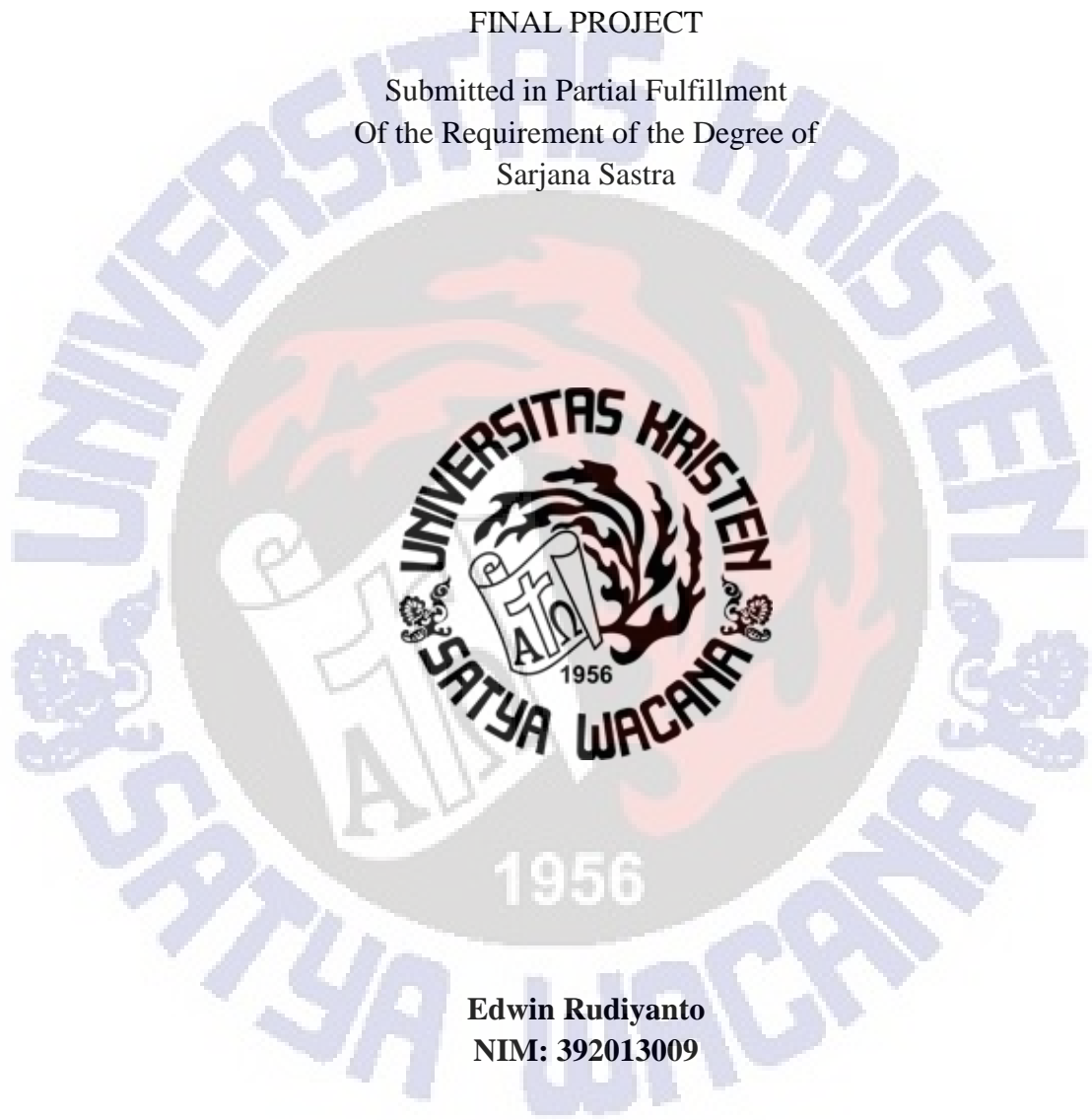


GRAYSCALED HUE

FINAL PROJECT

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement of the Degree of
Sarjana Sastra



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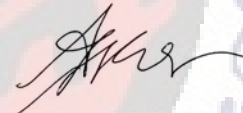
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1956

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SUMMARY OF THE STORY

Winar might not expect that he would go through his teenage phase while seeing his family torn apart by the deed of his father who was seeing another woman. When his big brother, Henri, attempted to mend the bond, and everything seemed to be going well, he found out that he would be the next harbinger of destruction to the family by being gay. Knowing that the family could not tolerate people like him, he kept it a secret from anyone but his best friend, Hannah. Winar told Hannah about everything, including about Erik, the guy he met on Grindr and who he had hope to have a relationship with. Although he had to keep many secrets, Winar was pretty content to have Hannah, Erik, and his family that began to regain their happiness. It was no longer until Hannah had an issue with her boyfriend that made her open Winar's secret to everyone in campus. Crying over the spilt milk, Winar accidentally told his brother about what he had been going through which resulting the rest of the family knowing about the secret he kept. Getting pressured from his friends and family, he went to Erik to look for solace, but ended up learning the truth that Erik had been lying to him. Winar did not know what to do or where to go, and at the end he chose to end his life as there was nothing left to be fought for in his life.

THE STORY

Grayscaled Hue

“This is the time”. I stood up and walked away from my motorbike.

The memories of the family I used to fond of slowly emerged as my steps approaching the edge of the cliff. *Ayah, Ibu* and *Bang* Henri...they left nothing but loneliness, as they know I killed their second son by being attracted to men. It was not my fault, I said; I did not choose to be like this, I said. My pleads were my only shield until it was broken by a single sentence with a meaning of disowning. I hardly believe those words echoed in my mind, nor could I believe it was the thing my family did to me. Stood as firm as the tree at the backyard where I and my brother usually took a nap on below, I stopped at the edge. Soreness bit my chest as the memory of them got more vibrant in my head. I chose to close my eyes, as opening them did not make any difference. My checkered shirt could not restrain the cold night breeze to touch my skin, and I trembled of the cold and the weight of burden I carried. As I opened my arms wide, the breeze explored every inch of my skin. Neither I fought nor did I resist. I knew the breeze was just as lonely as me—seeking for someone who was not afraid or hesitant just to give a single hug. I offered the breeze my whole body, and it blew harder and became wind. I cry upon the memories it carried.

Swoosh!

The sound of wind blowing followed by the sound of leaves rustling wildly in the wind filled the void. To hang on...or to let go. *Swish! Swoosh!* The wind blew harder, and hesitation in my mind grew greater. Somehow, my sorrow weighed me down so I sat on the ground. I hug my knees up to against my forehead and took my senses to the smell of the wet ground and the quiet that used to be peaceful but now felt like the Other. As I tried to project my mind on something else, the memory of my family came back even stronger—with their eroded smiles which had never be seen to return. Even the last time I felt happy in my family was when I was eleven. It had been eight years long of me holding the grudge. ‘If onlys’ streamed on my mind as tears streamed down on my cold cheek; and my mind wandered deep to the past—eight years ago.

“Everybody say cheese!” Ayah kneeled, squinted his eye behind the camera he held.

“Cheese!”

Maybe I was the one with the brightest smile on that picture. Our living room was more alive than usual. The bright sun that shines through the window, balloons, colorful papers, the writing 'Happy Birthday Winar' on the wall, and a cake with number eleven shaped candle on it helped living up the atmosphere of that day. My friends from the neighborhood, accompanied by their parents came with beautifully wrapped presents on their hands. They were stacked on a table where I could not take my eyes off of. My friends were busy with the birthday game Ayah prepared. The parents, including Ibu were on the sofa, talking and laughing about something I could not understand. I just sat down on the rug, watching everyone had fun while occasionally looked at the stack of the presents.

"What's up, birthday boy? Why don't you join your friends?" said brother broke my daydream while sitting next to me.

"I'm not a kid anymore, *Bang* Henri! I am eleven today." I took off the birthday hat of my head.

"But you like the party, don't you?"

"Only the presents."

"Only the presents, huh? Well, I am afraid I saw you were looking at some girls by the window, Mr. Birthday boy." My brother smirked and acted weird.

I did not bother to say a word. I silenced when I could not find attractiveness in those girls. I had not yet come to a full understanding that what I felt was what people called abnormality. The silence I made drowned me into ocean of questions about myself.

