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Java Tales and Beyond

The Creative Writing Magazine of
TCK Learning Centre for Migrant Workers

Plays

Poetry

Personal Stories

Essays



CREATIVE WRITING AND PERSONAL STORIES BY
INDONESIAN DOMESTIC WORKERS IN HONG KONG

Welcome to the first edition of **Java Tales and Voices**, the creative writing magazine of TCK Learning Centre for Migrant Workers, or TCKLC! All the pieces in the magazine were written, in English, by Indonesian domestic workers living in Hong Kong and studying English at TCKLC on their day-off and are reproduced here with minimal copy-editing. Some items were written in previous years as homework from Intermediate or Advanced English classes while the summer of 2018 saw an outpouring of poems and stories during a short course on Creative Writing.

We have selected a range of different materials, including touching personal life stories, atmospheric poems, thoughtful short essays and an inspiring drama entitled Reach for the Stars taken from the theme of this year's Graduation Ceremony and Cultural Performance, also the occasion for the launch of the magazine. As tutors of these classes, it has been a real privilege and source of upliftment for us to witness within the migrant worker community a wonderful enthusiasm for learning and the development of hidden talents and then see their expression on these pages.

We hope you enjoy this first edition of **Java Tales and Voices**, which we dedicate to all our students in celebration of the seventh anniversary of the founding of TCKLC in December 2011.

Chris Orledge

- Co-Founder

Saraswati Austin

- English Teacher

Becky Mitchell

- Creative Writing
Teacher

Eni Ghinaljypani-Guest

- English Teacher

Martin Reid

- Design Lead

TCK Learning Centre for Migrant Workers
Hong Kong registered charity number 91/12084
info@tcklc.org
www.tcklc.org
<http://www.facebook.com/TckLearningCentre>

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TCK Learning Centre for Migrant Workers



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RAINBOW

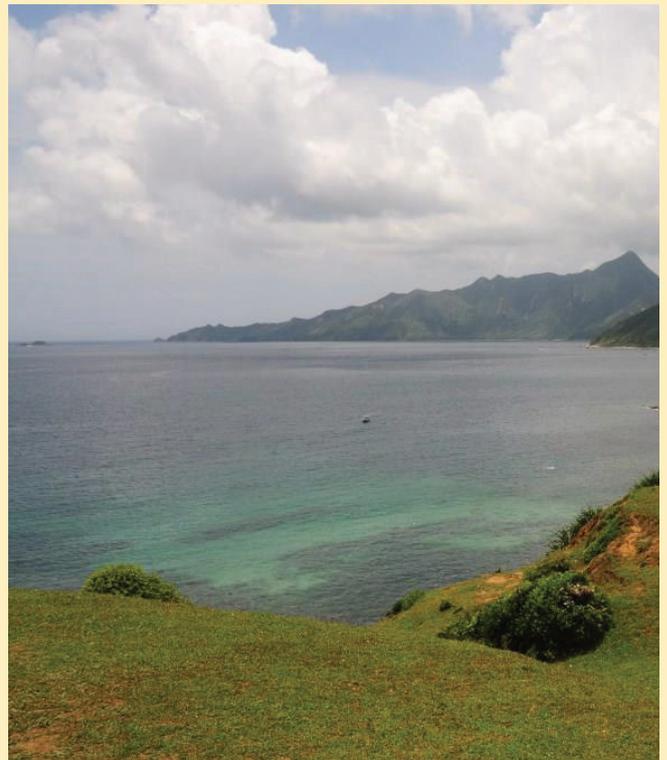


BY Anni Juliana

Drip ... drip ... drip ... The sounds of raindrops falling. They make my window blurry. I'm staring at the window and I start crying, and the sound of the rain and the shadow of the blur take my memories away, flying far away and bringing me back to my life 7 years ago.

My tears were falling then also... I hug my babies so hard. I hold them with love and pull them deep into my chest; I say a little prayer to make my heart calm and stop the pain in my head. "God, please stay with me, I want to be strong, and you know the reason why." I cry without sound while looking to the little angels sleeping peacefully in the night. I touch my little angels' faces softly and let them play in a dream world. I'm grateful and feel peace in my heart every time I see my babies' faces.

Beep ... beep ... beep ... My alarm is ringing clearly in my ear. But it's hard opening my eyes. Slowly I hear an angel's voice saying lovely words in my ears... "good morning, mummy" ... like a bolt of lightning, giving me the power to open my eyes and see my baby smiling. I wake and say "good morning, my angel." She gives me soft and tender kisses. It restores my faith and hope to face my days. I look at the clock hanging on the wall ... 5.00 a.m. Perfect. I hold her little body whispering "shhh, don't make any noise, mummy needs you to behave, so your sister and brother keep sleeping." I give her a smile while her eyes twinkle. I turn to her younger sister and brother and cover them with the blanket to stay warm. I walk out to the kitchen with my daughter. I start to cook, like every day, so everyone gets breakfast before they go to work. I must move faster because if my babies wake it's very hard to do this work. I must take care of everyone.



Muah... muah... muah... My sisters Tetty and Bella are leaving for work. As usual, they kiss my kids before they leave. "Love you Kevin", "love you Chelsea", "love you Ivy". I walk to the table to clean up their plates but my work is just starting. My dad is still having his breakfast. So I begin to feed my babies. And it's a crowded house. I have more brothers and sisters. My younger sister, Erni, sits at the kitchen table and starts to take food and eat. She's angry about my kids crying at night and complaining loudly about her sleep. "Well, why don't you go and find a job so you are not making this noise in this house?" my dad says. She got fired from her job, so she's come home to stay until she gets a new job.

“Well, it’s bothering me, I can’t sleep,” Erni is yelling at my dad. “Go and find a job, and don’t complain about your sleep. And respect your sister because she doesn’t get enough sleep every night. Sometimes the baby is crying at night. So why don’t you help to do something instead?” my dad says. “And besides, you should think about her feelings when you say things like this. None of you are married or have babies, so you don’t know how heavy her burden is.”

I keep quiet and keep feeding my babies, watching them playing, and keep smiling as they know nothing. I want to protect them because they are innocent. They deserve a better life... I keep smiling when my tears fall. My father’s words give my heart comfort, but quietly I speak to my heart: “Mum, I miss you.”

Being a single parent is not easy. I worship my mum just for what she did for our family. She had 12 children to take care of. With the hardest of financial situations, full of unfair choices, my parents carried a heavy burden. She did her best. She’s the greatest love of all. But God called my mum away from us too soon, and I know that we were not ready at that moment. And now, all I know is, I want to do my best as a mother of three. To try and be as good as my mum was. Memories of my mum give me the strength to face all the challenges in my life. I have to take care of my brothers and sisters and my dad and do all the housework while at the same time raising my three babies. It’s so much harder than anyone thinks.

Tick tock... Tick tock... Days, months, years go by, my kids growing up. Time moves so fast. No one can control or stop it, or even push the pause button. A million tears fall. A million prayers I send up to heaven just for one reason. I want to create a better future for my little treasures, my three little babies.

“Please, think carefully before you make a final decision,” Tetty says with a gentle voice. “If this is your desire then you must go with faith. Put all your worries into His hands. Don’t worry about what others say because you’re the only one who knows what’s best for you and your kids.” I look into her eyes... Thank you... thank you so much, Tetty. I want to yell out loud and tell her how much I appreciate her support. I do really think about this often. My kids should go to school. They deserve a much better life. And if it’s not me making it happen, then who? I try so hard. I take care of my kids and all my brothers and sisters. I fight and try to survive and do everything. But now the situation is changing. It becomes harder. Kevin must go to school, and next year Chelsea...and then Ivy.

This job, to be a domestic worker, is the only way I can make it. And besides, I did all these things for so many years. Waking up at 5 in the morning, cooking and preparing breakfast for all of you guys. Taking care of my babies, going to the market ... walking ... rushing home ... feeding my babies ... cooking lunch ... cleaning the house ... doing the laundry ... the dishes ... going crazy when the rain came because the water flooded the house ... sometimes crying because I was getting tired and still couldn’t stop until the floor was dried so when everyone came home all they knew was everything was okay. And when everyone went to bed, I made sure my babies were warm enough. And I never closed my eyes before I said a little prayer, that we would have enough money ... to rent a better house so we wouldn’t have to worry when the rain came, enough to send my kids to school or just to give them milk in the morning.

