

A SPECTRUM OF RED ROSES



*PUBLISHED BY THE ENGLISH LETTERS DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITAS SANATA DHARMA
2017*

“A Spectrum of Red Roses”

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A Spectrum of Red Roses

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ISBN: **978-602-50956-27**

PUBLISHED BY FAKULTAS SASTRA
UNIVERSITAS SANATA DHARMA
YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA

Preface

Spectrum is a symbolism of life. Life is filled with gradation of colors, from dark to bright. It reflects all stages of emotions while perceiving life. Red roses portray two opposite meanings; love and death. Love is not always associated with a frontal romanticism but it could be sympathy and even a glance. Death is not always the death of someone but it can be the death of hope and even of illusion. Through our masterpiece *A Spectrum of Red Roses* all authors express their thoughts that life is like a juke box, full of surprises. If life was a surface, it will be filled with holes and hills. Overall life is precious if we have a precious way to live it.

We would like to thank heaps our beloved, coolest lecturer who has guided us to reveal our own choice of colors through this book.

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A Poem of Mine

Clara Carissa Poppy Mahendra

Word by word making a rhyme

Note and tone are now a song

A smile was seen

A drop of tear makes all gone

...

This is a poem of mine. I am not telling you my story. I am telling you how I feel. I don't want you to care. I am hoping you to listen. I'm letting you know what my heart and mind want to say.

...

I used to be a part of a big stage. I loved to read others' poems out loud. I loved to play different roles. I have been a grumpy grey-haired lady. I have also been a cheerful girl who liked to sing. I was a role-player. I played well in every stage. All the beautiful flowers I have got, all kind of applauses I have heard, those are the

things I miss.

...

I lived in the glamorous stage and had no idea that I would have to leave. I breathed with all the rhythm of it. But now...

...

I remember that I used to admire a couple who danced and sang with the music they made. They introduced themselves as Indonesian in other countries. I took all their songs as my motivations. Endah and Rhesa. When she sang all love songs within the melody of her husband's guitar, I would sing along and be amazingly happy. Oh, that band. I remember one more favorite musician of mine. They are not Indonesian though. Two words. Dream Theater. When they played their music, they played my emotion. Feeling amazed, motivated, happy, and yet afraid when "Spirit Carries On" was playing. I loved it. I used to enjoy all those beautiful melody playing in my ear, in my mind, in my heart. Those could make me smile.

It felt like it was yesterday that I smiled listening to that music. Now, all happy songs feel really mellow and pathetic. I remember why I became like this, but please I still wanted to have some nostalgic memories of the great past life.

Once, I wrote a poem. A senior in my university then read it. That was the beginning of me living as an art lover. I loved poems. I wrote many stories every night. Then I crawled to be recognized. I enrolled my poems to countless online competitions. I also sent them to every newspaper and magazine I knew. Then, I joined a community which had the same taste of art. It was a theater in my city. From then, I lived a more colorful life. I loved it. I enjoyed it.

I was there for more than ten years. It was not a short time yet I could not speak of myself as a master in theatrical world yet. I left two years ago. I started losing my life, losing myself.

I enjoyed each second of my life. I built my life with love and faith. In weeks, it got broken, not yet gone, but hope really got so thin.

Yesterday was not this cold. There was always him who did not let me get wet in the heavy rain. Him. A man scarifying everything for me, telling me good morning, closing my day with good night, there was that man. I could not even say his name again. He was just too good to be remembered. He left in silence. He left me with no good bye and I could not even blame him. I missed him.

You are the angel of my life and I am blessed to have you. That

was what he said every day since we got married.

It was a rainy Friday. He just sent me a text. He said he was on the way from his office. We planned to go to hospital for routine check up. Then, he called. I thought he would ask if I wanted a cup of coffee from our favorite coffee shop. But it was not his voice. A woman. The woman told me that this man got into an accident. He left me when he wanted to see me. He died when I started to have hope in life.

...

Jesus, are you really that mean? When you took him back to your home, I could not blame you, could I? I prayed that You took good care of him.

...

“Good morning, Nana,” a man entered my room and greeted me.

“Good Morning, Doctor,” I replied.

“How are you today?” He just did his routine for two years.

“Could I be worse?” I tried my best to smile in sarcastic way.

I spent all the money I have left in this hospital. My left eye saw nothing. My right eyesight was blurry. I got weaker every day.

“Are you ready? You will have a big operation. A big day! You will see all the beauty again,” he smiled.

I was confused. Should I shout and say thank you? Should I be happy? Should I be grateful? I should, but I did not. I left most of my hope when I was diagnosed having this tumor. I lost all my hope when Angga left me.

...

Hope was here

People say it is always here

Dream was here

People say it will be here

I want to hope

I want to dream

I want to see me hoping and dreaming

See? All black

I see all black.

When the light is on

I see all black

...

In this room I leave all my hope, I leave my entire dream. Surgery Room. Perhaps, other girls also left their hopes and their dreams here. I depart. I will meet the love of my life. I am seeing the face of God. This is a poem of mine.

Awake

Antonius

That morning, the sun was shining brightly in the East. The air was so fresh, touching softly the respirator of every being. A group of *Lonchura Punctulata* was chatting with each other, producing a series of beautiful rhythms, making the most beautiful song in the world. A couple of *Papilio ulysses* was dancing attractively around newly blooming *Clerodendron paniculatum*. A 19-year-old beautiful girl was walking slowly step by step passing by the calm college garden. The girl looked like an angel in her white casual dress. This young girl was named Vania Jasmine. Vania was an English Letters freshman in Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta. She was a beautiful Chinese girl with alluring brown eyes and cherry sweet lips. She had long soft hair, as soft as the silk that flowed over her shoulders. Vania was quite tall, around 5 feet 5 inches. Looking from her appearance, she seemed to be a pretty girl, the ideal type of many boys. As the old saying “Don't judge a book by its cover”, aside from all her beautiful appearances, Vania had a somber personality. She was very introverted. She didn't have many friends. She didn't like to

socialize with others and she was also afraid of being in a crowd, what was well-known as *Agoraphobia*.

That day was Vania's first day in campus as a university student. While she was walking slowly, from another direction a tall boy was walking in a hurry. Accidentally, the boy bumped into Vania's shoulder, made her almost fell down. Fortunately, the boy sprightly held tight Vania's body. Two couples of eyes were staring at each other. The world seemed to stop rotating. Vania felt like her heart stop beating. Her feeling was in a chaos, mixed with pain, shy, and awkward. "Hey, hey, are you okay?" the boy's voice broke the momentary silence. Because she was still in shock, Vania only shook her head, muted. "Thank heavens! I'm so sorry, my name is Ryan," the boy smilingly reached out for Vania's hand to drive away the awkward moment. "M...my...my name is Vania." "Ah Vania, nice to meet you, I'm so sorry I must leave now, I'm in a hurry," said Ryan while looking at his watch. "Bye Vania." Ryan was leaving Vania stock-still.

In the class, Vania could not concentrate fully to the lesson. In home, she also seemed to have something in her mind. Something was distracting her. Yeah, it was the shade of the boy. She still felt the strong hands that held tight her soft body. In her ear was still buzzing the gentle voice of the boy. She could not forget the cute dimples at the handsome boy's cheeks. An aroma redolent of red orange, cinnamon, vetiver, and meadow-fresh mint lingered in the *olfactory epithelium* of her pointed nose, a seductive masculine aroma indeed. The smile of the boy had kidnapped her soul. In that moment, arose a feeling that was difficult to define in words.

First day had gone, vanished in the wind, this was the second day. Vania was walking slowly as usual. She was on her

way to the library. Of course, she liked the library so much, a place where she could drown her self into the ocean of books, a calm and peaceful sanctuary to avoid the crowd. She liked philosophical books so much. "*Proud to be An Introvert*," an interesting book seized her attention. Page by page scrutinized by her soft pretty fingers. Unconsciously, a pair of black eyes was observing her from the next shelf. One second... one minute... five minutes, yet the girl was still busy with the chosen book. The boy was continuing to observe the girl from every angle, in detail. "Beautiful," he said in his deep heart, "perfect." The girl seemed to realize the existence of the eyes. She was so surprised to know it. The eyes were quite familiar, and... yes, it was the eyes yesterday in the garden. "Hello Vania, nice to meet you here, what are you doing here?" Ryan asked while walking closer to Vania. "Mmmm... oh hello Ryan, I am reading a book." "*Proud to be An Introvert*"? Hmm.. quite an interesting book," he said. "Yeah, I like philosophical books," she said. "Oh really? I am also interested in philosophical books, what a coincidence," he replied.

Second by second, this pair of youth became acquainted with each other. They had many mutual similarities. They spent some hours in the library, talking and sharing to one another. Later on, Vania found out that Ryan was her senior in English Letters. He was a fifth-semester student. Day by day, very soon, their relation became intense. They spent their time a lot together. Like a couple of *Columbidae*, wherever Vania goes, Ryan would always be there to accompany her. They studied together, traveled together, went to the beach together, built the sand castle on the coast, and many more. They had a good time together. The world simply seemed to be theirs. Since Ryan became her close-friend, Vania simply began to change into a cheerful girl and smiled more than before, left out all her gloom. Vania seemed to find her true

spirit of life. “Let’s go to the Disneyland,” Ryan persuaded Vania because he knew that Vania had an *Agoraphobia*. He intended to get rid of it. Even though at the beginning Vania seemed doubtful, she accepted it finally. How could she refuse the invitation from such a handsome prince anyway? It was the first time that Vania tried to get out from her comfort zone. It was hard, but with Ryan by her side, it did not matter.

“Would you like to try the Ferris wheel?” Ryan asked. “But I’m afraid of heights,” Vania replied. “It’s okay, just try it, I will accompany you, don’t worry,” Ryan answered. “Hmmmmmm...” she murmured. “Come on,” Ryan held Vania’s hand as they stepped into the Ferris wheel. Because she was afraid, Vania held Ryan tightly. “Don’t worry, I will be with you, always,” such romantic statement came from Ryan. Hearing it made Vania felt more relax. Three minutes gone, Vania started to enjoy it. The joyful face appeared from Vania’s face. Her hand was still held tight Ryan’s. Might be it’s an exact time. “Vania, I don’t know how you feel, but I can’t lie anymore, I am in love with you Vania, would you be the half of mine?” Ryan confessing while holding Vania’s hand gently, feeling the soft fingers of her. “YES, definitely yes,” Vania replied it frankly as she also felt the same feeling since the first time they met. Ryan kissed Vania’s face softly, *in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, Amen*. Ryan whispered softly to Vania, “Vania Just Mine (Vania Jasmine).” Joy radiance reflected on her face. This might be the happiest moment in her life that couldn’t be expressed even in a thousand words.

“Vania, let’s meet up tomorrow at 10 a.m, at the college garden, the place where we first time met each other, I want to give you something,” Ryan said. Vania just nodded, though in her mind appeared a huge curiosity. The next morning, Vania went to the

nostalgic place. She waited in the long bench. 15 minutes gone... 35 minutes... and one hour gone, but Ryan still didn't appear. A gust of cool wind blew through her soft fair cheeks. A photograph was flying above her foot. She took up the photo. A photograph of a familiar face, Ryan's photo and in the backside written a set of letters :

Vania was very confused. She didn't know what was happening. Ryan didn't come, there was a photograph which in the backside written mirrored words. "What does it mean?" Vania thought hard. One day... two day... three day gone... Ryan still didn't appear. It was already 3 days from that strange event. Ryan disappeared, swallowed by the earth. Vania was desperately trying to look for Ryan. She asked many people in the 5th semester, but no one recognized the photograph and no one know who Ryan was. She returned into a somber girl. Vania lost her spirit, as if she had lost the most precious treasure in her life. She walked slowly to the college garden, hopefully she would bump into him again, as what she had done before. It was just a sweet hope that never became reality. She sat on the long bench, looked far away to the middle-aged man who was busy cutting the grass. In a sudden, came to her an instinct that probably this man recognized her sweet heart. She walked quickly toward the man. "Sir, sorry for disturbing you, do you know this boy in the photograph? His name is Ryan, do you know him, Sir?" Vania asked while showing the photograph, hoping she would get a satisfying answer. "Yes of course, this boy, Ryan Sebastian, he came here quite often some years ago. He was a good and friendly boy. He was a kind-hearted doctor," the man's answer surprised Vania. "Some years ago Sir? Doctor? How about a few days ago? Just a few days ago I came

here with him, but now I don't know where he is" Vania explained. "Pardon me. Do you said few days ago? With him?" the man wondered. "Last Friday I came here with Ryan, we spent our time here reading books together," Vania answered. "But how it is possible? He has passed away 2 years ago in a motorcycle collision," the man surprised. Vania just couldn't imagine it. "Ryan used to be a doctor who helped in the Sanata Dharma clinic. He often came here because he loved being in this calm garden. He was also a helpful person. He always helped me watering the flower. One bad day came to him, he was just finishing his work and on the way back to his house, he got accident on the road that had taken his life. Poor Ryan," the man explained in detail. Soon after that, the man left Vania speechless. She just couldn't believe what she just had heard. She sat back on the bench, opened her cellphone gallery. Surprisingly, all of the picture that she had taken with Ryan was gone. It was really unbelievable. A gust of cold wind blew on her face, she smelled a typical perfume that she was familiar with. Exactly, it was Ryan's perfume, the scent that she had always remembered of. A couple of cold hands held her hips. She was so surprised, turned back and looked at it. It was Ryan in a pale face smiling at her. "Vania... Vania... wake up dear..." that familiar sweet line, continued. "It's already 6.00 a.m, today is your first day in college right, be prepared, otherwise you will be late," turned out to be her mother's voice waking her up.

If Only

Bertha Fransiska Pasaribu

What a great day! Well, a great day for Galahad. For me, today isn't supposed to exist. I'm standing in front of a mirror in my room, what I see is a coward. Then a big memory crosses my head in a sudden.

I went to Paris to study Technology Information 5 years ago. I was an introverted person, lonely, and had nothing special through my days. After one day, I fell in love with a girl. She was stunning, brown hair, in a blue dress, and she caught my attention. I did some signals and I know she got them too. Shortly, I was success to be hers. She was loyal to me, never did me wrong, and she was ideal for every man.

But then, I took her for granted so many times. Until one day, I took her for granted for the last time in my life.

It was in a summer and we had a holiday for two months long. We went to Italy and spent the summer there. It was so lovely and unforgettable time. For the first time, we spent days and nights

together. It was only two of us. Holding hands, love everywhere, no issues between us, just flowers everywhere. After two weeks, we split up. I went back to my parents in Rome, she went back to Paris.

The time was going too slow without her. I felt it, and so did she. In that time, I believed that loving truly could hurt sometimes. I felt so lonely even in a crowd. I sent her letters sometimes. She sent me back.

“Are you serious with this girl?” my mom asked in a sudden when I was in a silence, thinking about her in front of our television.

“Indeed, mom. What is it, mom?”

“Is she a Christian?” she asked me again.

“Yes. She is.” I answered, slowly turning down my head down.

“Well, if you are serious, you know what to do. She must be a Catholic too.”

I did not have courage to continue the conversation. I thought; I should ask her. She must know that people in Rome are... Ah, if she loves me, she must want to do it. I know I'm the world for her. She won't refuse.

I kept that thing until I met her. Until one day, I finally went back to Paris and met her. I was happy. There was no word to describe it.

Days passed, I thought I should ask her about this religion thing.

“What do you think? How about if my family wants you to be a catholic?”

“Umm, no I won’t. Belief is privacy. It is more than a status for me.” She said.

“What about if my family wants us do our wedding in catholic way?”

“I’m okay with it. It is just about the wedding process and nothing to do with my belief. Besides, I’ll marry you, not your family.” She said again.

“Of course it has something to do with it.” I said with a little high voice.

“Whatever. I won’t do it. It is a very big decision, you know.”

I was shocked with her answers. She was persistent with it. Then, I thought to break up with her intentionally. Yeah, in a purpose, but actually deep down in my heart, it was a damn hard action. Even though, I was sure she would be begging to get back to me and fix the relationship in the end.

One day, I set a conversation and reasons in my head to find the way and how to break up with her. In an Italian café, we were sitting there drinking coffee. We were arguing and discussing

about unimportant issues between us and finally I brought up an issue that was so sensitive for her, sensitive for girls actually.

“Listen! I’m still young, I need to go out with girls, widen my circle, I need drinks, and I want to go to clubs and all. I want to spend my youth properly. If you are still in this strict way, we are done!”

“Why did you say that? All of those bans were coming from you. You did that to me first, and I have right to do so to you” she said with a tense face.

“Right, we are done.” I said. “Really? That’s it? OK!” simply she said.

My plan was going well. We broke up. I just needed to wait her coming to me.

Then, she finally came. Like I had said, she wanted to fix our relationship. She was crying and kept on telling me how frightful she was about losing me. To be honest, it killed me to see the scene. I still loved her.

“I want us back, please. I’m not giving up.” She said.

“It would happen but I need you to be a Catholic” I told her.

“Why? Won’t you fight for me? It is okay for me if we are different. Why should religion separate us? I thought the problem is me being... strict.”

“I just can’t. I want to avoid problems in the future. If we keep continuing this, it will be complicated later, for your family and also my family.” I said.

There was a long silence. It seemed like she was thinking very hard but I could not guess what she was thinking at that moment.

After about 20 minutes, I was shocked. She accepted it. I thought she would say yes for what I wanted. She went away with tears and kept sweeping them. I was hurting her. I hurt my feeling too.

Weeks passed away, I felt something uncomplete. I missed Amarta. I went back to Rome in order to ease me getting over her but it didn’t work.

Now it is just pain and regret.

If only I had courage to ask my parents that I want different religion wedding and fought for her a little bit more like my brother did, maybe Amarta is mine for eternity now. I just needed to ask.

Still looking at the mirror and put on my tuxedo. My brother's wedding is about to begin. Suddenly, the wedding invitation catches my eyes and saddens me hopelessly. Written; Holy Matrimony of Galahad and Amarta.

The Shadow

Stephanie Sita Permatasari

I'm on my way home. It's late. Again I see her sitting on the rooftop. I've been keeping an eye on her for three months. She stares at the sky. Maybe she loves moon and stars. I guess. Tonight she wears a long white dress. She has short haircut. She is beautiful under the moonlight - as always. Sometimes, I see her smile and it makes me want to go bananas. Unfortunately, I ain't know her name and her occupation. I rarely see her coming out from her house. Later, I promise I will.

