

CANTEEN TALKS 3 a.m. Thoughts

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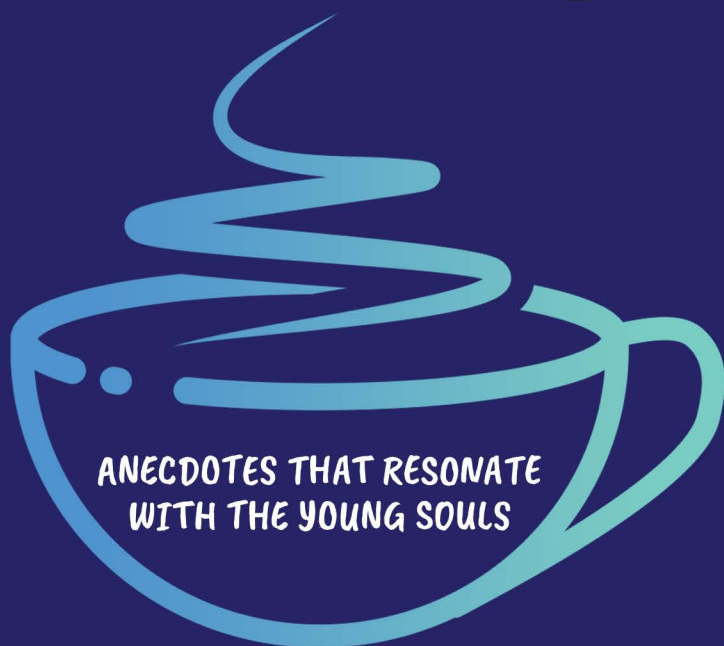
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Abstract: Between the din of the canteen and the silence of 3am, there are stories often left untold. This book gathers an assortment of anecdotes born from spontaneous conversations, quiet reflections, and raw emotions experienced by the students from Kolej Matrikulasi Johor (KMJ). Canteen Talks & 3am Thoughts is more than just a book. It's a space to remember, to reflect and maybe even to heal. These stories resonate with anyone who has ever felt lost, hopeful or human.

Keywords: Conversations, emotions, story, gather, hopeful

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ANECDOTES THAT RESONATE
WITH THE YOUNG SOULS

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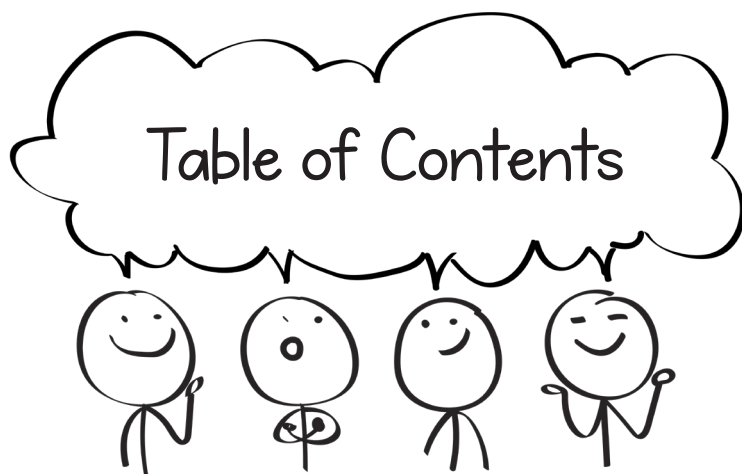
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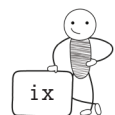
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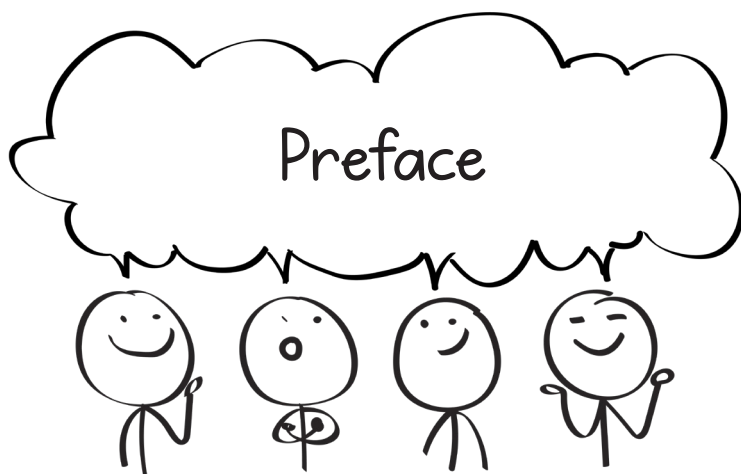


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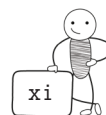
Canteen Talks & 3AM Thoughts brings together a collection of stories written by participants of the Creative Writing Workshop: Anecdote, a joint effort between the Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM), and Kolej Matrikulasi Johor. The workshop aimed to inspire a creative writing culture by encouraging student writers to draw from their own experiences and ideas. Anecdotes are short, often humorous stories that reflect real-life moments, and this book proudly features 72 of them. A heartfelt thank you to all the contributors who made this publication possible.