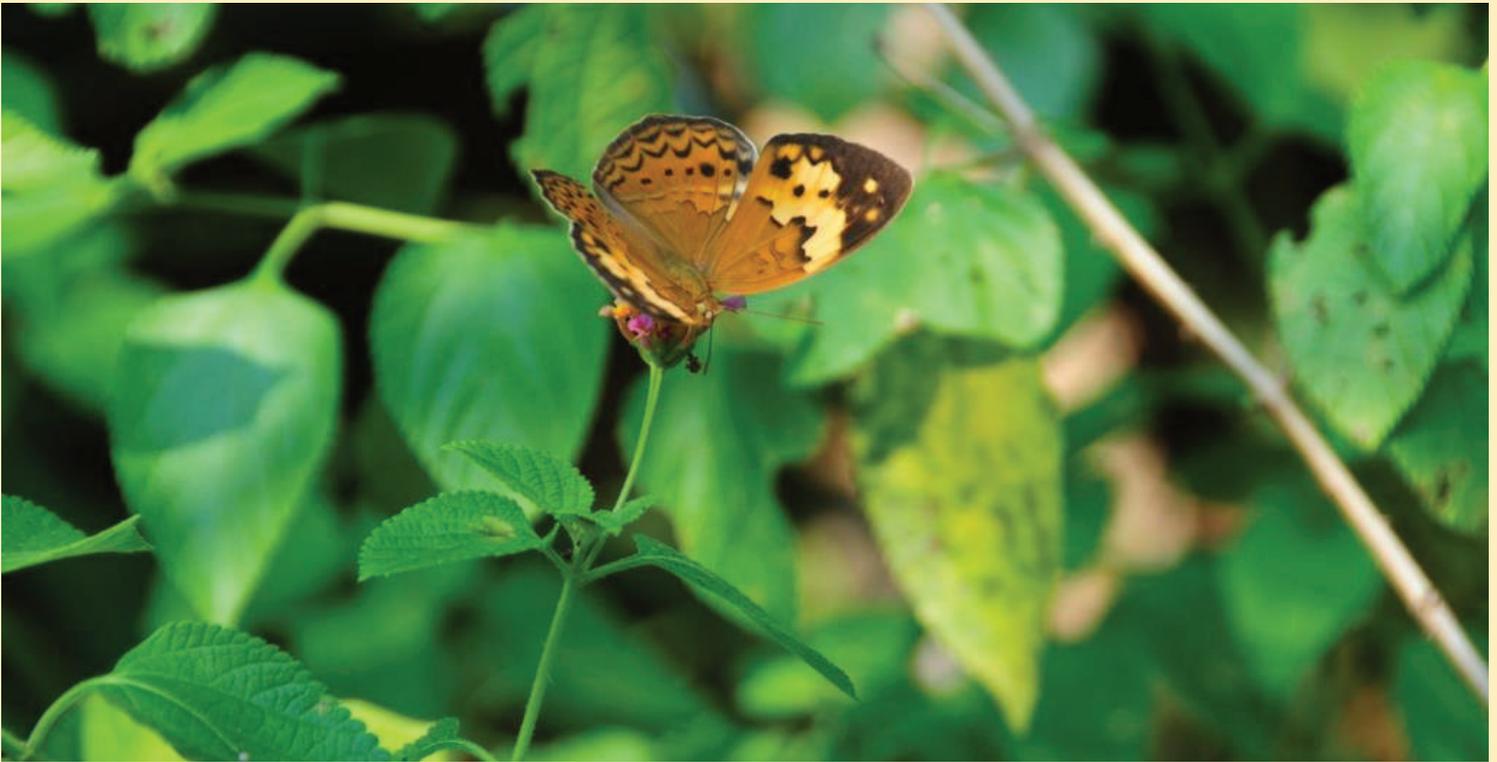
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Seven years ago I was a person who had almost lost hope, thinking that I would end up as nothing, worrying about how I would raise my babies, crying for the husband that left me, getting sick of my family, pitying my hard life (while I take care of everything) and angry for this unfair and heavy burden.

I must go out and work, work very hard to keep all things possible. And the time is now.

All these things I dealt with for so many years. It’s already part of my daily life. And now if I have to work overseas, that is the only way I can make all our hopes come true. I can do all these things. And my salary will be enough to make sure our family life is secure. Pay the rent when the time comes. Enough to send my kids to school.

“I only ask you for one thing ... take care of my kids with love,” I tell Tetty; “I will do everything for all of you, but please hold my kids tightly and care for them and love them.” She and I say nothing then, but I can see her eyes fill with tears. I hug her ... I know she can feel what I feel right now as a single mum who has to leave her kids while they are still so little.



"I will come home every year ... I will make my kids and my family my priority ... I promise," I tell her, and she looks at me and says "Go, all the best for you ... my prayers are with you ... may God be with you and bless you in every step you take."

My heart is full of gratitude. This is all I need. I am ready. I will face the world. On the morning I leave I kiss my three little angels, deep, and whisper in their ears ... Mum loves all of you ... God, please watch over my kids so I can fly peacefully.

Rain is still falling outside. My windows are wet. Just like my eyes, filled with tears. But these tears are tears of happiness. Before, I cried because I didn't know where life would take me. But now I'm grateful. I can see now that this is all part of the plan. I'm grateful for His plan for me. Seven years ago I was a person who had almost lost hope, thinking that I would end up as nothing, worrying about how I would raise my babies, crying for the husband that left me, getting sick of my family, pitying my hard life (while I take care of everything) and angry for this unfair and heavy burden. Now I've learned so many things. I've seen so many different kinds of lives. So I can say clearly now that God has a great plan for everyone, even when it's not easy. Through all this, I have become stronger. All my pain from before, what I faced in my family's home, makes me able to do my job now very well. I keep myself together for the ones I love. I send home my salary, so there's enough food for my whole family. My kids can safely go to school.

I can pay rent for my family's house. I am always grateful and thank God for everything He has done in my life and also for all the blessings that I cannot yet see, but I know for sure are coming. I have seen darkness, and now I see light - and those who have known darkness can truly appreciate the light.

This I know for sure. No matter who we are ... no matter how hard our situation ... especially for single parents ... for the poor people ... we must never, ever quit. Keep fighting, keep trying, try our best ... have faith. Because when we keep walking... there's a light ahead. There's happiness ahead. God will make a way for those who never give up. No matter what you have been through, have faith and believe your sorrows won't last forever. Believe that no mountain is so high that you cannot climb it.

My eyes are now tired. But my mind keeps going. The rain has stopped. From my window, I see a beautiful colour in the sky. Still some clouds ... but beautiful. It's a rainbow with all its beautiful colours. When the rain comes everything is dark and cold, it seems like there is no hope. But without the rain, there will be no rainbow. Just like in everyone's life. When challenges, sorrows, pains, burdens hit your life, keep hope and faith and keep trying. Hang on... there's happiness coming. Just like the rainbow.

MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL PARTY AT HOME



BY BRIGITA MUNGKI
YURIS DIAN

Last month my employer and I celebrated the Mid-Autumn Festival at home. I cooked various tasty dishes such as chicken, beef, shrimp, fish, vegetables, and so on, and my employer helped in the kitchen as well. After having dinner we shared a branded red bean moon cake which we divided into four equal pieces. Family gatherings are always my employer's priority, especially for such a big day. Watching fireworks, the lantern festival and the fire dragon dance on the TV were our activities afterwards. Our party ended in the midst of laughter, chatting and warm feelings. Last of all, we did the dishes and mopped the floor to maintain a clean and healthy home environment.

I love living in Hong Kong! I am one of the luckiest people who work here because I live and work with such a considerate and kind employer who treats me like their own family. Even though I do not have frequent holidays and always have busy days I get additional pay. Sometimes, they even take me to a five-star hotel or luxurious restaurant just to give me an unforgettable experience. Indeed, the struggles I go through always come along with happy memories.

CHANGING THE WAY I THINK



BY Suprihatin

When I was a kid, I wanted to be a dancer. I liked watching dangdut music videos and couldn't stop dancing every time I watched them. There was a very famous dangdut singer called Inul Daratista. She was very good at moving her body like a ballet dancer. I was a big fan of hers and I wanted to be like her when I grew up.