"Alright everyone, it's time to blow the candle and pray," said *Ayah* broke our conversation.

Everyone gathered by the cake and me. My turn to be the center of attraction. *Ayah* and *Ibu* took turns in leading the prayer before I blew the candles. I peeked at my brother while praying; he smiled and silently pointed at the white dressed girl with his eyes. I clenched my fist to him. I sighed, he chuckled.

That party was tiring but my heart was content. I sat on the dining chair swinging my legs while opening the presents. My brother was there too to help me. The sound of vacuum machine was heard from the distance added with father's hum of an old song. *Beautiful Boy* by John Lennon. Mother was preparing dinner in the kitchen. The smell of the herbs she used tickles my nose that I sneezed.

“God bless you,” said brother.

“Told you I’m not a kid anymore, Henri!”

“That is not the way to talk to your brother, Winar. Pay some respect!” Mother began to put the dishes on the table. Henri helped by throwing the wrappings away from the table. I put away the presents: the toys, clothing, and stationaries. I hardly understood why people give stationaries as birthday presents. I wondered how that idea came out of their head. That must be...stiff.

The small square mahogany table was full of the dishes, and it was too surrounded by the residents of that house. Soaked by the dining room’s light that hung right above the table, we were holding hands in the preoccupied serenity of the warmth of a family’s dinner prayer. Led by the father and amen echoed from the lips of the rest. That was one of the family’s traditions.

“I helped Winar opening the presents and found a present from Ms. Anita, but I didn’t saw her at the party,” said brother while helping mother cleaning the dish at the sink. I sat on the chair by the cabinet playing with a 3x3 Rubik’s cube from the present. Father was heard outside talking on the phone.

“She gave it to me this morning before the party began.” She stopped toweling the plates, looked at the air wonderingly. “She looks pale and very thin lately.”

“What happen to her? And *Bang Dani*? I’ve never seen him again. Has he graduated from college?”

“No he hasn’t. Rumor has it that he was arrested last week and Ms. Anita had to attend his trials.” She continued toweling. “I wonder what crime he did. I even hardly believe that a good boy like Dani committed a crime. He is active at the church and everything.”

“It’s uhmm...” Ayah entered the kitchen and stopped to sweep a look at us all. The quiet occupied the whole kitchen as soon as he said that. “It was on the headline of this morning’s newspaper,” he grabbed the cube from my hand.

“I missed this morning’s newspaper,” said Ibu.

“You know, it’s uhm...how can I say that,” Ayah stopped to think. “He’s people of Sodom and Gomorah,” he said in brief while giving a look full of code to Ibu. Mother gasped while I and Bang Henri looked at each other, did not have any clue of what they were talking about. “So it’s true? Whom he did it to?”

“His own nephew. It’s a shock for everyone that Dani was such a good kid and all.”

“I know, right?” Mother cleared her throat. “I mean, poor Ms. Anita. She raised her only son alone, she’s been good to everyone, and she is also a good Catholic. May God always be with her.”

“And may God punish his son for giving her mother a hard time. It has been clearly stated in the bible, how could he do...” Ayah pauses and looked at me and Bang Henri, “such thing?”

I sat stiff, but I was closely listening to their conversation. It was the first ever clue that I have about myself. I could find a similarity between me and Bang Dani somehow, that both of us were attracted to men. That thought put me into an instant distance, that I suddenly felt a great distance between me and my family. I felt different from them. I felt that I could not fit to what was usual. The reaction Ayah and Ibu gave towards Bang Dani dragged me even further from them.

Alone in my bedroom I sat by my bed and prayed, “Lord, if you ever loved me, then why did You make me to be something that Ayah and Ibu hated?”

New questions—answerless questions—kept appearing each day as I discovered more about myself; like the questions about my purpose in this world, whether a person like me could love and be loved, or apart from Bang Dani whether there was someone like me out there. Everything was blurry, except for one thing—that I feel totally lonely. I had no guts to talk about this to anybody that I feel I grew more silent each day, and the thing I did not want to talk from anybody turned into my deepest secret. Since that night I question the same things in my prayers while hopefully longing for the answer.

The sun had not really appeared yet while I already sat on the dining chair enjoying breakfast that Ayah made. Heaving in the air softly was the music from a small radio tape at the corner of the room, playing on church’s channel. I used to hum when I heard songs from radio, but Ibu sat beside me and would complain about my table manner if I did that. Ayah had been engulfed in his drafting table in the living room with a cup of steamy coffee by the window, still in his checkered red short and white sweater and a pair of socks to keep his feet warm. No one knew when he woke up. All I knew was he woke up so early that could make us all breakfast. Usually at this time he would rush upstairs and wake Bang Henri up, but today he got so attached to his work. And Bang Henri had already in his white-grey uniform walking down the stairs.

“Hurry, Henri! Ayah has to see a client this morning,” said Ibu a bit shouting. I knew it meant Ibu would take us to school. It also meant that along the way we had to listen to her preach about our study and our future and occasionally about what had been going on in her head. If there was a chance she would usually smuggle a comparison of herself with Ayah and make earnings as the main factor of the comparison. “Your father had never listened to me. I told him to apply in a property company, but he chose to be an independent architect. I mean...why rely on occasional earning when he can earn monthly. He would earn more if he just took my suggestion.” Lucky Bang Henri! His school was not too far from home that I had no company in listening to Ibu’s talk.

My day would be worse if I had to walk home after school in the middle of hot scorching day like today. I was lucky to have Ayah who picked me up every day with his old green *Kijang*. But today was unlike any other days; the luxury went away when Ibu went to her business trip and Ayah became more frequent in meeting clients resulting me going home by myself. The good thing about being not picked up was Ayah doubled my allowance for me to take *angkot* to go home—my regular allowance were actually enough to buy me snacks at school and take *angkot*—and no one would nag me if I hung around after school. But I decided to head straight home since I could not stand being outside in this temperature. Home felt creepy when nobody was there—not even the sound of a pin of needle could be heard. Still in the uniform, I ran to the living room and turned my Nintendo console on to the maximum volume to make it less creepy. It might sound silly, but it worked most of the time.

In less than an hour an engine of a motorbike was heard followed by sound of boys saying goodbyes. Bang Henri went home earlier than usual. I hurried to turn down the volume so he would not make fun of me like he usually did.

“Where is Ayah? Did you go home by yourself?” asked Bang Henri startled to see me alone at home.

“Told you I’m not a kid anymore!” I said without facing away from the screen. “Ayah said he has a meeting with a client.”

“Again?” he said while stepping to the kitchen. “It’s been three times this week.” He paused for a while, knocking himself down with a bottle of cold water from the fridge. “Have you had lunch?”

Before I answered, the sound of old Kijang was heard parked in front of the house. “I bring you lunch, kids,” said Ayah entered house with fast food boxes in his hand.

The same thing happened again today. According to Bang Henri’s count, it had been the fourth time in a week. Only this time before going home, I wanted to buy a comic book from the money I collected in the past four days. I stopped at the bookstore near Bang Henri’s school. It felt like an extreme climate change when I entered the bookstore. Outside was scorching hot and in the store was as cold as ice which somehow freshening.

I headed straight up to comic book shelves and began to browse. My hand swept at the books that neatly arranged in the brown wooden shelf. As soon as I found the book I was looking for I sat on the icy cold ceramic floor and let my legs to touch it while reading the synopsis.

“Gotcha!” Somebody covered my eyes with his palms from behind. His voice was very familiar.

“Let go!” I struggled to lose Bang Henri’s hand of my face.

“What are you doing here alone?” he chuckled and began to browse the comic book shelves.

“Buying books, of course. Anyway, don’t you think I should be the one who ask that? What are you doing here at this time?”

“Don’t want to talk about it,” he grumbled, “since when you have a lot of money?”

“Ayah doubles my allowance,” I said and then stuck my tongue out. He just nodded and joined me on the cold ceramic floor.

“Wanna have some lunch?” he said. I shook my head. “Chill! I’ll pay.” He dragged me to the cashier and left the bookstore.

