

DIAN LADYANTI VERONIKA PASARIBU

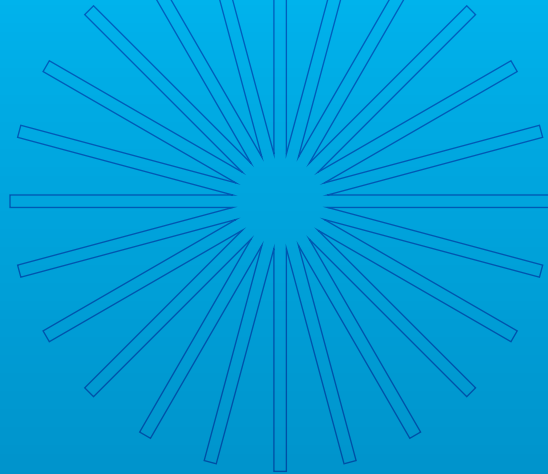
- MAGI THE MANGO TREE -



Mangi THE Tree

The 2026
WORDS
Storytelling & Storybook Competition
MY COMMUNITY





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American Indonesian Exchange Foundation (AMINEF)

Intiland Tower, 11th Floor,
Jl. Jend. Sudirman No. 32, Jakarta 10220

Book design by SUNVisual.

Printed in the Republic of Indonesia.

All storybooks including illustrations are courtesy of participants of the 2026 WORDS Storytelling and Storybook Competition.

These storybooks have been lightly edited for clarity.

Table of Contents

4	Foreword
5	About the WORDS Competition
6	Magi the Mango Tree
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.

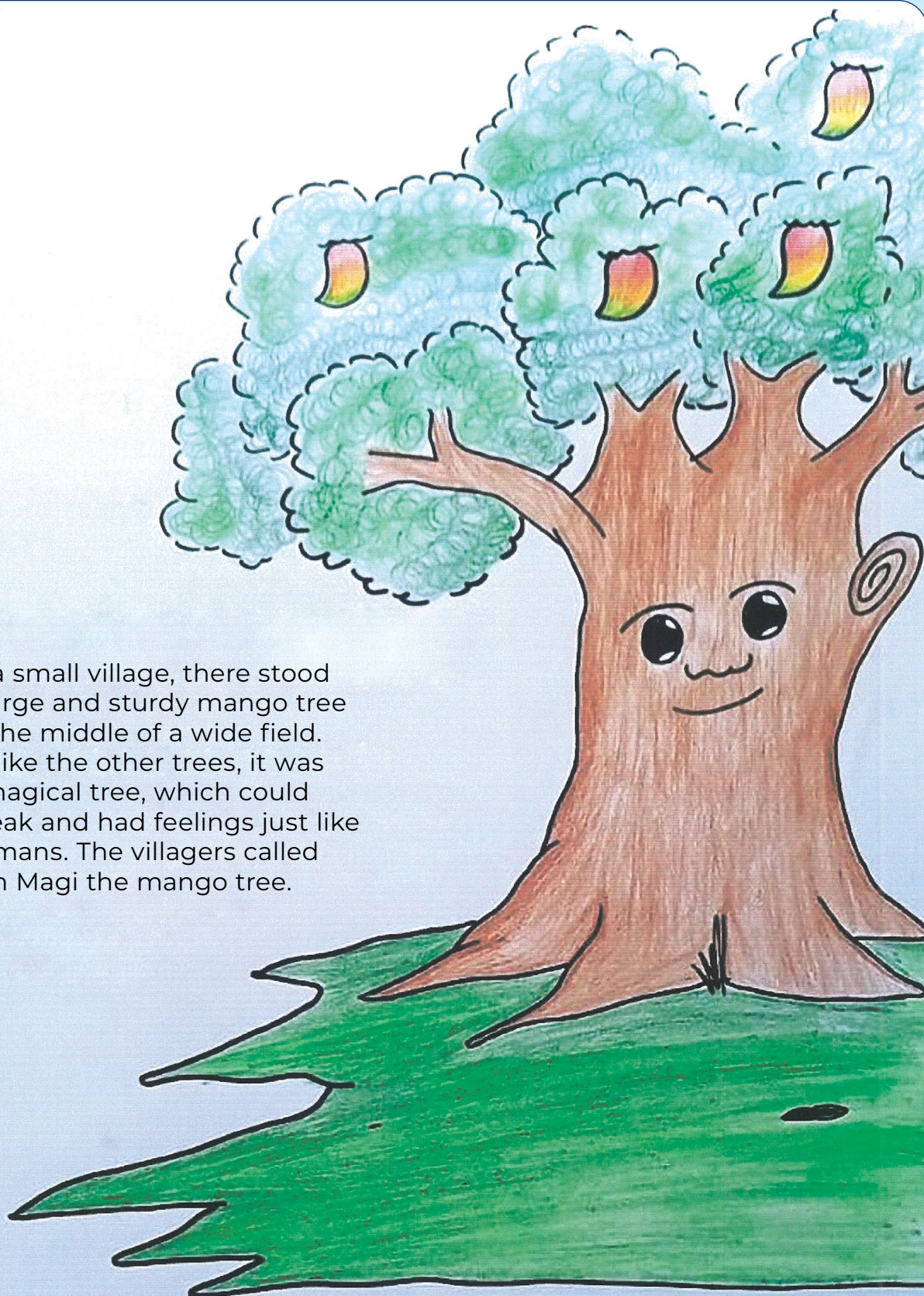
A highlight of the AMINEF year, the WORDS Competition allows 10th and 11th graders to showcase their storytelling skills, English proficiency, and cultural insights. In 2026, seventeen finalists will bring the theme **“My Community”** to life through their original stories.



