

# SHAFIYYAH ASHIMAH AZ-ZAHRA

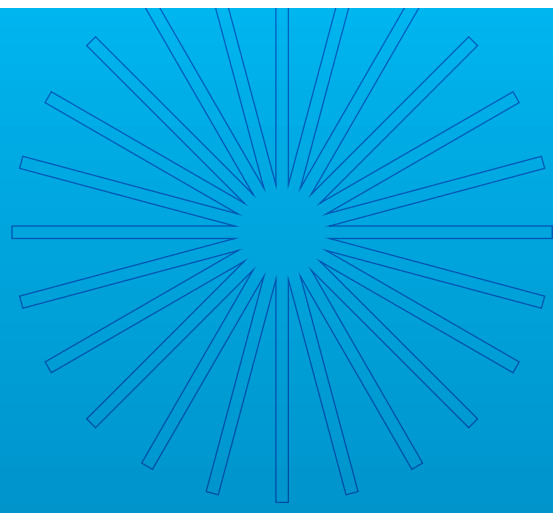
- HI! I'M LUCKLESS -

Hi! I'm Luckless



The 2026  
**WORDS**  
Storytelling & Storybook Competition  
**MY COMMUNITY**





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# Table of Contents

4	Foreword
5	About the WORDS Competition
7	Hi! I'm Luckless
21	About the Author
22	About AMINEF
23	About the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program and ETA in Indonesia

# Foreword

The seventeen stories presented in this book came from a collaborative process between students and their teachers— both their home institution teacher (co-teacher) and the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) serving in their schools. At the heart of the collaborative process is the desire to foster understanding and to bridge differences. The schools where they taught were selected through a collaborative process between AMINEF, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs to host the ETAs. Indeed, everything about this program underlines cooperation between all parties involved.

After a long selection and preparation process, the ETAs served in Indonesia for eight months. They came from various states in the US, from New York to California, Vermont to Louisiana - some from urban areas, others more rural. Together, they represent the rich landscape of places and cultures in America. Likewise, in Indonesia, the ETAs were exposed to and experienced life in various places and cultures. They co-taught English in various areas, spreading from Padang, Jambi, Lampung, Kulon Progo, Kudus, Sidoarjo, Praya, Palangkaraya, Makassar, and Kendari.

Over the eight months the ETAs, co-teachers, and students, in essence, serve as cultural ambassadors to one another. They forged friendships beyond the classroom walls and invested their time and energy in the communities. And this year's theme for the WORDS Storybook competition is indeed "My Community".

The stories you are about to read here were written by the stars of each school. The authors won a local competition organized by the ETAs and the co-teachers. They then worked intensively on their books and on how to best narrate the stories. In April, the students, co-teachers, and ETAs were invited to Jakarta to celebrate their journey – from beginning to learn English to becoming authors and, subsequently, storytellers.

The students performed confidently in front of a panel of four prominent judges who are all Fulbrighters from Indonesia and the US: Ahmad Fuadi, an author of best-selling novels including "Negeri 5 Menara" and a prominent public speaker; Anna Grundström, a performing artist and independent researcher based in Brooklyn, New York; Azalia Muchransyah, filmmaker, scholar, and lecturer at BINUS University; and Douglas Ramage, AMINEF Board Member and founding Managing Director of Bower-GroupAsia Indonesia.

The third place went to Clarintha Glory Amungin Allokendek from SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus with "Hannah The One-Man Team" whose story reminded us of the importance of collaboration with others. Putri Permata Sari from SMK 9 Padang's story "The Pursuit of Happiness", won second place. It is a beautiful story about self-acceptance and creating a community of your own.

In first place was Florencia Kirana Wilman from SMK 6 Padang, with her story "The Day Coffee Called Us Home." Ms. Wilman presented a powerful reminder that, amid disasters and challenges, communities can work together and find solutions. Her story showed that sometimes what the community needs is one person to plow the way, helping each other, and others will follow.

The WORDS Competition is a celebration for all: the students, the ETAs, and the co-teachers. It is a celebration of a new, and hopefully lasting, connection among people. And AMINEF is proud to have been part of these connections.

**Dr. Sandra Hamid**

Executive Director, AMINEF

# About the WORDS Competition

**WORDS** is a national English-language competition that brings together one student from each Fulbright ETA host school. Launched as a speech and talent contest in 2007, it evolved into a storytelling and storybook competition in 2018.

Finalists first win their school-level competition, which Fulbright ETAs organize in collaboration with the co-teachers. ETAs support students through brainstorming sessions, workshops, and performance feedback.