Once I completed my elementary school, I was very keen to continue studying because I was sure that if I was well-educated I would be able to pursue my dreams. So I went to enrol myself in secondary school with my friend, Ika. There were no buses or taxis in my village so we had to walk for about 2 hours from home to get to the school. We left home at 4 o'clock in the early morning so that we didn't miss the test. At 7:30 the test began. We immediately took our test and it was only an hour in duration. After we finished the test, we waited outside the school for the results. While waiting, we got to know some new friends in the school.

Thirty minutes later, the results' announcement was put up on the white board outside the class. I was very thrilled that my name appeared in the list with a very satisfying result. We couldn't wait to tell our parents about this. Ika was obviously supported by her parents but I was not sure whether my parents would support me as they had told me earlier that they couldn't help with my study.

"I'm sure that your parents will change their mind when they see how keen you are to keep studying," Ika said.

"Yeah... that's what I hope for from them," I answered hesitantly.

At 5 pm, I arrived home. I saw my mother was cooking in the kitchen. I came towards her and told her that I passed the test and I was accepted in secondary school. Her face suddenly turned unhappy.

"I know that you are smart and really want to study more but ... I told you earlier that we don't have enough money to send you to study again," my mama responded.



"Hmm... alright", I said, sadly while walking out of the door. I already knew that was what she would answer, the same as before. I quickly went to see my friend Ika at her home. I told her that I failed to convince my parents.

"No matter what, you should go to school, Intan. I'm sure they will change their minds if you never give up", Ika said, wanting to calm me down. We tried to find another idea to make my parents support me and I knew I would need a new school uniform. But then I decided that I would keep going to school anyway, while still wearing my old primary school uniform as I still didn't get my new secondary school uniform. So that's what I did!

In the first two weeks I was fine with it but by the end of the next two weeks everyone had already got their new school uniforms except me. I had been a month studying at school. My friend Ika was already wearing her new school uniform while I was still wearing my old primary school uniform as my parents couldn't afford a new one for me. I could only hope there would be a miracle so I would get a new uniform...

Then one day.... "Hey... you!" one of the students in the class exclaimed, pointing at me. "This is secondary school, not primary school," he continued, which made everyone in the class laugh at me. I felt so miserable and embarrassed to be in the class. All I wanted to do was to quit study and never come back to school anymore. I stopped expecting anything from my parents. I decided to stay at home and help my mama with household chores. I felt very hopeless and I had no idea what should I do next.

Years went by like that and then when I was 19 I was offered the chance to work in Hong Kong. I didn't take too long to think about it because it seemed the salary was higher than working in my home town.

My parents were both so worried about my safety as there was a lot of news of human trafficking but they couldn't stop me from getting what I wanted!

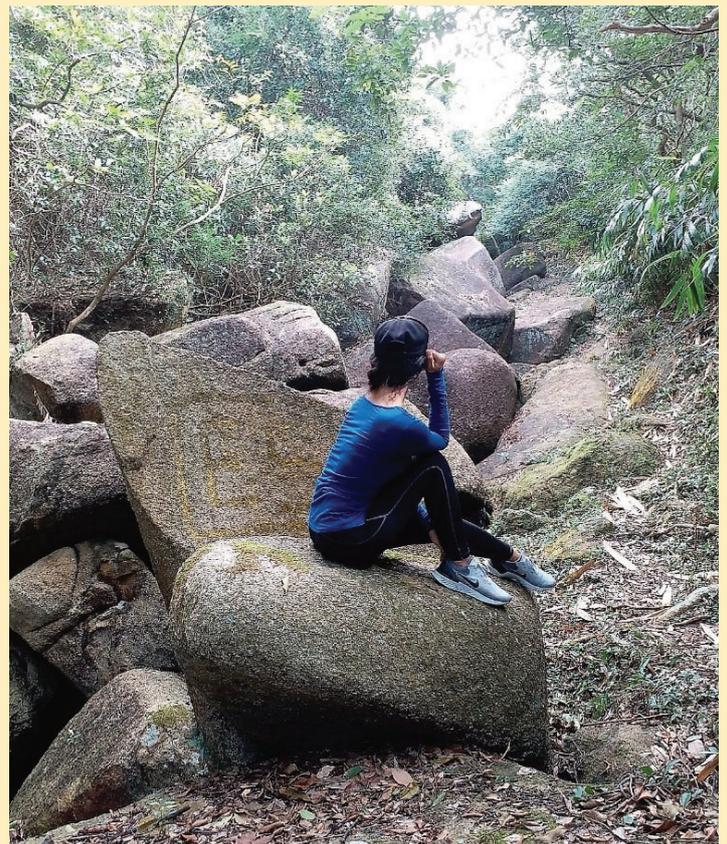
In December 2009, I arrived in Hong Kong. I never expected that I would be in this place. It was very cold, as it was winter here. I was shivering, because I was just coming from a tropical country but I would get used to it very soon.

In the next four years in Hong Kong, I had leave twice to visit my family in Indonesia. I bought anything they wanted and I never thought about how much I spent on them. All I wanted was to have fun with them and I would come back to Hong Kong with less savings as I had spent so much with my family.

I never thought about what my future would be until I realised that I had to force myself to learn something. I searched for several organisations on Google until I found TCKLC's Facebook page. From then on my life has changed. Now I feel more confident and I have found that I am able to learn more skills here. I have learned a lot of things in TCKLC. Now I can speak, read and write in English (although I'm still not perfect!).

I learned about being wiser with money which has helped me to control myself from spending too much. I can use the computer I bought and video editor too. I took make-up and dance lessons as well as English, attended lots of workshops too and I also took a swimming course with Splash. That's not all, as we often go together on outings around Hong Kong, hiking and cycling, and have enjoyed visits from many interesting people from different countries and organisations.

I have been part of this affordable and enjoyable organisation for about four years now. I volunteer in many different activities in TCKLC too. Best of all, I've been playing Angklung with TCKLC's Angklung Group and we've been invited by other charities and groups to do lots of performances, helping promote traditional Indonesian music culture in Hong Kong as well as having fun and learning new songs. I don't feel shy any more as TCKLC has changed the way I think. I know that I have ability to learn new things and I like learning. Now I truly believe that when there is a will, there is a way!



A SHORT STORY ABOUT ME



STORY BY Eka Anik Rusgiani

21 June 2003 is a day I will never forget. I was 19 years old and it was my first experience boarding a plane and going abroad – and all without my family. Hong Kong was the first foreign place I visited and I was going not for holiday but to work as a housemaid. I remember when night came on that first night in Hong Kong the room was so dark and I felt homesick but I strengthened myself to not be sad.