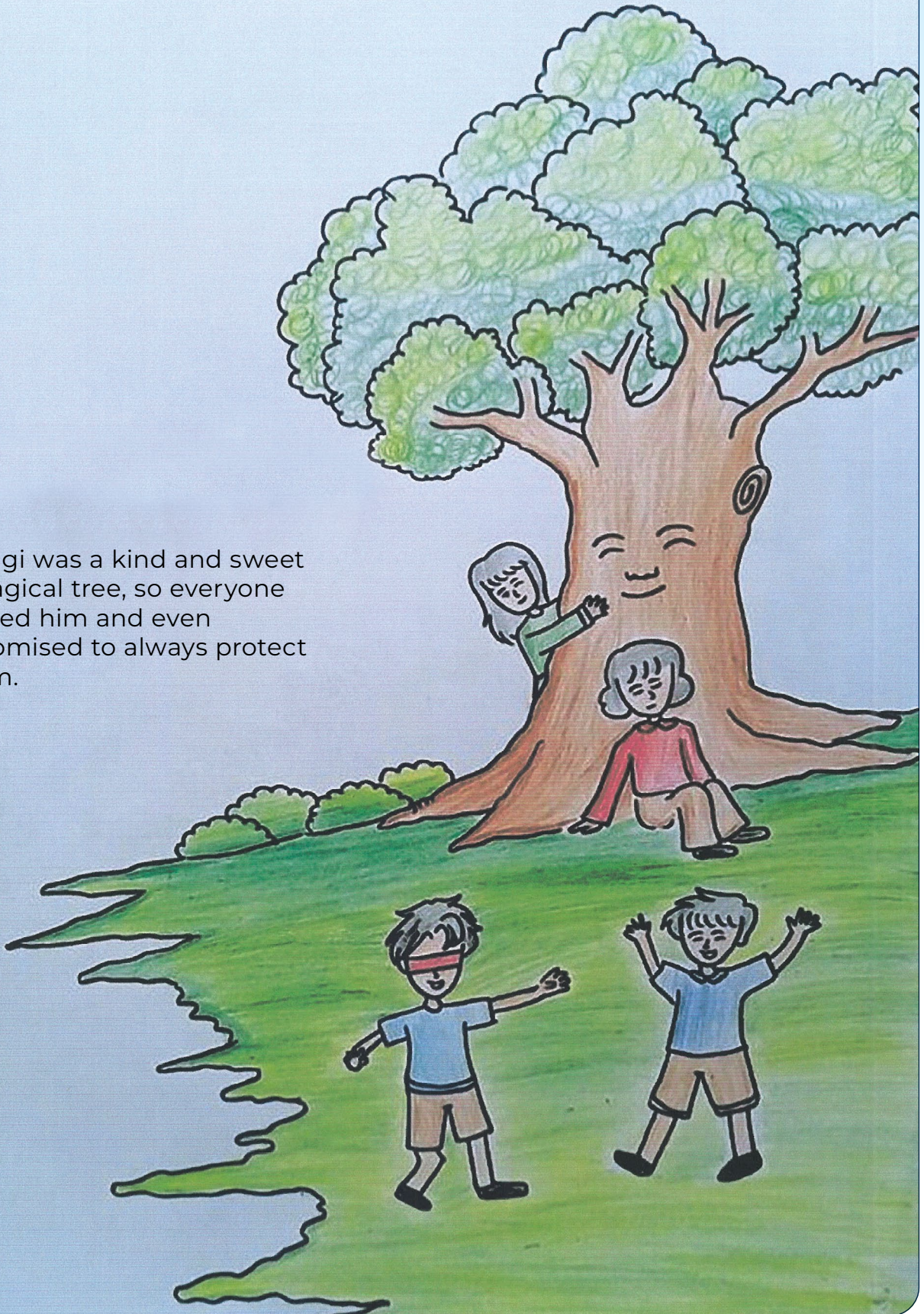
THE

Mango Tree

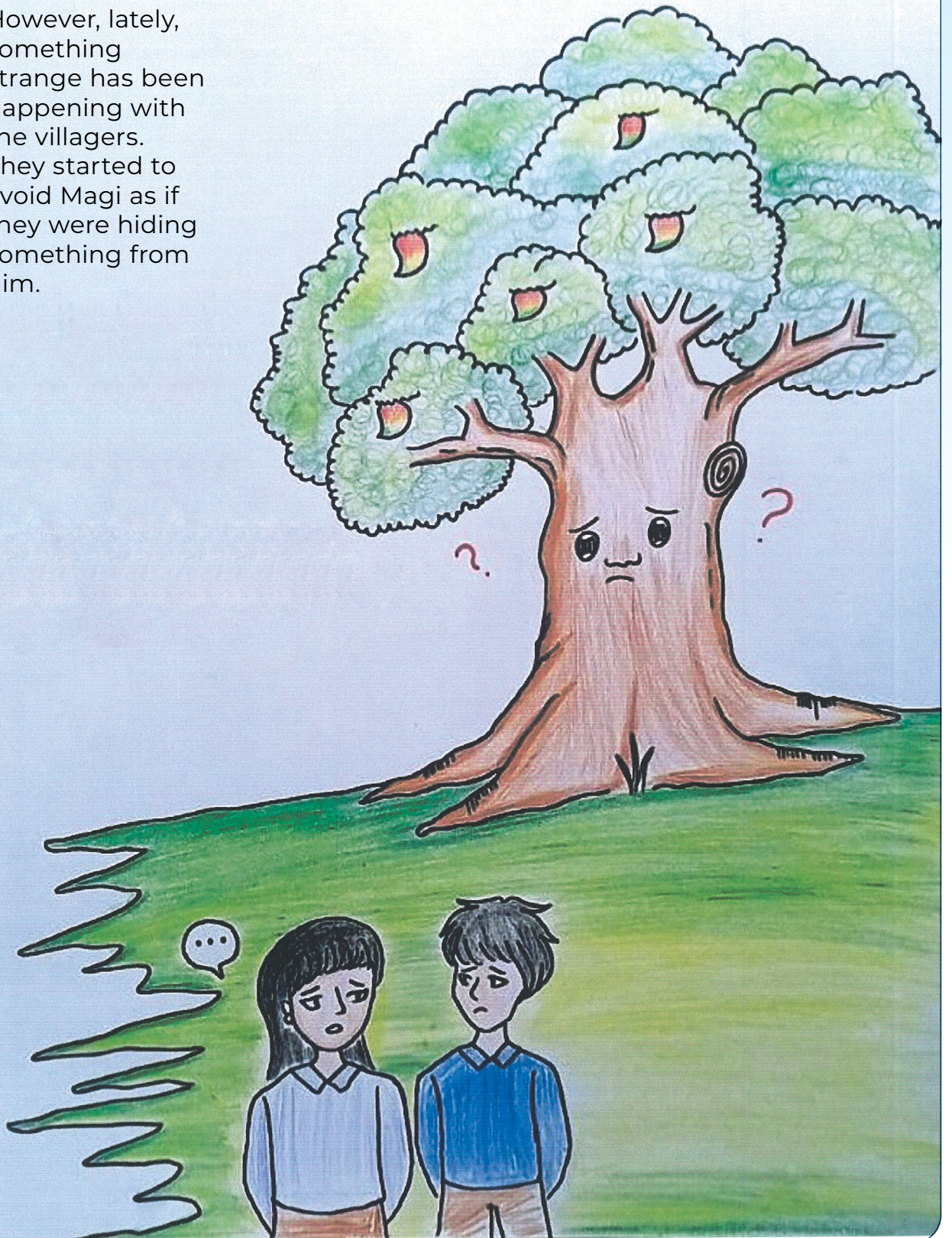
In a small village, there stood a large and sturdy mango tree in the middle of a wide field. Unlike the other trees, it was a magical tree, which could speak and had feelings just like humans. The villagers called him Magi the mango tree.



Magi was a kind and sweet magical tree, so everyone loved him and even promised to always protect him.

