

FAMILIAR STRANGERS:

Anthology of Poems and
Short Stories by Indonesian
Migrant Workers



Familiar Strangers

An Anthology of Poems and Short Stories by Indonesian Migrant Workers

Editors:

**Adriana Rahajeng Mintarsih, Yoga Prasetyo,
and Yusep Ardiansyah**

Writers:

**Deni Apriyani, Diana Listy Syukur, Eli Nur Fadilah,
Kustini, Meikhan Sri Bandar, Melur Seruni,
Nur Hidayati, Ratinie Fatmawati, Siti Mujiati, Sugiarti,
SusanRuwadi, Windu Madness, Wiwik Tri Winarsih,
and Yube Hermawan**

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ISBN: 978-602-52201-0-4

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Cover and layout:

Erwin Maulana Sadewo

Published by

Sanggar Budaya Budi Rahayu
Sekretariat Sanggar Budaya Budi Rahayu (Sebelah SD Senden)
RT/RW: 001/005 Desa Senden
Kecamatan Selo Kabupaten Boyolali
Jawa Tengah 57363 Indonesia

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Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands Singapore

First Edition, May 2018

ix + 111 pages: 15x21

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For everyone who left her land in the pursuit of a better life, for herself, and her entire family.

Acknowledgements

The publication of this book would not be possible without the help of a vast number of individuals and organizations. First and foremost, we would like to thank Universitas Indonesia for supporting our activities in a number of ways. Second, we extend our gratitude to Kathryn Chua. Kathryn is a passionate volunteer teacher who has dedicated a lot of her time, energy, ideas, and financial resources to *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands*. Third, we would like to thank Centre for Domestic Employees Singapore for allowing us to conduct our weekly workshops in their office and make use of available facilities. Fourth, we would like to thank Adriana Rahajeng for her immense contribution to The Voice. She splits her time between working and teaching in our online Literary Criticism class. Fifth, we also owe a great deal to Adrian Golian and Jeanita Putri as they have tremendously helped organize our workshops.

We are deeply grateful to the following volunteer teachers who have played their roles in empowering migrant workers through our online English Mentoring program: Ayu Annisa, Ireisha Anindya, Yusep Ardiansyah, Munzilir Rohmah Azhali, Putri Santi, Naeli Fitria, and Andina Amelia, as well as to the following volunteer translators who have been tirelessly helping us do heaps of work: Cheryl Nazik Cosslett, Diana Lim, and Annisa Rakun. Finally, we want to express our appreciation to Jon Gresham and Shivaji Das.

We dedicate this book to everyone who left her land in the pursuit of a better life, for herself, and her entire family.

Warmest regards,

Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands

About

Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands

Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands is a Singaporebased non-profit organization that seeks to promote the rights and welfare of migrant workers through literary writings. The organization was founded in 2016 by two exchange students at National University of Singapore: Yoga Prasetyo, a student of English Study Program at Universitas Indonesia, and Wei Wei Shih, a Law student at University of Queensland.

For many years, migrant workers have not had the tool to let the general public know of their experiences living ocean and ocean away from their much-loved family. In addition, the narratives that swirl around the experiences of migrant workers are predominantly told by third parties; thus, they might not be representative of what migrant workers feel in actuality. As such, *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands*, or *the Voice* for short, endeavors to give a voice to this voiceless, sizeable population that calls Singapore home. *The Voice* provides a learning space where migrant workers can pick up the basic skills of literary writing and utilize them to narrate their personal experiences through their own perspectives. In addition to weekly workshops on prose writing techniques, today *the Voice* offers two branch programs that are run online, namely English Mentoring Program and Literary Criticism Class. These online programs are intended to promote a more inclusive education to migrant workers, for a multitude of them do not enjoy weekly rest days just yet.

The poems and short stories in this book are a product of a year-long workshops that we have put together. Most of the poems and short stories were originally written in English, but some were translated into English by our volunteers. We do hope that the publication of this book can provide a window to understanding the lived experiences of migrant workers.

Yoga Prasetyo

TKI Berdaya Melalui Karya:

An online-based empowerment project in collaboration with *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands* funded by Universitas Indonesia

In spite of the improved legal protection for Indonesian Migrant Worker (TKI) in Singapore through the bilateral agreement between Indonesia and Singapore Government, there is still a negative discourse regarding Indonesian Migrant Worker in both countries. They are not regarded equally in Singapore and their jobs are belittled in Indonesia. Furthermore, media has often focused on the negative news, for instance, the portrayal of Indonesian migrant workers as miserable victims of their violent employers. Noticing this, *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands* provides creative writing workshops for them so that they have the needed skills to narrate their own stories. Since literature has long been used as a form of resistance toward the dominant discourse, we believe that these narratives, in the form of literary work, can counter-attack the dominant discourse in both Singapore and Indonesia and gradually develop a new non-discriminative discourse toward migrant workers.

There is high enthusiasm of Indonesian migrant workers in Singapore to join *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands'* creative writing workshops. However, some of them cannot join these workshops on Sunday as they have not got their right to get a rest day on Sunday. Therefore, we concluded that online classes are needed to compliment the workshops and accommodate the need of more migrant workers. The first online class is Literary Criticism in which elements of prose are discussed. Short stories about migration and diaspora which they can relate to are used as examples. Since English has been a great challenge for a lot of them, we also see the need to hold English Mentoring Program online class to support the workshops and Literary Criticism online class. This anthology is the outcome of a collaboration between *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands* and *TKI Berdaya Melalui Karya* project, which is also a community development project funded by Universitas Indonesia.

Adriana Rahajeng Mintarsih

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**ANTHOLOGY OF POEMS BY
INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS
IN SINGAPORE**



Further Away (*)

by Deni Apriyani

Like the dusty fan staring down the abandoned room...
Do I have to hold the guilt of killing an innocent creature?
Did I cross your mind with my obnoxious callings?
Yet, you will rather indulge with your red bone marrow...
Like an old soul with a bag of misery and sarcastic stares...
Because the moment you stepped my lungs, that meat went grumpy...
I mended you and snatched their guns with the hate bullets they had...
I wonder why I did?

You tasted your own fantasies in the middle of crowd above me...
Because I am those sands, buried by elastic white concrete and red stains...
While you are those, built as a castle by all the meat you had eaten...
I wonder why you are?
You let your dragon breathe ignorance when I threw up five thousand words...
You took my twenty stars when I wanted to see all of them lighten my darkness...
But in the end, your underwear still hung on the same washing line as mine...
That is what you called "love"
The love that perfected the art of persecution?

(*) This poem won the Singapore Migrant Worker Poetry Competition 2017

Television

by Deni Apriyani

On Monday, you hypothesized the answers.
My eyes transformed into Darkseid's,
Smiled by the edge of my apprehensions.
Squeezed and let the flowers be divulged.
My cheeks bloomed,
exploded.

I Think

By Deni Apriyani

Me, you are still alive today.
Why does my hair look like Medusa's?
I need to pee.
I can hold it on anyway.
My face looks so pale.
Should I shave my eye brows?
I think I wanna be a ballet dancer.
Just kidding, can I be a teacher instead?
Why does my left breast look smaller?
Does he really love me?
I have to pee.

Walk Through the Marbles

by Deni Apriyani

Look how delicate you are standing there,
staring at us with doubts,
with your ninety-degree Celsius face.
There's nothing we could bring,
except our smile.
We rushed to get your hand,
trying to be the nicest person.
But then you said this is so wrong,
because we don't deserve a handshake.
But there we stood still,
giving our smiles again,
holding our anxieties again,
smiling with hunger driving us.
Trying not to be kicked out,
with world on our shoulders,
with munitions hanging up on our eyes.
But still you decimated our legs.
Still with no smile for us.
We followed you as a tail,
because we kneel ourselves to you.



Cold Dragon

By Deni Apriyani

If jealousy could exterminate our building,
I would keep myself silent,
until it explodes smoothly inside of me.
Because I applied my devotion,
to the building that we built,
two windows, fifty-eight doors.
This is just about the badly-timed,
to put another window of it,
to ignore the spiders around it,
to keep nine rhinoceros in it,
to say "Look at that beautiful moon"
while we are under the sun.

Pearls

By Deni Apriyani

Where do I go if I am broken?
There,
in the corner of my room, near the kitchen.
The spot, where my phone could lick a little bit better Wi-Fi connection.
The same questions from him comforting my ears,
whenever we talk over the phone.
"How are you, Deni? Have you eaten your pearls?"
"No, but I have eaten some bread" I answered, with a smile tickling around my facial
muscles.
He is always curious about what I did put inside my tummy
"You aren't American, eat rice, or else you will get sick" he mumbled.

"Daddy" I called him,
but actually not.
I am not American.
I call him "Bapak."

I am Wet

By Deni Apriyani

Like that damp laundry, father,
hanging up there with the grey clouds.
I am not too sure,
whether I should go inside,
or stay here being soggy.
I am excessively afraid.
I am afraid of being covered with tears.
The tears from your lord.
not my lord, father.
Because I don't do "lord thingy."
I hope one day, your soldiers will take me,
and put me in the son of hell.
The place where I could fix the dampness in me.

Blue Remote

By Deni Apriyani

I washed the cars, wiped them dry. Yes, super dry.
I was wet, like the wet on the cars turn into my sweat, seriously.
I packed up the bucket, the towels, and the water-hose.
I had a shower, yanked my hair, and said "Aaaah."
I slapped my left thigh,
knowing the cars were wet again,
attacked by rain.
I cried,
naked,
in the corner.

Slippery Buttons

By Deni Apriyani

Honey,
even though I am not a microwave,
but I assure you to keep our love warm.
Like our holes when we had diarrhea,
or like our forehead when we had fever.
I could say like our armpits too,
or perhaps like my urine.
Honey,
if you want to feel warm too,
I will let you stay in my breast pocket.

Hanging on the Ground

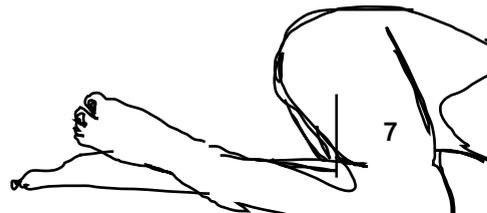
By Deni Apriyani

King,
like those spiny lump-suckers who let our knees kiss,
I transferred my cold,
you transferred your heat.
But, king,
I am one of them now, on the battlefield,
trembling in a huge refrigerator,
starving my eyes for your buttons.
My king,
Please, whisper me not to be a moonstruck!
Because they said I am not in the refrigerator,
but an ephemeral river.

Grey Dot

By Deni Apriyani

Sunday came,
wishing to get everything done.
Like those trains that smiled,
gathering us to free.
Sunday is a gold,
more than gold.



Half of the Page

By Deni Apriyani

Grating my skin for you.
My eyes or reserved tables,
still be,
I have to be.
My bones asked me to put them down,
but my list held me in anger.
My eyes begged me to shut them down,
but my dreams needed to be lighter,
to fold up my wishes neatly,
to shoot what I had thrown in the sky.
When thunder from you polishing my ears,
I could feel the pain deeply.
Sounded like I had to end my life.
"Please don't"
Yes, my dreams stopped me.
I kept shooting it.
I wished you could give me a rainbow,
or a drop of rain could be more than enough.
But did I wish too much?
I apologized.
But again,
silent is my only shield,
even when my fault is not actually mine.

Pa

By Diana Listy Syukur

The ground beneath my feet is still fresh,
decorated by the flowers whose beauty I could not see anymore.
But your laughter of yesterday keeps ringing in my ears,
even when the layers of soil have separated you from me.
Pa, I love you.
Can you hear that?

Domestic Workers are Humans, too

By Eli Nur Fadilah

How do I know the meaning?
if you say nothing.
How do I understand?
without you explaining.
No matter how hard I try my best,
I still won't make you impressed.
I want you to be happy,
so I can kill my worries.
I may be a helper,
but that doesn't mean I don't need instruction.
It is hard to hide my anger,
every time I get bad reaction.
I don't need you to treat me like a queen,
just understand me as a human.
I don't need you to treat me like your twin.
Please, don't treat me like a servant.
I do have my rights,
even though I make mistakes.
I know I get paid,
but don't harm me like I've done nothing.
You ask me to be neat,
but still do I get a bad treat.

FO4

By Eli Nur Fadilah

Pins and needles are in my legs.

My heart beats faster.

I am frustrated.

How can I tell my employer?

FO4.

Two and half hours I spend,

trying hard to repair,

but end up getting tired,

and getting out for some fresh air

FO4.

I can't continue working.

I can't stop thinking.

What if my employer is angry?

What will they do to me?

I am starting to worry.

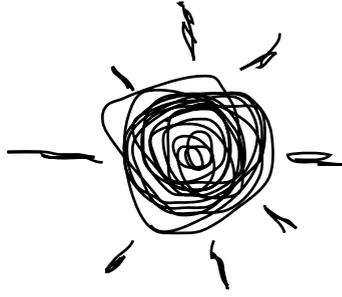
FO4.

Even only a washing machine error,

it's really a horror,

for a helper who never deals,

with this matter before.



Sky of Hopes

By Eli Nur Fadilah

When the sky of hopes the lies on your shoulder,
there will be clouds hanging on your head,
there will be rain showering your cheeks,
there will be wind deafening your ears,
and there will be storm destroying your chest.
But you have to stay calm like an ocean,
strong like corals.
Let their breath be like a fragrance of oxygen,
coming into your lungs,
Make their future your pulse,
and their life your nerve.
After all, that will create rainbow in your eyes.

I Miss You Too

By Eli Nur Fadilah

I knew you missed me.
At the day you refused to tell me your story,
you said that you hated me,
I knew this because you missed me.

When you pushed me away,
'cause I couldn't give you my time,
I was absent on your birthday celebration.
I'm sorry.

I had to leave you at the moment you needed me.
Had to stay far away,
to earn some money.
I'm sorry.

I knew you missed me.
Please, say one or two words to me!
Let me hug you once, after years.
I miss your hug and kiss.
My tiredness melts away in your hug.

