

ASIAN UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN
CHITTAGONG, BANGLADESH

Doichira: The School Notes

A Creative Senior Thesis

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One: The Nonamers' Guide #1

A nimbus flashed across the Horizon to the Noname Village as a sudden stop of the wind.

"The HoC had arrived. Ready to go! Must be ready to go! Time's up," the Old said, seeing the nimbus through the reflecting marsh.

Within five million times of beating wings, the HoC again brought to the Noname village a halo. It was a green halo this time.

"Should I tell the Nonamers about HoC so they have time to get ready?" the Messenger worriedly said.

"No! Not until the selected Nonamer is known." the Old asserted. "We will know the selected Nonamer soon!"

Each five years, only a Nonamer would be named by the HoC. No Nonamers knew which Nonamer would be selected for each time except the HoC. There must be some criteria which only the selected Nonamer and the HoC knew. One benefit of that was that no one knew who the HoC worked for. They were supposed to keep it secret, otherwise the Nonamer would not be named.

Being named was the most precious moment in each Nonamers' life. However, it was not easy to find the correct name. If the person found a wrong name, that person would never ever be allowed to leave home. Therefore, the HoC came to accompany the Nonamers on the journey of getting the correct names.

When the Old saw the HoC, the morning was just about to dawn therefore the sky still had a little dusk of previous day. Every five years, the HoC made a big noise in the village in the important day.

"Kak Kak Kak Kak...."

"Are you calling me?" Hearing the noise, a Nonamer got up and stepped out from the tree house nervously and surprisingly.

"Kak Kak," the HoC replied and gave the Nonamer a small box which was tied around the HoC's neck.

The Nonamer opened the little box which had the photo of the Nonamer and the HoC carved on it. The Nonamer wondered how they took the picture together while this was the first time they met. Inside the box, there was a small black crow feather which had the silver letters written on it.

Belongings: the HoC and this box.

The guide is waiting at the fish market.

“So so oo... my new name is Student” said the Nonamer in a trembling voice. “I have an hour to prepare before the sun rises, right?”

Only the selected Nonamer could hear the calling of the HoC and come out of the house to be renamed. Understanding that Nonamer was being selected to go on the journey; the Nonamer quickly turned back to the house and packed every thing. The selected Nonamer had been renamed as “Student” to distinguish with other Nonamers until getting the real name.

After hearing the news about the selected Nonamer, all the Noname villagers gathered in front of the Student’s house. They all quietly looked at the Student when the Student came out from the house. The morning space was overwhelming with the feeling of half happiness and half worry. The Old moved toward the Student, hold the Student’s both hands and said:

“Remember you are a Student now. Be strong, we are waiting for you here!”

It was hard to say a word in this sacred moment. Then the Student bowed the head to show respect and to say thank to the Old. After that, the Student turned to look at all the Noname Village once more time and bowed the head toward the villagers. In reply to the Student’s action, the Villagers also bowed their head with grateful attitude.

Suddenly, the HoC perched on the Student’s shoulder and said “Kak kak.” The sun had appeared on the Horizon to give the signal for departure time.

The Student turned to look at the HoC, bowing the head, said “I am ready.”

The two left the village. They went toward the Basket River in the west of the village where there were many baskets flowing along the road. Those baskets normally carried a lot of products which were already booked by the customer from place to place. The magic of the Basket River was the baskets floated and stopped where their customers were.

The Student wanted to take a lift from one of those baskets which should be big and strong enough to fit Student and the HoC. And the basket should stop in the place they wanted stop “The fish market.” They must reach there before the next day’s dawn.

The Students looked at those baskets. A small yellow basket full of rice which was written on “Ms. Kind,” another small basket with some chocolates which was written on “Mr. Melancholy.” Such weird names that the Student had never heard of. Another huge basket was coming. The Student cheered frantically but just after another seconds, the Student was crestfallen because the basket were full of herbal shampoos.

And the Student just kept waiting like that until noon the Student still could not find a basket to go.

“HoC, fish market! How can we get to the fish market?” The Student turned to the HoC and asked.

“Kak kak,” the HoC simply said with two words.

“What do you mean?” the HoC confused.

“Kak kak,” The HoC replied.

“But what does “Kak Kak” mean? I can’t understand. Come on, tell me something.”

“Kak kak,” The HoC again said.

At this time, the Student just realized that the HoC can only said “Kak Kak” with everything the Student asked. When the Student started the journey by telling to the HoC “I am ready.” The Student thought of by replying “Kak Kak,” the HoC meant “yes, yes”.

The Student made fun of the HoC, replying back to the HoC “Kak kak, thank you for your replying, but I don’t understand your crow language. Kak kak I don’t know what I have to do now. Kak kak. The guide and the fish market. Kak kak” The Student did not know whether to laugh or to cry in this situation. It seemed like this journey the Student had to stand on the own feet.

It was noon time when the Student found out the truth about the HoC. The Student started worrying when the sky got dark, it would be hard to find a good basket. And the Student also did not know where the fish market was.

The Student flexed the toes from up to down, from left side to right site. Suddenly, there was a big brown basket floating toward the Student. The Student could not see anything in the basket, then the Student signaled the HoC “should we go?” No time left, it would be dark soon. The Student had to decide even the Student did not know where this brown basket would arrive. The brown basket was about to approach near the Student. The Student quickly moved back from the river bank to take a run-up.

“READY, ONE, TWO, THREE...JUMP.” The Student ran three steps and jumped exactly into the middle of the basket.

“AKKKKKK” The Student suddenly screamed out in panicking. “NO NO NO.”

“You all live in this building and I am alone in that building. It is not okay. I don’t want to stay alone there.”

An says and grimaces at the allocation of rooms. It has been more than a year that Kim and An are friends. Since they became close friends, it is important for An to stay near Kim. Otherwise it

would be a whole problem of meeting each other from 20A building to 20J building. Distance is the problem.

“What I have to do now? Can I move to this building?” An says.

Kim looks at An’s desperate eyes, then moves to the opposite room where Kim finds an empty bed.

“Perhaps you can move to this room since there is an empty bed?” Kim says.

“Will they allow me to stay here?” An asks with a bit hope.

“Well, you can just say that you have leg pain, so you cannot stay on 7th floor. This room is on the 2nd floor so it will be better for your health condition. Right?” Kim replies.

“Yes, perhaps I have to do so, I don’t have any other options,” An says and leaves Kim behind with entanglement. Kim commiserates with An on the living alone matter, but Kim is in a muddle because somehow she feels being bound by this friendship.

“Dan! An is going to move to our building,” Kim says dispiritedly.

“I knew it! I already guessed that she would move here since we are here,” Dan replies as she already knows the answer of this plan, “she will move wherever we are. It’s okay. Don’t worry. Just let it go...Ah! The president of Student Government was searching for you and Nhat.”

“Yeah, I know, I know, we both have work today. I am going to talk to Nhat now. See you later. Let me know when you are going to eat.” Kim says and runs down stair in search of Nhat.

Tomorrow, there will be a welcome party for the new Students and the work Nhat and Kim get to day is to decorate the stage. Therefore Kim and Nhat are going to stay awake tonight. Kim takes the bag of gifts which An has brought from home to Nhat. Kim gets the job of delivering gifts.

Nhat lives in another building but it wasn’t that far to go. Between Nhat and Kim, distance is not the problem. Kim can run to Nhat’s room if she needs her and vice versa. When Kim comes, Nhat has just had a bath. Her hair is wet, sitting on the bunk bed and doing something. Above Nhat’s bed, there are many things like pictures, key hangers, and whatever Nhat likes, which are hung on a big rope in a very artistic way like a spider net. Next to the spider net, there is a big poster of her famous singer and even a tissue from Pizza Hut where they used to eat together. Kim rarely comes to Nhat’s room, therefore, this time, she finds Nhat’s room is very interesting to observe.

Finding Nhat is busy with her stuff. Kim tiptoes near toward her bed and then makes a big noise to make Nhat surprised.

“Hey! Ten ten ten! You got gifts from your dad. An told me to give you,” Kim says.

Nhat receives the package from Kim, throwing a big smile. Looking at Nhat’s radiant faces while she opens the gift, Kim gets a vicarious feeling of happiness. Gifts from home make people’s heart warm.

“Bum di clap di clap bum bum clap.”

Kim’s phone is ring, breaking the silence. It’s An.

“Kim, where are you?” An’s voice is like a sniveling little kid’s voice.

“Oh, I have work for the Student Government with Nhat,” Kim says.

“When will you come back?” An asks.

“Oh, I don’t know. When I have done with my work I will come,”

“Oh, ok then?” An hangs up the phone.

Nhat looks at Kim “You gotta go?”

“No, we gotta work right? Let’s go”

Nhat steps down from her bunk bed. Both of them start moving sluggishly to 20G rooftop. The AUW stage is no longer a stranger for them. After coming to AUW, decorating stage has become Nhat and Kim’s profession. Whenever there is an event, there are Nhat and Kim.

“What are we going to do with the stage?” Kim asks as always because she knows that Nhat always has creative ideas ahead. “We don’t have much time, something that we can make quickly.”

“Uhhmm, ...” Nhat takes a look around the stage and thinks. Her face puckers. “What about balloons?”

“Balloons?”

“Uh, decorating with balloons will be quick.”

“Then we can make the letter here right? Do we need to make anything else?”

“I think W-e-l-c-o-m-e will be a good enough,” Nhat says.

Concurring with Nhat’s idea, they both start on blowing the balloons.

“Bum di clap di clap bum bum clap,” Kim’s phone rings again.

“Here I am.” Kim says.

“Where are you?” It is An again.

“I’m in 20G roof top,” knowing that An’s next question would be “What are you going?” Kim answers An at once, “decorating for the welcome party tomorrow.”

“You haven’t done your work right?” An asks sadly.

“Not yet. I guess it will take a bit long to do because we’ve just started.” Kim replies.

“Oh, okay,” An hangs up the phone.

Perhaps An keeps calling Kim because she is staying alone in the room. But it seems like Kim does not care about An. She just continues the work with Nhat, blowing, tying, and hanging balloons.

After the night, all balloons are hung up on the stage wall in the form of the W-E-L-C-O-M-E letters. Different colors. Swaying up and down.

“We are done! Nhat! Let’s take a picture with our final product.” Kim happily says.

The two at this time are tired after the sleepless night but are still energetic to take pictures. One for each, then they both drag their legs to Kim’s room. Nhat put Kim’s yoga mat on the floor and sleeps next to Kim’s bunk bed. Kim is already on her sleep position on the bunk bed. Mr. Sun is coming from outside the room through the window, heating the room up. Even though the room is bright and the vehicles are *pim pim* making noise, the two do not feel bother because at the moment they lie down, they already start snoring soundly till lunch time.

“Kim, wake up. Let’s go for lunch!”

“Uhhmm” Kim stretches her torpid body and opens her eyes. Even though she does not have her glasses she still can guess it is An. She is hanging clothes in the balcony. Then Kim suddenly remembers Nhat, she looks down on the floor, but Nhat is not there. It is odd because normally Nhat is the one who sleeps more than Kim but she is not here anymore.

“Kim, I want to talk to you, ” An moves toward Kim’s bed, looking a bit serious and sadly.

“Yeah, yeah, tell me. I am ready to listen to you” Kim opened half of the eyes, looking at An sleepily.

“I am not kidding with you. Come on. I guess you already know it. I don’t like Nhat. So please don’t mention Nhat whenever you talk to me. I know you are close with Nhat, but I don’t want to bother you. I just feel sad when you talk about Nhat.” An throws to Kim a sad-looking.

“Yes, don’t worry, I won’t do that anymore.” Kim looks out to the window desperately. Inside Kim heart is all in a stir and a jumble because Kim loves both of them. She had already known that An did not like Nhat, which made Kim confused about how to make balance between the

relationships in her. Perhaps, she needs to make the decision between them now, between Nhat and An.

August 26, 2010

Burning smell from Princess's hair iron and spicy taste from Nondi's Fuwang noodles.

Darkness surrounding.

I see Mr. Sky close his eyes and the old darkness touches my back and my skin. Chilling cold. Then he rolls me in his arms. My face is frozen by the blow of Ms. Wind. I can't see anything tomorrow.

Dear Kolponik Kim,

Do you still remember this story?

"How many fuchkas you can eat at a time?" JJ asked

"I don't know. How many can you eat?" Cho asked back to coach.

"Last week I had an eating fushca competition with Mat, and I ate more than 50 fuchkas," JJ proudly flaunted.

"REALLY," everyone in the team opened big eyes and looked at him.

Can you believe our coach can eat more than 50 fuchkas at a time?

"Sir, I can't believe it unless you show it to us" Cho looked askance at him.

"You don't believe me. Okay, I will let you see it then." JJ said and turned to find the shop keeper to order five plates of fushsca.

"But you just told us that you did not bring enough money today," Nhat said.

"Oh, yeah! I almost forgot," JJ sadly said.

"Haha! It's okay, sir. We believe you. Tell us more about your eating fuchka competition," Cho said, smiling pleased.

"Ok, ok. You know, I was trying my best to win but I couldn't. Mr. Mat won. I really ate more than 50 fuchka. But when I got home, I nearly vomited all of them."

"Haha haha," everyone burst out laughing when they got to know that our coach loved fuchka that much.

“That’s why you love fuchka so much,” Beyadop said

“And that’s why you always took us to eat after playing,” Teayang continues Beyadop’s sentence.

And everyone laughed again and again, from this joke to another joke. It was our last fuchka together.

Today we couldn’t go to our favorite fuchka shop because of rain. Today was the last day without fuchka. I am going to miss it a lot.

Hey KK, here is the story between you and me, I write it for you ☺

KK: Why do you love eating fuchka?

K: Oh because...because... JJ loves it.

KK: Haha, because JJ loves it. Don’t tell me that you have a crush on him.

K: No no, I don’t know.

KK: Tell me the truth

K: Yes, I love him...But it is not true love I guess.

KK: Why do you love him?

K: Because he is JJ.

KK: What does it mean? Answer my question seriously.

K: Just, simply because I love basketball.

KK: Oh, that is the reason. Then why do you love basketball?

K: Oh, simply because of... Hey KK you already know. There is no reason for it. Enough! Enough!

KK: One last question please.

K: Okay, but change the topic.

KK: Of course, who want to talk about your crush (smile wickedly). Did you get wet today?

K: I did get wet and I even lost my spectacles today. But KK, has ...hhaaasss everything ended? JJ is leaving tomorrow.

KK: ...

K: KK tells me,

KK:...

K: KK, KK, answer me...KK

Rain on the jersey, imbuing with the body sweat.

Rain on the orange color, rolling around from the space and landing on concrete horizontal plane.

Rain on your hair, slapping your lips, sparkling in your eyes

Rain is salty today

Rain on my spectacles, rain in my shoes

Rain bids the farewell

KK: But you did not answer my question why do you love basketball?

K: Just no reason, I think everything should be ended soon.

KK: You still have Nhat and Pacemakers with you. Everything is still there.

K: You are right, but still we need a coach. You know a coach to guide us and will that coach will be good like JJ?

KK: ...

A rainy day! On a September night! The burning hair and the Fuwang's noodle smell are still somewhere but Nondi and Princess have fallen to sleep.

See you tomorrow,

Love, xox

Your K

Two: The Nowhere Story #1

There was something in the basket look like a brown ball of thorns. The ball moved from left to right, right to left, around the basket which terrified and stung on the Student's buttock.

Then suddenly the ball stopped moving. It opened up 45 degree, slowly revealing two little longans which looked like two big human eyes. Then the two longans started to move up and down, up and down.

"Hey what are you doing here?" showing its thorns, the-thing- that-looks-like-two-longans angrily said.

The Student could not answer a word because of the pain.

"GET OUT OF HEREEEEEEEE," The thing that looks like two longans said.

The Student's face color changed to the banana leaf color, which is the same color with the Student's shirt.

"WHAT A HORRIBLE DEMON YOU ARE! You even don't have a HEAAAADDDD!"

"No no no, I d..d.. do have a head," The Student terribly replied.

"Where is your head? I only can see your brown buttocks. Don't lie! I won't be defeated by your delusion. I know you are the kind of demon who wants to take head of other to put on top of your waist." The thing looks like two longans truculently continued, pointing at the HoC "a..and you even brings a black holy relic with you."

"No no, the HoC is not a holy relic, the HoC is my...my..." The Student spoke with halt because the Student does not know how to address the HoC.

"Haha, see your what? You even don't know. What a liar!" The thing that looks like two longans suddenly broke off a thorn on its body. The Student shriveled up because there could be a chance that the thorn would be thrown on the Student's face.

"And I think you don't have teeth like mine, do you, hahaha," The thing that looks like two longans said and then put the black sharp thorn put between its teeth and started flipping of the leftover food between its teeth: A dead leaf, then a faded flower came out. Then suddenly, all its thorns drooped down at once as the green worm was coming out from the upper teeth.

Witnessing this awkward scene, the Student started laughing until the tears rolled on the face. Witnessing this weird laughing scene, the HoC also started laughing. Of course the HoC does not have teeth so the HoC laughed by shaking its head up to down, back to front, circle and circle. Witnessing this funny movement, the thing looks like two longans also started rolling its body and laughed.

Everyone laughed and the basket started shaking so much.

“B..B OOOOMM” A big noise stopped everyone from laughing. They all looked around worriedly that something must have been wrong. Then, a massive of air exploded from the bottom of the basket.

Then the smoke moved around, creating a message “THIS IS HOW I LAUGH- Ms. Emotional Basket.”

After seeing the message, everyone started laughing again and they even laughed bigger and louder than the previous one. Ms. Emotional Basket also laughed so much which makes all the smoke covering around the river.

Wherever Ms. Emotional basket moved, the smoke pervaded the whole area. The smoke had the smell of mint leaf, whoever inhaled would be in bouyant mood. And whoever in the bouyant mood would start to change their emotion over and over again. Therefore, after laughing, Ms. Emotional Basket suddenly cried which made the Student bursted into a convulsive sob. The thing that looks like two longans also cried but in a baby voice. The most funny crying sound should be HoC’s voice with the action of flying up and down. Whoever heard the HoC’s crying sound might think that the HoC was brarracking for a cricket team in the stadium. Everyone cried, making a formidable sound throughout the area.

And then, suddenly Ms. Emotional Basket stopped crying and then she started sceaming. No need to mention, other three also start screaming. After screaming, then frightening, then jumping on the basket with excitement.

The smoke was all around therefore, it was hard to see how crazy they were. It was hard to imagine how terrible the noise was. Whoever listened to their madness might think that there was a big star had fallen on the river, which made the fish go mad. Fortunately there was no one who walked on the bank of the river, otherwise they would be frightened to death.

The emotion storm was kept going until the all the stars was visible in the inky sky. The dark shadow covered the whole scenery. Ms. Emotional Basket was still floating with different mood. The only thing that they did not realize was that if they kept changing the moods, they would face danger. There was a dreadful sight in the front. They could only try to overcome the danger if only the smoke would be dispersed. Ms. Emotional Basket should stop changing her mood now. But how? It was hard to change her mood because she was very emotional. But, the only thing could help her now is Ms. Moon. They had to find Ms. Moon.

May 17, 2010

Dear KK,

How are you doing?

You know, so far, everything is fine for me except learning Bangla. I'm sometimes lazy to go to Bangla class. Well I don't think the way our Shikkhika teaches us is effective. We have to learn by heart the sentences and a pile of grammar point. Well we do practice but it is not interesting since it is a non-credit class. Everything of the Bangla class is just about not making Shikkhika upset.

Whenever we have Bangla class, An and I have to phone Nhat, Dan, Ha to come to the class. Sometimes, there were only me and An in the class. Shikkhika is very friendly with us therefore, we come to class because of her, not because we love Bangla ☺

Bangla is terribly difficult. I did not know there is such kind of complicated language like this in the world. The words are super long, and the grammar is being reverse. For example, you just need to say *Tôi khỏe*, in order to say *I'm fine*, but in Bangla you have to say *Ami bhalo achi*.

A / mi/ bha/ lo/ a/ chi. You see it is a total of six sound while in Vietnamese only two sound *Tôi/ khỏe*. And we get a hard time to remember such many words. What to do? ☹

We are going on the wrong direction perhaps.

Hey KK, I have a thing and I hesitate to make the decision. Should I go home or not?

Of course I really miss home. It has been nearly a year. I want to sleep on bed and listen to my radio. I want to eat dad and mom's *thịt kho trứng* which have the sweet and salty taste of pork meat and eggs. But I will have only one month vacation if I go home. One month is too short for me. And if I go home, mom and dad have to pay nearly 800 dollars as an airplane ticket price for me. I don't want to waste their money.

Nhat told me to make to columns of go and stay, then but all the reason for staying and going. Which one is more reasonable then choose it. But it is still the same for me ☹

Stay at AUW

Save mom and dad money

Go home:

Miss home

Should I go home?

I miss home. But I don't want to waste their money. Well, I will wait until next summer then. The school will give me the ticket to go home.

So you have to stay with me then, poor you. Let's do something fun.

I want to sleep now. Princess and Nondi already slept, only me left.

See you!

Your K

The sky, the night, the wind, the quiet sounds, and the rhythm of the rain...

They all are yours

Home...

Is also yours

Close your eyes,

...the world is yours.

And the next drama happens. This is called the drama of nowhere because it is so simple that none of the readers would like to read such a boring story about friendship. What is called a boring friendship is that there is the silly fight and the misunderstanding between two friends, and then they don't talk to each other for sometimes or never talked again. And the boring story has come to Kim's life somehow. And you have to read it this boring story. And perhaps, this will be a serious of boring stories happen for Kim. Who knows? And here the drama comes:

An (wry face): My room does not have a balcony. I don't know where to hang my clothes, should I hang them on the rooftop?

Kim: Why don't you hang them in my balcony?

An: But, there are your roommates' clothes as well. And the balcony is very small.

Nhat: You can hang them in the kitchen, I saw other students also hanging their clothes in the kitchen.

An: But the kitchen is really dark. It is a problem to dry the clothes.

Kim: Okay then hanging them on the rooftop is the best option.

Nhat: No, if you hang there, then other people do not have space to hang their clothes

Kim: So what? The rooftop is for everyone. She can hang clothes there as well. Yeah, I know, you are always against me with whatever I say

And with this small conversation, Kim stops talking to Nhat. So as a reader, you must find how boring the story was right? The drama happened within 2 minutes, but Kim has decided herself not to talk to Nhat forever.

There is a said that the more you love someone, the more you pay attention to the person, the more you care about the person, and then the more jealous and the more hatred you find in you for that person. Haizzz, why there is the spelling f-r-i-e-n-d-s-h-i-p in this world to make human relationship becomes complicated. Haizzz, and as a writer, I have no power to change the spelling of the word. I cannot change *friendship* to *enemyship*. I have been trying to find an antonym of *friendship*. There are many antonyms of *friendship* but it is hard to find the one which has a **-ship** ending. Perhaps **-ship** is to indicate the strong **relationship** between both sides (I just use a **-ship** again). Even though my characters are enemies, they have a very strong **relationship**. And later you can find this between Kim and Nhat. And for now I call it as *enemyship*.

Three: The Nowhere Story #2

Infinite obscurity, shuddering chill, lilting harmonium sound

Floating...

The HoC, the Student, the thing that looks like two longans and Ms. Emotional Basket had fallen asleep after the long deep sadness.

Floating...

Only Ms. Moon could wake them up.

Floating...

But...

Moon where are you?

“Finally we are on the train now. Can you imagine? The whole AUW students are on the train,” the green stripe coat says as she swings her arms up and down with her excited talk. “I guess the whole train is booked by us today.”

“So we don’t have to worry about anything, haha,” the dark pink coat replies.

“But where are our juniors?” the light pink coat asks.