The next day, I'm waiting for her. One hour - two hours - three hours, she doesn't appear. Maybe she is weary and goes to bed early. Day passes by, she hasn't been seen for three days. I wonder where she is going. Then, I ask to one of her neighbors. The neighbor said that she didn't see that girl. It makes me more confuse. "Okay. I will go to check her house." It's around 7p.m. I ring the bell on her house. The bell sounds like raindrops ringtone on my phone that I always use to wake me up in the morning. I

hear the footsteps coming down the stairs and coming closer to the door. The door is opened and the middle-age woman came out.

“What are you looking for?”

“Hello, madam. I am Bryan. I actually want to ask about the girl who is sitting on the rooftop every night. I never saw her for three days.”

“Oh, she is sick. You may see her in the room.”

The woman shows me the girl’s room. I go inside the room and see her laying on the bed. She even looks so pretty while sleeping. It’s quite long to see her sleep; maybe she was enjoying being in the dream world. She wakes up and gets surprised to see me sitting next to her bed.

“Hey, who are you?”

“Ah, sorry. I’m Bryan. I am a college student at Saint Peter University. I also have a part time job as Barista at Blanco Coffee and Books. I’ve been watching you for so long. I always see you sitting on the rooftop at night.”

“Oh, yeah...”

“Anyway, what’s your name? And what do you do for living?”

“My name is Jeceline and I am also a college student at Saint Pedro University,” she answers me with the weak voice.

“Wow, that’s great. Our campus is neighboring.”

It sounds like I am so happy to hear that. My reaction is so exaggerate. She just looks at me with a marvel expression. Yeah, I

know, I am too odd acting up close to her. But, it doesn't matter as long as I still maintain my prestige in front of her. We had enough good conversation. From that, everyday after I finish my part time job, I go to her house to see her. Now, we are really close to each other. I may say that we are dating. Sometimes, we meet at campus. She usually comes to my campus.

“Hey, did you skip the classes? You always come to see me at my campus.”

“I just felt bored. I want to go out and spend the time with you,” she teases me.

“Arrghh, don't tease me like that, you know I can't refuse that.”

She laugh out loud seeing my response. “Don't you know? Hearing her laughter is a great happiness for me.”

She asks me that she wants to visit a bridge near the Seine River. I take her to that place. We spend our time there until the moon comes and greet us brightly. What an awesome scape to see a lovely girl in the nice place and in a precise time. “You believe or not, she is like an angel. Ah... no! I repeat again. She is an angel.” Time never be sided with me. It flows faster than I thought. It is 9p.m already. I drive her back home. Her mother is waiting for her in front of the fence. Her mother leads her enters the house.

Today is our 3rd monthsarry. It's a gray Sunday. But, I hope my day will not as gray as the sky. I come to Jeceline's house in early morning. I bring her a bouquet of white rose. I'm so confident she would like it. I ring the bell again and again. No one answer; ain't as usual. She doesn't tell me that she will be not at home today. So, I think maybe she has an urgent situation. When I come out from

Jeceline's house, the neighbor that I ever ask about Jeceline calls me.

“Hey you,.. I always see you come to this house. It's been around 3 months right? What are you doing inside this house? Are you the new owner of this house?”

“Hi,.. emmm no, I came here to meet Jeceline. The daughter of the owner of this house.”

“What the.....are you kidding me? As I know the owner of this house has died three months ago. Oh, yeah... today is the day when they had a car accident near the Saint Pedro University.”

+ + +

3 months ago:

3 March 2013

There was a car accident right on the street in front of Saint Pedro University. The victim was a girl and her mother. I know that because I was there when the accident happened. I saw that girl but just a second, so could not remember her clearly.

I just realize what has been happening to me. I ever experienced this kind of things when I was a child. My mother said to me “It was a shadow.”

Youniverse

(When the Universe centered all around You)

Nabila Wahyuningtyas

A straight, long, black haired little girl was finally finding her universe. It was a rainy day in December where Youra was taken to a *Salon* for the very first time. She was being told that she was very pretty and that had made her confidence and so excited. Her previous days were so blunt and dark. Her family eventually could see a sweet smile on that pale yet pretty face. When she went home that day, she could not sleep because lingering question kept her up, “Two am, why is life such a pleasure when you feel beautiful?” Every morning she woke up feeling so good and one morning she was called by her mommy from downstairs. Slowly but surely, she went down the stairs with golden of the neighbors while holding the stairs handle. Her mommy was holding an envelope in shiny gold color and told Youra that she was invited to a big New Year

Eve party in the town. Actually, it was Youra's mommy who was invited by her socialite friend to attend the party but she wanted to make Youra even happier so she told that Youra was invited because people wanted to see her flawlessness. Youra's little arms hugged her mommy's hourglass body enthusiastically. She then asked her mommy and also daddy to buy her a new dress for the party with her sweet innocent little rounded face. She asked for the dress in the morning and she got the dress in the evening. Her mommy bought a golden dress, beaded with little pearls on the top part. Youra felt the texture of the dress and imagined herself wearing it followed by thousands of complements.

It was 8 pm on last December day, people's eyes were stunned at a girl, about 11 years old who was wearing a very expensive looking golden dress dropped off by a white Alphard. Yes, it was Youra, her mommy noticed that people were amazed by how beautiful her daughter looked that night. She then told Youra that everybody wanted to see her because of her beauty. Youra heard massive complements; thus, she got more arrogant. Her mommy did not realize the arrogance, she just realized that her spoiled daughter was extra happy. Day by day passed so quickly and Youra changed a lot and even worse. She did not want to socialize with people, rejected to meet anyone because she did not want to be close with others whom she thought were ugly, no better than her. She was afraid that she would become ugly like them. She felt like a celebrity, the way she communicated with her parents also changed, she became less polite and always wanted to hear compliments. Her parents had tried to tell her not to become arrogant. There was one time when they took her to her favorite ice cream shop and they were trying to have a deep and meaningful conversation with the strawberry smoothies ice cream with rainbow sprinkles. Her parents came to conclusion that Youra

really needed to be given a lesson. Heading home from the ice cream shop, Youra could not sleep even though it was late already and she quietly dragged her feet to her parents' room and opened the door that was unlocked. Her parents were talking and mentioning her name, not that she cared.

In one early afternoon in January, Ruby, Youra's classmate in Primary School visited her at home with her mom. Youra's and Ruby's mom were best friends since they met in a makeup workshop that was held in Tentrem Hotel, which is the biggest five stars hotel in Yogyakarta. The location of Youra's house was close to that glamorous hotel and accidentally Ruby's house also. Ruby was excited to see Youra, Youra was called by her mommy, but she did not want to come downstairs. Her mommy told Ruby to just go upstairs to meet Youra in her pinky room with a glitter decorated door. Ruby agreed with Youra's mommy and there she was, just one step away from that glitter decorated closed door. She knocked the door three times and from inside the room, Youra shouted, "Go away you ugly! Only beauties who are allowed to see me but I don't believe there is even one!" Ruby was offended and running downstairs with tears falling from her hazel eyes. Finding out what just had happened, Youra's mommy got mad and she called her husband.

Youra was in a dark room, complimented by little echoes of her parents' voices and other familiar female voice but she had forgotten. She was used to dark rooms but the atmosphere was really unusual and her heart beats faster than ever. Her mommy asked her how she was feeling, then she answered "A bit weird, but I am still happy because the universe is centered all around me, who doesn't wanna see me..." That last sentence had disturbed anyone who heard it, especially her parents because she said it

every day. The familiar female voiced was recognized by Youra in the next five minutes and what Youra heard was “Youra, now try to open your eyes.” Youra said “What are you talking about? I already open my eyes, but as usual the world is still dark, just as dark as 1 year ago.” Then a soft hand that wasn’t her mommy’s stroked her hair and said “Well darling, don’t you know that you are blind? Your parents have been telling you that the world just gets darker right? The fact is you are blind and you will still be over confident while you cannot really those who praise you are actually beautiful also? And they see that you are blind but they say nothing”. Youra then realized that she was in the *salon* she was taken before and she said nothing at all, walls of insincerity shifting eyes and vacancy vanished when that voice was not heard no more.

A Flower on The Dove

Febby Clarissa Alvitasari Hanni

Aphrodite. She was my Aphrodite. She will always be my Aphrodite, or maybe you could decide cause I would still be worshipping her at dawn when I am awake just to cry myself to sleep or even now, when I lay myself to death.

Arch Tompson. The name looked well on me, as it should be. The family who adopted me was the owner of Europe's biggest biotech firm. I had the coolest sister ever, and she was also adopted. What a generous wealthy family who easily adopt kids just like people adopt stray dogs. I could buy the whole Lismore if I wanted to. I should probably did. My life was as perfect as a spoiled prince you see in movies. Just like when I finally met her.

It was Summer in a paradise right under the hell. The heat got me half alive but the view of Anse Source d'Argent charged my soul. My mind always flew to the time where I sat on an expensive bouncy coach, tried to heal my grilled skin in my hotel's room. Everything was fine until I heard the crack sound, someone opened my back door and casually walked in. My anger arose and

stopped to be existing by the time I saw this creature, an olive-skinned Latina girl with shocked light brown eyes half covered by her windswept dark blonde hair. She wore a beach dress, a baby blue beach dress with small stain on her chest. I guessed it was coffee. Her fingers were craving for mine, I could totally see that. Her waist was curved, it would fit on the palm of my hand perfectly. Her height got her face fit on my shoulder when someday she would hug me to find comfort. She was meant to be mine to enjoy, she would be the dead of my desire.

“I’m sorry, Sir. I must be mistaken your room for mine. I’m really sorry,” said her with accent that I was familiar with.

“Oh that’s fine. Are you next door?” I hoped she did not notice how my eyes were hoping her to say yes, how my brain planned moves to keep her body scent close to me.

“Yea, our room look alike from the outside. Oh, Dreena. Nice to meet you, I’m so sorry once again.” Her cheeks were blushing, they looked so soft, my hands were so ready to caress them, to feel them on my fingertips.

“Hey, I get free helicopter ride and a fancy dinner at Marville, they serve the best coffee. I don’t mean to be creepy, just want to make friends. I’m travelling alone.” That was not free, I made up, it cost like 3 months straight luxurious apartment rent in Birmingham.

“Wow, that would be great. I’d love to. So, I guess we’ll be talking again soon, new friend?” she said with the warmest smile in the end of her sentence. I was not so amazed since I would make sure that’s the only smile I would be seeing in the morning when I woke up for the rest of my life.

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Money talked, or even sang. It was not in the sense that she was materialistic, it was more like that I was compatible to make all of the 99 ways to own her easier. It took me 9 months convincing her to move here, 9 months compelling my sanity against the delusion of her. From that moment on, I cherished every second.

I spent to satisfy her cuddlesome appetite when the mood decided to take a peep. It would be the best ending of my story, I'd be living happily ever after and exercising our affection till we can barely walk. Surely, I'd be the biggest supporter of this idea, but it didn't go that way.

I was planning to introduce Dreena, and since then all I do was just staring at the empty ceiling while listening to my paranoid thoughts. Well, I portrayed her as a mesmerizing creature, why should I be scared? Here was the thing, my mom hated Latinas, no matter how good their personalities are. My dad was caught cheating with our Latina housemaid, that was the rumour heard inside the mansion, even some told the housemaid might had been killed. Introducing Dreena was a suicide mission.

The day came. Dreena looked so legit in a reflective silver dress, she was the walking diamond.

“Mom, meet my girl,”

Four words could turn my mom's attitude and manner. Four words made her going insane by crying and shouting uncontrollably.

“Let me help you, but you gotta do the same if someday I date a Latina,” said Cleo, my beloved sister, as a comforting hand landed on my shoulder.

We spent days approaching mom and dad, convincing them in every way that we could think of. None worked. I knew they loved me that much, so I threaten them . I’d leave to stay with her. It was risky but I really knew them. They allowed Dreena to stay in the house, what a dream. By the time she walked in, my sister ran to her and hugged her, that melted my heart.

Day by day, Dreena could impress my mom with her cookings and her skill at arranging flowers. The top two activities done by my mom ever since she was alive, I guess. Maybe Cleo told her, or even taught her since Dreena slept in Cleo’s room. Girls talks.

Everything was fine, and again, the possibility to end my story happily was there, so close for me to reach. As you could guess, my world turned upside down. My family’s company was corrupted and it made my dad really sick. Couldn’t stand the fall of his achievement, he left us, not even in peace. My mom was so heartbroken, all she did was crying all day and night. My sister and I had gotten the access to the company long time ago, we tried to fix the mess but it was hard.

I was sitting alone in the couch, waiting for my girls to come home from the market. My eyes flew to the box contained me and Dreena’s memories. It would help me to reduce the tension, so I opened it and my smile directed to one of the poems she wrote. I actually found this in her bag, maybe she was shy to give it directly since the poem was so passionate and sexual. I read words by words, being stressed out got me paying attention to

details. Something was not right about the poem. Something I did not see before. My lungs filled with tensions.

When I drown my heart over your beating ego

Lay on your dove tattoo with our flower in it

This two lines, got my life over. Everything crumbled down. That was not for me. Mine was a dove with a crown. The one with a rose belongs to my sister's. I got myself together, I tried to find evidence in my sister's room. It was empty. My mind was empty too till I brace myself to open a folded paper lay on the bed.

"City of Angels Orphanage.

There, our home, you can get to know me and Cleo better.

I hate we have to meet this way, I do really dream of casual meeting at a coffee house. I never mean to do anything that might hurt you, this is for us, for our mom. I'm sorry it has to sacrifice your dad, it was his fault at the very first place to fall in love and seduce my mom. Our mom.

Everything is fixed, and yours now, as my gratitude for taking care of your sister, my significant other, so well.

See you when I see you, little brother.

Dreena"

A Lie

Gabriella Srie N.S.S

06:55 AM

She walked in hurry, almost like running. A cold breeze brushed out her skin as she tried to keep the heat in her body by covering her hands with gloves and added scarf to her bare neck. That day was colder than other days and that she was missing her bus to school made her walk hurriedly to school. She checked her watch for the second time, 06:55. She screamed in her head and tried to run so she wouldn't be late for school.

The time was 06:59 AM, when Kirana stepped her feet right in front of her class. She was panting hard after racing with time. She calmed her heartbeat after running from bus station to the school. Her best friend, Tiara, waved to her and pointed to the empty seat beside her which meant Kirana had to sit beside her. Kirana walked to the seat and let a loud sigh after she sat. It was the first day of the second semester in her high school and it was her second year in the school, but somehow she did not feel spirited.

“Missed the bus, huh?” asked Tiara.

“Kind of, Ra. HHHhh.”

“I believed that I called you this morning and you woke up just in time.”

“Well, after you called I slept again and little I knew it was 06:15 and it made me missed my bus,” Kirana answered with grin in her smile innocently.

“You should change your habit, Ran.”

“Okay, I will later,” With a sighed, Kiran answered and then looked outside the window.

After a while, the rain falling from the sky and Kirana watched the droplets go down by the window. She remembered the past time, with the same rain, this day, 4 years ago.

8th of January 2010.

Kirana was in her school, and then she got called from the announcer. She met her teacher and her aunt was there. She went back home with her aunt even though the school time hadn't been over yet. The car was driven to a hospital near her house. Her aunt led her to a room in that hospital. Kirana saw her father standing outside the room and talking to a man with white coat, probably the doctor. Her father saw her with a sad face and try to avoid her face. After a moment, the doctor went away and Kirana walked towards her father.

“What happened?”

“Let's go inside, my dear” answered her father.

Kirana, her father and her aunt went inside the room. Kirana saw her mother was laid there unconsciously with a lot of strange strings attached to her. She was confused by the condition of her mother. She tried to call her mother but she didn't respond to Kirana. Her aunt could not help herself seeing her sister but cried, then went outside. Her father sighed and sat beside Kirana. Kirana tried to look at her mother's condition again. Her mother looked pale with some wounds on her face and bruises in her hand. One of her foot got fractured and the gypsum on it, just like what Kirana saw in the movie. She knew from overhearing the conversation between the doctor and her father that mother got into an accident.

“Kiran, let's pray together for your mom,” her father said.

Kirana and her father prayed together in the room and after that, they went back home. Her aunt stayed at the hospital to keep accompanying her mother. On the way back home, her father didn't say anything to Kirana. At home, everything was a bit quieter than usual. Kirana felt the uncomfortable with the ambience and she could not sleep even if she tried to. She wondered what happened with her mother and got confused. Thinking about it through the night, she fell asleep. The next morning until the next six days, her routine changed because every after school, she would directly went to the hospital. For days, her mother remained unconscious and the condition was getting worse. Kirana also felt that her father got farther from her.

On the 7th day, her mother awoke and Kirana who sat beside her stood up.

“Mama, are you awake? It's me, Kirana. I will call the Papa, okay?”

“Shh, it’s okay. Don’t call anybody,” said her mother weakly.

“What?..But..”Kirana got confused.

“Kirana, my dear. I am very sorry for everything.”

“But mother, why?” Kirana asking confusedly.

Then, her father and her aunt went inside the room. Seeing the mother had awoken, her father directly called the doctor. After that, her mother’s condition became better but Kirana was still full of questions about what her mother said to her and the message written on the paper she was holding now.

After three days, at night when no one was there, Kirana’s mother went out from her treatment room and walked to the rooftop of the hospital. She walked to the corner and then jumped from the edge. The doctor could not save her and that night, Kirana’s mother died. The next day, the house was full of the family and friends who gave some sympathy to Kirana and her father. After the burial, Kirana’s father decided to move to Jakarta.

“Kiran!!! Wake up!!” Tiara yelled at Kirana.

Kiran awoke with confusion.

“Kiran, you were asleep during the class, again. You need to thank me because I covered you from the teacher.” Tiara nagged.

“Sorry, I just feel a little tired a while ago. And thank you!”

“Let’s go! It is time for break. You must be hungry, right?”

“Okay.”

Kirana went home and found her aunt was there.

“Aunty!”

Her aunt turned her face and smiled at Kirana.

“Kirana! It’s been a long time. You grew so beautifully.”

“Thank you, aunt! By the way, let’s go inside. You must want to meet father, right? But he hasn’t come back from his work.”

“Um..it’s okay. I wanted to meet you, actually,” her aunt answered hesitantly.

“Me? Well, please do come in, Aunt.”

They sat in the living room inside the house. Unfinished cement floors with a table made by wood pedestal and glass on top of it in the center of the room. Two couches with wooden framework and black cushion and in front of them a longer couch with brown lining colorful printed cushions on it. The lamp that has a unique design hanging above and a mini white shelf with some books on the side of the room created a warm ambience.

“Nice living room, Kiran.”

“Ah, yes. I decorated the room a bit,” she answered while placing the tea on the table.

