

From the publisher of *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye*

TITA LARASATI

COMING HOME

A GRAPHIC DIARY



**COMING
HOME**

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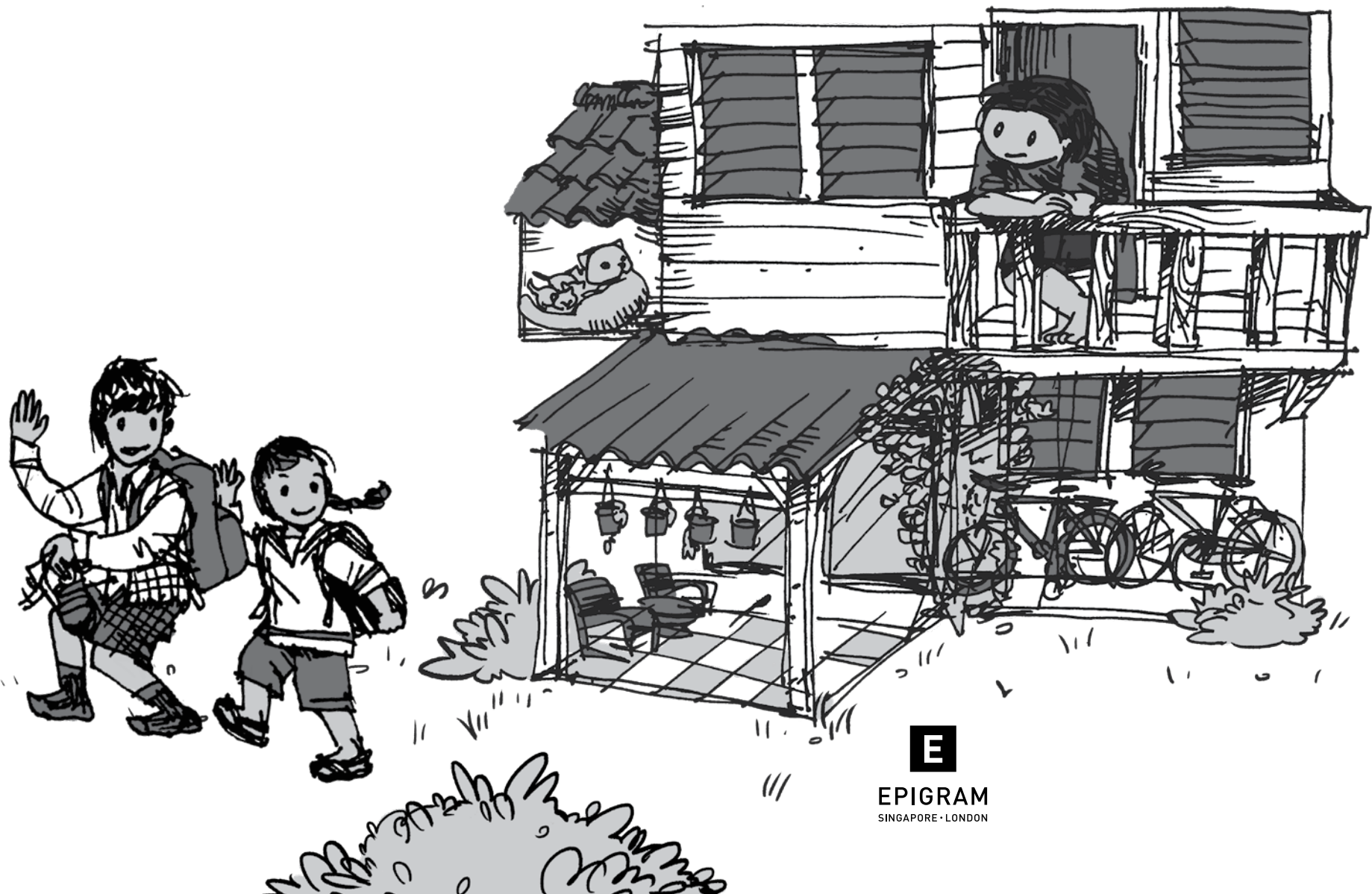
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The habit of drawing daily happenings started in my childhood, when a set of sketchbook and art supplies became must-have items for every family trip. They were used frequently during the journey to record sceneries and events.

