

## Chapter 4: Friends and Love

Friends and love are something that most immigrants need and get when they migrate to a new country. One can never survive in another country himself as he needs friends to accompany him or even love to make his life more enriching. Therefore, when overseas, one should try to socialize as much as possible so as to prevent loneliness and there would always be help provided when needed. It would also make the trip more meaningful- finding a best friend or a lifetime partner that would be with you for the rest of your life.

Michelle was aimlessly walking on the pavement of Orchard Road. Having lost her job and being too disgraceful to return to the maid agency, she did not know where to go and what to do. The stress was here again....money. As she walked along, she could not stop blaming how careless she was. If only she could be more cautious then all this would not have happened and she could now be breaking the good news to her family that she had gotten her first biggest salary. But now, with her job gone, and even though she still had the money but she does not have the face to tell her parents that she had lost her jobs. She could not imagine telling her parents: "Ma, pa, I lost my job...sorry". How broken would her parents' heart be!

She lowered her head in disappointment and let her imagination run wild on what her parents' reaction would be, however, she accidentally crashed onto something upright; face to face without realizing it. Instantly, she raised her head and wanted to apologise, something she did a lot for that day. Standing in front of her was Mike. He looked very forgiving and muscular, as usual. It was the first time she had seen someone so strong and fit and at first and for the first time of a life, she had a strange feeling towards him. Though so, it was no time to think about things like this as she still mumbled "I'm so sorry...don't blame me...It's not purposely" at a humble tone. Having the mindset of everyone in Singapore were all fierce and still in the trauma of what happened just now, Michelle became even scared and even started to bow as tears flowed from her eyes. She was desperate not to get into another trouble.

On the other side, from Mike's point-of-view, he was surprised at what was going on in front of him. He had half responsibility for the crash because just now, he was actually engrossed in thinking how to train up so as to be on his best performance on the competitions when he crashed with the lady. Yet, the lady seemed to have overreacted and seemed to be apologizing as if she had done something real mean. Mike, of course, requested her to stop it and tried to calm her down. Putting his strong hands onto the lady's

thin arm, he halted her bowing. "Hey cool. Slowly. You've done nothing wrong okay? I'm at fault too!".

Listening to this, Michelle cooled down and wiped off the tears off her eye before finally looking up and taking another good look at Mike. Once again, the eerie and inexpressible feeling ran down his spine. She felt attached to him. At the same time, Mike was able to now take a better look at the emotional Michelle. Wow! She seemed to be the most elegant girl he had ever seen. He used to think that America had all the beautiful girls but what he saw now was something different. She seemed more beautiful than anyone. He was attracted to her.

There Mike was, staring and admiring the beauty of Michelle and the gaze and so strong and long that made Michelle who was just crying minutes ago starting to feel a little embarrassed but she was no better as she was also in a daze, trying to 'feel' the current waves of 'special feelings' going through her body. It was as if the world stopped for them as they were there staring at each other, not averting their eyes for a second. Anyone who passed by would mistaken them as couple, especially when Mike was grabbing Michelle with his arm.

In their own virtual world, they stayed for about five minutes before returning to their real world, their consciousness to see that they were actually hanging onto each other when they did not even know each other. Embarrassed, Mike moment ally pulled back his hands as Michelle looked down, embarrassed. After all, it was the first time the both of them had such as experience. Then, Mike broke the ice between them by self-introducing himself and asked about why Michelle was so emotional.

Seeing that Mike was a gentleman and that she had a special feeling towards him, Michelle decided to be friendly and introduced herself too before going into details of what happened. It was here when suddenly; she became controlled by her emotion again and started weeping. It was the first few time that Mike seen a pitiful girl cry in front of him and he started to feel sorry for her but he did not know what to do to console her. He attempted to give her a hug but it might not be a good thing to do to someone whom you just got to know after all.

Hence, Mike decided just to be the listener, listening to all her sadness and her cries, hoping that it would make her feel better. At the same time, he tried to rack his brain to try to help her as crying does not solve the problem, only to find out that he was too dumb to think of anything. He could not help thinking what a failure he was not only unable to strive in his boxing career but even could not help people in simple things like this. The only thing he could think of to do was to send her back to the maid agency as she had already signed a contract and that was he did with the consent from the saddened Michelle.

