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1. WHO

The time ticks. The breeze seems still. It was dark. Bit by bit the air seems to thin. My breathing became hard. Whatever I felt all this while was known. The tap was close tightly but the drop kept on dropping. Tick...ticks...tick...It sounded so near.

Each drop of water was not just a drop of water from the tap. Its meaning was mere drops but more than that. I could barely hold this pen. Each word I'm writing is a beat from my heart.

A black heart. Sin was in my blood. Ahhhhhhhhhh.....arghhhhh!!!. Why did he come? Who was he after? Who send him here? Where was he from? What does he need or what does he want?. It keeps haunting me.

I first got to know him in the year of the tiger. The tiger is a fierce animal. Based on the Chinese calendar, the tiger is one of the strongest zodiacs. Among the twelve zodiacs, the tiger falls in 3rd from the zodiac hierarchy. He came on the 3rd of July. Looking at him the first time, I felt something was not right.

His name itself was weird. A name I have never heard before. Hse Lam was his name. He came to the food court on the 8th floor. I still remember that very day. We were having breakfast.

“Good moming guys, can I join you guys,” a husky voice came from a mere distance. I stared at him. He stood there, height around 180 centimeters, broad shoulder and with a clean shaved face. He gave a smile. My boss, Malar “Of course, you can join us, you are a part of our team!!!,” she said.

What the heck was my boss saying? Was she okay? “. Hse Lam was not even a week on the floor and now suddenly he is a part of our team!?!,”

I was confused but I could not say much or utter a word. My colleagues ushered him with open hearts but with a slight fear. Fear?

He offered his hand “Nice meeting you John,”. A wink with a sinister smile. Nathan was standing beside me. He had an eerie feeling. Accepting someone who is a total stranger would have everyone’s thoughts puzzled. It’s human nature. The fear of acceptance and changes.

“Okay guys, let’s go..enough with the jokes!!!! ,” Malar uttered, “You guys better finish your targets today, not shit excuses, okay?” she said with her eyebrow raised up a bit.

We understood what she meant. It was dark. The four walls covered around me. It was like a tall barrier. My eyelids were heavy.

It could be the lack of sleep for several of days. I switched on the lights. For a contact centre that operates twenty four hours a day, a moment of silence is not something you can expect.

It usually sounds like a fish market, everyone trying their best to sell their products. I was very surprised it was very quiet. "No calls?," I asked. "No lah bro, system down...only got three of us working night shift," he said as he was fidgeting with his mobile phone. "Melissa is not here, don't know where the heck she went as usual," with a sigh.

As I was listening to him, my thoughts were not on what he was saying.

My eyes were opened wide. I could not believe what I was seeing. Is it really him? This early? What the heck is he doing here so early? My thoughts were puzzled. I harden my heart and walked towards him. "Hey what the hell are you doing here so early," I said to him. He stared at me. He stopped what he was doing.

It seemed that we was writing or marking something on my colleagues table, Vino. "Nothing bro, just thought of coming early", "that's all bro," Hse Lam said. "Ahh...Okay bro, got to go, ahh... going to to get some breakfast ," he stammered. He left.

As soon as he left, I went to Vino's table. I was curious, very curious. I searched Vino's table. Wondering what he did on his table. I found nothing but I had a bad feeling. Something was just not right. I was always the earliest one to come into the office.

None of my colleagues would come as early as I do and they won't even attempt to come early. But why Hse Lam? He rides a bike to work and it only takes fifteen minutes from his place to the office.

My thoughts were going wild. As the days passed and months passed, work was becoming a routine. Nathan was my mentor. He taught me everything about the job. Nathan was not just a work colleague; he is like a brother to me. We had gone through hard times and good times together.

Nathan was a religious friend. Religion played an important role in his life. I used to follow Nathan when he goes for prayers.

He always tells me that there are forces of good and evil. Every time when Nathan starts his lecture, "Do you know that we are just mere being in the other world!!!," "I saw this...I felt this...I was there...", on he goes. What crosses my mind was Star Wars.

The fight between Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker, good versus evil. When Nathan's stories become darker, my thought runs into Exorcist. Is not that I don't believe him, I just can't understand it.