Much, much later, when I did an internship in a design company in Germany, my host parents told me to write home every week and that I may use the office's fax machine to send the letters. I thought, surely reading drawings would be much more fun compared to reading words, so I started sending weekly illustrations back to my parents in Jakarta. It turned out that my mother made copies of the fax papers not only to preserve the drawings, but also to distribute to families and relatives. I continued to draw daily, and these weekly submissions became a habit.

The process of documenting daily life became more intense when I settled with my family in the Netherlands, where news about the kids was shared to families in both Indonesia and Holland. Moreover, the format of a graphic diary has become the most comfortable way for me to record and tell stories—perhaps similar to people who like taking photographs to store memories and experiences. Technology and social media have played an important part in the distribution of my graphic diary. The scanned drawings were uploaded to reach wider audiences from all around the world, gaining avid readers and new friends.

My graphic diary was exhibited in the Netherlands and Brazil, and was published in the United States, the Netherlands, Japan and Belgium, before it was published in Indonesia as a series of three books called *Curhat Tita* (*Coming Home* is the second book of the series) in 2008. It was actually my publishing business partner who persuaded me to establish a publishing company, which led to the founding of *Curhat Anak Bangsa* (CAB) that focuses on showcasing graphic diaries and other experimental works.

At CAB, we label our books as "graphic diaries" to distinguish these from "comics" that dominated the marketplace in 2008, which were either Japanese manga or American superhero comics. Both the visual style and story of the *Curhat Tita* series are not mainstream; it was discovered that its audiences are people who are not necessarily comic book readers, but are those who can relate to the stories (fellow working mothers, parents of young children, Indonesian diaspora, etc.). After the exposure, the graphic diary genre started to thrive in Indonesia, resulting in other genres within CAB to follow: graphic travelogues, movie adaptations and comics for children.

At the time when CAB started publishing the *Curhat Tita* series, Indonesian comic artists were re-emerging in various events. It was obvious that there were very few female artists, compared to their male counterparts. However, since CAB's stable already accommodated primarily female creators (artists, writers, designers, etc.), it was apparent that there was talent that still needed to be identified, nurtured and introduced to all kinds of audiences, regardless of the gender of the creators.

The last *Curhat Tita* book *Kidstuff* was published in 2010, and since then, the series has appeared in diverse books and compilations (i.e., "Bloemen Blij, Plukken Wij" in *Liquid City* vol.3 by Image Comics, USA, and *Retour à Bandung* by Éditions çà et là, France). It's exciting to now see its publication in Singapore, which might mean that the stories and experiences are still relevant for current readers.

