

BRIDGING CITIES

Exeter X Jakarta



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FOREWORD

As we step into an era where global collaboration and cultural exchange are vital, we are thrilled to present the Bridging Cities project, a creative partnership between Jakarta and Exeter.

This initiative celebrates the power of words to inspire action, particularly in addressing one of the most pressing issues of our time—climate change.

By commissioning local writers to craft original poetry and fiction, we aim to amplify diverse voices and perspectives on the environment, showcasing the unique connection between these two UNESCO Cities of Literature. We are also delighted to collaborate with talented illustrators, who bring these stories to life

With support from the British Council's *Connections Through Culture* grant, we hope this project ignites conversations and sparks creative solutions for a more sustainable future.

Laura Prinsloo

Focal Point for Jakarta UNESCO City of Literature and Chair of 17,000 Islands of Imagination Foundation

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Bridging Cities is a collaboration between two UNESCO Cities of Literature, exploring the climate crisis through creative writing, made possible by the British Council's *Connections Through Culture* grant programme.

Six writers—three from Exeter and three from Jakarta—were commissioned to create an original piece of writing exploring the climate crisis, drawing on their own local experiences. Each writer was paired with an experienced mentor for feedback and guidance on their work.

Writers were then paired with a counterpart from the other city for a dynamic online conversation, rich with creative exchange and cultural connection. Excerpts from these conversations can be found in this publication.

Artists from Exeter and Jakarta were then commissioned to respond to each piece, creating a rich cross-cultural dialogue and adding a visual dimension to the project.

The resulting works have been translated into English and Indonesian, and exhibitions in Exeter and Jakarta will showcase excerpts of the writing alongside the stunning visual responses.

Bridging Cities embodies the spirit of the UNESCO Cities of Literature, which are committed to fostering creative expression and cultural exchange. This project empowered writers and artists to engage in meaningful dialogue that will continue long after the project.

The project exhibitions and digital publication further bridge the gap between these distant cities, highlighting the universality of environmental challenges while showcasing the unique contributions of Exeter and Jakarta's creative communities.



CONTRIBUTORS

SHIN ALEX



Shin Alex is an emerging writer living in Jakarta, specialising in young adult and children's fantasy stories. She is involved in the Indonesian storytelling community, and her writing was part of a project with the University of Plymouth and the World Illustration Awards through the Cities of Literature network.

Instagram @shin_4lex

Shin Alex adalah penulis pemula yang lahir dan tinggal di Jakarta. Ia lebih suka menulis kisah-kisah fantasi remaja dan anak-anak. Sejak pandemi, ia juga terlibat dalam kegiatan mendongeng bersama Ayo Dongeng Indonesia. Melalui jaringan City of Literature, salah satu karyanya menjadi bagian dari program dengan University of Plymouth dan World Illustration Awards.

LEGENDA BIDADARI: KISAH SEBENARNYA

Ditulis oleh Shin Alex

Konon tempat ini indah dan menyejukkan. Namun, apa yang kulihat sama sekali jauh dari gambaran yang diceritakan.

"Bagaimana ini?" tanya saudariku sambil mengibas-ngibas selendang birunya. "Apa dari dulu cuacanya sepanas ini, ya?"

"Katanya kita bisa main air." Yang lain melepaskan *scarf* hingga di lehernya. "Curug kering. Kalaupun ada, airnya hanya sedikit atau sangat kotor."

"Aku mau pulang!" tangis adikku yang paling muda sambil memegang kakinya. Tampak bercak darah pada selendang hijau yang terbebat di sana.

"Kita tidak bisa pulang dengan tangan kosong," protes yang tertua kesal. "Kalian lupa apa tugas kita?"

Benar. Kahyangan memberikan misi. Kami selalu diceritakan datang berekreasi, padahal nasib semesta ada di tangan kami. Tujuh bidadari yang



sering kalian dengar, itulah kami. Kali ini giliran kami melihat bumi yang katanya indah. Namun, apa yang kami dapat?

Aku menghela napas melihat pemandangan di depanku besok paginya. Setelah entah sungai seberapa akhirnya aku menemukan tempat ini. Suara aliran sungai yang mengundang ternyata tidak sesuai bayanganku. Entah apa saja yang turut mengalir di dalam air keruh semacam itu.

Setelah berpecah dengan yang lain, selendang dan *scarf* menjadi satu-satunya penghubung sekalipun kami tak bersama. Nahas, ketika aku menemukan sungai besar ini, aku justru kehilangan penghubung satu-satunya ketika kain basah itu kujemur di pohon tak jauh dari tempatku berdiri.

Uh, tempat apa ini? Rumah-rumah mungil sepanjang bantaran kali tampak kontras dengan gedung-gedung tinggi menjulang di latarnya. Awan dan kabut asap menjadikan suasana terasa suram.

Aku harus mencari bantuan. Saat menimbang-nimbang pertanyaan yang tak terlalu mencolok, aku tersadar kalau keberadaanku menarik perhatian penduduk sekitar. Aneh. Hidung dan mulut mereka tampak tertutup sesuatu.

“Hai. Ada yang bisa dibantu?”

Aku mengernyit. Pria ini juga mengenakan penutup hidung-mulut. Ia menurunkan tasnya yang berat ke tanah. Dengan cepat otakku berputar. “Kau tahu kenapa air itu begitu kotor?” tanyaku.

“Air Ciliwung?” Ia terbahak. “Lo lagi belajar?”

“Betul!” jawabku sekenanya.

“Gue barusan periksa kualitas airnya,” ucapnya sambil menepuk tas.

“Cerita, dong!”

“Sambil makan aja gimana? Nama gue Jack.”

Siapa takut? “Oke! Namaku Wulan.”

Beberapa orang yang mengais tumpukan rongsokan atau meminta-minta di pinggir jalan menunjukkan buruknya keuangan masyarakat. Sebagian besar tampak lusuh, bahkan si Jack ini sebentar-sebentar menggaruk kepala. Aduh, jangan-jangan kepalanya berkutu!

Polusi udara berat ternyata memaksa warga Jakarta mengenakan masker. Jack teringat akan masa kecilnya ketika COVID-19 merajalela. Kini, curah hujan asam yang tinggi akibat kondensasi bahan polutan di udara juga dapat merusak kesehatan manusia jika partikelnya terhirup.

“Gue lagi memeriksa kualitas air sungai-sungai di Jakarta dan sekitarnya,” papar Jack sambil mengunyah kerak telur, kali ini menggaruk pinggangnya. “Ada dua tempat lain yang mau gue datangi lagi hari ini.”

“Ikut!” cetusku tanpa pikir panjang.

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Sepertinya kami meninggalkan Jakarta cukup jauh untuk menuju lokasi terakhir. Aku tak lagi melihat gedung-gedung tinggi. Sebagian besar pemandangan digantikan pepohonan. Vegetasi di tempat ini pun tampak jarang-jarang dan tak sehat. Apakah karena airnya juga?

"Ibuku ... sakit parah," celetuk Jack tiba-tiba. "Kalau ia agak sehat, apa kau mau membantuku membesuknya?" Tangannya terangkat seperti hendak menggaruk, tapi batal ketika sadar sedang kuperhatikan.

"I-iya, boleh saja." *Kalau aku belum menemukan apa yang kukari.*

Sekilas, sorot mata Jack berubah.

Tiba-tiba ia mempercepat langkah. Ah, gemuruh air yang tadinya sayup, kini semakin kuat. Air!

Jack mengambil peralatan dengan tangan bergetar. "Tak semegah yang kulihat di ponsel pintar," desisnya, "tapi masih ada harapan."

Air bersih akan diproses dan disalurkan untuk Ibu. Aduh!" Sebuah kerikil mengenai kepala Jack dengan keras.

"Apa kau tidak memikirkan orang lain?"

"Tentu saja, Lan. Tapi mereka juga tak peduli pada lingkungan. Kau tak lihat sampah-sampah yang berserakan di sepanjang jalur yang dilewati tadi?"

"Itu tidak membenarkan tindakanmu!" balasku sambil memungut seongkah batu sebesar genggam tangan.

Tangan Jack kembali terangkat.

"STOP!" teriakku gemas. "Mau garuk kepala lagi?"

"Aku sudah dua hari tidak keramas! Mau



Ia cepat-cepat membuat panggilan telepon, lalu memandangu. "Ibu akan sembuh! Kualitas air di sini lebih memadai."

Kondisi ginjal ibu Jack menurun akibat mengonsumsi air berkualitas buruk. Sudah banyak orang dirawat atau meninggal akibat kondisi semacam itu. Jack tidak ingin Ibu menjadi korban selanjutnya.

"Seharusnya sejak awal kudatangi tempat ini. Beberapa hal memang tak bisa kupercayakan pada staf. Kerja setengah hati dan elewatkan hal penting begini," cibirnya. "Staf ibuku dalam perjalanan untuk menguasai tempat ini sampai kutemukan sumber air baru.

bagaimana lagi? Sampo kering habis! Selain mahal, air juga sangat terbatas!" Tiba-tiba ia tersenyum. "Aku tak sabar membawamu kepada Ibu setelah ia sembuh. Gadis cantik pantasnya hidup enak dengan uang berlimpah."

"Apa?" Aku bergidik. "Kau pikir aku mau denganmu?" hardikku sambil melemparkan bongkahan batu di tangan hingga melukai lengan Jack.

Di luar dugaan, pemuda itu berlari ke arahku, hendak menerjang. Dia pikir aku lemah! Tiba-tiba, rerumputan membelit kaki Jack.

Aku sendiri terkejut. Kupikir kekuatan itu hanya dimungkinkan oleh *scarf*-ku.

“Sudah kuduga! Nawangwulan ....” tuding Jack dengan mata terkunci padaku.

“Aku bukan istri Jaka Tarub yang legendaris.”

“Tapi KAU salah satu dari mereka,” balasnya sambil menyeringai. “Tak heran aku bertemu beberapa gadis yang mirip ketika berburu sungai. Tangkap dia!”

Dalam sekelebat mata, beberapa pria meringkus tanganku dari belakang. “Lepaskan!”

Jack berhasil melepaskan diri dan menghampiriku sambil mengeluarkan *scarf* merah. Pencuri!

“Tunjukkan padaku bagaimana cara memperbanyak sumber air seperti yang Nawangwulan lakukan ketika menanam nasi untuk Jaka Tarub. Kelihatannya bisnis air bersih akan lebih menggiurkan ketimbang *illegal logging* milik Ibu.”

Wajahku memerah. “Keluargamu melanggar wejangan para dewa untuk

menjaga alam dan keseimbangannya.” Tanah di kakiku mulai bergetar. Emosiku dapat dirasakan alam. “Air yang dihasilkan bumi tidak hanya diperuntukkan bagi manusia, tapi juga seluruh semesta! Air kalian paling berkhasiat untuk menjaga keseimbangan semesta setiap seratus tahun, tetapi disia-siakan!”

“Wulan!” Saudari-saudariku berdatangan. Pasti karena *scarf*-ku sudah ditemukan.

Jack mencebik. “Nah, makin banyak wanita cantik datang membantu.”

“Pepohonan besar di sini harus dirawat,” desisku geram. “Mereka menampung air lebih banyak. Lalu lakukan yang sama di tempat lain. Tak ada yang instan!”

“Berapa lama akan berhasil? Lima tahun? Sepuluh? Tidak! Aku mau sekarang!”

Getaran semakin hebat hingga tanah dan air terjun terbelah. “Tak ada gunanya bicara pada manusia! Ambil air itu dan bawalah pergi!” jeritku pada gadis lain.

Tak seorang pun sempat bergerak sebelum sumber air itu amblas ditelan bumi. Rusak dan tak dapat diperbaiki lagi.



Illustrated by Soni Speight

## SONI SPEIGHT

**Soni Speight** is an imaginative illustrator, author, and designer based in Exeter, who loves exploring characters and narratives. Inspired by the natural beauty of her surroundings, Soni brings stories to life through vibrant illustrations and thoughtful designs, blending creativity and passion in every project.

*Instagram: @sonispeight*

**Soni Speight** adalah seorang ilustrator yang imajinatif, penulis, dan desainer Exeter, yang senang mengeksplorasi beragam karakter dan naratif. Terinspirasi keindahan alam yang ada di sekitarnya, Soni membuat cerita menjadi hidup melalui ilustrasi yang dinamis dan desain yang berkonsep, menyatukan kreativitas dan hasrat dalam setiap pekerjaannya.



Illustrated by Soni Speight

# THE LEGEND OF BIDADARI: THE TRUE STORY

Written by Shin Alex | Translation by Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi

Once upon a time, this place was known to be beautiful and cool. However, what I saw that day was very much different from what was told.

"How can it be like this?" asked the sister with the blue shawl. "Was the weather this sultry in the past?"

Another sister took off her orange shawl from her neck and said, "I was told that we can play with the water. But there are only dry falls here! Meanwhile the rivers are either dry or very dirty."

"I want to go home!" cried the youngest sister while tending her green shawl that covered the scar in her leg.

"We can't go home empty-handed, my sister," my older sister warned while squeezing her yellow shawl. "Have you all forgotten our tasks?"

She was right. The upper world gave us a mission to accomplish. People might think that we visited Earth just for a trip. In fact, the fate of the universe was on our shoulders, the seven *bidadari* that you might probably have been familiar with. Our time to visit earth had come. Earth that was said to be pretty.

Unfortunately, what we encountered was nothing more than dry or dark rivers. My hope was gone after realizing that most of the water was polluted. We could not bring this kind of water back home and present it to the gods.

We finally decided to spread with shawls as our only guidance. Alas, I lost my magical shawl when I arrived at this place. Without it, I could not go home.

I looked around. What is this place? Rows of shacks along the riverbed were in contrast with towering skyscrapers in the background. Clouds and fog of smoke covered the sky, creating a gloomy atmosphere.

I had to look around and search for information on what had happened in this place. However, I realized that I could not ask too many questions or people would know that I came from the other world. Then I learned that most people there had their noses and mouths covered with a cloth.

"Do you need some help?"

I frowned. In front of me stood a young man carrying a big, heavy bag. Some time ago I saw him squatting at the riverside several miles away from where I stand. "What did you do with the dirty water?" I asked.

"The water of Ciliwung River?" He laughed sarcastically. "I was trying to find the best water among the worst."

"Is there any clean river here?"

He shrugged. "I'm Jack. Are you looking for something?"

"I'm Wulan. I lost my red shawl."

Suddenly, he coughed heavily. "I'll help you to find it."

We did not find any leads and we were too tired to continue searching. Jack drove me passing the empty roads of Jakarta—the name of this city. He was worried about me being outdoors without a pollution mask on—a piece cloth to cover my nose and mouth.

While driving, Jack told me that the situation was similar to during the time COVID-19 pandemic swept the world when he was a kid. Years passed and the high rate of acid rain that is caused by pollutant condensation in the air risked human health if the particles were inhaled.

Beggars and waste pickers could not afford to buy masks. Most people living in the city looked dirty. Even Jack frequently scratched his head. I trembled with the idea that he might have fleas.