A highlight of the AMINEF year, the WORDS Competition allows 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders to showcase their storytelling skills, English proficiency, and cultural insights. In 2026, seventeen finalists will bring the theme **“My Community”** to life through their original stories.

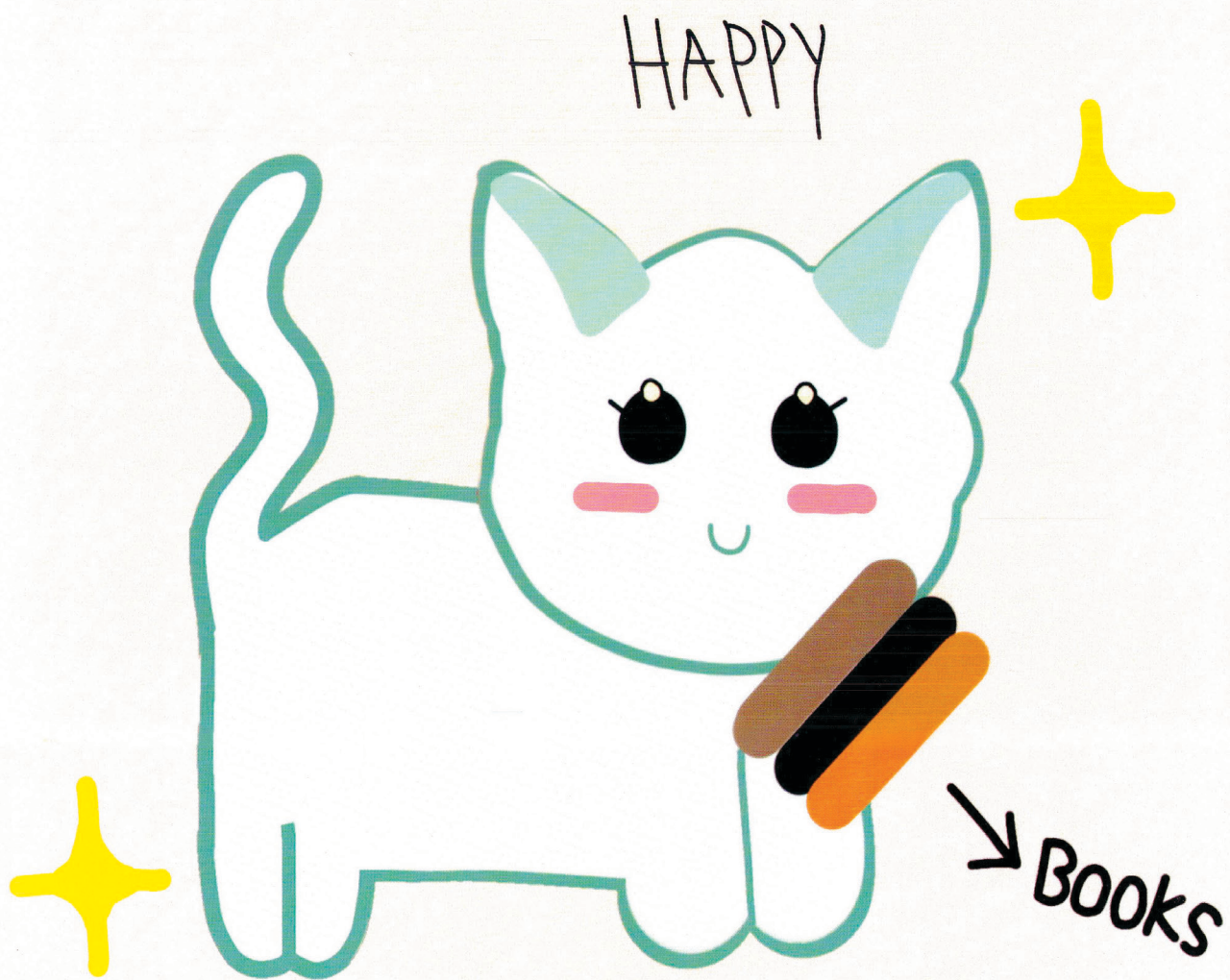


# Hi! I'm Luckless



Hi! My name is Clarity, but most people call me Luckless.

Why? Because I'm super clumsy, everywhere and every time. That morning, I woke up with a big smile. Even though school is not always kind to me, I still try to be excited about every new day.



I rushed down the stairs, and of course, I tripped.  
My books fell everywhere.  
People laughed.  
“Careful, Luckless!” someone shouted.



