

Everyone have their own descriptions of stories and
here's our own



Millennial's
Codex
of
Enigmatic
Pages

MMXVI

Millennial's Codex of Enigmatic Tales



Fakultas Sastra
Universitas Sanata Dharma

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Millennial's Codex of Enigmatic Tales

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PREFACE

Firstly, we would like to thank God because of His blessings, this collection of flash fiction entitled “Millennial’s Codex of Enigmatic Tales” has been finished. Secondly, we would like to present our gratitude to Ms. Wedhowerti for guiding us in the process of writing this flash fiction.

The stories and tales that we wrote in this book are the compilation of our expressions poured into words, our appreciation to art, and also our love to literature. It contains several genres: drama, fantasy, fantasy-drama, friendship, tragedy, dark tragedy, mystery, science fiction, and romance.

We hope our works can entertain whoever reads this book, and we are glad that we can present it. With all of that being said, please enjoy our collection of stories and happy reading! Thank you!

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DRAMA

The Downtown

Agricola Ajeng

164214151

That was a regular day in Los Angeles when the sun shone brightly and people were busy working. That was such a usual day for Hennessy Caroline White; a 19 years old half American and Indonesian girl who has beautiful brown eyes, and long brunette hair. She is such a brave, kind-hearted, introvert at some point yet optimistic and very ambitious. She must get everything she wants and she can do anything for it. Every day was a regular day for her because she had nothing special to do except going to school every day and spent a whole day with Anelyst, her favorite piano; because her parents' occupied them with work and busy collecting money. Her mom, Anita Putri White is Indonesian who worked as a secretary in a prominent company in LA, she decided to move to LA right after she married her husband. Her dad, James Peter White is an American and worked as an FBI agent. They almost don't have much time for her that is why she was always feeling lonely. She felt nothing special that day until she realized that was the anniversary of her parents' wedding. It made her burst of excitement. She tried to make that day so special for both her parents. There was an annual

summer festival downtown. She arranged a plan to take her parents to celebrate the anniversary there and ask them when they're home.

Hennessy asked her parent of what she arranged for them and her parents gave a sign that they will home with her, so they decided to go there in the evening because the festival looks so mesmerizing at night. They spent that night with happiness and laughter.

"Thank you, mom and dad, I'm so happy to finally come to the festival with you both! I'm so happy tonight," said Hennessy.

"Don't worry about that, honey! We are happy when you happy" said her mom.

(Arrived at the carnival)

"Wow! I can believe we made it!!!" she said.

"Let's try how that thing works," said his dad while pointing at a giant rollercoaster.

"Let's go!!!" said Hennessy.

"You both play and I will wait here, mommy got some more things to finish," said her mom.

"Why? You can finish it later! It's time to celebrate, come on!"

(Forcing her mom to come with her)

"Ah alright then, but wait I'm going to buy some ice cream for us," said mom.

"I come with you. I'll choose my own flavor. Hennessy, you here

is the money, you go to the ticket store and get them for us too, alright? Anyway what flavor do you want" said dad. "Get the chocolate one for me," she said. Seemed like Hennessy and her parents were the happiest person in the world because they never been so happy as they were that day. Unexpectedly that same happiness is cut short by some gang members shooting them and consequently kills her mom and dad. They used the mask to hide their faces and attacked the festival. Everyone there was frightened. (The crackling from fires) "MOMMM DADDD!!! NOOOO!!!" (She screamed loudly when she saw her parent shot by them while she ran to them to save them) "No mom, dad! Please, don't leave me, please" (she crying, then she lost her focus on their parent when she saw the gangsters and trying to reach them out by running but she got shot by them too). It happened so fast, Hennessy was separated from her parents when that happened but she witnessed that one of those people with the mask pointed his finger to her parents and shot them down to death. She trying to save their parents but one of them shot her too. They never thought that the happiness they had that night turned to sorrow. Hennessy had coma for several months because she got shot in the head. Meanwhile, the police and FBI investigate the scene of

the incident to find the case. They got to catch the suspect of the event. Unfortunately, they found nothing but speculation that it was a terrorist attack that they arranged for a purpose. Therefore, the police and FBI still work to crack the motive of a crime. The FBI team was very devastated of being left by Hennessy's father because he was such the most hardworking and sincere person. Before his death, her father working for the FBI to pull the plug on Santiago Lucas which he is a Colombian drug dealer and also the most wanted fugitive, he also wanted by the government and marked as a national traitor. After several months of coma, she underwent she finally surfaced from her coma. She cannot exactly remember what was actually happened that night. The only thing she remembers is when one of the men with a gunshot their parents down to death. She tries to remember but the doctor not allowed her to think a lot due to her unstable condition. That was such an unforgettable and heartbreaking accident she had ever witnessed and experienced. She never thought that was the last time she spent her time with both her mom and dad. She is very devastated by her parents' death. Since then, there is nothing remains to her and she started to hate herself and blame every one of what happened that night. She being in dazed and stressed out. She can't truly found who she is and she trying to get out from the hospital to discover herself and trying to remember

what was actually and exactly happened that night while she still in recovery and her condition is not completely stable; anything bad might happen to her and there is a strong probability that she can permanently lose her memory if she forced to recall the accident that _____ night.

There are two young FBI agents who protect and take care of Hennessy during her coma. They were working along with her father to pull the plug on Santiago Lucas' crimes. They both suspected that Santiago is the mastermind of the attack. (At _____ the _____ Hospital _____ in _____ LA)

"Good morning, Miss Hennessy. I'm Adam Smith and this is my colleague, Jim Scot, we are FBI agents. I'm so devastated for your lost. That is why I'm here to help you find the justice for your parents' death" said Adam, one of those two FBI agents.

"Thank you, Mr. Smith. I appreciate that so much," she said.

"Here Miss Hennessy we found some shreds of evidence in the festival that happened that night also we have some speculations about the gang. We speculate that they are related to Santiago Lucas," _____ said _____ Jim.

"Who _____ is _____ Santiago _____ Lucas?" _____ she _____ said.

"He is a Colombian drug dealer and also the most wanted fugitive in LA. We were working together to pull the plug on Santiago Lucas' crimes along with your dad. Therefore, we have the speculation that Lucas was the mastermind of the attack so that he

must pay for it" said Adam. After getting better she decided to get out of her house and trying to find out who is the figure behind the attack that night. She also wants to find who those people who killed her parents are. Since the parents died, she always begins her day with giving some kisses to a picture of her parents and she also has a new quirk, she always wears black outfit every Friday to reminisce her parents' death. She got some help by the FBI to find out the crime and the other day she invited to the appellate court in Los Angeles to be a witness and to explain the chronology of the attack that night. She explained it clearly but she still didn't get justice for her parents' death and the judge doesn't believe what she said. The judge didn't believe what she said because of the post-coma that she underwent.

Her life is ruined into pieces but she believes that life and growth are painful yet challenging. She completely a mess; she got trust issues in people and being so insecure about anything after being left by her parents yet she became stronger and stronger; she learns how to protect herself by learning how to fight for five years. Her personality and life are absolutely changed from an introvert teenager to become an unbearable force. She transforms herself from citizen to urban guerilla. She is channeling her frustration of her parents' brutal murder into personal motivation. She delivers her personal brand of justice. Her transformation

leads her to be more independent and powerful.

The justice system is incompetent and corrupt can be found everywhere. She resurfaces five years later with a vengeful goal to end her parents' killers. Since that, she decided to hide and disguise for a mission to reveal many judges who received a bribe, she also wants to punish people who did inequity of justice and she wants to do an act of revenge by punishing and killing the murders of her parents. She put their lives on the line fighting against injustice and left all the glamorous life behind. She will punish and kill every people who did wrong to others no matter with whom she faces. Hennessy dig as much information as possible about her parents' murder. She got helped by her two FBI agent which also his dad's colleagues. They got 3 targets and aims in their mission. The first one is The Judge; Hennessy secretly finds some evidence that pointed out the judge and digs deep information about whom he working with. In the evening, she came to the Judge's house, she forced him to be honest about the bribe that he received from someone but he wasn't admitting it. Hennessy held him as a hostage in his own house and tortured him. She throws a knife at him every time he tells lies. Unfortunately, the Judge didn't tell the truth, so Hennessy cut his neck as well as his life off. The second target is the gang members who killed parents at the festival. Hennessy and the other two FBI agents; Jim Scot and Adam Smith came back to the place of accidents to help her to

instigate a search for evidence to find them. She trying to recall the face of the man who brings the gun and also the man who drove the car; because before she was being shot she saw a little of those two men's faces also the car's number that the gang used. She tries to bring the memories that she saw that night all together. She trying to draw what she saw that night and put it on the paper. She draws little by little because it is quite difficult to recall an event that already happened five years ago. "Can you give me some more time? Because I'm still trying to remember it all", she said. "Don't get a rush, we'll wait for you!" said Adam. Fortunately, they are all got the information and starting to do the investigations. Mr. Scot and Mr. Smith got their addresses with the help of the police. They drove to the Haven forest in Los Angeles. They found an uninhabited old house in the middle of the forest; they come closer and get into the house. They decided to disperse in all directions in case they will find something; Hennessy and Jim observe the house, and Adam observe the back of the house. She finds a bullet as Jim remembers, it is the same bullets that were found by the FBI in the scene of the attack. Meanwhile, Adam found some black masks which he believes that it is the same masks they used at that night. It was at 11 PM which was very late so they decided to postpone the search and will back in the next morning.

The next morning, Adam found the address which they speculate that it is the address of the gang's headquarters. Without thinking much they drove there and found there is only a huge warehouse building sheltered by many gangsters. They keep forcing themselves to enter the building by making a trick. "I will come from that way and you from the back," said Adam while pointing at somewhere. "Get it!" both answered simultaneously. After an exhausting attempt, they finally entered the building and surprisingly she see the guy that she saw on the festival; he is the driver of the car. "Hello man, still remember me?" she said, then she begins to fight with him. There was a huge fight between Hennessy, the FBI agents and the gangsters. The luckiness was with Hennessy. The gangsters were all died in Hennessy's hand. Her very last revenge is to kill Lucas. She already knows where is Lucas' headquarters. They were disguised and came there by night when everyone fell asleep. It was not as they expected. There was none of them fall asleep. Hennessy must rack her brains to get into the Lucas' house. "Damn! Why they are still up? What should we do then?" she said. "I guess we make the wrong plan because you know they are working with a drug dealer which he can do anything to protect

himself from the police. Look they are many gangsters and bodyguards that sheltered him!" Adam answered. "I can see it, so what should we do?" added Jim. "I have an idea. I know his weakness. He only has one daughter and she is his biggest weakness. We have to make the most possible out of this by kidnapping his 6 years old only one daughter and take her to downtown to provoke him to get out of his house so that the police easily can arrest him." said Adam. "So Hennessy, it is your last job. Get inside his house and take his daughter, we will help you by here. Take this with you (giving a mini phone to Hennessy) just tell us what we should do to help you, alright?" Adam added. (Taking the phone) "Get it!" she said. "Good luck!" Jim added. Hennessy sneaked off to get inside the house perfectly without everybody knows. She gets inside in Lucas' daughter room and asks her to come with her to the festival in the city. "Hello beautiful girl, don't scream, don't be afraid, I'm Hennessy I will help you to get out of this boring room and take you to see the light festival in downtown. Do you want to come with me to see that?" she said. (The girl was a bit shock and about to scream) "Yeah," she said softly. "I will ask my dad first" she added. "No no, you don't have to. I already asked your dad and he said

you can come with me, honey." she lied to make the girl believe.
"No way! He never allowed me to go anywhere. You lied!" said the
little girl.

"No honey no, I'm not lying. Anyway, we have to do it fast before
your dad can change her mind. Anyway, I heard that you have a
secret way to get out of this house, will you show me? Said
Hennessy.

"That way! Follow me" said the little girl.
(Hennessy finally can make the girl out from the house with her
without Lucas and his men know. They left a letter to Lucas that
he should come to downtown if they want to see his daughter
alive.)

Lucas heard a lot about Hennessy and knows of what she has been
doing to bring justice for her parents. He also knows that he is her
major target. That is why he got anxious that she will kill his only
one daughter. Without thinking much, he apprehensively drove all
the way to downtown to get his daughter's back.
(He arrived at the main street in downtown and nobody there)

"Where is everybody?! Why are you hiding?! Are you scared of
me?!" He said.

(Hennessy finally show herself along with Lucas' daughter)

"I have been waiting for you but I can't see your ass up, so here I
am with your cute little daughter, you don't need to worry because
she's save with me, see? (His daughter innocently licking on ice

cream) I'm not going to kill your daughter the way you killed my parents because I'm not as fool as you. I'm here not to kill this innocent blood but I will kill you, motherfucker!" she said furiously.

Lucas got very angry and hit his nasty hand towards Hennessy's face and he draws her daughter's hand. And they start fighting. It was a sharp fight between Hennessy and a drug dealer, Santiago Lucas. Lucas was too powerful; he makes her right leg broken. Before another bad thing happens to Hennessy, Adam called the police to stop the fight and arrest Santiago Lucas. It was a long journey for Hennessy to get justice. Finally, she felt way better after she knows that Lucas is now with the police. She can breathe peacefully by now. She thanks to Adam and Jim for their endless support and help finding justice to her parents. Now she will back and continue her life as a normal 20 years old girl. She finally can feel the old Hennessy; which was a very cheerful, and lovely personality person. Now she never feels lonely anymore because, she now has Adam, during her journey he always spent most of the time with Adam and they secretly have a feeling to one another. Adam promises her that he will always with her and support her no matter what was happened in her life.

- The End -

Beyond

Marissa Aulia

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When it comes to family, some people will find that their siblings are the most annoying people on earth. They will never stop annoying, getting you scolded or making you cry even. People must find this is the most relatable but, some people just love being around their siblings. Can you imagine being in love with your own sibling? Love is the purest and the most essential things in this world, would you agree? Does love have a limitation? No, love does not have limitation. People do.

Jillian Hawthorne was a cold-looking 18-year-old girl. She had long wavy brunette hair, fair skin, and slim figure. She was generally a calm person and known as a smart and ambitious student. She always maintained on top of her class. She was so determined and strong-willed to get what she wanted. She lived with her brother who was 4 years older Julian Hawthorne and her father, Franklin Hawthorne in a beautiful port city.

One thing that she already interested since she was a kid was music. She had been playing violin for 9 years and was still taking a violin class on weekend. Music had been one of the closest parts of her life. Her first ever violin was given by her brother as a Christmas gift by using his own savings because her

brother noticed that Jillian was blissfully happy when their family once took them to jazz musical. She promised to learn diligently and aspired to be a professional violinist when she grew up and she knew she was going to make it.

She was emotionally attached to her brother because since she was a kid, she had been spending a lot of her time with Julian. Jillian felt the happiest and the safest when she was with her brother. Julian was a person who she could literally share about anything. Jillian believed that flesh and blood were forever. She told herself every single day that nothing in this world would ever take what she loved.

One sunny morning in the fall, before going to school, as usual, they had breakfast together. Nancy, the housemaid was already served breakfast. She had already worked for the Hawthorne family since Julian was still 2 years old. And as usual, that morning too, Franklin was absence in the dining table because he was still out of town. Back then, Jill used to sad when her father was not home. She always asked Julian when father would go home. As time gone by, Jill got used to it.

Back when she was 10 years old, her mother died because of an accident and ever since she lived with her brother and father. However, her father was very busy and rarely went home because he ran a business out of town. Basically, Jillian grew up alone with

her brother and housemaid who only worked in the morning until 4 p.m. She did not really understand the figure of mother and father in her life and did not actually bother with the fact that her father was also rarely home.

Jill remembered that yesterday her friend invited her to her birthday party. At that time she was just standing there and her not-so-close friend, Lily approached her and invited her to come to her party. Lily at least so far her closest friend even though she would prefer to say it, not-so-close friend. She was good. Jill hoped. Lily helped Jill a few times and she thought this was one of her thankfulness. Well, actually at first Jill felt like it would be just another boring party where she had to pretend that she enjoyed it all along. But since it was Lily at least, she considered coming.

After school, Jill was walking in the hallway when there was someone called her name. It turned out that glove boy. Actually, there was this boy who always wore leather gloves. She really thought he was a freak at first for wearing gloves every time. His name was Nara Coleman? Weisman? She always mixed it up with the other kid. They shared the same class in History. He was bright, friendly and very sociable. The more she looked at him, the more she thought that they were polar opposite. He asked if I saw someone named Marcus. "Marcus? Who else is Marcus? Never heard that name before." she mumbled. She just answered it coldly.

“The new kid in History, don’t you know?” he asked

Jill then understood who he was talking about. He was talking about that new cool boy in the History class and she saw he just went to the toilet 5 minutes before. Nara thanked her for giving the information where the new kid was. He took off his gloves to shake her hand. She was just standing still for a second before realizing that he handed his hand to shake her hand. Again, she mumbled deep in her heart questioning if this was really necessary for him to thank her that way. She thought a simple thank you would suffice.

Actually, at school, Jill actually was a smart kid. Many of her friends wanted to be close to her. Somehow, her friends were anxious around her because she looked sometimes ‘intimidating’ and unapproachable. Only a few friends ‘dared’ enough to talk to her. Actually, back then during junior high school, she had two best friends or at least she thought they were best friends but they were actually just used her for their personal interests. Ever since she was not interested to get close to her school friends anymore. Sometimes, she just thought that people who only took advantages of other people were trash and that feeling made her tend to avoid socialization. Julian who finally noticed about this asked her to forget about whatever her friends did in the past; that everyone was different and not like her friends. He wanted Jill to be open and make some friends.

“Tonight my friend is throwing a birthday party, can I come?”

“Sure why not? Don’t girls love party? Just don’t come home late. Cinderella rules.”

“Noted.” Jillian nodded and smiled

It had been a long time for her not to go to birthday parties. She felt it was tiring somehow and but she was just trying to be nice. She did not think that making friends was something she obligated to do. One or two were just fine for her. But, she would call it a break to come to her not-so-close friend’s birthday party.

Jill had a pretty hard time picking which dress she would wear tonight. The door was a bit opened and when Julian wanted to go downstairs he accidentally took a glance when Jill was confused over a red and black dress. Julian entered the room and standing behind her. Jill could see her brother coming from his reflection in the mirror.

“I’ll go with the red dress.” He said while smiling

“It is pretty, isn’t it?” Jill turned her body and while showing off the dress to Julian

“You’ll look lovely in that.”

“Thank you, Jules.”

Jill finished changing her dress and did her make up. She looked so graceful wearing that red dress that she lastly wore during last Christmas Eve. She let her long wavy hair in the

simplest way. She went downstairs looking for Julian to help her zip the back of her dress. Julian immediately helped his sister with her dress. For a second, Julian looked at her back that served in front of her eyes.

At this part of age, actually, they should have been given a lecture or basic knowledge from parents because both Jillian and Julian started acknowledging many things in life especially for body parts. Jillian would ask Nancy about certain things that Julian also had no idea like when she for the first time had period. Certain biological events also happened for Julian. It felt strange to him. How he had different thoughts on her and the way he looked at his sister just felt different. Julian began to think that his sister was pretty and attractive in a way he could not even understand. Julian felt something strange but quickly made up his minds to zip the dress. He grabbed Jill's shoulder and made her turning up.

“Done.”

“I don't know why I am doing this.”

“Doing what?”

“Going to a party. Don't you think this is not me?”

“What's so strange about it? Girls your age do that many times. I know I always say this to you, that I am your best friend in this world, but I want you to spend more time with your friends and have fun.”

Jill was actually tired after coming to her friend's birthday party. She kept telling herself that it was tiring and questioning why other girls like going to parties. She then remembered Julian and decided to come to Julian's room which actually placed next to her room; she found out that he was still awake; just lying on his bed reading some book.

“Can I come in?”

“Sure, come here.” Julian patted the bed he was lying on.

Jill walked and sat beside him. Julian fixed the blanket so that it could cover for both of them. She clung her hands on Julian's arms. Julian looked at her sister smoothly and saw Jill was already fell asleep after night talking. He placed her head on the pillow very gently not to make her awake. He just looked at her sleeping. She looked so peaceful and beautiful. He just realized that his little sister grew up beautifully.

He felt that his mother's beauty inherited to her little sister that he could portray how beautiful his mother was when she was about her sister age. There were also times when Julian felt 'strange desire' to touch his sister but quickly justifying himself that it was normal to have physical contacts like hugging and kissing his sister's forehead.

He remembered she was just a little girl back then. She was always clingy to him because they were very close. When they were children they liked bicycling around the block. He thought

her to ride a bicycle because father gave her a bicycle but never had time to teach little Jill. He loved Jill so much and he knew how Jill loved him too. He just could never think any boy would steal that love from him. In the morning, Julian was awake and moved Jill before the housemaid arrived at her room.

Even though they had their own room, both Julian and Jillian were really like sleeping next to each other. Julian would come to her room more often recently but of course not when father was home which was so rare and it made them so close. He would say goodnight and tucked her in. Actually, Julian had been doing this ever since they were children to replace the absence of the parents. Julian would say, *“Now close your eyes and sweet dream, Jillybean. There will be no days, when you open your eyes and not find me there.”* to comfort her that really nothing had to worry about, everything would be fine as long as she had him on her side.

One day Julian looked sad and seemed like he had problems that he had not shared to Jill. That evening, Jillian was sitting on the couch and Julian approached her. He leaned his head on her lap. Jillian wondered if her brother had problems.

“What is it, Jules?” she asked

“I just miss us together like the old times, me, you, father, and mother. I miss her so much.”

“Both of you were very close. I can give you the same amount of

love and care that mother gave you. I am here for you, Jules. No one could love you the way I do.”

“I know. Stay with me.” He grabbed her hands and held them close to him.

Jillian and Julian found a new way to have midnight talk. They liked stargazing on the roof if both of them could not sleep at night. They laid their bodies and talking whatever about the day until they felt really sleepy to go to bed. They would just count and pointing which one the brightest star of them all. At this very moment, she always dreamed that she could live like this forever; with her brother that no one would ever come between them. She loved this feeling. She loved being loved. Julian pulled her closer to his arms. The night was getting colder.

“Are you cold?” Julian asked

"No— no it is just perfect. I could die at this moment." She peeked at Julian's face

“Me too.” He answered gently

For the first time, they had their first kiss. It felt so pure and warm them from the cold night. They just looked at each other and understood their feeling to each other. Julian who at first said to Jillian that "brothers don't see their sisters that way" when Jillian asked if she was attractive in his men's eyes, in his eyes because there were actually boys in her school who asked her out but she could not now Julian admitted to himself that *maybe his feeling for his*

sister was not right but it was true. He loved Jillian more than just a brother to their sister. He started to see her as a ‘girl’ because he felt that indeed Jillian was the only person in this world who understood him and cared for him.

“I love you, Jill. I am too cowardly to admit that I love you this way.” He said

They both finally realized that they shared the same feelings to each other. How they did not see each other just like brother and sister. And that night also for the first time, they had more than just kisses. They were actually done intercourse. They decided to keep it secret from people; their father, Nancy the housemaid, friends because if they knew they were well aware of what would happen to them.

Days by days, Jillian and Julian were getting closer and closer. Julian was very protective. The way he treated Jillian was so gentle and obviously showed how he loved her. He would literally do everything to make her happy and safe. He felt the responsibility to make her feel that she had someone to rely on in this world. He felt that Jillian was someone that forever he would protect and take care of. There were many times which made him into thinking that Jillian was very beautiful and special in his eyes.

One night, they were still climbing the roof and stargazing from up there. While Jillian was busy counting the stars that night, Julian was stunned by his own sister. She was getting so pretty

days by days.

“You grew up beautifully –Such unfortunate knowing that...” he mumbled but immediately stopped and his words and sighed as he glared to the wide backyard in front of him.

“That we are related by blood?” Jillian stared at her brother next to her.

“You know, you mean the world to me.” Julian stared back at his sister and reached his sister’s cold hands

“You too – mean the world to me. We are so much alike, don’t you think? It feels like we are meant to be together. We are bound, Jules. Do you think there are out there other girls who could love you the way I do?”

“No, no one could. And so no one could ever love you the way I do.”

Although at first, they ignored and thought that every brother and sister experienced the same thing as them. They agreed to keep this as a secret. They did not want anyone to find out about their relationship especially their father who was actually devoted enough to his belief that something like this was not supposed to happen. They had no idea how long it would be. They had no idea how long they could keep it from anyone, from the world. Until then, they just wanted to be just like this; to be together.

Winter came. The weather was getting colder and colder. It was a

week before Christmas she would participate in a jazz musical and it was only in 4 days to go. She practiced with others more often and that night she came home. She prepared and tried her best. Mr. Hawthorne would stay at home for days until Christmas so they could spend it together.

That night Jill was so gorgeous wearing a white dress with a little flower crown on his head. Julian, Mr. Hawthorne and Lily, and the other friends came to give her support. They were amazed by the entire performance. Jill was very happy that all her hard work for months finally paid off. For the next 2 months after that was like the best days in Jillian's life until one day, his father went home without them knowing and found out that she and Julian were sleeping together under a blanket and hugging each other. Mr. Hawthorne woke them up. Both Julian and Jill were shocked knowing that their father went home without telling it first.

“Father – you did not?” Julian was in shocked

“How many times have you been sleeping one bed like this?” Mr. Hawthorne asked in a high tone

"Father we were really just sleeping," Jill answered

"Listen, Jill, you and your brother can't share the same room, sleep in the same bed!" Mr. Hawthorne yelled at them.

“It was my fault, father. I am sorry. It was my entire fault.”

“Now be honest to me, what have you both done all this time?”

They did not confess what they so far had done to their

father. Jillian was shaking because father yelled at Julian. Their father kept asking the same question over and over again and Julian answered the same with nothing over and over again as well. He asked Jillian to leave the room but she did not want to leave Julian alone. Her father, of course, did not believe any words they said. Somehow he felt that he failed. He admitted that he had always been so busy that he could not know what happened between their children. He was just could not believe that his children were this far.

“You both ever did that, didn’t you?” he yelled

Julian just stood there did not know what to say. Her father drew the conclusion that they did. Because of his anger, he finally decided to send Jillian to the sisters of mercy. He thought that they needed to live apart and redeemed for they had done. Jillian begged to his father that she did not want to be apart with her brother Julian. But his father’s decision would not be arguable. Julian also begged that father would not send Jillian away.

Jillian grabbed a knife that usually stored in her end table and stabbed her father from the back. Her father fell to the floor and she just stood there watching. Julian could not believe what he had just seen.

“Jill? What have you done? You stabbed him.”

“I had no choice, Jules. I could not take the risk that he was going to send me away. I want to be with you and I am sure father

would not love that idea. Finally, it is just you and me, Jules. Aren't you happy? Isn't it what we have always wanted to get rid of people that would make us apart? I am just too scared that I might lose you” She cried

Julian approached Jillian and hugged her. She was shaking. He wiped her tears. He tried to calm her.

“It is okay, I am here.”

By the time Mr. Hawthorne body was found, both Julian and Jillian went missing. They just ran and ran to places that no one knew them; no one would make them apart. Not family, friends, or the world.

“I believed this day would come, when you and me together and everything is just perfect.”

CHASING STAR

Bestari Dwi Noviyanti

164214165

“How’s the practice going today, honey?” his mother asked him during the dinner. “It was alright, Mom”. “And when will the announcement of the scholarship?” it was his Dad who asked him this time. “On the fifth semester, Dad”.

It was one regular Thursday evening for the Fletcher family. They sat down and had dinner together with whatever delicious meals Mrs. Fletcher cooked. They always have a conversation about what they did in that day or about their future, and this time they talked about Andy’s football scholarship.

He remembered at the beginning of his second semester, he saw an announcement about football scholarship. He saw the announcement at the wall magazine and thought maybe it was worth to try since he didn’t know where he will continue his study after high school. It said that for those who got the scholarship will go to Brazil and get a football practice for about a year and if they pass the test, they will be a professional footballer. After the school that day, he already filled all the forms and all the registration things even he hadn’t talk to his parents about it. He told his parents at dinner the next day. They asked him a lot of questions about it, but after all, they were nothing but support

him.

There's something about his parents that he hates sometimes. They never told him to become something they wanted, told him to take this or that class, or told him to take a certain major in a university as most parents do to their kid. Well, it's good because he can choose his own career. However, he still doesn't know who he is and what he wanted to be, so it's terrifying for him to make his own future.

His parents raised him well, with love and support that he thinks he will never be able to return. They are the most important thing in his life, alongside his sister, Sierra. They have a pretty close bond since he couldn't remember. He could tell everything to Sierra even the silliest thing he has done and she will never judge him, she always supports him. They grew up at the same roof and he could go into her room at two in the morning for late talk and vice versa, but now Sierra has to live in another side of the town for her work. She would visits once or twice in every week, but it will never be the same for Andy that he couldn't see her laughing at his stupid jokes or the smile that she tried to put in her face for support him when he was feeling sad.

After the dinner, he helps his mom with the dishes, then he excused himself to doing his homework in his basement room. Actually, what he did there was the opposite of doing his homework. He just stared at the ceiling thinking about how tired

he was. Since the football scholarship did not only considered his GPA but also his score at the football team in the school, he tried to balance those two things and sometimes it just eating him slowly. He really wants to get that scholarship because he thinks that was the only way to make his parents happy. He doesn't know what he wanted to do after high school and football is something he good at. It's not like he dumbs with the courses at school. He's one of the brightest students, but he didn't like the idea of him getting "formal" education again and ended up with a boring job. Maybe a professional footballer was the best for him. Maybe.

"Hey, mate!" said Dan, one of Andy's best friends. "Don't hey mate me!" snapped Andy, clenching his jawline. "Woaaah someone is grumpy this morning" another Andy's best friend, Mitch, joined them. Andy just rolled his eyes and continued walks towards the class. "But seriously, mate. What's wrong? You can always tell me everything" Dan said as they sit in the very back of the class. Suddenly, Andy felt so guilty about his attitude towards his best friends earlier. He got tired of practicing football yesterday and overslept in the afternoon, but he forgot he has to finish a project for today's class. So he stayed all night to finish it and hasn't got any proper sleep.