"My employees..," he stopped. "My friends will help you find your stuff. They are now busy examining rivers across the Java Island, including Jakarta," he scratched his hip while talking. "They are in bad condition. But suddenly I realized that there was one place missed in our examination. I think it is better to go and see it myself."

"I'll come with you!" I demanded.

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Jack drove his car passing the city border to visit the place he mentioned. I no longer saw tall buildings in the surroundings. There were trees, but they did not look very healthy. I wondered if the contaminated water was the cause.

"My mother is very ill," Jack said suddenly. "Do you want to visit her?" He lifted his hand to scratch.

"Err... Well, okay."

I noticed a slight change in Jack's expression. Suddenly that man paced faster. I heard the rumbling noise roar from behind. Water!

Jack took out some strange equipment from his bag. "It is not as splendid as shown on the internet," he mumbled.

Shortly, Jack talked to someone on his phone. His eyes shone. "The water looks good! I'm sure you'll get better in no time!"

Jack's mother had been suffering from kidney disease due to consuming poor water. Intensive care units of the local hospital were swarmed by patients with similar conditions. Some of them even lost their lives. Jack was worried about the possibility of losing his mother.

"How could my mother's employees miss this important site?! But then at Ciliwung my eyes were opened. I suspect..." He stopped searching his bag. A piece of red cloth popped. I caught a glimpse as he tried to hide it.

"That's my shawl."

"We will take over this place," asserted Jack.

I threw a pebble at his head.

"Ouch!" He snapped.

"Give my shawl back!"

Jack looked at me blankly and raised his hand.

"Stop it! I can't stand your scratching anymore!" I yelled. "I haven't washed my hair for two days! I'm running out of dry shampoo and there isn't enough clean water!" he complained. Suddenly a bright smile appeared on his face. "Once we find the source of freshwater, I will wash my hair regularly. I promise. I'm also certain that my mom will be happy to get to know you."

I shivered. I sensed lust in his eyes. "How could you think I want to be with you?" I hit his arm with a stone, hard enough he bled.

Unexpectedly, Jack threw his body on me. We fell on the ground. I felt a throbbing pain at the back of my head and warm blood started to flow. I commanded plants and grass to tangle and pull Jack's legs.

"Ha! So that's the power of Nawangwulan," he sneered.

"I'm not the famous Jaka Tarub's wife!" I sneered while trying to balance myself.

"But you're one of them," he replied. "So the news is true. I have met several girls who look like you around here in the past few days."

Suddenly my hands were grabbed by several men. I wondered if they were the men who worked for Jack's mother. *Who is his mother really?*

"It seems that Raden Suryakencana, the mountain's ruler, drives away people to find the upstream around here. Your magical shawl has helped me," Jack put the red shawl over my neck. "Show me how to multiply freshwater sources just like Nawangwulan cooked a grain of rice to make a basket of rice. By then, I'm

sure my mom will change her business from illegal logging to clean water."

"What? I can't believe you're one of those destroyers!" I screamed angrily.

The ground began to shake, as if listening to my feelings. With the return of my shawl, I regained my control over nature.

"You should all know that the earth produces water that maintains the universe's harmony for each one hundred years. Without that cycle, not only will we vanish, but the upper world will also be destroyed."

The ground shook even harder. Jack's men loosened their grips.

"Wulan!" my sisters approached me. "Control yourself!"

Jack pulled my shawl in a swift motion. "Take their shawls!" He ordered his men.

No! Without shawls, our power weakened. The ground shook again. I was free from their shackles but I could not reach my shawl.

The forest suddenly got noisy. Despite our magical powers, *bidadari* were not trained to

fight. Several of the men have been knocked down, but there were too many of them.

"Release them!" I screamed. "I can... I will multiply bamboo trees and other plants which have strong roots to hold more groundwater. Better ecosystem will grow more water sources. It all takes time!"

"How long? Five years? Ten? My mother needs to reclaim her power over Jakarta and its surroundings. We can keep our wealth if she gets her reputation back," Jack defended.

My chest burned with anger. I couldn't stand watching our shawls torn apart! There were more and more rocks falling. It was hard to just stand on both feet.

"Take the water and leave!" I cried when I saw there was only the yellow shawl that remained on my sister's neck.

I finally lost control of my power. The ground shook wildly, causing the waterfall to split. The water source is swallowed by the earth, forever destroyed.



# YSELLA SIMS



**Ysella Sims** is a freelance writer, facilitator, and creative communications specialist. Her creative work focuses on our connection to each other and the natural world, often exploring threads of commonality. She produces and hosts events, facilitates workshops and performs her work on the rich South West literary scene.

*Instagram: @ysella\_sims*

**Ysella Sims** adalah penulis lepas waktu, fasilitator dan spesialis dalam komunikasi kreatif. Karya kreatifnya berfokus pada hubungan antar manusia dan alam, seringkali mengeksplorasi benang merah yang menyatukan semuanya. Ysella mengorganisir kegiatan, memfasilitasi lokakarya dan berkarya dalam skena sastra Inggris Barat Daya yang kaya.

## THE LAST SWALLOW

Written by Ysella Sims

*'For in the end all human life aspires to hope,  
the highest expression of which is love.'*

*Richard Flanagan*

It was the middle of May and still there was no sign of the swallows. The roof of the yellow house, where every year since before even Greta could remember, a pair had perched, waiting for each other's return, remained empty. The sky hung the same blank grey it had been since September, shedding rain, day after day, onto the waterlogged fields circling the village. People watched anxiously for signs of the swallows' return, knowing that spring couldn't arrive before them.

Inside the yellow house, Greta moved listlessly between rooms, scanning each window for a swoop, a patch of blue sky. She could feel the



rumble of lorries carrying neighbours out to the city in search of new homes below her in the lane. All across the valley rain seeped into thatch, cob and stone, spilling debris into paths and roads.

In the yard she peered into the red-tiled shed, a jumble of Peter's tools and paint tins, but there was no sign of the swallows, just last year's nests on the ledge. She climbed the steps to the garden. The air smelt metallic. *Maybe this was it, the world was in reverse, folding in on itself.*

She lowered herself onto the sloping lawn, feeling like a pinball on a tilted bagatelle. *Nearly seventy and she was still doing this,* performing the same ritual, registering the quickening and dulling of the earth's pulse the same way that others registered weather patterns. *Well, good luck with that.* She turned her ear to the ground to listen, knowing this might be the time that she heard only her own heart.

Below the sodden surface was the sound of the earth movers in the fields behind the house, grinding through layers of shale and sandstone, volcanic rock and animal bone, through layers of leaf mould pulled down by earthworms during the overlong winter. The soil sighed as it gave way to metal. Below this the fizz of electricity, the clickety clack of tiny beetle legs rubbing together. *Where was it?* She strained to hear. *There it was.* A soft ticking, a rhythmic thud; the slow pulse of winter.

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"They're still not back," she said later, moving stiffly from the aga to the sink and back again, the warm kitchen heavy with the smell of simmering tripe.

At the table Lotta continued to pick at a scab on her wrist where the cat had scratched her.

"That smells minging," she said, twisting her mouth.

"Migration routes have been blocked by officials and migrant camps set on fire at Calais in scenes of repeated violence and protest

on the French border," announced the smart speaker on the dresser.

"Once the world was one big garden," Greta sighed, "before we started putting up fences. Soon, Lotta, when you try putting a spade in the soil, you'll only dig up plastic."

Lotta kept worrying at the scab, "I'm not actually planning on putting a spade in the soil Gran, but, thanks."

Peter came into the kitchen then, rolling down his shirt sleeves and taking his place at the table. The glasses he wore for mending watches and clocks were pushed back on his head, making exaggerated moons of his thinning hair.

"Still no swallows," said Greta, spooning tripe into a bowl and setting it down in front of him.

"They'll come, love," he said.

"Yeah, they'll come," said Lotta.

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In the time before, when the yellow house was being built, layer by layer, from stone pulled from the red earth by boys and men with hammers and chisels, black creases lining their hands and brows, and carried by thin horses up the steep slope of the village, clouds of swallows woke from the muddy reedbeds around the pond in the wet meadow to bring spring back to the village. They carried beakfuls of mud to the pig shed in the yard of the yellow house, building nests for black-eyed clutches who greeted the baker as he carried swill to the pig. The villagers welcomed the swallows with streaming ribbons and crowns of flowers, with dancing and singing and beer-filled bellies. As the fields greened and hedgerows billowed, the skies grew feathered with flight and chorus. Here was life returned! Here was hope!

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"I'm going out to listen again," said Greta, pushing away her bowl and getting up from the table.



Peter put down his spoon, exchanging a worried look with Lotta. She followed Greta into the garden.

Together they pressed their bellies and ears to the ground. There were the earth movers, insects and electrical pulses, and underneath the same faint thud of winter, like a rubber band stretched between two thumbs.

"Hear anything?" Greta asked, turning her face towards Lotta.

"Only winter," said Lotta, with a small shake of her head.

Greta groaned, letting her forehead rest on the ground. Lotta reached across to stroke the pink skin of her grandmother's neck.

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*Were the swallows released from gilded cages, the playthings of gods? Were they Aphrodite transformed? When the yellow house was transforming, from baker's cottage to gentleman's villa, the swallows' compass drew them back, across sand and seas, to the red-tiled shed, home now to a fat-bellied wash copper. The housemaid shooed them away with her broom, cursing the pesky guano that marked her white sheets. They took to the village barns, following the cattle as they grazed and came down to milk, plucking horseflies from warm air. At dusk and dawn they circled and chased above the village square as ruddy-faced villagers, the white-*

handed vicar, giddy schoolchildren, the last remaining weavers, looked up at the skies, at the carnival swooping and burbling, feeling the fullness of life, of fields full of livestock and crops, of air thick with quarry.

\*\*\*

Greta's body tensed. *What was that sound?*

"Did you hear that?" she asked, sitting up.

Lotta tilted her head to listen.

"Can you hear it?"

They scoured the sky, a look of concentration mirrored on their upturned faces. A musical current, trickling and lifting, fell toward them. And there was the unmistakable black arrow of a swallow cutting through the grey, darting and weaving; the sharp blue swagger of a moustachioed cad, a chestnut flash. A chink of light broke through the clouds. A second swallow appeared, chasing the first.

Lotta was on her feet, pointing at the sky.

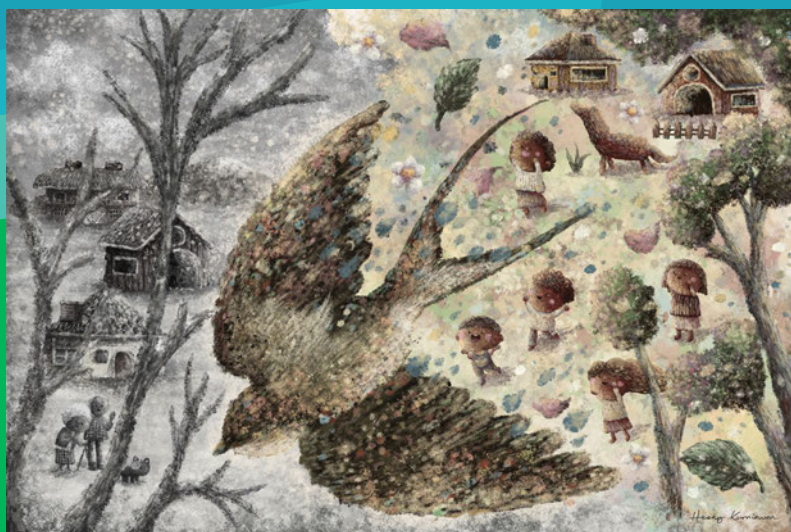
"Look, the sun!"

With urgency Greta pressed her ear back to the earth. There it was, the quickening pulse, the rising shudder of the earth's heartbeat.

She sat up, pulling Lotta towards her, cradling her, singing softly into her cropped brown hair.

*So this wasn't the beginning of the end after all.*

*They might still have time.*



Illustrated by Hezky Kurniawan



## HEZKY KURNIAWAN

**Hezky Kurniawan** is an Indonesian illustrator specialising in children's book illustrations, murals, and portraits. He has created illustrations for Dewi Lestari, Ika Natassa, and Risa Saraswati, and worked with international brands.

*Instagram: @hezkykurniawan*

**Hezky Kurniawan** adalah ilustrator Indonesia yang mengerjakan buku anak, mural dan potret. Dia telah membuat ilustrasi untuk karya novel Dewi Lestari, Ika Natassa, sampai Risa Saraswati, juga untuk brand lokal maupun internasional.



Illustrated by Hezky Kurniawan

# BURUNG LAYANG-LAYANG TERAKHIR

Ditulis oleh Ysella Sims | Terjemahan oleh Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi

*'Pada akhirnya semua kehidupan manusia mengidamkan harapan, dengan ekspresi paling puncak adalah cinta.'*

*Richard Flanagan*

Pertengahan Mei dan masih belum ada tanda kemunculan burung layang-layang. Atap rumah kuning, yang bahkan sebelum Greta bisa mengingat selalu disinggahi sepasang burung layang-layang setiap tahunnya, masih kosong. Langit menggantungkan kelabu hampa yang sama sejak September, meluruhkan hujan dari hari ke hari, mengenangi sawah yang mengelilingi desa. Orang-orang menunggu dengan cemas tanda-tanda kembalinya burung layang-layang, mengetahui bahwa musim semi tidak akan tiba sebelum mereka.

Di dalam rumah kuning, Greta berjalan lesu dari satu ruangan ke ruangan lain, memeriksa satu per satu jendela untuk mencari setangkup, sepetak langit biru. Ia bisa merasakan getaran lori di gang bawah tanah yang bergerak membawa warga desa ke kota untuk mencari rumah baru. Di sepanjang lembah hujan meresap ke tumpukan jerami, campuran jerami dan tanah liat, dan bebatuan, menumpahkan puing-puing ke setiapak dan jalan raya.

Di halaman rumah Greta mengintip ke gudang berubin merah. Ada tumpukan alat-alat lukis dan kaleng cat milik Peter, tapi tidak ada tanda-tanda burung layang-layang, hanya sarang dari kunjungan tahun lalu yang tersisa di langkan. Ia menaiki anak tangga ke arah taman. Udaranya tercium seperti metalik. *Mungkin inilah waktunya, ketika dunia berbalik, membunuh dirinya sendiri.*

Greta menggulingkan tubuhnya di halaman rumput yang landai, layaknya bola pinball di papan permainan yang miring. *Hampir tujuh puluh tahun dan dia masih melakukan itu,* mengerjakan ritual yang sama, merekam detak bumi yang semakin cepat dan menjemukan selayaknya orang-orang lain mencatat pola cuaca. *Yah, semoga beruntung.* Ia mengarahkan telinganya ke tanah untuk mendengarkan, menyadari mungkin kali ini ia hanya akan mendengar detak jantungnya sendiri.

Di bawah permukaan tanah basah terdengar adalah suara mesin keruk di sawah belakang rumah, menggaruk menembus lapisan-lapisan batu serpih, batu pasir, batu

vulkanik, dan tulang belulang binatang, melintasi lapisan-lapisan jamur daun yang dibawa cacing tanah selama musim dingin berkepanjangan. Tanah mendesah memberikan jalan untuk logam. Di bawahnya terdengar desis aliran listrik, gemeretak kaki-kaki kecil kumbang yang saling digosokkan satu sama lain. *Di mana suara itu?* Greta menajamkan pendengarannya. *Itu dia.* Detakan halus, dentuman beritme; denyut perlahan musim dingin.