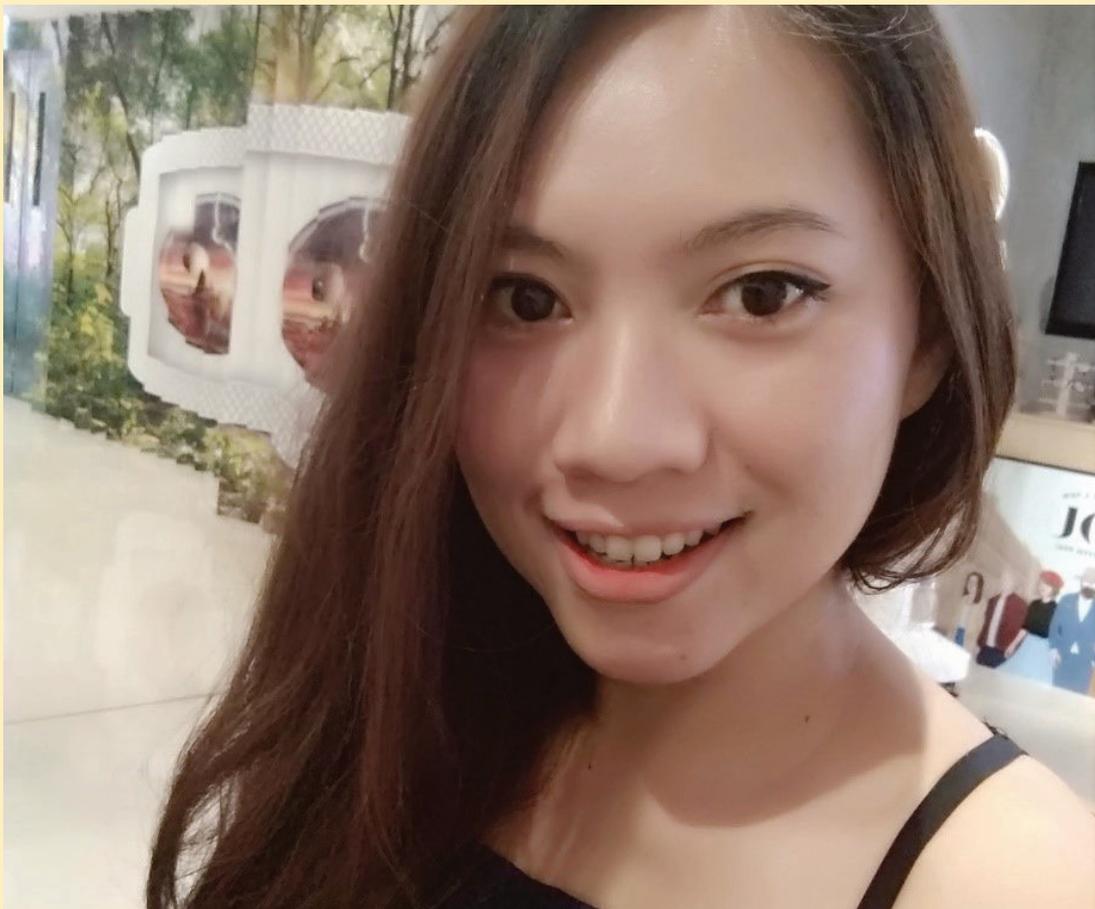
"Big girl, don't cry." I said to myself.

What I was hoping for was that my brother could continue to study and have a better education.

So I struggled and worked hard to survive, dealing with difficulties and obstacles as best I could. It was hard for me to manage the situation when some of my friends were happily going to college to continue to study and have a better future while I went overseas just to be a housemaid. Yeah... it was a pity.

"Life is so unfair to me," I said, but no matter how hard it was, time went by. Six years passed and in June 2009 I had 2 weeks' vacation and went back to Indonesia to meet my family.

I thought all the money I'd sent to my father was for building a house, but in fact my house had not changed.



The house was still the same as before I went to Hong Kong. I tried to ask my father where my money was but he scolded me for no reason. I tried to ask my mother but she didn't know about my money, she said. I don't know how to explain how I felt at that time. I just cried for the whole day and night.

I was so sad and had nowhere to go. I had worked so hard to earn money and thought my father was a good and responsible father. I was so shocked at what he had done to me. So three days before I went back to Hong Kong, I went to my neighbour's house to ask about my father's life. They said my father used my money for gambling. I was so shocked to hear that news. How could this happen to me?

"What the hell!" I said.

When I came back to Hong Kong again, I never sent money to my father's account anymore. I tried to trust my mother to handle some of my money, but evidently my mother was the same as my father: crazy about gambling. My brother couldn't continue his studies anymore because there was not enough money to pay for the school fees.

"Again and again! What's happened to my fate?!" I said.

For many years I suffered from this situation but no one knew my pain. I never told anyone else, I only wrote about it in my diary. When the night came, I cried a lot inside, in a dark room. I'm so lucky that I'm not into drugs and alcohol. Thank God for loving me.

I remember that one day, when I had nowhere to go on my holiday, I met a new friend in the garden and we talked a lot about Korean dramas and some love story dramas and we laughed together. We became friends. At the end of our conversation, she asked me whether I wanted to go with her to TCKLC.

"What is TCKLC?" I asked.

She said "It's a learning centre; there are many activities you can benefit from and learn." So I was very interested and went with her to register for the "English Intermediate" and "Sewing" classes.

So now, for more than 4 years, I've been learning English (Intermediate and Advanced), Sewing and Computer Studies at TCKLC. I'm proud to be a TCKLC student. God has given me strength to survive positively and gratefully.

For me, the most important thing is to stay healthy. Now, I try not to look back at my past but start planning my new future. I have saved my money by myself and I have bought land and soon will start building my own small house and start a business. This is to prepare for my retirement in the coming years.

Now I realise God gives trials according to respective abilities. Thank you God, for a wonderful life. I have no cause for anything but gratitude.



For many years I suffered from this situation but no one knew my pain. I never told anyone else, I only wrote about it in my diary.

MY JOB AND MY DREAM JOB



My name's Dwi and I'm from Semarang, Indonesia. I'm a house keeper and a mum of two fluffy cats. In my job, I keep the house clean and tidy. I also cook the meals and go to the market, too. I like my job because my boss treats me really well and I'll get my salary at the end of the month. There are some problems, too, though. Sometimes when my bosses are moody, I have no choice but to go along with them and bear the brunt of blame or ill feelings.

Besides my current job, I do have my dream job too. There are two kinds of dream job that I have always wanted. The first one is a tour guide. If I were a tour guide, I would go around several places and point out the most interesting spots to tourists, explaining their uniqueness and significance along the way. Being a tour guide is particularly appealing to those good at dealing with other people, along with the gift of the gab. I would have to answer questions that have been asked thousands of times. The problem, and probably the hardest part, is how to keep things fresh for my own sake.

And my second dream job is a freelance writer. If I were a freelance writer, I could work from the comfort of my own home. I could have control over what jobs to accept; meaning those that require immediate deadlines can be rejected. I could earn as much money as I need by simply accepting as many jobs as possible. If I desire a little rest, all I would have to do is pick only the jobs that I need for the week. The problem is how I could practise my passion for writing even if I don't get a lot of free time to do other stuff.

BY DWI
WURYANINGSIH

POEMS



YOU AND ME

Iceu Erawati

I am falling in love
I am falling in love with him
He's the man that I choose
I choose him to be my groom.



I loved him
I loved him from the bottom of my heart
I loved him sincerely
He made my life full of happiness
He made my life bright as a ray of sun
He made me laugh
He made me cry coz of fear of losing him.
When I felt down,
He encouraged me
When I lost my way,
He led me to the right path
He always kept me company
When he held me,
He said, "I love you, dear"
"I love you, sweetheart".

He is my everything.
And so I am his everything.
We both loved each other.

HOPE

Anni Juliana

Staring in the night ... without any light
My mind drifts far, far away,
Searching in the dark ... to find hope
Until I fall asleep ... it hangs by a rope.

Lay and rest my weary soul
Let go of the pain, throw it away.
Keeping faith inside my heart
We have tomorrow, again I'll start.

I know there's nothing I can hold
If it's not because of hope
'Cause even in the strongest rain
My hope helps wash away my pain.

When the time for spring returns
And sunshine burns my pain away
My search for light is never done
Hope will drive me ever on.

FIRE HELL POTIONS

Iceu Erawati

Magic ice-cube saucepan stubble
Shaking-shaking cocktail bubble
Sprinkle, sprinkle ashes of toad
Pop-up wine and drip of blood
Stirring, slithering, slugging trouble
Throw in saucepan, sizzle bubble
Wiggly, squeak, creak a whale
Boil and smoke with fire hell

THE STRONGEST EVER

Emi

Sitting like Jocko lost the swing-swing up
His fingers fasting a moment from jump-jump up
Whozzzz... whozzzz... whozzzz...
The time is gloomy blues
Looking out through tightened windows
Safely from the malignant puff-puff blow
Brck brck... spissing... swizzing ...
The sounds annoying and blazing...
Raining water like eggs... scrambling
Noisy... crazy... Cozy... dizzy...
Full full of scary berry...
Mouth mumbling stirring praying
Goes up the wind climbing
Can't pretend to be deaf
Whozzzz... whozzzz... swinggg...
Light occasionally blink
Super power sweep shake-shake the trees
Teardrops not cries
Whozzzz... Whozzzz... Wrrrrr...
Come and go whistle and blow
Creatures stop to grow
Living sitting eyes blink watching outside
Sad worry scary nothing-beautiful-day
Whole day horrible terrible
Typhoon not yet stoppable
Whozzzz... uuuuuuuu... Breerrr... brrrr...
There is still brrrr...whozzz wuuuvvvv... brrr...