For me, what matters most was he is like an elder brother and I love him a lot.

“You watch your mouth!!! Why are you telling all this to boss? You just mind your own business, Okay,” Vino said sternly. “I know you are informing everything to boss, you chat with her on intercom, you go up and see her on the 25th floor, You think I don’t know is it?,” his tone started to rise.

I just stood there. I could see the anger in his eyes.

I have never seen such anger. Misery, hatred, jealousy...the fire was in his eyes. His hand clenched, forming a fist. “Hey guys cool down, cool down...let’s talk this over,” “Mind your own business John, buzz off!!!!”, Hse Lam pushed me. He whacked the table with his fist.

He pushed the door and left. Vino pulled out his tie and walked off. I was blank. I felt hopeless on what had just happen. There was no unity in the team anymore. Since he came, there were always some issues within the team. Other colleagues started to notice the friction among us in the team.

It was so dear. We tried to cover it and pretend that everything is okay. But it’s not. News started to spread throughout the floor. “He is a very quite person, he never smiles, he always keep himself reserved,” an agent whispering to another agent on the floor.

I passed by them pretending I did not hear anything but I did. "I feel scared sitting beside him, he stares at me as like he is going to eat me," the whispers continued. Everything that I believed started to turn upside down. Nathan shared something to me.

I couldn't accept what he was saying. I don't believe him. I didn't want to believe him. Remember the saying "Seeing is believing," I said to myself in my heart. I should never doubt Nathan on what he was telling me. Things started to reveal when you take concern about it.

I did not believe him. I don't believe him. I could not believe him. I saw it. I saw it. I swear I saw it. Have you seen an egg? Why do you keep an egg near your computer? People passing by would never notice it. I saw it. If you notice his table or we call it as workstation, the Central Processing Unit (CPU) is behind the monitor.

There is a stack of notes covering the rear part behind the CPU. The wires connect the CPU and the monitor plus the other hardware's for the computer. There is a green cover / lid that covers the main plug point. If you lift up the lid, you can see an egg on the left side on the plug point.

I was shivering!!!. A chill sensation went down my spine!!!. I could not digest what I heard from Nathan and what I saw. Nathan continued to share to me. "Why do you always wear the green jacket?" I asked him curiously. "I like this jacket, it keeps me warm always," he replied. "Would

you wear a jacket when the air conditioner is not working and the temperature is at twenty eight degree Celsius?," I thought.

Seriously it sounds dumb and illogic. I saw it. I saw it. I swear I saw it. I was in the gents. He would come as early as me. It was the first time I saw it. Tattoo!!!!. He had a tattoo on his back. It was a tattoo I have never seen before in my life. Never!! Never!!! Never!!!!. It was writings. I'm not sure of what language it is.

It seems like some ancient language. There were 6 dots on his back ragging from the shoulder to his waist. Surrounding the 6 dots, the ancient writing starts from the back of his neck to his shoulder. There is also a continuation of the ancient writing on his left wrist.

I could not believe my eyes on what I was seeing.

"Sorry JJ, I'm allergic to cotton," he said. Cotton??? Allergic!!!!. You got to be kidding me!!!!. "I just got this shirt from Jusco, but damn, I have rashes now!!!,"" Luckily I always keep a spare shirt in my locker bro," he continued while he changed his shirt in the gents. I just nodded.

Shocked. Speechless. I just don't know what to say. I looked at the mirror. I was sweating. Chill sweats???. Chill sweats early in the morning???. I was freaking out!!!. I was bloody freaking out!!!.

The water felt extra cold than usual. I collected the water with both of my hands and splashed it at my face. I did it three times. As the water slowly drips down my face, I could only imagine the worse. Password expired. Change password. Sigh.

How many times do I need to do this?. I retyped a new password. "Hopefully this new password could last for another one month," I thought to myself. "How's the call? What was the customers enquiries?," I asked the agent. The agent gave a blur look. I sensed that the agent thought I'm an idiot asking the wrong questions to him.

"The caller wanted to change the flight, the return sector flight from Denpasar to Perth... I changed the flight for him, change fee and fare difference," he said.