“They will come later tonight I guess. On another train,” the dark green long sleeve T-shirt says.

“Then, the whole train is not booked by us then,” the grey T-shirt says.

“Who said that the whole train is ours? The number of AUW students is not even 400,” the big yellow T-shirt says “But it is funny, can you imagine, when everyone leaves, the whole AUW will be so quiet. Most of the security guards are with us, even the cooking bhaiya also with us.”

“Yaya, who stays there must feel scared. I can’t imagine it,” the dark pink excitedly said.

“But we are going to have fun,” the green stripe coat says.

And the AUW symposium journey starts for the 6 Vietnamese shirts. Yes, the whole carriages are AUWians. Noisy. Busy. And no worry.

“So tonight we will have a good sleep then,” the green long sleeve T-shirt stands up and then walking backward and forward and talking to the light pink coat.

“Yes,” the light pink coat replies.

“Soo no needs to afraid of the robbers then,” the green long sleeve T-shirt continues.

“Yees.”

“Sooo we can have fun Then.”

“Yeees.”

“Soooo we can move around freely as in our home THEN.”

“Yeeees.”

“Sooooo we can go to the toilet whenever we want THEN.”

“Yeeeeesssss.”

“Sooooooo...”

“Hey, can you both sit down and stop saying *yes* and *so*. *You guys are making me dizzy with this silly talk*, ” the dark pink coat tiredly says.

“YEEEEEEESS...HAHAHA,” Kim and Thi starts laughing after making a comedy in front of Ha.

For some certain point of time, all of our characters have fallen asleep. As you might notice that most of them are wearing coats and long sleeves T-shirt. Winter is good to travel sometimes because your body will not be smelly because of the sweat. However, the winter cannot prevent the tiresome of sitting on a train where local guesses would like to walk across by to visit our characters.

Within an hour, you can find more than 10 guests cross by. They might come for toilet, but they also should have toilets in their carriages. They might have some business, maybe seeing a friend, or maybe there is food canteen on the train so they cross by to buy. I try to pull out as many as reasons I can to defense the idea that the people came for their business, not to visit our characters. But somehow, I could not make it, when I see some familiar faces just walk by more than 10 times, and why they are walking, they look at our characters' sleeping faces as if they want to search for something on their faces.

However, these guests never have an attempt to stop by when they see a man wearing a grey shirt with an AUW ID card at the end of the carriage. He is the security guard.

After 7 hours train journey, the six color shirts and coats: An, Kim, Nhat, Ha, Thi and Dan has arrives the BRAC guest house in Dhaka. The Vietnamese juniors arrive later at 10pm. There are only 10 of them together, but they still can make a big mess somehow.

At 11pm, while the six shirts are trying on our traditional dress *áo dài* for tomorrow program, a junior hastily appear in front of their room and says:

“Sister, sister, there is a big problem happened. Something happened to Lan, she is crying and screaming crazily on the floor in our room. Sister, what should we do?”

Without a word, Nhat and Kim immediately run out from the room.

If the world could divide into two, one would be for Nhat and another one would be for Kim. The two worlds would be named the *shadow* and *human body*. And right now it is hard to distinguish who is the *shadow* and who is *human body*. Because actually the two are running on the same way but they have their own world. Obviously they don't talk to each other, but the fact that they are together might make everyone have suspicious about their relationship.

As a group leader, Kim finds in herself a “must run.” Wherever there is a problem which is related to Vietnam, there should be Kim. Therefore, there is no reason makes Kim not to run. But for Nhat, no one knows what happens. The first hypothesis could be Nhat cares for other people therefore she wants come to see what she can help. But in the room, there are a total of six Vietnamese seniors, and why does no one care about the junior, except Nhat? Why don't they come along as well? The second hypothesis can be Nhat is curious person; therefore she wants to see what is happening. But this hypothesis seems to be bizarre because Nhat seems to be a level-headed person. Usually she clearly knows what she wants to do and what she wants to say; therefore there is a minimum chance of wrong action in her. If the second hypothesis is wrong then we have to turn back to the first hypothesis which is Nhat cares for other people. But usually Nhat does not to talk to everyone unless Nhat is a good friend to the person; or Nhat is in a group chat; or Nhat has a business to with the person. Therefore, from the two hypotheses, our conclusion is Nhat is good friend to Lan. It seems to sound logical enough conclusion to continue the story of “a crazy girl crying on the floor.”

And the place appears when Kim and Nhat takes a turn left from the stair. In front of the room where Lan is, almost all the Vietnamese juniors are present. Some stand next to the window. Some sit against the balcony. Some are inside the room, trying to comfort Lan. The worried faces were whispering. Everywhere is overwhelming with somber atmosphere and the fear of something goes wrong.

Kim enters the room. In front of Kim, Lan's body is writhing on the floor with sobs. Her eyes and her hair are soaked with tears.

“What happened to her?” Kim asks those who are in the room.

“Sister, I don’t know. Suddenly she started crying terribly. Everyone tries to comfort her but we are helpless.”

“How long has she been crying?”

“More than a half an hour, sister.”

“Really?”

“Let’s me talk to her then”

“Sister, you try but I think she is still the same.”

Then Kim steps near where Lan is lying. Kim is baffled by Lan’s lying position. She does not know where she should sit down to lift Lan sit up. Lan’s body is nothing but skin and bone. She shrivels up like a tree trunk which is being trembled by an earthquake.

“Lan, can you tell me what is happening to you?...Lan.” Kim touches Lan’s shoulder and softly asks Lan.

However, there is no response from Lan. She just keeps sobbing.

“Lan...Lan. Let’s go to the bed and sit. Don’t lie down on the floor, everyone is looking at you. Lan... Lan... Come on. Let’s sit on the bed and then you can do whatever you want to do.”

Only after five minutes, when Lan’s sob becomes smaller, she starts to listen to Kim’s words. With the help of Kim, she sits up on the bed behind where Lan was lying down.

All of the eyes flock into where Kim and Lan sit. Even though it is winter, Kim feels the room is stuffy because many people are inside, and because of the sweat and the heat from Lan’s body. Actually, when people cry they also feel tired, that’s why somehow the body temperature increases.

“Everyone, please go to your room now, let Lan’s alone. Don’t worry about her. Go to sleep, tomorrow we have to get ready for the important symposium ... Clear? GO please.” For a while , all the people move back to their room, except other two girls. Then Kim turns to them and asks.

“Hey why don’t you both go to your room?”

“Sister, this is my room.”

“Oh, then why Lan is here?”

“We don’t know, she came, and then she suddenly was like that.”

“Lan, let’s go to your room,” no response from Lan still, “ Lan, let’s go, your friends need to sleep, they need to prepare for tomorrow’s program. It’s already 12 o’clock now,” still no response, “Lan, let’s go, they are all looking at you, let’s go.”

After much entreating from Kim, Lan stands up and walks in a lanky way. Finally, Kim sighs with relief. Kim then leads Lan to her room.

When they step out of the room, Kim finds Nhat is standing against the room’s window. When Kim looks at Nhat, Nhat is looking at somewhere else as she does not care who is coming out or in. Then Kim leads Lan to her room, which is the opposite Nhat’s standing place.

Kim lets Lan lie down on her bed. The girl is still sobbing. Kim somehow feels helpless.

“Lan, did you have a fight with your best friend? Lan, tell me....Or did your best friend beat you? Is that right? So can I ask your best friend?” Kim starts asking Lan as she is soothing a little child.

“No, why it is my best friend? Why does she have to care about me?”

Until this point, I guess you might guess what happens here. As I mention to you before that I am going to tell a series of boring friendship stories. And this is the second. Human life is being bound by relationship. And it is always the old stuff. A fight to a cry.

“Then who is the one who is making you cry?”

“Why does she have to care about me? I don’t have right to tell her to care for me. I don’t need her.”

Slowly Kim gets to the point that something should be wrong between Lan and her best friend.

“Then tell me, if it is not her then who else?” Kim keeps mentioning Lan's best friend.

“NONONO, DON’T TALK ABOUT HER. I DON’T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT,” Lan screams out loudly. And Kim is scared that Lan could wake everyone up at the midnight. Kim immediately changes the topic.

Right now, Kim is still not sure what happened to the girl. Perhaps it could be the relationship between the best friend and Lan, but right now, the crucial thing which Kim has to do is to get the girl to sleep.

Kim never had an attempt to talk to Lan unless she had to because she does not want to get close to any junior. Therefore, this is the first time Kim talks to Lan. But after talking with Lan, Kim finds that Lan is like a little child. Kim just needs to talk to her in the soft and sweet voice, the girl will listen to Kim.

Now Kim does not know what to do next because she rarely comforts people and she is not good at it. Kim then starts to tell her childhood story to Lan. Kim just hopes that the girl will be okay until they are going back to Chittagong. She does not want anything to happen in the symposium.

“Sister, you go back. I am okay now. You go back.” After a long story about Vietnam’s high school life, Kim also feels tired and wants to go back but she is still worried about the girl.

“Are you sure you will be fine?”

“Yes, sister, I am okay. Don’t worry.” Lan confirms in the flaccid way of a kid voice after crying.

Kim arranges Lan’s bed and say bye to her “Yes, sleep, I will come to sleep with you when we are back in Chittagong.”

It seems like the girl feels much better after Kim’s word. Kim also feels much better because finally she could put the girl to bed.

Stepping out from Lan’s room, Kim finds Nhat, not next to the other room’s window anymore, but next to Lan’s window.

“Hey what are you doing on this desert?” the first stranger asked the second stranger.

“Searching for a green sand,” said the second stranger.

“A green sand??? How are you going to find it?” the first stranger curiously asked.

“Holding hope! That’s what my guide said!”

“Who is your guide?”

“Very far!”

“But who?”

“Don’t know... don’t know but I can feel...it...somewhere!” the second stranger said and looked up into the profound depth of the sky.

Double check!

Four: The Nonamer's guide #2

April 20, 2010

Chair! Table! An's laptop! Cards! Water Bottle! Music! CDs! Dew! Bathroom! Clothes!
Shampoo! Clothes! Cell phone! Wall! Balcony! Dew! Dew! And Dew! And Nhat!

Dear Kolponik Kim,

I don't know why my tears keep dropping down on these pages while I am writing to you. The tears are infiltrating through the letters from this page to another page. I really need you. I need you to make me stronger, to keep my head up and to be back to who I am.

My mind is filled with hatred, love and memories. Do you remember the exchange-gender day in our university, the day I got upset with Mr. Jack because I felt that I was being lied to? He told me that he would wear a sari whole day. In the morning of that day, I saw him wearing sari and smiling at me. Many girls were dancing around him with words, surprises and satisfied laughs. I slightly smiled at him with the hope that I would have chance to talk to him in class in the afternoon. But when I saw him in class, the sari had been taken off. I was really upset because of the girls who made him feel shy. I did not have chance to look at his sari and take a picture with him. Since then, I stopped talking to him because I felt that I was being betrayed.

I remember on the next day, he suddenly brought a guitar to class and he was wearing a pop style T-shirt and a cool short. And he sang. A friend told me that most of the boy learns guitar because they wanted to draw the girl's attention. In fact, his song blew my soul from the classroom to the pink sky.

I remember three days later, I said sorry to him when I saw him passing by with a very low voice. I did not explain the reasons for saying apology but I guess he could understand it because I also saw him upset when I even did not look at him or talked to him. It was very hard to say sorry to someone. And he smiled back to me as if nothing had happened between us. You should not think that I said sorry to him because I felt in love with his guitar but actually I had realized that it was the nonsense of me to get angry with him because it was not easy for him to wear a female dress whole day and being laugh at by many girls. Stopping talking with the one I love made me stressed out.

I remember the day on his farewell party. I tied my hair like I had two bulbs of garlic on the top of my head. On that day, I sang and played the guitar. It was my first guitar performance. You know what? I had drawn his attention by playing the guitar. After that, he gave me a tightest hug ever I had had even I felt that I smelled bad because I did not have a proper bath.

And things were like that, time passed out quickly as I was glued with the guitar.

You know, right now, I really want to hold my breath, to take a deep sleep and never wake up again. I want to sleep until my prince will come and kiss on my lips and says “My princess, I came to rescue you, please wake up!” But I can’t close my eyes because I find that my eyes are filled with dew! The morning dew is normally cool and lucid. It creates the freshness in leaves, flowers and soil to welcome a new sunny day. If you wake up in the early morning, the dew can make your day by sending your mind the fresh of cool air and the energy of the warm sun. But perhaps the dew in my eyes is the evening dew. Mom usually said to me that I should not stay up outside at night; the evening dew can make me sick because it’s cold. Suddenly I cannot see myself because the dew keeps coming down, coming down and dropping down from the air to the ground. It cannot evaporate because there is no sun. It is cold and chill out here.

Here is what happened to me today around 5pm:

Before 5pm, I was sitting in my dorm 8B and preparing our group’s gift for him. Then Fatema came from her class and said:

“Hi Kim! No class? What are you doing out there?”

“Ah, I am preparing the gift to give for my teacher, Mr. Jack. Do you know if he is down there or not?” I asked her back.

“Oh! He has left around 3 hours ago.”

“What! No you are kidding me, aren’t you? He told me that he will leave at 5pm. Have you seen him down there? Haha, don’t make a joke. I won’t believe it. You know he never lies to me”

You know I was really surprised when she said like that and I could not believe it as I just kept asking her from this question to another questions. And finally she strongly concluded she did not want to explain to me anymore when she found that there would be no use to persuade me if I did not believe.

“No, he left, we were having class and we stopped for a while to say bye to him and everyone was there to see him off. Well if you don’t believe me, you can go and check. I am not kidding.”

She said and went back to her room. Just in the morning, I saw him. Even his wife told me that he would leave at 5pm. And at that time it was not even 5pm yet. I immediately ran to my balcony from where I could see downstairs. From the eighth floor, people hair was looked like black dots which were moving from this place to another place. The black dots seemed similar but I could recognize one from other because those are all familiar dots. The place I live is small enough to know all the dots. Some dots were moving from 20A to 20G and from 20G to 20A and a few dots were staying still.

I was searching for a dot which had the mix color of brown, grey, yellow and maybe a little white. At this time I did not really remember the color of the dot I wanted to find but surely it is not a black dot.

And it was 5:05 pm and I still could not find the dot. My eyes blurred. This black dot blends with other dot, muddling mind. At this point of time, I could not think of anything else, really could not think of anything else. My head was booming. My heart was beating very fast and I need to breathe. I was shaking while I was trying to find his wife's phone number. I wanted to call her to make sure that he was still in the campus. But no one answered the phone.

When it was 5:30pm, I came back to the table where I had been sitting whole day. I felt my body likes a dandelion which could be blown by wind from this place to the other the place heartlessly and painlessly. My face collapsed on the table, wet and salty.

Then, I immediately got up and ran to get my shampoo, body wash, brush, tower and my clothes. I bet you know why I went to the bathroom as you know me well. As usually I needed to go to the bath room, to hide myself as I don't like people to see me crying and to refresh my mind. Then forcefully I closed the bathroom door and put everything on place. I stood against the wall and slowly slid down on the ground. I bit my lips to suppress the sob but I could not control it. The tears just kept rolling on my face. I put a towel between my teeth and bit it tightly to make sure that I would not cry loud.

Then I stood up and I looked at myself in the mirror. I looked at my reddish and watery eyes! They were not my eyes; they seemed belong to someone else. "No! I want my eyes to come back to me, the beautiful eyes," I thought. I did not want people see my swollen eyes and I wiped all the tears. I did not want my eyes to become ugly.

I opened the tap, the water made me feel cool. It ran from my head through my body. The water mingles with the tears creating the brackish water and flew into my mouth. It washed all the tears and all the memories.

What did I do? I did not sleep for the whole night! I woke up from early morning to make the gift for him. What was I doing? Why was I so stupid? How long had I been sitting in front of the computer to do the gift? How long? How long? And the gift I made finally could not reach the receiver. Why it is so hard to love someone? Is there anything more painful than the feeling of disappointment when the gift you made could not reach to the one you love.

Staying for a while in the bathroom, I decided to renew my mind, to renew the existence to become the future. On the way back to my room, I saw Nhat was standing against the wall which was next to the bathroom with blank face. Why was Nhat here? Why? Who told Nhat about my

stuff? I did not even dare to look at her because I did not want to see Nhat catch my reddish eyes. I just glanced at her and went back to the room without a word. She also did not talk to me and just followed me back to my room. I dried my hair and took all the books out. I started studying as usual. Nhat was sitting behind my back. I studied and Nhat studied too. No one said a single word. The pencil was on my hand. The note was in front of me. But my soul was still somewhere else. I just wanted to tell Nhat, "Please let me alone." But I could not.

After writing this story to you, I feel better now. I hope that tomorrow, when I wake up, I will be okay. I hope that I will forget the pain and the tears. It was just like a shadow, right? Tomorrow Mr. Sun will come here through the balcony and reach me. Tomorrow Mr. Sun will dry my face and put my face somewhere on Madam Cloud so I could see the peace of life. Tomorrow, Ms. Wind will blow me to a place where I can get a sound sleep.

You know how strong I am right? Don't worry about me!

It is just 10pm but I want to sleep early today. I will write to you soon.

Good night and with love!

Kim

Dew and memory.

Day is night and night is day when things are seen through dew.

At somewhere, there was something which was sound like a little song from someone's melodious voice.

Basket Basket Basket....Sleeping in the sleepless night on the...

...River River River....I will take you to far far away, to the place of...

...Desert Desert Desert....Sands and Wind

Moon Moon Moon....Only Ms. Moon knows where you are.

The HoC, the Student, the thing that looked like two longans and Ms. Emotional basket were still adrift peacefully on the river. Tomorrow, the Student must find the guide otherwise the Student would not be named. However at this moment, the Student was still sleeping unconsciously.

"Nervousness. Fight." Someone was whispering.

"One...Two...."Someone was counting. "Ready...Three...Explode."

"BOOOOOOOM."

A big noise sudden resounded in the middle of the river in front of Ms. Emotional Basket. The water started to spin around very fast and created a vortex in front of her. At this moment, in the sky, all the stars started flocking into the point which was directly above the vortex. The stars gradually started to be rounded in the shape of a moon. If a bird was flying in the space between the sky and the river, it could have seen the bright moon above its head and the black vortex down in the river.

When Ms. Emotional Basket touched the vortex, the vortex suddenly raised up very high above the river. Ms. Emotional Basket woke up with a start. She looked around and found herself in the cool air and the darkness. Everywhere around her was nothing except darkness and a little smell of sands. The water, the vortex and the moon had wakened Ms. Emotional Basket.

“YAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHOOOOOOOOOOO! WE ARRIVED!!! WE ARRIVED!!! EVERY ONE!!! WAKE UP! WAKE UP!” Ms. Emotional Basket started to shout excitedly. And of course, when she was happy, everyone also felt happy. They all got up and were amazed.

“WOW, How did we reach here?” The Student said.

“Kak Kak Kak...Kak Kak kak...Kak. KAK KAK kaK KAK KAAAAKKK KaaaaKKKK” The HoC replied.

“HoC, I don’t understand what you are saying.” Even though the HoC tried to explain to the Student, the Student did not understand anything.

“The HoC said that there was no reason to know if we arrived or not. Ms. Emotional Basket knows it because she is a basket,” The thing that looked like two longans said.

“You... you... how... how could you understand the HoC’s language?” The Student was amazed by the thing that looked like two longans.

“Oh, you don’t know? Here, everyone understands the HoC’s language. The HoC is very famous here. Most of the people they cannot speak the HoC’s ‘language but they can understand it very well,” the thing that looked like two longans said.

“Really? Then maybe I should learn the language too,” the Student replied excitedly.

Then the vortex suddenly oscillated around quickly, gradually sped up and spun around until no one could identify who was who on the basket. Then the vortex took a run-up by flexing down the water and suddenly made a high jump. The basket was tossed in the air and at this moment the three were being flown to three different directions.

“GOOD BYE EVERYONE!” Ms. Emotional Basket yelled excitedly to say farewell to the three: the Student, the HoC and the thing that looked like two longans. Then she lowed herself down to the river and continued on her work of transporting.

You might wonder what had happened to Lan and on that day how did the symposium go? Well, as I told you before, you are going to hearing more boring stories about friendship. And here is my answer to you which I guess should disappoint you enough.

The symposium went well as all the guests come with their beautiful dresses and their full energy of both knowledge and appetite. The guests who came with knowledge mostly are donors of AUW. And those guests who came with appetite are mostly the AUW students. What would be better than knowledge and food for AUW students in that symposium? Therefore, everyone was happy with the food they have.

And about Lan's story, well I have to say that Lan did not cry in during the symposium or when they returned back to AUW. On the contrary, Kim gradually changes to be a quiet person. On the way back, she neither makes fun of the local people nor talks to her friends. She was just quiet enough to make An realized something was really wrong with Kim.

At late night, after arriving safely at AUW from the long journey, Kim takes a quick bath and immediately goes to find Lan's room.

"Hello! Is Lan here?" Kim asks. Then her eyes suddenly are bright when she sees Lan is sitting on the upper part of the bunk bed.

"Sister, you have come, I thought that it is too late so you would not come here." Lan says and happily looks at Kim. Kim is also happy, looking at Lan. Then Kim looks around Lan's room because this is the first time Kim comes to Lan's room. Kim says:

"I told you I would come so I have to keep my promise. Are you going to sleep now? I am so tired."

"Yes, I am going to sleep as well. Would you mind sleeping up here?"

"Why not, my bed is also a bunk bed. I like to sleep in a high place, so no one knows what I am doing."

And since that night, they both become so close that every week, Lan comes to Kim's room to sleep with Kim. One night, when Lan is talking with Kim in the darkness, An suddenly enters the room, and they both stop talking. Kim finds her heart beat faster than usual. She looks down at An's shadow slow disappear in the bathroom. Kim wants to hold her breathe as quiet as possible. Actually An just enters to use the bathroom at usually because her room does not have a bathroom. But her sudden arrival makes Kim and Lan feels nervous.

"Sister, has sister An gone?" Lan asks Kim.

"Yes, she is gone," Kim says.

“I don’t know why I felt so scared when she enters the room. I am afraid of her. I am afraid that she will think that I want to fight with her over you,” Lan continues.

“Really, you think so?”

“Yes, last time, when she knows that I was with Thi outside, she gets so mad because Thi is also her close friend, so I am afraid that she would think in way again,” Lan talks in her lowest voice as if there is someone watching her.

“Don’t worry about it. She won’t be jealous between you and me,” Kim affirms.

“Sister, can I ask you something?” Lan asks. “Is there any wrong between you and sister Nhat?”

“Why do you ask like this?” Kim asks back.

“Because I see both of you don’t talk to each other, but you both seems to understand each other a lot,” Lan answers.

“Lan, how does Nhat understand me?” Kim asks again.

“Because I usually come to talk to Nhat. I don’t know why I really like Nhat. We have been friends for a while.”

“Yes, she is very nice, I learn many things from her.” Kim smiles and starts telling Lan about Nhat.

“What did you learn?” Lan curiously asks.

“I got to know that Nhat looks outside like a very heartless person but she is actually very warm hearted,” Kim continues.

Kim smiles herself when Lan says this because this thing, she already knows Nhat is a warm hearted person. She smiles because she knows almost all the things Lan talks about Nhat. It has been long for Kim that she has heard about Nhat. And now she feels happy because Lan always tells Nhat’s story to her.

Then Kim starts the story of herself and Nhat, which you already knew before. Do you remember the nowhere story of where to hang An’s clothes.

“Sister, you know, Nhat is a kind of person how you behave to her, and she will behave the same thing to you.”

“Of course, I know.”

“Then, please talk to her, it is not too late to start again. I really love both of you. You both are two different people but you both are very interesting. I don’t know how to explain it.”