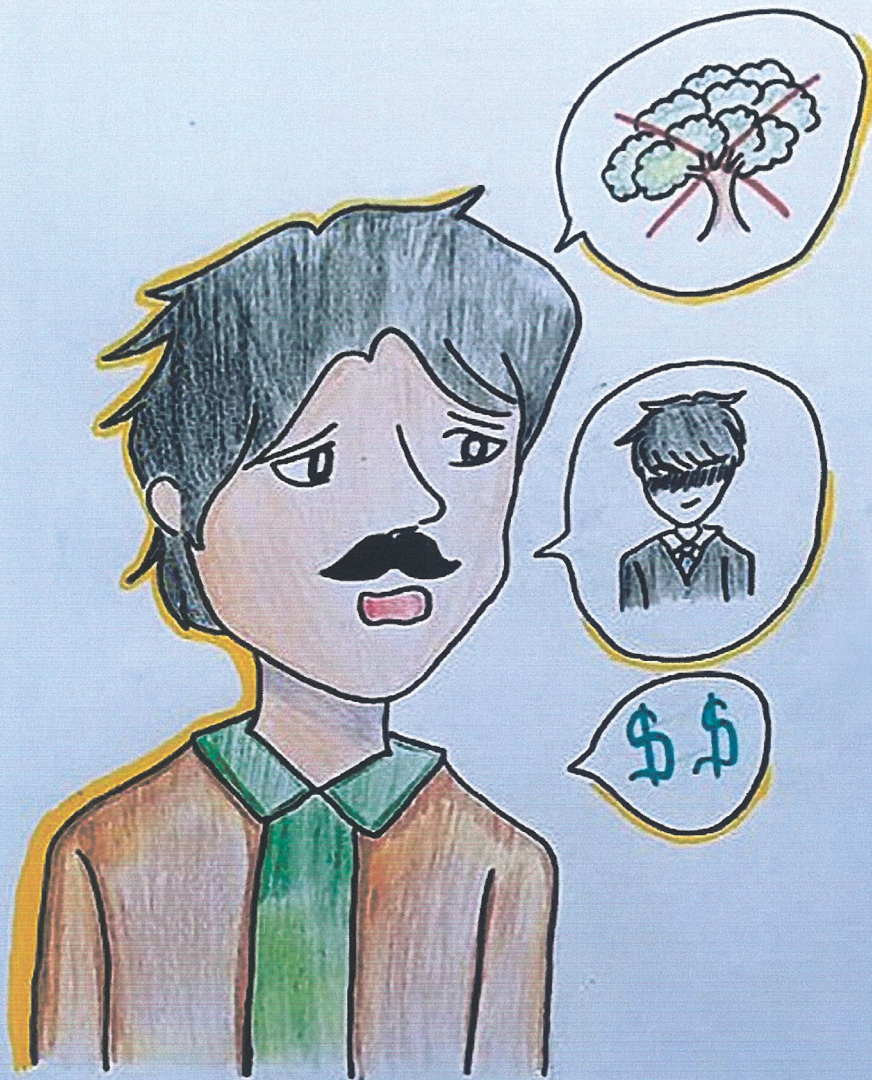


However, lately, something strange has been happening with the villagers. They started to avoid Magi as if they were hiding something from him.



Then, one day, a man walked past him: "Magi, oh Magi, what a tragic fate you have! Soon, you will be nothing more than a stump," the man said. "I'm sorry, Cik Lam, but what do you mean?" Magi asked, bewildered.

"They're going to cut you down. A man named Don bought this field and plans to build a big store here."



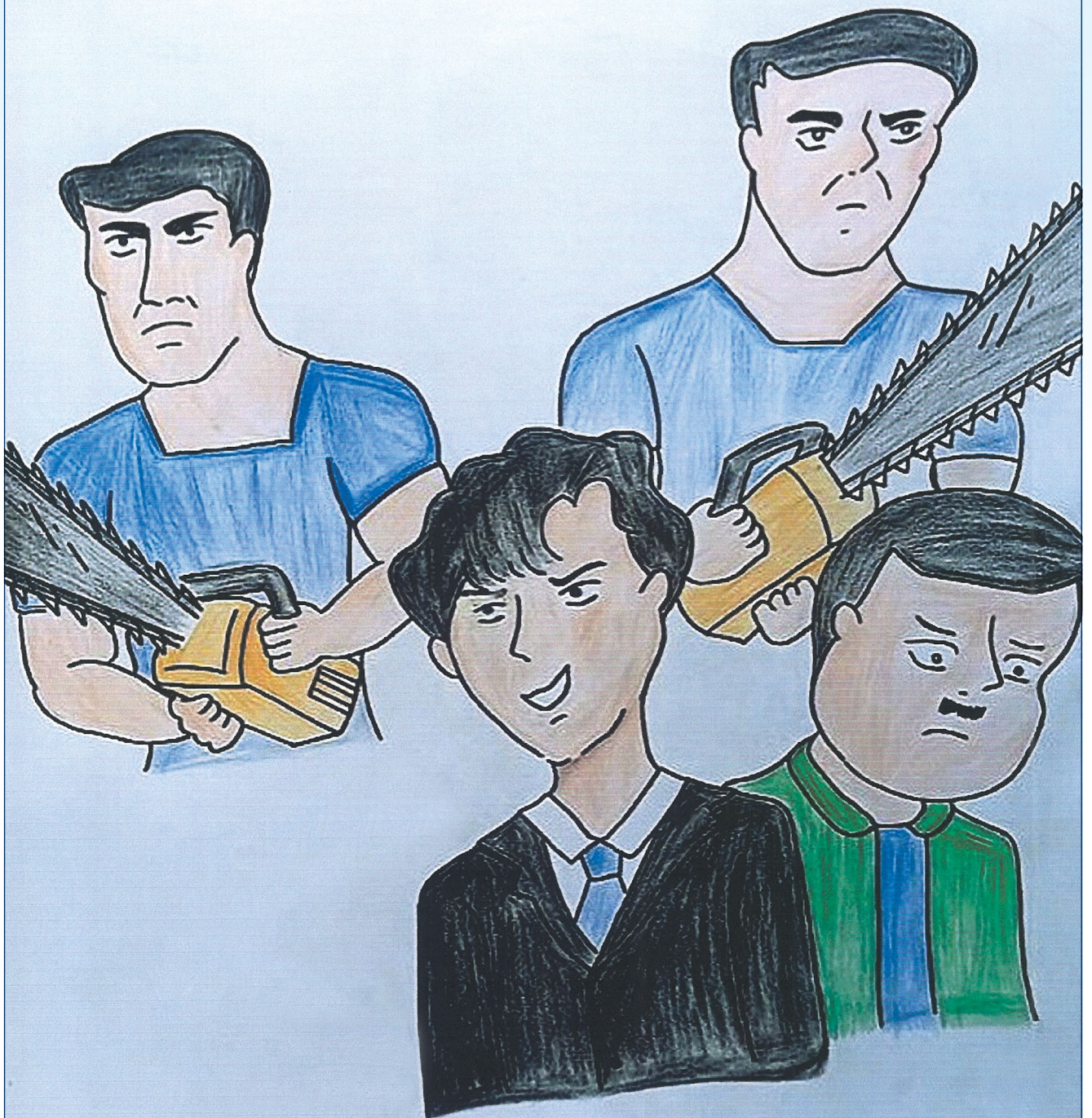
“What?! But the villagers promised to protect me!
You must be lying! I don’t want to be cut down!”



