

# **THE DEATH OF A BLACK CROW**

**Sidik Nugroho**

*For Adi Teguh Prasetyo, my younger brother who always loves thrilling stories, and listens to some bits and pieces of this story while I wrote it.*

*As well for Albert Lutano, a friend who always devotedly accompanied to go for a walk while I visited Jakarta. Moreover, for Syah Rinto, my comrade-in-arms who loves mystery and the unseen world.*

*“AN AUTHOR Found Dead Hanging Himself!”* That was one of newspaper headline at *Pontianak Post* that Sunday morning, November 16, 2014. Right away, Elang’s sleepiness went off somewhere.

Author! As much as he could remember, only house wives, officials, or criminals who had done that. This was the first time he read news about an author who committed suicide.

For God’s sake, an author!

“Sir, your coffee,” said the waiter, putting a cup of coffee on the table in front of Elang. It is still in the early hours, Elang was the only visitor at the moment.

Elang continued his reading, ignoring the waiter. From time to time, he shook his head, still refused to accept the posted news. His right thumb and forefinger moved swiftly to stroke the paper sheet. Cigarette ashes stuck in his right middle finger and index finger was already marking out very long trace—the one he lit before going to the coffee shop, now almost gone out.

“What news, Mr. Elang?” The waiter asked as he approached. Elang had just finished reading. He pondered, looked at the road, smoked his cigarette, and puffed its smoke slowly out of his nose.

Elang shifted newspaper on the table, frowning to the waiter. “Read it,” he said, holding up his middle finger and forefinger with clamped cigarettes to the headlines. He was throwing its cigarettes butts on the floor, put it off with his sandals.

The waiter seated in front of Elang, his eyes instantly slanted, his brow furrowed. “An author?” He muttered, almost faintly.

“The world is getting crazy, absolutely crazy!” Elang said, taking out a cigarette from its pack.

He sighed deeply, lit a match to burn the cigarette he clamped between his lips. He became more frequent smoking recently while thinking hard.

“So, the news was just like this? An author hanged himself—period? In fact, none mentioned his books. Only location, estimated time of suicide, the man who discovered, and...,” the waiter said, scanning the news, “Such very few explanation. I just wonder,” he added later.

“Probably it’s still under investigation, Hanif. Another explanation could follow. But I don’t think many people are interested in this news. The author was not Andrea Hirata, Raditya Dika, or Mario Teguh. Obviously, his name was a pseudo—Black Crow.”

“Black Crow,” the maid Hanif murmured, grimaced. “Why was this author using a bird’s name?”

“Maybe because he wanted to escape the moral responsibility of his writings. Or else, he’s writing something that could have threatened him by his real name.”

“Like a ninja, if so?”

Elang grinned. “Maybe he’s a ninja.”

Hanif smirked slightly, folded the newspaper, and asked, “By the way, how was the last painting? Already done?”

“It was done two days ago, Hanif. Now, I still want to relax. Maybe a few days or weeks ahead I would relax for a moment, looking for a new air.”

Hanif nodded. “What real good life of a painter. I was always curious about the artists’ way of life. “

“Oh, nothing special,” said Elang, waving his hand. His smiling face turned into solemn as seeing Hanif scowled. “But I don’t mean to misjudge your opinion that we are excellent. Yeah, there are many who thought we are terrific. Sometimes we also feel great, I have to admit. However, once you experience it, yeah... it’s actually common. Maybe our excellence due to... something we create.”

Hanif glanced at the newspaper. “The author also created,” he said quietly.

“Was he frustrated, Hanif?” Elang asked with a blank stare toward the road.  
“Was he confused by his unfinished work? Or else?”

“Elang might know better. You both created, right?”

“I’ve heard, an author so eagerly writes when he was just starting his story, or will soon end it. I think this author was going through the writing process of a complicated story for him.”

“Working on the middle of his story?”

Elang nodded steadily. “Probably like that. I presume it firmly—if not, then there was external pressure such as family problems, economic, and so forth. “

“Another cause?”

“Lack of ideas. Imagination. The characters he created. A great many. An author supposedly prone to the disorder.”

“Disorder?”

“It is bipolar, I think. It’s a kind of overly extreme emotional disorders.”

“Electric shock?”

Elang chuckled. “Maybe so, Hanif.”

Other visitor entered the coffee shop. “Ninja