



THE COLOR OF SPOONS

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ONCE DREAMT I WAS SORTING spoons in a room that smelled like burned bread. Each one had a color—green, yellow, and a tired shade of blue. That blue spoon had a chip on the edge and made a weird whiny clink when it touched the others. I didn't know if I was dreaming of my kitchen drawer or something bigger. I kept sorting. Some were warm, like just-washed memories. Some were bent, like they'd been trying too hard for too long. One was shaped funny, almost oval, like it had grown wrong on purpose. I woke up feeling like I'd just sorted years instead of cutlery.

I'm not the kind of guy people write essays about. My name's Fendy, I live in Malang, Indonesia, and I sell motorcycles for a living. I've got a

two-year-old son named Chan who thinks birds run the sky like a company, and a wife, Hera, who works at the hospital and somehow still smiles after a twelve-hour shift.

I don't craft with wood or knit or paint or anything fancy like that. But I do shape things. Days. Moments. Regrets. Little wins. Losses that don't sting as much after a while. You start to see that life isn't something you build once; it's something you keep patching together. Like duct tape on an umbrella.

When I was younger, I used to imagine a different life. A bigger one. Maybe I'd move to the capital, wear real shoes every day instead of sandals, have my own office with a desk that doesn't wobble. But things didn't go that way.

That's a crafted moment. I didn't build the bike. But I helped shape that feeling. That choice. That trust.

Instead, I ended up selling motorbikes under a flappy tarp roof next to a row of noisy food stalls. My office smells like fried tofu and burned coffee most of the time. My seat's a crate, and I keep my pens in a peanut can.

And yet, here I am. Still showing up. Still figuring it out.

I remember one time, a guy came looking for a bike for his daughter. He looked like someone who had never taken a bus in his life—clean shirt, gold ring, a haircut that cost more than my weekly groceries. He didn't smile much. Just pointed and asked questions like I was a vending machine.

Then his daughter came out of the car. She was on crutches, leg in a cast. She smiled at me with that kind of

bravery people have when they're tired of being afraid.

We talked about scooters. What color she liked. What music she'd play on her rides.

The father was quiet for a while, then he asked me which model I'd buy if it were for someone I love. I pointed to one that was cheaper than what he'd been eyeing.

He nodded. Bought it. No negotiation.

Three weeks later he came back with a thank-you note from his daughter and a half-dozen doughnuts. Said her first ride made her cry—in the good way.

He shook my hand. Firm. Real.

That's a crafted moment. I didn't

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Hera, my wife, is my opposite in the best ways. She's methodical, calm, always finds the socks I lose. She can fix wounds on strangers and still come home to scrub our bathroom floor like she's fighting off an enemy.

We met at a university debate contest. I was competing. She was the timekeeper. I forgot my third argument because she smiled at me right before I opened my mouth. That was it. Game over.

Our life isn't perfect. Sometimes we argue about dumb stuff like who left the fridge open or why the WiFi's slow. But then she says something like, "I can't believe you still laugh like a hyena when you watch that stupid cat video," and I forget what we were fighting about.

She crafts peace into our mess.

And Chan, our son, man... he's two but already talks like he's the boss.

"Papa, this rice not spicy enough."

Or, "Papa, don't be sad, you not small—you medium."

He once tried to feed a lizard a corn chip. Told me, "He look hungry."

That's the kind of life you can't design. You just live it, catch it in your hands like rain, if you're fast enough (Wait, not rain. I can't use that.)... like fallen leaves you didn't expect in the kitchen.

One night, Hera was working late, and I was home with Chan. He'd refused to nap. So I gave up and let him sit on my lap while

I wrote a list of customer orders. He picked up my pen and scribbled all over the paper.

At first, I was mad. Tired. I almost raised my voice. Then he looked up and said, "I write too, like Papa."

That hit me. Right in the ribs.

So I kept that paper. Still have it. In my wallet. The ink's smudged now. But the feeling's still clear.

Life's full of twisty stuff like that.

Like the time I thought I was gonna get fired.

Sales were low. Boss wasn't smiling anymore. Meetings got colder. I started printing my CV at the photocopy shop



next door. Hera told me to wait. “Don’t jump while the train’s still slowing down,” she said.

Then, randomly, I helped an older customer find a model that didn’t make his knees hurt. He ended up referring five of his friends. Boom—sales jumped. Boss smiled. I got a bonus.

Kept the CV though. Just in case.

Some days feel like noise. Others feel like a pause.

I remember once, I sat behind the shop and watched an old man fix a chair leg using a bent nail and a rock. He hummed while doing it. Not a care in the world.

I asked him, “Why not just buy a new one?”

He smiled. “Because this one already knows me.”

That stuck.

We throw away too much. People. Plans. Days.

Maybe crafting a life isn’t about making everything new. Maybe it’s about fixing the same thing again

and again until it fits you better than anything else.

I tried to write a story about this once. Sent it to a magazine. Got rejected. Twice.

Then I stopped writing for a while. Thought maybe I wasn’t meant to.

But the urge came back like an itch. Not for fame. Just . . . to make sense of things. To turn scattered spoons into sentences.

Here’s another twist: I was once almost hired by a big retail chain. They flew me to Jakarta for a final interview. I wore my best shirt, polished my shoes.

Didn’t get it. They said I was “too regional.”

I laughed. Then cried. Then ate street noodles and felt better.

That job would’ve paid more, sure. But I would’ve missed the customer who told me my smile reminded her of her grandson.

Would’ve missed Chan’s first steps. Would’ve missed late nights watching Hera sleep, knowing the chaos paused for a few hours.

Now, when I look around, I see life like a collage.



A little messy. Edges don’t match. Glue spots everywhere.

But also—color, texture. Stuff you’d miss if you were going too fast.

Like the guy who fixes umbrellas two stalls down from me. He sings old dangdut songs while working. Badly. But with passion.

Or the noodle-cart lady who always gives me extra sambal even when I forget to ask.

These are my threads. No—not threads. (Can’t use that word.) These are my parts. My glue. My pieces.

Some mornings, I doubt myself.

Am I doing enough? Will Chan be proud? Did I make the right turns?

Then Hera hands me coffee, sleepy-eyed, and Chan hugs my leg like I’m a hero.

And I remember—this isn’t a test. It’s a life.

Not perfect. But real.

So maybe this essay won’t win anything.

Maybe it’s too small. Too local.

But it’s mine.

And just like those mismatched spoons, it fits in the drawer of my days.

Bent, chipped, but still good enough to stir the soup. ✨

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