“You decorated it by yourself?” Her aunt a bit shocked.
“You are definitely a very talented young girl.”

“Thank you.”

“Me, too. Have interest in home décor. And that is how I get my money from,” her aunt smiled at her.

“So, why do you need to see me, aunt?” Kirana asked.

“No, I just missed you so I came by.”

Kirana got confused. Kirana heard a honking sound from outside which meant her father had arrived from work. She went outside to open the garage door. They went inside and met the aunt. Her father was a bit surprised.

“Ah, Ras, you are here.”

“Yes, Mas. Long time no see.”

Kirana can feel the awkwardness in this situation.

“Well, I think I have to go now,” Kirana’s aunt said. “Thank you so much for the tea, Kirana. See you tomorrow,” Her aunt smile and then turned to Kirana’s father. “Mas, don’t forget about the past.”

Kirana’s aunt, Laras, went from Kirana’s house. Her father saw her departure quietly.

“Let’s have a dinner, Kirana!” Her father said.

After dinner, Kirana gained her courage and asked her father about many things.

“Father, I need to ask you something.”

“What is it, Kirana?”

“How mother died, Father?”

“Why did you ask that question?”

“Because you never explained it to me.”

Her father sighed, “Your mother got into an accident when she wanted to buy some ingredients for dinner,” her father paused for a moment. “I am sorry I never explained to you rightly but it was really hard for me too.”

“Father, why did you lie to me?” Then she showed him a letter from her mother who had passed away.

Dear Kirana,

I am sorry if I disappoint you. I am very sorry that I leave you without saying goodbye. I want you to know that I love you so much and you will always be my only daughter that I love dearly even after I die.

Kirana, I love you very much but I can't handle it anymore. I could not stand the jealousy that always range in my heart and burn my senses. I love your father too much until I hate my own sibling, your Aunt Laras. She is always beautiful and talented. Many people loves her and her charms, including your father. They were together when we were in high school but then they got separated and I came to your father's life. Everything was so beautiful , so we decided to get married. Even at that day, I thought that the gaze from your aunt was because she was happy for my marriage. One day, I got pregnant but I had miscarriage and it was terrible. Your father changed a little bit, but I was still trying to be positive. The second one I got pregnant, I felt so happy. The doctor said to me that I need to be careful so I quit the job and rest at the house. Everything went well, especially that day, you were born, my angel.

My mind thought that everything was fine and we could build our little happy family. But, your father didn't change, he was still cold and getting farther from me. My heart hurt and I felt confused. I lived with your father for years until one day I saw him with your aunt together. Little I know, they were actually in a relationship. I got angry and wanted to have a divorce but then Laras showed me your picture when you were born and a paper of DNA test result showed that you are the daughter of Laras, my sister. I didn't believe her. Laras didn't get married even after I got the second pregnant, so it was impossible for her to have you as her daughter. I did my own investigation to the hospital and the result was the same, you are not my daughter. I didn't know what happened at the day you were born. I asked your father then he said it was true that you were not my child because actually after I had been giving birth to you, I was unconscious for a day. When I woke up, I saw you as my daughter. You are my one and only child, my Kirana. But after that, every day I saw you I was reminded of Laras. I felt depressed day by day. And that day, was the day I finally let myself to that accident. I woke up and I saw you, my little Angel. I could not live anymore, not with the affair and you as her child. Finally, I chose to leave you and this world.

I am sorry, my precious angel. Goodbye.

I'm Sorry

Made Adelia

[Vanilla's POV]

“Dad! Please don't leave me and mom! We need you!” I yelled.

“I'm sorry my baby girl. I promise you that I'll see you once a month,” my Daddy, Marco, replied.

I cried out loud. I did not care if my tears would make my clothes wet or if the neighbors woke up because of my attitude.

“Please take care of her,” Dad said to my Mom, Lily. “I love you baby!” he whispered in my ear and kissed my forehead.

“Dad! No! You don't love me, Dad! Why do you have to leave me and Mom?”

“Baby... I'm leaving because I...”

I wake up because I heard my alarm rang, and that dream always stops right in the middle of my conversation. Right before my Dad says the reason why he has to leave his family. I always wonder what is the reason behind my Dad's leaving the house. Sometimes, I mock myself for being a kid at that time.

"Ah! How stupid I was!" I yell then stand up, walk to the bathroom and get ready to go to the college in 30 minutes later. I walk downstairs to the kitchen where usually I will meet my Mom busy with her frying pans and stuffs.

[Author's POV]

Vanilla is actually a cheerful person, a lovely one, but because of her past, she becomes a very cold person to everyone, even to her best friend, Millo, with the exception of her Mom. She even doesn't believe in the existence of love. She really hates her Dad, not only because Marco leaves their family, but also because her dad never keeps his promise to visit her once a month. Because of that, her heart has already dulled for boys. Don't ask how many boys have tried to get close to Vanilla because not only she has beautiful body and face, but she is also smart. But she ignores them all because once again, she has already blunted her heart.

"Hey, honey! Why are you not eating your breakfast, hm? You don't like it?" her Mom, Lily, asks her carefully.

"Oh! Mom! You startled me. Are you okay?" Vanilla replies.

“It is still in the morning sweetheart, don’t daydream. I’m okay. Anyway, I’m asking you why you are not eating your breakfast.”

“Oh... I’m sorry Mom. Hmm... yeah, I’m full,” Vanilla lies.

“You are not even touching it, baby. How you can be so full?” Lily replies while eating her breakfast without noticing that her daughter is stiffening on her chair.

“Mom! I don’t want to hear that ‘BABY’ word! I warn you, Mom, because it reminds me of that je...” Vanilla tells in a lower tone but everyone knows she says it seriously.

“Alright. I’m so sorry. Do not continue your word, Vanilla! Do not say it out! He is still your Daddy, though.” Lily cuts Vanilla’s word in a serious tone.

“Mom! He even left us here! That *jerk* has...” Vanilla yells but her Mom cuts her.

“Vanilla! Stop it!” Lily cries. “What do you know about your Dad? Huh! I’m asking you what do you know about him?” Lily yells and cries.

Vanilla is stuck in her place hearing her Mom. Vanilla always wonders what actually happened. Why does Lily seem to love Marco very much, but in the past, she did not even restrain Marco?

“Mom...” Vanilla calls her Mom who is still sobbing.

“Go, Vanilla. Go to your college now. You’ll be late. I’m fine and I want to go to my bedroom because I suddenly feel

unwell today.” Lily smiles and stands up, ready to go, but Vanilla calls her.

“Mom... then tell me.” Vanilla replies in a lower tone, afraid that her Mom will get a heart attack. “I’m tired for being a stupid for this whole time, Mom. You said that I know nothing about him. Then tell me.” She starts to sob.

Lily freezes in her place for hearing her daughter words. Is it the time to tell her the truth? She takes a deep breath thinking for any consequences that she will get because she keeps this secret for herself. No one says any single word because both of them are still struggling with their own thoughts. 5 minutes later, Lily turns around and smiles.

The living room turns into a tearful and sobbing situation. Vanilla finds out the most hurting facts ever. She blames herself for being stupid for this whole time. First, she just knew from her Mom story that her Dad left them because he has to protect his family, and second, it shocks her when she knows that her Dad and Mom were never married before. The third fact is that her Dad works as a secret agent which does not allow him to have a family because it will be dangerous for the family.

Actually, Vanilla is disappointed with her Mom because she kept it for the whole time not telling her the truth that now her Dad is dead. However, she will not get mad to her mother and instead she will let it go because she knows that it must hurt her Mom to open the old wound. She hugs her mother to cheer her up. Now, all that she can do is pray and let her Dad go and banish all her hateful feeling towards his father.

“Dad, I’m so sorry for every mock that I pointed out to you. Thank you, Dad. I love you. It turns out that you are not only visiting me once a month but you are visiting me every time even though I cannot see the real you. Now, I will make sure that you will always be in my heart,” Vanilla speaks silently.

The Forgotten Memories

Yudea Ritopalda

It was around in the middle of fall season in Portland, Oregon, when Judith or preferably called by her nickname, “Jude”, finally went back to her daily life. After had been suffocated by the strong smell of disinfectant of hospital for months, it felt so good to be greeted by the pleasant smell of rain washed the earth as soon as she arrived home. Thanks for her family and her close friend efforts, her house looked cleaner than it supposed to be since she left it for months that already felt like ages.

She enthusiastically looked around her neighborhood. The scenery, the houses, even the people still looked the same. It felt as if she only had been gone for a few days instead of months. Then, she exchanged greetings toward the people who she already familiar with as she walked around the neighborhood, like the kind-hearted uncle Smith, her lovely aunt Zoe along with her husband uncle Rivaille, and many more, who each of them, of course, were concerned of her and bombarded her with questions about her condition. Before she walked way too far from her house and from their neighborhood, suddenly her father came after her and took her back home, her mother was waiting in worry at home.

Since Jude went back home, every night she always has the same constant nightmare. She always dreamed about herself which was involved in a big accident along with the appearances of two men that she has never seen before. At first, she decided to ignore it, since it might be the side-effect of her medication or her post-traumatic memories of the accident that she could not remember fully due to the dissociative amnesia. However, after her parents went back to San Francisco a week ago toward their job and their responsibility toward her little sister, Sheena—who all these times was entrusted to the care of her mother's close friend, aunt Kate—, her dream worsens. It became more and more vividly, even felt as if it really happened to her before. It also began to tire her out since she would scream her lungs out every time she woke up that most likely disturbed her neighbors even though they never complaint, yet.

It was the 27th of November when she decided to go out by herself to clear her mind, no matter how cold the season was, since it already reached the peak of autumn season. After had breakfast that aunt Zoe already prepared for her beforehand and made sure that both of her and uncle Rivaille already went to work, she took her bicycle to the road and pedalled it all around toward her favorite spot at the Forest Park. As soon as she arrived at the said spot, she sat down and enjoyed the best scenery that she never be bored with for years. Somehow, she was glad that all after these years, people still did not found out about this place, except for her and her best friend since her childhood days, Yvonne Kim, a cheerful petite French-Korean woman with a pair of stunning brown eyes that matched her brunette locks. Then, also at the same place, was where she met someone who began took a big part in her life, Matthew—she refers to called him by his nickname, Matt—a composed tall young man with a pair of magnificent yet

mysterious blue eyes that complimented his blonde hair and his warm fair skin tone, for the very first time.

It was Christmas Eve and instead to celebrate it with her family in San Francisco, she decided to stay and celebrated it with aunt Zoe. Thanks to Matt, who encouraged her to solve her constant nightmare—that actually offered clues about her lost memories of the accident—her memories slowly came back to her now even though she still has yet figured out who Keith Goossens was, the other victim of the accident—who unfortunately already passed away before she woke up from her coma—and what his relationship with her, other than people that she met, to get more information about him, who always said that he only her classmate. She believed that Keith relationship with her was not only as her classmate since he oddly involved with her at the same accident and also until now, she did what she was doing secretly from anyone who close to her, since when she mentioned about Keith Goossens to them, it was obvious from their reactions and expressions, that they did not want to talk about him. Moreover, she was sure that she not that socially active with her classmates other than Yvonne. So, it would be better for her to stay put in the city to regain the memories fully and figured out all of these mysteries by herself. Thankfully, both of her parents chose to appreciate her decision after listened to her explanation. They decided to asked aunt Zoe and uncle Rivaille to looked after her, even asked Yvonne—who was in Connecticut since she went to continue her study at a college there—to accompanied her on their behalf, which she gladly accepted.

Since Yvonne is her best friend forever, Jude could not help but told her everything about what she had done all this time.

Fortunately, it seemed Yvonne got her point, she even fully supported her and offered to help her. She also curious about this particular Matt that Jude always talked about.

“I already invited Matt to join us to celebrate the Christmas Eve. He said he’ll come, but now the event already finished, yet he still didn’t come at all.”

“Maybe he can’t handle the cold? It’s super cold outside, you know. It also seems that there might be a snowstorm later. It will be the best for him to stay home, you know.”

“I know, Yvonne, but at least he should inform me about it beforehand.”

“Don’t be sad, I’m sure he will talk to you soon. Now, shall we finish that cake which we put in the fridge before? Along with some hot choco?”

“You sure know what to cheer me up in this situation, bestie.”

“Of course, that’s what friends are for.”

Yvonne could not help but started to feel anxious about Jude’s well-being. The longer she stayed with her, the odder her friend behave. Sometimes she caught her talked by herself as if there was someone with her. Her friend couldn’t be suffered with hallucinations, right? It might be just her new quirks, right? To ensure either her assumption was right or not, she decided to indirectly asked her, so she would not offend her in any way.

“Hey, Jude. I have known about Matt for quite a long time now, but I never get the chance to meet him. Since you have his number, can I at least talk to him through the phone?”

“Of course you can, bestie. Here, take it.”

Yvonne took the phone from Jude, she pressed the dial button and put it on her ear. However, instead heard of Matt’s voice, what she heard was the voice of the operator which informed that if the number she wanted to reach was not exist.

“Are you sure this is the right number, Jude? It said the number does not exist.”

“Really? Here, let me check it.”

Slightly reluctant, she handed the phone back. She could not prepare to accept the reality if her assumption was true. She looked at her friend anxiously, slightly hoped that she just accidentally put a wrong number. However, this time, the reality did not take her side. Jude began to talked on the phone, as if there was someone else on the line.

“Okay, I’ll hand it to her. Yvonne, here, Matt wants to talk to you.”

“Ah, a-alright.”

She once again took the phone from her and put it on her ear. She tried her best to hold back her tears as soon as she heard the same response from the operator. This time, her assumption most likely was true. However, to assured her friend, she chose to pretended in front of her as if she was talked to this “Matt”.

“Hello, Matt. This is me, Yvonne.”

◆

Later, that afternoon, Yvonne in her disbelief of what she just witnessed, decided to visit aunt Zoe and talked about her recent discovery about Jude's condition. She could not bear to see her one and only best friend behave like that any longer. If her friend really suffered with such things as hallucinations, it would be better if it got treated as soon as possible before it got worse, no matter what. She just wanted her friend back to what she used to be.

"Aunt Zoe! Aunt Zoe!", Yvonne knocked her door loudly in anxious.

"Wait... Yvonne is that you? What's wrong, sweetie?", aunt Zoe said as soon as she opened the door to let her in and patted her back gently to calm her down.

"A-aunt Zoe, it's about Jude."

She, aunt Zoe and uncle Rivaille gathered together in the living room. With all of her strength to set aside her unsteady feelings, she told them everything and let out all of the buried emotions that began to gnaw her heart.

"To conclude all of your assumptions, Yvonne, I'm sure that Jude most likely suffered with schizophrenia."

"Schizophrenia?"

"It is a serious mental disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves, dear. If we don't get her some treatment soon, I worried that, in the future, she can't tell what's real or what's not."

"It is really that bad?"

“Unfortunately, yes. Now, Yvonne please go back and try to persuade her to go to the hospital. Me and your aunt will contact her parents about this news and the hospital to prepare for her treatment. Then we will come with our car to pick both of you.”

“Alright then, aunt Zoe, uncle Rivaille. See you soon.”

Jude was watching her favorite show on TV while waiting for Yvonne back from aunt Zoe’s house. She wondered why her friend seemed anxious when she said she wanted to visit aunt Zoe for a moment, but she decided to ask her later.

She decided to get along with whatever their plan was and went back to her room to get prepared. Not too long after she finished with her appearance, she heard the familiar sounds of aunt Zoe’s footsteps entering the house. She hurriedly came out from her room to approach them.

“Jude, I’m back.”

“Yvonne! Finally. I almost died out of boredom while waiting for you, you know.”

“Sorry, I don’t mean to make you wait too long for me.”

“Hey, you’re really odd today. What’s wrong?”

“Jude, let’s go to the hospital.”

“To the hospital? Is there something wrong happening?”

“Let’s get you checked up. I worried that some of your injuries didn’t heal accordingly.”

“What? I’m really okay. I don’t feel ill at all.”

“I said just to get some check up, but you acted as if you will get a surgery of something. I just want to make sure if you’re really fine like you say.”

“Alright, alright, if you insisted.”

“Good. Now, hurry, go prepare yourself. Aunt Zoe and uncle Rivaille will pick us up soon.”

“Aunt Zoe and uncle Rivaille are involved in this too?”

“I will explain about it later. Prepare yourself first, don’t make them waiting.”

“Okay, okay. You guys are kind of odd today, you know.”

She decided to got along with whatever their plan was and went back to her room to got prepared. Not too long after she finished with her appearance, she heard the familiar sounds of aunt Zoe footsteps entered the house. She hurriedly came out from her room to approach them.

“Aunt Zoe! Uncle Rivaille!”

“Hello, sweetie.”

“Hey, Jude.”

“Can you tell me what’s wrong that make all of you so worked up to get me to the hospital?”

“It’s a long story, sweetie, but I want to let you know that the hospital might undergo some treatment to you.”

“Is it serious, aunt Zoe?”

“It might be serious, but don’t worry, I’ll be there for you.”

“Okay, I’ll not ask you any further. I trust your decision.”

“Thank you, sweetie. Now, shall we go?”

“Okay, let’s go.”

As soon as they arrived at the hospital, a nurse approached Jude and asked her along with aunt Zoe to follow her to the treatment room. Not too long after, a doctor along with her subordinates came to examine her. However, instead of examining her with medical equipment, what they did was ask her questions about what she felt, what she did, what she thought, and what she remembered about the accident during the last few months, even asked her in details about Matt. After they bombarded her with those questions and re-evaluated everything they got from her answer, they finally came to a conclusion.

“Mrs. Zoe, your assumption about your niece was right. She indeed suffered with schizophrenia,” the doctor said, she could see a hint of pity on her eyes toward her.

“What is schizophrenia, aunt Zoe?”

“Schizophrenia is a serious mental disorder,” aunt Zoe said. “To put it simply, all this time, this “Matt” of yours isn’t real. He never exists. He was just your hallucination, Jude.”

After she heard aunt Zoe’s statement, she began to feel a great headache in her head. The last piece of her lost memory that she

was looking for, suddenly struck her mind. The memory played on her mind vividly as like a video and the answers of the mysteries began to reveal one by one. However, she could not bear the great pressure that struck any longer and the darkness took over. Moreover, her world just turned upside down and she was certain that next time when she woke up, everything would not be the same again.

The Heart of a Friend

Elisabeth Emmanuella I. H.