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"Mereka masih belum kembali," ujarnya kemudian, bergerak dengan kaku dari ruang memasak ke wastafel dan kembali lagi, menuju dapur hangat yang sesak dengan wangi sup babat yang mendidih.

Lotta di tempat duduknya terus mencabuti koreng luka di pergelangan tangannya yang oleh kucing.

"Baunya busuk," ujarnya, mencibirkan bibir.

"Rute migrasi telah terhalangi oleh pemerintah dan kamp migran di Calais dibakar dalam episode kekerasan dan demonstrasi yang berulang di perbatasan Prancis," terang pengeras suara pintar di atas meja rias.

"Dulu dunia adalah satu taman besar," desah Greta, "sebelum kita menancapkan pagar-pagar. Tidak lama lagi, Lotta, saat kamu menggali tanah dengan sekop, yang kamu dapatkan cuma plastik."

Lotta masih khawatir dengan lukanya, "aku sebenarnya tidak berencana untuk menggali tanah dengan sekop, Nek, tapi terima kasih.

Peter kemudian muncul di dapur, menurunkan gulungan lengan kemejanya dan mengambil tempat duduk. Kacamata yang ia pakai untuk memeriksa arloji dan jam dinaikkan ke atas kepala, memperjelas rambutnya yang menipis.

"Masih belum ada burung layang-layang," ujar Greta, menuangkan sup ke mangkuk dan meletakkannya di hadapan Peter.

"Mereka akan datang, sayang," ujarnya.

"Iya, mereka akan datang," ujar Lotta.

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Sebelumnya, ketika rumah kuning sedang dibangun, lapis demi lapis, dari batu yang

ditarik keluar dari tanah merah oleh anak-anak dan laki-laki dengan palu dan pahat, legam hitam menggaris di tangan dan alis mereka, dan dibawa oleh kuda-kuda kurus ke turunan curam di desa itu, sekawanan burung layang-layang terbangun dari hamparan alang-alang berlumpur sekitar kolam di padang rumput yang basah untuk membawa musim semi kembali ke desa. Dalam paruhnya mereka membawa lumpur untuk kandang babi di halaman rumah kuning, membangun sarang untuk telur berbintik hitam yang menyambut pembuat roti sembari ia membawa sisa makanan untuk para babi. Orang-orang desa menyambut rombongan burung layang-layang itu dengan pita dan mahkota bunga, dengan tarian dan nyanyian dan perut penuh bir. Seiring sawah menghiijau dan tanaman pagar menggulung, langit diwarnai kepakan sayap dan nyanyian. Di sini kehidupan kembali! Di sini adalah harapan!

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“Aku akan keluar untuk mendengarkan lagi,” ujar Greta, menggeser mangkuknya dan bangkit dari kursi.

Peter meletakkan sendoknya, bertukar tatapan cemas dengan Lotta. Ia mengikuti Greta ke taman.

Bersama-sama Greta dan Lotta membaringkan perut dan menempelkan telinga mereka di tanah. Terdengar suara mesin keruk, serangga, dan detak aliran listrik, dan di bawahnya lagi dentuman rendah musim dingin, seperti karet gelang yang dibentangkan di antara dua ibu jari.

“Kau dengar sesuatu?” tanya Greta, menoleh ke arah Lotta. “Hanya musim dingin,” jawab Lotta, dengan gelengan kecil.

Greta menggeram, membiarkan dahinya menyentuh tanah. Lotta mendekat untuk meraba leher neneknya yang berwarna merah muda.

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*Apakah burung layang-layang itu dilepaskan dari sangkar berlapis emas, mainan para dewa? Apakah mereka Aphrodite yang bertransformasi? Ketika rumah kuning bertransformasi, dari pondokan pembuat roti menjadi tempat tinggal seorang laki-laki, kompas burung layang-layang menarik mereka kembali, melintasi padang pasir dan lautan, ke gudang berubin merah yang menjadi rumah bagi alat pembersih tembaga berperut buncit. Pembantu mengusir mereka dengan*

sapunya, mengumpati kotoran yang menodai kain putihnya. Mereka menuju peternakan desa, mengikuti rombongan sapi yang sedang merumput dan berjalan turun untuk diperah susunya, mengusir langau yang beterbangan di udara yang hangat. Saat senja dan fajar mereka terbang dalam lingkaran dan saling berkejaran di atas alun-alun desa seiring warga desa yang berwajah merah, vikaris bertangan pucat, anak-anak sekolah yang tidak bisa diam, dan penenun kain terakhir, menengadah menatap langit, ke arah karnaval burung yang menukik dan menggumam. Mereka, menikmati hidup, sawah yang di penuh hasil panen dan tumbuhan, udara yang dipenuhi burung.

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Tubuh Greta menegang. *Suara apa itu?*

“Kau mendengarnya?” tanya Greta sembari bangkit untuk duduk. Lotta mengangkat kepalanya dan berusaha mendengarkan.

“Kau bisa mendengarnya?”

Mereka menerawang langit, tatapan penuh konsentrasi terpancar dari wajah mereka yang menengadah. Aliran musik, turun dan naik, mengelilingi mereka. Tampak dengan jelas sebersit panah hitam seekor burung layang-layang menembus kelabu, melesat dan berkelok; gerakan-gerakan tajam berwarna biru digariskan burung layang-layang berbulu coklat kemerahan. Secercah cahaya melintasi barisan awan. Burung layang-layang kedua muncul, mengejar kawannya yang pertama.

Lotta sekejap berdiri, menunjuk ke langit. “Lihat, matahari!”

Greta buru-buru meletakkan kembali telinganya di tanah. Terdengar olehnya detak yang semakin cepat, semakin menggetarkan, dari detak jantung bumi. Ia duduk, menarik Lotta ke arahnya dan memeluk cucunya itu, bernyanyi perlahan di rambut coklatnya yang dipotong pendek.

*Pada akhirnya ini bukan awal dari sebuah akhir. Mereka mungkin masih punya waktu.*



# SHOBA DEWEY CHUGANI



**Shoba Dewey Chugani** is a writer and storytelling mentor based in Jakarta. Her first children's book *Jangan Dragon Kite* was shortlisted for the Scholastic Picture Book Awards in 2015, and her poem interpreting Weston Wei's *Sleeping With My Allergy* artwork was included in the City of Literature project with the University of Plymouth and the World Illustration Awards.

*Instagram: @sdeweyc*

**Shoba Dewey Chugani** adalah penulis dan mentor bagi penulis pemula yang tinggal di Jakarta. Buku anak pertamanya "*Jangan Dragon Kite*" masuk sebagai semifinal Scholastic Picture Book Awards di tahun 2015. Puisinya yang menginterpretasi ilustrasi Weston Wei berjudul "*Sleeping With My Allergy*", terpilih menjadi bagian dari program jaringan City of Literature dengan University of Plymouth dan World Illustration Awards.

## CLIMATE CHAOS – EVERY ACTION COUNTS!

Written by Shoba D. Chugani

### Part 1: In the Chaos

She staggers into her apartment, throws off her shoes, drops her bag,  
shaking from the nightmare below -  
traffic deadlock, torrential downpour, asphalt streets turn to rivers,  
irritable drivers vying for road space,  
lightning flashes, intense, so close,  
the radio blasting breaking news of a first-of-its-kind tornado,  
a smack of doomsday just like in the movies,  
El Nino and climate change held culpable.

No mention of it all being anthropogenic, of course,  
but it's all over the internet,  
the surface of the earth, chemistry of the oceans degenerate,  
overhunting, overfishing, mono-culture agriculture,  
driving extinction rates to a thousand times higher,  
the earth on the precipice of the sixth mass extinction.

She collapses into her couch,  
up on the 23rd floor the distant cacophony ceases to exist,  
she logs into her playlist, jazzy tunes, sounds blend - edgy, cozy, warm –  
for a while, she lets herself charge.

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The rain pours, incessant, relentless,  
down at the coast the sky is dark, murky, foreboding,  
the fisherman comes home from a ten-day sail, beaten, weary to his bones,  
his wife cries in gratitude, the sea has spared him, the weather's been precarious,  
the fisherman laments his catch, meager, scantier than ever,  
even after braving harsh waves in rough seas,  
they had been warned –  
climate change, warm waters, rising waters and what-nots,  
but the sea is his life, and his life is the sea, he must carry on.

Stretching sore muscles, he flops onto the old bamboo bed on the porch,  
worn out with age it creaks desperately,  
the fisherman's wife prepares snack,  
the scent of fried bananas and black coffee merges,  
for a while, the fisherman wallows in the sweet aroma of home.

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Thunder roars, lightning bolts strike, split the distant skies,  
flashes of the mountain range, stunning,  
but marred by growing patches of human exploitation.

In the village, the shaman leads his people to take refuge,  
the buffaloes, the dogs, the chickens safe in the barn, the children all inside,  
the adults gather in the longhouse, together they brace for the downpour.

Life has been pure, simple,  
the forest's sacred wisdom nurtured,  
the land cleared after the harvest left free for the forest to reclaim,  
forbidden zones untouched, wild, protected,  
the ways of the ancestors strictly adhered to,  
for generations nature has been on their side, but not lately...



The shaman picks the strings of his lute, a monotonous melody fills the space,  
tuning in with the drone of the cicadas' call toned-down in the rain,  
for a while everyone is lulled into a solemn stillness.

## Part 2: Every Action Counts!

The rain beats hard on the windowpanes,  
the flicker of red taillights meander for as far as she can see,  
she calls her parents; they are safe and well.

She takes off her contact lenses, the daily disposable ones, her 27th pair,  
she usually tosses them into the waste bin,  
but this evening her mind decides to play with Math,  
even though her body screams for rest,  
30 pairs a month, 360 pairs a year,  
multiply that with a million people or even four,  
flushing them all down the drains into the waterways,  
adding microplastic already lush in the ocean,  
she'll opt for glasses or even laser,  
we've got to be aware, our actions count.

She turns off the lights, prepares for bed, but an urgent knock at her door jolts her,  
her bestie and her dog in distress, their house a few blocks away submerged,  
she prepares the sofa bed, boils some tea, the evening's been quite a scare,  
tomorrow's a long weekend, they'll get to unwind, figure things out.

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Strong winds topple a large pot of water lily,  
the fisherman alerted jumps to his feet,  
a suspicious roar at the back of the house sends him dashing inside,  
in their living room a gaping hole, one meter wide,  
the wave has just taken their floor away.  
The fisherman and his wife move their belongings,  
they fill the hole with sand and coral,  
add layers of sandbags along the walls to ease the crashing waves.

There have been better days, lush mangrove forests lining the coast,  
the ocean giving, nurturing, healing,  
fish abundant, they never had to go that far out to sea,  
but the coastline stripped naked for all kinds of commercial projects has turned  
treacherous, the water creeps in closer, their house is the coastline now.



The fisherman sips his coffee, lets his mind wander, should he try out his luck in the city,  
but the sea's been his livelihood, his forefathers' too,  
the ocean looms and threatens, a breach in nature's balance,  
tomorrow he will plant some seedlings, the next day a little bit more,  
one tiny step at a time, he must try to bring that balance back.

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The downpour has ceased as suddenly as it had come,  
the children asleep, the adults by their side,  
the shaman steps out of the longhouse,  
the scent of wet soil, plants, decaying wood combines – the smell of life,  
the forest that he loves so much, their home for generations.  
He grieves for the mindless clearings beyond, getting bigger, closer,  
nature being choked out of life, retaliates, wild, unpredictable,  
he must do his part, for the sake of the children and their children,  
in the dazed moonlight, he weaves his way in between the trees,  
the spirits of the forest speak into his ears.

Tomorrow he must gather his people to prepare for the rituals,  
seven days and seven nights of chants, praises, giving thanks,  
and with people from the conservation project, he must continue to make maps,  
on the ground and on paper - legal markings for their ancestral land.

Together they'll maintain the wisdom of the ancestors,  
allow the land to breathe and let life flourish once again.



Illustrated by Ridi Hossain

## RIDI HOSSAIN

**Ridi Hossain** (she/her) is a British Bengali artist and the owner of CreativeWeirdo, an art business in Exeter specialising in fine art illustrations, watercolours, and anime-style drawings. Her work has since been featured in OK! Magazine.

*Instagram: @creativeweirdo\_*

**Ridi Hossain** adalah seniman Inggris-Bengali dan pemilik CreativeWeirdo, sebuah bisnis seni yang mengkhususkan diri pada ilustrasi berseni tinggi, ilustrasi cat air dan gambar-gambar bergaya anime. Karyanya selama ini telah dimuat dalam majalah OK!.



Illustrated by Ridi Hossain

# KEKACAUAN IKLIM – SETIAP AKSI BERMAKNA!

Ditulis oleh Shoba Dewey Chugani | Terjemahan oleh Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi

## Bagian 1: Dalam Kekacauan

Ia terhuyung memasuki kamar apartemennya, melemparkan sepatunya, menjatuhkan tasnya, bergetar karena mimpi buruk di bawah sana—kemacetan, hujan badai, jalan aspal berubah sungai, para pengemudi gusar bersaing mencari celah, petir menyambar, kencang, sangat dekat, radio mengabarkan berita tentang bencana puting beliung pertama, sekelebat kiamat seperti di film-film, El Nino dan perubahan iklim dipersalahkan. Tidak ada yang menyebut semua itu disebabkan manusia, tentu saja, tapi semuanya ada di internet, permukaan bumi, kandungan dalam lautan merosot, perburuan hewan berlebih, penangkapan ikan berlebih, agrikultur mono-kultur, menggenjot tingkat kepunahan ribuan kali lebih tinggi, bumi berdiri di jurang kepunahan massal keenam.

Ia menjatuhkan tubuhnya ke sofa, di lantai 23 hiruk pikuk di kejauhan menghilang, ia menyelam ke daftar lagunya, nada-nada jazz, suara bercampur-unik, nyaman, hangat—sejenak, ia mengizinkan dirinya mengisi energi.

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Hujan turun, terus menerus, tanpa henti, di pantai langit gelap, suram, petanda buruk, nelayan pulang dari berlayar sepuluh hari, lelah, letih sampai ke tulang, istrinya menangis bersyukur, lautan telah menjaganya, cuaca berbahaya, nelayan meratapi tangkapannya yang jarang, lebih sedikit dari sebelumnya, bahkan setelah menantang ombak ganas di lautan yang keras, mereka sudah diperingatkan—perubahan iklim, lautan menghangat, permukaan air naik, dan segala larangan tapi lautan adalah hidupnya, dan hidupnya adalah laut, ia harus terus berlayar.

Merenggangkan otot yang pegal, ia menjatuhkan tubuhnya ke dipan bambu tua di beranda, usang karena usia dipan itu berderit putus asa, istri nelayan menyiapkan kudapan, wangi pisang goreng dan kopi hitam bertemu, sejenak, sang nelayan bergumul dalam manis nya aroma rumah.