During our walk—in the middle of the hot scorching day—to the nearest fast food restaurant he grumbled about the day at school. His friend asked him an answer during an exam, but he rejected to give it. Bad luck for him, what the teacher saw was Bang Henri cheated and he got nagged. He also grumbled about how his friend jokingly reacted towards the incident. It was the longest grumble he had, even it had not finished after we sit in the fast food restaurant.

“I then decided to fake a sickness and ask if I could go home; the teacher allowed me.” He had to shout a little bit since it was lunch time when we get there. It was pretty crowded, but the good thing it was cold in here. We sat right in the middle of the crowd, rather far from the ordering station; it was the only table left.

“They should not judge based on what they see, don’t you think so? He said while stuffing his mouth with chicken nuggets and Cola. I looked away to observe the place because his grumble was unstoppable, although there was nothing interesting – only total-red walls and huge crowd of people chatting and eating. I projected my sight to the ordering station and saw a familiar figure—a tall man with his blue jean, leather belt, and stripped polo shirt. It was father!

“Is that Ayah?” I said in the middle Bang Henri’s grumble. He turned around to make sure it was really our father.

“He is. Maybe he is buying us lunch. I’m going to tell him we are here.” He stood up from the chair. Only a few steps he took until he stopped stiff, like a statue. Like for real, why would he stand in the middle of the crowd who were sitting? I was confused and did not want him to make an awkward situation so I walked towards him.

“Do you want to come to Ayah or stand up there all day?” I asked jokingly.

“Let’s go home!” His face reddened and his expression changed—one I had never seen before. He dragged my hand and got out of the place as soon as we could—almost running. But I refused with a plea of wanting to tell Ayah we were there. I could not do nothing, he was so much stronger than me; and I had to struggle my steps to keep up with Bang Henri’s fast pace. Before we left the door, I managed to turn around, taking a look at Ayah. It was. . .no wonder brother’s reaction was like that. I too was shocked, even Bang Henri had to drag me harder when I stiffened for what I just saw. A young woman with tight legging and oversized checkered shirt came close to him.

“Who is that woman? Why did Ayah hug her waist like he usually does to Ibu? I asked innocently.

No response from Bang Henri. His face was still burning red and his breath was clearly heard. He just dragged me and kept walking fast. “Whatever you see today. . .just don’t talk about it at home! Especially with Ibu. Understand?”

I nodded. I might seem just like a child, but children at my age had understood such things. What I just saw that day left me hanging with a lot of questions. Sadness and fear struck when I tried to think about possibilities in the future. Bang Henri told me to keep it a secret. To be honest, it gave me a difficult time and cost me to be a taciturn for days—or maybe even weeks.

Ayah’s schedule was suddenly free from ‘meeting clients’ after Ibu went back from her business trip. It made a lot of sense, I thought. The only thing that did not seem to make any

sense was things seemed usual between Ayah and Ibu after she went back from her business trip. Ayah spoke to her like nothing had happened—like he had nothing to hide. His voice, tone, the way he looked at her—everything seemed completely normal. One thing was sure, brother and I held something that—if we were not careful enough—would bring a disaster to our family. I did not know what to do; to talk about it or to keep it; to tell Ibu what Ayah did or to tell Ayah that what he did was wrong. None of them seemed not to make the best solution. I relied on Bang Henri so much on this, while he actually was not sure either what to do.

Crying eventually felt exhausting—and so did hiding something. The cold night had not changed, but it did not matter a lot. My wet cheeks felt colder as the wind blew my face. I gulped the memory, and it felt to slowly stream down my chest radiantly hurting. I had always wished the best for my family, but in the end such disaster was inevitable. Bang Henri was the one who could not keep the secret for so long that he was honest to Ibu about everything we saw that day; he said he could not let Ayah lie to her forever. And so it happened.

Ayah said—more likely to shout—it happened because Ibu could not understand what he felt as a husband and a father who wanted to protect and feed his family sufficiently. I could not understand what he felt at that time, nor could I now. In the stories I used to read when I was younger, the bad guys were the ones who started the fire and the good guys would stop him from doing bad things and save people. In my case there were no good guys, and the people became the victims. I just could not believe that father was the bad guy.

I used to dream that someday I grew up and be like Ayah; an independent architect who was also a husband and a father who managed his family well. I held my dream high until that day I saw my mother fell down and cried terribly in front of my father who kneeled and begged for an apology.

People said that there would be rainbow after storm raged—not in this storm, I thought. Perhaps there was really rainbow, only in figurative form of a symbol of love I adored. But really, the problem did not stop just that. I fisted a patch of wet grass beside me, as I threw all the blames of the ‘if onlys’ thoughts to Ayah.

I rubbed my cheeks dry. The cheek Ibu used to kiss before I went to school; the same cheek Ayah slapped when he found out a little bit more about his son. I stood up as if I was ready, but the truth...I was not. Not until I had felt the wind on my whole body again did I

realize what was left was not fear, but hesitation. It still conquered my brain, and so did the nicknames they use to call me. Faggot, homo, sinner...failure. I grew numb by hearing those curses they threw at me, and eventually left nothing to be felt inside.

Without losing a piece of me

How do I get to heaven?

Without changing a part of me

How do I get to heaven?

I hummed with the chorus of the song that heaving this morning in my room. Heaven by Troye Sivan, my all-time favorite singer. To be honest, I did not really like the song, but the story it told and the singer's bravery of telling the world that he was 'different' strengthened me by making me realize I was not the only one who fought in this battle. I unplugged the speaker cable from my phone and hurried walking down the stairs.

"Going to a morning class, son?" Ayah asked all the way from the kitchen. The herbs he used always succeed to make me sneezed.

"Yep and I am in hurry."

"Well, at least grab your raincoat! Rain is quite unpredictable in April," he said shouting.

I closed the front door and grabbed the motorbike key from my pocket. I searched the left, right, and back pocket but could not find the key. I rushed back to my room and located the key on my desk. *BING!* My phone rang.

Where r u? Class has begun

It was Hannah. As long as I remember she took a pretty good care of me. At first I thought she had a crush on me, but even after I came out to her she still treated me well. I rushed back downstairs while thinking if I always forgot my keys in the morning, my feet would look athletic in no time. Before I get to the front door, Ayah and I made an eye.

"Uh Winar, I almost forgot. Can you pick Ibu up at seven at the church? Henri had to work overtime, and I had a lot of work at the office...so maybe I will be home late as well."

"Church?" I asked.

"It's uhm..." He cleared his throat, "the counseling for those who wanted to psychologically recover." That hanging tone Ayah made causing a really awkward silence.

"Right, it's Thursday," I said. "Yes, sure I can do."

“I should really go to that mechanic, it’s been two weeks since her car was repaired,” he said to himself with his thick voice while toweling his hand. “Anyway, I have made lunch for you. Just heat it up when you want to eat!” He smiled, and I could not resist to smile back. Lately I always had this thought that every time my father did something that impressed me, it felt like as if he was trying to rebuild his image in me. I was not sure whether giving him the second chance.

I tried my best to keep my eyes open in the class. Morning class had always been this torturing. Supported by cloudy sky and the monotonic voice of the lecturer, the perfect time to sleep! Hannah was busy jotting everything down beside me; I did not think I could disturb her. Opening my phone was the only way left to make me stay awake. I clicked the orange mask icon and began to scroll the nearest guys around.

“Really, Winar? Grindr in class?” Hannah whispered.

I shrugged off her question and kept scrolling. *Brrrt! Brrrt!* Someone just texted me through that app. I showed my phone screen to her and smiled; she said nothing just rolled her eyes back. The class ended up with me chatting with a rather good- looking stranger I just met virtually.

“It’s getting cold,” said Hannah shifting my focus from my phone.

“What?”

“Your food.”

I put my phone to the locked mode and began to eat, but it seemed that my phone refuses to be silent that notification popped up again. Hannah, who sat in front of me, saw it, smirked and made an up-down movement with her eyebrows.

“It’s no one,” I said. “Really, Hannah, no one.”

“If it is no one why do you smile when you look at your phone?” I began to think that she was a psychic. “Obviously, you opened Grindr during the whole class and you think I don’t know what’s going on in your head?”

“Shhh! Talk louder and I’ll kill you!” I whispered after making sure no one in the canteen overheard our conversation.

“Sorry.”

“So have you made it up with your boyfriend? The basketball guy?” I tried to change the topic.