"Sorry, just tired. You know... Mrs. Rodriguez's project" Andy whispered to Dan since the teacher just walked into the class.

“Yeah, it’s the fifth semester, buddy. They said it’s the gate to hell. Lucky you today is our last day on the fifth semester” Andy chuckled when he heard Dan’s reply. “I think I’m already in hell” Andy replied for the last time before the pay attention to the teacher.

It’s been hard for him to continued balancing between his grade and football. He struggled and worried since the announcement gets closer. He cried a lot at night. The thought of losing the scholarship, the thought of him will end up miserable if he’s not a success and the thought was not able to make his parents proud were haunting him. Sometimes he called Sierra, but he didn’t want to be too clingy since he knew how busy she was.

Thanks to his best friend who keeps he companied through all this time: Dan, Mitch, and Brian. They met in high school, except him and Dan. Andy met Dan when they were in elementary school and they became the best friends since then. It’s weird that they became really close since they all met. They all had the same sense of jokes, mostly dad’s jokes. They even play an instrument and cover a song together sometime. Those three guys only the people that Andy considered as his friends. Even though the existence of him is like a guy who everyone wants to be friends with, but he’s the kind of person who likes to shut everyone down and be friends only with a few people. He talks to people when it comes to an important thing and he will answer only if it’s necessary. It’s

like he builds a high-strong wall around him so there's no one can see him.

"Wanna hangout at my place tomorrow? Kicking off the first day of the semester break?" asked Mitch as they walked out of the class. "Count me in!" screamed Brian as he walked in rush to his next class. "Nah, I'm gonna pass, bro. Got a football practice for tomorrow" said Andy. "C'mon mate, we haven't really hung out recently and you've been pushing yourself too much. I can see it through the bag under your eyes" said Dan. "And tomorrow is the first day of the semester break, what an evil person who told you to come for football practice?" Dan continued to persuade Andy. "Okay, let me think about it. Later boys" said Andy as he made to a different direction from his friend. They had different classes for the rest of the day.

The drive to Mitch's house wasn't that long. Andy decided to join the boys after the football practice. Even though he was tired, but he really missed hanging out with his friends. Besides, his parents won't be home until midnight so it's better for him to hanging out with his friends rather than being home alone.

"Hey, mate!" said Dan as he saw Andy walked into the room. "Didn't I said to stop hey mate me this morning?" said Andy, rolling his eyes. Dan just laughed at Andy's behavior, he knew Andy didn't mean to be rude to him. Dan knew him very well that

Andy didn't have to tell him, he knew something was up in Andy's mind. "Here's mate," said Mitch as he handed Andy a bottle of beer. Andy accepted it and threw himself at the couch in Mitch living room. Mitch and Brian continued to play video games and Dan just sat there, watching them.

"You wanna talk about it?" said Dan all of sudden. "About what?" asked Andy. "Do you aware of how long I know you? I know you have something in your mind and it's not something good" Dan shrugged his shoulder as he answered. "Is it that obvious?" asked Andy. "You may not good at words, but we know," said Mitch who just paused the game and had full attention to Andy. It's true that Andy never been good at using words to express his feeling. He always avoids talking about his feeling, but he's a good listener though. He just doesn't trust people easily.

"It's just.... everything" Andy sighed. "My mind is running a million miles per hour. You know how much I love my mom and dad right? How much I want to make them proud and happy? Yes, I've tried so hard balancing my grade and football and it's killing me. I tried to not overthinking but what if I didn't get the scholarship? They will be disappointed, aren't they? Look at Sierra! She already had a wonderful job! She living in her dream as a professional hairdresser! What will I do then? Enjoying my miserable life?"

"Dude, you're rambling," said Dan as he put his hand on Andy's

shoulder. It's one of Andy's habit that his friend knows very well. He always rambling when he's nervous or wants to get something out of his chest. As they knew Andy never good at expressing his feeling using words, he will definitely ramble when he tried to. "I'm sorry," said Andy as he realized what he did. "Look, mate. I know all of these things stressed you out, but you no need to worry too much about it. Your grade is beyond great, you're very talented at football too, you've got it bro" said Brian. "Thanks, I don't know what I do without you guys," said Andy as he takes a sip of his beer. "You know what you need to do? You need to find a distraction from school and football. You need to find your escape where you can find your inner peace and stop this sentimental bromance session and let's have fun!!" screamed Mitch which made four of them laughed.

"Speaking of escape, what about your song writing? We know you're really good and passionate about that" asked Dan. "Yeah, you've always let us listen but not anymore. What happened?" this time was Brian who asked him. "Oh yeah, I still do it" answered Andy. He loves writing songs. He feels relived when he wrote as pour his heart out in the paper and turns it into a song. He used to let his friends listen to it, but not anymore. He felt it's too private to share with anyone. Besides, he didn't want to be seen as a sentimental guy.

"I write sometimes, but not in front you all" answered Andy. "Oh

yeah? I bet it's because we walked in when you were naked and wrote a song in your basement" said Brian jokingly. "It's like you've never seen it before" replied Andy. "Yeah but why naked, mate?" asked Brian. "Cause it will turn out into a good song when I wrote it naked". Funny to talk about it, but Andy thought that all the good songs he has written are when he's naked. "Oh, like you've written a song for Mariah Carey or something?" mock Brian. "Not Mariah Carey, but have you heard the song called The Perfect Disguise?" asked Andy. "The one that Mike Dawkins sing? It's all over the radio last summer, dude" replied Dan as he remembers the song that he would sing all day long last summer. "Uhm yeah, I wrote that," said Andy shyly and he immediately could see the shock on their faces. "WHAT?! HOW?! WHEN?!" Mitch was more screaming rather than asked the question.

It was started when he sent his song to Mike Dawkins through email at his third semester on high school. He never thought Mike would see it though. A couple of weeks later, Mike emailed him said that he would love to sing the song on his next album. Andy was cool with it, he can't believe it either, but he never made a big deal or brag about it. Dan, Mitch, and Brian couldn't believe how Andy told the whole story like it wasn't something big. After explaining about the whole Mike Dawkins and answered a lot of questions from his friends, he went home since he still got football practice for the next day.

The semester break flew so fast. Andy spent a lot of time with his family and best friends. Most of the time, he practiced football but he manages to the spent amount of time to write songs. Mitch was right about finding an escape from the madness of the football scholarship thing. Writing a song was the only thing keeping him sane and somehow he didn't worried about the scholarship anymore, even though the announcement was getting closer. Mike Dawkins also contacted him during the semester break. He said he liked to hear some more from Andy, so Andy sent him a bunch of his songs.

It was Sunday morning when the announcement of the football scholarship will be announced. The Fletcher family just had breakfast then they spent time together in their living room. Sierra visited them that day but the only reason she coming home was to support his brother. Around 1 pm, Andy got an email notification. His heart was beating so fast but the face of afraid turned into confusion as he realized it was from Mike Dawkins instead of the football scholarship institution.

“Hey Andy, just want to say that I love all the song that you sent me. I know this is your last year in high school and I kinda hope you want to join me in my writing session for my next album in LA after you graduate. Hope I will be hearing from you soon, bro. See ya!”

Andy couldn't believe what he just read. Mike Dawkins asked him to write a song in LA, which means he had to leave his hometown Sydney. Still couldn't think straight, he received another email. This time is from the scholarship institution.

“Good evening, Mr. Fletcher, We're so happy to announce to you that you are one of the students that got our scholarship. Congratulations, we're looking forward to your confirmation.”

A week has gone after the announcement. Andy still remembers how his parents smile lightened up after he broke the news to them. About the scholarship of course. He hasn't told them yet about the Mike Dawkins' offer. He already told Dan, Mitch, and Brian about everything and they were freaking out like crazy. They were aware that this is going to be difficult for Andy to make a decision but they couldn't do anything since it's only Andy who can decide. Andy also called Sierra the other day to tell her about Mike Dawkins's offer and of course, he has to tell her about how he knows Mike and about The Perfect Disguise song. Sierra was beyond mad at him because she has no idea about all of this and he's not telling her from the start. However, she guesses there's nothing she can do besides supporting his brother decision no matter what. She knew his brother afraid of making a bad decision and over thinking it, but she believes his brother is stronger and could get this through.

“Mom, dad, I have to tell you something,” said Andy after clearing his throat to get their attention. “I haven’t confirmed the football scholarship” there was a pause before he continued, “The reason is... I got an offer from Mike Dawkins to come to LA and write songs for his next album and I think I’m gonna take that”. He swears to God he could see the disappointment in his dad's face after he told them. There was a long silence, no one said anything. “Please say something,” said Andy after it felt like forever. “What’s wrong in your mind? Taking a songwriting job rather than a professional footballer? I know I never push you to become something but this is stupid” said Mr. Fletcher as he clenched his jaw and looked at him into the eye. This is it. All of Andy’s insecurity that he was really afraid about disappointing his parents will happen.

The feel of relieved after he wrote down what’s going on in his mind and turned it into a song was never can be compared to anything. He didn’t realize songwriting had a huge impact on him and shape him into a person who he is. He didn’t know who he is and what he wanted to be two years ago, but he knows better now.

“I know if you’re disappointed at me, you have the right to do that because I understand you only want nothing but the best for me. I’m sorry. But this is what I wanted to be, this is where my star aligned. Please let me chase my star and I will prove

you what is it all about and how important this is to me” Andy couldn’t help but cried when he said that.

Seeing his son broken like this really made Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher sad. They realized that they didn’t really know their son. They tried to raise him but in the end, it’s himself who shaped who he is today. Of course, they want nothing but the best for him. They will support their son decision.

-THE END-

MINU GA HANA

Clara Adriane Mauretha

164214158

how I wish I could be there a few hours earlier...

I would never forget that day. The day, when I thought would be the best day for her, turned into the day I've never imagined ever in my life.

It was Sunday, 29th February 2020. I was ready to give Hana her sweet 17th birthday surprise. I have prepared everything for her! I was worried before because of the heavy rain which I thought would be pouring endlessly. Thank God, an hour before my plan, the rain stopped. I only needed 10 minutes to get to my car and started driving to her house. It's still 6.20 in the morning. She didn't wake up early, especially on Sunday, that's why I decided to make a surprise before she awoke.

When I arrived, I parked my car and walked to her house. Hana's house was very big, at least for me, therefore I usually called it Hana's mansion even though it's not as big as a mansion in general. It was her great-great-grandpa's heritage which had been given from generation to generation. Her mother was the only child of her Mom's parents which made their family owned

that mansion just for them.

Hana gave me her key house so that I could come at any time and just walk inside without knocking the door since we've been friends for more than 6 years and I've become more like a sister for her. I walked inside her house and directly went to her room. My plan was just to walk inside her room, wake her up and then sing a birthday song with a birthday cake in my hand. That was just a very simple plan, of course, but what happened next was a nightmare.

I opened her door and found her body, dead-body, on her bed. I thought she's still sleeping, but I recognized there's something strange with her position. I came closer and finally saw the blood coming out of her temple. There was a gun in her right hand and a diary she held with her folded left hand. I was shocked and screamed out loud. I didn't remember what's happened after that. All I remember was I was inside a room (maybe one of the rooms in Hana's mansion) with her diary in my hand. I was staring at the diary for a few minutes then slowly opened the diary. The first page indicated the first time she started to write the diary. It was when her mother passed away. And then the story began....

June 18th, 2018

Today was the worst day of my life. I felt nothing but pain. Mom just passed away this morning. I never knew that this day would come so fast. I wasn't ready yet. Finally, that disease had defeated

you, the strongest person I've ever known. Why were you gone today, Mom? Why didn't you give me any sign before you go so that I could make you at least happy for the last time? Was it what a broken heart feels like? I was feeling like my body shattered into pieces.

Dad of course as broken as I felt, Mom. Maybe worse than me, but he was really good at hiding his feelings. He managed everything while let Kay took care of me. I felt grateful because Kay was here with me, as she always did. She helped me a lot by always being beside me without saying anything. Her presence made me felt that I wasn't alone.

Mom, I love you, as I always do. It's really hard for me. I wanted you to take me to your new world, but I knew that you wouldn't do that. I believed you'd be happy there. I won't forget you, Mom. Please don't forget me too....

**

August 2nd, 2018

I was so happy today! It's the first day of high school!

Well, I actually was a little bit sad because Kay wasn't in the same school as me... but Kay said that I shouldn't start my first day with sadness. She's right. That's why I was so excited.

Actually, the reason why I was so happy was that I met a handsome guy from the third year. Ha-ha! Yeah, I knew, it's too

early. But, well, I can't control my feeling. Don't worry, I'd only be his secret admirer :p
...even though deep inside my heart, I hope I can get to know him better.

September 15th, 2018

I knew his name! OMG SO HAPPY!!!!

I heard one of his friends called his name this afternoon in school, but I won't tell you his name, ha-ha :p

Let's just call him... Mister R.

Believe me, he has the most beautiful smile I've ever seen. I also like his eyes.

I forget to tell you that he's such an idol in my school. I'm not the only girl who likes him. Everywhere he goes, there will always be a group of girls who are screaming his name. And then he will give them his gorgeous smile while the girls will be shouting even louder. I'm looking at all of those things, hoping that I am brave enough at least trying to say hello to him.

Ah, does he also want to know my name? I hope so ☺

October 1st, 2018

You won't believe what happened to me today! He talked to me! He even asked my name and my number!!! I still don't believe it. I slapped my face again and again after he walked by because I

thought it was a dream but (THANKFULLY!!) it wasn't. I'm feeling like I'm the luckiest girl ever.

Wait, let me recall that Moment again.

The way he looked at me right into my eyes....

The way he smiled at me....

The way he asked my name....

Aaaaahhhh!! Let me feel those butterflies fly in my stomach again.

I will enjoy it by myself. Bye!

October 5th, 2018

You won't believe who texted me just an hour ago. It's him!
Mister R!

He asked me to go on Saturday night, which is tomorrow! OMG!
What should I reply??

Wait wait wait... let me think for a while... (well I think you already know what my reply will be)

November 22nd, 2018

God answered my prayers. Thank God.

Mister R and I are one step closer to a relationship, I think (or I hope?). We've been so-called-"friends" since that first night he asked me to go out. He's really kind, smart and gentleman. He always asks for permission to my Dad every time he wants to go out with me. I'm beyond happy. This is the first time I have this

kind of feeling to a guy. I don't want to be over-confident but I really hope that he wants the same thing as I want. Well, let's see what the future will be....

December 8th, 2018

I don't believe what I've heard today in school.

So, it was around 2 hours before school finished. I was in the toilet, but it wasn't the toilet that I usually used because the other toilets are full. The toilet is near school warehouse and rarely used. The warehouse is not well maintained so some male students usually use it as a "basecamp". Their basecamp cannot be seen from the toilet.

At the time when I was inside the toilet, I heard a conversation with some students. I didn't pay attention to what they're talking about until I heard my name was mentioned. I started to listen carefully to why they mentioned my name. Then I recognized someone's voice. It's Mister R's voice. This was more or less their conversations that I recorded,

"So, how's your relationship with Hana?"

"As you see, she's easy to conquer. Too easy. Ha-ha. I'm the one who wins this bet!" (Mister R's voice)

"Hahaha don't celebrate too early, dude. You win and get the money only after you have sex with her, remember? Are you really sure you can win?"

“Tch, that’s only a piece of cake. She's too in love with me. Right after I become her boyfriend, she will obey everything that I say. Ha-ha!” (Mister R’s voice)

"Hahahahahaha so she's that kind of stupid girl! She thinks that love is just like in novels and movies! She's not as smart as I thought, then! I want to taste her too, ha-ha”

That's all. After that, they're just laughing and saying that I have no different with a whore.

I was angry, sad and disappointed at the same time. Love has made my eyes blind. Thank God, You gave me a chance to open up my eyes and saved me from a jerk like him. I really need time to reconsider everything. I still can’t believe it. But I know I have to face the truth.

I will go swimming to relax my mind. Bye.

I knew that story. She told me about that jerk. He's the first male ever that she fell in love with. Fortunately, she's stronger than everyone thinks. The rest of the story was no longer important. I opened another random page and started to read again....

May 7th, 2019

In the last few days, I think Dad is a little bit different. He looks as if he is having something big but not something good. I’m curious but I think it’s not the right time to ask him what’s wrong.... Stay strong, Dad.

August 12th, 2019

I was chosen as the new Student Council President.

Of course, I was happy and touched. I was just started my second year and suddenly chosen as a President. It's such an honor for me. I will tell Dad right after he comes home! 😊

Oh! And of course, Kay must now about this!

October 4th, 2019

I don't believe it! How dare Dad invited a bitch to this house!? I understand that Dad is having many problems now, but how could he went home with a girl and did that... that... that THING! Here!!! In our house! In front of my eyes!!! OMG, I REALLY CAN'T BELIEVE THIS! And that fuckin bitch look at me as if I'm invisible! I can't stand! I'll leave this house!

October 5th, 2019

I came back home because Dad apologized and begged me to go home. He's still my Dad, the only family that I have.... I can't ignore him. I know he's just a human too. I forgave him and we hugged. He said that it won't happen anymore. He finally opened up about his problems. He explained that he has many debts right now. His business collapsed. And many more.

I was just trying to understand and give support to him even though I didn't understand it all. All that I know is Dad needs support. He also feels alone without a partner next to him, that's why he took that girl to home.

I cannot 100% accept his excuses, but I focus on his needs, not his mistakes. I never knew how he felt after Mom's death until today. The loneliness is killing him inside.

I love you, Dad. Let's face it together...

October 31st, 2019

After my deep talk with Dad, everything is getting worse. Dad went bankrupt. It really gave a big effect on him. Almost every night he comes home drunk. I told him so many times not to get drunk but he became bad-tempered. Not only once did he hit me when I tried to stop him to get drunk. Now I have some bruises on my body.... But it doesn't hurt me as much as his changes. I'm afraid of him. I don't like to be at home, especially when he's at home. But I can't tell anyone about this. He's still my Dad... even if it seems like I don't know him anymore.

November 18th, 2019

It's been the second time he did THAT to me! He's my father! How could he raped me!?? Huhuhu... what should I do? It hurt so bad I can't stand... anyone help me, please. :(

November 20th, 2019

The third time. He beat me so hard every time I tried to against him and protect myself. But I can't... he's too strong for me. I feel ashamed of myself. This is disgusting.

December 9th, 2019

It's been a month since he did that 'thing' to me and still do that until now.... I don't know who I am anymore. I'm too weak. I can't tell anyone because it's too disgusting and I'm ashamed. Why has this happened to me? What is my fault?

I was cheated by the guy whom I fell in love with.... And now I'm raped by the only guy that I trust and respect so much! How could life be this unfair?! What did I do in the past to have this kind of nightmare?

Mom, do you see this? Do you see this from up there? Can you please help me, Mom? It's such a shame. ☹

January 26th, 2020

Today I met Kay. I arrived earlier than her, so I decided to smoke while waiting for her. Unfortunately, she came too fast so she saw me smoked. It was the first time she saw me touching something called cigarettes. Never had I ever before even touched a cigarette.

I hate both the cigarette and the people who smoke. But now I became part of the thing that I hate the most. It's all because of him. Dad. But of course, I can't tell Kay.

She asked me,

“You must be kidding me. What's wrong with you, Na?”

I didn't know what to say. Then I decided to reply,

“Nothing. I just want to know what it feels like to be a bad girl. Ha-ha! I promise you it's just the first and last time I smoked.”

Of course, she didn't believe me. But she said nothing. And after a few minutes in silence, I tried to change the topic. Then we talked about many things as usual. Oh, how I wish I could tell her about this pain....

Kay, I think I don't deserve you anymore. I'm not Hana that you know. I'm sorry....

February 3rd, 2020

God, can you please just take my life? I can't stand anymore....

February 24th, 2020

Hey, look what I found! A gun! I never know that Dad keeps a gun in this house.... Wait! I have an idea!

February 29th, 2020 / 00.12 a.m.

I have to do it now. There will be no second chance. Now or never. Dad is not at home, so no one will know.

Mom, finally I can meet you again....

Kay, if you read this later, I just want to say that I'm sorry. I'm sorry I can't tell you about this. I'm sorry I'm not good enough for you. I'm sorry for leaving you without saying goodbye. I'm sorry for letting you know this in the end. It's not because I don't trust you. It's just because I know no one can help me. I will bring all of these sins with me. My last wish is... please forgive me. Thank you for being such a best friend and sister for me. Thank you for not leaving me alone. Thank you for your time and attention. Thank you for everything. I believe you will find another person better than me.

Ah, let me tell you something about me. I remembered a day before my Mom passed away, she told me about the meaning of my name. She said that Hana in Japanese means a flower. Such a beautiful name, right? But I think it's not suitable for me. Yesterday, I found a proverb also in Japanese with my name in it; *minu ga hana* which means things will never be as you imagine, so you're better off not seeing them. This one I feel more suitable for me because everything that happened in my life is never as I want. My imagination can never compete with reality. I lost the one that I love the most, I was cheated by a guy whom I fell in love with,

and I was ruined by my one and only father who I respected the most.

Lastly, if you are still questioning why I choose this way, I will answer it with a proverb from (once again) Japanese; *ikihaji kaku yori, shinu ga mashi* which means it's better to die than live in disgrace.

Now, after I have told you everything that you may want to know, if you forgive me, please bury my body and throw it away in the sea, our favorite place ever. Once again, thank you, Kay, and goodbye....

The only thing that spoke louder than my voice after finished reading her diary was my cry. It's kinda sad for me because I knew it after she's not here anymore, not in the same world with me. It must be very hard months that she passed through. She must have felt really alone during that time. How could I didn't have any clue about this? I knew something went wrong when I saw her smoked for the first time. I was shocked. But I had any other things to think at that time so I didn't put so much attention to it. Of course, I regret it so much now.

You know what, Hana? I hope you finally find your happiness and peace up there. I forgive you and I will make your last dream comes true. Don't worry. Thank you for teaching me so many things. I will keep your diary to remind me of you. Rest in peace, my sister....

My Sweet Revenge

Nathassya Martha U. S.

164214152

Hello, my name is *Hestia*¹ Fernandez and I was still 20 back then. My friends usually called me Ty for short. At the time, summer holiday was near the end and my second year of college would start in a few hours. In fact, it was going to start in 7 hours. My major is Psychology. I didn't really want to go back college. I hate college so much. I like my major. It was the situation that I had to face that I didn't like. I really liked to imagine that I could read people mind. So, I could fight back my bully. That was why I chose to major in psychology. In a way I could read people. It was raining outside and I¹ was alone in my room. The situation made me wonder about everything. I kept asking many question in my head, 'Why am I still alive?', 'Is it really because of me?' and so on. I kept thinking about negative things. This was why I hate rainy season. I rather chose hot weather that rain like now.

DUAARRR

¹ Hestia: Greek's Goddess of fire

It made me feel silent. I immediately hid under my blanket. I was so scared. It was because there was a thunderstorm and it caused a blackout. It was really great. Could it get any better? I scared of thunder ever since the accident that involved my mom. I called my mom in my head to keep myself calm. Then, I started to feel sleepy. After that everything was black.

I suddenly woke up from my sleep. I realized that I sat in the back seat of my mom's car. Then I heard a voice from outside of the car. I look from the window. I was so surprised. It's because I saw myself with my mom, they walked to the car. I thought they couldn't hear me, but I could hear what they said. What's going on? Suddenly, I remembered something. Wasn't this happen when we wanted to go out for dinner? Wasn't this before the accident? It's scared me. I started to shout at them. I tried to prevent them to go outside, but they couldn't hear me. Please lord, I didn't want to see this. I tried to grab my mom's hand, but I couldn't touch them.

Then, I was not in the car anymore. I stood in the street where the accident happens. Oh my... I couldn't see

this. I didn't want to see this, but somehow, I couldn't close my eyes. I saw my mom's car and a car that drove fast from the other way. It crashed with my mom's car. I ran to the car accident scene. I saw so much blood in my mom's head. She was hugged me to prevent me to get hurt. I fell down in front of the scene. I started to crying. I tried to woke up my mom, but she's not opened her eyes. I shouted out loud, asked her to open her eyes. Nobody heard my shouting and crying. Everyone around me started to call 911. After a moment, an ambulance came and took the younger me and my mom into it.

I woke up and scream, "Mommmmm....." I was still in my room. I guessed I fell asleep that night. Why I kept dream about the accident? While I kept thought about the dream, I didn't realised that I was crying. After a while, I got my phone from the bed side and saw that it was 5 in the morning. I didn't want to sleep again. I didn't want to dream that night again. It had been 8 years since that accident, but I kept dreaming about that night. It made me felt frustrated. Why couldn't I just forget about it? It's always haunting me in my dreams. I always asked this kind of question in my

head, but I already know the answer.

I think I still felt guilty about that night. I felt like I should be the one who died in that accident and not my mom. I felt guilty that I survived in that accident. I even got a scar in my left cheek from that accident. It was like a reminder that I was the cause of my mom's death. Every time I saw myself in a mirror, I would remember the time when I saw my mom's exhale her last breath. Back then, everyone blamed me for that night, including my father. There's no one who cares about me. I know that my aunt *Bianca*² still cares about me. She's not blaming me for my mother's death, but I still felt alone in this world. I also didn't want to disturb her. I'm already grateful that she still cares about me. She was such an angel and she's like a second mom to me. Then, I started to get ready. I had class at 7.30.

The next class was at 3 in the afternoon, so I sat with my friends at the school park. We talked about their winter holiday and also exchanged news. Before I forgot, I would like to introduce you to who my friends are. First, let me introduce you to *Seraphina*³ Santoso or we usually called her Sera. She was my friend since childhood. She was

half America and Indonesia. She was the kindest person that I ever know. She was also a Psychology student like me. She was the closest to me than my other 2 friends. Next, I would introduced you to the twins. Yes, I had a twin friend and they are still my best friends. Their names are *Alexa and Alexia*⁴ Thomas. Their descendent was from French. I met them in middle school. They were quite a nice friend, but they were not as close as Sera to me. Alexa usually called as Lexa and Alexia as Lexi. They were an identical twin, but they had a completely different personality. We could saw it from the major that they chose. Lexa chose to major in medical. She wanted to be a doctor. While Lexi chose to major in design. She wanted to be an interior designer. All of us went to the same college.

“Aaargg.....” I screamed loudly that everyone look at our table. My bully just poured water to me. “Looks who's here everyone” my bully, *Mary*⁵ White, shouted to everyone in the park. Mary shouted, “There is a killer here. Shouldn't a killer be in jail?” Then Lexa came face to face with Mary and said, “Don't bother my friend, granny, or I will kick you.” Mary back off from us while said, “She is a killer.” Sera and Lexi was busy hugged me and told me to not listened to

whatever Mary said to me. They closed my ears. I was trembling and crying. Why she had to say something like that. I hate her so much. I felt so weak. I stood up and Lexa asked, "Where are you going?" I answered her quietly and said, "I'm just going to take my spare clothes in my locker and change into it. You don't have to worry." "Should I go with you? In case, the granny bothers you again," said Sera. "You don't have to accompany me, Ser. I'll be okay. I will back here again."

I went to the locker area without waited my friends answer. I thought that I would survive by myself. I didn't want to be their burden. I actually didn't want them involved in my problem with Mary. Mary White was just some girl that like to bully me. My friends called her granny, because she always had a scowl in her face every time she saw us. I don't know what was my fault toward her. I always asking myself about why she hate me. It's still a mystery to me. I opened my locker and took my spare clothes. I always keep spare clothes in case for the situation in the park. It's like my everyday meals.

After I lock my locker, I start to walked to the bathroom. When I suddenly was push to the locker. It's so

hurt that I closed my eyes. The one who push me is Mary. “Hey, Killer. Look at me!” Mary shout at me. “What do you want Mary?” I asked her with a straight face. “Listen to what I say, Killer. You’re lucky that you have your friends back in the park. Don’t even try to tell them that you meet me in this locker room. Understand?” Mary talk to me while grabbed my chin. “I will not tell them.” Then Mary said, “You better keep your word or I will make you more suffer. You know what? You should die. I mean no one care about you. I bet that your friends only stick with you because of pity. You should kill yourself. For now, that will be enough. Bye... Bye... Killer.” Mary pushed me to the locker once again and left me alone. She didn’t know how true her words were. I already tried to kill myself once, but my aunt came in time. She brought me to the hospital, so I was saved. She even tried to bring me to the Psychiatrist, but I didn’t want to go. So, I promised to her that I would never tried to kill myself again. I didn’t try suicide anymore, but I cut myself once in a while. I cut myself when I felt tired with all the drama in my life. After Mary left me, I changed my clothes in the bathroom.

When I was back, my friends asked me, “What took you so long?”. “I just met a lecture when I on my way here. She asked about the progress of my project that was given by her.” I answered their question. After I answered them, they let it off and started to talk about something else. “Hey, how about we get some lunch?” Lexi asked us. “Sure, Lexi. That’s a good idea,” Lexa said to her. “I agree. Where do you think we should go Ty?” Sera asked me. “I don’t know guys. I don’t have any idea.” I said. “Oh, come on, Ty. Is there somewhere you want to go?” This time Lexi asked me. After a while, I suggested something. “Okay. Can we go to the café near our campus?” They agreed with my suggestion.

We went to the café and talked about everything. We talked about everything, like their crush or boyfriend, family, nature, etc. I didn’t like it when we talked about family. It’s always made me sad. The first time I met with the twins, they asked about my family. I never give them a clear answer. I always said that I was an only child and my parents was busy. Mary was the only one that know about my discomfort in family topic. Mary saw discomfort and started to talk about something else. I was really happy when we started to talk about nature. I love nature so much. I always excited we

went somewhere to see a beautiful nature. It's because I like to collect pebbles or leaf that have a unique shape. I developed this hobby from my mom. I even asked them to go to a beach near the city with me in the weekend. They agreed to go to the beach. I couldn't wait for the weekend.

