

Joshua Wooi
9:30 am - ENGL 150

I am from Malaysia. To the uninformed, Malaysia is a small country in Southeast Asia, sandwiched between Thailand and Singapore.

In some ways, Kedah is a lot like the state of Iowa. The people are friendly. The economy is inclined towards agriculture; where Iowa has corn, Kedah has rice—a lot of it. But unlike Iowa, the weather is always predictably hot. It is essentially summer the entire year, every year, and it is not as nice as you are likely imagining right now. Also, the food is good back in Kedah; make of the what you will about the food here in Iowa. Beyond that, it is flat terrains, reasonable infrastructure, and an improving education system—*ordinary*. I understand that Kedah does not sound like much to write home about with the way that I am describing it, but it is where I was born and raised, and it has made the person that I am today. So, it at least did one thing right.

The place that I grew up was a small town, in the state of Kedah towards ^{the} North of the country—a little place called Jitra. The people are kind and courteous, and almost everyone knew each other. I grew up sheltered in a friendly community, and I was naturally led to believe that people were inherently benevolent. “*Bad people*” didn’t exist according to me, young and naïve. I didn’t listen when my mother told me that I trusted too easily, and pained as I am to admit it, she was right. Like most people my age, I went to university when I was around seventeen, ⁱⁿ the big city of Kuala Lumpur—the capital of the country, but crucially, a six-hour drive from home. I went alone as a gesture of independence, but I quickly learned that I was but a sheep in world of wolves. I went to a nearby mall for a bit of shopping for school supplies, and was scammed by a stranger. I am fuzzy on details, but I remembered how he managed to

talk me into parting with fifty ringgit (Malaysian currency). I couldn't say no, simply because I didn't know how to. I ^{HAD} never been asked for money before, and I just handed it over because he was putting up a friendly front. I thought that I would be in the wrong if I didn't accommodate him. I don't blame myself as much as I did anymore, but let's just say that I get anxious, almost as a knee-jerk reaction, when strangers approach me now.

It's been a rough two weeks in friendly Iowa...

When I was about fifteen, I learned how not to ride a motorcycle the hard way.

Malaysians were only technically allowed to practice for a license when they were sixteen, but the law was loose on this, and younger teenagers weren't punished for learning with adult supervision. I was riding with my dad supervising at the back one day, on a fourteen mile stretch road, on the way home from a tuition class. Most of the road was straight, and it was fairly empty for a weekday afternoon. Naturally, I thought I'd get the both of us out of the heat quicker and rode a bit faster than I normally would, which in hindsight, was not a wise decision. A stoplight came up, and it was green when I saw it about a half-mile away. I sped up, confident that I'd make it, against my dad's warnings, only to have the light go red on me before I was even in the intersection. I was riding sixty miles an hour on a small motorcycle, and I realized that it was impossible to stop anymore. In a moment of panic, I let go of the handles and ran straight into another vehicle crossing the road. The impact sent the both of us flying like spaghetti in a hamster wheel. And to put it bluntly, we crashed and burned—not in the literal sense though, thankfully. I came out of the wreck with bumps and scrapes, but nothing major. My dad though, lost the use of his arm for a few months, healing from a broken collarbone. The guilt I felt was sufficient punishment, according to him. I had learned my lesson, and it was

good enough for him. I got to ride in an ambulance to the hospital that day, with my mother hysterically driving behind. I got a doctor's note for a week off of school, and it was during midterms week, so silver lining... I suppose.

I didn't ride a bike again for at least three months.

Wild ride!
Your writing is quite good &
flows nicely. I've marked a couple of places, and
you can see if they make sense.