A happy life used to be a dream that I couldn't achieve. I didn't even believe that such a life existed in this world. All I knew were loneliness and sadness. People said to me that life is beautiful. Do they mean that loneliness and sadness are beautiful? My parents got divorced and left me with my grandma. On my eighteenth birthday, I moved out to my own place. Every day my cold quiet apartment greeted me whenever I got back from school, work, or even in the morning when I woke up. There was no happiness in my life. I was eighteen, a high school student, but I was also a model. I used to think that just because I'm handsome and tall, they are nice to me. What a bunch of fakers. I couldn't trust people in this world since all they do is being fake towards me. When the sun started to rise, it meant a new day but it also meant a new struggle.

“...So wake me up when it’s all over, when I’m wiser and I’m older. All this time I have been finding myself and didn’t know I was lost...”

“Arrgghh...” I turned off my alarm and made my way to the bathroom, picked my toothpaste and started to wonder about things.

“All right, Dean. New day, huh? Let’s just get done with it. These shits will pass anyway,” I said to myself while I rinsed my toothbrush.

Every morning I did the same routine. Woke up, brushed my teeth, made my breakfast, and ate my breakfast while watching the sunrise. I didn’t know if it was just me, but the sunrise and sunset never failed to make me calm. After the sun was completely up, I began to change my pajama to my school uniform, and after done, I headed out to the door and walked to school.

“Deaaaaannn!! Wassup, man? You good today?” Bryan greeted me as usual.

“Well, you can see it yourself. I’m still alive,” I replied coldly.

“That’s good then, let’s go to the class,” Bryan said cheerfully.

Bryan was the only “friend” that always greeted me and tried to be friends with me. I didn’t know if he really wanted to be friends with me or it was because he had no choice since he was my school mate and we worked at the same model agency.

Finally, today’s classes were over and I went straight to my agency since I had to take pictures for this month’s magazine.

“Yo, Dean! There’s a new place on the way to the agency and I want to try it. It just opened yesterday,” Bryan said.

“Eh? Are you going to the agency today? Are you going to shoot too?” I replied dumbfounded. Well, fun fact. I didn’t really care about my model partners since all I had to do is take pictures with them.

“Don’t you say that you forget. I’m your partner for this shoot, dumbass.”

“You are? Cool. All right, then. Let me grab my things and go with you.”

“Mehh... I’ll just go with you now.”

“Whatever floats your boat, dude.”

Every day, Bryan tried his hardest to be friends with me. I once asked him about that and he said he simply wanted to be friends.

After I was done taking pictures, it’s already late and I walked to my apartment by myself. It’s dangerous but I didn’t really care. Bryan had done his shoot before me, so I guessed he had already headed home.

When it’s near to an empty alley, I felt felt like a group of people were following me. I walked faster, hoping that I could escape but I couldn’t. My instinct was right, it’s a group of robbers. They all brought guns. I think my life was over that day. I shouted for help, hoping that the people in the convenient store across this alley could hear me.

Bryan was buying foods for himself in the convenient store when he heard Dean's voice. Without any second thought, he rushed out to look for Dean, and he found him.

"Dean, you okay?!" Bryan asked me.

"Look who's here. You're here to save your friend?" said one of the robbers.

"No shit Sherlock," Bryan answered without fear.

"One more step or I shoot either you or your friend here." One of them started to point his gun at Bryan since Bryan started to walk towards them. Two of the robbers held my body so I couldn't do anything. Bryan kept walking towards us and after a moment, I heard a gunshot. They shot Bryan. After one of them shot Bryan, they ran away. I quickly ran towards Bryan and called 911. I never knew that Bryan really wanted to help me even when his life was in danger. Now I realized that Bryan was sincerely trying to be my friend. Since that accident, I knew that not everyone is fake. There must be someone who is sincere. Every day, I visit Bryan in the hospital until he recovers and our friendship becomes stronger than ever. Now that I'm not alone, I feel that this world is not that bad and I learn a lot about life lessons from Bryan. This world is not bad after all if you have someone beside you.

The Reunion

Yefta Andrew Rudolf Ebalkoy

This is the worst day, all because of a letter I got. This letter is an invitation to the reunion of my high school class. People should be happy to get such invitation, but why do I feel that this letter shouldn't even be here, in my house, after ten years I left that high school? It's not about my classmates who used to bully me or bad memories about the teachers there or anything that perhaps happened in that school, but the problem is I'm not a part of this class.

I'm in the dining room, trying to recall my connection with this class. I have no friends from that high school. I live alone in my house. The nearest neighbor is two blocks away; there's no way that the mailman left me the wrong letter, but something comes to my mind when I stand up and look at my chair; I did attend a class that I forget because something happened at my first day as a high school student.

I just came out from the principal's office with a map of the high school in my hand, and yes, it was a big high school and

somewhat famous. So, my class that day started at 8 a.m. at room 115 which is also the class' name. I was late that day, so I hurried up to find my class but when I opened the map, it only showed room 1 to room 110 and then jumped to room 121 to room 200; I was so confused, but at the same time I needed to hurry myself to the class, so I decided to run to class 110 first. I didn't know it because I was late but the school's hallways were empty that day, so I could run as fast as I could. I knew I could come back to the principal's office and ask for directions, but I had this thought that I could only survive high school if I had the ability to live by myself. What a stupid decision if I think about it now. So, I was at the front of room 110, decided to see the class from the window which had been started. I looked to my left and saw where I came from and then to the right where I could see a hallway that was not in the map. I was thinking that they might need a new map or they had given me the wrong map. There was a board in front of a door in that hallway with numbers on it: 111-120. I had opened a lot of doors to reach room 110, but this particular door was too heavy for a teenager to open. I looked to the left and right; saw that no one could help me, and the door wasn't locked so I kicked the door and broke the handle. I couldn't think rationally that time because when I took a glance at the clock it was already 8.40 a.m. So, I ran through the hallway across that heavy door and reached a room with carvings in front of it that says "Room 115".

I noticed that the door was positioned at the back of the class. I knocked on the door and then opened it slowly. I saw the teacher was busy teaching and the students were listening to the teacher. One thing that was so funny, they were wearing something like old clothes, yellowish and worn-out clothes. When I tried to sit myself on the nearest chair, I saw that this chair was unbelievably dusty and I couldn't just blow it out, others might notice it, so I

went out again, put some water in my handkerchief from the drinking faucet and went back to the class. I cleaned my chair and the built-in hand table on the chair. I sat myself down. I didn't remember anything past that moment when I sat myself on that chair and the next thing that I knew I was on the school's clinic and they said I passed out in front of room 110. I went back home and did a little internet search about that class. Apparently room 111-120 of that school was burned down 3 years ago. It was purposely done by a teacher from room 115. He locked all the classes and burned down the whole building with chemistry class equipments.

Suddenly, my doorbell ring. I go to the front door and see my mailman.

He looks exhausted because of something and then he starts talking "Oh hey... there's a little mix up with the mail... yours was supposed to be this one... that letter on your hand supposed to be your nearest neighbor which is two blocks away and I just burnt my chest by running back here... anyway... thanks for opening the door so quickly, here's your letter."

I give the letter back to him and close the door. That letter almost makes me crazy; I hope this new letter is better. I rip open the yellowish envelope and read the head of the letter: "Reunion Night for Class 115".

The Wedding Day

Odelia Yulita

“Here comes the time, Honey.”

I glanced once again at the mirror. *Wow, that glow in my skin. Hope this stays at least until the reception finishes.* I stood up and turned around. I could see my backbone was accentuated due to this suffocating dress. I had been reducing sugar intake lately. After this, I would go straight away for a cup of caramel latte. Oh my! My head was dizzy. My whole body was shaking.

My dad held my hands, “You look absolutely stunning today!”

Look, today. As soon as this whole thing is done, I am back to a weirdo with brittle hair and flaky skin. I knew my dad just tried to calm me down, boost my self-esteem. Instead, he made it worse.

With my dad beside me, I was walking down the aisle. Everyone was staring, smiling. Didn't know how to response to such

attention, I looked away into the void. After a long walk, I finally reached the altar. My dad sat on the very first pew.

Several minutes had passed. “Where is the groom?” The pastor asked. I could see my dad panicked and wandered around the room with his phone on his left ear. People agitated, began chatting with each other. I could hear a voice saying, *the groom has found someone prettier, sexier.*

My palms were all sweaty. *It’s peculiar since they don’t have pores. Do I have a heart problem?* I could also feel sweat running down on my face. I worried the foundation would fade away and everyone could notice my freckles. My legs were trembling. I fell out. The pastor came with a shocked expression on his face, tried to raise me up. I pushed his hands away. He looked even more shocked than before. *Let me be. My legs hurt. These high heels suck.* Feeling confused, he just sat next to me and fanned me with the mass book.

The pastor stopped fanning as soon as my dad rushed into me, “I tried to call him many times. He didn’t pick up.”

Fuck you, Adam! Do you have any ideas what I’ve gone through just to make this wedding? I didn’t have caramel latte since you proposed to me. I visited gym every day for eight hours straight. I cried in my own vomit every time I ate that horrible salad. I only drank water whenever I crave sweets. I spent my money on seeing dermatologist. I even did that exhausting ten step Korean skincare. You left me for a prettier, sexier woman? Fuck you! Fuck, fuck, fuck! You’re gonna pay for this. Motherfucker!!!

I look at the pews and people who were still gossiping; the pastor who no longer sat next to me, but cleared up some papers and was ready to leave; then my dad who looked anxious, ashamed, and mad the same time.

“Dad, take me to the dressing room and then home. On the way home, please stop by the coffee shop.”

My dad raised both of his eyebrows. I stood up and nudged him. It’s my way of saying *argue me not, just do exactly what I say*.

I'm sleeping
And right in the middle of a good dream
Like all at once I wake up
From something that keeps knocking at my brain
Before I go insane
I hold my pillow to my head
And spring up in my bed

(I Think I Love You, The Partridge Family)

“Morning, Sunshine!” He gave me a quick kiss.

“I told you not to kiss me before I brush my teeth. I have saliva all over my lips.”

He giggled, “Go brush your teeth then. I’ve prepared breakfast. “

Since we lived together, he was all crazy about preparing breakfast, taking me out for dinner. I, honestly, felt overwhelmed. When I was still living with my dad, I could wake up anytime, went straight away heating noodles in the microwave without brushing my teeth or trying to look pretty. I could spend all day in my pajamas. I only dressed up to go out whenever my dad was hooking up with a woman at home.

One night at the bar, I met him. He offered to buy me a drink. We hit it off. *Booze and poor judgment*. Until one day, he proposed the idea of us living together. My response was *yes, that's a fantastic idea*. I got sick of my dad's loud noises screaming out *oh, Jesus! That's the way I like it. Keep going*.

"Thanks for the breakfast. I really love it. I also appreciate your effort on this caramel latte."

"I want this to be a special day, so, yeah, caramel latte, your fave."

"And why is that so?"

He knelt down and held my hands, "Jess, will you marry me?"

I looked him in the eye, laughing. "I knew this day would come."

My dad hugged me. "You're always welcome here. Anyway, what happened?"

"He proposed to me!"

"And you said no.... Why?"

“Even a donkey doesn’t fall into the same hole twice. Then, why should I?”

Virtual Reality

Arendra Pranayaditya

I'm okay with what I have. I'm not a smart person and reluctant to try something new. Maybe it is my mind-set that controls me; not wanting to learn like others because others won't learn as deep or even interested in it. "Why do I have to learn the same passion they seek?" I say to myself. "They won't learn about cars equally anyway."

My father and mother haven't got a clue about my passion for racing, as they are more or less, just your average father and mother who are interested in gardening. Of course, being a racing driver is a huge commitment to make, not to mention the fame and glory only come after noticeable number of winning and memorable overtakes. Otherwise, he will just be another *midfield* racer who is struggling to make his way to the podiums.

Although my family isn't a multi-million dollar mansion owning, business international doing, or influential people knowing type of family, I am fortunate enough to get my own *headgear* to create a more immersed gaming. The *headgear*, combined with the game

became my sanctuary; a place where I can become myself as a true human being. When racing with other people in online mode, I always win. The game is not for some whacky racers with weapons and such; it's a racing simulation where timing for acceleration, brake, and steer determines the skill of the driver. This game, however, doesn't really give any significance to my friends, as they are far more interested in racing games as another genre to have fun, not to race seriously (the aforementioned whacky racers).

There is a rumour though, that the game I'm intensely playing with my *headgear* is supposed to be a platform for the developers to find candidates for their new *From Game to Reality* programme; essentially to monitor and choose those who have been playing their game in a professional, real racing driver-like manners.

Throughout my school year, I don't find anything to be particularly interesting. I'm not really what you call smart, or "cool" as kids say these days. I'm perfectly fine with having fewer friends compared to others as I don't really care about being the "cool guy" and whatnot. Of course being in high school there are laughs and sadness, but truth to be told, I never really feel that the things I've done so far have any relevance with me or my severe interest in racing. My relation with my colleagues is not exactly heart-warming. Our different interests prevent the way we converse; I'm still succumbing to what the society wants.

One evening after school ends, my patience reaches its limits.

"Mate, you're taking the game far too seriously," says my friend. "That game you play over and over doesn't change anything. So, try something different, will you?"

“What else should I learn? You don’t even want to learn what I learn anyway.” I reply coldly to my friend which results in silence. After the rather brief and meaningless conversation is over, I go back to my house to play the game again. I play the game so much that I decide that it is more important than my homework and as the result, my homework starts piling up.

I make new friends in the game where we, as people who love cars, are competitive in racing. We respect each other and apologize for intended or unintended mistakes, as we understand that mistakes do happen in racing. They even praise me for racing with an uncompetitive car, and yet finishing in the top five. I wish I could explain this sensation to my “generic friends” as they couldn’t understand the joy and satisfaction of winning a race.

Interestingly, I get a message after winning the last race with my online friends. It isn’t a message of apology or rage for my mistake at overtaking someone aggressively. It is even an email address that I have never known or befriended with. The message speaks: “Dear racer, we have been monitoring your progress and racing skill throughout the game. This game is specifically design to determine skilful driver which is suitable for our future programme of turning a gamer into a racer, and our observation resulted in choosing you as a candidate for our programme. We will be waiting for your reply. Best regards, *The Game Developers*.”

“Never expected that the rumour turns out to be true, but this will be the perfect chance for me to show them that I am more than just a gamer obsessed with a particular genre,” I say to myself.

I immediately agree on their request and the next two weeks, I decide to drop out from school. I fly to UK on the circuit of *Silverstone* to be trained as real professional racing driver; learning

and altering from the game to real life. There are more than 200 chosen players from all over the world, trying to prove themselves to be capable of racing with the big guns. Days after days of hard training, the number of contestants plummets as only one of us will be chosen to represent the new project as a whole. After three arduous months of excessive training, comes the day where five other racers and I will prove our skill by racing each other.

The prize? Becoming an official driver of one of the team in the next 24 hours of endurance racing in *Nürburgring*. Why *Nürburgring*? It is a track notorious for its long, twisting, and limited tarmac for overtaking. In other words, those who prove themselves in *The Green Hell* as others called it will be brilliant in any other racetracks. I blitz the other drivers through the circuit of *Silverstone* and with no one in sight, I take the chequered flag and become the first ever winner of program.

The next month, I fly to Germany to race with *Simulation Racing*, the team that the game developers are working with for their new program. I will be racing with two other professional racing drivers whose names I don't really remember as I am too focused on the job in hand, achieving 1st place in the GTE class. With greeting and briefing over, I take my seat in the race car they provide: The *Aston Martin V12 Vantage GT3*. I was very nervous since I will be racing with and against professional racing drivers who have been racing throughout their life. I think that a person like me will not stand a chance to race with those who have nurtured their skills since early age; that in the end I become a *midfield* racer and let down the team and the programme. However, it all changes when I take the wheel of the *Aston*. It is surreal, but in a good way; a very strange, yet familiar experience which creates a surge of confidence to push the car to its limits. The race goes on without

any troubles, our team climbs up towards 5th place in class from 10th place with me at the wheel and for the next eight hours of overtakes, driver changes, tyre changes, and refuelling, we are leading the race in our class. After the clock reaches zero hours, we win the 24 hours of *Nürburgring*. This makes me the first ever winner to take first position for their first time in racing and the youngest racer to take the first place for their first time in racing. I am crying and filled with joy, holding the trophy high up in the air for being 1st place. The cheering is mega, champagne fluid is sprayed here and there; celebrating on what would be the new era of racing.

It is a moment that I will never forget.

****Beep****

“Shutting down, thank you for playing, ”says the robotic lady inside my *headgear*.

Or that’s what I think after taking off my *headgear* and turning off the game to finish my homework that have been piling up since last week.

Aren't You Happy That You Were Born?

Nayenggita Falindao Paul

Mind is pretty blank right now. Rue and I have been sitting in her bedroom since yesterday afternoon. She hasn't moved from her window. It is in fact a delightful autumn. Foliage dances with each other in circles. Little boys in warm coloured jumper cycles. Yet Rue, she has been refusing meals all at once. Oh, don't ask me why I didn't persuade her or bring her food or make her some milk with honey or rooibos tea to calm her. Because I can't. *I am her hair.* I'm her mere shoulder length frizzy auburn hair which tangles here and there. I can only try to comfort her by stroking her cheeks when the wind whispered, begging me to dance.

Aren't you happy that you were born? It is intriguing how frequent that question comes up; by an English teacher while talking in front of the classroom about a literary work I didn't remember; by a friend who tried to comfort Rue, right in this room, with sugar

coating, rose coloured spectacles, flowery nonsense; by this one guy Rue used to be close with on their way home at those pavements where they used to sit and drink cans of cola. That was when his fingers would greet me in delight and swayed with me; even by her mother while lighting a cigarette across the dining table right after bowls of bruine bonen soup. And it was only yesterday, we encountered those words again. ‘Aren’t you happy that you were born?’ Bullshit! Sitting on its throne, seen by everyone, cheered by most; a billboard of some cheap bubble-gum pop music gigs. It pisses me off.

“I might like immortality, I guess,” she mumbles under her breath as if I was yelling my thoughts into her ears.

“I might like immortality. If I were to talk to my English teacher about my writings without going to his house and meet his wife. No, not after that one time they invited me to go fishing. When I was to help her with some fire and plates—*help me, what is this?* She touched me here and there then tried to kiss me, and said things that made me feel nauseous. I was 13. The realization of it hits hard 8 years later when I cannot do anything anymore, them? They live in bliss with their five- year-old daughter. Or could I tell him? And see if he would still be happy that he was born. Would he still be happy that his daughter was born from a child molester?