“Anecdotes are fragments of truth that time couldn’t erase. I lived this chapter, and it mattered”.

Shakina Shahlee

Raihana Ahmad Jalaluddin

Wardah Mohd Zuraimee





Canteen Talks & 3AM Thoughts would not have come to life without the voices, hearts, and honesty of the students from Kolej Matrikulasi Johor (KMJ). Thank you for sharing your stories, the laughter, the tears, the sleepless nights, and the unforgettable canteen moments. Your words are the soul of this book.

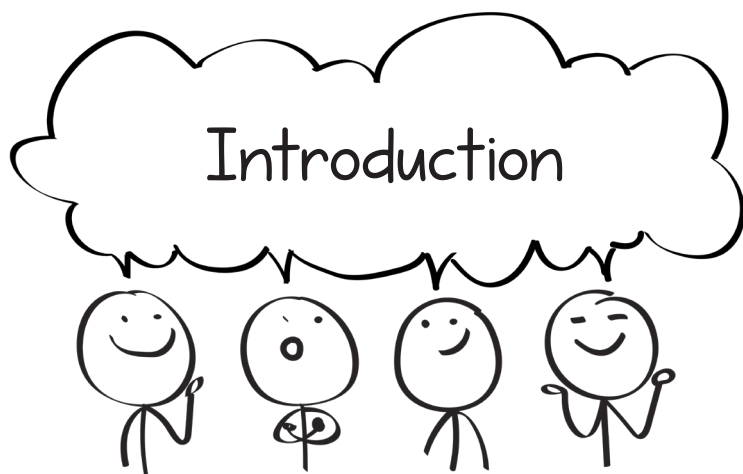
To the lecturers and coordinators from KMJ, we would like to express our profound gratitude for welcoming us from Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) and for giving us the opportunity to engage with your talented students. Your trust and support made this collaboration meaningful and memorable.

Finally, to UTHM, thank you for the platform and encouragement to carry out this initiative. It is through such academic and creative exchanges that we grow together as educators, mentors, and storytellers.

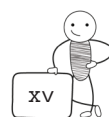


This book is dedicated to everyone who believes in
the power of stories.





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I. Melatonin

by Adriana Mohd Rahmad

Back when I was little, my mother always reminded me, “Don’t forget to drink milk before bed, or else you can’t sleep”. That sentence still lingers in my mind every time I’m going to sleep, even as a grown woman, except now I replaced milk with melatonin. Many told me not to take melatonin as it was an experimental drug with unforeseen consequences, but I still took it.

I saw an obvious change in the pattern of my productivity. During the first night of melatonin, everything was great, until... I started to develop an increasing reliance on melatonin, and now I’m constantly having bad dreams and extreme paranoia until I discovered mathematics. Every time I do my mathematics assignment, I always catch myself falling asleep until the next day without taking any drugs. I think I’ve found my new ‘melatonin’, and my grades are a lot better now.



3. The Unexpected Phone Call

by Ainur Insyirah Mohd Rizalwan

I was sitting in my office one day, deeply focused on finishing a report that was due in a few hours. My phone suddenly rang, and I answered it without even glancing at the screen.

“Hello?” I said, sounding distracted.

On the other end, a man with a deep voice replied, “Hey, it’s me. Do you know where I put the car keys?”

Confused, I asked, “Who is this?”

There was a brief pause before he said, “Oh, sorry, wrong number”.

We both laughed awkwardly, and before hanging up, he said, “Well, thanks anyway!”.

It made my day a little lighter, knowing someone out there was just as lost as I was that morning.



5. Kibble Spiller

by Aliya Sahana

Managing 15 cats can be a real adventure! One day, while feeding them, I accidentally knocked over an entire bowl of kibble. As the kibble scattered across the floor, I expected the usual chaos. But instead of chaos, each cat seemed to instinctively find their spot. Whiskers immediately claimed the warm spot by the radiator, Mittens hopped onto a high shelf, and Tigger took charge, gently guiding the others to their places.

I watched in amazement as the cats organised themselves with a surprising sense of order. It was like watching a perfectly rehearsed performance, each cat knowing exactly where to go. The scene was a delightful reminder that even amid managing so many cats, their unique personalities and their ability to handle situations with such grace make the effort not just manageable but truly enjoyable.