It's already night. I was in my room while record something in my recorder. It's a secret that I had a recorder. After the accident, I had a lost short memory. I recorded about everything that happen in that day so I could remember about it. Only my aunt that know about this. I didn't tell my friends, because I afraid that they would leave me. I afraid that they would thought me as a weird person. I never really told them about my problems. It's because I always thought that we shouldn't told people about our weakness. They would took advantages of it. Mainly, I didn't want Mary to find out about this. She would made me more suffer than I already was. When I finished recorded for the day, I started to think about what Mary said to me. She bullied me since the first year of college. I didn't know what triggered her to bully me.

I was tired about how most people around me

kept blaming me about my mom's dead. I love my mom. She was my rock. If I could turn back time and could chose about what happen, I would choose to be the one that dead in that terrible accident. Should I have followed what Mary said to me? Maybe it's a good idea. If I dead, maybe my dad would go home. If I dead, I could got free from this sorrowful life. My family would be happy about it. They would not saw me anymore. They wouldn't had to see me, the killer. It's just like what they hoped.

But... I didn't want to lose to Mary. Somehow, I wanted a revenge. I wanted to make her regret about what she did or said to me. I started to write what I felt about all the time she bullied me. I wanted her to feel guilty and thought that in a way she killed me. I mean she already killed my character, my identity. It's the same with she killed me in physical, right? I finished wrote the letters and putted it in my table. I also wrote a letter to my aunt, friends, and father. Then, I called my aunt and she answered me. So, I said, "I'm sorry aunty." "Sorry for what sweet heart?" she asked me. "I can't take it anymore. It's so hurt aunty." "What do you mean Ty? Are you hurt somewhere?" she asked me again. "My heart. It's hurt so much. Everyone hates me. I'm sorry

that I'm not strong enough. I left a letter in my table. So, goodbye aunty Bianca. I love you." I turn off the call without waiting my aunt. While I said everything, my aunt screamed that she would come to my house. She asked me to wait for her. She told me not to do something reckless. I didn't listen to what my aunt asked me. I took the blade that I used to cut myself. Then, I stabbed myself. In my head, I said, "Goodbye world. Mom, I'm coming."

The End

1. Bianca: White
2. Seraphina: Angel
3. Alexa and Alexia: Guardian
4. Mary: Bitter

A SOLID DOOR

Veronica Vitasari Embu-Worho

164214159

Life was a tiring journey mostly. Did you know Sisyphus—the one who was punished by Hades to push a rock to the crest of a mountain and kept doing it for eternity because it fell back down again? Well, that was exactly how Robin lived his life every day for seven years.

When Robin was thirteen, Robin used to hide with four of his siblings inside his room when his Mom, Mrs. Green, started yelling in the kitchen. He covered Greg—his six-year-old brother’s ears and he would close his eyes. Noah, Jacob, and Jill cried while usually grabbed Robin’s T-shirt. And Robin? He did not cry or feel sad. He was rather angry. Why did his Mom raise her voice in the first place? Why did his Dad, Mr. Green, start hitting her? Why did they act like nothing happen the next morning?

March 15th, one month after Robin’s fourteenth birthday, was the first day they stopped hiding. He saw his Dad carried five suitcases, went through the solid door he built years ago, and drove his car away. Since that day, Robin never heard Mrs. Green raising her voice over small issues at her husband again. When he woke up, he never found any scars on Mrs. Green’s pale face again. Robin still did not cry or feel sad. He was too heartbroken

to react.

Since their divorce, he was in charge of taking care of his siblings when Mrs. Green was at work. He had no time for hanging out and partying like everyone else in his school did. Robin had to go home immediately to check on his younger brothers and sister.

When he was a freshman in high school, Mr. Scott, a neighbor came to him and asked: “I need help with my restaurant downtown. Do you want to help, Robin?”

Robin thought this was the chance to support his family. They lived in poverty since the divorce. Mrs. Green was a babysitter and the salary was far from enough to support five people.

“Yes, Mr. Scott. See you on Monday,” Robin said to the 46-year-old man.

During the three years of his high school year, Robin worked at Henry’s Dining from 3 P.M. after school until 8 P.M. He sometimes took Noah, Jacob, and Jill to the restaurant so he could still take care of them.

After graduated at the age of eighteen, Robin went to college to study Psychology. He stayed at the cheapest boarding house and left Henry’s Dining. He started working as a part-time waiter in July Eatery, an English tutor for high school students, and a research assistant at college. People might think Robin was

crazy but this was the only way to survive.

Three years later, today, Robin sat on a chair in Mrs. Lee's Abnormal Psychology class. His under eyes were getting darker and he had no chance to eat breakfast this morning. He worked a rough ten-hour shift as a waiter last night. He came back to his room at twelve feeling exhausted.

"When was the last time you sleep?" Frank, the one sat next to him, asked. He was the only best friend he had in college since he was too busy to have social interaction.

"Last night," Robin answered.

His best friend looked extremely concerned. He pushed his dark hair back and said quietly, "Let's have lunch after this."

"No, I can't. My shift on July Eatery is in ten minutes."

Frank raised his eyebrows at Robin and turned his face to his own desk. It was the hundredth time Robin rejected.

"By the way, I opened my free marriage consultation yesterday. Please help me share the words," Robin smiled brightly.

"I will." Frank nodded.

Since his parents' divorce, Robin always wanted to open a free marriage consultation. He wanted to help married couples so they did not end up like his own parents. Robin might sound obsessive and he was fully aware of that but he just doesn't care. He had been carrying this mission for seven years.

After class, Robin walked to July Eatery for his Monday

shift. He changed his clothes to the uniform given by Leslie, his boss.

“Hey, Ben,” Robin greeted his co-worker.

“Hi,” Ben nodded.

Robin swept the restaurant’s floor and said, “I finally opened my free marriage consultation yesterday. Please help me spread the word, Ben.”

Ben nodded. “I can talk to my friend, Howard. He is a second-year Graphic Design student,” he said quietly. “Maybe he can help you with designing your leaflet.”

Robin’s eyes widened as he smiled. “Brilliant!”

One month later, Robin got a call from an anonymous number after his lunch break. He cleared his throat and greeted, “Good afternoon.”

“Is this Robin?” a woman’s voice asked. Her voice was shaking and sounded like she was in a lot of pain.

“Yes. May I know who am I speaking with?”

“Linda. Linda Craig,” the woman answers quietly. She paused and sighed then continued, “I saw the leaflet. You are the consultant, right?”

“Ah, yes,” Robin answered too fast. He was beyond happy. This was his first client.

“Can we meet soon?” the shaky voice asked him.

“Sure. Let’s meet at Burton Café near the park tomorrow

afternoon.”

“Okay, I’ll ask Tony—I mean, my husband.”

The next afternoon, Robin found himself sat awkwardly with a married couple. He guessed they were around 40s.

“So, I am Linda,” the woman pointed herself. She paused and said in hesitation, “And this is Tony.”

Robin nodded. “I am Robin,” he said calmly. After a long pause, he continued, “Please tell me your story.”

Linda started talking a lot about their first few years of marriage. She admired her husband. However, as time went by, they started arguing even about the smallest matters. The tension increased when they had disagreements over their only daughter, Anna. Robin listened carefully and nodded his head sometimes.

“We argued about what she should eat and the fight lasted for a whole week. We didn’t even speak to each other,” Tony added.

Linda ended the story and said, “We don’t see eye to eye on everything and I’m afraid that our marriage is on the edge. We just couldn’t afford a marriage consultation in this overpriced country.”

Robin took a deep breath and nodded. He looked at the town library across the street through the dusty window.

“That is understandable,” Robin said while scratching his left thumb nervously. “I suggested the Gottman Method to

increase closeness and respect. I will also have you both in individual counseling with me.”

Robin explained the method they should practice at home before their next consultation. He suggested that they analyze and re-evaluate the way they communicate their needs and wants. The couple nodded their heads when Robin talked. They scheduled the next consultation, thanked him, and left.

For the next one week, Robin was emotionally invested in his first case. He freed his time to go to the library to do a small research for the troubled Craig couple and planned what to do for the next consultation.

For the whole two months, Linda and Tony met Robin for their consultation. Sometimes they came together and some other time they came alone—depended on Robin’s reliable decision. Robin was extremely optimistic when they shook his hand, thanked him, and smile brightly.

August 6th was exactly one month since Linda and Tony did not call nor appear in their counseling session. He had tried to call Linda a few times but the woman did not pick up. A part of Robin was worried about what might happen to the couple but he believed that he had helped them to improve since he worked day in day out.

Later that night when he edited his students’ project for his English tutoring class, he heard his phone rang. He stood and

picked it up. He saw Linda's name on it and paused for a second before he decided to say, "Hello."

"Hi," her voice was trembling.

"How are you, Linda? It's been a month. How is Tony?"

"I am fine. He is fine." Linda paused and sighed. Robin could sense that the woman he was talking to is in pain. Just like the first time they talked over the phone. "We don't live together anymore."

Robin did not answer. For a moment he felt numb. He was in disbelief rather than feeling sorry or sad. Once again, he felt rage in his chest.

"I'm sorry," Linda said quietly. For a moment Robin thought it was his Mom talking to him. "We had an argument a week after our last session and things just got worse. I started yelling and he started shouting. Before I even realized, he slapped my face too hard and I couldn't handle. Our daughter woke up and ran to us. He didn't stop. He hit me in front of her. I couldn't take it. I had to end it for the sake of Anna. I'm sorry, Robin."

Robin still could not talk. He was in agony. He hung up the phone and turned off his phone. All the time he spent for the couple and the false hope of changing troubled couples ended up exactly like how he witnessed his parents walked off from their marriage.

He hurriedly changed his clothes and rushed to the

subway station. He went home with the last train that night. His backpack felt heavier than usual. He carried the burden of failure he had tonight.

He knocked the solid familiar door he always opened and closed in his childhood. He heard footsteps approaching him and a motherly shaky voice said, “And who might that be this late at night?” Mrs. Green unlocked and opened the door as her eyes got wider seeing at her son.

“Oh, God,” she shouted. “What are you doing, boy? Come on in! I’ll make you hot chocolate. Oh, God! You must be insane!”

Robin smiled as they head to the dining room. “Where are the boys and girl?”

“They are asleep, of course. Oh, God, Robin.”

They sat together in silence with two cups of hot chocolate in front of them. This was the first time he became vulnerable in front of people. All these years he tried to hide his pain.

“How are you, boy?” Mrs. Green’s eyes stared at him concerned.

“I’m fine, Mom.”

They drank the hot chocolate in silence before Robin tried to calmly said, “I opened a free marriage consultant, Mom.”

Mrs. Green put his cup down and stared at her son. She

did not react. She just stared.

“I talked to my first client for two and a half months and they had shown great improvement.” Robin paused and sighed. “Tonight she called me that they got divorced. They had an argument and her husband hit her in front of their eight-year-old daughter.”

A tear dropped from his eyes. Mrs. Green reached her son and took him in her arms. She ran her finger through his hair.

“I was devastated, Mom. This is my first case. I tried my best but I couldn’t change anything. It got even worse.”

Mrs. Green sighed. “We all people had this false hope that life would be perfect,” she said quietly. Her eyes looked at glasses she organized in her vintage cupboard across the dining table. “We grew up watching Disney and thought this is the fate we meant to have. And then life happens and we got devastated when we realized things are far from perfect. That it is just an illusion.”

Robin started crying.

“A solid family is what we always wanted, my boy,” she continued. “We studied hard as a kid to get a good job to support us once we had our family. But, it turns out that the path has many branches. It is probably the best for me—or your client, to end our marriage because then that is the only way to make our dream of the solid family happen.”

Robin wept his tears. “Yeah,” he said quietly.

“This is your first case, Robin,” Mrs. Green ended the conversation and hugged him. “There are still a hundred and thousands of couples out there who need help. I believe in you, boy. You just have to believe in yourself and understand life.”

Robin could not close his eyes that night even a bit. He went back to his boarding house the next morning by the earliest subway and waved at his mother. He hugged his siblings and smiled. He was still the same person. Just with a different perspective. He believed in himself now. And he believed that happiness was not fated. It was made and found within ourselves.

YOU TURN MY WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

Zsa Zsa Grindra Gayatri

164214150

"This is not a love story, it is about me who found myself in this chaotic world. You might find my story a little bit old and stale but let me tell you about how it began and ended up in this paper."

That is the first line that I wrote in my diary, I was really broken that day and thinking writing my story would be a perfect way to kill this feeling. I continue to read the story then I'm falling back to the memories.

It was a beautiful day, I opened my phone and checking the messages. There was nothing special in my inbox. I felt bored at the moment and I remembered a guy that I found on Instagram. He texted me last night. "You look good girl with those big brown eyes, long dark hair, and fair skin. Typical girl's looks but you look special" he said. I thought he was just messed around but then I checked his profile and he looked cute. I replied to him, "I am a new population here." "Oh well... what species are you? Lol," he said. Then we continued texting and he said he wanted to see me but I guess it is too late then I stopped replying and sleep.

The next day I replied his text and said that I am down to meet him but I would not be around the city for 3 days because I wanted to go to Ubud to see the Sacred Monkey. He said fine and

maybe he would come around to see me the next day. I went to the bus stop and waited for the bus. I jumped to the bus as soon as it came and chose the best position. I put my earphone and listened to my favorite music by Carpenter "close to you". I enjoyed my two hours trip alone. I texted my mom and my sister that I won't be in town for 3 days.

Arrived in Ubud I walked around to find my hostel. I passed by the market with so many tourists and seller. They sold sarong, Ganesha statue, Buddha statues, and so many things. I found some interesting spots too like a cafe, restaurant, and ice cream places that full of tourist. Then I arrived at my hostel and checked in with my booking number. I walked to the room and get shocked because it was mix dormitory so I'll stay there for three days with all of them which mostly boys, "Oh Sara, you should have read the description before you booked it." I talked to myself. I put my bag near my bed and check my phone. It was already 1.45pm and I have not eaten anything since morning. I decided to find some foods so I went outside. But I cannot find any local restaurant and I did not think to spend my money on this expensive restaurant. I decided to eat noodles and sat there alone. I looked people around wore traditional clothes to go to pray and there were two men who brought a-perfect-grilled-pig with their motorbike and I could not stop looking at it. They laughed at me because of my shock faces.

I went back to my hostel and checked my phone, "Three notifications from Alfred Coleman". Oh wow! He texted me again and said he would come to Ubud tomorrow to see me. I told him tomorrow I will be busy but I'd love to meet him. It was already late and I decided to go to sleep because the next day would be a busy day for me. I slept and use my earphone because the tourists here are so noisy when they got back from the party.

"Yo man! Let's go to the restaurant in downtown. They said it serves good food." I woke up because of the noise and checked my phone, "Oh shit I'm late". I ran to the bathroom and had a shower. I had my banana pancake and some fruits and went right away. I walked to the main road and went straight to the sacred monkey forest. It was quite fun, I could see monkeys live freely and ran to people, jumped to their head, and people gave their foods. I could not stop laughing when I saw the monkeys kept trying to reach people's bag and run with it. I bought some bananas and gave it to them. I had fun with the monkey but I did not really enjoy it. I felt lonely in this crowded place with all these monkeys. I have been here for like one hour, I checked my phone and again Alfred sent a message and told me that he would be here in two hours.

I took a shower because I was sweating and the weather was really hot that day. I changed my clothes and fix my hair. I laid on the bed and texting with my friend. I told them that I had an

amazing day and sent the pictures that I have taken in the monkey forest and wrote. "Guess who met new date today!" and they laughed. I fell asleep when suddenly my phone ringing and it was from Alfred. He asked my hostel the exact position. I went to the balcony and looked around. I saw a guy with a green raincoat was passing by the hotel. It looks like him, I believed it was him. I texted him my place and finally, he found it. I ran to the stairs to wait for him.

"Oh my God, Oh no, damn, he got beautiful eyes and long eyelashes. His eyes are perfect. Oh, look at that long hair. Perfect!" I checked on him from head to toe and talked to myself. He looked at me flustered, "You okay, Sara?" then he greeted me and breaking the ice between us. "Oh sure! Come inside! We can sit on the balcony, quite nice there." I answered. We sat in the balcony and talked about anything. He is an open-book kind of person and I could not believe that he is open up to me about his job, family, life, and anything even we did not even meet for one hour. "Bali is like my second home and I fall in love with the culture every single day of my life here," he said. I listened to his story carefully and looked at his beautiful eyes. I did not talk much because I didn't feel like to share my personal life because I do not have any interesting stories about my life. I just have a story about how pathetic and lonely I am. I chose to keep it for myself and showed him the best part of me. "I just moved to Bali and I will study

hospitality here and hoping to graduate soon because I wanna move to Mars," I said.

Time passed, it was already 4 pm and the rain has stopped. He asked that maybe I wanted to go somewhere. I answered that sure, I actually planned to go to Tegalalang Rice Field. He told me he could take me there now if I wanted to and I was really excited about. I grabbed my jacket and some money, my phone, and my camera. "You know what I love the most about Ubud?" he asked me. "What?" I answered. "The rice fields. They are amazing," he said. I looked how excited he was when he told me about it, I felt like his eyes also spoke the things he loved. "You know what I like about Ubud?" I asked him back. "What?" he said with curiosity. "I met my twins after really a long time" "Whoah! Really? Where? Where is she or he?" he asked. "In the forest." I said. "What? What do you mean?" he is confused. "The monkey." I laughed and walked away from him. We walked around the rice field, we talked, we laughed, and I felt alive. He kept complaining about people who keep asking for the money that they mentioned as a contribution to the rice field. I could not stop laughing because he complained just like a little kid. I got amazing pictures there and amazing experiences. We rode back to the city and back to my hotel then I asked him that when will he back to the city. Then he said, "Oh maybe I will stay here for a night. I will book a room nearby if that is okay." Then I replied, "Oh sure, cool. I'll shower

then.”

We sat down in the balcony and talked to other tourists. “Bali is quite fun, the party, the beaches, and all of its exotic place,” said one of them. “Yeah bro, that’s why I decided to live in Bali for a while,” he said. We had a quite good time and we planned to have a little party with pizza and beer tonight. Then I went to his hotel to check in and bought some pizza and beers for our little party. I waited him taking shower and texted my sister about where I am now. After that, we headed back to my hostel and ate pizza and drank beers until late. I was kinda drunk that night because I drink all the beers all alone. We went back to his hotel room very late and we were really full of beers.

The next morning, we headed back to my hostel and I packed my stuff. I checked out earlier and went to Kuta with him. I stayed with him for a week. I started to see something different from him. It happened really fast and I did not know what happened to me. He said he was in love with me, and I said the same thing. I did not realize it was the red flag. We spent so much time together and we did not realize we were falling even deeper to each other.

I started my study. I am studying hospitality and I loved it. My relationship with Alfred was getting better. We were really in love, we adored each other so much. I remembered that night when we were at Gusto Gelato and Caffè, he asked me what

would I be his girlfriend. I said yes, it was the best time of my life. I loved him too much. He asked me to move in and stay with him. “One thing I know for sure, I can’t live without you. Do want to move in and live together with me?” asked him to me. I was kinda shock at first and just let the wind blows between us. He touched my hand and my heart felt warm. “Sure.” I answered.

I moved in for around two weeks already. Our relationship was going good. We liked to go to grocery stores together and bought nothing. “OMG baby! I love this smell!” I screamed in the groceries stores and smiled. “What? The tea? You love it?” he said and laughed. “Of course! It makes me calm and I really love to go to the groceries store when I’m feeling down just to smell this!” I said. “You’re weird baby, I love you,” he said. “You know I love you the world,” I said. “Oh I love you the universe” he laughed. We were back home and put our groceries in the kitchen. “Sara, can you do me a favor? Please clean the bedroom” he said. “Oh, I’m tired. Can I do that later? I need to get some rests” I asked him politely. “What? Why are you so lazy? We were just having groceries shopping” he said very angrily. “Why are you so mad at me? I just said that I need to get some rests” I replied. “Never mind Sara, I could do this alone. You never help me” he left the room.

“Sara let’s go to the bar tonight! I really want to take you to Sky Garden with me!” he asked me. “Sorry babe, I really want to.

You know I really love to go but I got so much to do tonight and I don't think I can make it before midnight." I asked for apologies. "Are you serious, Sara? I just asked you to hang out with me but you always say no! Do you even love tho?" he asked me. "What? I just need time to do my assignment, Alfred. It does not mean that I don't love you" I answered. "No Sara, keep your bullshit with you." He said and left me alone.

Our relationship was not really going good. Every day feels like walking on the eggshells. Until one day, I did not see this thunder coming and our relationship sunk into the deep sea. It started when we were in the Gusto Gelato and Caffè, our favorite place when he suddenly shouted and pointed his finger on me because I chose my own flavor and he did not have chance to choose. "You can't just choose whatever you want Sara! You always do that! You only think about yourself and your Goddamn needs. You only care about yourself!" My world fell apart, tears fell from my eyes. Then all the flashback came back about what my mother did to me in the past. "Sara! Stop being so childish! I'm tired of you! Be like your sister!" the flashback of what my mom said to me came back. I could not stand on my feet. I asked him to buy the other one with my money but he is getting angrier. I felt numb and I remain silent until we arrived at home.

He asked me if there was anything wrong but I stared at the ceiling with an empty look. He left me in the room alone and I

started crying. I hate myself, I came to my darkest mind, I hit myself and scratch my hand very hard. He came back to the room and saw my breakdown. He asked what was wrong with me and shouted at me for not stopping doing that. "Talk Sara! I don't know what you want if you are being like this! It was your fault!" I ran to the bathroom and cried on the bathroom floor. He asked me what was wrong and repeatedly pulled my hand roughly. I could not speak and I just remained silent. He hugged me and said he was sorry. He left me alone in the room and I fell asleep.

After my first trigger, home felt like hell. Every day we had a fight. I got triggered easily over small things, I am being moody, sometimes I lost in my mind and hurt myself. Every night, when I tried to sleep, I scratch my hand to get his attention. When he was busy with his things, I started to hurt myself again. I threaten him by leaving him or said that I will meet someone new, just to make him feel guilty and did not leave me. I was too scared being abandoned, I loved him too much. "Alfred, we are better separate and don't see me again," I told him. "Why Sara? I'm sorry Sara, but if you wanted it like that, that was okay. I would leave." "Oh, you don't love me? You want to leave me?" I said to him. "What do you want Sara? I'm tired of all these bullshits" he ended our conversation and left me. It happened every day and I did not realize what happened to me. We abused each other and I said rude things when we got into a fight. I manipulated things to make

him say by my side. Day by day we got tired of each other, Alfred decided to move out for a while and but things did not get better. I got anxious and insecure, I accused him of cheating with another girl.

I was not expecting this, he asked to break up with me. He said, he was done with me and there was nothing to expect to. My world shambles, I could not let him go. I called him many times and he did not answer. I started being crazy because I did not expect to leave me. “No, no you cannot leave me, Alfred. You said you love me! “I typed messages to him. I texted him more than one hundred texts. I went crazy because I was too scared of being abandoned. I threatened him, I begged him and said I would change. I cried on the phone but he said he was done with me. “Nothing to say anymore, Sara. We are better off this way. I want to be in peace and it is not with you.” he said and then he blocked me anywhere and left me. I lost him. We fell for each other so fast, and we separated just like that.

I tried to live my life again but it did not feel the same anymore. I decided to go out of town. I went to Tabanan so I could be alone. I tried to contact him but I could not reach him anymore. I did not know I will lose him like this, and it really hurts me to watch him go like everything was nothing. Like we were nothing. Like I was nothing. I went for meditation in a temple when I met a guy who was just like him. “Alfred? You are here!

You coming back?" I screamed at a guy. "Sorry, who are you? The wrong person maybe" he said. "Oh sorry" I apologize and walked away. "I'm going crazy"

After a month, I still can't get over him. I tried to find him again. I went back to the town and I made a new Instagram account to text him. "Hey Alfred, I just got back to Kuta this morning. Can we talk about this? I really need to see you and make things clear. I'm already calm than before. I hope to hear from you soon." I wrote. I did not expect any reply from him, I left my phone and went to the beach to enjoy the sunlight. I checked my phone when I saw a notification from him. "Hey Sara, I'm really sorry but we have nothing to talk about. I have tried to think about our relationship but it was too tiring for me. I cannot keep up with you, I hope you understand. And after a month, I did a research for you. I don't think you are mentally healthy, you are sick. You are just like someone with Borderline Personality Disorder. You need to seek help and I cannot be with you. Sorry Sara, till next time." I repeatedly read his text and it breaks my heart again. "What do you mean, Alfred? What borderline shit? What is wrong with me, Alfred? Am I crazy?" my thought wandered.

"Thank you, Alfred, for your kindness, I do respects your choice but I hope we could meet just once to make things right," I replied. Then he told me, "Meet me at Gusto Gelato and Caffè in

30minutes. See ya”. “Thank you, Alfred,” replied me. I ran to my place and changed my clothes. I was really messed up and I did not want to look bad in front of him. I booked a taxi and went to Gusto by myself. My heart skipped a beat. I did not know what to do if I met him.

I saw him sitting in the corner, played his phone. He is the guy that I missed and love. He looked at me and it felt like the first time. He did not even smile, his eyes looked tired, he did not look like him as usual. "Hey Alfred, how are you?" I asked him. "Good. Just let's get to the point. I'm here for telling you that you have a serious mental illness, Sara. I cannot be with you, it is too tiring for me. You abused me, you manipulated me. You are crazy Sara. Go seek some help. I'm trying to help you. You're sick. I cannot get back together with you and don't ever wish things like that. You are a narcissist. You loved yourself. Everything revolves around you." he said emotionally. I was stuck and freeze. I did not know what to say to him, and only five words that came out from my mouth, "but I love you, Alfred." "It is not love, Sara, stop being so manipulative. You are really bad and crazy." he said. "I love you, Alfred. Let's fix things together. I could change." I told him. "No Sara, I don't want it anymore," he said and tried to pack his things. I cried in front of him and tried to hold his hand. "Let's try it again, Alfred. I will change."

He went out and got into his motorbike. I ran to him and tried to hold his hands. "Stop it, Sara! We are done! Don't try to manipulate things ever again with me! I'm tired of your games. You are crazy and go seek for help." he said to me and tried to run away from me. "Please Alfred, let's fix this," I said to him. He hugged me for a while and I cried even harder. He pushed me and left me. My world shambles. My walk to home was lonely and hopeless. My mind kept repeating his words and I arrived in the room and I can't stop crying. I texted him, "Thank you, Alfred. I'm sorry." No replied from him. I did research about BPD and found out I do have possibilities to have it. I decided to go to the hospital to meet the psychologist and I went there by myself. No one besides me. I looked around and crying. It was only me, by myself. I thought that dying sounds better than accepting the truth about myself.

The next day after I went to the hospital, the doctor diagnosed me with Borderline Personality Disorder. He was right or he is right. I felt like the sky fell into my head.

I tried to get up from my bed and did things. I went out and bought my favorite drink Milk Tea with Egg pudding. I went to the grocery store and sat there while smelling the scent of the tea. I saw people laughing and talking. It was so peaceful to know that I still could hear the sound of happiness from people around even I did not have that. My phone rang and I checked there is one

message. It was him, Alfred. "Where are you? Let's meet. But I don't want you to act like yesterday. If I wanted to leave, let me leave." he said. "Ok. Meet me at Kuta beach." I replied.

I saw him again after yesterday. He is still a beautiful man that I loved yesterday and today but I did not talk much like yesterday. "Hey Alfred, how are you? You found any job?" I asked him. "Not yet," he answered. We remained silent for a while. We lost in our own mind and we did not know what to do. We looked at people on the beach surfing, laughing, running, but we did not even feel the same feeling as them. The sunset came and he asked me that maybe I wanted to do something. I asked him to take me to a festival in Denpasar. We went there together by his motorbike but it felt different. It was so quiet, we did not talk much to each other. I tried to break the ice between us, but it seems different now.

We walked around and see the traditional dance shows. It was so crowded and I could not even see the stage. He asked me got into his back so I could watch the show. I was really happy and I did not even pay attention to the show. My heart skipped a beat and there are millions of butterflies in my stomach. After that, we looked for dinner and bought ice creams. Then we saw the ferris wheel and Kora-Kora. We tried it one by one. We did not talk in the ferris wheel but enjoyed each other company. Then we went to kora-kora. I wanted to cancel it at first because it seems scary,

there was no safety belt or anything. He held my hand and asked me to come with him. We got into the boat and it was insane. I could not stop screaming “Omg! Alfred stop this! I asked him to stop this! I don’t want to die, I mean not yet!” I said to him. “Hahahahaha just enjoy it Sara.” he said.

We have done playing and decided to go back to his place. On the way to his place, he told me to not expect anything between us. I did not answer and I pretended like I did not hear him. We got into his house and I sat on his bed. He changed clothes and took a shower. I checked my phone and I got so many messages from people asked me where I am. He sat in the bed beside me, and he asked me to get some rest and sleep. I laid down beside him but I can’t sleep. It felt calm to be with him again even there was some space between us. I looked at him and said “I can’t sleep.”, “Me too” he answered. I touched his cheek and kissed him.

Next morning, we decided to swim at the beach and had sunbathing. We were really happy and laughed. He tried to cover his head because he said it hurts if it touched to the sun. He suddenly said, "Sara, I will try to help you to change. You can change, I believe. You can stay with me maybe for a week." “OK," I said. I moved in again with him, I tried hard to control my emotion. I tried to be normal but I could not. He was getting on my nerves every day. He kept calling me crazy. "Hey Sara, you're

crazy! Realize it!" I woke up from a nap and he said, "Crazy". The worst things I got from him when he said maybe my mom also crazy too. I could not keep up with his words anymore and I got my breakdown. I screamed and said that I am not crazy. I cried very hard and kept saying I'm not crazy. He tried to make me calm and he asked me to walk around to the beach. He held my hand and took me to the beach. My mind wandered, "Why is he even trying to save me when he is the reason I'm being like this? Why is he now pretending he is the prince charming when he triggered me?"