Back at the agency, Michelle explained everything in great details to her boss and also asked for forgiveness. But it was no use. Her boss became so furious that Michelle had not only made the customer unhappy, but also tarnished the reputation of the agency. She ranted and raved and started giving an ear-lashing to Michelle. Michelle, as the one who committed the mistake, did not dare to resist and Mike blamed himself for being unable to help her.

It was at this time of desperate when an idea swam through his brain. Instinctively, he carried it out without consideration. "I'll take her! She'll work for me." He exclaimed before his brain intended to do so. His personal feelings towards Michelle had taken over him. The boss of the agency stopped and his glance flittered between her and Mike. He thought for a while before coming up with a decision. Since her reputation was at the rock-bottom and no one else would want her, Mike using her was not a bad choice either. Lagged for a while, the boss became straightforward as suggested "Lets carry on to discuss the price!"

Like this, Michelle was hired by Mike to clean his two-roomed house since he was someone who did not like to tidy. Life would be easier for Mike and also for Michelle. She would not have to be sent back to Philippines because of her poor performance and yet, now she have a new job, an easier one. The two-room flat seemed so crammed and small that it would only take her one hour to clean it till spick-and-span. Mike was very satisfied with being able to recruit Michelle to help him and Michelle was happy to be hired by Mike, someone whom she felt attached to.

It was amazing how fast Michelle and Mike had developed their relationship. From two strangers just a few hours back, they now became boss and worker and this relationship was expected to develop, especially with both of them living in the same roof now and both of them having a same strange feeling towards each other. They would soon find out that this strange feeling is the mightiest feeling of all- love.

As for Jie Tan, after life had decided to make fun of her and her husband, she now needed to work at the Junior college tidbits store with her newly made friend. Though it was a simple job, it was still something bad as she should actually be enjoying life instead of toiling herself to work but this was just how cruel life was. But, at least she was happier now. She always loved to serve people and especially people still in their education so that she could share her life experience with these people and this job allows her to do so. At least, it was better than always shopping with those 'tai tai' in the neighborhood.

After a few days of working at the canteen, Jia Tan got to take notice of a few students in the college, especially those pitiful ones and having influence ones. This made her looking forward to find a time and talk to them about life, so as to make those pitiful one not to feel too depressing and to influence those who are more popular to not be so proud and be careful of some friends that might lead him astray. Therefore, Anwar became her first target since he was hot-favorite in the college after the saga where he helped the hooligans in the storeroom.

Once, after recess, Anwar was still in the canteen studying as he was a Malay and was allowed to skip Chinese classes. Making use of this 'off-peak hour' period, Jia Tan went over to him and tried to talk to him. Anwar, being a friendly one also, did not reject the conversation and decided to chat with her since it was rude not to do so. Jia Tan started off by getting to know of Anwar characters better by asking about his hobby and other not-so-personal stuff. She looked as if she was an experienced counselor. Anwar tried to be helped and answered accordingly to the questions the truth.

Then, they proceeded to introducing themselves. It was here when Anwar suddenly got suspicious. Why was this auntie asking so many questions and even want me to introduce myself to her? Does she have a motive? Was she like those people stated in 'crime watch' where they used methods like these to hoax to scam people of their personal information? Suspicion started appearing in his mind as minutes passed as he decided to give the wrong information.

But before he could say anything, he suddenly saw Jia Tan leapt up from her seat and grabbed him away from his original position as he heard water splashing onto the place he was sitting on seconds ago. He turned back just to see that someone had accidentally spilt his hot bowl of 'wanton' noodle onto where he was sitting previously. He would have been

scorched till death if only Jia Tan did not pull him away at the critical moment. He was grateful to Jia Tan.

The now looking astounded and lost guy who had just spilt the bowl of noodle just now quickly apologized as he tried to clean the mess he had created. Jia Tan slowly let off the grip of Anwar and also helped out in cleaning the mess. Before five minutes was over, everything was swept off and peace was regained. Jia Tan sat back to her seat and tried to resume her chat with Anwar. Everything was the same again, except for Anwar's impression on Jia Tan. He had thought that Jia Tan was a bad person but after all, she was not. He had misjudged Jia Tan. If she had been evil, she would not have pulled him away from danger and also helped another guy clean the mess. Therefore, he decided that she was trustworthy and decided to befriend her.