7. Sunset On the Track

by Anis Ainin Sofiya Mohd Sani

In our final year of high school, just before the SPM examination, we stood by the track after one of his training sessions. The sun was setting, casting a golden hue over everything, making his tan skin glow even more. We both knew the exams were coming up, and the pressure had been building.

He looked at me with that serious, determined expression he often wore during games. "We need to focus," he said, his voice steady but soft. It was the first time I'd seen him hesitate about something.

I nodded, knowing he was right, but it didn't make it easier. We had spent two years together, and now it felt like everything was changing too fast. We both agreed to break up so we could concentrate on our studies, but as I watched him jog away for the last time, I couldn't help but wonder if we'd made the right choice.

Though our relationship ended that day, the memories of those years stayed with me. Those moments in the stands, cheering him on, and the quiet walks home where we'd talk about anything but school. Perhaps we will find our way back to each other...



9. Procrastinate by Athirah Roslan

As I woke up this morning, I noticed the clock was showing 10:00 a.m. I turned around to stop my morning alarm that had been ringing twice, and then I said to myself,

“Today must be a productive day. You have four homework tasks, two assignments due in less than a week, one basket full of dirty clothes, and a room that’s as messy as your head.”

After taking a shower and eating my breakfast, I started to open my book and began writing. Then, suddenly I remembered, “It’s Wednesday, my favourite Korean drama airs today!” I put aside my homework and opened my laptop to watch Netflix. After three hours of watching my K-drama and binge-watching the whole series, I woke up two hours later feeling drowsy, with a headache in my head.

I started thinking, “Ah, I must have fallen asleep. I guess I need to start again tomorrow.”



II. The Cake Delivery by Emyra Qistina

One day, while sitting at a small café, I noticed a delivery guy struggling to carry a large box inside.

Trying to strike up a conversation, I said, “Wow, that’s a big cake! Is it for a special event?”

The delivery guy looked at me with a confused expression and replied, “Oh, it’s not a cake, ma’am. It’s for our network upgrade.”

Surprised, I asked, “Network upgrade?”

He smiled and said, “Yes, I’m delivering a server for the café’s new computer system.”

I chuckled and thought to myself, well, that’s one cake that won’t make you gain weight!



13. Mother

by Estella Annatasia

Everyone has their own mother including myself. I always thought of my mother as a strong person, and I always forgot that my mother was also someone's daughter.

It was the 30th Sunday when I saw my mother's lowest point and the incident also broke my heart into pieces when I saw my mother break down in front of my eyes. My grandmother, her mother, her guardian and her angel passed away in the afternoon in front of her eyes. The saddest thing she witnessed was that her mother breathed her last breath in a video call from our house in Johor while my grandmother was in Sarawak.

It was like a slap on my face when I saw that side of my mother. It made me realize how ignorant I am towards my mother as I live. Why? I always thought of my mother as a strong person, but she is just an ordinary person that can break down anytime. Seeing this, I appreciated my mother more.



15. The Glimpse of Us by Fasdy

It was supposed to be a relaxing weekend getaway, but instead, I had to attend someone's wedding. I knew it wasn't supposed to feel this sad, but being a guest at the wedding of someone you once loved? That can still feel like a disaster, right?

The rainy weather seemed to understand how I felt the entire day. I cried a lot while doing my makeup and started to spiral into a relapse.

"I promise I'll stay," I whispered.

I kept crying until my roommate called out my name to check if I was ready to go. At the wedding hall, I couldn't take my eyes off him. He was wearing a black suit, looking absolutely stunning as he walked down the aisle.

"Thank you for coming today," he said.

I looked down and sighed before leaving them... with a smile. At that moment, I realized that all our promises and all the hopes of growing old together were gone.

The ring was for her, not me.



17. Beauty Privilege

by Hanis Nur Iman Samsol

Privilege. Have you ever experienced any kind of privilege from your surroundings? Privilege is basically an advantage that some people get because of their attractive appearance.

I was on my way to buy a movie ticket at the cinema nearest to my house. I had been waiting for this movie for a long time. As I was lining up, a beautiful woman stood behind me. I was super excited and nervous at the same time because I was afraid, I wouldn't get the chance to watch the movie.

When it was my turn, the ticket seller told me I was getting the last middle-row ticket. But just as I was about to take out my money, the seller suddenly said they needed to give the ticket to the lady behind me because "she was here first."

I knew they were lying; I saw the shocked look on the lady's face.

"Beauty privilege really exists."

I walked away and called my brother, asking him to close the cinema, because the shopping mall is owned by my brother.