Come to me my dear!
Say something to me, my princess!
Don't make your Mama a stranger for you.
Because I am your mother,
I know you miss me.
And,
you know that I miss you too.

I Am A Winner

By Eli Nur Fadilah

At the very first day, they called me a sinner.
I want to prove that I can be a winner.
They talked a lot about my mistakes.
I want to show them how many,
achievements I can make.
Being single is my decision,
forcing me to be strong by circumstances,
almost making me lose my senses.
Being domestic worker is better,
than sitting in the street as a beggar.
I may have darkness in my past,
but it doesn't mean I can't make a light in my future.
The way to the top of the mountain is not easy.
But in God, I believe thing that seems blurred,
is the thing that can raise me.

No More

By Eli Nur Fadilah

If there is no more desire to make a conversation,
you keep quiet and just fill up your ambition.
I tried to figure out why.
I tried not to cry.
And now I found out the reason,
that your energy wasn't enough to keep the communication.
That, people said, can save our relation.
I respect your decision,
even my heart misses your companion.

One Day We will be Together

By Eli Nur Fadilah

That fears start calling my tears.
Unseen but don't disappear.
The worries disturbing my mind,
remembering all that I left behind.

Nothing I can do, but crying for you.
You know, how much I love you.
I want to be in your side so bad,
but reality tears us apart.

Sweet small smile and beautiful eyes.
No one can deny your cuteness.
Little fingers slowly grow bigger.
My girl now has become a teenager.
I miss you dear.

Your name will always be in my prayer.
Be the best for your mother.
One day we'll be together,
forever.

My Shitty Past Doesn't Represent my Future

By Eli Nur Fadilah

My past is manure for my plants of happiness.
I dump all the shit at the hole, digging at my life garden,
burying it with the mud of dreams.
I water it with my sweats and tears.
I protect it with my power and prayers.
I always make sure that it gets enough positive lights.
I believe, one day, my plant of happiness will grow bigger and stronger.
And there will be a day with blooming flowers,
that have fragrance of hopes,
and freshness of a great life.
And I will show the world that,
my shitty past doesn't represent my glorious future.

The Voice of these Invisible Hands

Eli Nur Fadilah



If I could speak
I would say: "I am tired,
of being used."
Dishwashing detergent and bleaching
make me sick, sometimes bleed.
If I was not here,
would they survive?
I try my best all the time,
yet I still get yelled at,
Countless injuries from a knife, hot pot or oven;
I am still silent
because I know if I slapped someone
I might end up affecting someone's life.
Sometimes I feel like quitting,
but it will cost someone.
Who work to feed her baby?
I wish the body will stay strong
so I will keep going on:
working with strangers
and hiding my anger—
they see me but they don't recognize me.
I hope one day they will understand the hands that organize their lives—
I wish they could listen
to the voices of these invisible hands.

Humming Longing

By Kustini

Six years ago,
I decided, till I stand where I'm today.
While I was reluctant to leave.
But that was the decision,
that I had to take for now.

Six years ago,
A warm hug and waving hands,
showed the story of togetherness.
One hope that I've always wanted,
go home with the same peace.

Six years ago,
in teary sobs,
the corner of my room was silent,
and that night was my final decision.
I said this in my heart, "This is my choice."

Six years ago,
My big dream was for you.
Now I'm on my way,
living in a dream I hold.
I will create tears of happiness.

Six years ago,
I had dreamed.
Six years ago,
the corner of my room was a mute witness.
Now it's just nothing.

I miss,
the togetherness that has once existed,
and now is gone.
Selfishness has taken them away.
I really miss that moment.

A Grain of Dust

Meikhan Sri Bandar

Little.
Scattered among.
Crashed.
Hovering in the wind,
stranded between large rocks.
Perched on the leaf,
lying in the drain,
and nobody glances,
even away.

When it lifted,
hovering perch,
on a beautiful flower bud,
It was sheer luck.
Not because of the greatness,
just a coincidence.
Grain dust was aware.
Who is it?
It is,
only a speck of dust.

Does A Meaning

Meikhan Sri Bandar

Time crawled in the middle of perspiration days.
The clock kept walking to precede each hour.
The sun dimmed, tiredly dozed off.
Reluctant wind blew leaves away.

Darkness began docking on the sidelines of the twilight.
Night began to preen spoiled,
waiting for a date with the Moon.
Star-studded accompanied by sparkling.

There was no meaning of a beauty.
There was no sense to create an Art,
without knowing the Sublimity,
without grateful all His Gifts.

Beneath the Flagpole (Sketch)

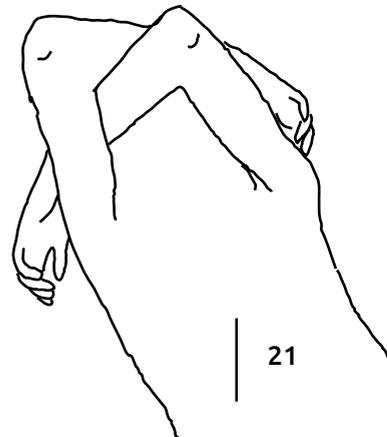
By Melur Seruni

On Independence day,
we draw a sketch,
of a flagpole standing proud,
awaiting for us to wave,
the red and white of my country.

But alas, motherland.
Sincere apologies,
as we are only courageous enough,
to paint the flagpole,
on the canvas of our hearts.

For we are nothing more than,
your unfortunate children,
outcast labour,
in someone else's home.

News on raids.
Our worries and fears,
colouring the sketches of our tears.
Oh masters,
Don't you hear our heartbeats?
As we attempt to sing Indonesia Raya,
louder than your ceremonial speech,
on independence day?



As if we are thieves,
in the midst of celebration.
Is it true, masters?
Are we decolonized, are we independent?
For we are still, and so afraid of intimidation,
each time we want to wave the sketch of a flag so perfectly folded,
for with every fold is a layer of fate,
and a piece of our lives.

(Translated by Cheryl Nazik C.)

Multatuli

By Melur Seruni

Reading you, in *Max Havelaar*.
I find courage,
for my kin, the migrants.
Reading you, in *Max Havelaar*.
I find the light,
for the meaning of justice and fight.

As I end my read,
I seek courage,
and I turn into flame,
for my kin, the migrants.



Wherever you are.
fight every act of injustice.
When it happens to you,
and the best of fight,
is that of wit and knowledge.

Learn again!
Read as much as you gain!
Starve for knowledge,
quench your thirst with new skills!
Brace yourself to write,
and just write
At least,
to liberate the soul and mind

I do not wish for an award.
I do not aspire for glory.
Nor do I dream of my name,
in the pages of history.
And I will not fool you,
into praising my name.
It is enough to see,
no more violence.
No more discrimination,
from anyone.

To my kin, the migrants,
if there is one thing you should know,
is that;
Abuse and subjugation do not exist,
because of we are poor.
But my kin, the migrants,
abuse and subjugation will live on,
If we are fools, giving life to fear.

(Translated by Cheryl Nazik C.)

The Ancestral Land Poem

By Melur Seruni

Years of waiting, the feelings of a mother who misses the children she fed.
Across the ocean a stream of tears is flooding her sunken cheeks,
While the children long for their mother's warm embrace
A father stares aimlessly, each time failing to not miss his daughters
It rips his fatherhood apart, without fail and solace
His old shoulders, once stern and strong, carrying his little girl,
are now broken, by the weight of longing

The yards have become empty,
for their women have sailed,
to a faraway country.
A perfect land of childhood fairy tales and legends.
The rivers have lost their soul in between water ripples.
The rice fields and farms have been abandoned, left by their men.
Some have gone to seek happiness,
to spend time, and cash with other women.
Many have taken their own women's wealth,
for the mere satisfaction of their masculinity

The children wail in silence, crying in pain,
trapped in the suffocating space called longing.
They have lost the chains, the ties between a mother and her baby.
They have lost the handles, for their fathers have forgotten their roots.
While the parents could only add to the lines of prayers,
mantras for one's safety,
so it is not only the daughters' names that return.

Even today, the ancestral land poem echoes.
Passing by mountains and oceans.
Across horizons, knocking on the hearts of the wayfarers,
in a faraway country,
so far away.

The ancestral land poem continues to sing its verses,
waiting for the daughters to return,
to start another ripple in the rivers,
to bring childlike joy to the homes they left,
and to adorn the yards with the presence of women,
who have sailed for a belief in turning one's fate.
To care for the parents,
when their ages reach the peak of dusk.

(Translated by Cheryl Nazik C.)

Look at Those Who Do Not See Us: Appreciation

By Melur Seruni

Pain,
sweat,
and even tears,
are possibly insignificant
to those who can laugh in joy
oblivious to the real us,
human beings, never considered one of their own.

To spree,
to party,
and to engage in infidelity.

Perhaps, they have become a tradition of those who are adorned with badges.
Badges that God knows, when will fall off their shoulders.
Badges that God knows, when will rust.

Let their disdain taint us, the outcast,
like a mace piercing the chest.
Until they are truly seen,
possessing the soul of a loser.

Magelang 10 September 2017
(Translated by Cheryl Nazik C.)

God is not a Printing Machine, Master

By Melur Seruni

Consider this a love letter from me, a human child and a citizen,
whom, merely by the virtue of my work as a foreign domestic worker,
you call a "slave".

I always wonder.

Have I done something wrong by walking the fate as written by the owner of life?

You label me and my people as dirty, backward, stupid, and shameful.

Truth be told, you are only boasting about yourself.

Do you believe that a prestigious job, a good education, wealth, give you an honor?

You are oblivious to the reality for only you insult Him, the Grand Designer.

You are among those who claim to believe in God, yet still looking down on people like me.

With all that you own, have you forgotten the eternal attribute of God?

Or are you, in reality, more ignorant than me and my people?

Have you considered that God has uniformly determined the fate of everything?

Perhaps, you do not have a mouth, but only a hole in your back.

Even so, what comes out of it is not degraded words against His other creation,

But a pure waste from what you eat and drink.

In this love letter, allow me to ask you, the clever and wealthy.

You enjoy labeling my people a slave.
Do you believe that God is a printing machine,
to whom my people and I can also ask for the fate and luck that you have?
to whom my people and I can request for a being like you to disappear?
Just so you know, the existence of me and my people,
is due to the greed of people like you.
Nobody is born into this world to be poor, ignorant, and dirty.
Unless people like you have no conscience and care.

Through this love letter, I proclaim my disdain over the names which you label me.
Just so you know, my people and I are also human beings and citizens with dignity.
Equal to you all, and you have no right to call me your slaves.
Since when have I ever been a slave to you?
Even though, you have workers whom you consider slaves,
they are your heroes.
Without their help and labor,
you will not be able to live,
for all you can do is whining.
God is not a printing machine, Master!
(Translated by Cheryl Nazik C.)

The Morning Rain

by Melur Seruni



A torrent of teardrops smashed into the ground,
before the first light of the dawn pierced the darkness.
And the chill air froze the dreams of yesterday and the days before.
I was chained to the unchanged, longing, and lingering memories of the past.
Oh darling, do you share the same feeling?

Memoir of a Wanderer

By Melur Seruni

The time has come to the chronicle.
Each and every foot steep,
in the long journey,
of this Odessy.
The laughter,
the pain,
are becoming like flowers,
on the earth ground.

The west wind begins blowing,
carrying the the melody of longing.
The solemn grief over.
A wish for an encounter.
And even the storks,
have returned to their nest.

In the memories that remain,
the travels achieved.
In my mind they are carved.
As the cure that relieves,
when this yearning overwhelms.
(Translated by Diana L.)

My Lullaby

By Nur Hidayati

From the first time I welcomed you into my world,
you've become my hope.

I love you black,

I love you blue,

I love you from your top to toe.

I love you big,

I love you small,

I love you from short until you're tall.

You are my joy.

You are my tears.

Your smile casts away my fears.

You are my sunshine,

My pouring rain,

my strength,

who helps me fight against the hurricane.

You are my love,

my love is,

you.

And every single day,

you make me feel brand new.

Every night, I hold you,

tight,

kiss your glowing cheeks,

my baby boy.

This loving feeling is fantastic.

Then I whispered my prayer,

for you,

hoping that God will,

always be there too.

in everywhere you go,

and in everything you do.

So baby, as I promise,

no more cries,
no more sadness,
'cause mama's here ,
and mama knows,
best.

When the time goes by,
time for you to leave and,
say goodbye,
Please do remember ,
my prayer is,
your perfect lullaby.

Lost and not Found Hope

By Nur Hidayati

Someday,
if I can meet you in any way,
I will hold you tight,
I won't let go.

Someday,
if Lord gives me another chance,
to be with you one more time.
I will be your best friend,
I won't leave you for any second.

I trade my soul for dollars bill.
I'm losing my mind.
it's against my will.
School fees, bus fares, and stationaries,
are all I care about now,
replacing those fond memories.

Missing out,
your precious occasions,
I am so hopeless.
I feel like a sinner,
who are waiting to be forgiven.

Afraid of losing you,
my heart is already broken,
begging you to come back now.
It was just too late,
because you disappeared,
into oblivion.

Broken Trust

By Nur Hidayati

Closing my eyes tightly,
I inhale, deeply and roughly.
All the pain, all the sorrow,
pounding at my heart,
wanting me to let them out.

The memories keep flooding back,
tickling my soul,
baring my brain,
exposing my insecurities to the world.
As the tears are streaming down my cheek,
I feel so alone,
I feel so left out.

Sweet, but your words are slashing me.

You trapped me, caged me,
and I gladly accept,
because you are my dress.
I wear it with pride,
and you are my closet,
a place where you can hide.

Meant for each other,
that's what I believe.
it's not the case though.
I mean nothing to you,
and it hurts.
You got me trapped.
You got me caged.

Left with no choices,
I pick up the broken pieces.
Slowly, I break the promises,
about me, you, us, and our paradise.
I mean nothing to you.
I'm just one of your bedtime stories.

You're like a black hole.
Full of mysteries.
I can't hold on anymore.
You gave me too much misery.