He re-introduced himself once again and told the truth this time round. He started from him coming from Malaysia till how he was treated just one month ago until now. Things were evolving very quickly in his life. After that, Jia Tan also introduced herself about her life before coming to Singapore and after coming to Singapore. They shared their opinions on Singapore as compared to their home country and many other things. Because of this, their relationships grew closer also since both of them are also immigrants and have about the same experience after more than one month of life in Singapore.

They chatted for about one hour, until the end of the Chinese lesson and Anwar was required to return for lessons but this was indeed a fruitful conversation between them and they were both satisfied with it, learning a lot from each other. This was their first chat and definitely not their last. This was the first time Jia Tan and Anwar was able to express themselves so openly to a friend and this made them a good friend since they never found one upon reaching as it is not easy to find someone who had gone through the same experience in life.

Lastly was about Rohan. His life was the best among the five of them but he was a workaholic. He was buried under work every day and he was not very socialized. After one whole month in Singapore, he had not yet really had any contact with a Singaporean except for his customers and his colleagues. His life was dull and money was all he could think off. How could this kind of lifestyle be healthy?

Even so, Rohan had no intention of changing this. He still worked day and night, overtime for almost every day so as to please his boss and customers. As a result, his body became unhappy and decided for a riot. He finally fell real sick after one whole month of work. Fever accompanied by cough and flu, the bacteria decided to form gangs to bully Rohan. He was so sick that day that he could not even climb out of bed to call for help.

This was the moment when not having friends became a trouble. As his colleagues thought he must be working at home, something he was given the freedom to do and what he always did, no one took much of a notice. Not only that, he had no friends at all who would call him every day to chat with him or ask about things. He was on his own. Helpless and hopeless, he could only lie on his bed and await death...or help.

At this critical moment, the door bell went off. It was the first time it ever did. Though unsure of who was it, Rohan knew it could be help if he catch the golden opportunity. Mustering all his strength, he knew it was insufficient to make it to the door but he knew it could be enough to attract attention. Taking one quick scan at the surrounding of the room, he saw a glass of water beside his bed. He knew what to do. Turning his head slightly to the left, he stretched his right hand to push the glass of the table with great difficulty. But all the efforts was not futile as he managed to push it off balance, causing a loud shattering of glass to be sounded. It echoed across the house, and supposing into the ears of whoever was outside the house and looking for him. Now, all he could do was waiting for help.

Unaware of his surrounding, Rohan went into unconsciousness again, for a while or permanently, before waking up a long, long time later. Opening his eyes for the first time after a long time, he saw lights shining into his eyes. Was he in Heaven or still on Earth? It was still a mystery until he saw a familiar man appear right next to his bed. It was his neighbor whom he knew the face but did not know the name. With this, things became clearer. The most likely situation was that that day, his neighbor was looking for him just to hear no answers but just a glass shattering sound. Concerned that something bad was going on inside, he must have called for the police and ambulance, leading him to end up in the hospital after all that.

Rohan was thankful for the help of his neighbor and this incident let him learnt about one thing: the importance of friends. If only he had more friends, one of them might have called him earlier and he might not have to go through the torture of the sickness without help. Without friends, one could really not survive in times of danger. No amount of money at

that moment could have saved him, only friends could have saved him. Not only that, life would have been better if he had more friends as for the next few days in the hospital, no one visited him at all and he was really very lonely. All his colleagues had to work to cover up his absence and therefore, did not have time to visit him. His family was all in India and he had no intention of letting them know about his condition, lest they become worried for him. Hence, he had no choice but to spend these long hours in the hospital, without company. It was indeed very sad for him.

From this chapter, it could be seen that friends and love are aspects that cannot be missing. They could help you in times of danger and also make your life more interesting. Singapore is a multi-cultural country and despite its limited land and population, the people here are friendly and would help out neighbours and friends in times of danger. They are not proud either, knowing that they could not afford to be. They are most suitable to be your friends.