm on my body. At this moment, I knew that I was not myself; I became even stronger than I already was when I was facing some kind of situation. When the

birds were chirping away and it suddenly became quiet, I said, "I'm alone again." I looked down, searching for an identity that they might carry along the way, but then my ear became sensitive. I heard sounds coming from the trees. I remembered there were two of them left. I then threw my sword to the ground; as my sword swung right and left making a distracting sound, I immediately took two of their swords and strongly threw them into the trees. One sword for the one on the right and the other one for the one on the left side. In the middle of the wide forest that was covered with snow, the sound of them falling to the ground echoed through the air. I knelt before my own sword and as I breathed weakly, I said, "I have finished them off, even the heavy wind cheered for me, the snow is absorbing the warm red blood as if they were parched for years". All I could do to celebrate for my victory was a smirk, then I traveled back to another me.

At the castle, I sat on my bejeweled chair; crossing my leg while I was listening to my royal advisor.

I was angry at something as my advisor told me about a hard situation that he heard from The North Palace. It took all my humanity to another level of bad. It hurt my pride. I left my chair for a while and headed for the window. I was talking to myself “It was the place. I had been watching it grows. So much blood that I dared to spill with my own hands only to be exchanged with pride.” He advised me to consider the threat and to give them another chance but as I took out my sword and swung it to the side of his head and stopped; he knew it right away that I rejected his advice. I stared at his eyes deeply. I did not find any sign of trembling in his eyes, maybe it was because he had known me for a long time. That was what friends were for, it was not necessary if you had good, loyal people because it only made you carry a burden, but him, he was different. He knew where he could use his fear and that was the thing that made me respect him even more. I decided to lower my sword. I asked him to bring me a piece of paper. I wanted him to

write a letter about my arrival tomorrow. “Tell them that I won’t come in peace!”

This memory was killing me, ah! What kind of man I was? The headache was killing me as I continued asking myself. Rubbing my eyes, I looked at both of my hands that were covered with warm blood from my previous battle. It answered my bewilderment about my familiarity with the movement of my sword. I tried to move my body, but I didn’t have any strength anymore. “I need water”. The cold wind was blowing; suddenly a magical thing happened to me. The wound on my right arm was starting to heal. I was asking myself whether it had something to do with the..... Anyway, I had to move and find a warm place to survive. “A friend? An extraordinary human that wants to be friends with a man that almost chop his head off. What a ridiculous memory.” The day was getting dark. I had been walking for hours and I could not find a place for shelter. Yet, the snow was getting thicker and as I moved my legs, they felt numb. I encouraged myself by saying motivating

words like, “Lucky you! You killed those thieves by yourself, your wound is healing, and just now you found out that you have a friend. It means that you are not going to die, right? Just continue to stay alive. There are many days that await you starting for tomorrow, so don’t die.” ...It had been two days since I faced my first battle, now my wound had definitely gone. In front of me, there was a mirror, I carefully paid attention to my appearance; rare red silver hair and red colored eyes. That was how I described myself. The sword that I was carrying along the way had a diamond, a reddish color, with blue hues and golden line around it, and the sword blade was very clear, even the sun was too eager to reflect its light on the sword blade. Seeing myself carrying such a divine sword, I was positive that I was not an ordinary man. Meaning to say, for all years before I lost my memory, I had bathed myself with blood.” I am afraid of what secret I will discover. I hope I am ready.”

The next day, I woke up by being awakened by the morning sun that went in through the hole as if it was



excited to watch my journey to find the person in my memory. As I opened the door, the chirping sound of the birds, the morning sun shone so brightly it made the wind felt warm on my skin. I walked without hesitation. I looked around, I pictured the scenery with my eyes. I said, "The world is going to be like this and we someday will be gone." Then I found a road, I thought it was the way to a town. I followed the path and from far away, I saw a chariot. In the inside, there were sounds of crying babies and a shouting woman. She shouted, "Save my husband!" As I heard it, carefully I approached the chariot and found a silver pink haired woman and two of her sons. I immediately asked, "Where is your husband?". As she looked at me, her eyes were trembling as if she was about to cry, but strangely I felt a joyful feeling in her eyes. Once more, in a low voice, she said, "Please save my husband." I didn't respond, but I immediately followed the footprints to find him. Behind the trees, I saw the thieves were ganging up to beat up the husband. Then I pulled out my sword and hunted

them down. The cling-clang sounds of our swords finally became silent. As I looked down, the husband was teetered to stand up. I counted the bodies, one...two... As I was aware that there were only two bodies on the ground, my eyes searched back for the one that was missing. He stabbed me. I immediately bend down, spun my leg to make him fall and then stabbed the man to the ground. I turned around to check the husband, my eyes were focused on the movement of his mouth. He said, "L... re...". My eyes felt heavy. I lost too much blood. Then, I fell to the ground.

In my subconsciousness, I was dreaming. There was a fire at the castle. The 6<sup>th</sup> royal prince who was most to be expected to be the next emperor was trying to remove his competitors. There were many people who were in the castle that had been assassinated. There were only a few knights, a boy, and the head maid left. The assassins all aimed for the boy's life, and the Knights fell one by one while protecting him and then the only one that was left was the head maid. She gave her life by

jumping in front of the boy and took the pain from the assassin's sword to save the boy with her life. The boy seemed that he wanted to die, but when he tried to die in battle he would come back alive. As if the boy was looking at me, I saw that the boy that was covered in blood was me.

I woke up and found myself in a big room with a warm bed. I noticed that there was a figure that was standing at the edge of the bed. I looked at him carefully, it turned out it was the man that I had saved. He asked me, "Do you remember me? I am your friend, Calvin." As I looked at him carefully, he was similar to the man in my first memory, but why his attitude did not look like a royal advisor. He approached me and suddenly he grabbed my hands and started to cry. He said, "I thought I'd never find you again." Spontaneously, I pushed him and I stood up to grab my sword and as I drew my sword, I frowned my eyebrows. I was about to swing my sword but then he started to make a loud crying voice like a baby. At that moment, I was confused. Then he said, "It's

really you! I am happy to see you again!” As I backed down, a loud bang from the door surprised me. There was a woman who ran toward me in joy and hugged me so tightly. She was also crying. She addressed me as her cousin; ‘Lereg’. Then I remembered the name that the man I saved had said before, it was my name. Apparently, they recognized me. Then they told me everything; that this was my land, my country, my people, and this place was Illestri, so that meant I was Lereg de Illestri—the last emperor of the generation. I learned that my assumption in the hut at that time was true. It was true that carrying such a divine sword meant that it was a symbol of pride of my country, but also a symbol of doom as I carried the name Lereg de Illestri. A tyrant, a ruthless conqueror, of the land of Illestri. For people that were close to me, they might say that they were happy to see me because they knew me well. But I was afraid for the tyrant title that I had carried since I was a boy might blind the eyes of my people, whom I actually cared about. -

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## How to Find Myself

Marcelino Ryan

“I promise to end all this mess!” said someone who stood firmly at the tip of the highest cliff at Olympus. “Remembering all the things that had happened which become my experience, I think today is enough!” he said again while remembering everything that had happened. When the dawn began to disappear and the night's darkness began to come, everything still looked the same. The red light with big flames which had destroyed the village was an impact of the savagery of the titans who had ravaged the village indiscriminately. “What are you going to do next, Hypo?” said someone who stood behind him. “Take a rest for a while, then we’ll go to their cave,” Hypo said while sheathing his sword. Then they walked away to their resting place.

Looking back at the past, when the whole world still felt peace. A child was born in a stage located under

the foot of Mount Olympus—the land of the Greek gods, the rulers of the earth. The child was born from a very beautiful marriage, which turned out to have a secret. Born in a human environment, the child grew up with the same treatments with the other humans; playing, learning; which made him experience humanity. Until one day, a mysterious incident occurred.

"Hypo! Hypo!!" called someone near there.

"What...? Why...? Hah!! Hey, what's happening here? Why!! Why me?" Hypo said with a sense of confusion that could not be explained by words. The sound of feet pounding loudly towards the house quickly began to be heard from outside. "Calm down my child, all is fine, calm yourself first," said an adult man with sweat pouring from his forehead. "Father will explain everything". The adult man turned out to be Hypo's father, and the one who called Hypo was his mother. Still, in a state of confusion, it turned out that a pair of wings came out from Hypo's back. The wings flapped which made Hypo flew to the ceiling of his room.

"Father, what's happening to me," Hypo said as he slowly descended to the floor.

"Hypo, I'm sorry. Father has kept it a secret until now." Slowly, the flaps of the Hypo's wings began to weaken and stopped.

"What do you mean father?" Hypo asked. Hypo's father and his mother slowly approached Hypo then hugged him tightly.

"Actually, Father is not a human like your mother," said Hypo's father.

"Father, I don't understand," said Hypo.

"Yes, my child, your father is not a human like mother," said Hypo's father again.

Hypo was silent. He was in a state of confusion.

"Father actually has another form, Hypo" Hypo's dad let go of his hug, then walked back and stood right in front of Hypo. "Hypo, look here," said Hypo's father. Hypo then raised his head and saw something he had



never seen before—a father he knew so well as a human turned out to be a winged horse, or better known as Pegasus. Hypo was surprised by this.

"My son, that is your father's true form," said Hypo's mother, still hugging Hypo tightly.

"My father....is Pegasus," Hypo said in disbelief. Then his father changed his form back to being a human and came to him.

"Hypo, Father is a descendant of the original Pegasus and your mother is a real human. But you are a combination of the two races, and that's why you can have wings in your human form," Hypo's father said to Hypo, who was still stunned with what he just saw.

"Father, can I change my form into Pegasus like you?" Hypo asked his father.

"Hypo my son, you should be able to change your form, try to concentrate and imagine yourself as a Pegasus." Hypo followed his father's instructions and another surprising thing happened; Hypo managed to

change his form into a beautiful young Pegasus with straight hair like his mother's, different from his human form.

Hypo was surprised by a sudden feeling of excitement. He then stomped his feet quickly but was immediately stopped by his father for fear of making a scene that disturbed the residents around their house. Long after the incident, Hypo's father told Hypo to hide his secret identity from the people around him. Then, Hypo also lived his life as usual until he grew up. And now, he had special friends who knew about his secret identity because of an accident. Now, they were good friends.

Back to the present

"Hypo, I think it's enough, your strength isn't even equivalent to a titan to defeat one. Why do you still insist on fighting them?" said Perseus.

"I know, Perseus. I'm not even equal to you who are half-human and half-god, but I know I have enough

strength not to succumb to the Titans. I can't stand seeing people who are always oppressed by the Titans," Hypo answered.

"Hence why I really need you not only as my partner but also as my teacher. You are the only one who can help me defeat them, Perseus, with your strength as a demigod, as the son of the strongest god of Olympus, we can certainly defeat them," Hypo continued his words.

"Hypo, be aware!!" Perseus said loudly when they had approached their resting place; a hidden cave behind the thick forest behind Mount Olympus.

"Yes, it's true if I was born as one of the children of the strongest god in Olympus, but I was only a half-blood. I'm still human physically, I can't even reach their level."

After that, they rest while they continued their conversation.

"Perseus, please understand. The suffering of human beings is intolerable. Perseus, I beg you, you are the only person who has conquered a sly titan who was even feared by other titans. I just want to do the same thing as you; eradicate the evil titans who made the humans suffer."

"Hypo, it's enough, take a rest. I will think about your words," said Perseus. He lay down his body on the bed and closed his eyes to a night of deep sleep.

But Perseus didn't know that Hypo was very ambitious to defeat the titans quickly. He then left without saying goodbye to Perseus. One thing unbeknown to Hypo was Perseus had promised in his heart that he would be happy to help Hypo even without him asking for it. Perseus only wanted Hypo to rest his body and the next morning they would go to the cave of the evil titans to defeat them.

In the middle of the night, Hypo arrived in front of the cave of the Titans which was shaped like a giant

mouth that would devour anything. Around the place, there were many visible objects belonging to humans that were scattered. With his great confidence and knowledge, Hypo then entered the cave to begin the plan he had prepared to defeat the Titans. After he walked far enough into the cave, Hypo finally arrived at the place where he saw the evil titans gathered and then began his plan. Hypo knew that in this cave there was a very deep ravine, at the bottom of it was a very hot lava pool, and he thought that by dropping them into the ravine, the Titans would lose.

"I will lure them to chase me and then I will lead them to the edge of the cliff and drop them all". That was what in Hypo's mind when he was about to do his plan. Hypo then took the sword on his back and took out his wings. He was ready with the plan. Hypo then flew quickly towards the Titan and began to hurt their legs. Hypo knew that the wounds inflicted by his sword were not enough to defeat them, but it was enough to make the Titans chase him who was flying and twisting through

the Titans. The plan was successful, the titan chased after him. Then Hypo continued his plan to lead the Titans to the edge of the cliff. "Come here, you stupid titans, catch me if you can!" said Hypo with a loud voice. He underestimated the Titans. Hypo was already on the brink of waiting for the Titans to catch up with him. The Titans almost arrived at the edge of the cliff. Then when they were right in that position, Hypo instantly shot towards the back row of the Titans with lightning speed and pushed them all into the abyss. But it didn't work, the power that he had was apparently not enough to push all the titan. Then in that situation, one of the Titans hit Hypo's body very hard and it made him bounce far enough.

"No, this is impossible," Hypo said to himself.

"Even though I managed to defeat the titan who attacked the village," Hypo recalled the incident when he managed to defeat a titan, "why can't I win against them all now?" said Hypo again in his heart while wondering to himself. Meanwhile, the Titans began to move closer

toward his direction. With the sword in his hand, Hypo darted forward towards the titans bravely; slashing them one by one even though it only gave a very small effect to the Titans, but Hypo continued on, until his body started to feel tired which began to reduce his movement in the air. The Titans began to be aggressive due to the injuries caused by Hypo's sword. They began to fiercely and blindly attack Hypo. Hypo began to get overwhelmed by them, and suddenly an unexpected event occurred, Hypo was unable to flap his wings. At the same time, a blow from one of the Titans caught Hypo and threw him away. He fell into the lava-contained ravine. Hypo panicked about the situation. But he was lucky, he caught on sharp rocks at the edge of the cliff but as a result, he got a wound on his back due to the rocks. Hypo couldn't move his body or speak. He could only feel the pain and fatigue. In that situation, Hypo thought, "Why? Why? Why is it like this?" "This can't be happening. I have the power to defeat them all, I should win" Hypo said in his heart. The Titans were still looking for Hypo up there and

due to the movements, they were making, the rocks began to vibrate and fall. The stone where Hypo was stuck started to crack. "No, I'll die here, " said Hypo in his heart fearfully, but he could not do anything since his whole body could not move, including his wings. "Will I die here before I can defeat the Titans"? "Is this the extent of my ability? Why am I too naïve? Just because I defeated some titans in the village doesn't mean I could defeat them all," murmured Hypo in disappointment.

"Perseus, I'm sorry. So, this is what you mean ... I should have known better. I was full of naivety. I regret it, Perseus."

Hypo kept falling into the ravine, he could feel the heat from the lava down there was getting hotter and hotter, the red light below was like the blaze of hell. The rocks that fell ahead of Hypo began to be swallowed into the exploding liquid lava, making a splash of hot lava into the side of the cliff. "In the name of the goddess of fortune, if luck is once again on my side, I promise to change my ignorant attitude." Hypo slowly began to be



able to speak from his mouth. He was approaching the lava pond. Hypo then closed his eyes, "Perseus, I'm sorry for my stupidity," said Hypo with his small voice as he surrendered to his fate. BRUUUKKKK; a loud voice was heard from within the abyss, apparently, Hypo hit the flat surface just above the lava pool. It turned out that goddess Fortuna had granted his wish and he was very grateful for it. "In the name of Goddess Fortuna, thank you, thank you for saving me twice!" said Hypo with tears running down his cheeks. After the incident, Hypo realized that all this time he had not thought of everything properly, he always thought everything was in control and safe without knowing there was a risk behind it. Lying down, Hypo still unable to move his whole body. He could move only some parts of his body. In that situation, Hypo expressed his gratitude again, "In the name of the deity goddess Athena; thank you for giving me a lesson. At your discretion, you have taught me how to improve myself. Thank you. Thank you." After lying down for hours, Hypo finally could move his whole body.

He then turned his body and looked up. A heated red room that stung the skin. A glimmer of light was visible from above and when Hypo opened his eyes wide, he was looking at the night sky with starlight that shines brightly along with the moon through the darkness of the cave. Hypo tried to get up, trying to move his wings with all his strength and he kept trying. With the remnants of his strength, Hypo tried to fly out of the ravine. With his hard effort, he succeeded, then he walked slowly while observing his surroundings. "Looks like the Titans are already gone ... Damn! Damn! Damn!" Hypo murmured in his heart. The remorse still continued to whisper in his mind until he arrived at the entrance to the cave. With his remaining strength, he tried to get back to their resting place. With a battered state and wounds all over his body, he managed to arrive when the dawn was coming. Perseus saw Hypo flying low, then he immediately ran and caught him "Hypo! What happened to you?" Perseus asked in a panic and he was astonished.

"Perseus, finally, I have recognized myself," said Hypo, then he lost his consciousness.

Perseus then quickly helped his friend and treated every wound he suffered.

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A Few Days Later

A miracle might not be created like the stars in the sky whose light explores this world.

A room at the top of the palace was open to the sky.

A figure looked down, "All the chaos that had happened are caused by the action of the giants who regarded humans as trivial creatures who could do nothing to fight back." With a sword and a scar on his back, a spear and shield on his hands he spoke, "We will travel the world to clean up this mess."

Thank You

-END-

## The New God

Aulia Sausan S

One fine day, in the first morning of spring in Ireland, the sky was blue, The snow melted, the flowers woke up from their sleep, and the forest beetles began to roam for food. A good start to this year. But did you know who played a role in maintaining the beauty of all this? God? Yeah, maybe, but He didn't jump directly into the universe to do it ... Angels? Not really. They were busy recording human actions. Doing the administration part in heaven, I say. Or maybe you thought that its nature would itself remain balanced? No kidding. Inanimate objects have no thoughts of their own.

Have you given up? Hmm... humans are weak, but you are still at the top of the food chain, surprisingly. Okay I'll tell you. First, let me introduce myself. I am Philip, an Aluca. Have you ever heard of it before? No? The Aluca is a distant relative of Smurf. Maybe our fame

is lost to theirs, but believe me, we are much cooler than those blue men. We are amethyst, similar to purple but has a glimmer of white, slight pink, and a lot of sparkles. I'm not sure whether I'm a dwarf or a star. Everyone from our kind came from the oak tree seeds that grow wild around Ireland. One of the hundred seeds will be one of us. We are very small, the size of your big toe, maybe. Also, we live in mushrooms house. Typical dwarfs in your movie, right? Yeah, but that's how we are.

If you think Aluca is a bunch of unimportant dwarfs, you guys are completely wrong. We might be small, but we are the keepers of the universe. We set the wind to blow. We drain the water to the ground to fertilize it. We color the flowers so that the world looks more beautiful. We are the ones you consider scientific.

However, there is one of the most important dwarfs in the world: the ruler of the universe. He is Pan, the legend who began to dim his sacredness at this time. Not because he is weak, but because he is considered dead by some dwarfs; and this nature? It works by itself,

they say. But nature has started to go a bit wrong lately: waste in water, air pollution, flood, landslides, and so on, are starting to appear one by one in each region. The earth is getting too crowded, and nature is getting more damaged. The noble Pan certainly will not let all of this happen under his supervision. I'm including a handful of people who still believed in legends about the noble Pan, how great he was to regulate the universe, how his wisdom governed the gods, and how he fought the enemy with his cries of nature. He was too strong to die now, and too ignorant not to be aware of the damage that was happening. I'm pretty sure there must be something wrong with Pan. I tried to find the answer about this, but my friends always laughed at me, even trying to change the subject so I would close my mouth. Aren't they curious about Pan's great heroic story in looking after us and the whole universe? I longed to look for and talk to him about all the things I admired about him. But for decades I didn't find any clue about it, and all the dwarfs in the village said I was insane and

hallucinating to find the legend who was either just a myth or had long died. I do not know and do not care, because the purpose of my life so far is to find the noble Pan and maintaining the universe.

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Anyway, today is my schedule to watch and check the state of the western forest with Anthony. He is one of my best friends, even though we had very different characters. He is a type of Aluca who is courageous and has a leadership spirit. But he sometimes, he is also annoying because he always rule, while I ... am arguably more rational than him. I do not like noise or challenges. I like all things that go according to the rules, because with that, all things will run safely and smoothly. But it's impossible for everything to work like that, right? For example, today, I just wanted to quickly finish my shift and go home early, because I was really tired. But when I checked the grove of juniper trees on the edge of the border, Anthony found a hole that was not big enough

but looked very mysterious. The hole flashed a faint light from inside, and it looked like a bottomless pit.

I didn't like it. Anthony would definitely try to investigate the hole. Why did he have to be that ambitious? Was he not afraid of giant lizards, or creepy insects, or monsters? All adults said that mythical stories about monsters were made so children would not go to dangerous places. But that didn't mean that the story is a lie, right? And yeah, my guess was right. Anthony had pulled the tendrils off the banyan tree and tied it to his waist. He was trying to get down. That was crazy man. I didn't want to get into trouble just because of this creepy dumb hole. I had to stop Anthony.

"Hey dude, are you crazy?? Don't be reckless! We don't know what's down there !!" I shouted to Anthony.

Instead of listening to me, he still strengthened his ties to the tendrils.

"Are you afraid, baby Phil?" he replied with a sneering grin.



I couldn't accept being ridiculed like a baby. With one strong pull, I kept Anthony away from the hole. He screamed in pain. Maybe my hand was too strong, but the most important thing was that he stopped doing things that didn't make sense like before.

"Don't be such a moron, bull-head! I don't want to get into trouble. We'd better report it to the guard fairies so that they would handle this hole themselves!"

Anthony, who was still in pain, tried to get up. But he gave up and followed my advice. Deep inside my heart, I was also curious about the hole, with what was inside it. My little heart said crazy things that made no sense. He said the noble Pan was down there, setting and seeing the universe from an angle that was never imagined to be occupied by a god of nature. But that's impossible, right?

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The next day, I reported our findings to the forest guards. The thing I didn't expect was the honorary

councils of Aluca and forest fairies held a closed session to discuss the mysterious hole under the juniper tree that Anthony and I found. According to the information Anthony got, the hole was a mythical hole the elders had never even told of. The underworld hole, that was how they called it. An endless hole that would lead you to hell. Just hearing it made me cringe in fear, but it was different from Anthony. It made him even more excited to investigate the hole. And his enthusiasm was a nightmare for me and Beta.

Beta is Alucan girl, and one of my friends. She always become the mediator when Anthony and I argued. She is very smart and kind. If you see her smile, you will think she is different from us. She is not Alucan. She is like an angel. Umm... I mean, her smile is soothing, that's all. Don't think that I like her, huh! Or she will be big-head. Just like me, Beta also didn't really like Anthony's idea, but she also didn't reject it. I knew deep inside, she wanted to find freedom and challenges. So, of course, I had lost the vote here.

Anthony had planned that we would infiltrate the forest at midnight tomorrow, so today I would enjoy (maybe) my last sleep in this cozy haystack, and to say goodbye to Jennie, my favourite leaf doll. I arranged my pillow and blanket, and in less than five minutes, I had fallen asleep. The first ten minutes of my sleep was very comfortable. I dreamed of sitting relaxingly with Jennie on the beach, but then the beauty vanished. It was replaced by a nightmare. It was another vision.

Here, I tell you one of my biggest secrets that I never told people before. But promise me the Amazon river that you will save this for yourself, okay? Don't tell your mother, your father or your sister. I can see the future through dreams. Initially, it is displayed in pixels. So, it's like I see the walking blurry squares in my dream. But when the time is near, my vision becomes clearer. However, this gift doesn't always make me comfortable, because my vision always shows things that aren't good. Like tonight, I dreamed of 3 people crying because they felt like they had lost half of their lives. Things weren't

good, of course, but they all still looked abstract. I was not sure of this dream, but I felt my adrenaline racing along with the rhythm of the dream. I woke up from my sleep with sweat flooding my pajama. Then, I wrote all my dreams in the little book that I named Tom. He was the one who brought all my secrets all this time.

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The next day at 10:00 p.m is the day. we gathered at Anthony's house to draw up a plan. Beta, Anthony, and I were ready with each provision. I carried food supplies, rope, Tom, and some lucky charms so that I could still come back alive. Now, the time was 12 p.m. It was time for us to penetrate into the red zone, where the hole was. It had been 3 days since this hole was discovered, but no one had dared to investigate it. And now, here we were, with our waist tied in a rope. We were ready to plunge into the mysterious hole. The guarding was much looser than I thought. One by one dropped down. Anthony was first, then Beta, and the last was me. I was not scared. I just thought that even if I returned safe, I

would still get a lot of trouble after this. However, what does life mean if we aren't dare enough to take the risks?

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It had been half an hour since we had gotten down this hole, but we hadn't reached the bottom yet. It seemed that it was impossible for us to get out of this place safely. Suddenly, we heard the sound "*kreekkk*". It was a bad sign, because a second later, we all fell down because my rope snapped. The positive side was that this hole had a bottom. But the negative side was that we all fell hard enough onto the dry ground. That made all my small bones crumble. Anthony scolded me for this incident, but I was helpless to reciprocate. So, I decided to leave it until he shut up. For fifteen minutes, we observed around and rearranged the scattered bones. Then, we decided to continue the journey.

There was nothing here. It was only a narrow and dark hallway that was only fit for 2 people with a low ground ceiling. The walls were also only soil, decorated

with abstract stones which I found interesting. While I was looking for signs of life inside here, I made a marker, so I knew the direction to go home. I named all the stones on the wall with chalk: Hans, Meg, Tan, Amanda, Dan, Alisa--I named all of them so that I wouldn't feel lonely. Anthony, who led and carried the lantern for our lighting, patiently and confidently convinced us to keep looking for signs. However, one hour of our journey did not produce any results.

When we almost gave up due to exhaustion, we saw a difference in the walls of the labyrinth. The hallway in front of us was more alive than we had passed. Soapwort tendrils and coral vines decorated the walls.

"Hey, I told you that there is life here! Let's find out!" Anthony, again, found his enthusiasm.

He ran down this hallway. Beta and I joined him. The deeper the trail was, the livelier the hallway, trees, flowers became. Even small ladybugs came to welcome us. This was actually impossible. No light could penetrate

this labyrinth, but they were all alive. And I felt the nature and life energy increasing here. Not for long, we found a door made of oak wood. Anthony ventured to open it, and I still wished that there were no lizards or anything terrible behind the door. The old wooden creak sounded when the door was successfully opened.

We saw a dwarf there. His age must have been very old. It was visible from every wrinkle on his face. But in contrast to all the respectable dwarves that I had ever met, he emitted an aura 1000 times stronger than the others. It was calming, but also killing. I was not sure whether he was a dwarf or not, but I really wanted to kneel before him. Anthony, Beta and I bowed before the senior dwarf. He was surrounded by dozens of golden winged fairies and all the plants that I had never seen before. All these beautiful sights I had not seen since the condition of the universe had deteriorated.

"Ahem ... I haven't had a visit for a long time. Are you my grandchildren?" asked the old dwarf.

His voice was soothing and very wise.

"Yes, sir. We are Alucans. I'm Beta to right is Anthony, and Philip on the left," Beta said softly.

"Welcome Beta, Anthony and Philip, My name is Pan. What is your need to get all the way here?" replied to the old dwarf.

*Pan*

*Pan ...*

*PAN ...*

My heart stopped beating. His name echoed in my mind. This is it, what I was looking for all this time... The noble Pan was sitting in front of me. He wore an ancient suit that looked dull on several sides. His hands and face were wrinkled with age. Although now he looked old and weak, but traces of his pride would never, ever be hidden by age. He was still the mighty Pan.

For a second, I couldn't bear the weight of my own body. I knelt, because at this moment, my body was



filled with excitement, admiration, and rising relief. Pan was still alive. The god of nature would intervene in nurturing our environment and cleaning up people who can only destroy it. This nature can still be saved.

Anthony and Beta saw me with a strange look. They thought something was wrong with my knee, or even my head. They just didn't know that I would soon explode with excitement. With a worried expression, Beta asked me.

"Are you okay, Phil?" from her voice I knew that she seemed hesitant to ask.

"I'm beyond okay. I'm superb!" my voice was shrill, feeling happy because of the fact that I had found my purpose in life.

It made me difficult to control myself.

"Then, why are you kneeling?" Anthony asked, confused.

"This is my respect for Your Honor, Pan, the legend of all the dwarfs. Our father," I replied.

Not long after that, Anthony and Beta followed me to kneel before Pan.

"Ahem ..." Pan's voice broke the silence in the labyrinth, and he smiled.

"I didn't expect anyone to remember me after hundreds of years after I left the surface world. I had to thank the history teacher at your school for this, har har ..." Pan laughed out loud.

It might have been a long time since he last talked with other people. His voice was the most beautiful thing I had ever heard. He was firm, but rather hoarse and trembling. But there was something strange, even though I would explode in excitement. I also felt sick, right at the heart. I also didn't understand why. I ignored my feelings. I think that was just my anxiety. I didn't want to ruin this historic moment with my erratic thoughts.

For quite long enough, Pan told great stories, most of which I already knew. Anthony and Beta listened enthusiastically....while me? I admired every inch of master Pan's majesty. I was determined to persuade the Noble Pan to return to the surface and prove everyone that the legend was still alive and would help us all in improving the environment. Then, everyone would hail my name for being a hero to all living things.

"Philip!"

"Long live Philip the Savior!"

"We owe you, O Aluca handsome!"

"You're really brave Phil, you're a hero."

"Are you busy tonight, Phil? If not, let's have dinner."

"You're very handsome Phillip!"

And then, Beta would hug me--uh I mean, celebrate with me. Hehe. Beautiful, isn't it?

"Hey, Phil! Phil, are you listening? Philip!"

Even now, I could hear it; the voices of people who are amazed as they were calling my name. From now on, you can call me Philip *Pitt*, or Phillip *Bieber*. It's good to be like the artists of the human world... Uh, wait a minute! This voice is too close to my imagination ... And I really know this voice...

"Hey, dumbass, wake up!"

Oh crap.

I woke up from my daydream and found everyone was looking at me with a strange look, except Anthony, because his gaze was very insulting.

"What's the matter with you, Phil?" Beta asked attentively.

I did not have the chance to answer. Anthony was already interrupting.

"I bet Philip is imagining things you don't want to know, Beta."

I glared. I knew Anthony would destroy my image in front of Beta.

"Shut your mouth, algae head!" I stopped Anthony before he could become noisier.

"Okay, okay! I won't tell anyone if you are daydreaming of filthy things, Phil. I swear by the oak!" he replied with a laugh of triumph.

Damn it.