I mean might, if someone would listen. Not some mere reluctant understanding of suffering—*what is wrong with me?* She didn’t seem to understand about the dirty look I get everywhere I go. She has friends here and there. The beautiful, the rich, the popular with smooth skin and molars blink like street lights. The way she is. Life goes, well, easy towards her. I mean she gets everything she wants and needs although her father left to live with his new family. But, at least she knows him and where he is, even they

went out for movies or dinners often, and he supports her. *Aren't you happy that you were born* she asked. Look at me. Be as undesirable, invisible, and unstable as I am. Be an outcast of society; have her father felt clueless of her existence and live with a mother that is a mess; have her brother exploded her dog instead of mine. *Would you be happy that you were born*, I'd ask her.

Might be, for once I was happy that I was born. Walking home every afternoon with a lover—*ha-ha! Disgusting!* Very naïve of me to think that h— Oh, to hell with him. To hell with him and his actual S.O. It still gets in my hair the way his fingers used to, that I was a doormat! A dirty-weekend! As if! He was even eating out of my money!

Also, mum, how dare she said that. If only I could choose, but instead, out of everyone I have you, one mess of a person to mother after me. How could I be happy that I was born? I was born because two explosions of hormones cannot control themselves! No it is not love! Out of their minds, 'we were crazy for each other' crazy 'indeed and idiot! Unable to support a living being, any living being. How clumsy, 'young love,' where is he now, *mother?* Out there with some other women, right? Hand in hand, celebrating their daughter's graduation? Who'd know? Well, they deserve that sweet and fuzzy kind of life that you don't. Since you're a coward, an idiot, you don't even understand what love is. Why was it so hard for you to come up to him and said that you carry his baby? You can't do that, can you? That was three months after your break up and he was already with his other preys. Right, *mother*, preys? Silly woman, if you were not so stupid, there are huge chances you won't be living this miserable kind of life. You could have gotten your degree then a decent job. Could still be hand in hand with the love of your life. Having a full family dinner

with proper meal you said you'd cook if life was not so miserable. You deserve these mess of a life, I do not. Damn right, be more grateful of what we have then we would be happy of the life we have. Easy to say, moreover your lips only move to justify everything you've done. Those ears of yours were never mine. I'm your own flesh and blood, but you don't know me. You don't deserve me," Her jaw clenched.

This doesn't happen often. But when it does her sludge leaks and over flows. It hurts and scares me when she does this. The last time she put me into a bun and cut me, and I was blue. She still pulls harsh on me sometimes; on times she catches her own self being whinny. Now I'll wait. What will happen now?

"Everything that happens will happen anyway, today, in this very hour for sure." She scoots out from her window.

Mind is pretty blank right now yet I could write a long piece about our new place. I don't see why that matters anymore. But I like this place as much as Rue does. It has been a long time since she laughs that way. Our dog too. We don't have bedsheets yet, and Rue still dries me with her t-shirts. Not quite sure where it is, but it already feels like home. Rue falls asleep on the kitchen table, beautiful and unaware but I have a strange dream. The little boys drop their bicycle and cry into their jumpers and people are coming from here and there. I'm red. I am red and slimy. I'm not sure if that's iron or copper I smell. Then there are chalk around us. And the old man from floor 12 whom we often take the lift together with when Rue used to run every Saturday. His hair envies me. Strange, the last thing I remember from the dream is that I am flying. The wind is screaming, it is screaming straight to my ears.

And there are flowers, even I wear flowers. Everyone looks sad, everyone wears black. Oh—

Come, I'll let you in on something big. None of these ever happened. Rue's mother aborts her a week after the recognition. The-supposedly-mother sits in a coffee shop with a cappuccino that has run cold. She is weeping in relief. Isn't that more settling?

Born to Kill

Marcellinus Yoga Maheswara

Yelena was only six when she was abducted and started her training as an assassin in Siberia. It wasn't her real name, but she forgot it the day she killed her first target when she was 17. Her father was a good policeman, her mother was a spy who killed her own husband, which is her father. Her mother was her first target, killed with deadly shots on her head and chest, in front of her new husband, who later also were killed. Slashed at his throat.

166 total of people she killed in 4 years, the same number as her IQ. Got fed up with the smells of blood and death, she moved out from Moscow, to Winchester, London. And apparently immigrating didn't entirely stopped her unusual career.

Yelena had just finished shopping for her dogs when she spotted a pot of black tulips was laid in front of her flat door. She immediately picked the pot and put it on the desk. A small square linen paper was hidden between the leaves. Then she read it. A number and an address. '106 Paddington, 44-0998-889'.

Recognizing the address with locker number, she stood up to get on her destination, Paddington subway station.

She arrived in 10 minutes, as she quickly dashed into the platform where the lockers placed. As she thought, it was unlocked. Inside the locker were a black envelope and a cellphone. She supposed to call the previous numbers written on the card, but she didn't want to do it. Taking back the packages, she got inside her car and took out the things inside the envelope. Some photos of her new target, the target's schedules and an £80.000 cheque. Just then she felt the previous cellphone buzzed. A very familiar number.

"You supposed to call the number, Miss" said a man on the line. Voice rough and displeased.

"I know you will call me. And I don't do call" Yelena answered back.

The man laughed "So, how is live in England? I heard-"

"I don't do friendly chit chat either" she cut.

He snorted in disdain. "Cocky as always. Anyway, I suppose you received the information about my request and the down payment for your service"

"Indeed" She replied.

"Good, the deadline is tomorrow, 4 PM. Clean and dead." He demanded. And the conversation ended.

☪

The information said that the target was a local politician. He supposed to meet his fellow politicians for a tea break and it was the perfect time for the execution. She drove downtown and set a lurking place. A hotel in front of the target's meeting spot.

Yelena set down her case and took out the pieces of rifle sets out of it. One by one she assembled the parts into a sleek heavy rifle. She put the weapon on its stander and took a glance at her wrist watch. The command said that she needed to execute the target at 4 o'clock maximum. It was already 3.40 and her target was still out of her reach. The said politician was having a cup of tea with some men in Vauxhall. He was guarded by a platoon of buffy men in suit, armed with lethal guns. It was going to be a hard kill, she thought.

As she drowned in her own thought, the target started to move. She got ready on her position, aiming for the head or the chest, she thought again. She dotted on a perfect point between the target's eyes. Just when she about to pull her trigger, a loud noise rang from the building in front of her hiding spot. Apparently, some stupid people had set the fire alarm off. She saw the target and his men started to move. The luck must be on her as she noticed the politician's limousine was parked right in front of the building she was hiding in.

Yelena took out a black box with digital timer shown in red. A bomb, a big one. If she couldn't get the target shot down, then she got to blow him off. Or no. She must be the clumsiest assassin alive because right after she decided to set up a bomb, she realized that the remote was not with her. With a loud breath she cursed as took the bomb with her and left the hiding place.

Outside the building was a chaos. People ran around and there were police and firemen tried to evacuate and clear the place. Her target was still being checked by police and medical team. Cautious by the surrounding, she placed the bomb right below an ambulance car as she walked across the road unsuspectingly. Approximately 200 meters from the place she dropped the bomb, she hid herself behind a bush. She peeked from between the branches and took out a gun with silencer and effortlessly shot the box under the ambulance, blew it into the air.

As she finished her gig and made sure that the target was terminated, she left. Reaching out a pack of cigarettes from his jeans, she walked approaching her Ford Impala 1967. She leaned onto the car door, lit up a stick and puffed the smoke, stared on it as it dissolved into a thin air. Autumn night was never felt this chilly in London, and living as a hitwoman was never easy. Luckily contingency plans were always listed inside her head.

Darkness

Luvita Freitas Martins

“He knows that he himself already falls into the darkness.

Rather than looks for a way out, he chooses to be the darkness itself”

“I love you,” Ryan said as he grabbed Jane’s hands. Jane was still a little bit shocked by what he said. She still couldn’t believe that the man who she had met three weeks ago confessed his love to her.

Both of them were introverted and spent most of their time alone, mostly in the library. They met in the public library and started to become closer because of the forgotten-notebook and the novel *Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair’s Youth*. From then on, they spent most of their time together in the library or coffee shop, discussed about their favorite books.

“Love you too.”

----||----

They were sitting inside the coffee shop just like what they usually did on weekends. It had been four months since they became a couple. Everything remained the same, they were still a lovely couple.

“I want to tell you something that you never know. I think it is the right time.” Ryan’s face turned to be really strange, showing the expression that she had never seen before. She gave him sign to continue it.

“Actually, I have an older sister in the same age with Jude. I miss her so much. It has been a long time I haven’t met her. I wonder how beautiful she will be, maybe as beautiful as mom,” he smiled, but it contrasted with his expression that was really sad.

Jane was a little bit shock hearing what he had said for he never talked about his family. He lived alone and Jane had ever seen a picture of him, his mother and a girl older than him whom she guessed was his sister. She had ever asked about the picture but Ryan never answered and he would start to talk about other things. Because of that, Jane thought it was Ryan’s privacy and she didn’t want to ask about that question until Ryan himself talked about it.

“Oh. The girl on the photo that I asked you about?” she asked carefully in order to hide her astonishment.

“Yes. I miss her so much.” He whispered and saw Jane in the eyes with the expression that couldn’t be described.

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Since the serious talk on the coffee shop, Ryan turned to be someone that was different from what Jane knew. Jane tried to understand him; maybe he was not in a good mood. He must have

really loved his sister. There were hundreds of questions about Ryan's family that she wanted to ask to him, but she was afraid that it would make him sadder. She let him to calm himself and there they were, in Ryan's house. Believe it or not, this was just the second time she came to his house.

Jane was sitting on the sofa, waiting for Ryan that she didn't know where he went since they arrived to his house. She looked around. This house seemed so desolated and it made her think how sad and lonely he was.

"Ryan..," she called his name after waiting for 30 minutes.

There was no answer.

"Ryan..," she called again as she walked to the second floor. There was still no answer.

There were three doors in the row and one of them was a little bit opened. She assumed that Ryan might be in that room. She stepped into the room and there was only a really dark room. It was really dark that she couldn't see anything.

"*Bruuk!*" She crushed herself to the chair which she couldn't see. She was searching for the light switch to turn on the light.

"Where is- ahh," *ttkk!* she turned on the light.

She was shocked by what she had seen in front of her. Many pictures of her and what was most shocking was the picture of her brother, Jude, with a knife stabbed on it. She threw herself to the floor because she couldn't even stand on her feet. She didn't know what she should do and hundreds of questions appeared. She was really afraid.

Suddenly, she heard taps of toe coming closer to the room.

“R..ryaan.. Is that you?” She called but there was no answer. Then, she tried hard to calm herself down and stood up slowly. When she was about to go away from the room, there, near the door, stood Ryan with a gasping breath.

“R...ry...ryaa.-“

“STOP THERE!!” he shouted. He glared and his eyes turned red.

“What is this? Huh..? Whaa-“

“SHUT YOUR MOUTH!!” He shouted and suddenly he raised his right hand, holding a knife.

He stepped forward, closer to her.

“No, Ryaaan!!”

Jane was trembling as she stepped back.

“No, pleasee no..”

She was trying to search for a way out.

“I.. I...why.. you... No, Ryaan.. No!!”

Oh, God! She was stuck because of the wall behind her.

“Now my sister will be happy.. or maybe not! But at least, she will not be alone.” he said with a deep and sorrow voice.

“NO.. RYAAA- AAARK!!” He stabbed the knife on her chest. Jane screamed and closed her eyes as the knife was being stabbed on her chest.

“A..AAKH” She closed her eyes tight and screamed in pain. The red blood flowed swiftly. She tried to fight against the pain, but it really hurt. What was hurting the most was that someone that she loved, did something that she had never thought of.

Ryan knelt near her. He watched Jane blankly and his bloody hands were trembling.

3 years ago..

Ryan was sitting on the floor and crying. His sister was found dead because of drug overdose. He hugged his sister’s diary that he found under her bed.

15 June 2014,

I am too tired of everything. People hate me. Mom runs away from us. Dad always beats us. And he, oh.. why does he do that to me? I believe that at least he will always be there for me. At least I can smile and be happy. But, he hates me. He throws me away. Why should he run away when I say I love him? When I love him more than myself. Now, there’s no hope.

He cried hard after reading her sister’s last ‘words’. He found a picture of a boy, tucked on the diary. He squeezed the photo and his eyes showed anger and resentment.

Ryan was still not moving from the place where he knelt. He was still looking at Jane’s body that was covered with the blood. Suddenly, he slowly moved closer to her.

“Hey.. baby..” He called her as he lifted up her body. Her body didn’t show any movement.

“Heey.. I.. I.. I am sorry.. ehmm.. don’t leave me.. ohh..” He felt frightened. His hands were trembling. He were very panicked.

“Sorry bae.. so..” He hugged Jane’s body tightly. His body was already covered with Jane’s blood. He looked at the knife that still stuck on her body and pulled it up.

He looked at the knife and *bruuuk!*

Everything turned dark.

Fascination

Arif Budiman

It's a gloomy Monday. I enter this class full of buzzing greenhorns in diverse forms yet unanimously glaring such superfluously-vivid colors—too much for my eyes which are already laden with centuries-worth of ebbed tears, indecipherable memoirs of my yesteryears. Sigh... Another batch; another year full of meaningless encounters, tedious endeavors, and the piling up of despicable archives consisting of jumbled mountain-like material and assignment papers, akin to a deck of cards shuffled by a novice dealer who has zero interest in pleasing his blackjack players. What a bad analogy; a blackjack table has designated decks, of which the patterns and styles are distinctive yet exclusive to each casino, shuffled by their sophisticated machines and lined up neatly in a card holder.

Anyway, here I am as a lecturer of one of those less prestigious colleges. There's not much to see in this unpopular department, and not many specimens to look forward to. Look at that, ugh, the same dull pair of table and chair. How surprising. I wonder when

the higher-ups will realize that a lecturer's desk is the 'economic determiner' of his work ethic. No wonder my colleagues look more lifeless day by day as if being drained in a constant rate by an invisible force. Not me though. I have my own sources of life force.

Now, how's my preparation? Laptop's set. First meeting—no materials needed yet; there will only be introduction and syllabus explanation. My laptop merely functions to enhance the lecture's prestige from its visual aspect. My pen is tightly perching on my shirt pocket. All in all my brain will suffice for this first lecture. Now, let's see what boorish endeavors may these younglings exhibit for their next quadrennial college life.

"Uh-hum," I cleared my throat in such baritone a manner that it may incite the voracious sexual urges hidden in the id of middle-aged widows—or at least that's how I've always imagined it to be.

To my surprise, the students start buzzing in a much higher decibel of unnatural enthusiasm. Is there anything wrong with me today? My chin... I shaved already. My teeth... Are there any leftover coffee dregs sticking there? My—

"SIR."

The class goes silent. I too am mesmerized for a split second but I quickly recover my consciousness and proceed to analyze the voice. It was one of the utmost vehemence, roaring ferocious lullabies in a matter of microseconds, so much that the whole audience couldn't maintain their noisy disorder. If not for the present setting of which I'm aware, I would've probably thought that a mighty orator, perhaps a past-leader reincarnate, had just spoken. Dear, oh, dear... my unevolved primeval reaction is still

electrifying me; my body hair is probably being perpendicular to the countless bulging skins in which the hair roots are embedded. I scan the whole class—regretfully. The cursed color-palette of Generation Z is trying to render me sightless. Perhaps I should just ask directly.

“Who—

“SIR,” echoes the voice once again, right into the walls of my beating heart.

Now I can see where the voice had come from: a lady sitting in the back row, aligned to the position where I’m standing. Her clothes, a simple long dress with neck ripples, are cosmic-latte colored which mysteriously don’t hurt my eyes at all unlike those of other students. Perhaps this is due to her skin which is of the same color—pale and so delicate, akin to freshly served ice cream, that I have a sudden urge to lick all of her, from the tip of her toes to the peak of her forehead. And now that I focus on her face, I realize how much of a fictional beauty she is. Her face is that commonly portrayed in fairy tales: elf-like, magical, enigmatic, transfixing, and enchanting. Her eyes are of exceptional azureness, hinting a paradoxical depth from its clarity and kidnapping my vision to an otherworldly realm. Her rosy cheeks and pinkish lips are the finishing touches to a living masterpiece. Never once in my life did I meet so fascinating a specimen.

“Yes?” I reply to her calling me.

She doesn’t answer immediately and instead stands up and starts walking toward me. The whole class is silent and so am I. The lady’s movement is truly a cinematic act performed in the slowest of motions as if tiptoeing along a down-tempo groove.

“An angel...” I whisper unconsciously while my insides are being clawed by a sudden surge of emotion—my yearning of her whole being.

And now her movements has come to a halt—right in front of me. The distance between our noses is probably less than 10 centimeters despite our height gap as our gazing each other hasn't been broken, resulting in my looking down to her and her looking up to me. Her sweet-scented breath reminds me of jasmine tea which I used to love in my younger years; and so hot it is that I doubt I can stop myself any longer from slurping it and assaulting the soft cup from which the arousing fragrance flows out.

Yet, before I can act, the lady whispers melodically.

“Devour me.”

And to my astonishment, in a lightspeed manner she assaults my cup, and along with it, my soul. Years seem to have passed as I stood in stupefaction. My mouth becomes a chalice. My blood rages with every pulse. My stomach fluid swirls in rapid turbulence. Then my sight succumbs to darkness.

* * *

It's a gloomy Monday. The bed is painted red, still wet. I sit in silence, savoring the sultry iron-stench. Between the red is a pitiful cosmic-latte, drowning. I close my eyes, concentrating in an effort to preserve that aesthetic moment. I had devoured a fearless angel—a transcendent predation. Post-orgasm, I howled and

slayed. Tremendously voracious was my swallowing her parts,
dismembering her within me, becoming onewith such lady, and
thus her beautiful disintegration.

So fascinating a specimen; so sating a feast.

Inescapable

Gabriela Y. R. Aritonang

Her power is like a boomerang; betraying its master.

It was Monday, 23rd of December. December finally came around the corner, and snow had been falling like crazy. The weather was so cold but everyone was excited for Christmas. Christmas in New York had always been so festive. Twinkling lamps decorated shops in the street. Red and green everywhere. That was one thing Leah loved about New York. She loved when it was time for Christmas, and the fact that she was celebrating it in New York made her even excited about Christmas. The day had just started; people had already filled the streets. Everyone had their own activities, their own destination to go to, and certain people to meet with. It was the same with the people inside W Magazine's building. The staffs were also busy with their own jobs; the difference was this time it was more like busy stuck with their computers. W Magazine's 5th anniversary was close; they wanted to make a special birthday edition for this month's edition. It was a good and tiring thing that the magazine's anniversary was close to Christmas; it was double

the fun and double the trouble. Meeting and presentations filled the schedule; it was hectic, not excluding Leah's schedule. She is one of the editors there and she had one hell of a schedule today; it was full of meetings, editing, and coffee. She wanted to keep herself awake for every sudden order she got from her boss. After a meeting, Leah would grab coffee with one of her friends, Cass, and that's exactly what she did today after the meeting. She went to the cafeteria downstairs with Cass, bought coffee to survive the day. Leah had her non-iced Americano and Cass ordered iced Vanilla Latte.