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Guntur meraung, petir menyambar, membelah langit di kejauhan, kelap pegunungan, memukau, tapi dirusak oleh petak-petak eksploitasi manusia yang terus bertambah. Di desa, tetua adat mengarahkan orang-orang untuk mencari perlindungan,



kerbau, anjing, ayam, aman di dalam kandang, anak-anak di dalam rumah,  
orang-orang dewasa berkumpul di rumah panjang, bersama bersiap menghadapi hujan lebat.

Hidup dulu suci, sederhana,  
kebijaksanaan hujan yang sakral terjaga,  
lahan dibersihkan setelah panen agar hutan bisa memilikinya kembali,  
zona terlarang tidak tersentuh, liar, terlindungi,  
cara hidup yang diikuti oleh para pendahulu,  
selama beberapa generasi alam berada di sisi mereka, tapi tidak akhir-akhir ini...

Tetua adat memetik senar kecapinya, melodi monoton mengisi langit,  
selaras dengan dengung panggilan tonggeret yang diredam hujan,  
sejenak, semua orang terbuai dalam keheningan yang khusus.

## **Bagian 2: Setiap Aksi Bermakna!**

Hujan berdentum keras di kaca jendela,  
berkas merah lampu belakang mobil berkelok sejauh pandangannya,  
ia menelepon orang tuanya; mereka dalam keadaan aman dan baik.

Ia melepas lensa kontaknya, lensa sekali pakai, pasang yang ke-27,  
biasanya ia buang ke tempat sampah,  
tapi malam ini pikirannya bermain dengan matematika,  
walaupun tubuhnya berteriak meminta istirahat,  
30 pasang sebulan, 360 pasang setahun,  
Kalikan itu dengan satu juta orang atau bahkan empat juta,  
menggelontorkannya ke saluran air,  
menambah mikroplastik yang sudah bertebaran di lautan,  
ia akan beralih ke kacamata atau bahkan laser,  
kita harus sadar, tindakan kita bermakna.

Ia matikan lampu, bersiap untuk tidur, tapi ketukan mendesak di pintu menyentak,  
kawan baiknya bersama anjingnya dalam kesusahan, rumah mereka beberapa blok dari sana  
tenggelam,  
ia menyiapkan tempat tidur sofa, menyeduh teh, malam itu cukup menakutkan,  
esok tiba akhir pekan panjang, mereka akan bersantai, mencari jawaban.

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Angin kencang menjatuhkan pot besar berisi lili air,  
nelayan berdiri terkejut,  
raungan mencurigakan di belakang rumah mengantarnya berlari ke dalam,  
di ruang tamu ada lubang menganga, lebar satu meter,  
ombak telah menyapu lantai mereka.  
Nelayan dan istrinya memindahkan barang-barang,  
mereka mengisi lubang dengan pasir dan koral,  
menambah lapisan kantong pasir di sepanjang dinding untuk meredam hempasan ombak.

Sempat berlangsung hari-hari yang lebih baik, hutan bakau lebat menggaris pantai,  
laut memberi, merawat, menyembuhkan



ikan berlimpah, mereka tidak perlu pergi sejauh itu ke laut,  
tapi bibir pantai yang ditelanjangi untuk semua jenis proyek-proyek komersial berubah jadi  
jebakan, air merayap mendekat, rumah mereka sekarang adalah bibir pantai.

Nelayan menyesap kopinya, membiarkan pikirannya mengelana, haruskah ia mencari  
peruntungan ke kota,  
tapi laut telah menjadi penghidupan baginya, bagi leluhurnya juga,  
laut membentang dan mengancam, pelanggaran keseimbangan alam,  
besok ia akan menanam sejumlah bibit, esoknya lebih banyak lagi,  
satu langkah kecil dalam satu waktu, ia harus coba mengembalikan keseimbangan.

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Hujan telah pergi secepat ia datang,  
anak-anak tidur, orang-orang dewasa di sisi mereka,  
dukun keluar dari rumah panjang,  
aroma tanah basah, tanaman, kayu busuk bercampur – bau kehidupan,  
hutan yang sangat ia cintai, rumah mereka lintas generasi.

Ia berkabung untuk penebangan hutan yang semakin luas, semakin dekat,  
alam dicekik menuju kematiannya, membalaskan dendam, liar, tidak tertebak,  
ia harus jalankan tugasnya, demi anak-anak dan anak-anak mereka,  
di bawah cahaya bulan yang kabur, ia menyusuri jalannya di antara pepohonan,  
roh hutan berbisik di telinganya.

Besok ia harus mengumpulkan orang-orang untuk menyiapkan ritual,  
tujuh hari tujuh malam penuh nyanyian, pujian, syukur,  
dan dengan orang-orang dari proyek perlindungan, ia harus terus membuat peta,  
di tanah dan di kertas - penanda hukum untuk lahan nenek moyang.

Bersama mereka akan menjaga kearifan nenek moyang,  
mengizinkan tanah untuk bernafas dan membiarkan kehidupan mekar sekali lagi.

\*\*\* Tamat \*\*\*



# SWARNIM AGRAWAL



**Swarnim Agrawal** is a writer from India who has lived in Exeter since 2022. She has an MA in Creative Writing from the University of Exeter and has performed at various open mic nights. Her writing has been featured in the ENIGMA journal and RAZZ magazine, and she was on the Exeter judging panel for Slamovision 2023.

*Instagram: @swarnim\_swag*

**Swarnim Agrawal** adalah penulis India yang sudah tinggal di Exeter sejak 2022. Swarnim yang mempunyai gelar Magister Seni dalam Penulisan Kreatif dari Universitas Exeter, telah tampil beberapa kali dalam ajang open mic nights. Karyanya pernah dimuat dalam jurnal ENIGMA dan majalah RAZZ, dan dia adalah salah satu panel juri untuk Slamovision 2023.

## STEPS. REFLECTION. REBELLION.

Written by Swarnim Agrawal

*31st March 2024, 6:30 a.m., Exeter, Devon, UK  
the clocks have just gone forward, ducks are waking up,  
seagulls saunter about the Flowerpot Field, a dark green tree  
stands out, a train stops on the bridge and then reverses; i  
hum a mix of Hindi and English songs in a ['beɪ.sʊrɪ:] [a:və:z];  
watching the sunrise, i spot a green poster from far, blurred  
by my myopic vision... "Save Our Green Space"*

from Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, India, to Exeter, Devon, UK...it's been 600+ days of walking, of being accountable to the Logophilia Nest, to myself

of asking the #Why behind staying in Exeter even after walking across the stage and tossing the hat...



i need to do this because i am screaming. inside. and i want to feel okay  
these walks have been helping me peel off the layered veneer one leaf at a time  
here, i have found routes that i like. i have (too many) photos of the Stoke Hill, the Quayside  
track workout → start walking → “Stepping up your game!” – that’s what the app says  
the weather is so good...and the sky, oh it is beautiful (i need to increase my Nature vocabulary) –  
that’s what i say

wind invades my jacket, muddy brown pale leaves sweep through the ground as three bags of  
garbage carry my procrastination

i see early risers taking their dogs for a walk and realise, my emotional baggage needs to be  
defecated i come to the Taddiforde Valley and wonder – is it a stream? a river? a pond? a brook?

*Do not go for walks when it is raining*

but it rains so frequently here – it’s a routine of trees shaking their arms to dry up  
black water drips from my hands and there’s a blemish on my nose, i ask again – is it a waterfall  
the ink saga continues

stumps logs moist lifeless – just random words as this mystery of identification and naming goes  
on

i remember the lion and gorilla from Nandankanan Zoological Park from 2013 and wonder if i was  
also performing a role in captivity away from my natural habitat

*She is a good girl. One doesn’t become a topper by wasting time pursuing boys or playing  
sports.*

my therapy workbook → Emotions: hopeless, lonely → Thoughts: i want a hug → Physical symptoms:  
suffocated crouched in a corner □ Behaviour: lying on the bed doing nothing, no cooking no  
cleaning

i stand behind a tree and peek through the slits at the Reed Pond, looking at the crimson  
reflections of the trees



swimming with swans, flowing with streams, crossing bridges, jumping with rabbits, falling with leaves, rising with magpies – that's how i thrive in Exeter instead of just surviving elsewhere  
i carry my mentor's words with me – "your experience has biased you to think that you won't find love and care. this won't be true forever."

having sieved some of my relationships in life, maybe now i can make some time for Nature so i climb the steps – Reed Hall – the Italianate mansion awaits with its white moss-laden walkways  
the statue intrigues me – Google Lens, university website, archives team – no one knows is that Artemis? connected to wilderness?

left with unanswered questions, i visit the Diamond Jubilee International Garden of the university  
a rendezvous of storm and tangerine sunset applauded in the sign language of the green leaves dangle and jump as i want to in that moment, under the monochromatic cloudy sky  
it's as grey as the ink that flows in my sink or my eyeliner smudged on a tissue  
i am standing on the edge

i came from north, looking south, standing on the east, clicking photographs of the west  
i hear footsteps behind me and the fear comes back

*~~You will fall off. you are not allowed here. you must delete all the photos and videos.~~*

i remember going to the Tiger Hill in Darjeeling, watching Mount Kanchenjunga on a hazy morning

i realise – i am still on a pedestal, but for a change, this one has a wonderful view in open space

i don't want to do any more people pleasing

i start walking back towards the Forum Hill. oh! cars again → stop. look. walk. no. stop. go. run. stop.

how many months are enough to learn traffic rules of the UK and not get run over

look at that rainbow forming a halo around the university campus!

just two or three rainbows in twenty-one years. now, one rainbow per two weeks in three months

i don't feel homesick. i yearn to return to the Shrine, the Logophilia HQ, the Nest

i love this place, its colloquial cotton candy skies, wisps of air. i had heard of Keats' unrequited love and ode to autumn, read Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey, lived in the Victorian novels and graduated from Hogwarts. now i get to wear winter coats. i love the interweaving contrails, fresh air, silence sans horns, sunrise and sunset, hills.

i will be doing my walk a little late today. Something happened... i am okay. was just overwhelmed. waking up to 6 missed calls. being my parents' tech support. filling my mother's job application form and fixing my father's phone issue while crying. living in two time zones is difficult

when i first went to the Quay – [ki:], not [kwei]; the swans looked with poise at the contraption in my hand as i saw the European robin – orange, grey, blue, brown, little, oh so small  
unlike the 'evil' seagull that the International Student Support Officer had warned us against  
it's a struggle to observe minutely through my myopic sight, a barrier, a blurred registration of visual delights

a spare pair of corrective lenses and a cleaning cloth are among my top packing priorities  
i lived by the riverside in Allahabad. we used to go there, rarely, for religious purposes. we often  
didn't indulge in pleasures such as boating.

UK's Nature and India's Nature – i cannot compare. this is my first close encounter with Nature  
i went on one long drive on my second last day in India – my induction to becoming a Nature  
enthusiast my college in New Delhi had beautiful lawns  
front lawns – closed for preservation and laurels; back lawns – too hot in summers

i missed those tufts of grass during the pandemic. i missed that freedom  
i couldn't go out at night even in Delhi, but i could travel alone via metro

these roads of Exeter support my walks. they know me. the girl in the jacket. walking early morning  
WHY. why do so many people think i have chosen the path of failure? why do they think writers  
do nothing? why do they take my success for granted and failures as catastrophic? why do they  
think long drives and nature walks are not productive?

*I AM NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM. PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME LIKE YOURSELF. I WILL BE ME.*

i started my morning walks going round and round, not even hundred metres in one circle  
it is not a circle. it is the room that i finally got when i was nineteen. after multiple breakdowns  
ouch! i just stubbed my toe on the bedstand, the wall, the table, the shoe box  
sometimes i even felt dizzy circling around the room  
i am exploring and experiencing, rediscovering and redefining myself. seeing the aurora borealis.  
it takes time to unleash many years of suppressed rebellion. takes work walks words  
at least in Exeter i don't have to run away without articulating my feelings or concerns  
i am learning to hold my own umbrella.



Illustrated by Lala Bohang

## LALA BOHANG

**Lala Bohang** is a visual artist and writer whose work explores identity, memory, and possibility. Lala has participated in several group exhibitions in Indonesia and abroad and received the International Randal MacDonald Award 2020 for the book *The Journey of Belonging* written with Lara Nuberg.

*Instagram: @lalabohang*

**Lala Bohang** adalah perupa dan penulis yang kerap melakukan eksplorasi atas identitas, memori, dan kemungkinan pada karyanya. Lala telah berpartisipasi pada beberapa pameran kelompok baik di dalam dan luar negeri. Ia mendapatkan International Randal MacDonald Award 2020 untuk buku *"The Journey of Belonging"* (2020) yang ditulis bersama Lara Nuberg.



Illustrated by Lala Bohang

# LANGKAH. REFLEKSI. PERLAWANAN.

Ditulis oleh Swarnim Agrawal | Terjemahan oleh Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi

31 Maret 2024, 6: 30, Exeter, Devon, Inggris

*jam telah berdetak, itik mulai terbangun, camar terbang mengitari Kebun Flowerpot,  
pohon berdaun hijau gelap menjulang, kereta terhenti di jembatan lalu melaju mundur;  
aku menggumamkan lagu-lagu India dan Inggris dalam ['beɪ.sʊrɪ:] [a:və:z]—nada sumbang;  
memandangi matahari terbit, kudapati poster di kejauhan, buram karena miopik...  
"Selamatkan Ruang Hijau Kita"*

dari Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, India, ke Exeter, Devon, Inggris... sudah 600+ hari berjalan,  
bertanggung jawab atas Logophilia Nest, atas diriku sendiri  
atas pertanyaan #Mengapa bertahan di Exeter bahkan setelah turun dari panggung dan  
melempar topi toga...

aku perlu melakukan ini karena aku berteriak, dalam hati, dan aku ingin merasa baik-baik saja  
langkah demi langkah ini membantuku mengupas lapis-lapis dedaunan satu demi satu  
di sini, kutemukan rute yang kusenangi. aku punya (terlalu banyak) foto Bukit Stone, Quayside  
rekam aktivitas → mulai berjalan → "Tingkatkan performamu!" – ujar aplikasi ponsel  
cuacanya bagus sekali... dan langitnya, ah sungguh cantik (aku perlu menambah kosakata  
tentang Alam) – itu yang kukatakan

angin menelisik jaketku, daun coklat pucat menyapu tanah seiring tiga kantong sampah  
membawa pergi rasa malasku  
kulihat orang-orang yang bangun pagi mengajak anjingnya berjalan lalu menyadari, beban  
perasaan ini harus dibuang  
aku tiba di Lembah Taddyforde dan bertanya-tanya – apakah ini parit? sungai? kolam? Anak  
sungai?