The same questions with the same answers and excuses. I have heard it all. Sensing the absent of Nathan as he was ill, I miss him a lot.

Ash was on the other side, busy munching on snacks. That's the only thing she knows. When it comes to work, she always give the excuse "Oh...I don't know how to it," "no one taught me!!!". Arrrrggghhhh!!!! She really gets up my nerves. It's been three months since Vino was terminated.

The absent of Vino was a big lost to the team. I always cherished the great times we had together. Breakfast outing, lunch outings...the best of all dinner outings. We really can

eat. “Hahahaha,” my mind wandered as I passed VIno’s table to get the score sheet.

His termination was a shock to us all. Why was he terminated? A question that was not answered or given to us by our beloved boss. “When the time comes, I will tell you guys,” Malar said that three months ago.

I still can remember the exact quotation she said. I personally feel that it doesn’t really matter now. Looking at the window, the reflection of the building was very clear. The wind was blowing strong. The lightning struck. A heavy downpour. “There is no way I’m going back now!!!,” I thought.

I leaned back on my chair, adjusting the knob at the bottom of the chair, sliding it right to the end. My headset was plucked into my ears. The soothing music, quieted my heart. I was rocking the chair like it was a rocking chair.

Turning to my left, turning to my right. Back and forward. As the light was flickering above me, the section of my workstation was rather dark.

Mr. Lee forgot to fix the light. As I was rocking the chair, I noticed the pillar on my right side. I saw a shadow. A dark shadow. I stopped rocking the chair. I stared at the shadow for a moment. My thoughts were curious. At that point of time...two red dots appeared. A blink of a pair of eyes. Blink!!! I shouted.

"!!!! Ash!!!! Did you see that!!!!?!, did you see that!!!!" What?!, " she looked at me. Giving that shock look. "The pillar!!!," "The pillar, did you see that!!!," I pointed at the pillar with fear." See what???, " she says. ????.

I freeze. I sensed she didn't see what I saw. "What lah dei???", she asked me. Nothing. Nothing. I'm I going crazy? Did I just see a pair of red eyes staring at me from the pillar???

Its 7pm only....I'm day dreaming?? Or was I too tired???. I took off the headset. Locked the pc and headed to the door. "Hey...where you going lah..," Ash asked. I just walked without answering her. I was not bothered. I tag myself out and headed to the toilet. I entered one of the cubical in the toilet. I locked the door.

I moved the lid of the potty and sat.

I was shivering. I still see the eyes. The red eyes. Every time I tried to close my eyes, I see the image of the red eyes reappearing. I fidgeted the cross near my chest. I held the cross hard. I was murmuring a prayer. The Lord's Prayer came to mind.

"Please tell me I did not see that Lord," "Protect me Lord,". I lost count how many times I repeated that. I was in that cubical for twenty minutes. As I started to calm down,

I opened the door of the cubical and headed out of the toilet. I headed back to my work station. Ash was missing. I

assumed that she has left. Her handbag was not on her table. I slowly walked to my workstation passing by the pillar. I stared at the pillar as I passed by it.

No shadow, no red eyes. I looked at the window outside. The rain has stopped. I started to plug out the headset wire. Shut down the unused programs in the pc. As I was busy closing the programs, I stopped for a while. I turn my head to my left, facing Hse Lam's work station.

Hse Lam stared at me. Did he sense that I was going to look at him or was it just a coincidence???. He grinned. An evil force was lurking. Clashed with the black helmet, and the big headset, Hse Lam headed his way towards the door. His shadow reflected on the floor as the fluorescent light glared at him. A small child???.Two shadows???

A figure as of a child aged...maybe five, "what am I imagining,". His shadow accompanied with another shadow. "Hehehe ahahahaahhaa," a hysterical laughter. A laughter of a child drummed in my ear. I shut my eyes.

I opened my eyes. The laughter disappeared so as Hse Lam. I was trembling. What just happen???. Is my eyes playing tricks on me??. Did no one in the office noticed it??. I tried to calm myself down. I sat on my seat. My forehead on the table with my eyes closed.

I immediately thought about Nathan. He knows a lot of these weird things. Since Nathan is strong in religion, he could maybe explain what just happen earlier.

