

"Mommy, where are we going?" Michelle, my daughter, asked me.

She was 4 years old, and was born in Lausanne, Switzerland. My employer relocated me here 5 years ago for a semi-permanent position. I went here with my boyfriend, got married, had Michelle, and for some reason I'd rather not talk about, got separated and very soon he became my past imperfect, forgotten and barely seen amid the dust of my fast paced life's trail.

So here I and Michelle were, nearing the end of my assignment, packing all my stuffs in my preparation to go back to Indonesia, my homeland. She was busy helping me putting all of her belongings in a carton box supplied by the mover I hired. Her long black hair were let loose, still wearing her pink nightgown and hugged her Ted, her beloved brown teddy bear in her right hand while she went back and forth between the box and her room carrying her goods one by one with her left hand. She was excited about her trip Indonesia, because she always loved going to new place, and she never had a chance to visit Indonesia before, so although I already explained for several times to her about our destination, she kept on asking me again and again to tell her where we were going to go.

"We are going to Indonesia, sweetie. There we will stay in a city called Surabaya." I told her.

"Is Surabaya bigger than Lausanne, mom?" Michele asked me.

"Yes, dear, of course." I answered, smiling.

"Then I should be able to make a lot more friends there!" She acclaimed.

"Sure, Honey you will, but please don't put your pillows into the box just yet."

"Why?" She asked.

"Because it's already pass your bed time, and you will need them to sleep, won't you? Now, get your pillow back and bring Teddy to bed, he looks sleepy." I told her, smiling.

"Oh, Okay, Mommy."

I took her hand, helped her with the pillows, and lead her to her bedroom.

"Good night, Michelle." I said, while kissing her forehead.

"Good night, Mom." She replied, and turned her back to me, hugging Teddy tightly.

I stood up, headed for the door, turned off the lights, and then slowly closed the bedroom door. Time for me to sleep, too. Big days awaited me ahead, I thought, as within a week I'll be in Indonesia, back to my homeland.

So I walked toward my bedroom, took a look at my living room, full of mover boxes, and took a deep breath.

"Goodbye, Lausanne." I whispered as I left the living room and entered the bedroom.

After 5 years of living in Lausanne, I think I have forgotten how hot Surabaya was. Man, it was hot! And I now begun to remember that during the months of November and December Surabaya usually becomes either hot and humid or hot and wet. It was only about 9AM when we stepped out of arrival gate of Juanda International Airport, but already the heat stroke us.

Poor Michelle, she never experienced this kind of harsh weather before, so she looked miserable with sweat wetting her shirt and her face.

"Wow, mom, why is Surabaya very hot?" She asked, frowning.

"Yes dear, Surabaya is hot, but I think today is not our lucky day, because it usually is not this hot. Hear, let me wipe your sweat, and let's go to a taxi, they should have air condition." I comforted her and wiped her face with a handkerchief.

"No wonder you left Surabaya and stayed in Lausanne..." She mumbled.

I just watched her and smiling to her.

I ordered our taxi to drive us directly to Town Square, a nice hotel in Surabaya. Both I and Michelle were tired. Sixteen hours of flight, albeit in flatbed business class, was still a tiresome journey, not to mention the jetlag, as our bodies still thought that it was 3 AM. Michelle fell asleep on my lap as soon as the taxi hit the road.

At the hotel, I checked in, asked the bellboy to carry our luggage, and then once we arrived at our hotel, Michelle continued her sleep immediately while I decided to recuperate myself a bit by having a light shower.

Twenty minutes later, I joined Michelle to sleep. It was 11AM in Surabaya but hey, strolling could wait. After all, I'll be staying in Surabaya for good now.

"Bu, ini ada rumah yang mungkin cocok sama selera bu." My property sales told me about a house that might be particularly interesting for me.

"Oh, bisa saya lihat detilnya mas?" I answered him, interested to see the proposed house in more detail.

"Rumahnya sederhana dengan desain minimalis, ada dua kamar tidur, dua kamar mandi, dan satu gudang. Sudah lama tidak ditempati tapi baru saja direnovasi oleh pihak bank. Rumah ini tadinya disita oleh bank Sentosa, tapi kemudian bank nya kolaps pada masa krisis ekonomi 1998, dan sekarang dipegang sebagai aset milik bank Harapan. Saat ini pihak bank sedang melakukan pemutihan aset bermasalah, dan rumah ini adalah salah satu rumah yang sudah bisa dijual." My sales explained. He also showed me some photos of the exterior and interior of the house.

I looked at them and immediately fell in love with the house. This was my third day in Indonesia and although my company allow me to stay at the hotel for maximum duration of two weeks, I was eager to move in to a house as soon as possible because living in a hotel room was not very nice. Besides, Michelle has complained about not having any friend, and you can't find much in a hotel.

"Berapa harganya mas?" I asked him about the price tag.