*Jangan berjalan kaki saat hujan*

tapi di sini sering sekali hujan – sudah biasa pohon-pohon menggoyangkan lengannya untuk  
mengeringkan diri  
air hitam menetes ke tanganku dan ada bercak di hidungku, aku bertanya lagi – apakah ini air  
terjun  
petualangan tinta berlanjut

tunggul batang kayu lembab tak bernyawa – hanya kata-kata acak seiring misteri identifikasi dan  
penamaan berlanjut

aku teringat singa dan gorila dari Taman Zoologi Nandankanan dari tahun 2013 dan bertanya-  
tanya apakah aku juga memainkan peran keterasingan jauh dari habitat asliku

*la anak perempuan yang baik. Kau tidak akan menjadi juara jika menghabiskan waktu untuk mengejar anak laki-laki atau bermain olahraga.*

buku terapiku → Perasaan: putus asa, kesepian → Pemikiran: aku ingin sebuah pelukan → Gejala fisik: sesak meringkuk di sudut → Tindakan: berbaring di tempat tidur tanpa berbuat apapun, tidak memasak, tidak membersihkan rumah

aku berdiri di belakang sebuah pohon dan mengintip Kolam Reed dari celahnya, mengamati bayangan merah pepohonan

berenang bersama angsa, mengalir bersama arus, melintasi jembatan, melompat bersama kelinci, jatuh bersama dedaunan, bangkit bersama burung murai – begitulah aku bertumbuh di Exeter alih-alih hanya bertahan hidup di tempat lain

kubawa selalu pesan guruku – “pengalamanmu telah membuatmu bias untuk beranggapan bahwa kamu tidak akan menemukan cinta dan perhatian. kondisi ini tidak selamanya.”

setelah menyaring beberapa hubungan dalam kehidupan, mungkin sekarang aku bisa menyisihkan waktu untuk Alam maka kunaiki anak tangga – Aula Reed – gedung bergaya Italia menunggu dengan jalan setapaknya yang ditumbuhi lumut putih

patung itu mengusikku – Google Lens, situs kampus, tim arsip – tidak ada yang tahu bahwa ia Artemis? berkaitan dengan alam bebas?

pergi dengan pertanyaan tak terjawab, aku mengunjungi Taman Internasional Peringatan 60 Tahun di kampusku

pertemuan badai dan matahari tenggelam jingga bertepuk tangan dalam bahasa isyarat alam dedaunan hijau yang menjuntai dan berlompatan seperti yang kumau, di bawah langit berawan monokrom

sekelabu tinta yang mengalir di wastafelku atau maskaraku yang meleleh di selembar tisu  
aku berdiri di tepi

aku datang dari utara, melihat ke selatan, berdiri di timur, mengambil foto ke arah barat  
aku mendengar langkah kaki di belakangku dan ketakutan kembali lagi

~~Kau akan jatuh. kau tidak diizinkan di sini. kau harus menghapus semua foto dan video.~~

aku teringat pergi ke Bukit Singa di Darjeeling, melihat Gunung Kanchenjunga di suatu pagi berkabut

aku sadar – aku masih berdiri di atas tumpuan, tapi untuk sebuah perubahan, ini adalah pemandangan yang luar biasa di ruang terbuka

aku tidak mau lagi berusaha menyenangkan orang lain

aku mulai berjalan kembali ke Bukit Forum. oh! mobil lagi → berhenti. lihat. jalan. tidak. berhenti. jalan. lari. berhenti.

berapa bulan untuk memahami jalanan di Inggris dan tidak tertabrak lihatlah pelangi itu, membingkai lingkaran cahaya di sekitar gedung kampus!

hanya dua atau tiga pelangi dalam dua-puluh-satu tahun. sekarang, satu pelangi dalam dua minggu dalam tiga bulan

aku tidak rindu rumah. aku ingin kembali ke Kuil, Logophilia Nest

aku cinta tempat ini, obrolan sehari-hari gula kapas di langit, gumpalan-gumpalan udara. aku telah mendengarkan cinta dan pujian Keats kepada musim gugur yang tak berbalas, membaca Tintern Abbey karya Wordsworth, tinggal di novel-novel era Victoria, dan lulus dari Hogwarts. Sekarang aku harus memakai jaket musim dingin. aku mencintai jalinan setapak, udara segar, sepi dari suara klakson, matahari terbit dan matahari tenggelam, perbukitan.

aku akan berjalan agak siang hari ini. Sesuatu terjadi. ... aku tidak apa-apa. hanya kewalahan. terbangun dengan 6 panggilan tidak terjawab. menjadi staf teknologi untuk orang tuaku. mengisi formulir daftar pekerjaan ibuku dan mengatasi gangguan di ponsel ayahku sambil menangis. hidup di dua zona waktu sungguh sulit.

saat aku pertama kali pergi ke Quay – [ki:], bukan [kwei]; angsa-angsa memandangi alat-alat di tanganku dengan tatapan aneh

seiring kupandangi seekor burung berkecet – oranye, abu-abu, biru, coklat, kecil, oh sangat kecil tidak seperti camar 'setan' yang diingatkan oleh petugas Kantor Dukungan Mahasiswa Internasional

sungguh sulit untuk mencermati dengan mataku yang miopik, sebuah halangan, gambaran keindahan yang memburam

sepasang lensa cadangan dan kain pembersih adalah prioritas berkemasku

aku tinggal di tepi sungai Allahabad. kami dulu pergi ke sana, sesekali, untuk tujuan keagamaan. kami tidak memanjakan diri dalam kenikmatan seperti berperahu

Alam Inggris dan Alam India – tak bisa kubandingkan. ini adalah pertemuan dekatku dengan Alam yang pertama aku berkendara jauh pada dua hari terakhir di India – perkenalanku menjadi seorang pemerhati Alam kampusku di New Delhi punya halaman rumput yang cantik halaman depan – ditutup untuk pelestarian dan semak laurel; halaman belakang – terlalu terik di musim panas

aku merindukan kuncung rerumputan saat pandemi. aku rindu kebebasan itu.

aku tidak bisa keluar saat malam hari bahkan ketika di Delhi, tapi aku bisa jalan-jalan sendirian dengan metro

jalan di Exeter mendukung langkahku. mereka mengenalku. perempuan dengan jaketnya. berjalan di pagi hari.

KENAPA. kenapa banyak orang berpikir aku telah memilih jalan kegagalan? kenapa mereka berpikir penulis tidak melakukan apa-apa? kenapa mereka mengesampingkan keberhasilanku dan menganggap kegagalanku sebagai bencana? kenapa mereka berpikir berkendara jauh dan jalan kaki melintasi alam tidak produktif?

AKU BUKAN YANG KALIAN PIKIRKAN TENTANGKU. TOLONG JANGAN MEMBUATKU SEPERTI KALIAN. AKU AKAN MENJADI AKU.

aku memulai jalan pagiku dengan berputar-putar, tidak sampai seratus meter dalam satu lingkaran. ini bukan sebuah lingkaran. ini adalah kamar yang akhirnya kudapatkan saat usiaku sembilan belas. setelah beberapa episode kekalutan mental aduh! tumitku terantuk kaki tempat tidur, dinding, meja, rak sepatu

kadang aku merasa pusing berputar-putar mengelilingi ruangan  
aku mengeksplorasi dan mengalami, menemukan dan mendefinisikan diriku sendiri.  
memandangi aurora.  
perlu waktu untuk membebaskan perlawanan yang ditekan. perlu kerja langkah kata  
paling tidak di Exeter aku tak perlu lari tanpa mengutarakan perasaan atau kekhawatiranku  
aku belajar membawa payungku sendiri.



# DAVEENAAR



Dwiанти Aviantari, pen name **Daveenaar**, is a new writer who previously worked in the financial sector. After writing for Kompasiana, in her first year of writing, her works were published by Elex Media and Gramedia Pustaka Utama. She has self-published a political novel and is now working on a project about illegal loggers.

[www.kompasiana.com/daveena](http://www.kompasiana.com/daveena)

Dwiанти Aviantari atau **Daveenaar** adalah penulis pemula yang sebelumnya bekerja di sektor keuangan. Setelah menulis di blog Kompasiana, karyanya mendapatkan perhatian dan diterbitkan oleh Elex Media dan Gramedia Pustaka Utama. Daveenaar kemudian menerbitkan sendiri bukunya yang bertema sosial politik dan saat ini sedang merambah dalam penulisan novel daring tentang perlawanan pada pelaku penebangan liar.

## KETIKA GUNUNG SAMPAH MERANGSEK JAKARTA

Ditulis oleh Daveenaar (Dwiанти Aviantari)  
Ditulisikan bersama Mardyah Chamim

Marwiyah berlari. “Bang, Bang Alang...!” Berteriak dia memanggil suaminya yang memperbaiki joran. Entah kenapa perempuan ini tidak pernah mau menunggu suaminya di rumah, dia lebih suka berlari ke pantai tempat Alang dan perahu usangnya bersandar.

Sambil terengah, dia bercerita. “Pak RT bilang, di Teluk Jakarta akan dibangun bendungan terpadu. Hidup kita bakal berubah, Bang,” katanya dengan wajah berseri. “Bendungan ini bisa melindungi kampung dari hempasan ombak. Terus, bakal dibikin juga sistem yang bikin lancar aliran 13 sungai di Jakarta dan sekaligus mencegah sampah terus menumpuk di tempat kita.”



Nelayan lain berkerumun mendekat. Ikut gembira mendengar cerita Marwiyah. Maklum, urusan bendungan ini sudah dibahas bertahun-tahun tapi tak kunjung ada bukti. Ada juga yang acuh dan sinis.

+ “Halah, itu kan Pejabat biasa janji kosong. Lagian, siap-siap aja kalo kena gusur.”

- “Negatip mulu, Bang,” Alang menyahut. “Pemerintah udah bekerja keras. Positip dikit, naap?”

Benar, garis pantai yang dikhawatirkan makin bergeser ke dalam karena tergerus air laut tidak terjadi. Pulau-pulau kecil di kawasan Kepulauan Seribu masih utuh. Jakarta tak jadi tenggelam seperti adegan di sebuah film dokumenter yang menghebohkan beberapa tahun lalu.

Konon, Jakarta selamat lantaran pemerintah Kota Jakarta bergerak sigap. Mahesa, gubernur kesayangan warga, menggebrak laksana Si Pitung. “Pembangunan ugal-ugalan ini yang bikin tanah ambles 20 centimeter saban tahun. Ini bahaya buat hidup puluhan juta orang. Tidak bisa dibiarkan,” kata Mahesa, yang tumbuh besar di kampung di bantaran Kali Ciliwung.

Kejadian mencekam lima tahun lalu telah mengubah halauan. Saat itu, jantung kemewahan Jakarta di Sudirman hingga Kemang terendam banjir berminggu-minggu. Ribuan mobil mewah rusak. Ratusan nyawa melayang di hari-hari nahas hujan topan badai itu. Baru setelah kawasan mewah, tempat hidup para politikus dan selebritas terdampak, para pejabat bergerak. Mereka tak bisa lagi main-main.

Seperti mata elang, publik dan media mengawasi dan memastikan Mahesa memperbaiki Jakarta secara radikal. Si Pitung Mahesa pun beraksi, merobohkan mal dan gedung-gedung tinggi bermasalah. Lahan bekas gedung ditanami pohon-pohon besar. Sumur resapan dibangun di setiap sudut kota.

Konglomerat dan segenap kroninya berteriak. Mereka melobi kiri-kanan agar langkah Mahesa dihentikan dengan berbagai cara. Tigabelas naga, developer yang merajai Jakarta, tak henti melayangkan gugatan. Teror dan ancaman fisik terus mengalir. Mahesa terpaksa tiarap. *Selow* dulu, kira-kira begitu strategi Mahesa, agar dia bisa terpilih di periode kedua.

Gebrakan Mahesa memang membikin Jakarta membaik, sebagian. Polusi tak lagi menghimpit napas. Transportasi publik dibangun besar-besaran. Konglomerat industri mobil cemberut, penjualan mobil tak lagi gemilang. Macet total seharian tinggal cerita lama.

Tapi, belum semua cerah ceria. Seperti penyakit kronis yang bikin semua sel menciut, kondisi Jakarta sudah kelewat ruwet. Dibenerin satu soal, puluhan persoalan berteriak protes. Begitu terus tanpa henti.

Kawasan pesisir Jakarta masih belum terjamah gebrakan Mahesa. Angke, Kampung Muara, Cilincing, masih dipadati nelayan yang kian lama kian sesak napas menyambung hidup.

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Alang dan Marwiyah bergandeng tangan. Pulang. Di depan pintu rumah kontrakan, ada



sebuah kotak besar bertuliskan Bantuan Sosial Jakarta Raya. Isinya beras sepuluh kilo dan dua liter minyak goreng.

Wajah Alang masam. “Sialan!” Dia menghempaskan badannya ke kursi sofa usang. “Maapin, ya, Neng. Abang gagal jadi kepala rumah tangga yang seharusnya mencukupi keluarga. Buat beli beras aja kita mesti nunggu bansos.”

“Tenang, Abang. Semua nelayan dapat bantuan. Kita senasib,” kata Marwiyah menenangkan suaminya.

Sepuluh, lima tahun lalu, kehidupan Marwiyah dan Alang berbeda. Saban hari, Alang membawa pulang uang segepok dan ikan segar. Seratus, dua ratus, tiga ratus ribu itu biasa dibawa pulang. Kini, lima puluh ribu pun susah didapat.

Banyak hal terjadi. Sebagian pesisir Teluk Jakarta berubah jadi beton. Reklamasi. Apartemen mewah menjulang menggantikan pohon-pohon mangrove yang dulu rapat. Kawanan kepiting, yang dulu berumah beranak-pinak di lumpur di antara mangrove, tak ada lagi.

Seperti belum cukup, Teluk Jakarta harus menanggung nasib jadi korban gaya hidup sembrono dari segala penjuru. Sampah dari sebelas sungai di Jakarta bermuara, parkir di Teluk Jakarta. Tak tanggung-tanggung, tumpukan sampah seluas satu hektar dengan kedalaman sampai sepuluh meter.

Bau anyir menyengat. Kemasan plastik, segala rupa, menjebak sampah organik menyebarkan aroma busuk yang susah dilukiskan. Para nelayan Teluk Jakarta yakin, ini yang memperparah situasi. “Bisa jadi bau busuk yang kita cium itu berasal dari ikan terjebak yang mati membusuk. Ikan-ikan jadi malas berenang ke area tangkapan,” begitu kata seorang nelayan. Alang mengangguk-angguk.

Belakangan, tak ada pilihan lain, para nelayan melaut lebih jauh dari biasa,

menghindari pulau sampah yang jadi kuburan ikan. Sebetulnya ini langkah nekad, melaut lebih jauh butuh perahu yang lebih baik. Beberapa kali kejadian, perahu kecil dihempas ombak dan nelayan bertaruh nyawa berhari-hari di tengah laut. Tapi, apa boleh buat, demi tangkapan ikan.

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Suatu sore menjelang laut pasang, Alang tepekur menatap perahu. Gunung sampah tak juga susut, bahkan tampak terus meluas. Kenapa Mahesa hanya fokus membenahi Sudirman, Thamrin, Kemang, dan memaksa pesisir terus dalam antrean. Alang merasa ditinggalkan. Nasibnya para nelayan rupanya tak dianggap penting.

Dari kejauhan tampak rombongan Mahesa melangkah mendekat. Pelantang suara melambungkan janji-janji kampanye. “Kita akan terus lanjutkan pembangunan Jakarta,” begitu Mahesa berseru. Sang gubernur menghampiri Alang, mengulurkan kotak bertuliskan “Bantuan Sosial Gubernur Jakarta”.