Gathering all my strength,
I break the wall.
It's intoxicating here.
It is not a home,
nor a place where i belong.

No apology,
I don't need to be sorry.
no goodbye,

I don't need another lie.
Holding my head high,
I embrace my new found freedom.
The warm air hits my lung.
This is just the beginning.
I told myself.

Walking through the crowd.
A smile plastered on my face.
I made it, I break free.
I'm away from you,
but I don't feel empty.
I love myself more now,
because I am Me.

The Oppressed Commoners

By Ratnie Fatmawati

Standing sturdily at the view of the country corners.
The tall buildings with fading pigments.
Sashaying are the neck-tied shoulders.
Chasing horizons, fighting for the throne on the lectern.
The pitiful little small timers,
defending themselves shouting for justice.
Pleading for rights as the oppressed commoners.
Mister, your necktie is not to ensnare my neck!
But to defend the bullied land.
Hardened veins, hammer-like.
Only to shield the prosperity of the Motherland.
As one we all stand,
uniting the country's stakes.
Together, shoulder together towards the true soul.
Singapore, 08 January 2016
(translated by Annisa R.)

Hello

By Siti Mujiati

Hello, How are you—you who are struggling in a foreign land?
Do you still remember why we came here?
Do you still keep the faithful love of your homeland?
Sometimes, Internet is the barrier of our communication
Be grateful if free Wi-Fi comes to the rescue.
If you are helping out your family with monthly salary
Don't give it all, save some for your future.
I know the hustle
When a day off comes,
Go out for some skill honing.
Choose whatever you heart fancies diving in.
Keep on dreaming and hoping
To ignite the spirit of dollar-collecting
Don't forget your well-being.
If tiredness and anger strike
Remember His Being
Because He is the one who can do the fate-turning.
No matter how hard the problem we are facing is.

World is Sick

by Sugiarti

The world is sick.
I seek for remedies to the Chinese,
but all I find is fake goodies.
Temperature could boil the sea.
Subzero turns the heat into a freeze.
Adam kids are in agony.
The world is really sick.
Oh dear God, help us!

Dear Rapists

by Sugiarti

I saw you continuously staring at me from seven feet away.
No, not because you know me.
It's me, what's on me that you desire.
The desire to feed a beast inside of you,
his name is Lust.
Your desire is something I'm not willing to give.
No, you can't have it.
Even when you threaten me, intimidate me with your beast's eyes.
No, don't blame me.
Don't blame me because of my way of clothing.
No, don't say "I invited you."
No one invited beast into their lives.
No, don't say "I deserve it."
No one deserves black ink in their white blood.
No, I'm not weak.



I will fight you until the last drop of my blood,
until my eyes are closed,
until I breathe my last breath.
No, you are not a winner,
even when you rip off my clothes, my dignity, and taint me.
No, you are not a winner,
even if you cut my life short, wiping out my existence.
Still, you are not a winner.
Your wild dance on me will awake every beat of a heart,
and an army will rise for my justice.
The same army who will fight to cut your life short,
wiping out your existence.
No, they are not destroying you.
It's not my fault, if your life is cut short.
It's not my fault, if our existence is wiped out.
It's not my fault, if your life gets destroyed.
It's not the army's fault either.
It was you, your stupid mind and sickening beast.
We loathe a beast like you.
We have the right to wipe out your existence.
We deserve to live beautifully.
We deserve to live peacefully.
We deserve to breathe easily.
We deserve to live without a beast like you.
The hell deserves you better.

Prejudice

By Sugiarti

The servants forthwith welcome Him, Him who just waltzes in.
Their lips are dancing showcasing signs of obedience.
His chest sticks out proudly boasting His meager power.
He ignores what the Small utter.
He tramples them with his laughter.
And the servants kneel down to this meager power.

The Small rumbles with no voice, fighting with no weapon.
Their batter is already lost without any action,
to this inconsequential domination.

The servants choke on the Small's question.
"Who is He who just came commanding attention with meager power?"
"His power is meager, but He is the server of the ruler".

Defeated and somber.
The Small trudges away from the servants and Him with petty power.

Me, My Ex, and Coffee

By Sugiarti

His mocha complexion is a delight to my eyes.
When we're together, it feels like I won brand new coffee machine.
You gave me different taste each day.
You keep me up like caffeine.
Valentine is whenever you put frothy foam to my iced latte.
I drank 3-in-1 when you step out of the door.

You turn hot cappuccino into ice,
and left it in the fridge to freeze.
I sip your bitter promises like a champion.
Years have passed and I'm tired of 3-in-1.
I've got to go to store to get new espresso.
I can't wait to indulge once more.

Wondering Mind

By Sugiarti

Wondering mind, what do you see when you soar above the sea?
Wondering mind, come closer!
Wondering mind, why did you leave me behind?
Wondering mind, can you spot me with your mighty mind?
Wondering mind, help me find "me" in that jungle of misery!
Wondering mind, let's make a bee line and dance to my heart beat!
Wondering mind, why are you wondering while I am under the realm of reality?
Wondering mind, please stay! Let's make a journey to a happy land instead.
A place, where you are no longer to wonder.
A place, for you and me to find sugar and spices of life.
A place, where we can stay together bind by a duty to make Sugi happy.

To the Women Who Had Loved Me before I was Born

By Susan Ruwadi

Even though you are far away,
in every moment, you are with me.
Every day, my labor is for you.
Every day, my dream brings a rest.
As in my dreams, you are beside me.
God has given me the best.
You are my hero, everything I am,
everything I hope to be, everything is because of you.
You push me to be a better person,
even when I move very slowly.
you push me to do the right thing,
even when it is hard to do.
But you always love me.
You are the only one that believes in me.
Working far from home,
induces heartache to me.
One day, I will be at home,
and all this time will be passed.
No words can describe,
how much you really mean to me.
I am thankful for my experience today,
and new friends that surround me.
There is no better mother than my own.
You're the best and I have ever known.
One day I will be home again to stay with you.
I will be my best and always love you.

A Dream Just at Times, Walk just Walk

By Susan Ruwadi

Success is defined by striving to reach our heart,
and be who we really are.
It is always harder when we are far from a success.
it seems like we see no light,
no way through to see the bright.
But that is a time,
when we are about to find a success,
because we reach to a different part of a stronger source.
God, who lets us see the greatness in ourselves.
Sometimes, we should look back but not live there,
for we are more than we think we are,
for we need to believe we can do all things.
God strengthens us and time works for us.
Just be who you are, decide what you want,
then pray, fight, and go for it.
No matter if there is no light for us to see,
just keep striving for that one thing.

Madness Journey

by Windu Madness

She doesn't know where she is.
At some point in life, she feels lost.
But still, she is full of wanderlust.
When she decides to go somewhere she is never familiar with,
it feels hard to part from the loved ones.
Nevertheless, she still stands up right telling herself "You have to be ready!"
There's a fear; she finds a way through it.
There are tears; she hides behind her smiles.
There's a wish; she can scream to her new world "Where's justice?"
When she is supposed to play and have fun with her friends,
She becomes the backbone for survival instead.
Being a migrant in a cruel world,
that's her choice with no other options.
Locked in the cage of longing, confusion, and a lot of tragedy.
Yet, she goes through every paragraph of it.
She keeps her madness inside her.
while her braveness tries to find her absence after all these years.
The thoughts beyond her age.
She doesn't grow up, she grows in.
People used to ask: "How long?"
It reminds me of how many times she gets lost in the process.
In fact, it is countless.
That's what strengthens her belief; *La yukallifullahu nafsan illa wus'aha*
She sparkled light at the end of the tunnel she was passing through

New in Singapore

by Windu Madness

Everyone speaks English and Singlish
while I feel like an alien.

In the world of technology, I wonder why is that Merlion peeing through his mouth?

Everyone is walking so fast,
it is like half running.

"Hustle up!"

That's what my agent always said

He herded me and my friends into his van

I was innocent back then

All I understood; YES and NO

I love those random memories, somehow they make me smile.

Oh, of course, I also got annoyed by the agent who treated us like animals.

Well, let me take it as a lesson

We often learn the hard way to understand better

Okay, Lord,

now I know why,

As the result will never betray the process.

You Think and I Think

By Yube Hermawan

You think,
I don't love you enough.

I think,
you have never seen my courage.

You think,
I have never worried about you.

I think,
you have never forgotten yourself.

You think,
I have never put all my heart and soul into love.

I think,
you complain against yourself.

You think,
I only care about myself.

I think,
you were too selfish.

You think,
I never wanted this love relationship.

I think,
you were the one who doesn't need me.

Whatever you think,
you have already lost someone who loves you the most.

It is because you keep thinking,
I don't love you enough

You think and I think.
Tired of thinking.
It's better off ending.

Goodbye, My First Romance

By Yube Hermawan

Since you came into my life, you have affected it in a profound way.
Sadly, now our love has gone away.
I don't want you to go, but there's no other way.
Slowly, I let you go on your own way.

Even though our romance was too short.
Sharing the joy with you was my delight.
First love indeed never works out.
But can both of us forget?

In the days before, my mind was full of thoughts.
Then, now I have finally recovered from the sudden loss.
As I said a thousand farewells,
gravely I told myself that our love no longer exists.

How tragic goodbye my first romance was.
Don't know, somehow I feel free.
Tomorrow and the next day, you will see.
I'll be the cheerful girl I used to be.

We were once a pair, yet I feel fate isn't fair.

Foolish of me thinking we would get married, then live happily ever after, but the reality turned so bitter.

Could you please tell me that you never loved me, burying the wound in my heart even deeper?

So I have a reason never to remember you, and of course it will make me feel better.

Please Remember

By Yube Hermawan

Suddenly my heart was completely broken,
but my tears were never shown.

This was always such pain of my own.

Until now, those things I have left unspoken.

To tell you the truth, so much hurt I have been hiding.

Believe me, I'm not lying.

Oh, my darling,

yes, we have broken up, but my love for you has no ending.

Yes, your love for me has already departed,

Though, about this, we never ever talked,

Still you are my one and only beloved,

and you will never ever be replaced.

I wish our love story could have lasted longer.

But now I see it—we can never be together.

Goodbye my darling, see you never.

**ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT STORIES BY
INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS
IN SINGAPORE**



Dr, Mr. I love You!

By Yube Hermawan

He was my respectable teacher and my first love. I liked the way he dressed, walked, and talked. He was much older than me; he was in his 30s and I was only 18. I was his favorite student back then during my high school years. He loved to praise me in front of others; he loved to crack a joke when I was around. Talking to him made me lose weight. I wonder why I fell for such a person. He knew how to make me laugh. Well, that's why I fell in love with him. But he was my teacher.

After I graduated, I confessed my feelings to him. As I always expected, he only regarded me as his student. He loved an older and mature woman who was capable of running a household and a woman who was ready to be a wife. "You are definitely too young for me." That was all his answer.

My heart broke into pieces that day. I didn't know how to explain to him that I loved him. I wanted him, and even if he asked me to cut off my fingers, I'd do it for him. All I could say was that I loved him with all my heart. The only thing on my mind before I went to study overseas: I'd keep holding on to him.

3 years later

I was so happy to finally go back home and try to look for him again, but it was too late. He couldn't wait for me. He never gave me a chance, even though I pledged to him that day before I left my hometown, begging him to wait for me to become a mature woman, so he could make me his wife. But now he's someone's else husband and a father of a son.

I saw him in one of the minimarkets carrying his only son on his back and holding his wife's hand. He passed me by, not recognizing me at all. At that moment, I thought about calling his name. At that moment of jealousy and anger, I was hoping that his wife could disappear. I was sad because he did not remember me as his student and a true admirer. I thought about cursing him for not appreciating my love. Yet only tears spilled down my cheeks without any words coming out of my mouth. After so many years, I endured my feelings, hoping that someday he would be mine. But then I just realized that it was just a dream that would never come true. Never. I wrote

about my heartbreak in my diary until I got addicted. A few years later I tried to publish my first novel titled "Dear, Mr., I Love You!"

The sad love story novel sold well throughout 2016. I was nominated for the best new comer author in 2016. All my pains were paid off with the achievement I got, but somehow, I still often thought about him. From that day on, I started my utmost effort to erase him from my mind.

One day, by chance, we met again in a public library. He recognized my face this time because I was a public figure. Then he asked for my autograph on my book he bought. I smiled to him while he was holding the book. We looked at each other for a very short moment, then I wrote my name on the last page of the novel with some words "THIS NOVEL EXISTS BECAUSE OF YOU".

My feelings for him were real, and yearning for his love for years was my decision. Today, I had learned lessons from the love I never had; it was not bad to love him even though I never won his heart in the end.

Evidence

By Sugiarti

The air kissed me fondly like two people who had been separated for too long and then finally found each other again. For the first time I felt like I could taste the air; its sweetness and crispness filling up my chest, but I couldn't return the favor, the sweetness it gave me. Just cold breath that I slowly let out.

I could see the birds more clearly; I was surprised at how loud they were when they greeted each other. I held out my hand hoping that one of them would perch, so I could feel their claws, feathers and heartbeat. I wish they would sing to me, but they ignored me as if I was one of the statues they had always passed by. But I was not complaining.

The sun started to blind me, changing my skin tone, but it didn't bother me. I was at peace; nothing would break me. I smiled contentedly looking at God's creation.

"Hey, what are you doing?"

"Are you crazy?"

"Get inside now!" he ordered.

People who heard the shout started to look out from their windows, wanting to know where the noise came from. Those who finally saw what had happened started to gasp and close their mouths in terror and disbelief. They too started to shout. Flashes came and went from different windows; some of them were busy talking on the phone upon seeing what they had seen.

Why did nobody believe me?

The cloud was very dark. Tears slowly flooded my cheeks soaking the top of my faded grey t-shirt

Slap!!

The right hand of Mrs. Teo landed on my left cheek so hard that for a moment I could see nothing but darkness, numbing my left cheek. There was a burning sensation inside my head, my body trembled, and my legs struggled to stay still.

"I'm not lying!" I defended myself.

"Bullshit!!" she said.

