

Beacon

By Valerie Chua Xin En

The story of Noah was a well-known one. In a world where selfishness and greed reared their ugly heads, Noah remained steadfast and righteous. While everyone was swept away by the currents of sin, Noah, the shining beacon of hope remained. In the face of darkness, he did not lose hope, eagerly waiting for the land of salvation. That story could never be apter.

Corruption managed to reach the shores of our country. People grew tired of the political party that governed us for fifty years. They thought that the rules were too strict, making life mundane. They wanted something interesting, like new policies, to live life with a different perspective. They chose someone who proposed fresh and promising ideas. As the saying goes, "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't". The new Prime Minister turned out to be a complete hypocrite. He embezzled all our funds and accepted bribes from other officials, turning the other ministries corrupt as well.

It was a time where the officials lived in decadence, while the citizens lived in poverty. In order to make ends meet, you had to get your hands dirty. The authorities accepted bribes from wrongdoers to look the other way. Hence, the country was rampant with thieves and robbers, trying to earn enough money for food and raiment for themselves.

My family and I lived in fear and poverty every day. My father worked as a policeman, and he saw with his very eyes how honest and trustworthy colleagues were forced to accept bribes due to their low level of income. However, my father still chose to live righteously, refusing to use underhanded methods to earn money. He came home exhausted every day, earning no more than a few dollars a day. When we had our meals of sweet potato gruel together, he always had a guilty expression on his face.

It was a dark time for the both of us. A mere youth like me was so terribly confused and distraught. Our shimmering and brilliant country was plunged into darkness, and I was but a desperate moth, yearning for the light that once shined. In my eyes, my father was a brave warrior, refusing to yield to the corrupted government. His unwavering determination to uphold justice was truly awe-inspiring. However, the fact that his child would also have to live in poverty chipped away at his conscience. Despite that, he refused to give up and continued fighting corruption courageously in the little things he did. He enforced justice and arrested thieves, robbers, even his own colleagues. No amount of bribe will sway him, no matter how much he needed it.

One day, I found a package addressed to me. Upon opening it, I found a stack of textbooks neatly nestled inside. I paused for a moment, unable to express the many emotions I felt. These very books held hidden knowledge only the

wealthy children could have access to. I was finally able to learn again after five years!

Little did I know, my father would not return home. I suppressed my feelings of worry and confusion; holding on to the thin thread of hope that father would return one day. Until then, I continued to study my textbooks to their full extent.

One day, a policeman came over to the dilapidated the house that was our home and forcefully led me to his police car. Though I did not understand what the man said about "under custody", I knew that something was amiss.

I was pestered with the thought that my father had finally succumbed to accepting bribes to feed his family. I would rather die than see him break under temptation, even if it was for my education. Then, I saw my father and his emaciated body behind the cold prison bars. He looked at me, his eyes glazed over from exhaustion. Then, he forced a smile, trying his best to tell me that everything was alright. Seeing my father in such pain and suffering felt like hands grabbing my throat, suffocating me until tears forbade me from seeing him.

In a hoarse and merciless voice, the policeman said that father was imprisoned for speaking against the corrupt government. I knew that the freedom of speech was not welcome in our country, but my father was cracking against the suffering the government put him through. My father was the only one taking a stand for justice, however, he was punished for it.

Then, my father reached out and gave me a letter, which held the story of Noah and his own thoughts on the corrupted world. He said, "I believe in you, go on and be a beacon in this dark place."

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