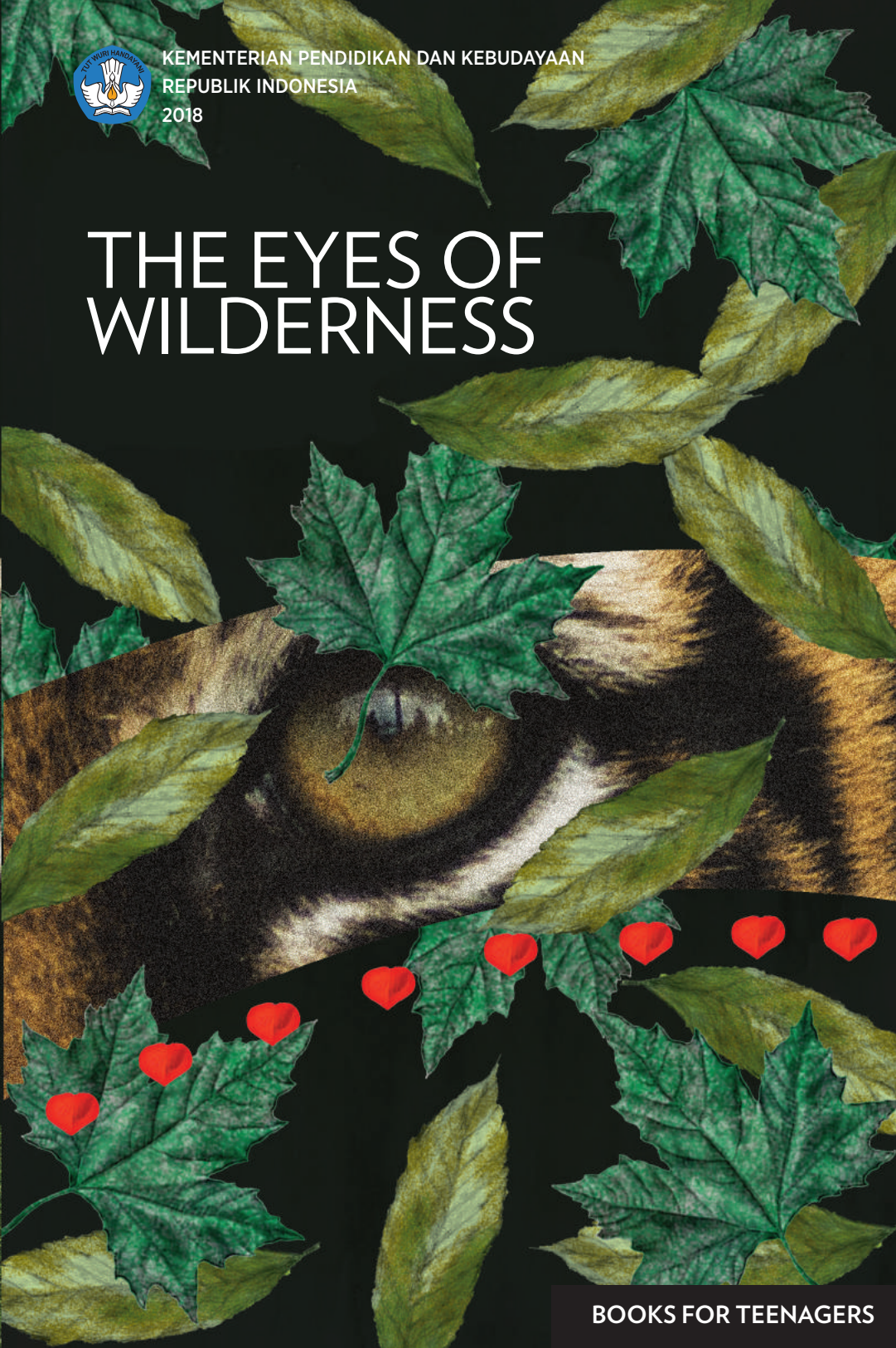




KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN DAN KEBUDAYAAN
REPUBLIK INDONESIA
2018

THE EYES OF WILDERNESS

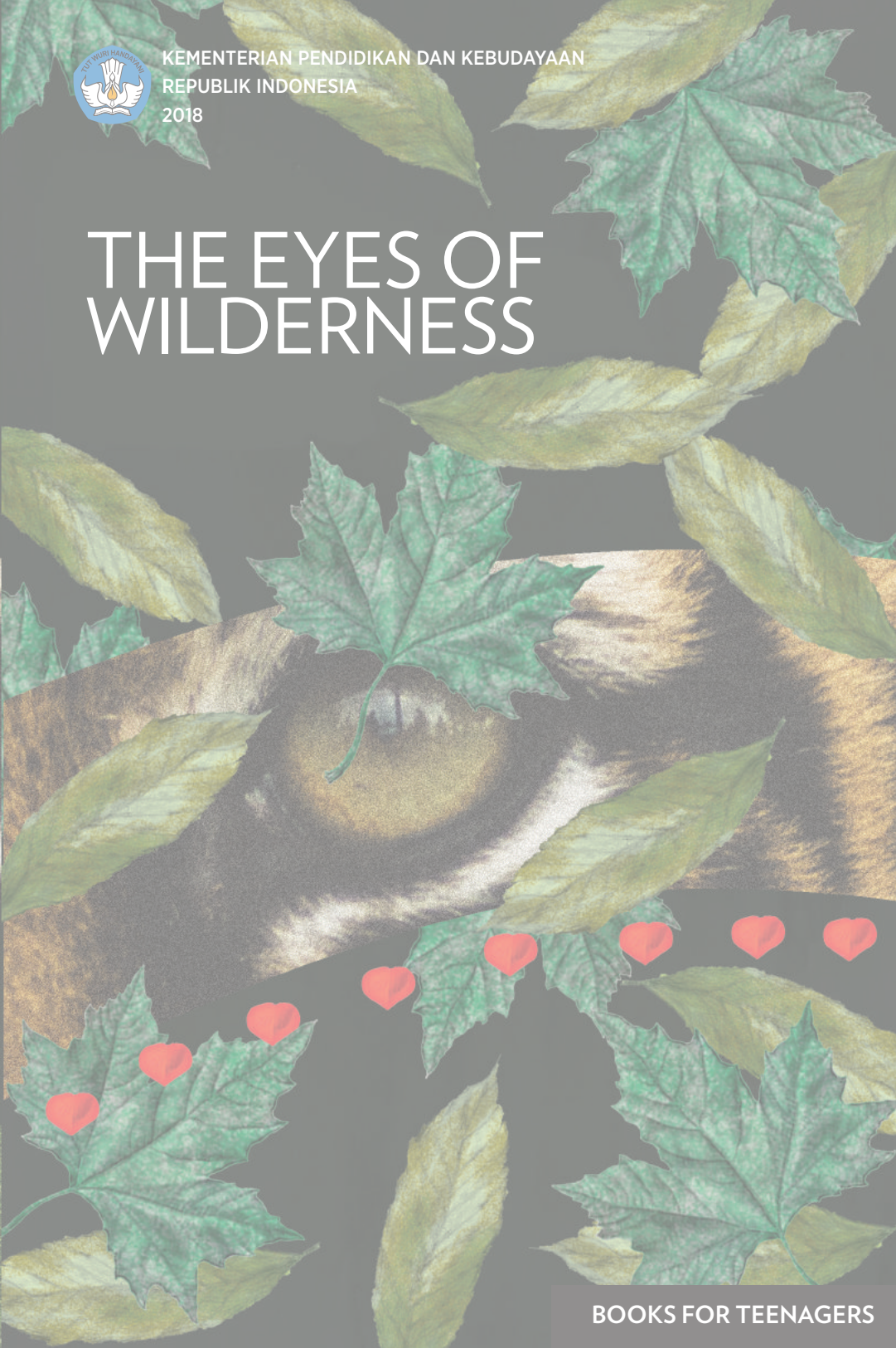


BOOKS FOR TEENAGERS



KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN DAN KEBUDAYAAN
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THE EYES OF WILDERNESS



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Judul:

THE EYES OF WILDERNESS

Buku untuk Remaja

Cetakan Pertama 2017

Cetakan Kedua 2018

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FOREWORD

*Director of Family Education Development,
Ministry of Education, Republic of Indonesia*

Dear valued reader,

Books cannot be separated from human development. Inspiring stories have brought significant changes to human history and the world around them. It has been proven that society with high levels of reading interest can influence national progress. Therefore, The Ministry of Education, Republic of Indonesia through the Directorate of Family Education, Sub Directorate of Child and Adolescent Education, seeks to provide quality books appropriate to the ages and characteristics of children and adolescent readers. Moreover, many books produced, such as this book, are the work of children and adolescents themselves.

Developing a reading habit provides many benefits. Not only will it enrich knowledge, reading will also train your critical thinking skills; it can help you with making decisions and problem solving; and also help you in your development of life values. A good reading habit is expected not only to be developed through School Literacy Movements in the form of asking students to read 15 minutes/day at school and at

home where the student is free to choose books/reading materials that suits their taste, including works of fiction. At home, students can also invite parents or other family members to discuss the contents of the book. This can strengthen the relationship within your family.

Hopefully this book can be a useful source of learning for you, as well as motivating you to read more.

Very warm regards,
Sukiman



THE EYES OF WILDERNESS

ELYSA NG

(ENGLISH VERSION)

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1 TIGER

I could smell them long before I heard their footsteps crashing into the undergrowth. The scent that they brought with them was completely foreign, a mix of cold hard metal blended with the smell of leather, burnt flesh and fresh blood. They were talking in loud noises, ushering each other forward. I slunk deeper inside the undergrowth, keeping myself hidden from sight, my tawny stripes blending in together with the forest ground. Invisibility was the only weapon that I have now, as I knew, that however puny these creatures seemed to be, I was no match for them. Nobody in this forest was. The snakes, the rhinos, the orangutans and many others had all fallen prey to these men.

The undergrowth parted, finally revealing the creatures. They were laughing, a sound echoing loudly and unnaturally in this part of the forest. Some of them were in gray uniforms, while some were wrapped around with the dark clothing that were always worn by the men around these parts. They were holding up a platform, where another tiger hung upside down, his eyes glazed. He was obviously dead, fallen to become prey to those man creatures. His orange and black fur were coated with grime and blood, matted in some places.

I felt my fur bristle, both in anger, and fear as I watched the group parade past, apparently shameless towards the fact that the entire forest was watching them. I had known that tiger. He owned the territory which slightly overlaps a portion of mine and he had fathered my previous litter. When he was alive, he was a fearsome tiger, known for his sharp claws and fearsome bite. But now he was just a corpse, dangling from a platform, carried by two men who were barely half his size.

They were disappearing now, into another section of the undergrowth. I knew that I was safe, for the time being. I started to trot away deeper into the woods, where the ferns were denser and it was harder to navigate. I slipped easily through the growing vines from the forest, ignoring the monkeys that had started to screech above the branches overhead. I could flicker my ears, choosing to ignore them. I was giving them the chance to live for another day.



The ground was now sloping down, into the direction of the valley. I shouldered myself past the bushes, stopping for a moment to mark my territory on a nearby tree. I hurriedly entered a small cave by the edge of some slopes in the valley, my eyes quickly adjusting into the gloomy atmosphere.

There were three pairs of misty blue eyes, peering out through the darkness. I chuffed under my breath, a sound to announce my arrival to my cubs. Almost at once, all three of my cubs had bounded forward, squeaking happily. They were now at the age to learn how to walk, and they did so, on tottering unsteady legs and tails that stuck out high for balance. I have been in charge of them, until they are at least old enough to disperse which should be about the time they reach from 20 to 30 months of age. I had to teach them how to survive in a human invested land, and how to grow up to be a fearsome tiger with a respected territory.

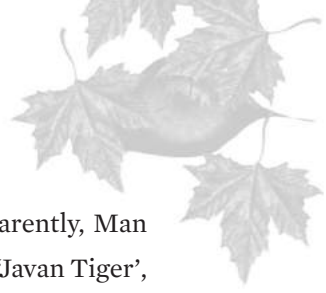
I nuzzled the nearest one, giving him a rough lick on his head that had nearly unbalanced him. I chuffed a few more times, before signaling with my tail to go in deeper inside the cave. I laid on my side, my eyes narrowing to slits as my cubs eagerly crowded over, fighting for teats that they wanted to claim for themselves. The largest cub in my litter had pushed down another cub that was sliding down off my flank. I pushed her small eager body with my muzzle, a small growl forming in my throat. The cubs seemed to have gotten the idea as the squabbling quietened down. I gave them a few more chuffs to remind them not to play rough with each other.