I picked up my books and laughed too.  
Well, maybe it hurt a little.  
But I didn't want to let sadness win.  
I guess today will be the same as always.

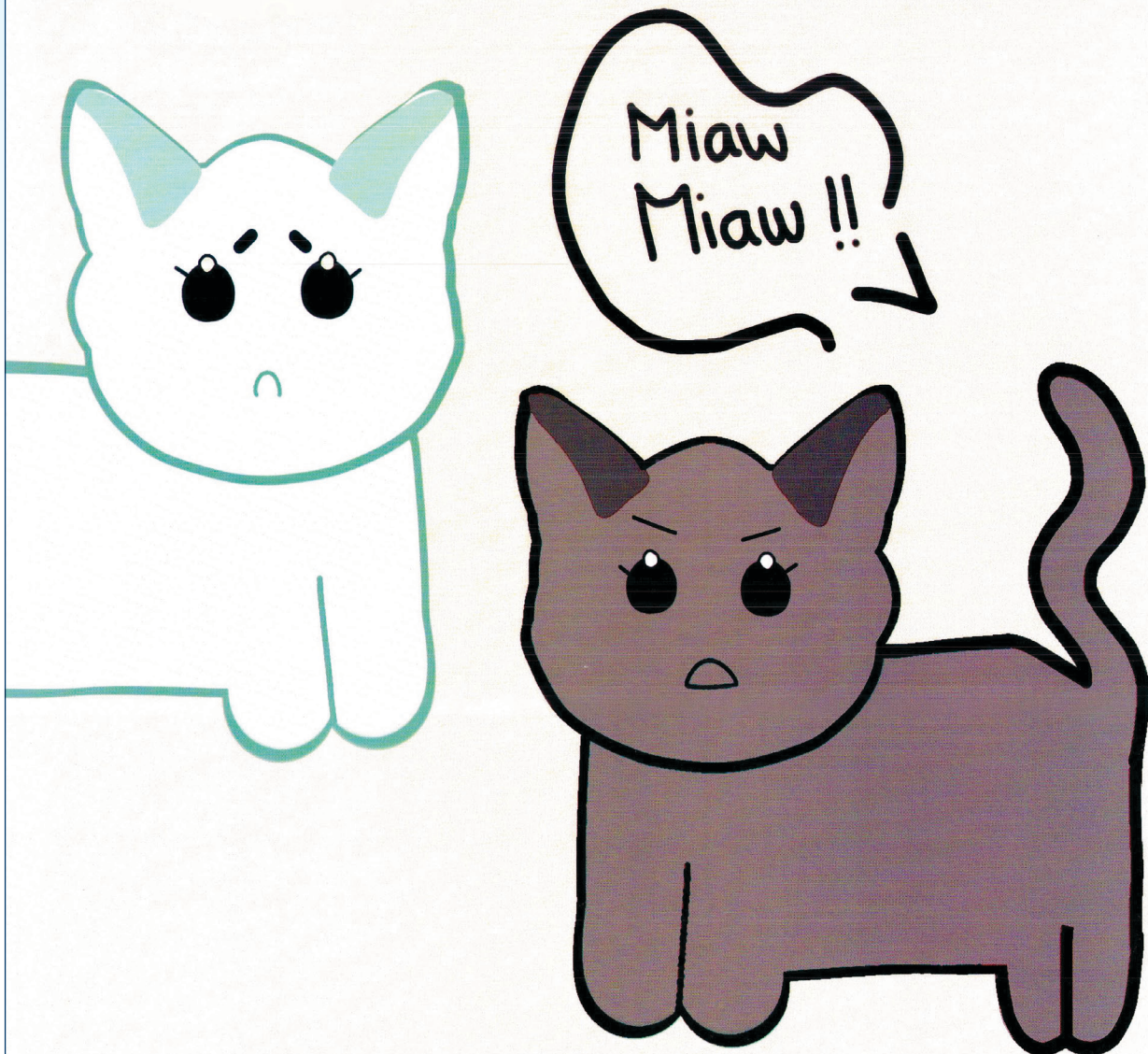


“Luckless, do my homework.”  
“Luckless, take the water for me.”

And I did.

Not because they forced me, but because I believe being kind is better than being cruel.  
Sometimes I wish someone would see me not as the clumsy girl, but as just Clarity.

I didn't know that today would be different.  
That today, someone would pretend to save me and teach me a big lesson about trust, kindness, and who I really am.



During break time, I sat alone in the school garden.  
Well, not alone. My bullies were there as usual.  
That's when a boy suddenly stood in front of me.