“Lan, don’t ask me to do it. I will not do it. It is not Nhat’s fault. It is all my fault, but it is over now. Just let it be.”

In the darkness, tears gradually roll down from Kim eyes, wetting Kim’s hair, and Kim’s face. Kim turns her body to the other side of the bed. Silently in the darkness, Kim lets the tears roll down without wiping them. She does not want to let anyone in the world know that she is crying in the shadow of someone else.

Can you here it?

The silent of darkness

...is pulling

...the memory of nowhere

Seclusion and solitude

Five: The Student's assignment #1

10pm, February 13, 2010

Lunar New Year Eve is coming,
The window leads my eyes to the moon.
Dear KK,

One two three four five, here you go!

I had never eaten that much banana as I did yesterday. After the basketball practice, Nhat and I ate more than ten bananas. We were too hungry. You know Nhat likes eating bananas right? And you know as long as the person next to me likes it I also like it too. And I've loved eating banana since then.

You know the tomorrow is Lunar New Year. I already secretly made the vegetable salad with fish sauce dưa món to eat with sticky rice. You know, actually we eat this kind of dry vegetable with rice cake, not with sticky rice. But in Bangladesh, it is hard to find a rice cake. I hope the vegetable will be good enough to eat. This is the first time I made it. I don't know if I did it correct or not. After washing, cutting, drying, I put them with fish sauce. This is my gift for Nhat, An, Ha, Dan and Thi. Hehe. So excited.

And this is the first time, I have the new year far away from home. Only six Vietnamese celebrate together. I wanna cry terribly. I miss everything at home. At this time, I should be cleaning the window and buying flowers to decorate home. ☹

In the evening we already went to buy fruits, incense sticks, and some food for the New Year Eve. I bought some candies already. I made some lucky money bags already. I will give to friends who come to my room on the New Year Day.

You know today in the morning, Nhat and I went to teach the little kids in a slum school. All of them were so cute. They are very excited when whenever we come. Nhat taught them drawing. She was very good in arts. I could see it through her. I don't know but I feel happy when I saw Nhat with the Students quietly drew with creativity.

Few minutes ago, Nhat was just here with me. I just went out for a minute, I find Nhat's note: "I am going. Study well then only celebrate Tết, okay?" Tết here meant Lunar New Year. Hehe. Actually I have an assignment due tomorrow so I have to finish it. In Vietnam, no one studies before Tết ☹. I have to study now. I won't be able to write to you until after the New Year.

Write to you later,
Your K.

*Home...home...home...
Lala...lala...lala...*

“Sister, yesterday sister An sister told me that she did not like me to stay with you and Thi. She said that I am stealing her best friends,” Lan whispers in Kim’s ears.

“Then what did you tell her?” Kim asks.

“I did not say anything, perhaps I have to stay away from Thi? But what’s wrong with having Thi or you as my best friends? Why can’t I have my friends?” Lan says as she is about to cry.

“Why do you have to care about what An said? Each person has their own life and you have your right to have friends.” Kim says.

“But, I am scared.”

“Why are you scared? Just be normal. You don’t have to start a fight with her. I know An very well. She is a good friend of mine. She just always wants to have someone beside her to care for her. Thi and I do care for her. But I don’t want to be with someone every day and every minute. Do you know what I mean?” Kim said.

“Sister, can we be best friends forever?” Lan asks Kim softly. “Sister, a sisterhood can become a friendship, right?”

Kim does not say anything, she just smiles and takes a deep breathe. She does not what to say with the little girl.

“You know, as you suggested I already borrowed sister Nhat’s journal and read all at once.” Lan excitedly says.

“How is it?” Kim asks Lan.

“Super interesting! I am really in love with her writing.” Lan continues. “Nhat seems like appears to be heartless person, but she is actually not. She notices things very carefully in a fine way.”

Kim smiles inside mind again, because these things she already knew that from a long time ago.

“Sister, I never dare to ask Nhat about your friendship with her. But sometimes, when I asked about you, she has never said anything bad about you. She said you are very good.”

“So what?” Kim’s voice suddenly changes to a cold voice.

“And you also have never said bad about her. You two are so good to each other....” Lan says with a halt. But there is no answer from Kim. Lan continues:

“Sister, can you both talk to each other? Please sister. I will be very happy if you both talk to each other.”

“Let’s sleep Lan, I am feeling sleepy now.”

...A little silence is overwhelmed the night again. Only once night a week, Lan comes to stay with Kim. The little talkative girl always brings Kim happiness. But as usual, after the endless happiness, they end up talking about Nhat before they sleep. And Kim is being confused by Lan’s words. Kim does not have an attempt to talk to Nhat.

Kim turns her body and wipes her eyes. Kim looks out through the window where the cool air is moving around, dancing and whispering with wind. She wishes she could fly with them, so she can leave all the stories and the sadness behind her. She feels lonely.

So I am back again. I don’t know what I have to say about our characters. Sometimes, I find them so cute with their innocent happiness, but sometimes, I find them so stupid. Smiling and then crying. Smiling and then again crying. Why are human beings so complicated? Just few minutes ago, Kim smiled and then after two minutes, she cried. As I told you, this boring friendship story will just have to be continued. However, at this time, I think I will take Kim away from these friendship and enemysip for a while. Kim needs a rest. Let’s see if Kim will change.

“Try this!” The Master said and gave the Student a little black ball which had tiny white sand around. Looking at the ball, the Student was wondering if it was a new challenge which must be done. The Student scared but did not dare to disobey the Master. So far, in this desert land, the Master was the only one that the Student could lean on. “What should I do if there is no Master?” the Student thought and nervously took the black ball from the Master hand.

“Should I eat it?” asked the Student as if the sun was going to fall down on earth.

The Master quickly glanced at the Student and looked back into his green compass, busily ignoring answering the question. The Master’s glance made the Student regret the silly question. Closing the eyes, not daring to put the ball near the mouth to smell, the Student turn the back against the Master’s face and quickly put the black ball inside the mouth and nervously gulped down it all without chewing it. The ball was very hard and big enough to stick in the Student’s throat for some time. And the Student was trying hard to press it down. At this time, the tears started coming out from the Student’s eyes with the wish that someone would beat on the head to press the ball down. The Student tried to control the tear drop not to fall down but somehow a tear drop from the left eye managed to drop itself to the floor. Immediately, the Master turned to the Student as if the tear drop just made sound to attract the Master’s attention. The Master stood up and came toward the Student.

“Oh, no. I’m going to die. What should I do now? The Master is coming,” The more the Student thought, the more tremble sound come out.

Booommm...clang... The Master hit on the Student’s head hardly by hand. It seemed like the Student’s thought was clearly written in words that the Master could read it. The Student just wished someone beat the head in order to escape from the stuck? And immediately there was someone to make the wish come true.

Now, the Student could stand straight and turned back but did not dare to look directly into the Master’s eyes therefore the Student had the eyes glued on the floor.

“Where is the ball?” asked the Master.

“I...I ate it already,” answered the Student in a trembling voice.

“How did it taste?” The Master asked again.

“What!” the Student thought. The taste? The Student was very afraid and did not dare to chew it. The ball already was inside the stomach but the taste was still a puzzle for the Student. The Student tried to find a way to answer the question. “Should I say that the ball was stolen by a sly rat? No, but we are on the desert, no rat can survive here. Then should I say it melted. No but I even don’t know what was it. Was it spicy, sweet, salty or sour? I even don’t know the smell of it. What if the Master found out the truth?”

When the Student’s mind was flowing with the thought of trying to escape from this question, and suddenly the Student forgot and looked up, catching the Master’s eyes. This time, the Student decided to tell the truth because there was nothing that could be hidden from the Master.

The Student admitted, “I don’t know taste! I... I gulped it all without chewing it.”

The Master shook the head from left to right and from right to left with a deep sigh “I know it, you are too hungry for it.” And the Master opened the cow skin bag, took out another black ball and gave to the Student. At this time, the ball was even bigger than the previous one. “Now try this one, slowly and tell me the taste. I want to know the taste of it,” said the Master and looked back to the compass.

Open the big eyes, the Student took the ball from the Master. “The Master could have tasted it rather than asked me to do it. Right! Why didn’t the Master eat it, but me? Why do I have to eat that black color ball,” the Student thought, tightly closing the eyes again and slowly putting the ball into the mouth and indisposed chewing it.

Exactly as the Student expected, the ball was hard to chew. The Student put the ball inside the mouth, trying to break the ball into pieces, but could not do it. And there was no other option that the ball had to stay still for a while in the Student’s mouth. One minute had passed and the first taste came was the bitter taste like medicine and the burning smell of ashes after the

cremation. The Student's face puckered like a rag piece of clothes. Tightening the lips, the Student really wanted to cry out but the Student's face was not bathed with tears but with the sweat from fear of the Master.

"I know now... I kkkknnnooww it. It has the bitter taste of cremation," said the Student

Right after the Student finished the sentence, the Master looked straight up. The Student was scared of the sudden action. However, the Master did not look at the Student's eyes as the Student expected. The Master looked far to the west. And the Student also followed that look to the west.

"We will sleep here tonight!" The Master said and looked toward a mass of dark curly clouds far in the west.

The Student did not know what happened but thought that there must be something wrong with the weather. Looking at the sky, the curly cloud was gently moving from side to side, covering all the sun which made the air cool down and the Student's sweat evaporate. "What a lovely cloud is!" the Student thought and took a deep breath from the cool air. Not caring if something went wrong, the Student was glad that at least there was a time to relax like this. Even the Student had forgotten that the black ball was still inside the mouth. When the Student realized this, the taste of the ball had changed to sweet taste. This taste had a feeling of relaxing and satisfaction.

"SWEET! It has the sweet taste!" the Student shouted loudly with bursting happiness.

The Master looked straight up again but this time the Master neither looked at the west nor the east, but into the Student's eyes. At this time, it was the turn of the Master to make the puckered face without saying a word.

"But it is weird. Wasn't it bitter! But now it is sweet!" The Student asked the Master.

"There is nothing weird here. That was what I wanted you to learn. You might find it bitter when you think it is bitter and you might find it sweet when you feel happy. However, it does not always happen. To reach the stage of a peaceful mind, it might take some time to overcome the sorrow like tonight. After the darkness, the sky will be clear again." The Master said and looked straight back again to the sky where the curly cloud was gently covering the daily light.

Also looking up into the curly cloud, the Student did not know how many percentage of the Master's word could be understood. But the Student could feel the ball was melting inside and gradually penetrating with the cool air which had been breathed.

Double taste!

Six_one: Kim's Note #1

Kim is so excited when she gets a call from her supervisor saying that she gets a new assignment. Finally, she can get to attend a conference and moreover, because the conference will be at the agriculture ministry it is supposed to be a very important event. The name of the conference she will attend is "Youth and Tree Plantation." Such an English name like this makes Kim happy because she thinks that this time she could cover proper news. She will try her best to take notes and to write good news so her report can be published in tomorrow's newspaper. What can be happier when everyone read the news that Kim writes? Kim wakes up early. The conference is at 9am. Since she does not know the place, Priyonti told her to get ready at 7am and they will go together. Priyonti is Kim's best working partner as Priyonti is always there when Kim needs helps. Priyonti knows Dhaka by heart since Dhaka is her hometown. Today Priyonti and Kim get the same assignment and Priyonti is taking Kim to the Agriculture Ministry.

Kim walks toward her favorite cake shop, quickly gets a pizza and goes straight to call a rickshaw.

"Jaben! Dhanmondi Lake dui nombor rastay!"

With her broken Bangla, Kim quickly jumps on the rickshaw and asks the rickshawalla to take her to the road number two in Dhanmondi Lake. Kim always loves sitting on a rickshaw whenever she passes by the Lake because of the big tree shade and the fresh air here. And Dhanmondi Lake in the early morning is perfect for the one who loves nature like Kim. On the street, only a few rickshaw wallas are pedaling and only a few pedestrians are relaxing with their morning walk. Breathing the cool air, Kim can feel the breeze gently running through her hair and her skin. She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath with the hope of having this pleasant feeling forever. This is the best part she loves the best in Dhaka city; she feels like home here.

Priyonti and Kim meet on the road number two and they takes a bus straight forwards to the Agriculture Ministry. Priyonti says that perhaps they have to take two buses to get to the place and it might take a half or even an hour to reach the place. Kim does not care about the time. In Dhaka, she gets used to it. People say a half an hour, it could be two hours. People say 10 minutes it could be two minutes.

Unexpectedly, they reach the conference after a half an hour on the crowded bus and a half an hour rooming around for asking the road. This is faster than Kim thought. They enter the conference hall, the receptionists happily give them the information and agenda plan of the conference. And Kim is even happier when she sees all the information in English. Entering the conference hall, they seem like the nearly final guests of the conference. They take seats at the back of the conference. Kim takes out her notebook, her pen out and get ready. Again Kim promises to herself that she will take the best notes ever and write a good report.

“Asalamualakum! Welcome everyone to the Youth and Tree Plantation. First let me introduce our honor guest today. Dr. Anindita Chawdury- the Agriculture Minister,” the MC introduced after a few minutes of arranging seats for everyone.

A big warm clap one after goes through the room whenever the MC finishes introduced a guest. Kim leans from left to right and forward to backward in order to see the guess clearly. Kim’s heart is even burning and beating with excitement when she finds that the MC is speaking in English. She starts noting down all the name of the special guests. Kim leans to her right side where Priyonti is concentrating on the talk.

“What is the name of the ministry? I could not hear it clearly,” Kim whispers in Priyonti’s ear.

“Anindita Chawdhury,” Priyonti said.

“Let’s us welcome, Professor Kabir Alam- the director of environmental department of Dhaka University,” continued the MC.

And again Kim whispers into Priyonti’s ears and asks with a big confusion of how to write the name:

“What is his name?” Kim again whispers.

“Don’t worry, we have the information sheet they gave us, you can look at it,” says Priyonti.

Kim’s mind is bright right after Priyonti gave her the hint for the name lists in the information leaf. Not for long, after the introduction, the first honor guest slowly steps up to the stage and gives the speech. At this time, Kim is ready to take notes. She looks up and tries to identify who is the speaker is and find his name on the list.

Suddenly Kim’s face color changes from red color of excitement to the brown of disappointment when she finds that the guest is speaking? She feels like the world has fallen on her shoulder. She looks at Priyonti with a worst face ever she has.

“Well! I will do it then. Don’t worry,” Priyonti comforts Kim.

Now Kim cannot keep her promise. She cannot take notes, she cannot write a report. And again she will be back to the office and tell her boss that: “Sorry sir! I cannot write the report today because the people in the conference were speaking in Bangla.” How many times has Kim come back to the office in the blank notes and the disappointed face? She wishes that she could understand Bangla. She has been living here for 3 years but her Bangla is just “how you are and please give me a cheaper price.” She really regrets for not taking Bangla seriously. She finds that she is useless reporter in the famous office. She gets an honor job as she is working as a reporter of the most popular English newspaper in Bangladesh but she still finds her jobless.

After one and a half hour sitting and staring at people's expression, finally Kim can escape from the agriculture conference. She was overwhelming with the sophisticated air inside the hall. It is noon, Priyonti and Kim is heading to their office. The sun directly shines on their skin, burning and burning. Kim takes the shawl and covers her head to avoid the heat as if she is a Muslim.

"Kim! Are you okay if we are walking? It will be hard for us to get a CNG from here," asks Priyonti.

"Ya! Sure! Why not? I can walk. Don't worry about me," Kim answers with a careless face.

"I am happy that you can walk! You know many of my friends do not want to walk."

"Haha! You know what! I love walking like this, so I can lose weight."

"Exactly! It is correct! I want to lose weight too. It is good exercise, right? And sometimes I even don't have a penny in my pocket so I have to walk." And they both laugh.

Kim is surprised when Priyonti said that sometimes Priyonti ran out of money. To Kim, Priyonti is like a princess because she is growing up in an upper class family. She has private car to go to school and has a servant at home. Comparing to other Bangladeshis Kim knows Priyonti is really well off.

"Why you don't have enough money to use? Didn't your parents give you some?" asks Kim.

"Yeah! They do give me monthly, but you know, most of the time I spend the money to buy drinks," answers Priyonti.

Looking at the blazing sun, listening to what Priyonti said, Kim gradually understands what Priyonti says. Then a question rushes to Kim's mind "What about the rickshaw walla? Are they buying drinks as well?"

Kim's Note #1:

Guider-Priyonti

Office-Bangla

Sun-Water

Reporting press release has been Kim's daily work since she started to working as a training reporter. "What does the news need?" First she writes down six key words that her boss told her to do every times she starts reporting news. She is looking at the press release again and trying to figure the most important thing in the news. She has learned that the news which is reported is needed to be selected and chosen, so it can attract the readers' attention. Every day, her writing work starts with "5W1H" (what, who , when , where, why and how). She writes:

“What?- Attacking”

“Who?- a group of Bengali settlers and 2 indigenous Thana villagers”

“When?- August 29, 2012”

“Where?- Thana village, Rangamati district”

“Why?- To grab the villagers’ land”

“How?- Beating using wood sticks”

“The lead: On August 29, 2012, a group of Bengali settlers allegedly attacked two indigenous Thana villagers to grab their land in Rangamati district.”

Turning the papers up and down, she hopes that the lead she writes will be attracted enough. But anyway, the percentage for her press release report being published is 0 % because the good press release will be reported by a real reporter. There press release has many readers meanwhile she has only one reader that is her boss. How many days have she been working here? Almost two months, but she still has to report the press release. If her press release report at least is valuable then she will be happy to do it.

Tiring of looking at the screen, she stands up and walks toward the wash room. Sometimes, she has nothing to do, so she just wants to go somewhere to refresh her mind. Sometimes, she goes to wash her face and to look at herself in the mirror. She loves the office bathroom. It is clean, bright and cool. Sometimes, she wishes she could take bath here. Sometimes, she just wants to roam around to look at her colleges who are busy with their works. Usually, the time from 6pm to 8pm is the time when Kim has no one to talk with. Kim comes here in all the morning when none of her colleges does it. It seems like Kim has a lot of work to do, but actually she comes here early just because she does not want to stay alone at her hostel. And moreover, her hostel is very dark and small which somehow makes Kim feel suffocated. Eating, drinking tea, sending emails, and learning songs is the work Kim does every day at her office. What a monotonous life Kim has!

And Kim is always waiting to 4pm because at that time her colleges are coming. The way, she passes another senior reporter and he calls her: “Kim, tomorrow there is an assignment for you and Priyonti. Read the invitation letter and go to cover it.”

Kim receives the invitation letter with her bright eyes. Opening it, and she starts reading...

A transit of Venus across the sun...

The Dhanmondi Astrology club coordinately invite you to the events...

Venue: At Dhanmondi Field.

At 5AM...

“What news is that?” Kim scans through the invitation letter. However, she does not understand what she is happening at the field because she does not understand what transit of Venus is. Therefore Kim decides to take the paper to Priyonti because she knows Priyonti will tell her what to do. Immediately, Kim runs quickly to Priyonti’s desk. Within 10 seconds, Kim reaches Priyonti. At this time, Priyonti also does not have much work to do, she is checking emails and Facebook.

“Hey Priyonti, have a look at this, our new assignment,” Kim cheerfully says.

Priyonti looks over the invitation and makes a slightly smile says “Tomorrow, we have to go at 5am in the morning to attend program. The venue is near to my house so don’t worry.”

“5 AM? Really?”

“Yes, 5am!” Priyonti repeats.

“That’s early! But I will make sure that I’m on time. See you tomorrow then.”

Kim leaves the conversation in the middle because she just wants to go directly to her working desk and starts looking up in the computer. “Venus? What is Venus?” She asks herself as she scrolls the mouse up and down. The assignment has made Kim forget the sleepy feeling.

“Yes!” She shouts slightly and reads all the information like she has never found anything more interesting than this to read. She reads all the news which is related to Venus and sun. Anyone who has a chance to look at her at this time, will easily find her overwhelmed with curiosity and excitement. In order to do the assignment well, she decides to read as much as possible to make sure that at the end of the day, she is ready for the assignment tomorrow. “What a wonderful job I have!” She thought “This will be the first early morning in Dhaka that I ever had.” With this thought in mind, she finds how much she loves doing her job.

At 10pm, she has to leave the office to prepare for the tomorrow assignment. Sitting inside of the CNG, she can feel the muggy air running through the CNG grill door. It is hot but Kim does not really care about the weather. In her mind, she is still worrying about tomorrow, about the special assignment she has.

Once, Kim reaches her room, she immediately goes to the bathroom to have a quick bath. However, at this time, the water has not come yet. At this hostel, there is a specific time for water. She does not know how many times the water comes in a day. She only knows that the water will come once in the early morning and late night. However, Kim cannot predict the exact time they will open the water tank’s tap.

Then Kim goes to take the stored water in her bucket. Only this time, she feels that her roommates’ suggestion about buying a bucket. Now at least she has the water to take bath. She

has to manage to take a body bath and a head bath within a bucket of water. Kim never knows that there is a time in her life that she has to manage taking bath with limited water. She hates this. She just wishes to have a proper bath but it seems a big deal in this hostel. Therefore, the scarcity of water is one of the reasons which make Kim want to go to her office in the morning. Kim does not want to stay long in the bathroom, because for Kim, it is the most terrible place she has ever seen in Kim's life. Whenever she looks at the rusty and filthy washstand, she just feels like she wants to vomit.

Normally, Kim has to wait in order to get a turn to enter the bathroom because there are about eight people using the same bathroom. Luckily, today Kim does not have to wait perhaps because it is late night and no one wants to take bath, perhaps because there is no water, therefore no one wants to use the bathroom. However, Kim does not have an interest to use the bathroom. She is afraid that there will be a day the bathroom would collapse while she is inside. Therefore, she has a quick bath and returns back to her bed.

Kim's hair does not have time to dry but Kim already decides to sleep early because she does not want to sleep late. Tomorrow, she will have a long day. It already passes 11pm. Kim starts arranging her bed while her roommates is having her dinner.

"You don't want to eat today?" her Bangladeshi roommate asks.

"No, I don't want to eat. I ate snacks at the office already. I have to sleep now," Kim replies while she is flicking off the dust from her bed.

"Oh, you sleep early today," her roommate comments with a curious face.

"Ya, I have to go out to work early morning at 5am," says Kim with her proud face.

"5AM???"

"Yeah! 5 am. You know my work is like that. You never know when you have to go for an assignment. Some of my colleges even have to go to cover news in the middle of the night. It is a very busy work," Kim is happy because she has a busy work because it means that her work is interesting.

"Oh, I see. But you have to ask *khala* so she can let you out in the early morning."

Her roommate's reminder makes Kim realize that she needs to ask permission to go out. Just think in term of the working timing, she finds herself so special. In this hostel, Kim is the only one who is allowed to go out early in the morning and return home late at 10pm. She feels that she is not a student anymore since she has the feeling of freedom.

Most of the people staying in the hostel are university students. Because it is a hostel for female students, the rules are very strict. The students are not allowed to go out in the early morning and at 9pm they should be at home already. As a Student reporter, Kim has asked them to give her

the permission of going and coming whenever she wants. As a foreigner, she definitely got the priority. She knows that she will have to disturb the *khala*, the hostel supervisor, in the morning but she does not have any choices. Besides that, she is very proud of herself to get the authority of having special timing. In Bangladesh, most of the girls are not supposed to go out at night. Therefore, sometimes, she wonders if the *khala* will think that she does some bad work that she need to wake up early and goes back late at night. Thinking back and forward make Kim forgets the conversation between her and her roommate.

Leaving Kim alone with her thought, the roommate takes the empty bottle to go down stair to take the drinking water.

“Are you going down. Then can you help me to communicate with *khala*. My Bangla is not that good,” Kim asks.