Brakkk! Alang menghempaskan kardus ke tanah. “Kalau Bapak-Bapak sekalian bekerja mengelola kota dengan benar, pulau sampah ini tak akan ada. Kami tidak perlu bernasib mengenaskan seperti ini. Empat tahun kami hidup dari bantuan sosial. Anak-anak kami kurus kering. Bapak sekalian sadar, dong, bantuan sosial bukan solusi.”

Alang bersama para nelayan rebutan bertanya dan berteriak. Dari mana saja sampah itu, Pak? Kenapa kami yang harus menanggung sampah orang lain? Bagaimana kalau gunung sampah itu buyar dan membanjiri rumah kami? Ikan-ikan mati busuk terjebak di gunung sampah itu, Pak, kami mesti bagaimana?

Masih banyak lagi hujan pertanyaan. Mahesa kewalahan dan meminta para nelayan tenang. “Sabar. Ini persoalan rumit,

Bapak-Bapak. Perubahan iklim memperparah semuanya.” Kalimat Mahesa langsung disambut teriakan nelayan yang tak rela sang gubernur melimpahkan kesalahan semata pada alam dan iklim. Pembangunan dan tata kota yang jauh dari bijaksana, melampaui batas, mengorbankan kelompok lemah, itu yang jadi soal utama.

Terdengar teriakan panik. “Sampah, sampah!” Pulau sampah, entah kenapa, membludak terburai naik dibawa ombak ke arah pantai, tempat kerumunan. Seperti tangan-tangan raksasa, sampah-sampah itu seolah menampar dan berebut mencari

perhatian Mahesa, para pejabat, juga para nelayan.

Sampah terus meruap, luber, terus dan terus meluber ke jalanan, merangsek ke gedung-gedung. Alang berteriak, “Ayooo! Teruslah luber, bangunkan orang Jakarta. Jangan biarkan cuma kami yang akrab dengan aroma anyirmu, sampah!”



Illustrated by Iris Morgan

## IRIS MORGAN

**Iris Morgan** (she/they) is a Queer and Cymreig multidisciplinary illustrator, ceramicist, and ritual facilitator based in Devon, England. Iris is interested in creating work that looks at Queerness, Nature, History, and the Occult through an anthropological lens, using bold shapes, textures, forms, and materials.

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**Iris Morgan** adalah seorang ilustrator multidisiplin, pengrajin keramik dan fasilitator ritual dengan latar queer dan berbahasa Wales yang tinggal di Devon, Inggris. Iris tertarik berkarya dalam cakupan queer, alam, sejarah dan ilmu gaib melalui lensa antropologi, menggunakan bentuk-bentuk yang berani, tekstur, rupa dan material.



Illustrated by Iris Morgan

# WHEN TRASH MOUNTAIN STORMED JAKARTA

Written by Daveenaar | Translation by Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi

“Bang, Bang Alang....!” Marwiyah dashed, calling his husband who was busy fixing his fishing pole. Nobody could tell why she would rather run to the shore where Alang docked his worn out boat when she could just wait for him at home.

Catching her breath, she told Alang, “Our head of neighbor just announced that an integrated dam will be built at Jakarta Bay. It will change our life.” Her face shone. “This dam will protect our kampung from the waves. There will also be a system to smooth the flows of thirteen rivers in Jakarta while keeping trash away from piling in our place.”

Other fishermen gathered. They were happy to hear the news as they have been waiting for the results of years of discussion over the dam. However, not all of them were happy. Several looked indifferent and cynical.

“Can’t you see that it’s just another empty promise? Other than that, you should be ready to get evicted.”

“You need to stop your negative attitude,” Alang replied. “The government has been working hard. Why can’t you be more positive?”

Alang was right. The fear that the coastline continued to shift inwards due to eroding sea water did not happen. Small islands that made up the Thousand Islands were still intact. Jakarta was still above the water, far from the prediction of a documentary that had caused social panic several years ago.

It is said that Jakarta was rescued by the city government’s swift actions. Mahesa, the people’s favorite governor, made a breakthrough just like Si Pitung, the legendary Indonesian Robin Hood. “This reckless development has caused the land to sink 20 centimeters every year. This is a danger to the

lives of tens of millions of people. We can’t let it happen,” said Mahesa, who grew up in a kampung on the banks of the Ciliwung River.

The terrifying event that happened five years ago has brought a profound change to the government’s plan. At the time, Jakarta’s prestigious areas of Sudirman to Kemang were flooded for weeks. The water damaged thousands of cars. Hundreds of lives were lost during the fateful days of rain and typhoon. It was only when luxurious residents where politicians and celebrities resided were affected by the flood the government finally responded. They could no longer fool around.

Like eagles, the citizens and news media were watching, ensuring Mahesa created a radical improvement to Jakarta. Mahesa ‘the Pitung’ finally took action. He tore down malls and skyscrapers. The empty lands were then planted with large trees. He built infiltration wells in every corner of the city.

The conglomerates and their cronies felt threatened. They lobbied the city government to stop Mahesa. ‘Thirteen Dragon’, a group of estate agents that dominated Jakarta, continuously filed lawsuits against the governor. It was accompanied with incessant terrors and threats. Mahesa had no other options but to lay low. His strategy was to slow down a bit to save his position for the second tenure.

Mahesa’s breakthrough had indeed improved Jakarta’s condition, in part. The city residents could finally breathe clean, free-pollution air. Public transportation was built on a large scale. Car industry conglomerates were unhappy with the significant drop-in sales rate. Total standstills in traffic became history.

However, not every part of the city had turned bright. Like a chronic disease that shrinks every single cell in a human



body, problems faced by Jakarta were too complicated. One resolved, dozens of other issues cried for help. It was like a never-ending cycle.

Jakarta's coastal areas have not yet been touched by Mahesa's breakthrough. Areas such as Angke, Kampung Muara and Cilincing, crowded by fishermen who found it harder each day to get through their lives.

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Alang and Marwiyah walked home, holding hands. In front of their rented house, they found a large box with 'Social Assistance from Government of Greater Jakarta' printed on it. Inside the box were ten kilograms of rice and two liters of cooking oil.

Alang's face turned sour. "Damn it!" He threw himself onto the worn sofa. "I'm sorry, dear, I have failed you. I am supposed to provide for the family. But what happens is we have to depend on the government just to get some rice."

"It's okay. All fishermen here receive the donation. We're in the same boat," Marwiyah reassured her husband.

Ten, five years ago, they lived a different life. Every day, Alang went home with a bunch of money and a boat full of fish. At the time he could sell his fish for one to three hundred thousand rupiahs. Now, fifty thousand rupiahs was even hard to come by.

Many things happened during that time. Some coastal parts of Jakarta Bay have turned into concrete. Reclamation. High-end apartments replaced the once dense mangrove trees. Herds of crabs which once lived and bred in the mud among the mangroves were no longer to be found.

As if that was not enough, Jakarta Bay had to bear the fate of being the victim of the reckless lifestyle of Jakartans. Garbage from eleven rivers in Jakarta ended up in Jakarta

Bay. It built up a pile that covered an area of one hectare with a depth of up to ten meters.

Stinky smells spread in surrounding areas. Various kinds of plastic packages trapped organic wastes, releasing an indescribable foul odor. The fishermen believed that it had worsened the situation. "I think the smell comes from rotten fish that were trapped there. It drives the other fish away from the fishing areas," said one fisherman. Alang nodded in agreement.

The fishermen were left with no other options. They sailed further into the sea to stay away from the garbage island where dead fish found their grave. It was actually a desperate move as they did not have appropriate equipment to sail on the sea. There were times when their small boats were hit by waves and they risked their lives for days at sea. Yet, they had to do that to catch fish.

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One afternoon before the tide rose, Alang lost in his thoughts. He stared blankly at his boat. The trash mountain was far from being removed. It even seemed to continue to expand. Why did Mahesa only pay attention to Sudirman, Thamrin and Kemang, while keeping the coastal areas waiting in line? Alang wondered. He felt abandoned. Fishermen's lives were apparently not very important for the government.

From a distance Alang saw Mahesa, along with city government officials, walk closer. Campaign promises were heard over the loudspeakers. "We will continue to develop Jakarta," Mahesa shouted. The governor approached Alang. He handed a large box marked 'Social Assistance from the Jakarta Governor'.

Thud! Alang threw the box to the ground. "If you all managed the city properly, this trash mountain would not exist. We don't have to suffer such a tragic fate. For four years we've

been living on social assistance. Our children are all skinny. You should've understood that social assistance is not a solution."

Alang and his fellow fishermen started to yell, demanding answers for their questions. Where does the rubbish come from? Why do we have to put up with other people's trash? What if that pile of trash disperses and floods our house? What can we do with rotten fish trapped there?

There were still many more questions. Mahesa got overwhelmed and asked the fishermen to calm down. "Please be patient. This is a complicated issue. Climate change makes things worse." Mahesa's answer was immediately responded by the fishermen who could not accept the governor putting the blame on nature and climate. They knew well that unwise, excessive development and urban

planning that sacrificed the disadvantaged people was the actual problem.

Suddenly, a panicked scream was heard. "Trash! Trash!"

The trash mountain was suddenly burst and flown by the waves towards the beach where people were gathered. Like a giant hand, the trash slapped everything that stood in its way. It moved as if as king for the attention of Mahesa, city government officials and the fishermen.

The heap of trash continued to overflow unstoppably, spilled over the streets and stormed buildings. Alang shouted, "Come on! Keep on going! Wake Jakartans up. Let them feel what we have been dealing with, your foul, stinky smell!"



# DR CHARLES MANSFIELD



**Dr Charles Mansfield** is a literary travel writer with degrees in English Literature, French Literature, and Literary Tourism. His work specialises in place-making and urban space. He participated in a residency exploring the urban flood defence system in Plymouth, from which he built an archive of journaling, which inspired his story for Bridging Cities.

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**Dr. Charles Mansfield** adalah seorang penulis perjalanan sastra dengan gelar di bidang Sastra Inggris, Sastra Perancis, dan Pariwisata Sastra. Karyanya mengkhususkan diri dalam pembuatan tempat dan ruang kota. Dr. Charles berpartisipasi dalam sebuah residensi penulis yang mengeksplorasi topik sistem pertahanan banjir perkotaan di Plymouth, yang menghasilkan sebuah arsip pencatatan jurnal yang menginspirasi ceritanya untuk program Bridging Cities ini.

## MILLBAY AND MILL BAY

Written by Dr Charles Mansfield

*Monday*

I held my breath a moment; I had no need to become engaged with this place of transition. All I had to do was get through the waiting. Besides, I had my copy of *Marshlands* with me, and although the book troubled me, it was reassuring to re-read.

I stood for a long time on the top step of the Duke of Cornwall hotel. My view swept down through the old Millbay station to the water course that now runs beneath the boulevard. Melt water, silt and pebbles had rushed down this way for eleven thousand years, flowing into the Atlantic, as it filled to



form the channel between Brittany and Devon. The ocean edged its way up the water course. The mill wheel stopped turning. The ocean filled Mill Bay.

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At six o'clock in the evening at the hotel, André would have been tempted to walk to the Palace Theatre, in Union Street. Was Angèle with him? When passing through a strange town, surely you can afford to explore a little.

"But, André," Angèle said, "you must understand that the pleasure a trip may bring is purely secondary. One travels to learn."

They crossed to the railway station where the last train for London was due to leave, so the platform, waiting room and buffet were all busy. Their onward journey, like mine, did not start again until much later, but who can resist the movement and farewells of a station concourse? They slipped into the buffet and Gide ordered a couple of Calvados. Angèle found them a table and they settled to their journaling. André opened his copy of *Marshlands* and taking from his music case a sheet of paper, he began writing.

"So!" she said. "Hard at work?"

"I'm improving *Marshlands*," he replied.

"I hope you deal with all the rain. Read me that piece again about clubmoss, please."

"The ground gives way and the layers of moss sink underfoot; the moss is full of water, soft, with secret drainages somewhere that let it dry out. It also grows on the heather and on a kind of squat pine tree; Lycopodiaceae roots creep there; the water collects into dark stagnant puddles."

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I carried my copy with me as I set out to search for Mount Pleasant Place, marked on old maps that still showed Millbay Station. As I turned up into Citadel Road I noticed down below ground level, a sign for a basement bar beneath the hotel, 'Fleur de Lys'. It's strange how a downward glance can reveal the unexpected. This mound of Grey Plymouth Limestone kept

residents high and dry above Sourpool below. The bedrock formed during the Mid Devonian epoch, 390 million years ago when clubmosses first emerged. Alas, Mount Pleasant Place was no longer to be found.

I turned back and crossed the space left by Plymouth's Millbay station and its buffet down the now empty slope, past the newly-planted birch and pine trees, and into the new hotel bar where I opened my copy and realised that something was missing in *Marshlands*, too. That's what had troubled me. In the daily entries of the book, a whole day is missing. Had Gide removed it? Was he planning to develop this short work into something longer?

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The other customers in the buffet pressed towards the exit. The London train was boarding. Passengers are easy freight, they load themselves. With the crowd gone, Angèle and André noticed a piano over near the window. André settled on the piano stool, turned over the sheet he'd been writing on, and began to play from it the *Prélude* and *Fugue* by César Franck.

"Where did you get that?" she asked.

"Jacques R. gave it to me before we boarded the Rochambeau Liner in Le Havre."

"Ah, that reminds me, we must buy our tickets for Ashburton before they close."

\*\*\*



I hesitated in the expanse of the new hotel's ground floor. Would I find a table that was not too low for writing? Would it be too noisy? Then, as I sat to sip my cappuccino, I noticed that the new hotel's glass curtain walls diffracted the Devonian sunshine into a silvery white light. Bathed in this silver, and way across the huge seating area someone was typing on a laptop. The papers surrounding her made me conclude that she had been working, undisturbed for some time, one sheet had even slipped unnoticed to the floor. So, someone had already taken root in this new space that had only existed for five weeks.

Outside, up on the car park, I knew that two young birch trees and a pine were settling into their new home, too. The silver birch (*Betula pendula*) is a pioneer species, reclaiming difficult urban wastelands to support insects and plants that shelter beneath its canopy. The silver birch is a nurse tree creating a space of care beneath it for others to flourish. Betulin, the white compound in

the birch's peeling bark, protects the tree from harsh sunlight, reflecting the radiation downwards to share the energy with those nearby. Silver birch grows mutually with the mycorrhizal fungus (*Amanita muscaria*) which connects its roots to an underground supply network. The laptop user must have had a network connection, too.

I still had hours to pass before my sailing left for France. I walked north to look for the Octagon Brewery, which I'd heard was being restored, but, in Sawrey Street all was quiet and the shutters were firmly closed. The narrow, cobbled lanes led me onto Union Street, the road that André and Angèle would be heading towards for their evening out. Second-hand furniture stores dotted the south side of the street. I still had time to browse. Inside, an old piano stool caught my attention. After a closer inspection I saw it had a hinged seat with hidden storage beneath the lid for printed music sheets. Slightly yellowing music filled the storage. The top one was a piece by César Franck, printed with the title: 'Prélude, Fugue and Variation'. I picked out the sheet carefully and turned it over; handwriting, in French, filled the unprinted underside of the sheet.