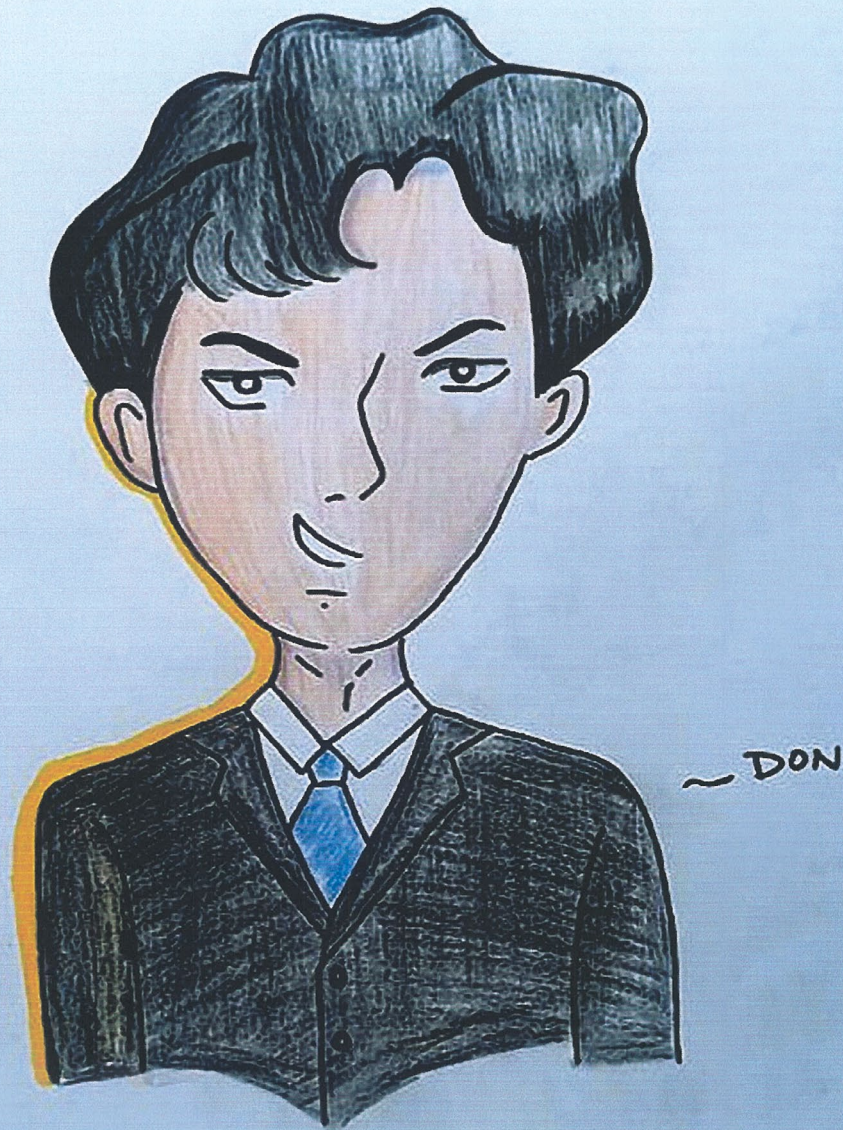
With a sorrowful face and regretful voice, Cik Lam whispered, "I know... I know it must be hard for you to believe. We tried our best to defend you, we truly did. But the village head, he is the one who sold this field. I-I'm so sorry, Magi!"