Before falling myself into a deep slumber, the images of that dead tiger dancing around my head.

2

When I was a little cub, there were way more of us than we are numbered right now. When my mother was still alive, back at the times when she taught my siblings and me the ways of survival, we were the rulers of the forest. Back then, the rules had been incredibly different. A hole was something found on the ground. A prey was there to sustain life. A ruler stayed the ruler. Now, the tables had flipped. A hole might be a hidden trap. Preys were getting scarce, and could kill us. What was once a ruler was no longer fit to stay in the throne. Many of us were fading away. We were dying due to bad prey, getting caught in traps, and captured or killed by those man creatures.

We tigers had ruled the forests at these parts for thousands and thousands of generations, but now what's left is just a few of us, scattered here and there. My family has spread out into all four directions of the wind, to be never heard off again. I never knew where my mother or siblings were anymore before I went my own way. I never knew what fate has fallen upon the cubs I had raised from my previous litter. Were they still alive? Did they continue on the next generation? Were they dead, hanging on a platform like that other tiger?



What were we to the eyes of man? Apparently, Man had named us *Panthera Tigris Sondaica* or the ‘Javan Tiger’, although frankly I found that name calling stupid. Weren’t we all tigers, and thus one and the same? I remembered my mother had told me that there was something called the ‘Sumatran tiger’ and something else called the ‘Bengal tiger’, although I found the idea absurd. But then, I hadn’t really met any other special or strange tigers.

Now men have been here for a long time too, but lately, they’ve been growing a little bit wildly, out of order. There had been men before I have set my paws on this planet, and I had my reasons to believe that there would still be men, long after our species had died out. But what did men want to do with us? We didn’t eat men, as they were too puny for prey, but the large cows that they drive out into the field were appetizing and enough to satisfy our hunger from finding almost no prey for weeks.

But their harsh cold rule refused to give us only that. I knew countless other tigers, who disappeared, reportedly becoming prey to man after trying to take down at least one of those fat moving lumps of meat. But what happened to us once we were killed and had become prey to man? I saw a lone man, moving across the undergrowth when I was still a juvenile tiger, eager to befall his first prey. On his coat, there was a pelt of another tiger, wrapped together to make it look like it was some kind of coat. Scared and afraid, I had turned tail and left, remaining hidden until he left.

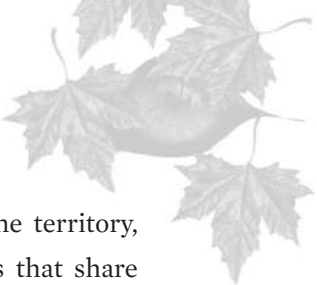
But when I came to think about it, the forest was never a safe place to begin with.

3

The sunset was streaming into the cave, waking me up from my deep slumber. I was aware of my cub's pelts as they jammed into each other, snoring wildly. I grumbled softly, as a small hind-leg nudged me on my face. My cubs were waking up too. I ran my tongue over one of the she-cubs, causing her to whimper and raise her head slowly while shaking her head sleepily. I chuffed softly, to wake the other two cubs up. There were some more groaning and whimpering before I had them all lined up in front of me, shaking their heads fuzzily at the sudden sunset light.

Flickering my tail, I started to walk towards the entrance of the den, looking back to expect my cubs to follow. Cautiously, they all did, stepping out of the den in the evening air. I took a moment to take a quick sniff at the air. There were some fresh scents of some monkeys and some deer, but no form of human. That was good.

It seemed that it had just rained that afternoon, several puddles pooling around on the mud. The weather in rainforest here is very humid. It rains a lot here in the rainforest, the weather being able to shift from bright to dark in a matter of hours. I chuffed again, and started to walk out of the den, my tail held high in the signal for my cubs to follow.



I was planning to show them around the territory, and introduce them to many other creatures that share our space. The three cubs seemed over the world at the thought of exploring the territory. With their misty blue eyes and tottering legs, I knew that we wouldn't be able to go really far yet.

The largest male cub of my litter sprung forward, his whiskers twitching as he tried to gauge in everything that was set right in front of him. His two sisters followed, looking around with excitement. I felt myself blinked in amusement. The forest was covered in sparkling dew on the nearby leaves and stalks. It must have been like a wonderful experience to them.

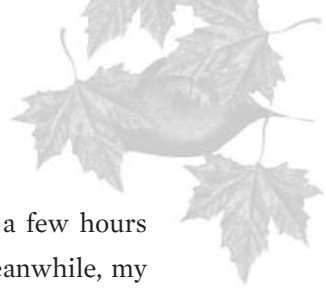


I started to pad deeper into the forest, my tail held high as a sign post for the cubs. I could spot all the wild orchids now, growing in all directions on the trees of the rainforest. They were *epiphytes*, plants that grew on other plants that were not judged as parasitic plants. The orchids were one of the plants bringing in the colors in the forest floor. My favorite ones were the lilac and white ones.

I could hear the buzzing insects competing with the loud screeching of monkeys from the overhanging vines above. Most of the creatures living within this forest were tree dwelling apes. I could smell the Proboscis Monkeys, obviously on their way for their early evening daily meal. These reddish brown creatures dominated the tree lines near the river, their activities bursting during the morning. My lips curled on the corners of my mouth. There were fast agile creatures, these monkeys, and had the advantages of the trees. They were not what I would expect for my early breakfast. I'd rather choose an easier target.

As a tiger, I ate whatever I could find. There was even once a time when I even pulled down a small fresh-water river crocodile who was sunbathing by the nearby river. It was looking the other direction, enjoying the bright sunlight, it didn't even notice me until I did the killing bite. I found its nest a little bit later, and digging a little amounted to a few eggs to crunch on. But the current things that I'd rather eat would be fish, deer or fowl.

I opened my jaw to give the air a long deep sniff. There was a small whiff of deer scent that was slightly old.



The deer had been here, but that had been a few hours ago. The deer must have been long gone. Meanwhile, my cubs had decided to just perch down under a tree and tried growling at the proboscis monkeys. Their shrieking shout was louder, and they were running up higher into the tree, alerting every other creature of our presence. I growled, warning them that they had to keep quiet, but they didn't oblige, preferring instead to run towards the direction of a nearby squirrel.

With this going on, I was sure I wouldn't be able to catch any prey anytime soon. I huffed, walking towards the small she-cub and picking her up by the scruff of her neck. With my tail held high, I started to signal them back towards the direction of the den. I could try and bring them out again tomorrow, but right now, I was going to take a journey out far and wide in the search for at least something to satisfy my hunger.

4 HUMAN

I squinted at the sudden intrusion of light, trying to take in everything that was happening around me. The alarm was beeping beside me, loudly. It seemed like I had fallen asleep on my laptop again. The smell of last night's pizza was still lin-

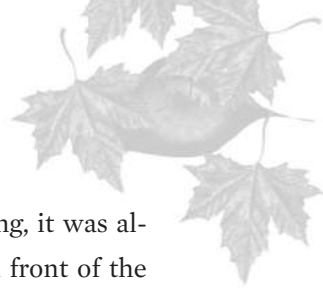
gering in the air. I could smell the cheesy bits of it, with tomatoes and mushrooms. Tiger was butting his head at my foot, demanding his breakfast. My cell phone beeped, signaling that there was a torrent of messages waiting to be replied to. Another day, many more things to do.

Isa [4:05AM]: Rosie, I'm sure you'll be fine. The meeting is at 10 tomorrow. The kids will love you

Isa [4:10AM]: Rosie, don't forget to dress formally for the occasion, by the way.

It was just like Isa, trying sweet talk me in to things. Who did she think she was? I sighed glancing up at the alarm clock who was still beeping out its head away near the table, wondering what time it was. 9:30. I felt my breath hitch up on my throat. Suddenly, my day seemed to have started moving at an even faster rate. What did I do last night? My mind reeled. Writing. I did some writing. About the tiger. I had promised that I would write about the life of a tiger during the time of the Dutch colonization in Java. That had been a long time ago, in the 18th century when man started to disturb the lives of the animals living in the jungle. When they had started to kill, a reason for a heavy downfall for the animal. But that had to pause for now, I had matters to attend.

By the time I was done shoving up some fish bits for Tiger and ran outside to hail a cab, it was already 9:45. The cab wouldn't be able to bring me there in time. I have to look for my favorite taxi-bike. The place wasn't so far, I should be able to easily reach it. I knew that I could always count on my favorite taxi-bike



By the time I reached the school building, it was already 9:57. Isa was already waiting for me in front of the school, her arms waving frantically at my arrival.

“Hurry up and get in!” She told me, ushering me through hallways until we reached inside of a room. “We got all the kids rounded up already. They were explained and understood. So, please, just go in there and start speaking.”

I managed to sneak out a small glare at her, before I was pushed into the gym.

The gym in this school was slightly smaller than what I had thought it would be, the number of students there were not as overwhelming as I imagined. They were all eighth grade kids, first time biology kids. They were all sitting across the seats, and much to my distaste, most of them had either their ear pods in, or had their attention on their phone. I quietly stepped onto the center of the gym, by the podium, coughing lightly to attract their attention. It took at least three minutes before finally everyone noticed my presence.

I saw Isa nodded towards me from the doorway through the corner of my eye. I should get started.

“Well, good morning, everyone.”

I introduced, watching the students carefully. As a biologist, it was a thing that has become my second nature. Observation. When I was their age, we had to place potatoes inside Petri dishes and watch them swell up due to osmosis and diffusion and what-not.

“And welcome. So, I guess you know that my name is Rose, but you can call me Rosie. Miss Rosie. I’ve been invited here by my dear friend, who also happens to be your teacher—in the need of me helping to assist her to finish the syllabus portion. I’d like to give my thanks to Ms. Isa for making this event possible.”

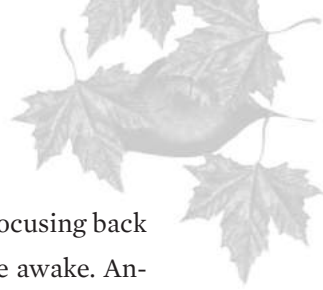
There were some dry chuckles here and there, making me cast another sideways glance towards Isa. She shook her head. My job here was to talk, to educate these young children about the things that are happening in the world. As a zoologist, I found that my responsibility.

I felt my belly flip uncomfortably as I began to speak. “Now, we’re going to be focusing on the rainforests in Indonesia and on the animals living there. So how far have you guys gotten?”

One of the things that Isa had told me was that I was to be as interactive as possible with these guys. Apparently children—especially these teenagers--were very sensitive creatures. But by the looks of this batch, I really didn’t think so. That fire inside of me dwindled, before raging back on, with a more powerful force than the last.

“Come on, guys!” I started. “Wake up. It’s school time. Hello?”

There was a kid, who was half asleep by the bench on the second row. I suspect he didn’t get a lot of sleep the night before. I stopped talking. From the corner of my eye, I could see Isa trying to glare me down from the doorway.



She started to shake her head. I ignored her, focusing back on my audience who was still struggling to be awake. Another girl by the top seats of the gym were nodding off, her head leaning on to her friend. That was when the fire decided to explode.

“Is that it, guys? You’re all so shameless. You.”

The boy squeaked in alarm, jerking awake when I pointed him out. My voice had dropped. It was snarky, daring the boy to speak.

“Let me guess. Facebook kept you awake all night? I don’t think you’re the type to use Instagram or maybe even chat. No girlfriend, I bet. Nobody would ever want to date a lazy bones like you. No, wait, it must have been YouTube. You stayed up all night watching YouTube. I believe there was a match between Manchester United and Arsenal last night. Am I correct?”

I thought I had captured the audience of everyone else in the gym. I brushed the boy off, this time looking back towards my audience.

“Okay, so maybe biology isn’t your main interest in your life. If you’re not, alright. I’ll just explain that bit to those few who are interested.”

I was sure Isa was positively quaking in either anger or fear by the doorway. I knew that I wouldn’t be getting that paycheck anyways but I couldn’t stop. The fire had already pushed me off the edge.

There were a few more murmurings, until a small brunette haired girl raised her hand.