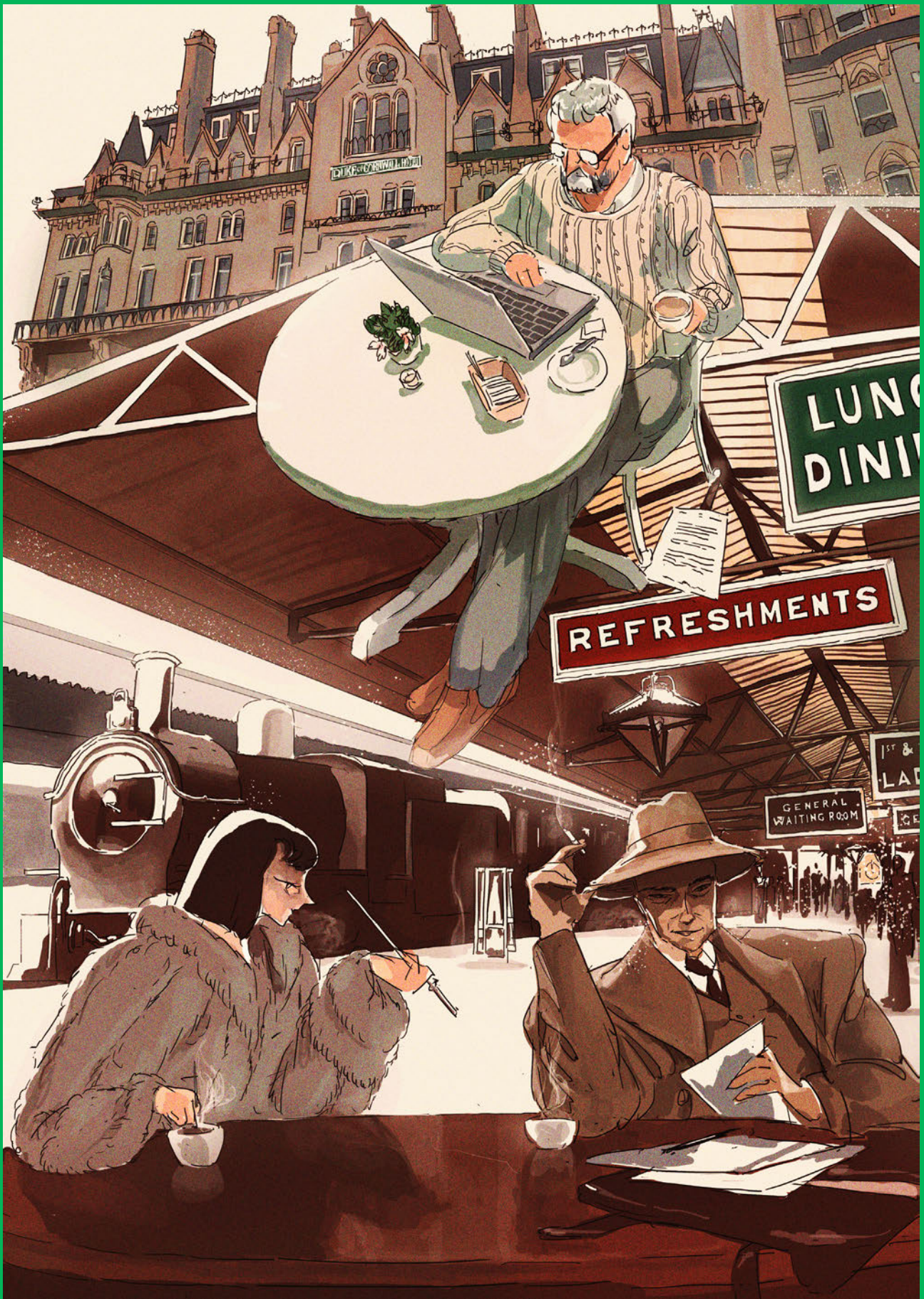
Illustrated by Antonio Reinhard Wisesa

## ANTONIO REINHARD WISESA

**Antonio Reinhard Wisesa** is an illustrator from Indonesia, trying his best to capture the world in his work.

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**Antonio Reinhard Wisesa** adalah ilustrator dari Indonesia, yang selalu berusaha menangkap dunia dalam karyanya



Illustrated by Antonio Reinhard Wisesa

# MILLBAY DAN MILL BAY

Ditulis oleh Dr Charles Mansfield

Terjemahan oleh Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi

*Senin*

Aku menahan nafas sejenak; aku tidak perlu masuk dalam ruang transisi ini. Yang perlu kulakukan hanyalah melewati penantian. Lagipula aku membawa satu jilid *Marshland*, dan meski buku itu mengusikku, ia berhasil meyakinkanku untuk membaca ulang.

Aku berdiri cukup lama di anak tangga teratas hotel Duke of Cornwall. Pandanganku menyapu stasiun tua Millbay sampai saluran air yang kini melintas di bawah jalan raya. Air lelehan salju, lumpur, dan kerikil telah mengalir di bawah sana selama sebelas ribu tahun, mengalir ke Atlantik, sembari mengisi kanal di antara Brittany dan Devon. Lautan menemukan jalannya ke saluran air. Kincir berhenti berputar. Lautan memenuhi Mill Bay.

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Pukul enam sore di hotel, André semestinya sudah tergerak untuk berjalan kaki ke Palace Theatre di Jalan Union. Apakah Angèle bersamanya? Ketika melintasi kota asing, tentu kau boleh berkeliling sejenak.

"Tapi, André," ujar Angèle, "kau harus paham bahwa kesenangan adalah soal nomor dua dari perjalanan. Orang berjalan-jalan untuk belajar."

Mereka menyeberang ke stasiun ketika kereta terakhir ke London akan diberangkatkan, sehingga peron, ruang tunggu, dan kafe semuanya sibuk. Perjalanan mereka, seperti perjalananku, tidak akan dimulai sampai beberapa menit berikutnya, tapi siapa yang bisa menahan diri dari pergerakan dan perpisahan yang terjadi di stasiun? Mereka masuk ke kafe dan Gide memesan beberapa gelas brandi Calvados. Angèle mendapatkan meja untuk mereka tempati dan mereka mulai menulis jurnal. André membuka *Marshlands* dan mengambil secarik kertas dari tasnya, ia mulai menulis.

"Aha!" seru Angèle. "Sedang banyak pekerjaan?"

"Aku sedang memperbaiki *Marshlands*," balas André.

"Kuharap kau menggarap cerita tentang hujan. Tolong bacakan lagi padaku bagian tentang paku kawat."

"[...] tanah memberikan jalan dan lapisan paku kawat tumbuh di bawah kaki; paku itu penuh dengan air, lembut, dengan drainase tersembunyi di suatu tempat untuk mengeringkannya. Paku kawat juga tumbuh di antara semak belukar dan sejenis pohon pinus; akar Lycopodiaceae merayap di sana; air berkumpul menjadi genangan gelap yang terdiam."

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Aku membawa *Marshlands* bersamaku sembari mencari Mount Pleasant Place yang ditandai di sebuah peta tua yang masih menunjukkan Stasiun Millbay. Ketika berbelok ke Jalan Citadel aku menyadari di bawah sana, di bawah permukaan tanah, terpasang penanda sebuah bar di bawah hotel, 'Fleur de Lys'. Aneh bagaimana tatapan ke bawah bisa menguak hal yang tidak terbayangkan. Gundukan Grey Plymouth Limestone yang menyokong para penduduk kota dan menjaganya tetap kering di atas Sourpool. Batuan dasar itu terbentuk pada kala Devon Tengah, 390 juta tahun lalu ketika paku kawat pertama kali muncul. Sayang sekali, Mount Pleasant Place tidak lagi bisa ditemukan.

Aku kembali dan melintasi ruang yang ditinggalkan stasiun Millbay di Plymouth dan kafe di bawah yang sekarang menja di lereng kosong, melintasi pohon-pohon burja dan pinus yang ditanam baru-baru ini, dan mengarah ke bar hotel baru di mana aku membuka *Marshland* dan menyadari ada sesuatu yang hilang juga dari buku itu. Itulah yang mengganguku. Pada bagian catatan



harian dalam buku itu, ada satu hari yang hilang. Apakah Gide menghapusnya? Apakah ia berencana untuk mengembangkan tulisan pendek ini menjadi karya lain?

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Pelanggan kafe yang lain berjalan ke pintu keluar. Kereta ke arah London berangkat. Para penumpang tidak membawa banyak muatan, mereka menaikkan sendiri barang-barang mereka. Ketika kerumunan itu menghilang, Angèle dan André melihat sebuah piano di dekat jendela. André duduk di bangku piano, membuka lembaran not balok yang telah ditulisnya, lalu mulai memainkan *Prélude* dan *Fugue* oleh César Franck.

“Dari mana kau dapatkan itu?”

“Jacques R. memberikannya padaku sebelum kita menaiki *Rochambeau Liner* di *Le Havre*.”

“Ah, aku teringat kita harus membeli tiket ke *Ashburton* sebelum loket tutup.”

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Aku ragu dengan lantai bawah tanah hotel yang baru. Apakah aku akan menemukan meja yang tidak terlalu rendah untuk menulis? Apakah di sana akan terlalu ramai? Lalu, sembari meneguk kapucino, aku menyadari bahwa tirai kaca dari hotel yang baru membiaskan sinar matahari Devon menjadi cahaya putih keperakan. Dibalut oleh cahaya perak itu, di ujung ruang duduk yang amat luas, seorang perempuan sedang mengetik dengan laptopnya. Kertas-kertas yang berserakan di sekitarnya membuatku berkesimpulan ia sedang bekerja, tidak terganggu selama beberapa waktu, sampai-sampai tak sadar satu lembar di antara kertas-kertas itu telah jatuh ke lantai. Jadi seseorang telah menancapkan akarnya di tempat ini yang baru ada lima minggu lalu ini.

Di luar, di tempat parkir, aku tahu bahwa dua pohon burja dan satu pohon pinus muda juga sedang menempati rumah mereka. Burja perak (*Betula pendula*) adalah spesies pionir, menempati lahan terlantar perkotaan yang gersang untuk mendukung para serangga dan tumbuhan yang berlindung di bawah

keteduhannya. Burja perak adalah pohon suster yang membangun ruang perawatan di bawahnya bagi makhluk yang lain untuk bertumbuh. Betulin, onggokan berwarna putih yang menempel di kulit kayu yang terkoyak melindungi pohon itu dari terik matahari, memantulkan radiasinya ke bawah untuk membagikan energinya bagi makhluk-makhluk di sekitar. Burja perak tumbuh bersamaan dengan jamur mikoriza (*Amanita muscaria*) yang menghubungkan akarnya ke jaringan cadangan makanan di bawah tanah. Perempuan dengan laptopnya itu pasti juga sedang terkoneksi dalam jaringan.

Aku masih punya beberapa jam sebelum kapalku bertolak ke Prancis. Aku berjalan ke utara untuk mencari *Octagon Brewery* yang kudengar telah direstorasi, tapi suasana di *Jalan Sawrey* sangat sepi dan jendela-jendela ditutup rapat. Gang sempit dengan jalan makadam mengarahkanku ke *Jalan Union*, tujuan Angèle dan André saat jalan-jalan malam. Toko perabot bekas ditandai di sisi selatan jalan. Aku masih punya waktu untuk mencari. Di dalamnya, sebuah bangku piano tua menarik perhatianku. Setelah melihat dengan lebih dekat kudapati tempat duduk berengsel dengan penyimpanan tersembunyi di balik tutupnya untuk menyimpan partitur. Lembar-lembar partitur menguning mengisi tempat penyimpanan itu. Paling atas adalah karya César Franck, dicetak dengan judul: ‘*Prélude, Fugue dan Variasi*.’ Kuambil lembar itu dengan hati-hati dan kubalik; tulisan tangan, dalam bahasa Prancis, mengisi halaman sisi yang tidak bercetak.



# WRITERS IN CONVERSATION

One of the core aims of Bridging Cities was to provide writers from Exeter and Jakarta the opportunity to exchange ideas and connect with each other. Writers were paired and took part in virtual conversations facilitated by experienced professionals. The conversations were wide-ranging and illuminating, covering their writing process and the context in which they write, the inspiration for their pieces, and the common climate issues they experience.

## PROCESS & INSPIRATION

### Ysella Sims

The process for me involved thinking about my immediate environment and what I could see, and I loved that focus of writing about where we live. So I wrote about where I live now, and I approached it from a generational perspective. I wanted to produce a sense of time passing, so I focused on the house and how it had been over the ages, and how nature had changed.

We have swallows that nest here every year and there's so much mythology around them; back in the Middle Ages they thought swallows emerged from the mud after hibernation, and they were the heralds of spring. I thought about the generational change through the numbers of swallows that return to the village with the spring, and what that means in terms of folklore and mythology, and our connection to each other and to the land. I tried to think of something that represented all of that, and came back to the idea of hope. Salena Godden explores pragmatic optimism in '*Pessimism*

*is for Lightweights*', the idea of identifying problems and finding practical ways of dealing with them. So I hear her in my head, and her poem *Welcome to Hope*.

I also like the swallow because it represents the crossing of borders, and I feel like there's something in there as well about how much more fearful we've become. The less we work together and the more closed we are, the less likely we are to find solutions. So it was broadening the metaphor as well about being insular rather than being outward-facing.

Once I have the idea, I write out long-form and then I do a bit of research, and then I write a draft and then I rewrite it over and over, until it gets to a place where it feels finished. Although I'm beginning to realise nothing's ever really finished!

### Shin Alex

My story is inspired by the story of Jaka Tarub and the goddess, the seven *apsaras*. In the original story the main character is Jaka Tarub, but I switched the perspective to one of the goddesses. My first version was from Jack's point of view, and what are his needs to get the water for his mother and how he is in conflict with the goddess. But there were some plot holes, so I thought why don't I switch the point of view? So I rewrote the whole thing! In the original myth, Jaka Tarub was someone from the village and he stole one of the goddesses' scarves, and then she couldn't go back to heaven. I switched the story, so this time the goddess lost her scarf, but then Jack and the goddess fought for water together because each of them has their own needs. Jack needs it for his mother because it's very difficult to get clean water, and for the

goddess, the universe created was with the clean water from the Earth, so actually Earth produced things even for the heavens. So with the water from the Earth, the goddess and all the beings in heaven, it's like the circle of life, keeping life in balance with the water brought back to the heavens.

This is in a dystopian world, ten to fifteen years after the pandemic. I chose this because whoever reads that should think that it might happen one day and it's not so far away. It can happen where we have a shortage of water and everything that you need in the years ahead if we do not really take care of the environment. The story is a warning so, you need to be reminded that one day, if you do not preserve water, preserve the Earth, then it's gone.