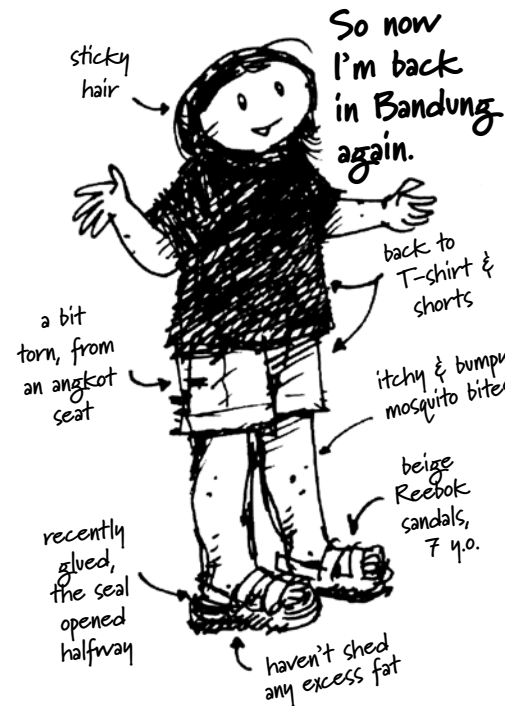
Tita Larasati
March 2020

FLASH BACK

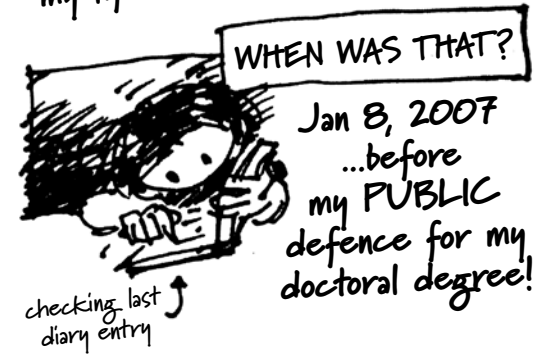
February 10, 2007



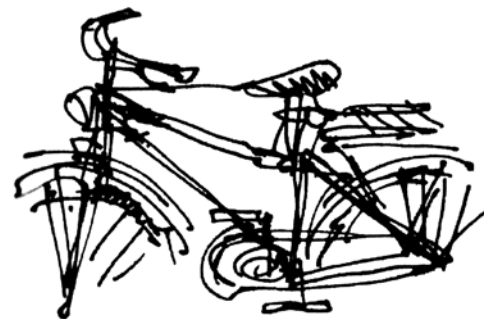
↑ a successfully tacky front page title



Loads of things have happened since the last time I sketched my life in this book.



When my working table in Amsterdam was still full of papers & books & stuff...



...when my bike was still waiting patiently in the basement...



...when a thick jacket, socks and shoes were daily essentials.

Here's a quick journey back to Amsterdam from earlier in the year...

Jan 10

It's my mother's birthday. I picked her up from Schiphol Airport early in the morning. I also picked up Prof E. B., one of the committee members for my exam.



Then, after dropping off Prof E. B. in Delft under the care of Dr A. F. and Prof K. D., I went to clear some of our/my moving business.



Silly me for not bringing enough cash. Ended up walking for hours looking for an ATM in The Hague.

Playing with Google Earth in Prof K. D.'s office.



Jan 11

After six years, the long-awaited day has arrived.

I went to Delft by train with my mother & MB Isti. The wind was blowing really, really hard.



rained hair thanks to the windstorm



MB Isti's hairbrush saved the day!

Time was tight. I changed into a formal outfit before entering the room and presenting my research. Guests had already arrived.



I presented my research very quickly (as in 10 minutes). I spoke very fast; really wanted to get it over with.



Maybe only a few people got my message, but what the hey.



At exactly 15:00 the beadle led the examination committee members into the room. She thumped her staff as a starting sign and then left. A question-and-answer session went on until 16:00, when the beadle and her staff returned to the room and followed up with their own questions.



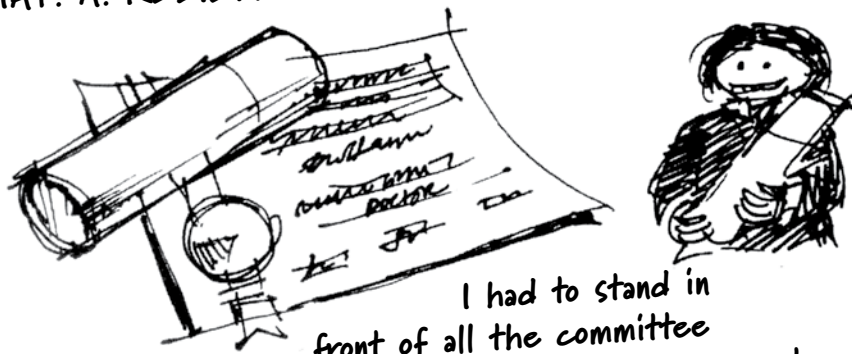
trying not to look at the clocks that are hanging at the sides of the room while answering questions

The kids, Dhanu and Lindri, were in another room during the defence. Kids under 6 y.o. are not allowed—nor are flashlights and noisy stuff (mobile phones!).



They were reported to be "sweet and easy" by a woman who watched them.

16:30—my doctoral degree was given!
WHAT. A. RELIEF.