“I’m interested, Miss,” she said, before nudging her friend beside her who was holding her chin with her hand. The other girl nodded too, her eyes heavily lidded.

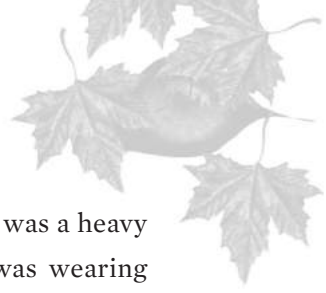
Across the audience, there were several shockwaves here and there. Some others were whispering ferociously to their seat mates while the rest were looking at me blankly.

“You know what? I might start by deciding who stays with me here or not. When I don’t select you, you’re dismissed. You, stay.” Then, I nodded towards the brunette girl, purposefully skipping over her friend who were still holding her chin with her hand, and then looking across to scan the auditorium. I had picked out already the students who were going to see me—a PhD degreed professor, by the way—speak about this subject.

By the time I was done, I had dismissed everybody else, and saved only five children. As the children filed out, I could see Isa start to debate with another teacher whether the best solution was to kick me out or just try and plan out their next move. I quickly dismissed their moves. I would deal with them later, but I had five interested children who were now looking at me with a new light of respect in their eyes.

“I want names.” I stated, studying them.

The first girl was the brunette girl with wide hazel eyes who had raised her hand in all the chaos that had happened earlier. This time, she was without her friend. The second girl was dark haired girl whose straight hair



was quite long. The kid standing beside her was a heavy boy with dark nutmeg colored skin who was wearing glasses. The third girl has dirty blonde hair with pink streaks on it (this school apparently allows girls to dye their hair). She was the tallest in the group, and had green eyes, which were contact lenses. The final boy had an athletic body, and was handsome. He had a friendly face, and a squared jaw. It was obvious that there were many girls after him.

At once, the brunette girl stepped forward. “I’m Kanaya.”

Her voice was loud and clear, without a sign of fear or nervousness. I could guess that she was a natural leader. My analysis was spot on, as she proceeded to point at the other kids who were gathering around her.

“This is Asry, Matari, Nisha, and Ricky.”

As she mentioned each name, the children acknowledged it with a nod or a smile. Nisha even said hello. I could imagine their basic personalities from their looks. Asry was more serious and reserved. Nisha should be more of the bright and bubbly type. Ricky seemed like he was more of a sports captain and the popular soccer player. Matari was the quiet one, with a peaceful expression. A leader or an advisor type of teen. And then there was Kanaya, the sweet girl who loved peace. But of course, these were just guesses, nothing to do with what their real personalities should be like.

“Fine with me.” My voice was gentle now, as I shook

their hands. “Let’s get started.”

5

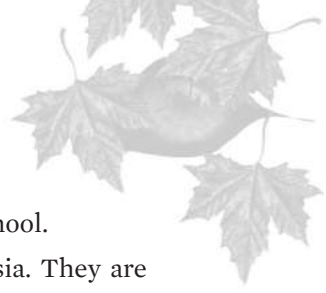
“So I’m sure that everyone is familiar with the gigantic archipelago that we call Indonesia?”

There was a flurry of nodding heads. We had ended up moving to a smaller private class room. Isa had left us to be, her lips pursed, as she marched outside. Before we entered, she had pulled me aside and told me in a hushed tone that all the other children had been ushered to their usual classes and that I might have to face a few of their parents later, because she isn’t going to try and add fire to the burning flame that I had created. I told her to bring it on.

“Indonesia is located in the Southeast Asia, and it is estimated to have at least 17,000 islands where only 6,000 is inhabited. Studies show that at least a few new islands pop up across the archipelago every day! Most of the small islands aren’t that big. Some are really, really small you could walk around in at least ten minutes.”

I had started to talk about the island itself. Indonesia was a very interesting place, and one of the most precious jewels for us zoologists to the ecosystem living there. I hoped these kids feel the same way.

I paused, turning on my Powerpoint and letting the first slide zoom in to a picture of Indonesia. It was a finely colored picture that I had taken from the internet a few



days ago in anticipation for talking for this school.

“There are five main islands in Indonesia. They are Kalimantan, Sumatra, Sulawesi, Papua, and finally Java—which is the densest as it is home to the capital city of Indonesia which is Jakarta. Indonesia had a really long history to begin with. Indonesia is the hotspot for many popular cultures and believes. Most of the rainforests which house a huge number of animals are mainly found on the four islands: Sumatra, Borneo--which is the name for Indonesia’s territory in the Kalimantan island-- Sulawesi and Papua.”

I reeled out the facts quickly, highlighting the important points.

“So I’m sure you’ll all be very interested to know a little bit of zoology facts.” There was a flurry of nodding. “Many of them, I’m sure you would know as they are extremely iconic species. They are elephant, orangutan and tiger. But we need to look into more details. The elephants are divided into several subspecies that can be found in Indonesia, like the ‘Borneo Pygmy Elephants.’, and the Sumatran Elephants. Meanwhile, orangutans are divided into two subspecies. Borneo and Sumatran Orangutans.”

As I started rambling on and on, I felt myself transported into a realm in which only I could enter. I was back in the eyes of the Javan tiger I was writing about earlier, imagining her adventures through the undergrowth with her growing cubs to discover more about the residents living along with her in the forest. The mother tiger’s love for her cubs was very strong. I should continue writing when I

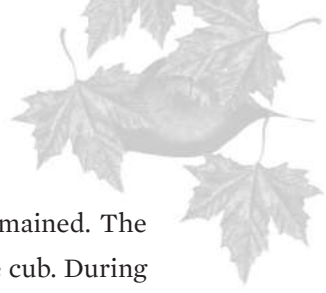


get back.

“Alright, children, have you heard of the Javan tiger who had gone extinct a long time ago?”

6 TIGER

There were at least eight or nine of those elephants, emerging from the undergrowth. I growled, eyeing them warily, my tail held high to push my cubs back. They were bigger now, stronger. At least big enough to wander around the forests together with me. The distance that we could now travel had become larger and larger, and they were seeing many new things. Out of



the three cubs that I had raised, only two remained. The smaller feisty female cub, and the larger male cub. During a few months of famine during the dry season, the smallest cub didn't make it. She was there one cool evening, and the next morning, she was not.

I remembered calling and calling, but she didn't wake up. So I gnawed up her dead body, which was mainly just composed of skin and bones and lead my other cubs away. Her small body had more than enough nutrition to nurse the other two cubs. I couldn't grieve for long. There were two other cubs to tend. The famine finished a week later when I snagged a buck. The buck was enough food for a few days, and the other two cubs grew rapidly, one less competition gone.

The elephants trumpeted, ambling along the road. Borneo elephants were rare encounters with us tigers. Elephants originated from Kalimantan and Sabah, brought into the island of Java. As I raised my second litter of cubs, I had barely come across them any longer. Frankly, I could guess the reasons for that. I was scenting more humans recently, even in the very deep parts of the jungle. The jungles were diminishing, shrinking back. The prey that I have been catching was getting smaller, weaker, and barely enough to satisfy my hunger or provide enough nutrition for me.

I eyed the elephants as they passed us with steady yellow glare. The elephants ignored us, but ushered their own cubs to the other opposite side. It was difficult to snag

an elephant, even the smallest cub. They were defended by the larger elephants in the group, and a wrong move could eventually lead to an untimely death. I remembered my brother, ripped apart by the tusks of the elephant during a particular famine. We were just learning how to hunt, and he was overconfident about it.

The larger cub whined, his eyes tracking the movement of the elephant. No. I signaled to him. We are not going anywhere near those elephants. I ushered them away. Challenging elephants were something that were meant for later, although not at all advisable.

In the jungle, there are great many things to be found. Not just those elephants and monkeys, but there is even an occasional Javan Lutung that I can snack on with my cubs. Lutungs tend to stay on by trees. Lutung are in different sizes and have orange reddish hue in color, as shade that was almost like my pelt. The tail was very long. I was partial towards the lutung. They were yummy, yes, but I rarely ever had a chance to snack on them as they rarely touch the ground. But if they did, they fell victim into my waiting jaws. As a tiger, my job was to lead the food chain, and fight with humans to claim the spot at the top of the food chain.

I sniffed the air, trying to get any fresh scent of prey. Beside me, I saw my cubs do the same. Wild boar! There was at least a group of them. The boars with their own cubs. The tiny striped cubs were barely a meal for all of



us, and with the current level of hunger I was feeling right now, I felt opted to aim for the bigger boars. Maybe even the leader of the group, although I knew I was doing a dangerous risk myself. I had to pick out a medium sized one for myself. A boar that would outweigh me would end up to be a problem.

The boars were one of my main competitor's food, aside from the other smaller cats that live in the rainforest. But the boars would eat everything and anything ravenously. I chuffed softly, to direct my cub's attention to it. They growled, their tails held high with excitement. They knew what we were going after.

Quietly stalking an animal on the prey trail with cubs is no easy feat. The cubs would blunder around the under bush, making prey scatter everywhere. I chuffed to my cubs, telling them to be as silent as they could. They were not far, the scent was pretty fresh.

There was also the scent of fresh blood hanging in the air. They must have caught on some small prey or something, I swept my cubs over towards a small rock that leads to a tiny cave. It was empty, and small. It was probably used by a small wild cat to nest her own cubs recently, but she probably moved them. The scent of kittens was very stale.

They had to stay there. I didn't want the boars to come and get them. The younger female cub whined softly, her now yellow eyes blinking at me incredulously. Her brother was laid back, watching my movements carefully. I chuffed at them again. This time the message was clear. They were



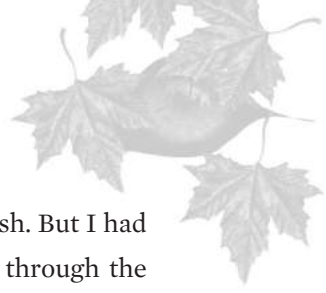
to stay there until I come back.

I blinked at them once more to remind them that they were not old enough to question my decision yet. And with that, I went out, to go after the boar.

7

Through the deep undergrowth, I could see them. There were a few individuals and a few of their cubs, all of them crowded together to eat a deer carcass in the middle of a small clearing. The biggest one, probably the leader of the group was straight in the middle. I quickly scanned my eyes over the scene, analyzing them. The deer was now barely just some torn skin and bones. They were going to stop feeding soon, meaning that I had to act fast.

My eyes stopped at a slightly large but medium boar, one that I knew I would take down easily. It was lounging near the tall blades of grass, where the wind was facing



onto my side. It was going to be an easy ambush. But I had to creep all around the small clearing to get through the boar. It would be a problem if the wind decided to change direction and favor the boar instead. I had such instances once, when I was still a young blundering tigress who barely knew her way in the world. The first time my mother allowed me to watch her hunt was when she pulled down a Malayan Tapir, another commonly found prey here. In my mind's eye, I saw her pull down the malayan tapir, crippling it down to just mere prey.

I crept forward inching around the undergrowth, my eyes set on the chosen target.

That was when the wind decided to change its side. The boars were looking around in alarm now, the small cubs starting to run and disappear towards the direction of the undergrowth. The boar I was after was on his guard, snorting. This was no good, I had to jump.

Although boars did make up most of my diet, it still took out a lot of energy to kill one boar. They were big heavy creatures that could easily charge ahead and gore an adult tiger with no problem. I was on top of the boar now, my claws tearing through flesh and my teeth trying to bite through scruff. The rest of the boars were fleeing, running as fast as their trotters could carry them from me. They were not going to stay back and help their buddy.

The boar was starting to duck now, trying to roll me off. I clung on stubbornly, squashed between the boar's heavy body and dirt. I had to land the killing blow as fast

as I could, before I ran out of energy. The boar grunted and snorted. Wild boars had incredibly amounts of endurance, and could take on any pain that had fallen upon them. I snarled through the amount of fur my teeth had sunk under.

I was starting to feel an overwhelming tiredness wash ingover me. The boar was getting weaker and weaker. Suddenly, it felt like a match on who would tire out first. A fresh image of my cubs popped in my mind and I snarled, dragging the boar and shaking it as hard as I can. The boar snorted, thrashing wildly. We must have tussled for at least ten minutes, maybe fifteen. By that time, I felt like I was going to fall over in exhaustion. My own body was pretty bruised but I still managed to hold on. The boar's body was full of gashes and scratches but it was still holding on. Yet its struggles were getting weaker and weaker.

