

2021

Role Model

[School featured]

Maybe I'm just greedy. News reporters swarming like an aggravated beehive just outside my property. An ordinary person would feel satisfied with being famous worldwide, or so I was told. It was my dream. However, now looking at myself in the mirror, was this what I wanted? Was publishing the current #1 bestseller novel worldwide really my dream? Even if it was, why should it feel any more significant without the person who inspired me to write? I might just be asking for too much. What's gone is gone – a common phrase in my writing.

My journey started in school. A filthy place that tore me away from my beloved computer. Studying was mental torture for me, especially when those irritating teachers waited patiently, ready to pounce the second they see an error. Yet, there was one thing that I despised more than those vultures who call themselves teachers. The English Language. I could not keep still and stare at those black bold words cluttered together. They were like extraterrestrial symbols to me. My hate towards the English Language was so great that I wanted to tear all existing English storybooks and light their remains on fire, watching them squirm in agony.

Two weeks to the end-year exams. My ears still decided to close the gates on every piece of information from my teachers. My mind wandered into a different universe. *Tap*. One touch and I was fished out of the deep oceans of my thoughts. I looked up, eager to kill whoever dared disrupt my daydream. A drop of cold sweat trickled down my forehead. It was that monster, the leader of the vultures—my English teacher Ms Ng. The pair of piercing eyes of a leopard and the sharp ears of a bat made her the highest of the apex predators.

“Why is your paper blank?”

These 5 words rang in my head like a concussion. The pencil trembled between my fingers as if it was having a seizure. My mouth moved, urging me to defend myself in this deadly battle, however, no words came out. My hate for the English language was probably stacked so high that I could not even mutter a single word, or the cold sweat that clogged up my throat made me incapable of speaking. Helpless, I sat there awkwardly without replying to her question. To my relief, she sighed and walked away.

Then, the voice of an angel called out to me. The melodious chime of the school bell. Finally, school was over for the day, or so I thought. I was gleefully packing my bag ready to sprint home, but I was way too late. Ms Ng had reached me before I could reach my computer.

“Clive, could you stay back for a while?”

It was like baiting a fish to eat a delicious worm on the hook only to get caught and eaten soon after, except that the fish was me and the worm was escaping school. Reluctantly, I

stayed in class, mentally preparing myself for Ms Ng's renowned punishments. Ms Ng took a seat and sat in front of me, forcing me to look at her intimidating face.

"Do you need help with understanding English?" Ms Ng asked calmly.

Surprise smacked me hard. Why was Ms Ng concerned about my English? No, she must have been using sarcasm to rub more salt into my wound, but there was no sign of malicious intent in her tone. My mind was engulfed in questions, so much so that it drowned my entire consciousness. After getting back to my senses, I realised that Ms Ng was still waiting for a response. Guilty for making her wait, I nodded slowly. Another wave of surprise slapped me twice as hard as before; she started to interrogate me, getting me to spit out whatever difficulties I had with English.

Every day after school, she would wait for me in class to teach me English. Just for me. From time to time I felt at fault for wasting her time when she clearly had better things to do. In return, I decided to start listening attentively to her classes. It was tough at first but after maintaining focus for 1 minute, I was engrossed in her classes. After seeing her teach, I was inspired by her love for English. I aspired to be someone as respectable as her.

2 weeks flew by in no time, and I was sitting at a desk. On that desk was a single piece of paper. Instead of looking like the usual mess of an alien language, I was not overwhelmed anymore. For once I managed to finish an examination with a smile on my face.

A week later, the same paper lay on the same desk. This time, there was red all over the paper. I could not believe my eyes, I had jumped three grades in less than half a year. An "F" grade to a "C". "Great Improvement!" – 2 words beside my score. Much to my disappointment, these two words would also be the last two words I would ever hear from her.

I had never seen her since the exam. The role model I looked up to had vanished from the surface of the Earth. One day, I was beyond worried. I decided to ask my form teacher about what happened to Ms Ng. Not long after, I found out that she had an illness that threatened her life, and yet she continued to teach, to the point she could not anymore. I was in despair. The person who got me into reading. The person who got me into writing was gone. Despite this, I believe that I should carry on writing for her sake. Proudly say that the world's best author was taught by an "ordinary" teacher. That "ordinary" teacher was not so normal, however, for she is and forever will be the person I aspire to be. I could never forget the warm glow in her eyes and her reassuring voice that left a scar in my memories, a beautiful scar.

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Writer Notes:

This was an essay written for some minor competition, and yes it was first written on a computer. It's really not bad, but the end was quite abrupt because I realised how absurdly long the essay was becoming. Also, although I can't fully recall what the topic was, I definitely deviated a lot. It was something like, write about how an ordinary person changed your life or something along those lines. Yes, Ms Ng is actually my English teacher, and she read this essay and gave it the green light.

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