"Are you okay?" he asked gently.

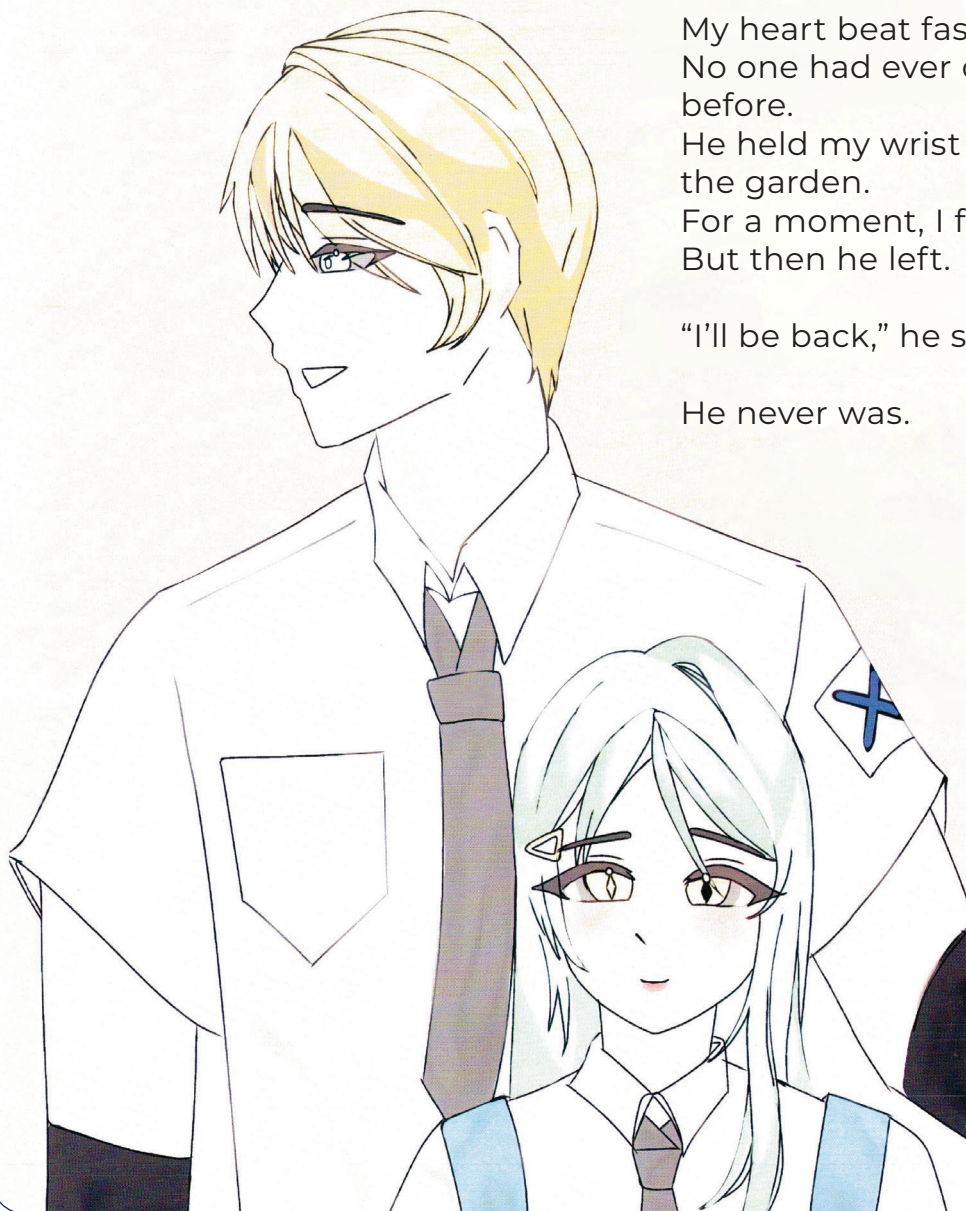
Before I could answer, he turned to my bullies.

"Stop bothering her," he said.

My heart beat fast.  
No one had ever defended me  
before.  
He held my wrist and took me to  
the garden.  
For a moment, I felt safe.  
But then he left.

"I'll be back," he said.

He never was.