Eventually the boar became still as its life drained out.

After my cubs and I had fed and my cubs were curled around me contently, the boar's will for life suddenly flashed into my mind. All prey was like that. Prey never wanted to die. It somehow got me thinking about man again. In front of them, I was more or less viewed as prey.

I chuffed softly at my cubs, rasping a tongue over the male cub. I had to go to sleep. As a tiger, it wasn't my job to worry about those things. There was always going to be a tomorrow where I had to take care of my cubs, hunt, kill and repeat.



8 HUMAN CHILD

What would happen if a Leopard would ever try to fight head on against a Komodo Dragon? Natural circumstances would never allow them to meet, but if they did end up in a clash, who would eventually win? The Leopard was agile, quick. The Komodo was stronger, but was armed with venom that could cause an infection to spread if the Leopard would win. Some people said it would be a tie. Others argued that the leopard would unquestioningly win due to the fact that it was agile, and it was not completely scientifically proven yet that the saliva of a Komodo dragon contains certain bacteria that would cause infection to set in.

I remembered listening to Ms. Rosie talk to us about Komodo dragons. On how they were native species to Indonesia and the argument regarding a Komodo dragon's saliva.

I sighed, hurriedly texting a message to my best friend, before glancing over at my messages to Ms. Rosie. I hurriedly texted my question to her. We had kept in regular

correspondence, even after she left. I found her extremely cool. How she managed to deal an entire grade like that.

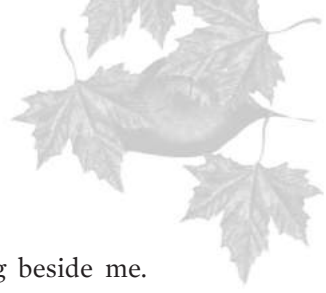
Rosie [7:08 AM]: I'm not really sure myself whether a Komodo dragon would win against a leopard. But I would say that the leopard would win. The leopard is generally more agile and faster, so they should be able to avoid the Komodo dragon's bite as they are more sluggish compared to the leopard.

Rosie [7:10AM]: But of course, we are all cat lovers here, aren't we?

I snorted a laugh at the message. I wondered when Ms. Rosie would be able to go to school and talk about zoology again. She was definitely fun to chat around with, that's for sure. But I was not really sure whether Ms. Isa would even consider Ms. Rosie around at school anymore. After all, she did kick out an entire grade. The rest of my friends now talked about her solemnly. When a guest would come and say something, they would probably be remembered, through imitations and jokes. But to Ms. Rosie, there was none.

School dragged on as usual. Today's biology period was just a teacher coming in and trying to talk about enzymes. *Boring.* We all knew about what an enzyme was and what it could do already. I whipped my phone under the table, to text Ms. Rosie again. She replied almost immediately. It seemed like she's the type to keep her phone beside her while she worked. I quickly texted her, wondering if I could ever come around to meeting her again.

Rosie: [8:15AM] Sure, why not? Are you free on Satur-



day? What about you bring a friend or two?

I glanced over Emma, who was sitting beside me. she didn't even seem to listen. She was doodling hearts all over her notebook. I shrugged as she's probably not going to even be interested. She was not going to come together with me. And then there was Asry, right at the back of the room. She was staring right at the worksheet the teacher gave us, and her face was twisted in a look of concentration. That was right, I should bring on Asry instead to meet Ms. Rosie. I was sure Asry liked Ms. Rosie too, as they got along pretty well during the last seminar.

I nodded to myself, resolving to ask her after the period ended, because I was not really sure whether I would be seeing her in all my classes after this.

"Kanaya! Concentrate!" The teacher snapped, glaring towards my direction. I shrugged, looking towards my notebook where I had stuck a worksheet. Question number one asked about the enzyme which was found in the human digestive system. I snorted to myself, hurriedly circling the answer B. Pepsin. Of course it had to be Pepsin.

9

"I'm busy this Saturday."

"Please? Pretty please?" Asry shook her head, her dark bangs covering her eyes. I cursed inwardly in my head. I remembered that Asry was more of the loner type; shy and reserved--meaning that she wasn't really the type

to hang around with people on a Saturday.

“It’s going to be fun. I know that you would be pretty interested in this. Anyways, please, if you’re not busy? Plus it’s going to help with your grades, it really is.”

Asry eyed me suspiciously, before walking towards the other direction. “I got French classes after this,” she said, slinging her bag across her back.

“We can meet in front of Starbucks at 9 on Saturday!” I yelped after her, desperately hoping that she had heard me. She just stuck up her arm, and waved. Somehow, that made me smile, because I knew that was more or less her way of saying yes.

10

So that was how Asry and I had managed to end up meeting at Starbucks at 9, waiting for Ms. Rosie to appear. I slurped on my coffee, watching the atmosphere outside. It was pretty quiet for a Saturday, because most people had obviously slept in. The café was nearby the University of Indonesia. That was where I heard Ms. Rosie does her jobs and lectures most of the time.

“Hey, kids.”

I glanced up, my eyes obviously sparkling with excitement. Ms. Rosie grabbed a seat opposite to us, a large cup of coffee in her hand.

“Tired much, Miss?” I asked, noticing the bags under her eyes.



“Yeah, I was up writing.” Ms. Rosie grinned, looking towards Asry. “So, Asry. How are you?” Her eyes were soft.

“Fine, Miss.” Asry nodded, her dark eyes focusing on Ms. Rosie’s cup. “What are we even going to discuss about, anyway?”

“I can answer that.” I chirped, before Ms. Rosie could answer. “She’s going to tell us about conservation efforts that has been done for endangered animals. And the reasons why they are in trouble. That should be a help for our upcoming biology essay.”

Ms. Rosie smiled. “So what do you think, Asry? If you don’t want to be here, you could go home and sleep in on this beautiful Saturday.”

Asry ruffled her bangs slowly. She nodded, her eyes still fixed on Ms. Rosie’s cup. She looked up a little bit, a tiny smile on her lips. Asry always needed some time to warm up with people. Of course, I know that she liked Ms. Rosie. My observations were always spot on.

“I got a few power point slides up for you kids. This is one of my classes that I teach this semester to my students at the university. Hummm... Let’s see.” Ms. Rosi turned on her tablet. “Why don’t I start with an animal that you girls are already familiar with? I think we can start with that. Then we will go on with the conservation efforts the government is taking for animals in Indonesia.”

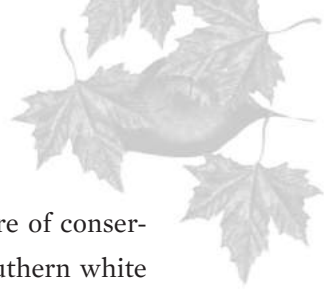
“That sounds great.” I said, quickly settling down on my chair. The coffee in my hands was still warm, as Rosie started to speak.

11 RHINO, CORAL REEFS, AND TRASH

BY: KANAYA

The southern white rhino is a species commonly found in Africa. Like every other rhino, the southern white rhino is regularly poached for its horn in the hope that it would make a great contribution to the medicine trade in China. As rhinos are very slow breeders, it took no time for the number of the southern white rhino to drop. By the late 1800s, the animal was thought to be extinct until a small group of at least 50 individuals were discovered in Natal, South Africa later on.

Immediately, protected areas and breeding rhinos were set up, making the rhino population arose. Now, there is at least 11,000 of these rhinos living in Africa, making it one of the most numerous rhino species. This has also made the poaching for these rhinos to return and they are back to be regularly hunted for their horn. But at least, this what a success story could be.



But there are also many stories out there of conservation attempts failing, horribly. Like the southern white rhino's closest relative, the northern white rhino. In the year 2015, a white rhino passed away, leaving only three remaining northern white rhinos left in the world. Unfortunately, all three of the northern white rhinos were too old to breed, so the only final last ditch effort was to harvest the sex cells from both these rhinos and try using vitro fertilization the southern white rhino.

You win some, you lose some.

And then somehow we're back to the issue of Indonesia. There are a lot problematic conditions here on our archipelago. We get the coral reef problem, where at least 95% of the coral reefs in Indonesia are threatened and since Indonesia is practically an archipelago with coral reefs everywhere, 95% is a lot. In other words, it is a gigantic area of space. It's due to many local factors, that happens-everywhere in the entire world. We have the overfishing problem. The poor coastal management problem and those are just the local factors. What about the global problems where the world ocean's acidification is increasing?

The coral reefs are placed under a lot of treat from all these factors. In the Tanjung Puting National Park in Kalimantan they have a turtle reserve. Although the beach looks squeaky clean at first glance, there are a lot of transparent plastic items floating around. Used diapers, plastic bottles, those are just examples. Animal activists and the locals should work together to clean up the beaches here.

Tourists are invited to raise awareness about wildlife and the environment around them. But sometimes, their presence creates the exact opposite of what is intended. Tourists enjoy the place, bringing the fund needed to save wild life from the brink of extinction, but then there is also trash tourists would throw around. It is disrespectful towards the environment. There are also times when the tourist is oblivious to safety. For example, there were tourists who died for swimming in a crocodile infested river and tourists who would stroll around a Komodo reserve. There's a line between plain stupidity and being daring. They crossed the line.

The next threat in Indonesia is deforestation. Indonesia is blessed with many rainforests, and when cities finally settle in and economy starts rising, many forest plots are taken down due to the fact that it is needed for other things like agriculture, rubber, palm oil, and pulp plantations as well as actual human settlement. It goes to the point where at least 25% of the forest area of Indonesia has disappeared since 1990 and that has been home to many species of animals being forced out into the hands of hungry human. Sumatran elephants in Sumatra had been reported to have gone out of the forest and into human villages, trampling down crops and scaring everyone. Animal-human conflict is also due to deforestation.

Everyone reacts strongly on these issues. To solve it, they even have a team of trained elephants to chase out the wild elephants. The poor elephants will finally have



to retreat into deeper part of the rainforest and if they're incredibly unlucky, they would find that there really is nothing left to return to.

The last problem is pollution. Every country has its own pollution problem. Take Jakarta as an example. It's a big gigantic metropolitan city, and is very dense with population. So dense, that when people can't find a home, they build their own houses nearby (already polluted) rivers. This has become a problem for those who live there and for those who do not, because they pollute the river that can cause flooding in that area. The government is cleaning up the area, so that trash would not pile up and ruin nature in metropolitan city.

The pollution problem is basically one of the reasons why many species of animals are dying out. The canals in Jakarta that are cleaned every year to avoid flooding are no longer home to many species of animals. Even the Ciliwung river, one of the biggest rivers here in Jakarta, is so full of pollution that it has wiped out nearly all the native plants and animals that should be able to live there.

The government is prioritizing to conserve the native species of Indonesia. They're trying to save tigers since Sumatran tigers are critically endangered now. The Javan tiger, on the other hand had long become extinct. There are many other critical cases, like the Rhinos, the Elephants and the turtles who live in Indonesia and are facing more threats every day. Each and every animal has its own spe-

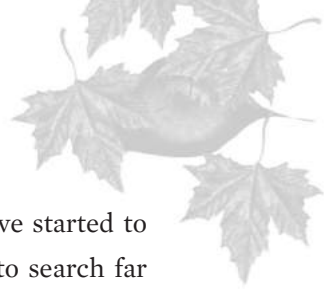
cific problems. The turtles are being hunted to be eaten, and its eggs are being stolen by humans. Turtles have a very tiny rate of survival once it has hatched from its eggs, so its extinction is guaranteed if the government does not step in to help.

Conservation efforts do end up to be costly, and they need a lot of dedication and hard work to completely save animals hanging on the brink on extinction, but seriously is worth it.

12 TIGER CUB

By the time it was nightfall outside, mother was gone. I blinked fuzzily towards my brother who was still asleep, snoring quietly in a curled up ball of orange and black. I didn't want him to wake up yet, so I quietly got out onto my paws and snuck a peek at the entrance of the cave. Mother would always change our den every now and then. Actually, I preferred the old one to the new one. This one had a weird scent in it, as if it used to be inhabited by another animal right before we came to it.

My belly rumbled, reminding me that I was hungry.



As a growing cub, I was always hungry. I have started to eat meat on most days now, so Mother had to search far and wide to try and find more prey for me and my brother. Lately, she's been leaving us in the den for longer and longer periods of time. Another famine seemed to be close to striking. My tail tip twitched, reminding me of the last horrible famine.