“Ugh! Don’t talk about him, like ever!” She rolled her eyes again and lit the cigarette she held with her lips. “He’s such a prick.”

Lately Hannah was seen to be in a relationship with a guy. Good thing for her! Before she met him, Hannah would go anywhere with me that people began to assume that we were a couple while the truth said that I would never had a feeling for her, or other hers—no pun intended. The bad thing was problems began way too early in their relationship. Seeing her having difficulty with the lighter made recall what she told me about her boyfriend.

It was the day before, where we attend the worst class of the week. The lecturer made the whole class in circle groups and discuss about the subject. Apart from the report we had to hand after-class, the worst part was I and Hannah were in different groups. Occasionally we caught each other’s eyes, and I could tell that she was suffering from boredom right there. This time, when she looked at me she jiggled her phone—the way of telling me to check my phone—while biting her lower lips which seemed dumb to me rather than sexy. I directly went to our chatroom.

My bf did shit thing to me.. He made a video of us while, u know...

I did not reply, or rather, I did not know what to say that my best friend—my one and only best friend—had such ‘free’ lifestyle. I mean the fact that she smoke had already been shocking news to me, but this? I guessed I had to respect her choice the way she respected mine, didn’t I? I looked at her and mouthed “What the hell!” with my eyes open wide. She typed back.

And he threatened if I didn’t do the thing he wanted he wudupld the damn vid!!!

What exactly that thing is? Maybe I could help you.

Listening to me already helps, dude! I’ve got this. Thanks tho (;

I saw her blowing smoke out of her mouth across the table and still had no idea when or why she began to smoke. Some eyes in the canteen even disgraced her—but she did not seem to give a damn about that...I did not either; a girl smoked seemed peculiar to their eyes, I understood that. “I admit you’ve got a good taste when it comes to choosing a boyfriend,” her lips curved hearing me saying that. “So you guys broke up already?”

She blew the smoke again. Lucky her, the canteen was semi-open with wide windows that her smoke would not fill the room and complaints would not be heard. “It’s not like that, Winar. It’s not how relationship works,” she paused and looked at me deeper. “Say, have you ever been in a relationship before?”

“For your information, I’m nineteen years old. Through your observational eyes, do you think that a smart yet gorgeous young adult like me have never been in a relationship?”

She chuckled, which I was not sure which part of my sentence was funny. “From that app? I don’t think it counts a relationship. Waiting for someone to chat you and you meet him and then broke up because of nothing.”

She said that as if I felt nothing. “Sometimes it’s better if we wait,” I raised my tone. I bet she knew clearly what I referred to.

“Wow,” Hannah put out her cigarette. “Meaning what?”

I thought I slipped some of my umbrage and instantly regretted it. “It’s um...nothing. Forget about it!” I looked at her eyes which seemed longing for another explanation and felt really guilty by the silence she gave me. “Contact me if you need somebody to talk to.”

“I will,” she replied with a smile.

The thought of Hannah wandered around my head, and the gaze she gave me reminded me a lot of Ibu. I know Hannah was not a typical of crybaby. The thing that I was concerned about was she might look strong and okay and could even made fun of me during her bad time like this, but I did not know—no one really knew—what was going on deep inside her. I threw my head on the pillow, frustrated of not finding the best way to help her.

I closed my eyes and almost fell asleep when my phone vibrates. Erik, the guy I met on Grindr this morning, messaged me. I had been using this app for months and had brought several guys to a real life meeting. For some reasons, this guy seemed to be somehow different. Many guys on Grindr only look for one night stand, but I could see that Erik had more decent intention.

My daily schedule was added one agenda: chatting with Erik. It was such a fun until I came to a thought that tong virtual encounter eventually brought me to boredom, with nothing left that can be talked about. I proposed a meeting to him on Saturday morning, and he agreed on that.

I had already seated in a café nine-thirty sharp in the morning, half an hour before the meeting time with Erik. I had to come earlier, I thought; mental preparation was needed in the time like this. Sun light hit the room as a result of the wide glass window on one side of the café facing straight to a sidewalk on a quiet alley. My cup of coffee steamed peacefully on the table. It was not crowded in the café; only a few people reading newspaper or facing their laptop could

be seen in this place. The song that played was *Zombie* from the Cranberries—not a right place and time to play such song. It was his idea to propose this place; he did not want anyone he knew saw him hung out with a younger guy. That idea did not sound weird to me as I had been in his position before. I swept my sight out of the window and then it caught a figure of a man smiling at me.

“Have you waited for long?” I shook my head. He seated on the only chair in front of me and gave me a look, like he just seen another human for the first time—smiled and did not turn his look away from me.

“What? Is there something wrong with my face?” I said breaking the ice.

“No. You just look better than the picture.” He said straightforwardly.

“Well, everybody does.” I said innocently. The waitress then came to our table with a cup of pitch black Americano for Erik which made me subconsciously stared at him.

“Don’t tell me you’re gonna analyze my personality based on my choice of coffee?” He might have seen the furrows on my forehead. “I’m afraid I chose the wrong coffee.”

“No, I am not good at it. Besides your choice of coffee is the typical of coffee that is always analyzed in the movies which says you are a person who enjoys social life and simple things.”

“See? You just did!” We chuckled.

We both let our conversation bloom that I dug a lot of thing from him. His job as a journalist, his family and the fact that he was the only child, his college life that he was actually the alumnus of my campus, and the best thing was his relationship status which he said he was single. Hearing the word ‘single’ made me feel that our conversation grew more interesting until we reached to one deep topic.

“So what about your parents, are you gonna tell them?” he asked, putting his arms together on the table.

“Yes, but someday when I’m ready to life by myself...you know, the plan for the worst case. The only thing I can do now is to be as good as possible,” I put my eyes on his when he raised his brows. “It’s because most of us have relationship for the sake of sex instead of love that makes people tend to see us differently.”

“By going secretly this way, naysayers are the only thing we will get when we’re out of the closet,” he tried to keep up with me.

“That is why I need to be something different that, hopefully, can make them have better perception on us. I mean, at the first place, what is wrong with two guys holding hands in the street?” I said softly. “We’re not gonna have sex with them anyway. Why do they see us as if we are sex maniacs who would rape random people in the street?”

He chuckled at my opinion, “I could not agree more!”

“I’ve got a friend who is different. She is so accepting. I told her just about everything and she’s still cool to hang around with me.”

“That’s good,” he smiled.

Hannah. Her glance appeared in my mind again. I wondered how was she doing with her boyfriend. Also, the last thing I said to her...I was afraid if I might have hurt her or something.

“You okay, Winar?” Erik waved his hand in front of my eyes.

“No...I mean, yes. Yes, I’m fine.”

“Still worried about the parents thing? You know, if you’ve got something troubling your mind you can talk to me, it’s a pleasure to be a good listener. You know how to reach me,” he smiled at me.

I had always dreamed that someday I could talk with somebody who felt the same as I did—never knew that the day was the day I met Erik. It was unbelievably relieving, like somehow all of the burden that weighed down my chest was lifted for a while and it felt hollow—peacefully hollow. I really enjoyed every second with him.

After meeting Erik, I tried to contact Hannah but she was unreachable. I looked for her to her home, but her mother said she was out with her boyfriend. Perhaps I had to wait until we met at class on Monday. Meeting Erik was my only schedule that day, which after meeting him meant I slacked in my room until evening doing figuratively nothing.

Saturday family Dinner was Bang Henri’s idea who said it would bring our family as close as it used to be. Besides, after Bang Henri graduated and got a job, and Ayah took Ibu’s suggestion to work at a property company, the family actually rarely gathered. It might be a good idea after all. Gathering around the mahogany dining table under the dim light and prayed before having this occasional dinner took me back in time when we had our last most joyful family dinner—the evening of my eleventh birthday. Although this evening Ayah and Ibu had talked as they used to, and Bang Henri happily saw the result of his effort in helping to rebuild the family, there was something that made me feel like I had drifted away from them. I was reminded of my

conversation with Erik this morning and had a feeling that the secret I kept would tear down what had been built—once again. I could not let that happen, but I was not sure how because deep inside I really wanted to tell my family the truth about me—I could not lie to them forever. For now, I guessed I had to keep the secret far from the surface.