Anthony and His Excellency Pan laughed, while Beta was shifting slightly away from me with contempt. It was useless if I explained it to Beta now. Then, I just hit Anthony's head.

It turned out that my friends and I were exchanging stories for a long time with Pan, and finally I knew why Pan decided to leave the surface and stay in this labyrinth. He was too tired caring this earth alone.

His presence on the surface made everyone depend on the continuity of the universe in his hands. While they were all drinking at the bar.

"The age of nature is getting older. So is mine. I can't take care of it for a longer time," Pan said

Suddenly, I felt my pulse stop beating, and the earth stopped rotating. Pan was unable to take care of this earth for much longer. I lost myself for a while. One fact that I never knew was that gods could also die. I didn't want to agree with that fact. Then, I asked Pan again. I hoped the answer was not what I thought.

"Wait a minute, what is the meaning of 'I can't take care of this earth longer'?"

"Uhm," Pan was trying to hide his cough, "well, as it sounds, kid. I'm not an immortal creature. There will be a time for me. Well, I'll ..."

Pan didn't have the chance to continue the sentence.

I interrupted him with my vibrating voice.

"You're not serious, right? You are a god. The protector of the universe. You can't die and leave all this responsibility, right!?" I held back my voice to not shout.

I had gone through dozens of moon phases without a single clue about Pan's existence. I once felt that all my research was in vain, but I never doubted Pan. Not even one night. And now he was in front of me, with all the things that legend said. My biggest life goal was in front of my eyes. It was just one step to improve this earth. But it looked like this story wouldn't end happily, at least, for me.

"My son, Philipus, forgive me. I didn't mean to hurt you. I know everything you have done for me on the surface. You may be the last dwarf who still believe in my legend. You tried to convince everyone to look for me. I saw that, Philip, my son," Pan's voice shook.

He looked at Beta and Anthony, who were looking down, then turning to me again.

"Forgive me, Phil. I should have trusted you more. I should have believed in the legend of the 'Majesty Pan' who is great. Forgive me, Phil, Mr. Pan," Beta held back her voice.

It seemed like he knew what would happen next. He was the smartest to read the situation, compared to Anthony and I.

"Hey...Um... Phil, I'm sorry to belittle you and your old books about the Pan legend. I just... yeah, you know... I needed proof.." Anthony said haltingly.

Huh. I know he was not the type of dwarf who could admit his mistakes. and this moment was the first.

I was still silent and frozen. What would I do if Pan disappeared? What would I do after this? He was my only goal in staying alive and trying. After all the trouble I had looked for, he said that he couldn't last much longer. My world stopped.



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For quite long enough, this awkward atmosphere went on. I was still trying to reduce the war that was raging in my heart. Beta and Anthony were still bowing down in sadness; and Pan kept coughing. It was a painful sound for me, because I knew Pan was suffering a lot. He would not be able to leave if there were still people who are not willing and still hoping for him. He would not have the heart. And I was that person, who still rejected the death of Pan, who was still very hopeful of the miracle he would create.

"I know it's not easy, my child, but there are things you need to know. My presence here had only two reasons," Pan said softly and wisely, "first, I didn't have an heir. Second, there is still someone who's really hoping for my presence in this world. Philip, my child..."

Pan coughed.

I didn't think that I was the reason Pan survived so far, but I was also the reason he suffered longer. You

may say I was selfish because I couldn't let go of what should have been released. But I did this because I loved him too much. I depended too much on Pan to fix my environment. I was helpless without it. I pondered, remembering what I had done to find Pan. The longer I pondered, Pan coughed even worse than before. Beta began to sob.

Pan's coughing sounded more like a heart-wrenching grief song. The longer it was, the longer it got sadder. I couldn't stand it anymore. Pan had reached his limit, and I couldn't do anything for him.

I was still silent, and condemning all the selfishness that I had done. I didn't realize that my tears began to flow either. It started from small droplets until it became the flow moistening my cheeks. Watching me tormented like this, Beta and Anthony started crying harder. I know they weren't as hurt as me, but they must be concerned about all the things I had done to find Pan. In that sad and tragic state, Pan, the god of nature, also cried. His voice was strangling my mind.

"You have to be strong, Phil. Don't you feel sorry for Pan?"

"Phil, you have to let it go. It's the only best way."

"Phil, come on, don't you be sappy like this..."

"Philip!"

"Phil ..."

Beta and Anthony tried to encourage me, but I actually felt something else. It was another feeling; a feeling that still could not let go of Pan even though I knew that there was no hope. The only way to complete the purpose of my life was to give up Pan, and to witness his death.

I strengthen my heart for all the things that would happen in the future. I would make up my mind. The fight that had been raging greatly in my imagination finally produced the winner: my heart. My heart was the winner. I had to defeat my own ego to save Pan. Prepare yourself, Phil. You would cry all night because of this...

"Okay," I said in a trembling voice.

I already felt hoarse. My voice was almost gone.

Everyone in the labyrinth looked at me with a look of hope.

"I've decided. As long as you know, this is the biggest and hardest decision in my life, because, Your Honor Pan, you are the goal of my life so far. But I must not be selfish. I know my hope will make your suffering become even more severe than before. So, I ... will ..."

My throat choked. The last sentence I had prepared from the start was reluctant to leave my mouth. I thought I wouldn't be able to face all this. I tried, but the sentence was blocked by a brick wall, like the one in front the royal fort of Aluca. But I have to do it. This is the last one, and I will save Pan.

"I am... willing... to witness to your death. I will preach the news of your presence and your death. I will swear by the Nile. I will preach your death."

Finally. Finally the words came out of my mouth. Finally I could breathe and cry with relief. Finally...

Anthony and Beta were stunned. Their faces hinted the utmost shock. They couldn't believe I could get it done. They didn't believe I could give up the purpose of my life away. They did not believe that a loser like me dared to testify the death of a legend. But I did it. Then, Beta and Anthony cried even harder than before. Pan's voice truly filled this long maze.

"Thank you, Philip, my child. Thank you for saving me. Thank you for always trusting in me, even though it is a very heavy decision. Thank you for giving me up too. Now, I can go peacefully."

My defense collapsed. I cried so much. I didn't believe my search had been a tragic one. I would lose Pan.

Now, I was at the lowest point in life for a Philip. Could you imagine how it feels to be me? I did whatever I can to find Pan. Pan was the purpose of my life so far,

which made me lasted all this time. And when I found it, I had to witness his death. I had to watch the seconds of the guardian's death. I must be the bearer of this bad news. Pan's death. This was my biggest loss, and my greatest loss. Could you imagine what it feels like?

*destroyed*

*broken*

*crushed*

*messy*

Call all words that define bad conditions. That was what I felt right now. That was my heart now. but I couldn't continue like this. I would only hinder Pan's death. I had to be stronger, to be more accepting.

"Beta, Anthony. Don't you become whiny like this. You have to let go. Pan had been guarding the universe for too long. He had carried this burden alone for too long. It's time for him to rest. It's time for him to leave. You must do it. You must accept the death of Pan.

And the three of us must be strong witnesses of the death of the god of nature, Pan. The three of us must be the bearers of the news of Pan's death to all people, so that they would care more about the environment, so that they don't continue to depend on Pan, and also so that they might know that all these miracles did not come alone. There was Pan, the right hand of the god who made all of this real. You must be able."

I strengthened both of them, and I also strengthened myself. You may call me a big mouth. But that's the way I calm myself, that is by calming others. because believe me, now I have lost the purpose of my life. nothing hurts me so far than this.

Anthony and Beta began to raise their heads, looked braver than ever before.

"Come on, Beta. Don't cry anymore. Do you want to be lectured continuously by this loser? Ehehe..." Anthony had risen, and became the Anthony I know.

He insulted me again, as usual.

"Yes, you are right. I also did not want to hear Philip's babbling for a long time, hahaha," Beta began to find herself again.

She had risen. But unfortunately, she also made fun of me like Anthony. It hurts, you know?

"Your Honor Pan, the three of us are ready to witness your death. We will bring news of your death. We will tell everyone about the legend of Pan's grandeur," Anthony said loudly, as a leader.

"... And we will make everyone aware that there are no miracles that come alone. We have to make our own miracles. We must take care of our own nature," I continued.

Pan smiled. His smile illustrated relief. He would soon be able to rest peacefully. He had found his heir.

"Thank you, Philip, Anthony, and Beta; my children. Now, I can leave this world peacefully. I no longer have responsibility. I will go. And for all three of you, take care of the universe carefully. Make your own



miracle and become a legend. Goodbye heroes. My blessings are with you.”

And he was gone. His body slowly faded, and his soul began to rise. Pan was completely gone. The air of life in this labyrinth also faded as he left. The plants dried up and disappeared. The golden-winged fairies also escorted their master's departure. Everything disappeared.

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Now, it was only three of us who were left here, staring blankly at the empty maze. I didn't know what we have to do next. I was not the only one who had lost the purpose of life, but it was the three of us.

Then, the three of us slept soundly. We were too tired to continue the journey home. We slept in the cave where Pan had lived. Even though the three of us had closed our eyes, I knew that each of us were holding back the tears so it would not show.

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The next day when I opened my eyes, my eyes were hurting. No... not because I cried too much, but because too much light had entered my eyes. Wait a minute... light? My eyes? Is it possible...? I blinked and opened it slowly, making sure they were getting used to the amount of light around me. Well ... I was already in my house with all the familiar things around me. I was surprised. I was home. I pinched my arm to make sure this was real or just a beautiful dream. And it hurts. It meant that this was not a dream. I was home. There was no fact more pleasant than this.

I ran for Anthony's house. There, I also saw him. He was still wrapped in a blanket. With pretty hard shakes and my shoutings, I managed to wake Anthony up. Well, he welcomed me with his lazy expression.

"What on earth happened, dude?" said Anthony, narrowing his eyes to adjust with the amount of light around him.

"Look around you, moron! We're home !!" I shouted very excitedly.

Anthony blinked, and he was no less happier than me. We managed to get out of the creepy labyrinth safely. Then, when we were celebrating our freedom, there was a knock on the door. Beta appeared from behind the door.

"Hey guys, have you noticed it? We're already home! This is a blessing from Pan," Beta said excitedly.

*Pan*

*Pan ...*

*Pan ...*

I remembered the incident again, when I watched a god died in front of me. I remembered the purpose of my existence again. Pan was dead, and there was no hope now. What would I do after this? Uh, wait a minute...

"Guys, does it look like we have an unfinished mission?" I said with a smile.

"What?" Beta and Anthony answer together.

"We will see later!" I said enigmatically.

They both looked confused, and I smiled, remembering Pan's order in my dream last night.

-END-

## **DRAMA**

## NUNC

Yohakhim Ragil Anantya

It was a fine day in January, the wind blew through my hair and into my jacket. That noon was as good as usual. I took off my shoes and felt the grass greet my feet. I walked around the park and my destination was always the same, some spot under a Bayan tree. That was a very short but solemn moment. In the tranquility, I could feel that nothing matters except the moment I gazed at the sky and then my head was buzzing and the sky seemed to become an enormous screen where I could see every problem that haunted me in the past year.

It was suck. I used to be very close with my mother, but since my study didn't go well I always tried to avoid her call. She always made about one hundred calls in a week and it forced me to think what arguments I should make to convince her that I am alright and to explain that I could not answer any call at that moment.

But that was just one of another problem. I moved and live with my friend because I couldn't pay my boardinghouse fee. Mother didn't give me money to pay. It was getting worse when my bike was stolen and I did not really like my roommate. My roommate did not know about privacy. Living together did not mean you could use your roommate goods without permission.

At that moment, it seemed that I was trapped. My other friends had already graduated so stayed with this annoying one was the only choice and considered that his boardinghouse was the nearest to campus. I was never liked to stay in the boarding house for the whole day. I always woke up earlier, went to campus and in the afternoon I went to the park, then went back at night so what I did was only prepared to sleep. Almost every day goes like that. Basically, I just ran from reality. On campus, I was often doing nothing. But sometimes I went to see the thesis advisor that always summoned the anxiety inside me. That was not his fault actually, I always

tried to convince myself. It was me that always felt anxious whenever met him.

Earphone on my ears and I started to close my eyes, the sky was no longer interesting for me. Pink Floyd on the playlist.

*“We’re just two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl year after year, running over the same old ground, what have we found? The same old fear...”*

This song echoed in my head, down with the stream through my veins and reached the very core of me. The world went around and I just pretended that everything was right while there were so many problems unsolved. I just a fish on a bowl. Then I remembered, whether I graduated or not, the future was already determined. I should go back to my hometown and ran my family store. That was because of my father's last will. My mother believed me to fulfill that will. Yes, indeed, I could not blame my father or mother, no one should be



blamed. On such circumstance what I could possibly do was just controlled myself to love my faith.

I thought that was enough, I could not really escape. I woke up and sat when I saw from the distance my friend came. No, that was not my roommate. He was the one that I could say as my best friend. He came closer, his step was smooth and slow as falling leaves. He never said a single word. He was just like that, then he sat beside me, stared at me for a while then looked away. At that moment, there were two entities under the tree. The two that the one never throw a single question or even gave a sign. When he sat beside me I saw a small wound on his foot. It seemed that he got an accident.

"What happened with your foot?" He didn't answer me.

"Knocked over again, huh?" He just stared at me with those two profound eyes.

“Okay, next time be careful, you never learned. How many times have you knocked over? It seemed it was already the fourth time”.

I knew, my words had no power to make him learned, even an accident. Then for the rest of the noon, we spend the time with no words. We both busy with our thought. Until it was enough for me to stay in the park I said goodbye to him and walked away. Still no answer. On my way back home I was contemplating and considering what would be the best way to solve my problems. I could not keep the things any longer, I thought. Stay longer in university was not wise I thought. Because there would be more fees to pay and another problem would come. I thought to quit. Before that, I need to prepare a strong argument and bravery to tell my mother.

It spent about one month just to collect enough bravery and built a strong argument. In one month I spent the time just like before. I went to the park and sometimes my friend appeared as usual, with no words.

I had told him about my decision. He did not give any attention or advice. He was someone that I should dig into by myself in order to find the answer for my own question. In the time that no words burst from both of us, there I found a reflection of myself in my friend. I knew him well, he seemed to get a lot of accident and I was sure that became such bees buzzing in his head considering how many he had almost killed. He has not had any concern about his life, I thought. He just lived his life and do whatever he wanted.

I thought of that and I thought he was just right that moment. Just do something and regret nothing. I should have the freedom to choose the way of my life as my friend had the freedom to live his own life. That made me more confident about my decision. Then, time to tell mother. But before that, I should meet my thesis advisor first. I planned went to see him on the day after.

On the day I met my thesis advisor I felt anxious. I wonder what would be in his head when a troublesome student like me suddenly made a decision to quit. My

head was still wondering when I realized that I was already at the front of the corridor. The walls around me looked pale as if I saw my own reflection. My thesis advisor's room was on the corner of the corridor. I walked slowly, my heart beating and the room was felt like moving forward farther and farther. I could hear my footsteps were rushing with my heartbeat as if they were racing each other. Then, I was in front of the door. I knocked on the door, then low and heavy appeared from behind the door.

"Come in,"

I opened the door and there he was, glared at me. Then I took a sat and directly told him about my intention to see him. I explained about my decision. He listened carefully. His expression didn't change but the way he looked at me, I could feel that he was quite surprised.

"Are you sure?" asked him.

"Yes, Sir". I was very sure about my answer.

“You know, you almost make it”. I didn’t know what he meant by *‘almost make it’*, what I had experienced so far was just revisions and stuck on my chapter three.

“But if this is what you want, then I can’t prevent you”. He let me go,

At first, I thought that he would make it difficult.

Then I only replied "Thank you very much", and just go. I didn't like to waste my time to have a long conversation with him, it was still made me anxious. After that, I made a call to my mother. As I expected, she surprised because after quite for a long time I called her first.

“After for a long time, Mom”.

“Already miss your mother, huh?”

“Uh-uh, you know it already”. I gulped and took a deep breath. For a while, the words seemed to not want to come out from my chest. And I tried to begin.

"Ehm, mom. You know, I'm not doing very well in my studies. Also, whether I graduate or not, I'll be the one who continued the family store, right?"

"Yes, but of course it will be better if you finish your studies right?"

"Indeed, but mom, for the past years, uhm, especially for the past few days I feel like I cannot..." I paused, it was like something blocked my tongue.

"Cannot what?" mother's voice increased a bit.

"I think I cannot continue my study". Right after I said that I could feel my heart stopped for a while. Then I realized that My mother did not answer yet. I tried to call her name and I could hear the voice again.

"So, you lied to me about your study? You said that you alright but now you call me and said something like that". Then there went about five minutes full of mother's anger. I needed to clarify everything I have told her now. After My mother has calmed down, I tried to convince her once again about my decision. I thought she

had already given up and just said that it was up to me. Then I just ended the call and what I felt was just relief. For the next day until about a week I spent my time to administer my documents, finally, it came to an end.

After I thought that everything was already fine I decided to go to the park as usual. I was so busy and for the past week, I didn't come to the park. I wanted to see my friend and told him what I have been done. But unfortunately, after walking around and wait for almost two hours while listening to my favorite music, he didn't come. I wonder where he was and decided to walk around once again.

That noon the trees were steady, leaves like enormous heads bowing down to greet me. My footsteps stopped near a small mound. It was like someone buried here. Then I asked the nearest park cleaner. He said that the mound was a grave for a cat. The cat found dead three days ago. When I heard that it felt like my heart was detached from my chest, it fell and broke into pieces. I just nodded and went back to the mound. I squatted

down and whispered my last words to my friend. "What has happened to you? Finally, you lost your nine souls, huh?" I have no friends now. Until the time he has gone, not even a single word given from him. Yeah, you couldn't expect a cat to talk to you.

-END-



## Where is My Happiness?

*Maria Amorita Yestia Gani*

Rachel Dalle, an innocent and cheerful girl who lived in a harmonious family. Her mother and father were famous actress and actor. This story took place under the sky of New York. At that time, Rachel was 7 years old, it was the first time she entered elementary school.

"Rachel?"

"Yes mom?" said Rachel.

"Today is the first day you go to school, are you feeling happy?" said her mom.

"Surely happy, I will meet my friends."

While at school, Rachel was very happy because she could meet good friends. Her family was praised by her friends. Even though her family was actors, love and attention had never disappeared from both. In her country, an actor's child usually got bad treatment, but

not for Rachel. Rachel was very grateful that she lived in a family that had no problems. Rachel was also an only child. In her life, whatever she wanted, her parents will always fulfill them. Rachel was a teenager when she first entered junior high school. Every day, she always brought lunch to school and got delivered to every school. They always had time for lunch or dinner together. They often had a vacation together abroad or to their grandparents' homes. However, a few years later when Rachel began to grow up when she first entered high school, her entire life changed dramatically. For the first time, she found out her father and mother had a fight. The fight did not only occur once or twice. The fight happened very often, making Rachel didn't want to stay at home again. At one point, she decided to go to her grandparents' house. She was very tired of seeing her parents' quarrel. Even though her parents never showed it to her, she knew that something was wrong in her house. Sometimes, her father didn't want to go home, and sometimes, her mother left her suddenly. Rachel's

life turned out to be the worst. She was having a vacation at her grandparents' but it did not bring her happiness back. Finally, she decided to go home. She carried out her activity as usual, but there was something strange in Rachel's attitude. She became pessimistic and an introvert.

"Rachel, are you okay?" said her friend, Claire.

"Yes, I am fine, I just don't feel really well."

"If you have a problem, tell me. You and I are friends, right?" said Claire.

"Don't worry, everything is okay." Rachel's tone was very different.

Actually, her feeling was not okay. But, she must continue to hide this problem, because she did not want everyone to know what happened to her parents. Claire was Rachel's best friend since they were little. Claire never looked at her with one eye because of her parents' work. Claire had never taken advantage of her because her parents are actors.

That day was a very tiring day for Rachel. Her busy life at school made Rachel forget to eat and rest, which made her sick. Rachel had to be rushed to the hospital because of her stomach disorder. Claire and Rachel's aunt accompanied her in the hospital. Her parents were busy working, even none of them visited and looked after her in there. Rachel looked sad. One night she cried, but no one heard or knew it. That morning, still the same morning, her parents did not come to visit her. Rachel was sad, but she had to stay strong to live.

"Have you been well?" Claire asked.

"I've been better, Clair. My parents still won't come to see me?"

"Not yet. Your aunt said that they are having a very busy talk show, so they leave you to your aunt." Claire replied to Rachel's question.

"How sad my life is. When I'm sick, they're supposed to be there but they were not. It's really my fate. " Rachel said.

"Believe me, everything will be fine, Rachel. I will always be there for you." Claire replied with a smile.

That morning, Rachel was able to go home. When she arrived home, her house looked deserted and empty.

"Is your family alright, Rachel?" Claire questioned.

"Can I tell you a story? Will you stay away from me when you find out that my family is not doing well? "

"Don't worry, we've been friends for a long time. I know you well, and you also know me. Tell me your story, maybe it can make you feel better. "

That night, she heard her parents quarrel again. Rachel wondered what made her parents fight. She asked Claire through her favorite smartphone.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Rachel. I haven't heard your voice for a long time. Do you have anything to say? "

"Yes, this is about my parents. How can I find out what the problem is? "

"I heard on the news that your mother was involved in a scandal."

"What scandal is that? Why is my mother like that? "

"The scandal was well known among celebrities, Chel. Your mother is allegedly involved and your father knew it. I don't know what exactly happened. "

"Ok, alright. Thank you for your information." I closed the telephone.

The next morning, Rachel accidentally watched the TV and saw the news that her father and her mother would soon divorce. Rachel's heart was devastated. And that day was her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.

No one cared about her birthday, only Claire gave her a little surprise. It was the worst day for Rachel. She thought that her life was meaningless.

A few months later, her mother invited Rachel to have a vacation abroad but her mother lied to her. Her mother only wanted to escape and live in another country. Rachel followed her mother and left everything behind.

The first day Rachel was in that place, she met new friends, it made Rachel happy. A few days of staying there made her forget about the past. But, apparently, the case of her parents was heard up to the country which she lived now. Her friends began to be hostile towards her because they did not like Rachel's dark past.

She remembered her past. Suddenly, something surprised her:

"Rachel, why do you look so down?" Lyn questioned.

"No. I am alright. Why did you come to see me? "

"No, I just want to talk to you. Your friends already know about your family background, huh? "Lyn questioned again.

"Yes, I think so. Are you here just to insult me too?

"

"No, Chel. I know how it feels to be you. You are only a victim of your parents' problem. If you want to tell me about it, come to me." Lyn answered confidently.

"Yes. I don't have anyone now. "

"No. You still have me. By the way, there is a man from the other class who wants to meet you." Lyn replied.

"Who is he?"

"His name is Peter Condor. He is kind and he is a writer, Chel. Will you meet him? " Lyn asked.

"Oh, yes," Rachel replied.

That day, Rachel got a new friend, a boy. He was a writer at school. He was also a journalist at their school. Rachel was very glad that she met him, Peter.



Their meeting was quite short. Rachel and Peter are now friends. They are getting closer and closer. But there was something that made Lyn suspicious of their friendship. Apparently, Peter approached Rachel only to get information related to her parents' problems. Peter was a writer. The information he obtained about Rachel would be written in his book. Lyn was very surprised, knowing the truth. Lyn wanted to tell Rachel but this was not the right time.

Lyn told the truth to Rachel. However, at first, Rachel didn't believe Lyn's words because Rachel began to like Peter. That made Rachel feel sad. She thought that happiness was not in her life. Despite knowing that, Rachel was still grateful that she had met with Peter because her life became a little better. In the end, Rachel remains grateful for what happened in her life. She thought that happiness could only be found when she was gone, that it was in heaven. She believed that every journey of life had a meaning that made us survive.

Rachel was one of the children who suffered a broken home. She remained too strong and acted as if her life was fine. Even though her life was a mess, Rachel still was a good child and loved her parents.

-END-

## Deliberately Destroyed

Anastasia Martina

**March 24, 1995**

Finally, I had everyone as the witness of my new masterpiece. It was my Spring/Summer collection exhibition. I emphasized the simple yet striking silhouette in my outfits. When the first muse walked on the catwalk, I could see the audience *wow*-ed and slowly clapping their hands as a form of appreciation. I could feel it, I could see it. Yes, this was it. This gonna be an iconic runway! After that, a silky dress swept the catwalk. Finally, that was the last outfit to be presented in Finn Singer's Spring/Summer 1995 fashion show. The journalists, fashion experts, and fashion enthusiasts showered me with joy, bright smiles, and bunch of appreciation. You know that an after party in Club Nebula is a must to celebrate the success of this Spring/Summer collection exhibition.

After that, the Telectronic suddenly appeared in the bar as it was a lightning to me. It was the big hit among the clubs. Without waiting any longer, the guests were dancing and shaking their bodies like there was no tomorrow. Was it strange that I didn't feel like dancing even though the song was delightful?

"What's the matter with you? Are you sick or something? come on. You've rocked the fashion industry once more; So, let's celebrate it. " Callum Webb asked me.

"Nah, I'm good. I just need to be sober since I drove myself here," I made an excuse.

45 minutes in that after party felt like hell for me. I decided to go home immediately and enjoy my own company. Without further ado, I rode my diamond red Porsche.

It felt nice to hit the sack earlier. As the night was getting darker, I let myself indulge in my collection of wine. I took one sip. Then, my mind wandered just about everything.

I stared at my awards and trophies. I saw what was written there, “The Stylish Creator 1994”. Also, there was “Fashion Wand Award 1992”. Yeah, at least my hard work is finally paid off. I proved those bastards out there that I could achieve something in this industry. They were my babies, they helped me to forget he who put the deepest wound inside my heart.

### **March 25, 1995**

It was six in the morning. I immediately woke up giggling at the fact that my roller blades were still with me. My mind suddenly wandered, recalling yesterday’s event. I could see journalists and some editor-in-chiefs from numerous fashion magazines sitting at the front line. There were also lots of fashion enthusiasts from all over the world, putting their attention to my latest works. It was dominated by bright red and orange. Yes, to make my works more vigorous, I also added the yellow and sky blue colour.

Then, I went to the kitchen to get myself a cup of espresso. When I was about to pour the espresso, the bell rang. I was shocked and almost burned my left fingers.

“Long time no see, huh? Congratulations for another fashion show. Sorry, I didn’t make it to Pearllightning Avenue because the police took away my license,” Ellen shouted.

“Do you have to ruin my morning? Go to playground and hit those kids,” I complained.

“Wow...! I can’t believe that those roller blades are still with you. I mean, you know, you’re not that kind of athlete anymore,” my sister chattered.

“Well, at least, I’m still able to do the flat spin. Watch this!”

After half an hour of a nonsensical fight between me and Ellen, we had a breakfast together. It was an omelette,

cream soup, and garlic bread. Just like what my dad cooked when we were little. Wait, did I just say 'dad'?

"It's been a tough day in Cherrytown!" Ellen exclaimed, "You should've gone home for a while."

"You know that my brand is expanding massively. Did you see my face on *Chic Journal*? I ain't got time for that."

"Well, well, Mr. Bees. You have to take care of your so-called babies, right? Did you even remember to take care of me and daddy?" Ellen ranted.

"Don't be so grumpy, Elle! I have paid for your lunch two weeks ago and bought you the limited-edition skateboard, remember? Maybe if we meet again someday. How was daddy? I don't know if I can forgive him now." I sighed.

"Here is the letter from daddy. He wants you to read this and do the things that he favoured. It is pitiful

to hear daddy talking about missing you everyday and to hear his yell every 4 a.m.," Ellen replied.

"I'll try to consider it later. It's almost time for your train to Cherrytown, right? Don't be too late, darling!"

"I will. Thank you and congratulations one more time," Ellen immediately packed her backpack and ran quickly to the elevator.

I watched her leave until I could no longer see her bouncing ponytail.

It was, indeed, a sentimental breakfast for me. First, it was because Ellen suddenly appeared in my crib. Second, dad sent me a letter? What did he want? Didn't he realize how deep the wound that he had put on me? Oh gosh, it was 9 a.m. already! I must prepare myself for an interview session with *Euphoria Weekly* at 10.45 a.m.

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*Dear Finn,*



*If you don't want to see me after reading this letter, it's okay. It is totally okay because in the end of the day, it is my fault.*

*I know that I'm not a good dad unlike the other dads out there. In the past, I often showered you with insults and hit you with my own hands. I'm such a bad tempered person. This bad-tempered behaviour had turned our paradise into a piece of abyss. My demeanour had taken away your mom from our side.*

*Could you please go back to Cherrytown to accompany me in this tiny mansion, for at least a month before I might leave this world? Also, I want you to bring me to the lake that we used to visit. Do you remember that lake? Marsonnee Loch?*

*Hopefully we can meet as soon as possible. I miss you.*

*Best regards,*

*Your beloved daddy*

\*\*\*

How dared he calls himself my 'beloved dad' if he had killed mom due to his uncontrollable emotion? What is the purpose of begging me to be on his side on his last days?

“So useless,” I said to myself.

After reading the letter, I just put it inside my leather jacket pocket. I could no longer remember Cherrytown. At first, yeah, I could still feel it's jovial moments and its enchanting scenery while singing to Abba's "Dancing Queen". However, the dust and pain had covered the joy until the enchanting part became invisible.

.....  
**June 10, 1995**

After a meeting for a photoshoot session with Charlist, Ellen called me. She asked whether I had visited dad or not.

“How come you haven’t visited dad? You know that dad only have a few days to live. Gladly, he is still able to live until today,” Ellen sounded so shocked.

“Well, umm, I’m sorry for that. It’s just...”

“What is it now? Is it about your business? I understand that you are reaping the fruit of your hard work. You are enjoying your wealth now. But, please, he needs you right now. He is still your dad,” Ellen said, almost crying.

“The thing that matters right now is he has to stay in jail for the rest of his life.” I enunciated. Then, I hung the phone.

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*“He needs you”*

*“He is still your dad”*

*“He only has a few days to live”*

Ellen's words still lingered in my mind. I couldn't finish my job properly because I kept thinking of both Ellen and dad. At last, I decided to leave Klaridge to go to Cherrytown. "Only for the sake of Ellen," I thought.

\*\*\*

### **June 12, 1995**

I finally reached Cherrytown. When the taxi brought me to my dad's mansion, I could feel that this town was less dull than the last time I saw it. However, the changing atmosphere didn't succeed in changing my thoughts towards dad. After 30 minutes, I reached my dad's mansion. I could see him sitting on his terrace chair with Ellen.

"Ellen, is he Finn? Finn Singer?" dad asked.

"Yes, he is, dad. He is your son, Finn." Ellen replied.

"Is he the one who always appear in the magazines?" dad asked again.

“Of course! He has lots of achievements because of his clothing line. He is a genius one,” Ellen replied once more.

“Oh my god, Finn, look at you! Now, you have succeeded in your field and I’m so proud of you, my dear son,” he touched my face and attempted to hug me.