Outside, it was incredibly dark. The crickets and frogs were all crying out at the same time simultaneously. I felt my fur bristle a little, my ears pricked. All my senses were alert. I tested my nose, and realized that all I could smell was the faint scent of my mother. What about prey? I knew that hogs had their own distinct scent. So did the monkeys and the deer. I drew in a large sniff, trying to absorb everything around me. There was another scent hanging around in the air. It was a wild bird maybe? Whatever it was, it had crossed this place before.

I guiltily placed a step out of the den. I had done it tons of times with my Mother, exploring the places far beyond, but I've never dared to wander out alone like this. I quickly turned back to look at my brother, who was still asleep. My entire senses now all focused on this bird, I slipped out, and into the darkness of the night.

I knew that my Mother would probably freak out if she returned from her hunt to find that I was not there. But I could not miss that bird! I would show her that I could positively hunt my own prey alone. Slinking into the darkness, I eyed the area around me with concentration. My

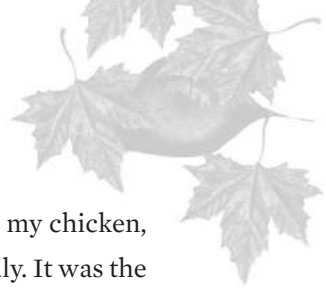
brother and I had romped around a little bit in the daylight when my mother was asleep in the den, and I was sure I knew at least the main visuals of the area.

I was going closer and closer to the trail, trying my best to keep my footsteps as soft as I could. My nose sniffed around wildly. It was there, and it was close. I just had to find it. I imagined my mother stalked the wild hog that she had brought home a few weeks ago. It was huge, and there were a lot of bruises and cuts that she had when she returned. But the wild hog tasted delicious, and it was picked clean of flesh almost immediately.

I froze as a soft padding of footsteps attracted my attention, as I narrowed my eyes trying to keep the flattest I could on the ground. It was a chicken. It was black, like all of the wild fowls that could be found in the forest. My mouth drew open in a soft hungry growl. That chicken was at least half of my size, and I should be big enough to drag it down.

When I tackled it headfirst and managed to sink my teeth into its neck after a few somersaults of tearing and biting through thin air, I felt a surging amount of surprise at the sudden gush of blood into my mouth. I bit harder, shaking the chicken. There was no way that I was going to share this with my brother. I would devour the chicken here, right here and right now. I was halfway through munching on its neck and feeling the warm glow of satisfaction wash over me when I realized that I was being watched.

I could smell it, the same furry smell that mother had



brought home a few weeks ago. I bit down on my chicken, my posture defensive, eyeing the clearing wildly. It was the hog scent, the scent of wild boar. I knew it meant prey. That prey was nearby, but I also knew that boars are also carnivorous, and wouldn't mind a bit of prey here and there. It was probably the chicken. This chicken was mine! I was not going to surrender it for anything.

I snarled, biting down onto the chicken harder. I could see small eyes peering from the undergrowth as more and more boars appeared from the undergrowth. They were bigger, and were way more bulky than me. I felt a deep pulsing fear inside of me, instinct telling me to run away. But I wanted to hold on to the chicken. After all, these boars were preys and I was a predator. As a predator, I should feel unnerved of boars. But yet, most of the boars were at least bigger and bulkier than me. I was positively quaking inside.

An especially gigantic one stepped in front of me. It was at least three fourths of my mother's size. It was snorting heavily, pawing the floor and glaring at me. Its tusks somehow were glimmering in the moonlight. I snarled back at it, hoping I intimidated it somewhat. It snorted again, lowering its head. Was it going to charge? I felt my small body bundled up defensively. I snarled again loudly at it, showing off my barely growing fangs that were bloodied after feasting through that chicken.

Suddenly, my mother burst out of the undergrowth, tackling headfirst into the hog, suddenly engaged in a

deadly battle. My fur bristled in horror as I watched my mother tear into the boar's broad back, snapping and clawing, aiming for the neck. The rest of the boars were fleeing, afraid. On instinct they were leaving their leader away to be eaten by some tigers.

I growled, jumping forward to nip at the boar's throat. Its massive strength caught me by surprise as it flung me away. I stumbled back into my paws as I watched my mother clawing, biting and thrashing, meanwhile the boar was squealing in anger. The undergrowth had suddenly twisted to life. I was hurrying forward again, this time nipping on the boar's hind leg and refusing to let go. With the buck of my mother, and its movement suddenly restricted, the boar finally stopped thrashing and died.

I chuffed happily, feeling the rough tongue of my mother rasping over me. I could hear the undergrowth rustle and felt my fur bristle before it flattened as my brother revealed himself, his ears perked in curiosity. Panting heavily, my mother settled herself near the boar and began to eat. Following her example, I did the same, my brother joining on my side.

As I swallowed up the boar's remains, I suddenly thought about the chicken I had killed. In this forest, the rule was to kill or be killed. The food I got was from our fierce struggle. As I was chewing on a particularly delicious part of the boar, I dropped that idea of finishing my chicken and swallowed chunk by chunk hungrily.



13 HUMAN CHILD

I eyed the dangling keychain hanging from a bag from my spot by the door. It was a bright yellow mouse. A Pikachu. After the *Pokemon Go* craze that hit hard, and went away hard, many people still had their Pokemon souvenirs lying around.

I myself had my Glaceon charm hanging from my bag although I was never a Pokemon Go player. The only Pokemon games that I played was the games. Pokemon Emerald, Pokemon Leaf Green, Pokemon Platinum, Pokemon Heart Gold, Pokemon Black 2, Pokemon Y and Pokemon Ruby. My parents had even preordered Pokemon Moon for me. What I liked the best about this game was that I could care for these animal-like creatures. There was a deeper meaning into why I liked Pokemon so much. Ever since I played my first Pokemon game, I immediately felt the affection and love to those small animal-like critters.

I saw Emma hang around in the corner, munching on her sandwich with the other girls.

“Hey, people!” I greeted, pulling out a chair and looking at their direction, trying to immediately judge their discussion. Of course, it was something along the lines of

K-Pop and Korean Drama. They were talking about BTS's new album. About their new song lists. I easily found myself slipping into the conversation. Truthfully, I was also a loyal fan of the Korean songs. Emma had changed my entire music taste. After laughing and chatting for a bit, I stood up to excuse myself to the toilet.

I found myself lurking in the hallway. It was still at least twenty more minutes before the break ended. I sighed. I was already bored. I started to whip my phone out to check the messages on the screen. There was nothing from Ms. Rosie for the entire day. She told me that she had to attend a seminar at Institut Pertanian Bogor, so I shouldn't expect a reply until tomorrow.

"Hey, Kanaya."

I jumped a little in surprise at the sound of the voice, relaxing when I saw Ricky. Ricky was the sports captain and one of the best soccer players in the school. Yet he had a really soft spot for nature and wild animals.

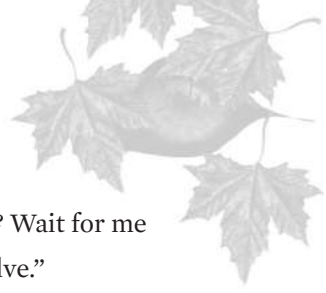
"Did you hear from Ms. Rosie recently?"

I nodded at the question, proceeding to tell him about meeting her plans to meet us next weekend.

"I got a meeting for my Soccer Club."

I watched him, as his gaze turned slightly uncomfortable. "The kids there need some help with the upcoming biology essay. You know, the one where we have to write about how important the ecosystem is and how to preserve it. You get what I'm saying, right?"

Ricky tilted his head, considering my words. "Maybe



on Saturday noon, I guess? In the school field? Wait for me to finish my meeting, I should be done by twelve.”

I nodded, quickly filing his words mentally.

“Can I invite some other people for this?” I asked.

He nodded, a slow smile spreading on his face. “Thanks, Kanaya! See you on Saturday.”

I shouldn’t be worried much. Saturday was still six days away, I could take my time in telling Ms. Rosie.

I started to move into the direction back to class. The girls back in class were still in their corner, their conversation stuck on K-pop. There was ten more minutes before the bell will rang. I decided to go to join them again.

14

Somehow it was Friday again. I was at least two weeks closer to my finals, and yet all the teachers would do is was just piling up more and more essay tasks. I squinted at the laptop screen, quickly re-reading what I had written. Thanks to meeting up with Ms. Rosie and being in heavy correspondence with her, I was able to mention some very important points that could earn me some good marks. I peered at the open internet tabs again. So far, I had at least twenty tabs lined up across the internet page. All of them were more or less related to the same thing.

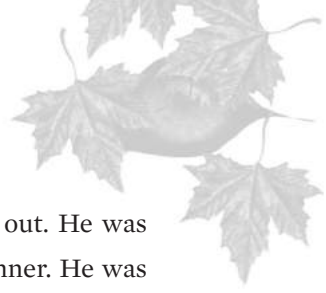
The essay we were writing about was basically the one that we were told to start one week ago. Although we

were given two weeks for it, it was a long gigantic essay. They warned us it should range from 2,000 to 3,000 words. And what's more frustrating than writing an essay with nothing but science facts all over. Our teachers expected us to hold interviews, surveys and discussions. We are also expected to show pictures as proof. It makes you wonder whether you are doing a scientific paper or just an essay.

Of course, knowing me, I didn't really mind doing this all—that was preparing and writing the essay part. The surveys and discussions would be annoying and awkward part to do, as we had to go around and take pictures. Emma and the rest of my friends were even talking about faking the pictures, although I doubt that it was a good choice either. The only way to do this was to actually take real pictures, as I was a slave for grades. I had figured out that the discussion along with Ricky and the rest would do me some good. I just had to bring a camera.

Ollie whined, rubbing his black and brown head on my leg. A half Dachshund and half King Charles Cavalier Spaniel mix, Ollie was just part of an accidental litter between my friend's Dachshund and my other friend's King Charles Cavalier Spaniel. After a litter of three pups where two died, due to his mother reject rejecting him. Finally, Ollie became mine. Ollie entered the house at the age of three months old, and now he had grown from a quivering puff ball to a medium sized dog, larger than the toy dogs at these days.

“Come on! You're not hungry yet, are you?”



Ollie wagged his tail, his tongue lolling out. He was obviously not, as I have just given him his dinner. He was busy eyeing my small bag of snacks located by the table.

“That’s mine, by the way.”

Ollie responded by placing his muzzle on my lap and giving me his sweet puppy eyes. Since I had grown immune to it, I simply ignored him typing away.

Within a spur of a moment, I suddenly remembered Asry. She would probably be interested in joining the discussion to help with her biology essay. I paused, looking at my phone for a second, before sending a text message to the two other people selected by Ms. Rosie. Nisha replied almost immediately, her message was decorated in pinkish bunnies. I smiled. That was so much like her. Matari replied a few minutes later, his message just consisting of one line. ‘Okay.’ Asry herself didn’t reply. The message just blinked blue, indicating that she had read it. I think that there was a 99.9% chance of appearing in the field this Saturday.

An impulse, I also created a group for the five of us, and added Ms. Rosie in it.

Nisha [7:14PM] Heeey. Seems like a fun group here. Who is the BlackDragon dude?

BlackDragon [7:14PM] It’s Matari.

Kanaya [7:14PM] So how far are you guys in your essay?

Rick [7:15PM] Sort of like 1Kish words. Not really sure

what to write anymore haha.

BlackDragon [7:15PM] I haven't started.

Nisha [7:16PM] I started~ I'm 500 words in.

BlackDragon[7:17PM] Lolol

Nisha [7:18PM] Oh and Asry, I know ur lurking. Come on out~

Kanaya: [7:17PM] She's reading this, don't worry

Nisha: [7:17PM] Kanaya knows everything!

Kanaya[7:17PM] Of course I do

Rick [7:18PM] To the point where it's a little creepy, don't you think so?