“Yes, obviously, let’s go.”

---15 minutes later---

Kim lies down on the bed. Today, it is too early for her to fall directly asleep. And the tomorrow’s excitement comes again. She is proud of herself for going to work in such a strange timing of the day-very early morning when people are sleeping and she already be going to work. And tomorrow’s work makes her feel how important she is because she needs to start the work at 5am which not many people can do. Kim decides to sleep right away because she wants to make sure that she can wake up for tomorrow assignment. She promises with herself that she will not be late.

Touching her hair, she finds out that her hair is damn wet and sticky. Her body is also wet of sweat. “What happened?” Kim opens her eyes and finds out that the electricity has gone. She wishes that she could open the balcony door or the window so the air could enter into the room. But her roommates never allow her to do so because she is afraid that some men who live in the opposite building would see inside of the room while she is sleeping. Kim feels like she is a big piece of meat on a big hot pot. Kim gropes for a towel in the darkness, wiping of the sweat and trying to get back to sleep.

Cuckoo cuckoo cuckoo... Kim’s alarm is ringing.

Kim suddenly sits up as if someone has beaten her up and turns off the alarm. Kim takes a minute to call her mind back to the world. She is still in the transition world, half sleep and half awake. Kim tries to recall the reason why she woke up in the middle of the night. Looking at the phone, it’s 5:05am. Looking around the room, her roommates are still sleeping. Remembering that she has an assignment, Kim rushes to the bathroom. The midnight heat makes Kim have to take another bath. She does not want to go with her current appearance.

“No water!” Kim sadly finds out when she comes to the bathroom. She really wants to cry at this time. It is late and there is still no water in this morning. Kim decides to take a risk by taking her roommates’ stored water. Two roommates have two buckets of water, so it would be enough for Kim to take bath but Kim is scared to do that. She hopes that her roommates would not get mad at her for taking their water. She hopes that the water would come when they wake up.

Kim quietly takes their buckets to the bathroom as quickly as possible. She has no time left. Just bringing the water bucket already takes her quite a bit time because the buckets are heavy. She need two buckets of water because she needs to take head bath, body bath and then she need to wash her face and brush her teeth and for toilet. What a complicated morning! Kim thinks and pours all the water on her body. At least the water makes her body cool down.

After taking bath, Kim opens the door with the hope that the sky will be clear enough for her to go out. This is the first time Kim goes out early in the morning so she tells herself to be careful. Who knows what will happen in a foreign country. And Kim is happy when she looks at the light coming from the window. The sun still hasn’t come yet but somehow she can see the road clearly.

“*Khala. Khala! Dorja khulla ektu!*” Kim calls aunty to open the door in a reluctant voice as she feels not good to disturb her in the early morning like this. Kim hopes that khala could have set her alarm in order to open the gate for her. “What a silly thought I have? Who are you that make Khala set alarm to open the door?” Kim thinks and starting to call louder. However, still no one appears. Kim looks at her phone. It is already 5:45am. The last night electricity and the water already took her 45 minutes to get ready. And she is supposed to be at the event now.

“*Khala. Khala. Keu ache?*” Kim calls in hopeless, asking if anyone is inside the room.

“What should I do now?” Kim thinks a while and she decides not to call anymore. She is afraid that she would wake everyone up and moreover, she is very thirsty. She has not drank water since last night. Yesterday, Kim was hurry to rush back to the hostel and forgot to buy water.

She decides to tie her front lap and the back lab of her *salwar kameez* together. Yesterday, before sleeping, she scrupulously ironed this red *salwar kameez*, therefore now she feels sorry herself and for making it crumple. Kim takes out her shoes and puts them in the back. She also put the oar- her scarf inside the back. She wants to make sure that everything she carries is neat. None of the things are protruding from her body. (Now you can probably guess what Kim is doing).

Kim looks around the hostel for a while. She looks from left to right, from up to down and from back to front. She wants to climb out through the gate. She slowly lifts her right leg up. She steps on the right side and the left side. She is in the divided mind as to what to do. She cannot find a bar of steel which is big enough to fit her foot. The gate here does not have the iron fences like her home. When Kim was small, she usually climbed from the gate to enter the house whenever she forgot to take the house keys from her parents. Her home gate has the horizontal steel sticks

which Kim stepped on to climb. Therefore, Kim gets stuck a minute to find out the way to get out of here.

Then Kim decides take a big step up on the square whole which is uses to put hand inside the gate from outside to bolt the gate. Kim has to take a big step because square whole in the middle of the gate and half Kim's height. Kim can feel her groin fully stretched. The loose pants actually help Kim in this situation. If she wore jeans, her jeans would be torn.

Here Kim goes! She manages to stand in the top of the gate. If there were a dog here, it would bark until Kim jump down. And off course, people would wake up and find out a thief on their gate. What an embarrassing situation this is, Kim thinks.

Bum!

Kim jumps down from the two meters height gate. A lightly wind blows through her hair, the cool and fresh air outside makes Kim feels like she has just escaped from a prison. Few people have started the morning work, and some old men are walking as well. It is interesting for Kim when she finds people go for a walk in the morning like home. Taking a deep breath, Kim wants to catch a lot of cool air as possible. Kim looks around like a real professional thief to make sure that no one is watching her. A foreigner is climbing from the gate! This can become hot news on the newspaper tomorrow. But Kim does not want to be like that. She wants her Venus story to be published therefore she is heading straight to Priyonti's place. Nothing can compare to Kim's assignment at this time. Kim starts making bigger steps, one after another. It is not even a five minute walk from Kim's hostel to Priyonti's apartment.

Ding dong. Kim tips the bell. Priyonti opens the door, wearing blue pajamas.

"Hi," says Priyonti as she puts her hand to cover a big yawn in her mouth.

"Good morning, are you ready?" Kim asks and she is expecting that they will go to the assignment venue now.

"Just come on in," Priyonti says.

Looking at Priyonti's manner, Kim guesses she will stay in Priyonti's house for a while. She steps in and goes directly to the sofa where a little cat is sluggishly rising her legs up. Priyonti goes inside her room lets Kim sits alone in the drawing-room. Kim has visited in Priyonti's house many times since they both started the internship together. However, this is the first time, Kim has chance to observe the drawing- room this clear. There is a big window in front of the sofa, where Kim can see the morning light is approaching inside the room. The room is on the third floor; therefore Kim can see clearly what happen from far down stair. Kim hugs the cat with her left hand, and uses the right hand to stroke the cat, moving toward the window. Kim takes a round look from bottom to up and from right to left, following the window frame which is covered by the green liana. The liana makes the house looks cool.

Kim's eyes stops nears a heart-shape leaf as she lifts her body forward. The leaf is moving up and down as if the wind is blowing from the sky and down to the earth. Then Kim looks up, gently says in surprise "It's raining."

Hearing Kim's words, Priyonti runs out from the kitchen toward where Kim is standing. Priyonti looks at the sky and says "We will have to wait because in this weather, no one will be there."

"Really, is that true?" says Kim. Kim is a bit nervous of missing the program because she has never attended in this kind of program before.

"With this weather, no one can see the sun, so we can just at home until the rain stops. You sit and have breakfast," Priyonti confidently says and she puts a pie of butter, egg and bread bake in front of Kim. While Kim was looking at the plants, Priyonti had already started cooking the breakfast for both.

"That's quick. I thought that you are changing your dress or brushing teeth." Kim says in surprise. Kim eats the bread and waits until the rain stops.

Kim admires the way Priyonti works. With Kim, it seems that things are in order under Priyonti's hands, which makes Kim always feel secure when she has Priyonti as a colleague. Priyonti is always confident with whatever she does. If Priyonti says that the program will be late, it must be late. If Priyonti says they should leave the conference room early, it means that there is nothing more to say in that conference. And in all the cases, it is true. Therefore, this time, Kim sits and eats nicely, waiting for Priyonti's next plan.

"Kim, today is our last internship day, isn't it?" Priyonti asks.

"Yes, tomorrow my bus will be leaving at night! When are you coming back?" replies Kim.

"Let's see, I have some work to be done before going back to the university." says Priyonti "but I will definitely go back soon, the classes are going to start and you know none of us wants to miss the class, do we?"

"Yeah, I see."

"Kim, what happens to your *Kameez*?" Priyonti sudden stared at Kim's cloth.

Kim quickly looks on her shirt and says.

"No, nothing happen, it is just little bit shriveled because I was in a hurry," Kim smile placidly.

"No, no, you look it carefully. There is a big tear in the back. Here... Can you see it?" Priyonti comes toward to show Kim where the tear is.

"Really, how is it possible?"

“I don’t know. What did you do? I know. Haha, A dog gnawed it right?”

Kim’s face color turns red as a tomato and then changes to the pale color. She worriedly asks Priyonti.

“What to do? I have to go to the event. And I cannot dress like this.”

“Haha, don’t worry, you can wear my clothes. Wait a minute.”

Priyonti takes out a set of *salwar kameez* and asks Kim to change. The clothes are a bit big for Kim but she has no choice.

“What’s the smell? Is something burning?” Kim finds out while changing the clothes.

“Oh no! My breakfast! It is burning!” Priyonti cries out and hastens to the kitchen.

The egg and the pot have the same black color. The oil and the water are overflowing on the kitchen table. The fire is still on on the gas stove. The burning smoke makes the bottom of the cupboard turn to black as well. Everything is a mess. Priyonti hurriedly turns of the gas stove.

“Oh no. My mom will kill me if she knows that I have burned her favorite pot. What should I do now?” Priyonti tries to suppress the fear in her voice.

“Let’s clean. I will help you.” Kim says.

“Thanks. ...Oh, we have the assignment. You should eat quickly and go. I will take care of the stuff,” Priyonti says.

“Is that okay if I am going alone?” Kim sudden remembers the important work and asks Priyonti with doubt.

“Yes, please go quickly. My mom will kill me when she finds out...but it is better than being killed by our boss.”

“Ya ya, you are right. I must go then,” Kim does not even touch the breakfast, taking her bag and rushing to the road. “See you later then.”

“Take cARE...,” Priyonti says.

And Kim rushes on the rickshaw immediately. Just hearing about “being killed” by her boss, she just wants to go to the event quickly.

“*Rickshaw, jaben?* Stadium.” Kim asks the rickshaw driver and goes up. She does not even bargain because there is no time now. However much the rickshaw will ask will be okay with her.

Thirty minutes has passed however Kim is still stuck in the middle of the traffic jam. The big cars, the rickshaws in the front already covered Kim’s view. Kim does not know if she is nearly

there or not. She cannot see the road properly. But somehow, she has the feeling that she is on the right track.

RRRRGGRAAARKKK

Kim suddenly falls down from the rickshaw.

“AHHHH” Kim shouts loud.

Some of the passengers their faces to look at Kim. Kim does not know what happen. She is about to cry. The rickshaw puller steps approaches Kim.

“NO NO NO” thinking that the rickshaw puller is going to touch her chest, Kim cries out.

Kim is panicking and closing her eyes as the rickshaw puller is about to put his hand on her body.

“DEEEE XOOMMM” She says something in a tremble voice which no one understand what she is saying.

And this time everyone stops moving on the road and starts at Kim. They are curious to see what happen. They see a foreigner is sitting on a puddle of water. Her shoes, her clothes and her hand are mixing with the soil and water from the morning rain.

Kim opens her eyes and thinks that a thousand eyes are glued on her face. The rickshaw puller is still standing beside her.

“*Apnar orhna*” The rickshaw puller gives the scarf to Kim when he sees Kim opens her eyes. Kim stands up and brushes off the dust from her clothes. Kim looks like a sleazy girl.

“Thanks” Kim takes the orhna and climbs on the rickshaw again. She just now realizes that the rickshaw puller just wanted to give the orhna. She remembers that before falling down, there was something which pulled her neck and made her fall. The scarf had gotten stuck in the wheel. She feels embarrassed for not wearing the clothes in a proper way. Sometimes, Kim even forgets that she has a scarf on her shoulder.

The road is even busier after people watched Kim. Only five minutes, but it already enough to make the road stuck.

Another 30 minutes has passed, and Kim still on the rickshaw. The rickshaw has been roaming around the lake for more than a half an hour because of traffic jam. Kim is nervous now. Giving the rickshaw men some money, Kim jumps down from the rickshaw and decides to walk to the event. Kim remembers that Priyonti said the stadium is near to Priyonti house, which means that Kim should be able to walk there.

Walking for five minutes, she can see the green field and there are some kids are playing crickets there. Kim happily runs toward the field. She wants to run as quick as possible because it already 8am now. Kim hopes that people still there at the stadium.

Kim reaches the fields, she looks around with excitement. However, she cannot see anyone, any cameras or media on the field. "Am I at the right place?" Kim asks herself. The she goes and looks around the field to make sure that the event is here.

"Where are they? Where are they? Please show up!" The more Kim walks, the more the tears drop down from Kim's eyes. Only at this time, Kim feels like she is the clumsiest person who cannot do anything well.

"Hello madam? What you search?" A man says in his broken English to Kim.

"*Ami stadium jabo*". She says to him that she will go the stadium but she regrets for this answer because actually she is at the stadium.

"*Oh, si-ta-di-am? Odike!*" the man says and points the way in front of her.

"What?" Kim thinks, "I am not at the stadium"

"Kothay?...Okay...Thanks," Kim asks the man immediately and runs on the way which the men told her.

So the place Kim was standing is just a cricket field. There is another stadium. Kim happily runs to the place.

"Excuse me, Is it Dhanmondi stadium?" This time, Kim wants to make sure that she is at the right place.

"Yes, go that way," A student replies.

Kim enters the stadium. It is much bigger than the cricket field and there is stand for audience as well. And Kim starts looking for a group of people who have telescopes and cameras. Kim is also clever to ask another man who is playing cricket there.

"Excuse me do you know where is this event?" Kim shows the man her invitation card.

The man looks at the card for a while which makes Kim wonders if he understands English. To Kim surprise the man nods his head and says.

"Yes, I know. Early this morning they already started the program."

"Yes, that's right."

"They were looking at the sky."

“Yes, can you tell me where are they?” Kim asks hopefully.

“OH, but they have gone. Maybe about a half an hour ago.”

Just hearing until that, Kim feels that she has a buzzing in her ears which is so loud she cannot hear anymore. She keeps silent and stands till.

“Are you okay?” The man asks Kim.

But Kim does not answer. The man leaves Kim alone and continues his cricket game. Kim is still standing there. She has lost her mind. Kim could not believe what the man says. She already missed the event. And Kim starts walking around the stadium. For a moment, Kim feels emptiness inside her heart and her mind. She has nothing left to do. Just some minutes ago, Kim was busy with work and now she is jobless.

When Kim enters the office, Kim finds there is one article online which is also written about the Venus across the Sun. In Kim’s surprise, the reporter’s name is Priyonti. Kim is shocked and she does not know how it happened. Kim immediately runs to Priyonti table and asks.

“Priyonti, what is this?” Kim asks.

“Hey Kim, what are you talking about?” Priyonti says.

“What else could I talk about? Don’t pretend that you are a good person.” Kim angrily replies and point at the online article in front of Priyonti’s computer.

“Ah, so you are talking about the report that I wrote. Do you have any question for it?” Priyonti mischievously says.

“How...how did you do that to me? You are such a betrayer,” Kim asks.

“I did nothing wrong, Kim. I know that you won’t be able to cover it so I wrote it.” Priyonti cold says to Kim.

“But how did you get the information,” Kim asks.

“Kim, wake up! This is an international event, the news is just simply on the media everywhere. If you go there or not, the news will be the same. Everyone knows that we can get the information online and report it,” Priyonti says frankly. Then Priyonti stands up and walks away, leaving Kim behind with her disappointment.

Kim leaves the office at night. She keeps walking along the road, from this road to another, slowly from this step to another step, energy-less for three hours. Her mind is blank and she does not know what to do and where to go. Her last day of internship has ended here.

Six_Two: Kim's Note #2

Jumping down from the bus, Kim can feel the similar humid air mixing between the wet of the rain and the hot of the sun in the tropical day. A muggy wind slightly sneaks into Kim's rough hair makes her feel ticklish.

Kim gently shakes her head and rubs her hair to straighten it back. Looking up at the sky when the day is not clear as the day and the night is not clear at the night, Kim softly takes a deep breath and whispers with the wind "Finally, good morning Chittagong!"

Rang rang ... A rickshaw driver runs toward Kim, stopping in front of Kim and saying the common rickshaw language "*Kothay jaben*" to ask where she will go. Kim smiles and at the usually habit, she refuses the man by saying "*Na, jabo na.*" Then the rickshaw driver leaves, and gives Kim back her front view where she can see the signboard "Greenline Bus Counter."

"*Madame, luggage nai?*" The bus supervisor asks if Kim has luggage with her.

"*Hae, ache, onek ache*" Kim replies back to him with a funny gesture as her hand make a big circle dance to say of course, she has a lot of luggage.

"*Onek ache?*"

The supervisor repeats her words and smiles when he sees Kim's gesture. Then he helps Kim pull out her bags out from the bus storage: a brown-reddish luggage and two big bags. From the bus counter to Kim's university, it only takes five minutes walk. Feeling the heaviness from the other backpack on her shoulder and looking at the bags which are lying about in disorder and in the way, Kim thinks she should have agreed with the rickshaw driver's offer so she does not have to search for another one now. Luckily, another rickshaw approaches her which makes Kim feel relieve. Without hesitation, Kim and the messy bags head straight to AUW.

"Welcome home, ten tén tén tèn," with a big smile, An jumps out from behind the gate and talks to Kim in a melody when An sees Kim enters.

"He he he," Kim does not know what to say then she just smiles back.

"How are you?" An asks and drags Kim luggage.

"You already saw how I am so why did you ask?" Kim answers in the way of avoiding a complicated answer.

"Hehe, I just asked to have something to ask hehe. Let's go!" An grins with delight.

"Hold on, I need to check in with the guard," and Kim runs to the guard office and quickly check in.

“Hello, check in.” Kim is about to say the guard “*asalamualai kum*” but she does not know if it is appropriate to say. That’s why she says a short sentence. The guard smiles at her and she smiles back. Looking at the similar faces of the guards, the same school yard and the friend who is waiting there with a big smile, Kim thinks, so peaceful to be back. The head guard gives Kim the list to write her name and the arrival day.

Then An and Kim goes toward the 20A Building lift.

“Yay, lift is working,” Kim says joyfully.

“Of course, it works,” An replies.

Whether or not the lift at 20A building works is really a matter with Kim. Today is Friday. Normally, on Friday, 20A’s lift is closed. Kim does not know why the school usually closes the lift on Friday. Perhaps they close it for the sake of the saving electricity or perhaps for the sake of overloading Students, Kim thinks. But today it is opened perhaps they know that Students are coming back from home. Kim’s room is on the seventh floor that’s why sometimes she feels lazy to walk there. And this time, she is more tired with the messy bags.

Opening her door, Kim and An throw the bag in the middle of the room and they start talking:

“You, hehe, you got the internship in Dhaka, so great!” says An, sitting on Thi’s bed- Kim’s roommates.

Kim slightly smiles. Kim still has not replied yet, An continues.

“I sent you a message in the summer. Did you get it?”

“Yes, I saw it. Hehe I also texted you back but maybe there was a network problem. How was your summer?” asks Kim because she does not want to talk much about her summer since it was a long summer for her.

“Yes, I did internship with Nhat and we earned some money.”

“You told me you also taught English somewhere, didn’t you?” Kim asks again.

“Yeah, I taught kids in a private English teaching center. It was so fun. You know I used the Laoshi’s method in my class.”

“Oh, really?”

“Yeah, it worked well. The kids like that. Whoever did well, I gave them a sticker and they were very happy with that. Once, a Student’s mom was asking why her son’s notebook was full of tickers. She thought that he did not study serious and just played stickers. But finally she was happy to find out that the stickers were used to encourage Students to learn. Many of the parents also gave me gifts. Hehe.”

“Wow, such a great experience you had! Hehe.” Kim comments and continues asking An another question “How is your family?”

“Yeah, they all are fine. I got to eat a lot and I went to visit a lot of places. You can see how fatter I am now. Hehe,” An answers joyfully.

“What about the new Vietnamese Students? You came with them right? Are they okay?” asks Kim.

“Yeah, they are fine. This time, the new Students seem very active and they are also pretty. You will see them when we go to dining hall for breakfast. Yesterday I took them around Chittagong, helped them arrange their stuff and bought some stuff too, ” An replies.

“Glad to know that!”

“Ah, you can refresh, wash your face and change, then we will go for breakfast,” An reminds Kim.

“Yes, can I use your shampoo and washing powder? I don’t have it now, I’m too lazy to search for it,” says Kim.

“Hehe they are in my room, let’s go. I will go back for a while. When you are done then go down and call me, we will go for breakfast together,” An keeps talking as she is walking downstairs to her room with Kim.

“Yes, sure.”

As usual, An is always cheerful. An loves to talk and share her stuff with others. And it was such a long time, An has not met Kim, that is why An seems very excited about it. Kim also feels happy to when she talks to An. There was a time in the past, Kim thought that her friendship with An was broken. In fact, in the summer, they rarely contacted to each other, perhaps because one was too busy with her own work. But today, the way An talks to Kim and An’s cheerfulness makes Kim thinks that they are still very close friends. She does not know how close they are but there must be something that connects them whenever they are together.

Kim is back to her room with the soap and shampoo. She declares a big statement in her mind

“TODAY IS A CLEANING DAY!” She quickly takes bath and goes to An’s room to call An for breakfast. When Kim reaches An’s room, An is taking her things from her luggage on the floor. An also just arrived here two days ago, so she still needs to arrange her clothes, books, beds, etc. Seeing Kim comes, An immediately says:

“Kim, you came in the right time. Hehe. Sit here. I have something to give you.”

Kim follows An's suggestion, moves toward An's bed and sits between the mess which An's just pulls out from her luggage.

"What is that?" Kim asks excitedly.

"Here, choose among these. I bought it while I was traveling. I bought for you, Thi and Dan as well." An says and give Kim's three star-shape flowers which are tightly plaited by coconut leaves. Kim picks up the banana-leaf green one and enjoys watching it circling around with the wind.

"I will take this green one. I think Dan will take the red one because she likes red, then the yellow one will be Thi's." Kim says

"Here, choose among these notepads. I will give you two, and the rest I will give each to my foreign friends." An takes out a package of ten notepads and gives to Kim.

"Hehe, okay!" Kim says.

While Kim is looking at the notepads, An searches for something else and says

"Here, I have another thing for you!" An leans backwards and forwards, searching the drawers inside and outside the luggage and takes out many sleeping eye masks and gives to Kim. She says, "Choose among this masks, I found it so interesting for foreign friends so I bought it here. Give you one."

Kim takes the bags of masks and looks at them curiously. Each mask has a funny cartoon eyes. Kim picks up a mask which is look like Kungfu Panda's eyes. Touching it, she can feel the softness of the mask which is made from cotton. This is the only cotton mask An has.

"I knew that you will pick that one. Hehe," An saw Kim watching it, An says.

"Hehe, yes, I will take it," replies Kim.

"Next, my boyfriend has bought gifts for you, Thi and Dan when he was studying abroad. Each of you will get a pill-shaped eraser. Hehe. It is so funny right!" An says and throw to Kim another plastic bag. Kim takes out from the bags three pills. A half color of the pill is white and a half is either orange, purple or yellow. Kim chooses the white-orange color one and enjoys opening and closing the pills. The gifts An gives Kim are very cute and small. An usually brings from home the cute little things like this because An knows that her foreign friends like these things because these are not available in their countries. Then An takes out a big plastic bag and give to Kim, says

"Here, for now, you can choose three bags of instant noodles and keep it with you. And the rest, we will eat together later."

