

<Written on the basis of goodwill by Arlianny Sayrol and Linda Jamari on 24th November 2018, as part of Jason Cai's Motivational Writings Book>

Letters to Vilomahs

Even when worlds apart, you are still a part of my heart – Vilomah Atma

The Vilomahs

Linda

Luminous streaks painted the skies for a millisecond before disappearing back into the bellowing thunderous clouds. Linda was on an overnight trip to a relative's house in Johor Bahru. Her 1-year old toddler was kicking an almighty tantrum, louder than the thunderstorm brewing outside the bus's windows, whilst her husband was quietly fuming trying to calm her down.

Yet those did not faze her. There was a crippling pain in her abdomen. A muted type of pain. Her heart froze as she saw blood trickling down her thighs. She was 32-weeks pregnant with her second child.

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Arlianny

The droning nasal pitched voice of her superior went on and on, as the clock ticked closer and closer towards break time. Every second compounded tortuously into more confusion and indecision. Arlianny sat there anxiously holding on to her phone. She had called for a cab, one that will pick up her mother and then hurry them to Kandang Kerbau Hospital. For the past few days, she had drunk carbonated soda, hopped around her house and even changed her sleeping side, every other hour.

Nonetheless, no matter what she tried, her child did not move at all. There was neither discomfort, signs of illness nor any blood loss. Each day went as planned, yet there was that eerie stillness. The intuition that something was so deadly and ominous, it hid itself from discovery. She was 32-weeks pregnant with her first child.

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She was delirious, seeing double and wailing from the excruciating pain. As if something was pulling her baby from inside her tummy. One of the cleaners in the hotel they were staying at, sat beside her, soothing her with prayers and kind words. The ambulance was going to be late. It was stuck in a jam. In the background, her daughter was still crying, as if she knew something was wrong.

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There were hurried movements and urgent whispers, as the nurses scurried to find a senior gynaecologist. The Doppler machine did not detect her son's heartbeat. A man in a white coat with a slight hunch went into her cubicle. He apologised for needing to apply the cold gel and a harder pressure on her bulging tummy. After a long while, he finally looked away from the screen, forlorn and apologised once again. He could not find her child's heartbeat; with those words, her world splintered with each piece mercilessly piercing her heart.

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Azman

Reza had her hair. Those wavy curls; so stubborn and gentle at the same time. She held him tight, skin to skin for 3-hours. They had to return him to the mortuary, before settling into a restless night.

When he was finally released, he was packed in such a manner that he resembled a gift. He was in a blue cloth taped at the ends. Azman carried him all the way back to Singapore and at the customs, told his wife that the baby's body was cold. An officer entered the van for verification, and then gave them a soft sympathetic smile before she closed the door. With Reza in between them, the couple solemnly journeyed towards a rutted path.

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Ehsan

It was the eve of the New Year when the call came from the missus: *Foetal heartbeat cannot be detected. Please come to the hospital immediately.*

So few words. So little that Ehsan could do once he got there. Holding her hands. Talking about... what? A future? There was no future for their child. Their beloved and long-awaited first child. The weary night passed, drenched in hopelessness and tears.

Push. Holding her hand as she strained. Push. Push! Yaseen was in a breech position. His legs... his shoulders... finally his head! Their child came into this world. He was a strange, still bundle. How they had dreamed of this moment! But never this way. Every other labour ward seemed to be celebrating New Year's Day, welcomed by loud wails of their pink newborn babies. With Yaseen in between them, the couple discreetly planned his burial.

Letters to Vilomahs

Vilomah is adapted from Sanskrit ("against the natural order of things") a word that is used to describe a bereaved parent who had lost his or her child. *Letters to Vilomahs* is the brain-child of two women, Linda and Arlianny, who met through unfortunate circumstances and became friends. Due to the silences and taboos surrounding the topic of losing a child through premature births, miscarriages and stillbirths, it prompted the two ladies to commit themselves to help other bereaved parents. They wanted to ensure that others need not be helpless and struggle too hard in coming to terms with their losses. Through their Facebook group (*Letters to Vilomahs*) and email (vilomah.atma@gmail.com), friends and family members could request letters to the grieving parents (or the grieving parents themselves could write in for a letter request), where the letters would be personalised and written to honour their child lost. Each letter is unique and they hope to inspire and encourage other grieving parents, providing them with some closure as well as knowing that there is an active and strong, child bereavement community supporting them.

The Vilomahs' Mission

For The Individual Vilomah - Recognition for the bereaved parents' losses and respect for their grief.

For Reconnecting with the Vilomah - Reaching out to bereaved parents and supporting them in starting off their healing journeys.

For Building a Vilomah-centered Community - Developing a comprehensive network where there are resources to help bereaved parents.

For a Confident Vilomah - Un-silencing the topic of child loss, so that the bereaved parent could grieve and move on positively.

The Letter

Dear Mummy,

The hardest journey made was the ride home. Your little companion was no longer there. Homecoming to an empty cot, the nursery looked quieter than it had ever been before. Yet, you did it twice, for your three little fireflies.

It is the kind of bravery that only mothers who have endured the loss of their children would understand. We are sorry that you had to go through such heart wrenching pain. It must have hurt, to receive them wholeheartedly and then to lose them prematurely.

You must have loved them so deeply, and still missing them so dearly.

For them you grieved and cried constantly, as if the tears could never go away. At some point it became too tiring, nonetheless you continued on your journey. As the ride back home was not the end of the ordeal. You had your whole life to live still. Facing others without your fireflies, some may not acknowledge that you have had children. So you silently engraved their existence into your heart.

Perhaps someday there will be a reunion, with all three children waiting under a blossoming tree. The day will be sunny and bright, yet their faces would illuminate the entire sky. Would they recognise you as their mother? Definitely, as your name was already inscribed in their tiny hearts from the start.

You would want to live decently and magnificently in this life, so that you could honour your three little fireflies.

However we feel, the honour is theirs, for YOU were chosen to be Their Mother.

Welcome to this unspoken group of Vilomahs. Hopefully together, we will un-silence our grief and let the world know, we are the best kind of Mothers.

Love,
Vilomah Atma
Letters to Vilomahs
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