

Chapter 2

18 year old Rizin Anwar arrived at the bus station where the buses ferrying passengers to and fro Singapore and Malaysia were stationed. He alighted from the bus and looked around. He was now convinced that he had made a good choice. He could already see many officers at the baggage claim, checking the goods of the passengers carefully. This already indicated that Singapore is a safe place, unlike India, where the security is not tight, at least for now. Anwar decided to take a taxi to the school he would be studying in Singapore but after looking at the amount of money he had left, he decided that the most efficient way to get to school was by the public bus. But there was one problem. He was unsure of which bus service to take to his school.

He started asking which bus service he could take to his school. To his surprise, he took almost half an hour to get a reply. In Malaysia, the Malays always lent a helping hand to the Malaysian Malays because they were the main race in Malaysia. But here in Singapore, it was different. The people here were said to be selfish and unhelpful and yet think themselves as gentleman. Therefore, he received no help. That ruined his happy mood. He started on his journey to his school. Once he reached his destination, he went to the boarding school to stay. It would be his home in Singapore. But without his parents around to help, he had to be independent. School would be starting tomorrow, and he had to be prepared to face competition from other students. He promised himself to seize the opportunity to score well and get along with others.

The next day he went to school. When he entered the classroom, he could see many Chinese. He was not very happy. He tried to smile at them, hoping they were good Chinese who would interact with other races. But they ignored him.

That was definitely a bad start to his school term. During recess, he realized that the food sold here in Singapore was much more expensive than that in Malaysia. He decided to save money and buy a small bun. Some of his classmates laughed at him for having little money and could not afford a proper meal. At the end of school, Anwar did not make any good

friends. They were unable to communicate with each other. At the end of the day, Anwar slept in his bed, feeling both angry and sad. He wished he was in Malaysia right now. He was starting to be regretful about his decision to come to Singapore to study.

Upon his arrival in Singapore, Mike took a glance at Singapore's sky. The sky seemed so dark, mysterious yet tranquil. Surprised and shocked that the sky was not blue, Mike checked the time on his watch. It was two o'clock in the afternoon. Not knowing where to go, he took out the slip of paper that his agent had given him. "Block 285 Tampines Street 22 #02-222" was written in black bold ink on the paper. Since he was feeling fatigued and tired after a long flight of more than 12 hours, he hired a taxi to bring him to the rented room.

Of what seemed like a few seconds, the taxi pulled to a stop. The taxi driver woke Mike up, who was still snoring like a gorilla. After paying the taxi fare, he went up to the apartment and rang the doorbell. No one answered; Mike rang the doorbell a few more times. Finally, an annoyed old man came out, seemingly prepared for a quarrel. Just before the old man was going to say anything nasty, Mike explained himself and apologized. The old man relented and let Mike enter the apartment. It was a messy and dirty apartment. The old man told Mike that he was the owner of the apartment. Mike was led by the old man to his small and unkempt room, and he lay down on the bed and travelled to his own wonderland.

The next day, or the time when Mike woke up, the sky was blue with white fluffy clouds. Mike checked his watch. It was midnight. He was flabbergasted. At the instance, Mike received a call from his agent. He told his agent that he was fine and asked his agent about his doubts, which were cleared up immediately. He was told to adjust his watch's time to synchronize with Singapore's.

Besides that, his agent wanted him to report to the daily boxing sessions. When he arrived at the gym, there were some residents exercising there. As a sociable and friendly person, he

wanted to chat with some of the residents to know more about Singapore. Hence, he approached one of the residents and introduced himself. The resident did not seem to understand him and spoke in a foreign language. Mike did not understand and the resident proceeded with his training. He intended to approach another resident, but dismissed the idea later on because he feared that they might not understand him. Mike proceeded with his daily body building exercise routine.

Rohan stepped out of the airplane and gazed around at the world renowned Changi Airport. People filled the air terminal and all of them have different skin colour as well as language. Rohan, whom only knew Tamil and English, expected himself to have a hard time communicating with people in Singapore. Rohan noticed that a Chinese man looking at his patched and dull clothes and tardy appearance, which made him look small in front of all the others, decked out in fashionable and bright garments. Rohan heaved a deep sigh as he knew that rich people would never show much respect to a poor person – as he had experienced mistreatment from his rich classmates back at India. His dream of being treated equally in a new land was immediately tarnished.