Kim opens the bag which has variety of Vietnamese noodles: Crab noodles, Lau Thai sour spicy noodles, Chicken Pho, Spaghetti, De Nhat noodle, Omachi noodle. An has brought many Vietnamese noodles here. In Vietnam, Kim does not eat instant noodles because she does not like it much. But here in Bangladesh, these packages of instant noodle are very precious for Kim because it has Vietnamese taste. Kim happily picks up the noodles as An says.

“Hehe, Thank you!” Kim says.

“Ok! Let’s go to eat. I have *mắm ruốc*. We will eat it with rice. My mom specially made it,” says An and she closes the luggage, takes out a big plastic box of of shrimp and pork sauce and shows to Kim.

“Yeah,” Kim’s eyes are bright when she hears two words “*mắm ruốc*.” But then she asks An, “But we don’t have plain cooked rice. What will we eat *mắm ruốc* with?”

“With roti,” An answers with delight like she just discovers a new eating combination between Vietnamese food and Bangladeshi bread. Such a weird suggestion An has. Kim does not know if roti will be good to eat with *mắm ruốc* because Kim eats with rice only. But it does not matter, as long as there is home food to eat, Kim thinks.

“Ah, I forgot to give you one thing,” An opens her wardrobe and takes out a bat’s wing shaped T-shirt with dark blue and white strips in between. An gives to Kim and says “This T-shirt I bought for you when I was traveling as well. I bought for you another bag, I guess you will like it, but I left it home. I’m so stupid. I should have brought it here, so you can use it here. Anyway, I will give you when we are home.”

Kim takes the T-shirt and does not know what to say. How many things An has given her? How much An loves her, Kim thinks how special and how lucky she is to have An as her close friend. This makes Kim imagine that it seems An brought gifts for her only.

“I will put this stuff in your room and I will take it back later.” Kim says

They both go to the dining hall. Some of new Students have arrived, Kim guesses because she cannot recognize those faces. There are no Vietnamese students here. Looking at the clock, it is 9.30am. In Vietnam, people usually have breakfast very early from 6am to 8am. That is why Kim can guesses there is no Vietnamese students here.

“We are late for breakfast, we will meet those new Vietnamese at lunch time,” An says.

Kim does not feel excited to meet the new Students because she thinks that she is too tired to know and to care about anyone else. There is time, Kim felt that she is not Kim anymore.

At 12pm, Kim and An go to dining hall again for lunch. Seven new faces are sitting together, talking and eating. Looking at their East Asian faces, Kim wonders if they are new Vietnamese Students.

“Introduce to all of you, this is Kim sister,” An says to six new faces with an excited smile.

“Oh! Hello sister”. One by one, they all say hello to Kim with curious and admired eyes. They all stare at Kim like Kim is an alien who has just fallen down from the Black Hole to the earth.

“Hello everyone!” Kim just quickly smile and then leaves to take her food with An. Kim asks An in a small voice on the way to the food corner.

“Did you tell anything about me to them?”

“Yes, I told them many things. You know, it was a long journey so I had nothing to talk then I introduce you to them. Not only you, I also introduced everyone else,” An says happily.

“Hhm that is why they all looked at me with those eyes,” Kim thinks.

Then Kim takes her food to the table and eats without saying a word. “What happened to me? Why I don’t say anything? Really, I don’t want to say anything to the kids sitting there. They are just the kids. Who cares? I’m so tired to care anything of them. I don’t know what An told them. Why they are looking at me with excitement?” With that thought in mind, Kim decides not to speak with anyone. She keeps her face down and pretends as she is very focusing on her food. Sometimes, Kim looks up, and unexpectedly caught the eyes of a girl who is looking at her. The girl turns her look to another way. But Kim does not look back at the girl, she just continues to finish up the food on her plate. From the beginning to the end, the only word Kim says is “hello.” It seems like there is something which has wrapped Kim’s mouth, preventing her from speaking.

Two days later, all the Vietnamese Students have arrived. The university is getting crowded because it is the time for school. A new semester is going to start soon. Thi, Kim’s roommate has arrived as well, which makes Kim happy because inside Thi’s luggage has Kim’s home food. Kim’s parents has sent those through Thi.

“Thi! Welcome back!” Kim jumps out from the crowd on AUW Lane with a big smile.

“Hello! How are you!” Kim and Thi both are shouting as such a long time back. Thi has been Kim’s roommate for two years. They usually fight because of laziness. Only two of them are in the room, so they divide the work equally. For example, if Kim cooks, then Thi will wash the dishes. If Thi sweeps the floor, Kim will have to mop it. Sometimes, Kim gets angry with Thi because Thi forgets to wash the dishes, which means that Kim does not have any plate or spoon to use. Sometimes they don’t talk for a while because of these small reasons. Kim and Thi can be seen as the selfish people of the world. However, the long summer makes them miss each other. Some people say that, the more you are living far from each other, the more you miss each other. Perhaps this belief is true in this situation.

“Let’s me carry your luggage!” Kim offers Thi.

“I don’t have my luggage!” Thi sadly says.

“What? Where is it? Did you label it?” ask Kim.

“When I got down from the airport, I could not find it. I think my luggage is still in Singapore or it might travel with someone to US or UK. I did not label it.”

“How come? Then did you report to the airline company?” ask Kim.

“Yes, I did. They said they will search for that. And I have no choice so I came back to Chittagong. My laptop charger is inside, my food, my clothes and your clothes,” Thi complains.

“Yeah you are right! But you did not keep your money there, did you?” ask Kim.

“No, the money and the laptop is here with me” Thi says but Kim can feel the heavy sadness inside Thi’s heart. Kim is also sad too, because her family’s love is inside Thi’s luggage. Kim did not go home in the summer, she did not have good food, she did not meet Mom and Dad, therefore, Kim can feel how much important the home gifts are. Kim wishes that they can find Thi’s luggage back.

Sometimes, Kim does not know what she is doing in her life. Sometimes, she thinks that she should have gone to home in the summer. She could have at least met Mom, Dad and her sister. At home, she could have home food and she could go around meeting her friend. How much she loves them and how much she misses them. She thinks and tries to look up as the tear drop nearly come out from her eyes. Sometimes, Kim thinks that she is very stupid because she does not know what she is searching for. It has been a year she has not been home. She really feels down, she wants to set up her mind and make a clear goal in her mind. But the more she goes, the more she feels lost between home love and her future goal. Why do we sometimes have to sacrifice the love to reach our goals in the future? Kim thinks and she wishes that she has both in life.

“Let’s go to the room. You need to take a rest,” Kim says to Thi and they both walk up to the room. Kim turns her back to look for Nhat, but Nhat is not there. Perhaps, Nhat will come few days later.

Finally, the new semester starts, things are getting crowded at AUW. Kim is busy with her class schedule and works. She sets up a list of things to do in this semester.

Kim’s Note #2:

1. Learning Chinese
2. Earning high score in class (five courses)
3. Organizing the guitar class
4. Searching for a basketball coach

Every beginning of the semester, Kim writes a list like this, but not all of them were done successfully. There are many reasons for the unsuccessful list. Sometimes, Kim might forget the

things she need to do when she is too busy with her academic work. Sometimes, Kim changes her mind, and she feels that she should give up a task. Most of the tasks related to patient work usually fail. Learning Bengali is one of them. Kim wanted to learn how to say a sentence in Bengali every day, but she did it for two weeks then she completely forgot about it. She gave herself an excuse that she had other important work to do so she would learn the Bengali sentence later. Once, she called her friend and made a group study GRE vocabulary together, but the group was broken up after two weeks with the same reason.

Looking in the list of this semester, most of the work Kim does are not academic work. But Kim still counts them as her responsibilities in the semester, because these works are equally important to her. Without doing one of them, Kim would feel like some part of her life is being missed. This time, she does not want to write a long list of things. She writes only the most important things to her with the wish that she can achieve her goals at the end of this academic year. The long list might distract her from what is important and what is not. This year, besides studying, she has only basketball and guitar, nothing else. She is too tired now. She wants to do her best.

Kim promises with herself that she will not join any activities except basketball and guitar. She want have a focus on the things she does. She is already too tired with the summer, and she does not have time to do anything else. Thinking in that way, Kim opens her laptop and starts writing email to resign in Magazine Club. She has been working as a Creative Writing Editor for a year, and she feels that her work is a little bit boring. She loves writing but it does not mean that she want to edit people's papers and to run for deadlines. She is tired of deadlines since her last internship at Dhaka.

She also needs to resign from the Public Speaking Club where she has her first experience in teaching English, where Nhat and she were busy every Saturday morning for preparing the lessons and for going to the slum school. The club was a part of her memory. She still remembers one time, she asked two boys leave the class because they were so naughty. Her class was fun with music and game. Nhat's class was always fun in artistic way. Nhat loves art and therefore, the little kids got their first chance to learn how to draw. It was very fun to think in a way of how people love things and do it according to what they love. It is like Nhat loves drawing so she teaches drawing. Kim does not know what she loves but she tried to bring music to class because the students there never got a chance to learn English with games and music. Nhat does not talk much so her class was very quiet. All the Students were very polite and nice. Kim was talkative and funny and therefore her class was like a fish market. Sometimes, she could not even manage her fish market. And the result was she sat there and let the sellers do what they wanted.

Then Kim starts counting the gifts she has just got from friends: money, peanut sweet and an elephant key hanger from Sri Lanka, a traditional dress, a pair of earrings, a pair of hair clips, a bracelet, a big bag of pop rice, four packages of Waiwai noodles, two big apples and a big box of

fried red chilies from Bhutan, a beautiful shawl and a big bag of nuts from Afghanistan, a handmade purse from Cambodia, an ethnic baby key hanger, a mountain picture and a T-shirt from Nepal; a cute pen, a kungfu panda eyes-sleeping cover, a package of coconut candies and a package of sweet sour salted spicy dried apricot from Vietnam. Perhaps, this is the last time Kim will get different gifts from different countries at once. Kim does not know that when will be like this time in her life. Overwhelmed with the gifts she gets, Kim feels that every year she is very rich. She is rich because she has a lot of love from her friends.

Kim weeps silently because she does not want to wake Thi up. Closing the laptop, Kim looks outside the window, where Mr. Sun is coming. It is just 6.30 am in the morning, Thi is still sleeping. Kim lightly looks at Thi's face. Kim usually says Thi has a skeleton face because when she gets thin, her face looks very small. Sometimes, Kim thinks that there is only bone on her face. Kim likes Thi's face when Thi gets fat because at that time at least there are a little flesh on her face. Kim wishes that she would have a face structure like Thi, so she would not have to worry about if her face is becoming bigger or not. After three months, Thi has become thinner a lot. When Thi gets thin, Thi's body shape is perfect with three sizes of a model: butt, waist and chest. Thi's dad made her run every day at the park near her home in the summer. Kim wishes if her dad will force her to run like Thi's dad so she could become thinner like Thi.

It has been more than three years they are roommates now. Kim remembers the time when they traveled together to Syllet. It was a battle trip actually because they were angry and did not talk to each other for long. Kim and Thi usually fights for such small things like putting the spice in the cooking pot, sweeping the room, or washing the dishes. Now Kim feels like laughing at herself for being foolish to Thi. Suddenly Kim feels a bit happiness when she looks at her Thi's little cute face. Kim wishes if time could stop for a moment, just a moment so Kim could write down all of her memories.

Two weeks later, everyone has their class schedule and start their student life. Being a student here is not easy for Kim because she has to keep herself busy all the time. There was a time that she had nothing to do and she could not find anyone to talk with. Kim found her heart and her mind is the emptiness and loneliness. She missed home a lot and she just kept crying. Since then, Kim gives herself a lot of work because she never wants to have free time. Thi usually says to Kim that she is a workaholic. And this semester, Kim starts being busy. She does not come to eat on time. Because she doesn't talk to friends much. If anyone asks what Kim is doing, then she will just simply says she has work. She does not like to explain to people what she is doing; this is the short answer that Kim gives to everyone.

"Hello sister, where have you been? I have heard that you are very busy with your work. Is that right?" a junior asks Kim.

Kim does not say anything, she just smiles back to the girl and slightly nod her head and then keep eating. Kim tries not to speak as much as possible. And this makes everyone start being curious about Kim.

The way Kim behaves makes others feel that she is really hard to close with. Kim just does not want to care to anybody, care to any one. She is very tired already. This is called she is in the stage of craziness. She calls herself as crazy because she does not know actually what happen to her. She just feels that she is losing something in her life. She just does not care if anyone is interested in her or not. Or she also does not care if she anyone wants to make friends with her. With the ways Kim acts, none of the new Students dare to talk to her.

When the girl asks Kim, she has just realized that she has been busy. But actually, what has she been busy with? She is taking many academic courses. But she was not Kim anymore. The Kim usually smiles with everyone. Kim now is known for a heartless person as An usually describes Kim.

An is always excited and cares about Kim but what Kim does is just listening to An's daily stories as she separates herself from her own mind. Sometimes Kim is in the conversation and she finds that she loses her mind to somewhere else. When her mind comes back, she finds that An was talking about something which she does not know. Kim feels bad for not being concentrating on An's talk. She really does not know what happened to her mind. She just wants to be away from what she has been doing.

In the juniors eyes and through An's story, Kim is the one active, happy and always be there to help people. And it seems that Kim has become a good model in An's and other's eyes. However, what is happening to Kim was the opposite of what An thought:

“Why did not you say anything to the juniors? You make me like I am the one who is telling lies to them. What is happening to you?”

Kim just smiles dismissively. She is trying to avoid the question . For Kim, it is okay with whatever the juniors think because she does not care anymore. She is too tired to care for anyone else.

“So you told them everything right? It is your failure then,” Kim says and tries to make in a funny way to cheer An up.

“No, but I just want to let them know that you are my good friend. I want to let them know that you are really active and you are willing to help everyone.”

Listening to An's words, Kim just wants to cry but she tries to control it because she does not want to cry in front of An. She does not reply to An. She just wants to let it go. With the groundless conversation, Kim leaves to her room and starts questioning herself. She really wants

to ask herself what is hapening to her. She opens her laptop listening to the song Let Her Go. She writes writes and writes.

What happen to me? I just don't want to be like that. I really need someone with me. I really need someone to be there with me. Please let me alone. Let me alone. Everything will be fine.

The more she writes, the more her tears coming on her face. And the salty taste of the tear mix with the chorus of the music made her sob. She could not see the typing anymore, The words are blur in front of her. But she does not want to stop, she feels that she is helpless. And with no way, no mind, she opens her messages with Nhat in the summer.

Kim wrote: "Hey let me be back to normal! I am tired when we are like this. I am very tired. I hate it. I hate every time when we were in group. I was in the front and you were in the back. No words. Can we be back to normal?"

Nhat wrote: "I will try my best. I don't know if I can do it but I will try my best"

Kim wrote: "You don't have to try! Just let it be normal! It will come."

Nhat wrote: "Please stop writing me like this. So sick."

Kim wrote: "Sorry!"

Perhaps this is the end between Nhat and Kim. Kim thinks and falls on her table, looking at the far far away, when the morning light, morning cold, and the dew are mixing. Mr. Sun passes the light to Kim's eyes where some of the tears still remain, creating the sparkling dew in Kim eyes.

*There are two kinds of people: The one who talks and the one who does not talk
The one who don't usually talk but they talk a lot when they have chance: Scary at first but funny
to know that person has two-side of characters
The one who talks and just talks: Unsurprising
The one who talk but does not know what to say: Boring
The one who don't talk and just don't talk: Silent*

Seven: The Student's assignment #2

November 27, 2009

Rajbargh Police Line, Dhaka! Eid day!

Dear Star-Kim,

I have reached Dhaka yesterday. Eid is fun but somehow quiet here. Haha, you might wonder why I said fun but quiet. Because normally fun is supposed to mean in an excitement and blasting moment and it is not supposed to be quiet. I will tell you later, my long journey. Please be patient with my story as I'm patient to write to you when I think I am about to die of hunger now. This could be longest letter I write to you, since I don't have anything to do now.

You know it is 9pm and I don't even have a single grain of rice inside my stomach. Then I decided to write to you because I think you might help me to fight for the hunger. To tell the truth, this is my first time staying in a Bengali home and as a rule, 9pm is not the time for dinner yet. My apa knew that at the campus I usually have dinner at 6.30pm therefore she kept asking me if I wanted to eat but I said no. I don't want to make them sad. Also, I want to see how long I can bear this hunger. Therefore, you have to be patient with me, ok?

Now, this is the story of today. What do you want to hear first? A bad but fun one or a good but a bit quiet one? Hmm since you always let me choose the stuff, I guess I will choose for you. I just wanted to ask you for fun because I know anyhow I am the one who decides it. Then I will tell the bad one first, because after the bad ended, the good came.

The bad:

This story happened on the November 25, two days before Eid. And two days before those two days, my apa who is also my senior, called me to tell that she forgot to buy the ticket for me and she was already in Dhaka. Such lovely news I got in this Bangladeshi land!

Me! Alone!

And I took all of my courage and told her "Apa, don't worry about me! I will be fine! I will just get on the bus, take a good sleep and when I open my eyes, I will be in Dhaka. You just tell me how to buy the bus ticket."

At that moment, I did not know if I would really have a good sleep on the bus but I just told to her in that way so she would not worry about me. Most of my friends usually scared to travel alone in Bangladesh. But you know me right? I am the one always wants to make people believe that I am strong and courageous. Moreover, I thought that I had to go to visit her home any way because I had been making promises to visit her family for many times, but I did not dare to do it.

Apa treats me really well. The first time when I came to Bangladesh, she was the one took me around the city and helped me when I needed. I'm happy to know her. What else can be more important than this reason for me to visit her family?

As apa instructed, Nhat and I went to the bus station in Dampara which is far from my university about five-minute walk from my university. We both crossed many bus stations but still could not find the bus name that apa told us to go. To have a safe journey, we went up and down on road to find the exact bus name that she talked about.

Fifteen minutes passed and the road we walked was not even 100 meters. Then I called my apa again to make sure that we were on the right direction. I was about to call her, then we found the small and old signboard written "Hanif Bus."

"Yes," Nhat and I said to each other, "finally."

We hoped this would be the right bus name. A man instructed us to go upstairs. The upstairs was covers with shops and shops. It was really dark and dank which made me feel creeped out. The shops looked half ancient and half dirty. We were walking around the place of about five square meters but still could not find the bus counter. Most of the shops had closed for Eid holiday.

I called my apa and she said that we were on the right place, but I wondered where the counter was. We asked another passerby and he said we should go down instead. His answer made me wonder if my Bangla was that bad that I could not even ask the place well. We went down as the guy suggested and we saw again the "Hanif Bus" signboard. But under the board was a small bus counter which I guessed that this must be the Hanif Bus. Beside my language skill problem, there could be an eye problem which caused us roaming around and wasting time. I thought a bus counter supposed to has a big sign board enough for us to recognize. "Haiizzz."

Done!

The bus ticket was booked two days before Eid. I felt lucky that at least I got a bus ticket to go and its cost was only 300 Taka. The ticket price surprised me because it was very cheap. Seven hours by bus was not even cost five dollars. But I literally set my mind at rest since my apa said this was a good bus.

Nhat and I went back to the university after booking the ticket. And it was happening that we both did not sleep for the whole night. Sometime, we both did some crazy stuff which took us the whole night to do. (I will not tell you what we did because it was the secret between Nhat and me.) In the next morning, we both looked like two aliens with pale faces due to the sleepless night. At 6.30am, Nhat and another Vietnamese friend came until the bus station to see me off. Nhat and I were actually walking like two babies who crawling on the road.

Waiting for about five minutes, a mini bus came in front of the bus counter and I was asked to get in by the counter guy. I quickly said bye to my friends as the bus rolled its wheels forward. I

got to sit in the front of the bus which was near the driver. It was a very rushed moment that I did not look at the bus clearly. Only after arranging my bag and being seated, I got a chance to observe the bus in detail.

To tell the truth, I did not believe that I went on a bus like this. The bus was very small which could carry about 30 passengers. Everywhere of the bus was rusty and it had the brown and yellowish color. When I looked back of the bus, I found about 15 pair of eyes were staring at me like I was the alien just dropped out from the black hole. I immediately turned back to my original position and sat straight as I pretended that I did not see any eyes.

“Okay, everything is set. This is the bus that I’m going to sit in for 7 hours long.” Suddenly my whole body and my bag flew up in the air because the bus just crossed by a breaker. It seems like the bus wanted to answer me that “Yes Kim, this is the bus that you have to go on.” And I wondered how many times the bus would say to me “Kim, you are crossing a road breaker,” while I badly needed a sleep. But somehow I told myself not to sleep.

“A small rusty-old bus and a long journey!” I was hoping that everything would be fine on this journey. I hoped that once I opened my eyes, the bus would reach Dhaka. Going for about 20 minutes, the bus stopped and everyone got down from the bus. After one minute of confusion, the bus supervisor told me to get down from the bus. If you could see my face at this time, I guess it was blank as a white paper which had only one sentence was written “What’s the next thing?” Then I saw everyone else was moving to a bigger bus which has about 50 seats. “Yes, finally, we are moving to the bigger bus. Yes, the real journey is starting now. Yes, finally I don’t have to fly up to the sky whenever that rusty bus crosses a road breaker,” I joyfully thought with a peaceful mind.

I got to sit in the front of the second bus where I had a 3-D view. My right view was a widow which I could look straight to the places on the right side where I could see trucks were racing buses to get in the front. My front view was the driver and the front road where sometimes I feel that my bus nearly hit the other buses’ tails. And you can guess my left view was the other window to the places on left side of the road where houses were next to paddy fields. I was glad to have this full view so at least the driver or the bus supervisor would pay attention to me. Hehe. It was not because I wanted to attract them by my beauty. I just thought of it, in case I got some troubles, they could notice and help me right away.

The second bus seemed okay to me even though it was a little old and no AC. I opened the window to let the air come in. The bus started its journey after five minutes of luggage and passenger arrangement. I was very glad because I thought that this time, I would have a real sleeping time. I put the ears phone and listened to music. You already know I am the music-alcoholic who can sleep easily by listening to music. And I slept.

I listened to music. Whoever got on the bus, they looked at me. Even young kids or old people, I attracted their attention. Haha can you see how beautiful I am? I was just kidding with you. I knew that whenever I sat on the bus people still could recognize how alien I was.

I slept but actually I did not go to a deep sleep. I was looking here and there, from both side of the road. Most of the places which the bus passed by, I found them somehow similar to Vietnamese village. There were very clean roads, fresh air and cool tree shade. It was not crowded and busy like Chittagong city. Far away, from my eyes, I could see few farmers were working on the field. No matter they wore different clothes, no matter they spoke different language and no matter they had different appearance, I found there was the acquaintanceship here, which was the peaceful picture of a simple village with tall and strong bamboo trees, yellow-green glossy paddy field with the blowing of buoyant wind.

I closed my eyes as if there was nothing perfect more than going to a village. I missed home.

You know, I thought that I was flying on the paddy fields and went through all the big bamboo trees and suddenly I found myself stopping in the middle of the field and I was planning to sleep at one village home tonight. I would ask them to give me a place to sleep tonight. I would give them some small money as long as they accepted me to stay. “Would the villagers be happy to see me? Would they let me stay?” I thought.

Suddenly I felt so hot. No wind.

“What happens? “ I thought as I opened my eyes.

The bus had been stopped.

The driver loudly said something and in his response there was a sound of some men doing something. I guessed the bus driver asked help from someone. After that, the bus was pushed from the back and started moving a little bit forward like a turtle with its shell.

“Now, what’s up? Bus broken?” I ask myself.

All the passengers were moving down from the bus. They stood under the tree shade. Some of them were nervously gossiping with each other. Some of them was standing behind the bus and pushing.