He mentioned a figure and I was delighted when I heard it, because it was well within my budget.

"Bisa kita mengunjungi rumahya sekarang pak?" I asked him to pay a visit to the location.

"Oh, bisa bu, mari kita ke sana sekarang." He answered.

We then drove to the location.

From the outside, the house was nice to see. He then grabbed a bunch of keys and soon found the key of front door. We entered the house and to my surprise, despite it was high noon in Surabaya, and the small size of the house, I didn't feel the heat inside. Apparently the house's architecture superbly managed the air circulation.

"Kamar yang besar ini bisa untuk ibu. Ada kamar mandi dalamnya, sedangkan kamar yang ini bisa untuk Anak ibu." The salesman pointed to the rooms and gave me his suggestions.

We roamed from room to room and it looked like that the bank did a good job of renovation. No water spot on the wall nor on the ceiling, and although no one has lived in the house for years, I didn't smell any trace of staleness inside. I even felt warm in a nice way, it was as if the house welcome me, and I somehow sensed that this house belonged to me.

"Kayaknya menarik nih mas rumahnya. Saya suka. Kapan kita bisa selesaikan proses jual-belinya ya?" I asked my salesman excitedly about the purchasing process of the house.

He explained the detail of the process and it turned out that we could start settling the document within one week, so off we went to the bank to negotiate the terms and complete the forms. I really was excited during the whole process...

It looked like deja vu, only in reverse. Michelle was busy walking back and forth between the mover boxes, taking out her belongings one by one and put them into her room. She used the same night dress as when she packed her goods in Lausanne three weeks ago. The hot Surabaya night didn't affect her spirit and energy.

"Mom, can I invite my new friend to my room sometimes?" Michelle asked me suddenly.

"New friend?" I asked her, astonished that she already had friend that fast. We were only in Surabaya for 2 weeks and she got here at this house for just 12 hours.

"Well of course dear, you can invite them to your room." I continued anyway.

"But it's already past your bedtime. So why don't you stop unpacking for tonight?" I asked her to go to sleep.

"Ok mom." She agreed instantly. I guess she was too tired already. She go straight to her new bedroom while I followed her from behind.

Once she was on the bed, I tugged her snugly under her blanket, kissed her forehead, and walked out of her bedroom, turning off the light on my way out. Then slowly I closed her bedroom door and gazed around at our new loving room. A lot of packages needed to be unpacked, so I decided to unpack some more tonight.

The house had three rooms, and since there were only two of us, I used the third room to store some items that I haven't yet determined their proper place in the house. There went the suitcases, the shoe rack along with our shoes, books, rugs, souvenirs from our previous travels, and some other house hold goods.

Enough unpacking tonight, I thought. I was tired and so I stopped my activity, had a little shower to clean up my body from the dirt, put a nice pajama, and went to my bedroom.

"Good night new home" I whispered as I got into my blanked and close my eyes.

I was busy preparing for breakfast when Michele walked into the kitchen, still half asleep, carrying her beloved teddy bear.

"Good morning sweetheart." I greeted her with a big smile. "How's your sleep?"

"Morning, mom." She answered, ignored my second question. She grabbed one sandwich and started eating her breakfast.

As I faced in front of kitchen sink, cleaning up the dirty utensils, I heard Michelle humming *Hänschen Klein*.

Strange, I thought. It was a nice children song, but I've never heard Michelle sang this song before. Ah well, I guess that was the last song her teacher taught her back in Lausanne before we moved to Indonesia. I knew that song quite well as my mom used to sing it for me when I was a little girl. My mom was born and grew up in Cirebon, so of course it was the Sundanese version that she sang to me years ago.

I turned back to the kitchen table and cleaned up the breakfasts leftover. Then Michelle, while caressing her teddy, started singing to it as if putting her Teddy to sleep:

*Abdi teh ayeuna, gaduh hiji boneka*

*Teu kinten saena, sareng lucuna*

*Ku abdi dierokan, erokna sae pisan*

*Cing mangga, tingali boneka abdi*

I was stunned. *Hänschen Klein* was a German children song so probably she had heard it before in Switzerland. But I never knew if she had ever had an Indonesian friend before, let alone a Sundanese one that might have taught her to sing the Sundanese version of the song. Wow, she must have learnt fast to be able to sing not only in Bahasa Indonesia, but in Bahasa Sunda, exactly like what my mom used to sing it!

"Nice song, Michelle. Who taught you that song?" I asked her, smiling.

"Oh, it was Luna, mom, my new friend." she replied.

"Where does Luna live, Michelle?" I continued our conversation, still amazed by how fast she made new friends in this foreign environment.

"Oh, in the room next door." Michelle answered, still busy playing with her Teddy.

Room next door? I thought. Well, she must be meant house next door. It's common for a five years old children to make such mistake.