19. The Meaningful Trip of The Boys and Me by Isma Iskandar Azmi

If we spend our days waiting for fabulous roses, we might miss the beauty and wonder of the tiny forget-me-nots that surround us. That's what I realised after a trip to the local museum with my friends. We went there because our class was tasked with creating a scrapbook about local historical figures.

Among the many figures, we chose the Malayan politician, Dato' Onn Jaafar, as our main subject. We were so focused on completing the task rather than truly exploring the museum that we ended up with writer's block. We had so much information about Dato' Onn Jaafar that we didn't know how to begin writing.

I decided to take another walk around the museum, hoping for a spark of inspiration. That's when I realised all the other historical figures we had skipped had more engaging stories than Dato' Onn himself. I suggested a new idea to my friends, and they agreed. We explored the museum more thoroughly this time and decided to write about multiple figures instead of focusing on just one.

As a result, our team received full marks for the assignment.

Life is similar to this experience, if we focus only on what's ahead, we miss the little things happening around us. In the end, we might lose more than we gain and live with regret.



22. The Negligence of Peers Teenagers by Muhammad Adam Rosli

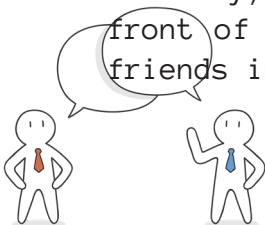
The accident taught my friends and me the importance of being aware of our surroundings, especially when doing something that involves other people's lives. The situation truly frightened and shocked both of us.

Last week, my peers and I went on a weekend outing to Dataran Pahlawan in Melaka. We got there by renting a car from a shop near our college. We had a great time and spent money like we were millionaires.

"Chill, it's our money. Just buy anything you want with it," my friends said.

After that poorly managed spending spree, we decided to unwind at Pantai Klebang beach. All of us were exhausted from walking around the mall like zombies. Since the driver (one of our friends) was too tired to drive, he passed the steering wheel to me.

On the way back to the car, we turned on the radio and blasted the music to enjoy the ride. That was our first mistake. Because of the loud music, I couldn't hear the GPS instructions properly and clumsily took the wrong lane on a busy road. Suddenly, I accidentally crashed into the car in front of us while changing lanes. I looked at my friends in panic, my heart racing like crazy.



24. Sports Encouragement by Muhammad Akmal Abdullah

One classic story about Rozaimi Rozali illustrates the power of persistence. He attempted to join the varsity taekwondo team during his sophomore year in high school but unfortunately did not make it.

Rather than throwing in the towel, he took that setback as motivation to keep going. Rozaimi spent hours working on his skills, sometimes arriving at the gym before dawn to train. However, he still did not make the varsity team that year. By the following spring, he became a gold medallist at the 2019 SEA Games. Through this experience, he learned the importance of hard work, which helped shape him into one of the best athletes to date.

A powerful reminder from his story is that even the best have faced failure. What matters most is how you handle failure or any obstacle in your path.

Last but not least, I am very proud to have him as one of my coaches.



26. The Unexpected Guide

by Muhammad Izzat Fakhri Abdul Latiff

I got lost on the first day of my university life. The campus was too big for me to find my way around. I wandered in circles for 20 minutes until I tried asking that one nice old science professor I met, who jokingly convinced me he was my age and an undergraduate student. With his warm smile, he kindly gave me directions to the class location before walking me over there.

I sat down, opened my book and was ready to learn, only to find out that he was standing in front of the class, with a smile still on his face, ready to teach. Oops!

But, it is better to ask around than to keep on walking in the dark, right?



28. The Influencer

by Muhammad Syukri Sajri

The 16-year-old Sara was feeling discouraged because of her appearance and one day, she stumbled upon a video by a social media influencer casually talking about the key to self-confidence lies in accepting your flaws. There were personal anecdotes shared by an influencer about her battle with low self-esteem and how she overcame that. Sara was touched and relieved that someone she admired faced the same issues. It gave her the idea of kinder self-talk and made sure she never compared herself with girls she saw online anymore. Weeks passed and Sara felt morally down again.

After finding a piece of advice from someone online, Sara felt optimistic all over again.

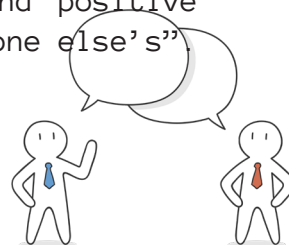
“Do we really need to think about other people’s judgement about us?”

“Is it important to always be as good as others?”

“Is there really a beauty standard in life?”

“Live your life as you want! It is yours, so live it fully.”

Those questions keep popping in her mind. This time, something clicked and she never looked back again. She tried her best to be cheerful and positive because, “This is my life to live, no one else’s”.