Unfortunately, his smile did not succeed to conceal my wrath.

“Could you please enter the room. It’s getting darker outside.” I said to dad, sharply.

Day after day, Ellen and I looked after dad. We reminded him to take his medicine properly. Luckily, both of us were able to cook, so, we didn’t have to deal with corn dogs every day. When it was the time to clean up, we divided our chores. Ellen was in charge for dusting, sweeping and cleaning the kitchen. Meanwhile, I was in charge for mopping and cleaning the car port. Actually, it was good to be home again. Here, I didn’t

have to think about collections for the next runway, photoshoot session, or the world tour to present my collection. Everything was serene and peaceful. However, there was one thing that ruined it. Yes, he was the one who ruined this beautifully made paradise. He strangled mom to death due to his alcoholic behavior and his bad-tempered self. Thankfully, his disease took away his ability to hit me or Ellen. He seemed even powerless to me and he didn't even deserve to live longer. In my mind, there were plans that went back and forth waiting to be executed...

.....  
**June 14, 1995**

It was our shopping day. Ellen and I were shopping for our kitchen needs. Everyone was so in rush. When Ellen was heading for the meat section, I called a friend who was a chemist. His name is Lawrence. I was asking for his arsenic stock, just in case that he has it available. It turned out that he has quite a lot and I asked for one.

“But be careful, you must dare to risk yourself if you want to bring this with you,” Lawrence warned.

After I called him, we met at the parking lot. When I went back to the supermarket, Ellen seemed to worry so much.

“Where did you go?,” Ellen asked, “I was worried that you were not here to select the meat for our dinner,”

“Just meeting my friend and getting some vitamins from him. You know, The virus spread so fast, you need to take care of yourself,” I made an excuse.

After we got the groceries we need in our hand, we paid for it and went home immediately.

.....  
**June 17, 1995**

It was seven in the morning. Ellen, Dad and I decided to have a picnic in Marsonee Loch. It only took 10 minutes to reach the lake from our house. After preparing the basket, food, and beverage, we strolled

our way through little hills and gardens. The lake itself was located behind one of the other lakes.

“How’s the tuna sandwich, dad?,”

“It is the tastiest tuna sandwich in the world. I think no one would make it as delicious as your sandwich. Great job, Ellen Marjorie Singer!,” dad exclaimed and asked for high-five to Ellen.

“Hmm...the *aglio olio fettuccine* is not bad too,” I commented.

While we were eating our food, we slowly reminisced our days as a family in Cherrytown. We remembered the days when Ellen and I always argued even for something trivial. Then, our parents tried to separate us by confining us in our rooms for several hours. After that, we usually played frisbee or tagging one after another. Furthermore, we recalled the days when dad always sneezed because of the pollen allergy that developed due to mom’s hobby of collecting flowers. After that, we recalled the moment when Ellen



and I almost drowned in the lake because we were too excited to find the Espensite gemstone that both of us believe would make us live longer. We laughed, we cried, we mocked each other. But, surely, we loved each other. Well, I wasn't sure about the "loving" part. At least, my dad could enjoy his last days before he leave this world.

"Dad, please try the mango juice too. I swear it's the most delicious mango juice," I offered it to him gently.

After dad drank the juice, slowly but surely, I could see dad was struggling for air, his head felt dizzy.

After a few minutes, he was vomiting. Then, spasm took over his muscles. However, it was too late for him to realize that he was being poisoned. Lastly, the *finale*, he was helplessly laying down on the grass with mango juice slowly spilling from the bottle.

"One should pay for what he has done and today is the moment dad must pay for what he has done to our mom. From now on, let's leave this lake and face this

together,” I grabbed Ellen’s hand and we ran to the police office.

-END-

## Dreaming

Pantari Gunawan

Early August 2019

Kringgg!! Kring!! Kringgggg!! “Uuuuh... What time is it?” said Mia while she turned off her alarm. She woke up after her alarm rang more than 7 times. Mia looked around her room, there was no light from Mr. Sun, no voice from the downstairs and it was very cold which was kinda weird because she set the air conditioner no less than 20 degrees. She wiped her eyes to make sure that she woke up in her own room and not at other rooms because sometimes when Mia was so tired, she would walk in her sleep. Wait a minute, she felt familiar with this situation, gloomy, lonely, and disquiet. Mia started to open the door and she ran faster to the downstairs. She needed to make sure that she's really awake, "Goddamnit!!!!!! Why the hell it's happening again?!" Unbelievable. The more she tried to get to the down, the

farther the distance. It was like Mia was running without no end. When it was so close to the end, Mia fell and at the same time, she fell from her bed with her alarm clock ringing in her hand.

She woke up for real now. After a long time, almost one year actually, she never had that dream and now she dreamt it again. Mia started this Sunday morning with a mixed feeling between anxious and annoyed. Mia already forgot about that dream but because of what just happened, it made her remember her buried memories. While Mia kept thinking, she took a shower, under the water that was streaming down on her body she could feel how tense she was. Her mind stuck on that dream.

“Maybe I should prepare myself better,” said Mia in the mirror. Last night, she wasn’t ready for that dream. However, because she had that dream too often, Mia wasn’t surprised anymore. She did her activities as usual; going to school, doing the homework, playing video games and etc.

Tonight, Jess accompanied Mia for dinner because her parents were out of town for some business. "Last night, I had that 'dream' again," Mia started the conversation. "And what was the result?" asked Jess. "You know, nothing impressive. Later, I'll try again to be more relaxed. Sometimes I feel tired from having that same dream, Jess." "Mia, you can end this. Believe in yourself. Okay?" Mia replied with a smile, "Thank you, Jess, I wish you were my sister. Good night. See you tomorrow." "Night too Mia, have a nice dream," said Jess.

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September 2008

Little Mia was 6 years old, at that time, she always had a strange dream. Not only strange, but some of her dreams would come true. One day, Mia dreamt of a random number; 106. From that moment, she always sees 106 in her surroundings. It made her really confused. Once, she told her parents about these strange

things, but they didn't care because they thought it was just her imagination. Because she didn't get a good response from her parents, she told Jess. Jess was the one and only who cared and believed Mia. Jessy or Jess; she was Mia's nanny. Jess loved Mia like her sister, Jess really cared about Mia because Mia didn't get enough love and attention from her parents. It could be said that Jess knew Mia better than Mia's parents.

After Mia told Jess about that number, Jess searched for it in Google. It said that on October 6, 2004, at 13:16 p.m. there was a tragedy in Dharmawangsa. A group of terrorists bombed the main lobby hotel, of course, there were a lot of victims. What was the relationship between this tragedy and Mia's dream? That was a big question.

"Jessy, what are you thinking about?"

"None. It's nothing," said Jess to Mia with a big smile on her face to calm Mia down.

“Okay then, if you say so,” answered Mia. Then, she continued watching My Little Pony.

Jessy kept thinking as she tried harder to remember something about this number.” October 6, October 6, Monday 6 October.... what will happen? October 6 isn’t Mia’s birthday, none of us has a birthday that day and there is also no school activity that could lead to something dangerous for Mia. So what is that?!” Jess talked to herself frustratingly. She looked at the time, it was already 2 a.m. Jess decided to sleep, hoping tomorrow she would get the answer.

The next morning Jess still didn’t get any clue. It continued to the next day, and the next 2 days and more days until she forgot about it. Not only Jess who actually forgot but also Mia. Their days went on well, nothing bad seemed going to happen. September ended fittingly, welcoming this October just as fine as the previous one. It was 6 a.m. on October 1<sup>st</sup>, Rebecca, Nana, Fani, Sal, and Jess had finished cleaning the house and started preparing for breakfast. Usually, Kay would wake up after

all the nannies were finished doing their jobs. After she woke up, she made a black coffee for Dean and a hot chocolate for Mia. That was her morning routine.

“Dean, baby, wake up. It’s almost 7 o’clock,” said Kay and she opened the curtain to let the sun come in to brighten their room. “Wake up, boss baby, you need to get to your work today. It’s a big day.” Shortly after that, her husband woke up. Next, Kay went to Mia’s room.

“Good morning princess, wakey wakey. Let’s go to school or you will be late.” Kay pulled the blanket and kissed Mia. As a famous artist with a lot of jobs, being a mom was her number one priority. “Mommy,” said Mia hoarsely because she just woke up. “I dreamt about you pressing an elevator button and the number was 1-0-6. When the elevator doors were open, it was just blank. But I heard a voice, a very noisy voice. Then I woke up.” “So, it means I need to go to the 106<sup>th</sup> floor?” answered Kay. “I dunno Mom, maybe you should or maybe you shouldn’t.” “Okay, I’ll think about it, now you should take



a shower and have breakfast with daddy. Don't take too long okay?" said Kay. Mia went to the bathroom lazily.

"Jessy, Becca come here," said Kay from the dining room, "Next Monday, please help Mia do her homework and tell her I might be at home late so Mia doesn't have to wait for me and Dean. I have a very important event in Jakarta. At Sunday nights we'll go back here and we're going to be at home on Tuesday morning." "Yes Ma'am," both Becca and Jessy answered simultaneously.

The night when Kay and Dean left Mia, suddenly Mia was crying loudly asking her parents to stay with her. Mia was crying out loud, banging on the table until her face was red. She begged Kay and Dean to just stay at home, she was so afraid. "Jessy!!! Tell mom please, you need to stop them... please Jessy....," Mia begged to Jessy. "Why Mia? What happened in your dream? Tell me," asked Jess confusedly. "In my dream, after the elevator doors were open, it's always blank; black and dark. Only voice, last night I clearly heard that someone

said 'Help'. 1-0-6 means October 6, Jessy, don't you remember?" Mia explained breathlessly because she was still crying. "I'm scared, Jessy..." Jessy was shocked, why she realized this clue too late. She hugged Mia tightly and said everything would be fine; that was what she promised to Mia.

October 6, 2008. It was the day that Jess, Becca, Sal, Nana, and Mia were waiting for. Today, her mom and dad would attend Panasonic Grammy Award at Studio 8 Global TV South Jakarta. Kay was nominated for the best female singer and top song on the charts this year. Apparently, Kay won all of the nominations and brought 2 trophies home. Mia's '106' dream was good news for her mom. However, it wasn't good news for others. Rajawali Air Boeing 601 from Jakarta to Bali had reportedly had an emergency landing due to an engine fire. 8 people were seriously injured. Rajawali Air was the plane that Kay and Dean took. They refunded the tickets and changed the airline immediately after this accident.

Even though they would come back late to home, at least they were back home safely.

Mia dream was special, it had meaning. It was like her subconscious wanted to tell something. But Kay and Dean considered it as a coincidence. They didn't want Mia to get into trouble because of her dream. It happened after Mia's birthday and from that moment she changed a lot.

May 2006

May was a special month because on this May 23, Mia was turning to 4. Everyone was waiting and super excited to celebrate Mia's birthday. As a top well-known family, Dean and Kay had already prepared for Mia's party. This year, Mia wanted to become a Minnie Mouse. Kay made a special Minnie Mouse costume for Mia; it was an adorable dress and the color was pink like the real Minnie's dress. More specifically, the color was French-rose with a lot of white dots on the dress. Mia also wore a big black bandanna as Minnie's ears with a pink ribbon

in the middle. Kay combined that adorable dress with a black legging and cute mustard flat shoes. Now, Mia looked like a Minnie doll.

“Mia, my baby girl, you look so pretty!” said Kay while she was combing Mia’s hair.

“Yup, my daughter is very pretty just like her mother,” said Dean, looking at his beautiful wife and his lovely daughter. “Hey! Let’s take a picture together.”

“Yes, daddy! Yes!” Mia shouted. Dean took his polaroid from the locker.

“Ready? 1.. 2.. 3.. cheese!!” said Dean. “Once more okay? 1.. 2..3”

“Daddy, give it to me, please! I wanna shake the frame! I wanna!” asked Mia

“Hahaha, okay baby.” Dean gave the frames to Mia. A perfect photo to describe this perfect family; Mia in the middle with her biggest smile showing her bright teeth, Dean and Kay kissed her cheeks, what a sweet

photo they had. The party was really fun, Mia got many presents from her family, friends, neighbor and some of them were from her mother's fans. So far, this was the best birthday that Mia ever had. However, after the wonderful party, there was a nightmare waiting for Mia.

Mia was so happy today and it showed because she couldn't stop smiling all day. Until she went to bed, she was still smiling. "Mommy, daddy thank you. I love it! You guys are the best parents," said Mia before she went to sleep. "Anything for you, darling." Kay and Dean kissed Mia's forehead and said goodnight to their lovely daughter.

"Mmm... I need to pee." Mia turned on her lamp on the desk. "It seems I dreamed of something." She opened the bathroom door and turned on the lamp, she wanted to walk over to the toilet closet but she couldn't find it. She kept walking but the only thing she found was a door after she opened it, there was always a new door. 5 times she opened the same door, she couldn't find what she was looking for. "Am I still dreaming?" asked

Mia to herself. Then, she decided to go back to the first door. At the same time, her bathroom became a long hall with a lot of doors. Kreeek!! Suddenly, all of the doors were open and the only one that was still closed and it was at the edge. Mia ran faster to reach the last door which she believed to be the real door toward her bedroom. Every time she passed one door, it would close automatically and the lamp was off. The atmosphere was getting tense and Mia started to cry, calling her mommy and daddy to help her. She continued to run, 2 doors left, keep running, once more she would get to the end. Mia's hand was trying to reach the handle, a little bit more and she could get out from this maze. Right after she turned the handle to open it, she fell. Bruk!! Brukkkk!! Bruk! "Daddy!!!!!!" that was Mia last word.

That night after Mia's party, she fell from the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, hit more than 14 stairs. According to Sal, another Mia's nanny, before that accident, Sal saw Mia opened all the door in the second floor but Mia was still sleeping and that was why she didn't wake her up. This was the

first time it happened, and other accidents were already waiting for Mia. One phenomenon led to another phenomenon in Mia's dream, but it had a pattern. It's always something that had no end, such as being trapped in a maze, swimming in a vast ocean, walking on a long road, etc. And also, this dream happened every 6 months. Kay and Dean didn't do any further action, but Jess did some research about this sequence dreams. It was said that you can get a dream like what you wanted through *lucid dreams*<sup>1</sup>. However, Jess thought Mia wasn't ready for this, she was still four. When the time was right, Jess would teach Mia to do this. Jess tried all of the steps to get lucid dreams, some of them worked well and some of them didn't. Jess also needed to know the risk of lucid dreams.

January 2016

“New Year, new me huh? That’s bullshit,” said Pete to Mia. Peter was Mia's best friend in school. His house wasn't far from Mia's, it was only 2 blocks from Mia’s house. They were always together since Mia was in

elementary school. Pete's mother also knew Kay and Dean. Therefore, Mia and Pete were very close. For Mia, Pete was just like her brother who was always there and took care of his little sister. Of course, Pete knew Mia had a special dream and he did believe it.

"Yeah, I'm still me and the dreams are still happening," answered Mia.

"What's your dream last night?" Pete forgot to ask this important question, every day Pete would ask this question just to know if there was progress or not, "Did you find any clue?"

"Nope, New Year couldn't help me find a new clue. Moreover, I got a bad *sleep paralysis*<sup>2</sup> last night."

"That's suck! Did your mom knew?"

"Ck, she's busy. But I told Jess and she was looking for the way out from this situation," said Mia. They had a date every Friday nights at Mia's house. Sometimes they watched a movie, had dinner or just star gazing.



Mia, Pete, and Jess were doing some research lately. Some people might have sequentially dreams and it was also true that the dreams might happen in real life, just like what Mia experienced. There was something that affected someone subconsciousness, however, it was difficult to stop this dream. The worst dream that Mia ever had was when she dreamt of her aunty. Aunty Elle was in the bathroom and her hair was falling out. It fell out one by one without anyone touching it and Mia saw that aunty Elle was really sad. It turned out after that, her aunty was diagnosed with cancer in her brain. Knowing the future wasn't as cool as knowing the who was the winner of Liverpool vs Arsenal. The only thing that you needed was to be fearless.

Maybe if Mia could control her dream it would be for the better. Therefore, Jess asked Mia to do lucid dreams. Mia's dream was always something that had no end and the first thing that Mia should do was to find out how to solve it. Concentration and calmness were necessary. So far, Mia was doing great, her dream about

being trapped in somewhere was improved into another dream. It was replaced by a dream that Mia really wanted. Yet sometimes, she still had the same dreams about being trapped but it was not as often as before.

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July 2018

There were a lot of butterflies flying in Mia's room. She was shocked at first, but she enjoyed this view. Pink, brown, blue, and yellow; they were so pretty, they flow freely. The white one with black dots sat at Mia's head. She giggled for a while, she tried to move her position but all of the butterflies were falling down instantly, they were dead. For a moment, Mia knew it was a dream, "Oh my God!!! Another nightmare I guess, just relax, it's okay Mia. You need to open that door and then you will be awake," Mia talked to herself. She did what just she said and she was awake now.

Curious with her dreamt last night, she searched it on Google. Dreaming about dead butterflies had a

negative meaning, it said that your plan will fail or you will lose someone that you love. Because butterfly was a symbol for the soul. It also said that the white butterfly described naivety. “WOW! Jess must know about this. Maybe it’s related to my dreams,” said Mia.

Talking to Jess made Mia feeling relieved. Jess always helped Mia to understand more about her dream and together they would find a way out. Jess was so proud of Mia, she saw how Mia had changed 180°. Now, she was capable of controlling her emotions. She was also more relaxed when dealing with her problems; no more crying at midnight because she had nightmares.

Honestly, she was one step closer to her goal but it was really difficult for Mia. This sleep paralysis thing just often happened to Mia. She was still learning how to deal with this new problem. The failure of lucid dreams might had an impact on sleep paralysis, the both of them had a connection so Mia thought it was natural.

There was something that Mia and Jess were missing, lucid dreams had a fatalistic effect. If the person wasn't able to overcome their failure, then that person would always wake up in the middle of the night out of breath in a long time. It was the effect of being sleep paralyzed. And the worst was some people who tried to control their dream precisely would be trapped in semi-consciousness. If you were in this situation, you would be half awake and half dreaming and you would experience a great hallucination. Moreover, if you weren't ready, *dream claustrophobia* will happen. Meaning that you were stuck in your dream forever. This risk might happen due to internal reason, such as out of breath, stomach cramps and heart attack.

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End of August 2019

"Mia?" Her dad knocked at her door. "Come in dad!" answered Mia. "Hey, Princess! How's your day?"

Tell me one thing that makes you laugh today,” Dean asked Mia, they used to have this conversation but as time goes by, it just disappeared and now Dean wanted to try it again. Having quality time with his one and only daughter. "The school was boring, as always. Pete and I decided to go to the same college next year. I took psychology and Pete took law.” Mia explained to her dad. “Wow, that's great! I know you can do it, sweetheart.” "But dad," said Mia, "What if I'm failed? Once I had a dream about dead butterflies and it has a negative meaning. You know that my dream might come true right?" Dean answered, "Mia if you think positively then you get positive result too. Remember that okay? Now it's time to sleep.” “Okay dad, good night,” said Mia, “Good night too, darling.” Then Dean turned off Mia's lamp.

“Let's dream! I'm ready for every situation, try me now!” said Mia with confidence. First, she needed to think what the dream she wanted will be, second, she must relax, then Mia had to wake up after she slept for

5-6 hours and the last was focus. Slowly her eyes began to feel heavy, heavier, heavier, and then sleep. It started with Mia in an airplane with Becca, Nana, and Sal. It was a sunny day and perfect weather, she was at 17.000 feet above the sea and she could see the blue ocean before her plane was getting higher. Mia was sleepy, she asked Becca to wake her up 15 minutes later. "I can't wake you up, because you are still dreaming Mia." With closed eyes, Mia answered, "What do you mean?" Suddenly, she woke up and she had a second dream, it was something new. She was awake now and she was thirsty, she opened her door and went down, down and down. "Whoa, I guess I have a triple dream now," Mia talked to herself. She kept walking down, a little bit faster now. "Relax Mia. You can do it," she gasped. She walked down to the end of the stairs and reached the last floor.

Mia experienced sleep paralysis but she forced herself to get that shit end now, her body was stiff and her breathing was erratic. Sweat poured down from her head. "Keep walking, Mia. You can see the last floor,

right. Don't forget to relax." Using her last energy, Mia stepped on the last floor and opened the door. Now she was on the airplane again. She was getting ready to jump over into the blue sea. "I'm ready," she whispered. Mia let herself fall down, feeling the air fearlessly. She readied herself to hit the sea. She was drowning herself, then she was following the flow without any protection. 5 minutes later Mia saw a light. All of sudden, her surroundings became bright, very bright. She did it, finally.

Everyone was shocked, it happened so fast for Mia. Mia was dead when she was sleeping. She drowned herself at the pool. After experiencing sleep paralyzed, she experienced sleepwalking. Mia walked to the pool then jumped as seen in the CCTV recording. Jess, Dean, Kay, and Pete were crying because they didn't do anything to help Mia. Everyone at that house was blaming themselves for Mia's demise. Now, Mia didn't need to worry about her nightmare. She was having a nice dream in another world. -END-

## Missed

Dionisius Dwinandi W

My name was Danny. I was the only child of a couple of entrepreneurs who were quite famous in my city. From childhood, all my needs and wishes were always fulfilled. Even though I came from a family that was quite rich, I was always taught by my parents to always be humble and not to be arrogant. I was also educated from early age to have the character of an entrepreneur, with the hope that someday in the future I could continue or even exceeded my parents. After I was a teenager, all the things my parents had taught me seemed to slowly fade. I began to be a naughty child after I decided to be friends with one of the kids who many people labeled as 'bad boys'. I began to have the courage to fight my parents. I denied all of the advice they gave after they realized that their child was different now. Even though I acted like that, their love continued to flow to me. When I was not in front of them, sometimes I felt



guilty for all of my behaviors towards them. Once, I even got stressed out because I was very concerned about my behavior towards my parents. I repeatedly wanted to apologize to them, but I was afraid to tell them.

One day, I came home late at night. When I opened the door, my mother was sitting on the sofa in the living room. She then approached me and asked why I came home late at night. I then answered as brief as possible. My mother then suggested me not to go home late again, but then it was as if the devil possessed me. I immediately denied it and then snapped at her. So loud I snapped to my mother, my father who was already asleep woke up and approached us in the living room. My father then separated us and told me to go to the bedroom and told me that he would catch up with me. My father at that time understood my new nature. Although he could be said to be a strict person, on the other hand he could be a friendly and very caring person. He then advised me not to go home late at night and whenever I would go home late I was expected to contact

and inform my parents. He also said that my mother was very worried when I wasn't home yet, and even when he invited her to sleep, my mother refused to until I was at home. I, as usual, felt very guilty, and at that moment I managed to commit all of that to my father. I then apologized to him, and after that, my father also invited me to apologize to my mom. I then came to my mother who was sobbing a little. Then I bend down to her feet and apologized to her. After that, I returned to my bedroom and promised myself to change all aspects of my life.

The days after that day were very different. I began to get close again with my parents and I also obeyed all of the advice and words from my parents. I also began to change my friendship. I began to leave my friends who brought negative impact on my life. I could be said to be a different person compared to who I was.

That day, when I celebrated my 17th birthday, I was given a surprise that was beyond my imagination. As usual, in the afternoon I came home from school and

found a BMW M3 E92 parked in the carport of my house. The license plate still wasn't installed. I was surprised by the sight and also amazed because I could finally see the car I had been dreaming of. I then entered the house and found my parents were in the living room holding a birthday cake. I was very surprised and happy to see them. After blowing out the candles and eating some of the cake, I then asked my father about the car. I asked why the car was in the house's carport and who the owner was. My father then went inside as if he wanted to take something. After a while, my father came out again while carrying some documents, a key fob, and 2 pieces of iron plates. He then handed over the documents to me and I then read them. It turned out that the document was an invoice and a manual book. As I read the details of the invoice, I was very surprised to find that the invoice was a vehicle purchase document, which the vehicle type was exactly the same as the car I saw in the carport. At that moment my father stood up and approached me then handed me the key fob and 2 pieces

of iron plates which turned out to be license plates. He told me that the car was a present for me. Unbelievable, my dream came true. I was holding my dream cars key fob. I hugged my parents and thanked them for fulfilling my dream. They also advised me to take care of the car and make the car as a motivation for myself to keep developing into a better person. I also decided to open a business in the field of car modification, which parents approved.

A few weeks after I had a license to drive a car, I went to my friend's house using my father's car to do a school work. Until evening, my friend and I were still trying to work on the assignment and in the end, I had to tell my parents that I would come home late because I was still struggling with school work at my friend's house. Finally, it was only a few hours left before midnight when we successfully completed the task. I then said goodbye to my friend and his parents. When I drove on a fairly quiet road with a speed slightly above the recommended speed, my car slipped. I tried to control the pace of my

car, but I had lost control of my car. My car finally flew past the road divider and ended up hitting the lamp post right on the driver's door. I lost my consciousness. In the end, I was taken to the hospital in quite severe condition. I was in a coma for a few days.

I woke up from my coma on the fourth day. When I opened my eyes for the first time, I didn't remember anything that happened to me before and wondered why I was in a place like this. When my eyes began to be able to see around the room I was in, I found my mother asleep on the waiting chair. I did not see and know where my father was. Shortly after, I saw from the entrance of my room, my father came in with a very restless face. He then approached me and he did not realize that at that moment I was conscious. After he was right beside me and his hand was placed on my bed, I tried to move my hand as hard as I could to reach my father's hand. When our hands met each other, he looked at me and a moment later, tears were dropping on his cheeks. He then retreated to wake up my mother and came out to

tell the nurse about my condition because when I woke up, it was dawn. When my father went to see the nurse, my mother came to me and said that everything was fine and told me not to think too much about my medical expenses. When the nurse left after finished checking my condition, we decided to pray to give our thanks for the grace God had given. In my prayer, I was sorry for all my mistakes to God, especially my mistakes towards my parents. I closed my prayer by asking God to bless me, to always guide me in repentance and change my life completely. I was in the hospital for about 3 weeks and after that, I continued my treatment with outpatient care.

My days after the near-death experience changed me greatly. I became a person who was closer to God and tried to avoid all of His prohibitions. My parents were glad that their children had become more religious. After I graduated from high school, I entered the world of college. In this new place, I have many friends with diverse characteristics. I was closer to my friend who had

the same hobby as mine, which was automotive. This also made my business that I initiated since high school progressed very rapidly. With the help of those who spread my business to their acquaintances, finally I was able to open my first store after I ran my business at home before.

One day when I was washing my favorite car, the M3, my father came to see me and he complained about feeling pain in his stomach. He said that his stomach hurt for 3 days straight. He could not defecate and whenever he wanted to swallow food, he would vomit. After hearing it all, our family decided to seek treatment at one of the famous hospitals in our city, it was where I had been treated for my past accident. The doctor stated that the pain my father suffered was just a normal stomach ache. He was only given medications that increase his appetite. Our family came home feeling a little relieved after knowing that my father's illness was not too severe. It was time for my father's checkup to the hospital again. The three of us returned back to the hospital again, and

when we saw the doctor again, my father said that the pain didn't go away. Finally, the doctor gave him medication that had higher dose. We came home with feeling a little lethargic because we did not know for sure what was the illness that was attacking my father, but we were optimistic that my father would recover and soon would be able to do his activities normally.

At that time, I was on campus because I was one of the committees in a campus' event to welcome new students. At that time, my division was not working on anything so I decided to open my cellphone. I opened one of the chat applications and found something I didn't really expect. I saw with my own eyes, a screenshot of a chat from one of my sisters, stating that my father had to be hospitalized. I was shocked to death and with little faith, I contacted my mother to make sure whether it was right or wrong. I was speechless after hearing my mother said that it was true that my father had to be hospitalized. I had a mixed feeling when I asked for permission to leave early from my division coordinator



and to the other committees. I then rushed to the hospital not far from my campus, and when I arrived and passed the security guard, I met my mother in front of the inpatient preparation room. After talking with my mother, I then went into the room to meet my father who was lying on the bed. He said that he was fine and advised me not to think too much about his condition, he told me to just think about my academic first. I, who at that time could not hold back my sadness, finally cried in front of my father. My father then calmed me by stroking my head and repeatedly saying that he was fine. After that, I said goodbye to my father to go home first and promised him that I would be back again while carrying the necessary equipment and supplies.

My father was then treated, and a few days later, he was recommended to undergo surgery on his stomach. After undergoing the first surgery, my father left the operating room and he still joked with my aunt. From the surgery, it was known that the disease that attacked my father was cancer that was already on its

latest stage. When I accompanied my father alone, he spit out unknown black liquid. At that moment, I saw how my father was suffering greatly, and immediately, the thought that I would lose my father soon suddenly appeared. I cried in front of my father, and once again, he calmed me down, and said he was fine.

One surgery was not enough. Because my father's condition had not improved, it was finally decided to run a second surgery a few days later to make a way out from his stomach. The surgery went on a bit longer, but it worked and when my father came out of the operating room, he seemed to be silent. There was no meaningful response. A few days later when I visited the ward, the nurse was moving the position of my father's bed. My father was delirious. He said that there were many ants on one of the curtains on his bed. At that moment, my mother, the nurse and I saw that there were no ants on the curtains. We tried to tell that there were no ants there, but my father insisted that there were many ants. Then, we just agreed on my father's words. After the

transfer process was completed, I was told by my mother that my father's condition today was very different from yesterday. He ate all the food provided by the hospital and also ate the fruit which was also provided. I was positive that my father's condition would improve and he would soon return home. A few hours passed. I said goodbye to my father because tomorrow was the peak day of the campus event. He advised me to study hard so I would be able to graduate with a good title.

The next day while I was on campus, I was told by my mother and my brother to go to the hospital immediately because my father's condition was getting worse. I rushed to the hospital after I got the permission to leave the location by my coordinator. When I arrived at the ward where my father was treated, his condition was very severe. He breathed with difficulty even though he was already helped with a breathing apparatus. The thought of losing my father soon reappeared, and then I rushed to the bathroom to release my sadness alone. I returned to the ward after I was feeling better, and as

soon as I got there, I was told by my mother that I must be strong and must be ready if my father passes away that day. Night came, and when my father woke up a bit, my mother invited my father to join in praying the rosary prayer. I, who at that time could not say anything else, could only stand beside my father's bed while continuing to hold his hand and not taking part in the rosary prayer. After the rosary prayer was finished, just when the Catholic patients were blessed by a nun who went around the hospital, my father's condition worsened again. Because since noon my mother hadn't eaten yet, she asked me to accompany my father while she went out looking for food. I was just with my father at the time. I could not bear to see my father in such condition. I repeatedly said that I loved him very much and with a heavy heart I whispered to him that I was sincerely ready if that day my father would leave me forever. My father then opened his eyes and our eyes met before he finally closed his eyes again. Then, my father's breath which had been gasping slowly began to weaken. I saw it with my

own eyes; I was accompanied by my mother who at that time had returned; my father's breath slowly disappeared. In the end, my father was not breathing anymore. The doctor then was summoned and stated that at 8:20 p.m. on 18th August 2018, my father had passed away. I then whispered to my father again that he was one of the people I loved most and I had sincerely accepted his death.