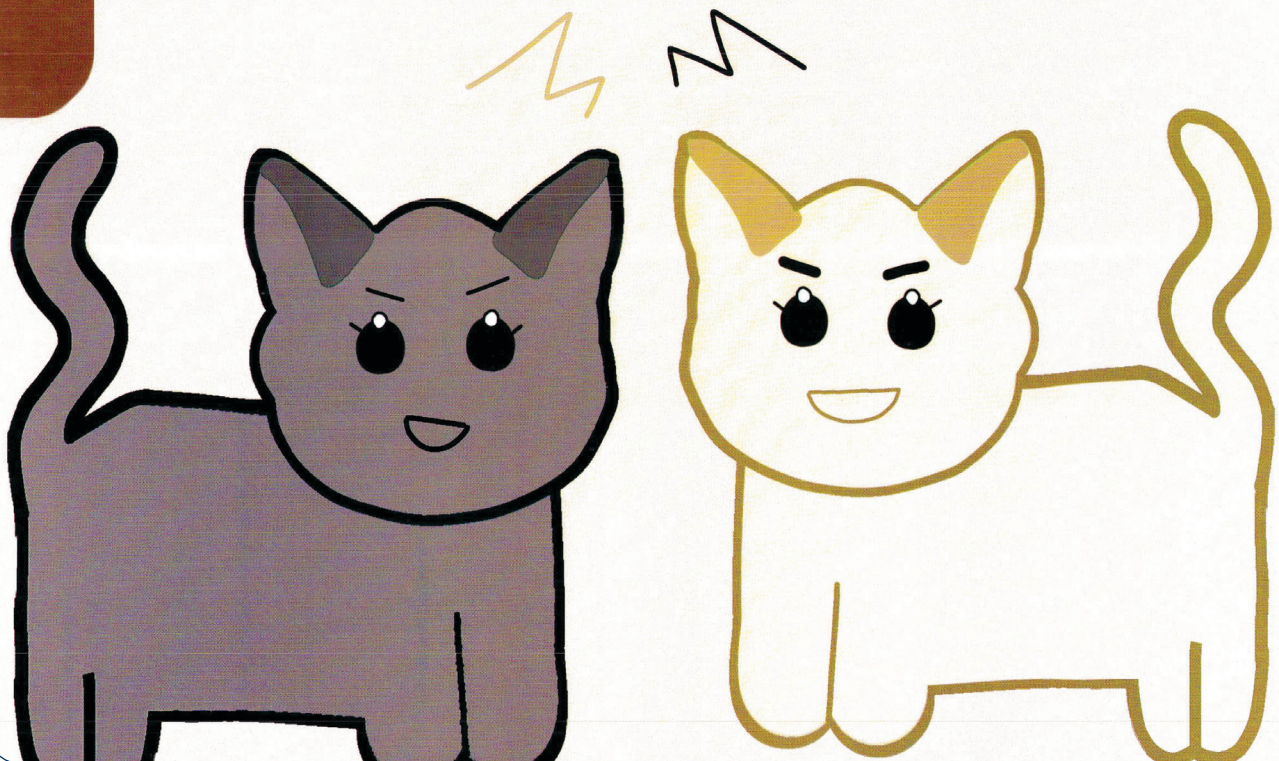


Later, I saw him laughing with my bullies.  
I hid behind the wall and listened.

“So, did you sneak an ugly photo of her to share?”

My heart dropped.  
The boy I thought was kind was just like  
the others.

After that day, I felt a little sad, but I didn't  
let it change who I was.



One afternoon, I saw one of my bullies standing  
beside his motorcycle.

It wouldn't start... ?

I wanted to walk away.  
But my heart said, help him.  
So I turned back and smiled.



"What's wrong, pal?"

He looked confused.

"My motorcycle... I can't fix it."

I reached into my bag, pulled something out, and said happily,

"Don't worry... TADAAA!"

It was my wrench, I fixed the motorcycle, and when it finally worked,  
I laughed.