"How dare you tell lies! Don't you dare speak about my husband like that!" she yelled, angrier than before.

I felt hopeless.

"My husband is a kind, respectful man, and he loves his family," she described her husband in such a loving tone.

"I trust you. I brought you here to help me clean the house and take care of my children. How dare you do this to me!" She looked at me with an intense gaze piercing my soul as she was speaking.

"There's no way he will look at you; let alone touch you!" My eyes started to get wet. Feeling angry and a sense of despair, I could not think. I clenched my fist trying to gather all my strength that was left.

"If you want to go back, just tell us! There is no need for you to make up a story!" Her tone started descending as she pulled out a chair and sat down, crossing her legs under the dining table as her hands were busy fiddling her shoulder-length hair.

"Stupid girl!" I heard the familiar voice addressing me from the kitchen behind me.

"Who do you think you are, huh?" he continued.

"Your Bangla boyfriend dumped you, eh? You're pregnant with his baby, but then he doesn't want you anymore, so you use me as a scapegoat. Stupid girl!"

"Alright, enough!" Mrs. Teo interrupted her husband as he walked slowly towards the dining room and sat down next to her wife.

"Do you want to go home?" Mrs. Teo asked me with such a stern voice.

No words could come out from my mouth; my tongue felt heavy. I couldn't even move my lips as if they were sealed with glue.

"Fine, I will call your agent and arrange your replacement. I don't want to be under the same roof with a liar. I can't stand you anymore!" She stomped off towards her bedroom and slammed the door.

"Dear, I'm going to my appointment now," Mrs. Teo said lovingly as she emerged from her bedroom and walked towards her husband in the living room.

"Alright, my love, I'll pick you up once you're done and we've had lunch at the Hilton," Mr. Teo said as he was walking towards his wife, he embraced her and gave her a peck on her rosy red cheeks. Then they walked slowly towards the front door.

"Imah, I want this house to be spotless when I'm back," Mrs. Teo said sternly to me before Mr. Teo opened the door.

That was how she punished me every time I made her angry.

"Click!"

Just one click, my life was locked. No one could hear my whisper let alone scream. I was locked with a monster who tormented my life for three months once I started this job.

"Bang!"

Something hit the back of my head as I was washing dirty dishes. I accidentally dropped a cup in the process, but luckily I didn't break it. I turned around and saw a roll up newspaper lying on the floor next to my left foot. I heard foot stomping. Within a split second, a strong hand grabbed my left arm with such a strength and tossed me hard against the wall.

"I told you not to tell anyone!!" His face was red in rage; there was fire in his eyes as he looked at me in disgust.

"Who else knows about this?" He continued as he was shaking my thin frame.

"Do you think you're smart, huh?!" as he snatched my hair.

"Sir, sir, please don't hurt me, sir" I begged him with tears flowing down my cheeks; my whole body trembled in terror.

"Please sir, let me go sir."

"No one else, only Mrs. Tan, sir. I promise you, sir. Please let me go." I choked up. No words could come out of my throat. My hands desperately tried to push his hand away from my arm that started to turn as red as his face. If my follicles had voice, they would scream in pain and beg me to release the hair or they would uproot and cause trauma to my scalp, "What power do I have?" I whispered.

"Come, come here!" as he pulled my arm towards the master bedroom.

"No, no. Sir, please don't!" I tried as hard as I could to break free but I couldn't. I tried to grab anything to hold on, but there was nothing, "Let me go sir, please. I promise I

won't say a word. Please, sir!" I begged and pleaded, but it fell to deaf ears.

Then he pushed me to the mattress, pinning my body down with ease. I pushed his body away, but he was too strong. I snatched his hair, scratched his back, and hit his chest as he pulled down my short. Like a hungry lion, he devoured me. He penetrated my innocence, purity, that I had guarded like a rare gem. With every inch of his manhood, the gem turned to an unworthy piece of thing that I ashamed of. He shook my perfect life with his lust. He shattered my dreams, broke my hope of a picture perfect future that I had sketched before stepping into this foreign soil. His lust put me in a dark hole where nobody wanted to be in; his touch made me feel sick; I was loath to breathe. His orgasm triumphed his manhood, sending my soul into space where I couldn't feel the gravity of living.

"Go clean up yourself!"

He threw a blue bath towel with stain of his blood on my face. He left the door open and was ready to walk out of the house. For a moment I felt at peace for not being able to see his face but what about tomorrow?

I felt suffocated in this room. The breeze and the bright light welcomed me as I opened the balcony door.

"Ah girl, are you hungry or not? Come in, lai. Come in to my house. I cooked curry for you."

"Do you want to call your family? Here, here, use my phone."

"Come inside, girl. Don't worry. I will help you." The middle-aged woman kept chattering. She tried her best to buy the time, putting sense of reality.

"No, no, no, don't cry, girl!"

"Everything is gonna be ok. Trust me, lai, girl!"

"Have you knocked the door next door dear?" The middle-aged woman whispered to her husband.

"I have, but no one answered," her husband answered.

"Have you called the police?" she continued.

"Yes, yes, they are on their way here. Go, go talk to her!" asked her husband.

In the distance I could see a flock of white birds flying towards my direction.

I could hear the most beautiful song I ever heard as they came nearer. Oh yes! They were singing it. It was wonderful to find them singing it to me.

"Let's fly away, beautiful girl!" said one of the birds with such a mesmerizing voice.

"Ohh dear God...you can talk?"

My eyes lit up like a little girl finding a jar full of sweets.

"Auntie! look! Look! Look at that bird! It can talk! It's talking to me!" I smiled from ear to ear at the middle age lady standing at her master bedroom balcony while my left hand was pointing at the bird.

"Bird? What bird is she talking about?"

"Oh dear, can you see any bird up there?" she asked her husband in whisper.

"Noooo laahhh...no bird!"

"Go...go talk to her! Faster lahhh...before she looks away!" said her husband. But the only word she could say was "Noooooo!!!"

As I said good bye to the middle age couple, I could feel a tickling sensation on my back. I could hear something sprouting beneath my skin, and it grew longer and longer, long enough for me to notice from the corner of my eyes. It slowly lifted me up and brought me closer to the flock of white birds. I felt lighter in a split second. We were starting to dance to celebrate my freedom. We twirled in the air. At the end of the dance we landed gracefully mid-air. I could hear applauses from corner to corner as huge black curtain closed and the light started to fade.

Grief and relief filled in the air in a room full of people that followed what happened since the news broke six months ago. Victorious hand shakes were exchanged between four men in smart suits. On their table lay documents. Every word pointed at the man in an orange jumper suit sitting at the right corner of the room, head down, expressionless while a woman sobbed uncontrollably upon hearing the verdict.

Sometimes we don't have to open our mouth to talk. We can talk through our action. Even an unbreathing, soulless body that lies at the far end of a land can talk and tell its stories.

And that is my story.

A Slice of Anger

By Deni Apriyani

I was twenty-one when I stepped down from the bus near the end of the road, in the city where he lived. I didn't come to be his guest, not at all. I stood there, outside his house, waiting for him to show up, dressed as sexy as I could. There were many ways to describe a moment like this, but I could just say this was a 'suicide'.

When he saw me standing there, he looked scared; I came closer to him and wrapped my fingers around his neck.

"I love the way you treated me that day, don't you still want some more? Let's do that again." I whispered.

His body was shaking, but shortly after, he slapped my face. The slap was as loud as a clap. I still remember the sting and the shock, but it was nothing. I had gotten used to being slapped.

I tried to hold back my anger and didn't even try to wipe away any sweat on my face. I was so afraid, but I smiled instead.

"Let's go somewhere only we know," I said.

He was my brother-in-law and I shouldn't have done this. I made him drown into me; I took away his mind.

"I am going to fuck you hard, fuck you hard," he whispered, as he touched my face with both of his hands.

"I've got something special for you. Get your car, and I will show you the way, baby." I ran my fingers through his hair, and then they touched his ear, down his chest, and all the way down to his special part.

He didn't ask how I managed to leave the death cage; all I could see from his face was his sexual desire: wild and unstoppable.

I took him to my old house, a house in the middle of nowhere. The surrounding trees were quiet and tall; their leaves seemed to have a good time dancing in the sky. My house was far from the city, where there were no feet stomping around, and that was a perfect place for me and him to enjoy the world. He pulled me out of the car without questioning

why I took him to this house.

The wind whistled through the trees, bringing me into the dark memories. I pictured the place where I was screaming in agonizing pain; where the owl was watching; where my whole body covered with bruises; where my parents were dying in the bathroom with snakes surrounding them. The snakes were black, with pale yellow stripes running the length of their bodies, attacking with every move they made. This was the place where all I wanted to do was to curl up into a ball, waiting for help, but I was helpless.

He dragged me into the house; he pushed me to the bed; he took off my dress and got naked, whilst exploring my neck. I knew that the game had started, beginning with the chili-pepper spray that I put under my red pillow. I had fifty-six bottles of them in this house, hidden in every corner.

I sprayed his eyes several times, and as he was in pain, I sprayed his dick continuously—the dick that was not supposed to bother my space. There were unwanted sexual touches when I was nineteen; he touched me in front of my parents, and also my sister, his wife. I couldn't help myself or stop him, as both my hands and legs were tied and my mouth was duct taped.

Tears began to blur my vision. The pain and memories of my family made my body ripple with anger. I let go of my anger—towards the person who deserved it.

I made him kneel, stripped him naked, and tied him with a very tight knot, a swing rope that I'd gotten from my apple trees that had been planted by my dad. I'd prepared all of these very well.

I tied his hands behind his back and I made him sit with his legs crossed and his feet rest on his thighs. I tied his legs in lotus position like most Buddha statues. But he was not sitting in peace like the Buddha. I laid him down on his back, putting more pressure on his hands.

I could see the pain in his eyes. He groaned. I put some crushed chilies in his mouth, and I duct taped it with a black masking tape, seven layers covering nearly his whole face. I suffocated him. His eyes, his mouth, and his dick seemed to be burnt. That was how my heart felt when I saw him do horrible things to us. It was terribly painful.

In the darkness and narrow space, against the coldness of the floor, and amidst the rotting smell of the house, I could see his tears flooding over the tape. They went down his neck and fell to the floor, and that was my happiness.

It was 11 pm. I tucked my knife under my pillow before I went to sleep. I pulled him out

to say good night, and rubbed his hair gently, and leaned against his stomach.

“What did you do to their dead bodies? Where are they?” I cried.

I wasn’t expecting an answer because whatever the answer was, it would not bring my parents back, hugging me again. I spread honey all over his body, and I placed him back under my bed.

As I recalled what he did, I wish that I had put him on a Judas Cradle, or inside a Coffin Torture, but I was weak. I made this game but I wasn’t ready to be the main player.

I wasn’t going to let him die that morning. I ran to the kitchen to make some food for him. There was still some food stocked from last year in my sticky kitchen cupboards; I grabbed some rice with my wet hand, with the blood stain coming from his middle finger, the finger that he used to swear a lot in front of my mom.

Although I didn’t want to see him die from starvation, I made everything slowly. I set the stove on a very low flame, as what I wanted it to be; I wanted him to starve for a bit longer.

I gazed at the pot, and the rice turned into red as I was singing a song by My Chemical Romance: “Mama, we all go to hell.”

There were seven dead cockroaches around my kitchen. I was confused with what had caused their death in the same spot, so I picked them up and put them into the pot. Boiled perfectly with the rice, they were a part of his meal—how delicious.

I went back to my room and saw him trying to escape; he was nearly there, nearly. His legs were blue, with an army of ants and stench of urine showering his body. I pulled him out and kicked his face.

“Want to escape, huh?” I gathered his wet and stinky hair.

I brought the food to him, and took off the black masking tape of his mouth; his lips were swollen. I fed him, and he pleaded to give him a chance, with his sad, hungry face. I did not say a word, I just kept feeding him, and he ate it all.

It was four in the morning. I pushed him back under my bed, and I did not cover his mouth. I let him sleep with better breathing, so it gave him a greater pain for the next game if his lungs survived. See, I wasn’t that cruel.

A Moment of Friendship

Susan Ruwadi

Seven years ago was the most unforgettable moment because the moment I had never expected happened. I was a simple, relaxed, and a little careless teenage girl. However, I still took my school matters seriously by not going out or hanging out with friends too much like the others did. At that time, nothing worried me in the first year of entering the final level of school because all of my grades were fine and I was so grateful that I was surrounded and accompanied by good friends who understood me. We always learned together. When we were having trouble, we solved it together. Until a new student named Wildan came to my class and broke my friendship. I did not really like the boy, yet my friends, Widi and Icha, admired him. A little change emerged until after my friends would rather go seeing Wildan playing his guitar than do the homework with me.

One day, a teacher of mine divided the class into several study groups, and I was in one group with Wildan. That was not a good situation for me. At first, I insisted on being put in another group without Wildan. I talked to my teacher, but she didn't grant my wish. Eventually, with a heavy heart, I accepted this group division, becoming Wildan's group partner. It turned out that this group division was the beginning of a disaster for my friendship; the jealousy of my friends because I spent a lot of time with Wildan. After working together for two and half months in the study group, I got along very well with Wildan. We laughed, told each other stories and exchanged ideas. He was so different when he was with me. Surprisingly, I no longer bothered to make amends with Icha and Widi. They started it after all. The exam week passed; I was so happy that I was still able to keep up my good grades. Yet, my friends kept on getting further and further away. We barely communicated, and we fought a lot. Once our fight ended up punching and mocking each other, leading us to the principal's room. I was not quite aware of who made this happen. My relationship with Icha and Widi was very fragile.

When Wildan decided to move to another school due to his father's job, I had to get used to solitary. But his being gone made me realize that the short presence of Wildan between us blinded us. We forgot that the promise of a friendship was more important than anything else and we should not have let anyone break it.

Silhouette 1

By Wiwik Tri Winarsih

"Help me!" she screamed out loud, but nobody could hear her. "Where is Auntie Nela? Where is Uncle Handoko?"

