

Essay on The Misfit

When I was in standard six we received a newcomer to our class. All of us were promoted from the same standard five class except for Kok Wing, the newcomer.

The very first day he entered the classroom, I felt that there was something strange about him. First of all, he was too tall for his age. He came into the class looking more like a monkey with long limbs than a standard six boy. His uniform was obviously too small for him and he must have felt very uncomfortable in them.

Besides this physical strangeness, there was something even stranger in the way he looked at things. His large eyes gave me the feeling that his thoughts were always a thousand miles away, far from the reality of the classroom. I wondered how he was going to cope with the rest of us and his studies.

Kok Wing never spoke. He bellowed. His voice must have been a bit of an embarrassment for him because every time he uttered something, the silly girls would start to giggle and that would make his face red. Invariably he would stop and assume the far-away look of his. He sat two desks from me but I doubted if he was ever aware of my presence. He was always lost in his own world. I could not fathom what went on in his mind.

After a couple of months with us. Kok Wing was as strange as ever. Often he arrived late to school with his uniform in total disarray. His shoes were filthy. They looked as though he had just walked through mud. Nobody asked him about his aloofness. Nobody could even get close to him. He was a person who had surrounded himself with an invisible and impregnable wall of silence. Ever the teachers gave up trying to reach him after some time.

So day in day out Kok Wing sat at his place, fidgeting ever so frequently. Sometimes he smiled to himself and at other times he seemed to be talking silently to himself. His immediate neighbor, shy little Patmanathan, always tried to cringe as far away from Kok Wing as possible. Poor Patna, what else could he have done, being less than half the size of his strange neighbor?

Time went on. Tests and results filled our days. We were all engrossed in our work. Everybody tried to improve on his or her work, except Kok Wing, that is. He would treat classwork and tests as though they meant nothing to him. He never completed his homework or tests. I had on one occasion, glimpsed at his test paper when the teacher handed them back to us All I could make out was some red marks on a piece of paper dotted with illegible scrawlings. The teacher must have had a hard time trying to decipher Kok Wing's attempts at answering the test.

Gradually Kok Wing began to chalk up noughts on the register. Sometimes he would be absent for days before suddenly appearing again for a day or so. Nobody questioned him about his absence. Some tried, nobody succeeded. So finally they left him alone completely. How could a person who seemed to live totally in his own world still manage to return to his given seat sometimes? Was he ever aware that he was with other people? He must have been. He could not stand the girls' giggles. What kind of a person was he? He was not a robot or a man from outer space. He was human like any of us. All I could say that he could not fit into his environment He was a total misfit.

Finally, the day came when we heard that Kok Wing had drowned in a disused mining pool near his house. They found his body only two days after he went missing. Nobody saw him go to the mining pool. The police could not decide whether it was a case of accidental drowning, suicide or murder. All we knew. was that this poor withdrawn person

had met his end. He left us as strangely as he appeared. Only God knows why he behaved the way he did and the reasons for his inability to fit in. Only God knows where he is now.