“Should I get down? All the people had gone down but what would I do when I am on the road? Sitting somewhere or talking to people?” And I decided to stay on the bus with the driver because I did not know what I would do when I was down on the road.

Push! Push! Push! Five minutes passed.

This time was the first sign that made me doubt if there would be something like this happen in the next few hours. However, whatever would be happened, I would be fine because I already on the bus and I must reach apa's home. This was my real goal of the day.

I looked around. The road was covered with paddy fields. Looking at very far behind the paddy fields, I could see some small houses. This time I applied the real thought. I consoled myself that I would be fine if the bus stayed here at night. At first, I would love to take a walk around to see the places; perhaps there were many interesting things to see. I looked on my right side, there was at least a food shop there, so in case I got hungry I could eat there. As I told you before, I could go to ask some villagers to let me stay at their home at night. "What a perfect plan I had!" I thought.

A half an hour had passed. The bus was still in the same position. It was noon. I tried to drink as less water as I could because I did not know when I would have a chance to visit the bathroom. I was hungry too but not much. I ate some biscuits. You know, actually I was trying to minimize the possibility of visiting a bathroom.

Someone started shouting and fighting. Through their action and expression I could somehow guess. A person was mentioning about the Syllet's bus, another person was looking at and showing his watch to the bus supervisor. They were both holding their luggage. I could easily guess that they had a bus in Dhaka which would leave soon, so if this bus was late, they would miss the bus in Dhaka to Syllet. The bus supervisor was calling someone else on phone which I guessed he was calling the bus counter to send a replacement bus. The two passengers lost their patience and they went out to catch another bus.

"Should I get down and catch another bus too?" I thought, "But what would happen on the next bus?" And again I decided to stay with the driver. At least I would not be alone when I stayed but I would be alone if I went.

Only at this time, when I was on the bus and everyone was down there on the road, I could count how many passengers were there. Including me, there were only three women on the bus. I could not say how old they were because their faces were covered by shawls. I could see only their eyes. Sometimes, I got scare of those eyes when I caught the eyes were looking toward me. Only until I got down on the bus I could notice that I was one of the women. Sometime, I wondered if the women here travel much.

It was very hot on the bus because there was no wind and no shade. You know, I was stuck in the middle of the road. I remembered once time, my mom said that if I felt hot then I should not do anything, just stayed still then I would not feel hot any more. I did as mom said. I calmed my mind down. I did not think much. I sat there and pretended as if there was a lot of wind coming, which made me relax. Do you know how to call this? This is self-satisfaction. If you think that you feel cool then you will feel cool. It depends on how we treat your mind.

All the men on the bus seemed very tired. They took a short-break and then they continued to push. I wondered if I was the one who made the bus heavier. I guess yes, because 55kg more for the bus was also a problem. However, no one asked me to get down from the bus. Perhaps, they gave me an exception as I was the only foreigner there.

1 2 3 go... 123 go... people started shouting as they wanted to have some more energy and courage by the noise.

The driver turned the key from left to right again. His legs pushed the starter of the bus.

Drrrum. Drrrrang.

Hurrah! The sound of the machine started and everyone jumped up with big smiles. Immediately, everyone quickly entered the bus as they were afraid that the bus might stop again. I was happy as well because finally the bus continues its real journey. You see, I said a real journey again. I hoped this one must be a real one.

My apa called me several times, but each time, I did not tell her the truth. I just told that the bus was going very nicely. I did not want her to worry about me. On the way, she had been talking to the supervisor many times about me already. She asked him such question, like how was my sister? Where was the bus? Why was the bus so late? What happened? This time, I did not dare to give my phone to the bus supervisor to talk to her for the sake of being a good-hearted sister.

When the bus passed near a restaurant where was many other buses were parking there made me guess that was a resting point. But everyone in the bus created uproar toward the bus driver “*Jan jan jan*” as they want to continue going. They all did not want the bus to stop anywhere. They were afraid that if the bus stopped there would be a high chance that the bus could not work again.

I found myself a half crying and a half laughing in this situation. It would be nice to go to the bathroom but it would be worse if the bus stopped again.

I slept again. And I reached Dhaka bus station when the sun had gone to sleep. This was not only the result of broken machine but also traffic jam. I came to my apa’s home when my whole body, from hair to shoes, was covered with dust.

And you know, since then, I became a part of her family which is the good story I am going to tell you know.

Hold on! Apa is calling me for dinner finally. I will quickly write to you. My stomach is shouting now. So in this good story, to make it quick I will list down what I did in Dhaka from the beginning till the end. Here it is:

One day before Eid: Eid preparation:

- Waking up in the early morning when everyone is still in their dream-> Morning here is quiet. I found myself sitting still beside the window and looking down to the road. Only few people were walking on the road. The fresh cool air is covered by the shade of a century-old tree. This was the most peaceful time in Bangladesh I ever had, and the feeling of missing home.
- Going to a market in the afternoon with apa and apa's sister-> I was surprised because they (the daughters) of the family were the one who decided what to buy and how to decorate their home for Eid celebration. I thought that all the women here should not be the decision makers. They were allowed to do what they wanted. And they were very good at doing it. No corruption. If I were doing that, there would be corruption and bias because I would use the money to buy the things I like. Haha. Sounds funny, right?
- Going to market to buy clothes, and receiving the first Salwar Kameez in my life -> Salwar Kameez was my first Eid clothes gift and I got a lot of compliment from other people about how nice I was in the Salwar Kameez which made me love wearing it.

Eid day:

- Looking at the love of the family when they were gathering together-> I found myself feeling jealous with the love of the three sisters. I missed home.
- Eating *sondesh*-> This is my first favorite misti in Bangladesh. It had the milky sweet and powdery taste. Misti simply means but sweet but I like the way they call it. I found myself happy when I ate the misti.
- Sitting still and looking at something for hours -> At apa's home, the family members don't talk much. It was great when there was time to think and to stop making yourself busy but it reminded me of home.
- Staying quiet in most of the conversation -> It was not because of the language differences. I don't understand Bangla, but I enjoyed watching them speaking and guessing the meaning of their talk.

I hope by listing the things I did you can see in it a peaceful story. I gotta go now! See you later!

With love

Kim

Someone was calling at night. If you can see the person, you are in the day. If you cannot see the person, you are at night. Turn on the light and see. You are in the day.

“Kakkakkaaaak, K ...A...K..”

“What are you doing there?” The Master asked the Student while the Student was making noise on the coconut tree.

Seeing the Master down under the tree, the Student immediately slipped down, flicking of the dust off the shirt and said.

“Yes, Master, I am trying to imitate the HoC’s language,” The Student felt ashamed of the funny imitation and the Student was nearly to laugh.

“The HoC’s language?” The Student hadn’t not started laughing, the Master already questioned, “How can you learn a language by imitating their action? Do you understand what did you say?”

“I don’t know, Master,” the Student said softly and indistinctly. “Co...ould you tell me what that was about?”

“Hhm, you don’t know what does it mean and you still imitated them,” the Master turned his back against the Student and calmly said. “There is a serious political issue in the area, two HoC’s citizens were being killed in front of the palm tree by an extravagant party. The HoC are worrying about the citizens’ lives.”

The Student’s face color changed to the color of banana leaf, with a surprised and fear face.

The Master continues, “Remember, you shouldn’t climb on the tree like this if you don’t want to die. Now all the HoC’s citizens are worrying if they have to move to other area.”

“But Master, why they want to kill those citizens?” The Student asked the Master curiously.

However, the Master did not answer the Student, went straight back to the flamboyant house, leaving the Student with fear and worry. Things were gradually changing.

“Kim sister, you have come back from, yeah. How are you?” Lan happily asks Kim.

“Yes, everything was fine.” Kim answers.

“Shall I come to sleep with you tonight?” Lan asks.

“No, it is okay, you don’t have to come and sleep with me anymore. You know, I feel really hot and Thi is my roommate, she could here whatever we talk at night.” Kim says indifferently.

“No, it is okay, I don’t care if Thi could hear us or not. Please sister, I will come to sleep with you sister. Please.”

“No is no.” Kim says straightforward to Lan. “Can I be alone sometimes? Lan, I am very tired.”

Hello readers, I am here again, at least to give a reason while I continuously make you read the boring friendship stories. Well it is very hard to keep your interest in my writing. With those boring story like Kim's friendship, I would lose you any time, any moment. And that would be the worst thing for me as a writer. I know you like something like character's flaw or a bit unexpected and complicated story to keep you reading. But you know the complication is always on the top of boredom.

Let's me summarize the mess friendship so you might have an idea of how normal this friendship is. Kim was a good friend of Nhat and An. An was jealous with Nhat because Nhat was always better than her. Then by the boring incident about where to hang clothes, Kim did not talk to Nhat. And Kim became so close with An until the day when Lan came to Kim and became Kim's close friend. An did not like Lan because An did not want anyone to take her best friend-Kim away. In between, Lan is close with both Nhat and Kim so Lan is the only source of information Kim has about Nhat. I thought that the Dhaka internship would make Kim feel better, but she started to ignore both Lan and An after that. And she decided to have Jigme, a Bhutanese girl as her best friend. However, Jigme is also a good friend of Nhat and the story just continues like that.

I also feel so bored when I tell you the story because Kim's friendship was just simply between this person to another person. What is Kim searching for? A best friend or someone to talk to her about Nhat?

One day, Jigme comes to talk to Kim:

"Hey, how have you been?"

"Fine, you?"

"Yes, I am fine. I rarely see you these days. Do you have a lot of work?"

"Yeah, kind of," Kim answers back with annoyance.

"And I did not see you sit and eat with the Vietnamese group anymore."

"You know, I don't really have time, I just come and eat when I have time and my schedule is very different."

"Yeah, I see. And I did not see you with Nhat as well? What happen so far?"

Jigme's question made Kim feels a little shiver and Kim tries not to think much as she tries to keep her emotion down. She says:

"Nhat? No, nothing happened, we are still very normal. Nothing happens between us. We are still fine."

“Yeah then it is fine.”

All of Kim’s friends start wondering what happens to Kim. Why Kim does not talk? Why is Kim so busy? In fact, people rarely see Kim in dining hall. For Kim, the simplest reason she has in her mind is because she does not want to meet Nhat. She is afraid that if she meets Nhat she would cry. She is afraid that she will have to look at Nhat’s eyes.

Kim is eating alone at the dining hall and a junior start talking to her.

“Sister, are you watching a movie?”

“No, I rarely watch, I don’t have time to watch,” Kim smiles.

“Then what do you do when you feel stress?”

“Stress? Hm... Stress? I don’t know, ya, I really don’t know”

“Then maybe you don’t have stress”

“Maybe I sleep, I don’t know...”

The question of a junior made Kim just realizes about herself. She wonders if she ever has stress. Actually what does stress mean to Kim? Kim does not really know. But Kim just know that when she does not want to do anything is the time she wants to sleep. And when she starts to sleep, she could not sleep right away but her tears start rolling on her cheek to the pillow.

She lies facing to the wall. And she just knows that at that time she is already tired and she just wants to sleep like this time. She wonders if it is called stress or it is just a normal tiredness.

Normally, when there is the thing that she does not know what to do, Kim just wants to sleep because she knows that on the next day when she opens her eyes, everything has gone, her tears, her sadness, her problems and everything that does not belong to her, it will come and and go. It come through the tear she has and slight touch on the pillow and then evaporate on the next morning. The tears have the pure color therefore it seems like there is nothing there on the pillow. The tears are dry as the sorrow will dry.

She never ever wants to keep the sorrow with her and she does not want to give the sorrow to anyone, therefore she choses to sleep. Sometimes, she feels bad for the pillow because only the pillow is the one has to suffer when she cried. She feels bad because she makes the pillow wet. She does not want to give the sorrow to anyone because she does not want everyone feels sad, she does not want her sorrow to be other’s sorrow. Therefore Kim just decides to sleep. She uses herself as the only friend to share the story with. This is what Kim hates about herself. Sometimes, she also wonders how Nhat shares her sorrow. Kim has never seen Nhat share to her a sorrow and Kim has ever dare to share her sorrow, therefore she wonder if there is a time Nhat needs someone to share with.

Is that Kim's stress? Is it called stress? Kim is just asking herself and the tears still keep rolling down down to the pillow and she starts sleeping. She usually blames herself for the problems she makes. It is like today. She blames herself for not honoring the friendship she has. She wonders how many friends she has lost. Does she know how to keep a relationship?

Sometimes, Kim just wishes the pillow can become a real person who can talk who can protect her, who can lift her up when she feels down, who can hug her when the weather is chilly out there. Does she have a best friend? She wonders if she used to call Jigme, Nhat, An, Thi her best friends. She wonders if Jigme knows her as well as Kim knows Jigme. Does An know what Kim likes? Does Thi know what Kim needs? Is a friend just the one who always there to help and always there to listen and to care? Then one day, her friends just feel that she is already tired with the relationship and she wants to lose it. It is Kim, who realizes that her friendship needs to end. Kim is the one who realizes that she wants to lose and go far away from others? And finally it is Kim who regrets what she does. Just think until here, Kim closes her eyes, and sleep in the stream of tears.

Are you a talkative person? Do you like to talk? If yes, then make sure that you listen sometime. Are you a quiet person? Do you like to listen? If yes, please just make sure that you also want to share sometimes.

The wall:

To write the things that only you can understand it and when people look at it, they think your thought is an art.

To lean on when you need a shoulder

To look at you cry and to protect your tears from everyone

To paste the memory quote "imagination is more important than knowledge- Albert Einstein"
And to hang the school note

I go back to room like every other day

...but not to work, to sleep or to play

There is time like today

...that I felt nothing to say

With the empty mind and the heavy heart

Don't ask me what's wrong

Just let me alone

...with the songs

...and I will be strong

Eight: The Last Nowhere Story and the Imagine Conflict.

Who knows whether or not if you are going to believe my next story about Kim. You might not believe it and no one does when they hear it for the first time. But as a writer, I need to keep telling the story until there is a conflict in the story. All the boring and complicated friendships you have read above might have happened to you in life already. And now, I don't know if the next story has ever happened in your life.

Human affection is a big topic to talk about. The dream, the religious belief, the thought, the pain, the omen and the feeling are seem connected. I don't really know how to start talking and what to say about omens since these are hard to talk about. But I can briefly say that it sometimes is the feeling that only through human affection, you could feel it. Perhaps the affection which is going to happen, is real, deep and true affection.

5pm on 20A rooftop is not too hot and not too cold for two Asian friends to sit and have a chat. It had been a while and they have not climbed up there since last year. And this is the first time in the semester; they have a real time for each other after the summer vacation. And their conversation starts with the topic of tomorrow.

“What are your plans after graduation?” Jigme asks Kim.

“I really want to go to graduate school but I am not sure which university that I should apply to. You?” Kim answers.

“Me. Just now I think that I will go to graduate school rather than start a job.”

“Ya, you should do it! That will be great,” and then Kim starts her back up plan. “I will go back to Vietnam, in the days I will work for a company and at night I will teach English because teaching English is a great way to earn money in Vietnam. A full time English teacher in Vietnam can earn more than 1000 dollars per month which is quite high compared to other jobs.”

“My backup plan is to start the national exam in order to be admitted in the government job. In Bhutan, I have to take the exam because there are no other options. To get the government job, everyone must take the exam. The government job is the most respected job in Bhutan. And there are not many private jobs in the job market so I'd prefer to work for the government.” Then Jigme asks “In the future are you going to get married?”

“Why?” Kim asks back to Jigme in surprise. This is the first time that Jigme has asked Kim about love and marriage. Before, Kim always thought that a shy girl like Jigme would never talked about love and marriage. Kim does not feel shy to talk about marriage but she thought of the love would not make Jigme comfortable. Perhaps they are close enough that they can share everything, Kim thinks and goes on with her long plan about marriage life.

“It's fine. Just share.” Jigme says.

“Of course I will not get married after the graduation; I will get married perhaps when I am 29 years old. Right now, I don’t want to have a boyfriend because you know, I am afraid that I will not have enough time for him. Even now, I don’t have enough time for myself. I am running here and there to do the work. I know it will be very hard to maintain a relationship. I have seen many of my friends they are talking to their boyfriends every day and I can’t do that. I have no time. You know, right?”

Jigme just nods her head and Kim goes as if she was a professor giving a life speech her Students. “But after the graduation, who knows? I might have a boyfriend. When it is the time, it will come. It is funny in the way that my parents and relatives are expecting me to have a boyfriend now. When I was in high school no one even asked a single word about this matter and now they all are asking if I have a boyfriend. My dad even worries that I don’t have a boyfriend. In Vietnam, after the graduation, around 24 years old is the age of marriage. That is why they are keeping asking me about it. This is such a ridiculous stuff, isn’t it?” Then Kim asks Jigme, “What’s about your plan of getting married?”

“I don’t know,” Jigme says in the shy way. And for the first time, Jigme tells Kim her love story. She said, “Around two, three boys are following me, they are waiting for me even though I already rejected them.”

“Who are they?” Kim smiles.

“They were my classmates and some other friends,” Jigme says.

Kim does not care who they are. Kim just remembers that Kim just asked that question in order to have a topic to continue the conversation. Then Jigme goes on with her story.

She says, “I really want to go the graduate school so I don’t want anyone waiting for me. They are not going the same way with me. Also, I am tired since I have faced a lot of family problems.”

When Jigme said family problems, Kim’s mind starts to resemble what she has said to Kim before about her current family situations. Last time, Jigme told Kim that her younger brother was making her crazy. She says, “My mom was calling me and complaining about Kota. My mom said that there was a girl came to our home, and told her that her brother made her get pregnant.”

“What? Pregnant? Are you serious?” Kim is surprised and shouted in a low voice as she knows that this news should not let other people knew about it.

Kim really could not believe it because he was the one nearly made Kim fall in love with him. The first time when Kim met him, he kept talking to Kim while Kim was so tired which was irritating Kim a lot. Because Kim was damn tired and in addition of the tiresome was there was someone just keeping annoying Kim by asking many questions.

However, he was so nice to Kim when Kim was at Sakteng which was far away from Jigme's home by a day walking. Kim stayed at his house, a cold place Kim had ever stayed. Sakteng was a famous tourist place in Bhutan as it was known for world's secret grassland. Tourists went there for trekking and to learn about the ethnic groups in Bhutan. The time Kim went there was early June, when the rain season was coming and the weather was getting "warmer." Kim put the "warmer" in a bracket because "warmer" was only for the local people in Sakteng. For Kim, it was terribly cold so Kim had to wear a coat, take hot bath and stay in bed whenever she was at home.

He knew that Kim loved Thukpa which is one kind of rice porridge which is a mix of chilies, butter, water and rice; so he cooked Thukpa for Kim all the time. In Sakteng, people drank tap water, which made Kim have doubts about hygiene. Knowing that Kim wanted to drink boiled water, he boiled the water for Kim in the morning. He was always trying to make Kim happy. From Jigme, Kim got to know about Kota's life. He was Jigme's second sister's classmate. His parents died long time ago therefore, Jigme's dad felt sorry for him. From then, Jigme had an adopted brother. Although he was an adopted brother but her dad loved him the most.

Then Kim asks Jigme, "What happens to him now? Will he be okay?"

"I don't really know because right now all the responsibilities are seems on me. The other brother does not study well. I had to write email and call my friends for help. I am sick of it. And now my father is sick. He is going to the capital city for the treatment." Jigme continues.

"I am so sorry, I wish he can get better." Kim does not know what to say to Jigme since she is not good at comforting people. She just took a deep breath for the life of her best friend. At this time, she finds that she really values the friendship that they have had since the first year. Sometimes, Kim finds herself ignoring Jigme but Jigme always cares for her. Kim feels very guilty about it and she feels that she should care more for Jigme as a best friend.

It has been awhile

That I haven't checked my email

Once day, I just found your email

And the tears just keep running from my eyes

I have lost you

Now I know what's wrong

You are the part of my life

Love and affection

...never be gone

“Hey Kim where are you? Are you in your room?”

“Yes, I am in my room. What’s up?”

“Can you come out to your balcony?”

“Ok”

Kok Kok, Kim opens the balcony door and steps out as Jigme told her.

“Oh, you already here,” Kim says.

“Yaya. Here, take this,” Jigme gives Kim a packet.

“What is that?” Kim asks.

“Just something to eat, ” Jigme says and smiles.

Kim catches the red wrapped paper packet. It is the mint toast, their favorite snack from Wellfood.

“Why did you buy it?” Kim asks Jigme.

“Nothing, I just had a chance to cross there, then I bought it for you.”

“Thanks,” Kim is surprised because the art of eating this mint toast is being together. Kim and Jigme usually bought them, ate and talked together.

“Is there any occasion? Why is she giving me food?” Kim thinks.

“Bye, I am going, ok?” Jigme says bye and goes back immediately when Kim again says “Thanks.” It seems like Jigme is busy so she just wants to give the food quickly, but also, it seems like she feels shy to give the food.

“KIIIIIMMMMMMMM, MOSQUITOESSSSSSSSSSSS!” Hearing Thi’s scream voice, Kim immediately enters the room and closes the balcony.

Kim looks at Thi’s mad face, smiles and asks a pointless question.

“Why did Jigme give me food?”

“It is really simple, because she cares for you,” Thi answers as this is the simple fact that everyone already knows, and nothing to be doubted from it.

“Yes, you are right,” Kim again smiles, but this time it is a smile with a sigh. “But there is no point of having the food alone?” Kim thinks. However, Kim is happy with the food she gets.

“Missing home in the middle of the night when the city becomes quiet and the music of the night (chirping of birds and insects; a distant croaking of frogs; blinking of lights like stars) dominates everything there- A Beauty!. .. Remembering watching a dancing moon over woolen clouds under the blackish blue sky in my old days at home...”

After seeing Jigme’s Facebook status in the late night, Kim immediately chats with Jigme.

Kim: ???

still awake

Jigme: yeah.. what about you?

Kim: not yet, still writing paper

what are you doing?

i haven’t seen you the whole day

Jigme: i was in the room.. i just can't sleep

Kim: did you sleep a lot?

Jigme: I did since yesterday late evening

Kim: ok hehe

then what are you doing now?

Jigme: nothing..

Kim: you don't have things to do?

Jigme: I do have actually many things

Kim: ok hehe

Jigme: :)

Kim: then what are you going to do?

Jigme: just stay awake until the morning-most probably.

Kim: then you would better go to sleep

Jigme: hehe.

I will i guess you also should sleep..

Kim: are you in the stage of not doing anything?

Jigme: yeah

Kim: okay i see i got it these days as well

4 hours ago, just lying down, listening to music, did not feel like to do anything

Jigme: ok. hope you are ok

..do well..

and you should take care

Kim: i don't really know what's wrong
but now I won't sleep, I have to do the stuff

Jigme: is there anything wrong?

Kim: nothing

Jigme: if you have slept enough, then you can work
ok.. good to know then

Kim: actually I should ask is there anything wrong with you
actually i did not sleep

Jigme: i am ok. no worry'

Kim: normally when you feel like doing nothing, you will feel emptiness hehe is that right?

Jigme: hehe. its true actually

Kim: then missing home as well

Jigme: i guess you saw my status.
at this hour, i miss home for some reason

Kim: it is happen to me whenever I have nothing to do and whenever I am overwhelmed with
work

Jigme: yeah.. its a tough one actually
but the work load shouldn't trouble you much
take care yourself

Kim: is your home stuff is okay now?

Jigme: i don't care now.
i hope it should be ok

Kim: you said you don't care but actually you care, but you are useless
i meant you cannot do anything

Jigme: hehe.. maybe, thats the truth which frustrates me
i got what you meant

Kim: what to do
let it go then
don't think a lot

Jigme: thats what became my philosophy now
i am not thinking at all on it.. I stopped.
i have to care myself first now

Kim: okay I will have to observe how you are going to take care of yourself
hehe

Jigme: hehe.. maybe
but for that i might go home over this coming break
maybe until thimphu

Kim: to do what?