"Where had all the people gone?" She tried to scream louder and ran toward the light. But she couldn't find the way out.

"Where am I?" she fell on her knees, begging for help.

Laura was conscious, but the room was unfamiliar. "This is not my bedroom, where am I?"

She tried to remember where she was. But there was nothing she could remember. She did not know where she came from. "Who am I? What is my name?"

Fearful and hopeless, she wanted to cry, but there were no tears. What was she doing? Why was she lying there? Where was this place? Who was Auntie Nela? There were a hundred question marks on her mind.

"Who am I?"

A man in a long white robe came in to her room. He was a young man, in his mid-thirties. He had beautiful eyes; he smiled warmly to everyone he met.

"Hi, how are you?" he asked Laura, showing his warm smile. He checked her breathing using his stethoscope. "How do you feel?"

Laura didn't answer. She was looking at the doctor carefully. She learned every part of his face and tried to remember something. But when she tried to do so, she felt more confused.

"Do you know who I am? I can only remember my name. I don't know who I am, where I come from, who my family is," she mumbled.

The Doctor stood up. He gave the nurse an instruction to hand in Laura's medical report. He examined her carefully. He asked her a few questions.

"We need to do a brain examination. Please prepare the room. And, I need to meet her guardian as well!" He handed back the report to the nurse. He gave Laura an injection; he smiled.

"I will do all the best I could do for you, I promise!" He said before he left the room.

Laura didn't want to fall asleep again, but she felt sleepy suddenly.

"What did the doctor inject me with?"

She tried to stay alert and fought with all her strength. But she couldn't make it; the drowsiness was getting worse.

"What is he doing to me? I don't want to sleep. It's terrible, I don't want to...."

She mumbled, felt weaker, and lost her strength. She fell asleep again, coming back in to her same dream where she kept running but couldn't find the way out.

~*~

"Hi, Doctor! I am Nela, Laura's Auntie, and he is my husband, Handoko"

Doctor Fadly looked at the young woman and her husband. She had long hair and was wearing branded clothes. The young man beside her looked like a businessman. His face looked familiar. "I wonder where I met him before," the doctor said to him.

He asked them to sit down on the two blue chairs in front of his desk. Then he opened a file, before handing it to them.

"So, you are Laura's guardian?"

"Yes, doctor," Auntie Nela answered. She studied the file, and her expression changed.

"I am doctor Fadly. I am the doctor who is in charge of Laura's case."

Then he explained about Laura's condition. He asked them, a few questions about the accident. He looked at them suspiciously. He was suspicious; they seemed like making up a story. The way they talked was weird. He wrote every single word they uttered on a white paper sheet.

"I think we need to file a police report. It was not a kind of accident; my guess is some people did this on purpose," he said. "When an accident occurs, and it puts someone's life in danger, we can't take it easy. We need to file a police report for Laura's safety in the future."

There was a pause, and Auntie Nela expression changed. They were hiding something. They looked at each other. Auntie Nela hoped that her husband could help her. But it was hopeless.

Uncle Handoko sat on his chair hopelessly. He sat there without doing or saying anything. He listened to every single word that the doctor said. His mind was going back

to the day when Laura got into the accident, the accident that put Laura's life in danger, the accident that happened right in front of his eye.

~*~

Laura sat on her bed. What she had heard was that this room had been her bedroom since she was 3 years old. It was a small room at the rooftop of a big bungalow.

The room was small but neat and tidy. Its wall was bright pink in color. There was a small desk on the corner of the room. There was also a wardrobe, and a row of roses was outside the window.

Laura looked around, detached and confused. "If it is my room, why can't I remember a single thing about this room?" she asked herself desperately.

Laura walked to the desk and sat on the wooden chair. She couldn't feel anything. A photograph was hanging beside a table lamp. It was her and a young boy whose age seemed to be the same as hers. She looked happy in the photo.

Laura looked around the table. There was a pink colored book and a pen on it. No was nothing else on it. Laura opened the book on which a phrase written on its first page:

'MY DIARY'

She turned to the next the page and found a piece of paper. It was a poem, a sad poem.

"Did I like writing?"

After I write this...

I will throw away all of our love letters

From the first until the last

I won't forget you

I won't be your girl anymore

I just want to love you in my heart

Silently

I will continue my life, just like this

Even if I have to struggle in my life

Or I'm in a bad condition

Even if I'm very hurt, very sick, I won't disturb you...

I promise you

I will take care of myself better, be good to myself, love myself and fight for my life

Work hard to get my dreams

So,

*I hope the same for you too
All the best for you
If, in the future you come back
Please,
Don't let me know, don't call me
Otherwise, I can't stop myself
I don't want to hurt you, more than this
Because, it hurts me more
Bye, take care
All the best for you*

Laura read the poem. She cried, trying to remember who wrote the poem and questioning if she was the one who wrote this. Why did she write this kind of sad poem?

She cried hopelessly, "I am lost in my own place"

"Laura, are you inside?"

Auntie Nela called her. Laura didn't want to make her worried; she wiped her tears and walked to the door. She opened the door. Behind the door Auntie Nela and a young boy were waiting for her.

The boy was the one in the photo. He had the same hair, face, and smile. Laura looked at him, studying every single part of his face. She didn't blink, examining him thoroughly.

"Bagas has come to visit you," Auntie Nela said.

Laura didn't answer, she kept looking at Bagas. Now she was confused, there were tears on the corner of her eyes.

"Why can't I remember anything here!"

Suddenly, Laura screamed. She was frustrated, feeling hopeless and miserable. She grabbed Bagas' neck, looking at him fiercely. But she fell on Bagas' shoulder. Bagas held her and was startled.

"Laura!" Bagas called her.

~*~

Bagas carried Laura and put her slowly on the bed. He looked around; the room was still the same. It didn't change. The photo of him and Laura was also still there.

"These are her favorite bed sheets," Bagas mumbled. "Did she also forget about this?"

Auntie Nela stood beside the bed. Her facial expression was weird; she didn't say a word. She looked at Laura and Bagas, "You can take care of her if you want to," she said. Then she walked out.

Bagas didn't answer. The word that Auntie Nela said seemed to be more of a warning than an offer. Her cold eyes and words gave Bagas a warning. Perhaps she was the one behind the accident. Bagas had no doubt about it.

Bagas remembered that there was a time when Laura told her about her life. She was not a lucky princess, like what people had always said. But he had never believed her and always doubted her stories.

"Your Auntie looks good."

"There is no reason for her to show you her true color," Laura said.

Bagas felt hopeless. "What can I do to help you?" He talked to himself.

Where he could seek for a help. Everything was too late.

"I shouldn't let you walk alone. I should've sent you home instead of looking at you walk away. I am sorry, Laura."

Bagas cried. He remembered all the words Laura said before she walked alone on the driveway. She was laughing a lot that day. She was twenty now, and she said, "Maybe I will die soon."

"If God gives me the chance to be a better person, I will pass tonight safely and I can see tomorrow sun galore from behind my bedroom window." Those were Laura's last words, before she walked away. She waved her hand and left Bagas in his car.

"Why would you keep on saying those words?" Bagas asked her, but he didn't get the answer since Laura was asleep.

Silhouette 2

She was sweating in terror. It was the scariest night she ever had. She woke up in the middle of the night, in the middle of nowhere. She sat on the edge of the bed, lost and confused; she cried but there was nobody there. She had a bad dream as she did a few days before.

But this dream felt more real. She told herself, "It was me!"

In her dream, she was standing alone in a park. The wooden chairs and flowers were covered in a thin mist. From a distance, she saw a young lady standing near a Poinciana

tree. But Laura couldn't see her face. She waved to Laura.

Laura stood up but unable to move. From where she was standing, she could see that the young lady had a beautiful, curvy body and long hair, and that she was wearing a white dress.

Laura tried to call her, but she was mute. She was unable to talk. "What happened to my voice?" She screamed inside her heart and held her neck using her two hands. She cried, but there no voice came from her mouth.

A young little girl suddenly appeared out from nowhere. She looked familiar, especially with her butterfly hairpin.

"That was mine!" Laura tried to call and wave to the little girl, but the little girl seemed to ignore her.

Laura felt too hopeless. Her two legs were frozen. Her voice was gone, and she could only see both of them hugging each other. Seeing them both, she couldn't hold back her tears.

"They must be missing each other, just like I miss Mama!" she said to herself.

"Mama!" Laura heard the little girl call the young lady. She kissed and hugged her mother. They laughed and walked away together. A while later both of them vanished together with the thin mist.

~*~

Bagas drove down to the Eastwood. He ignored all of his mother's complaints. She was actually a lovely mum with her natural beauty and old-fashioned lifestyle. His father loved her so much. There was a bunch of stories about their romance he had heard from their friend.

"Your papa is the world's number one gentleman; you should be like him," Uncle Henry told him not long ago. His neighbors also said the same thing.

"Your papa is the best husband ever!" Auntie Nadia said. She told Bagas that she was jealous of his mum. "She is very lucky!"

His family lived in an old house. It belonged to his paternal great-grandparent. Every year during the celebration of Hari Raya, the house would be very crowded. All his mother's and father's family would gather together. On that day, Bagas couldn't breathe freely, and he didn't have any other choice except to stay at home and help his mum prepare the party.

After his mum got to know what had happened to Laura, she started acting strangely. She would always make Bagas do unnecessary stuff intentionally. Bagas knew it, but he preferred to comply with it.

"This is unavoidable; she is my mum after all!" he told himself.

"Mum, today I need to go out!" Bagas tried to persuade his mum. But there was something not in place. His mother's expression changed, and she looked at him fiercely.

"Why do you need to help her? She is rich enough to help herself!" she shouted while looking at Bagas in anger.

"You should help yourself!" she said. Her voice was shaken. Bagas startled, and he couldn't believe with the words he just heard. My mum wouldn't say those words. Bagas had a fight with his own consciousness.

"Mum, she is my friend. She has nobody, and she needs me right now!" Bagas tried to defend himself.

"She is crazy now. Don't waste your time!" She screamed. It was loud enough to make Bagas's father go to the kitchen.

"What happened here?" he asked, but Bagas and his wife didn't say a word.

"What is going on, can anybody tell me?" he asked again, now he looked at both of them, the mother and son. His anger was about to blow up. Bagas took a step backward, and then he looked at the floor. He knew his father well.

"Ask your beloved son," Bagas Mum said and then she left both of them.

Bagas stood up on his leg. He couldn't help himself from looking at his father face.

"Lies to cover lies often are truth, always remember my son!" He said. He was the best father in the world, he didn't hover. He would understand what kind of situation that Bagas was in. He would give his blessing for Bagas and support him to do the best he could do.

"Don't worry about your Mum, she will be fine!" He said.

"Thank you, Papa!" Bagas hugged his father, before he ran towards his car.

"I have to meet with Granny Siska, no matter what happens!"

He started his car. Behind the glass door, his father and mother were looking at his car slowly moving out of the house yard. Bagas's mum couldn't hold back her sadness. Her only son dared to take all account to prove his love for his girl.

"Don't worry too much, he is big enough to take care of himself" Bagas's father said, trying to persuade his wife.

"In this world, no mother would let his only son run into a danger!" She said, there were tears in the corners of her eyes.

~*~

"Bagas, are you free?" Diana said over the phone.

"Yes!" Bagas was surprised. Diana wouldn't have called him if there was nothing happening.

"Can you meet me tonight, at the park nearby my office?"

"Okay, see you later!"

Diana cut off the line. Bagas had felt uneasy since the day he met Diana. He couldn't understand why. All the things that had happened to Laura were caused by her own auntie and uncle.

"I know they are my parents after all. That's why I don't want them to become murderers," as Diana said that her eyes were wet with tears. "You are the only one last person I can believe, you should help me save Laura!"

Diana handed to Bagas a piece of paper, "Here is the address of Granny Siska. Only when Laura was with her would she be saved from my mum!" Diana hesitated.

Bagas was unable to say a word. He was too surprised with all Diana's stories. Who is Granny Siska, and why was she the only one who could save Laura? I have to find out about it! Bagas told to himself.

"I will go there tomorrow, I promise!"

"Thank you, Bagas!"

Diana smiled to Bagas, happily. She took a long deep breath, she looked to the sky. It was dark and stars were nowhere to be seen.

~*~

Bagas parked his car nearby an old house. It seemed old, but it was clean and tidy. There was an old bicycle at the terrace. The long journey from the city to the Granny Siska's house made him feel weary. He had to go by a big ferry and spent an hour driving to the village from the harbor.

"I hope she is at home"

Bagas got down from the car, slamming the door behind him. He walked to the house which seemed to be quiet, but the quietness gave him the feeling of peace.

"GRANNY!" He called but nobody answered him. He walked around the house and stopped at the backyard of the house.

The view was too beautiful to describe; green, serene and calm. But his eye bumped into something unexpected.

"Why is there a tomb?" Now he felt the horror, his neck was cold and the goosebumps started to make him scared.

When he turned around, he saw an old lady standing right in front of him. Her hair was white, and her skin was wrinkled. She smiled and there were no teeth in her mouth. Bagas couldn't move, his two legs were limp. He was unable to blink his eyes when he saw her.

"Who are you, young man?" The old lady asked.

"I am Bagas, Laura's friend. May I know who you are, Granny?"

The old lady didn't answer him, but she looked at him closely. Bagas felt terrified as the lady seemed so mysterious. She didn't talk much.

"Oh, you are the boy who always plays together with Nona!" she said loudly.

"Yes, that's right!" Bagas felt much better. He regained his courage, but he it came to him as a surprise that she could identify him. Perhaps, he had just forgotten about her.

Granny Siska looked around, "Why are you coming alone?"

Bagas couldn't answer. He lost his words. "Granny, may I ask you for help?"

The old lady felt something was happening to Laura. She looked at Bagas, "What I can do for you, young man?"

Her gaze was unreadable. Bagas hold tight on his courage. "Please, don't get nervous now," Bagas begged to himself.

"I am sorry, Granny. Laura got into an accident a few months ago!"