30. Backbone of My Life by Nazatul Shahira

In another life, if I were given one wish that I wouldn't want to change, it would be my parents and my siblings. They are the most important people in my life. True love is not expressed through words but through actions and that is exactly what they show me.

Whatever I want to do, they will always support me. No hesitation nor criticism. Everything is given with unconditional love.

Is my life happy? Yes, I am very happy.

This is the best gift I am most grateful for in life. I hope all children in this world get to feel this kind of love..



32. The End of Dreamland

by Nur Ain Natasya Nurshahduan

I jumped from one cloud to another, each bigger than the last. I had no idea where I was and tried to find my way back home. Suddenly, I saw a giant candy shop on top of a cloud. My inner child could not resist, so I ran to the shop happily.

Inside, I found a variety of chocolates. I grabbed some and stuffed them into my pocket without hesitation. Suddenly, a creepy old man wearing green pants and a red floral shirt glared at me and shouted, “Hey, kid! You have to pay for that first!”

It turned out he was the owner of the shop. I panicked! I didn’t have any money. I dashed toward the exit and glanced back to see if he was chasing me.

Then, he transformed into a terrifying monster with a long tongue, a big head, and one huge eye.

I managed to escape, but I had forgotten I was on a cloud.

I fell.

“Nooooooooo!” I screamed as I plunged downward.

Then I heard the monster’s voice yelling,

“Wake up! Wake up!”.



35. A Sweet Moment about Yesterday

by Nur Erika Ezira

For the first time in the past few months, I hung out with my beloved girl classmates. We spilled a bit of tea... Well, actually, a lot. We did a bunch of activities, like cafe hunting and eating. Of course, eating is a priority.

“Hey! The direction is right here!”
“No! It’s here! My map shows it’s over this way, not there!”

The argument continued for a few minutes while another friend sighed and stressed about the directions. We got lost and gave up on going to the original cafe. We ended up going to the one that was closest to us instead.

“Here we are, the first place we arrived at, and now the place we’re eating at.”

My friend and I laughed a lot about it. It was funny because we had decided not to go into that cafe in the first place! We took a seat and looked at the menu.

After we finished our food and drinks, we went out to take some pictures. We put our things aside and focused on getting the perfect shot. After that, we went to Mixue to get some ice cream! And then...



37. A Memorable Vacation by Nur Hidayatul Asikin

—
A memorable vacation for me was that spontaneous one with my high school friends to Pulau Tioman. While sipping our hot lattes one fine morning, we decided to go on a quick “healing trip”. Since the four of us lived far away from each other and only met once or twice a year during raya celebration, we thought that was the perfect time to go for a short trip.

After a few minutes of rushed planning, we then packed our things and drove to Mersing before chartering a ferry to Pulau Tioman. It took us 4 hours from our place, and we finally arrived. Luck was on our side as the sky was clear.

That night, we decided to camp out under the stars at a remote spot we stumbled upon. As we sat around the campfire, shared stories and laughed together as we reminisced about our golden days, the warm gentle breeze and the beauty of the starry night sky made that moment unforgettable. It was a perfect blend of adventure, camaraderie, and natural wonder, leaving us all with lasting memories and a deep appreciation for the beauty of the world.

It wasn't always about the place or activities, but who we shared it with.



39. The Uninvited

by Nur Nadhira Humaira Mohd Burhan

I was in my friends' room talking about our day peacefully and happily. One of their roommates, Dania, was already asleep as it was already 1.00 am. Aishah, Alieya and I planned to sleep late that night since the next day was the weekend.

While talking and laughing, I suddenly looked up towards the fan switch of the room. I saw something, a thread-like waving smoothly. I immediately got up and told my friends that there was something on the wall. Alieya and I hurriedly took the broom and dustpan to use our weapons.

Alieya hit it and suddenly it flew towards us. We shouted loudly and ran like a headless chicken out of the room. Alieya closed the door immediately as it seemed to be chasing us. We were breathing in a sigh of relief.

Within a second, we heard screams from the room. "How dare both of you!". We looked at each other in shock. "Aishah and Dania are still in there, aren't they?", I asked.

"What?"

"She ran too slow, and Dania was sleeping. So, I had to close the door first before the cockroach got to us," Alieya explained.



41. My Roommate by Nur Nazihah Ayuni Jamal Abdul

Just like a puzzle piece that needs the right space to fit perfectly, I found mine inside an empty locker in my room, sweating like crazy! But hold on, I had a plan. And I was not alone as I was with my roommate, Mardhiah.