A few days later, Magi's nightmare came true. A group of men with chainsaws came, accompanied by the village head and a well-dressed man.

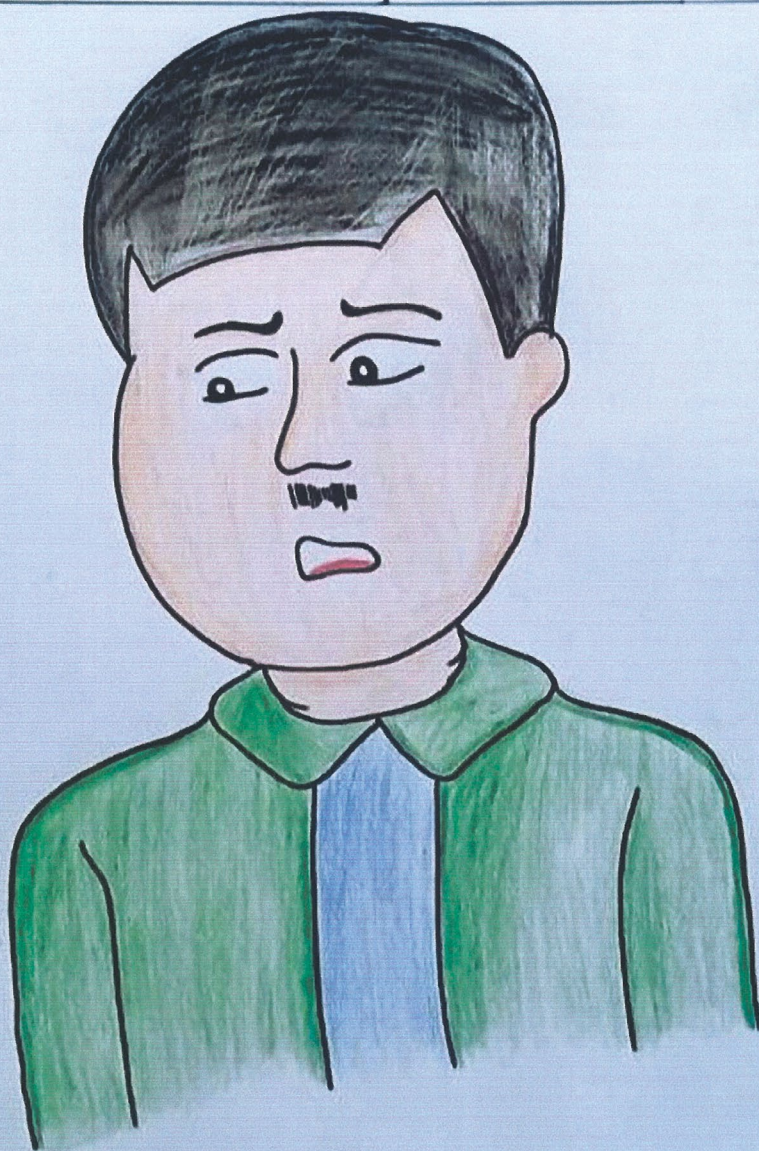


The well-dressed man stepped forward, "So this is Magi, the magical tree? Hello Magi, I'm Don, the new owner of this field. You must already know about my plan for you. This might be painful, but business is business," said Don.



“You can’t cut me down! Mr. Village Head, why did you sell this field to him? Please, please save me!” Magi begged with a trembling voice.

“I’m sorry, Magi. I want to save you, but the money tastes better than your mangoes. Just accept your fate.”



Vrroom! Vroom!
The chainsaws
roared loudly.

VRRROOM
VRRROOM

But suddenly—"Stop!"
It was the villagers!
They were running to
defend Magi.



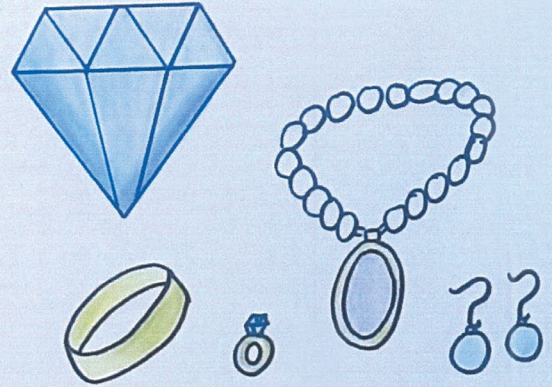
The scene became chaotic until Cik Lam stepped forward to speak: "Don, is there anything this village could do to make you want to return this field and give Magi back to us?" he asked firmly. Don smirked, "Fine, if you truly want this field back, pay me five times the price of this field. But if you can't, the saws will continue."