I STOP CRYING

Iceu Erawati

There's a mouse near a tree rose

I see a bee flying over the house

I cry in fear and my tears drip

He sees me crying, and he starts to sing

He sings my favourite song

I stop crying.

A BEAUTIFUL WAITING

Suci Resmiyati

When I am sitting pensive,
I am staring at the beautiful night lights.
Those night lights adorn my night
views,
Waiting for you.
However, that figure never appeared.
But the beauty of the night lights,
Adorned the road,
As if to keep waiting.
Waiting until the time comes...
And the miracle comes true with
happiness.

PLEASURE IN MY LIFE



I am young and I love life. So everything that life offers is a source of joy for me. Like Sherlock Holmes, the hero of Conan Doyle's detective novels, I can elicit much amusement from looking at a cat lying flat on a bed or the floor.

Coming to our day-do-day life, I enjoy relishing an ice cream. What fun it is! As one feels its cold sweet syrup moving down one's throat, the tongue feels sensations. The cavity of the mouth becomes an air-conditioned cabin. Biting the cone gives another type of enjoyment. One's teeth seem to be frozen but crushing the ice cream under the teeth is quite enjoyable.

Being single, I enjoy the strange creatures called married people. When I see the poor husband carrying the baby and the wife carrying her purse, I wonder "what has man made of himself?" the wife gives the orders and the husband carries the bundles. I feel amused when I find even a strict man being commanded by his wife. Moreover, they consider single people unlucky persons who should be treated as jealous outcasts. But I think that they are like that jackal that lost its tail and considered himself to be the king of the jungle.

I enjoy riding a bicycle down a hill. With lifted feet I seem to be flying in the air. I fly like a bird with bushes and trees rushing by me. The sinuous road gives me the thrill of moving like a snake but with the pace of an arrow. A deep valley on one side and a huge mouse on the other make me think of the ups and down of life. How disappointed do I feel when I reach level ground? How much have I come down?

I don't even know if anyone could give me an answer about life. I'd better not dare to ask that ridiculous question ever again. Life is full of mystery. We only live once, so enjoying pleasure in life is part of human life itself.

BY DWI
WURYANINGSIH

CELEBRATING KARTINI DAY



BY DWI
WURYANINGSIH

Sunday 22nd May was a memorable day for three TCKLC students. And what made that day so memorable for them? It was because that day, three TCKLC students were honoured to show their own creations during a celebration of Women's Emancipation called Kartini Day. This is a special day dedicated to R.A Kartini who put up a brave fight: the fight to win her equality to men. Living in the 19th century, she was the daughter of the Assistant Head of the Regency where she lived who was also the descendant of a noble or aristocratic family. During that time, access to higher education was restricted for women. In an old Javanese tradition, "pingitan time" is a time when a teenage girl has to stay inside the house and is not allowed to go out until a man proposes to her. According to this traditional Javanese practice, a teenage girl has to be secluded and her activity is limited, and this was applied to Kartini too. So she spent her time reading books she got from her relatives. She believed that tears and sadness would not change anything. She decided to enrol in Europe's Lagere School. Then she also wanted to enrol for higher education but unfortunately the pingitan tradition did not allow her to do so. But Kartini seemed to have big ideas about education and by using her knowledge and creative thoughts she was able to establish a "school" for local people on the backyard of the city hall.

She also wrote a book titled “Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang” (meaning “After Darkness there is Light”). She has been a great inspiration for women all over the country who continue the struggle to set women free from legal, social or political restrictions. She pioneered Women’s Emancipation.

Anyway, her story and the celebration have inspired me to write something about empowering women. In many places, education is a special privilege for boys. Education is prioritised only for men. Many people think, “It’s useless for women to be educated, in the end they will just be a mother, a housewife, whose occupation is caring for her family, managing household affairs and doing housework. So they don’t need to be educated”. But, that tradition doesn’t work anymore for women in this era. During this century fortunately the tradition has changed a lot. We women don’t have to stay at home for “pingitan” time and we are freely allowed to access education at any level. So, I am going to write about how we women in modern days celebrate Kartini Day.

The original date to celebrate Kartini Day is actually 21st April. And we women always have many great things to do to celebrate that special day such as taking part in a singing and dancing contest, a cooking competition or fashion show competition. And on that day, 22nd May, many Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong took a part in fashion show competition to celebrate Kartini Day that was held in Admiralty, organised by the Sanggar Budaya (or Cultural Group) of the Indonesian Consulate General in Hong Kong.

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And not to be left out, three TCKLC members participated in the fashion show competition.

The costumes that they wore that day were all original creations made by the students themselves. The first costume was “Kebaya Modern Classic”, the second was “Kebaya Modern Elegance” and the third was “Simple Muslim Kebaya”, made by a student from TCKLC’s sewing class. All the kebaya were actually a blend between traditional and modern fashion styles. A kebaya or a blouse-dress is a combination made from sheer material such as silk, thin cotton or semi-transparent nylon or polyester, adorned with brocade or floral pattern embroidery. A kebaya is usually worn with a traditional “batik” or painted fabric. It was a long process leading up to this day since all the costumes, especially the Kebaya Modern Elegance one, actually needed at least two months to finish, including putting lots of small bright beads on the sleeves and back of the kebaya. A sanggul or bun-style hairdo is a must to make the kebaya and the model wearing it look perfect. But it also goes well with a tiara or just a simple curled loose hair style.

The three TCKLC models were competing against 50+ contestants and although they didn’t win anything at the end I swear the three of them looked so dashingly beautiful that day. And the dresses they were wore all made by them. They might not have been called the winner but their creations were a proud representation of their own worthiness and effort to celebrate Kartini Day and all that it means.

THE MEANING OF EDUCATION FROM MY POINT OF VIEW



BY Dwi Wuryaningsih

Would you be able to have a normal and prosperous life without having an education? I think most people would not be able to have one without education. Education plays a critical and most important role in our lives. When young, we must dedicate most of our time to education in order to have a stable and better future. But what about the people who live in poverty? Is education really the way for the poor to escape poverty? I am sure and confident that the answer would be 100% yes.

Poverty will always remain in human societies. However, education is indeed the best and most effective way for the poor to escape and not only to escape poverty but also to kill illiteracy and ignorance, gain an awareness of individual rights and responsibilities and overcome all forms of social discrimination, including in my country, Indonesia. The people in some parts of Indonesia are still living in poverty, however, the Indonesian department of national education has introduced a nine-year compulsory education programme.

Under this programme, every Indonesian citizen is required to attend school for at least nine years, starting from elementary for six years and then continuing to junior high school for three years. In June 2015, the Minister of Coordination for Human Development and Culture made a plan to enforce a twelve-year compulsory education programme, to include senior high school for three years. Of course those who are well-off could have higher education too. They could continue to study at college or university after they finish their compulsory learning.

Now in the modern era, and especially in developed countries, people who already got married and have children usually start to send their children to school from an early age.

The reason is either that the parents are busy with work or they want their children to develop important skills, because school is not just a place for children to study and score well in their exams.

By interacting with other children at an early age, kids learn how to take turns, how to listen and how to share. Playing with other kids also helps children to learn about their own personalities and their own likes and dislikes.



The independence that kids gain in school is also a lesson that is hard to learn at home. Throughout the whole learning process, children learn how to negotiate, compromise and interact with their peers. This is not something that parents could find in a text book.

Education has a different meaning to everyone all over the world. Whether it is given big importance or very little importance, education is a crucial part of life in all societies. And the role that teachers play is extremely important for a good education. Teachers should make sure that their classroom is an inviting and comfortable environment for learning. Students would like to sit in a bright and cheerful classroom rather than a dull and dissatisfying one. I believe that everyone should be eligible to a quality education. There is no reason a child should be denied a quality education because of their social class, nationality, upbringing or disability. Because education gives a person the foundation they need to go wherever they want to go in life.



A FAT GIRL STORY



STORY BY Widy

When I was kid, I had a very close friend. Her name was Lulu. She was very kind, funny, and caring. She sometimes got mad when she got bullied by the boys who liked to call her “a fat girl”. Yes... she was very big compared to our size.

We always played together at school or even when we came back from school. We usually went to the rice fields to walk our goats and let them eat the grass. We did that every day when we got back from school. Even though we were girls, we had to herd our goats outdoors together as the goats needed to eat the grass in the rice fields.