The next day, we did not talk much. I stayed in the bedroom and he smokes on the terrace. I heard there was a fight outside. I went outside and asked him, "What happened?" he answered that it's the husband and wife that live beside us fighting. I heard her husband screaming and beat her. I fell and crying. "What's wrong Sara?" he asked, "No dad, don't beat mom... dad, please... mom run..." I said with shaking voice. "No Sara, your dad is not here. Don't worry" he said. I had my breakdown again and I ran to the bedroom. I hurt myself and scratch my hand very hard "Dad stop it. Don't hurt Mom... Please, dad..." I cried. "SARA! Stop baby, I'm here. No, your dad is not here. Don't worry. Your mom is safe. I'll take you to the beach and we can see the sea, stars, moon, and airplanes. You like it right?" he said. I looked at him and he took me by the hand. We walked to the beach and I looked at the

road blankly.

"Why are you so scared, Sara? You can't keep everything inside alone. You need someone that you trust." he said very gently. "I am too scared. I am too scared when people know about me, they will use it against me. I am too scared to see them look at me with that pity eyes. I am not weak and I will never be." I answered. "Nobody's gonna do that to you. Don't be that way, Sara. It's too tiring for me to always comfort you like this. You are really sick Sara." he said. Then we spent the rest of the night in silent. I just realize things does not look what I thought it looked like.

The next day. I decided to move out of his place and he took me back to my place without even asking me why. We kissed in front of my door and I wish I knew it was our last kiss. We just talked on the phone. Everything was fine before but he did not change. He kept saying me crazy and pushed me into my limits. It really ruined my mental states. One night I kept thinking about what I wanted and what we might be, I did not find any answer. I kept crying all night and thinking about what I have done wrong. He called me and complaining about anything. He said he was tired and he is done with all of these. I tried to tell him that I could not change in a minute like that. I have tried to change and fix things. I fought with my own battles too. He hung up and the next morning, he called and said we better separated from each other.

Once again, he left me when my world shambles but I tried to accept it at that time.

I tried to keep alive and enjoy my life as I used to do. I met friends, go to classes. I went to therapy by myself. I realized things and everything that happened to me this year was like hard pills to swallow. It hurts me so much but I kept trying to stand up on my feet. The therapy was not always going good. I got a bad moment when my therapist tried to open up my old wounds about my parents. I started to remember all the bad memories that my mind tried to block to save me. Then I remembered how my dad and mom beat me up, locked me at the toilet in the dark and I just cried all night. One thing that really hurts me, when I remembered my mom was shame on me and said that she felt like I threw shit to her face by followed her to her dinner with her friends. I was 9 years old and I did not know what that is supposed to mean but I did not know it affects me so bad at this age of my life.

All the therapy sessions hurt me so bad. Sometimes, the thought about dying and kill myself comes to my mind. I hurt myself with a scissor. I could not even breathe and I needed to face it all by myself. No one supports me and lends their shoulder when I failed or even clapped for me when I succeed. I got back to my room and sat alone in my bed and thinking “This too shall pass, Sara. The universe always guides your steps, and you are

lucky for that.”

I kept going with my life with or without him. I got a new friend named Bibo. He is a clownfish. He is the only person I see every time I got into my room after classes. "Bibo, how are you? You know what? I had really a bad day in therapy. I made it out alive tho. Some snacks? I love you Bibo. I can't believe, I'm survived" I talked to my fish. I tried to be happy when I was outside but I know I am not. I met so many new people and made new friends. I'm happy and I realize that the only way for you to be happy is to love yourself first and the only person you have is you. I found me after the chaos.

"I found me". I read it in the last line of the story. I closed the book and looking around the cafe. I'm looking at happy faces around me and it makes me feeling relief that I survived and stay. Now I'm here at Gusto Gelato and Cafe for the last time before my flight to Amsterdam. I have decided to move from Bali and continue my study there. After what I read in my diary, I am feeling grateful for who I have become now and how I still treat others kindly. I never changed, I'm still the same Sara Beckenbeur, who loves to travel, writing, the scent of the tea in the groceries store, and who loves her fish, Bibo. *"Yes Sara, this too shall pass."*

-The End-

NOTES OF A TEACHER

Siulienda Winata

164214027

A small village in Bo town, Africa, June 1995

“Amare!

Wake up! Your brother be late for school!”

I awoke. Lately, I couldn’t sleep so well, imagining leaving this farm and starting an adventure.

“Mare! What yeh doing upstairs? Quick!”

“Yes, ma’am. I’m coming.” I grabbed my jacket and walked downstairs.

“Let’s go, Kai.” I said to my brother.

The nearest school was located approximately two miles from our home, and the road was long, so I had to walk my 6-year-old brother to school.

We were passing the hayfield when Odion and his dog passed by with his truck. Odion offered to drive us to school because he also needed to do business near Kai’s school in town.

Odion. He was two years older than me, but he looked ten years older than average 20 years old teenager. He was serious, shy, clumsy, and was not very comfortable interacting with people. He was my neighbor and my best friend since we grew up together and attended the same school.

When we arrived, I jumped out and said, “Thanks for the ride, Ode.”

He only nodded and drove away.

“Mare! Go wash the clothes and bring me five water a bucket from the well.”

I just arrived at home. “Yes, Ma.”

“Mare! I need an egg. Go get ‘em from the farm.”

“Mare! The plates need to be a wash.”

Mare, do this. Mare, do that. Mare, Mare, and Mare. I was exhausted and revolted to be treated like a housekeeper rather than her daughter.

“Amare! It’s 3 p.m. already. Go fetch your brother to school!”

She did not have to shout out every word.

“I’m going.” I wished Odion passed again by his truck, but he didn’t show up.

The school seemed crowded. The volunteers that occasionally came to villages to help in public schools and hospitals must have come. I was waiting under the oak tree when Kai saw me and came along with an eye-catching guy wearing yellow bright ‘DIT IS ‘N PRAGTIGE DAG’ t-shirt.

“Hello! Let me guess, your... sister?” he said to Kai while pointing at me. Kai nodded.

Then he introduced himself to me, “I’m Leon. I’m from a city in Portugal. I’m 20, though I feel like I’m 15. I’m here to teach in your brother’s school for six months, um...and that’s it. It’s nice to meet you. May I know your name?” I just looked at him and both of us laughed.

“Mare. From Amare. And nice to meet you, too.”

“Just it?”

“Yeah.” Then we laughed again.

“Strength–Amare. It’s a beautiful name.” he said while showing his crescent moon smile which was so attractive. He was going to talk again when his friend called him. Then he said to us, “Sien jou more.” And ran back to the classroom.

From that moment, walking my brother to school was not as tiring as before, because I could meet Leon in school. He was so humble, talkative, and smart. I liked to listen to him recounting his experiences. He came from a wealthy family. He liked to travel. He decided to quit school at 16 (which is an irony, because I was forced to quit school to help my family on the farm at the same age) and traveled to new places. He had traveled for four years, been to many places, especially in Africa and Asia.

I envied him. I really wanted to get out of this town as he did, but it seemed impossible with my family's condition right now. I was needed to help my parents in the house and the farm. I had to do like every woman in my village did—taking care of the house and later, the children.

On Sunday, he was off duty so we decided to take a trip around the town. I asked Ode to come along with us, but his answer was not clear and he went back to his farm. We drove around the town all day long, and in the late noon, we reached a field with big Cotton Tree (a big tree like oak) in the middle. We rested below it while watching children playing kites in the distance.

We were silenced for a moment, just enjoyed the cool breeze and the view of the town. Just then Leon asked me, “How long have you been helping at your family's farm again?”

“2 years—which seems like 20 years. I can picture myself 20 years from now if I do only stay in this village.”

There was a moment of silence again, but then he said, “Let’s go.” I looked at him in amazement but he got excited and said, “Let’s go, Mare! We’ll go together to new places. We’ll have a lot of fun traveling together. What do you say?”

I laughed. “Leon, I…”

“No, Mare! Listen to me. You have to go now, don’t you understand? You can’t just hope to escape this place without doing anything.”

He really convinced me, and in the decisive moment, I forgot about my parents, my duties, everything—I just got excited at the thought of escaping. So I said “Yes. Yes! Let’s go!” and we laughed, shouted like crazy and our words were blown away by the wind.

I wished that I did think thoroughly about that life-decision I made.

It’s October when we planned the escape—we decided to go to Liberia, a province beside Sierra Leone which could be reached in half a day from Bo town. We planned to go two days after Christmas by a car he borrowed from his neighbor in town. I was curious why his neighbor wanted to lend him a car, but I remember he could be very convincing and persuasive if he wants.

I was anxious all the time when October nearly ended. I frightened at the thought of people knowing my plan to escape, especially my family.

November passed by without anything important. Then finally, December came and I couldn't hide my excitement, along with anxiety and hesitation to leave this town which kept haunting my mind. To ease my burden, I made myself busy on the farm and convincing myself that I only went to Liberia not for a long time, I said, 'it's only to take a break from these tiring work on the farm.'

Days have gone by, and only three days left until Christmas. Ma and I were busy cleaning the house and prepared the gifts for our relatives. I asked Ma if I could invite Leon to celebrate Christmas together in our house, and Ma said yes.

Finally, it's Christmas. Ma and I had been busy preparing dishes since morning, and after all the work was done, I washed, put on my new peach dress and some make-up, and waited for Leon to come. I waited and waited but he didn't come. Only Odion, his parents, and some of Pa's relatives came to the house that night.

I was disappointed and slightly afraid. What if he left? What if he lied about taking me together with him? I felt like my panic attack emerged and I started fidgeted and tapping my ear with my

fingers. I always do that unconsciously if I felt uneasy toward something. After sometimes, I got up and walked to my favorite place to relax, the vast hayfield behind my home.

The view was so beautiful that night. The full moon shone brightly and it made the hayfield turned blue. Sometimes the cool breeze blew and it brought the fragrance of wildflowers and grass. I was deep in thought when Odion came along and sat beside me. “You’re always come here if you have problems and need time for yourself.”

We sat in silence for some time. Just having him sitting next to me had calmed me down for an unknown reasons. Then I faced him, “Ode, I’ll go in two days.”

I am going to miss you. That’s what I didn’t say.

He just looked at me blankly.

“I am going to pursue my dreams. I am going to see the world. I have to see the world before it’s too late for me to do what I like before I grew old.”

“I’ve thought about everything. I will not go too long, maybe just five or six months. I’ll come back. I will.”

He just muted and stared at the sky. Then he looked at me and our eyes locked.

“I would not hold you back. I just want you to know that I will miss you and I’ll wait for you here.”

I was choked up.

He really understood me.

He reached his pocket and passed a beautiful pendant to me.

“Merry Christmas, Mare.” he said.

It was a beautiful star-shaped gold pendant, and I said, “Ode, this is too much. I can’t take this.”

“I planned to give you this since a long time ago, Mare. I meant it.”

I couldn’t say anything so I just hold his hand and we sat together like that until the moon was covered by clouds and it’s really getting dark to see anything.

When we got back to the farm, Ode’s parents were ready to go, then we waved each other goodbye.

The following morning when I walked Kai to school, I immediately sought Leon to ask why he didn’t come last night, but he noticed me first from the distance and ran to me to say sorry.

“I am terribly sorry I couldn’t come to your house yesterday night—my friends forced me to join them at Christmas party on one of our guides’ house. I am so sorry, Mare. Oh, here, I brought you a gift. I hope you like it.”

He gave me a beautiful notebook. He added that the notebook was for me to record my thoughts and stories when I came to new places, and just like that, I forgave him.

Then we talked about our plan tomorrow; he would pick me up at my house near midnight. The anxiety and excitement filled my mind again, and Leon laughed seeing my worried face. He said all was going to be okay, and he left to teach the students again after saying “Tomorrow, Mare. I’ll pick you up on the hayfield on 11.00 p.m.”

When I got home, I sat in my bedroom and wrote a letter to inform my parents about my leaving plan. They were too busy taking care of the lawn, so they would not run after me, though they would be mad knowing I couldn’t help them anymore on the farm.

I already prepared some clothes I had and some money I collected since I first helping my parents in the farm, so I just cleaned the house and done all the jobs I could do until Ma remarked, “What’s wrong with yeh? Why you suddenly become diligent like this?” I just said “Nothing.” and continued my works.

It’s near time for Leon to come, so I checked if my parents and Kai had fallen asleep. When I finished making sure everything as I planned, I held my backpack and tip-toed until the kitchen door. Then I reached the doorknob and opened it with not much noise. I saw Leon was reaching the hayfield, and I walked slowly so that I didn’t make a loud noise and woke my parents up. My heart was

beating so fast and I thought I couldn't make it, but eventually I reached the car and still, nobody's screaming my name.

Leon immediately started the engine when I got into the car, and he drove fast to get out of the town. I was so excited and I couldn't stop smiling, I forgot to look back at the house.

We reached Monrovia, Liberia on December 28 in the evening. It was crowded, colorful, and I really felt lost in that city. There's so many tall building which was so different than the one in Bo town. They're enormous.

We came to a less crowded area in the country (even though it was so hard to find it in this metropolitan city), and we found a small and comfy inn located between a restaurant and a bread shop. Then we decided to stay there until New Year's ended while planning up to our next trip from this city.

On New Year's Eve, we went to a beautiful beach and walked around with some new people we knew from the inn. Leon had made himself close with them although we only knew each other for less than 3 days.

We were walking to the harbor when the tragedy happened. I lost Leon. I was looking at a beautiful Christmas tree when suddenly Leon and his new friends missing from the crowd. I searched for them until the end of the harbor, but they were nowhere to be seen. I started panicked and I couldn't enjoy the moment again. I

suddenly felt that the noise was getting bigger and the screams terrified me. I tried to calm myself down and walked back again to the inn.

I decided to take a taxi to get me to the inn, but I couldn't find my wallet in my pocket. I was horrified and I didn't know what to do. I sat on the sidewalk for a long time, long enough for an old woman who ran a restaurant across the street noticed me sitting alone when people were partying in the beach not far from there. She invited me to come in, but my body felt numb and I couldn't speak, so she came to me and helped me walking inside her restaurant. I was trembling and stupefied, but after sometimes I started sobbing uncontrollably.

I was so relieved that she found me.

After I had calmed myself down with her chamomile tea, she started asking me questions about my origin and my friends. I told her everything, and she looked at me in pity. I stayed at her place that night, and in the morning she gave me meals and some money to take the bus back to the inn. I could only repeat thank you for her kindness, and promise that I would return her money after I found Leon.

When I arrived at the inn, I stomped to Leon's room, but he wasn't there. In fact, he left me. The owner only returned my clothes back and passed Leon's screwed note to me; he said, 'I'm really sorry. I must come back. My mother's sick.'

I didn't know how I could get back to Bo town after I lost all my money, but when I reached my pocket, I found the short amount of money the old woman gave to me last night. The money is only enough for me to take the public bus, so I decided to come back to her place and asked for a job there.

When I got back to her restaurant, I was pale, screwed, and frustrated, but the kind woman understood and let me worked in there until I could get enough money to go back to home. I was gratified and delighted that I bumped to her last night, I didn't know what I would've done if she didn't help me.

Thus, my days as dish-washers began. It was a tiring job with a small salary, but at least I got a place for sleeping at night and food. She also had a large collection of books that I could borrow for reading at night. Those books and Ode's pendant were the things that helped me not overthinking about my parents and feel sorry that I left them alone with Kai.

One day when the restaurant had just closed, I was reading a history book about the Liberian war on the front desk. Suddenly, a man in his fifties came in and noticed me reading the book. He asked where Madam Zeni (the restaurant owner) was, and I told him she was upstairs, watching TV in her living room.

Turned out he was Madam Zeni's niece, and he was a professor in a public college in Liberia. He was a kind man, he sympathized with me just like Madam Zeni too after he heard my story. Then to my surprise, he offered me to work as his housekeeper and a nanny for his daughter.

So I stopped working as a dish-washer and became a housekeeper. What a great life, I thought. I escaped from my duties as housekeeper to be another housekeeper in another city.

I had worked in Mr. Stein's house for about six months when he noticed I had a huge interest in history. I borrowed his history books and usually read it at night. When her daughter got a task to make a history essay, I learned by his book to make essays and helped his daughter wrote it.

I was very happy when he said he would give me informal teaching in the house for one hour every Friday and Saturday. It was like he stirred me back to my original intention when I left the home. To learn what I like without boundaries.

Although I was tired, I took it with gratitude since I could continue my study and learned a lot about history. He taught me how to debate and develop my arguments, and I got new perspectives in seeing things and it made me became more critical and mature than I was before. It was such an experience that shaped my personality.

Time flies, and to my surprise, I had been in Mr. Stein's house for about four years. I felt that I had learned precious things, and now I wanted to share my knowledge, but it meant that I needed to stop working at his house. I was afraid to tell him that after all that he has done for me. But eventually, something would happen and forced me to leave his house.

"Amare. Do you have time?" was what Mr. Stein said to me when I was playing with her daughter in the garden.

"Yes, Sir."

"Could you talk to me for a moment?"

I thought he wanted to talk about my learning process or my job as a housekeeper, so I followed him.

In his office, he didn't immediately say a word.

He looked frustrated and anxious, but then he said, "Mare... I knew that I'm as old as your father, but I think that I should ask you for this, since we have been living in the same house for a long time, and Leah has been so close to you. Amare... Will you marry me?"

I was shocked. I didn't think that he would even consider this matter. I saw him as the substitution of my father figure, but how could he say that?

“Mr. Stein. Look, I cannot marry you. Leah and I are like sisters and I do not have an intention to marry anyone right now. I just want to go back to my village.”

“Mare, I know it’s a big thing for you, but now you’re 22. It’s a common age to marry.”

“For a village girl. But I’m not the village girl – that naïve village girl anymore, Mr. Stein. You’ve taught me a lot of things and I’m truly grateful for that, but I’m sorry, Sir, I cannot marry you.”

He looked taken back and I could see that I had hurt his pride. He looked at me in anger and said, “Well then, I think that you should leave this house now, Amare. And don’t ever come back. I was so disappointed at how you paid all of the kindness I gave to you.”

I nodded and said, “Thank you from my deepest heart for your generosity to me all these years.”

I left the house in the evening and took the bus to Madam Zeni’s restaurant to say goodbye. I gave her the money back and used the rest of the money to get back to my village in Bo.

When I arrived at Bo, I was so touched and happy that I finally came back to my home with the knowledge and skills that I could use to help my community. Now that I finally came back, I intended to be a teacher.

I reached my village by hitchhiked a neighbor I saw at the town's traditional market. I was searching for Odion, but it seemed that he didn't go to town this day—if he was still in this village.

My neighbor didn't say much even though he knew that I had just arrived in town. He didn't even look at me when he spoke. And that should've made me realize that something bad had happened, but I was too happy in the thought of seeing my parents, so I didn't pay much attention to him.

We arrived in my village, but he didn't drop me in front of my house. He told me to walk away from the rice field into my home. He said he had to reach a friend in the rice field.

So I started walking with large steps—I want to reach my home faster. But when I passed the same hayfield which had been my favorite place before, I sensed that something was really wrong in my home. I slowed my pace and I searched for the house where I grew up, but I couldn't find it. I kept walking and walking until I reached the farm's gate, but there was no house and no farm. The soil was black and the only thing left that reminded me of my house was the remaining of the foundation of the house.

And I didn't know how long that I stood in front of my house. I was trembling and shaken up so badly until Odion saw me and ran to me. "Mare, Mare, let's go, let's go now, it's okay now, it's okay." The last thing I remember before I passed out was how blue and bright was the sky above.

“She’s awake. Ma! Ma! She’s awake.” I heard Odion called her mom to look after me. After sometimes, I also remember my burned house and my senses became numb. I muted for days and all I have done was only staring into the vast horizon outside Ode’s window. I didn’t respond to everyone’s talking, I barely ate, but Odion never left me. When he was on his break from his farming job, he would come and try to make me speak. He spoke a lot of things, about his farm, the neighbors, the changing of the weather, but I didn’t really listen. I didn’t know what I should’ve done. I just want to be left alone, but Ode wouldn’t do that. I finally pay attention when he started talking about the village people’s gossips when I left my house, and also about the incident. He told me that the incident happened six months before I came back home. He couldn’t contact me because he didn’t know where I was, so he could only waiting for me. The house was burned in the night because of a gas stove explosion, and my family was trapped inside. It was so fast and all were burned, nothing’s left except the ashes. The villagers had collected of what’s left of my parents’ body and Kai, and they had buried them in the public cemetery not far from the Cotton Tree.

When I had gained more strength, I went to the cemetery with Odion and broke up in tears. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m really sorry, I’m sorry.” I kept repeating those words until my eyes

dry and my throat was burning. I stayed at the cemetery with Odion until the sun was setting.

I felt that three months after that were really hard for me, but fortunately, there's Odion. His parents let me live in their house and do whatever I wanted—although mostly all I do were sleeping and staring blankly to the wall. After the hardest part had passed, I thought of what I will be doing in my life, and I started walking to Kai's school and got a job in there.

After the time being, I started to let go of my grief slowly, and I could do that because Odion is always there to cherish me.

When 2 years had passed, Odion proposed me and we were married when the spring had come and the flowers bloomed.

Now I have been a teacher for 35 years, and I have become an old woman and have gained a lot of precious lessons in life. I used the lessons to guide my children and my students. I share stories to inspire them to be a better person and a person who carved his own future.

I still had the grief inside of me, and I know that I will live with it for the rest of my life. So I just want to give my best in realizing my dreams and teaching the children at my community and make their future brighter.

Ally-Oop

Glenn Puturuhu

164214161

'Jerry! Jerry! Breakfast is ready!' loud noise coming from outside my room.

'Jerry Jordan, you better wake up before I put my foot somewhere it's not supposed to!'

'Sheesh mom, in a minute'

Yup, my mum is hella loud, loud enough to be an efficient alarm every single morning.

'Shit, I wish I could sleep longer' it's stupid that I said that every morning before school, when the reason why I couldn't, is because of the "Stuff" that I usually do in the night.

'Top of the morning champ, what can I get you?'

'Dad, this is too early...'

'Hey! Hey! Where's this attitude coming from?'

'It's just puberty... ' my mum jumps to the conversation.

'MUM! We've talked about this, don't bring it up again!'

Puberty is the only thing I hate slipping into the family conversation, I mean its ok if the teacher talks about it, but when my mom talks about it... shit.

'Hahaha, why are you so afraid of that? I had puberty too, and if I

didn't get puberty, we wouldn't have you, Jerry'

'For Christ sake dad! I'm only 16!'

'You know I had you when I was your age right?' my mom jumps into it again.

'That's the reason why Mom! I'm not ready for this reproductive things'

'Shoot, I had sex when I was 15!'

'Sad...please STAHP!!!'

'Ok ok, now eat your breakfast and clean your "Manhood", we got 10 minutes'

'DAD!!!'

'Hahahaha' my parents laugh.

This nasty conversation stops, for now, it never gets old and I'm frustrated.

They sure did tease me a lot, too much maybe. Well you know... parents, what you gonna do about it. Every single morning, I had come face to face with this kind of situation, the puberty thing just started this week, there was more stuff they tease me about.

It's always some stuff about what I'll go through and every single morning, I have to yell at them but did they stop? Ho ho ho, no! It's like I give them candy for every time I yell "stop!" they get more excited.

I get it I spend too much time by myself and also the only children in the house. I mean it's ok, I don't really think about it, but

somehow they still feel responsible for it... especially my mom, she's infertile so she put herself at a hard spot, she even quits her job just so I can have company at my house.

'Jerry get your stuff, we gotta go'

'Shit I haven't even put my shoes yet' whispering under my breath.

'Ay Jerry, what took you so damn long? Dumbbell again? You seriously need to get a hang-off that' preach my dad

'You always said muscle intensity matters, if anything it's your fault I started this'

'Well yeah... but too much is no good you know?' my dad anxiously responded

'Chill dad... it's just a mild exercise, see, I didn't even sweat!' I reply while tying my shoes

The conversation went on and on for several minutes, we got into the car and heads right off to school.

My dad always drives me to school, he works as security at the factory not far from my school and he prefers taking me so I could have five minutes of chill time and not rushing by walking to school. He likes to "lay back and relax" in his life and introduce me to this lifestyle and I have to say, I quite like it.

We arrived at school and he says he'll pick me up after school just like every other school day. Some students say it's awkward as a teenager to be "transported" by your parents, but I don't give a shit about that.

“Well well well, if it ain't daddy's little boy!” a boy shouting in the school hall

So this is Thomas, I don't know why he said that... it doesn't even make any sense what he is saying... the only thing I know is that he's an asshole, he's not even a bully to me, well he's... a cancer let's just said it that way. He's a cancer to me since elementary school, he lives in my neighborhood but not very welcomed because he's an asshole... pardon, a cancer. Every day since the day he moved to our neighborhood, he becomes the bully in our school. Well, not a kind of a “bully” like in a movie or something. One-thousand percent not a physical bully, but his annoyance tho... urgh. Imagine if he's a dog and everyone in my school is a postman, a continuous barrage of barking in the school area.

Rumors said he was move here because he got in a fight with someone and his previous school dropped him for that.

‘Hey ponyboy,’ said Thomas

‘Wassup Tom... haven't had your medicine or something?’

‘You, me, basketball court, now!’ said Tom with abrupt tone

‘Man... you still mad about that? That match ended 5 years ago Tom and you lost? I said while looking down at him since I'm way taller

‘Well yeah... but I bet I'll destroy you this time’ Tom maintaining eye contact

‘Heh...grow a couple more centimeters and I promise I'll be the

one to challenge you' while I putting my forefinger in his chest
Well, sorry to be an asshole, but he deserves it. The story of our rivalry started 5 years ago, when we were 5th grade and my dad told me he was a basketball player once, so I started playing basketball for a few days and one day after school there was an election for our school team, so I give it a shot. So, long story short I got elected along with a newcomer named Thomas, this is where it gets interesting... the first day we played as a teammate Thomas started "Jerking around". At first we were training, my teammates and the coach was impressed by my skill, the coach once played in the same team with my father so he said basketball was in my DNA, and something about a will of fire and stuff that I forgot, and when I told him that I started basketball not long ago, he was even more amazed. However, Thomas is there getting red like a boiled potato. He's mad about something for sure, and I know why.

Anyway, a few hours passed, now Thomas started showing his true skin. So, after the practice there was a three on three going on and I asked the guys if I could play the rest of the players said 'yes' but Tom with hostile voice said "no, you can play if you can dunk", I was a smartass so I replied with "well then, none of us could play with you since none of us could do that" the rest of the team starts nodding like agreeing to my comments. Then Tom shouts "I can!" again me with a smartass comment "well I got

news for you champ, you're crazy... because there is no history of a 10 years old kid dunking before and if you can, you're a bull...shit" everybody in the court laugh including me then he yelled at me, "you wanna fight?!" keep in mind I've never fight before in my life, up until middle school. So I was so scared that I run away. My dad was supposed to pick me up but I said to myself I need to get the fuck outta here, so I walk home.

Long story short, I arrived home, my mom is mad at me for walking home. She called my father and told what I just did my father gets mad at me as well, luckily in all my life I never get an ass-whooping so I'm ok, but my parents rarely get mad, so when they do... all hell breaks loose.

When my dad came home, I tell him the whole truth because I was scared of getting mad. He told me to man up and confront him. I asked my dad if he could find a way for me to dunk, not because I'm scared or anything... it's just so I can get away without even have to fight. He said it's impossible, we argue and then he took me to our neighborhood court, there was this mini ring like half the size of the ring in our school and he raised me up so I could stand on his shoulders, I was so scared that I won't open my eyes. So he told me "don't", I still won't open my eyes and then he said "trust me" so I open my eyes and there it was, the ring beneath me. It was amazing

So what's the point of the story? The point is that I somehow got

an idea to pay Thomas for what he did. The next day, the second day of team practice, I talked with my janitor Mr. Ramirez if I could borrow the latter for my team practice before practice starts. I was the first in the court and I helped him set the latter. So the stage is set, Thomas and the rest of the teammates walked in, so apparently, Thomas is the leader of the team, they bow down to Thomas and laughs at every single joke he made, what a pig... anyway, I say at him that I could dunk now, I sat at the top of the latter and dunk the basket and yell "I won" Thomas looking at me and yell with even more hostile tone than before "you're cheating!" and my comeback was "well, you're lying... you could never dunk" he keeps yelling "I can!" and here goes my final blow "I dare you", you know as a kid if that sentence is directed at you, you're shit if you don't try to prove something. The rest of the team goes "OOOOO" Thomas, who's at the edge of the cliff started running towards me so I assume he's going to push me down the latter. So I jump at him, and the bottom of my shoes goes into his face like asteroid hits the earth resulting dinosaur to go extinct, but this time it's his fuckin' face. He gets knocked the fuck out. Resulting in him taken home because of "accident" in the court, apparently, Tom wasn't a snitch so he played along with our story. Rumors started to spread in school. It's about me knocking Tom out. They say that I karate kick him and I know martial arts or something like that. I was going, to tell the truth, but where's the

fun in that? but I told my father tho, he told me it's great that I've overcome my fears, but if there's any report on the problem, he's going to teach me a lesson, I'm not afraid because I know that it's not happening.