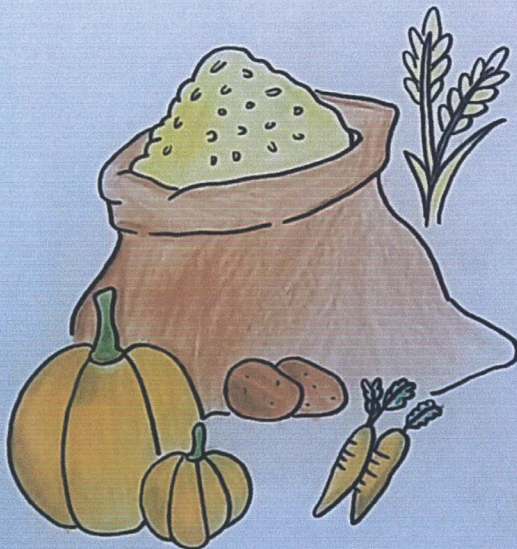
Without hesitation, the villagers ran to their homes. Everyone gathered their coins,



jewelry,



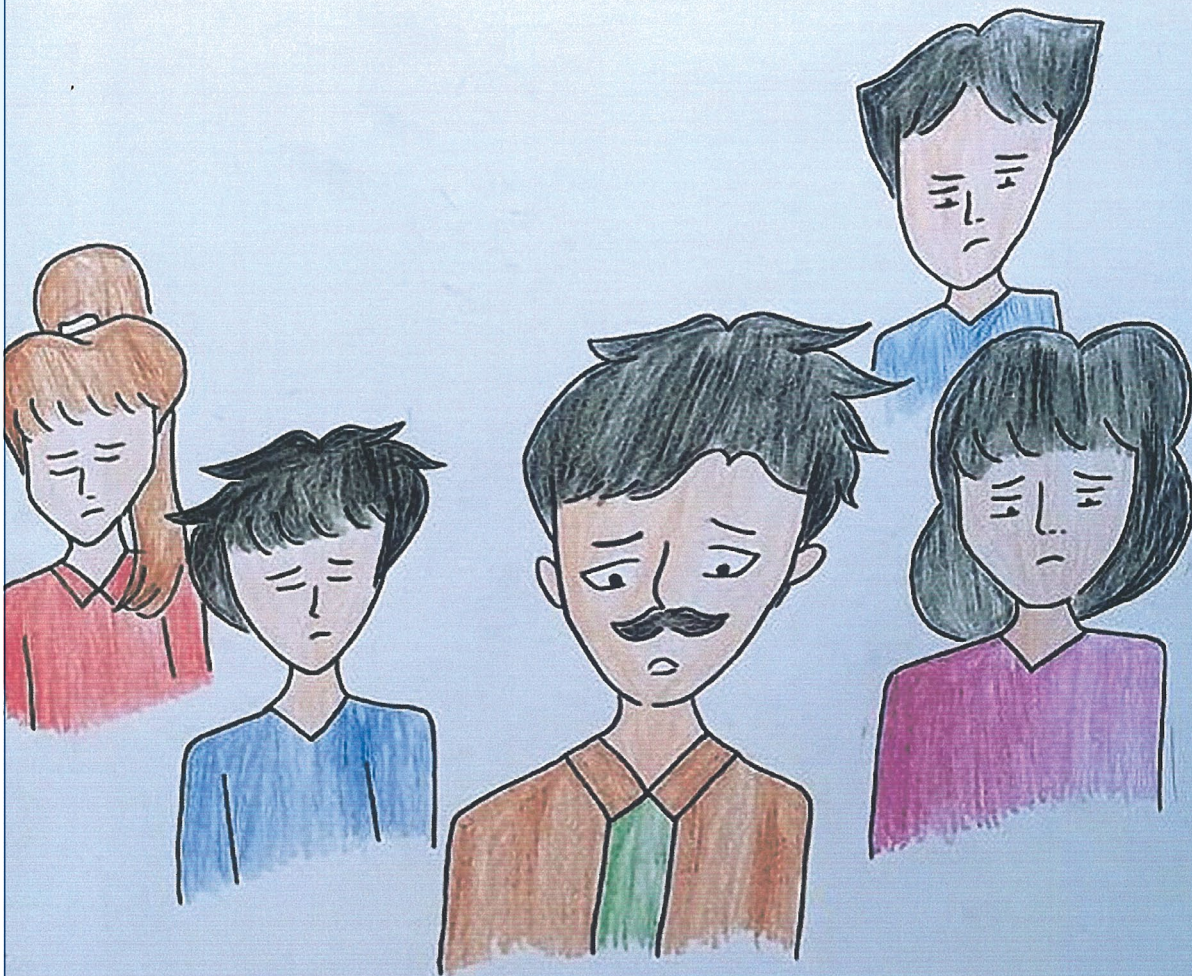
and even brought their harvests.



Once everything was collected and handed over, Don took it greedily and commanded his men to leave the village.



