

Ratap seorang anak di pemakaman ibunya

by Najmah

Original in Malay

Seorang anak kecil meratap di pemakaman ibunya yang masih merah, bertaburkan bunga-bunga yang masih segar dan harum
Telah lama upacara pemakaman sederhana itu usai, seorang pendakwah yang tadi dengan malas melafalkan doa yang juga sangat pendek telah pergi
Rombongan pelayat yang dari tadi asik berbisik-bisik sambil melirik jijik pun telah bubar
Aku menatapnya dari kejauhan, namun ratapnya terdengar karena alam tiba-tiba hening dan takzim

Ibu, akhirnya kau tinggalkan aku sendiri, Bapak telah lama mendahului kita, mungkin engkau akan segera menemuinya..

Aku saksikan engkau ibu istri yang tabah

Engkau rela merawat bapak sampai sisa hidupnya, dengan penyakit yang di deritanya

Padahal, aku dengar dari bisik-bisik yang di sampaikan orang-orang di sekeliling kita

Bapak selalu asyik menemui wanita-wanita di luar sana, saat tidak bersama kita

Kata mereka, sakit itu hukuman buat bapak

Dari muda, kata mereka, bapak berperilaku durjana

Tapi engkau tabah, engkau sabar..

Nak, apa kau mau Ibu menjanda??, jawab ibu membungkam protesmu

Seolah kata "Janda" menjadi hal yang menakutkan bagimu

Ibu,

Tak ada lagi pelukan hangatmu untukku, tak ada lagi senandung menghibur laraku

Bahkan saat penyakit jahanam itu juga menghantuiku

Kata dokter, imunku melemah, sehingga penyakit mengerikan yang merongrong pernafasanku pun mencekam

Aku terkena TBC buk

Penyakit yang bahkan mendengar namanya saja membuat orang menyingkir jauh

Ibu, bahkan aku lihat kau mampu berkompromi dengan dunia yang melecehkanmu

Aku ingat di rumah sakit ketika engkau datang memohon sedikit belaskasih untukku, anakmu

Wajah sinis engkau dapati, bisik-bisik jijik antar mereka mendengking di telingaku

Aku ingin protes buk, tapi engkau menyabarkanku

Kesana-kemari engkau di permainkan birokrasi

Engkau akhirnya protes...!

Kami sibuk, kamar sudah penuh dengan penderita COVID-19, itu yang aku dengar
Covid-19 itu apa buk..Lirih ku bertanya
Engkau tersenyum, itu sama seperti penyakitmu nak, Cuma batuk saja.

Tapi aku tahu, perlakuan itu membuat trauma dalam hidupmu
Sampai akhirnya engkau sakit buk..
Ya bapak ternyata tidak mewariskan apa-apa, selain sakit padamu..

Aku tak bisa menolong mu banyak dengan tanganku yang kecil..
Ada om dan tante dari LSM yang membantumu
Membujukmu ke rumah sakit
Tapi engkau menggeleng...Aku takut, jawabmu
Takut akan COVID-19 dan tes COVID-19..
Yang akhirnya kau bawa mati
Meninggalkan aku sendiri...

Aku melangkah mendekati anak kecil itu
Memegang pundaknya dan berkata
Nak, ibumu sudah tenang di sana, dia sekarang telah berjumpa dengan Bapakmu
Anak itu mengangguk..
Ibu Bapakmu pasti Bahagia di Surga
Anak itu menengadahkan kepalanya
Matanya menatapku tak percaya
Mulutnya berkata lirih
Tapi Ibu dan Bapak mati karena HIV..
Aku terdiam..
Langit tiba-tiba mendung..

A child mourns at her mother's funeral

by Najmah

English translation

A little child wails at her mother's funeral, the ground is still red sprinkled with fresh flowers
It's been a long time since a simple funeral ceremony took place
An Islamic preacher who lazily recited a very short prayer has left
The group of mourners who had been whispering about her mother have also dispersed
I looked at the child from a distance, and suddenly her crying got louder when nature was quiet
and reverent

Mother, finally, you left me alone
Father passed away a few years ago
Later you may meet him
I witnessed that you are a steadfast wife and mother
You were willing to take care of your husband till his last breath with severe lung disease
I heard from neighbors that my father had extramarital partners when he was not with us
People said his sickness was a curse for my father
From a young age, people said, my father behaved badly
But you were so patient; you were a tough woman
You said to me, "do you want your mother to be a divorcee?" this question silenced my protest.
The word "Divorcee" became a scary thing for you.

Mother, no more warm hugs for me, no more humming to comfort my pain
Even when I also got infected with that disease
The doctor said that my immune system had weakened, so I may suffer from a terrible disease
choking on my breathe.
I got infected with tuberculosis.
When people hear this disease, people will step aside from you

Mother, I saw your resilience to compromise abusive actions from others
I remembered in the hospital when you begged for my help, your daughter
You dealt with disrespectful services; I also listened to unfriendly faces and sarcastic words
I wanted to protest, but you calmed me, mom
You were so busy with a red-tape referral system
Finally, you protested.....!
Now, we were busy, yet all in-patient rooms were packed with COVID-19 patients,
I ask you, "What is COVID-19, mom?"
You smiled at me and said it was just like your disease, just a cough.

But I know that the disrespectful health services traumatized you
Until you finally got sick.
Your husband did not leave anything behind, apart from this disease to you (and me)

I cannot help much with my little hand
There are uncles and aunts from non-governmental organisations to help you
Persuade you to go to the hospital
But you shook your head and said, "I am afraid of...."
Fears of COVID-19 and COVID-19 test
Finally, you passed away
Left me alone

I stepped closer to this little daughter
Holding her shoulders and saying, your mother has a peaceful life there; she has now met your father.
The daughter nodded...
Your mother and father must be happy in heaven
The daughter tilted her head
Her eyes stare at me in disbelief at my words
Her mouth said softly
And said, "But my father and mother passed away due to HIV."
I am silent
Then the sky is suddenly cloudy

This poem is based on the true story of an HIV-positive widow who was part of the author's research project on stigma and discrimination of HIV and COVID-19. She passed away in July 2021 after postponing seeking healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic. She left behind an HIV-positive daughter.

Dr. Najmah is a lecturer in the Public Health Faculty of Sriwijaya University, South Sumatra, Indonesia. Najmah was awarded a prestigious New Zealand Scholarship for her doctoral studies and graduated from Auckland University of Technology in 2020. She completed her PhD under the supervision of Dr Sari Andajani and Associate Professor Sharyn Davies, whilst looking after her three toddlers. Najmah also has degrees from the University of Melbourne, where she studied with an AusAID Partnership Scholarship, and her bachelor degree in Sriwijaya University (Unsri), South Sumatra. Najmah is the author of four books of Epidemiology and Biostatistics and an editor of three books related to Data analysis and research methodology in Public Health and English camps in Indonesia. She is currently writing her fifth book in qualitative approach and enthusiasm in Feminist and Participatory Action Research. Najmah's research interest is HIV, women and COVID-19. Her current research grant is from Alumni Grant scheme, Australian awards for Indonesia with titled to get tested or not: A project to reduce stigma around COVID-19 and HIV testing in Indonesia.