"What date is it today?" asked Cass during their small talks while ordering.

"December 23rd. Why?"

"Nothing, just asking. I have an invitation to a Christmas Eve party tomorrow in Katra Lounge. Do you want to come along?"

"Um nah, I think I wanted to spend my Christmas Eve at my home instead."

"Oh come on, this is your first Christmas Eve and you want to spend it alone at home? You've got to be joking."

"You know how I feel about parties."

"Yeah but it's your time to mingle, you've been alone for 2 months since Kevin...."

"I know, but I really don't feel like going, Cass."

"Okay then, suit yourself, Lee. Don't blame me if you're cold and alone at your home."

“Nah, I will not. Come on! Let’s go have this drink upstairs before we doze off and get fired!”

Their schedules that day were tight, so they had the coffee taken away.

“AH!”

Leah was drenched in sweat, went from her sleeping position to a 90° sitting position. She looked around. She was still in her room, on her very own bed. She was awake; it was a dream – a nightmare to be exact. Leah was still trying to control her breathing pace, trying to be calm. It was one of her “dreams come true” because the dreams, literally come true. Her dreams would happen in the real life, and it would happen exactly the same with what happened in the dream. The only thing that she would not know about was to whom it would happen to and when it would happen. She would not know the victim of the accident. She had had this ‘ability’ ever since she had an accident when she was a child. It wasn’t a common accident; she encountered something that she was not supposed to see, and then she just went black. The next thing she knew she was at the hospital. Ever since then, she had weird dreams like this. She never told anyone close to her. She only told this to the people she asked help for. She didn’t know how to stop it; she had gone everywhere possible to get help but it was useless. No one had explanations clear enough for her to accept this ability. She was really frustrated, because she felt haunted and pressured to help everyone, or if she chose to brush it off because sometimes she could not handle it. She had saved lives because of this, but if she couldn’t save people’s life, she would feel really guilty.

She thought hard about her dream just now. The dream was so intense. She saw someone getting stabbed at a party. She didn't know who got stabbed, nor when it would happen. Her head was spinning and felt heavy. Ah, it was always like this whenever this happened. She decided to lie on her bed for a while, not wanting to continue to sleep. She checked her clock, 3.34am, 24th of December. She tried to recall her dream, if any specific clue or - the party.

She immediately thought about Cass' Christmas Eve party tonight.

She tried to call Cass but she didn't pick up. Of course, it was almost 4 in the morning.

In the morning, she tried to call Cass but still, she didn't pick up. She went to her apartment but no one was there either. She started feeling anxious. *Where are you Cass*, thought Leah. She had no option but to go to the party too, in case something happened to her. It was her first Christmas Eve in New York and it was already ruined.

She finally came to the party alone. She was only hoping Cass wasn't there because she wouldn't know if the person getting murdered there would be Cass or not, or if it even happened in this party, she had no idea. Half of her was hoping it didn't happen in this party, but half of her was hoping too that it would happen there so that she could save the person and save the Christmas. *Lord, what am I thinking? What am I doing here? What did I just get myself into?* thought Leah to herself.

She arrived at the venue. A lot of people were there, the place was great, too. Not too big. *Great! This made me easier to investigate whoever looked suspicious,* thought Leah.

“Hey, why do you look so nervous? Are you okay?” asked one of the girls there while holding a drink in her hand.

“N-No, I’m fine.”

“Come on, you stuttered! Here, have my drink, have yourself a little fun, I’m going to get myself another drink kayyy,” said the girl. She was half drunk, Leah knew it.

She left her alone to get her drink; she was still nervous as ever. Her heart was beating so fast. She had been looking around and staying focused, but she had not found Cass, nor anyone that looked suspicious enough to stab someone. She, herself wasn’t sure if she could do it alone, but she was still hesitant to tell anyone.

Cass still hadn’t been found, and Leah was half worried and half relieved. She wasn’t sure if she would leave now or continue to find Cass. What if she wasn’t here? What if the murdering wasn’t even here?

Leah decided to stay and looked around for a little bit more. Cass’ phone was also not picking up. Her worry increased. *Cass where are you,* thought Lea. She hadn’t found the murderer either. She started thinking if for the first time her dream was wrong. Just as she thought that, she heard glasses crashing to the floor, a scream

and a guy with a fork coming to her fast, and stabbed her in the stomach.

It was 26th of December. One day after Christmas. The weather was still cold as ever. As cold as Leah's apartment room. She couldn't survive the sudden attack. It turned out that she was the one who got murdered. All this time she dreamed about something that would happen to someone else, never her. Now, it's her that got killed. The police had captured the person who stabbed Leah. He was mentally sick and drunk. The law and rehabilitation would take care of him, and would do justice to Leah. Leah's friends couldn't believe what had happened, especially Cass. Cass' phone was not working when Leah called her, and she was feeling sick so she decided not to go to the party. Now she beat herself up for telling Leah about that party. "Why did you even go Leah, you said you didn't want to go, why did you suddenly go?" said Cass while crying. She would never know why Leah had gone to that party. Leah couldn't escape her own fate, had died because of her own power, and let others live.

Katsuragi

Yosefa Gustin

I was sleeping with Katsugaragi when someone entered the class and disturbed me with the sound of stiletto. I pushed my head up to the air and found a dark green-eyed blonde in a white shirt with two loose buttons. She smiled at me as she was passing by. Who was she? She sat on the lecturer's chair. It should be an empty class during the time, unless she was replacing the poor Mr. Wright. As I was enjoying her face and body, a sassy girl entered the class and sat on the first line. One by one the students came into the class. How could they know about this new lecturer?

The class began with introduction of the new lecturer. She was Ms. Sally, graduated from Princenton. I felt empathetic when she answered my friend's question; she was a widow. She distributed white papers as she told us she would hire a new assistant to help her. Damn! How could I be able to be her assistant? I felt sleepy, I was not able to concentrate. She wrote the question on the white board: "Explain the way you can deal or work with a woman/women". We got confused about why she asked that question instead ask us the way combining numbers and formula. She explained that she didn't mind how brilliant students are in doing maths. She wanted one who was able to work with her

as a woman. During the next meeting, she announced the assistant. She chose Nat, a sassy girl who couldn't get along with the previous math lecturer. I felt both disappointed and glad: disappointed because she didn't choose me, and glad because she didn't choose male students. The class was over, I put my stuff slowly so that I could get out at the same time with her. As she walked out, I followed her steps until I could speak to her. "Ms., can I get your number, please? Just in case I get confused in combining the formula", I asked nervously. "Sure, why not? Here is my number....", she gave me her number.

That night, I couldn't stop thinking of my lecturer: her blonde hair, dark green eyes, fair skin, pinkish cheeks, pink lips. When my imagination reached her breast, I decided to text her. One, five, ten minutes went by. There was no reply. I tried to stop imagining her in my mind. I watched and got my sensuality high because of Katsugaragi's compact breast. My cellphone rang once, I ignored it. Waittt... that was the ring for messages. Did she reply my message? I jumped onto my bed and checked my cellphone. She replied my message. After that night, we intentionally sent messages. Many topics were discussed till the night before I attended her class, I sent sensual messages. Surprisingly, she enjoyed our topics. I had half an hour to prepare myself before seeing my new idol. My friends looked at me as if saying 'you are so weird today'. I didn't care. A casually handsome fragrant man sat on the first line, giving so much attention to what the lecturer said, no, to the lecturer's gestures. The class was over. As usual, I was the last who left the class together with Ms. Sally. "How was your night, Fin?" she asked. "Well spent since I got your number, Ms." She laughed showing her white teeth. "Shall we go out for dinner, Ms.?" I snapped. "Did you just ask me for a date?" I nodded oddly. "You should look for a girl your age, I am a married

woman and I am your lecturer.” I could only watch her from behind as she walked out.

I felt guilty. If only I could take my words, I would fix all of this. I parked my car five blocks from the house based on the data I got from the campus. I saw a blue metallic Honda Civic parked in front of a classic-arcitected house. Got it, that was her house. As I was about to knock the door, my nervous feeling came like a disaster. I wanted to take a leak. I saw a path leading to the back of the house. There may be a space to pee, though it was disgusting .There was a light from the opened window shining on a small yard. When I pulled down my zipper, I heard a woman but not Ms. Sally who was talking, then the voice of Ms. Sally snapped back. The two women called each other ‘bae’. I came along to the opened window, almost dropping a pot of cactus when I saw what the hell was going on here. The sassy girl Nat and Ms. Sally kissed each other. Nat grabbed Ms. Sally’s breast. Ms. Sally groaned when Nat kissed her nipples. I could not stand any longer watching two women making out. I got in my car, barely breathing, still couldn’t believe what I just saw. My daydreaming ended when a police car passed by. It stopped right behind Ms. Sally’s car. The two policemen appeared and visited Ms. Sally’s house. What surprise would come along after this? Were the policemen their boyfriends? The previous scene was a warming for the real one. I didn’t know. What I could see was the four of them getting in the police car. Ms. Sally and Nad had handcuffs on their hands.

Lisbeth

Binsar Maranata

The sun has raised high, in such a bright day, Lisbeth, a very adorable girl with skin as white as snow, walked through the foggy sidewalk in the New York city. She has been walking for three days straight, searching on the way to her home. She felt cold in her new house, she didn't want to be there, but she should. She could not stay in her old house with her lovely parents anymore, she didn't know why. Her parent put her in a small bed with a wooden case, with many flowers around her. They kissed her for the last time before they closed the case. Then, everything became dark. She could not see anything.

It was another day at the hospital. Mommy woke me up, as it's the time for the doctor to analyze my condition. That day was different. I felt my head heavier than usual. I can't even move my head to stare at the doctor when he took down the cables that has been put on my chest for months. I saw my mother cried as the doctor left the room, I didn't know why she cried. In the afternoon, my father came to my room with a wheelchair, he lifted me up and

put me on the wheelchair, he said, “We’re going home now”. I was so happy as I really missed my home, I really missed Kopi, my lovely puppy that mommy gave to me as a birthday present, I really missed to play with my beautiful neighbor, Sarah, she was like a sister to me, we used to play hide and seek in my backyard, we also played dolls and read so many books with many cute pictures in it. I was very excited to go home.

As I arrived at home, grandma has waited for me in front of the door. She hugged me tight as my dad lifted me out of the car. As soon as I got into the house, I found out that there was something different with my living room. Our sofa has turned into wooden chair, our flat TV has changed into an old TV, and I could not see my brother’s gaming device, but my head was too heavy to ask something about it that time. My dad brought me to my bedroom, there’s nothing changed with my bedroom, everything was the same as I left it. My dad laid me down on my bed and said, “You go to rest sweetheart, it’s been a long way from the hospital.” I nodded. I felt asleep soon as my dad killed the light off.

Three days later

It was very cold as I woke up from my torturing sleep. Nightmare has filled every second of my last night’s sleep. I saw my parent on the right side of my bed, and so many relatives that I thought I never saw them before, standing on the corner of my room, well, that was what my mommy told me when I asked who they were. I didn’t know why are they here. I felt very cold, my skin was freezing, my head ached so much, and I felt that something pinned under my chest so hard that I struggled to breath. I saw my mommy cried. She talked to me but I could not speak, I could not lift my lips up, I could not open my mouth. I could still

hear the relatives talking each other, I also heard some of them crying, crying for something I didn't know.

I felt so cold. This time, it was different, this cold, I never felt before. I often felt cold, in the hospital, but this one was different. I struggled to breathe. It was even harder from the first time I got home. I heard they cried even louder, I also felt my mother shook my body. It was dark, even darker than usual. Now, I could not even breathe anymore, then I realized. I'm dead.

She wasn't given any choice. Desperation stole her voice. She just needed to suffer one last time, making herself used to be in her new place. That cancer took everything from me: our joy, time, money, and the most precious one, my treasure, Lisbeth. I could say nothing to pull out my sorrow, the deepest sorrow in my life, which had stolen many tears from me, as much as I had ever spent my entire life as a man, as a father, who just lost her daughter. Despite all of this, I had been given so much more in life, I had got a son, and I had got a wife. I myself had to suffer one last time, to plead for her and to say goodbye.

She was my cute little girl, who was as strong as muscular cliffs on the mountain, standing through everything that came after her. I just could not believe myself on how her little lips could still smiled for me, when that cursed cancer started eating her from inside herself. I read her stories before bed, even though all she could do along those months were just laying on the hospital bed, torturing bed for me, with those cables on her chest, that forced her to stay on the bed, killing the chance for her to be what a girl supposed to be, playing with her friends on the open field. I had

given everything I could, but still god wanted her so bad, that she took her from us so quick.

No matter how much Temazepam, that I take, there's no sleep that can help me bear this loss. Until I realize, I am a proud mother, by seeing her effort to stay alive and her effort to make me smile, make us smile in our deepest sorrow. I am a proud mother.

Partly Tamed, Slightly Damaged

Rischka A. Putri

Gary Underwood was a quiet man. He liked to spend his spare time solving crosswords on newspapers and drinking tea while neighbors chugged a few bottles at the bar. He never liked taking walks or going to the gym; no, none of those. The only thing he fancied was that *lil' ol'* red flannel he wore every-*goddamn*-day. He seemed to enjoy himself, so we didn't really mind. However, it was really unfortunate to see his mediocre lifestyle become neglected when we joined the army. He was a suburban man, *for Pete's sake* – a florist! – the type of man you'd see picking out canned sardines at isle four!

Oh, how I remember the first days of camp like it was yesterday. I could see his eyebrows twitching furiously when he looked at himself in the mirror; all green, topped with a butch cut,

and a pair of dirty *ol'* boots. Then again, Gary Underwood did not say a word and turned away, like the silent *crumpet* that he was. All the days we spent sleepless and tearless, not even once did he help when a five-inch bullet found its way in and through his leg, nor did he howl like a lonesome wolf when two of our mates died in the battlefield. He carried on and took down nearly half of the rebellion. I saw it – with my own eyes – dozens of armed Iraqi men scurried in panic at the sight of a 5-foot middle-aged man who took up *Bingo* as a hobby. Gary *bloody* Underwood.

He was quiet about it, of course. He did not join the joyful cries of his surviving mates, nor did he wholeheartedly receive their compliments and salutes. All he did was wash off the dirt of his face and continued to be on the watch. We were baffled, with jaws dropping in front of our soles and silence dancing around as if it was mocking us. “I don’t know who raised this fellow but I’d like to thank ‘em!” said one of our already-drunken mates. Everyone nodded their heads in sync and did a toast on his name and for those who had fallen. Come to think of it, it was rather a silly moment.

After nearly two years spent together, nobody really knew Gary Underwood. Nobody knew what his favorite drink was, or who he was going to come home to, or how much he longed to kneel on the ground he was proud to call “home.” As I said before, he was a quiet man – even when we left. He was quiet when we packed our things, he was quiet when we got into the aircraft, only seen fiddling with his dog tag for hours, and he was still quiet when we bid our goodbyes and went to our separate ways, though

we lived in the same neighborhood. Since then, I've only seen him going outside to collect his milk and mails, but nothing else. Every time I walked by his house, I would catch him reading different books while sitting in the same worn-out chair through his front window. I thought about knocking on his door and saying hello a few times, but I didn't want to disrupt his mediocrity. God, I should've – I should've the moment it crossed my mind.

One day, I heard his name being faintly mentioned in the whispers of the housewives. "What was that about Gary Underwood?" I asked them. In short, Gary Underwood, army veterinarian and crosswords enthusiast, ran outside his house in a drunken state, yelled at a senior citizen, and kicked a couple trash cans and mailboxes. "*The Gary Underwood?*" I asked, perplexed. "Are you sure?"

The Gary Underwood that I knew never quite understood the function of his vocal chords. He wasn't weird, just – *ordinary*. He wouldn't do such audacious thing! So I waved off the ladies and carried on. It went on like that for a few months. I'd hear more and more rumors about him attacking his neighbor's dog, or that one time where he sat on his porch for the whole day while holding a rifle, bloodshot eyes and all. It all seemed too unrealistic; too made up, as if it was a high school prank to embarrass the living daylight out of Gary Underwood. "Poor soul," said a young man who lives two doors next to me. "The war might've changed him for good. He *ain't* mediocre Gary anymore." Well, I have to agree on that. A few days back, I saw Gary's mother knocking on his front door and calling out for him several times to no avail. She left

after about an hour. “How weird...” I thought to myself. I was pretty sure that he never left his safe haven, but I didn’t want to pry into other folk’s business. I should’ve stuck my nose as far as I could – I should’ve.

A month later, on a Tuesday, at exactly six hundred hours, my wife – and the blasting sound of sirens – woke me up. Something was definitely wrong. I went outside, unprepared for the sunlight ramming into my eyes, and my attention immediately shifted to Gary Underwood’s property. “What in the devil’s name...” I muttered under my breath. Neighbors gathered around his front lawn, barricade tapes surrounded his fences, and what seemed to be paramedics could be seen carrying a body bag out of the house on a stretcher. “*Jesus!* Is that Gary?” I heard from a distant voice among the horrified crowd. Yes, it was indeed Gary Underwood; paler and quieter than the usual. Nobody knew what happened to him. Some said he took his life, others said he died of natural causes. Well, soldiers *do* fall. It didn’t really matter – how he died. Gary *bloody* Underwood is *gone*.

A couple of days later, I woke up earlier than usual. I took a long shower and put on my best and only suit. My wife straightened my tie, hugged my torso, and we were off to church. I greeted a few familiar faces wordlessly and sat at the front. It felt as if I was going to a Sunday sermon, but much more melancholic. *It is, isn’t it?* Here we were, dressed in black with our hands tucked neatly behind our backs. No upbeat preaches and clapping hands. Here we were, grieving over a man who lived and died as a soldier. He might’ve come home to an entirely new war, but he died

forever holding his ground. It's miserably ironic, actually; the atmosphere here was as quiet as Gary Underwood was.

She's The Devil

Gaby Valerie Y

Every single morning, all I could hear in this old little apartment covered with dust was her nag. I lived with mother, only the two of us. I didn't know where the rest of my family was because mother was always mad when I asked about it. I didn't ask because I cared though, I was just curious. The apartment we lived in was just an old, dilapidated building. "I can only pay for this," she said every time I complained about our place.