Every weekend, my roommates (Mardhiah and Ainul) and I usually watch a movie together on a laptop. But one particular weekend, Ainul spent the whole day outside the room with her other friends and did not come back until almost midnight! She told us to wait for her, but she didn't even give a proper reason for being late. Mardhiah, clearly frustrated, suddenly said,

“What if we hide in the locker and pretend no one's in the room?”

I thought about it for a while, then said, “Okay, let's do it.”

So, there we were, squeezed inside the lockers, trying not to make a sound.

We had been there for almost 30 minutes, and honestly, I felt like I was about to pass out!

I peeked out of the locker, and Mardhiah did the same. We exchanged glances and stifled our laughter. Then, we heard the room door creak open.

“That might be Ainul,” I whispered.



43. Him.

by Puteri Aisyah Sofea Mohamad Hisham

So, the lyrics from the song that I got is “I’m in love with the shape of you...” by Ed Sheeran. It doesn’t sound right to me so let’s change the word ‘shape’ into ‘sight’.

The day before yesterday, at 10.50 a.m. I was waiting outside DKK3 with my friends for my English lesson. We had to wait because there was another class ongoing inside. I was talking to my friends when the door finally opened, indicating that the other class was done with their lessons and about to come out. And then, there he was. I saw my crush.

I was so amazed, mesmerised, in awe, because how on earth can he be so perfect? I had my eyes on him the whole time he was walking, with my jaw literally dropped. We even made eye contact, which made me scream internally till this day because of how embarrassing it was.

If I have to say, I am a pretty bold person. I don’t really mind if my crush knows that I have feelings for them, but it was embarrassing for me at that moment since I got caught red handed. I really need to control my feelings whenever I see him.

Yes, I have to learn more self-control, ASAP.



45. Memorable Moon

by Qurratu Ain

The starry skies at night, such scenery must be appreciated by all. I too, am a fan of the moon and the stars always be mesmerizing every time I look up to the sky at night.

However, this one night, he (the person that I used to have a crush on) and I, we both look up to the same sky. The same night, in the very same place. That time, I thought “Maybe at this very moment, we’re so lovers-coded, although I’m very much delusional because of the fact that he has a partner himself, haha.” I really felt peace that night, surrounded by my lovely friends under such a beautiful moonlit night sky...

“Qurr!!” One of my friends called me from afar. “Daydreaming again?”

I turned my head and smiled at them. “Maybe”, I giggled.

I feel grateful to my friend because she brings me back to my reality.

“Let’s go back to our room, okay?” she said.



47. To Be Seen Is Human by Raihana Ahmad Jalaluddin

As always, the day will be quiet and silent, unnoticed. No one will take note, no one will care. Yes, the mind craves validation, seeking recognition from others, yet, in truth, we are enough. We alone have the power to feel seen, to remember ourselves, even when the world does not. And the nights like these can feel isolating, but they also offer a chance to find strength within.

The need for validation is human, but true peace comes from knowing we are enough, without external approval.

As the day may pass without a sign, without a word or gesture to mark its passing, but that does not make it any less meaningful. Existence itself is enough to be honoured, even in silence.

Live it, enjoy it, be grateful for it.



49. The Great Loss

by Raihana Ahmad Jalaluddin

Am I still at a loss if I knew, yet I let it slip away? Yes. I am at a loss.

Did I do anything to prevent it from getting away? Yes. I am at a loss.

The weight of regret is overwhelming, unyielding, inescapable.

I'll carry this feeling till the end. As I knew, but ignored.



51. It's Leaving by Raihana Ahmad Jalaluddin

When the rain falls heavily towards the end of Ramadan, it always feels like a sign, a gentle farewell, a quiet reminder. The month of rahmah and barakah is leaving. It holds you close in its final embrace, whispering,

“Will you remember me?”

Will you cherish Ramadan even after it has gone? Will you carry its light beyond its days? Will you continue the kindness, the prayers, the longing, or has exhaustion already settled in, making you eager to part ways?

Because if you are tired, Ramadan will leave. Silently.

Sadly.

But you,

Will you wait for it again?



53. Creepy Towel Tissue Trip

by Shakina Shahlee

Well, I'm a woman. And yes, I often shop alone. And I'm perfectly fine with it. Honestly, I find joy in window shopping. I mean, who doesn't? Especially us girls. It's practically a sport! Huhu. One day, I realised it had been a while since I last restocked towel tissues at home. So, I told myself, "Let's get this done!" I headed to my go-to hypermarket my mom always went to. Not your regular kedai runcit, mind you, because the towel tissues there are a real steel.

