

Reading 1 — A Narrow Escape

I was walking past a row of shophouses when I saw a young boy squatting furtively outside a shop. I quickened my steps as he cut a threatening figure and I was afraid of what harm he might do to me. When I passed him, I could not resist stealing a glance in his direction. It was a mistake. He caught me looking at him and immediately turned his attention on me.

Without hesitation, I turned away from him and tried to continue walking. However, he pounced on me and pulled me back by the collar. He hollered that I had been staring at him. Stunned, I mumbled that I hardly even looked at him. I kept my eyes on the ground as I spoke to him for I was afraid that he would accuse me of staring again. Keeping my eyes lowered, I waited for an opportune moment to make an escape. He must have guessed my intentions for he pushed me against the wall and forced me to kneel. At first, I looked at him in bewilderment. I did not know who he was and I did not do anything to offend him. Then it occurred to me that he might want my money. Beads of perspiration were forming on my forehead and my hands became clammy. I had three hundred dollars in my wallet which was meant to pay for my tuition fees. I hoped he would not take it.

However, no sooner had the thought occurred to me than I felt his hand in the back pocket of my trousers. He was searching for my wallet!

I had to stop him! Twisting my body away from him, I used my shoulders to push him aside. He was a skinny boy so it did not take much strength. However, his face turned red with anger. Clenching his fist, he tried to punch me but I dodged just in time and his fist landed on the wall. He took a while to recover from the impact so I managed to ease myself away from him. I darted across the street and fled down an alley towards the main road. When I turned around, the boy was no longer in sight.

With a sigh of relief, I stopped a taxi to take me to my tuition centre. I wondered if the boy had given up chasing after me and was going to terrorize another student who chose to walk down the same path. I vowed not to walk past that row of shophouses again so as to avoid him.