Later on, I became the most badass person in the school after that. Ever since then, I was never to be seen in the basketball team again. I quit. I asked my dad to buy a single post ring for me to practice in my backyard. After I got much better, I play in my neighborhood court. I only see Tom at school. It's like I was cursed to get stuck with him.

sound of the bell going off

'Why are you two still standing here? Get to your classes, now!' shouts the teacher

'See you around Jordan' taunts Tom

'You wish' I replied

I don't even know why he's trying so hard to prove himself like what's the benefit of that. I don't get it.

After school ends, I wait for my father to come and pick me up

phone ringing

'Hello, dad?'

'Jerry, I'm gonna be a bit late, there some trouble at the office I need to handle it really quick. You can call mum to pick you up if you want to?'

'It's ok dad I'll walk home'

'You sure?'

'Of course, what am I, a 5-year-old or something?'

'That the spirit, ok gotta go, bye love you.'

'Love you too dad.'

hanging up the phone

I guess I'm walking home today then, hufft'

'Ayo Jerry!' wade shouting

'Aye wassup, wade?'

'Waiting for someone?' ask wade while giving me the handshake

'Nah man, my dad had to bail so he couldn't pick me up'

'So, you're walking home?'

'I guess so...' replying with an exhausted tone

'Chill dawg, hop in with me'

'Haha, you have a car?'

'No, I meant that we walked home together.'

'That's a joke wade, what the hell...'

'Oh... hahaha' wade fake laugh 'I don't get it'

'It's because you say hop in and... nevermind man lets go'

I and wade go outside the school building and see Tom went in the court, he was alone in the court playing basketball playing one on one against nobody.

'Aye look' whispering to wade

'Who? Tom? That dude is weird he's hella talented tho'

'Wait, he's in your team?'

'Hell yea dude, he got dunks boy' wade hyping
'Damn, I thought he's lyin'
'He doesn't get your cross-over tho' wade hyping again
'My cross-over is not that great wade'
'See, that's your problem dude you're too humble' wade teasing
'Yea right, wade...'

We continue our chat until we arrived at my place and split up
'60 point's dude! Last game! Kobe!
'The hell?! I gotta watch that game replay tonight'
'I'm telling you, man, it's crazy!' wade pitching
'Aye, see you afternoon man' handshakes wade

'Mom, I'm home'
'Hello my honey pumpkin, how's school?'
'I have a name mom, school's great I got 80 on my test'
'You need to lose the attitude' mom raising her voice
'Well sorry for being like my dad'
Mom shakes her head.
'Who's your friend?'
'Who? Wade? Nah, he's more like a colleague to me'
'A colleague is a friend Jerry'
'Nope, a colleague is a person you know and interact but doesn't
get you that well' I reply with a mouth-full off snacks
'You know it would be nice if you brought your friend here once'

'I have, and he lives here' I reply while picking up my dumbbells
'I meant, someone else besides your dad!' moms with antagonizing voice

As soon as I heard that I stop, and I put my dumbbells on the floor

'Look mom, I know you're worried about me having no friends, I don't need one right now' brushing my mom hands 'I got friends at basketball court if I wanted to bring them home the house would be full of them, you wouldn't like it' my mom has a little laugh

'But anyone has to have a best friend Jerry, a person to spill what their hearts desire when nobody else's can'

'I don't need that kind of attention mom'

'Well, at least your friend could spill their hearts for you' my mom quickly replied

'My friend at the basketball court likes to tell me things too mom'

'Was it personal? Or just merely irrelevant to them'

'Well, they say things about trying to do some stuff and...'

'Honey, best friend tells their best friend the most personal secret they have, they share it to you not because they wanted to, but because they trust you, you'll know it, if you give it a try' Mom cuts me off.

At this moment it hits me hard in the feels, I never had no comebacks, but this time I freeze. I walked to my room thinking

am I really that sad? Well, I have never told someone if I like somebody, would Wade be my best friend? Maybe George will? He once told me about how he likes Wade's sister, but he told it to everyone. I kept thinking about it until I was tired and went to sleep, I wake up and it's already evening.

'Damn, I overslept until midnight?' I whispered

Walked down the stairs to the refrigerator to see any leftovers. There's nothing, looks like my dad eats them all. I walk back up to my room, I can't sleep, I had too much of it. I put my hoodie and my shoes on, pick-up my basketball, jump over my window room, climb down the drain pipe, and walk to the neighborhood court. Well, this is my "stuff" you see, this is what I like to do when I can't sleep. it's safe, there will be our neighborhood security, Mr. Wilson, I mean he wasn't always here in this spot but eventually he'll roam the neighborhood until he got here, I know him pretty well, I sometimes go here when I couldn't sleep, and Mr. Wilson was there only to tell me to go back home.

Anyway, I walked to the court and not like the day before, I wasn't here by myself, there's a kid there too. Who's that kid? I peek through the fence but he's not facing this way, so took a closer look.

'Tom?!' I'm surprised

'AAA!' Tom screaming Oh, it's you, Jerry, you scared the shit outta me'

'What the fuck were you doing here?'

'I'm playing basketball smartass, what else would you think I'm doing?' said Tom with a mocking tone

I'm rolling my eyes, I just wanna throw the basketball on my hand at his stupid face, well, I guess the court is used, I guess I better go home now. I'm walking away when suddenly,

'Hey Jerry...you... wanna play?'

'Who? Me?' I reply sarcastically

'Yes... you'

'Why would I want to, Tom?'

'Well you brought a basketball to a basketball court, so it has to be something right?' Tom with a friendly tone

Now I'm confused why did this asshole being friendly to me.

'I'll just go home right, for the sake of both of us, because if I'm here longer we're gonna fight' I don't wanna talk anymore at that point, so I turn my back at him and walk away.

'Hey... I'm sorry Jerry'

'For what?' I reply while continuously walking toward the exit

'For being a prick'

Hold on a second, I stopped, did he just say sorry? Did he really just said that? The cancer Tom? Look I know Tom, and that's not what Tom would've said.

'Wha...?' you see...that's all I can think of, I have stutter just by hearing that

'Look, I know what our history was, I was being defensive' said

Tom

'Defensive?! You called that defensive?!' I gnarly responded

'Hey! You didn't have to get hostile every time I met you!' Tom's
pitching

The hell? This guy must be crazy; he's telling me that I was the one
being hostile all along?

'Wow, now you saying I'm hostile? Bitch, it's you that being
hostile'

'What? You're the one being rude all this time, I just don't wanna
lose to your arrogance' Tom responded

Wait did I really was that rude? Hold on...

'Who said that I was rude?' my curiosity started to rise

'Well, I did...' Tom reply

Well there you go Tom, again with the hate speech, I didn't wanna
reply to him anymore so I just turn my back and proceed to the
exit.

'...Wade did, Jeremy did, Steven did, everybody in my team did'

Tom proceed his talking

I panicked, after all this time I thought they were a good friend of
mine.

'What? they tell you?'

'No... but I listen to their chit-chat once'

'What did they say?'

'It's something about them not wanting to invite you to the team because you're a trash talker'

Turns out, in my high school team they invite talented people, and there was a time when I was being told that I would be invited to become a team member, since I was not a social kind of person and also my style of playing of "one versus all" they decided to reject me because they thought there would be less connection in the team play.

'But they got you in? You know that they called you weird right?'

'I know,' smirk Tom 'they need my dunks tho, that's why...'

'So, you're their slave, and you don't care?' I curiously asked Tom's sitting on the bench 'I can't say no to basketball man, I can't play in the neighborhood because of you, so I played in school team'

'HA, I'm so sorry if you think it like that, but that's wrong' I laugh 'See that's your problem, you don't live in your own world Jerry, you can't'

I'm shocked, I never thought of that, we spoke for like an hour or so and now I'm amazed by Tom's personality, he realizes everybody has a stage of their own, he knows that sometimes we become aggressive because we're scared, well in Tom's case he doesn't want to get bullied so he takes the role of aggressiveness as his defensive system, he covers his flaw by raising others.

'Well it's us or them' Tom with a low tone

'But you can always be friendly besides being, you know... you' I respond

'How?' Tom asks

'If you're friendly enough, there's no need to hide your flaw... a friend would accept yours'

I don't know what I'm talking about, I'm saying the stuff that I didn't even familiar about. Well, I've never been in this situation before, so I speak what I needed to speak.

Tom and I been chatting for a long time, turns out he's rich as fuck, he has his own basketball court and he broke his ring from dunking too hard, that's why he's here. And also...

'You have a TV, in your room?! Daamn...'

'Hahaha' Tom laugh

We didn't even sweat that night, we would just talk about how our lives were before and how basketball changes our life and laughing and so on, so apparently we like to do the same stuff, we like to train constantly and couldn't sleep if we weren't really tired.

'Aye, Jerry! You need to go home now! It's almost 4pm!' Mr. Wilson shouting

'Ok, Mr. Wilson' I shout back

'Who's that with u?' Mr. Wilson approaching

Before I could reply, Tom shouts

'I'm Tom sir, Jerry's friend'

'Mr. Terrence? First time seeing you in here' Mr. Wilson reply 'hey,

don't you guys have parents or something? You need to go home, now!

I and Tom walked home, we say our goodbye, have little handshakes and we split off. I climb my water drain, open my window and jumps to my room, its 4 pm in the morning, and I still can't sleep so... I'll pick my dumbbells and started training I guess. I train until I get tired and jumps to bed.

Fast forward, I wake up, look at the clock, it's frickin' 8 am... fuck I'm starving. I went down my mom was there cooking so I sat at the table and wait.

'You wake up early, you know it's weekend, right?'

'I didn't have dinner, so I'm starving right now'

'Hold on 5 more minutes and you'll eat, I know dad eat the leftovers and you're probably really hungry so I made chicken strips.'

'Thank you, mom, I love you soo much'

'I guess your dad wasn't a good friend huh? You know Jerry, a good friend will always remember his friend and your dad is not that a kind of person that would care about others situations about others beside his family, so... don't be your dad ok?' my mom preaching

'Hey mom, how do you know someone is your friend?'

'Well... it depends, honey' mom reply

'What do you mean?' I asked again

'We tend to live our world the way we want to, just like you wanted to live this life without friends'

'There's a good friend and a bad friend, a good friend is a best friend while a bad friend is just a colleague.'

'Your best friend shares his mind with you, while your colleague shares what needed to be shared. But sometimes, best friend hides their true emotions, and leaves it to you to realize it'

'Sometimes your best friend will throw his ego just because he doesn't want you and him separated'

'Everyone has their own match of personality; you'll never know for sure if he's the one or not'

'The only way to know is to give it a try, Jerry'



FANTASY

EDEN: THE NEW ME

Luh Ananda Sri Delfi Inggas

164214160

“The entire universe should be balanced. Human and nature supposed to be creating the harmony of life. But things don't always work well. People's dying. Nature's dying. Earth mother's mourning lost its virginity. Ain't nothing but everyone deserves a better place in this world. Here, I see human, but no humanity.”-Eden

“Eden, male, 30 years old, and you are from Canmore, right?”

"Yes, Sir."

“Good. Regarding this job as a travel reporter, have you experienced in traveling or visiting other countries?”

"Yes, Sir."

“Well, I would like to know what's the most memorable experience you have experienced while you were on your travel.”

Flashback a year ago

After hours of flights, I had just landed my feet over this place. An unknown place for me which I had not been here before. I knew I was at somewhere else. It was a part of my travel journey. I

decided to travel on my own. Hopefully, I could get out of my comfort zone as an introvert person and for being able to communicate to the world outside in the search for my own identity.

Everything I had imagined, they were just out of my expectation. When I looked over at my surrounding, this city was full buildings and ocean of people. Hot air, crowded, chaotic atmosphere, vehicle drove aimlessly. I didn't feel comfortable being in a crowd of people, actually. It seemed suffocating. I just could not stand it anymore. Hardly, I tried to get out over these people. I let my feet moved away to find a way to a motel or any place that I could rest my body, for a while.

Walking out of downtown, I decided to explore more about this place. With a camera on my neck, I was ready to capture my journey. The sun was still shining brightly at its finest way. Its ray touched my pale skin so that it was burned a little bit. The sky was painted in shades of blue. I felt like I was in the midst of the desert. Above, an eagle with its bald sound was spinning around shaping a form of silhouette and watching over its prey. The prey must be near come to death in its grip.

I kept going on walking till I found myself in the middle of nowhere. I had no idea where I was. Perhaps I had lost. In contrast, the place where I belonged now was totally different

from where I had been before. It was refreshing, calming, and mesmerizing. I watched the trees as if they were dancing. The wind blew my long-light-brown hair gently as if the mother of earth gave her purest love to his son. O paradise.

I laid my six feet body under the tree. Dreaming of starrng at the night sky observing the galaxy, hoping I could be a scientist. Or maybe I could be a philosopher. Oh, I wish then. If only I had entered university life, I would have been holding my degree. What a bitter life, Eden.

“Arghhhh,” I sighed. “No. The wounds are still here. They are invisible. But my life must go on. I have to move on. I have!”

Rather than kept remembering how sad my past life was, I tried to look away. From a distance, there was a stretch of barren land. But when I tried to squint my eyes, something had ticked my curiosity, a trapezoid-like barren hill. Wondering what was there, I kept questioning in my mind. Soon after, I heard voices behind the hill but it sounded faintly.

As I steeped along through the barren, the stench and sting began to smell. With widened-eyes, the smell came from a polluted-river covered by piles of junks. I found the water was black, dirty, oily, and sticky. Fish carcasses were seen among the trash, meanwhile a hundred of flies perched above this. What the world was this? Those voices behind the hill kept me roaming. To reach the top of

the hill, the track was not easy to reach. I had to climb rocks. All I had to do was to satisfy my curious desire.

“Jesus Christ!” I screamed
to myself

I found myself stood with a look of disbelief. It was a dark hidden sight of the world. There were so many uninhabitable houses lined-up surrounded by with garbage. This was area was considered as a home for hundreds of homeless people. In front of the houses, women were sitting blankly and babies were crying of starving. Even I saw kids were helping their parents picking up leftover food from the landfill. For them, finding leftover food was a treasure.

It was still me witnessed the outside of the world. The world was so cruel. My eyes were on something suspicious on the river bank. Oh God, you have torn my heart apart. It shocked me when I found a half-dying tiny kid was lying weak and helpless. His body remained skin only. His body was cramping. Quickly, I took out my bottle and put him in my arms. When I got him in my arms, his eyes were slowly closed. There was no sign of breath and no pulse beating. I got a panic attack. All efforts I had tried for the sake of bringing his life back. Useless. An innocent little kid had

died.

“Shit. Oh, Lord!”

I sobbed. I cried. I screamed. I blamed myself. I cursed myself. Only if I could find him earlier, there was a hope that his life could be saved. I was completely messed up. This was the first time I cried because of a little kid. I knew I hated children so much. I thought kids only a troublesome, but they were not. They were innocent and pure. This broke my heart into pieces. Knowing the fact that he was no longer belong to this world, I hugged him for the last time. I whispered to his died body.

“Hey dear little kid, you are an angel now. You’ll be dancing happily with the sound of heaven up there.

There’s no more pain and tears. I’m so sorry,” I sobbed.

The cry of a mother was obviously heard. When I looked up, I saw her. My teary eyes met hers. She had lost her only son. I gave her son to her. No words could describe how painful it was. I had witnessed how life brutally took over their fate. The reality was truly heartbreaking.

“This place leaves me breathless and speechless. I feel pain inside my feeling. It hurts to see them. Those kids are supposed to be happy kids playing in the playground.”

I was so furious. How could this have happened? We’re all human. We were supposed to give our hand to help them. Fuck this reality.

“Hey dude, I’m so sorry for what just happened.”

Someone with a British accent tried to speak to me. When I turned around, a man had stood in front of me.

“Yeah.”

"I am Jack Thompson. I came to this place a week ago for my duty as a journalist. I was told by someone that the people once lived there." He pointed to a land across the river. "That place was the only place with filled of forests. This was once a very clear river. But since a few years ago, the people were forced to leave that place. The forests where it was used as the source of life was destroyed. Deforestation and forest fires happened for years. Now, the ecosystem has lost its balance. People are dying. Nature has given its reaction to people’s greedy action.”

“You’re right. I feel pity for this world. Hopefully, the world could find its balance soon. Anyway, I am Eden Larsson. Nice to meet you.”

“Nice to meet you too.”

Flashback off

“I’m so sorry to hear that, Mr. Eden. I am amazed. Your travel journey has been so amazing. So, does it make you feel called to be a volunteer?”

"Yes, Sir. This journey has changed a lot of things in my

life. Hopefully, it can bring much positivity in life. Human and humanity that what's we need right now.”

"Well, I guess that's all. We will let you know the result through email. Good luck."

“Thank you, Sir.”

Now, I am at home. It is still 3:30 p.m. I pack my travel bag and get my dog, Goldy, to go for a walk to Policeman's Creek River. For me, this place is perfect. I could spend hours sitting and admiring the beauty of the river. A stretch of the sweet perfume of grass, crystal blue water as clear as glasses reflected from the river, and the summer breeze echoing the sound of heaven, I feel myself lives within peace and serenity. I have just realized, I feel connected to my soul. That's a way better to live my life.

As my eyes staring at the sunset, I do self-reflection. I have been going through a lot of things. I had been in my worst days. I had been in a mess. I had been addicted to drugs and alcohol. I had committed suicide for countless time. No one knows I had been a drug dealer. I did all those shit things because I lost my balance. I had a meaningless life. I almost gave up and gave in to my own life. I was losing me.

Now, I am glad I have found a way how to make a better version of myself. I am ready to open my new prelude in life. I am ready for being the new “Me”. Through my unforgettable travel journey,

I have seen new perspectives on a different point of view. It has changed my life drastically. That journey has opened my eyes that there are a lot of people need our help. The crisis of act of humanity has made me dedicate myself to bring justice.

---THE END---

Queen of the Moon

Haya Eclipsia

Glyceria Nova Dacosta

164214137

Haya was an 18 years old girl. She was the one and only daughter of the queen of the moon named Zavana. Her father was a human, he came from Japan, he had been living below the Fuji Mountain as the forest keeper, but her mother was originally from the Milky Way Kingdom. She had wings, stayed on the moon and controlled the moon shape and shine every night. Haya had big blue eyes like her mother, thick eyebrows, and yellow light skin color like her father. She had also long beautiful eyelashes, pointed nose, small lips, and purple wavy long hair that she usually had ponytail on it. Besides, she was tall and skinny but she was really energetic and passionate. She likes to use a diamond necklace from her mother. She believed the diamond necklace had a magical power to protect her from any danger because it had the red light of the nuclear moon. It shone lightly to everyone who had a negative intention to her. She loved mixed purple and black colors; it is why her accessories always had those two colors. She used her violet read the leather

jacket and black trousers everywhere. In addition, she also used her beloved sparkling silver bracelet which has the moon symbol in it. The bracelet gave her the power to end something bad with electricity. She was born on earth, but right after that, her mother caught up by the shoulders of the sky. Then, she just came back to keep the moon shining by her existence, it was why her mother life separately with her father. There, the mother raised her daughter alone, even though she missed her husband. On the moon, Haya didn't meet humans. She only had a friend named BooBoo, the flying rabbit and Momochan, the flying swan. From she was baby, BooBoo and Momochan always accompanied her and protected her. Haya didn't really know how to interact with a human, although she was half human and half Goddess. But, Haya felt better anytime she can make her best friends smile and laugh.

Her hobbies were dancing, flying and singing. Her habits were collecting small stone from a black river in the middle of a forest on earth. She went to earth every full moon phase in a month to see her father. Her favorite drinking was Broccoli red beans with carrot juice. She had a negative side too; she was easily falling asleep and sometimes less sensitive towards her surroundings. However, she was tough, brave, and supports the peace among humans. She hates mosquito and yellow jasmine. After she turns 17 years old, her mother assessed her how to be a good queen and

she was mandated to go to Sakura Country, living there for around one year and helping some child's cases that need her power. She promised her mother that she would devote her life to save children from any danger such as torture, violation, kidnapping, harassments and sexual abuse. Her goal on earth was to finish the task by her mother. Zavana wanted her daughter to be more mature, discipline, active and sociable. She wanted all the best for Haya because later Haya would take over Zavana's position as the Queen of the moon. Therefore, Haya's motivation was to protect children on earth.

On December 14th, 2019, Haya was flying from the moon to the forest below Fuji Mountain. She wanted to see her father and cheered him up. She knew that her father was old and was not able to do many things, she wanted to help him. In the middle of the night, she turned down and stepped her feet to the ground. She walked slowly and calmly following the forest's path. She saw all animals were sleeping tightly and so did the human. She was walking and seeing around, she thought all things were changing, the situation was also changing. She smells something sting and she saw the high huge black smoke from a far distance. She assumed it was from the middle of the city. Then, she continued her way to her father's home. Suddenly,

there was crying from a girl which was not far away from the Haya position. Haya was shocked and she ran to the source of the sound, but she saw nothing. She was so curious and with her bravery, she searched the voice. The crying and the scream was louder and louder. Haya was panic but she tried to calm herself. In the dark cloudy cold night, she keeps continuing her journey in founding the voice from the girl. She was sure that was not her illusion but real.

After ten minutes of walking, she arrived at her father's hut. She knocked on the door and she was calling her father "Papa, where are you?". Her father didn't response her at all. She tried louder "Papa, this is me, your daughter. Don't you want to see me?" Again, her father didn't give back any answer. Then, she was worried about what exactly happened to all things and her father. She found the diamond on her necklace couldn't shine, it was dull. She was silent and thinking for a moment, "There must be something wrong here" said Haya. She turned around to her father house, she peeps from the window but no one inside. She knocked and she was shouting " Papa!! ", Haya was sad and stopped, then standing on her's father terrace. Suddenly, an old mysterious lady came to her and said " Haya, are you the daughter of Mr. Kawasaki ?", Haya was trembling and said "Yes, I am. Who are you?" An old lady was handing her snake stick then she was

pointing a certain direction near the central town, “ He must be there, you should save him.”, said the old lady. Haya was startled then asking back, “Why there is no one here? What happened? Please tell me! How can I save my father if I don’t know what actually happen?”. An old lady disappeared when Haya turned back. Haya was surprised because an old lady was gone and there was no one inside her. She wanted to go back to the moon and told her mother above. The moment she started to fly, she can’t see the sky clearly. Her wings were weak and it couldn’t support her to fly away. She was trapped in the forest, and she felt hopeless and lonely there.

She thought she had to walk to the central city and found her father by herself. She started to walk past her father home until she met a girl who was crying so hard. Haya’s bracelet vibrated, it meant something bad happened around, Haya was standing and looking around the girl, she was ready to save the girl. Suddenly, there was a huge monkey that appeared with its long tail and sharp teeth. It was a monster from the forest. Haya was gazing at him and she was ready to fight.

At that moment, Haya was triggered and attacked the monster. She took her power out. She used her electric bracelet to face the monster. After fighting to the wolf and got some wound and

scars, Haya was weak and fell down to the ground. When she saw the monster, it already died and didn't move at all. Haya saw the condition to go was better, then she took the girl with her away. They continue their route to downtown. During their way, Haya was trying to ask the girl "Hey, what is your name?" The girl answered, "Hi Haya, My name is Sakura, I know you before we meet." Haya was surprised then asked her out "Really? Whoah! How can you know me?"

Sakura said: "I know you from my parents, they liked to talk about the story of The Goddess of Moon and her daughter who is really beautiful." Haya said, "Thank you, you are beautiful too, we could be friends from now on." The girl was smiled and hug Haya. They were continuing their journey to the town. The girl was so curious and she asked "What happen in the city Haya? Is there something wrong?" Haya couldn't answer the question, she was silent and worried but she was pretending to be calm.

When they arrived in the central city, all houses, buildings, and public infrastructures were destroyed. No one there, and it was dark full of smoke. Haya was trying to call her father, "Papa, where are you?" No one answered. After some minutes looking around the ruins and the dust, Haya saw an old man was standing from the top of the tower. Haya saw him through the window. He was staring at the town condition. He wore a white dress and

handing gold lion head stick. He had flat expression. He was sad. Haya then runs at the building where the man was standing then she approached him. “Brag....” Haya opened the door at the room where the man was there. “Hey, what are you doing here?” Haya asked. “I am nothing here, all my family was gone. They were brought by something negative.” “What is that?” Said Haya. The old man didn’t answer it. Suddenly he disappeared. Haya was keep questioning. When she decided to go out of the building, an old man waylaid her. Then, he said “Please go to the highest hill in the middle of downtown, the monsters are there, and they were kidnapping all children in this region. Your father, Mr. Kawasaki is there too, he wants to save them but he needs your help.” Haya was limp the moment she heard that she was afraid anything happens to her father. An old man gave Haya a map to direct Haya the way to go to the hill.

Haya and Sakura were directly following the map. The air was so cold, the sky was so cloudy, the rain started to fall down. Haya covered the girl body with her jacket.

They found lots of obstacles during their way climbing the hill. They had to kill the black poisonous snakes, cutting long wild weeds, and fought with wild small monkeys. The first challenge was the black poisonous snakes, it was hard for Haya and it was so dangerous for Sakura. Seeing Sakura condition, Haya gave

her electricity protection that surrounds Sakura. There were no snakes that could pass the electricity around Sakura. After that, Haya jumped into the head of the king of snakes. Haya stabbed the head of the king of snakes with her sword and she said “How could you be mean to children? This is revenge from what you have done.” Other snakes were staring at Haya. They became mad because of their King was killed by Haya. One by one snake approached Haya, they rope Haya feet, hands, and body. Haya couldn’t see her bracelet, she was trying to see her bracelet so hard until suddenly it falls down to the ground and one of the snakes bought it away from her. At that moment, the electricity protection at Sakura was gone also. Haya was hopeless but she didn’t want Sakura to die. Suddenly, she read one magic word to the sky to call her best friends. “Zapatalula Zalelefela Toschelalala Meytowtete, help me, my friends, I am in a danger,” said Haya. In the Moon Kingdom, the queen was waiting for Haya, she was a worry for Haya because Haya had been gone from the kingdom over than 24 hours, it must be something wrong happen below there. The sky color changes into orange and red, the rain stopped at the sky, it couldn’t fall down again, something bad happens down there. Boo Boo and Momochan saw the rare situation, it was unusual and weird. The sky was orange and red, Haya didn’t come back. Suddenly, they heard Haya voice below there saying the magical words from the

Moon Kingdom. They quickly ran and told the Queen about Haya voice. The Queen also heard the same. Then, she mandated them to go to see what happen below there. BooBoo and Momochan prepared themselves. BooBoo had his fire gun and Momo had her water splash weapon. They started to slide to the earth. When they arrived, they saw Haya and a girl was surrounded by black snakes. Immediately, Booboo bombed all the snakes with his fire gun. Momo picked Haya and Sakura away from that place. All the snakes died. Haya couldn't stop thinking about her bracelet, she suddenly saw an old man whom she met at the tower was near Sakura, Haya said to him: "Hey, what are you doing here?" An old man replied "I am doing nothing, I only watching you. I see your bracelet now in the top of wild weeds there."

Haya was mad and furious because her beloved bracelet was far away from her. She encouraged her friends to help her mission. Sakura was also triggered and she helps to read the route for Haya, Booboo and Momo were also accompanying Haya journey to help the children in the hill. The second challenge was wild weeds, when they reached the gate below the hill, there were so much wild weed whispering and distracting Haya's focus. When the weeds were whispering, it produces sting chemical gasses that could make people dizzy and lost their focus. However, Haya kept focusing to get their bracelets in the top of the highest weeds.

Here, Momo contribution was really needed. When they faced all the weeds, the weeds started to dance and touched their bodies one by one, Momo knew what they wanted actually, and they wanted to kill Haya and friends. Momo quickly sprays the water to the gasses produced by the weeds. It was easy to defeat the weeds, Haya directly grabbed her bracelet and they continued their route. They climbed the hill step by step, there were so many stones, woods, charcoal, and the temperature was higher and hotter than in the low land. They finally reached the top of the hill, they saw so many children arrested by the monkey monster. The children will be brought to the Monkey kingdom, they would be killed one by one, sacrificed for the meal of the King of Monkey monster. Besides, all the parents were also jailed near their children. Furthermore, Haya used her bracelet to face the monkey, it was tough fighting, it was hard to kill the monkey monster, they were so nimble, cunning and tricky. Haya was not alone, she accompanied by her friends to kill the monkey, all the children were shouting “Help Haya!! Help us!! You can combat and kill them!” Haya was motivated and continuing fighting with all the monkey monsters. She took out all her energy to give huge electricity to the monkeys. One by one monkey was killed. The king of the monkey was angry; he was so big and brutal. BooBoo and Momo arranged the strategy to trap the King. BooBoo burned

all monkeys' guns and weapon, he burned all monkeys' property. The King lost his soldiers and he couldn't do anything. Haya came to him and with her huge electricity, she killed him. He finally died, and all the children and parents went out of jail. Haya made one huge boat with his energy; Momo helped to arrange the water so they came back to their home with the help of water. Haya also found her father, she hugs her father tightly. They went down from the hill by the boat. All the parents were so happy.

From that moment, all the children knew Haya as the new Queen of the Moon. Haya was saying goodbye to all the children and the parents. She took her father with her to back to the Moon Kingdom. She was flying with BooBoo and Momo-chan. In the Moon Kingdom, the Queen welcomed Haya warmly, she was proud of her daughter, Haya. The Queen felt that Haya deserved the crown as the queen. Haya was successfully done her mission to help the children. There was also an old man standing her mother, Haya was surprised with him. He was actually her grandfather, the father of her mother that she never saw before. Haya thanked her grandfather and her best friends, Bobo and Momo-chan, the queen kissed her husband and they were preparing a ceremonial celebration for Haya. The celebration was held to give the crown to Haya. Now,

Haya became the Queen of the Moon. She was there, above the moon every night. She was watching all children activities and always ready to help whenever something bad happen to them.