The funeral for my father was held on the next day. At that time, many relatives could not believe that my father had died, and they encouraged me and my mother. I could keep my calm that day and still was able to accept my father's death, but the next day I began to lose my will to continue living. It started with me repeatedly skipping classes, and if I decided to go to college, I just stayed quiet and there was no material that I could learn. When I skipped my class, I said goodbye to my mother as usual, but my destination was my campus. I went to some of the places that I considered I could use as my solitary places. I was no longer motivated to live

and no longer cared about my future. Everything I had planned for the future with my family just disappeared. Later, I dared myself to confess to my mother. The confessions and complaints I had after my father's death were released right away. My mother understood the situation that I was experiencing at that time, and she encouraged me again to continue living so that my father would be able to living his life after death in peacefulness.

FIN.

## **TRAGEDY**

## Haunted

Grace Amanda N.P

“Dad, I’m so sorry! I won’t do it again. Please, stop hitting me!” , cried a boy who was hit with a bamboo stick by his father. His father who was drunk stopped what he was doing and walked closer to the boy without putting down his bamboo stick. “What did you just say, huh? You want me to stop hitting you? Then stop pissing me off, you little piece of shit!” He said it almost like a whisper. Then, he hit the boy again and it was harsher than before. The boy was crying. He could not do anything to his father. He wanted it to stop but he could not think of anything. Then, suddenly he felt like he hit was stop and he opened his eyes to see what his father was going to do to him next. He saw his father grabbed his hands. He was being pulled into a dark room against his will. The room was located in the corner of the house beside the stairs. It was dark and the boy swore he could smell a dead rat’s scent from far away. “Dad, where are you



taking me now?" he said between sob. His father just kept quiet until they reached the door. "Have you ever wondered where I always put my useless stuff?" he said while smirking. The boy shook his head. "I put my useless stuff in this room. Now get in!". He pushed the boy into the dark room and closed the door behind him. "Don't you dare come out until I say so!". Then, he left his son inside. He was crying and scared.

In the morning, the boy heard the sound of the door being opened. It was an old door which was made of an old oak tree. So, of course, it would make a disturbing sound if it was being pulled. The boy was jolted from his deep slumber because of the sound. He rubbed his eyes and tried to recognize who was standing right beside the door. "Oh, you're already awake, huh? Good, because I don't want to pretend like I am a good man and trying to wake you up." He looked at his son with disgust like he was a nasty thing that should not be seen. The boy stood and walked towards his father. "Go take a shower! After that, you have to go to work at Uncle

Ben's bakery." He left after saying that to his son. The boy then ran to his room to take a shower and went to work at the bakery in the middle of the town.

"Good morning, Daniel! Ready to work?" The owner of the bakery greeted Daniel once he stepped inside the bakery. "Good morning, Uncle Ben! I really am ready, sir!" Daniel smiled widely at the person who greeted him. He was a nice person and everyone respected him in the town. Daniel, the boy who was being abused by his own father the night before, just took his hat and his apron from the hook. He stood behind the bread's counter. A wide smile formed on his face. It looked like he was ready to do his job now.

One by one, the customers came to the store. When they came out, they would always bring a brown little bag that had bread inside from the store. The customers chose to bring the bread home or eat during their way to works. "Thank you very much, sir. Please come back again next time!" said Daniel after putting

some money into the cash register, then he got ready for the next customers. He went back at the counter to wrap another bread into the bag. He put some money again into the cash register. This activity happened repeatedly until the last customer left the store. "Good job, buddy! We are going to earn much money like that." said Uncle Ben while tapping Daniel's shoulder and laughed. "It was because of your great recipes so we can sell out all of the loaves of bread." Daniel praised Uncle Ben's recipes because the recipes were one of the most wanted items in the town. The bread was so delicious. "Time to close the store, buddy! This is your payment for today's work." said Uncle Ben while giving some money to Daniel. "Thank you very much, Uncle!" he said with a smile formed on his face. After that, he helped Uncle Ben closed the store and went back home.

On the way home, Daniel saw many kids running and playing with snowballs together with their friends. A kid threw snowballs at his friends but landed on Daniel's face instead. Then, they laughed it away together. Daniel

watched the scene in front of him with a little bit of envy. He did not have any friends that he could play with together. It was so unfortunate for him because he had to work while the other kids could play with their friends. He felt lonely suddenly after watching the kids played snowballs. Without he realized, a girl walked towards him with a lollipop on her right hand. "Hey there!" greeted the girl. Daniel noticed her but he confused because no one has ever been so friendly to him. "Ehmm... Excuse me, do I know you?" said Daniel to the girl. The girl shook her head. "I don't think so. I think this is the first time I met you and talk to you. But I have been watching you from a couple of minutes ago, though. You seem lonely." The girl stared into Daniel's eyes while talking. Meanwhile, the latter avoided the girl's gaze and chose to look at another view. "Yeah... I don't really have friends around here," said Daniel while tightening his torn jacket. The girl smiled. She seemed to be taking something from her jacket pocket. It was a lollipop with rainbow colors. She handed the lollipop to Daniel and the

latter seemed to be considering to take the lollipop or not. They barely knew each other but the girl suddenly offered a friendship like this. *Was she really serious right now? No one dares to approach me because I am dirty and poor all this time.* “Hey, are you there? You want it or not?” asked the girl. Daniel shrugged his thoughts away. He took the lollipop from the girl’s hand. “Thank you. You are so kind.” Daniel praised the girl. The girl smiled at Daniel. “No problem. My parents taught me to always be kind to everyone around me. So, I decided to offer friendship to you. My name was Tiffany by the way. What's yours?” The girl offered a handshake. Daniel decided to shake her hand. “What a pretty name. My name was Daniel Kim. Nice to meet you, Tiffany-shi\*.” *Well, maybe this was not a bad thing after all. Having a friend would not be a problem, I guess.* And with that, the fallen snow became the witness of how their friendship been made. They thought that no one knows about it but they were wrong. Without their notices, there was a

mystical creature that eavesdropping them behind a big oak tree.

Daniel went back to his house with a big smile plastered on his face. He was proud to himself because he finally had someone to hang out with. He walked happily to his old-fashioned house. When he entered the house, he found his father sitting on the chair next to a big round table with his mad face. "Oh, you're finally home. Have you forgot that you have a father, Dan?" Daniel gulped down watching his father like that. He knew that something bad would happen to him after this. "I-I was on my way home when suddenly Uncle Ben called me to pick up the store's supplies." Daniel lied to his father because he was afraid that his father would abuse him again if he told the truth about meeting a new friend. He knew his father would not let him hang out with anyone outside work. His father looked him with his sharp eyes, just like an eagle aiming for its prey. "Are you telling the truth? You know, if you lie you will definitely sleep in the darkroom again." "I did not lie, dad. Please

don't lock me in that room again. I don't like that place." he pleaded to his father. "I won't if you behave. Now, give me the money! All of them." Daniel was scared and when people scared, they would do anything asked. So, Daniel gave him all of his money. His father smirked. "Good boy. Go take a shower! You are so dirty." Daniel almost took his first step when he felt like he had something to say to his father. "Dad, how long will you do this to me? Don't you feel tired abusing me almost every day? You were not like this when mom was still alive." He finally could express his feeling towards his father. His father turned around to face him. "You want to know the truth, huh? It was your fault that my wife passed away. She passed away after she gave birth to you!" Daniel was shocked by hearing the fact. He never knew the truth behind his mother's death. *What?! Mother was dead because of me?* "It was your fault, you little piece of shit! I should have chosen her instead of you!" It was no one faults actually but his father kept accusing him. Daniel had enough of his father's words.

So, he decided to go to his bedroom. Before he could reach his bedroom upstairs, his hands were being pulled by his father. Daniel tried to fight back and they were fighting on the stairs' steps. Then, an idea was crossed in his mind. *This was the right timing!* He pushed his father down the stair. He watched him bleeding until he was dead. *Oh my god! What did I just do right now?* He knew he just murdered his own father, so he was afraid. He decided to run away from the house into the jungle.

“No way! I didn't kill him. It was an accident, right?” Daniel kept on saying that in the middle of the jungle. Until someone spoke, “You murdered him, Daniel! You murdered your own father!” The voice was getting closer to him and suddenly, a beautiful creature walked to him. It had nine tails and white fur covering the body. Daniel was stunned for a second admiring its beauty. “Who are you?!” Daniel took a step back. “I am a Gumiho. I am the protector of this place. I know everything about this place. Including your incident with your father.” Daniel was a bit surprised hearing that.



“That was not my fault! He fell by himself!” Daniel screamed to the Gumiho. “No! It was your fault! You pushed him down the stairs!” “No way! It was an accident. If you keep insisting then I will tell everyone that you murdered him!” Daniel ran away leaving the Gumiho alone.

Daniel went to Uncle Ben and told him about the incident but he lies. He accused the Gumiho. Uncle Ben was shocked and decided to gather everyone to inform them about it. So, after that, the news spread and people became the Gumiho haters.

A few years later, Daniel was already 30 years old and he already had a job. He became a veterinarian. He opened a clinic not too far from his apartment. “Here we go. The cat is healthy again now.” He gave his best smile to the customer while holding a cat. “Thanks, doctor. Now the cat could run around the house again with me.” The customer laughed and then paid for the treatment.

After the customer left, he closed the clinic and went back to his apartment.

He lived alone at the apartment all by himself. He did not have anyone after the incident. When he arrived at the front door of his apartment, someone called him. He turned to see who the caller was. She was beautiful and has a nice smile. Her eyes were gone when she smiles. "Hey, doctor. We often met at this hour but we never spoke to each other. Are you new?" The woman asked him. Daniel blushly answered, "Yeah. I am new here. My name was Daniel Kim. Just call me Dan." He showed his best smile while offering his hand to her. The girl shook his hand and says, "I am Tiffany Hwang. You can call me Tiffany or Fany." Daniel seemed to recognize this girl by her name. "Have we met outside this apartment before? Because I think I know your name." Tiffany thinks for a second and suddenly she hugged Daniel. "Daniel, was this really you? I am the girl who gave you the lollipop a few years ago!" Then a realization came to his mind. "Tiffany? Oh my god!" He hugged her

back. "Do you want to come to my apartment, Fany? Maybe for a cup of coffee." He asked her while opening the door. "Alright then. Lead the way."

After Tiffany left his apartment, he walked towards the balcony. He seemed to be in deep thought. He kept thinking about the incident of his father. *Am I wrong to hide all of this?* He sighed. Then, he wanted to go to sleep when a creature came "You again?" Daniel recognized her. It was the Gumiho from his past. "Yeah. It was me again, Kim." The Gumiho smirked. She was there because she wanted him to fix the mistake from the past. She wanted him to tell the truth. "I want you to reveal the truth!" "No! I won't." The Gumiho had enough of his antics. So, she used one of her tail to choke Daniel. Daniel tried to fight back the latter and they fought.

A knock was heard from the door of his apartment. It was from Tiffany. She heard noises come from the apartment and decided to check on Daniel. "You okay in there?" asked Tiffany. She was worried about

him. No answer. She called the emergency number. After waiting a bit longer, the police and the security came. "My friend was in there. I think he might be in trouble." The police and the security guard tried to open the door with another key. The door was opened. Tiffany got inside followed by the police and the security guard. Once they got inside, they found a bleeding body lying on the floor. Tiffany was shocked. She took a step back from the body. "Daniel? What you have done? Who was she?" Tiffany asked him in fear. The police and the security guard also shocked. The eyes that Tiffany saw were not the eyes of her best friend, Daniel. It looked like the eyes of a murderer. "You want to know the truth? I murdered her because she kept insisting that I murdered my own father. Which was true." He laughed after saying that. The police and the security guard arrested him because of double homicide. Tiffany cried alone in that room after he was brought to the police station. The secret that he kept for a long time finally out from his own mouth. It was tragic, but it was the punishment for

a murderer. However, it was not his fault after all. He was traumatized because his father abused him.

This story just wanted to deliver the message that abusing children was not allowed. The children would be traumatized and depressed. In the end, the children would do a bad thing because of their traumatic experiences.

-END-

# Fyodor

Andreas Aditya

## Chapter 1: Tanya/Aleena

Friday night, December 27, 1991. The snowstorm was stronger than usual but compared to the look that Fyodor just gave to Andrei Petrov—5 times national heavyweight boxing champion—when he knocked him out with one full-powered uppercut, this storm was nothing. The crowd shouted at him like the people of Rome cheering for their beast-killer Gladiator. The referee rang the bell, and gave the medal to “The Gift of God”; Fyodor Fedorov. But, Fyodor didn’t give a single penny to those groups of fired up people. He focused his look only to a short-haired girl who sat near the entrance door, giving a huge smile to him. Without him noticing, the people who lost their bet went on a rampage and started a huge riot.

"Fyodor! Fyodor!" shouted Alexei, Fyodor's 35-year-old personal trainer, from outside the ring with a

huge-ass megaphone. Fyodor woke up from his daydream and turned his head toward him.

"What the fuck are you still doing there? The crowd will eat you alive!" Fyodor got confused for a while, then finally realized that thousands of people were heading towards him. Alexei grabbed both of Fyodor's leg and dragged him out from the ring as the horde full of angered people successfully broke through the guards. They both managed to escape through the backdoor.

Well, as someone who just had his 26<sup>th</sup> birthday last week, Fyodor's life was nothing but one big wild ride. His father left him when he was only 6 years old, and his mother died because of breast cancer when he barely hit 7. He spent the rest of his childhood at the orphanage, and at the age of 18, he left the orphanage and joined an infamous and brutal gang called "leafgreen". He survived countless gang wars, and his shooting skill was undoubtedly far better compared to the others. During his time at the gang, he met a boxer named Alexei. Alexei offered Fyodor to become a boxer with Alexei himself as

his personal trainer, and Fyodor accepted it. Fyodor's career was very successful, and he won almost every championship that he was participating in. With over 2 meters of height and 140 kilograms of pure muscle equipped with arm reach that was never seen before in the Russian boxing world, it was highly doubted that anyone was going to defeat him at the moment.

Now back to the current moment. 2 days after the match, a huge celebration party was thrown in Fyodor's hometown at the Town's Favorite Pub (that's literally the pub's name). Unsurprisingly, the short-haired girl was there.

"Al, check out that girl over there," Fyodor whispered and slightly pointed his finger to Tanya.

"Oh, you mean Tanya? Don't even ask," replied Alexei with a sharp grin.

"You know her?" Fyodor enthusiastically asked.

"Of course, you dumb-dumb. She's my sister. Well, stepsister, technically."



Fyodor made a gesture of disbelief. Alexei nodded his head showing that he told the truth. Then Fyodor laughed for a whole 10 seconds.

"At first, I didn't want to tell anyone about this because I'm sure that almost every single man in this pub will ask me to do a matchmaking type of shit with her, and I don't have time for that nonsense. But, since you're my best friend; who has been staring at my sister's back for the last 2 hours, I'll make an exception."

Fyodor slapped Alexei's head, and they both laughed.

"Anyway, what kind of girl is she?" Fyodor casually asked as he burned his fifth cigarette of the night.

"She's a little bit on the cold side if you know what I mean, but I'm sure that you'll get the hang of it."

"That's all I need to know." Fyodor choked his beer and proceeded to greet Tanya. Alexei quickly grabbed his right arm.

"One important note. Her father, I mean our father, I mean my stepfather is the general of the air force. Make just one stupid step as you usually do, and he will gladly launch a missile to your house and turn you into a buckwheat soup."

"Stupid? Do I look like a peckerhead to you?"

He replied, "Unfortunately, yes. So, good luck," and he pushed Fyodor off the chair.

Fyodor confidently walked through the half-drunken crowd. He didn't care at all at his surroundings. The only thing that was orbiting on his mind was thinking about the perfect way to start a good conversation. He was getting closer and closer to Tanya until he was only 1 meter behind her back. He didn't even notice that there was a wheeled bucket full of water mixed with floor cleaning soap. His right foot stepped into the bucket, lost his balance, fell right into Tanya's chair and ended with Tanya spilling her wine into her own yellow dress and Fyodor fell right beside her, face first.

"And that, ladies and gentlemen, is how you make a good first impression!" shouted Alexei followed with a huge wave of laughter from the crowd.

"Jesus! I'm so sorry. I'm truly sorry. Oh my God, this is so embarrassing." said Fyodor with a low voice as he helped her to clean her stained dress.

"It's okay. It was an accident."

"No, it's not okay! It's all over your body."

"Well technically, it isn't. You can see that my head is still dry," joked Tanya, trying to break the tension. Fyodor wasn't paying attention to the joke at all.

"Just wait here, I'll go get another tissue for you." Fyodor ran into the toilet and returned to Tanya with a big roll of toilet paper on his left underarm. Alexei quietly observed them from his chair. He was surprised and confused all at once since Tanya was quite well known for her stone cold persona when she met a new guy, but now it's different.

"How about I'm buying you a dress to wear now? There's a store only 2 blocks from here. Consider this as my apology," said Fyodor with a rather persuasive voice.

"No, that's not necessary. Besides, I'm wearing this right now because my dad forced me to do it. How about we go to the thrift store across the street, and you buy a T-shirt and a pair of jeans for me. That will be a good apology and I would gladly accept it," replied Tanya.

"Oh, uh well... Okay then." Fyodor seemed to be a bit shocked.

They arrived at the store. Tanya went straight to the clothing racks while Fyodor was following right behind her. With full excitement, she checked the rack of medium-sized clothes.

"How about this?? See, it has your face on it," asked Tanya as she picked a T-Shirt with a picture of Donkey Kong along with its butt printed on the back side. Fyodor smiled a bit.

"Yeah, right. Whatever. You are just like your brother Alexei, but with boobs," answered Fyodor with his made-up sarcastic face that looked rather comical.

"Hahaha... Hey, how did you know that I'm Alexei's sister?!"

"He told me, duh"

"Then what's my name?"

"Tanya, right?" Fyodor showed his face of doubt.

"Huh, why haven't I come up with that name? Yeah, by the way, he lied to you. Congrats."

"Well, the next time I go to his house, I'll kidnap his dog and also take all of his vodkas," joked him, followed by her bursting out laughing.

"I'm Aleena. Nice to meet you," said Aleena as she offered for a handshake.

"I'm Donkey Kong. Nice to meet you." Fyodor reached Aleena's right hand. They've been dating since that moment and they were getting closer and closer each day.

## **Chapter 2: Baobab**

June 1, 1993. It was the first day of summer. Everyone on the neighborhood seemed to enjoy the warm afternoon weather, except for Fyodor and Aleena who had been living together since a year ago, because they were busily preparing for the wedding that was going to be held in 5 days.

During the time period, Fyodor broke his right arm in a car accident and later he lost the national champion title because his right arm was not as strong as it used to be. He only played at the regional level at this moment. The money he got from it was nothing compared to the amount that he received back when he was still competing on the national level and unfortunately, well-paying jobs at that time required a clear criminal record; a requirement that Fyodor couldn't fulfill. Luckily, Aleena got accepted to work as a chef at their favorite restaurant. They set aside some of his savings to accommodate the wedding and save the rest for future needs. It was enough, they thought.

June 6, 1993; the wedding day. Almost all of Fyodor and Aleena's relatives were there, including many of their friends.

"Fyodor! Fyodor!" shouted one of Fyodor's friend as he ran toward Fyodor.

"Boris! Dude, how long has it been?! 10 years? 15 years? And where have you been all this time? You've been missing since senior year. We thought that you were already dead!" said Fyodor with a high voice as he hugged his old friend.

"Oh, by the way, this is Aleena. Al, this is my closest friend when I was in the orphanage, Boris" Fyodor introduced Boris to his wife.

"Sit here. I'll get a drink for us. We have so much to talk about!" Fyodor rushed into the mini bar to get the champagne.

"Soo, where have you been all this time?" asked Fyodor as he opened the bottle.

"Long story short, I ran away from the orphanage, became a pretty damn successful drug dealer for two and

a half years. The police caught me and got me sentenced for fifteen years. I joined a gang there and we managed to escape that filthy place a year after my arrival. Then I got a well-paid job at an organization. Oh, and the organization managed to clear my criminal record. My life has been kinda stable since then, I guess," replied Boris.

"Huh, what kind of organization that can erase a freakin' criminal record? I call that nonsense," Fyodor doubted.

"It definitely can if it's a criminal organization funded by the government itself," said Boris.

"Wait, let me digest each of the words you just said... What the fuck are you talking about?" Fyodor couldn't believe a single word.

"I will happily answer your question. The organization is called Baobab. It is named after "the tree of life". Basically, you do the dirty work that the government can't do since it's against the law. Killing, kidnapping, money laundry, robbery; you get the point.



Let me go straight to the main reason why I am here, that is to invite you to our family. Would you like to join us?"

"You have to be joking right? Are you a stand-up comedian now?" joked Fyodor, hoping that it was a made-up thing.

"Do I look like a comedian to you?" asked Boris.

"Judging by your appearance... Uhm, no?" Fyodor lowered his tone.

"So, what's your decision?"

"You know that this is not the type of question that can be answered just in the blink of an eye, right?"

"Yeah. But, consider this. First, I'm sure that your job as a regional boxer is not enough to support your little family. Second, there's a rumor around the government that this country will go on an economic crisis in less than two months. However, they are not ready to release a statement since it is still a speculation, but I'm sure that this thing will surely happen," said Boris with his convincing voice. Listening to what Boris just

said, Fyodor was stunned and couldn't move a single limb of his body.

"So...," Boris put his right hand on Fyodor's left shoulder, "If you have made a decision, call me right away. Don't tell your wife about anything that we have just talked about. It's for her own safety." Boris stood up from his chair, left his number, and then walked to the exit door. Fyodor quickly took his number and put it in his pocket. Fyodor pretended like that conversation didn't happen at all, but the rumor about the economic crisis was still haunting his mind.

September 30, 1993. The rumor turned out to be true. Russian ruble's value was dropped 340% of its original value. Firing happened almost everywhere. Although Aleena was the best chef in the restaurant, she was not an exception. The boxing match was no longer filled with audiences and Fyodor's family relied only on the government's allowance, which was not enough for just buying everyday needs and it was going to be dismissed soon. Their saving was used constantly, and

soon there would be no money left for them. Moreover, they found out that Aleena was 3 months pregnant. Fyodor started to consider joining the organization, but he promised to himself in the past that he would leave the criminal world behind.

January 2, 1994. The government had stopped the allowance since 3 months ago. Their current money could only afford a week worth of food. They had not paid this month's rent, and they had been living without electricity since they couldn't afford to pay the bill. Riots happened all over the place.

It was 1 o'clock in the morning. The snowstorm was raging outside. They took turn sleeping since the raging people outside could break through anytime they wanted. Aleena, who was 8 months pregnant managed to sleep although there was no heater to keep them warm. Fyodor peeked through the window as he saw a bunch of teenagers looting a store just across the street. He couldn't deal with this situation any longer. He rushed

through the closet to search for his wedding suit, hoping that Boris' number was still there. Thankfully, it was.

"... Hey"

"Fyodor! How's it going?" shouted Boris.

"How do you know that it is me? By the way, what's with the noise, man? Are you in a party or something?" Fyodor shouted back since he could barely hear Boris' voice with all of the noise.

"Yes, I just know, and yes, I am at a party!"

"Oh.. ok. I decided to accept your offer. Now, what should I do?"

"Just get your ass over here!"

"How?!"

"If you look closely, the paper that I gave you is folded. Open the fold and you'll know where I'm at." Boris hung up the phone. Fyodor unfolded the paper and found the address. He put on his jacket and took his handgun that was hidden under the closet for safety reason. He slowly unlocked the chain so it wouldn't wake Aleena, then prepared on a long walk to the location.

After nearly 2 hours of walking, he arrived at the place. It was an old museum with guards dressed as homeless surrounding the building. After two minutes of full body checking, they took Fyodor's gun and guided him to the entrance.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you, the new member of our organization, a former champion; Fyodor Fedorov the Gift of God!" said Boris through the microphone second after Fyodor entered the museum. The people cheered excitedly for his arrival. Fyodor missed this feeling so much. The last time he felt this way was when he won the national championship. The feeling of being acknowledged. He felt the excitement, he felt the happiness, he felt that he was in the right place.

### **Chapter 3: Zoya**

The first week of February 1994. A month after the previous event. The currency's value had recovered although it was still below its original place. Basically, everyone had gone back to their normal life, but in

Fyodor's life, it had gotten even better. Since joining the organization, money was never a problem for them. Fyodor even managed to afford a down payment for a decent house in the suburban area along with a brand new car with his first paycheck. Of course, this would not go as smooth as he thought since his wife started to smell a rat. He said that he was currently working as a manager at a museum and he was still boxing regularly, but honestly, he had never been good at lying.

February 12, 1994. It was Aleena's birthday, and it was also the day their first child was born. It was a girl, and they agreed to name her 'Zoya' that means 'life'. The born of Zoya gave Fyodor a new meaning to his life. All he wanted at the moment was the safety of his daughter and his wife. He didn't want to feel the feeling when his father left him, neither when his mother died. He just wanted to live a life as a happy family.

"Aleena, what date is today?"

"17. Why?" answered Aleena from the other room.

"I'm making the schedule and to-do list for our new maid. Oh, how're your stitches doing?" asked Fyodor as he tried to reach for his pen under the table.

"It's not bleeding anymore. So it must be okay, I guess. Oh, Boris called this morning. He wanted to talk to you."

"Oh, okay. I'll do it soon after I finish making this."

"Anyway, I'm going to Alexei's to pick up my stuff. I'll be back in 1 hour. Bye..." Aleena closed the front door.

Fyodor had finished making the schedule, then he went to his room to call Boris.

"Hey, Bori.."

"Fyodor, this is a pre-recorded voice from Boris' computer. This recording can only be listened on one telephone, and it won't be repeated so listen carefully. This following message is based on the direct order from Timofey Kozlov, the leader of the organization. This is the message; Hey, it's Timofey speaking. I order you guys to meet me at The Dormition Cathedral three days from now at 7 p.m. sharp. Wearing a suit is a must and don't

forget to bring your identification card. This meeting will talk about your next mission that is going to be crucial for the future of our country, blah blah blah blah, and so on, and so forth. Have a good day." The recording stopped playing. Fyodor was a little bit shocked since it was unusual to receive this kind of message. Besides, all the work that he had done during his time in Baobab were just collecting money from place to place. A debt collector, basically. So, this was a huge thing for him.

February 18, 1994. The day of the meeting. Fyodor prepared himself early in the morning because it was going to be an 8 hours ride to Moscow from his city, Saint Petersburg.

"What kind of Museum that holds a meeting 700 kilometers away from its own place when it can just be held at, you know, the museum?" asked Aleena with her signature tone as she helped Fyodor packing up his clothes.

"It's a national meeting, honey. Besides, I'm the general manager. So, what can I say about it?" replied



Fyodor with his low and calming voice. "By the time you miss me, I'll be at the front door. I love you." Fyodor kissed her forehead.

"I love you too. Don't forget to call me soon after you arrived at the hotel"

"Got it."

Fyodor went down the stairs and turned on his car. Aleena watched him from the bedroom with a face full of anxiety as he left the house.

#### **Chapter 4: Timofey**

"Hey Honey," said Fyodor through the hotel telephone.

"Fyodor! How's the ride?"

"Haha, don't even ask. The road's filled with full-blown shitheads that don't even know how to drive like a normal human being. However, the view is quite amazing though. We should do this together sometimes. How's Zoya doing?"

"She is sleeping all day. It's kinda boring, to be honest. I thought that being a mother would be more exciting than this," joked Aleena followed by Fyodor's chuckle at the end of the line.

"Soon after she learned to walk and talk, she will be as annoying as her mother. You'll see."

"I can't wait for that moment to come," replied Aleena.

"Oh, sorry but I have to get prepared. The meeting will be held in one hour. See you tomorrow."

"Yeah... See you." Aleena hung up the phone.

February 18, 1994. It's 6.50 p.m. and Fyodor had already arrived at the Cathedral. There were two men guarding the entrance.

"Identification?" asked the guy on the left. Fyodor handed his card. The guy took a quick scan on the card, returned it to Fyodor, and opened the entrance for him.

"Huh? No body checking? No touching? Any kind of activity involving you guys poking at my body parts?"

No?" asked Fyodor. The guards just stood still ignoring any of his words.

"This is kinda awkward. Okay then," Fyodor proceeded to enter the Cathedral.

It turned out that Fyodor was the last person who came. 14 persons in total, including him and Boris. Fyodor took the chair with his name written on it. Not a second after Fyodor sat on the chair, the door behind the altar was opened.

"Good evening, guys. How's your day?" It turned out to be the Red Hat, the leader of Baobab; Timofey Kozlov, a 13-year-old boy. He was accompanied by 6 of his personal guards, each of them equipped with an automatic weapon.

"Anyway, I'm going to make this quick because I have lots of homework. We have gathered intelligence from many sources, and it turns out that Germany has been spying on us for more than a year. Up to this time, we have discovered 7 of their intel. So, your mission, as you have already guessed, is to kill them all. You'll be

working in a two-man team, and each team will be given the name of their target, along with the target's complete biodata, address, daily activity, and the date that you should do the assassination. Remember that you have to do this as subtle as you can. But, if your face is being recognized and you are being reported to the police, we have no other choice but to put you down since we have to maintain and keep the secrecy of this organization. So, good luck to all of you. Oh, the complete information about your target has been printed and sealed in an envelope located under your seat. The name of your partner is also written at the top of the paper. I think that's all for today's meeting. Now I have to go back to my house. My mom is preparing for dinner and I cannot be late for that. Thank you." Timofey put down the microphone and left the room.

Fyodor took the envelope under his seat and rushed back to his car. He opened the seal of the envelope and pulled the paper out slowly. Boris' full name was written at the very top. Fyodor's heartbeat

nearly stopped when he read the name of his target. The name was Alexei. Alexey Vasiliev. His personal trainer. His brother-in-law. His best friend. Fyodor couldn't believe the thing he just read, and he couldn't hold his tears any longer. With all his remaining strength, he tried to read the day of the assassination. It was on July 20, on Alexei's birthday.

"What should I do now?"

## **Chapter 5: Alexei**

Today was the day that Fyodor hoped would never come. It was the day of the assassination. He had not slept for three days and had not eaten anything since yesterday. However, he tried to act as normal as he could. The plan of the assassination given by Boris 3 days ago was haunting his mind all the time.

"So, this mission will be a piece of cake. I'll be the executor, and you'll be the bait. Got it?" said Boris.