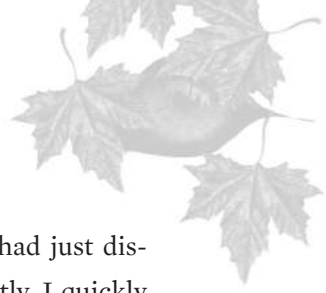
Kanaya [7:19PM] Ricky! e-e

Rick [7:20PM] :p

We started to chat a bit longer, comparing out our essays. Well, the four of us anyway. Ms. Rosie was not online yet, and I knew that she was pretty busy today and Asry was just lurking. I realized that she went offline a little bit later after that. Probably studying. After we all said goodnights and settled for our night activities, I took out my old rusted DS from underneath the bed and popped another Pokemon game. It was my Pearl version, I was still halfway through the game. With Ollie snoozing beside me, I started to play.

15

When I arrived at the field, I realized that I was the



first one to come from the five of us. Ricky had just dismissed his soccer team. The sun shone brightly. I quickly found a spot below a tree to escape the sun.

Ricky arrived a few minutes later, grinning and holding a big sports bag. He was then followed by Asry, and then Matari and Nisha. We sat on the grass beside a tree at the end of the field, waiting for Ms. Rosie to appear.

“What’s that camera for?” Nisha asked, peering over my shoulder to try and take a look at the pictures that I had stored in the camera.

“It’s for the discussion pictures later. We need them right?” I told her, quickly exiting the gallery. There really weren’t many things that I had stored in the gallery, as the camera itself belonged to my brother. He left his camera before he went off to university. Everything there was just some blurry pictures of Ollie, and an attempt to take several pictures from our last holiday at the beach.

“I also need you to fill in my survey.” Nisha was digging into her bag and shoving off loads of paper before handing them around. Most of the questions were really more or less similar to the questions that I had written in my own survey.

“So when is Ms. Rosie going to come?” Ricky asked, while ticking off boxes with a pen that Nisha had handed over to him.

“Soon.” I shrugged, taking out a bread loaf from my bag and biting into it. “She has stuff to do, and she’s rarely

late.”

Matari stared darkly at my direction. “Are you even sure that she’s going to come?”

I nodded, trying to peer over the field from my spot under the tree. My phone beeped, and I opened it eagerly, knowing that it’s a message from Ms. Rosie. See, I even set a special ringtone for her.

“She’s coming soon!” I announced.

Ricky was still drenched with sweat while both Asry and Matari lounging on their phones. Nisha and Ricky were deep in conversation. The class group were bustling, students already started to panic about the deadline. I stifled a snort as the messages of ways to cheat the discussions were starting to roll in.

“There she is!” Nisha pointed, shaking me off my phone.

We were all looking and waving towards her by the time Ms. Rosie reached us and settled down.

“Hey everyone!” Ms. Rosie greeted, moving to join our spot below the tree. She was holding a small book, a file and some papers. Her voice sounded slightly tired. It was obvious that she had been very busy. I really appreciated an adult who would spend time with teenagers and talk to us in our language.

“Hey, Ms. Rosie!” We chorused, settling down around her.

After a few exchanges and some small conversations (she asked about Ollie, and I told her Ollie was doing quite

fine), quietness crept around us as we looked at her expectantly, expecting her to start speaking about our topic.

“Alright, guys, let’s take picture!” I announced, taking out a camera from my bag. “It’s to show our discussion for our essay. You don’t mind, right?” There were several nods including Ms Rosie’s nod, as we huddled together to take the picture. I placed the camera on a pile of books. Random poses were struck, and the camera flashed.

“Now one, two, three...”

I tried a few pictures until I was completely satisfied with the result. The photo ended up great, in perfect resolution. I smiled, placing the camera into my bag, ready for our discussion. The wind blew softly. The noon passed by, becoming warmer.



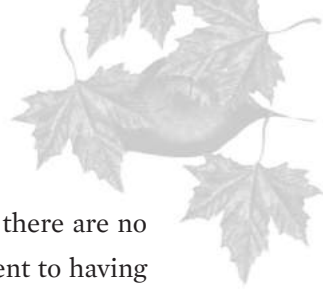
16 HUMAN VERSUS ANIMALS

BY: KANAYA

If there are no more animals left, what do you think will ever happen to us? Of course, we will start looking into some perspectives connected to human-animals relations. To most non-vegetarians out there, what do you think you will eat once there are no more animals around? People cannot live with only vegetables and fruits. Human need nutrition provided in meat for their bodies. Many of human's basic daily needs are found in farms.

If there are no more animals, that's equivalent to us having no more pets. Cats and dogs are animals too. The same goes for every rabbit, hamster and bird out there. There wouldn't be no more cats to comfort you when you sleep, and there would be no dogs that can help human. There is going to be no such thing as dog or cat owner arguments, and dancing cat videos on You Tubes.

But those facts are just the facts popping up in our



selfish minds. From a scientific viewpoint, if there are no more animals left on this planet, it is equivalent to having large-scaled apocalypse. The disappearance of every animal in the world would lead to a chain event that would eventually lead to many other species to die out. With no more animals, many microscopic animals would die out, because they would have no animal hosts. There would also be many plant species that depend on animals for pollination to breed that would die out quickly. The other plants that would depend on wind pollination would survive.

Let's say humans are catalysts for a mass destruction in the animal kingdom, causing many species of animals to die out. That would be the cause of another massive evolution, and many new species would reappear, thousands and million years later, long after the extinction of human. Nature will always keep on moving forward. There will be no certain creature that will rule over the world forever. This is just like when the dinosaurs were around. The dinosaurs, also called the 'terrible lizards', disappeared when the asteroid hit the planet. Tiny mammalian creatures, then, took over the planet.

On this planet, animals had played out a huge impact in the lives of every living being on this planet. Whether it is a person who is afraid of a certain species of animal, or a person who is an animal activist, they never deny that animals play a huge part in it. Animals have woven their way into culture and history. Animals are also the source of an incredible amount of myths and legends, and are inspira-

tion to many of us.

You could take the jaguar as an example. In the early ancient civilizations, they were idolized. Scientists had found many artifacts dedicated just for the jaguars! And have you seen Anubis? The Egyptian god? There is almost no question who Anubis is based from.

In Indonesia, there are a lot of myths and stories based on the local animals living there. For example, there is a respected myth called the tiger myth in West Java. It has recipe of every common folklore, with a happy but mythical ending. Yet, this story was handed down from generation to generation for a very long time, created because people lived in fear of tiger. Before obsessive tiger hunting started that nearly killed them out, tiger was one of the most admired creatures on the planet.

It's not just the scientific facts that will roll in upon us once there are no more animals left. There will be a large void within us when all the animals are gone. We've shared a lot with animals, in our culture and identity. There is an invisible red string attached—a strong bond between us and every other species in the planet.



17 TIGER

The famine had struck again, and it was a long one, due to an everlasting drought that had hit the rainforest. All three of us had lost a lot of weight, and our orange and black fur had lost its sparkle. My female cub hunkered on, her ribs protruding through her pelt, her eyes dull. My male cub was getting slower and slower, blundering upon his legs. He had been getting slower and slower, and was losing his pace with us. I dropped my pace, standing by his side and rasping my tongue over his ear to remind him that we still had to move forward. He chuffed, his voice came out in tired rasps. His energy level had been slowly oozing out of him from the past week, and he had lost tremendous weight. All I could see when I looked at him was just skin and bones, and ribs protruding to what used to be a shiny and well-groomed pelt.

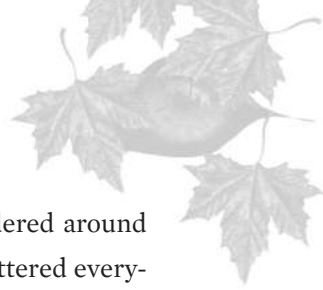
My cubs were now nearing the first half of their first year. Both of them were great hunters, rarely missing on their prey. We would separate and part ways soon, at least in a few more months. I could say that I was proud of both of my cubs and wished the very best of them when they explore life on their own. Just like the last litter of cubs that I

had where only two out of four survived. This time I hoped I could raise both of them in the best way I possibly could.

I chuffed at the female cub, telling her to slow down. In nature, she was the most powerful cub ever since she was born, although as a female, her size couldn't compare with that of her brother. She would win in play fights, and I could tell that she was obviously the strongest of the three cubs that I had given birth to. She was going to make it into a sturdy tigress that would eventually raise her own cubs in the future. She slowed down, pulling to a halt beside me. I chuffed to her again, before turning back at my son. Her brother was too tired to move. He was already starting to scent slightly sour, unlike the sweet scent that he had carried throughout the months that I had been with him. I felt my fur bristle at the thought of losing another cub to famine. We had to find food! As fast as we could.

I chuffed to my female cub, telling her that she should stay with her brother. I wanted to go and scout on ahead, and try to pick up a scent of prey. The female cub whimpered, settling down beside the body of her brother. I disappeared into the foliage, pushing out nearby reeds. I eyed the clearing carefully, my jaw opened up to try to detect some scent. Journeying out further, I went over to the bend of a river, bending down to drink some water. Maybe I could catch out some fish?

The river surface was lower than usual, running to near dry due to the drought. The receding shorelines had caused more rainforest inhabitants to be packed at the



waterholes with the most water in it. I wandered around the mud, seeing corpses and bones of fish scattered everywhere. The smell of rotten and decaying flesh hung in the air. I flattened my ears at the sight of my luck. Where could I go? I eyed the trees. There were no more flashes of brown of the monkeys. They all had moved towards another water hole.

Just then, a squeaking sound caught my ear. It was a mouse, thin and gaunt with hunger, scampering across the river. It fell to my claws easily. A mouse was barely enough—it was too small. Yet I brought it to where my son laid and offered it to him. He ate it, barely swallowing the dry meat. The air was dry and incredibly humid I could almost taste it. Even during the night, everything felt like thick soup. Yet there was something else lurking in. It was what I could identify as the scent of death. Suddenly the crickets were chirping louder than air, and everything around me grew heavier. I was about to lose another cub.

I lashed my tail in frustration, as my son's breaths grew shorter and shorter. My female cub eyed me with unease, as she picked at the corpse of the mouse, devouring all that was left in famished gulps. There was barely anything left, even for myself. Our only choice was to search for another water hole.

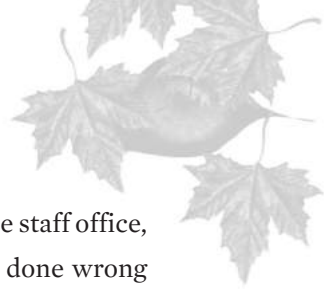
My son didn't make it until the morning. He was dead by the time dawn broke through the sky, just a mere corpse of what used to be a living hunting tiger. My only remaining cub and I could only grieve for a little while. We were hun-

gry, we had to find food. We were incredibly dehydrated to, so it made sense for us to search for another waterhole. We ate what was left of his body and wandered off, feeling slightly refreshed hoping that we could find something to break the famine.



18 HUMAN CHILD

When the assistant teacher entered the class stammering my name to tell me that Ms. Isa wanted me, I thought I was in trouble. Emma and the others had thought so too. They managed to send their final good-byes with a pat on the back and many invitations to join my



funeral. As I reeled—no staggering, towards the staff office, I was wondering the things that I could have done wrong in my head. Ms. Isa wasn't my teacher, or the teacher in this grade. She's a coordinator, and arranges everything.

Was it possible that I had forgotten to give in an assignment? No, I was sure I submitted everything. There was no way my subject teachers hated me that much to complain me off to Ms. Isa. Did I plagiarize or forget to copy a source for the biology essay or any other essay? I was pretty sure I credited everything. Right down to the survey and the discussion. Did I fail horribly in the biology pop quiz that the substitute teacher had given out? I knew that the grades of substitute teacher pop quizzes went to Ms. Isa, but I was not sure that's the case. No, I was sure I got everything down correctly.

By the time I reached Ms Isa's office and opened the door, I realized that Ms. Isa was beaming as she caught sight of me. I noticed that Asry was there too, along with Nisha, Ricky and Matari.

"Hey, everyone!" I greeted, before focusing my eyes onto Ms. Isa. The atmosphere was brighter than what I had expected it to be. I felt my hopes rise up, knowing that I was not in trouble after all.

"Well, Kanaya, I've got to say. Perfect marks for all five of you that all 5 of you got perfect marks. We're proud with the result of your essays. You know, the school would sometimes send students with potential out into the field in their area of potential. This time, we want to send you

guys somewhere, so you can learn more in your biology field.”

“A trip on the field? Whoah!” I couldn’t help exclaiming as I looked at the rest of my group. They were smiling and nodding at each other. The prospect of going on a trip sounded really exciting. And with my new found friends, it was totally worth it.