A Handful of Sandwich

Dhira Rozaandiar

164214148

Nara was an 18 years old boy; living his life to the fullest. He was an average student in his school. His long brown hair that always smelled like hair product crowned his tall and well-built body. The freckles decorated his fair skin. He was a cheerful and extrovert teenager who was going through high school as an ordinary teenager does.

It was the beginning of fall, Nara was a sophomore in his high school. He finally met his friends which he had not met for months during summer. He watched his friends coming from every direction of the schoolyard. He noticed some new faces he never had never seen before. They must have been the new freshmen.

The first two weeks of his semester, Nara had an ordinary life – hanging out with friends, new home works, go fishing, absorbing people’s negative emotions and exchanging them with his positive emotions. Yes. Nara had that kind of ability. He was born an empath – someone who can sense other’s emotion. It was inherited from his father when Nara was born; his father’s ability vanished and transferred to Nara right after he was

born. Nara was able to sense someone's emotion and exchanging them at will by having direct contact. However, he did not want to use it irresponsibly or accidentally. That is why he always wear leather gloves. There were a lot of people questioning his choice of wearing gloves. "Why would you wear it? Do people still wear gloves like in the old days?" His answer always simple and straightforward "I kind of a germophobe." Nara was not and never had been a germophobe. He lied because he did not want his friends to find out his ability. He hid his ability from everyone, except his father. Her mother? Mother died when giving birth to Nara.

On the beginning of his third week as a sophomore, there was a new student in his class. This kid sat next to Nara's seat. When Nara came late to the class, he questioned who this kid is. He did not know this kid's name since he came late and did not get the chance to listen to his introduction. Nara was a very observant person. While walking to his chair, he stared at this kid. He saw how flat and expressionless the new student's face is. His lazy eyes seemed like glaring straight front with his expressionless face and his short dark hair framed his face. After he sat down in his chair, as a friendly and outgoing person he was, Nara asked the student's name. However, his curiosity blinded him, he wanted to sense this new student's emotion. He, then, intentionally took off his glove to have a handshake and, of course, to sense the emotion

of the new student.

“Hey! My name is Nara. What’s yours?” said Nara while reaching out his hand to have a handshake. The new student, at first, just stared at Nara's hand for 5 solid seconds before reaching out his hand back to Nara. Right after Nara touched the new student's hand, Nara was not able to feel anything other than an empty void and a strong coldness that he could feel down to his spine. A coldness he never felt in his entire life of being an empath.

“Mar...cus,” replied the new student while startled by Nara who took his hand off Marcus right after their skin touched. Nara’s face clearly showed how shocked he was because of the handshake with Marcus.

During the class, Nara could not take his mind off Marcus, the new student. What kind of emotion that Marcus had that make Nara scared and startled? Nara then decided to befriend Marcus to get to know him better and might help him. After the class, it was a lunch break. Nara rushed to find Marcus outside the class and asked Marcus to have lunch together.

“Hey! Do want to have lunch together?” asked Nara warmly.

“Nope, thanks,” replied Marcus coldly.

“But, why?” asked Nara.

“I don’t bring lunch,” answered Marcus coldly without

even seeing Nara's face.

"It's okay, I bring an extra sandwich," said Nara while grabbing Marcus hand and led him outside to find a seat.

"Here, take it," said Nara while handing Marcus a sandwich.

"How about you?" asked Marcus.

"I've already had lunch. You can eat it," said Nara while giving his warmest smile. Nara actually had not had lunch, he lied so he and Marcus could have a talk over lunch. Seeing Marcus eating his sandwich, Nara happy. That was enough for Nara. Both of them spent time together eating Nara's homemade sandwich. They talk about everything, well, it was obvious that Nara is the one who talked the most. Marcus only listened while enjoying his sandwich.

When the bell rang, the hallway was filled with dozens of kids who wanted to get out of school and spent their weekend – it was Friday. Nara who shared the last class with Marcus tried to find him and asked him to go home together. When he tried to find him among the crowd in the hallway, he met Jillian – his other classmate in History class.

"Hey, Jill! Do see Marcus by any chance?" asked Nara curiously.

"Marcus? Who is that?" answered Jillian coldly.

“The new kid in History, don’t you know?” said Marcus.

“Oh. That kid, I think went to the toilet there,” pointing a door twenty-feet apart from them.

“Thank you!” said Nara. Nara had always been curious about Jillian. She was smart and ambitious in class, but she hardly saw with anyone. Nara, then, took his gloves off to shake hand with Jillian to thank her for the information she gave. Right after Nara touched her, he could feel her insecurities that was hidden by a great amount of love she felt at that moment. He then understood why she acted the way she was.

Nara then left Jillian and tried to search Marcus when came out from the toilet. Nara then asked Marcus to walk home together, not bothering he had to take a longer route than usual. Marcus, actually, felt uncomfortable by Nara. He had been following him since History class. At first, Marcus rejected Nara’s offer, but Nara insisted and told him that his house was on the same way. Marcus then forced to walk home together.

Along the way home, just like when they having lunch, Nara talked a lot while Marcus just listened and answered every question shortly – giving a sign he was annoyed of him. They then arrived at a big brown house with a small garden and a big tree stood tall covering half of the garden.

“You have a great house!” said Nara excitedly.

“It’s not mine. It’s my foster family’s house,” replied Nara coldly.

Nara could see the face he saw this morning when he saw Marcus for the first time. The cold and emotionless face that hid scaring feeling for Nara.

“I’m sorry,” said Nara, apologizing to Marcus.

“You should stay away from me. One day is more enough. Don’t you have any other people you can annoy?” yelled Marcus, “And for the record, I don’t intend to make friends, especially to a person like you.” Marcus marched into the house leaving Nara speechless.

Nara was not speechless because he was shocked nor he was mad for being yelled at. He was speechless because he started to understand why Marcus acting cold, but it did not answer a ton of question Nara had in my mind. He wanted to know more, he wanted to help Marcus to be happy and not cold and emotionless. He was planning to take him to park nearby on the weekend.

It was a sunny morning. While walking excitedly, Nara brought a paper bag full of sandwich. He wanted to ask Nara to stroll around town and have a little picnic at the park. When he arrived at Marcus house, without hesitating he rang the bell – hoping it was Marcus who would open the door.

“Hello. Can I help you?” asked a woman with a warm

smile.

“Hello, Ma’am. I’m Nara, Nara Weisman,” said Nara introducing himself, “I’m Marcus’ friend. Is he home?”

“It’s good he made friend,” said the woman, “Please come inside. He is upstairs. The first door to your right, it’s his room.”

“Thank you, Ma’am.”

Nara came inside the house and walking up the stairs. He saw many pictures hanging on the wall, yet he did not see any Marcus' face. He concluded that Marcus was new in the family, presumably as new as he moved to the town. Living a teenager life while have to move around to new houses must have been difficult, that was what Nara thought. He finally arrived at the first door to his right. He knocked on the door and called Marcus. Marcus opened the door and saw Nara. He immediately slammed the door and told Nara to go away.

“Come on. I walked twenty blocks to get here,” said Nara begging.

“Did I ask you to? Did anyone ever ask you to?” asked Marcus coldly.

“No, but I’m here to apologize about yesterday. I was just so excited to meet a new student and have a new friend. I thought you might want to have a company in a new school. I was trying to be considerate, but apparently, I was just being annoying for you. Let me make that up. Let's have a walk around town and have a

quick lunch in the park. After that, it's up to you if you want to be friends with me or not," said Nara, but he did not hear any answer.

"Come on. I brought a sandwich, just like the one you ate yesterday," added Nara. The door was opened and Marcus. Nara smiled at Marcus while showing the sandwich he made. It was not the sandwich that gave Marcus away to have time with Nara. It was the chance of not be friend with him that sold him off.

Nara and Marcus, then, took a walk around the town and ending up in a park. It was Sunday, but not much of people were there. Nara could easily spot the people there. He saw his weird neighbor, Mr. Polar having a walk by himself while wearing his suit. He was an agent, people said. He also saw Stephen, his cousin, from across the park taking pictures with his camera. They used to be closed but not anymore, maybe because Nara annoyed him just like he annoyed Marcus.

After taking a seat in on the park bench, Nara took out his sandwich and give it to Marcus. It was a tuna sandwich for Marcus and turkey sandwich for him. Nara took off his glove to eat comfortably. Little did Marcus know; Nara's hidden intention was to temper Marcus feeling. He gave the tuna sandwich to Marcus and intentionally touch his hand. Nara still felt the coldness inside Marcus' heart. He, then, transferred his tiny bit of happiness to Nara and absorb his tiny bit of coldness in return. Nara wanted to

know if a tiny bit of happiness could trigger something inside Marcus' heart. It was proven by the big and genuine smile in Marcus' face after receiving the sandwich from Nara.

Seeing the smile on Marcus' face, Nara asked a few things related to Marcus' past. Surprisingly, without having to insist him, Marcus told everything about his life, like he had known Nara for years. A bit of happiness could do such a big impact on Marcus.

Marcus started to tell his story from he was a child until now. He was raised and born in a city across the country. He had a happy family. The smile of the happy family disappeared right after Marcus' mother diagnosed with blood cancer and would not live a long life. She later died when Marcus was only 7 years old. His father blamed himself for not earning enough money for his wife's treatment. He drank liquor as his getaway from reality. As a result, he became alcoholic and abusive toward his sons. Marcus became his father's punching bag for months. Fortunately, there was Max, Marcus' brother, who always protected Marcus from his father. His father abusive behavior did not last long, his father died in a car accident because of driving under influence, hence his addiction. Marcus and his older brother then live with their uncle. Their uncle knew about the heritage that their parents left to the kids. Knowing this, his uncle murdered Max – the first born and the one who will receive the fortune – violently so he could have the fortune by himself. Nara witnessed the horrible murder, and

ran away from his uncle house. He lived on the street, and moved from one city to another, when he was finally taken in an orphanage next town. He lived there until age 16 when a couple adopted him. His new family then moved to the town and here was, living in the same city and going to the same school as Nara. Marcus had been cold and closing himself since he ran away from his uncle. He was traumatized. He was devastated. He experienced all those terrible things at such a young age. It was not a surprise he was cold all the time. The void inside his heart absorbed all kind of emotion he could or wanted to feel.

Without him realizing, a tear dropped from Nara's eye. He now understood everything. It only had been two days him knowing Marcus. But it was enough for Nara to help Marcus. He wanted Marcus to feel again, feel anything he could feel. Sadness. Happiness. Rage. Love.

“Let me help you, Marcus,” said Nara to Marcus.

“Haha...it's okay, I'm fine now. Thanks to your amazing tuna sandwich, I guess. Even though I don't know why I'm crying,” replied Marcus. The happiness that was put by Nara earlier, triggered other emotion inside Marcus' heart. It was still unstable. That is why he said it was okay but not realizing he was actually crying inside.

“Give me your hand,” asked Nara to Marcus one more time. Marcus gave both of his hand to Nara. Nara held Marcus

hand tightly. He tried to absorb the coldness and the negative emotion inside Marcus' heart and give his happiness to him in exchange. During the process, Nara could finally feel all the feeling that Marcus had hidden deep inside his heart. Nara was overwhelmed by all of Marcus' feeling and not realizing that the void inside Marcus' heart absorb all of Nara's positive emotion and, in exchange giving, the grief, sorrow and blue it had restored over the years. Nara could feel Marcus' pain over the years, he felt it mentally and physically. Nara's body could not comprehend such emotion, he fainted.

Nara woke up in his living room. He saw Marcus and his dad having a talk. His father seemed very concern, asking about what happened to Nara. Nara noticed Marcus. He saw something different from Marcus. He was livelier than usual. He could sense the coldness and the void were gone. Nara tried to get up from the couch.

“Dad? What happened?” asked Nara.

“It's okay buddy,” said Mr. Weisman, “don't force yourself.”

“Arrgh!” screamed Nara in pain. Mr. Weisman, Nara's dad, knew what happened. He knew that Nara must have done something incredibly stupid. Exchanging his positive emotion in order to help Marcus.

“You better go home, Marc, Nara needs to rest,” said Mr. Weisman.

“But, sir...”

“I SAID GO!” yelled Mr. Weisman, “I’m sorry, kid, you have to help me here. Please go home, and let Nara rest. I appreciate you calling for help, take Nara home and not making things more complicated.” When Nara fainted, Marcus asked for help from the people around the park, and thankfully, there are a lot of people knew Nara and take both Nara and Marcus to Nara’s house.

“Okay, Sir, I’ll be going now,” said Marcus. While leaving the room, he saw Nara was smiling at him, and he smiled back. He felt at ease seeing Nara smile. He then went home.

“What were you thinking, Nara?” asked Mr. Weisman, “You can't just use the ability to new people like that.”

“It’s okay, Dad,” replied Nara.

“No, you’re not, and you know it. Here, touched my hand. Absorb my positive emotion,” ordered Mr. Weisman. Nara followed his father’s order and touch his hand. Nara could not feel anything from his father. It was not because of his father did not have emotion like Marcus. Nara could not feel anything at all from his father.

“Dad? Why can't I feel anything from you?” asked Nara with shaking voice ready to burst into tears.

“What? Impossible!” said Mr. Weisman, “What have you done to that kid?”

“Just like usual, I exchange my positive emotion with his negative emotion,” answered Nara, “but I feel something else on the process. It’s like there is this kind of void inside his heart that keeps absorbing my emotion.”

“Kid, I think the problem is bigger than you think. That void you talked about, is dange...”

“Arrgh! Dad. Help!” Nara screamed again in agony.

Since that day, he could not sleep at night, even if he did, he will immediately wake up from a nightmare. He started to skip school. He was in great pain. He felt all the negative emotion from Marcus, he felt mentally and physically. He found bruises on his body. The negative emotion was eating him out from inside slowly. Mr. Weisman was worried sick about Nara.

During winter break, Mr. Weisman tried to invite Marcus to the house, expecting Nara to get better over time. However, it did no good. Nara might be smiling when he saw Marcus and spend time together, but actually, he was wailing inside. He tried not to look in pain in front of Marcus. Nara was actually happy seeing the cold and emotionless face was gone from Marcus, but he could not feel anything than great pain inside him.

“Hey, Marcus. Come here,” called Nara from the kitchen.

"What's up?" asked Marcus, "Do you need any help?" Marcus was more considerate than ever, the void inside him was gone.

"I made you a sandwich. Tuna sandwich, just like you like it."

Marcus was startled for a second, "Thank you, Nara. Thank you for everything,"

"Everything? I did nothing but made you sandwiches."

"Exactly, I appreciate every piece of sandwich you have ever given me. I'm sorry if I ever been bad to you, I now realize you are my friend, even though we just knew each other for a few months."

"You're welcome, Marcus," Nara replied him with his warmest smile he could give.

Later that night, Nara woke up from a nightmare. He screamed. Mr. Weisman marched into Nara's room. He found Nara was sweating and his body felt hot. At some moment he had a seizure, and faint over and over. He then woke up and cried asking his father for help.

"Help me, Dad. I can't bear it anymore. It's too much," cried Nara for help, "All these feelings are torturing me. Please, Dad! I want all of these to stop." Nara marched down to the kitchen and tried to find a knife.

"Nara, please, what are you trying to do?" asked Mr.

Weisman, worried seeing Nara crying while holding a knife in his hand.

“It doesn’t stop, Dad. All the feelings are tormenting me. Maybe it will go away if I stop feeling anything at all. Please help me, Dad,” said Nara while handing the knife to his father.

“Don’t be silly, Nara. We’ll figure this thing out together, with Marcus also. Okay? He might be able to help,” said Mr. Weisman convincing his son.

“No, Dad, he mustn’t know, and I can’t bear it any longer. Please, Dad,” cried Nara.

Seeing his only son – the only person left from his family – in agonizing pain was not only unpleasant but it was also tormenting Mr. Weisman. While crying, he took the knife from Nara’s hand. Nara was smiling and nodded.

“I’m sorry, kid,” cried Mr. Weisman.

Nara was right, all the negative emotions he had felt were gone. The last two things he felt was the cold knife inside his body, and his father’s tear on his forehead.

Kallos

Michael Vegeta B. R

164214144

In a world where the Aasimar – humans with significant celestial blood ancestry, Arakockra – bird-folks from the high tops of mountains, Dwarf – the ale drinkers and forge masters, Elf – the ones who lived in ethereal beauty of ancient forests, Genasi – the offspring of genies and mortals, Human – the creatures of compassion and beauty, Tabaxi – catlike humanoid creatures driven by curiosity, Triton – the guardians of the deep ocean, and even the Tiefling – the beasts of hell on the surface of earth, lived in peace under the union of a treaty called the Navasath among the 9 kingdoms of every race, then they became one nation, the nation of Navaleia. On the Kraka Mountain's foot, the kingdom of human laid, The Kingdom of Cealt.

On one fine morning when the princess of Cealt was 9, before the sun rose and shone upon the great castle of the Tforc family, a young agile princess had started climbing the eastern tower of the castle to enjoy the magnificent purple-ish eastern sky. She loved the morning sky as she loved climbing the tower, she had been doing this since she was 7 and she never ever, not even once, fell. Two hours after the sun rose, she ran across the cookery

to grab a slice of bread to fill her tiny gut then she couldn't be found in her room, in which she should be for her grooming. It turned out she went to the field where the brothers trained to fight, sharpening skills of archery and swordsmanship. She saw a bunch of unused and immaculate bows and arrows, as the curious girl she was, she put on a bow and arrows then she put the arrow between the string and the curved short bow, nailing three arrows into the 3 bull's eyes in a row like it was drinking milk for an infant.

The next day in the afternoon, Belva's father, King Mivusae, were about to go hunting with his boys, Belva was never been on a hunt for she was a princess and she wasn't supposed to go hunting. Somehow, Belva sneakily followed them to the woods and she brought a short bow and 12 arrows with her. In the woods, the eldest prince found a dead hog the size of a man with two arrows pierced each of its eyes and one pierced through the chest. He noticed that those arrows were from the castle but none of the brothers nor the king and the guards claimed the kill. After a long hunt, they went back to the castle and Belva was already there to welcome her brothers and father. She noticed they brought 3 wild hogs including the one they did not kill, the other two hogs belong to the king himself and Gilmorg, the eldest. Belva was always cheerful, she never seemed sad. She was the youngest and the only girl, with dark brown hair and her sky-blue eyes, the

pale glowing skin, no wonder that everyone loved her. Despite all that, she was not just an ordinary 9-year-old cheerful girl, she managed to climb the highest tower in the castle without any tools to help her with. At the evening feast where the cooks had served the most delightful meals, Belva said, “I followed father to the woods but nobody seemed to notice me,” while she cut and chewed a chunk of meat, “I killed a giant hog there, it was near the creek.” “Oh, shush it young little girl, you must eat the meat slowly so you won’t choke on it.” Her mother, Queen Torfa, jokingly said. No one seemed to believe or even bother with her story but Gilmorg was skeptical because no one put these three arrows in the hog and it was true that the hog was near the creek.

That was how everything started to change for Belva. She went hunting with her father and brothers, Gilmorg assured the King to let Belva join the hunt and he would always have his eyes on her so the king wouldn’t worry. While in reality, Belva didn’t even need supervision as long as she had a weapon to wield. Sometimes, she went with her father alone to hunt but she never went alone by herself to hunt. Along with time, Belva trained to wield swords and how to use them in combat. By 45 days, she had topped the skills of the royal guard in swordsmanship and archery. She was small and fast, she disappeared from the sights of her enemy like snakes tangled its preys; the preys wouldn’t be aware of what was coming.

When Belva turned 14, she got a present from her father, it was a short sword and two daggers and she named them as The Trinity. The Trinity were forged by a forge master from Upatree, a kingdom named after the oldest elf of the seven elves who provided weapons during the 3000 years' war – the war between the celestial being and the demon clan. The short sword had a carving of runes in Elvish saying, “IM GELIR CENI AD LIN.” Which means, “A star shines on the time of our meeting.” Belva did not know what exactly that meant and why the sword had it. She thought it was about her father and the forge master named Puerir. Since then Belva trained how to utilize The Trinity in hand-to-hand combat. She trained days and nights to adapt her fighting style to The Trinity because she never wielded three weapons in the same time – a sword and a shield were the ones she had been taught with. On the fourth night, when she was sparring with Aeron, she realized that the short sword seemed to have its own will for she had difficulties wielding it despite how weightless the sword was. She could not charge Aeron at will despite how hard she tried to. Aeron realized it, “What’s wrong with you? Cannot put your sword on me? That’s unlike you, little sister.” Aeron teased Belva while dodging all of her strikes. Belva’s eyebrows went downward making wrinkles between them. She struck Aeron’s left foot but he managed to dodge it and Belva knew he would and could dodge it, so she took one of the daggers

with her left hand and spun around to put an extra attack with her dagger. Aeron's eyebrows raised as his upper pupils slightly opened, he was surprised by Belva's maneuver. As the dagger cut his left ear he was still in shock because he could not see that attack came from his little sister, "What was that? Luckily, I only got cut in the ear. It could have been my neck if I had not ducked." Aeron's thought. Belva knew that her dagger got a piece of her brother. Then she put her sword away and wielded the other dagger as in instance she charged forward at her brother's right side. Trying to pierce Aeron's right elbow with her right hand then again Aeron dodged the strike and tried to kick Belva's torso away so she would not land another extra attack on him like before. He could not feel Belva's weight when he kicked, it turned out Belva was leaping when she tried to strike Aeron. As she landed on her hands, her feet landed on Aeron's head with great force downward, putting him on his knees. "I won!! You're on your knees." As she gave her hand to help Aeron back on his feet. "Where did you learn that move? I don't recall teaching you that." Belva just gave him an ear-to-ear smile. After Aeron's wound was treated by the kingdom's cleric, they went back to the castle. As Belva walked down the castle hall, heading for her room, she kept having a thought about how she managed to pull off the stunt that she did to put Aeron's on his knees. There was a smile and wrinkles on the corner of her eyes. She got back in her room and

she put off her armor, changed to her sleeping clothes, untie her hair and started brushing her long dark brown hair.

A week had passed and Belva seemed to get a hold on utilizing her fighting style to The Trinity: the daggers gave Belva more agility and complete control of her body while the short sword did not want to be wielded for a long time, it seemed to be reluctant – the longer the sword was wielded the harder it was to get a hold of it.

Few weeks later, on an early noon, a maid found the queen of Cealt with blood all over the clothes, she panicked and shouted for help. Gilmorg, he was preparing to spar with Belva, taking javelin and a shield, caught the maid's cry for help and suddenly dropped his javelin and the shield then ran towards the source of the voice. He found his mother in the maid's hands, covered in blood and full of bruises. Belva who had happened to see Gil and noticed that he was in a hurry followed him and found that her mother was slaughtered but it was too late to save her. She was already lifeless. She asked Gil what had happened, Gil could not respond for his heart was full of sorrow. Gil had mourned upon the dead body of his mother. Belva stood still, the corner of her lips slightly went down as did the outer corner of her eyes, as tears started falling on her red rosy cheeks, breathing seemed to be the hardest thing she could ever do at the time. She fell on her knees, stuttered, "Mo...m...mm...mother!" As Gil and

Belva cried over their dead mother, Frodrus, the second son of the king made his appearance. He stood still watching his bloody mother and his two siblings crying over her, he knew that she was killed and immediately investigated her wounds and the room she came from. Frodrus realized her mother was stabbed with a small dagger around the size of his palm. There were also bruises on her body, Frodrus said to Gil, “There had been a fight between mother and the killer. Look at the bruises on her cheeks and knuckles. There’re some broken ribs as well. Feel it.” As he put Gil’s hand to her mother’s ribs. Frodrus went straight to the room where her mother came from. The room was rumbled and there were some bloods on the ground and the window frame. He tried to find the dagger used to kill his mother. There was nothing. He didn’t lose his cool even though his heart filled with anger and sadness of losing his beloved mother.

The incident changed everything around the family. The king no longer had a grasp on himself, he turned into a mad-drunk king who ran everything by default. While the children tried to cope with their sadness on their own ways. Gil tried to keep the family from being torn apart by other kingdom by stepping up into the diplomatic matters, showing the other 8 kingdoms that the kingdom of Cealt stood firm despite the tragedy. Frodrus kept studying the wizarding art while keeping the investigation of her mother murder. Malin kept training with the royal guards hoping

that they will get stronger so tragedy like this would never happen to his family ever again, he was the greatest warrior the kingdom had and he was the Royal Knights Great General. Aeron kept wandering around the nation, nobody knew what he was up to but he told his sister that he was looking for a sword called Carnaige, the sharpest and strongest swords ever forged by the goblins and dwarfs, the one that was used to slaughter the undead and the living during the 3000 years war. And Belva, she kept being the charming cheerful princess of Cealt that she had been being her whole life, even after her only mother was abolished.

Belva had turned 18 by now, four years had passed after her mother was murdered and the one at fault had not been found yet despite how smart Frodrus was. She had grown into a beautiful lady she was. She still went to the village and the people loved her deeply. She remained as the humble and cheerful princess she had always been to the people. She had been doing this since she was a kid, back then she went down with her mother to see how the farmers planted all kinds of vegetables, now she went down by herself. These past four hard years, Belva had been through a lot. Living without her mother left quiet a hole in her life, nobody would ever scold her for climbing the tower early in every morning, not brushing her hair, taking bath, practicing with her brothers, accompany her to the village, nobody would expect her to join dinner anymore. “You had always been the source of this

family's compassion and joy, mother." As she mumbled along her way to the tavern on the western part of the kingdom. She did not dress like a noble lady at all whenever she went down. Leather boots, brown pants that belonged to Frodrus, a dirty white top she took from the castle cookery and The Trinity. "Not much of a lady, are you?" Greeted the tavern keeper. Apparently, nobody noticed that she was the princess of Cealt. "I'd take an ale and two breads." As Belva requested, she noticed heavy footsteps approached her. She reached for her dagger after she took a glance of who was approaching her. It was two dwarfs, heavily armored with a chainmail and great axes. Belva couldn't notice why they are, so she asked them, "Who are you two gentlemen? Name's Croft." They did not mind her presence. They just went straight ordering ales. Belva despised being ignored, especially when the person she spoke to knew she tried to speak to him. As pissed as she was, she remained calm, she was not a child anymore. She chose to offer them a drink for they must be from another kingdom. After chugging their first ales, they accepted Belva's offer, "But, we will have a little competition, if I can outdrink one of you, you must give me one of those great axes." She noticed that their one of their lips corners slightly raised, from that moment she knew she'd win for they had underestimated a lady on ale drinking contest. "Deal." Both of them replied simultaneously. So Belva had the keeper prepared 50 glasses of ale for the

showdown. As Belva and one of the dwarfs battling on chugging ales, she burped like she never had before. They were happy, the dwarf enjoyed the free ale and Belva enjoyed the company from the dwarf. She had not felt this kind of joy in a long time, how free she was from the stereotype for a noble. Nobody judged her for drinking that much of ales and burping in front of a lot of people. “Hahaha... you are quite a lady.” There were only 3 glasses left and Belva had drunk 24 glasses. As he took another glass, Belva took another. After finishing their glasses, Belva felt she couldn’t take another one, her gut felt like exploding because of the ales. She saw the dwarf was reaching for the last glass, she wanted to stop him so bad. Too bad, she was late and the glass was already on his hand. As he drunk the ale from the last glass, he passed out like a baby sleep. Belva wanted to shout her joy out but she couldn’t, her body wouldn’t allow her to celebrate. “You’ve won, young lady. He passed out drinking his twenty-fifth but you survived yours. I now acknowledge you has out-drunk my brother Bylro and may give you the axe you wanted.” “Oh no, I was just messing around with you guys. I have plenty of those fine axes at home, I don’t really fancy axes to be honest.” As Belva refused the great axe that was handed to her, “I must head back, the sun seems to be setting. It was a nice drink with him, give him my thanks, would you?” She ran off towards the castle after paying the ales. “My head is spinning, my stomach feels like exploding and I

cannot walk straight, damn it was a good time, hahaha.” She staggered along the streets heading to the castle. Along her way home, she saw a very thin young girl sneaking around the bakery when it was about to wrap up for the day. Belva knew that the girl would snatch a bread from the store and waited for the girl to snatch a slice. Without doubt, she snatched a slice and ran with all her might. “Stop it little brat!” The bakery keeper shouted and tried to chase her down. “Don’t waste your energy, I’m paying for the bread she took.” Belva threw 3 coppers at the keeper’s feet. “This place has become a shit hole. Where’s that girl parents? Everybody in the castle is fed but what about the people in this kingdom. Heh. Mother took the life of this kingdom with her.” She arrived at her room and went straight to bed and off to sleep for tomorrow the princess of Cealt would be needed.

The next morning, Belva did her routine, she climbed the eastern tower of the castle to enjoy the morning star. She was not there for long, now that she had to get dressed, moreover took a deep bath for, she smelt like ale. She stood in her mirror as she brushed her hair. She took The Trinity with her even if her dress was not made up for that. As the bewitching young lady who was adored by the people of Cealt, whose grace captivated the people of Cealt as well as the whole nation walked gracefully along the hall, The Aasimar King’s firstborn, Lothro laid his eyes on such a magnificent lady. He adored the lady for when there was an annual

gathering of the kings, he first saw the lady with a long dark brown hair and the brightest bluest eyes and a dress of the deep ocean blue color matched perfectly with her eyes, as her light soundless steps went down the castle hall, she had two daggers and a short sword on her side, unlike any other lady he ever laid eyes to. “My Prince.” She greeted Lothro while she bowed. No males in the room could ever neglect her presence, not even the high elves. Everyone with decent eyesight could not afford to blink their eyelids not for a split second they wanted to look away from the winsome advent. Then again, the captivating princess of Cealt was introduced by the first born of the Tforces as his own and only guard to start the gathering. As they talked and discussed the matters of the nation, the lady’s mind and soul did not belong in the room within the same matter. Despite her radiant blue eyes, her gaze was empty, null, as if the greatest misery had fallen upon her, “It’s like my brothers were slaughtered in their sleep, my mother slept with a drunk in the tavern, my father was eaten by a hog in the forest because he was too drunk to wield his bow to defend himself. As if everybody I ever cared for was taken away from my life. The whole thing about being beautiful by the standard of this nation makes me want to puke my gut. For being a princess with petite shoulders, long dark hair, blue or green eyes, a pale skin like a dead meat but lips as red as blood and cheeks like wine, steps as light as a feather, dress as big as two long-bows put

together and the color as bright as the morning sun simply makes you the best kind of beauty in this world. I find it amusing, what about the little girl who was always starving and needed to steal a slice of bread to survive in the street? What about a lady who could out-drink a dwarf in an ale drinking competition? What about a lady who wielded weapons and shields to put on a fight because she needed to? What about a girl who liked to hunt wild boar? What about that girl who had a sorrowful heart and no soul left? All everybody cared is how you look, how you bestow your graceful manners. Nobody ever cared about what you fought for, what you had been through. This world disgusted me!" Belva only heard mumbles as she sat still in her chair next to her brother, Gilmorg.

