

“A Home for Dian”

By Kania Alisjahbana & Judith Karina Onang

SUBMISSION FOR
“SOUND: A COMICS ANTHOLOGY”
BY DIFFERENCE ENGINE

Plot

Dian just started her university studies in Singapore. She wakes in a daze, the alarm from her phone ringing by her pillow before she turns it off lazily. After gathering her senses, she notes the stark difference of the atmosphere between Singapore and her hometown of Bandung. Here in Singapore, the busy sounds of her morning is replaced by a quiet morning all alone. She cooks her food alone too, the egg on the pan sizzles and she flashes back to her mornings in Bandung, where Mbak Ani, her helper, would make everything a little easier, waking her up in time for school, tell her that her uniform is ready, and breakfast would already be set. Mbak Ani would call her “*Neng!*”, a form of addressing “young lady” in Sundanese, the traditional language commonly spoken in Bandung.

Before we know it, she’s already waiting at a bus stop. Her bus arrives with a rumble and she gets on, fighting the rush hour crowd. The moment triggers a flashback to when she went to school in Bandung. She rides a car, comfortably sitting in the backseat with her brother Dimas in the passenger’s seat—asleep and snoring, as always. Their chauffeur Pak Eman is on the driver’s seat, laughing and chiding about the way Dimas snores. There are many cars outside, the morning rush hour can be seen with cars honking to one another despite the standstill while music plays in the car’s stereo, playing the family’s CD collection. Back to the present and she smiles to herself reminiscing these times. Yet the smile fades as she realises she is not with her brother and Pak Eman anymore. She’s alone in a crowded bus.

She looks up to check where the bus is headed and realises her stop is next, proceeding to press the red “Stop” button before hearing the way the “Bus Stopping” sign beeps. She taps her card to exit—another beep, and then alights, hearing the bus rolling away with another rumble. She walks to her destination with a hum, crossing the green light which makes a repeated beeping noise while people cross alongside her. She sees her best friend, Mei Lin, in the distance who seems to be rushing.

Dian catches up to Mei Lin and they greet one another with a clumsy hug. Mei Lin is walking a little too fast while she says (in a Singapore-Hokkien accent) that they will be late if they don’t hurry, adding that the supervisor is “damn killer”. Dian giggles delightedly at hearing her little accent and they both start running to the meeting point, about to start their school-assigned volunteer work at Kampong Glam. She hears the sound of Sultan Mosque’s *adzan*, turning her head to the source before smiling to herself, again taken back home to where hearing this sound is a daily occurrence.

The supervisor arrives, greeting her and Mei Lin matter-of-factly and briefing on their job today. Mei Lin gives Dian an encouraging high-five, wishing her luck on her first volunteer work ever since she moved to Singapore. They are soon dispatched to their duties and Dian finds herself busy with attending to the events’ patrons, helping the vendors, and assisting the supervisors. The pace of the day overwhelmed her, interacting with more locals than usual, handling situations she had never experienced before, sometimes she couldn’t understand what the

locals were talking about, and they would laugh at her for it. At that point, she just smiles bitterly and accepts that maybe things wouldn't be as easy alone, and her homesickness grows. Later on, the bass blares at the event finale, and she decides to go out where the *adzan* could be heard from Sultan Mosque. Only then the time slowed down again.

She carries the feeling until her day ends. She locks the entrance door, holding a takeaway food for dinner. And right then, she hears the sound of her ringtone—it was her family. She picks it up excitedly, only to be greeted by the face of Dimas, merely telling her not to forget his souvenir when she comes back home for the holidays. Dian grumbles, to which Dimas just grin before he exits and hands the phone over to their parents. Dian tells them about her gloomy day, bursting into tears as she apologises for being weak. The parents remind her graciously, “Don't think about making us proud, make yourself proud.” In turn, she looks back on her time. She experienced so many pleasant things that day too—the funny Singlish slangs she learned from Mei Lin, hearing a lion dance in the midst of the event, even hearing the different languages from people. She lights up at the thought of all these. Singapore is now her second home. Everything will be alright.