Most of the times going to church helped me center myself once again after all the thought that had been bothering me all week. The songs, the sermons, friendly people...they brought me to peace state again. Some other times, on a very rare occasion, the church did not feel very helpful. Like this morning, sitting beside my family with the priest giving sermons of the change of the world—including same-sex marriage. He did not besmirched anything, the phenomenon, the countries, or the people, but still it made me uneasy to sit between my own family—more like feeling of insecurity. I kneeled and made the sign of the cross before I left to the toilet.

My church was not really big that it did not have big parking lot or park or even outdoor seats, and made me decide to go to toilet which was separated from the church hall. I washed my face over many times; even from here the fainted voice of the sermon could be heard. The reflection of the toilet stalls could clearly be seen from the mirror, and one person in a tight black shirt came out of the second stall from the left. By only one glance I could already identify that familiar figure—my senior who was also the basketball jock in the campus and the boyfriend of Hannah. He smiled at me thought the mirror and took a spot right next to me to wash his hands—and I wish he could wash his filthy brain as well.

“You’re Hannah’s boyfriend, aren’t you” I said and looked at him through the mirror.

He faced me a little bit ducking due to the difference of height and took a look of me from hair to toe. “I am. And you are Winar, I suppose.”

I startled for a moment of the fact that he knew me; but perhaps Hannah had already told things about me. “Look, dude. I do not mean to have a finger in the pie of you and Hannah, but if you’ve got a problem with her solve it like a real dude!”

He washed his face and made a smirk at the corner of his lips. “Bet she told you everything.” I already anticipated that he would be mad of hearing me bringing up this problem out of the blue, but his tone sounded so light and easy. “Don’t worry, Hannah and I already made it up.”

“That fast? Really?” I looked at him thoroughly and thought whether what I was going to say was acceptable to be talked about. “And you won’t upload the clip, right?” I said it anyway—attempting to quench my curiosity.

“I bet she told you everything, didn’t she?” He towed his face with toilet paper and had me waiting. “Of course I won’t. It was all just a bluff, for God’s sake! I was in the clip too, and I might have lost my sanity if I upload it because I will lose my basketball scholarship.”

I was relieved to hear the latest update about Hannah’s relationship with her boyfriend. She solved her problem pretty well, I guessed. “That’s cool, then.”

“And I wouldn’t worry anymore if she hangs around with you all the time,” he blinked one eye at me and left the restroom which left me with trains of questions. A blink? Me? What did I have to do with their problem? I barely knew their problem the week before. And what was that blink for? I suspected something was not right behind it. I shook my head of the worst possibility that might have happened and washed my face over many times again.

I had been thinking about this all night, and the thought what Hannah’s boyfriend did to me somehow making it worse. I had waited to meet her all weekend but she did not come to class today. Maybe that possibility—the worst case—was true. Maybe Hannah told her boyfriend about me. Even it got worse, that perhaps he told everybody about me. Since I came to class this morning, people saw me differently—they whispered and sometimes laughed right in front of me.

“Hey, Winar!” shouted a guy from afar while waved his hand. Hannah’s boyfriend with a bunch of his friend came to me. I waited still on the intersection right before the canteen.

“What do you want?” I took that blink as an insult and thought there was no better way to treat him than talk to him cynically.

“Whoa! Easy! We thought that it is impolite to not greet a lady who walks alone,” he and the rest of the jerks laughed. And their laugh made me realize that my bad thought about Hannah was true. Surprise!

“Look! I don’t know what Hannah told you about me, but if she told you a secret don’t you think you should shut your mouth up to everyone?” I tried to talk to him with normal tone although my anger had burned.

“What do you mean a secret?” he began to grow furrows on his forehead. “She told me that when we had a fight in the middle of training session. I couldn’t believe she came to the court just to bring up our problem.”

“She what?”

“Now, if you excuse us.” That bunch of jerks left.

It blew my mind so hard. I trusted her with my secret but she talked about it just like any other thing. I still stood in the intersection watching those bunch of typical bullies walked away when I saw Hannah came to her boyfriend. Spontaneously, I rushed my feet to her.

“Hey Hannah! What the hell?” I shouted at her.

She was about to walk away when I succeeded to grab her hand.

“Dude, easy on girl, can you?” said her boyfriend pushing my chest away.

“That thing that troubling your relationship, that you couldn’t talk about that day in class...was it me?” My voice began to tremble. “If I am the one who caused you a trouble, do you need to tell my secret to them?”

Hannah did not look me at my eyes. “It’s for the best, Winar.”

“Your best is not my best! You traded my secret with your relationship. Unbelievable!” I lose control with my voice that I began to shout. People who passed by began to look at us. “I thought you were my best friend. Now look what you’ve done! People look at me as if I am...something disgusting.”

“You said you wanted to help. Don’t you think this is the best way to help me?” She now faced me. “Come on, Winar. It’s twenty-seventeen anyway; no one’s gonna judge you. Love wins, remember?”

“Yeah, no one.No one except idiots like your boyfriend and his idiot fellows. And guess who else? The whole campus that your stupid boyfriend can’t keep his mouth shut to,” I shouted and pointed at the bunch of guys in front of me.

“You’ve got me, Winar. Isn’t that enough?” Her voice softened.

“So now you’re offering shelter from the storm you’ve caused? Fuck you, Hannah...and the whole shitty drama you’ve played!” I walked away from that crowd.

“Fag!” Her boyfriend shouted that did not bother me to just stop, even to turn around.

I did not usually care what people said about me, but what he just said instantly silenced me, and what she just did stiffen me like the time I saw Ayah and another woman. No one had ever told me that losing a friend could feel like losing my hope to continue life. Hanna was my last resort if someday my family could not accept me. But she had gone...on her own will. Even worse, she backstabbed me by telling everyone my secret and people began to act like my

deepest fear. All those time I had spent with her to build our friendship went in vain by choosing a guy she had just met over me. If she really did mean offering me friendship again, she should have tried to contact me and perhaps—only perhaps—I would give our friendship another chance. I really wanted to have someone I could talk to, but Erik—the only person I hoped for—was unreachable. I sobbed in my room when nobody was home, holding an opened bottle of Aspirin with the thought of putting an end to my life was the best way left before anything worse could happen.

I bawled my eyes out until somebody called my name from downstairs. I thought Bang Henri would be home late as usual. My hands were still trembling and my knees were too weak to move and clean up my face before he rushed in. With sobs in my mouth, he broke in my room and hurriedly grabbed the bottle of Aspirin from my hand when he saw me crying on the floor.

“What the hell were you thinking?” He exclaimed.

My mouth was too busy sobbing to just say a word to him. I did not even dare to look at Bang Henri at the eye. Bang Henri handed me a water bottle from his bag and sat beside me on the floor.

“What’s wrong with you, man?” He asked after a few minutes of letting me calmed down.

“I’m fine.”

“No, you’re not! You never cried that bad since you were born,” he made a joke to cheer me up but did not seem to work out. “Please tell me what is going on, so I can help you.”

“Just go to your room! I know you’re tired.”

“I will not leave before you tell me. You made me worried, you know? You have a bottleful of Aspirin in your hand and you expect me to think you’re okay?” he put the bottle of Aspirin into his bag and went to sit beside me again.

I looked at him thoroughly. I really wanted to tell him what had been troubling my mind—he was my brother after all. “If I tell you this, promise you wont tell Ayah and Ibu?”

“What’s wrong?”

“Promise me!” I exclaimed.

“Okay, okay. I promise.”

I exhaled and piped down for a moment. “I think what I did was a sin. Hannah left me because of it, and the whole campus hated me. I don’t know what to do. I wanted to take the Aspirins because no matter what I do, I will go to hell anyway.”

“Winar, you scared me. What did you do?”

“I’m afraid if Ayah and Ibu find out about this, they will be outraged. It could tear the family apart. I don’t want our family to be like that again,” I could not help to sob. “You all will hate me. I know if you found out the truth, you’ll hate me.”

“Hey, hey...It’s alright. Calm down and tell me what’s wrong,” he embraced my shoulder to calm myself down.

I waited until he loosened his hug and I cleared my sob. “I don’t think I can be like Ayah, Bang.”

“So what, Winar? They are so proud of you for whatever you’ve done.”