School was better than our apartment, I thought. I hated studying indeed, but perhaps I was just accustomed to it. But my school had a huge library that instantly became my favorite spot. Not because the building had a nice design or such. The building was old, just another dreary and shabby building standing on the corner of the school yard. Yet the quiet atmosphere was comforting to me. I immensely appreciated my solitude in that room for I never got such divine stillness at home. It was so fortunate for me that I never worried about being alone, and being without friends, since I never got one.

Actually, I had a friend once. Her name was Alana. I was lucky for getting a chance to know her, for she was an alluring apparition. But something in her always reminded me of mother, that old devil. Perhaps that cold blue eyes! Every time I stared at them, I shivered. Or perhaps because they shared the same personality: a perfectionist. It always hurt me when I saw her forced herself to fit her expectation of herself. Still, she was a kind girl after all, and I spent some good times with her. But she was gone. Poor little girl, she was found dead after someone poisoned her with arsenic. I never know someone could hate such a kindhearted girl like Alana so much that he would commit such a low deed. She was lucky though for having a loving and caring brother working in law enforcement who was investigating her case. I remember when he came to my house to ask several things about her. I expressed my confusion, "I never thought that she has a hater. Why the hell did he think of killing her?"

"Or she."

"Oh, and why do you think the murderer is a she?"

"Because the way she was murdered... arsenic! Men would do a more sadistic or direct way to kill. But women, they will avoid a direct contact with their victim. They are afraid of looking into the victim's eyes." He paused. "And I assume this is her first murder though, so it won't take long for us to find her.

"Hmm... I hope so. She must pay for the crime she committed." And that was the last time I saw him, maybe he had been busy with Alana's case.

I always believe that to live a life without a purpose was the easiest way to waste it. Or maybe not. One thing for sure is that my

life has never been mine. The consequence for living with a perfectionist single parent is that I need to fulfill everything she wanted. Everything. She never let me do anything I want. The worst thing about this is that we had different views in almost everything. Yet she wanted me to be like her. No, I didn't want to be like her. Then, she said to me one day.

"Hecate, you need to get all A in all classes you take. I've registered you in additional course every Tuesday and Friday. Also, no more cheers!" she shouted as I got home.

"What? But I love cheers!" I shouted back at her.

"No, you have to quit. Not until you get a good mark in all classes. It's final," she said in a monotone way, yet I know, she would not take her words back. "You never listen to me, do you? I want you to get a better life than me, I am a failure. I don't want you to follow my path."

"But you are leading me to the same path you took, mother," I said as I walked quickly in the direction of where my room was.

She was the devil. It is her to blame that I was trapped in the meaningless routine that drained myself away. Not once I thought of running away, finding a way out there on the border of town where the city lights were replaced by shining stars, the place where I could take a deep breath and loosen myself up a bit. Still, she never let me do anything I wanted. She would have held me and put me back into the cage she had made. I wonder how it felt to be a free bird, flying to the place where it wanted to be. There was a poem that caught my attention, *Caged Bird* by Maya Angelou. The lines, they spoke to me.

The next day, I had a great fight with mother. I put on the old boots I had for years then left. It was the moment when the sun slid from the sky when I was on my way down slowly over the cold breeze, enjoying the admirable scene, as the trace and shade followed each other over the cracked road. I shivered a little when the cold wind hit my bare neck, making me regret not putting a scarf on. Not knowing where I was going or wanting to do next, I ignored the cold breeze as I continued my aimless walk. I finally found a place to rest after countless steps. I arrived at an old amusement park on the side of the town at last. The old dilapidated building was a comfort to me. Maybe I just got used to obsolete things.

I headed to the nearest bench before finally carelessly sitting down. My eyes looked straight to the ground below my old boots, my brain went somewhere just as the wind had blown it away. The nostalgic moments were ready to be played in my brain. Both anger and sadness filled my heart. With a quick move, I wiped the tears that were about to fall from my eyes. I took a pack of cigarette, pulled one and lit it. I sucked on it so hard to the thought that the whole thing would be burned off together with those damned memories.

I laid my body on the bench under the maple tree, closed my eyes, and let the autumn wind touched me. The next time I opened my eyes, the sun was fully gone from the sky. All I can see was only darkness, which did not bother me at all, for my whole life was already full of it. I was aware of nothing but confusion of my own thoughts. As far as I could remember, I dreamed the same dream again, to cut mother's throat with a sharp knife as I could see her fresh blood spurting from the wound. I was assuming that

the dream, if the truth must be told, was a reflection of my desire: to get rid of her.

The cool night air blew me in an unfriendly way, making me shiver more. After considering whether to stay there for a night or to go home, I picked the second choice. I walked slowly as I let my feet take me home. My thoughts frequently dragged me away and away from reality. It did not take long for me to finally reach my apartment. The door was still there, yet it seems so far away for me. After a lot of hesitation, I encouraged myself to open the door and let myself in. The room was dark and quiet, I felt like something was absent. Where did she go? She never left the apartment at night. I turned on the lights as I stepped a few paces forward.

“Mother?” I spoke, more like murmur, for my voice was vague as I heard it. I raised my voice. “Mother?” I shouted, waiting for an answer. One... Two... Three. Still no answer. I took heavy steps to her room. I could feel that the quietness had hit me a nerve. The moment I stepped into mother’s room, I could see her old figure lying weakly on the floor. Startled, I jumped and knelt down beside her. My eyes were wandering from her head to toe only to find an odd bottle on her hand. Arsenic. The second I snatched the bottle from her hand, I heard heavy steps approaching.

“How does it feel to lose someone you love?” asked the man. I recognized him to be Alana’s brother. Alana, my old dear friend.

“Did you kill her?” I asked him as I looked back into mother’s eyes.

“No,” he answered. “I forced her to drink it.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Why? Why? You tell me why! Why did you kill Alana?! What had she done wrong to you?” he shouted as he dragged me by force. “She was a sweet girl. My poor Alana.”

I was about to open my mouth but then closed it again. The word was on the tip of my tongue but I couldn't find it. I could only stare into his eyes, that damned cold blue eyes again! As he stared angrily at me, he released his grip and walked away.

“The police will be here soon,” he said. “Your mother begged me to deliver her last words for you,” he sighed. “She said she was sorry. She was so strict to you, for she was afraid you would become just like your father. She knew your nature, after all, eh?” he released his evil laugh. “Here, in case you miss your father.” He handed me a paper with a writing on it. “You were a lot more like your father, no wonder,” he said as he walked outside. I glanced at the paper he handed, *San Quentin State Prison, California 94964, USA*. I looked back at my mother's tired face as I heard his steps getting far away. I couldn't help but feel my mother's body hit my nerve. As I took father's old hunting knife I found on the basement which was neatly hidden in my boot, I stabbed her stomach, cut it open. I stabbed her here and there as I played my music on my mind. I smirked, releasing my joy I had been holding. This... This made my heart flutter. She was gone at last. She was the devil. Yet I am the devil.

Suicide Club

Chelsea Thessalonika Rumagit

Today will be the very last day of me.

Yes, you heard this right. I want to kill myself.

I have been planning this since a few months ago, since February to be exact. The world is just too sickening for me to hold on any longer. I guess death would be a privilege.

I found this website called suicide club. It's basically a website for depressed people wanting to end their lives. I met a bunch of friends there. But what's so absurd about this website and us is that everyone is encouraging each other, not to get motivated in life or to live on but to end it as soon as we can.

But please don't blame yourself. Don't blame anyone. This is pure my choice to end my life. You can blame me or you can blame the world. Just don't blame yourself.

With her trembling hands Maya puts down the red ink pen she just used. She struggles for a few seconds deciding if she would fold the paper or leave it be. Her eyes occasionally peep on the iPhone beside the letter, impatient for a new notification to pop up. It's 11 a.m. and she is supposed to meet her executor in thirty minutes. She leaves about twelve messages and all unread. Her palms are wet cold along with her forehead. At this point, she's starting to question her decision but with a quick head shake she mutters under her heavy breath 'No, I need to do this.'

It's 11:50 a.m. Maya is standing on an underground subway station. Her eyes are lurking in every direction trying to find a guy in a grey sweatshirt and a blue cap whom she's supposed to meet twenty minutes earlier. The train they're taking is going to leave in ten minutes. Every passing minute, she grows incredibly agitated with this guy. Finally, the guy with those particular clothes walks towards her. His face is utterly pale and he walks like those zombies she often sees in movies. As the fast-approaching sound of train grows louder, Maya's anxiety becomes unbearable. She doesn't know what to do.

"Sorry I'm late I got something to do. Let's go. It's our train."

He proceeds on walking inside the train. Maya is still standing. Her feet wouldn't cooperate to even move a bit. Suddenly a bunch of restless crowds fight their way into the train. Maya finds herself squeezed between a smelly grandma and lanky guy. "Come on!" screams the executor. Maya fasten her steps and pushes through the crowd. She then sits beside the pale faced guy.

"Um..."

"I won't talk to you until we arrive."

“Uh... alright.”

Maya feels like she's about to cry. She is so scared of this guy. He looks like a crack addict with his disgusting smell of body odor. There are a lot of questions she's desperate to ask but she remembers her initial purpose to even come. She's going to die in a few hours anyway. Maybe it'll be better not to question everything. She remembers her cousin, Anna. Anna was diagnosed with breast cancer last year and she died in June this year. Maya witnessed her cousin slowly dying as the cancer swallowed her whole. From her first massive hair loss to her last breath, Maya was there. She doesn't want to end up like Anna, she wants a quick and painless death. But Anna's death is nowhere near the actual reasons why Maya wanted to end her life. That is certainly not it.

They finally arrive at a tiny two-story apartment. The apartment smells really weird even from the outside. The guy leads her into the apartment.

“Sorry if you find me rude or anything. That's just the procedure you know. I'm Steve by the way.”

“I'm Maya.”

As he opens his apartment door, the unpleasant smell grows horrendously. The smell doesn't seem to be chemical but rather reek and rotten, as if someone had died there for years. She suddenly feels sick to her stomach thinking how many people had died in this specific room.

“Um... what is this?”

“What? The smell? Oh it's my cat. She pooped and peed everywhere.”

“This doesn’t smell like cat poop. I have cats at home.”

“It’s cat poop. Okay? Are we doing this or not?”

“Is it the bodies?”

“What? No! Why would I keep the bodies here? I bring it to my friend’s. His family got like a cremation company. We have been doing this for years.”

“But how? I thought cremations are expensive?”

“You are asking too many questions. Are you still doing this or not?”

“Well yeah... but...”

“Wait here. I’ll grab the pills.”

Maya sits on a couch in front of her. Her anxiety is now gone replaced by curiosity. This is not a smell of cat poop. It is disgustingly rotten. She remembers when she asked him about the method of his execution, he told her that he used cyanide pills. It would result a quick and less painful death which is what she always wanted but at the same time she’s skeptical. Especially about what would happen to her body after the execution.

She stands up and travels the apartment. It is very tiny with only two rooms in it; the bedroom and the living room or the kitchen. Steve is currently on the bedroom. She follows the horrendous smell, it all comes from the same direction; the corner of the living room. She moves closer towards the corner of the room. There’s a huge cabinet there with books on top. The smell grows even stronger. She slowly opened one of the cabinets finding a bunch of

rotten trash bags. Her hand slowly reaches to open one when Steve comes out of the bedroom.

“Hey! What are you doing! Here’s the pill come on.”

“Oh I was just... I was looking at your book collections.”

“Oh yeah? Well I’m not dumb, I read.”

“I see... so you like horror books?”

“Cut the bullshit. Here.”

Steve forcefully hands her two pink pills. “Come on now.”

“Alright. Chill. I’m the one who’s killing myself, I can take whatever time I want.”

“Sure you do but I have other clients so hurry.”

Maya finds her hands cold and trembling again. This is it. It is now the end of her 24 years of life, 24 years of miserable and pain. She closes her eyes and reminisces her past. Pictures of events and faces start appearing and deafening loud voices whisper to her ears. Tears start falling down on her cheek. She just couldn’t take it any longer.

“Come on!!”

“Yes!! Shut up!!” Maya finally swallowed the pills.

“So how long does it take for it to work?”

“2 or 3 minutes. Depends. Why don’t you sit down?” Steve helps her sit on his sofa.

Maya then feels her eyes getting really heavy and her visions are blurring. She finds herself yawning so she leans on the couch. Surprisingly, she doesn't feel any pain at all. Steve walks towards the front door, locks it and rushes to his bedroom again.

“What's with the trash bags?”

“What?”

“Those inside your cabinets, what is it?”

“Have you read The Tell-Tale Heart?”

“No, is it a book? I think I saw it on top of your cabinets.”

“Yeah it's a short story actually. So, there was this man. He lived with this old guy and this man hated this old guy. He hated him for his eyes, strange right? So one night, he went to this old guy's room and just straight killed him. He's nuts. You know how he did it? He butchered him, mutilated him and hid the body under their living room.”

The Dark Truth

Ayu Sutriati

It was late winter, on March 2015. That was the coldest winter, when the police found that Nicole died of drug overdose. She was found dead floating in her house's bathtub with a lot of pills floating in the water. Nicole was a typical ideal woman in her age. She was type of girl other people would love to have as a friend, as a lover. All in all she was a perfect ideal of woman in her early 20s. She seemed like she didn't even have any serious issue. Everyone envied at her, they wanted to be like her. But then, all they could think was, why?

“ How can the perfect girl as Nicole did that? I won't believe that!”

“ Where's her family? Her dad?”

No one wanted to believe that the girl they had adored was dead. Dead of drug overdose. Everyone didn't want to believe on the fact that she died of suicide. No one knew the exact reason why she finally decided to end her life, neither did her closest friend, Emma. She and Nicole had become friends since the first day of college,

she thought that she had known all of the dark sides of Nicole, but in fact, she didn't. Indeed, she realized that Nicole had changed for the last 4 months, Nicole barely went out her house, she ate like a bird, and she had trouble getting or staying asleep. She skipped the classes, and she smoked, drank a lot whenever she visited to check Nicole up. She seemed like she had some big burdens to carry. Emma never thought this terrible thing would happen to Nicole. Four days after the suicide, Emma wouldn't leave Nicole's room, for her, like everyone else, blamed herself for Nicole's early death.

The police started the investigation in her house. No one was there, except the corpse of Nicole. Her mom died long time ago, as far as people know, she lived with her dad, but now her dad, Rob, was not there. No one knew where he goes. Her big family lived in Missouri. The room where Nicole stayed wasn't that huge. The room was clean and neat, there were nothing to be suspicious about. Above the bed, there was a window that was always left opened in the night. The police found no signs that Nicole was murdered by someone. Nicole died of drug overdose when she tried to end her life. But the reason wasn't clear enough. But Emma found a piece of paper or Nicole's handwriting under her bed.

"Sorry but I would rather die than wake up tomorrow feeling the way I do right now."

"The wasted years, the wasted youth, the pretty lies, the ugly truth."

"I heard sounds. The demons are screaming at me, begging to end it all."

"She lost her sense of light, she might not make it home tonight."

It was fall, one and half year later after the day when Nicole died of drug overdose. Since then, everything seemed gloomy for her family and even more Emma. She lost the perfect figure of someone that she used to call whenever good or bad things happened to her. The people were still wondering the reason of her suicide. Some said that she might do suicide because of her complicated relationship with his ex in the past, Joss. Some even thought that she died because she had nothing to find in her life anymore, well, because they thought that she already had everything. Since Robb, Nicole's dad had not gone back to his house.

The day same when all things that had been hidden before were being revealed, when her aunt visited Nicole's house, that had been left before since Nicole died, she found something that make her shivering at first. She found pregnancy test pack under the table of Nicole's room. She immediately called the police to start again the investigation of Nicole's death.

“After being tested in the lab, Nicole was positively pregnant, Ma'am. And we found some scratched wrists, bruised thighs. Her vagina was torn and the uterus had been severely hurt. The anus and rectum had also been damaged. What actually happened to her, Ma'am?” the police asked curiously.

“I really have no idea, Sir. I never visited her house since I work in Seattle, but we were always on the phone, she said that she was fine.”

“We suspect that she was raped by someone for a very long time, Mam.”

“Are you serious? That’s unbelievable. Oh dear! I think the police should start investigating the cause of my Niece’s death.”

After the police started the investigation once again, no one could be suspected as the rapist of Nicole. Not even her exes. The weirdest thing was none of Nicole’s things such as personal books and phones that could be used as clues for her death left in her room could be found in her room. As if all the things had been taken away by someone so that his action wouldn’t be caught. There was something fishy there. The next day, Nicole’s dad came back from Boston where he worked. Jane, her aunt, was there, helped him pack the things.

“I have to move to Boston, Jane.”

“Isn’t too early, Rob?”

“I am just too sad to live here again, everything reminded me of my daughter and my wife.” Rob said, with some kind of weird sad expressions.

One night when Rob was taking a bath in his house, Jane was packing some things into the boxes. Then Jane accidentally found another thing that could reveal the reasons of Nicole’s death. When she wanted to see some pictures of her niece in Nicole’s father’s camera, she found something terrible and disgusting; sex tape video of Nicole and her father.

“ Oh what the fuck is this? Rob?! How could you do this disgusting thing to your daughter, you fucking bastard!”

Rob couldn’t say anything since he was caught red-handed. Then the police came to take Rob to the police office after Jane called them. In that video Nicole was crying, her face was so sad and

terrified. It all started with dirty touches and pinches. Rob's filthy face when he got pleasure out of touching and pinching Nicole was so disgusting. He started kissing and fingering in all the wrong places. Nicole started beating her dad, but nothing much she could do since she was blindfolded, she didn't even know if it was recorded. He force-fed her pills and then he'd hurt her again.

"You can't do it to me again, dad. What should I really call you "dad"? Since that night you're no longer a dad to me, you're just another immoral bastard who fuck with your own daughter!" she screamed and cried in naked.

" Well you know what's the consequences if you talk to other people about it right. You know, right?!" He grabbed Nicole's neck angrily while grabbing some wrong parts of Nicole's body.

He kept doing this since Nicole was 18. Since then, her world was a mess, she lost herself in a wonderland of madness. Since then also, Nicole had lost her true self, she thought that she was just a dead girl walking. She had to bear all the pain alone, because it would be such a shame if anyone knew about this. She decided to keep it to herself alone. She cried everynight, waking up in the morning everyday was such a curse for her. Untill she became really sick of the pain,She put out three bottles of sleeping pills and his dad's vodka. She took the sleeping pills with the vodka. 15 minutes later she started to feel drowsy, and she felt no pain again.