Jigme: not to home. the duration is short
to care for myself

Kim: care what?

Jigme: i am in worse condition right now than them (brothers)
 need to heal myself first
 to tell you the truth.. i am sick.. i was bed ridden yesterday...

Kim: how?

Jigme: i am not sleeping because i can't sleep because of the pain
 pain getting worst..

Kim: tell me clearly

Jigme: i need tradition treatment

I am sick.

physically sick i mean

Kim: what kind of sick?

Jigme: the pain all over my back.
 need to suck the blood out..
 i went to Health centre.. BP (80/60) that worried nurses...
 and got medicine, but can't take it because i know my disease
 if i take medicine, i might die..

Kim: what is your disease?

what?

Jigme: it is the blood poison if i translate from my mother tongue

Kim: how do you know it?

Jigme: that blood poison will travel around, and if left longer. a death at last. if it enters the brain.
 don't scared though
 i know this because i got it at home
 and not all the blood could be sucked out..
 remaining blood poison is now giving me a trouble

Kim: who told you that?

i meant who suck your blood?

Jigme: hehe. My Bhutanese identified one.

so doctors may not support this..

my aunt.. and apa also

Kim: what does it mean

Jigme: but i will just find someone at thimphu

i know it will be difficult for you to get this. but we know what this is
 here, i am wasting auw's money.. they buy medicine outside and give me.. but i don't take
 it at all..

Kim: i can't believe it, i don't believe it and i won't believe it

Jigme: hehe. you know there are some things that we don't believe and don't want to, but we will
 have to endure with it..
 it is the truth after all

i also don't want to believe in it. but i heard about it, experienced it, and now experiencing it..

i already saw people experiencing this.

there is always a mystery between the Science and the traditional beliefs or treatment anyway, don't get bothered by it.

Kim: does anyone know about this

Jigme: nobody. i don't want my parents to know that because they will get pissed off since they know this disease. I didn't want to tell anybody.

My two Bhutanese friends are the one who are encouraging me to go home they are just afraid of it

Kim: who else knows about it?

Jigme: nobody.

so don't tell anybody

if i go home, i will go silently

i will talk with relatives tomorrow..

i guess you should do your homework..

sorry that i had to narrate this stuff hehe

I am going to sleep. good night. you should sleep now.

bye

:)

Kim immediately shuts down her laptop. The tears start running faster on her cheeks and she bursts out crying in the middle of the night. She gradually understands what happens to her best friend. She realizes that the pain and the emptiness she has these days might be related to Jigme's sickness. Because actually these days Kim finds herself crying a lot. And tonight when Kim heard Jigme's story, she feels pain in her heart. She is afraid that she would lose her best friend. What kind of belief is that? Why does the traditional belief want to kill her best friend? Kim thinks.

Kim starts to cry louder and louder in the middle of the night. She can't imagine about the sucking blood. She is scared that her best friend is very superstitious.

"Why? Why it has to be my best friend but not anyone else? Where is that traditional treatment come from? I hate the whole culture itself. Why do they have to believe to such kind of thing? I don't understand it." Kim never finds herself getting this much hurt before. She feels weak. "I need to do something. I need to help my best friend." Then Kim stops crying and she immediately start searching online for Bhutanese traditional medicine. She finds there is the traditional medicine field in Bhutan and there is sucking blood treatment as well. But Kim could not find which diseases can be treated by this way. Almost everyone is being treated by sucking blood, which made Kim feels scared. Kim really needs an expert who can answer all of Kim's questions.

As a best friend, Kim finds herself being useless.

“Hey are you there? Are you free? Let’s go to the rooftop. I have the mint-leaf toast last time you gave me.” Kim calls Jigme in the next morning.

Then they both climb on the favorite place on the 20A rooftop.

“You know yesterday, when I slept I dreamed that I saw you were crying badly on my lap which made me feel pain.” Jigme says sadly.

Kim is terrified by Jigme’s words. How did Jigme dream about it? And really Kim did cry badly yesterday. What a coincidence, Kim thinks. However she does not want to let Jigme know that she actually cried. She is afraid that Jigme would be really upset if she knows that Kim cried.

Kim just laughs and pretends that there would never be such kind of weird crying in the world. “Who said that Kim would cry?” Kim thinks.

“I am very sorry that I could not help anything for your sickness.” Kim says to Jigme.

“Don’t worry about it. I will be fine.” Jigme comforts Kim. At this time, Kim should be the one who comforts Jigme, but it turns out that Kim is also upset about being helpless.

“I think the sickness I have is getting serious.” Jigme says.

“Then what should we do?” Kim asks anxiously.

“I have to suck the blood from my back before it gets worst. But here no one can do it.” Jigme says.

“How to suck the blood?” Kim asks, doubtfully.

“I need to use a knife to slit a line in my down back where the pain is, then suck the black blood out.” Jigme says.

“But, how do you know where the black blood is?” Kim asks.

“Well, I have to wait until the pain comes. If the pain does not come, I cannot identify where to cut.” Jigme says.

At this moment, Kim takes all of her courage and says to Jigme, “If you need my help, I can suck the blood for you.”

Though Kim has decided to suck the blood for Jigme, she cannot imagine how she can do it. Right now, she just knows that she will do anything that could make Jigme feel better and could make the sickness go away. Kim just hopes that everything will be fine for her best friend. She is really afraid that she will lose Jigme, her best friend.

“You know, these days I could not concentrate on my study. I could not do anything well,” Jigme shares.

“Perhaps, you are too stressed and you have too much pressure.” Kim tries to get a reason for Jigme.

“But you know, I have another sickness, sometimes, I just suddenly cried in the middle of the night. I lost control of myself,” Jigme says.

“Is it really a sickness?” Kim suspects. “I think you have too much work to do, that’s why.”

“No, this is a true mental sickness, when there is a time that you lose self-consciousness. One early morning, I came to the rooftop and I nearly jumped down from there. The only thing that kept me not to jump was you. I thought of seeing you the last time, that’s why I sudden remembered you. You have helped me escape from the unconsciousness.”

“Why do you have so many diseases? I can’t believe there is such kind of sickness like this,” Kim continues with serious tension. “You know, you really make me worry. Don’t ever think of it again.”

“Yaya, I won’t,” Jigme says. “But I cannot control over my behavior. I wish I will be better.”

Jigme: good night although you are busy hehe. Hope done with your works or about to be done...

Kim: now I'm doing it
crazy

Jigme: hehe. ok. good that you at least knew before you go
is it a lot?
if you don't finish it, don't worry

Kim: Hope that I will sleep at 3am today

Jigme: don't make a habit of not sleeping at night

Kim: hehe
i know

Jigme: you should sleep before that

Kim: i really want to sleep
but I just want to finish these things before going so i can just writing my thesis in peace
don't worry

Jigme: Actually, that is a great idea. I like it

Kim: you are better to go to sleep
hehe

Jigme: :)

sometime, it is difficult to live a life ..right? :(... do you experience that? just asking...
 Kim: yeah, that is true
 but we have no choice
 either live or die
 Jigme: you are definitely right
 thats it actually
 Kim: either suffering or knowing nothing
 Jigme: hehe .. then also we have problems.. in whatever state of our live
 My life really sucks in one way
 Kim: in which way?
 Jigme: i don't know.but it is
 Kim: if you live in an easy life, you know nothing, but when you have a bad life, you got stuck
 but somehow you learn how to solve that stuck.
 Jigme: I don't know.. It is not something that i need to learn..
 Kim: but it is suffering right?
 Jigme: Life teaches us some lessons-thats true
 you are right..
 i guess i am disturbing you.
 Kim: hehe
 Jigme: but feel like writing to you
 so sorry
 Kim: hehe somehow that you are writing to me, which means that you are prefer to tell your
 stuff to me. So next time, you are better to talk about it rather than keep silent
 Jigme: what kind of you expect?
 it will be a very long story..
 but.. leave it..
 I am half through it
 Already had enough of pain from here and there hehe
 Kim: but it still better to talk rather than to write hehe
 don't worry if it is long or short
 you can tell it very quickly
 you see, almost you whole family story and your problems was in my mind
 hehe
 Jigme: hehe.. this one i might not.. its nothing of great one. just a family issue. everything
 coming on me just because i am the eldest
 Kim: so another one won't be the problem
 Jigme: hehe.. no.. i kind of promise myself not to let others suffer because of these crazy stuffs..
 Kim: hehe it's up to you if you want to tell me or not
 Jigme: It is not that i don't want to, but i don't see any hope is digging it out..
 i mean something cannot be taken away ..

Kim: i know but at least you don't have to keep it yourself
 there are things you cannot change but keeping it alone sometimes might lead to
 depression

Jigme: hehe.. i guess a wonderful person like you deserve a better story than suffering.. you
 might have felt that sometime, i am about to say something.. that is nothing related to this stuff
 that i just shared.. that is completely another story

I am always living in a depressed world-sorry to say that.. joy is not in my arena ... but i
 don't blame for this, in fact, glad to have that as you said in the beginning..
 it gives me some lessons and solutions...

Kim: so this is the story that you were about to tell me?

Jigme: which one? sorry i didn't get it

Kim: you mentioned that you were about to tell me something

Jigme: oh yeah.. i mean whenever i met you, i wanted to say, but doesn't come out

Kim: then you can write to me

Jigme: I don't know if i should..
 thanks for the suggestion though

Kim: also, why do you think you are living in the depressed world?

Jigme: i always find myself depressed

Kim: then what are the things that you think that it will help you escape from the depressed
 I meant what is your expectation

Jigme: hehe . it is difficult..
 i don't really have any expectation

Kim: then what are the things made you depressed?

Jigme: i guess half of it is shared or mentioned just before

Kim: that are the family burden which is hard to change

Jigme: now you see.. if i share about my problem, it is just a disturbance to you.. so i guess you
 may continue your work.

Kim: and what else

Jigme: that is one
 but i don't blame for that..
 but there is something when everybody puts responsibility on you, if things doesn't work,
 the blame comes on you-.. I am in that state
 that is one story

Kim: yeah I got it
 but still you are better write to me and I will read it fully, I don't want to ask one by one
 question

Jigme: hehe.. which story you want to know?

Kim: just try if it work out, I'm not the one easy to get disturb much my other story
 hehe

Jigme: good to know that..

Kim: I don't want to know anything, I just said that I'm ready to be there when you are ready to share. Hehe that's it

Jigme: hehe..

ok.. got you

If i share something very very weird... will that be ok to you?

Kim: i don't want to answer any more questions, what I have to said, I already said. It will always be the same, no change, you are asking an useless question. It is up to you who is the teller made the decision and take the courage, not me the listener have to say it is okay or not. You know that my answer will be the same

Jigme: yaya

got you

thanks for your advice

Kim: don't know what to say, but these days, many things happen to you, I hope those will go soon. not that quick, but it will take time to heal

Jigme: I am so sorry to have bothered you with my stuffs.. this is the thing that i am reluctant to share my problems.. I make people worried or at least bothered.. so sorry..and no worry..

Kim: everything needs time, but just don't get worse before it is over

Jigme: sorry.. didn't really get the last part of your sentence

Kim: i meant that problem needs time to heal, but you have to keep your head up before it's healed. For example (this is not true, this is actually a bad example). When your problems are solved, you have to make sure that you are still alive. Don't die when the problems are unsolved, don't make your life end with it

this was what I meant

i don't know if it is clear

Jigme: I am clear on that now.. thanks for the explanation..

Kim: hehe

i know you will survive, that was just a bad example of describing that you might get worse, weaker, mental illness after the stuff hehe. And you should not get those

Jigme: hehe.. i will not allow that happen to me which is actually difficult..

Kim: hehe

because there are still a big family responsibility on your shoulder
is it right?

Jigme: sometime, it automatically happens.. actually now it seems a serious problem.. don't worry.. not really a big matter..

hehe.. Maybe, now i should be optimist.. an opportunity? hehe

I am happy with it

Kim: :)

yeah, you can take it in a positive way to make yourself feel good

Jigme: hehe yeah..

Kim: but it is still hard

hehe

Jigme: one method

which is realistic...

hehe..

you may do your homework.. sorry for having disturbed you..

i guess i will have to learn to solve it, in that way, it won't be hard..

but then don't put me wrong.. I am not frustrated solely because of this eldest responsibility issue.

just feel too tired of living

in other words, I am the failure...

Kim: God says: "Jigme, I give you the opportunity to study, so you will have a chance to take care of your parents. I give you a chance to say thanks to your parents, so work hard" and Jigme says "thank you for your kindness, you have given me many challenges to teach me many things in life. I have learned a lot. And thank you for give me a chance to help my parents." The God says" By the way, I also give you the food, from now on, you are better to eat more, don't waste my time. if you are healthy, then your dream will become true. So take this opportunity seriously." and Jigme replies: "Yes! I will not waste your time anymore."

"Shall I give you some more challenges in life" God asked. "I'm gratefully for it" Jigme replies with a happy smile

Jigme: wow.. nicely put on.. thank you for your inspiration..

I will work hard..

Kim: :P

don't work too hard, just do it with happy smile, and accept whatever we have and whatever is going to happen

Jigme: I consider this as my opportunity.. just that i don't have to power solve obstacles that come on the way..

I live in that way actually.. if you could remember me once writing to you that "I don't live for tomorrow"..

Kim: hehe i remember now hehe

Jigme: I actually developed a technique of living myself in such pathetic situations because you can't always expect the world to care for you, look at you as the world is too busy with its own problems

I always think, in regards to this story, that there are millions of people who are worse than me-sufferings and struggling..

so my problem is nothing compared to them

Kim: true

hehe me speechless

Jigme: hehe.. you are giving me a life spirit-and reminding me and teaching me.. and showing me the way ---i am very grateful for that

Kim: hehe, oh my god. it seems like i have become a priest

Jigme: sometime, do you feel how unlucky that you met me -- hehe.. a talkative girl and a never ending problems... hehe . just kidding.. don't get frustrated by that..

you are indeed a priest to me

Kim: hehe haven't felt that way, but I might have that in the future if that girl keeps having depression

hehe

Jigme: hehe

I would then feel guilty

which is already i am actually'

Kim: hehe speechless again

Jigme: hehe.. we are not talking, just typing.. so no speechless .. kidding

Kim: i don't want to be anyone priest, just help if you need help, just don't make me like a useless doll

hehe

Jigme: I never had a thought of you being useless.. indeed, i have been recollecting how much care, love, and supports you gave me since AA..

I remember crying on your lap in UG-1

sharing my family stuffs in AA..

having fun together in AA

Kim: hehe most of the memories were in AA h

Jigme: doing crazy stuffs in UG-2_ always aiming to be together (even internship, project) - trying hard in every opportunity to be together in UG-2

and in UG-3 too.

you gave/give me lots of surprises..

Kim: speechless

those are not counted because you did the same

Jigme: and in UG-4.. still there is connection.. sometime, i Believe it might be because that you have given me so much care.. and that I become so dependent on you physically, emotionally, spiritually and that i cannot stay without you

I already had been in lots of thinking these days

Kim: :P

Jigme: you are right, memories are mostly in AA because, we have been together 70 % of our time

Kim: so at least there is joy in your life

hehe

Jigme: the one who made that joy in my life is you..

i should say this now since the topic came.. maybe because of this.. i have become so dependent on you even for my future.. thats why there is wired feelings from me on you-sorry to say this.. it is an automatic feelings .. I have pain for you.. sorry that i finally confess that.. keep it to you

Kim: so that was the thing that you wanted to say

Jigme: maybe, i guess...

I am so sorry. i didn't try it.. it happened.. but i tried stopping that. i guess it worked.. because i found it weird

I should say a dependence on you

you may take in whatever you want it..

I don't know if that person can be blamed for..

Kim: then what should I do?

Jigme: you don't have to do anything

Thats why i wanted to stop such weird stuffs

Once again, it just happened out of nowhere.. i also couldn't understand that either i was analyzing it

maybe, the reasons could be what i said before.. our times together.. maybe, i have been thinking .. might be because we will separated soon..

I actually couldn't find it when it happened and why i realized when i was suffering myself ..

I guess the fear of being separated.. most probably.. and your emails too..

I know this is really a weird thing in the world..so don't get shocked.. I was shocked too actually.. you can blame me for this that it started from me..

Kim: hehe I'm not getting shocked

shocked

Jigme: why?

Kim: was it shock for you?

Jigme: i don't know.. it was actually.. i hope you wouldn't want to know how it was

i couldn't discuss about this to any other person in the world.. so thought to end that weirdness by directly talking to you..

but didn;t work out hehe

Kim: hehe i see

Jigme: i feel laughable now

Kim: why?

Jigme: to think back to that moments

Kim: hehe

I'm happy to know that you love me a lot hehe

Jigme: you know.. i thought maybe, if i stay a little away from you that might help me get over with it.. but then turned out that we actually were ending to be opponents.. so thats why i wrote asking for your permission

hehe

You will have soon the person who will love you the most.. I am not the one thats why.. I have to ask you thousands of questions if you will be ok..so i know this irritated you.. I am so sorry

Kim: obviously soon there will be a separation but it is just the body separation, our mind will still be connected

hehe

Jigme: i guess maybe that fear or worry..

however, i am so sorry

i promise you that i will never let this happen again..

Kim: I know that will be happened and I am preparing myself for that

Jigme: sorry.. didn;t get it

Kim: I meant that who knows when we have to go far away from each other, who knows when the separation come. I know it will come one day, soon or late. but the thing is i'm getting myself ready for that separation

Jigme: ok got it

thats really good of you..

Kim: it will be hard to accept but it is life that sometime we have to do so

Jigme: mine just happened in a opposite way

i know

Kim: I used to think about this that's why I'm getting ready for it.

Jigme: thats really good..

i guess you need to teach me rather than simply falling in love haha..

i mean mine is dangerous

Kim: but wherever we go, we are not separate because we still think of other

Jigme: hehe...true

why wasn't this news shocking to you?

Kim: I think it will take you sometime to overcome this problem :P...hehe

Jigme: hehe.. now i am far free from such feelings.. otherwise, i wouldn't be able to approach near you..

Kim: hehe...you see how cool I am

hahahaha

Jigme: you still haven't answered my question

Kim :D

which question

Jigme: i guess you shouldn't care me much to make me fallen in love with you- just kidding..

hehe

why weren't you shocked by this news?

Kim: i know you fell in love with me hehe

Jigme: when? how?

Kim: I told you that I was prepared for it hehe

Jigme: prepared for..... ?

Kim: hehe ...i don't know how to explain clearly to you hehe

Jigme: i also remember you once writing to me that you have an affectionate towards me

i didn't really get that

Kim: which mean that I care to u
hehe

Jigme: just tell me how much you could explain it.. it may makes me feel little better to understand your side

Kim: I told you that you are the one who always keep telling the problem hehe
that's why the more you tell the more I understand you
hehe

Jigme: oh ok

Kim: clear
somehow

Jigme: i still didn't get it on which topic you are talking..

Kim: hehe

Jigme: because right now i have two stories
hehe

Kim: I was answering the question

Kim: hehe let it be and just be prepared for whatever happen
:P

Jigme: i guess might not happen it again..
it was bit a bad experience for me

Kim: don't worry if it is happen again

Jigme: hehe.. will there be any solution?

Kim: it is good if one care for another and can feel it
yourself is the solution
hehe

Jigme: you know .. i also analyzed on that too.. when i say that that feeling is gone.. doesn't mean that i don;t care you and love you.. the feelings that i had was true love.. i was literally having pain of love .. not a friendship love.. i don;t know how it happened.. hehe.. funny right..?
so sorry

Kim: don't be sorry
hehe
Yeah! I'm glad to know that you love me that much

Jigme: can i ask you one question?
hehe. do you want to know more on that hehe
better not right

Kim: sure ask

Jigme: its bit weird
did you ever have this kind of feelings for me?
just asking if there was mutual feelings

Kim: ok i can tell you the truth

hehe

Jigme: you should since i told mine

Kim: hehe

:P

I have been telling the truth

Jigme: ok..

Kim: that sentence was just to start the story

Jigme: i believe in you

which sentence?

Kim: "to tell the truth"

hehe

ok, so i don't know the difference between the friendship love and the true love. For me, whoever I love, I care. To let you know that you are my first true best friend ever in my life. I have many close friends but not really like best. And for that reason, I care for you

Jigme: thank you..

I guess same is with me too

Kim: I can distinguish between best friend and other since the feeling is different. Just give you an easy example, I was very upset when I got to know that you were terribly sick last time

Jigme: i guess i understood your feelings in that email.. i saw a support and a positive feelings from your side too

Kim: so we are not better to differentiate between the true love and our friendship love

Jigme: i guess sometime, we need too.. thats why i wanted for a long time to discuss with you.. what these feelings actually are hehe

Kim: hehe this is call magical

love

hehe

so funny

kidding

anyway

now you are clear

Kim: i really did not choose anyone to be my best friend

it was you who chose me to be friend with. And I don't know from where, but I keep something in my mind that I should not search for a best friend, if one care for you then you accept it

that's what I thought

Jigme: hehe.. now is that thought wrong to you?

Kim: and since I found you that in the AA you are cared for me, so I decided that I will care back to you

Jigme: hehe. thank you

Kim: it is not wrong, it was my decision

hehe

Jigme: i mean now if you felt that was wrong hehe

Kim: what do you mean?

Jigme: hehe.. no i guess..... that question isn't appropriate to this now

Kim: any way I meant is that love cannot be searched, we are better to love the one who love us

hehe

that's it

Jigme: so you want me to continue that feelings i shared?

i know ..

you know.. once i thought if i should continue that feelings .. or that i should stop that.. but i didn;t see the possibility in the future.. so tried hard, though it was difficult, to stop such wired feelings

this feelings, as i warned you, is something weird.. it will be the best lovers if we both understand.. if not, can be enemies.. thats why i was so afraid and was keeping to myself.. i don;t know.. i might be wrong.. i mean kind of that i can keep allowing that kind of feelings if it comes back

Kim: how can i be an enemy with my best friend

hehe

Jigme: i mean this love.. not the friendship love

you know same sex love is something wired and that society doesn't accept it

Kim: yeah! so don't try to run away, we should be thankful that we understand each other so well

hehe

:P

Jigme: hehe.. well.. thats good to know

Kim: hehe

Jigme: hehe.. what you want to know more.. since i started sharing about this.. i can share more if you want

Kim: :(how many things you have

Jigme: hehe.. if i didn't go through that many struggles, i might not have realized my love for you

otherwise, i wouldn't really say a true love

Kim: ok hehe

i see

Jigme: you know.. hehe.. funny actually.. those weeks before, i couldn;t really concentrate on studies.. have to write down.. and sometime, literally cried .. i was having pain inside.

i had no one to ask help for

i was frustrated..

don't laugh at me.. it just happened automatically

Kim: :)

not laughing this is smiling

Jigme: hehe. i understand. i didn't expect this to happen to me either.. thats why it was a lot of courage that i had to get to tell you.. i thought better to share than to suffer myself
i started feeling better 2-3 weeks ago .. since i stopped thinking on that
now feel much better that i finally confessed it.. i can't believe that i did it for the first time in my life.. my love hehe

Kim: anyway whatever happens we are still best friend. I'm grateful to know you
hehe

Jigme: we are..

Kim: so let's see who will be the next one get that great chance to hear your love
hehe

Jigme: hehe one more.. seems i have lots to say.. I missed long hugging with you... I have one thing that i have been longing to have.. but won't tell it now
hehe.. i guess i will not have any

Kim: i think you are brave enough when you confess it
don't think anything for now
just keep life simple

hehe don't feel shy when you meet me, don't tell me that you don't dare to look at me
haha it would be so funny

Jigme: hehe.. i don;t know.. ok let me tell you.. i was ok to suffer alone.. but you know i tried avoiding that feelings, but found out that i literally was avoiding you.. which you might now remember .. so that was too dangerous for me..

that i was really really frustrated, and decided to stop then and there.