## Swarnim Agrawal

I came to Exeter from India two years ago to study, and even though India has rich biodiversity, I lived in a mainland city, so spending time in nature was not a thing we did. I felt I could bring a new perspective, because as an immigrant I was seeing it all as very new. For instance, in autumn when the leaves were turning orange, I was excited by that because I had never seen that happen so closely before! When the tulips were blooming, I was going crazy taking photographs, uploading them on social media, and sending them to friends. Whereas all around me, people were just walking past. So I realised that I have

this perspective to bring that people might be taking nature for granted.

One of the things that my mentor back home said was that “You should always ask the ‘why’ of a place.” There are lots of ‘whys’ of why I’m still in Exeter after graduating when many of my classmates have moved on to bigger cities. I realised nature is something that binds me to Exeter, and the discovery of the healing power of it. I can’t imagine being without it. Now I am surrounded by nature, I am growing protective about it: when you are close to nature, then you understand what it would mean if you lose it.

## Shoba Chugani

I had visited a fishing village in Central Jawa a few months back for another project, and how this person has managed to maintain the village so that it does not turn into another shrimp farm like the other villages became a source of inspiration for me. Every time I read an article about climate change, about forests, it always comes back to the fact that we have indigenous people in Indonesia who are being very greatly impacted by climate change. So I thought it would be a great idea to put this third component in my poem. So that was how it started.

In the first draft I didn’t really elaborate much on the shaman because shamans are people who normally we would be fearful of, I think. We don’t want to get close to someone who does magic, and given that there are doctors here, we don’t go to shaman, right? But actually, it is a part of daily life. There’s always

two approaches. So I researched people who visited the Meratus tribe in South Kalimantan, who live in the forest of the mountain range called the Meratus. I looked at what they do every day and how they apply their ancestral wisdom to their daily life, the leaves and natural ornaments they use in their prayers. It’s not exactly the same, but it’s similar to what we use in Bali as well. So they would have these ornaments in the middle of the room and then they would have chants and go around the ornament and pray, and those kind of things I could relate to because of my life in Bali.

One of the moments in the poem is actually something that happened when I was writing. A friend’s house was submerged and her dog was diving through the water. It was so dangerous, so we told her to stay with us. So we are already in the chaos.

## Daveenaar

Our residential area used to flood during heavy rains, but the construction of absorption wells by the local government has eliminated this problem. However, illegal houses built on dams or riverbanks still flood every year. Additionally, many companies are developing buildings on every available piece of land, making it hard for the earth to breathe. They also extract groundwater excessively, contributing to pollution and environmental stress. These realities are a major influence on my writing. Several interesting developments in Jakarta inspired my writing. The capital city of Indonesia is moving from Jakarta to Nusantara in Kalimantan, which will impact Jakarta's development. Additionally, there is an upcoming election for a new Governor of

Jakarta, who will be responsible for handling climate change issues. My initial draft had the new Governor's perspective, but he came across as too much of a superhero, tackling various problems simultaneously. After several revisions, I switched to the perspective of Alang, a simple fisherman dealing with the issue of a garbage island. Mahesa, the governor, still plays a role but in a more realistic capacity.

The writing process was challenging because I had to cover many issues within the word count. This led to multiple revisions—six, to be exact. I finally settled on focusing on the issue of a trash island.

## Dr Charles Mansfield

Millbay used to be the place where cruise liners arrived from America, then aeroplanes arrived and the traffic across the Atlantic changed completely and the area was kind of neglected. There's a huge theatre that's been disused for 30 or 40 years and it's so flamboyant, and old bars and pubs that have fallen into disrepair. One or two of the streets are still cobbled with little square stones, they're not tarmacked like a modern road. Millbay has tried to sort of make itself again, and every 10 or 15 years or so we try and build something there. Just as I began to do the writing project, lots of energy and money was poured into the area again. The European Union gave a large grant to build Millbay Boulevard, which is an underground drainage system, so that when the city does flood, the drainage goes very quickly down into an underground tunnel which then holds the water and lets it out back into the sea very slowly. I wanted to celebrate that, it was our last big connection with being European, and to have a street called a 'boulevard' seems very exciting in Plymouth. So I've grown to love that area, that strange area that's trying to regenerate with a proper environmental consciousness and awareness.

In terms of writing, I'm very structured, and I deliberately use a three structured process for going into a new piece. I read a lot - I call it the library step - and spend a long time in the library and try to find books connected with the area. Then I go out into the field and actually go and walk the area and try to get a feel for it to notice things; particularly where planting has

gone on, if someone's put new trees in or put new concrete down, and that contrast between concrete and trees. I try to take live notes, either speaking into my phone myself or meet people in cafes and restaurants and let them speak and then transcribe those notes.

The third step - which I call the lab step- is where I take my journaling and notebooks, and do that reworking. I take the note form and write it and rewrite it and look for ways of putting space into the writing or movement. For example, I stood on the step of one of the hotels and looked down across the space where the water used to flow, where there used to be a big area of polluted water in the middle of the city, and I try to think about rewording that, me standing on the top step and just one or two extra words, different words, make it so that it shows the reader that I'm standing high up and looking down into the water from a height. So putting lots and lots of care into the melody, or the poetry, really, even of prose writing, and making sure that there's purpose in there.

There's that feeling that we're living through the same thing. We're many, many miles apart, but we're going through the same fears about our cities. We're connected by the sea. It's an old idea, but you feel that you can go to the sea and put your hand into the sea, and if you did the same thing, we'd be connected by the same sea. So we're all touching the same thing and faced with the same issues that we're going to have to deal with.

# AFTERWORD

Bridging Cities is more than just an exchange of words between writers from Jakarta and Exeter—it's a celebration of our shared humanity. In a world that can sometimes feel divided by geography, culture, or circumstance, this project reminds us of the common bonds we all hold, regardless of where we call home.

Through this collaboration, writers from these two UNESCO Cities of Literature came together not just to tell their own stories but to listen and learn from one another. They explored how climate change—one of the defining challenges of our time—shapes the lives of people in Jakarta, a bustling metropolis facing rising sea levels, and in Exeter, a historic city grappling with its own environmental realities. Their stories help us see that while our cities may be thousands of miles apart, the issues we face are often similar.

At its core, Bridging Cities is about the power of international collaboration in the arts. It's about creating connections that transcend borders, using creativity to spark conversations that matter. This project offers a glimpse into the meaningful work that happens when we open ourselves up to the stories of others—and, in turn, begin to write a new one together.

**Anna Cohn Orchard**  
**Executive Director, Exeter UNESCO City of Literature**

# WITH THANKS

This project was made possible by a Connections Through Culture grant from the British Council. Our sincerest thanks go to them, and to the team at British Council Indonesia for all their support.

The teams at Exeter City of Literature, Jakarta City of Literature, and Yayasan 17000 Pulau Imaji would like to thank all the writers, artists, mentors, translators, and facilitators, for all their hard work and passion throughout this project.

## MENTORS AND FACILITATORS

### Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi

**Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi** is a Jakarta-based writer, editor, and translator. Her work explores topics related to Indonesian mass human rights violations of 1965-66: her latest work is *Rumah Dukkha*, a short-story collection narrating the psychological trauma of the victims. She co-founded Footnote Press, an independent book publisher, and serves as the editor-in-chief.

*Instagram: @dhiandharti*

**Dhianita Kusuma Pertiwi** adalah penulis Jakarta, editor dan penerjemah. Karyanya mengeksplorasi topik-topik terkait pada isu pelanggaran HAM 1965-66; termasuk karya terakhirnya *Rumah Dukkha* (Teroka Press, 2023), sebuah kumpulan cerita pendek yang menceritakan trauma psikologis dari para korban. Selain menjadi redaktur Footnote Press, ia rutin menulis artikel tentang sejarah dan isu sosial-politik di laman Medium.

### Reda Guadio

**Reda Guadio** is an author and musician who tells stories through books and songs and runs creative writing classes online. Her work has been published by POST Press and The Emma Press.

*Instagram: @reda.guadio*

**Reda Guadio** adalah penulis dan pemusik yang berkisah tidak hanya melalui lagu-lagu dan suaranya, tetapi juga buku-buku. Reda juga rutin mengadakan kelas penulisan kreatif secara daring. Karyanya telah diterbitkan oleh POST Press dan The Emma Press, Inggris.

### Mardiyah Chamim

**Mardiyah Chamim** is a writer and journalist, specialising in environment, science, technology, and health. Her latest focus has been the critical issue of climate change.

*Instagram: @mardiyahchamim*

**Mardiyah Chamim** penulis dan jurnalis yang banyak menulis topik lingkungan, ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi, dan kesehatan. Beberapa tahun belakangan, Mardiyah aktif dalam isu perubahan iklim, sebuah topik besar yang menentukan nasib dunia dan kemanusiaan.

### Yani Kurniawan

**Yani Kurniawan** is the founder of Literasia Creativa, a literary and illustration agency in Jakarta. From 2015 to 2019, he worked with the National Book Committee, promoting literacy and publishing. Currently, Yani is the General Manager at Yayasan 17000 Pulau Imaji, organising Jakarta Content Week and promoting Indonesian books at international fairs.

*Instagram: @yanipatrik*

**Yani Kurniawan** adalah pendiri Literasia Creativa, sebuah agensi sastra & ilustrasi di Jakarta. Sejak 2015-2019, ia aktif di Komite Buku Nasional dalam Promosi Literasi & Lisensi Penerbitan. Saat ini, Yani adalah Manajer Umum di Yayasan 17000 Pulau Imaji yang menyelenggarakan Jakarta Content Week dan aktif mempromosikan buku Indonesia di pameran internasional.

## Carla Jenkins

**Carla Jenkins** is a novelist and creative writing teacher based in Exeter. She completed her Masters in Creative Writing at the University of Exeter, and her debut novel *Fifty Minutes* was published in 2024.

*Instagram: @\_raw\_writing*

**Carla Jenkins** adalah penulis novel dan guru penulisan kreatif yang berdomisili di Exeter. Carla menyelesaikan Magister Penulisan Kreatifnya di Universitas Exeter, dan novel debutnya “*Fifty Minutes*”, telah diterbitkan pada tahun 2024.

## Ceri Baker

**Ceri Baker** is a performance poet and 2024 Bard of Exeter. She writes poetry to be performed, facilitates workshops and spaces to support people in raising and finding their voices, and is a multiple Slam Competition Winner who has performed across the UK.

*Instagram: @ceribakerwords*

**Ceri Baker** adalah penyair panggung dan Duta Penyair Exeter tahun 2024. Ceri menulis puisi yang ditampilkan, memfasilitasi lokakarya, dan menyediakan ruang untuk mendukung orang-orang dalam menyuarakan dan menemukan suara mereka. Ceri juga memenangkan Slam Competition beberapa kali dan telah tampil di panggung seluruh Inggris.

## Natasha Lay

**Natasha Lay** is writer for page, stage, and screen, whose work explores Otherness in all its forms. She has been shortlisted twice for Playmarket NZ's Playwrights b4 25 award and her short film *Love is Real!* (co-written with Calvin Sang) was part of the official selection of Whānau Mārama: New Zealand International Film Festival 2022.

**Natasha Lay** adalah penulis halaman, panggung dan layar yang bekerja mengeksplorasi keberlainan dalam segala bentuk. Dia telah masuk sebagai semifinal dua kali untuk Playwrights b4 25 Award yang diadakan oleh Playmarket NZ. Dan film pendeknya “*Love is Real!*”, yang ditulis bersama Calvin Sang, menjadi bagian dari deretan film seleksi resmi Whānau Mārama di New Zealand International Film Festival 2022.

# ABOUT THE PARTNERS



## Exeter City of Literature

Exeter City of Literature is the charity established to steward the UNESCO Creative City designation, awarded to Exeter in 2019 in recognition of “outstanding contributions to culture and creativity” and the wealth of literary heritage in the city. Our vision is for everyone to love stories and storytelling, and our mission is to celebrate diverse stories by working with our local and global communities. We believe in the power of words to imagine new possibilities for this world.

[www.exetercityofliterature.com](http://www.exetercityofliterature.com)  
[www.instagram.com/exetercityoflit](https://www.instagram.com/exetercityoflit)



## Yayasan 17,000 Pulau Imaji

The 17,000 Islands of Imagination Foundation is a non-profit organisation working to improve the quality of literature and creative content in Indonesia, initiating and organising various educative and inspiring programs that encourage the realisation of a sustainable literary ecosystem, encouraging high-quality literary products, making reading materials accessible for people, as well as elevating the role of Indonesian literature in global contemporary issue, and collaborating with various actors in the book industry, the government, corporation, and communities. From 2020 until now, the foundation and Frankfurter Buchmesse are organising the Jakarta Content Week (Jaktent) which will bring together different creative sectors, such as publishing, literature, film, IP, AI, music, culinary, and many more.

[www.instagram.com/pulau\\_imaji](https://www.instagram.com/pulau_imaji)



## Jakarta City of Literature

On November 8, 2021, Jakarta was chosen as a City of Literature, joining the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) international network. Jakarta is the home of the creative industry and is recognized as a major creative centre for the publishing industry in Indonesia. It serves as the hub of Indonesia's literary scene and boasts the most productive publishing industry in Southeast Asia.

[www.citiesoflit.com/jakarta](http://www.citiesoflit.com/jakarta)  
[www.instagram.com/jakartacityoflit](https://www.instagram.com/jakartacityoflit)



## UNESCO Cities of Literature

Launched by UNESCO in 2004, the Creative Cities Network was established to promote cooperation among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.

There are 350 cities in the network, each awarded their UNESCO designation due to a commitment to either crafts and folk art, design, film, gastronomy, media arts, music or literature.

UNESCO Cities of Literature are awarded the title based on their dedication to pursuing excellence in literature locally, and work together to promote new national and international literary links.

[www.unesco.org/en/creative-cities](http://www.unesco.org/en/creative-cities)  
[www.citiesoflit.com](http://www.citiesoflit.com)

## The British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. They support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. They do this through our work in arts and culture, education and the English language. They work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2022-23 they reached 600 million people.

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

## Connections Through Culture

### *Connections Through Culture*

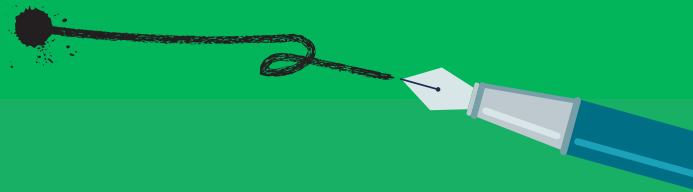
The Connections Through Culture grants programme is designed to nurture fresh cultural partnerships between East Asia and the UK. These grants are instrumental in supporting new ideas and collaborations from artists and cultural organisations at any stage of development. The grants supported in the 2024 round of the programme have focused on two distinct areas: diversity and inclusion, and addressing climate change. The collaborative efforts across borders and artistic disciplines will lead to new thoughts and ideas created to address global challenges. The grants support new connections, exchanges and collaborations and help build long-term relationships and collaborations between artists, cultural professionals, creative practitioners and art and cultural organisations, hubs, networks and collectives.

[www.britishcouncil.id/en/programmes/arts/connections-through-culture-grants-2024](http://www.britishcouncil.id/en/programmes/arts/connections-through-culture-grants-2024)



# BRIDGING CITIES

Exeter X Jakarta



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