"Oh, at the house next door." I corrected her. "Well, we are getting late now, why don't we let Teddy sleep so you can take a shower?" I continued.

"But I'm still sleepy mom." She protested, but she went to her bedroom to put her Teddy anyway, and then went to the shower. I smiled watching her did her morning ritual.

"Mom! Can I bring Mrs. Potter outside? I want to have some tea with Tiara!" Michelle excitedly asked my permission. Mrs. Potter is her tea table playset. It was afternoon, around 5 PM and the weather is cloudy but not rainy. Surabaya wasn't that hot that day. I was ironing our laundry in the living room.

"Well, sure honey. Be careful in bringing them out, Ok?" I granted my permission. She went out of the living room. I then hear she open her bedroom and not long after the usual noise she made every time she brought her favorite playset around.

There! I ironed my last laundry! They heaped in neat stack, grouped by clothes types on the living room table. I took a deep breath, glad that I finally finished one of not-so-favorite chores. I stood up and took the heaps to put them into the cupboards in my room and Michelle's. As I passed Michelle's window, I saw her playing tea time with her new friend at our backyard. They both sitting face to face at Mrs. Potter.

So that's Tiara. I thought. I put Michelle's clothes into her cupboard, and went back to the window to watch them playing.

From afar, Luna looked a little bit pale with sad look in her eyes. She wore a white gown and carried a teddy bear, too, similar to the one Michelle had. However, I noticed that her gown and teddy looked outdated and a little bit dirty. She didn't talk much and only gave a little nods every now and then, and much of the time she only gazed at her tea cup while Michelle, on the other hand, talked and laughed a lot. Apparently Michelle were telling her experience abroad.

Michelle told her story in English, and Luna seemed to comprehend every bit of it. Wow, I thought, she must had been abroad for quite some time to be able to speak, or at least, listen to English.

Suddenly, as I knew that I was staring at her, Luna lifted her gaze off her tea cup, moved her eyes directly toward me, and smile at me, a sad smile. I was caught off guard, and a chill went down through my spine. I didn't know what to do, didn't even know what to speak. In my tremble, I accidentally dropped my laundry down. It was as if she drew my full attention toward her. Michelle, though, didn't seem to notice her change of focus, and kept on talking cheerfully.

A moment later I regained control. I shook my head a bit to clear up my mind, returned an awkward smile to Luna, kneel on the floor to hastily collect my scattered clothes. As soon as I finished tidying up my laundry, I stood back to see her again through the window, but I only saw Michelle stood up in front of Mrs. Potter, faced to one corner of the backyard and waved goodbye. Our backyard, as with other houses Apparently Luna went home while I was busy on the floor, but somehow I felt strange, because I didn't think I was out of the window for that long to allow Luna walked away from the tea table. Ah maybe I was too tired, I thought.

Michelle was moving Mrs. Potter back into her house, the Styrofoam-lined carton container, original packaging in which I bought that toy tea set. I heard a nearby masjid started to air the adhan of the Maghrib prayer time. Suddenly I shivered, as if the air turned cold.

"Michelle! Come on in! It will dark soon!" Quickly I called Michelle in. She lifted the carton and walked towards the door.

Later that night, after we had dinner, I went to the piano at our living room and played some random songs, while Michelle played with her doll. Then I remembered *Hänschen Klein* and absent-mindedly

started to play its tunes. Hearing that song, Michelle's attention turned into me. She stood up, walked towards me, and starting to sing a long the song. I smiled hearing her sang her new favorite song.

"You like this song?" I asked Michelle. She noded. She smiled butther eyes looked a bit sleepy.

"OK, now, it's going to be late, Michelle, let's go to sleep." I continued. Again, whithout word, she agreed.

"Good night, Michelle." I kissed her as I tugged her in her bed.

"Good night, mom." She replied.

I took one last look at her, turned off the light, and closed her door. Then I went into my own room and getting ready for sleep.

I was walking in the dark when I saw her face, Luna, Michelle's friend, while *Hänschen Klein* melody was played slowly on the piano. Then, as it reached the last note, I opened my eyes. Strange, I thought. I must have been dreaming, but I swore I really heard the song was being played.

Then from the other room, I heard Michelle talked, as if she was talking to someone. Curious, I went out of my room toward hers.

"Nighty night! See you later!" I heard Michelle talked as I reached her door handle.

I opened the door, and I was petrified. I swore I saw the side of her bed close to her bumped up, as if someone was sitting there and then stood up. And the chill, again, I shivered.

"Michelle!" I spoke to her with a bit of scream. "With whom you talked to?"

"Oh, hi, mom! I was talking to Luna. She came to visit me. She said she was lonely so we chatted for awhile. Then suddenly she said se felt tired, so we said goodbye and she left the room." She answered.

"Luna? How could she entered your room?" I asked her.

"Through the door, mom, just as you opened it."

"Through the door?" I was puzzled. She was probably just imagining things, but that receding