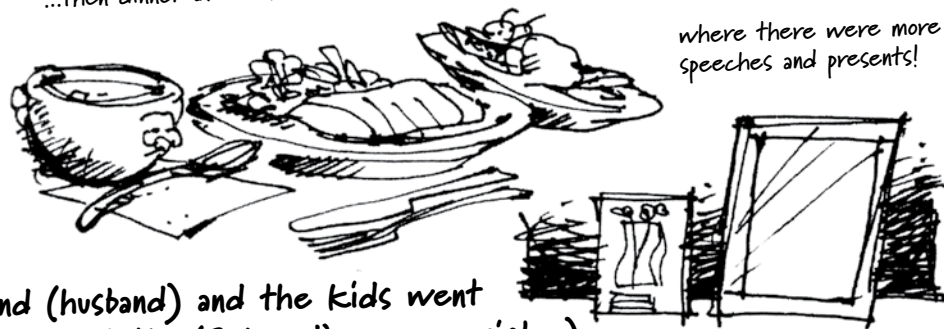


I had to stand in front of all the committee members and listen to my promoter, Prof K. D., read a note about me.

A small reception in another room...



...then dinner at WJNHAVEN



where there were more speeches and presents!

Sybrand (husband) and the kids went home with Edith (Sybrand's younger sister); my friend Nicole took Ibu & me home.

We got back at about 23:00. What a day. But there's no time to sit back & relax—we now have to pack & clean up our place for our move back to Bandung!

COUNTDOWN: 2 WEEKS!

Jan 12

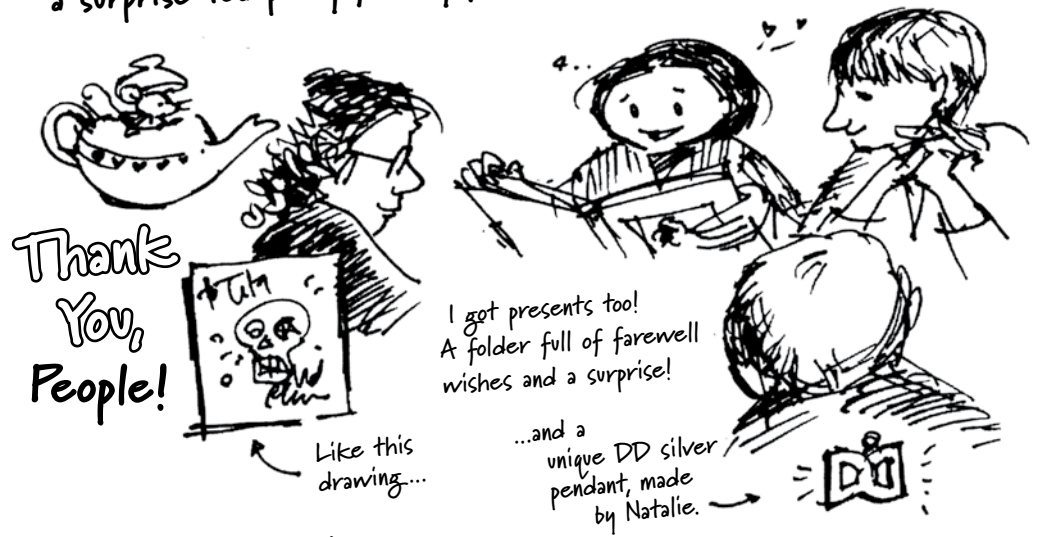
Syb had to go to Groningen (the Ministry of Education is located there) to legalise our certificates.

I prepared some snacks at home for Syb's work colleagues.



Jan 13

I thought only Yvonne, a fellow Duran Duran board member (of our online DD "club"), was meeting me for a cup of tea. It turned out to be a surprise tea party for my farewell! So touching!