I slide my hand into my pocket and reached my mobile phone.

I contact Nathan. The ringing tone was there but no answer. Damn Nathan!! Answer the damn phone!!! I uttered softly. Then I thought, what if Nathan thinks I'm crazy or something?. I stopped. Deep in my heart, I was suffering in fear for what I just saw. I had no idea what was going on. I keep telling myself it's all a dream.

Delusions. That's all. End of story.

I packed my bag and left the office. I didn't want to think what happen, how it happen, why it happen. I was lucky to get the bus at 11.30pm. I assume it was the last bus. I sat in the bus, I started wondering. I can't stop my thoughts. His grin, the tattoo on his back.

The red eyes, the raw egg with worms investing it. The images kept reappearing over and over again. I reached home. Entered my room and took a shower.

I headed straight to bed. Why am I seeing it again?. Why am I hearing it?. Is it all coming back again? Its 3am and I'm still awake. I just couldn't sleep. That's just the beginning of sleepless nights...

2. SERPENT

The dampness soaks the air. The wine tangles among the bushes. The smell of decay as of death surrounds the atmosphere. She hurled through the thick bushes. The thorns pierced into her flesh. Cuts and bruises growing deeper and deeper. From the skin to the flesh, from the flesh to the bones.

She ran as fast as she could. The howling and screams of wild worsens the condition. "You cannot hide," words echoed in her mind.

Her heart started hammering inside her chest as she heard the voice in her head. She was a mess. Her face was swollen and a prominent dark bruise was invading her neck. Her outfit was a mess as well.

She was wearing a white gown, it was stained everywhere with a dark liquid I could not describe. Her movements become slower. She gasped for air. She can't run no more. The fog blinded her sight. The still waters reflect numbness. Living things floated on the surface of the lake.

It became darker. The cloud clouded the light of the night.

Slime at the edges on the lake. A tailless amphibian sat on the rock of the dead lake. It leaped forward towards her. It croaked so loud. Its cleft tongue attacked her. Its slime gushed to her face. The green goo disgusted her. The goo went down deep into her deep throat, forcing her to throw up.

Her vomit wet her gown. Slithering worms soaked her gown. She's already half dead. "What's happening to me!!!!," she scream her lungs out." Why are you doing this to me!!!!,". At that time, the bushes beside her started to wither.

A burned stench slowly filled the air. She was so weak. The bushes were on fire. A serpent emerged from the lake. The forked tongue serpent glided through the burning bushes. As the serpent glided its way, it formed a path way. The surface of the lake was on flames as a figure emerged from the lake.

Its broad shoulder and legs, thin waist was as of a man. Its jutting chest and large arm were engraved with weird writings.

It headed towards her. She crawled like of a baby wanting attention. The ground was wet with fresh blood. It picked the serpent from the ground. The serpent entangled itself to the arms of the figured man. "What do you want from me???, Why are you torturing me like this!!!," she plead as blood oozed from her mouth. " I know you're there," a

male's smooth voice said to her "I can sense your fear, Malar." It said the last word bitterly, sounding disgusted by it.

She was too scared to say anything back. "Let me in" he whispered making his voice sound even smoother as if it was trying to enchant her. "Please leave me!!!," she cried. "Don't make this any harder Malar," it said. She swallowed hard.

The way it said her name gave her a chill. How did it know my name? Who is this man? "You cannot protect yourself and the people around you anymore," its tone softened. "This won't be long, Malar. Your time is here" it promised but she was not falling for its words.

"Malar!!! Cooperate with me or this can be really painful if you don't," it said to her. "Stay away from me!" she yelled.

A hand covered her mouth while its strong arms wrapped around her waist. The slithering serpent nibbled her neck. She struggled desperately to free herself. She could feel the strong figure behind her. "Shhh" it whispered in her ear, its breath was warm.

She kept fighting to release herself. She screams but its drowning in her throat as they couldn't escape since its hand was tightly covering her mouth. Despair filled her veins.

Its arms loosen her waist, as its hand slid inside her gown. It's warm fingers, with pointy nails grazed her skin. It sank its nails deep into the skin at her chest. She screamed in

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