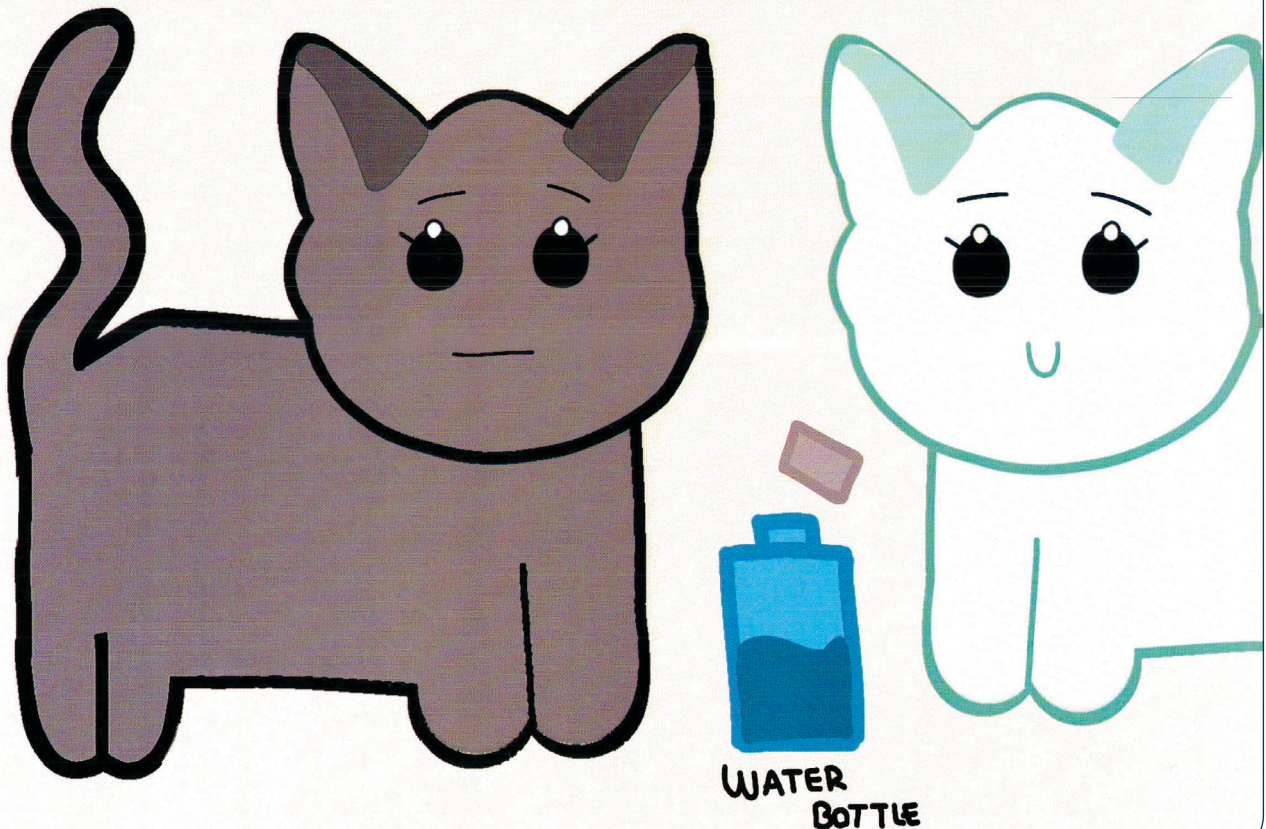
"See? Easy!"

He looked at me for a moment, then said quietly,

"Thanks."