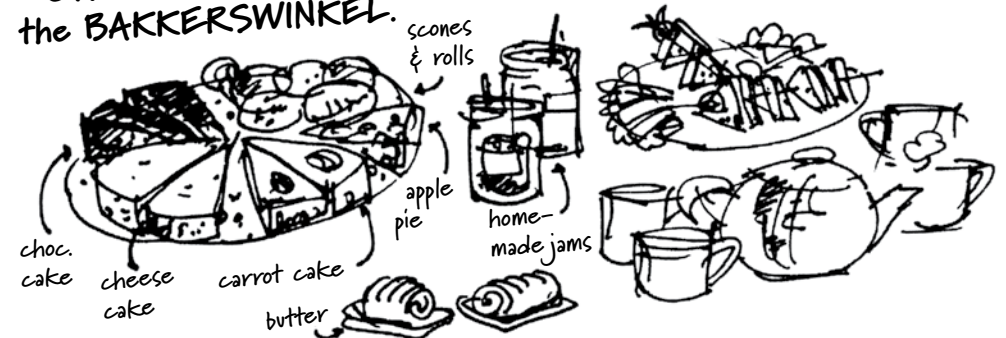
Thank You, People!

Like this drawing...

I got presents too! A folder full of farewell wishes and a surprise!

...and a unique DD silver pendant, made by Natalie.

OH and it was at the BAKKERSWINKEL.





8:15 train to The Hague

KBRI = The Indonesian Embassy ("Kedutaan Besar Republik Indonesia")

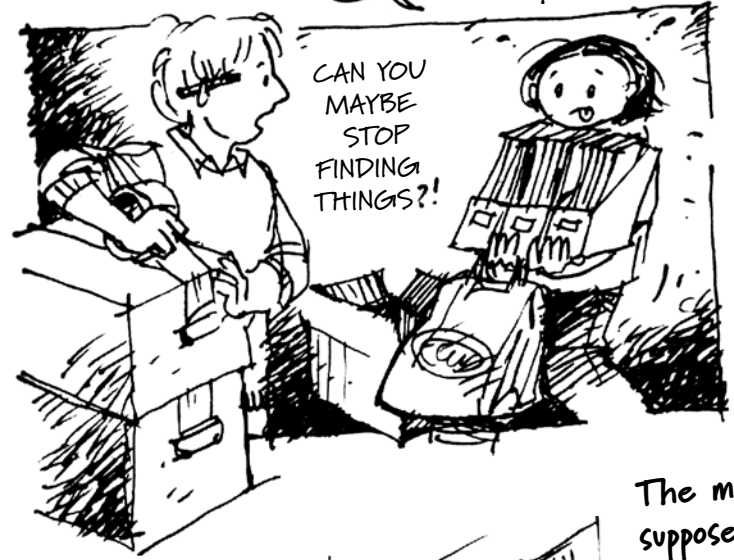
Embassy Legalise certificates
KBRI: 10€ each!

pick up SK Konsuler (official letter from the consular), SK DikBud (official letter from the attaché of education and culture)



Jan 20 The kids are at Edith's house again. This gave Syb and I some room to pack. (There was a storm today, so Eef, Edith's husband, picked them up from home and later, Edith brought them back.)

Jan 21 same story ↗



We have a small apartment, so it was a wonder how we kept finding "hidden" items in several places, all of which needed packing.

The moving truck was supposed to come at 12:00 and we only had two hours to load all of our things inside.

Jan 22 **THE BIG CONTAINER DAY**

But it got stuck at the corner of our street, not being able to make a turn or enter.



delay... waiting... for a smaller car to transport the LOAD. Started ±14:00



We got help from Jos & Birga (Syb's sisters), Peter (our landlord) and Chris (Syb's colleague). I was to stay put and watch our kids but Dhanu "escaped" and "helped" anyway.

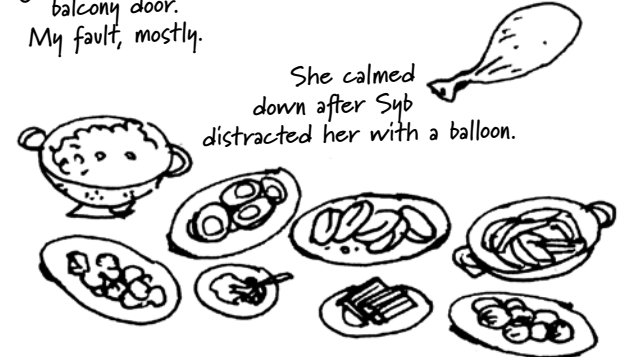


I was interviewed in one of our empty rooms by RANESI (Radio Nederland Indonesia). Too bad it ended with an accident.