“Magi, please forgive us. We feel ashamed that we couldn’t protect you,” said the villagers.



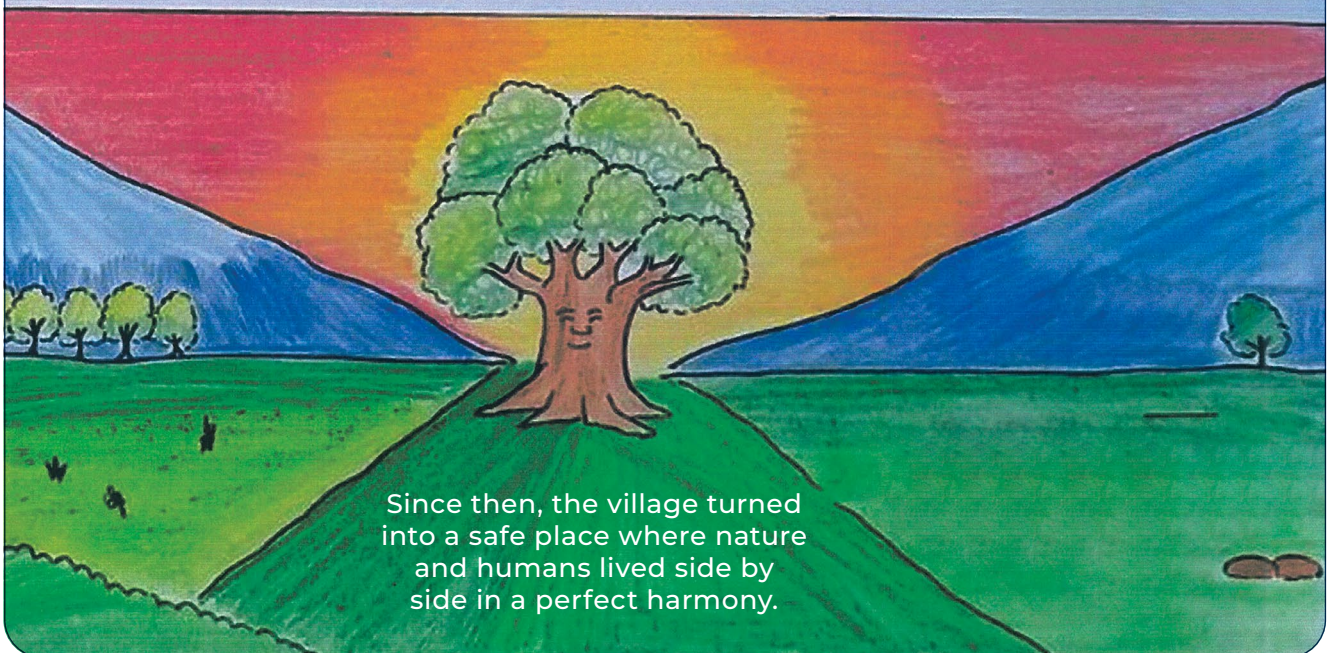
“You know, it really hurt to realize that I was going to die and none of you stayed around. But seeing your sacrifice to protect me, my heart can no longer hold the wrath inside me. I forgive you. You are truly my family.” Tears fell, and the moment turned warm as the villagers embraced Magi.



What about the village head?
Well, the villagers were consumed with anger toward him, but they still tried to forgive him. They didn't cast him into darkness, but they demanded justice. As the consequence of his betrayal, the villagers forced him to resign immediately and forced him to repay the village. Crushed by his own shame, the ex-village head decided to leave and never come back.



From that day on, Magi was safer than ever. But the story didn't stop there. The villagers also planted and protected more trees, their love for nature growing with every new sprout.



Since then, the village turned into a safe place where nature and humans lived side by side in a perfect harmony.

About the Author

**Dian Ladyanti Veronika
Pasaribu**
SMAN 3 Kota Jambi



Hello! My name is Dian. I am 15 years old and I live in Jambi, Indonesia. I was born in Jambi City on July 21, 2010, and I am currently a student at SMA N 3 Jambi City.

I have many hobbies, but the two I do most often are reading and writing poetry. For me, reading, especially the fantasy genre brings my imagination and creativity to life. Meanwhile, writing poetry is my way of expressing my feelings!

I am a bit shy, but I get excited when meeting new people, so don't be surprised in our first meet! In the future, I want to become a journalist and travel the world to study history and experience new cultures. If you'd like to know more about me, feel free to visit my Instagram @de.dian21.

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.

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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Intiland Tower, 11th Floor
Jl. Jend. Sudirman Kav. 32
Jakarta 10220

T. +62 21 5793 9085/86
F. +62 21 5793 9089

www.aminef.or.id

 AMINEF/Fulbright Indonesia
 fulbrightindonesia
 @FulbrightID

 AMINEFFulbrightIndonesia
 aminef_fulbrightindonesia
 infofulbright_ind@aminef.or.id