One day, by chance, I saw her fighting with a few boys who made fun of her and kept calling her a “fat girl”. I couldn’t help her as I was just a little, tiny and skinny kid.

All I could do was just cry for help from pedestrians who walked by. A few minutes later, she and the boys were separated by a pedestrian who saw me crying out loud to get help and they stopped fighting.

But the bullying still went on. When my mum and dad took me to move to another village, I no longer saw Lulu anymore. I was very upset that I couldn’t see her and play with her but my mum told me that we had to move as my dad had got a new place to work.

Ten years later, when I was reading some books at the library, I saw a lady who looked familiar. She looked like my best friend Lulu, but she was very pretty and slim and I was not sure whether it was her. Then I saw a birthmark on her right hand. It looked exactly like Lulu’s! I remember she had one on the same place.

Lulu... is that you?” I curiously asked her.

“Yes it is! Who are you?” she answered.

“I’m Nury... Do you still recognise me? When we were small, we used to play and go to school together”, I continued, and tried to remind her of my memory.

“Oh God... Yes, I remember that! What are you doing here?” she asked.

“I work near here. My work place is opposite the library.” I answered. “How about you?” I asked.

“Mmmm... I bring my kids to find their favourite books,” she said. “I would like to introduce you to my kids and my husband, Martin. They are now downstairs in the kids’ books section,” she said.

“I would love to, but I’m so sorry I have to go back home now as I should arrive home a bit early. I promise I will see you again on one of my other days off,” I said.

“Can I have your phone number so that we can keep in touch?” she asked.

“Yes sure. Here’s my number, 12426748, and call me when you are free.” Afterwards, we said goodbye. I went straight home but I was still surprised about how she looked now. She had totally changed. She’s very slim and pretty but she was still the little Lulu I used to know. She’s still very kind, sweet and humble and she’s not fat anymore. I couldn’t blame her for not recognising me because I was the one who looked like a fat girl now!

REACH FOR THE STARS



DRAMA BY Lia Mandansari

Ani is waiting for her employer to pick her up at the agency. She came to Hong Kong three days ago and did the medical check-up and also got her temporary ID card. This morning, Miss Li from the agency told her that her employer will come today. So she has prepared herself and now she is sitting in the corner, doing nothing but waiting.

Miss Li: Ani, remember you have to pay for the agency fee for six months, 3000 HKD every month, coming out of your salary, and you have to transfer it through 7-eleven after you get your salary. Don't forget that, okay?

Ani: Okay Miss Li. I understand that. But what time do you think my employer will come today? It's almost 3 pm now. Do you think she forgot about me?

Miss Li: No, come on! Don't worry, she'll come today. Just be patient and wait for her.

Ani continues waiting then, and at around 4 pm, her employer comes. Ani suddenly stands up and greets her.

Ani: Hallo Tai-tai, lei hou ma?

Her employer glances at her, ignores her and talks to Miss Li in Cantonese.

Miss Li: Ani, this is Miss Lam, and you can only call her Madam, understand?

Ani: Okay Miss Li. Yes, I understand. Hallo Madam Lam, how are you?

Madam Lam: Now, I will take you home and you have to work hard. Hong Kong is not like your country, Indonesia, where everybody is lazy and everything is dirty!



Ani doesn't say anything and follows Madam Lam to her flat.

The next morning...

Madam Lam: Ani! Where are you? What time is it now? This is your very first working day and you're being lazy in my house and I even have to feed you too! Wake up, wake up, you lazy pig!

Ani who was still asleep suddenly wakes up after she hears Madam Lam's voice.

Ani: Yes Madam, I'm really sorry. I was still asleep. What do you want me to cook for your breakfast?

Madam Lam: You're stupid! Now, wash your face and brush your teeth! I don't want a dirty maid to serve me. You may bring your disease from Indonesia and spread it here. Now, go and clean yourself!

Ani doesn't have a day off. She doesn't have a phone either. Madam Lam threatens her that she would send her back to Indonesia and that her family in Indonesia will have to pay for her debt to the agency. Then one night, when Madam Lam has gone out, the phone rings...
Kring ... kring... kring...

Ani: Hallo, good evening.

Madam Lam: Hallo, Ani this is Madam Lam. You have to go to the supermarket now to buy some small choisum. Remember, the small ones. I don't want the big ones. Don't buy the wrong ones. Use your money first and then I will return it to you once I get home. Only buy one catty, understand?

Ani: Okay Madam Lam, I understand.

Ani then goes to the supermarket near their flat. It is quite late, almost 9 pm now and the supermarket is closing. She tries to find the small choisum Madam Lam wants to eat, but she can't find any. She tries to find the big one, but they don't have any either. So she chooses another vegetable, small pak choi, and hurries back home. She prepares the dinner and then...

Ting tong... it's 9.30pm and Madam Lam comes home.

Madam Lam: Ahhh, so tired today. Ani, have you prepared the dinner for me? I'm really hungry now.

Ani: Yes Madam Lam it's all ready now.

Ani goes to the kitchen and takes the food out. She puts it on the table. When Madam Lam sees the pakchoi, she gets really mad.

Madam Lam: Ani! I asked you to buy choisum, not pakchoi. Didn't you understand what I asked you to do? Don't you know which one is choisum and which one is pakchoi? You're so stupid, lazy and useless! Pack your clothes now and get out of my house! I don't want to see your face anymore!

Ani tries to explain to Madam Lam, but she doesn't want to listen at all. Ani then goes to the agency as she doesn't know any other places in Hong Kong. It is almost midnight and she doesn't have a phone, and the agency is closed. She sits there in front of the building with her luggage and falls asleep there.

The next morning, when she sees Miss Li...

Miss Li: Ani, I've told you that you have to work hard. It's Hong Kong, not Indonesia, you can't be lazy here. Madam Lam has told me everything. As you have only worked with her for two months, you still have to pay our agency fee for 4 more months. But if you want us to find you a new employer, you have to pay for 6 months again.

Ani feels really powerless, and all she can imagine is her family in Indonesia, her mum and her dad, also her younger brother and sisters. She can't give up now, she needs to support them.

Ani: Okay Miss Li, I agree with that.

Miss Li: Good, and now while waiting for your visa, you can stay in Hong Kong for two weeks at our boarding house. Then you will have to go to Macau and wait for your visa there.



At the boarding house...

It's Friday evening and Ani sees two Indonesian girls putting on make-up and getting dressed up.

Wati: Hey, new girl, what's your name?

Lala: Wati, she can't hear you. She's probably deaf; try to speak louder!

Wati comes to Ani and with her big eyes, she stares at Ani for a moment.

Wati: Hey! I asked you: what's your name?

Ani: Uhm... uhm... I ... I ... uhm... my, my, my name is Ani. I just came yesterday.

Wati: Come with us, we're going to a party tonight. I'm sure you'd like it.

Lala: Yeah, I can help with your make up Ani, and also you can borrow one of my dresses.

So then Ani goes out with Lala and Wati. They go to the one of the bars in Wanchai. Lala and Wati keep giving Ani drinks till she gets drunk. Ani feels really happy that she could forget about all of her problems.

The first night out was okay but starting from that night Ani started to drink more and more. Even when she finishes the two weeks that she is allowed to stay in Hong Kong and needs to go to Macau, she does the same thing there. When she finally starts to work with the new family, she gets one day off every week. And they let her out from Saturday night after she finishes her work.

So every Saturday after she finishes her work, she continues going to the bar in Wanchai and gets drunk there until one night she gets really drunk and into a fight with another Indonesian customer there. The security guard comes to them...

Security guard: Both of you are just so shameful! You're only helpers here. So cheap, stupid and useless. You only know how to fight with each other. Now, go! Don't make a mess here!

He kicks them both out.

Ani is really drunk and she can't get home that night. Luckily it is Saturday night, so she doesn't have to work the next day. She falls asleep on the street until someone suddenly wakes her up.

Tutik: Mbak, are you okay? Wake up Mbak, are you okay?

Ani: Oh yeah, I was a bit drunk last night and fell asleep here. But I'm okay now, thank you.

Tutik: Come and sit on the bench with me. Here, drink some water. What is your name Mbak? And where do you live in Hong Kong?

Ani: Ani, Mbak. My name is Ani. And I live in Causeway Bay.