Kim: as my rules, If I were in your shoes, I would not try to avoiding it. I would just let it go, because when time passed everything would get better and i would just make sure that I would not lose the friendship
hehe

Jigme: hehe.. i don;t know.. but i want you to understand that don't feel bad on me.. it just happened.. not that i tried hard to love you.. there was really a magic in it.. since it was automatic, i would say that you also don;t feel bad and act wired with me when you see me..

hehe.. do you think that i will ever make our friendship go? that was the main reason i wanted to share it and end my weird feelings because our present friendship is the most important.. i guess if you go back to that email.. you will now get it every word i wrote..

Kim: hehe

you think who i am to be shy with you
hehe

Jigme: i know.. i will be the one.. but just to remind you hehe

Kim: hehe

Jigme: my insomnia was also because of you.. hehe so weird actually.. i wonder why it happened and how?

Kim: don't feel shame for it, it is like a magic or a fairy tale story
hehe
i see

Jigme: i should say that hehe

Kim: :P

Jigme: actually what you expected that i would have been through?

Kim: hehe it was you the way you said the stuff in a mysterious way

Jigme: did you expect that i would have gone through this? i mean if you believed or not

Kim: i don't expect anything for the stuff
i just wanted to make sure that you are alright hehe

Jigme: all kind of sickness came together..
mentally, physically and spiritually

Kim: now at least one sickness is heal now
hehe

Jigme: you are right

I have now last question.. what is your feelings after having known about this stuff? i am sure there might be something happened.. i mean how you viewed on me before i shared this (2 am) might be now being in different state on mind..

*having known..

Kim: to tell the truth there is no change in my feeling to you, you are still my best friend
:)
clear

Jigme: hehe ok

Kim: enough now

Jigme: cleared

Kim: i will go to sleep

Jigme: yeah.. should sleep now
hehe

thanks for listening to my stupid story hehe

Kim: haizz it is going to be a long day for me

Jigme: i hope you will keep this to only you.. i don;t expect anyone to know about this once happened story

Kim: no you have to say that thanks for listening to my fairy tale
hehe you think that who i am
again you ask such a silly question
hehe

Jigme: not really a fairy tale.. do you think that feelings will completely go if it is true love.. i am still figuring it out

well.. thanks..

hehe..well apologize for such questions

ok..

Kim: hehe dont need to figure anything more

also don't feel bad about yourself, because you are not wrong, it was just the nature of human being's love, keep it nicely in your memory

I am going to sleep now. Good night

Jigme: yaya good night :)

After finishing the conversation with Jigme, Kim immediately climbs on her bed. She just feels like she needs a break. As exactly as Kim guessed, Jigme has an unusual love with Kim. Kim starts gathering all the clues which she has together in her mind. The first clue would be the conversation about marriage life and future on the rooftop. Jigme once said that she would not get marriage and becomes a nun when she gets old. Perhaps Jigme knows that the society would not accept a strange relationship, so she does not want to share. The second clue would be recently, Jigme bought a lot of food for Kim which Kim did not notice. Jigme was searching for a chance to confess with Kim, but she could not. The third clue would be on the other day, Jigme says that Kim was the one help her escape from the unconsciousness when Jigme was about to climb from the rooftop. And perhaps the last glue could be the Jigme's Facebook's status in the other day. Kim recalls the line. "I am trying to distance myself from the worldly possessions of love and desires which keep me pulled towards negativity."

Kim does not know if she is really shocked or not. She does not want to tell it to Jigme because she thinks that Jigme must be suffering a lot from this strange love already. Kim does not know what she should do now. She does not want Jigme to be upset about it, so Kim said to her that she was not shocked. Perhaps she is not shocked. But somehow, Kim needs time to think on it. Perhaps she needs need a little time to rest. She just feels like everything suddenly fall on her head.

Someone is whispering at night

Have to note them down

The memory

Nine_One: The Rain Note #1

One hour and fifteen minutes

Rainy festival of Bhutanese friends

October 28, 2009

Dear KK,

People can do many things and a lot of work in a certain amount of time and each work has its own difficult level. The work can be completing homework, finishing cooking a meal, cleaning the room. But this is the first time, I have done learning a dance performance within one hour and fifteen minutes.

This evening, it actually 4.15pm, Nhat, An, and I decided to practice dancing to perform in the celebration of Bhutanese Rainy Day. Perhaps because we were moved and fired by the enthusiasm of Bhutanese friends so we have the motive to do it. Bhutanese friends danced for us many times already, which we can see how fervent they are.

Three of us were in the library, then we decided to go to An's room to practice dancing. It took a while for us to decide on the song. We wanted to decide quickly so we can have time to practice. And then, we all decided to dance the song Trống Cơm which is about the traditional Cylindrical Drum of Vietnam.

In a moment, An had to think of many dancing steps which is not a difficult work for An because she was a dancer in her school life. Nhat and I also followed the steps quickly.

“Yaya, good step! Wow wow!” Sometimes, Nhat again rose An effusively.

Among the steps, I hate the part “the half-closed eyes” because at this part I had to curve my body like a mosquito larva. And that part was repeated many times in the song ☺. This reminds me the stork dance when I was in high school. We took a month to practice dancing like storks but it could not be done.

Staying with An and Nhat makes me miss my school friends a lot. I still remember those fun days, studying hard together and dancing together. What a nice time I had!

The dance practice made us feel a bit tired but we all felt so happy. You know, we were even surprised on how quick we learned the song.

You know the new joy and the new happiness are like a breeze softly passes by, which made us enjoy and love our life more. This is how we create our happiness in a foreign place.

@20A-8B2-AUW

00:12am

I am listening to music and writing.

Jigme is sleeping.

Nine_Two: The Rain Note#2

9.30pm

Hello Keight,

Perhaps this is the most beautiful rain story in my life. Are you ready to hear it? ☺

You know, only until you try then you will know what the joy and the happiness is and you will know how a meaningful life would be.

The sky was full of grey clouds, just left aside a big hole which made Nhat and I think it was the black hole of the universe. Looking at the deep and profound sky, I felt myself very light as I am lying on the cloud.

This was the first time I had lied down on the tenth floor rooftop to look at the sky. The stars were very little that I could count the stars with my ten fingers. Until that time, I hadn't realized that the sky at night was so admirable. I remembered when I was at home, I had never had a chance to look at the stars because I was always busy there.

Taking a deep breath, I was feeling that I was flying and all the sky was surrounding me. Suddenly I asked Nhat.

“If you were in Vietnam at this time, what would you do?”

“I would be preparing for my university; it is nearly the time to start the new academic year.” Nhat replied.

“Perhaps, I would be walking and singing gently with my crazy friends,” I thought. I wished I could have a chance to study in the university in Vietnam. You know every summer, the university usually organized the “Blue Summer” program, where all the volunteer Students could join it. It is my wish to join the program since I was a little kid. I wish I could teach the poor children, help the famers work in the fields, and have the all the gathering night together. I wish to have a part time job such as selling little stuff in a Vietnamese shop. These all are my favorite things. I want to feel the money which I myself make it.

“I wish it would rain now,” Nhat whispers softly, listening to the music from the An's little music box.

I closed my eyes.

Suddenly, there was something touching on my lips and then my cheek.

I opened my eyes.

“Rain! Rain! As you wished. It is raining, ” I shouted.

It has been such a long time since I has the feeling of taking bath under the rain.

After few minutes, it rained heavier. Nhat and I quickly found a place to shelter from the rain because we did not want to go back to the room yet.

The sky was really dark now. Looking in the sky corner, Kim found a tall red building, lonely.

“Looks so strange, I have never seen one like it in Vietnam,” Nhat says.

I looked at that building far away, all around it was just small old house alternate with new buildings and left out the tall reddened building alone. In the between them was jungle of tree, green and black all of the corner.

Sitting under the staircase, looking at the blackish sky, looking at the gentle rain, I felt the soft cool air, and the soft cool rain were gentle touching my toes, my two cheekbone. I missed the coffee smell, I missed the intense milk fragrance, the bitter taste. I wished I could drink coffee.

Knowing that I missed coffee, Nhat immediately opened her pencil pack and said

“I have a coffee bean, do you want to smell it?”

Then Nhat opened her phone’s torch light and started searching for the bean. Nhat was startled “If I lost it, my friend would kill me.”

Finally Nhat found it. I softly sniffed it. This was the first time I smelled a real coffee bean in my life. When I drank the coffee, I would not know the coffee bean has such a special flavor like this.

I missed home extremely.

Then Nhat and I told each other about the memories we had when we were in high school.

I felt the happiness was somewhere surrounding me. It just suddenly came back to me, in my heart, in my soul, and brought to me all the overflowed memory in the rain’s sound, in the music sound. It was just sudden being warmed up and remained somewhere in me. A new life had opened in front of my life.

Sitting in a little corner and looking at the big sky, I found the world was waiting, waiting for something to cool our souls.

I softly sang:

“Sunshine and love will be with you

In rainy day I shall be with you

Love is no fool, dreams come true

I'll always be with you.”

September 23, 2009.

Your Kim,

Kim ;)

Ten: Doichira

Doichira recipe- Yoghurt and water bitten rice

Ingredients:

- *A bowl of beaten rice which is already kept with water (Chira)*
- *A few of ripe banana slices (Kola)*
- *A Bangladeshi traditional sweet (Misti)*
- *Sliced copra (from coconut)*
- *Yoghurt (Doi)*
- *Sugar (Chini)*

Eating Instruction:

Mix all of the ingredients above together and eat; or come to Bangladesh and find a guide to take you to eat it.

Taste and memories:

You might find it sweet when you add more sugar and you might find it sour when you add more yoghurt.

You could find it sweet when you think it is sweet and you could find it sour when you think it is sour.

You can find it sweet when all the happiness surrounding you at once and you can find it sour when you taste the tears from your eyes.

Both Jigme and Kim start to ignore each other. Jigme ignores Kim because she does not dare to face Kim. Kim ignores Jigme because she feels everything needs to be slowed down. Everything is going too fast for Kim now.

And just like that, Kim tried to work as much as possible; she does not want to be free at all because if there is a free moment, Kim will again think about whatever happened to her best friend.

Kim's friend makes fun of Kim and Beyadop's relationship because they are always together these days. Kim knows Beyadop since they have worked together in different projects. And since Kim has been ignoring Jigme, she has gotten to know Beyadop better.

Sometimes, Kim looks at Beyadop and she wonders if she is lesbian or not. Kim feels scared if it is right. She does love Beyadop but love and friendship confuse her. Then Kim starts to observe different people at AUW, and about the intimacy people have. She still wonders if she is a lesbian. It is true that Kim always care about Jigme, and Kim loves Jigme but Kim does not know if it is out of friendship love.

One time, Kim meets Jigme while she is eating with Beyadop which makes Kim feel scared. Kim feels scared if Jigme would think “Oh this girl, you don’t have time for your best friend but you have time for them.” The memories of friendship between An and Lan suddenly comes back to Kim which makes she have a feeling of unsecure whenever Kim finds Jigme’s eyes when Kim is with Beyadop. Since then, Kim develops a hiding action. Kim usually wants to hide whatever she does with Beyadop. Kim does not want Jigme to think in that way. Now, Kim is scared of losing her best friend.

“Hey Kim, did you collect your wish card?” Beyadop asks

“Which card?” Kim asks back.

“The card which we all UG4 wrote wishes for you. I took it for you. It is in my bag. Open and take it,” Beyadop still continues cooking.

“Oh, thank you,” Kim makes a big smile, immediately opens Beyadop’s bag to get the card and says. “You know, getting closer to you guys, I am losing my close friends,” Kim says while she is looking at Beyadop cooking.

“Everyone is like that. You don’t have time to spend for many people. And you have to make decision yourself.” Beyadop says and smiles.

“Yes, you are right,” Kim says.

Beyadop reminds Kim about her friendships. How hard it was for Kim to keep balance the friendships between Nhat and An, An and Lan and Jigme, and now Jigme and Beyadop. Things are not simple because people have complicated minds.

Then Kim takes the card, goes to the balcony and starts reading all the wishes.

Kim suddenly recognizes the familiar and unique handwriting which Kim never forgets. It is Nhat.

“It’s all my fault. Good bye! ☺”

Tears are suddenly rolling on Kim’s checks and all the memories sudden come back to Kim as she looks at the card again and again “It’s all my fault. Good bye.”

Kim remembers the smell of coffee bean and the smell of cold rain when Kim and Nhat on the rooftop together. Kim remembers dancing with An and Nhat on the rain festival of Bhutanese friends. Kim remembers the first Lunar New Year with full of happiness with Vietnamese friends. Kim remembers eating bananas with Nhat, teaching the slum kids with Nhat, playing basketball with Nhat and Nhat's note: "Study well then only celebrate Tết, okay?"

Kim sobs and her body starts to shake. She could not control her body any more. Kim feels like the whole world is just fallen on her head. Then Kim starts to blame herself for losing An and Lan, for making Jigme suffering a lot sorrow.

Looking at the profound black sky, Kim feels somewhere in her heart the coldness and the emptiness. She bites her slip tightly so she won't cry aloud.

Then Kim suddenly wipes the tears off her face. She immediately runs to the kitchen where Beyadop is cooking. Then Kim jumps around, sing songs and play guitars.

"Ta rang ta rang ta ta ti ti ta," Kim starts singing whatever the melodies come to Kim's mind. "Today, I CAME and sing A song for you. Ta rang ta rang. Lalala. ANd I see you ...are cooking for me. Ta ta rang rang. Lalala. And I ask you 'Can I eat now? I am so hungry.' Ta rang rang rang. Give me food. Give me food. Lalala. Give me food. Give me food."

"Stupid! What is happening to you?" Beyadop laughs.

"There is nothing happening. You know today I just made my sister realize that how important of study English in her life. You know only studying that language chance to get can give you the chance to get a scholarship to study abroad," and Kim goes on nonstop with her endless story about her dad's favorite food, then Kim lists all kind of fruits in Vietnam. Kim talks about the sun and rain of Vietnamese weather. Then Kim compares and contrasts between Vietnamese boys, Bangladeshi boys, Nepalese boys, Bhutanese boys, Chinese boys, Korean boys, American boys. Then Kim concludes that both of them do not have boyfriends. Then Kim laughs, Beyadop also laughs.

People rarely know how much fun and how talkative Kim is. They usually see Kim as a serious person. And today Kim finds herself that she is tiring of being a care taker. She wants someone to take care of her. She is tiring of being a responsible person, of being an eldest daughter at home with many responsibilities.

Kim wonders how long it has been since she is stopped talking like this. Kim feels happy when she talks about these things to Beyadop. Kim still remembers when the first time Kim came to AUW, she was a happy girl, and always tell different stories to people and brings happiness for them.

Kim just wishes that everything could stop and just would have been like this moment, being owned and belonging to a group of people and a place. Kim wonders if it is the feeling of home.

Kim finds herself happy when she has someone to cook for her, someone to play with, someone listen to her nonsense and stupid talk, someone to scold at her, someone to think that she is just a little kid. Kim cries today when Beyadop is cooking for her. Looking at Beyadop's sweat and happy smile, Kim finds herself being happy in this way.

"Yes, Master, you call me." The Student immediate said when the she heard the HoC's message.

"Sit down," The Master asked and continued "I have a new assignment to you, and this assignment will decide whether you will be named or not."

The Master words made the Student scared. How many scary assignment had the Master given the Student? And those assignments were not easy at all. Moreover, this was the most important assignment because it would decide how to name the Student.

"Yes, Master, I am ready." The Students said.

"What you have to do is to find yourself?" The Master said and looked straight to the Student.

Getting the look from the Master, the Student started at the Master's look.

"Find myself?" The Student asked the Master again to confirm that the assignment is correct.

"Yes, find yourself." The Master said peacefully.

"But how? Master, I don't know how," The Student said in fear.

"I cannot tell it, only you are the one can find yourself. Just get ready whenever you want," then the Master went inside the flamboyant house, left the Students there with a bunch of questions inside the head.

"I must ask the HoC. The HoC might know something about it," with that thought, the Student immediately stood up and went in search of the HoC.

The Student found the HoC on the coconut tree, having meeting with the HoC's citizen. The Student just came on time that the meeting was nearly over.

The Student did not understand much about what the meeting was about because the Student's HoC language was very poor. However, by looking at all their serious faces, the Student guessed there must be something wrong.

The HoC finished the meeting and flew down where the Student was. And the Student started to say in the broken HoC language.

"Kak kaK K..AK..KKKK," the Student said.

“Kakakakakak Kakak KAKAKAk kakkakak.” The HoC said.

“Oh, you meant that I can speak in English and you will answer in your language. Yes, thank you.” The Student continued to ask about the last assignment that the Master just gave the Student.

“Kakak Kakakkakak...,” the HoC explained to the Student. “kakakkakak..Kak kakkakk.”

“So you meant that I have to try different challenge to find myself,” The Student repeated the HoC words. “But how?”

Then the HoC went on to tell about the story how the HoC was being named. Before, the HoC was just a Student Crow, like many other HoC’s citizen. Since their land were being mess by different political parties, the HoC decided to step up in the committee to help protecting people. In order to do that, the HoC had to study many things, from the HoC formal language, to its culture, then relations between different political parties, the happiness theory, the survival skills, etc. While studying those, the HoC also tried to involve in different crows’ program such as how to build nest on the coconut trees, how to find food when there is a strike goes on. Since then, with the enthusiasm and the good work, the HoC was being named “HoC”.

The Student was surprised with what the HoC had done. Such a long journey, the Student thought.

“What does it mean, I meant your name, what does your name mean?” The Student asked.

“Kak Kak Kak.” The HoC answers.

“WHAT? Is that simple? I did not think your name would mean Head of Crow,” the Student said in surprise. “So you are the Head of all the Crow citizens here. I am so proud of you. Now, what is my name? I wish that I would know like you. I wish I would be named as soon as possible so I can return to the Noname’s village. The Nomamers must be waiting for me for long. It has been five year now.”

The Student looked at the HoC and smiled. Then the Student stepped out to find the Sun. The Student wondered if the Sun were still there in the Noname village. Being named was not simple at all.

August 16, 2009

Dear Kim,

Can you believe that I am already in Bangladesh? I can’t believe either.

Perhaps today is the longest day of my life. Let me tell you how everything went.

An, other four girls and I started the journey to Bangladesh together. Do you still remember An? We met her earlier in the university entrance exam day. She is very nice. It was so kind of her to let me have a place to take rest in the middle of sunny day. I am happy because at least we two know each other, we been keep talking for days. At the airport, she seemed to be very upset when she left. Her family must care about her a lot. Somehow I have the feeling that An is a princess of her little house, where she gets special care from her family.

Ah, the other four girls are Dan, Nhat, Thi, and Ha. Of course, I had never met them before. I don't know how quickly we got to know each other, but only within few hours, we seem to be very close. Perhaps because we have the same thought and go in the same way. You know when the world there is only your race and other race, you usually tend to talk to your race because you know the language well. And you know with my poor English, I will stick to the Vietnamese group like glue.

Oh yeah, let me describe to you how other four girls look like. Hhm, Dan is older than me one year old. She has a long straight hair. She looks tired, so I did not talk much to her. I guess she has travel sickness or something. Ha looks very young like a teenager however she is the oldest one. She seems very excited about the journey. Among us, Thi is the best English speaker, so whenever we need something, Thi will help us to communicate very quickly. Nhat, this girl seems to be even more excited than me. I did not talk much to her. She looks a bit strange with her short hair. But somehow I think she is funny.

We arrived Bangladesh airport at noon. The afternoon of not really hot and not really cold. I can't remember the airport's name because it is the longest name I have ever known. At the moment we stepped out to the airport door, a security guard took us with them. Well, at first we did not know what happened. And then few more security guards came. They had us sit in one place. And we were like that from noon till evening.

They gave each of us a mango juice. The mango juice wasn't bad at all. I kind of liked it. I just need time to drink more then I will like it, I guess.

And until the evening, another man came. He shook hand with the security men and then turned to us and started speaking in English. I don't know how much I could understand his English (poor me ☹) but I guess he must be the one from our university.

Again traveling. I had no idea of where he was taking us. When we first stepped out from the airport gate, I found thousands of eyes and eyes are flocking into me. They all looked so strange with their dark skin color. Suddenly I got a creepy feeling in the back of my neck.

He took me to a plain white color house where I finally figured out it was restaurant until they brought the food to us. Inside the restaurant, there was some men were eating and chatting. When we entered, they all stared at us.

I don't remember exactly at what time we were in that restaurant, but I found the sky was dark when the van took us to this restaurant.

We all were hungry, but we did not eat much. One reason was because we were all a little bit tired and another reason was because the food was a bit strange for us.

After the dinner, the van again took us away. I was wondering a thousand times about when we would reach our university. Inside the van, I could not see the city much because it was dark and because I had no clue how the city looked like. I could see only cars and cars, and sometimes there were few people on the late night road.

Ending my wonder, we were standing on the rail way station. Another journey was going to start. Perhaps this was the busiest railway station I had ever seen. People come in and out, in and out like a bees' nest was being broken. We stood together in a circle where people around us made another circle. It was late at nearly 11pm but there were so many people. I kept questioning why these people were just kept staring at us, they did not have other work to do or what?

Ha, Thi, Dan and An were very tired as I saw all of them sat together with mournful faces. I wished I could help them to carry their luggage, but I could not because I had my own to worry about.

Now it was terrible the men threw us on the train alone and left. I sat next to a married Bangladeshi man who was studying in the place that we were going to. I have no idea of where we are going to. He talked to me in English and I hesitated to answer because of my spoken English. Then he offered me some chips which made me laugh in my heart because in Vietnam, an adult would rarely eat chips alone because chips are for little kids only. And I did not dare to eat because I imagine that I would be poisoned by these chips. It was so funny of me, right.

I tried not to sleep so I could know what happened around me. You know defense ahead is always better.

The moment when the morning came was when we found happiness. Once we stepped down from the train, a tall and white skin woman ran happily and hearting welcome us. Only that moment we knew that we had surely arrived. I don't know why the skin color makes that big different between care and safety but it was happening to me in that way.

Haizzz, so I am here now.

Yeah yeah yeah I have reached the university. Oh, I have to call mom and dad. They must be worried about me.

You know, I still remember the day when I fought with mom and dad in order to study here. Mom cried and I also cried. Mom said if I could go, I can go forever and I do not have to come

back home any more. Later all she did not talk to me for a while. It was a hard decision for me to choose to come here. I don't know if I have made a correct decision or not. I was scared.

You know, dad even said to me if I could not pass the university national examination, I would not be allowed to come here. I was scared that I could not overcome that crazy time. Almost every day in my high school, I was just ended up with studying, studying and studying.

I still remember yesterday, mom cried in the airport. Looking at both mom and dad, I felt that I am not a good daughter. You know, I had never seen dad made such sad expression. I don't know to describe dad's expression to you. But you know, a strong man when he looks sad, you can imagine how worst and how sad it is. I was scared.

Haizzzz, I am here, I am here already.

Kim Kim Kim, You are growing up, you must be strong. In the next few days, you are going to be 18 year old. You are an adult now.

Haizzzz, from now on, no mom and dad, nothing at all. I have come here with a brave heart I guess.

Tomorrow, we will continue have orientation. Today I had one, but I could not understand anything, oh my poor language. I have to sleep now. I hope that I can understand somehow.

Love,

K

P.S: Today, a friend told me that I can call you Kolponik Kim, because you are the imagination one. Sound goods enough KK? ;)

Find yourself belong to nowhere, nowhere at all.