While Rohan was deep in thoughts, he did not notice a small man reaching his hand into his pocket and fishing out the rest of his money, which was all he had left to survive in a foreign land. However, it was the Chinese man who jolted Rohan back to his senses with his shout of warning. The thief took off like a rabbit and no matter how hard Rohan chased him, the distance between them only became wider. Just as all hope seemed to be lost, the Chinese man sprinted after the thief and caught up with him, subduing the thief. Rohan was relieved and thankful to both the fact that he got his money back and the help he received from a person of different race in a different country.

After the robber was handed over to the police, the Rohan thanked the Chinese man in English awkwardly as he did not expect a Chinese to understand English but the Chinese man's smooth and fluent English proved him wrong. The Chinese introduced himself as Mr Lim Jerome and he was the manager of a newly built company in charge of the construction

of new machine prototypes and he is lacking employees. At this news, Rohan immediately introduced himself and told Mr Lim about his diploma in engineering and his achievements in his school. Mr Lim became interested and gave Rohan his business card to remind him that he could come for an interview the next day. With his heart thumping with both disbelief and joy, Rohan shook Mr Lim's hands and walked towards the direction of the taxi stand. He felt his life in Singapore started on the right foot and his future here seemed more promising than he had expected.

In another part of the world, Jia Tan and her husband took the plane to Singapore. When they arrived at the Singapore Changi Airport, they took a free shuttle bus to the city in order to save money before Jia Tan's husband went for work in the company's headquarters the next day. When the shuttle bus drove out of the airport, she was captivated by the numerous high-rise buildings Singapore had. This gave her the impression that Singapore was well-developed and she was confident that her husband would be able to earn more in Singapore than in China. Also, she could not endure the communism in China. She was happy to be living in a democratic state. She felt that going to Singapore was going to be the path to her happiness even though they were poor now. She was confident they would be rich in no time. When they reached the city, they asked for the bus services they could take to the rented flat they decided to live in temporarily. They had a reply very quickly. They soon reached their rented flat and located the landlord. The landlord then took them to their room. Her husband had to get ample rest before preparing to go to work tomorrow.

The next day, her husband went for work. He realized that he and other Singaporeans could get along well with each other as they were able to communicate with each other in Chinese. They also warmly welcomed him. Jia Tan's husband was very surprised and at the same time happy that he was able to work well with his Singaporean colleagues. The Singaporean boss gave him work on the first day, but Jia Tan's husband was prepared. In order for him to have a higher salary, he must be able to overcome the huge workload. After finishing his work, his Singaporean boss praised him for his efficiency as he was able to produce such a great piece of work within such a short time. Jia Tan's husband was delighted. He looked outside the window. All he could see was darkness. He looked at his watch. It was already 11pm. He really needed to go home. He was tired by the time he got

home but looked forward to the next day of work after a good start to his first day of work. He felt that he could blend in with Singapore's culture very soon.

After a grueling consecutive one weeks of trainings on not only basic cleaning skills but also communication skills, Michelle was finally able to grab hold of the basic criteria for a maid. Though inexperienced and under-trained, she was a smart lady and this was spotted by the agents. Hence, she was given the chance to get picked by employers for her first job.

The wait was long without results, too long for comfort. Though she was given to live in a hostel provided by the agency, she knew her family was suffering, especially when she had not given them the money for the last one month. She became desperate for work but the chance never came. Wondering why she was not chosen, time passed day by day before it finally came.

A family of five had finally chosen her as she looked reliable and diligent. Once Michelle heard the news, she was elated. Finally! Squeezing everything into her bag, she dashed off to see her boss for the first time. He had a face of benevolence, looking with his spectacles on. He gave Michelle a warm smile, before leading her off from the agency, towards his house. This made Micheal feel lucky...lucky that she got a good boss at least for the time being.

Reaching the house, Micheal was introduced to everyone in the bungalow and also briefed by Mr Chan, his boss about the procedures and the things she needed to do. Then, her work finally started after what seemed like forever, one week of waiting. She was told to mop the floor, cook and wash the car for that day and when she completed them, she was exhausted. The moon was already high up the sky before she was able to finish her task. Retiring to her room, which was as big as her house in Philippines, she dropped onto her bed and started dozing off, thinking about her first day of work. It was tiring but easy and Michelle wondered if this was a good thing. Would things get worse or better?

Life in another country is obviously more difficult than that of a country which you are familiar with, however this is just the starting and nobody knows what the future foretells and how life will change, but the reaction of the people of Singapore and their attitude towards them is the factor that will shape their future more than anything else.