Lindri's hand got caught in the balcony door. My fault, mostly.

She calmed down after Syb distracted her with a balloon.



In the evening, we had a farewell dinner at **YOGYA** Restaurant, near Edith's place, with the whole family.

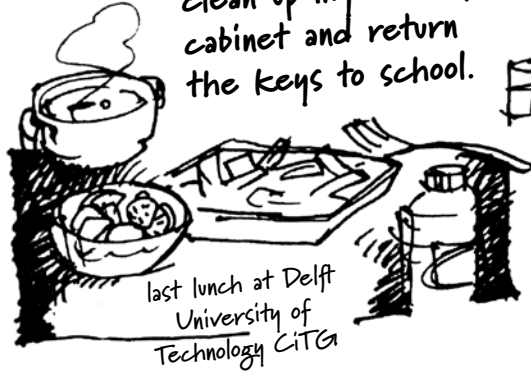
Ibu went to Roosendaal with my mother-in-law afterwards. We went home to an (almost) empty apartment.



Jan 23

Tue

I went to Delft for the last time (at least this year), to clean up my desk & cabinet and return the keys to school.



last lunch at Delft University of Technology CiTA



sending out the last batch of dissertations



My friend Onno returned my bamboo books!

AFTERNOON: tea appointment with TITA, MINAN and SADIA, a Malaysian family I met in the Netherlands.

Tita = a friend I first met online
Minan = (now former) husband of Tita
Sadia = their daughter

café LEONIDAS

DELFT

THANKS GUYS!



cold monchon cake (no bake cheesecake) with warm, glassy cherries



koffie verkeerd (similar to café au lait)

choco "drops"

brownies



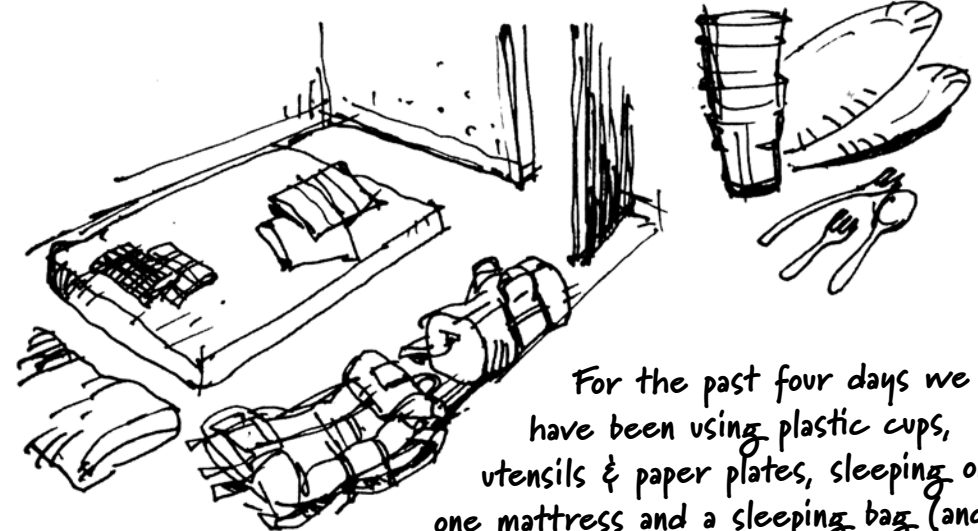
I made a video recording of our current situation. (I'm not very good at freshening up, btw.)

"camping" at home:



A present from Sadia & family! THANK YOU!

We had our last parent-teacher meeting, BUT Lindri was fast asleep at home, so only Syb went to see Meester Joeri at 2 o'clock.



For the past four days we have been using plastic cups, utensils & paper plates, sleeping on one mattress and a sleeping bag (and lots of sarongs) between the four of us. On one of our last days in town, we went to buy a couple of suitcases since the bags we had weren't enough to accommodate all the belongings we still had left. I also managed to squeeze in one last trip to the LAMBIEK comic shop.