There was a pause, and Granny Siska's expression changed. She looked at Bagas curiously and fiercely. Her eyes didn't blink, and tears began to pour out from the corners of her eyes. She wiped them quickly. Bagas couldn't say a word. He didn't dare to look at the old lady's eyes.

"We'd better have a talk inside the house, please!" She led Bagas into the house.

Bagas followed her, "How can I let Laura live here?" He said loudly enough to make Granny Siska turn around. "I am sorry!" He said.

"Don't play around, or you will be sorry!"

Silhouette 3

"Mum, Laura is my cousin!" Diana shouted at her mama. She was not able to contain her anger.

This was the same conflict that Diana and her mother always had whenever Diana tried to talk about Laura with her Mama. "What did she get?"

There were only ill words and disappointment. Her Mum would say Laura had nothing to do with all the wealth they had. She did nothing, and she owned nothing.

Diana had her Mama's beautiful eyes and her Papa's dimpled cheeks. She spoke softly, just like her Mama did. She had fair skin and long curly hair. Her small body posture was perfect for a flight attendant, which was her previous job.

"I love to travel a lot," she said proudly about her job, whenever her friend asked her.

The morning after Diana had her argument with her mother, she did not come out from her bedroom. She was waiting for the best moment to get Laura out of her house.

"No, it was Laura's house!" Diana told herself.

Her waiting was not a waste. At ten o'clock, from the window of her room, she saw her Mama and Papa hopping into their car. The driver opened the back car door and closed it slowly before he ran to sit behind the steering wheel.

"I should call Bagas now," Diana said.

She then called Bagas. After waiting for a few minutes, she could hear Bagas's voice over the phone.

"Hello, Bagas. How are you?"

"I am fine, how are you? How is Laura?"

Diana hesitated. How could she tell Bagas about Laura? Laura was still locked inside her bedroom. It would not be easy to get Laura out of the house.

"Did you meet Granny Siska?"

"Yes, she told me that she would do anything to help us!"

"That was a great. Would you come over to my house later? Oh, no. Now!"

"Why? Did something happen to Laura?"

From Bagas's voice, Diana felt he really cared about Laura.

"No, nothing happened to her!" Diana hesitated, "But we should take her out of here as soon as possible!"

There was silence. Bagas did not answer.

Then, he said "I will come over."

Bagas cut off the line. Diana moved quickly. She ran downstairs to get Laura's room key at the kitchen. Then, she climbed up again and went to attic. Laura had always been there since her mother left her all alone when she was five years old.

~*~

Laura sat on the wooden chair beside the window of her room, emptily gazing out to the back yard of the house. Remembering almost nothing, she felt lonely, hopeless and lost. "Who am I?" The question rattled on her mind.

Laura only did what Auntie Nela said. She obediently spent her days in her bedroom, read some books, or just sit on the wooden chair beside the window, enjoying the sunshine.

Auntie Nela would visit her every morning before going to the office. She would bring her breakfast and medicine. She would tell Laura not to go anywhere. Otherwise she would get lost on her way home.

"I am lost in my own place, you shouldn't worry about it," Laura expected to say it to her auntie, but she couldn't do it.

Laura always had different dreams every night. She was getting more confused and anxious staying in this house.

"I should get out of here, but how can I do that?" Laura asked herself.

"Laura!"

Laura turned around, trying to find the source of the voice. "Who called me? Does anybody know about me? Who am I? Where am I from?"

Laura smiled at the young woman who had called her name. She was, maybe, two or three years older than herself. Laura remembered meeting her. It was the day before she was discharged from the hospital, two months ago.

She was Diana, her cousin. She told her they were growing up, playing and going to school together. But, Laura couldn't remember all of the memories. She remembered only about a few shadows in a dark room.

"Diana!" Laura called her.

Diana ran toward Laura. She hugged her and kissed her cheek. She could not hold back her tears. They were staying in the same house, but they never said hello to each other. Laura changed a lot, from a lovely and talkative sweet girl into a completely different person. She always kept to herself and simply ignored people around her.

"How are you, my dear?"

"I am fine, but why did you come into my room?"

"I'll explain it later, but..." Diana paused for a moment.

"Do you want to have a walk with me? Bagas is waiting for us." Diana tried not to make Laura feel anxious, avoiding making her feel nervous and scared.

"Where are we going to?" Laura asked her. She looked at Diana suspiciously.

There was another pause. Diana held Laura's hand. She looked at her intently, "I will take you out of the house!" she said.

Laura was too surprised to hear that. She tried to believe the word she had just heard from Diana's lips. She wondered how Diana would take her out from this house. "Did she have the power to go against Auntie Nela?" Laura couldn't believe her, even though Diana had always demonstrated politeness.

"Are you serious?" Laura asked anxiously. To her now, it was difficult to simply believe what people said.

Diana held Laura's hand. She couldn't find the right words to make Laura understand. She had no choice, "Please just follow me, I promise you will be safe there." Then she led her out of the tiny room.

"Wait! I need to get something!"

"What is Diana trying to do? Why does she want me to get out of the house?" Laura asked herself. She unwillingly sneaked out of the place. She took her diary and followed Diana quietly.

~*~

Bagas ran toward his car. He looked at his watch. The watch pointed to eleven thirty.

He needed twenty minutes to drive to Diana's house. He started worrying about Laura. "Wait for me, I will be there soon" he mumbled.

~*~

They walked silently. They walked past the staircase along the corridor and ended up at the end of the balcony.

"You wait for me here. I need to get something" Diana said, "Don't go anywhere!"

Laura didn't say anything, her brain was empty, and her mind was blank. She simply stood up, looking at Diana's back before she disappeared behind the wall. She glanced around, scanning the walls. "Why can't I remember a thing here?" she talked to herself.

Diana gave a sign to Laura to stay in her place. She was bringing a big suitcase and another bag. She looked around before approaching Laura.

Diana led Laura to walk toward another corridor, before they stopped by the gate. Diana could see Bagas waiting for them in his car. He got out of his car once he saw Laura and Diana walked toward his direction.

Bagas certainly cared about all of the things related to Laura. That was not because of their relationship, but this was his responsibility. If he hadn't let her go alone, the accident wouldn't have happened. He kept on blaming himself.

"Diana, are you sure about this?" Bagas tried to persuade Diana.

"I am sure, pretty sure!" Diana said certainly.

Diana opened the passenger door, she asked Laura to hop in to the car. Then she closed the door and asked Bagas to open the baggage's door. Bagas helped her carry the suitcase, put it into the baggage and closed the door.

"Let's go, we don't have much time. Please, don't worry about me." Diana said, "I will take all the responsibility, and they are my parents you should know it already."

"You should let me know if something happens to you!" Bagas asked her, one more time. He knew Auntie Nela well. She looked like a calm, polite and soft spoken person. But, actually she was cruel.

"I promise you, I will be all right. They are my parents after all, they won't hurt me!" Diana answered confidently. "Let's go, we need to get going!"

Bagas hopped in to the car and started the engine. He drove slowly until the end of the alley. They passed by a big lorry. Sometime he would step on the breaks pedal when

the traffic light was red.

Laura sat quietly at the back seat, enjoying the journey. It was a while since she never got out from the house. There were a lot of things she couldn't see inside the house: different colors of sky, trees, and some kids selling newspaper at the traffic light. Laura wanted to open the rear window, but as soon as Diana noticed it she forbade her.

"No, just ignore them!" Diana said.

Diana looked at the Laura. She couldn't hold her sadness. It was unfair for Laura. Laura used to be a lovely and charming girl, laughing and smiling to everyone she met. The accident changed her into another person. She no longer smiled and laughed. She kept herself in her own world.

~*~

Auntie Nela was angry and she kept on asking her house keeper. How come Laura got out of her room, and now she was nowhere to be found. "Where are they going?" She kept talking to herself.

"Did you call Diana?" Nela asked Handoko.

"Her phone is off. Don't worry, I asked some of our men to go find out where are they!" Mr. Handoko said.

The house keeper said, Diana and Laura were going out with Bagas.

"Where are they going?" Auntie Nela mumbled. She couldn't hold on her anger, "My daughter had given to me the declaration of war," she said wickedly.

"Dear, I guess we could dispatch some more men to the East wood!"

"Why do you think Diana was going to the old lady's house?" Mr. Handoko asked Auntie Nela anxiously.

"There are no other places she should go," Auntie Nela said, "I am sure, she would go there!"

Mr. Handoko made a phone call.

"Ben, now you go to the East wood!" He said.

~*~

Bagas stopped his car in front of an old house. Diana opened the car, looking around before getting her feet down from the car. There was not much change. The same old

house and the same bicycle were still there. Maybe it had always been there.

"It has been five years!" Diana said.

Diana opened the passenger door, letting Laura get off from the car.

"Where is this, Diana?" asked Laura.

Laura felt she was familiar with the place. But she could not understand why those feelings came into her mind--the feeling of coming back home. The feeling got stronger every step she took toward the house. But, she was engulfed in right. She was worried about something she did not know.

Diana led Laura to the house. The front doors were unlocked. Perhaps the owner was inside the house. The living room was simply decorated. There were two wooden chairs, and a long bench made from bamboo. At the center, there was a wooden table covered with flowered table cloth.

"Granny, are you home?" Diana called out, but nobody answered.

"You sit down here, let me find Granny Siska. She would be very happy if she knew you were coming back!"

Laura sat alone in the living room. She observed every single thing in the room. "Where is it?" Have I ever come here?

Bagas came into the room. He was carrying the luggage and put it down on the floor. Then he sat beside Laura and he took her hand. "Do you want go for a walk?"

Laura looked at him, "Yes, sure!"

"Did I ever live here before?" asked Laura.

"Yes!"

Laura was struck with amazement and admiration. There was a beautiful garden at the backyard. There were a lot of flowers and butterflies. Laura became fixated on the beauty. They looked happy, enjoying the sunshine galore.

"How happy they are!"

Laura looked around, walking slowly on the small path of the garden. She stopped under a Poinciana tree, and she felt she was here before. She turned around, Bagas was beside her.

The Poinciana tree was in her dream a few times. She looked around once more and said "It was the same place."

"Do you remember anything?" Bagas asked her anxiously.

Laura walked forward. She knelt down in front of a tomb, crying. However, she could not understand why she was crying.

"Why do I cry? Do I know the person under the tomb? Who is she?" Laura kept asking herself, as she sobbed.

Bagas sat there, perplexed. He had no idea why Laura was crying. He wanted to do something, but someone held him.

"Let her be, she will be much better" Granny Siska said, Diana was standing behind her.

"She is her Mum" Diana whispered to Bagas.

Bagas held himself. He looked at the tombstone, thinking if the tomb would bring the old memories back to Laura. He heaved a sigh of relief.

Silhouette 4

The east wood was a small village located on the east end of the Kangean Island. The village had fresh air, and a beautiful mountain view. The foggy morning would be filled with singing birds and swaying flowers. Butterflies would fly around, dancing in the wind.

It was serene and calm, and the sky was blue. The rustling of the wind accosted the tip of a leaf, from which water dripped.

On the first night at Granny Siska's house, Laura had a hard time putting herself to sleep. She kept on thinking about the tombs at the backyard. The image continued to come to her mind.

Bagas and Diana went back to the town the following morning. Bagas promised he would visit Laura again. Diana flung herself onto Laura, embracing and kissing her goodbye. She couldn't hide her worries, about Laura's safety and condition.

"Take good care of yourself," Diana said.

Laura smiled at her. "I will!"

Granny Siska stood beside Laura, seeing the car drive away. Her expression was incomprehensible, and her eyes cast a mystery. "Who is she?" Laura asked herself. Why had Diana said that out of all people around her, this woman was the only one who could help?

"You need to take a rest, Nona," she said to Laura.

Laura followed Granny Siska. She couldn't hold her own curiosity. Granny Siska led her into a room. She sat on the wooden chair beside a window. The room was tiny, neat and tidy. A photograph of her and a young woman hung on the wall. She was wearing her pink dress and smiling happily. The young woman was sitting on the wooden chair. She held Laura's hand on her neck. She could be my mum, she thought.

"Yes, she is Nyonya Sarah!" Siska's Granny said.

Laura was startled. How come Granny Siska knew what she was thinking? Who is she? Is she someone related to me? How much does she know about me and my past?

The room was quiet. The sound of the wind and the chattering birds broke the coldness among them. Laura tried to be calm and do nothing to make Granny Siska feel like she was expecting of something from her. But she could sense there was something that Granny Siska was hiding.

Laura could feel it. There was something that Granny Siska was keeping from her. However, Laura just said nothing about it. Perhaps she was waiting for Granny Siska to tell her the stories on her own will.

Granny Siska took out an old of album. The cover was pink. There was a rose on it. However, it was very old and worn out. Granny Siska handed it to Laura. Her hand was shaking, but her expression was ice-cold.

"Inside this album, you can see all the memories you had with Nyonya Sarah. She is your mother, and the only daughter of your late grandparents!" she said, before walking away.

Laura sat alone in the room. Once she opened the first page of the photo album, her eyes couldn't blink. In this photo, she saw the little girl in her dream holding a bunch of rose.

"Who is she?"

~*~

Aunty Nela was sitting on her desk when Diana approached her. She didn't say a word, only looking at her daughter. Diana sat on the sofa, ignoring her mother.

"Where were you last night? Are you feeling happy now?" Aunty Nela said, she was calm but too scary at the same time.

"I thought you were the one who was having a party here, Mum" Diana said.

"Do you know what you are doing right now?"

"I know it very well!" Diana got up from her seat, "And I won't stop it until you give back what is right for Laura"

Aunty Nela couldn't say a word. Her one and only daughter gave her a declaration of war.

"You will regret this!" she said with a cold and heartless expression.

Diana smiled. "Don't use your money to fight against me!" she said, hurling a piece of paper onto her mother's desk. "You'll need to find the best lawyer in town after reading this!"

"What is this?"

Diana walked out, she ignoring her mother again. "You've always loved your money too much. Tell Ben to take good care of Laura since he is there."

Auntie Nela cast a look at her, startled. Diana seemed to know everything she was doing. She felt somewhat afraid. "You are my daughter!"