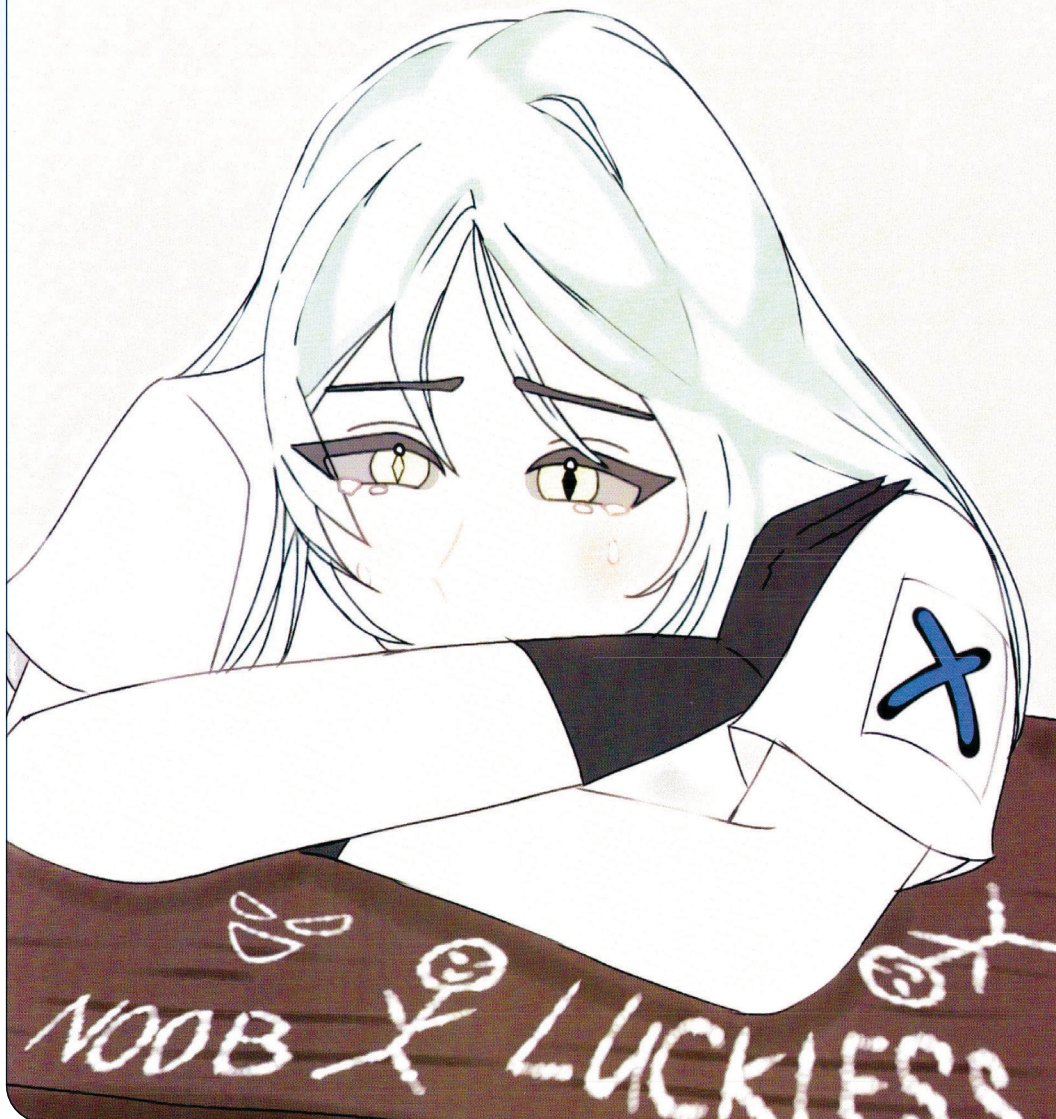


The next day, a girl who used to bully me couldn't  
open her bottle.  
Everyone laughed at her.  
I stepped forward, opened it easily, and said,  
"Tadaa! Problem solved!"  
She smiled at me.



I was pretty confident that things would change, but they didn't. They still call me unlucky, they still look down on me. What's wrong with me? Why do I have to keep trying to please everyone if they're not the right people for me? Or maybe I'm just not a good fit for this community?

I felt hopeless for a moment, as if no one really saw me anymore. Until someone came along, and looked at me in a different way.



“Clarity, are you okay?”

For the first time, I heard someone call my name;  
her voice was so soft.

“Don’t worry, I’m here for you.”

From that day on, I felt seen... I felt safe with her.  
My perspective wasn’t broad enough to realize that there  
were still people who cared about me. I was too focused on  
one path without realizing there were other paths.