“It sounds fun, really does.” Nisha agreed, her eyes locking on mine. “We could actually look at what we would be writing about in the field. That sounds incredibly fun.”

“The school is obviously going to be funding you guys. But we need your parent’s consents too, and we’ll bring someone to company you guys on the trip. After that, you guys have to write a report about the trip that has the same level with university reports.”

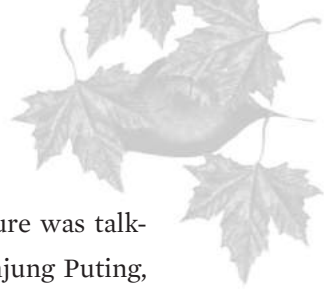
We looked at each other. Ms Isa continued.

“This is important, so you guys have the ability to observe, analyze, research, and also write. We want your entire visit and concentration is for your field of choice. This way, you guys are able to invest on it in the future. Our Principal, Mr. Suwandi has said that the investment ~~planted inside~~ made for serious students that has passion over something will be worth it.”

Ms. Isa pulled out a drawer.

“We want to guard the potential of our students here, so that they can keep on growing and developing.”

Ms. Isa leafed through a file of papers and gave out some pamphlets for Asry to read. We crowded around



Asry and I read together with her. The brochure was talking about an orangutan sanctuary, called Tanjung Puting, located in East Kalimantan. My heart was beating fast with excitement.

“Ms Isa,” Asry called out, after flipping through a page in the brochure. “Who is going to accompany us there?”

“Your biology teacher.”

“Wait! You mean Mr. Pie, our bio teacher sub?”

Asry was looking out, eyeing at Ms. Isa strangely, the flyer hanging limply on her hands. We all stared at Ms. Isa, the brochure was forgotten.

“Why him?” I asked, picturing the bio sub in my mind. Mr. Pie, or what we really called him (I didn’t remember his real name, it’s a long one), was the total opposite of a teacher you would like. He was loud, and came up with the most stupid things to call us out for, and he had a thing on hating students. And the feeling of hate between both student-teacher, was mutual. We absolutely despised him.

“Not him, please.” Nisha started to beg, with her signature puppy dog eyes. I remembered Mr. Pie pulled her long hair back and commanded her to tie it on a certain biology period. Of course, it was partly her mistake for not tying it on a biology period, but I did not see the point in actually pulling the hair. It was harassment. To us, girls, at least.

“Can we invite Ms. Rosie?”

I was surprised to hear a cold kind of determination in Asry’s voice as she leaned forward, eyeing Ms. Isa. Asry was

daring her to speak. I knew that ever since the failed meeting a few months ago, the relationship between Ms. Isa and Ms. Rosie has been strained, but I nodded. Around me there was a flurry of nodding too, as we agreed simultaneously.

“She was the one that has helped us with the essays, and she’s the reason for our marks. It seems fair that she gets to come with us to this sanctuary.” Asry’s voice was loud, surprisingly. I had never expected her to be loud.

Ms. Isa’s face faltered, her smile dying.

“I can’t send you guys out without an official teacher from this school. Remember, the school is funding you guys, which means that the school is responsible for your safety, health and the entire trip itself.”

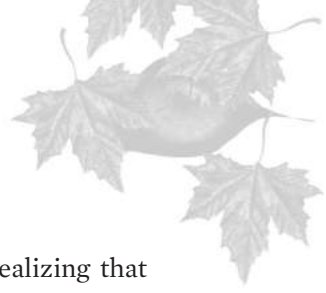
I was ready to open my mouth to say something back but Ricky beat me to it. “Alright, then call the trip off.” Ricky said boldly. “We’ll collect our own funds, and Ms. Rosie can collect hers, and we’ll still go to Tanjung Puting this holiday and research, therefore getting information, with or without your help.”

Matari nodded beside him.

I felt like a tiger (the five of us, at least) closing in on its prey (Ms. Isa).

“How about this.” I said, realizing that what Ricky had said sounded too extreme. “The school can continue funding us for this research, however, Ms. Rosie isn’t included in the school funds. I know she’ll be able to manage to get everything herself.”

“Then who would represent this school?”



“You can do that,” Matari stated.

I glanced towards Matari in surprise, realizing that Matari had used our situation to his advantage. He was going to cause two people that are enemies to meet each other again. Ms Isa and Ms. Rosie together? I thought that this was the best solution for both of them to become friends again, and I was not sure myself whether I would be alright with Ms. Isa in the journey, but it was okay. I'd rather be with her than Mr. Pie. After all, I would be going with my friends and Ms. Rosie.

Ms. Isa glared at Matari.

“I agree!” Nisha announced, her voice pleading.

“Me, too.” Asry had now joined the fray.

Ms. Isa looked at both Nisha and Asry's direction.

“Please, Miss!” Nisha had her puppy dog eyes on her face again. “You can do it.”

Ms. Isa pursed her lips. “Maybe.” Finally she said with heavy voice. “I will need permission and I need to talk to the principle about this. If Mr. Suwandi doesn't mind, that means that we all can go. If he doesn't, we're canceling out the entire trip.”

“Agree,” Ricky and Matari said together.

“Please, try and get Mr. Suwandri to agree,” Nisha begged. “I really want you to come with us.”

Ms Isa shook her head twice. She was trying to hold back a smile. Her voice was full of authority. “I didn't know Rosie has so much fans. This is a big surprise.”

This time it was I who was trying to hold back my

laughter.

“Okay, kids! We’re done. You all can go back to your own classes.”

I had an intuition that Ms. Isa would try her best to get the trip a success. I looked towards the ceiling, hoping time would pass quickly by.

19 HUMAN

Tiger was hungry. He had been butting his head onto my knee for the past one hour, but all I wanted to do was to finish with Mother Tiger’s journey with her cubs. I was so close to completing it. Really close. Tiger mewed again, his tail trailing lightly on my jeans, glaring at me with his yellow eyes. He wasn’t happy at all. I sighed, pulling myself up and pouring him an entire bowl of kibbles. Tiger immediately ran into it and started lapping it up. It was obvious that he was very hungry. He looked up to glare at me again, before shoving his muzzle into the food bowl.

“Sorry, mate,” I told him, before going back into my laptop.

Lately, everything has been in a mess for me. I ran af-



ter deadlines, attended many seminars held by University of Indonesia. It was hectic. Especially with Kanaya texting me for meetings to help her and her group for the essay. It was not like I hated it. Kanaya was like a foster-daughter to me, I had technically never met anyone really passionate about biology like her, and as a Professor, it was my job to help her to the best of my abilities.

I felt my phone beeping, but I ignored it. I would reply to it later. I need to complete this chapter.

It was nearing midnight by the time I was finally done with Mother Tiger and managed to send the file to the director. Mother Tiger was actually a story project from several professors at University of Indonesia, a project with a purpose to spread awareness about a certain topic to teenagers living in Indonesia. Those inspiring stories were going to be published by the university and would be spread out to young adults. From campus to the world.

I actually had wanted to drop out of the writing half-way through writing Mother Tiger. It was a common reason —I lost my muse, I was too busy. But Kanaya was the exact person I could picture that I would hand the next generation over to. Although she was still slightly naïve, she was an enthusiastic and smart girl, and I knew she would be able to fair well later in the future.

I opened my phone, looking at the array of messages that had floated in. There were some messages from my mother who lives in Palembang talking about her health. I asked about it this morning. There were also some mes-

sages from exam-stricken university students who had procrastinated all term long and was finally now waking up. I ignored them for now, left their messages for later. I never liked cramming, it was the exact opposite of productivity. But there was a message from Kanaya. I read through it, and I texted her back.

She would probably not text back as it was really late at night. But Kanaya texted me back right away. She was probably up studying or she was busy with a documentary video. It should always be a documentary video on wild.

Rosie: [12:18AM] I'm really not sure about this, Kanaya, especially with the funds and how it involves other people too.

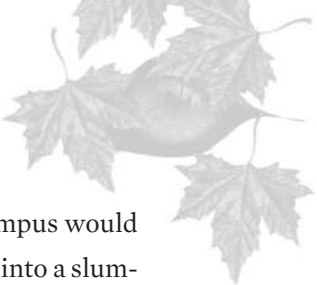
Kanaya: [12:20AM] It would be fine, Ms. Rosie. I know you can do it. And we could always do the trip next year if you want to. As long as you want to do it. We can figure out about the fund.

I chuckled here, before texting back.

Rosie [12:21AM] I'll tell you what I think about this soon. Right now I'm about to hit the hay. I think you should get a good night's sleep? It's nearing 12:30. I know it's a weekend tomorrow, but you still need to sleep.

Kanaya [12:22AM] Sure. Documentary is ending anyways, and I'm sleepy.

I was right. That girl was watching animal documentary video. I laid on my back as I looked up to the ceiling



of my room. The draft was finished and the campus would pay me by next week. I closed my eyes, drifting into a slumber. Maybe I could use the money they gave me to company those kids to Kalimantan. The money was not much, but I could get the rest from my salary.

20 TIGER CUB

Prey had been going well for a while now, and I knew that it's more than time for me to leave my mother. But I couldn't leave her just like that, yet. I still wanted to stay by her warmth in the caves, and I still wanted to go hunting and chasing about the prey trails with her. But now I was off the age tiger cubs are when they were ready to disperse and find their own ways and territories in their forests, and raise their own families.

I glanced at my mom, who was wearily padding behind me. She was getting older now, more tired. I realized that I wouldn't be having any more half-brothers or half-sisters. Mother was just too old now to raise any cubs. I flicked my tail encouragingly, looking ahead.

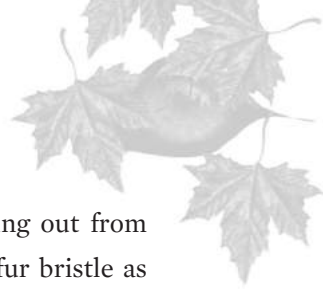
It was a man village. I flickered my ears to mother, eyeing the large cattle grazing in a pen. In the darkness of the night, I could still see their white humps, grey in the

moonlight. I craned my neck, studying the cattle. There was a young one, sleeping with his mother close to the fence post. I could swoop in and kill him and drag him off before the humans realize what was happening.

I angled my face over to my Mother, knowing that she's looking at the same thing. But somehow, she was not looking too excited. She chuffed at me, signaling that it was a bad idea for me to tackle those humans head on, and that stealing from them was stupid. I snorted through my nostrils. I couldn't find any other prey in the jungle. Either we took this animal down or we all were dying of hunger. Mother was growling softly, disagreeing with me. I thought Mother's idea was absurd. Humans were slow moving creatures, no match for my claws and fangs. This should be an easy task.

I crouched forward, creeping towards the field. My mother snorted a little, sounding worried as I slunk forward. Hunting was easy, it really was. All you had to do was be still and creep, and aim for the throat. It was something that I had learnt watching Mother, and it is something that I would teach to my own cubs someday.

By the time I had that calf clamped in my jaws, the rest of the herd was bellowing loudly. I started to drag the calf's corpse, refusing to let it go. My mother was growling near me, telling me that I had to drop it and make a run for it to the woods. This was just like the time I had faced the hogs. I refused to let the chicken go. Mother had saved me back then. This time, I refused to let the cow go.



The humans were shouting now, running out from the dens, waving fire into the sky. I felt my fur bristle as I watched the fire get closer and closer. They had spotted Mother first. Mother was snarling at them, her fur bristling as she glared at them, daring them to come closer to her. I had dragged the prey to the bushes now, away from the sight of the humans. I urged my Mother to hurry up and join me.

Mother opened her mouth in a snarl as the human thrust its jaws forward, close to her face. I remembered the time when Mother tackled that hog in front of me. That hog was the human now, looking strong, but still a weakling inside. Mother's ears were flattened close to her head, her fur bristling and her tail lashing. She was completely surrounded now, with humans and their flames.

Suddenly, there were more even more humans running out from their houses, waving little sticks in the air. It took me moments to realize what they were holding. Spears made out from wood, its ends sharp. One of them flew in the air, hitting Mother in the hind leg. Mother snarled, jumping on the closest man to her, causing him to fall on the ground. Before she could deliver the killing bite, two more spear heads hit her shoulder and her neck. Blood splattered everywhere, flowing all around her body. Mother rolled around, her body hitting the ground. Her flank rose up and down, her breath ragged. The last arrow stabbed through her rib cage, and she stopped moving.