"Essentially, the plan goes like this; you'll lure Alexei to sit on the chair that's on the second row from

the entrance. It has to be the one in the middle because that's the seat where I can get optimal vision. Then poof! Oh my God! He's dead aaaa aaaa... Anyway, I'll be off from my position in less than ten seconds. And you, you can just blend in with the crowd. Plus, I've hired 2 amateur gunmen to stand by at the front of the bar. So, they can just go inside the pub and kill him right away if you fail to lure him to sit on the chair. Damn, this is so much easier than I thought."

It was one hour before the celebration. Aleena took a quick bath, while Fyodor was planning on how to save Alexei from his judgment day.

"Fyodor! The babysitter is already here! What are you waiting for?"

"I'm coming!" Fyodor took his handgun, put it in the hidden pocket on his jacket, and then went down the stairs.

"Aleena! Fyodor! My 2 best friends are finally here! C'mon, go get yourself a drink!" shouted Alexei a second after Fyodor opened the pub's door. Judging by

his gesture and voice tone, he was already drunk. Fyodor looked to the outside through the small gap on the entrance door, and he saw the 2 gunmen were already in their given position. He had to come up with a plan now, or it could be too late for Alexei, and luckily, he already had.

The plan was kinda hard, but it had to be successful at all cost. In short, the plan went like this; Fyodor informed the current situation to Alexei, Alexei's wife Nadia and also Aleena while they were all out from Boris and the gunmen's vision. Then, they had to leave the pub through the backdoor that went straight into the other side of the road. Fyodor had rented a car and parked it right on that place. After that, they have to pick up Zoya at the restaurant where Aleena used to work since Fyodor had asked the babysitter to go there and entrusted Zoya to Tatiana, Aleena's former co-worker. And finally, assuming that all went according to his plan, he must escape the country within a week since a week was the amount of time that Baobab needed to make a

cooperation with the police department. If Baobab managed to do that before they left the country, there was nothing that they can do about it.

Back to the pub, it seemed that the plan wouldn't go as smooth as he thought it would because of Alexei's condition. He was drunk as fuck. While Nadia was trying to make him awake, Fyodor had to confess to his wife.

"Aleena, there's something that I haven't told you, and you probably know what it is. That whole thing about me working as a manager is a lie. I'm sorry."

"I knew it from the first day you told me, because first, your knowledge on history is at the same level as Zoya and second, anyone in this town knows that that museum has been abandoned since nearly a decade ago. I'm just waiting for you to confess because I think that sometimes honesty takes a little bit of time. So, my question of the day is... What were you doing and where did you get all that money?"

"I can't tell you now. There's no time. We have to leave this place right now," said Fyodor like he was being



chased by a herd of lionesses. "Where the fuck is Alexei??" He spun his body as he looked for the sight of Alexei, and his adrenaline was pumped so high when he found that Alexei was sitting on 'the chair'. 200 meters from the pub, Boris was ready with his finger on the trigger of his sniper rifle. For Fyodor, it was a race against Death, and he won. He successfully pulled Alexei on to the floor a split second before the bullet crushed his head. The crowd went crazy because of the gun sound. Alexei also snapped out of his drunken state because of it.

"Don't go to the front door! This way!" shouted Fyodor as he guided Aleena, Nadia, and Alexei to the backdoor. Meanwhile, the gunmen struggled to enter the pub since the crowd tried to get out all at once. By the time the gunmen stepped their feet on the pub's floor, the four of them were already gone.

"Zoya! We have to pick Zoya!" said Aleena panickily as they entered the rented car.

"Don't worry, Zoya is at the Jenny's," said Fyodor as he hit full throttle on the car.

They arrived at the restaurant, but Zoya wasn't there. They rushed back into their home hoping that everything would be just fine. As they arrived at the front yard, Aleena rushed her way into the house.

"Fyodor, I think there's something wrong with your garage door. It doesn't open by itself." Fyodor's garage door opened by itself automatically, and it would have been locked and couldn't be opened automatically if there was already a car in it. In short, there was a car in the garage, and it wasn't theirs.

"Aleena! Stop!!" Fyodor tried to chase Aleena, but it seemed that it was already too late. Aleena opened the front door and by the time she turned on the lamp, a 9mm bullet pierced through her heart. She fell on the ground, and Fyodor couldn't do anything about it.

-END-

## **STORMY THE BRAVE FAIRY**

Stefanny Gultom

In a kingdom located in heaven, there was a beautiful fairy who was very ignorant. Her name was Stormy. Stormy was a young girl who was very ignorant and did not care about anything. She never wanted to join the other fairies because she was very scared if her beauty was surpassed by another fairy. Stormy also liked to be alone. If she felt uncomfortable or disturbed, she became angry in any situation. Actually, many fairies wanted to be friends with Stormy, but sometimes they were also afraid if Stormy was angry for no apparent reason. Stormy lived only with her mother. She did not have a brother or sister. Her father, the king who was highly respected, was killed by aliens during the war over the planet Mars. Her heart was hurt, broken; it was unbearable. Stormy felt a sense of loss. Stormy's days just passed. Since his father died, Stormy did not have any close friends. Only her father who understood Stormy.

Her mother was not too close to Stormy because she was busy with other royal affairs. Now her life increasingly became quieter. Nobody knew what Stormy really felt. In fact, they didn't care about Stormy. That made her even more uninterested to be close to other fairies, even with her mother. She didn't want to talk to the other fairies because she thought everyone sucked.

Stormy was a very closed child. She didn't want to share her stories with anyone except her father. If she was feeling sad because she missed her father, Stormy could only look at the photos of the two of them on her table. Since the father died, Stormy began to change. She increasingly became a closed person, did not care about others and was easily angry. When she was alone, Stormy preferred to read books or clean the crown collections and jewelry. She didn't like crowds, she was not comfortable with that. Many people did not understand Stormy's personality because sometimes she could look very ordinary without any problems, but sometimes she could look very scary because she could be angry in an

instant. If she felt uncomfortable with a situation that she did not like, Stormy would be angry at whoever was there. She could also punish people she didn't like with her magic stick that she always carried everywhere. It was her father's magic wand which she would never leave because with the magic wand she felt her father always accompanied her. There were already 4 fairies who were punished into frogs because Stormy felt their presence made her uncomfortable.

One night Stormy felt hungry because she did not want to leave her room all day. She finally went to the kitchen and tried to search for food on the dining table. Because it was 12 at night, Stormy did not find food on her dining table. She felt upset because again, she felt that no one cared about her. Stormy was very sad, no one called her to her room to take her out to eat since morning and when she felt hungry, the food was gone. She finally cried because she thought everyone didn't care about her. Hearing the sound of crying, there was one fairy named Brownies who accidentally heard it.

Brownies was a fairy who used to clean the yard of Stormy's royal palace. The fairy saw Stormy crying at the dinner table, out of pity she approached Stormy and tried to speak with her, "What's wrong with you Stormy? Why are you crying?" Brownies asked worriedly. As usual, Stormy did not want to answer the other fairy's questions because she felt this was none of their business. But the fairy, Brownies still wouldn't give up and keep asking the same thing, "What's wrong with you Stormy? Why are you crying? Let me know, you can't keep hiding your feelings." Stormy tried to tell Brownies about what she felt.. Her tears broke uncontrollably again. She hugged Brownies the fairy without telling anything. Brownies felt sorry for Stormy. All this time, she always noticed Stormy had never joined the other fairies, Stormy even had no friends. Stormy kept crying without telling anything until finally Brownies wiped Stormy's tears and calmed her. Stormy finally calmed down. She began to tell what she had felt without hesitation to Brownies. "I'm disappointed," she said with his head

down. Brownies still didn't understand what Stormy meant. "I'm really disappointed with all the fairies in this palace, even with my own mother who never cared about me. I felt that everyone is being nice to me only when my father is still alive. Now, they all even don't know me. There is no longer food left in the kitchen for me. I miss my father, Brownies ...," she said while cried. Brownies was shocked, all this time she did not expect that Stormy could think like this to the fairies and her own mother. "Stormy, if you feel lonely come to me. If I'm not busy working to clean the park, I'll accompany you to play," Brownies reassured Stormy. Brownies tried to convince Stormy not to feel lonely anymore and she wanted to try to understand Stormy. "Now, take a glass of water and go back to your room to sleep. Tomorrow morning, I'll make you breakfast," Brownies continued. Stormy just nodded to Brownies. Before going to bed, Stormy thought that she was happy because she had told Brownies what she had felt so far. That night, Stormy slept well.

The next day, Stormy woke up feeling happy. "Wow, today is very bright," she muttered while smiled. Stormy went to the bathroom, then she was getting ready for breakfast. When she went to the dining room, she did not see her mother having breakfast, but the table was full of food. Without thinking any longer, she went to the dining table and was greeted by Leony the fairy. "Good morning sweet lady," greeted Leony. "Morning," replied Stormy slowly. "What do you want to eat and drink, Stormy?" asked Leony with a very warm smile. "I want to eat pancakes with honey and drink a cup of hot chocolate," Stormy answered. Leony just nodded and smiled. Not long after that, all the food and drink that Stormy wanted were served neatly on the dining table. Stormy ate ravenously without thinking. After she was done eating, what should she do? Or where should she go? Because surely she would feel very bored if she only stayed in the palace. When Stormy wanted to drink the chocolate, she saw a woman with a white crown coming from the direction of the room on the second floor. Yes,



Trolls ... She was the mother of Stormy. Fairy queen that was highly respected in the palace even in Fairytown. Trolls was actually a good mother, but for some reason, since her husband died (Stormy's father), she turned into a very ignorant figure, even with her own child Stormy. She only focused on her diamond collections and almost for every night she would always drink wine to make her sleep well.

The atmosphere became awkward, Stormy was not comfortable with a situation like this. "Hi Stormy, where have you been for a few days? I really miss you!" said the mother as she started a conversation. Stormy just stay quiet and did not answer, she did not like talking with her mother. "Do you still want to be quiet, Stormy? I'm your mother! Talk honey, what do you want? Tell me!" asked her mother in a soft tone. Actually, Stormy also missed her mother. But because she felt the mother was more indifferent since her father died, Stormy decided not to want to talk much with her mother. Stormy wanted to answer honestly about her feelings, but

everything was stuck in her mouth. Stormy forced herself to answer, "I want daddy back!" The mother was shocked to hear Stormy's answer, it was clear by how her mother looked at Stormy. Stormy also understood that surely her mother was hurt by her answer. Stormy did not care about that, she was too hurt by everything she felt since her father died. The atmosphere increasingly became more uncomfortable for Stormy, she decided to leave from the dining table because she could not stand the atmosphere. When Stormy left her chair, her mother began to cry while she said, "Stormy, your father is already at peace in heaven, why have you never opened your heart to me? If you think mom is not a good mother for you, I'm sorry. Mom always loved you, Stormy." Hearing the mother's statement, Stormy paused and felt guilty, but she continued to walk away from her mother.

Stormy also decided to go to the back of the house in her palace. She sat enjoying the birds singing there while looking at the very bright sky. Blue, the sky in the afternoon was very bright. The sun illuminated

everything with a smile, which made her didn't want to feel sad. For a moment, she thought about what her mother had said in the dining room, did she have the heart to do it or was it indeed the mother who had been heartless to her? Or were they selfish? Stormy and her mother were hard to understand. When she was going to the room, from her behind Brownies the fairy approached her and said, "Hi sweet girl ...". Hearing that voice Stormy smiled, "Hi Browniessss, what are you doing here?" asked Stormy. "My duty is to clean the garden in this palace. Then, what are you doing here?" Brownies replied. "Oh yeah, I just remembered. I just want to sit and stare at the sky, to rest my chaotic mind. This place is very beautiful and comfortable. I like being here. But I can't linger, I have to go back to my room. Bye, Brownies," Stormy said. Seeing Stormy who had to immediately enter the palace, Brownies also spoke briefly to Stormy and let her go while she said, "Yes, this place is so comfortable and calm. Okay, bye, Stormy."

The next day, in a beautiful morning, Stormy woke up feeling annoyed because she felt her sleep was disturbed by the chirping sound of a bird that always perched on the window of her room. Stormy tried to ignore the sounds of the bird, but the bird kept chirping until finally Stormy took her magic wand and pointed it to the bird. It turned out that Stormy spelled the mantra wrongly, she made the bird spoke instead. Since the bird could speak, he finally introduced himself to Stormy. The name of the bird was Melvin. He came from a planet that had been fought over by the fairies and aliens, the planet called Earth. The bird said that he could get to this kingdom because he was kidnapped by aliens. The bird also said that 1 year ago he escaped from Pluto (the home of the aliens) by tricking the planet's guards. The bird did not know its way back to earth so he just flew in the direction of the wind until he arrived at this kingdom, which was in Fairytown. Melvin said that the Earth was a very beautiful and calm planet for a place to stay. Melvin said he wanted to go home soon to Earth. Melvin begged

Stormy to take him to earth to meet his family. Stormy did not immediately give an answer. For two days Stormy thought about the offer Melvin had said. Actually, she wanted to take Melvin to Earth because she felt guilty to him. Stormy also felt bored living in Fairytown, she wanted to find a new place that was quieter and more comfortable than her current place of residence.

The third day, Stormy could only give Melvin one answer. She found Melvin still perched on the window of her room. When she got up from sleep, she immediately said, "Well, I'll take you to Earth. But on one condition!" Stormy said very confidently to Melvin. "Fine, whatever the condition is, I will follow it," answered Melvin happily. "The condition is easy, you just need to sing sweetly for 5 minutes to divert everyone's eyes to the front of the palace so I can get out of the palace easily and we will fly to Earth together," Stormy explained. "Okay if that's all you want," Melvin answered without further ado.

The next day, they had been preparing since morning. Around 8 a.m., when some fairies in the palace were having breakfast, they started to get out of the palace. Melvin began to sing in a sweet voice to distract the palace gatekeeper. About 5 minutes passed, Stormy managed to get out of the palace and was followed by Melvin. They finally flew to the earth for 7 days and 7 nights. Right on the 7th day, they arrived on a very beautiful Earth planet. So many trees and rivers. Stormy really liked this place. She began to live her life here and tried to forget all her life in Fairytown, which was full of wealth. On earth, she must live alone. Her friend was now not fairies but animals in the forest. Meanwhile, all the fairies including Stormy's mother were actually worried because they did not see and did not know where was Stormy, who had not been seen for 7 days. The mother just cried and could not say anything, her only daughter was missing and she did not know where her daughter went to. Using the magic power of the fairies, they had tried to find where Stormy was, but it

always failed because Stormy was too far away and inaccessible.

Five years passed, Stormy grew into a strong and independent fairy. She had been very friendly with nature and everything that was on earth. The quiet life that she had wanted so far had been accomplished. That afternoon, when Stormy had just finished cooking a roasted chicken, suddenly someone knocked on the door of her house. When she opened, she was very surprised that it was Brownies the fairy who came to her house. Brownies were tasked by Fairy Queen Trolls' assistant to find Stormy because the Fairy Queen was dying. She was seriously injured because of the war against the aliens on Pluto. Hearing the sad news, Stormy immediately invited Brownies to fly back without thinking any longer. All the way to Fairytown, Stormy just cried. This trip would take a long time, Stormy was afraid when she arrived at the palace her mother would be dead.

Seven days passed, Stormy and Brownies arrived at the palace. The mother, Fairy Queen Trolls was still alive even though her condition was very critical. Her face was getting paler because she was unable to withstand the pain she was suffering from. Seconds before the death of her mother, she got a message from his mother, "Stormy, forgive your mother if I have not been a good mother for you all this time, mother is no longer strong enough to endure this pain. I leave this kingdom to you. Take good care of everything in this kingdom. Be a wise leader. Mother always loved you, Stormy, see you." Hearing her mother's last words, Stormy could only cry and didn't have any time to apologize to her mother. She felt very guilty.

A few months passed, Stormy no longer felt sad. She tried very hard to live without her parents. Stormy had also begun to change. She was willing to socialize with the fairies in the palace, even outside the palace. She became a fairy who liked to look around at the situation outside of the palace. That afternoon when



Stormy was sitting relaxedly in the backyard, suddenly 2 palace soldiers arrived and said, "My queen Stormy, 2 bodyguards at the edge of Fairytown have been killed by aliens by injecting them with something." Stormy was very shocked and angry because of that. Without thinking for a long time, Stormy asked all the fairies of the palace including the soldiers to gather in the living room to discuss the war against aliens of the planet Pluto. When all of them had gathered, Stormy firmly ordered them all to get ready to wage war with the aliens in a secret manner. They rushed and prepared everything they wanted to carry during the war. They wanted to attack the aliens at night when the aliens were sleeping.

In the evening, they headed to the planet, Pluto. When they arrived there, they all dispersed quietly. When everyone felt safe, the soldiers immediately threw bombs at the palace and shot all the aliens who guarded the palace to death. The aliens got up and were shocked. They scattered out of their homes and palaces. The war continued for approximately 8 hours until the soldiers

from Fairytown could kill the alien king named Judas. He was dead after being shot in the head for 4 times by the soldiers and the last shot was by Stormy. The war was won by Stormy and the fairies. They were very happy and decided to go back to Fairytown. Stormy was very proud of herself for defeating the aliens who have killed her mother and father.

-END-

## **MYSTERY TRAGEDY**

## Revenge

Yosephine Nurmalasari

**2008**

There was an attractive girl named Anna who was a high school student with gorgeous appearance. Long blonde hair, blue eyes, tall and slim body. She was half American and half Italian. She was born in USA and lived with her parents.

It was afternoon, all of the students came out of their classes. Anna was surrounded by her friends while she was walking out of class. Then, suddenly appeared one unpopular boy who was predicated as a nerd in the school. This boy brought a bouquet of red roses. He was awkwardly walking closer to Anna while smelling the bouquet. Everyone was staring at the both of them.

“I love you!”, screamed the words by the nerd boy, and the response he got was just laughter from the

people around him. And Anna? She stared at the nerd boy disgustedly. Without saying a word, Anna grabbed the roses and threw it to a garbage. Then, she left. The nerd boy was left alone with his lonely eyes.

## **2017**

It was Anna's golden age. This year, Anna turned 24, and her dream to be a traveler came true. All the money that she got from her hard work as a director was used to achieve her dream. Now was the time for her to manifest her ambition.

An alarm was ringing in Anna's room. It was 6 A.M. in USA. Anna was preparing all the things she needed to bring. It was Anna's first trip, she was really excited. The destination was Italy. She chose it because it was her father's homeland. She arrived in Italy at night by plane and then she stayed in a hotel. On her second day in Italy, she met Aurora; a local who could speak English.

“May I take a photo of you? I’m really bad in memorizing faces of people I barely know.”

Anna always did that the first time she was getting to know a person she just met to remember them. It was because she had difficulty in memorizing people’s faces who she barely knows. Day by day, she enjoyed Italy. She also collected pictures of some people that she just met there. On her last night in Italy, she finished packing her belongings. When she went to sleep, she found a red rose under her bed.

“Whose rose is it? Why is it under my bed? And for how long?”

But, she didn’t really care about it, she thought it might be just a prankster. Then, she just ignored it and slept.

The second destination was French, a romantic country. Like what Anna did in Italy, she also took pictures of people she just met. At there, she made a friend with a woman named Adele. The first time Anna met Adele, she took a picture of Adele, like what she

usually did. Day by day, she was accompanied by Adele during her vacation in Paris. Then, on her last day in Paris, someone knocked on the hotel room's door where Anna stayed . When she opened the door, it was Adele, her hand was holding a red rose. "Here." Anna smiled and answered,

"You are giving me a red rose? How nice."

Anna accepted the red rose and Adele said, "No, that's not from me. There was a guy outside the hotel and he asked me to give this red rose to you. You have a male friend in Paris?"

Anna was confused because the only friend she had in Paris was just Adele. Then, she asked Adele to bring her to the man. They both walked outside of the hotel but the man was already gone.

Anna arrived at her third destination, Thailand. At there, she ran into difficulty because she rarely could find any person who could speak English. Suddenly, appeared a woman and she said to Anna,

“Hey, can I help you? You look confused.”

Anna felt so relieved. Finally, during her vacation in Thailand, she was accompanied by Apinya. She always helped Anna during her stay.

It was her fifth day in Thailand. After Anna came out of a bar, she went to her motel room with Apinya. She asked her to go with her to her motel room because that night she was really drunk. In the morning, Anna woke up with Apinya. Anna shared her story about her traveling to Apinya and showed her pictures of some people that she met in Italy and Paris. Suddenly, Apinya said,

“Wait, why is Arnold in every picture?”

She was pointing at a guy who stood at the back, far from the objects in every picture.

“Who’s Arnold?”

“He’s your boyfriend, right? Oh, I’m sorry, yesterday he asked me to give you a red rose, but I forgot



and left it in my house. Actually, he pays me a lot of money to be your translator and guide here. You are so lucky to have him.”

Anna was shocked. She re-checked the pictures and she realized that in every picture that she took in every country, there was always one guy standing in far behind. And the red roses? Of course those were from him.

Anna asked Apinya for Arnlod’s number, she wanted to know what actually he wanted, but Apinya didn’t have it. Apinya told her that in the last five days, she saw Arnold in a garden not so far from the motel where Anna stayed. They both went to the garden but there was no Arnold there. In the night, when Anna wanted to sleep, her mind was disturbed, it was full of questions about Arnold. Then, she decided to go to the garden. It was so quiet there. Still no Arnold. Suddenly, BAMM! Anna fainted. When she woke up, he was in a warehouse with a guy standing in front of her, it was Arnold!

“What do you want from me?”

“Don’t you remember me, princess?”

“Just say who you are and what do you want!”

“I’m the nerdy boy that you rejected badly in high school. Remember now? You know, I still love you until now, I always stalking you since I heard about your traveling plan. I gave you help and flowers. Like in high school. But you rejected me, it makes me feel really hurt. You will get my revenge soon, darling.”

“What do you mean? I’m sorry for what I did in high school, please let me....” A bullet pierced Anna’s head. Arnold kissed Anna on the lips, and then threw her body to a garbage.

-END-

## The Hypothesis of Vyla – Requiem

Patricia Paramitha

A solemn night greeted the young man's lonesome figure; he walked calmly as if nothing had bothered him at all. He walked towards the puddle of blood which was only getting bigger and bigger as he goes forward to a man-made freezer on the backside of an old abandoned hospital. He inspected his surroundings and pulled out rubber gloves from his pocket. He tied his long hair back, looked to the sky and sighed. Behind him, followed a thirty-two years old man walking towards him and handed him a box of cigarettes. "It's getting colder around here, care for a smoke?" asked the old man politely, the young man turned to the old man and looked at him dead in the eye.

"I hated the smell of it, how could you forget that, old man?"

"Pardon my manners, Anthony, this old dad of yours really want to get a little bit fun with his son!" Detective Maehara giggled nervously, he looked around and realized how inappropriate of him to act in a certain way in a certain condition.

Anthony looked towards his old man again, he turned back to the scene and examined it thoroughly. His entire crew members had cleaned up and pointed all of the parts which the two detectives had to focus on.

"Now, Anthony, I want to remind you that you're here to help me and I want you to be in your best behavior. I know you're smart but these cops had done their fair share of talent for you too," said Maehara, warning his step-son to keep calm when handling the people around him.

Anthony was not the type to socialize; he was a rather solitary figure who was just working to fill his spare time. Maehara watched Anthony as he walked up to one of the officers, asking what happened and what would be

the matter around the area. He seemed calm, yet his stance is firm, he gave a stern look to everyone he talked to, even some of them couldn't stand and wet themselves when he saw Anthony's dead fish eyes.

"If it's your order then I'll do it," replied Anthony while he was pulling the door handle and then closing it after he entered.

There, an officer stood on a pile of floor tiles. He was staring into a hole on the floor, looking rather terrified.

"Scholast," called Anthony while slowly approaching the officer.

"...Detective, what degree of murder is this? What kind of man-made tale is this?" Scholast pondered, holding his batch file close to his chest and trembled. In front of him, piles of body parts were scattered in the hole. Inside the same hole, there was a headless body of a young child lying with her chest cut wide open.

Anthony looked around with his emotionless eyes. He was at a loss for words, for his entire career with his father's guidance, he had never seen such a tragic scenery like this, it may be terrifying but in the same time, he knew he must act calm.

"Scholast, get out of this room. Go home, you've been pondering too long, don't forget to get some drink on your way home," commanded Anthony, escorting the trembling officer out of the room, leaving himself inside the room with what could be guessed, thousands of body parts with him.

No one dared to clear the body parts, although they were all frozen, they were purposefully left there as a part of the crime scene. As soon as Scholast had left, Anthony got back to his work; he examined the terrain and fixed his eyes to small bloody footsteps on the corner of the room. They were heading to a small cupboard with a warning sign to it. Approaching the cupboard, Anthony began to hear a knocking sound, followed with a shout

from it. He pulled the door hard enough and finally a boy dropped out of it, he was naked and cold.

"You're not wearing...mask" the boy stares into Anthony's face.

"What are you doing here? Where are your parents?" said Anthony, silently judging the boy

"Parents? I don't...have that. Are you my parents?" the boy asked, his stare looked very genuine, Anthony thought it was one of the kids of the neighborhood who played pranks in a wrong place, but the boy just seemed to be as confused as much him as Anthony interrogated him on the spot. The boy showed nor tears or chuckles, he was perhaps clueless of his surroundings.

"Young child, what is your name?" asked Anthony, kneeling down to see the boy closely. The boy wondered again, he was getting more confused.

"What name?" The boy looked into Anthony's eyes, he then continued his word, "If a name can be a number, my number is U50! I am made to become a service of pleasure."

Anthony got up and looked around him, he looked into the hole and find a number tag on the headless body; 'U49'. Finally, he decided to use it to find a clue of what the boy actually was. Calmly wrapping the boy's body with his coat and sitting him down on a chair outside of the freezer, he asked Maehara to continue examining the room while he questioned the boy.

"Sit here tightly, and I need you to answer my questions," commanded Anthony

"Sure, I will answer anything, mister!" The boy seemed to be excited, he swung his feet back and forth, his blood-red eyes shined like a ruby while he pulled the coat closer to his body.

"Do you remember anything what happened in here and who may, or might done all of this?"



"Of course, that is a freezer, this is where *they* keep me and the others to stay!"

"Would you care to elaborate on '*they*'?"

"They would be the urban lifestyle company, have you ever heard of them? They say they're the solution for a greater beauty!" The boy's tone was odd, it sounded so happy rather than terrified, he seemed like he had been brainwashed and didn't find himself in a situation of madness.

"No, I've not heard that company before, for the record. Do you remember what they did to you and to *the other*?" said Anthony as he pulled a chair closer and sat in front of the boy.

"They did tests on us, they called us beauty product experiments; rabbits as they may say! I have a record of the lists of the names of us if you'd like to see? It's on the cupboard where I hid just now...I can grab it for you if you'd like me to?"

"Yes, I'd like to see it. Let my partner take it from here and you'll have to come with us" Anthony's eyes seemed to be more pleased, he had found his evidence-- but not just one but three; the boy, the name tag, and the list of names. He got up from his seat and looked at the boy's face. "That's enough from me, thank you, U50"

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A day after, the boy was brought to an examination room, with the result of his details listed by the doctor from the police station, the boy was clear from any threats. Anthony, on the other hand, seemed to have taken interest in the boy's condition; since he was brought out from the freezer, he seemed to have taken interest in books and reading. On the early morning, Anthony checked in and went straight to the examination room where the boy stayed until his case was solved.

"Good morning!" U50 greeted with such glee on his face.

"Morning, where is Doctor Ostelund?" asked Anthony, preparing a cup of water for himself

"Doctor Ostelund is out to get some food, he'll come back soon," said U50 while fixing the tiny cute pajamas he wore.

"I'm guessing you've not eaten yet, are you perhaps hungry?"

"Oh! No, no, I'm fine, mister. I just happen to have eaten a piece of bread from Doctor Ostelund's table this morning." U50 fixed his book on his hand onto his lap and smiled.

"Isn't that Ostelund's breakfast?"

U50 nodded cutely and got off from his bed; he walked closer to Anthony with his book on his hand. Anthony sighed and patted the boy's head carefully, U50 examined Anthony's dead fish eyes and quickly pouted.

"Uso." Anthony murmured while patting the boy's head, "Come to think of it, calling you 'Uso' is easier than your number, do you mind if I named you 'Uso'?"

Flattered with the idea, U50 thought about it for a while; a name to define his identity? It seemed bizarre to him. The tall man in front of him seemed calm, Anthony even fixed his eyes upon the book he was holding; 'The analogy study of philosophical identity'; quite a heavy book for a child like him to read. U50 put his head up and realized that he remembered something.

"You can't—! If you name me, I'd be yours and if that happens, I'm not ready," said U50, feeling nervous as he looked at the tall man.

"What kind of concept is that? Who told you that?" Anthony asked, confused about what U50 had said.

"I'm a doll, I have no name, and I am made for pleasure." U50 trembled nervously, his anxiousness drained his words and finally, he spilled out the truth to

Anthony "My creator, a doctor said to me, that I shall not be named until I've chosen my owner. It's completely ludicrous if you name me without me accepting you as my owner, and a man like you, owning a doll like me? What kind of man would own a doll?"

Anthony was baffled, but he still remained calm to him. Thinking for a good word to answer that, Anthony caressed U50's cheek. "A man can own a doll, for what purpose the doll would be is something you should've known from your word 'made for pleasure'. I assume you would be familiar with the word 'sex'?"

"Sex!?" U50 shrieked, he looked around and stopped talking for a while, trying to avoid eye contact with Anthony's eyes. "I know it, either—way! Please don't name me, call me by my number and I'll come to you." U50 nervously walked back to his bed. He returned the book to his bed and walked back to Anthony.

"I understand." Anthony put his hands into his pocket, sitting on the waiting chair nearby Doctor

Ostelund's desk. He took a peek into the files on the desk and let U50 sit next to him. Awkwardly sitting close to each other, neither of them was able to say any words.

As time passed by, Doctor Ostelund walked in and found Anthony already seemed busy sifting through his papers and taking what Doctor Ostelund could describe as a note full of 'sketches of evidence piled with a sketch of commemorative jeopardy'. He had brought into the examination room while U50 is busy reading a smaller book than the one he had read before titled 'Mannerism 101'. Doctor Ostelund shook his head in disbelief of what he had encountered.

"You two really seem to have something in common," said Doctor Ostelund as he walked closer to his desk and put his breakfast and lunch on the table.

"What would that be?" asked Anthony, still focused his hands in shifting across the papers

"A taste of complexity. I'm fascinated by the way you two are keeping yourselves busy. It's still six in the

morning and you are already shifting across your files and U50 is starting to read his second book. How you two just love the complexity of whatever you two are doing right now, is astonishing.”

"So, you're saying that what I can assume is: we are two boring figures who know no fun and we love to just doing what people can assume is 'boring' because it has too many explanations?" Anthony stopped his hand and put down his pen, slamming it to the table

“Sort of...?” Doctor Ostelund shrugged.