“If they find out that I can’t even dream to spent the rest of my life with a woman, will they still be proud of me?”

A long uncomfortable silence muffled our mouths. Until Bang Henri said the word I avoided the most, “You’re gay?”

“See? You’re saying it like you hate me!” My sobs were getting worse.

“Winar, give me time to think about this.”

“I don’t know what to do. I’ve never wanted to be like this. I kept trying and praying that someday when I wake up everything will change, but it never happened.”

Before Bang Henri left to his room I assured him to promise that he would not tell anyone, especially our parents. In times like this telling him about what I felt was surprisingly soothing—although he was not sure how to react. After I got to be alone again, I spent the whole night thinking about what would happen the next day or the day after at campus. I barely knew that having a friend could be this dangerous—no one had told me so. I even began to think if slipping a tear for Hannah was even worthy.

What I had anticipated was true; no one at campus seemed to be as human as the used to be—or perhaps they saw me less human. Like people said, “*Words hurt more than stick and stone.*” And loneliness seemed to be the one that struck me the most. At least by being like this I was able to filter my friends and saw who was the true friend for me—the result said no one. The way they looked at me, talked to me...as if I was just a joke.

I rode my motorbike slowly to home. After a long day at campus, slow-riding under the city lights and through the breeze that started to get cold somehow felt healing. Before I parked my motorbike in the garage, I stopped in front of my house just to see it from outside. The family was my only shelter left, I said to myself. I stepped my feet straight to the kitchen and stopped when I saw Ayah, Ibu who was sobbing, and Bang Henri in the kitchen. That view gave me a sudden fear—that my skin shivered—of the possible thing that caused them to be in the kitchen with that empty—even maybe hopeless—look at nothingness.

“What happened?” I said breaking their thoughts—except her sob. My voice made them looked at me.

Ayah came to me, held my both shoulders, and gave me a close look. “Winar, you promised if something is wrong you would tell me,” he paused, “What the hell is wrong with you, son? Why have you gone astray?”

My blood ran cold and my heart skipped a beat. For a second I thought that everything I had done, everything that I had achieved just to cover up my secret would collapse into pieces. I paused as he finished his words and stared at Bang Henri. “YOU ASSHOLE! I TRUSTED YOU.” I shouted and tears began to slip.

“I was worried about you!” he exclaimed. Ayah had to hold me before I got to lay my fist on Bang Henri.

“Ayah, please... I’ve never done anything wrong. It’s—”

“You’re gay and there is nothing right about it! We never raised you to be such a sinner.” His saying muffled me that silenced the whole room; only Ibu’s sob that could be heard getting louder and worse.

A second later Ibu took steps away from the kitchen followed by Bang Henri that left me alone in the kitchen with Ayah. I could not look into his eyes; whether they were full of tears or full of rage, I did not know which one—I did not dare to look. Eventually he left me all alone with all the sobs. A sudden strange feeling struck me, like the feeling of totally naked in public—exposing miles and miles of my bare and flawed skin with nothing left to be used as the cover. Cold, afraid, insecure...all the feeling I thought was prepared for if this day would come, did not feel the way I was prepared for. Like a bullet penetrated my skin and tore down my intestines, it ached badly inside. I walked slowly upstairs with nothing left to do apart from crying. I tried to

contact Erik again, and thank God he replied; but he said he was too busy to talk. So I spent the whole night crying until I fell asleep.

It was the first time ever I felt reluctant to just go out of my room. I was terrified of the reaction that my family could give to me. From here, the voice of Ayah and Ibu having a light conversation about something could be faintly heard. Bang Henri had gone to his office at this time; and I, too, was supposed to go to campus twenty minutes ago. The longer I stayed, the worse my thought went, then I braced myself to go out of the room and go to campus. My presence in the kitchen halted their conversation in a sudden manner.

“I’m going to campus,” I said to them.

No reply, no nods, nothing. From the coming out videos I’ve watched on the internet, it was quite rare that a family could immediately accept their son after coming out—they need time to think. I thought my family needed time too to think, and hopefully to accept me the way I was. Ayah and Ibu who sat face to face in the dining table, ignoring my presence was one of the reactions that I had predicted. I went straight out and grabbed my motorbike.

I did not say a word the whole day, whether in campus or at home. No one responded to me when I tried to begin a talk, even when it was just a ‘Hey’ on the hallway. The loneliness felt severe and cut deeper than the blade I was trembling upon even just to get hold of. A day felt longer when there was no one cared about my presence.

Days became week, and I began to lose count of the silence my family threw upon me. The happiness in the family slowly and surely subdued, like a candle losing its wick. Saturday Dinner was gone and everyone went to church all by themselves. One Sunday morning when Ayah went to church with Bang Henri because Ibu had a fever and had to stay at home, I came to her bedroom. At first I only took a peek from the slightly-opened door. I did not dare to make much noise—I did not want to wake her up. Like a huge sign of ‘Keep Out’ hung on the door, I was too scared to break in—even just to see how she was doing. It hurt when I see my own mother ignored her son like he had never been wanted. I then decided to go to her room; doing anything I could to make her feel better. I checked her heat with the back of my hand and changed the towel on her forehead. She woke up when I lifted the towel; she might have seen me full of tears. She might be too dizzy to talk that she shook her head among the pillow. I thought she did not want to be cool-compressed anymore, but she meant differently.

“Leave me alone! I could do it myself,” she said softly.

I was startled by what she said, but I did not want to leave her alone in this condition. Ibu never changed—still a very persistent woman. She shoved my hand away that the towel and the bowl I held fell causing puddle of water on the floor.

“Look what you’ve done! You always cause a mess.” She woke up and tried to clean the puddle. I still could not let my sick mother do heavy things. I pushed her shoulder slowly, signified her to remain seated. She shoved my hand again and the pain got more severe, but I did not let my tears to fall in front of her again. I hurriedly cleaned it and left the room immediately.

I rode my motorbike aimlessly slow, just for the sake calming myself down of Ibu who still could not accept his own son. I came to a cliff on the corner of the town. From the top of that, the cloud, the gold sun ray, and the light if the town that stating to emerge could be seen. Behind me was an entrance of a forest. The wind blew pretty hard up here that the only sound could be heard apart from swooshing wind was the leaf rustling. I stretched my hands and tried as best as I could to soak in the amenity of that evening.

I felt slightly better after having a time for myself. I guessed I would visit that place more often. When I stopped at the traffic light I saw someone I knew standing by a car. I rode my motorbike closer to that red Mercedes.

“Erik!” I called him.

“Winar!” He looked surprised. “I’ve told you I am busy right now.” He tried to enter the car but I grabbed his hand.

“Erik, please help me! My family knew my secret and now I don’t know where to go.”

Little did I know that a woman—a pregnant woman—was watching us in front of the building where Erik parked his car. I read the sign which said baby clothing store. The woman came to the car and went straight in.

“I’ve told you this isn’t the right time to talk.” He entered his car and drove away.

On just a millisecond, I had managed to connect everything. Erik, the woman, the store. It was so messed up, I thought. Erik was just another Ayah. He lied to his wife all this time; he lied to me too—and maybe to other boys he met from Grindr. The name Hannah suddenly appeared when I made that comparison, since she was no other different than Ayah and Erik who only cared about their own happiness without even thinking what they did would bring impact to their surroundings.

I had been tired of crying. It helped a little bit, but it left hollowness as I recalled the unsolved matters. When I entered the house, everyone had been in their rooms except Ayah who still in his drafting table. I sat on the dining table with a glass of cold milk in front of me, watching him doing his work. It was a long silence for both of us. He knew I was there, but did not bother just to look at me. I attempted to make a talk to him by a cup of chamomile tea I made.

“You should get some rest when you’re tired,” I put the cup of the, replacing his empty cup of coffee.

“Did you just talk? I thought apart from gay, you are a deaf-mute,” he said without looking away from whatever he was working on that table.

His words slit my chest deep; so deep that I skipped a breath and cold sweat stream all over my body. It took me a while to recollect myself after got hit real hard by his word.

“It’s not a condition, Ayah.” I tried to sound as soft as possible.

“What will people say if they know that a member of this family is abnormal,” he now faced me. “What will I say to the neighbors when they asked why has my youngest son never been seen with a girl? You know it exactly what people say about Ms. Anita; do you want the same thing to be said to me and your mother?” His words were like lightning, and I was a tree that got struck for many times and could not do anything to resist the lightning.