Diana left the room. She didn't want to say too much to her Mum. As she was about to leave her mother's office, she saw her father coming through.

"Diana!" He called, his expression was full of anxiety.

Diana looked at him, waiting for his words. "Here come the husband in the world!" she thought to herself.

"I am busy. You should ask Mum if you need an explanation. I told to her what she needed to hear!" Before he could reply, Diana cut her father out and snapped, "I should get going, I am busy. Bye, Papa!"

Handoko couldn't hold his temper any longer. "Why did you do that?"

"Because sinners like you and Mum deserve it!"

"Stop protecting her!" Handoko bellowed. "Be your own person and do your own job!"

"Papa.." she started, before correcting herself. "No, Mr. Handoko. You should try to stand in Laura's father's shoes for a while, and then you'll get your answer!" She walked away, leaving her beloved father grappling with his own anger.

"I hope you understand, and realize what you should do!" Diana mumbled. "I love you but you love your money more than me!"

~*~

Ben walked quietly. He was observing Granny Siska's house thoroughly. He had worked for Mr. Handoko since he was twenty years old, after losing his parents to a traffic accident. That was a decade ago.

"You work for me and I will take care of you" Mr. Handoko always said.

Ben had a tall muscular body, fair skin and a handsome face. He was a polite and respectful young man. His body was fit for a bodyguard, which was his job. However, he was famous in his field being a cold-blooded fighter.

Ben looked closely at the house. From a distance he could see a young woman enjoying the sun. He smiled and thought: You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen!

Ben kept his eye on her. He knew Laura, and about everything that happened to her, but he had no right to care about her beyond his job. He had never neglected his job, and he would never. As a man, it was easy to fall in love with her. But as an employee, he had other responsibilities.

Laura was enjoying the evening, sitting on the bench in the backyard. She loved the scent of the flowers, the golden sunset and the sound of the bird chirping. She was thinking about the photo album. She was the little girl in her dreams, and the young lady was her mum. That was what Granny Siska said.

Her mind was flying, floating with the skies. The calm and the serene atmosphere erased her worries. The image came to her again and again. The photo album gave her the willpower to try harder to get back her lost memory.

There was a small note on a page of the photo album. It was her mother's handwriting. After reading it, Laura remembered some of her memories with her Mum. The date at the memo said it was a year before she was found died on her bed. The mystery behind her mum poisoned food was unrevealed.

Tonight was a beautiful night

There were no stars, only darkness and loneliness

No more pain, no more hurt, no more worries

And, there was no more hope

Please, stay strong my little Laura

Eastwood, 23 June 2009

Laura could remember the very last day she had spent together with her Mum. "My

beautiful Laura, you should grow up like a princess, I am sorry my girl!" that was her Mum's last words.

But she suddenly lost her memories. She couldn't remember what happened to her after her Mother was gone. She still hadn't found the answer.

She looked at the blue high skies, not noticing the man standing right in front of her. He was wearing a hat and his face was concealed.

"Are you okay?" The man asked her.

Laura didn't answer him. She got up from the bench, looking at him with confusion. She asked him, "Who are you?"

The man walked closer to Laura. His hand was holding something. Laura panicked. She tried to fight but her small body was not a good match for his. He easily got a hold of her arm. Suddenly, a sharp small knife was on Laura's neck.

"Don't move or try to fight. Listen to what I say and follow me!" he whispered into Laura's ears.

"Who are you?" Laura asked. She was too scared to move or look at this man who had come out of nowhere.

"Me?" he laughed. "I'm the one who helps you go to heaven!"

Laura went pale and limp, losing her will to fight. She was unable to defend herself. The house was too far away, and there was no one else around her. She felt like she was falling into a deep hole around her own feet, and nobody could save her.

Laura closed her eyes, holding back her tears. She was supposed to be happy that somebody was helping her end her painful life. But she felt too scared to imagine the pain that would be caused by the sharp knife in front of her eyes.

"Mama" She hissed.

"ARGH!"

Suddenly, the man screamed. His strong arms let go of Laura. Laura could hear the sound of a hard punch.

"Don't open your eyes!"

She could hear another man's voice, but she was too scared to open her eyes. Laura obediently listened to the voice. She stay put.

After a minute, she couldn't hear any more sound of fighting. She opened her eyes,

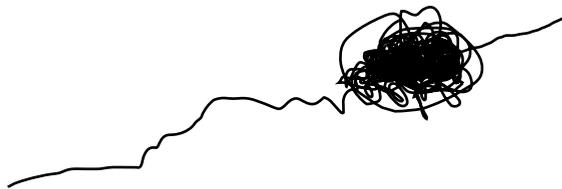
but there was no one there. The man who pressed the knife against her neck was missing, and so was the other man.

"Who is he?" She kept looking around, but there was nobody.

~*~

Ben punched the man's face so hard that he fell to his knees. The man looked up, but before he could say a word he got another punch to his face. Ben pulled him up by his neck, and gave him instructions to keep his mouth shut.

"Don't open your eyes!" Ben said to Laura before he left her. The other man was following behind him.



The Wooden Chair

Wiwik Tri Winarsih

"I have booked the ticket for 7th August!" Her employer said.

Ah Ma finished her lunch before she went back to her room to check on Kiara. A smile spread on her face. She imagined the amount of pain that Kiara was feeling, the pain of having to live away from her family in a world completely new to her.

"Take your lunch and continue your work, Ara!" Ah Ma said before she went to her room.

After cleaning the table, Kiara sat on a wooden chair. There was a corner in the room that she used as a hiding place from the pressure of her job. She hated the feeling of missing home, but she managed to endure it very well. These days, however, the feeling got stronger and it was just too much to bear.

"Homesickness, go away!"

Kiara worked as a domestic worker since her twenties, working with the family since she first set foot in this country. Two months ago, Kiara decided to change to a new employer, and this would be the beginning of a completely new story for her.

Her previous employer made her work under strenuous conditions, day in day out. Sometimes ill words were hurled at her. But Kiara kept the smile on her face unchanged.

On weekends, Kiara did not get her off days as other domestic workers did. She was made to work at her employer's catering business without getting extra pay. Believing this would end soon, Kiara survived the arduous work.

"Are you stupid? Why don't you report it to the Ministry of Manpower?"

"You don't understand

This was the question that her friend threw to her every day. But she knew her friend didn't even understand her situation. This would be useless if she did not know what to say in front of the officer. If she failed to prove her situation to the officer of the Ministry of Manpower, she would get blacklisted or she had to stay without any job until the case was closed.

"No good thing would happen to me, anyway!" Kiara said in her Indonesian accent.

The traffic was slower at peak hours. It was weekend, the situation was getting worse when Simon's phone rang for a few times. He was focused on the traffic instead of picking

up the phone call. The car moved 20 km/hour, which was better than a few minutes of not moving at all. It was 15:07.

Kiara sat on the passenger seat, without saying anything. She knew very well that they would get into trouble in the next few minutes. The event should've begun at 7.30 pm, but they couldn't send the food on time. The traffic was horrific on Saturday evenings.

Today was her last day to work for her employer. Her work permit was cancelled five days ago without her concern. But, she didn't feel angry or grumbled. This was what she wanted to happen. At least, she got her letter to walk out from her employer's house safely.

"I am will stay in Batam for a week," she said to her mother earlier this morning over the phone.

~*~

A stream of people queued at the counter for checking in. The big screen on the wall was displaying the flight schedule for today and blinking once in a few minutes. A couple ran on their shoes in hurry. Their faces were as white as white sand. They passed through throngs of people who were standing in the line when the girl behind the desk exclaimed, "Your flight last call was fifteen minutes ago, Sir!"

Kiara stood in her place. She imagined what the couple felt: losing something already on the list because of carelessness or inability. Human plans out, but God decides.

"My flight is next week, Mum!"

A week ago, when a lightning struck her but she wasn't dead. The text was sent by her daughter, vividly saying about her elder sister; she was in an accident that morning. Kiara waited for the next text from her daughter, but received nothing. Waiting is killing.

The time moved slowly, but still there was no text sent. Kiara couldn't focus on her job. She went out and in to the kitchen, checking on her phone and putting it back on the table. A few minutes later, she came back to check on her phone again, but she got nothing. Until lunch time, she sat on the corner of kitchen waiting a text to display on her phone screen. On the wooden chair beside the window, the tears wetted her eye.

Her sister was gone. A big day that she should celebrate turned into condolence and sorrow.

"Human makes plan, but God makes decision," She whispered. She took her boarding pass and walked towards gate, waiting for the plane.

I Named Her Al Isha

By Eli Nur Fadilah

I felt like my head was spinning. My stomach was upset, and I vomited every morning. I got weaker day by day. The struggle became too much to bear, so one day I decided to go home. I took the early train so by the evening I would have reached home. I was scared of being unable to find my own way home.

At six o'clock in the evening I reached home. It took me eight hours by train from Jakarta. When I arrived, my brother had gone to his food stall near the police station, about one kilometer away from our house. My village was blanketed in tranquility. Most of the youths had moved to the city or overseas for a better living.

My mother cooked my favorite food every time I came home from work in the city, but this time I couldn't eat the meal as my stomach refused it. I started to vomit when I smelled something strange. I asked my mother to take me to the community clinic the next day. The day came, and we went to the clinic on a trishaw.

Upon arrival I was filled with anxiety, but the pleasant demeanor of the doctor comforted me. She did several checks unfathomable to me and a moment later my mother and I were seated across her desk. She then broke the news, "You are pregnant," said the doctor while handing a book to me. "Please come here every month for a check-up."

My jaw dropped. I stared blankly at the book the doctor passed on to me. The news also brought my mother to a standstill.

On the way home, my mother didn't utter a single word. I wanted to break the silence, but looking at her face, I could sense confusion mixed with anger and sadness. Eventually I resolved to stay silent throughout the rest of the journey back home.

I was so overwhelmed by grief that I locked myself in my room, crying and considering suicide. I could hear a faint sound of my mother and brother conversing outside my room. I thought, "If I commit suicide, how will my mother take it? I am her only daughter, and I am the only one who understands her better than others. If I commit suicide, I will kill not only myself but also the unborn human that God has created in my tummy." I was filled with confusion, not knowing what to do. I wondered if the society would still accept my presence in their midst.

My pondering was interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Can I have a word with you?" asked my brother from the other side.

I opened the door and discovered that my other relatives were already sitting in the living room. A moment later, they hurled questions at me.

"Do you have a boyfriend?" my cousin asked. I was unable to get a word out of my mouth. I didn't have the courage to behold their countenance, so I just nodded my head.

"Where is he?"

"Can you ask him to come here?"

I took out my phone and started to type a message to my boyfriend, who lived in a city on Borneo Island.

"He said he has no money," I told them.

"Just ask him to come. I will get the money for him," my mother offered. So I asked him to come.

Things were difficult because we were a poor family, and my boyfriend was still a university student. In addition, he also came from a low-income background. On the following day, my mother handed some money to be sent to him. I accepted, asking "Where do you get the money, mom?"

"I borrowed it from Ayu," she replied. "I want our neighbors to know that your unborn baby has a father, so they won't say ill words to you," she added. Then my brother and I went to the bank to remit the money.

I was lucky that my family didn't disown me. Maybe I would've been kicked out if my dad had still been alive. I felt remorseful.

My boyfriend came in the fourth month of my pregnancy, during which we did a prayer for the unborn baby. Such was commonplace in my village. After the prayer, my mother introduced my boyfriend to the villagers who came to our house, so everyone got to see his face.

My mother asked the imam if I could get married to my boyfriend, but he said, "No." Hearing it, my mother felt crestfallen and resolved to ask other imams only to find that they said the same thing. She eventually gave up and tried to accept the situation.

Two weeks went by and my boyfriend had to return and continue his studies. He promised to come back before I delivered my baby. During the waiting, my family was having a really tough time as our neighbors became noisy about me. They were gossiping about me, such that I didn't even dare to go outside for a walk or buy something at the nearby shop. So I kept myself locked in my house.

During this time, I helped my brother at his food stall. When it rained, he wouldn't go to his shop with his bicycle and my mother would help him sell the food. She would roam around the neighborhood selling food under an umbrella. If she hadn't sold the food, we wouldn't have been able to feed ourselves. Selling food was our only way of earning a living.

In the eight month of my pregnancy, I started to find it difficult to communicate with my boyfriend.

The ninth month of my pregnancy fell in Ramadhan, the Muslim holy month. It was the day before the led—a big day for my brother as he would usually be able to sell more food around this time. My mother set out to shop in the morning although her heart was heavy, worrying about me. The doctor said that I would deliver my baby in about a week's time.

The afternoon was spent in cooking the food. At 5 o'clock, my brother collected the food and went to his stall. All of a sudden, my legs started to feel frozen and I was unable to walk.

I told my mother and she called my cousin. Soon, he came to fetch me and drove me to the nearby clinic. After we got there, the doctor told me that I was to be sent to a hospital as my blood pressure kept increasing, and my body weakening. It took one hour to reach the hospital. My mother and stepbrother kept me company on the ambulance.

At the hospital, the doctor said that she had to do a C-section. The hospital officers asked my husband's name, and they wanted him to be present among us. I asked my brother to call my boyfriend, but he was unreachable. I was shattered.

After my brother signed an agreement, I was taken to the operating theater for surgery. My mother and my stepbrother waited for me outside. They gave me an injection, and all of a sudden I forgot what happened next. But on the last couple of stitches, I could feel the needle piercing my stomach and I screamed out loud. After that, they took me to a regular hospital room, while my new born baby had to stay in a special care unit because of the baby's slow heartbeat. I pumped milk for my baby, and my mother would send it to the baby's room.

Four days later, they let me go back home, but without my baby. I still couldn't walk properly, but I had to go home because the government's insurance couldn't cover the room fees any longer. The hospital informed me that my baby still had to wait for a medical specialist to come, but because it was on the led, the doctor wasn't on duty. My brother stayed there to look after my baby.