"Cool." Anthony returned to his papers and shifted across it like a talented banker shifting across a pile of money. He seemed to be calculating the number of the files, picking numbers and words in frantic pace before stopping in a certain spot where he found himself baffled with the file. Meanwhile, Doctor Ostelund was arranging his cabinet while checking whether he missed a container from it or not. When he turned back to his

desk, he found Anthony sitting silently in front of him, just gazing into the paper while his posture stayed still.

“What’s wrong, Anthony?” asked Doctor Ostelund, seemingly curious.

“Valdis Ellamore. Subject number: U49” Anthony spoke it out loud, the room became quiet suddenly. Anthony quickly got up and seemed to be in a middle of panic, his gestures were everywhere although his expression stayed still. “Troy, where did they put the bodies?” he continued.

“They put it in the large examination room. Anthony, what’s wrong?” Doctor Ostelund grabbed Anthony’s shoulder and asked him to calm down.

"Subject number: U49 is Valdis Ellamore. The tattoo on her thigh, the scar on her back, they were hers!" Anthony's expression showed nothing, yet his gesture was like a man who was in a mid-panic attack, and to him, the name Valdis Ellamore was a key to his fears.



Seeing his friend frantically moves, Doctor Ostelund calmed the man down while U50 was staying still, looking at the chaos in front of him. *Hush*, repeated Doctor Ostelund while patting the back of Anthony's back, slowly putting him in a calm state.

"She's gone. I want you to digest that slowly," said Doctor Ostelund, pouring water into a plastic cup and bringing it back to where Anthony was seated before.

U50's curiosity arose when he saw Anthony was refusing the water and covering his face with such remorse. He took a look at Anthony's papers and took a peek to the notebook. The pictures were there, clearly printed and signed 'Autopsy done at 00:00 A.M. by Trygve Ostelund', by that, U50 was sure that Doctor Ostelund had spent all of his night to identify the body, but he saw how Doctor Ostelund didn't seem to show much sympathy when he knew the dead body, who was

the last to be discovered, was one of his friend's significant other.

"Who is this woman, Doctor?" asked U50, blankly looking at Doctor Ostelund.

"It was Anthony's girlfriend; she had been lost for a couple of weeks,"

The reply made U50 think of how Doctor Ostelund sees this poor woman's fate. Instead of describing her with 'her', he used the emphasis of 'it', as if she was the one who deserved to die. Instead of missing, he said she was lost. U50's familiarities with details were showing, he stood up and pulled his blanket off his bed and wrapped Anthony around it.

"Doctor Ostelund!" said U50, raising his voice

"Why would you say that? SHE was Anthony's girlfriend; she had been MISSING for a couple of weeks! Why would you say such a thing to describe your friend's girlfriend who had just passed away?"

“What?” Doctor Ostelund stuttered, he was surprised.

This boy who had just been out to the world for the first time was yelling at him on how he described someone. But when Doctor Ostelund saw U50’s bright blood red eyes staring back at him in an angry expression, he realized how this boy knew what he was saying to a degree where he could see as much as details he could. He was excellent at mentioning it too.

“It’s alright, U50. Doctor Ostelund knows she deserves it after what she did to his brother.” Anthony opened his mouth after he tried to get a grip on him. He patted the boy’s head, “U50, I suppose you could go to Detective Maehara’s office and tell him that I can’t come to work today. I’m not feeling too well. His office is just nearby, go straight, left, left, right then right again then you will find a door with a board saying ‘Anthony’s Pops’; that’s his door.”

U50 nodded, he quickly jumped down from the seat and headed himself out, still with his pajamas on. The two buddies were left alone; finally letting out all of what was inside of Anthony's chest, he started the conversation

"I deeply apologize for how I just behaved," said Anthony while wiping his mouth with his thumb.

"It's all right. I'm sorry for describing your girlfriend like that." Doctor Ostelund put down the cup he was holding on his table and pulled the chair next to Anthony close to him and sat on it.

"That boy, he still holds something inside that little head of his. What he did just now was a sign that he could know something more than just a mere speech detail. Don't you think so?" Anthony raised his head and looked at Doctor Ostelund in the eye, with just a nod, Anthony got his answer. With that, Anthony collected his stuff and headed off to the parking lot.

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In the same morning, Anthony visited a small bar called 'The Basement Bar'. He was familiar with the place, too familiar that his presence was already being recognized from a mile away. A young bartender with bandages wrapped around his left and mouth area was standing behind the bar. In front of him, sat down the bartender's roommate, a young Arabian man with his smagh on, smiling at Anthony as he entered.

"Good luck brings to you, Anthony!" cheered the Arabian man; he was smiling ear to ear.

"Afternoon, Maher, Yin," greeted Anthony, taking a seat next to Maher

"What brings you here, Anthony?" Maher asked while watching Yngve, the bartender was making sign language to him.

"News had just come in, Valdis had passed away, not in a good way I say" Anthony looked at the face of Yin as he said that. Yin's right eye looked down and his posture seemed to be distressed. "I deeply sorry,"

continued Anthony. Yins looked up to Anthony and made a sign language again to Maher

"He said his condolences and he's willing to forgive what she did to him. Perhaps it was only one of her psychotic episodes that made her almost killed him and burned him alive." Maher looked at the roommate of his and thought for a while after he said what he had translated. Yngve's wounds were severe; he had a second-degree burn across his chest area and what had seemed to be like a third-degree burn across his neck and chin, covered under layers of bandages. Maher wondered how could any man who worked at the front of the house every day would be able to forgive someone who had ruined his weapon for a successful business.

"How was your face holding up, Yin? She stabbed you badly too. It must've been hard for you to work," said Anthony while he watched a good friend of his poured vodka into a glass. While he was making a long island tea

for Anthony, Yin nodded and made a sign language to Maher.

"He said that he is doing alright, business is good and all. Although he'd like to ring his brother, Doctor Ostelund to get checked on his eye which he's sure that he could see a sheer of light out of it. Can you please give him a call? You could try to—," told Maher who was trying to translate Yngve's words as the gesture of his hands were getting quicker. "Slow down, there, Ol' champ! I'm just your interpreter, not your popcorn machine," said Maher, raising his voice and holding Yngve's hand down.

"I get it, Yin. I'll call Troy when he is off-duty to check up on you," said Anthony.

Getting his message clear, Yngve proceeded to ask whether Anthony was planning to stay longer in the bar because he seemed excited to tell stories about what he had just found in his last trip, but Maher was not so

sure to translate it, he hesitated yet managed to translate it.

"He asked if you'd like to stay, He wanted to tell you about the last trip with Valdis," said Maher in a nervous tone.

Anthony shook his head, he placed a small tip in the jar and handed him an amount of money for the long island tea, he finished his drink and tapped Maher's shoulder.

"I have to go back. My old man is not going to hang in the office for a while if I'm not there. After all, I'm here to check up on you," said Anthony before heading his way out of the bar.

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Back in the office, Maehara sat down on his chair while he gazed at the board. He seemed anxious while rolled his cellphone around. He was tapping his feet to the floor with a quick pace, gazing to the board, to the



clock, to the board again and the clock again. He repeated this over and over until the door creaked open and saw a young boy entered the room.

"Detective...", said U50 faintly as he walked in.

"Ah! You're that boy who Anthony brought in, U50, right? ...How are you?" Maehara got up from his seat and kneeled in front of the boy to see him up-close.

U50 trembled as he saw the Japanese man kneeling in front of him. He wondered, Anthony didn't make him feel like this the first time they met? He knew that Anthony was the scariest person in the department; Doctor Ostelund had pointed it out during his stay. But for him, the figure of Maehara just scared him; wrinkles around his face, his thin eyes gazing at him and his rather short and not-so-tall posture didn't sit correctly in his mind. Even the scent of sakura on his clothes made his vision much worse.

"Mister...Anthony is not feeling well, he said... he can't come," said U50.

Stepping back and about to run away, U50 tumbled on a box and fell to the ground. Maehara rushed to the boy and asked if he was okay, he helped the child up and sat him down on the couch. The caring hands of his brushed U50's pajamas, cleaning the dirt off it.

"Watch out, don't beat yourself up, there is nothing to be scared of here," said Maehara, caringly patting the boy's head.

"I'm sorry, I'm not used to this..." U50 hesitated to move until Anthony came into the room with his files already checked.

"Anthony! You said you called in sick?" Maehara stood straight up and took the files from Anthony's hands.

"I did, but here I am," replied Anthony, clearly standing with his firm posture. "I've checked my files and now it's my turn to see what you're supposed to finish."

"It's not a race, I've just connected the dots of the blood trails...it seemed like it was heading to the outside and the bodies were butchered inside the freezer while the victims were still dying," said Maehara, explaining his board to Anthony.

Anthony shrugged and pulled U50 to view the board too, in an odd manner, the boy started to get more nervous. But this time not out of Maehara's sight, but out of the photos on the board and the strings connecting them.

"Anthony, what are you doing? He's a victim, he's not ready to see this horrific scenery." Maehara quickly stood in front of the board, covering it from the boy.

"You have something to say, right?" Anthony whispered to the boy's ears, "Spit it out," He continued in a very aggravating tone.

"I-" U50 wasn't able to say a word, he fidgeted around his fingers as he remembered everything inside

his mind. He felt disturbed, he could see what happened before his eyes again.

"You fool! Where is Trygve?! DOCTOR OSTELUND! SOMEONE CALL DOCTOR OSTELUND," shouted Maehara out to the office, he frantically moved around but soon stopped when he heard the boy started talking.

"We were there, I couldn't bear to see it, we were there with him. I'm not like them, I'm not a God-made creation, I'm a man-made creation. They wanted the perfect boy, that is why they bring out every child they could find to find the great parts of them and made me. There she was, eighteen years old Valdis Ellamore, she had the perfect face, the perfect heartbeat. She was the last one to die, I was there, I sat there in front of her after I saw 48 children died in front of me, not screaming, just looking at me as if they all blamed me for it, but I am no murderer, I could swear on it.... I'm a monster created by crazy minded people who call themselves the urban

lifestyle group. Detective Maehara was right, they are all dying, and I too hoped that I was finished that day," U50 stopped, he held Anthony's shirt and hugged him, slowly tearing up on the spot.

A tight embrace warmed Anthony's heart, somehow, he felt empathy in the strong grip of the boy. Yet, he was a detective, as far as he was empathizing, he couldn't believe what the boy had said. When the boy stopped crying, Anthony brought him out of the sight of the board, his plan was to bring the boy back to the examination room but the boy wouldn't let him go as he kept clinging to his hand. Anthony sighed and walked towards the department garden to calm himself and the boy.

They sat on the same bench, watching the sky went by so quickly and soon after the boy got curious about his surroundings, he walked around and saw Officer Scholast walking towards him. To a surprise, Scholast wasn't waving back when U50 waved in cheer.

Rather, a gun was pointed at him. Realizing it was a gun, Anthony rushed to the boy and managed to take the bullet with his back, luckily it missed his fatal area. Not finished with his duty, Scholast rushed in and managed to shoot Anthony to his feet, yet not killing him instantly. As the boy fled, Scholast pulled the wounded Anthony and held him down. Watching the French man coughing up blood was not enough for him, he wanted to finish him but not with his gun, but with his scalpel. At his last moment of consciousness, Anthony heard Scholast screamed.

"HE IS MY BOY, HE SUPPOSED TO BE MINE. We were their beautiful family, Lord and Saviour Lucian Müller bestowed me the perfect sex toy, he is made for my pleasure! ...How dare you care for him like that?" screamed Scholast.

Anthony was slowly dying as he watched the scalpel moving across his chest, he stopped moving.

\*\*\*

The sound of the cart moving into his room woke Anthony, he survived the attack and he was now in the hospital next to his office building. U50 stood behind the bed, crying.

"U50," called out Anthony. "Are you wounded? Is anyone else wounded?" he continued, worried out of his mind. Slowly, his hand reached toward the boy but he was already weak enough to move.

"Everything is supposed to settle now. They've got Officer Scholast...no one else was wounded except you...," replied U50, he watched the man on the bed look at him and wiped his tears away. They seemed to have grown a significant connection to each other but none of them dared to say it. Until U50 poured a cup of warm tea and said, "I'm sorry for the death of your girlfriend, it must've been hard for you."

"It was no big deal, really, she herself had got her hands dirty, as much as I love her, I could care less for her death."

"What did she do, anyway? Doctor Ostelund seemed to hate her so much"

"Before she went missing, she dated my friend, Yngve Ostelund, they had a fight and called it off, she went crazy and she said she doesn't want Yin to leave him and burned him with a blow torch and bashed his face with a liquor bottle. He was badly wounded and she fled before I could arrest her for it."

"...so, you knew that she was cheating on you and you let your friend take her like that?"

"Sure, I was going to end the relationship either way."

"That's horrible," said U50 as Maehara walked in.

The old man rushed to his son and smiled as he was relieved when he saw his son was able to talk normally. Anthony sighed in a troubled tone and greeted his old man.



"Old man, how was the case going?" asked Anthony, laying on layers of bedding.

"After such an attack, could you care less about work?" said Maehara, refusing to reply to Anthony's question. Anthony stared at the old man of his and eventually, Maehara understood.

"Right, Uhm, the case is solved, Scholast was the murderer of the 48 corpses on the freezer, and luckily for U50's case too! Scholast confessed it all to me...Oh, here it is. I have a letter sent from your hometown. It says it's from one of your cousins, he's worried."

Anthony sat up when he heard what Maehara just said, he received the letter and quickly opened it; a letter with a stamp of the urban lifestyle group on the front of it. He unfolded the letter that said it all: Lord Lucian James Müller says: "Enjoying your stay? The doll next to you is yours, Thank you for taking that scum Scholast out of my group, We all happy to see his departure! Aaaaannnyywwaaaaaaaay, I hope you have a great time in

your bed, tomorrow, you'd wake up and saw the beauty of my work, don't worry.... nothing happens to you"

The suspicious message was returned to Maehara, as he read it, he watched Anthony looking to the window, the case was not over. It had just begun, and the next target was him.

On a bright morning after, Anthony was awoken by a strong smell in his room, to horror, the dead body of Scholast slept beside him, already rotting away. In the extra bed, curled U50 in a traumatic face with his naked body on the floor and bodily liquid around his body. Beside him was the head of Valdis Ellamore, placed there with her rotting eyes opened and a forced smile on her face. As Anthony moved to get himself away and get U50, he realized the ceiling had been written in black Chinese ink: Requiem.

END?

## **ACTION**

## The Fighter

Benedictus Ario Seno N

Have you ever heard of this statement, "A human is a wolf to another human?" Imagine a woman with a perfect picture of the society stood in front of you. The sight of a wolf could be seen from her eyes. The supremacy of a wolf arose in the air since you took a look at her eyes. The more you looked, the more you fell down. What a flawless woman! "Wake up, lazy kid! Stop dreaming and wake up!" The woman in my mind became someone in front of me. "In 5 minutes, ma'am," answered Anta from her bed. The intense light of morning sun insisted Anta to wake up. While Anta tried to make up her mind, she stared at her room. A stack of books stood at the corner of her room. Many posters of cartoon and video games hung on the cold wall. Anta put on her glasses and took a look at the clock. "Really? It's 5 a.m.? What the hell, mom!" said Anta while she tried to get up from her bed.

“Morning, sweetie,” Anta’s mother smiled at her. “Morning, mom. Why do you keep bothering me every morning? Couldn’t I sleep in peace until 7 a.m.?” said Anta while she yawned. “Anta Anitasari, you are already lazy for a whole day. Couldn’t you spare your time for your own health?” Anta’s mom approached her. Anta couldn’t talk back to her mom. “Well, yeah. I just go to school, then read many comics and play many video games all day. At least, by jogging every morning, I won’t have problems in P.A class,” thought Anta. While Anta got ready for the morning jogging, her mom answered someone's call. “I told you already! I will never go back there again! No matter what the situations and the benefits are! Bye!” Anta’s mom answered. “Again mom? It’s already four times in a week,” asked Anta. “Oh, it is nothing, dear,” said Anta’s mom. Anta could not ask any further what her mom was talking about and who the person was. “Let’s go, mom!”

The fresh air was surrounding Anta and her mother. The birds were singing in harmony. The rice field

near her house always met her every morning. A peaceful morning for jogging. "Hey mom, can I ask you several questions?" asked Anta. "Go ahead," her mother answered. "Who was the caller? I know, it is weird since you received 4 calls in 1 week from 1 person," Anta asked. "Well, he was my business partner. He asked me to do something," said mother. Anta chose to not ask any further.

"Almost there, kid! Raise your legs!" Anta's mother encouraged her to move faster. "Wait, madam-who-has-unlimited-power," Anta already lost her stamina. When they arrived in their block, they saw someone in front of their house. "Anta, don't mind him. Pass him and go to your room!" said her mom. Anta nodded her head. Anta passed the guy and go to her room. "What a strange person," said Anta. Then, Anna was preparing to go to campus. "I told you many times. I already left the ring," said Anta's mom to the guy. "But, Sari, you were the best fighter we had. Please Sari," The guy asked Anta's mother. "I will think about this after I

discuss this with my family,” said her mom. The conversation made Anta curious. Anta tried to approach her mom, but the conversation already ended.

“Hey, Lazydo. What’s up?” asked someone to Anta. Anta kept her mouth shut. This person kept asking her. “Can’t you shut up, Amanda? It’s still morning and I’m just trying to figure out what’s wrong with my mom,” Anta tried to shut Amanda’s mouth. Amanda asked what was wrong with Anta’s mother and Anta could not answer because she also did not know the truth. Amanda suggested Anta ask her mother, but Anta was not the type of person who asks about someone’s secret. She thought it was better to leave their secrets alone. Tono asked the same question as Amanda did. The answer that came out from Anta’s mouth was still the same. I don't know, I don't know, and I don't know. Anta felt her mom was hiding a big secret from her. Her mind was stuck within questions. Her school life today was miserable.

"Hey, Anta! How's your school today?" asked her dad when he saw her daughter’s stressful face. “Not

good, and I have many questions for you,” answered anta. “Sure, why not?” said her father. Anta asked who her mother was, what her job was before she got married, and who the guy was this morning. “You mother? The woman named Tantri Putri? The woman who got married to me, Joyo Nugroho?” Anta’s father tried to clarify. “If you have questions, then you should ask by yourself or you can find your answer by yourself. Challenge yourself, kid! Hahahahaha,” said her father. “What a useless answer,” said Anta. Her father’s answer made her more curious than before. She decided to find her answer. She would try everything to answer her curiosity.

In the next morning, after doing her usual routine, she texted Amanda to inform her about her school today. She planned to skip class and find the answer to her curiosity. Today, she planned to follow her mother activities. “Anta, are you skipping today’s classes?” asked mother. “Nope, I’m just late. Hehehe” answered Anta to hide her plan. After hiding until her legs were almost



gone from her body, she followed her mother activities. She didn't find any abnormality from her mother activities until she found out her mother went to a boxing arena. She never would've thought that her mother would go to a place like a boxing arena. Anta waited until her mother came out. She waited so long until she could remember how many birds were passing the road today. Eventually, she went back to the house without her mother.

"Anta, I heard you skip your classes? Is that true?" asked her father to her after she arrived home. "Yes, I just wanted my answer but I'm still confused," said Anta. Her father was fine with that and left her daughter alone. "Who the hell is my mother? Why she went to the boxing arena?" asked Anta to herself. Her curiosity became bigger than before. She mustered up the courage and asked her mother. "Mom, I need to talk, please?" Anta requested a deep talk with her mother. Anta explained that she lied to her mom about school and followed her to the boxing arena. Her mother first reaction was angry

at her because she didn't even go to school. However, her mother asked Anta to come to the boxing area with her on Saturday. Anta would find her answer tomorrow.

Being curious made Anta cannot sleep at all. Her panda eyes emerged around her eyes. After getting ready to the boxing area, her mother asked her to keep this as a secret from anyone except her family. Anta was okay with the agreement. After dealing with the agreement, Anta and her mother went to the boxing arena. "So, why are you curious about me?" asked her mother. Anta was silent because she slept along the way to the boxing area. Her mother smiled at her. "Hey, lazy girl, we are already in our destination." Her mother tried to wake Anta up. Anta lost her excitement because of her lack of sleep.

"Hope! Thank you for coming!" said someone who was familiar to Anta. Anta realized he was the guy who came to her house. "Today, I bring someone. Is it okay?" asked her mother to him. Without answering her question, he approached Anta. "She is your daughter,

right?” said the guy loudly. Everybody looked at her and stopped their training. Then, the crowd asked many questions about her, but Anta’s mother said Anta wasn’t a fighter. Anta left the crowd since she didn’t like people. She rolled her eyes to several pictures in there. ‘HOPE BRINGS NEW HOPE TO INDONESIA,’ HOPE GOES TO THE FINAL!, ‘HOPE WON THE FINAL MATCH AGAIN!’, and so on. “Who is she, mom?” asked Anta to her mother. “That’s me,”

“It’s funny, mom. Are you joking?” Anta tried to understand the situation. “Am I joking to you? No, dear,” said her mother. Anta’s brain tried to process the conversation. Anta’s mother proved herself. She came up to the ring and challenged someone to fight. Anta was astonished by her mother performance. It was like watching the movements of characters in the movie. The wolf that she dreamed became true. “Your mother was an MMA fighter. She was the best and our hope to rise MMA. So, we called her “HOPE”. Unfortunately, she disappeared to nowhere because of no reason.....”

Before the guy could finish his sentence, someone disturbed the moment. “What the fuck, bro. Why everybody stopped their training?” shouted someone when everybody was still starrng at Anta’s mom. Then, everybody went back to training. “Ma’am what’s wrong with these people?” asked the woman. Anta’s mother answered her question by moving her eyes to Anta. “So, it’s because of this piece of shit? Come to the ring and show me what you got!” said her. “Hey, she is not even a fighter!” said the guy. “Shut up, Yatno! She just disturbed our training!” said the girl. Anta’s mother didn’t do anything besides watching them. Yatno asked whether it was okay or not, but Anta’s mother was still silent. “Hey, I’m not a fighter like you. I don’t even know how to punch,” said Anta, but the girl didn’t care. After wearing the boxing gear, they came up to the ring. Yatno was chosen as the referee. “Ready? Anta? Brown? Go!” said Yatno. Yatno stepped back and the battle began. “Hey, I’m not...” Anta couldn’t complete her sentence as Brown laid a punch on her face. Anta fell into the ground and

Yatno tried to help her. Brown asked her to get up and continue the fight. Anta accepted her request, but how many times Anta tried, she didn't know how to respond to Brown's attacks. Anta never got humiliated like this before. She became angry and tried so hard to punch Brown. It was not a tale or a comic story in which you can suddenly have the power to punch back the opponent. Anta realized that she was already mad. The last punch of Brown made Anta fall onto the ground. Anta already gave up to her. Without saying any sentences, Anta went back to home.

"Are you angry?" asked her mother. Anta kept her mouth shut. "If you are angry because someone took your dignity, then take it back," said her mother. Anta kept her mouth shut along the way back to home. The next morning, Anta came to her mother and asked her mother to teach her MMA. Her mother agreed to teach her. Anta came back to the boxing arena and challenged Brown. "I will defeat you in the national championship," said her. "Really? You just challenged a national MMA

fighter, you know?" Anta didn't care about what Brown said. For her, punching Brown in her face was an achievement.

"Wake up, Anta. You have 5 minutes to prepare or I will order you to push up 5 more sets," said Anta's mother. She suddenly woke up and got ready to first training. She did run for 5 km, push up, sit up, and did many exercises in her training. "Already tired? You just did the pre-practice. The main practice is now," said Anta's mother. Then, Anta's mother taught her the basics of MMA. They were jab, hook, and block. Anta needed several weeks to learn the basic. The National Championship was going to be held in December, so Anta had that much time to train her technique. She trained herself so hard every day. Amanda and Tono could only support her.

"Hey, Amanda, why didn't you tell me if you knew who was my mother?" asked Anta to Amanda. "Well, you are the stupidest person in the world until you knew who was your mother," said Amanda. "You jerk!" shouted

Anta while she was punching the sandbag. "So, tomorrow is your first fight?" asked Amanda. "Yes, and please watch me, biatch," said Anta. "Aye captain," said Anta. "Can I watch you?" asked Tono. "Yes, of course," said Anta.

The D-day of her first fight, she got nervous, but her mother said, "Just remember how you lost back then." What her mother said helped her so much. The first fight was easy for her because of her physical body. It gave her an advantage in the fight. The next fight until the final one was done smoothly by Anta. Because of her hard work, she could fight against several roosters. The final fight was on the next week and Anta debated with her father. "You aren't ready to fight her." said her father. Anta asked why, but her father didn't answer. Eventually, she asked her mother. Her mother told her to ask her father by herself. "You only used basics MMA knowledge, fighting is more than that. Your opponent understands every inch of your movement," said her father after Anta asked her father what was his reason.

"Are you the same as mother? Used to be an MMA fighter?" asked Anta. Her father only asked Anta to follow him to a room. Anta was shocked by her family again. She looked at her father's achievements. "So, you used to be a martial arts expert? Why did you leave?" asked Anta. "Your mother and I agreed to leave and raise you, Anta. That's why we left our martial arts," answered her father. It made sense to her right now. Her mother had a healthy and perfect body and her father had unlimited power. "Now, I will teach you, Kami Basami, the God Scissors technique." said her father. She learned Kami Basami technique only for one week before the final.

The final had arrived! Anta was not ready for it. Anta came up to the ring and faced Brown. The referee got ready for the fight. "Are you both ready? Go!" said the referee. "I will not hold back myself. Get ready!" The fight began. Brown laid a punch, but Anta could block the punch. She could feel the pain of Brown's punch. Brown's power was unmeasurable. Anta responded to Brown's



punch by giving left hooks. The commentator said, "WHAT A FIGHT! Brown's unlimited power is pushing back Anta!" The crowd yelled to Anta and Brown to support them. After the 3<sup>rd</sup> round, Anta lost her energy, but Brown didn't. The 4<sup>th</sup> round began, Anta with little power left only could block Brown's punch. "AGAIN! Brown pushes Anta into the corner," said the commentator. The crowd was louder and wilder than before. Anta, in the corner of the ring, could only block Brown's punches. The end of the 4<sup>th</sup> round, Brown gave an uppercut to Anta. Anta passed out because of her hook. The bell was ringing and Anta was saved by the bell.

"Anta, wake up. Hey. Wake up!" said her father. "Did I lose the fight?" asked Anta. "Not yet, but listen, you cannot use your power to fight her. Do what I taught you. Use less power and lock her joint. Combine everything that I taught to you!" said her father. The 5<sup>th</sup> round began. Anta changed her stance into a different posture. The crowd and commentators were confused. Brown

began to punch Anta, but Anta could avoid Brown's punches by moving out of Brown's punch zone. Anta could avoid her and fought back Brown. The crowd shouted Anta's name and the commentator became wilder. "THIS NIGHT, THE PENTAGON MAKES HISTORY. Anta with her new technique can fight back Brown easily. WHAT A TECHNIQUE!" said the commentator. The situation was turned the other way around to Brown. Brown tried to lock Anta's legs, but Anta could anticipate the attack. "It's time to use that," said Anta. "What?!" Brown couldn't hear Anta clearly. Anta moved her right leg to the back of Brown's knee and her left leg to Brown's body. "WHAT A NOSTALGIC MOVE! It is already 20 years since I saw the last person who used this technique. She is THE NEW HOPE! KAMI BASAMI! THE GOD SCISSOR TECHNIQUE!" the commentator became wilder and speak louder. The crowd supported Anta. Brown couldn't move her legs even for one inch. Tring...tring... tring.... The fight was over! Brown was saved by the bell. After the fight was over, the referee

asked the juries. It was the time the referee to tell who was the winner. "The winner is....." The crowd suddenly became quiet. Anta was eager to hear her name. Brown almost lost her consciousness. "BROWN." The crowd became wilder. They shouted Anta's name. "ANTA! ANTA! ANTA!" Anta smiled at the crowd and passed out.

"You won the war, but not the fight. Good job, kid" said her father. "You're in a hospital, so don't worry," said her father. "I'm sorry mom, I lost the match," said Anta to her mother. "No, you just made another hope for this country. You made me proud, dear," said her mother. "But, my problem wasn't solved yet, I will come to fight with her again," said Anta. Her parents just laughed at her. "We will teach you about the fight! Go my daughter!" said her parents.

-END-

## **COMEDY**

# My Dream, My Freedom

Spencer Matthew Lambert

**08:48**

**In an apartment**

“CRAP! I’M GONNA BE LATE!” exclaimed a voice.

That voice sounded like a teenage boy. His name was William, and he was in a rush as if he didn’t want to be late for school.

*Wait.*

He took a look at the calendar.

It was Saturday.

And there was no school.

There was silence.

“The hell was I thinking?! Today is Saturday!!”

After that weird morning, he decided to take a shower, then change his clothes. While he was playing games, he

was wondering what he should do while waiting until it was the time to meet the others. Then, he heard a voice.

It was a cat's meow.

He looked at where the sound was coming from. It was coming from below. There was a long-coated ginger cat and his name was Kome. William stood, taking a can of cat food, pouring it into the bowl. His stomach suddenly growled very loud that Kome was startled.

“I might as well go to Grand Feast and say hi to Boss,” William thought.

“Stay here for a while, okay? Alice will pick you up and we will meet again in the secret base,” said William to Kome. He went out from his apartment with a big smile. He drooled, thinking how much food he could eat.

## **11:22**

### **Grand Feast Buffet**

Grand Feast Buffet was a pirate-themed family restaurant that was quite popular in the city, not only just

because of their delicious food, but also for its cheap price. The restaurant had parties that have unexpected tendencies. Its tendencies could either bring joy or a disaster, depending how crazy the party is. But this is not the man attention for every resident inside.

*MUNCH! MUNCH! MUNCH!*

William kept on munching and munching his food.

“Boss! More meat, please!” William shouted.

William was sitting with two of his friends and eating a mountain of meat very fast. It was so fast that the mountain of meat was getting shorter and shorter with every passing second.

“Shut it, brat! Save some for the customers!” shouted the Boss.

“Just one more,” argued William.

“The hell!!! No way, you bottomless pit brat!!!” yelled the Boss.

*BONK!* Someone hit William.

“OOOWW!! The hell was that for, Claire?!” snapped William to one of his friend as a bump landed on his head.

“Give it a rest, Will. You’ve already eaten too much,” said Claire calmly.

“Yeah Will. Remember the last time you ate that much?” said his other friend.

“But, Maru, the food here is so good,” complained William and Yukimaru only sighed.

A new plate of food was suddenly placed on their table, and William immediately devoured it with joy.

“Thanks, Tony,” said William happily.

“Sure. Just eat it up and stop complaining,” replied Tony.

“Seriously, besides your grandfather, food is the only thing that could stop you. Anyway, thanks Tony for



stopping him,” Claire complained while William was shivering in fear as he ate on.

“SUCH WORDS ARE UNWORTHY FOR ME, MY DEAR CLAIRE!” said Tony with hearts in his eyes.