Arrived in INDONESIA

From Jakarta airport, we went to my parents' house in Senayan. Syb & the kids took a rest while I went to DIKTI (higher education office) in Senayan with my younger sister, Tiyas... then to DIKTI Pancoran (their temporary office) to get a legalisation form for my diploma.



Dhanu & Lindri met their former babysitter again!



Before going home we dropped by my father's studio...



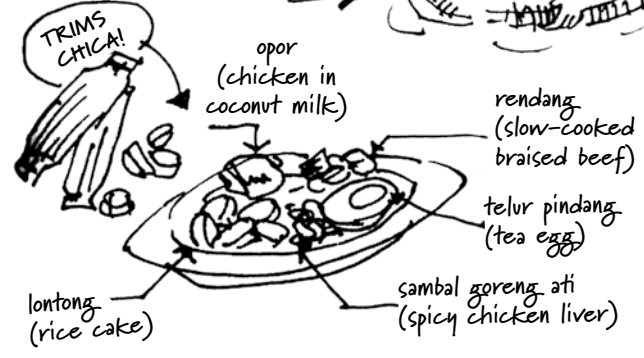
Jan 27 To CIPETE (Jakarta)

SATURDAY

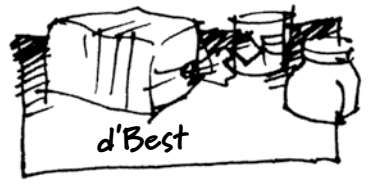
Lindri's first swimming experience



My nephews Toby & Thomas (sons of my older brother) were here, too!



- TRIMS CHICA!
- opor (chicken in coconut milk)
- rendang (slow-cooked braised beef)
- telur pindang (tea egg)
- sambal goreng ati (spicy chicken liver)
- lontong (rice cake)



Jan 28

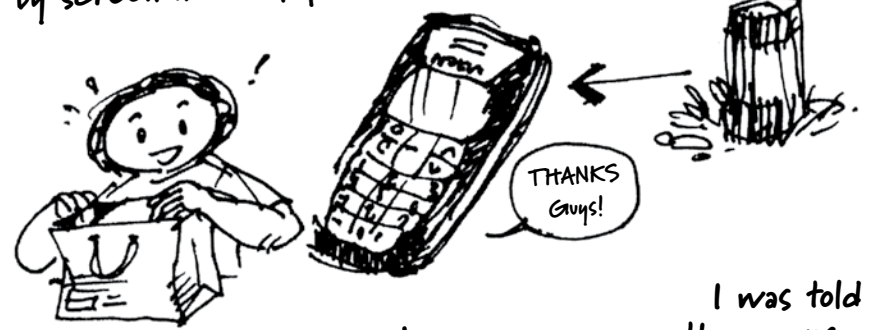
THE BIG LUNCH

at Lagunas... starting 11:00



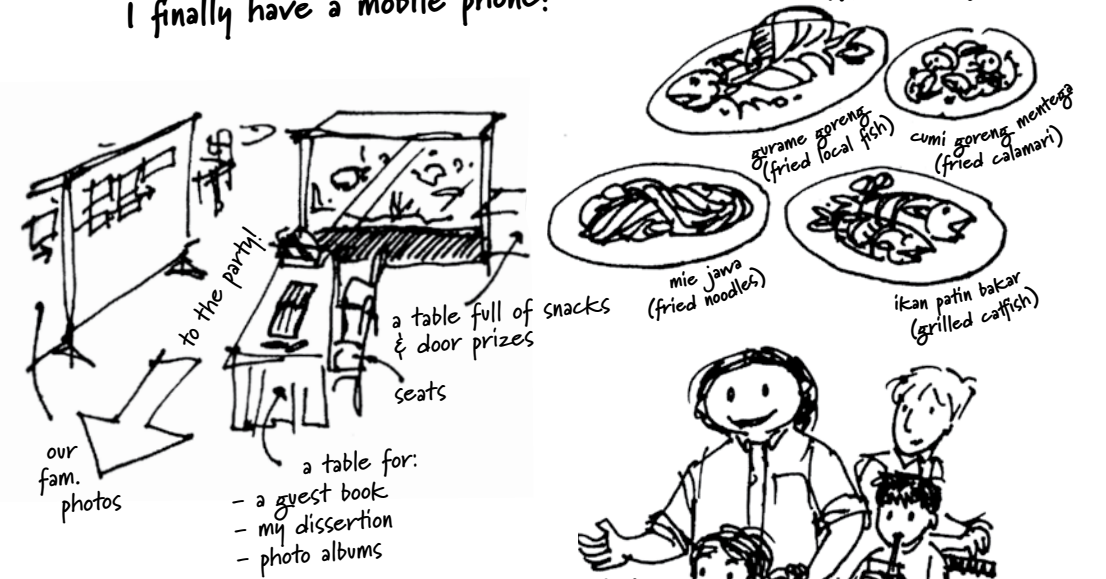
Met lots of family members, cousins I hadn't seen in a while and friends, especially the ones I used to only know by screen names & photos!