The Executioner

Oriza Ayu Septiani

Samuel Peterson, a twenty-three-year-old guy, lost his hope to live his own life after his parents passed away in an accident on 10th of August three years ago. Just after the death of his parents, he didn't go to college anymore nor do some jobs to fulfill his own needs. All that he had done for the last three years was spent his parents' property. He spent the money on vodkas, whiskeys, a courtesan almost every single night until he had nothing left. So then, he needed a job to fulfill his own needs. Poorly, no one and no company was interested in employing him. Except one job, being an examiner.

“The fuck dude. The third coffee shop that I came to today also was not interesting in hiring me as their barista.”

“Then you’ll starve to death.” Billy answered.

“Well, you should help me get a job Bill. Remember? I bought you vodkas every single night and it was also me who paid for your courtesans.”

Billy was busy with his cell phone, didn’t give any response to Samuel. The music *Something Just Like This* by Coldplay was playing out loud in Sam’s room. Just before the next music was played, Billy turned the speaker off.

“Sam, I got information about job opportunities for you. And this time, you’ll be accepted a hundred percent.”

“Okay. What kind of job then?”

“An Executioner.”

“An Executioner? Haha, are you kidding me? What kind of Executioner dude?”

“I’m not going to tell you. You contact this person, go meet him and you’ll know it by yourself.”

It was 2 p.m. in Las Vegas. Sam hadn't slept. He was still awake, looking at a piece of paper in his hand that had an information and a contact of someone on it.

Hello Thomas. This is Samuel Peterson and I'm interested in applying for the Executioner position. Please kindly reply my message if I had a chance to work with you. Thank you.

Eleven hours had passed by. Sam was still sleeping with his hand grasping his handphoned. After he woke up, the first thing he did was checking his handphoned, hoping that Thomas would reply his

message and give him a chance to do the job. When Sam checked his handphone, he had got a message. But when he saw the number of the sender, it wasn't from Thomas. Without furthermore, he opened the message.

Hello Samuel Peterson. You're going to do the job that I offer if you pass the exam. You'll have your test today at 5:30 p.m. Meet me at White Street and please fill the form on examinetocure.com. Dress code: Black Suit. Good luck for your exam.

After a few moments of incredulous silence, he then went to the bathroom and took a shower. prepared himself vigorously, filled the form and finally went to the White Street by himself, driving his own car.

When he arrived at White Street which was empty, he came out of his car and walked toward a man with a black suit.

“So it's already 5:45 and you're 15 minutes late.”

“Well yeah I'm sorry.”

“Next time please, be on time okay. And have you read the rules on the website? Did you come on your own?” asked Thomas while his eyes were checking Sam's car from distance.

“Yes of course I had read the rules and I came here by myself. I don't mind if you want me to open all of my car's doors.”

“No, you don't have to. So, could you please take off your sunglasses?”

Sam took off of his sunglasses, turned his head to the right and left slowly while Thomas was looking at him then looking at Sam's

picture carefully, trying to match Sam and his picture attached on the form.

“So now, you can get into my car because we’ll go to the place with my car. And don’t forget to lock yours.”

Samuel pressed the lock button on his car’s key then he got into Thomas’ car.

Thomas drove his car with high speed because the streets were quite empty.

“Are you nervous?” “Everybody will always get nervous at the first time doing something that they've never done before. So just chill man, just chill. You can do it. Keep calm and just chill.”

Sam breathed heavily and his heart was pounding.

“Okay.”

“This test is very important. It’s kinda decision for us whether we’ll hire you or not. So, keep focus and do your best, okay? Make you’re worth it for our company.”

“Okay.”

Sam felt that there was someone on the back seat and when he turned his face, he saw a woman with a sexy black dress and her lips were covered by tape, her hands and feet were tied up with a rope. They were staring one each other for a moment.

“So, she’ll be your test. She’s a hooker with STDs such as *Chlamydia*, *Genital herpes*, *Trichomoniasis*, HPV, AIDS, and still much more.” “And if you fail on this test, the diseases will spread to many people. So make sure that you do it correctly.”

“Do it correctly?” Sam was confused.

“Yeah you’ve to make sure that she is no longer breathing.”

“What do you mean by no longer breathing?” Sam looked at the Women with pity.

“Make sure that she’s dead.”

They arrived in a neglected mill.

“Alright, we’ve reached the place and you can start the test anytime. Make sure that you’re ready for it.”

“Okay”

Thomas came out of his car and followed by Sam. They went to the car trunk then opened it. There was a black big box on the inside.

“All properties that you're going to need to do this test are in the inside of that box. This is your key. You can open it by yourself and feel free to choose your own weapon.”

Sam handed the key from Thomas then he opened the black box. He chose a Benelli Supernova and filled it with some bullets. After he was ready with his gun, he carried the woman and put her down around ten meters from the car.

“Hey, I’m sorry. I just have to do my job to save my own life and also people’s lives from the STDs in your body,” he said to the woman with a deep sight in her eyes.

Sam stepped away from the woman then he pointed his shotgun at her. 10 minutes had passed by. He hadn't triggered yet and still stared at the crying woman in front of him.

"FUCK! I can't let a woman cry! I can't bear with it."

Thomas was watching from the inside of the car. Sam went back into the car trunk. He took a knife, and a bag which had been filled by him with some things. Then he scurried to get to the woman and cut off the rope that tied her legs and her arms. He opened the tape on her lips and gave her the bag and the gun.

"Here! Take it. There are a cellphone and a wallet with \$70. Now you have to run away! GO NOW!"

"NO! He'll kill you if I run away. I deserve to die."

"Just go now!"

The woman ran away. Thomas was shocked with what Sam had done to the woman and mindlessly, he pointed his gun to the woman but Sam was running toward him with a knife on his hand, ready to stab Thomas's body.

"Hey man! What are you doing! Keep calm man!"

Thomas diverted his gun to Sam's body then suddenly there was an explosion. The bag which was carried by the woman was filled by a bomb by Sam. It exploded thirty seconds after she carried it. The explosion cleaved her body into pieces.

"So, was I worth it? Did I pass the test?" Samuel asked with his slay face

"You're fucking cool dude."

The Red Ribbon

Lautania Theora

“Zoon, come here.” I look up and find my grandfather sitting in front of his chamber.

Hesitating, I turn around and walk back to the main house.

“What is it, grandpa?” I ask him after knocking the door, he doesn’t turn his head or anything, he just slightly tilts his head to hear my voice clearer, his wheelchair is placed beside him,

“Come,” he says, “Sit anywhere you like,”

I want to sit as far as I can, so I sit at the small table beside his bed,

He then becomes silent as if he’s immersed in the scenery in front of him, the tea farm lies ahead of us, green and sweet-scented.

It was cool when I first came here, but I grew tired of it eventually. I want to go back home but that wretched old hag is still around, what was my father thinking anyway? Remarried? Doesn’t he feel any shame? Then, I hear my grandpa mumbles,

“...” I don’t know what to say nor do I want to say anything, I kind of feel apologetic toward him when I realize that he has opened his eyes. The first time I see his eyes was around eight or ten years ago, and I remember, for two weeks straight, having a nightmare about a zombie with white eyes chasing after me endlessly.

I am sitting uncomfortably, waiting for him to send me away when I notice a part of red cloth sticking out from below my grandpa’s pillow, I think that it’s probably a handkerchief, but why does it red? Blood? Is my grandpa secretly have some chronic diseases? Well, blind is not a disease, isn’t it?

At that moment, I believe I somehow care about him, therefore I go out of my way and grab it to find that it is not a handkerchief nor it covered in blood, but a ribbon. The color is already worn off and there are some darker stains on it.

“Grandpa, what is this ribbon?” I ask him reluctantly,

“You are as nosy like the dutch..” he announces bitterly after some time, while maintaining his eyes open, the thing that always creeps me out, he never blinks, and if he ever closes his eyes, it will be long before he opens them again.

But I will take that as a compliment, and I stay silent, waiting for him to answer my question,

“*Zij is heel mooi,*” he says finally,

“The most beautiful student in my class, she was also so smart, always getting an A in my class.” he continues, I can almost see he’s having flashbacks, now I regret my decision, it’s probably better to stay silent and let him dispose me quickly rather than listening to him about him and grandma’s love story,

“Her skin was so fair, I still remember the veins in her hand when she was writing and sometimes her hair would fall and she would tuck them behind her ear.. she was so beautiful,”

Now, this is getting a little overboard, my grandma has died three years ago, and I don't recall them to be a lovebird,

“So, this is grandma's,” I say in attempt to end this awkward conversation

“What are you talking about, do you ever see that woman wear red?” he says with a hint of annoyance,

So, this is not my grandma's, not that I care, but it's either my grandpa having an affair or this is just an old flame,

“It's Fan's favorite ribbon, she would always wear that when she thought something good will happen, Fan was so pure, she even smelled like tea.” I can sense my grandpa's melancholy mood, So her name was Fan and this is her memento, I wonder if my grandpa bought this tea farm field because of her,

“You know, *Zoon*, she was so pure, even her body only had five moles in total.” he continues again, I am astonished,

“Seems like you have seen her naked by yourself, grandpa,” I say awkwardly, he turns his head to me, then he closes his eyes before turning his head to face the window again,

“I did,” he says, I never think my grandpa would be sort of a playboy when he was young,

“So, what happened between you two? How come you end up with grandma?” because he seems to be really in love with her, and to the point seeing her naked, they must be deeply in love,

“I was not her kind, my son,” Ah, it was regrettable, I take a look again at the red ribbon,

“Was she married to someone her kind then?”

“No, she was killed during the May 1998 riot,”

“My Fan was tainted and corrupted, and that ribbon was used to tie her hands, when I got to see her, she was in no state of talking nor crying, she was in no state to be a human again.” My grandpa finishes his story relatively calm, that sullen mood feels phony now,

“1998, how old was she when she died grandpa?” I hear myself voicing my thought,

“Sixteen.” I stare at his almost bald head and wrinkly neck, what he says come to my mind,

“You were her teacher!” like an enlightened person, I come to a conclusion,

“Yes! And I did my job as a teacher, I wanted to protect her but I was late, so I protected her from horrible future.” He spits rather violently, I see his chest pumps up and down

“What do you mean?” I demand an explanation,

“What?”

“Did you kill her?”

“I did not, I protected her from her horrible future! *Voor haar bestwil!*”

Unexpected Days

Clara Monica

05th of June 1999 was the last day of school and it meant summer holiday was coming. All students were so excited to plan a long holiday with their family, friends, or maybe their lovers. But not all the students were lucky enough. Artur was probably one of them. He lived in a huge house, yet had a complicated family. He found that his mother was having an affair with another man and also his father did the same way. It seemed like his heart was broken into pieces seeing that disgusted sight. Even though he was raised by a rich family, he found no bliss inside of it.

He could not stand anymore hearing those quarrels until he decided to flee from home and adventure to find some peace. He wanted to find the greatest waterfall in his hometown, Sintra, Portugal, which was located inside of jungle. Then he asked his friend, Tomé to accompany him. The journey was not going to be easy because the routes were little bit extreme and challenging. It probably took 2 days going there by walking.

The day has just come, they already prepared several tools for camping and ammunitions until eventually they were ready to go. They started to go around five in the morning. They were just only relying on the map and the compass. They agreed for always trust and never leave each other. Five hours has just passed and they still had a long path to go. Then they decided to take some rest in the middle of journey. However, one thing that Artur hated his weakness was when he needed to use inhaler to help him breathed every time his asthma suddenly relapsed.

After they got their energy back, they started to continue again. The jungle was really quite as inhabited until the rain was coming. Then they decided to make a tent because the rain was too hard along with storm. Unfortunately, the next day, when they were starting to walk again, the cloud became gloomy and even worse.

“I think we should move quickly, we cannot postpone our journey to get there again though.”

“Yes absolutely, we need to move no matter how hard the rain is.”

All of sudden, the rain was coming again, even harder than before. But they still moved without paying any attention to the rain until one of the tree trunks fell down and hit the Artur’s leg.

“Ouch! *Filha da puta* my leg! Tom, help me!” Artur screamed in pain.

Tomé immediately helped him and moved the tree trunk away from his leg. Turned out that his leg was severely injured because the tree trunk hit it too hard. However, it did not make him stop to continue the journey even though he had to walk crippled. Out of the blue, a couple, husband and wife came into them after hearing

Artur's shouting. They intended to help him and brought them into their house. Without answering, Tomé helped Artur to walk by following the couple. After they arrived at the couple's house, Artur was asked to lie down on the bed and the wife helped him by cleaning and bandaging the scars, while the husband smeared some traditional herbs to cure the wound.

"You both can stay longer in here if you want until you are ready to continue your journey again."

"Thank you for your help sir, without you maybe we cannot keep on moving again."

Unconsciously, they stayed for more than five days until one day Artur saw some sharp equipment covered with blood, like knives, saws, axes, and many others hanging in the certain corner. At first, he did not think anything but he felt something strange and uncomfortable in that house.

"Tom, I think we should go immediately, we cannot stay any longer here and we need to reach our destination soon. I feel something's wrong here."

"Why? We can stay in here first until you get some enough recovery."

"No no! We need to leave this place as soon as possible."

There was always any ways from the couple to make them stay longer in their house. On one afternoon, Artur saw a hand full of scars and blood lying on the ground. He was really shock seeing it and suddenly a hand was touching his shoulder from back.

“What are you doing here boy? You should not be here. Let’s go eat, my wife already prepared soup for dinner.”

“Oh no...no...nothing sir, yeah I’m already hungry too.”

When Artur and Tomé were eating the soup, they found some nail and hair of human inside of it. From that moment, Tomé started to believe what Artur said before and they both were so frightened. But it seemed that the soup had a poison on it that made them all of sudden.

After five hours falling asleep, they were planning to escape from that dreadful house in the next night. Later on the night has just come. Immediately they packed their bags and ready to go. Their hearts were beating so fast than normally because they were afraid if that couple caught them by sight.

“Where are you going boys in the middle of this night? It is too dangerous going out there.” The man said with scary smiling.

“Tomé Let’s go.... runnnnn!!!!”

Not long after that, the man caught their legs by some whip until they fell on the ground. He dragged harshly and roped them inside in the corner and he started to take some sharp knives.

“The time is come, do you want be mutilated by knife or saw? Ha? Honey, I think tomorrow we can fulfill our stomach with their fresh meat.”

“Yes my love. Now leave me alone, this is my turn, let me mutilate them because I like these fresh young boys. I cannot wait to tear their body apart and eat their meat.”

Artur and Tomé were panic and shaking at the same time. They needed to survive, they needed to take off the rope soon. Luckily, Artur had a small knife in his pocket for cutting the rope. When the woman was approaching them, she started to cut toe by toe of Tomé first.

“Arrrghhh noooooo!”

“Ssst does it hurt my little boy? Oh I’m sorry but I enjoy it”

Then Artur pushed her body with his leg until she fell down to the ground.

After that Artur quickly got the knife on his hand and stabbed it to the woman’s neck from the back.

“Arghhhhh. You... you little beast!”

“Tomé, let’s go run we can before her husband finds out that I kill her.”

Hearing the woman’s screaming, immediately her husband came to that room. Turned out that Artur and Tomé already ran away. But suddenly in the middle of road, Artur’s asthma relapsed again. He could not breathe without inhaler which was left behind in that house. He needed to take back otherwise he could die.

“Tom y...yo...you need to go, I will go back to take my inhaler.”

“No Artur, you cannot breathe clearly now. We already promised to never leave each other. Stay here and I will take it for you now before we go too far.”

“But your toes...”

“Don’t worry I still can run as long as I still have legs.”

Then Tomé ran fast to get the inhaler back. Looking the house seemed quite with just the dead woman lying on the ground, he swiftly took the inhaler and when he turned around the husband directly broke his head. Hours by hours has passed, Artur waited Tomé’s back for too long until he could not breathe anymore and the time exactly showed at five o’clock in the morning.

Watching My Friend

Yudi Pedro Situmeang

It was Tuesday night when Anre and I stood on the edge of apartment balcony. He should have gone home to gather with his family. It was 10 pm at that time when he smoked while staring at the city scenery.

He did nothing for hours but smoke. He did not move an inch, or even talk. It felt weird to have your existence ignored by a friend, even though I was right by his side. But worry not, I was already used to it. I did not want to ask anything related to his behavior at that moment, but I knew that he was having a lot of heavy thoughts. I was pretty sure about it since we had known each other for fourteen years. To be honest, I was too curious that it made me want to ask him, but I knew that he would not satisfy my curiosity.

It was not the first time I had encountered this kind of situation. It had been months since Anre became like this, and I did not really know the right way to deal with him. Since I was

too curious about him and I decided not to ask and stuffs, I took a glance at him, looked into his eyes, and I soon learned that he fell into the pit of sorrow. At first, I was kinda surprised to know that he could feel sad. Nevertheless, I did not understand why he felt that way, and I did not try to figure it out since it would waste my time.

He finally moved to another side of balcony after standing for 2 hours as usual. He was staring at places from a distance, and in a minute, he started to mutter. From his muttering, I could tell that he was saying things about his friend even though I could not hear it clearly. Since I was bored and got nothing to do, I decided to hear him out.

I had been listening to his muttering for minutes. I was expecting that he would tell me another story, but he kept telling me the same thing every time I listened to his muttering. There was nothing special, just a lot of things about his past poured on this balcony on every Tuesday. He told me that those places he stared at are the memento of their friendship. While pointing at specific places, he recounted the events he had been through with this friend whether it was good or bad. He also recounted some events that changed their lives because of the foolishness done by them.

I started to feel sleepy and Anre stopped muttering. He suddenly went to the park by himself and I decided to follow by car. In the park he continued muttering about his past and keep walking until we found an isolated area of crash site across the park. He fell on his knees when we reached this place. I could tell that he had lost someone precious here.

Anre had been kneeling on the crash site for minutes, and I knew that his sadness grew stronger than before by just looking at his eyes. There was nothing to be done and I believed that I should not do a single thing. All I could do was watching him grieving from a bench on the street. I had been watching this kind of scene for months and somehow my head always told me not to do a damn thing when Anre was grieving on the crash site.

I did not realize that I had wasted a lot of time as usual. I started to feel a bit bored so I decided to count the stray cats to kill the boredom, and my phone alarm suddenly went off. It was already 2 am and I decided to go home since I needed to sleep. I waved at Anre and went to find my car.

Every time I walked away from him, I felt so sad because he did not recognize me, his friend from the past. On that crash site, Anre lost his life in the accident, while I got my face crushed and reconstructed. It was not that bad, since I would not feel lonely whenever I watched him doing the same thing every Tuesday, the day when we lost each other.