“Why do you care so much about what people say, but not your son?” My voice trembled when I said this, and my eyes felt burning that made me think that in a matter of seconds my tears would slip. “It’s not what I do; it’s a part of me. If I could choose, I don’t want to be like this. By doing good things in life, isn’t it enough?”

“So you’re saying that homosexuality is good. You’re saying that people like you and Ms. Anita’s son who raped his own nephew are good?”

I was burnt in rage. “I know you think that gay people only look for sex in their lives; but not for me. I am not like that, Ayah. What I do, that you think is abomination, is actually based on love. While what you said to me I believe only based on hatred towards gay people; and what you did to Ibu long ago...I did not see any love in your deed. ”

An instant silence wildly streamed as I closed my mouth, finished my last sentence. A chance for me to speak up and to be heard. “I grew up denying that I prefer boys rather than girls. Ayah, believe me! I don’t want to be like this either. But everything that I’ve tried to

change myself, they didn't seem to work. And then I thought maybe God has plan for me by being like this."

"That's bullshit! God will never tolerate your sin." Ayah shouted.

"How do you know that, Ayah? Think about it! Do you think God will ever tolerate yours by lying to Ibu, by ignoring your children for the sake of your selfish happiness?"

SLAP! "How dare you speak to your father like that?" Ayah slapped me real hard. Even after seconds it passed the heat of his palm still could be felt on my cheek. Ayah did not seem to listen. "Change...be normal again! Can you at least try for me?" Ayah begged. His tone softened.

"I've told you I've tried, but it didn't work that way. Sexuality is not a choice, Ayah." I tried to give him another understanding.

"If you cannot change and still think that what you're doing is right, then I cannot have a gay son." He walked away to his room. The last loudest lightning struck the fire, and the hard rain of my tear came and put out my own fire.

I ran to my motorbike and rode without knowing where to go. I cried along the way with Ayah's word echoed shrill, hurting my chest. I did not know where to go. My mind clouded dark, as dark as the sky, which seemingly would bring a heavy storm.

I rode my motorbike to a cliff near the city. I parked my motorbike began to walk to the edge of the cliff with darkness both in the sky and in my head. I sat near the edge, questioning myself whether to give up on life or to continue even if without anything to fight for. As the chilly wind blew hard on my body, my memories from my childhood emerged. I recalled the love that my family ever gave to me. The warmth that used to fill my chest, the joy that used to decorate my face...I missed those things.

A question appeared. "Do I really have to give up?" I broke down the events that just happened to me, and as I managed to calm myself down, I come to the understanding that those events were manifestation of hatred. With only little hope left in my soul, so little like ember, I chose to continue my life. I swore to myself with the days I had left that I would live my life out of love until the hatred could not be remembered even though the whole world is against me. I chose love over hatred, even though the love I chose was despised by others, even if I could never make an affirmation of my love, I chose to stay alive as a reminder that love will always win against anything.

REFLECTIVE PAPER

At this point in time, the notion of who cannot keep up with the world will be left behind is getting more real and horrifying due to the fact that the constant change of the world is rapid and covered huge aspects in life. Logically speaking, changes are never meant to be something worse, instead, changes are meant to suit the development of the people; and thus, the world keeps craving for it. However, some changes are quite debatable to be categorized as a good change. One of the most recent and debatable changes is the legalization of same-sex marriage in some countries in the world; thus, this becomes one of the reasons why I chose this topic to be written in my final project. Another reason is because I want to answer the question of whether or not it will be legalized in Asian countries, especially in Indonesia by seeing how Indonesian people acts on the occasion of encountering gay people in real life, and also how gay people in Indonesia see and define themselves. The condition of LGBT community in Indonesia will later be discussed which shows how the image of this community looks like in the eyes of both heterosexuals and homosexuals, and how such image can be constructed in the society. In my writing, those facts is conveyed through a portrayal of how a gay boy live among his family, his friends and his neighborhood while at the same time it shows the possible way of a family treat their son when they know that he is gay. Getting closer to the story I wrote, my writing shows the struggle of how gay people survive in Indonesia where the upheld values clashes with the existence of LGBT community.

The condition of LGBT community in Indonesia

Indonesia is a country that looks up to many values, and one of the most upheld values is religious values. Due to that strong belief, often times most Indonesian people take whatever the religion says for granted. It is predictable that such environment does not support them to live as themselves, and urged them by being someone they do not want to be in their own skin. Most of them lie their whole life by marrying a woman just so they fit in the society's standard. It is embodied in the most basic aspect of Indonesian people life that they—or I should say we—judge too much before we really know what is going on. It may sound controversial and probably hard to admit, but we are a judgmental society who once sees a flaw of someone—or once we see

something peculiar—we make it worse than it really is. Once we heard something about, we keep making prejudices about the event instead of trying opening our mind towards every possibility.

The question that arises: what kind of prejudice do we lay on gay people? One of the most popular ones is that we ‘know’ that all of gay people are sex maniac. Sadly, this image is not constructed from supposition, but instead by the help of mass media—the media which covered only bad things about them. The arrest of the recent gay club which goes under the name of a gym is surely still fresh in the mind. Such news undeniably affects the way the society sees gay people. The society’s prejudice has gone worse when it affects their action; in Aceh, for example, recently the internet has been flooded with the world’s protest regarding the news of a gay couple in Aceh who are banned because they are caught while having sex. This news did not seem to appear on TV. Same thing happened with the news of the legalization of same-sex marriage in Taiwan that becomes the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage and protect gay rights under their law. This news was not aired on TV either, even on CNN. This keeps me wondering why the media only shows the bad side of gay people, while such saddening thing that happen in Aceh was not broadcasted on TV. It makes me come to a sense that most Indonesian people are intolerant towards gay people.

Trying to see how gay people point of view about themselves and about the image that the society had constructed, I employed qualitative method which offered an in-depth approach towards the life of gay people by doing observation, library study, and interview. The observation that I did was not merely about gay people, but also about how heterosexual people reacted towards this matter. This was not very difficult since the society around me has given the overview I needed. In the meantime, I also browsed through some books that helped me in both enriching my data and polishing my writing skills. Books like Adele Ramet’s *Creative Writing 7th Edition*, Jay Asher’s *Thirteen Reasons Why*, and Allan Cumyn’s *Between Families and the Sky* had quenched my thirst for the data I needed for my writing and the knowledge about the technical of writing a fiction. Interviewing was the last thing I did as I faced some difficulties during the process.

During the data collection process, I faced a challenge in finding the source persons to be interviewed. I used a mobile application to assist me finding the source person. It took me almost a month in that app, looking for somebody to be interviewed; and then I came to the idea that my

approach was not right—I stated that I need to interview somebody for my final project—because people there tend to keep their identity a secret before they actually meet in real life. My last resort was to pretend that I was just a common Grindr user, and it worked well. Among the people who contacted me, I managed to meet two persons outside the app. Still in the disguise, I could not ask their permission to record our conversation or make notes during the conversation because I did not want to freak them out by stating my real intention and lose the chance to interview them—the only option I had is to memorize important points of our conversation. However, I respected them by keeping their identities a secret whether in the story or in the reflective essay. My questions were mainly about how they lived and how they see themselves. Although the interviewees have two different backgrounds—one is a working man, and the other is a college student—both of them have some things in common in answering my questions, except for the question of how they see themselves. The working man sees himself as someone who suffered from a ‘sickness’ and will get cured if he married a woman. While the college student said that he had accepted himself—although has not become openly gay to anybody he knows—and cannot have a close relationship with girls as he said he would feel guilty for lying to that girl. However, both of them disagreed with the prejudice that I have stated above. They also added one thing that they cannot deny the existence of gay people who are only care for sex which, in their opinion, destroys the society mindset about gay people.