As usual, I went straight in with my checklist. Everything seemed normal until... something felt off. I started to sense that someone was following me. I glanced over my shoulder, and there he was. A man, holding his phone, earphones in, pretending to look elsewhere. He mimicked my every move. I walked; he walked. I stopped; he stopped. That's when I knew, "Nope, this is not a coincidence".

Trying to stay calm, I spotted a female staff member arranging vegetables nearby and whispered, "Excuse me, I think that man's been following me." She looked up and said, "Oh, really?" Then subtly tried to keep an eye on him. With that, I rushed to complete my shopping. Once done, I hurried to the counter, paid as fast as I could, and thought I had shaken him off. Arms full with heavy bags, I decided to drop everything into my car before heading back inside to grab one last item.



55. Whose Prayer? By Shakina Shahlee

It was a gloomy day when work was done and dusted. I started the engine and recited the transportation prayer. Well, we seek protection from the One we should.

I headed home with my favourite music playing on the radio. My favourite song came on:

“I can see you’re sad,
Even when you smile,
Even when you laugh,
I can see it in your eyes,
Deep inside you wanna cry.”

As usual, I sang along to pass the time while driving. The road home was lined with thick jungle on both sides, with many animal crossing signs along the way. But in the four years I’d been using that road, I’d never seen a single animal until that day.

Just as I was jamming to the song, a huge boar suddenly crossed in front of my car. Luckily, I wasn’t speeding and managed to hit the brakes just in time to slow down.

I screamed, “Whose prayer saved me today?!” Hahaha, yes, that actually came out of my mouth.



57. See Sea. Set Me Free

by Shakina Shahlee

I had a phobia of the ocean. Yes, thalassophobia is its scientific name. I always imagined the dark blue depths filled with something terrifying. Meg? Giant octopuses? Oh, you name it, every sea monster imaginable lived in my head.

But somehow, I decided to go on a trip to an island, hoping for a little “healing” session. My plan was simple: sit back on the beach, watch the waves, and listen to their calming sound. That was it. Little did I know... the trip I booked was packed with snorkelling activities. Hahaha, so much for chilling on the sand! Turns out, beach time was rare on this trip.

But I reminded myself, “This trip is a must to heal the soul.” So, I chose to go with the flow and challenge myself. The “don’t mind, don’t care, don’t wanna care” spirit kicked in.

But here’s the thing, I don’t know how to swim. And guess what the first snorkelling checkpoint was called? “Nemo Point.” It was way off the island’s edge, in deep water. The sea was a dark blue, so deep you couldn’t see anything from above. But something came over me. I just... jumped in. No hesitation. No panic. Just courage.



59. Oh to a Beautiful End by Shakina Shahle

Some people admire wealth, billionaires, and millionaires. Fortune is like a measure of success to them. Some idolised brilliant minds, people with great knowledge, whom they feel outsmarted by. Some worship beauty, chasing perfection of physical attractiveness.

We all have our own visions of what makes existence meaningful and powerful. But for me, I dream of a respectful, peaceful, loved life ending.

It gives me goosebumps when I hear of those who pass in the most beautiful ways. I always wonder, “What did they do to deserve such grace?” and “What deeds filled their days so fully that death came not as an end, but as a final blessing?”.

Their souls are surrounded with not just mourners, but with love. Those who whisper stories of their kindness, just tell good deeds, nothing unpleasant can be heard.

Oh, to be remembered like that.

Not for wealth nor for beauty. But for a life so well-lived that even death bows in reverence. Money fades, beauty withers, but a life of sincerity? That lingers forever.



61. Tents, Trails, and Laughter by Siti Nur Ayssah

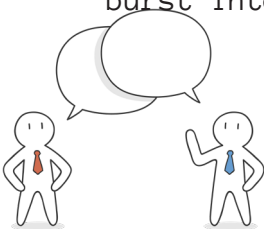
When I was 12 years old, my friends and I participated in a school camp. We were very excited since it was our last camping trip as primary school students.

Our first session of the day was kayaking, and I was partnered with my best friend. Before we started, the facilitator briefed us on the dos and don'ts. The first activity was water confidence. We had so much fun floating and swimming in the water while wearing our life jackets.

Then, the time came for us to begin the kayaking activity. Since it was our first time, we were both nervous and didn't know who should sit in front of the canoe. My friend was too scared, so I offered to sit in front.

As we started, the canoe began to move with the waves. We were scared, but we enjoyed every moment. As we rowed, I started to feel like something was off, everything felt heavy. At first, I thought it was because of the waves. But when I turned around, I realised I was the only one rowing the canoe, while my friend was just sitting back and enjoying the ride!

"Are you done enjoying the wind breezing?" I teased. She finally realised what was happening, and we both burst into laughter.