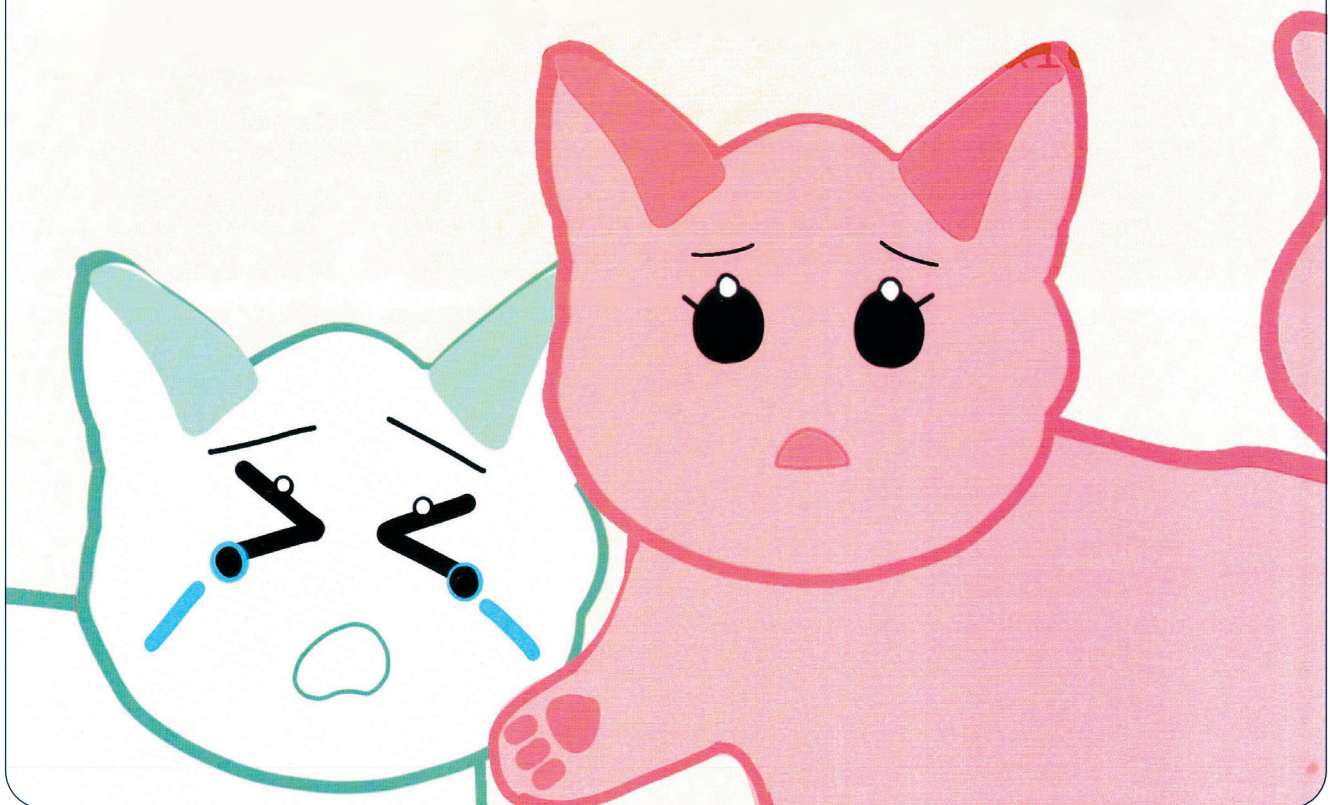
The problem is over, or at least that's what everyone wants to believe. My wounds are slowly healing, and voices are once again demanding,

But above all that noise, I learned one thing.  
That being different isn't a mistake.

And in a world so vast,  
it turns out it only takes one soul  
to make you feel like you're enough.

So from now on, I choose to remain silent in  
the face of demands,  
and walk as my true self.

And maybe, I'm not really Luckless after all.





# About the Author

## **Shafiyah Ashimah Az-Zahra**

SMA Muhammadiyah 1  
Taman



Hi there! My name is Shafiyah, but most people just call me Fiya. I was born in the busy city of Surabaya on January 26, 2010, making me 16 years old. Although I started my journey in Surabaya, I currently live in Sidoarjo with my family. I am now in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and while school can be a challenge, I always try to find the fun in it.

If there is one thing you should know about me, it is that I absolutely live for singing. My life basically has its own soundtrack because I'm always humming a tune! When I'm not singing, I'm probably being the most talkative person in the room. I've been told I'm quite a handful because I'm super clumsy and always full of energy. Some people might find my 'hyper' personality a bit exhausting, but I believe it just makes life more interesting. I'm just a girl living her best, loud life, and I wouldn't change my cheerful, chatty nature for anything!

# About AMINEF

**The American Indonesian Exchange Foundation (AMINEF)** is the binational Fulbright Commission for Indonesia. AMINEF's many educational exchange programs have increased mutual understanding between the United States and Indonesia and strengthened the ties that unite our two countries.

Since 1952, more than 3,500 Indonesians and 1,400 Americans have participated in exchanges. Annually, 80-100 Indonesians travel to the US through Fulbright grants for degree study, teaching, research, or non-degree professional fellowships. Similarly, up to 60 Americans receive Fulbright support to contribute their expertise in teaching, research, or as Specialists, offering insights to Indonesian institutions.

For detailed information on degree scholarships and non-degree fellowships available to Indonesians and Americans, visit the AMINEF website at [www.aminef.or.id](http://www.aminef.or.id).

# About the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program and ETA in Indonesia

**The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program**, one of the US State Department-funded Fulbright programs in many countries worldwide, places recent college graduates and young professionals as English teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools or universities overseas.

The program helps improve international students' English-language abilities and knowledge of the US while increasing the US student's language skills and knowledge of the many host countries worldwide.

In Indonesia, the Fulbright ETAs are placed in high schools (SMA, SMK, and Madrasah) that assist local English teachers. The program has been running for over two decades, since 2004, affecting thousands of Indonesian students and their communities across the archipelago. AMINEF works closely with the Indonesian Ministries of Primary and Secondary Education and Religious Affairs to administer the Fulbright ETA program in Indonesia.






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