

I decide to visit Rochy's apartment. I take my football in case he wants to train and Grandma gives me a bag of pumpkin seeds to share with him. I dribble the ball all the way, dodging people and piles of rubbish. At one point I have to hurdle a bin that has been tipped over. There is a trail of litter across the road, and a few cats and children pick at empty cans and packets. They don't even look up as I race past.

When I reach Rochy's I hide the pumpkin seeds behind my back and knock on the door. After a few seconds I hear someone shuffling on the other side. Then it goes quiet. I'm about to knock again when the door suddenly opens and Rochy's mum looks down at me with a frown. Her hair hangs in greasy strands and her face is wrinkled and yellow like old paper.

"What is it?" she says. "What do you want?"

Her breath smells awful.

"It's me," I say. "Budi. Rochy's friend. I've come to see him."

She looks down at the football beneath my foot and shakes her head.

"You know he's too old to play silly games like football. He's the man of the house now. Haven't you got other friends you could play with instead?"

I shrug. Football is not a silly game. Then I remember the pumpkin seeds and offer the open bag to Rochy's mum.

"Would you like a pumpkin seed, *Ibu*?" I ask.

She peers into the bag and quickly lifts it out of my hand. She starts splitting the seeds between her teeth and spitting the shells onto the ground.

"I'll go and tell him you're here," she says.

I reach out my hand to take the bag back, but she turns away into the gloomy apartment and disappears from sight. She leaves the door open and I can see that the room is a mess. It looks as though someone has emptied a bin onto the middle of the floor. After about a minute she comes back to the doorway, scratching her elbow. The bag of seeds is nowhere to be seen.

"He's not in. He must be at the dump."

Then she closes the door.

I start dribbling in the direction of the dump, but I keep the ball close to me. The dump is surrounded by slums, and the people here live by different rules. Rochy says they ask three questions whenever they find something: "Can I eat it? Can I sell it? Can I burn it?" And the dark shapes huddled in doorways would probably take one look at my football and answer "Yes" to all three.