“*Tch.* What a creep,” said Yukimaru in disgust.

“WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY, YOU BLIND SWORDSMAN?!!” Tony yelled in fury.

“I SAID YOU ARE A CREEP, PERVERT!!” snapped back Yukimaru.

“PATHETIC SAMURAI!”

“MORON COOK!”

“HEARTLESS ASSHOLE!”

“FAILED PLAYBOY!”

“JAPANESE STUCK - UP!”

“AMERICAN MEATHEAD!”

For normal people, this argument is a concerning one. However, regulars and the staffs were already got used to this kind of bickering. Claire could only sigh in despair while William laughed until his phone vibrated. He checked his phone. There was a text from Alex.

“It’s almost time. Bring the rest to the base,” it said.

William grinned after reading the text. This made Claire curious. She decided to take a glance at William’s phone screen. After reading it, she stared at the two who were bickering. She decided to stop it with the best course of action.

*BONK! BAM! BAM!*

“WILL YOU TWO CUT IT OUT ALREADY?!” yelled Claire in frustration.

“We – we’re sorry,” said Tony and Yukimaru.

After they paid for the food, they went out of the buffet and headed for the secret base.

**16:52**

### **The Secret Base**

There were five people inside the secret base. All of them were packing their stuff and necessities into the cargo part of the truck. In the midst of this was a mischievous-looking young man named Alex. He was staring at the reply of the text that said they are on their way.

“Is the preparation ready?” Alex asked.

“Everything is almost ready. So, when will they come?” said a female voice.

“Probably, in few min--wait, Rachel. What is that?” Alex pointed at something Rachel was holding.

“Serum of truth. Why?” asked Rachel.

“Oh hell, no! We’re not gonna have the Mooroka incident again!” yelled Alex in fear, taking away the serum and hiding it.

“Awwww. But it was fun, seeing his reaction like that, and yours as well,” Rachel pouted.

“FUN MY ASS! Thanks to William and I, we received a month of detention, and chaos happened after we drugged each of them,” complained Alex.

“Guys! We’re here!” William shouted at the entrance.

“Finally! The gangs are all here. Oh, and here’s your cat.” another girl with red hair handed Kome to William.

“Thanks for bringing him here for me, Alice,” replied William while holding Kome.

“Yeah. Don’t worry. He is in a tip – top condition for our trip,” said a man in his twenties.

“Thanks, Joshua. I can always count on you for this stuff,” complimented William.

“Glad to be at your service, Captain.” Joshua replied.

Claire looked around as if she wants to find someone.

“Speaking of captain, where’s Sebastian?” she asked.

“Right here,” said an adult voice.

Claire looked behind in shock as she saw two men wearing terrifying zombie masks.

“Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!” Claire shrieked in horror.

The two men opened their masks and revealed themselves; Sebastian and Tony. They were laughing while putting down their masks.

“HAHAHAHAHA!! That never gets old ain’t it, Tony?” Sebastian asked while he was still laughing.

“It is and it will always be,” giggled Tony.

They were unaware of a very sinister dark aura looming over them. The others backed away from them with fear.

“Is that so?” asked Claire darkly.

The laughing duo shuddered and looked back. They saw Claire smiling sinisterly at them like a promise of a very painful experience.

“Then I hope you two are ready for some DISCIPLINE right now!” Claire snapped at them and they paled immediately.

“NO! ANYTHING BUT THAT!!” screamed Sebastian and Tony. They tried to run away but got caught by Claire before they could run. She dragged them to a dark room.

“Wait wait wait! Please anything but discipline!” pleaded Tony.

“Guys, save us! Our lives are at stake here!!” begged Sebastian but no one made a move to save them.

After Claire had dragged the both of them into the dark room, screams of agony immediately could be heard from the outside despite the fact that the secret base was soundproof.

The others clasped their hands together and said, “May your pitiful soul rest in peace,” they prayed

**17:58**

**After a beatdown from hell**

“Well, everything is set and ready,” said Sebastian with a swollen and bruised face as well as Tony.

“The coordination is ready and well. It is as scheduled. We should finish all of this in a week,” said Claire with a red face.

“Tough, I must ask. Why on earth are you dead set on this, William?” asked Alex.

“Do you guys remember what my dream is?” asked William seriously.

“My dream is to become the greatest adventurer in the world. Not just because of the freedom you have, but also because there are many undiscovered land to explore. I want to venture them all,” explained William.

All of them smiled at him as if they were already expecting this.

“Well then, everyone! Let’s go!” yelled William.

“YEAH!!” all of them replied.

-END-



## **MYSTERY DRAMA**

## THE FEDORA HAT

Obed Junior

A man who was always sitting on the city's park's bench was quite different among others. He showed a very old-fashioned vibe by wearing a black fedora hat that was a bit ripped on its skin and a grey coat that covered his neck until his thighs. A smile was always reflected by him. His blue eyes reflected what was always in front of him: a lake, which was the thing in front of them, the man and the bench. Ducks, geese, birds, he saw them all swimming in the sparkling water. Dogs, cats, ants, he saw them all walking and running. Sometimes he saw squirrels in a flash on trees there. Sometimes, he fed them all but the squirrels and ants.

He was also known as the bench guy. Some ignored him. Some didn't mind his presence. Some wanted to know. A few knew who he was. Many didn't.

\*\*\*

Smith... Everyone I knew called me that, starting from my childhood when my father spelled my first name wrong when he was angry because I spilt his coffee by running around with my paper plane. So, he started with my second name. Then, everyone followed, calling me that. Perhaps it is shorter than my first name, and it's simpler.

I didn't like it at first. I wasn't used to that, until someone said to me that it is a good name. Someone who I couldn't forget. Someone whose name is unknown even to me. Someone who was strange.

Our encounter was when I was 6 years old. I couldn't forget when exactly, but I remembered it clearly. I always saw him sitting under a tree whenever I played with my toys in my backyard. He looked like a venerable man, wearing a red loose checkered shirt covered with a brown parka jacket and a black fedora hat hanging on top of his head. The man sat below the tree that grew behind my house, which was an empty land, just a bunch of grass and few trees. He often sat there

and did nothing. Sometimes I saw him feeding small creatures there such as squirrels and birds. Sometimes I wondered if he ever got stung by insects there. My curiosity grew larger and larger.

One time, my mother asked me to take out the trash to the bin behind our house. I did what she asked. After I finished, I saw the man sitting there again. He looked at me with a kind, innocent smile. I greeted him back with an awkward one. That was our first encounter, An awkward encounter.

“Such a nice weather,” he said with his deep croaky voice.

Although our distance was quite far, I could hear his cracky voice clearly.

“But it’s cloudy...” I replied with my young, high-pitched voice.

“Yet, it doesn’t rain.”

I was a bit confused of what he said. He sounded wise, like how an actor was performing in a play.

“You’re not wrong...”

I still felt awkward of the way he spoke to me and was confused of how to reply.

“When such weather appears, sitting in an open place like this is quite calming, Young One.”

I was more confused of the way he called me ‘Young One’. I didn’t know what that mean because I wasn’t familiar with it. I asked him anyway.

“What does ‘Young One’ mean, sir?”

The man laughed.

“I am sorry. I forgot that you are too young to understand such words. ‘Young One’ means a child. Well, you are younger than me,” the man released a small breath while holding his short laugh after finished speaking.

“Is that an old word?”

“It is rarely used nowadays. Well, actually I first knew that from an old play I did few years ago.”

“Play?”

“It is a show where people act on a stage. It’s the same as movies you usually saw on TV.”

“Can I see a play on TV too?”

“It would be hard to find one in this time because of how old it was. I rarely see a play now.”

“I see...”

“Your name,” he looked at me with his grey eyes, “Smith, right?”

“Yes, how do you know?”

“I heard your father calling that name loudly some time ago, and so I assumed it’s yours.”

“Yeah. He was angry back then. Weird name, isn’t it?”

“Sounds good to me. That name is often used in many stories,” the man said with his eyes widening.

That was the first time I knew something old, yet new. The man made me more curious and he gladly told me everything he knew. Perhaps, that was the strangest friendship I ever had. It was the very first time I felt there was someone to talk to with something I was interested in, someone whom I could tell anything without fear of being scolded for talking harshly or not-in-the-right-time.

\*\*\*

Unfortunately, it didn't last long. A week passed. The man told me that he had to go somewhere. I asked him where, but he didn't answer it clearly, but vaguely. We were below the tree. I was playing with a twig while he enjoyed the blowing wind. Then, he stood up.

"I'm happy to get to know you, Young One. But I have to go," he said while stretching his back.

"To where, sir?" I stopped playing, looking upward to his tall presence.

"Somewhere for an old man like me."

"But where? Is it far?"

"You'll go there too someday. It is not that far actually," he rubbed his chin, thinking about how to explain it.

"Will you be long?" I was a bit worried when saying this.



“We will surely meet again,” he looked down and smiled at me.

“Here,” he handed me his hat.

“For what, sir?”

“It’s a gift for you. Just in case I might missed your birthday,” he laughed and coughed at the same time.

“That’s understandable...” I didn’t know whether he was trying to make a joke or not but I still smiled at his corny joke and put the hat on me.

“Looks good. You look like the gentlemen in my days,” he laughed while complimented me, “I must go now before it’s too late. I’ll see you again.”

I saw him walking further, away from the tree I stood. This was the last time I met him, and the time I realized, I forgot to ask his name. We had known each other for a week and yet we didn’t know each other’s name. Then, I went to my house since there was nothing to do there with his hat on my head. My mother who was

washing the dishes saw the hat and became suspicious. She asked me where I got the hat and I simply, innocently answered that it was from the man that usually sat below the tree. She showed a surprised and yet an expression of disbelief. My father who overheard us came to see what happened. My mother told him that I might have stolen someone's hat. I was surprised of how opposite that was and told my father the truth. Both of them didn't believe and assumed me for taking a trash from somewhere or stole it from someone. They forced me to tell the truth of which they didn't believe. They kept telling me that there was no man ever sat below that tree or near that but I kept try to convince them that there was someone. Because of their stubbornness to not believe, they forbid me to ever go near that tree and they started to doubt me often afterward.

Luckily, my room's window was facing toward the back of our house, so I could still see the tree. I kept looking at the tree, hoping that the man would come because I had lots of things to tell, including my parents'

disbelief. Unfortunately, he never came. His hat, which I hid it from my parents, was the last thing I have from him. I was always confused of why my parents insisted that there was nobody there. I had no choice but to tell about the man to my friends at school, whose houses were close to mine, and yet they also didn't believe because they never saw someone sitting there. Thus, nobody believed me and he never came back, yet his hat was with me.

After that time, I had never tell it to anyone. None of my neighbors, friends, and even my parents saw the man nor believe me. His presence was known only by me, yet his name and address remained unknown.

\*\*\*

I remembered vaguely when I was in high school. Similar problem happened. When I was waiting for my father to pick me up from school, I happened to see an elderly woman walking around near the store in front of my school. Half of her hair was grey, and her body was

slender. She seemed confused and people just passed in front of her without even being concerned.

We accidentally saw each other. Her face was bright when the sun touched her. I asked if she needed help. She answered that she was lost and forgot where her house was. Seeing her like that reminded me of someone I knew. So, I asked her name and surname hoping that I would know someone with the same surname. I couldn't remember her name but I was sure that time, her surname was beyond my knowledge. We had no choice but to ask the store owner and someone nearby. Weirdly enough, nobody knew anything about her. Her name and address were unknown to all who were there.

We were so lost in thought trying to find her house until my father came to pick me up. I told my father that I'm looking for the woman's house and asked if he knew her. My father was confused of my question and said he didn't. He told me to get in the car but I refused, because I couldn't leave the woman yet. He

asked, with a bit of rage in his voice, where was the woman. I was confused with the question because I stood there in front of him and the woman was beside me. I was also surprised because when I turn to left to check the old lady, she was nowhere beside me.

In the car, I was thinking where the lady went. Maybe she was afraid of my father's scary face, or maybe she knew that I couldn't stay with her much longer. The answer remained unknown. My father, riding the car, scolded me to stop doing that. I asked him what that was about and his voice sounded like being cut, hesitating to tell me what he meant. All he said was "that", which I assumed was helping others. It was very common for people to assume that a person who wandered around in one place is crazy or mentally unstable. I couldn't accept that idea, though.

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I started my college a year after my meeting with the wandering lady. It was still bugging me and made me curious of where she went and how she was.

“Did she found her house after I went home that time?” I said to myself, looking at the window of my new small apartment.

I moved because my college was far from my house and instead of taking much time on the road, I told my parents that I should just get a cheap apartment near the campus.

Thinking of the lady made me remember of the fedora man and his hat. Luckily, I brought his hat secretly when I moved here. I took out the hat from my wardrobe and wore it. I looked into the mirror and saw myself with the old dusty hat. I smiled a little because I remembered that he said it looked good on me and yet it did. I was admiring the hat a bit longer and thinking how old its age really was. A few minutes passed by. I looked at my face, still wearing the hat. I was surprised.

I looked like him.

-END-

## **FANTASY DRAMA**



## **Seraphina**

Maria Yosefine Ratri

It is about Seraphina. She was a girl with the look of an 18-year-old look. She was the most beautiful creature anyone had ever seen. Her blue ocean eyes, her pointed nose, her cherry cheeks, her rose lips, her silky hair--they were just in the right places. It seemed like God was in a good-mood while he was creating Seraphina. Seraphina's angelic look didn't make her an arrogant girl. She was a happy and friendly girl. Everyone must have been thinking that Seraphina came from heaven, and yes, heaven is her home.

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Half of the earth was full of darkness. As the days passed by, crime became increasingly rampant. That made the angel army worried. With the darkness and crime done against the earth, the angel army decreased every day. It was so, because the souls of the dead people will become devils, changing and affecting good people

to be wicked. When they died, they would be Thanatos' followers. The only savior was the Siel stone. It was the stone which had always been resting on Thanatos' neck. The siel stone could bind souls, and at that moment, it would turn souls into devils. The angel army had to find the Siel stone immediately and destroy it. And now, Thanatos had disappeared, running away with the Siel stone and hiding it in the human body. It was difficult to find Thanatos, because his mien in the human body. It was not easy to detect where the real Thanatos was.

A flash of a star went down to earth in the middle of winter night. It was covered by aurora, adorning the cold night of Denhig. It was a small, beautiful town that was on the verge of chaos, because the crime increased. An angel set her foot for the first time on the face of the earth. She only felt the cold aura of the devil--so strange, uncomfortable, and full of fear. It was the characteristic of the existence of Thanatos. The angel army knew if it was Thanatos, because this small town was famous for its comfort and safety. Of course Thanatos hated it. She

must immediately carry out her mission to look for Thanatos, the god of evil who carried the Siel stone. Seraphina was silent. She was staring around the city. She walked down the city to adapt with the condition of the city of Denhig at that time. Suddenly, Sera heard the glass broken, and a loud alarm rang from one of the shops. Three people were running away, carrying sacks containing money and valuables from the shop. As soon as possible, Sera searched for a place to hide, realizing that her body was still in the mien of an angel. Her mission would fail if humans knew that the angel was present on earth. Sooner or later. Thanatos would know and run away even further.

"Oh God, I had just arrived at this city and the crime is directly visible..." Sera said.

While looking around, Sera continued her observation on the condition of Denhig. Suddenly, Sera had a brilliant idea. She would hide by acting like a human like Thanatos, in that way, she would be looking for Thanatos. Vice versa, Thanatos would not be aware of

the existence of angels who had a mission to destroy the Siel stone.

The sun shone more intensely than before. Seraphina knew that she must change her appearance before everyone became aware that she was in the body of an angel. She rushed to the suburbs. Not long after, she found a frozen lake.

"Wow, this lake is beautiful," Sera said.

She did not only find a beautiful lake. Sera also found an empty house that seemed to be abandoned by its owner.

"This is great. I can stay here and make this house as a my place on earth."

She slowly entered the house.

"Hello!! Anyone here? Helloo !!"

Realizing that this house was indeed uninhabited, Sera then took the liberty to explore this house. Like

other houses that had been abandoned by their owners, this house was very outdated.

“Okay, I think this house needs a little bit of decoration and Seraphina’s touch. I need to look around this house and find my room.”

Seraphina entered the room and delicately stepped into this old-style decorated room. This room was not big, but looked very comfortable. There was a classic-looking bed, an old wardrobe, a closet covered by dust and window beside the bed which was leading directly to the lake. Sera made this room as her private room. That day, she began to bustle herself by cleaning up her new home and not yet carrying out her mission. Seraphina was quite satisfied with her decoration of the entire house which she had been working on all day, especially for her private room. She decorated her room with things coming from nature, such as wood, stones, flowers, and leaves. She loved it. As night arrived, Seraphina decided to rest and end her activities. She sat on the bed, leaning back and looking at the beautiful

frozen lake in her window. For a long time, Sera felt sore because her wings were bent. Then, she laid down and slept.

Seraphina had woken up to a cold morning. She walked along the lake and sat on the edge, letting her whole body feel the cold--the cold that would not be felt by humans. Her mind drifted, thinking about how to find Thanatos with very little clue. In the midst of her reverie, she realized one thing. She had to camouflage like a human. Sera headed to her room, hoping there was something to hide her angels wings so she would look like a human. Sera opened an old closet in her room, and luckily, she found an old-fashioned dress. It was still worth wearing. There was a pair of black shoes with floral prints. She tried to wear it, but unfortunately, her big wings made it difficult. Then, she looked for ways to hide her wings. Sera took a long cloth that was resting on the other side of the cupboard and bent her wings, wrapping them in such a way to make her wings quite hidden. After

that, Sera smoothly wore the dress. Then, she saw her reflection on the glass.

“I don’t think that I look beautiful in these human clothes.”

“Okay, I must go out and start finding Thanatos. I can get him,” she motivated herself.

Seraphina hurriedly walked to the middle of the city. She felt an extreme aura of evil. Only when she reached the center of the city, she saw people being beaten on the roadside. Shops were looted, and police were busy chasing robbers. Citizens could only scream and were afraid to see all the incidents that were happening. Seraphina was worried. The condition of the city was getting worse. She couldn't do anything yet. She still walked down to another area of the city of Denhig. Along the way, she continued to observe how to be a human. The first thing she knew was that she had to find work to get money. Without any chit-chat, Sera entered a flower shop and applied for a job there.

In the spring and following days after, Sera started working at the flower shop as a flower delivery girl. She accepted that job because she did not have to be in the shop all day long. Her job was just to deliver the flowers to the client using a bicycle. She thought that while she was working as a flower delivery girl, she could look for Thanatos' whereabouts.

It was hard to find Thanatos in his human form. Everyone seemed just to be in their right mien. There was nothing special. Seraphina thought hard finding Thanatos was. Today, she was daydreaming in the store, because today her flower shop only had a few customers. The flower shop owner, Claire, was not in the shop. She looked after the shop alone. Her thoughts were interrupted when a man stopped at her shop and greeted her. He was tall, handsome, and a kind-hearted man.

“Hello... miss! Hello...!”

“Oh I’m sorry, can I help you?”



“Yup. I want a bucket of red roses for my mom’s birthday, please?”

“Red roses. Hmm, okay, wait a minute sir. I’ll arrange the roses.”

“Okay. Just call me Jon. I feel like I’m 60 years old if you call me ‘sir’.”

“Oh, I’m sorry sir. I mean, Jon..”

Sera looked at the flower shelf that was neatly set in the shop. She was looking for red roses, however, the inventory was up.

“Jon, I’m so sorry. I think the red roses are already sold out.”

“Hmm. My mom really loves red rose. Do you have another flower for my mom?”

“Let me see.... That’s it! Red lilies. I think your mom will love it!” said Sera excitedly.

“Okay. Can I get a red bucket of lilies, miss...?”

“Seraphina.”

“Miss Seraphina. Okay, wait a minute, Jon.”

Seraphina felt that Jon's heart was full of kindness. After talking for a while, Jon left her flower shop for his mom's birthday party. Seraphina hoped that Jon would not be affected by Thanatos' Siel stone.

Two days later, Sera saw Jon visiting her flower shop again. Jon's expression changed into excitement when Seraphina arrived with her bicycle. It seemed that she had just delivered flowers to the customer.

“Hi, Seraphina! Nice to see you again. I just wanna say thank you. My mom fell in love with the red lilies you've picked for my mom. She said that red lily is her new favorite kind of flower.”

“Really? I'm happy to hear that, Jon. By the way, if you call me 'Sera', it's okay...”

After greeting each other, Jon was interested in Sera. He was not only interested with Sera's angelic look,

but also the softness of her heart. He felt calm while talking to Sera. Since that moment, the two of them became closer.

Sera felt the same way. Sera felt Jon's kindness and love. From Jon, she knew that humans also go to school to study and make friends. Sera knew more about the real human life through Jon. Seraphina did as much possible to cover her true identity from Jon, because it should be done.

Jon was also religious. He invited Seraphina to come to church on Sundays. Seraphina gladly accepted his invitation. Sera was very happy because Jon was not only good, but was also devoted to God. Seraphina, again, felt sad when she arrived at the church. She entered first, then waited for Jon in the church. The people in the church are very few, maybe no more than 20. Half of them are old people. Seraphina promised to find Thanatos as soon as possible and restore goodness the world. Moments later, Jon arrived with his mom and his sister. Jon's mom was so beautiful. It was not

surprising that her children were also very handsome and beautiful, just like the mother.

“Mom, this is Sera.”

Sera was taken aback when Jon introduced her to his mother, because she was admiring the beauty of Jon's mom.

“Hi, Sera. You're so beautiful, darling. Thanks for the red lily. I love it so much! I'm Mrs. Margareth Thompson. You can call me Maggie. And this is Anne, Jon's sister.”

“Hi Mrs. Margareth. It's nice to see you. You and Anne are more beautiful than me.”

After getting acquainted with Jon's mom, they continued for a banquet at the church. Jon could not stop staring in awe at Sera. After the banquet was over, Sera said goodbye because she had to go home. Jon offered to take her home. Sera hesitated a little as Jon's mom spoke.

“It’s okay Sera. I will walk around to buy some cupcakes first. Enjoy your time with Jon.”

Sera went after getting the permission from Jon's mom, Sera agreed. Sera was nervous, not because she would be in one car with Jon, but this was her first time to ride a car. Do you think there are cars in heaven? Don't expect that, because there are wings to fly.

“I’ll make you a cup of tea.”

“My pleasure.”

The two of them entered the house. Sera went straight to the kitchen, making Jon a cup of tea. Jon looked around Sera's living room. Strange. There wasn't a single photo of the family in the living room. There were only flower vases decorating the corners of the room. Jon followed Sera into the kitchen.

“You just moved to this city, huh?”

“Yup,” Sera answered Jon’s question briefly.

“Where do you come from?”

Sera was shocked hearing Jon's question.

"I'm from Oslo," Sera answered arbitrarily.

"I see no family picture, huh? Where is your family?"

"I never saw my family since I was several months old."

"I'm sorry to hear that Sera."

"No problem Jon. You have a happy family, I see..."

"Nope. I don't. I don't have a father. But I have to admit, my family is happier without my father."

Sera was momentarily stunned. She just realized that Jon did not bring his father when he went to church earlier. Sera wanted to ask where Jon's father was, but she was afraid. She was afraid that Jon would be offended, because it seemed that Jon was very unhappy with his father. With courage, Sera asked Jon.

“Why did your father decided to leave?”

"Hmm... 3 years ago, I had a happy family--father, mother, and sister. Dad was a very busy person, but still prioritized the family. One day, he met a gang of criminals. They led him to use drugs, sleep with other women every night, and other bad things. Dad was arrested by the police. The company's finance decreased and disputed with mom. After 2.5 years in prison, Dad got back to us, but only to ask for money. I didn't know what affected Dad. He turned so mean and creepy. I couldn't get to know Dad anymore. It was just like someone else had possessed him. He didn't seem to recognize himself. Then, he left us. No matter where he is now, I don't care anymore."

Sera was shocked by Jon's story about his father. She immediately realized that Jon's father had met Thanatos and had been affected by the Siel stone. Certainly, Thanatos didn't seem to move to another city yet. Sera must look for him immediately. Somehow, Sera

was so sure that Jon's dad had been affected by Thanatos and became his follower.

"Don't you intend to look for your father?"

"Nope, he is a jerk."

"Come on Jon, he's your father. Are you really not worried about your father's condition?"

Jon fell silent. He agreed with Sera's words. He was worried about his father's condition. During this time, he just did not like the treatment of his father towards Mom and Anne.

"Jon? Are you okay? I'm sorry if I made a mistake..."

"No, I'm okay. Actually, I feel worried about my father."

After the discussion that night, Sera and Jon were determined to find the whereabouts of Jon's father together. Overnight, Jon made a leaflet containing a photo of his father and printed it in large quantities. Jon's



mom didn't believe that her son had forgiven his father and was determined to find him. He is indeed a very kind and loving child, thought Jon's mom. The next day, Jon rushed to Sera's house to pick her up.

After entering the car, he was shocked. There were white feathers in a blue tinge in the car. He was also confused, what bird had this beautiful feathers and when did the beautiful bird entered his car. Most likely, it was Sera's wing feathers. Jon was stunned by the beauty of the feather and immediately remembered Sera.

“Wow. If Sera is an angel, she would have have this beautiful feathers.”

He kept it in his bag because he did not want to throw it away. Then, he focused again on his father's quest. Sera was ready and went straight into Jon's car. They placed the leaflets throughout the city all day long. When night fell, Jon felt extremely hungry. He was surprised at Sera, as if she never felt hungry. He also

realized that there was no food at Sera's house at all.

"Don't you feel hungry, Sera? Let's go for some brunch-dinner! We are not consuming any food today."

Sera did not answer because she did not understand what hungry was. Jon grabbed her hand and headed to a restaurant. Jon ordered a lot of food and Sera only ordered milkshakes. Jon was too hungry to ask why didn't Sera order food. After that, Jon took Sera to her home. After arriving at home, Sera went for a moment to the edge of the lake and took a mossy stone.

"What are you doing, Sera?"

"Picking a stone."

"What for?"

"To accompany my sleep. Don't others bring something to accompany them to sleep?"

Jon was surprised by Sera's strange actions and chose to not give any answer. Today was too tiring for both of them.

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It had been a week since the leaflet had been distributed. There had been no number that had contacted Jon for a week, and for a week, Sera felt insecure all day long. She felt the evil force was always surrounding her. It seemed like Thanatos had felt Sera's presence in the world.

Right on the seventh day, the door of Sera's house crashed. Someone broke in. Seraphina was shocked. She immediately woke up. Slowly, she headed forward, seeing what really happened. And sure enough, there was a man, standing between the door of her house. He was a tall man, as tall as Jon, with red eyes, muscular hands, and a green necklace.

“Thanatos...” Seraphina knew him from the bright green necklace that he wore.

“Yes, angel. It’s me,” he answered with his horrible smile.

Thanatos attacked Sera quickly. He destroyed the living room of the house and threw everything to Sera. Sera tried to get out of the house so she could flap his wings and return to attack Thanatos. Without her wings, she couldn't use all of her energy. She remembered the window of her room. She ran to the window of her room, tearing off the cloth which had been wrapping her wings. Unfortunately, Sera’s wing was bent for too long. When she jumped from the window, she immediately fell to the ground. The wings were useless and limp. With all of her energy left, Sera immediately ran. She headed for Jon's house, because Jon was the only person she knew closely in this city.

“Jon, help me!!” Sera shouted as she arrived at Jon's house. Jon, who was sleeping, then gasped and went down to Sera. But it was too late. Thanatos had grabbed Sera and was preparing to destroy her.

“Father! Don’t you dare to kill her!!!” screamed Jon.

“Jon, take his necklace away!!” said sera.

“If you step closer to us, this girl dies.”

“Don’t listen to him, Jon! Don’t worry about me! Just take away his necklace and destroy it!! Your father is influenced by Thanatos, the god of evil. Just take away his necklace. Jon... Listen to me!!”

Jon was very confused with all of this information. *Who* is Thanatos? *Why* should he take away the necklace? He preferred to save Sera instead of taking away his necklace. Thanatos took Sera away. Jon chased after him. Thanatos led him to the middle of the forest. Jon lost Sera’s track.

“Sera!! Where are you!??”

Silence. There was no sound. Jon continued to run towards the forest. All he had in mind was to save Sera. Deep in the middle of the forest, he heard a shout.

"Sera ..." Jon whispered.

Sera was tied to a pole. Thanatos was carrying a sword, and was about to cut Sera's wings. Sera was screaming. Jon clearly saw Thanatos's face.

"Father..."

Jon was shocked. The man who carried the sword and wanted to kill Sera was his father, who had disappeared. He saw Sera. There were quite large wings on his back. He didn't understand what all of this meant. He just wanted to save Sera. Jon looked around, looking for a tool to injure Thanatos. He found a branch with a pointed tip. Thanatos had pointed his sword at Sera's wings, and Sera could only surrender.

Instantly, Jon came from behind Thanatos and stabbed him. Sera was helpless. Before Thanatos could rise again, Jon immediately released Sera. Then, Sera's wings had begun to function. Sera flapped her wings. A very bright light surrounded Sera. Sera immediately saved Jon to a safe place. Sera grabbed Jon's body and

took him flying. Unexpectedly, Thanatos got up and grabbed Sera's legs when they were already flying. Sera was pulled down and Jon fell. Jon was unconscious after he fell.

Sera was involved in a fierce battle with Thanatos. She had done every way to attack Thanatos. Sera saw Thanatos' sword lying below. As fast as lightning, Sera flew down to grab Thanatos' sword

“You can’t get my sword!!”

Sera focused to grab Thanatos' sword. The battle was so fierce. Sera got her sword and unhesitatingly slammed Thanatos' wings. Thanatos shouted. One of his wings was cut off by his own sword. Seeing Thanatos weak, she immediately brought Thanatos high and flung him to earth. Thanatos was weak. He was lying on the face of earth. His necklace was still resting on his neck. Sera thoughtlessly took the sword, then pointed it at the Siel Stone.

"You're the strongest angel army, Sera,"  
Thanatos whispered.

"You are not worthy of being on earth. "

"Stop making people into your followers,  
Thanatos! "

"Never."

Hearing that word, Sera immediately thrust his sword into the Siel stone, stabbing it through the body of Thanatos. Only Thanatos' scream was heard. The souls trapped inside his necklace were freed. She was freeing the people in the city of Denhig from all evil and crime. The green light slowly dimmed, indicating that the souls were completely freed. The last soul coming out was the soul of Jon's father. He approached his child, smiled, and then flew away, freeing the citizens of Denhig with the other souls. Jon, who had regained his consciousness, saw his father's soul and approached his father's body. He pulled a sword from his neck, and hugged his father.



Jon cried. Thanatos had used his father's body to gain his followers in Denhig.