Tutik: What's wrong with you Mbak Ani? What in the world do you think you're doing by getting drunk like you did last night? That's not going to solve your problems, but make some new ones. My name is Tutik by the way.

Ani: But Mbak Tutik, I feel really tired of people looking down at me because of my status Mbak. They keep saying that I'm just a helper, stupid, dirty and lazy. I just want to escape from their judgment and forget about it all. That's why I drink.

Tutik: Owalah Mbak Ani...you have chosen the wrong path. Let's show them that we can do something better, not only for them Mbak Ani, but especially for ourselves.

Ani: Yes, I think you're right Mbak Tutik. But what can I do? I only know people from the bar, and I'm sure they will only ask me to go there again.

Tutik: Why don't you join me Mbak Ani? I'm learning English at TCKLC, a charity for domestic workers like us. The people there are really nice. And they not only have English classes, but also Mandarin, Computer, Make-up and even Sewing courses. We can learn there together with others.

Ani: Thank you Mbak Tutik. When can I join you then?

Tutik: I was actually going there when I saw you sleeping on the street this morning. So, let's continue walking there Mbak Ani. Just think, if people throw rubbish at you, or give you a bag of rubbish, what would you do? You wouldn't accept it, right? It's the same if someone treats you badly or discriminates against you or abuses you: it's not your problem but theirs. Don't accept the rubbish that they're saying! You don't deserve it. Keep your chin up! Let them keep their problem. And remember that you are not alone, there are friends who can help you. And you know what, if we stick together and help take care of each other, we all can reach the stars together!

And they both walk to TCKLC. After joining the classes for a few months and making new friends, Mbak Ani has started to understand more about the rules and regulations in Hong Kong. She even reports her agency for overcharging her. And it turns out that actually her agency is one of the many agencies that regularly overcharge domestic workers.

And now, Mbak Ani is still learning at TCKLC, together with the other Indonesian Workers, for a better future. It's not for their employers, not for all the people who treat them unfairly, but for themselves. And they know that education is the best investment, and learning is a lifelong process, a journey that helps us reach the stars!

THE MIRACLE



STORY BY Lia Mandansari

“I don’t know why she stopped texting me; we used to chat almost every day for the last three years. We were like best friends. I still have that feeling for her, and I still love her, even though she doesn’t want to talk to me anymore.” Then I saw him crying, silently...

That same evening I’d been for a hike with Jason, one of the cool people I know from the Internet. They always say, be careful if you know someone from the Internet, you might end up in a tragic way, getting robbed or getting raped. But Jason looked like a normal, quite charming guy who was warm, friendly and chatty. So I didn't feel worried about spending a few hours with him even from the very first time we met. We discussed hiking together for the next week, and we did hike!

We wanted to hike to Sharp Peak at first, but we ended up hiking to another peak because I showed up a bit late as I was working overtime the night before. During our hike, we talked a lot about almost everything. I was pretty surprised to see so many longan trees along the way with fruit that other hikers didn’t seem interested in getting. Once I saw there were some low branches, I grabbed the fruit and ran back to Jason. I was literally running even though I knew nobody would catch me, haha, just to make it a bit more challenging, I thought, and also more dramatic for sure. I felt like I just executed an impossible mission and reported to him, with the fruit in my hands. We walked farther, and I saw a tree with another kind of fruit, with yellow skin, the fruit that I saw only after I came to Hong Kong, as we don’t have it in Indonesia. He was a bit confused at first and thought it was a longan because of its yellow fruit.



We were arguing about this until I saw a lady and stopped in front of her, showing the fruit we'd got, and asked her if it really was longan, and she agreed; "That is longan," she said. But her answer didn't satisfy his curiosity, so he didn't take it as a final answer. When I saw another tree like it, I ran towards it with the speed of light. I shushed Jason, pointing with my right finger, and climbed the tree like a hungry monkey seeing its food. I felt as free as a bird that evening. I got a lot of yellow skin on my hands and threw some fruit to Jason who was patiently waiting for me under the tree. Once I got down, we started eating all the fruit we had, and surprisingly, the yellow skin was really sweet, even sweeter than on the ones I usually get from the wet market. So yeah, we then continued to hike despite the growing darkness around us, as it was almost sunset.

We kept going up till we saw some bulls that looked super strong with their giant horns. They made quite a weird noise, and it looked like they were enjoying an early dinner that evening. But one of them suddenly stopped eating and looked at us. I was not sure what he was thinking as he walked slowly to us. I could tell though when he started speeding towards us. I thought, he's got annoyed by us, as we were talking and walking at the same time, disturbing his peaceful evening. I speeded up my walking and then almost ran when I saw him coming towards us. "Jason, he's running towards us, look at his size! Then how, what should we do? Let's just quickly climb the tree!" I panicked and couldn't really focus on what was in front of me until, suddenly, I felt something soft and wet under my right foot ... yuck, I had stepped on you-know-what!

"Hahahaha," Jason started laughing at me, and I couldn't help myself but laugh with him. Miraculously, the bull stopped chasing us and got busy with some fresh grass in front of him. Or was it because he didn't smell my human smell anymore, as I'd just joined his community by stepping on his poo?

"Here Alley, I'll show you the spot where I usually do my paragliding." I followed Jason to the hill, which was not only covered with tall green and healthy grass but also more of what I had just put my foot in! "Just mind your step and look around, so you don't step on it again." As he said that, he winked at me with his naughty eyes. His eyes were really beautiful with his long curly eyelashes and gave the impression that he was such a happy guy. The wind wasn't strong, but I was soaking wet because of my sweat, so the wind helped me to dry out my t-shirt.

We were enjoying the sunset on the hill that evening. He kept saying how grateful he was and how amazing nature was, that every day we have a different sunset and a different sunrise. The sunset that evening looked really magical to me, with the orange-reddish sky, and some small white greyish clouds covering half of the sun. The trees looked like the frame of a natural painting in front of us, so alive and colourful.

It was getting dark and we had to run to get home. The feeling of being active was really great. It was like you were on top of the world, you could do anything, and you were superhuman with super powers. Once we arrived near his home, he offered me dinner at the restaurant nearby. I was trying to be polite by saying I would get dinner on my way home, but my stomach didn't agree with me, and Jason could hear my belly singing. Because I didn't take his first offer, he then made another one. "Alright then, you didn't seem to like the idea of having dinner nearby, how about if I drive you home and we find a good place to eat close to your flat?" I nodded at him trying to hide my face as I could feel it getting hot.



As he said that, he winked at me with his naughty eyes. His eyes were really beautiful with his long curly eyelashes and gave the impression that he was such a happy guy.

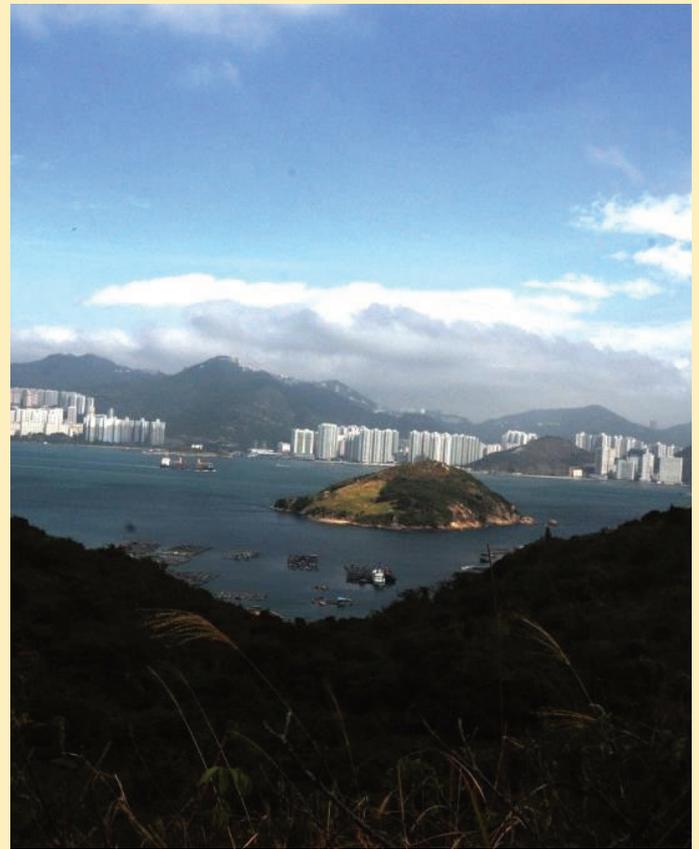
Once we finished eating, he started talking about his personal life, about the lady whom he loved the most. He didn't really know what was happening to her, he said, until a few days ago, after she stopped texting him. It turned out she flew back to the US to meet her husband who was about to be her ex as they were processing a divorce. "That's why when I asked her if she needed me and if I could come over, she refused by saying she was fine. I didn't question her, Alley. I trusted her because she also said that she had grown stronger than before. I heard it from her friends who were actually quite private about their lives that she killed herself in a car with carbon monoxide two days ago in front of her husband's house....."