Today marks a milestone for me:



I finally have a mobile phone!

I was told that there was:



our fam. photos

to the party!

a table full of snacks & door prizes

seats

- a guest book
- my dissertation
- photo albums

- ayam goreng (fried local fish)
- cumi goreng mentega (fried calamari)
- mie jawa (fried noodles)
- ikan patin bakar (grilled catfish)



The four of us received the guests, around 150 people, as they arrived.

es teh manis (iced sweet tea)

This BIG Lunch Party went on from 11:00 to... let's see... about 16:00, I think. Then it rained.

MONDAY MORNING:

Jan 29

We first visited the park at **GLENEAGLES** Hospital then to **PERTAMINA** Hospital to visit Oom Agvi.

We finally left for Bandung around 14.00. It was my first experience on the **CIPULARANG** Highway!
ARRIVAL time: ±16.00 at Cihaur



The rest of the day was spent sorting things from my old room...



TUESDAY

Jan 30

our ADVENTURE STARTS here.

Our first **ANGKOT** ride was for free (from Kanayakan to Simpang) because the driver didn't have any change. There's hope yet, I thought.

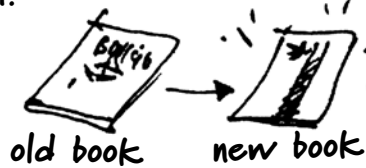


To the **IMMIGRATION** office:



It turned out that Syb & the kids didn't need to report themselves to immigration so soon after arrival.

NEXT we went to the bank for me to update my account.



A colleague, fellow ITB lecturer

In the evening, we went to a nearby **WARNET**... (internet café)

where Lindri and Dhanu got lots of attention.



The internet room was all smokey. NOT pleasant. Oh, and the connection was so slow too.

Jan 31

to **KANWIL** bag. Kehakiman (Regional Office for Justice)



2 folders = 100,000 IDR

to **KANWIL** Catatan sipil (Regional office of Civil Registration): 4 maps = 12,000 IDR



ABOUT THE CREATOR

Tita Larasati was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia. She moved to Bandung to study at the Faculty of Art & Design, Institute of Technology Bandung (ITB). Later, her studies took her to the Netherlands, where she focused on product design and sustainability. After acquiring her doctoral degree, Larasati returned to Bandung in 2007 to work as a lecturer and researcher at ITB.

During her stay in the Netherlands, she created a graphic diary, or a visual note of her daily life. She co-founded Curhat Anak Bangsa (CAB) in 2008, an independent publishing company that focuses on graphic diaries, graphic travelogues and children's comics. CAB published her works *Curhat Tita* (2008), *Transition* (2008), *Curhat Tita: Back in Bandung* (2008), *Kidstuff* (2010) and *Seven* (2009). She contributed to *Liquid City* vol. 3 with her work "Bloemen Blij, Plukken Wij" (2014). *Curhat Tita: Back in Bandung* was translated into French as *Retour à Bandung* (Éditions ça et là, France, 2016).



Tita Larasati returns, after nearly a decade in the Netherlands, to Bandung with her Dutch husband and two young kids in tow. As the family adjusts to life in Indonesia, Tita rediscovers the unique quirks that come with living in her hometown.



GRAPHIC MEMOIR

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