66. Serendipity by Wardah Mohd Zuraimie

Have you ever experienced the occurrence of events in a beneficial way? This happened to me when I mistakenly locked myself out of my apartment while wearing only a bathrobe and flip-flops. As I stood on the sidewalk, shivering and slightly embarrassed, I contemplated my poor life choices.

Just then, a pizza delivery guy passed by and, seeing my predicament, offered me a slice of his last pie. We struck up a conversation, and it turned out he was a budding film director. He needed a last-minute extra for his short film, and, due to my attire, I was cast as “the confused neighbour.” I spent the day pretending to be lost in a robe, and the experience made me unexpectedly famous among my friends.

It’s funny how life’s little mix-ups can lead to the most memorable moments. Who knew a wardrobe malfunction would turn me into an accidental movie star?



68. A Distinguished Gentleman by Wardah Mohd Zuraimie

Yeah...I have an amazing family, an amazing wife, amazing kids, four of them. I don't believe in working hard, but I do work smart. To be able to rest and sleep is my utmost priority.

My wife? Oh, don't worry about her. She's well taken care of. She gets pampered with spa treatment daily. She maintains proper beauty and grace with the help of her maid, yeah, I got her a maid, so she won't lift a finger.

And my kids, they're adorable. I made sure they received proper education and exercise. They have so many toys and educational materials at hand. They're so active, mischievous at times, so they eat a lot, like a lot, which scares me sometimes. Nevertheless, they have an ample supply of nutritious food and treats to keep them healthy.

By now, you should know I'm a very good family man and fantastic provider. Ohh please, enough with the compliments *chuckles*. I told you I worked smart. I just use my handsome face to my advantage.

Sorry? A model? Oh, no, no... that's beneath me, pfft. Models flock to me when I'm in their presence. I would rather be called a distinguished gentleman because my work contributes to a better world. My work puts smiles on people's faces. In turn, they



70. A Strong Line for a Kite by Wardah Mohd Zuraimie

A steady kite that dreams of soaring high in the sky must have a strong line. If the line is weak, it will snap, causing the kite to toss and turn in confusing directions and loops in the strong winds before falling hard on the ground.

A person is like a kite that explores and finds a place to belong in the sky while bracing the strong winds. Without strong winds, the kite cannot fly. Without a strong line, the kite roams mindlessly before meeting its demise. Without hardships, a person cannot grow. Without stability, a person's soul wanders aimlessly in a limited time to live.



72. Trust

by Wynona Ahmad

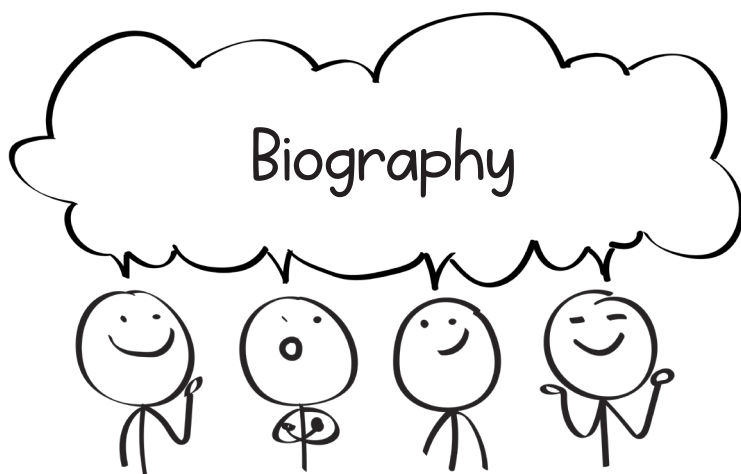
We sketch the path in careful lines. With dreams so bold and hopes that shine. Yet life, with hands unseen, will steer a course unknown, a shift unclear.

We build with patience, step by step. Each goal in mind with paths keep tracked. But winds may turn, and skies may fall, and plans once firm now seem so small.

When roads diverged and dreams must bend, know that not all journeys reach their end. The map you held now torn, unmade, is not a loss, but a path relayed.

Be kind to self when things are changed. For life's not cruel, just rearranged. Embrace the flow, let go of strife and trust the twists and turns that shape your life.





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Canteen Talks & 3 a.m. Thoughts

Between the din of the canteen and the silence of 3am, there are stories often left untold. This book gathers an assortment of anecdotes born from spontaneous conversations, quiet reflections, and raw emotions experienced by the students from Kolej Matrikulasi Johor (KMJ). Canteen Talks & 3am Thoughts is more than just a book. It's a space to remember, to reflect and maybe even to heal. These stories resonate with anyone who has ever felt lost, hopeful or human.



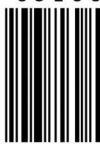
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