After one week, I went to visit my baby. The doctor told us that the machine to check my baby's heart was broken, so I would have to wait for it to be repaired. But my family suggested we move my baby and myself to another hospital since I was still not feeling any better.

After paying about one million rupiahs, we moved to another hospital where I received some government subsidy for my treatment. My brother did all of the paperwork required, and the hospital treated me very well despite that fact that I was on a subsidy. After checking my baby's heart condition, they declared that my baby was all right. After a month full of stressful circumstances, we were finally coming back home!

I still couldn't communicate with my boyfriend to tell him that I'd delivered the baby, but I was very happy to be home and eat my favorite food that my mother cooked for me. The next days were spent in preparing for the name-giving Islamic ceremony. I named her: Al Isha.

About the Authors

Kustini

Kustini was born in Pati, Central Java. She has been working in Singapore since December 2011. She is fond of learning something new and different from her surrounding for her own self-growth. Her hobby includes writing. Being far away from home has shaped her into a stronger and more independent version of herself. “Your choice is the consequence of your responsibility” is her motto and self-reminder in everything she does.

Sugiarti

Sugiarti M. comes from Sokaraja, Banyumas, Central Java. She has been working as a domestic worker in Singapore for 18 years. She spends her days off by attending classes such as hair styling, sewing, business management, and prose writing with *The Voice of Singapore’s Invisible Hands*. Photography, especially taking photographs and portraits of a street, is her hobby.

Deni Apriyani

Deni Apriyani was born in Indramayu, 18 April 1996. She has been a domestic worker in Singapore for 4 years with 2 different employers: Indonesian and Australian families. She likes to watch comedy show and write something unusual.

Yube Hermawan

Siti Mubaedah loves to write short stories and poems. She has been a writer for the past two years and enjoying it very much. She thought writing was a mere hobby, but little did she know that it would help her find a purpose in her life. Her English proficiency level does not stop her from writing as it has been a great medium for her to cope with hardship and heartbreaks in her life. Furthermore, she loves art and aspires to become a great poet.

Susan Ruwadi

Susanti is an ordinary person who always wants to be an independent woman running a life of her own. In 2010, she decided to leave her home town, Indonesia, to work as a domestic worker in Singapore because she wanted to earn money to continue her study; she wanted to go to university. Things did not work out as planned at first. Fortunately, in 2014, she met a good employer

who has been supportive since then. Being a domestic worker has taught Susanti to work harder and be more confident in every step she takes. She has come to the realization that learning happens everywhere, not only in university's classroom.

Melur Seruni

Yanti Mastuti, who is more well-known as Melur Seruni, was born in Magelang on the 4th of August 1979. She first traveled abroad to work in 2000, with Singapore as her destination. In 2005, she traveled to Malaysia to work for two years, and went back to Singapore in early 2008 and stayed there until 2017. Her long journey overseas has given a special touch to her poems, which she began to write in the late 2010s. Since then, she has written hundreds of poems which have been featured in more than 10 anthologies--collectively and single authored-- and newspapers. Her featured work includes *Cinta, Rindu dan Kematian* ("Love, Longing, and Death", Jakarta 2010), *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Sajak* ("Out of Dark comes Poetry", Solo 2012), *Puisi Menolak Korupsi* ("A Poem Against Corruption", Solo 2012-2016), *Maharajan* (Malaysia 2013), *Kopi Sastera* ("Literary Coffee", Malaysia 2014), *Meraih Sayang* ("Aiming for Love", Jakarta 2015) *Memo untuk Presiden* ("Memo for President", Solo 2014), *Memo untuk Wakil Rakyat* ("Memo for People's Representative", Solo 2015), *Memo Anti Terorisme* ("Anti-Terrorism Memo", Solo 2016) *Nol Kilometer* ("Zero Kilometer", Jogja 2014), *I'm Domestic Worker* (2014), *Buruh Migran dan Human Trafficking* ("Migrant Worker and Human Trafficking", Jogja 2016), *Puisi Kampungan* ("A Savage Poem", Semarang 2016), *Kopi Penyair Dunia* ("World Poet's Coffee", 2016), *Kami Menulis di Atas Pasir* ("We Write on Sand", 2017). Her work has been featured in *New Sabah Time* (2012), *Berita Minggu*, Singapore (2015), *Susastera*, Sabah (2015), *Antologi Tunggal Jejak Kelana*, Semarang (2015) and *Kembang Jarak*, Semarang (2016). She was also the third winner of poetry writing and reading contest on Kartini's Day, HOME Singapore 2014, and the third winner of poetry reading contest on Hero's Day, Indonesian Embassy Singapore November 2016.

Meikhan Sri Bandar

Menik Sri Bandar or Meikhan Sri Bandar is from Batang, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia. She is more known as a singer with a specialty in Dangdut music. She began her journey as a migrant worker in 2003. Working in Singapore, she cannot hold back her true calling. She still sings whenever there is a chance. Menik has joined a lot of singing and karaoke competitions held in Singapore

and earned champion titles several times. Apart from singing, she also writes. Her short story entitled “When Love is Flowering” brought her to the final round of the Migrant Poetry Competition 2016 and has been featured in the Anthology of “Cinta Sejuta Rasa”. Her life motto is “Be yourself. Dare to try. Don’t be afraid to fail, and keep up your spirit.”

Eli Nur Fadilah

Eli Nur Fadilah was born in Cilacap, Central Java, on 18th March 1992. She has been working in Singapore since September 2011. When working overseas for the first time, she was employed by a very supportive employer. In the middle of 2014, she joined a baking class and became the 2nd best student at the intermediate class. In 2015, she joined Aidha and passed module 2 in November 2017. All the fees were covered by her employer. Now she is working with a new family and has started her senior high school equivalency program. Eli has a deep interest in writing and started doing it when she was still in junior high school. After a long hiatus due to his dad’s passing, she started joining *The Voice of Singapore’s Invisible Hands* in 2017.

Wiwik Tri Winarsih

Wiwik was born in Kediri, East Java. She came to Singapore in 2004, working as a domestic worker. She has enjoyed writing since she was very young, and she believes that in this world nothing is impossible as long as she works hard. She has one daughter, and her dream is to be the best mother for her only daughter.

Windu Madness

Windu was born in Jakarta, Indonesia. She works in Singapore as a domestic helper. She has had a hobby of writing in a diary since her childhood, and in 2014 she began writing short stories, novelettes, and poetry. In addition to writing, she also likes reading, exploring and photography

Our Big Family

Yoga Prasetyo

As a child of a domestic worker myself, I've been touched to the core by the many conversations I've had with these highly talented women. Their stories help me understand the circumstances that my mother and countless other migrant workers have been through; to imagine what it's like to toil for what seems like endless hours, an ocean away, for years and years until their own children grow up to be like strangers to them. I hope *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands* will continue to provide space where migrant workers can learn and take actions – by and for themselves.

Wei Wei Shih

With much humbleness and also great pleasure, I am writing this for my beloved and much missed former students, of the *Voice*. When Yoga, with his great vision and passion founded the *Voice* in 2016, I had the fortune to be invited to help in the earlier stage of the project. I was asked to teach the students - predominantly domestic workers from Indonesia - English literature and writing skills. Little did I know that these ladies were to go on and teach me much more, about resilience, patience, and unbelievable optimism, than what I could possibly teach them in return. 101 In the running of our social media page I saw a section of the Singaporean society becoming more aware of the issues faced by people like our students, may it be triumphs or sorrows. That site, as well as this book, also aim to further our mission - to provide a much-awaited and deserved platform for many of the talented albeit less privileged souls who walk among us, so that their voices can be heard. 76 Thank you, dear readers, for hearing us. Though I'm no longer based in Singapore, my love and thoughts are with the students of the *Voice*, always.

Kathryn Chua

Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands introduced me to some of the most talented, motivated and individual writers I have ever had the pleasure to meet. Although I joined the organization as a teacher, I often felt more akin to a student in our classes; each of the writers had incredibly rich and complex stories to tell, often drawn from their lives as mothers, lovers, workers and intellectuals. From ghoulish tales of midnight bus rides, to heart-wrenching poetry written for

children on faraway shores, this collection contains a bevy of wonderful writing. There are many that believe that art is (or even should be) the domain of the elite, and that literature is only legitimate if written by the powerful, wealthy, or well-educated. However, this is not the case. Art is most meaningful when it speaks to humanity's universal experiences: of tragedy, humor, triumph and love. It is most meaningful when it shines light upon experiences and opinions that have, until then, been kept in the darkness. I believe that the writers of *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands* embody this vision of art and literature. I hope that upon reading this book, you will come to believe the same.

Annisa Rakun

It has been a great honor to meet and share my English and literature knowledge with the wonderful students in *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands*. I was blown away by the honesty and character of the works that I encountered, out of which I translated some. These precious gems taught me that everyone has a story to tell regardless of their demographics, and that these stories are important to be told, especially because the public does not hear it enough. After all, knowing someone's story is the first step to being able to understand and respect these important members of society, and that will in time lead to better treatment of workers. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to the committee headed by Yoga and Kathryn for giving me an avenue to learn to teach despite having no experience. It has been a thrilling ride, and I wish everyone involved all the best.

Diana Lim

I saw *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands'* Facebook post requesting for translator volunteers and I knew I really wanted to do it but had a doubt whether I could juggle with deadlines. I decided to take the plunge anyway and it turned out to be one of the best decisions I have ever made! I have just translated 2 poems so far for Mbak Melur and Mbak Sugiarti, but that short journey has taught me so much. The most touching part is when I first saw their poems... soul-stirring is an understatement. I always heard about the plight of domestic workers here, but their words made me saw first-hand the real emotional struggle to be away from home and work here. It was truly eye-opening for me. Seeing their gratitude to me also humbled me because I didn't do much for them. I wish I could do more. The midnight oils burnt for this is totally worth it! Thank you Yoga for creating VoS and hope VoS can grow more!

Adrian Golian

Being involved in the English writing lessons run by the *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands* was one of the most valuable experiences of my year as exchange student in Singapore. The incredible ladies behind this publication, and their stories, have moved me deeply on multiple occasions. They tell their experiences as people often unnoticed and whose work is being taken for granted. Stories of separated families, love gained and lost. It was not uncommon that their work surprised and amazed me with their level of creativity. I am so grateful for the opportunity to help these people show the society they live in and the world that they are human, that they are worth listening to and that their journeys and lives matter. Thank you, to all the students and teachers who poured their hearts into our project.

Cheryl Cosslett

I decided to join *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands* because I deeply appreciated the organization's mission to let migrant workers represent themselves in a light that differs from existing stereotypes and narratives. I believe that creative writing is an empowering tool for self-expression and for raising one's concerns for a cause. Thus far, I have found the poems I work with nothing less than impressively moving, and can only hope that I do justice to the works of these incredibly talented migrant worker writers!

Jeanita Putri

It was such a great experience to be part of *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands*. I did not only find new friends here, but a new family! They are smart and creative. I was amazed by the wonderful poetry and stories they made. I am the one who learnt a lot from them. Here, I also learnt that teaching is not always about giving a lesson to the students but how you can get along with them. As if you live in the stories of poems they made. I hope that by reading this book, the readers will get to know more about them, just like I do.

Adriana Rahajeng

Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands has allowed me to understand the lived experience of migrant workers. From my interactions and online sessions with them, I can tell that the members of the community are highly motivated individuals. They are always eager to learn. Their writings show that they should not be simply defined by their identity as migrant domestic workers because they are more than that. They are also daughters, mothers, and citizens like everyone else.

Yusep Ardiansyah

Being a part of *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands* has strengthened my belief in the power of sharing. For the mentees, it may have always been we, the mentors, who have taught, helped, and changed their lives. But for me, their written expression of battling the injustice, longing home and also the beloved ones, their passion, and hard work have made a difference in our lives by teaching us the most important lesson on being optimistic and embracing our imperfections. I hope your works can be the eye-opening voice that cannot be silenced anymore.

Putri Santi

Thank you for giving me a chance to be a part of this organization. It was not just me teaching my mentee but they actually also taught me a lot of things. Thank you for the new experiences and please never stop giving people all the education they deserve to get. It's really my pleasure to be part of *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands*.

Ayu Annisa

What's truly memorable from being involved in this project is witnessing the participants' determination to learn. Despite the lack of facility and control from my part and the lack of time from theirs, they always managed to find a way to keep engaged to the lessons taught. Their actively asking questions and engaging in discussion prove that they have what it takes to learn so many other great things in the future. I sincerely hope all of the participants find this project as helpful and as inspiring as I do.

Andina Amelia

I'm truly inspired and motivated by our fellow migrant workers who still have the spirit to learn English despite their busy work hour. Thank you *Voice of Singapore's Invisible Hands* for bridging me to these people!

“Reading these poems and short stories by Indonesian migrant workers made me realize that much of our humanity side has been hidden, humiliated, insulted, or even obliterated. At times, these migrants have to bury deep the hopes to communicate with their far away family, in the quietness of night. These poems and short stories paint their hopes, dreams, pains, and happiness, and they remind us, once again, of the utmost importance of putting certain structures in place to ensure their welfare.”

Anis Hidayah, Coordinator of Migrant Care

“This anthology of poems and short stories does not only demonstrate the depth of knowledge and artistic talents of these Indonesian migrant workers; it also shows us the realities of Indonesian migrant workers’ life at work. This book will help you understand what it is like to be working, ocean and ocean away from a family.”

Trini Haryanti, Coordinator of Library Development Foundation

“Much has been said about migrant workers, but through this anthology they become the subjects who write in the language their masters can understand. Aside from things that we all share, memories of childhood, romance, dreams and visions about society, and aside from horrors of violence that haunts stolen time. It is mother’s time from bonding with her children, daughter’s time from tending to dying parents, a lover’s time from the loved one’s embrace, time locked, frozen in the routines of somebody else’s homes, not one’s own. Creative writing is a process for healing the wounds. Reading and sharing these writings is a process for recapturing our humanity, lost in the migrant worker’s injustice.”

Prof. Melani Budianta, Universitas Indonesia