Seraphina brought Jon's father's body. Then, she carried Jon to his house. She promised Jon to explain everything, and said sorry for not being able to save his father. Then, Sera left, allowing Jon and his family to bury his father's body properly. In that night, Sera also saw many free souls, saving the earth from the influence of Thanatos' evil. She saw the soul of Jon's father, smiling and waving at her. He had wings now, like Sera's. Sera was relieved. She felt the aura on earth had changed. There was comfort, safety and happiness. That was the condition of the earth that Sera felt now.

Sera came to Jon's father's funeral day, in her human appearance. He met Jon, Anne, and Mrs. Maggie. After saying her condolences, now was the time for Sera to say goodbye to Jon. Her mission was complete. However, there was something Jon wanted to say to Sera. It was the feeling he felt since the first time he saw

Sera. Jon invited Sera to come to the edge of the lake beside Sera's house.

"I love you," Jon said without further ado.

Sera was silent, not knowing what to say. She didn't even understand Jon's feelings. She was born as a pure angel, not a soul that turned into an angel. Without answering Jon's question, Sera spoke.

"Jon, I'll show you something."

Sera took off her shirt entirely, opening the twist that was wrapped around her wings. The wings expanded, emitting light. And all this time, Sera never really set her feet on the ground. She was floating. Jon remembered the beautiful feather he found in his car.

"Is this yours?"

"Where did you find it?"

"In the car, the night when I took you home for the first time."

“Take it, Jon, so that you can always remember me and know I'm always here for you. I'm an angel, Jon. I cannot be with you. My job was to kill Thanatos and it was finished. Now, it's time for me to go home. Don't worry about me. I will always take care of you and this earth. Don't tell everyone that we exist. Just simply spread the goodness on this earth, so Thanatos will not rise again. Are you willing to, Jon?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Thanks, Jon.”

Then, Seraphina flew away. She headed straight up and disappeared along the bright city lights of Denhig's night sky. Only memories and beautiful feathers of her wings were left for Jon.

-END-

## End of the movie

Theodorus Rimbo

In a place where nowhere, there was a place with no shadow, a lonely and quiet space. All was a white with no dark even just a little bit. No one might hide, no one sight unseen. It was just like drowning in a glass of vanilla milk. There was the phrase 'time flies' which used when people enjoy the time they spent until forgetting that time always goes leaving behind. It also happened there, what people said 'time flies' but the time was flying in different meaning which was literally flown or you might say that it was gone. Flew too far and finally couldn't or maybe didn't want to go back because of the tedium of the setting in the movie. There was no more debate about the difference between time and duration, you would not be worried about confused because of no more time. Just duration.

In the middle of the silence, the slightest sigh of breath would be heard.

"DAMN YOU, STUPID DIRECTOR!! A DIRTY TRAITOR" ... his voice became one and only sound.

"Do you know the feels when being betrayed?! Do you know how it feels when you had been leaving?! Do you fucking know?!"

When he was murmuring the invective, unconsciously he was dragged away with something he didn't know. He felt strangled. When he got his consciousness, he realized that he dragged by a horse with a lasso on his neck. He tried to get off the lasso because it limited his lung to supply oxygen. He held the lasso to give a little spot to breathe. With his last consciousness, he pulled the lasso and he could get the riders. The difficulties were because the horse ran about 30km/h and his difficulties to breathe. He was feeling dizzy and unluckily the rider aware of what he was doing. The rider kicked him at face once, and the second time he kicked he caught the foot

and made the rider lost balance. He was still dragged but with his hand was holding the rider foot. The riders moved his foot to get rid of the prey. When he almost caught the rider's shoulder, suddenly the horse stopped. He fell down because the rider got off the horse.

“Move!!” said the rider while pointing a gun

“What are you doing?” he surprised because the rider was a woman

“Dragged you? What else? And then kill you, don't you want to finish this movie?” said the rider with a hand busy tied hands and feet.

“I want but not with this way, why don't we make a good movie so we can prove to that bastard director so she can regret leaving us. Let's make a masterpiece. What is your name? I promise to give a good role for you”

“I have no time. this was the fastest way to meet my family?” the rider finished tying and dragged on the foot with face facing up.

"What family?"

"Not your business," said the riders coldly.

From a distance, he saw a guillotine. While walking to come near, he investigated it. A big frame guillotine so it could execute more than three people at once. There was a basket that he sure the last place for his head after being cut off. He also could see the rope which holds the blade. The guillotine was clean and shiny, it indicates that it hasn't used. And he would be the first one who died in that guillotine. He just imagined the scenario that would be happened. The rider that he hadn't known the name would untie the rope and the blade would fall right on the back of his neck and his head would rolling away on the basket.

"what is your name? I really want to hear it"

"Jane" answered the rider

"I'm Sam, in case you want to put it on my gravestone"

"No, I don't need it, there is no land to be dig so no funeral, no grave, no gravestone, only die"

"Wait here I will be right back," said Jane while leaving Sam in front of the Guillotine. He tried to escape but the rope was tightly tied. He brought no knife and the only way to cut the rope was cutting it with the guillotine's blade but he could not because it was very high. He also thought to cut his hand. It was better to lose his hand than his life. He frustrated and blamed the director who made him like this. He gave up and was just sitting and waiting for his death.

After a few minutes, Jane returned while holding a child. The child was also being tied on her hands and feet. For a while, if Jane didn't want to kill Sam maybe Jane would be an attracting woman with blonde hair, strong jaw, and firm eyes. She was about 168 cm and suited enough with a white gown than with that shabby leather jacket, dingy brown jeans and boots she was



wearing which made her look like a stupid western cowboy.

“friends for you, you all will be executed in an hour”

“how kind you’re”

“stop teasing me or your head on that basket right now” while pointing on the basket in front of the guillotine.

Once again, Jane left Sam and the child. This time Jane rode her horse and left them behind. He could see Jane because there was nothing in that world. Nothing could cover eyes for seeing as far as it could. Sam saw Jane gone until his eyes limit the ability to see it. He was rubbing his eyes which felt a little sore. He saw Jane’s departure until he forgets that there was a child beside him.

"Hey, little girl, who is your name?"

“Molly”

“how long you are with Jane?”

"I don't know"

“Do you being kidnapped? Where is your parents?”

"No I don't and I have no. I was just sitting and I have no memories of my parents. I feel lonely and then Jane came and offered me help to end my loneliness. And then she brought me here”

“How evil that woman, do you know that you will be executed with that guillotine?”

“I know, Jane has told me. She was the same with me, she felt lonely because her family killed. She lost her husband and his daughter but she doesn't even know how they died so she goes around to find people and kill them so she could end this movie. She tried to find the main character and when she kills all people but the movie still haven't ended she told me that she also will do a suicide”

“Fuck you god damn director”

"Pardon me, sir?"

“Oh no no forget it, how if we make the movie so we can prove to the director that this movie will be the masterpiece?”

"uhhmm I never think about that way"

“yeah we will make a good movie and you will be a superstar"

Molly’s eyes were shining as she was smiling. She was cute with long black curly hair, white skin, and big eyes. Her clothes were a little worn but who cares about clothes in a place where there was nothing. Not only Jane and Molly but also Sam who never thought about their outfit. Sam only wore a green shirt with a lab coat, cargo shorts, and slipper. With his lab coat, he always thought that he created to cure the wound in the movie world.

In the middle of his daydream, he heard the hooves of the horse come near. From afar he saw Jane.

Jane got off the horse and put a bottle of wine and a glass cup beside the guillotine. The gurgling of wine became a teaser. After seconds, the cup was full of a maroon liquid.

"time to die," said Jane innocently

"wooww wowww wowww wait pretty girl, don't you want to make a deal with me? How about drink some wine first? We could talk about something you like"

"something I like? They died because of that stupid director"

"I know, I also hate that fucking director but we can end the movie better"

"stop bargaining"

Jane dragged Sam until he lied his neck on the frame of the guillotine. She asked Molly to do the same. Sam didn't realize that Molly was not tied. He realizes when Jane asked her to move to the guillotine. He felt so stupid. It was because Molly always sat with hands put

between her feet. He was regretting it, if he realized it, he could escape and brought Molly with him. He also a little annoyed with Molly why did she didn't offer help. However, she was just a little girl in a brainwashed state.

The preparation was done. Two heads would be cut but there was only one basket and it was placed above Sam's head. Jane was checking the guillotine's blade and the rope while Sam saw a shiny white plate that would soon be cut off his head. He knew when the blade cut was necking the movie would be ended because he was the main character of the move. Molly only thought that all that Jane said was a truth that she wouldn't feel lonely anymore.

“Don't you want to offer us to say our own last word?”

“and go”

“How about may I slap your butt?”

“What the fuck?”

"Didn't mean to tease you but I don't know, I just should do this"

"No thanks"

"Ohh come one, please"

"What is your last word, Molly?"

"Thank you," said Molly with cheerful eyes

A second after Molly said her last word, Jane immediately turned her face away. She looked afraid if Sam or Molly saw her tears meltdown. She got her cup of wine and then untied the rope which holds the guillotine's blade. Sam closed his eyes, ready to welcome his dead and the end of his movie while Molly only smiling, didn't know about death. Along with the fall of the blade, Jane gulped down a cup of wine on her hand. The blade fell, as well as Jane's body.

For a while, Sam felt nothing touch his neck. He tried to open his eyes and see a blade stopped right above his neck. He confused about what happened. He

was curious that he already died. He saw Molly beside him and still smiling. He touched the blade and his finger was hurt. He gets off his head from the guillotine's blade and realized that there was another bond that holds the blade rather did not really cut its neck. He saw Jane lying lifeless because the wine that she drank was poisonous. He pulled the rope to lift up the blade and join again with Molly in the guillotine's frame.

"Okay kiddo, it was time to sleep. just close your eyes and thought that there spread a lot of stars in front of your eyes and be one of them." Said Sam while putting his arm so it could be used as Molly's pillow.

"Uhhmmm Sam, actually I know what stars was but I have no memories about how stars look like" answered Molly innocently.

"*Haha* then I will tell you a story about a dog and her puppy. Once upon a time, there lived a dog that could not feed her puppy because no drop of milk comes out of her nipple. So, for keeping her puppy alive, she must

cross a very heavy stream but across the river, there was a niche with never run out spring. The only way to cross the river was with the help of a crocodile. However, there must always be something that should be sacrificed as the cost which was the dog's claw. One for each help. The dog accepts the condition and let the crocodile eat her claw for the cost for each help he has done. Once every week the dog crosses the river and returns with a bucket full of water so the child could stay alive. Therefore, it means that once for every week she would lose two of her claws. Until in the tenth week, she lost all of her claw and she thought that her puppy strong enough to follow her to the springs. So she brought her puppy and met the crocodile, but the crocodile knows that the dog already lost all of her claw so he makes a new condition. He wants to bring the dog with her puppy if the dog wants to give all of her legs. It was a big deal for the dog because he must choose for the life of her puppy or her legs. After seeing her innocent puppy eyes, she decided to use the crocodile service to bring her and her puppy across.



However, she asked for relief, she requested to give her legs after bringing her puppy to the springs and she promised not to betray. The crocodile agrees for it and brings the dog and her puppy across. Then the crocodile said that he would eat both of them if they betrayed him. The dog brings her puppy to the spring and when she arrived, she happy because of seeing her puppy happy for the unlimited water resources. Her puppy didn't know that he would leave forever. The dog only kissed her puppy and said 'keep alive,' While her puppy enjoys the fresh of the spring water, she goes back to the crocodile to kept his promise. After losing all of her legs, the dog could only watch over of her puppy from far away. She could not touch her puppy anymore until she died because of bleeding. The end. Why you haven't fall asleep?"

"I don't know, I just feel like the puppy"

"Why?"

"I have no idea"

"So why don't you go to sleep and went to the spring?"

"How about a question?"

"Why you want to end this movie well?"

"Absobloodylootely because I want to take revenge to that director"

"Is it revenge or a form of sacrifice?"

"What do you mean with sacrifice?"

"A sacrifice that actually you love our director?"

For a second Sam felt a ton of rock fell out from the sky and hit him then overtook him and left an immeasurable tightness. Reality was always painful even in the movie world.

"that was more than one question kiddo, time for sleep and there's no bargaining" only that which could come out from Sam's mouth. Next second he realizes and said

"I think it was time to end the movie"

"Pardon me?"

"No no, may I slap your butt? Oh I mean may I pet  
you"

"Thank you"

\*\*\*

A woman stood alone in a graveyard started two  
mounds decorated with various types of grass. An  
untreated old tomb which on each one of its side stuck a  
gravestone inscribed with a name. "Molly" and "Sam".  
With a bunch of regrets, she just said

"I think it was time to end the movie".

-END-

## **Peter the Monster**

Anggara

The story began with a boy named Peter. He was raised only by his mom because his father left him while he was 3 years old. He and his mother lived in Town, a little town of Pekiski Province, New Molland Nation at the year of 2017. Because of his mother's condition, he needed to work for both of them, but his mother also worked as a home tailor. His mother did not want to be a family burden. Then, Peter worked as a woodcutter when he was 12 years old because he liked to play in his own wooden house and in the woods since childhood. Even though he was a woodcutter, his job was only lifting small wood and a little bit of crafting. But, day by day, he learned more about woodcutting until he became a proper woodcutter when he was 15 years old.

One day, his mother's health dropped but the medicine in the town was really expensive. He was very

troubled because of this problem. He thought very hard and he found a solution, but it had a big risk. He must cut some woods in the forbidden forest. He wanted and needed to cut some woods in the forbidden forest because there were a lot of trees with high-quality wood in there. The forbidden forest that was called “Juiven” Forest had a lot of high-quality trees because, from the people’s stories, the forest was a habitat for mystic creatures called “*nehmur*”, which were really dangerous for human and they even attack human. But, Peter didn’t care about the risk that he would face.

He courageously went into the forest for his mother’s sake. At first, he found some good-quality woods after a couple of meters. Step by step, he found better quality woods. Then, he saw a medium-sized high-quality tree that was lit by the light that was leaking through the leaves. Quickly, he chopped that tree and the tree went down. But, a red-and-black thing went out from that tree and quickly stuck into Peter. Peter did not realize it and he just chopped the tree as usual. He went

home after he took all of the woods that he needed while the strange thing was now inside of his body.

He went back to the small wood company to sell the high-quality woods which he got from the forbidden forest. He sold it at a high price so he could buy the medicine for his mother. He went to the pharmacy and then went back home. His mother was so happy for the medicine. He was so happy that his mother was happy and smiling. His mother saw his face and said, “You don’t need to force yourself to get this medicine. I also work for this family and I can work harder to get this medicine, even if I can’t get it as soon as possible as you did. You need to take a rest and stop worrying about me”. He just replied, “Yes, mom”. But deep down in his heart, he remembered his father and he thought about how his father was not here when he was really needed right now. *‘I will find you, father, then you will pay for this!’* thought Peter.

He went back to his bedroom to take a rest for a bit before dinner. He felt something was not right with

his body. His upper hair became coarse, and there was a red line on his hair that slowly took almost half of his upper hair. His muscle became harder and he felt stronger. His eyes were hurting a bit and he was really confused; what was going on with him? Then, a voice talked to him, "Do you like what happened to you?" He was shocked and screamed. Peter asked the voice, "Who are you?". The voice came from inside of his body, it controlled his body and mind. Then, he was really frightened by the thing inside of his body. Peter asked again, "What are you?" to the creature inside his body. The creature said that it was a monster from the forbidden forest who just wanted to stay with Peter. Peter was angry because of what the creature did to his body and asked it to leave. The creature did not want to get out of Peter's body because it thought that this body was really suitable for the creature, and it wanted to do something for the greater good using his body.

Peter asked the creature to explain. The creature said there were good monsters and bad monsters in the

forest. Most of the monsters were bad and good monsters were a minority. It claimed that it was a part of creatures called "*nehmur*". The creature said it needed a proper body to help defeat the bad monsters that attack human. Peter's body was physically big and strong. With Peter's strong physic, it hoped that Peter would be able to defeat the bad monsters easily. But, Peter thought that the creature told him a fake story. The creature made him believe it by bringing Peter to the forest. There were several bad monsters that Peter saw by himself using the help of the creature to make his vision better. Peter then believed that there were some bad monsters, which were spotted through his eyes. The creatures asked Peter to take control of his body as they liked. Several times, Peter rejected the favor, but finally, Peter agreed with the creature only with some conditions. The creature was only allowed to control Peter's when they were fighting with the bad "*nehmurs*", when he was cornered by criminals, or when he was in a dangerous situation. The good "*nehmur*" then agreed.



Peter then kept the monster in his body and worked as usual. But, at night, he with his creature partner fought the bad "*nehmurs*" together in the forbidden forest. He took care of his mother first before he went out to the forest. Peter's excuse for leaving home in the night was that he was working for some "extra part-time jobs". Almost every *nehmur* was slain by him, and day-by-day he was getting stronger. Soon, the good "*nehmur*" fused with Peter's body and he enjoyed it.

He did it for almost every day until he was 16 years old. He worked and hunted very hard and often used his night activity as entertainment because he never felt so lively in his entire life. The Joseph Academy Priesthood Foundation started to notice him because of his activities. One night, he met someone else who also hunted bad "*nehmur*" in the forest and he was shocked. He was worried that his cover was blown. He did not want to make his life more complicated. The Joseph Academy Priesthood Foundation later visited him when

he was chopping some woods with other workers near the wood factory. The Joseph Academy wanted to put him in the academy. The Academy wanted him to study and live in there because he was fatherless and although his mother was still able to work, she was sick. He was interested in the offer and asked his mother for her permission. His mother was so happy that her son would get educated for a better future at an elite academy. Then, he joined the academy for the first year to study.

The Academy had a lot of facilities, such as school, dormitory, gymnastics, pool, cafeteria, library, science lab, etc. The dormitory had twenty-two rooms and each room had two beds for two students. Peter visited his mother every weekend. He tried to focus on his study in class but sometimes he fought with his classmates because they mocked his hair. His mother asked him to stay calm and keep a low profile in the academy and he always said, “Yes, mom”, or, “I tried”. But the truth was, he often couldn’t control himself. Every night, Peter hunted the “*hours*” that terrorized the city and he was

supported by the scientist priests in The Academy. The academy monitored him while he was hunting. The academy several times did researches for Peter so he could have a better control so he wouldn't hurt anyone or himself. Then, he passed his 1<sup>st</sup> year. For reasons he did not know, he suddenly lived by himself. The Academy wanted to isolate him from his friends from the school because they did not want Peter to get distracted with his social life from his primary objective; the project of The Academy. So, every time The Academy needed him, he would be prepared and ready to go.

Peter hated his father because he thought that his father was a cruel man for leaving them, while now his mom was sick and he had a mysterious power in him. His mysterious power sometimes controlled him, but he must accept it because the power inside of him was too powerful. He thought he was the loneliest person and nobody wanted to become his friends because he was "unique". He felt sad every time his mother's health dropped. He felt motivated because The Academy

supported him because he thought he was finally being useful.

Now, he was a second-year student at Joseph Academy Priesthood Foundation. He was 17 years old and lived in the dormitory of The Academy. Peter also had a friend named Caiden, his dormitory roommate. Caiden was a freshman of the new batch of the student of the academy. He came from a well-off family. The reason why he entered The Academy was that he was smart and his parents wanted him to study at The Academy. He loved modern technologies like computer, chemistry, etc. So, the academy started to give their attention to him and they had a secret plan for him. Caiden's academic performance was going well, the academy also placed him in the same room as Peter. The reason why the academy placed him in the same room as Peter was the academy needed them to get along with each other for their secret project. On his first day, Caiden seemed to hate living in The Academy, but after

he met Peter and knew Peter deeply, he began to enjoy his study in Academy.

In the beginning, Peter was not open to Caiden because he saw him as a stranger. Peter had lived by himself for almost 1 year in one room. The relationship between them day by day became stronger. Then, Caiden was recruited by The Academy to join their project. Caiden agreed and he thought he could experience new great things if he joined. Caiden provided technology support for Peter's battle outside the academy and Peter protected him from the stronger "*nehmurs*" in return. Later, they fought the "*nehmurs*" together, just like what The Academy had planned.

-END-

## **CRIME FICTION**

## Messhi

Erna Oktaviani

Messhi's mother kept a snake. A squirming and circular snake intimately on her smooth neck. The snake was made a Barbie room, complete with a bed and bathroom. The room was right next to the mother's room. Several times Messhi nagged at her mother to look after other pet, but her mother always slapped her head. The snake was the one and only lovely pat at home. On a nice Sunday morning, the sun got in through a window and between wooden walls, sparked the frosty furniture of the house. Messhi and mother were watching TV, Messhi began to stink the arrival of a rotten animal. That was the snake, he coiled on the mother's lap. Grubby breath filled the whole room. Messhi took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, trying to keep watching her favorite cartoon. However, the nasty snake deliberately replaced the TV channel with a boxing program that had been repeated more than twice a week. Messhi stepped into

the kitchen, took a handful of salt which she would sow in the TV room. So that no creeping animals would enter. But, before Messhi scattered the salt, her mother jumped from the sofa and threw her hand to Messhi's head. The whole room was spinning and the snake smiled satisfied with his victory.

Since the arrival of that animal, Messhi's behavior has been different. At school, she pitted Melly and Sisy. She told to Melly that Sisy had said that Melly was stupid and lazy. Instead of Sisy, she also said that Melly told to her that Sisy was also stupid and lazy. They fight and their friendship relationship was destroyed. Not only that, deliberately Messhi put her wallet into Elly's bag. At that time, all the 8th-grade bags were in the same class as Messhi was checked. Of course, the wallet was in Elly's bag. Elly became the bullied of her friends. No one knows that Messhi was the director behind all of the incidents. Surely no one thought about it because, after the feud between Melly and Sisy, Messhi was the only one who calmed Melly. Messhi came to Melly's home and



comforted her. She also did the same to Sisy. In addition, when everyone stays away from Elly, Messhi was the only person who faithfully comforts her. Messhi said that she would not report to the teacher if she knew that Elly took her wallet. Her words became a dagger for Elly and increasingly made Elly's cry become confused. Messhi was very much loved by her friends, especially because she became the leader of the organization at the school. Her mother proudly tells the success of Messhi to her friends.

Her achievement in building a good image was inversely proportional to the lesson in school. The test scores were alarming and her absence from class exceeds the specified limit. The teachers meeting was held because of how it possible student whose grades and presences were less became the leader of the school organization. Her teacher told Messhi that she was in danger of not going up to class. Messhi thought of a way to save herself and defend mother's happiness. It would not be easy if she tricked her teacher by pitting between

teachers with each other. It wouldn't work and it could be that she was expelled from school if they knew it. Messhi thought and concluded that the highest power was on the hands of the headmaster. She thought about how to fool the headmaster so she could go up to class.

Messhi remembered something about her mother. One day, she heard the discussion of her mother and mother's friend. Mother's friend said, "Don't be so serious and panic. To sale, your pussy is also okay. It's to solve the problem of life, to give a life for your child. God will know and forgive us." At that time, Messhi didn't understand the meaning of that conversation. Moreover, she also remembered how the mother dressed, laughing in front of uncle Melky. How her mother took the drink for uncle Melky until mother's breasts just wanted to jump from the bra and how did the mother wet her lips with a little outstretched tongue. If Messhi was home, her mother with uncle Melky would leave. When returning home, mother would shop for a month's need and take Messhi a walk. Messhi realized and bear out

about the similarity between uncle Melky and the headmaster was they are male.

When she came home from school, the house was empty. Messhi entered the mother's room to prepared her action. She preened in front of the mirror, using the mother's red lipstick and putting it in a bag. She opened the drawer and sprayed perfume on her neck. In the drawer, Messhi saw a letter stamped with her school logo. However, when she wanted to take it, the snake was at the door of the room. He stretched toward Messhi. The air was frizzed her bones. The snake turned into a giant anaconda, he writhed on Messhi's body, stripped off her wet school uniform, Messhi's body became stone, her throat felt dry until no sound came out except moans. In Messhi's mind, she hoped that her mother would see the decay done by the damn snake. A bitter life didn't have to be lamented. The disgusting incident made her no longer hesitant to launch her action to the headmaster. Besides, she was curious about the contents of the letter in the mother's drawer, if the letter

contained bad news, why wasn't Mother angry. Her determination was even more rounded, she would wait for the school to be quiet, change her clothes, then seduce the headmaster to be able to go up to class and ask what the letter was sent to the mother.

The sun was a little dim and all of the students were already gone. That was time for Messhi to carry out the action. She went into the bathroom which the smell was like a carcass rat. She was changing her clothes and preening with mother's lipstick, now her appearance was similar to her mother, with loose long black hair and a pair of brown eyes. A thing which was slightly different only on her breasts that was not fully grown. The principal's office was tightly closed, she peered from the keyhole and her vision was blocked by a key from inside. When she wanted to knock on the door, she heard loud laughter from the room, spoiled laughter that was familiar to her ears, sweet laughter from her beloved mother. She froze for a moment, her eyes no longer able to hold more and more water dams. Grains of water

washed her face. Then she realized and ran to the bathroom. Messhi washed her face and returned home with anxiety. She went into her room and locked the door tightly. She laid on the bed, saw her picture with mother. Imagining whether things could get worse. Messhi imagines a happy life with her mother, cooking, traveling, watching TV, and eating together. The only thing that hinders it was the mother's pet, the snake. Messhi must really get rid of the snake. She must tell the mother what the snake has done to her.

The night went out, the wind shook the leaves, made the curtains fluttering, and occasionally accompanied by light from the sky.

"Mess, there's something I want to say to you"

"Yes, Mom, I also want to say something."

"Let me tell you first. Now that you're grown, it's time for you to have a younger sibling. "

For a moment all was empty and cold, the mother waited for an answer. But Messhi was increasingly petrified.

"It's been a long time for a mother to live alone without a husband and you are alone without a father. I will get married.

"Oh, who is the lucky guy who will be your husband and become my father, Mom?"

Lightning boomed, the light entered and instantly lit the Snake's body that standing in front of the mother's door.

"Snake."

**Yogyakarta, March 2019.**

-END-

# **HORROR**

## **SAIRA**

Melinda Septiana

All of this started when I realized that I could see things that nobody else could see. It was not an easy thing, this ability made me hard to express what I felt. People always thought that I was crazy and a freak. Many people said that I was beautiful, but my attitude wasn't. I had peculiar behavior; when I saw something invisible, I always screamed like a crazy person and I did not care where I was. That was why people thought I was a freak.

Many people asked me why I was like this. I did not want to explain it because even when I told them the truth, people still did not believe what I said. Having an ability to see something invisible was not a fun thing, it made me afraid to look for someone that had the same ability like me. The things that I saw only have half of their body, it was like their body just cut into two parts and the other part was gone. That thing always made me



freak out. I was always alone because people kept their distance from me, and I also wanted to kept my distance from them because I didn't want them to get into trouble whenever they were close to me.

I really liked music. I could play all musical instruments. Music was a part of my life because the sounds coming from music calmed me. I could vent my anger and resentment through music without making people know I was feeling sad or angry. I liked school. School allowed me to avoid being lonely and feeling like a normal person, even when people thought that I was not like a normal person.

I was not a smart student, but I could get high grades without studying since my ability to see something invisible helped me to obtain invisible friends who could help me in exams. That was why my grades were the highest among the student. When I studied at senior high school, I found that my ability to see something invisible became the most horrible thing I had ever known. It

started when I could see a soul went out from its body right before they died.

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Thursday morning in class, I sat alone because my tablemate had moved to another school 2 months ago. Her name was Tamara. I saw Tamara suddenly came to class with her pale face and she sat next to me. I saw there was a knife stuck on her back, it made me wonder; *'what happened? How come there is a knife on your back?'* She did not answer; her eyes were empty and kept starring at the front of the blackboard. She never looked at me, I asked again, *'Why are you quiet? Why you didn't answer me?'*. She still didn't answer. When I wanted to touch her, suddenly she disappeared.

The whole class fell silent and were surprised, they asked me what had happened. I explained what happened, but no one believed what I was saying. But, there was one friend who felt that I was telling the truth, who was named Dina. Two days later, there was news

that Tamara had died and was found in a state of being stabbed using a knife on her back. That was a shocking news throughout the city because the killer was her own boyfriend.

After the incident, Dina came to me and said that she trusted me and we became good friends after that. Dina was the only person who understood my situation and didn't think I was weird and crazy, even after I told her the reason why I often screamed.

\*\*\*

Having ability to see something invisible was not a new experience for me, I had often seen various forms of them; from the good to the bad. I was very fortunate to meet a good one because they were the one who helped me with the exam. But there were times when I meet the bad one; who was very ugly and evil. They always bother me and make me felt uncomfortable. One of them happened to be at my school, precisely on the stairs that went up to the 2nd floor.

I had seen it since I first entered my school but due to the fact that my tenth-grade classroom was in the ground floor, the creature never bothered me. However, since I was in eleventh grade, my class was on the 2nd floor. Every day, I had to see him, he looked as if he was threatened by my presence. His figure was like a child. I always ignore it every time I went up the stairs. But one day he bothered me; even pushed me from the top floor when I went down to the 1st floor and I broke my right hand.

Knowing that incident, Mr. Anton, my spiritual teacher and also my gym teacher, came to me and said he had driven the little-boy ghost away. The incident made me unable to go to school for one week. I was at home for a week. I felt lonely, but Dina occasionally came to see me and talked about many things. Dina helped me socialized at school. She introduced me to her friends and taught me how to get along with others and build relationships.

Not only Dina, Mr. Anton also helped me to control my emotions. He taught me how to deal with evil beings and how to communicate with them. He also guided me spiritually.

Time passed and school was almost over; the time with friends in school almost over and it would never happen again. New friendship would be started in a different place.

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Friday morning, I came to school. The weather that day was not too good; it was cloudy and drizzled. In the classroom before the bell rang, I saw Toro came to class with a pale face and he was covered in blood. He walked into the class like a confused person.

He sat next to his friend, talked to a friend beside him and behind his seat, but no one responded. I said to him, *'What are you talking about? Your friends can't hear what you say?'* He responded, but not a word came out of his mouth. I asked him again and there was no respond

from him. He seemed like he was answering to the question I was asking, but I could not hear his voice. I immediately approached him and suddenly he disappeared

I was confused and asked his tablemates, *'Where is Toro going? Didn't he sit here, why did he disappear?'* They answered that there was no Toro, he hadn't arrived yet. I replied, *'He was here before, talking to you, but you didn't respond.'* They said that they did not see Toro and he had not come at all.

And then I sat back on my seat in the back row of the class. I felt weird because I clearly saw Toro talked to them. Not long after, there was a telephone call from a friend saying Toro had died. He had a motorcycle accident while was on his way to school. And then I realized, the thing that I saw was his soul. I felt guilty for what happened to him.

I asked myself, why I never realized what happened in the first place; what happened to Tamara and Toro. Why I was never scared of their pale faces, of all the blood, and the knife on Tamara's body. Why I never knew that was a sign from them. I felt like my ability was useless. I thought it was a gift for me, to help people with my ability, but I was wrong. I was useless.

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