Portraying the condition through story

The story that I wrote mainly tells about a boy named Winar and his family in struggling to keep the family together while being faced with continuous problems. The first problem is about an affair which happened because the superiority of the wife in a patriarchal society. Based on Rowatt’s *The Two-Career Marriage* by often times when both husband and wife are employed, and the wife earns higher salary than the husband, problems that are close to divorce often occurs (21). It happens because the husband wants to fulfill the role of a husband who can suffice and feed the family, but he feels the wife is the one who has that role because he gets lower salary. In Winar’s family, the problem did not end up in divorce since the family is a devout Catholic family; and in Catholic getting divorce is very difficult to do. The second problem arises when the family found out that Winar which is based on Switzer’s *Parents of The*

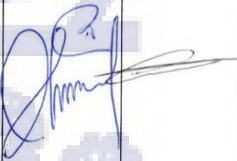
Homosexuals. The family's lack of eagerness to listen to Winar's explanation because they have already 'disgusted' by the word gay before they really know what is going on in Winar's mind.

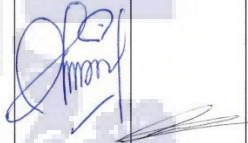
The story ended up with Winar committing suicide as one of the worst result as people's intolerance towards gay people. Another worst result is shown by Erik who is conveying how some Indonesian gay people see themselves. As another result of people's lack of tolerance, gay people like Erik tend to choose to marry a woman at the end of the day. Not because he changed his mind, just because he wanted to avoid the social prejudice towards him. Thus, he married a woman but still lingers on gay social app because he is not content with his marriage.


Conclusion

My writing portrays how LGBT community struggled to survive in an unsupportive environment like in Indonesia. Most of them has to keep it a secret, even has to lie to themselves by marrying someone they do not want to marry just to avoid the social prejudice towards them like what Erik did in the story. Some of them faced bad times in their lives like what Winar did where the family could not accept him if he still being gay. In the end, the minority is the one who has to pay the cost of the people's lack of desire in keeping up with the change of the world.

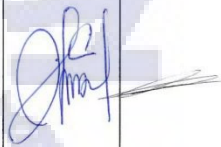
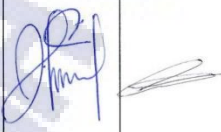
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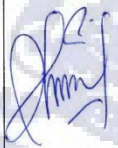
Date	Activities	Progress	Problems	Advisor's Suggestions	Advisor's signature	Student's signature
25/01/2017	Creating plot and characterization CV		Creating one logical and vivid character is not easy as I am required to make many connections from one trait to another, more like a cause-effect thing—and I need to make four significant characters. Moreover when it came to connecting one character with the others and to the story, all the traits should respond well and logical towards what they face. The	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synchronize the plot and the CV • Make the plot more logical 		

			plot also have to flow smoothly without making a character doing what he/she is not supposed to do.		
02/02/2017	Collecting the data		Finding a suitable source-person to be interviewed is quite an obstacle. One, I have to install and use Grindr for weeks, which feel odd every time a stranger texted me out of the blue. Two, I finally have met one person who agreed to be interviewed but refused to be recorded during the interview. Also his		

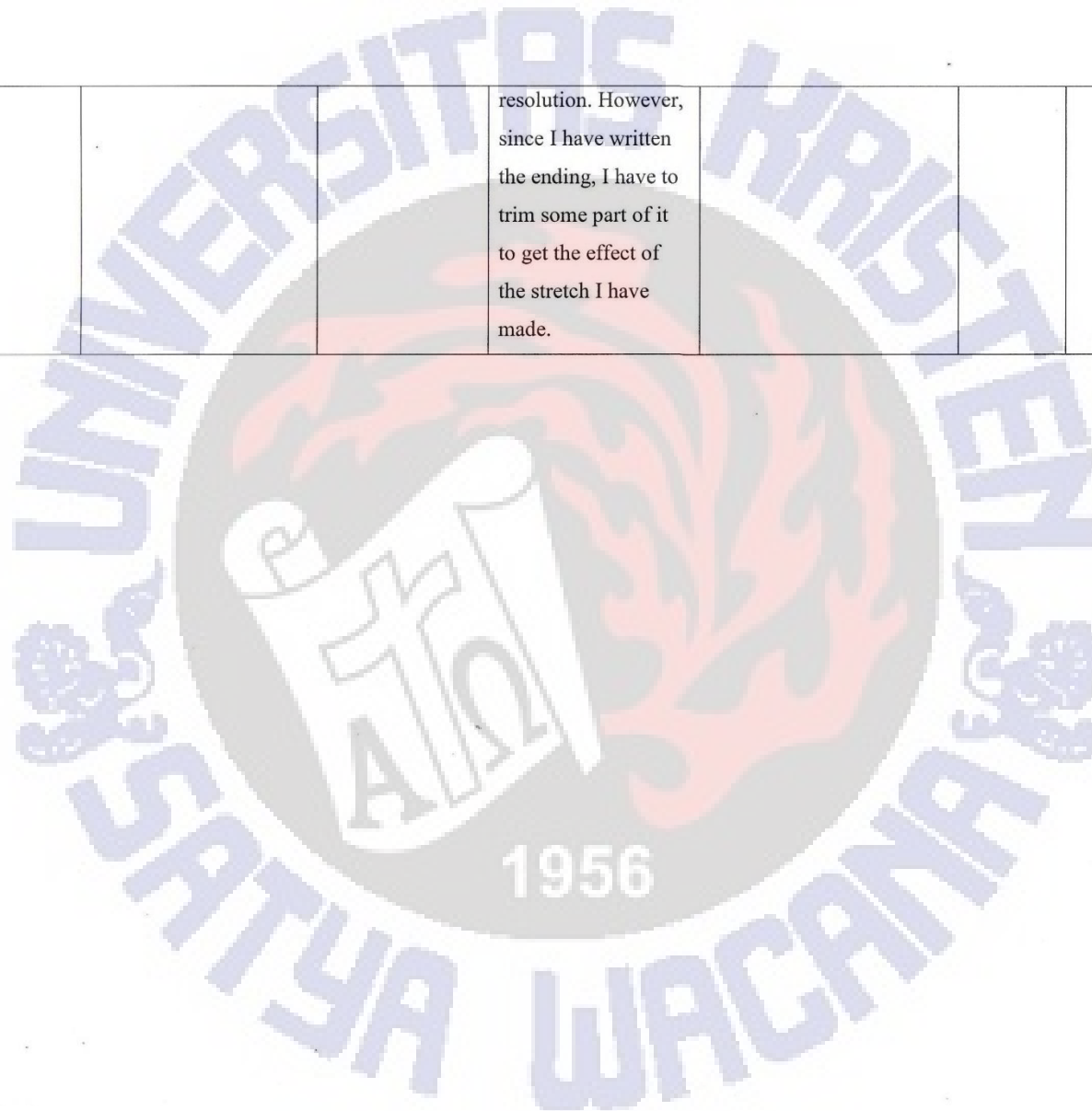
			view towards the main issue of my story is irrelevant to what I am about to convey.		
06/04/2017	Writing the 1 st part of the draft (4 pages)	Completed the plot and the characterization CV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in finding the reference to support the story • The first-word syndrome: the difficulty in beginning a story due to the notion of how well it will attract the reader to read more, also how it will lead the story in the 		

			<p>future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Punctuation is not as simple as I thought. It gets complicated when I am in the middle of wanting to play with it to make the story look more natural and wanting to use it properly without committing any kind of violation; and turns out that line in between actually existed. I finally decided		
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			to read some novels as references of how to use punctuation naturally yet properly.			
15/04/2017	Writing the 2 nd part of the draft (4 more pages)	4 pages completed with revision	Regaining the focus of the story where it was left off after several days of not writing gave me hard time; but I pushed myself to write anyway—and turned out the result is not very satisfying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be focused in showing rather than telling 		
18/04/2017	Writing the 3 rd part of the draft (7 more pages)	8 pages completed with revision	The encounter with the book <i>13 Reasons Why</i> that made me contemplate of stronger reasons of			

			<p>why someone committed suicide, like what Winar will do—I only had one reason why to the story. As a result, I added some new characters that will become more reasons why Winar finally decided to put his life to an end.</p>		
10/05/2017	Revising the final draft	25 pages completed	<p>From the last consultation I was asked to stretch the time lapse on the climax, which means I have to extend the conflict within Winar's family—which means from climax until</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretch the climax • Don't just narrate the events, instead give section separator in each event to gain focus from each of it 	

			resolution. However, since I have written the ending, I have to trim some part of it to get the effect of the stretch I have made.		
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