Biographies

Judith Karina Onang, Illustrator

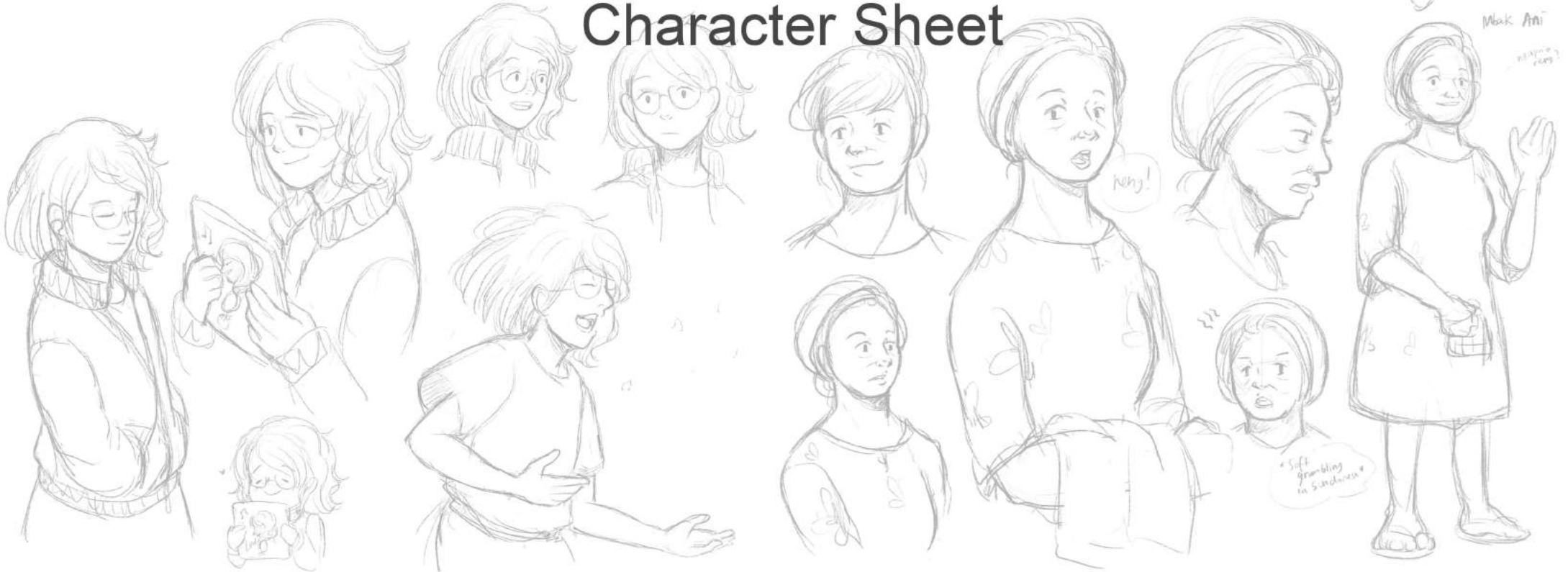
Judith was born on 8 May 1997 in Jakarta, Indonesia. She grew up with Japanese comics and Disney animation and has been drawing since primary school. She further pursued a Bachelor of Arts in Design & Media at NAFA. With a love for heartfelt story-telling, she has written and finished a fantasy comic entitled “Daring Heart” for her graduation project and have had it published on LINE's publishing portal, Webtoon. She dreams of someday publishing her own children's storybook.

Kania Alisjahbana, Writer

Kania was born on 26 June 1995 in Bandung, Indonesia. She has written stories ever since she learned to use a word processor on her family's Macintosh. Her love of stories started from knowing that her own great grandfather was a writer. She is passionate about the arts too and earned her Bachelor of Arts in Arts Management at NAFA. She believes that stories is what connects people as humans and dreams that her stories could inspire someone else someday.



A Home for Dian Character Sheet





07/2019
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