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[UNTITLED]

The Unfinished Work: Destiny of You

Angel Brigellia

164214132

Somewhere in Ireland

Isabelle Pruiatine Saunders, a 12 years old girl with straight brown hair, almond – shaped brown eyes, pointed nose, well – shaped lips, sharp-chinned face, medium height, white skin and a small mole on her cheekbones who usually gives her mysterious smiles in the evening to everyone who work in her house such as Ms. Claire, her nanny, Mr. Tom, her driver, and Mr. Smith, her gardener and at the same time as her housekeeper too.

"Hello, Ms. Claire, Mr. Tom, and Mr. Smith!" How is your day? Mine is good, well yeah you know as usual. There's nothing special on it. Hahaha" said Isabelle.

"Ah, you have to be grateful for that. You have us and we are a wonderful team right?" said Mr.. Tom

"Yeah, the A-square team. Hahahahaha" said Isabelle.

"Wait, I'll make you" said Ms. Claire

"Ms. Claire can you come here for a while, I need your little help for this dress
asked Audreana.

"Isabelle, I should go to her room. I'll be right back in 25 minutes. Okay?"

"Of course, Ms. Claire. Please." Said Isabelle

It looks like there is nothing significant happen in her life and everything looks normal, yet her parents actually had an accident when she was 3 years old, so she lived and grew with her godparents who is known as Saunders Family and lived in a village called Sneem located in the Ring of Kerry, Ireland. She has a very great family's background and so popular in that village. Her father is a Scientist and Doctor at St Conals Hospital, her mother is a Director of Amazon, the biggest company in there, her eldest brother is a Lecturer at Oxford and Cambridge University and her second oldest sister is a Prime Minister of The Great United Kingdom. It makes sense that she has a better education which is proved by the schools where she takes, The Hibernia College.

That competence and intelligence inheritance were inherited from his family to her as the last child of that family even though she is not the biological children of Mr. and Mr.s Saunders nor not a sibling who has blood relations with her siblings. However, in that school, she gets so many achievements almost in every major like maths, biology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, and many more. Also, She has a very great value on IQ, EQ, TOEFL, IELTS and more tests that she joins in. Actually, she is not only a smart, intelligent, kind – hearted and honest but also known as a girl with unpredictable feelings, thoughts, and highest curiosity.

Since in her 6 years old she already had a very uncommon way and high level of thinking proved by her very difficult and “non –

sense” questions which almost every day her parents could not found the right answers and gave the appropriate explanations for all of them.

Exactly in the autumn, it happened when she gave several of her questions,

“What do people actually look for in their lives? Why does "chaos" still exist in human life even God has given the authorities for the human to manage and control everything with their logic? Why do people keep hurt one another ?, Does money can pay everything and guarantee eternal happiness in human’s life ?, and Why do human keep searching for love in their life even though in the end some of them will get the misery because of their effort for that?” said Isabelle.

“Dear, you do not need to think about all of them. Just live for your life, we just human with so many weaknesses that is God’s “jobs” to manage everything. Okay, darling?” said her mom.

“Isabelle at your age now you just need to play and learn. Please enjoy your playing time, baby. I love you” said her Dad.

“But why don’t you give the answers to those questions? Are they really difficult and make you confused?” asked Isabelle

“No, my little angel. Of course not. Let’s play again. You haven't finished yet your parts in throwing that dice. They are waiting for you. C'mon" said Alden as the eldest in the family.

“Okay. I’m coming. But promise me that all of you will give the answers for all of my questions” said Isabelle.

"Yes, of course, but later!" said Audreana as the second oldest girl in the family.

It seemed when Isabelle asked those questions her family like would change those topics and tried to divert those questions with everything that they could do so that Isabelle will forget all of them.

Even though she had a life that looked so perfect like can get everything and made others got “jealous” but they did not know the fact that she is actually not really have those lucky things, she is an introvert and really difficult to open herself to others, so any social interaction, she will avoid it intentionally but it does not mean that she literally has none friends at all, she still has her Smith who she really believes and loves to as her own family and as the one and only best friend that she has. Nevertheless, she rare shares her feelings, emotions, or something to him.

One day, her parents think that she should forget about those “unimportant” questions she had in her mind and ask her to take a music course so she will become a normal girl.

At the living room

“Isabelle, my dear can you come here for a while? We’re gonna tell you something?”

“Yes, mom. What is that?” said Isabelle

"Honey, we have a plan that we are going to find a music teacher for you so that you can have other options or hobbies besides doing visual art. What do you think for that?" said her dad.

“That’s okay. I would love to but why do you suddenly think about that? Don’t you say that deepening my talent in painting is the best thing?” said Isabelle.

“Yes we did but we want you have many various abilities so you won't be bored too for that visual one," said her parents.

“Well, okay.” Said Isabelle.

Basically, she does not like it because she thinks that why should she be treated like other girls if she is already "unique" and should get those “special treatment”? However, she is happy at the same time because her talent is not only just sketch, paint, or draw strict in the visual art but also she can have a chance to learn about the audio one through music instruments such as piano, violin, guitar, harp, flute, pipa (a Chinese traditional music instrument) and sing. Isabelle has to learn all of them in 6 days a week which is almost equal a week. Fortunately, she takes private classes for all of them so her teacher comes to her house every day.

At a certain room beside the windows

“Ah, here she is, the princess of Ireland HRH Isabelle Prustine Saunders...Very nice to meet you” Said Mr.. Larkson (while

smiling and laughing to Isabelle)

“Hahahaha, Mr.. Larkson. That’s so high.” Said Isabelle.

“Nice to meet you too?” said Mr. Larkson

“Oh, how silly I am. So nervous because of your calling, hahahaha.... Nice to meet you too, Mr.. Larkson. So happy to have you as my music coach.” Said Isabelle.

“Ah, that’s too formal. I’m not your teacher just think that I’m your friend like your Smith. Call me Lark, so I can be seen as similar as you. Let’s say like your classmates.” Said Mr.. Larkson

"Hahahahaha... Lark, you are but just "a 75%" a little bit older than me... hahaha... said Isabelle.

“Well, yeah, you are not the only one who praised then dropped me deeply... said Mr. Larkson (while giving his sad face and then laugh louder)

“I’m just honest, anyway, Lark... hahaha... Said Isabelle.

“Okay, then so let's start. The first thing that you have to remember is when those music instruments play you should have prepared your heart and feeling.” Said Mr. Larkson.

“Why so, Lark?”

"Because all of your five senses will live and you can enjoy it very well within yourself except you have more than five then I won't know how you enjoy it... hahaha just kidding but the first statement is literally serious" said Mr. Larkson.

“Ah, I see. That’s why people always have their own expression to

express what their feeling is when playing a certain music instrument, right?"

"Yup, that's one of those million ways in how people try to express and vent their feeling," said Mr.. Larkson.

Then they continue in learning those music instruments together day by day

Because of the hard work and the vigorous training that she did, she becomes more fluent and masters in playing the musical instruments in which she usually expresses her feelings by playing one of them while brooding about something that she currently feels. Regardless of everything that she has and what she has experienced, she is like a puzzle that must be played in a labyrinth which is very interesting and of course triggers everyone to compete but unfortunately just a few of them who succeed in doing so which the results of it is they can find another amazing surprise still inside of her.

At 9 P.M. In the Isabelle's bedroom

"Mom, mom...?? Called Isabelle (she goes outside of her room and calls her mom)

"Yes, dear, wait for 5 minutes, I'll be there," Said her mom.

After waiting for 5 minutes,

Knock, knock, knock... (The sound of a door knocked)

"Princess, this is a special gift for you". Said her mom (while she was giving a glass of hot chocolate to Isabelle)

“Wow, mom. You should not make it for me. I can make it by myself.” Said Isabelle

"Honey, I'm your mother. That's my pleasure to give you all of my heart and life so please drink it now, I'll be waiting for it and after that, we will do our little routine as usual before you go to sleep" Said her mom.

“Aye, aye Mommy...” said Isabelle. (She immediately finished off it).

“Done, mom.” Said Isabelle.

“Okay, now let me scratch your back while you are sleep.” Said her mom.

“Mom, don’t forget the *metronome*, so I can enter it”. Said Isabelle.

“Yes, darling. I won’t but enter?” Asked her mom.

"Oh, hahaha... I mean so I can enjoy the sound of it". (She said it while showing her smiles to her mom)

“Ah, okay, dear. Do you want me to leave you now?” Asked her mom.

“Yes, mom, I want to sleep now really feel comfortable and sleepy.” Said Isabelle.

“Good night my little angel. Sweet dreaMs. for you”. Said her mom. (While kiss Isabelle’s cheek and forehead).

Before she sleeps, she likes her mother to scratch her back while she is listening to the *metronome* which at the same time she can look for a certain truth because before listened to it, she once get a

bad dream but it felt so real which she met a mysterious and scary man who said, “You will meet me someday, and that is the juncture to see who is the winner between you and me” which make her really confuse and tries to enter that moment again to figure out what actually happened.

Because of her critical thinking, she is a type of girl who will not believe to thing directly until she finds out the truth and observe it "deeply" on her own.

In the midth of April on 20, everything that she tries to seek is revealed one by one. Her best friend, Mr. Smith comes to her and tell everything that he knows.

“Isabelle, can we sit at the backyard for a couple of moments?... I need to tell you something that is really important”. Said Smith

“Sure, Smith... you are my best friend.. anytime we can talk, right?... What is it actually about?” Said and asked Isabelle.

"Isabelle, this is not an easy one so please listen to every word that I say to you. This is about the life of the world.” Said Smith

“Okay, I’m listening”. Said Isabelle

“My name is Logan Smith and I’m your protector in this world and fully responsible for your safety. You are the chosen one and the only one in this world. A mortal who had been given a superpower to have access in and out through space and time, freely. Actually at the beginning everything is okay and the world’s

situation is in the peaceful condition but one moment everything falls apart because Spalock, the devil who is trying to take over space and time, wants to create a chaos in the world by making humans become the slaves of time and making them spend their lifetime to work by deliberately so make them miss the precious moments in their lives and can create selfish and individualistic individuals.

Because you have been naturally equipped with various abilities so that they are enough to help you in solving problems. which will come soon without knowing the time will be. Therefore, you have to be ready always at any time.” Said Smith

“But why me? I’m just a 12 years old girl, really an ordinary girl, Smith... Then, you ask me to keep the balance in this world?” Said and asked Isabelle.

"Sometimes there's no reasons and logical background for everything that happens in this world, Isabelle. Just accept and do what your faith is." Said Smith

“So that is why sometimes I feel really different from others. Is that the answer?” Said and asked Isabelle.

"True, you are unique and not everyone can understand you well cause just several who may be in their past life have a connection with you whether your close friends, family or your relatives other than that they won't be able to understand you." Said Smith.

“And is that the answer why I can feel like entering another

dimension? but how it could be happening?" Asked Isabelle

"Yes, you can, through time and space. You can do it because *the metronome* which I gave you that help you to do that. Actually, you can enter it by yourself without any tool but your power is not really stable yet so *metronome* is the only one tool which can help your balance and awaken your senses, your subconscious, and your conscious mind. That is why you should keep this secret from anyone including your family, just you and me who know this" Said Smith.

"Are you alone in this world or there are still others who are the same as you?" Asked Isabelle.

"Of course not. We are 9, several of them are busy with their own duties in this world. Ah yeah, anyway I almost forget to tell you that the power which you have was the gift from Corrado The Wise since your 4 years old." Said Smith

"Okay, okay, I have to prepare myself for this. While inhaling she continues her words "Then, what should I do now? Do I need a specific train for that?" Said and asked Isabelle.

"Yes, we have to prepare you well so you will become a brave girl and then finally you can help us to against Spalock." Said Smith

"Help all of you? Me?" asked Isabelle

"True because all of us have done so many interactions with human and every day we are getting older which make us not really strong as similar as in the golden time when we were young.

Regeneration is needed.” Said Smith

"Okay, if so, please prepare me, Smith," said Isabelle.

Then they train and learn every day but in a certain time and in a special place in order to keep that secret from anyone besides their circle.

“Hm, Smith... I wanna ask you... Can I?” asked Isabelle

“Go ahead. You don’t need my permission for something because I have considered you as my daughter and my friend too.” Said Smith

“Please don’t hide the fact that at any time I can be absorbed by time and you can be a victim because the protectors must be willing to lose their lives for their master.” Said Isabelle. Isabelle told this while showing her sad face.

“You already smart and well - prepared which is for me is so impossible to deny everything from you. You don't have to be sad like that, you have to be a strong girl no matter what the condition is. Isabelle, life has its own unique pattern. You can see and feel it, if there is a meeting there will be definitely a separation that there is no one know when it is. Said Smith

“But I’m so afraid because of that. I don’t know how I could save two lives at the same time. I really don’t want to lose you. It is enough for me to lose my parents, please I don’t want to lose something that I really love” said Isabelle while crying to Smith.

“Isabelle, I love you and will always love you whatever things that will happen, you will always my Isabelle and I'll be always your

Smith." Said Smith while hugging Isabelle.

Isabelle gave no response to all of Smith's words. She just cried and cried out loudly.

This was a very difficult thing for Isabelle because she should hide this big issues from her family which soon she knew that was aimed to save the life of her Saunders family so that there would be no more victims. especially the important people that she love and have been in her life. She is really afraid to lose her Smith even though she will lose herself too if she lost yet she just thought about the lives of the people who she really cares of and love.

When there is a problem she always tries to finish it by her own even if there will be her family or some of her friends who tries to help her but she does not want to endanger their lives and safety just because of the matter that she has to face with.

The time has come

In the middle of the cold winter night, Isabelle met Spalock, "the evil" who wanted to destroy the equilibrium of the world.

"So, you are chosen? The mortal who supposed to be just a mortal. How could the universe choose a 12 years old girl to battle with me, Spalock, The Great Spalock!" Said Spalock while walking closer to her "Again, you won't be able to save the world and defeat me!" Said Spalock while laughing at her.

"You can't guarantee someone's ability just by their age. That's a

narrow-minded thought! That's not surprising that I was chosen because I have a high quality of thought above you!" Said Isabelle intentionally.

"Hey, keep your little mouth! Don't waste the time and let's do battle, small sheep! Said Spalock

"That's the words who every losers and coward always said!" Said Isabelle firmly which was deliberately angered Spalock.

"YOOOOUU!!!!!" Shout Spalock

The battle between them happened so tensely. Isabelle with her brave, agility, ingenuity, intelligence, wisdom and humility use every power that she had learned to against Spalock. At first, until the middle, Isabelle looks like will lose but suddenly she went flashback, remember everything and every moment that has happened in her life while listening to the voice of people misery and suffering. Then she rose again with a very strong wind which made a great storm occur and she absorbed Spalock with all the strength he had. The condition of time and space was running properly after the fierce battle.

In the first day of spring

Isabelle sat at the bench of city's park and remembered again her dream which is to have power in creating a world with no more confusion, chaos, and worry as the result of time and space's game.

"Isabelle, c'mon see those beautiful flowers!" Asked Alden

“Okay, I’m coming!” Said Isabelle

When she walked to her family, suddenly an old man with several of them came toward her

"Isabelle, thank you for your help. We really appreciated it. Please save this, the eternal key of *The Equilibrium*. Please keep it with you forever. We knew that you are the only one who can succeed to balance the time and space and help human to feel and act like a human supposed to do without tears, egoism, and many bad things!" Said Corrado.

“Where would you go?” Asked Isabelle

“You already knew the answer, my dear” Said Corrado.

After that short conversation, they disappeared mysteriously. Isabelle continued her way but when she almost gets her family, there was a man who not strange for her came toward her

"And please keep this *metronome* with you. It will help you to sharpness your feeling and intuitions.” Said Smith

“Smith! You..... You... It is really you?” Asked Isabelle happily

"Yes, but I didn't have enough time. I should go back." Said Smith

“Well, okay, Smith... Thank you for being my protector” said Isabelle

"My pleasure," Said Smith. He then hugged Isabelle but he suddenly disappeared from her.

In the end, Isabelle felt very grateful for every special moment she had in her life. While walking with a smile, she knows that "Hide –

and – seek" is the key in her life. She believes that if it is her path then she has to be responsible for that by finishing it until the end as well as she can without letting anything or anyone becomes the stumbling block of her goals.

*As long as you can do something by yourself then go do it without creating a "take and give principle" even though it will be okay for the people who give their hands to you. **Be brave and the world will submit to you.***

~THE END~

The Neglected Soul

Yocefrino Leonardi Hibur

164214143

“Cause now again I’ve found myself. So far down, away from the sun. That shines into the darkest place. I am so far down, away from the sun. That shines to light the way for me. To find my way back into the arms. That cares about ones like me. I am so far down, away from the sun again.”(Song by Three Doors Down)

Have you ever heard that song lyric? It is my favorite song entitled “Away from The Sun”. I’ve listened to that song since a few days ago. I heard the song for the first time from the radio. It was my father’s radio that he used to listen to news. The song seems like describing people’s feelings about how alone they are in this life. Well, you may have another interpretation of it. Regardless of that, it was touching me when the first time I listened to that song.

In this afternoon, I listened to the same song while sitting on the terrace of my house. Nobody else. Just me alone. Staring at the sky. No twilight, only drizzle that wet the ground. It accompanied me waiting for the night to come. I don’t know, somehow when I listened to the song, I felt totally sad. The song took me to a quiet situation which reminded me of a dark past. I felt that the song told about me, my whole life. How I felt, what I suffered in this life, and why I got this deadly disease.

All the bad things came to me because of my past. It was started when I was a child. I was always bullied by my friends. I remember they always mocked me by calling me “Sissy” because I am a little bit feminine. I was famous as “Sissy”. They never called me with my name. They hated and stayed away from me without any reason. Sometimes, I wanted to fight them. I didn’t like if they called me like that. I just wanted them to call me Jeremy. That’s my name. However, I couldn’t, my physique was not big enough to against them. When they mocked me, I just went to the toilet and cried there alone. The toilet walls were silent witnesses to how fragile I was. I didn’t want them knew I was crying. I didn’t want to look weak in front of them. It happened all the time until I was in senior high school. I tried hard to hold on in this situation. Sometimes, I skipped the class to avoid bullying because I didn’t feel pleasant. This made my education process didn’t run well. I was not smart enough in class. Even though I could pass the exam, my scores were really bad at all. It also left me a deep wound until now and made me become an introvert that was always standing apart. I just spent my time alone.

It was such as tough life. Having no friend, no place to tell what I feel. Loneliness was like my friend. I felt empty, alone, and alienated, even in the crowd. Nobody took care of me, even my mother. She was very busy earning money since my father died. It

has been sixteen years he left us. I remember it was on 20 February 2003, when I was six years old. Since that time, I just lived with my mother, no brother, and sister. Just we both. But my mother almost had no time for me. She worked all day to night. We had never gotten close enough to share one another. She never asked me about my condition. We just talked to each other when I need money to pay my tuition fee. I think, my mother believed that I could pass my life well. However, she never knew how frail I am. How I needed her more to pass my loneliness. I grew up with a lack of attention and many inner wounds.

I tried to escape from my loneliness by going to the bar and being a drunkard. As I remember, I entered that place for the first time when I was in senior high school. I did it also to prove that I was not a “sissy”. Since that, I was addicted to alcohol. I spent a lot of time in a bar because there, I could let all the burdens go. At the bar, I shared what I felt with every liquor I drank. I let go of all the anger. That liquor was like my friend that made me free from any problems. I felt calm and cozy even if It was just for a moment. Do you know? I always brought my own shot when I drank at the bar. I brought it from home. It was something ‘quirk’ of me. However, I did that because I just liked it.

I became an alcoholic until I was in University. I spent the money that my mother gave to me as tuition fee. My campus life was broken, but I didn’t care. I had no dream, no life destination. I

didn't want to achieve anything in this life. All I needed is to be noticed, appreciated and loved. You know, I got what I needed from someone I met in the bar. He is a foreigner from Canada. His name is Nicole. I knew him accidentally. It was when I was drunk. I fell down and accidentally spilled my drink at him. He lifted me and made me wake up from getting drunk.

Since then, we were getting close. We often spent time together, drinking at a bar, traveling, and visiting one another at home. It was the first time I have a close friend in my life. He was just more than a friend. He always listened to my story and had time for me. He was the place where I told everything I felt. He always said to me like this "Jeremy, never lose hope and dreams in this life". He supported and helped me to raise from the sorrow. Since I knew him, I decided not to be a drunkard anymore. He changed a little bit of my life that made me had hope in this life. He made me brave enough to have a dream. Anyway, nobody knew that Nicole is my gay friend, even my mother. I was gay since I got close to him. We were not like friends anymore, but lovers.

Tuesday, 12 March 2019. It was in the morning when the dawn was not yet fully visible. The dew is still attached to the leaves. It was around 06.30 a.m. I got a message from Nicole. He said:

"Dear Jeremy,

Maybe It is hard to say, but you have to know that I must go back to my country. I couldn't explain to you the reason. I just want to

say thank you and I am sorry”.

After reading the message, I couldn't say anything. I was deadly frozen. I was silent for a while. My heart was torn apart. Then, I called him many times, but there was no answer. However, I was disappointed with him. He left me just a week before my birthday. He ruined every hope and dream that I was knitting. He betrayed me when I had been deeply falling in love with him. He left me without any reason. It hurt me so bad. Since that time, I never believed other people. I just lived my life based on my way. I just followed what is in my mind and heart. I never believed again what other people said. Every person is the same for me. They are wicked.

It was after two weeks Nicole left me, I was sick. I lost weight and My head was dizzy. Firstly, I thought it was just an ordinary disease. Maybe it because I often thought about Nicole. However, the pain was getting worse. I decided to go to the hospital to check up. The result startled me. Doctor said that I was infected by HIV/AIDS. It hit me. Honestly, I was afraid of death. My tears fell instantly. I muttered to myself that my life ended. Since then, I knew why Nicole left me. It is because he was the person that caused me to get this deadly disease. He didn't want to take responsibility, that's why he left me.

Since the day the doctor said to me that I was suffering from HIV/AIDS, I never believed the existence of God. For me, God

has died since that day. I grumbled to the world, “What is the purpose of believing in God? To be good and to get a better life...right? But why I always got something worse in my whole life?...right? There were so many sufferings that I got, why I should believe in God? I was like a neglected soul. My life ended, I just lived the rest of my life without hope.

Well, it has been two hours I am sitting here, lamenting my past. The drizzle has stopped. The night was getting thicker. The sound of the night beast began to echo. I didn't realize my eyes were shedding tears, wet my cheeks. It showed how deep the pain in my heart. It was my heart voice that couldn't be expressed by mouth. I was ignored. Nobody cares about ones like me. My life ended. I am just enjoying the rest of my life now. I hope that nature still allows me to live a little bit longer in this world.

The Shutter of Life

Robertus Reynaldi

164214139

In the library early morning, Stephen sips his coffee he bought earlier from his favorite coffee shop, he is reading a book about the history of the 2nd world war, he examines thoroughly all the pictures in the book. He is not really much of a reader, he just wants to enjoy his coffee peacefully, because the library is the quietest place in his university, he decided to go for a read there. Later when the class started, he sits next to his friend Samantha, which he calls her 'Sam' they're quite close to each other and sometimes spend some time at the coffee shop to have a coffee and some chit-chat. He had his morning coffee to compensate all the energy that he spent earlier in the morning since he couldn't sleep earlier but still, the caffeine hasn't kicked in, he couldn't concentrate to the lesson given by Professor Langston. He thinks about where should he take a picture today, the kind of thinking that comes by when you are bored in the class, and he decided to go at the nearest park there and probably get some rest between the green trees and breezing wind, the Professor glances at his watch and decided to call it a day and dismissed the class, Stephen says goodbye to Sam and go for a walk to the park.

He put his Pentax K1000 out of the bag and starts

aiming at the bench overlooking the lake and take the picture, he thinks that is enough for today, quite a good shot he got there he thinks, he then sits at the bench observing things around the park, the people, the trees, the reflection from the water lake showing green trees and also skyscrapers, what a good view he thinks. It is so calm that he almost fell asleep at the bench, he then packs his bag and decided to go home, he arrives at home and greets his mom, his mom asked him "Have you had a lunch Steve?" and he replied "No, I haven't mom." then his mom prepares the meal for him, he then goes to his room, hang his backpack and then sit down at the bed near the bedside table, he then open one of the drawers where he keeps the photograph of his father holding him when he was still a baby, he looks with a very sad eyes, he's been missing him lately more than ever. He never really knows his father, but one thing for sure, he knows that his father loved him and that his father was a good man.

He then goes downstairs and heads to the kitchen, his mom cooks pancakes and serve it on the plate to Stephen, he then pours the maple syrup to add the taste to the pancake, and then he asks "Where's Anna? Then his mom replied, "She said she was going to Bonnie's house.". Stephen knows that his older sister borrows his Walkman without telling him "Tell her when she comes home to get my Walkman back to my room," said Stephen and then his mom just nod silently, Stephen then goes back to his

room to lie down. He usually listens to music while laying down on the bed, but since his sister brought his Walkman with her, he can't do anything but daydreaming.

The next day Stephen doesn't have many things to do, he decided to go to George's house, his best friend since elementary school. While Stephen loves photography, George in the other hand he loves videography, he is very good at recording and looks forward to becoming a videographer. They usually go to the nearest bar. Since their university is not really far away from their houses, they still live with their parents, it takes about 15 minutes to get to their university from where they live. Stephen arrives at George's and decides to go to the nearest bar with Sam and Jerry, Jerry also usually called Johnny, his actual name is Jonathan Müller but the group calls him Jerry since he is German, they are so close to each other that it doesn't offend him.

They talk about the future plan since college is about to finish soon and they just want to share what do they want to do in the future and shares some experience they've been through. Sam says that she wants to be a teacher when she finishes college, and George wants to be National Geographic cameraman, and Jerry is planning to open up a bar "I love beer and everyone loves beer also, they drink alcohol when they feel happy and sad, a perfect substance to dull your senses," said Jerry, and everybody laughs. While Stephen, he doesn't really know what he wants to do "I

don't know guys, probably I'll end up being homeless,” said Stephen, and everybody laughs once again. He actually wants to keep taking photos, but he knows that the photo industry is a very vague way to earn for a living.

Stephen got back home and sit at the dining table while looking at his mom washing the dishes, Stephen's mom doesn't really interfere with his life and dictate what to do, as long as he is enjoying what he does and it is legal, she'll agree to that, Stephen told his mom that when he graduated from college he wants to be a photographer and his mom is really supportive "As long as you enjoy what you do and if it's can be beneficial to the others, then why not?" she said. "Mom, if dad is still here with us, what would he want me to be?" Stephen asked. "He wants you to be yourself" his mom replied. "Maybe I can be a teacher and still taking photos, but I think I'm not that good teaching people,” said Stephen, “Well sonny, you have to decide for yourself, for whatever your decision is I will always support it,” her mom said. Stephen really got emotional and hugs his mom while saying thank you.

They talk about other stuff and then Anna comes from upstairs, “Oh, dinners ready now,” said mom. “You don’t have to wait for me actually,” said Anna. “Well, you’re here now so let’s eat now,” said her mom. They enjoy the lovely dinner their mom made, while Anna tells her story at work today, she works as nail artist in the meantime, she loves art and drawing and she thinks

that her work as nail artist really suits her personality and might want to pursue the career professionally and hoping that she could make it through in the future.

Two years later, he finishes college, the graduation is held where her mom and also Anna and Jerry attend the graduation, he also says congratulation to many of his friend, and also his best friends, George and Sam. After the graduation ceremony, they're heading home to celebrate Stephen's graduation with some little feast, Stephen feels so happy yet so sad, he doesn't know whether he will keep staying at Cheyenne with his family or to pursue a career, nevertheless, he doesn't know what to do after this.

At the graduation yesterday George told Stephen, Sam, and Jerry to hang out again at the bar, Stephen then prepares himself to go there, on his way to the bar, he sees a poster of non-governmental organization doing a foreign aid in 18 villages at Ethiopia, he then decide to write down the number of the organization, just in case he wants to join as a volunteer. He arrives at the bar and looks for them, and none of them are here yet, "I must be earlier than them," he thought. He orders a pint of beer, shortly after George, Sam, and Jerry arrives and then George says "Hey guys, you know what? Let's go to California and spend some time there, we can surf and stuff you know, the beaches are beautiful!" and then Jerry replied "You can't even swim George,

let alone surf,” they laugh at George because of saying that.

After a brief silence, Stephen says “I don’t know guys, I think I might not be able to do those things, I saw this poster about some foreign aid in Ethiopia, I think I’m interested, I can take pictures of people there you know and spread the message.”, “Well Steve, Africa is far away from here, do you know how long you’ll be there for? We for sure going to miss you here if you decide to go.” Sam replied. “Hey don't you guys worry, but I don't know for how long, I just can stay here forever you know? The world is just too big for me to not to see the part of it,” said Stephen, and then replied by George “I think that is a wise choice Steve, at least you have something to do, I mean planning to do. While I am here still wondering what will I do, and Africa, yes man just go there get some good photos.”

