

JOURNEY OF THE NIGHT SUN: BABY TURTLE SEARCHING HOME

I finally wake up. It's been a month, 17 days and 23 hours, 36 minutes and 09 milliseconds roughly so to speak! Yes, I have been counting. I still can't see. It's definitely sun down; I know it by the sand that engulfs me. These sands of *Rantau Abang* keep me warm from the chilling midnight breeze above my head. All this while, I have been cooped up in my reclusive introverted shell. Although, I am grateful for my vessel to protect me but I must leave, for my *home* calls me.

Lady Malay is her name. She is part of the vast waters between Gulf of Thailand and Java Sea. I must leave, for mother has left me her scent-trail to follow, into the greater depths of these waters. I push and prod to crack open the shell with my rigid jaw. Push... tak, prod..crr..crr..crack... I finally break free. I can smell her! I can smell Lady Malay's magnificent salty breath. It's inviting, propelling my flippers to move forward. With tantalizing hunger I race by my brothers and sisters to be blessed by the waters head-first.

It's a *Penyu Belimbing*, someone called. I was stunned by the shrill outbreak. I failed to notice someone had been watching over me. My primal instinct took over me, I exert my flippers faster than ever, but sadly the mountainous sand slope was too high for me to climb. My siblings who could use their night vision by now were calling me to hurry as they noticed the shrill giant creatures stomping towards me. I tried to rush my climbing but all I did was make silhouetted sand-angels. Something picked me up in the air chilling my belly. I was stunned again. As quickly I was picked, I was carried back to my siblings' trail and was set free. This heart-throbbing sudden episode triggered my vision to open-wide. I scrambled faster now beside my siblings to look back at the shrill creatures from a distance. There were two dreadlock creatures with shining eyes that stood on their two feet. They were huge. I could easily fit in their palm. I shivered at the thought of contact.

Lady Malay spewed her trance again for I got distracted by the giants! I was immediately captivated by her presence that I wanted to fly within her. The sand was still dry. I had to reach the tide so that she would swallow me in. I crawled with emergency to finally reach the moist salty surface at the end of the beach. But Lady Malay was upset. She wanted my whole attention during this initial journey. She decided to punish me. Her waves pulled in some of my siblings that managed to reach first. I scampered closer to her foam, but she chose to ignore me. Her water was around me but I wasn't within her. I prayed and begged forgiveness- *Take me in Lady Malay, take me home.*

Lady Malay accepted my prayer at a price; it's either me she would accept or my slow siblings that were still stuck in our sand pit. She also warned me about my journey ahead, she warned me that I would have to protect myself from other large creatures for I would become their meal. She was testing me- loyalty versus courage! I chose courage, I spoke that my siblings were independent to make their own journey for we woke up together with one purpose only- to find our way back home, as quickly as possible. This was a race of survival and I needed her help, so I prayed to her again to accept me.

Lady Malay blessed me gladly and acknowledged that I saw through her test. Her waters drenched me, drowning me into her arms for she tried to heighten her tide to pull in my siblings from the pit. She whispered to me that she wouldn't abandon my siblings for they were her children who longed for home equally. I couldn't hear her whispers clearly, as I was blissfully happy. I swam through her currents, it felt like flying but the water wasn't deep yet for the sand bed was touching my belly.

I squinted through, testing my vision, looking into the distance and saw *Red Crab*. His claws were so big that each was twice the size of me. I needed to escape him. I went against Lady Malay's current propelling with all my power. My siblings that were too excited failed to notice him. I could hear their cries as he devoured them. I felt vengeful but didn't have the courage to swim upto him as I treasured my new-born life. I promised I would avenge them when I would grow older but for now I must find a safe cover. Lady Malay's current turned,

assisting me to my safe spot.

I swam towards a seaweed shelter that floated on the surface of the waters. Swimming by the surface would protect me from the night sea-predators that were at the bottom of the sea. I must soon find a cave that could protect me during the day as well.

I swam quietly swinging my flippers up- and-down, not drawing attention to myself. I was alone at the surface, sipping air now and then. I took the time to look what was below me. My night vision helped me pry through the heavy waters. Sudden burst of colours hit my eyes as I saw clearly. The creatures at the bed were now preparing their shelter to sleep for the morning was going to break-in. These creatures glided through the sand deceptively. It immediately made me skeptical of their presence. These creatures were coloured with shades of the brown bed. They camouflaged with their shelters. I wouldn't have noticed them if I wasn't spying.

A sudden splurge of bubbles came in with a school of snapper fishes. They were coloured vibrantly in yellows and neon blue stripes. Marvellous swimmers they were! They swirled around me forming an infinity pattern momentarily to then rush away by their next being of attraction- a puffer fish. The puffer fish seemed to blow up as soon as it would fall asleep. No wonder it had dark circles on his yellow sponge-body for he was so sleep deprived.

I sighed as I slowed down my flight when the water at the surface began to heat up- the day was rising high up from the horizon. I sank to fall asleep and revive for the next swimming.

I hadn't yet reached the great depths of the vast sea. But I must follow Lady Malay's currents, to explore my new home for the secrets of my home waters will help me survive...

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