This time I really dropped the calf. I couldn't face the

humans now, and there was only one option. I had to run. The smell of fire and smoke was still stinging in the nose by the time I was running. When I looked up, I realized that it was dawn. Cold emptiness swept into me as I realized that I was completely alone.

21 HUMAN

I stared at the crowd of people anxiously as the announcers stepped onto the stage. The Festival of Indonesian Children that was being held by Unicef was located in one of the biggest malls in Indonesia. Many people were invited to the event. There were many activities, like story-telling, cooking competition, music festivals and drawing competitions. With the consent of the University of Indonesia's presidents, my superiors had taken the manuscript of my short story to participate in the competition in the Festival of Indonesian Children.

I held my breath as they started to the ceremony, with several dances and songs being presented by a bunch of young children. They also showed some powerpoint slides about protected fauna and animals in Indonesia, the initiatives done by local natives, the government and by the non-



governmental organizations.

Kanaya was holding my arm tightly. I had invited the entire gang to come with me to this event, with the promise to treat them later. They politely declined, but still came anyway. Asry came first, followed by Ricky. Nisha came together with Matari. Kanaya came last, as she had to babysit her sister before she left.

The third winner wasn't me. She was a small woman, wearing bright colored clothes with the same color of hijab. She stepped carefully on to the stage to receive her five million rupiah. I could guess by looking at the monitor that her manuscript had something to do with the conservation of coral reefs in Papua, the East of Indonesia.

It took at least ten more minutes before the second winner was announced. By the time I had pulled back to reality from a lingering thought about Mother Tiger, the second winner was stepping up the stage, receiving a check of ten million rupiah. He was a burly man, probably someone who lived in Makassar. I was sure they announced it just now. His manuscript was about the local wisdom of catching the fish.

I felt my heart hammering in my chest, thinking about the two winners who had written about wildlife in the sea. I knew that ten million was a lot of money. I heard the crowd mutter among themselves as the announcer left the stage to grab the name of the first winner. Who could the first winner possibly be? I saw Kanaya looking at my direction, before looking back at the stage, a glimmer of hope in her eyes. I real-

ized the amount of people who had placed their faith in me.

I could win this. There was that moment when I could hear myself sing out in my head. They were all hoping that I could win. I've read once that when more than one person focusing their thoughts intently on something, it can become a reality. But that's just a thought. There was nothing scientific about it. Nothing at all. I felt like a little kid again, my memories went back to the time when I was about to graduate into my PhD and was given the honor roll.

And then they were announcing the first winner, I suddenly felt Kanaya pushing me forward, suddenly screaming. Nisha flung her arms around Asry's neck and Ricky gave Matari a high-five. It took me another solid ten seconds to register that I was the winner. I had won this! They were now pulling me to the stage and giving me a gigantic check. Twenty million rupiahs. There were rapid fire questions to me now, and I managed to stutter past all of them, all the time looking back to the audience to find Kanaya's beaming face there.

"Congratulations!" The announcer shook my hand. The gigantic check and flowers were heavy in my arms. "The story talked about the extinct Javan tiger in Indonesia. What do you want to deliver to the teenagers of Indonesia through this story?"

"I want us all to love the forest and the animals living there, and protect the Earth. We should take care of it, so there are no more extinction stories happening everywhere. It's not only the Javan tiger that we won't be able to see again. Don't



let the same thing happens to the other animals. Don't let the rainforest, orangutans, elephants, komodo, coral reef, turtles and other animals disappear. If they're gone, we're gone."

I answered them coolly, just like how I was trained to do as a Professor.

"Ms Rosie, you really are a great defender of living creatures." Kanaya hugged me as soon as I stepped off the stage.

"You are the knight of the rainforest!" Asry shook my hand.

I smiled. "That's too much," I told them.

"Of course, it's no lie." Ricky, Matari and Nisha also shook my hand.

I raised my hand in a V for victory. "Looks like we could go to East Kalimantan now."

"Really?" Kanaya's eyes were beaming with excitement, as she glanced at her friends. She pumped her fist in the air. "East Kalimantan, guys! We're going to Tanjung Puting!"

There were cheers as we pulled ourselves in a group hug.

22

"Look at that orangutan! He's large!" Nisha couldn't even keep herself quiet as she was leaning forward on the ropes separating us from the orangutan feeding grounds.

"He's male, a dominant one. Of course, he's large." I

whispered at her direction.

The orangutan shook his bright red-brown coat majestically, before darting forward to grab a banana, stuffing it into his face. There were two more female orangutans descending from the trees, one of them carrying her baby on her back.

“They’re so cute,” Asry whispered while holding her breath the entire time.

I nudged at her, before looking back at the feeding spectacle. The orangutans were now greedily grabbing bananas, claiming their share, and an occasional squeak as a young juvenile accidentally crossed the line of the larger male. Hogs, forest hogs were trotting into the scene, eating up the fallen bananas on the ground. I saw Nisha squealed as she caught sight of the piglets, as they scurried forward after the lead hog.

“Cute.” Nisha giggled.

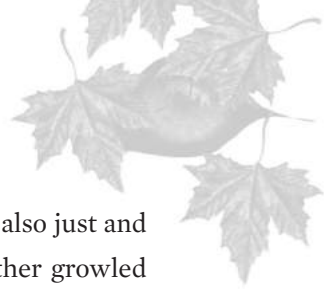
The piglets were hurrying after the larger hogs so that they wouldn’t be left behind. The orangutan mothers were now going back to the trees, glaring suspiciously at the hogs. Kanaya nodded, watching them.

“The hogs will sometime eat the young of the orangutan when they are unguarded,” I explained to Kanaya.

“Whoa. The hogs are cruel too,” Ricky said.

“They only kill to fill in their stomach. It’s fair. They only take what they need.”

Ms. Isa shivered to my words. But this was the cycle of life in the forest. It was a strict rule of killing, or getting



eaten up. The forest is a very harsh place, but also just and wise. In front of my eyes, the orangutan mother growled threateningly at an approaching hog, opening her mouth to show her long pointy fangs. The hog backed over wearily, pawing at the ground. I smiled, looking up at Kanaya.

“There’s nothing innocent about nature,” I told Kanaya, as if I had read her thoughts.

Kanaya nodded back at me, a signal telling me that she had realized that too. By the time the orangutans had all retreated to their trees, and the hogs had disappeared into the foliage, it was nearing sundown.

“Come on. Show’s over.” I told them, herding us towards the long track back to the small boat where we would be staying. “Let’s go.”

23 TIGER

The brackens wove as I lead the way, my jaw slightly opened as I tried to take in the scents around me. They were the forest smells, calm and soothing. It was earthy, and I felt at home. The birds squawked and flapped in the air, alerting the jungle of my presence. I looked up to glare at them. They had caused the monkeys to start screaming, and now I was more than sure that I

wouldn't be able to find any more prey in the area.

The vines rustled again as my cub staggered out of it, pulling himself into his paws. He was immediately tackled by his brother. They started rolling around, engaged in a play fight. I purred, chuffing at them to tell them to stop. Two pairs of misty blue eyes poked out of the brackens as two more cubs ran out, their tails held high in the air.

I was no longer a tiger cub. I had given birth to four cubs two months ago, to a very large litter. As a first time Mother, I was completely relying on my instinct to raise them. They were growing well. I believe they would turn into fine hunters when they grew up. I raised my tail as a signal to gather the four of them together. Stumbling on their paws, they followed.

The smaller female cub fell on her paws, wailing. She was tired. We had been walking all night, and it was going to be dawn soon. I walked over to her and picked her up. I could try and find food again tomorrow. I hope there would be a tomorrow for us, the Javan Tiger.

With her dangling on her scruff in my jaws and her three brothers chasing after my tail, I walked into the brackens, my stripes blending into the foliage, and disappearing into the darkening forest floor.

THE END



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Elysa Ng was born in Jakarta and is a middle year student. She is a passionate supporter of animal conservation and animal lover. Her favorite activities are reading, writing, and enjoying a bar of white chocolate. Elysa has been writing since she was ten.

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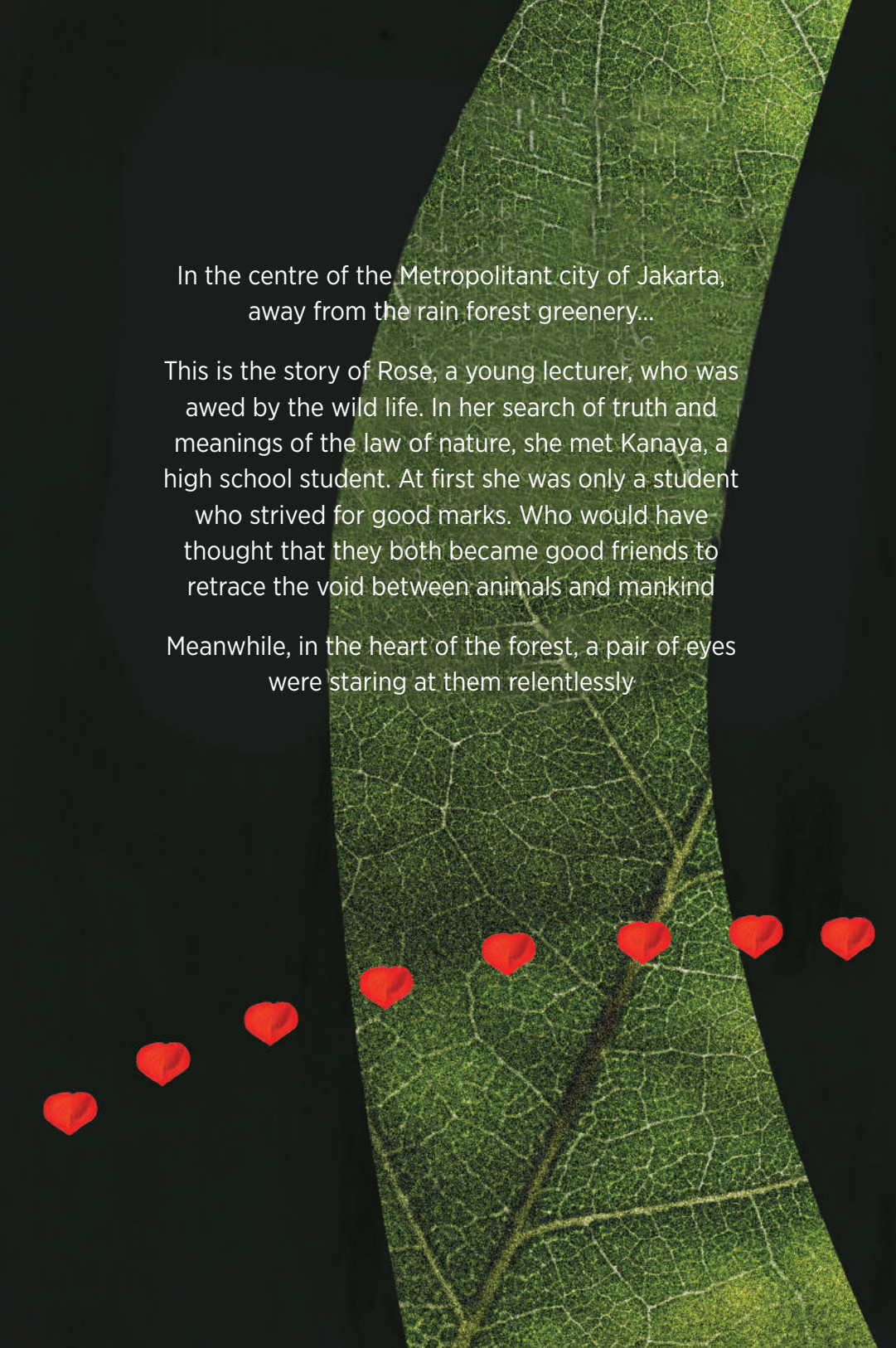
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In the centre of the Metropolitan city of Jakarta,
away from the rain forest greenery...

This is the story of Rose, a young lecturer, who was
awed by the wild life. In her search of truth and
meanings of the law of nature, she met Kanaya, a
high school student. At first she was only a student
who strived for good marks. Who would have
thought that they both became good friends to
retrace the void between animals and mankind

Meanwhile, in the heart of the forest, a pair of eyes
were staring at them relentlessly