Jerry and Sam also seem supportive of his choice, and Stephen really feel inspired to even more to go to Africa, he hasn't talked about this to her mother and Anna, but he will as soon as he gets home. They spent the time there at the bar till the evening and all of them decided to go home. He finally arrives at home and greets his mom, his mom is at the kitchen preparing dinner, he then sits at the table. “Mom, I'm going to Ethiopia,” said Stephen “Look, Steve, I know you are drunk right now, where were you from? The bar?” his mom replied, “I'm not kidding mom, I was just drinking beer and I'm not even that drunk, look I saw this

poster when I headed to the bar, I thought why not give it a try, besides maybe I could make decent money.", "Yeah, I know that Steve, but dear Lord, Ethiopia? Is it located on the African continent, right? It is so far away, I know I said about your choice, and I will support it but Africa is not like here, I hear they have lions and cheetahs there.”

Then Stephen says “Mom, come on, we have black bears and grizzlies here, you don't have to worry I won't be scattered in the jungle, I will be documenting the activities and probably do a little help there.", "Have you consider it thoroughly? I mean if you insist to go then I will not stop you, but please do consider what you are going to do." She replied. "I gave it a thought already and I do really think I need to do this one, once in my life I want to do something, I want to share through photos that I take, mom," said Stephen. "Well then go, when will you be going there? Have you prepared all the stuff you need there?" said his mom, "I'll be leaving in two months, yeah, I prepared my stuff already, and they're giving me this new camera even though I have one already, but anyway it's better so why not? Anyway, mom, thank you for allowing me to go, you know I hope I'll have a good experience there," said Stephen. "You be good there okay? And I really hope you can go back home for Christmas."

Someone opens the front door, and it is actually Anna just arrived from work “Hi Steve, Hi mom.” While hugging her

mom in front of the kitchen stove. "Guess what, I'm going to Ethiopia," said Stephen, "What? Ethiopia? What are you going to do there? I mean, you're serious?" Anna replied while in disbelief. "Yes, I am serious, I am going to be a volunteer there, a non-governmental organization will hold a foreign aid and I will be documenting the process, and probably do a little help there.", "Well that is wise of you, what is suddenly inspired you to go there?" She asked. "I don't know, passion maybe? Oh, I sound weird, I don't know Annie, I just want to discover something new." Stephen replied, "Well, one thing for sure, I'm gonna miss you while you're gone. Hey, mom is the dinner ready?" said Anna. "Will be in a minute" her mom replied, then they enjoy the dinner together and talks about Stephen's plan.

He lays down in his bed wondering about what it will look like there in Ethiopia, as he can just imagine for now, now that he has two months left in the United States, but he feels confident as he is sure about what is he going to do. He then set his alarm on his alarm clock at 7 a.m. to register himself as the volunteer, the non-governmental organization that he will be joining is quite known in the country so he believes that they are capable enough to help people.

He takes the picture of his dad from the drawer and staring at it for a while, he says in his mind "Dad, I'm going to help other people, may not be much, it's just taking photos of the

world that are not enough to expose to the world, so that people knows the struggle of battle against hunger and sickness in Africa, I'm going to start with Ethiopia, they desperately need our help to survive. You know what, I hope that you're here so that I can ask you your opinion about me going there, but I believe that you'll support my vision, I hope I'll get accepted there, or at least they will anyway since they need a lots of people to help with the mission, that is all I want to say to you, love you pops." He then put the picture back in the drawer.

The next day he wakes up and went to the office of the organization, he handed some documents and then a short interview of what he can do and stuff, shortly after he finishes the interview and will be announced as soon as he is accepted by mail. He then decides to go to a coffee shop near the office and ordered a nice hot americano, he brings his camera with him and decides to take a picture of an old man sitting alone in the corner facing the wall, he is quite far away from Stephen and positioned diagonally, Stephen thinks that he has a good angle of shot and then snap, a film is burnt with light. He doesn't usually take a picture of a person but since he will be anyway so the old man is a good start.

A few days have passed, he finally receives the letter from the organization, it's the announcement about his acceptance at the program and how much the initial amount of money he'll

get paid, he's quite surprised since the initial money itself is a very good amount of money considering he is just a volunteer. He is glad that he is accepted and now is waiting for the time. While he is waiting for the time to go, he spends a lot of his time with his mom and Anna, sometimes also with his friends, and a little bit of walk and taking pictures.

Three days left from the day he will depart for Ethiopia, he can't wait while also don't want to leave his mom, he is suddenly feeling bad for it, but what can he do. He knows that he is responsible and don't want to cancel the opportunity to help other people, Stephen told his friends to hang out to the bar while also as to say goodbye to his friend, they did hang out together and Stephen enjoys his last few days in the United States.

He doesn't do much a few days before his departure, mostly preparing the stuff that he will use there such as the camera equipment, basically his essential needs. He brings a lot of films rolls just as a precaution because he is pretty much sure that there is no one selling those things at the village, and they probably rarely go to the cities since the main focus is to help the people that reside in the villages and rural areas.

The last day of his free time from becoming volunteer really passes quickly, he thinks about how fast time flies when you anticipate or waiting for something. Now he really appreciates the time he still has, he's been helping his mother in the kitchen after

his mom coming back from the kitchen, now he really wants to spend his precious time with her mother, well, he will be missing Anna as well but she is working in the meantime but she will be for when the time Stephen depart from the United States. He told his friends to come over to his house the night before he departs and has dinner, and they spend that night talking to each other.

And now it is late at night and he wants to sleep early so that he doesn't miss the flight, he will be flying with the other volunteers and also the organization's staffs, he knows some of the volunteers from the day they were interviewed and they had a little talk. Suddenly he doesn't feel sleepy or tired even though he knows he has to sleep early, he experienced this kind of thing as well when things get too excited or if he is nervous the coming day.

He wakes up and prepares himself up, saying goodbye to his mom and Anna, and get a taxi to the airport where all the volunteers and organization's staffs will be. He hugs his mom and Anna and then gets into his taxi, he opens up the window while the taxi starts to drive away from the house, Stephen then waving goodbye to his mother and Anna. The taxi driver asks "What is your destination sir?", "Uhhh, The airport please," said Steve.

He arrives at the airport, and gather at the gathering point where all the volunteers and organization's staffs are located, he signs the paper of terms & agreements. All of them checked-in

and are waiting to depart. He is very excited for now as he is about to fly about five thousand miles away from his hometown, the announcer is announcing to all the passenger to board in the plane.

He then sits next to Claire, one of the volunteers as a nurse, they have met each other when they were interviewed. Claire ask Stephen "So, what field are you in?", "I'm in the documentary team and will be taking photos of our activities there.". "Oh, that's great, hey I'm sorry but what was your name again? Was it Stan?" asked Claire. "Well thanks, by the way, it's Stephen, but close enough," Stephen replied, then both of them spends a lot of the time chats since the flight takes about 17 hours.

After a long and exhausting flight, they finally arrive in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, they then spend a day here for instruction and the list of villages that they will be staying at. Stephen's first thought about Africa was barren sand as long as he can see, but it's actually not, the views are beautiful and magnificent. The next day they head to the village called Kamuka located southwest of Shashamane, the village is quite populated with people, a few camps are set there from the international foreign aid.

The team arrives and Stephen start taking photos of the surrounding and the doctors talking to the patients, this is for the first time where he meets a girl that caught his attention. She

works as a nurse here and Stephen tries to approach her and ask her permission to take a picture of her, the girl agrees and Stephen starts to take pictures of her taking care of a child. Stephen then asked her "Excuse me but, my name is Stephen, what is your name?", "Oh hello, my name is Santi," said Santi. "How long you've been a volunteer here?" asked Stephen. "Well, it's been 4 months now, what about you Stephen?" asked Santi. "This is actually my first day of the job, we just arrived here yesterday."

"Oh, how fortunate, we do need some helping hands around here, glad you guys are coming here," Santi said, she then finishes her work and then they are having long conversation after that, Stephen collects some information about her that she is from Indonesia and just graduated from university just like him, and how she likes to help other people, she is doing the best she can do to make the world smile. Stephen really amazed by her personality.

They get along together pretty quickly, they have been in Kamuka for one month and will be stationed here for two more weeks, while suddenly Stephen receives a call from his sister saying that his mom is really sick, in a rush he goes to the staff telling what is happening back in the United States and they allowed him to go back to the United States for a while to visit his mother.

He then talks to Santi about his mother and that he really looks forward to meeting her again after he comes back

from the United States, Santi also concerns of Stephen's mother, since they get along together, there is some connection between them that exist. It may be love but who knows, what Stephen knows that he will be back for her.

He then goes to the United States and visits her mother, after two weeks later his mom gets better. He talks about how he met Santi and that he really looks forward to seeing her again. Stephen say something to his mother "Mom, now that you are feeling better but I'm going to stay here, probably not going back doing the volunteer thing.", "But Steve, I know that this was your decision from the start, look I know that I was sick but I'm feeling better, go back there take some photos again, and make sure you meet Santi when you get there, I'll miss you but you know, as a mother I will be glad that you go back again, I have Anna to look after me, I'll be fine, and when you meet Santi, please that I would be glad to meet her," said mom to Stephen.

"Thanks, mom, I'll say that to her, and I promise I'll be back for Christmas and I won't miss it" said Stephen, he is glad that his mom understand, he will be leaving for Ethiopia once again in two days, and while waiting for the time to go, he spends most of his time with his mother and taking care of her, Anna also say that Stephen should not be worried for she will be taking care of mom, this time once again he says goodbye to his mother and Anna.

With a ticket and a photo of the woman that she met in Ethiopia, he is going there once again to meet her, with a vision of helping other people through photos that he takes. For a journey that he took the first time he goes brings him to something that will take him back in the first place.

THE END

Happy Birthday

Astrid Dyah Wuriastuti

164214012

In the corner of Jakarta which well known as the crowded city ever in Indonesia, there is a lovely family consist of 3 members; Mr. and Mrs. Laksana and their daughter, Penny. 17 years later Mrs. Laksana was pregnant. That day was the happiest day of Mr. Laksana's family. The day is coming and also the baby. For 9 months they waiting for the worth gift. As a mother, Mrs. Laksana was very excited to see her youngest daughter and also her husband. In the middle of the birth process, there is something happens in this family and this family will not be the same as before.

Amelia Kara. This beautiful name was Penny's idea for her sister's name. This baby was beautiful more than her sister and her mother. She was born with brown eyes, bright skin, and also straight and heavy hair. Her parents were very proud and felt that her presence was the best gift ever in their family. In the other side, Penny was facing her worst problem in life. She was committed to suicide. Coincide with her sister's birthday.

In the midnight of the day, Penny was throwing herself in the river. Their neighbor immediately called Mr. Laksana after he passed that river. The father was shock and confused about

that. He thought that her daughter studying for her examination. Mr. Laksana went to her daughter's suicide location immediately. When he got there, he saw the entire of Penny's body. Her body was pale and stiff. This means that she was passed away. Penny did never exist anymore in his life and also in Laksana's family. Some so many people surrounded in that river and also an ambulance. All people in the location were surprised and did not expect that good girls like Penny would have this situation.

"No! No! That's my daughter, leave me alone!"

"Are you her father?" Asking the hospital staff.

"Yes, can you help me?"

"Sure. Come on follow us to the hospital."

After they arrived in the nearest hospital, Mr. Laksana was informed that her daughter died. He was crying out loud. In the same time, his other daughter, Kara was born. A couple of hours later, Mr. Laksana told about this accident to his wife while Mrs. Laksana was carrying her baby.

"Honey..." he tried to tell the truth with his crying face.

"What? What's happened? Is there something wrong?"

"Penny..."

"Penny? What happened to her?" Mr. Laksana laying her baby to the bed.

"She never came back again. She died, honey. She died!" he hugged his wife directly.

They both were crying loud. They never expected about Penny.

During the following years after those moments, Kara's family was not harmonious as before. Her father locked Penny's room and only contemplated his daughter's death. He does not treat Kara like his daughter. He felt that Penny was the one and only child that he has. Uncaring is the only habit that he did to Kara. Her father never said happy birthday to her that is the saddest moment in Kara's life. What's the meaning of her birthday if indeed her father does not admit that?

The birthday is nothing. The birthday is bored. What is birthday?

For 17 years only two people that have always routinely congratulated in her birthday; her mother and her close friend, Rena. Her mother always makes his favorite food, called *kue pepe* or *kue lapis sagu*. This cake is soft and usually layered with eye-catching colors, such as red, white, and yellow. The sweetness taste that inherent in it was the reason Kara likes it. *Kue pepe* by her mother is the best homemade food ever. Rena has her own unique ways to express it. She gives her own motivational quotes to Kara; actually there are no birthday congratulations words. It is written on yellow paper, which Kara's favorite color, then glued on her desk class – Rena's way. Kara feels grateful that at least there are people who remember her birthday rather than the penny's death

day.

That day was 1 December – Penny’s death day and also Kara’s 17th birthday. Every time on her birthday, she never expects anything until get something suddenly. When she came into her parent’s room, she has a knocking in the door.

“Kara.” Mr. Laksana came in front of her.

“Hi, Pa,” she replied while looking for the tucked book.

He gave Penny’s room key – for finally. That key is Kara’s first birthday gift from her father. “You can have it from right now, you deserved it.”

“Really?! Oh, thank you, Pa. I’m really happy, happy like a baby.” She hugged his arm.

“But don’t bother your sister’s things.”

“Yeah, I know it.” She smiled, although her father did not say happy birthday.

Kara was going to school after that. With her white broken bicycle, she paddled it with her happy face. It took about 20 minutes to get to school, and she always passed that cursed river. That river is now fenced in and filled with comfortable seating. In her way to school, she always smiled to her neighbors, food sellers, friendly people, and also children who always greet her cheerfully. That day was the happiest day for her.

Kara is the dream girl of all students in her school, besides she is beautiful, and also smart and down to earth, like

mother Theresa.

“Hey, my birthday girl.” Rena hugs Kara.

“Morning, Ren. So, where’s your quote?”

“Because it is your seventeen, I have a special gift for you. A Walkman haha.” She gives an old yellow Walkman that found in a vintage store.

“Wow, you know what I need. That’s my favorite color too.” Kara was happy while prancing in the classroom hallway. “Aaaaaa... Thank you so much, my baby.”

“Yeah I know you well, keep it carefully right because it is so old and rare.”

“Today is the magic day ever, Rena. Like in heaven.”

“Have you ever died?” asking with joking.

“Of course not!” they both come to their class.

When she arrived in Penny’s room and wants to clean it, the ghost of Penny stands in front of her. She saw her sister with her last appearance before she died. A 17 years old girl, ponytail hair, little short than her, and wearing a yellow shirt. Penny was smiling at her little sister. Kara was shocked like the other normal person.

“Hi, my sister.”

“Who...who are you? You like my sister.” She was starting frightened.

“I’m Penny, your sister.”

“No! My sister died on my birthday.” Kara pointed at Penny’s photo.

“Yeah, that’s me. Looks carefully.”

Kara was starting to believe it, but she did not believe that she can see her sister’s ghost. “Why can I see you? You’re already dead.”

“I didn’t know it too. But you’re the only one that can see me in this house. Oh, and also I need your help.”

“What? Help you? No. Big no. What’s the benefit for me?”

“Oh come on, you’re my sister. I need you to find my suicide reason.”

“Why?”

“Because I forgot it and I was trapped in this house for 17 years. Oh, come on, please...”

Kara was really confused about this situation. What does she mean? Why does it have to be her? But finally, she agreed with her sister’s request. She thought that his life had only made people sad and this is the solution to it. The first thing that she did was looking at the diary of Penny. Usually, diary was the center of our life’s secret, especially for teen girls. The penny’s diary was found in under the bed. That book was dusty and some writings are cannot be read because have not been opened in a long time. Every day she read that book to know her sister’s life while to looking the killers. After many pages that she read, Kara stopped her reading and focused on one name, Daniel.

“Who is Daniel?”

“That’s my first love in high school, why are you asking it?”

“Nothing.”

Kara was suspicious towards Daniel because he was described as being a good person, but in somehow he did not. She tried to find his contact person. When she got it, she wants to meet him personally. Daniel agreed with that because he was known about Kara.

In their meeting, Kara told her about her purpose. Daniel does not a shock at all. He tried to explain that Penny was his best treasure even now. Daniel cannot move on up until now. Penny is only in his mind every time and everywhere. Kara did not believe him easily. There is a big “DANIEL” word on one page. There is must be something wrong between Penny and Daniel. The more she sought the answers, the more he refused to tell the true stories. He was preferred to silent. The first attempt failed.

“What happened with you and him?”

“I don’t know, I forget about that.”

“But you said that Daniel was your boyfriend.”

“That’s true.”

“Oh, you make me confused. Aaaaarghhh...Why I involved in your problem, even you’re dead.” Lying on her bed.

“I’m so sorry.”

The other day – her second effort. Kara asked her

mother about Daniel's really are. As expected, Mrs. Laksana won't say anything. Her mother seems to not hear it. What's really happened? Kara wants to ask her father, but it is a risk. She will not damage the good situation between herself and him. She decided to find Daniel one more time.

"What do you want, Kara? I'm busy."

"Just telling the truth, so I will let you go."

"Okay! Come to my office."

Daniel works as chief editor of a well-known magazine in Indonesia. He invited Kara to sit in his office. Daniel was the perfect man, he is well established, good looking, and has his own charisma for those people around him. Kara asked about the relationship between him and Penny and also the story behind her suicide.

"Okay, the day before that day I gaped cheating on her."

"What? Why?"

"Because your sister is so nice to me and I was scared to your father at that time."

"If she was nice, then why are you cheating on her? That could be one of the reasons for her death."

"Yeah, I know. Therefore, I can't forget about your sister."

"Because of your fault, my life is sucks. Just because of you!" Kara was angry and leave that place.

She immediately told Penny about Daniel's cheating,

but surprisingly she already knew that. And the weirdly, she also still trapped inside that small house. There is no change. Kara still has her mission. After finding out more, she knew that Penny was not her sibling. The fact that her father had divorced with Penny's mother and remarried with her mother now. One day Penny was wanted to change school because her old school has a bad education system. But her parents who were divorced at the time did not approve this. She feels lonely and unwanted everywhere. Apart from being cheated by her own boyfriend, her parents were also busy with their works, and also have no friends who understood her.

This is the reason behind her suicide attempt - lonely and unwanted. A few days later, she was gone forever. Kara's mission was successful. She returned with her routine. Back with her habit, which listening rocks music on the rooftop school using her lovely yellow Walkman. The most important for him that her family has returned to normal again. Her father smiled again and cared about her existence in that small house.

WIND FLOWER

Vella Sophia A.
164214157

People say love comes in funny ways, even for someone like me. Someone skeptical about love. Someone that thought love was nonsexist. Blamed my parents for nailing idea that love was a non compulsory things. That until I laid my eyes on the most beautiful creature I had ever seen my whole life. Turned a non-believer into someone willing to do anything for a certain individual. People say good things come with price. Unlike ordinary love story where sweetness shown in almost every page, mine was as difficult as when the love hit me for the first time. Mine has no sugar-coat whatsoever, real it is as how I remember every single second I be with her.

Like when I saw her for the first time, she stumbled upon my secret hide-out where I off to have cigarette escapes behind an old chapel. I heard her loud melodious humming, her light footsteps, and I could smell a handful of *wind flower* she carried. Then she got my tongue the moment I saw her eyes. Eyes I fell in love with. Ridiculously I asked who she was without comprehending the black and little bit of white of the outfit she wore, or the veil covered her head, or the cross pendant hanging

on her covered neck. That day she pronounced my name ‘Abby’ for the first time, that day I knew her dorm-mates called her Sister Claire, and that day I gained my sense of who she really was. I said I never fell in love, and the last thing I had ever imagined is to fall in love with a nun.

Like how it was impossible to begin with, to win her heart was ten times harder. I started to act as if I was *bella* religious all of sudden, chanting prayers I never once known just so I could see her. I found out she loved gardening, I pretended to be interested with flowers, I paid unnecessary amount of attention when she told me about *wind flower* that she planted to replace lily and carnation since they’re expensive. One day I asked her why the white flower she planted seemed bigger than the wind flower I normally saw. She smiled and replied that was because she was a good gardener and wanted to own one, someday.

Time went on then I was getting brave and showed too much attention, and I might or might not blurt out that I like her. I was slapped. Countless time. Things thrown on me couple times. And there was one time I was almost being exorcised. I was denied. Tough I dared to say I knew she might have any feeling towards me too.

People say you do stupid things when you are in love. Like once I locked my self and her in one of the confession room

just to ask the tingling things inside my heart whenever I was near her. How she knew better that *God* had given me this feeling and she just asked me to denied and called it sin. Then she showed me the eyes I never saw after all those time. I gave her the first chaste peck on the lips for the first time. And I got to call her by her given name, I called Hope.

As how our relationship began, things never gotten easier. Hope doubted many times before she decided to leave the monastery. Without any fail, the dirty looks we received, the curses said to us, and hateful spited as if they were the holiest people existed. Hope was an orphan, she never had to deal with family issues unlike me. My parents, although they divorced for as long as my age, they loved minding my private life though theoretically I wan an adult. Typical Asian parents living in Perth. Couldn't be worse with both combinations. So I moved out. I got a small but nice place in Auckland for Hope and I, where people not as closed minded as in where we came from. I told Hope our new place had a small garden and I felt like falling in love again when she said nothing but smiled and wrapped her lithe figure against my much bigger one.

We moved in, I have good enough skill in virtual designing, so I got a job in a small but quite well-known web design company while Hope worked as musics teacher in a local

all-girls high school. We were almost too happy and I know I should have be cautious because everything went on smoothly for people like us. Like, too smoothly. Till about a year after we settled in, Hope got sick almost every month. Like, really sick. At first we thought it was just stomach flu or food allergic reaction. Hope always refused to go when I said I was going to the doctor. She said there was nothing to be worried, or she was just tired, or she would get better the next day. But one day she passed out after vomiting blood and got to be taken to hospital. When doctor announced Hope had kidney failure, it hit me thousands feet to the ground.

Hope was tending the flowers when I got home. I told her before to not to get over-exhausted since she had just charged out of hospital for the fourth times this month.

“My, my... haven’t I told you to not doing things especially in board sunlight, Hope?” I said. She turned around and pouted her chapped lips. Her body had gotten much thinner lately too.

“I had quit teaching the subject I love and now you nag me for doing thing I love the most too?” she answered.

I sighed at her reply, “But you just got back from hospital. Doctor said you need to rest since tomorrow you will get hemodialysis.”

“Honey I’m fine, just sick not crippled.” she added, “Look... my poor flowers... nobody tended my garden since we had to stay in hospital”

I shook my head in disbelief. I had never won against her since the day I won her heart. The first and the last time I actually won. “Okay, ten more minute,” “I’ll be right here and watch you.” I said while heading to the love seat on the porch.

She nodded and flashed a grin, “Just sit and think of me”. I wanted to reply *‘Oh I never not thought about you, Hope’* but I left it unsaid.

I can feel a gush of air on my face. I opened my eyes to a weak grin belonged to someone I love the most. I must have been drifted to sleep. It was almost dark. Hope rested her head on my shoulder as she wrapped ragged blanket to our body.

“How long was I out? It’s dusk now?” I said.

“Hmmm... an hour maybe? I went in to wash and drink but you hadn’t woken up. I have no heart. You look tired”.

“You could have just wake me up, Hope...” I replied, still hazy from sleep. I wrapped my arms around her bony body as she shivered a bit. “Are you feeling cold? Want me to heat up a hot milk?”

She shook her head, “No... let’s just stay like this for while... I sky is so clear, I can see stars and universe from here... Plus we haven’t cuddle that often these days” She said warily.

“Yeah... I know... sorry” I said back.

“Hey, you know it’s not your fault...”

I sighed, “Still... I couldn’t manage to get you donor...”

She sat up and starred at me, “Hey, we had a deal for not taking this too that extent... It’s not your fault... Honestly I kinda just wanna leave it as it is..” she said. I was a bit taken back hearing that.

“You wanna give up Just like that?” I asked her. She smiled

“No... Giving up and submitting is a two different things, Abby... I feel like It will be better just to live the rest of my life to it’s fullness rather than doing vain things... I wanna spend more time with you rather than hemodial thingy or choking up on medications.”

“But I want you to survive, Hope...” I said.

“I will survive. Don’t you know how tired I am? Don’t you know how tired you look?” she added, “You had given up so many things, yet I still torture you in hundreds different ways...”

“Don’t say that... I did not give up on anything and I love you so it’s natural for me to do anything for you...” I said.

“Your family?” “You gave up on them?” she said.

“No I didn’t...” “How come I gave up something I had never owned the first place? I only have you...” I said again, “so just don’t give up yet... Promise me...”

She smiled again and stroke my cheek. “I said I never give up right? I love you too much to just give up..” “I just mean to say don’t force upon yourself because I hate seeing you worry over things like my illness... be happy, make me happy...”

I smiled back at her, “I know, and I will... I love you so much” I said to her and I ducked down my head to give her the kiss contained with love I borrow from the universe.

It’s Saturday and Hope had schedule for another hospital visit today. I brushed my short dark hair and headed to the bathroom. I tempted to see myself in the mirror. I feel like I had not done that since I busy working and taking care of Hope. Hope was right, she always right. I looked like shit. I barely recognized the reflection I saw. Hollowed cheeks, dark eye bags, and lifeless eyes. I almost looked as sick as Hope. I shrugged off and washed myself before heading back to wake Hope up.

“Hope, wake up... We need to be in hospital at 10.” I caressed her cheek and she stirred a little. Yet managed to smile at me despite her illness.

“Yeah, Help me up to get a drink will you?” she asked. I grinned a little and carried her down stair to dinning room to get water. I put Hope down near the dinning table for her to lean on. I was about to get a cup water when I heard a thud. Hope passed out again. This time with blood gushed out of her nose and mouth.

Hope was in coma for two days. I kept staying by her side, waiting for her to open her eyes while me myself was dying inside. This morning I saw her fluttered her eyes open and I couldn't be more relieved.

“Hope... you alright? Do you want me to get the doctor?” I asked her.

“I'm alright Abby,” she said while smiling. I hated it. She smiled as if she did not feel any pain. “and yeah, can you get me the doctor... And can I ask you one more thing?” she asked.

“What is it?”

“I kinda miss my garden... I want to see my flowers...” she said.

“You want me to bring flower from our garden?” I clarified. She nodded.

“You know my favourite?”

“Yeah... I know what you like the most...” I answered and headed out to get the doctor.

I was home for about an hour before rushing back to hospital. I began to feel antsy when I saw doctors and nurses rushed out towards the wing where Hope stayed. I tried to calm my self and just not think of anything. But my conscious left me when I saw a bunch of people surrounding Hope. I couldn't see her face, she was covered in white sheet. I felt panic inside yet I couldn't move my body. The doctor tried to say something but I was too dead to comprehend any words he said. The small flower pot dropped to the ground just before I felt my face collided with the cold floor.

I laid the bucket of wind flower just above the cross with Hope's name on in. Hope's funeral was very quiet despite the crowd that came to bid her goodbye. Some of her colleagues and former students came. Her sisters from the monastery also came.

And the least people I expect to come, also came. My brother came.

“Hi Abby,” the younger man said.

“Hi Bill... You came. How are you?” I asked him.

“Good... You good?” He asked. I was just nodding. He knew me so well for not saying condolences because I would hate that so much. “Mom is home...” he added. I pretend to be surprised.

“Oh yeah? And Dad?”

“Dad is about to marry again.” he said bitterly. “He wants you to come though.” he said again, “Mom also wants you to come home... after... you know...” he didn’t continue. I gave him a small smile and shook my head lightly.

“I never had home, you know?”

“Hey don’t say that... They’re still our parents. Your parents”

“I know that. But I still can’t forget those scornful faces they gave me when I introduced Hope. I know I expected too much but I thought they understand manner better than that.”

Bill sighed, “Okay, I understand. I won’t say it twice as you know what kind of person I am and I know you too. So... just come home... whenever you like to...” and he bid me goodbye.

It has been a month. It was hard for me to keep my sanity without thinking anything but grabbing alcohol and cigarette I had given up when Hope and I moved in. I could still hear her laugh and her voice when she sang one or two verse. I told her once that she sang too loud for a nun. The moment those memory flashed, I always regret myself for being a coward. I dragged my feet to the garden. Once filled with blooming white petals of wind flowers. It was almost dead. I feel like shit, so I walked down to the shed to get the hose. The shed had low door and roof, just the perfect height for hope but too low for my much larger built. I was grabbing one of the end of the hose when I spotted a khaki colored envelope. As cheesy as it was, that was a letter from Hope.

Dear The Love of My Life...

I wouldn't know how much time you needed to find out this letter... I sneak out to write this when you were sleeping on the porch this evening... I am

writing this while staring at your pretty face... And I don't know how much gratitude I have to say to God for bringing you into my short life..

Abby, you know when people say that you just have the feeling when your life is coming to an end, right? I'm so certain and I feel like my time is coming real fast. But strangely though, I didn't feel scared or regret or sorry... Because I believe you are strong enough too let me go when the time has come..

Abby, my love, my first and last and only love..

I don't want you to feel sad or sorry that I leave... Because I don't feel that way... Believe me when I say; the only thing will disappear is my body. My soul, my spirit, and my love will always remain by your side.. I will always be here with you.. When you're staring at the wind flowers, is me you're seeing.. When there is a wind blows over you, it is me you're feeling.. When you notice the sky is darkening, it is me covering you from this world.. and now that I know I'll be gone, I can borrow the love universe has and I'll give them all to you..

I love you, Abby

Claire Hope Mallory.