Silence fell. All of a sudden the silence felt like it was taking over the situation without letting us break to continue our conversation. But I didn't know what to say to him, so I put my hand on his shoulder, saying, "Jason, I'm really sorry for your loss, I hope she's happier now wherever she is." I couldn't stand looking at his eyes that looked like dark, grey heavy clouds full of water and ready to fill all the rivers on earth, while he didn't try to hide his face nor did he want to cover it.

"Thanks Alley, I do appreciate it", he continued. "I just couldn't believe what I heard because she was such a sweet lady, only with a bad childhood, ah poor Anne. Her dad abused her when she was a kid. A friend of mine said that your brain gets used to the things that are familiar to you, even when they are really bad and destructive, and tragically you kind of love those things even more than the better things around you. That's what happened to her. She knew her husband kept cheating on her, but she couldn't help herself from falling into his trap, again and again, until she killed herself. We had been chatting almost every day for the last three years. Alley, she told me literally everything, especially about their fights."

"The pattern was that whenever they argued about something, he would call her crazy. Naively, she trusted him and all he said. But because she knew he was cheating on her and living with another woman in the US, that had given her a sleeping disorder; she couldn't sleep unless he was with her, beside her. But can you imagine that Alley, how hard that kind of relationship would be, as he was in the US while she was in Hong Kong? So she thought by getting married, he would stop cheating on her. But she was wrong, and that made her even more depressed. I tried all possible ways to make her happy. I asked her out to watch a movie, go hiking, or even just to have a coffee. Sadly, she didn't seem interested in doing anything, but to be with him. Alley, I couldn't convince her to just leave him".

Jason was talking about all the things that bothered him and was really sad, and I knew he was in love with her but had been rejected. He tried to move on, but he somehow got stuck even deeper with all the memories they had together. "People are just people, and they change. But everyone has their own personalities, interests and feelings; you can never push or force someone to love you. Anne was a beautiful, intelligent woman who worked as a flight attendant.



She travelled a lot, seeing the world in a way most of us can only imagine. She was really lucky, meeting different kinds of people, knowing different personalities, but she, unfortunately, didn't realise how lucky she was, because she was too busy listening to just one guy, as she thought he was her world."

"Thank you Alley, for listening to me; I really enjoy your company, especially your smiles." I nodded at him saying, "Yeah, I had a good time too with you Jason, thanks for everything and for driving me back home." As I said that, I walked to my flat, leaving him to get into his car.

The next few weeks we met again, to hike, to have lunch, sharing our stories, experiences and thoughts. A couple of months passed by until it was almost winter. Jason suddenly disappeared, in early December. I didn't think anything of it, just that he might have gone back home to the US, or he got busy with his flying schedules. I was doing my routines, working and working. I checked my phone after work every night, but I didn't get any messages from him. No text, no call, nothing. So I thought he had lost his phone and all his contacts. Until early February, when it was Chinese New Year holiday. The place I worked at was super busy, it was chaos, the customers were lining up in front of the shop, ordering their food while the others were having their food and drinking in our second shop, which was next to the first one, so the shops got really full.



I was taking an order, and standing in front of me was a tall, beautiful lady with long wavy blonde hair. I didn't really pay attention to the rest of her look and asked, "Yes, what would you like to have?"

"Can I get two of your special menus tonight, Alley?"

I wasn't expecting her to say my name, so I looked her in the eye and said, "Sure, \$400 please." She smiled, took the money from her purse and handed it to me. "Here's your change and your receipt. Miss, your order will be ready in 10-15 minutes." I took a hundred dollar note from the cashier machine and gave it to her.

"It's okay; you can keep the change for your tip, Alley. Thank you."

I couldn't believe what I heard, so I asked her, "Pardon me?"

"I said you can keep the change; that's for you, Alley."

A weird customer, I thought; I didn't even know her, but she gave me \$100 as a tip, 25% of her order. "Uhhmm, thank you." As I said that, I put the money in my pocket and went to the kitchen to prepare her food.

Once it was ready, I took her order next door, where she was waiting. She was alone, sitting at the corner of the shop while beside her was an empty chair. She was definitely waiting for someone, and I didn't want to ask too much, so I put the two plates on the table, "Here's your food Miss, enjoy!" I was about to go back to the first shop when I turned around, and my eyes suddenly detected a familiar face: Jason! I almost screamed out his name, but when I saw he was smiling at the woman behind me, I could finally arrange all the little pieces of the puzzle that had been in my head for the last two months.

"Jason!" The woman stood up from her chair to welcome him, then they hugged and kissed each other's cheeks.

"I'm sorry Anne, for making you wait", he whispered in her left ear. I was standing there watching a sweet scene in front of me until Jason realised that he hadn't greeted me.

"Hi Alley, how are you? I'm sorry that I didn't text you for two months. It's a long story, really. But first of all, I want you to meet Anne". He turned towards that lady; "Anne, this is Alley, and Alley, this is Anne". What a brief introduction he made! We both shook hands and smiled at each other. "Alley, I've heard quite a lot about you from Jason. As we are all here now, would you like to sit with us just to have a chitchat?" Her smile was so sweet and beautiful that I felt like I couldn't say no to anything she asked me.

But before I had a chance to say anything, Jason saved me by saying that it was still my working time, so I couldn't join them ... while the truth was, I actually would like to have an answer to all the questions in my mind about him and Anne who we all thought had committed suicide. But it was still very busy at the shop next door, so I had no choice but to leave them alone.

As I went back to the shop, I felt happy that Jason had found Anne again, but at the same time, I wondered about what had happened to her while she was in the US.

"Ah, I'm sure I'll find the answers to all my questions. Well, it's just not tonight I guess", I told myself as Jason and Anne were leaving the shop.

TCK Learning Centre for Migrant Workers ("TCKLC") is an all-volunteer educational charity based in Hong Kong that, in a values-based learning environment, offers regular Sunday classes on English, Mandarin Chinese, computer skills, make-up, sewing and dress-making to migrant domestic workers. With the slogan of "By Us, From Us, For Us!" TCKLC tutors are mostly Indonesian domestic workers although we are very grateful to kind individuals who are willing to share their experiences and expertise on a voluntary basis. We also work with partner organisations to run workshops on topics such as entrepreneurship, film-making, CV-writing, employees' legal rights and first aid and are regularly invited to offer dance, music, martial art and fashion show performances, with our Angklung music group being particularly active at events around Hong Kong. Other activities have included two Indonesian Workers' Art and Culture Exhibitions (IWACE), one held in Causeway Bay and the other in Kowloon Park, which allowed our members to showcase some of their artistic talent in singing, dance, dress competitions, poetry and handicrafts.

Aiming to make learning affordable, interesting and enjoyable, TCKLC sees itself as a warm-hearted learning community and education as a pathway to overall personal development through acquiring relevant knowledge and practical skill-sets as well as realising individual potential. Many migrant workers have had limited educational opportunities and have taken up employment overseas to help support their families. Learning while working abroad can be a great help for when they return to their home country, seeking to re-integrate themselves into their local community, look for work opportunities, pursue further studies and resume family life.

TCKLC classes and other activities take place throughout the day every Sunday, usually in the Tai Hang/Causeway Bay area. Students become members of the Centre and have opportunities to assist in the running of its activities and thereby develop and express organisational, management, leadership and inter-personal skills and experience. For more information, and details on our classes and workshops, please visit www.tcklc.org and <http://www.facebook.com/TckLearningCentre> or email info@tcklc.org.

TCK Learning Centre for Migrant Workers: registered charity number 91/12084

