

HOMECOMING

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When I stepped into the airport's arrival hall, I expected to see my family, but what I got instead was the police. Dressed in plainclothes, they peeled away from the crowd and zeroed in on me.

From the front.

From the left.

From the right.

Then one of the officers jammed his foot against my baggage trolley, bringing it to a stop. '*Selamat pulang ke Malaysia.*' Welcome back to Malaysia.

Another flashed me his identification. 'You are Mr Samuel Wu?'

I blinked, my throat feeling like a screw being tightened.

They belonged to the Special Branch.

Malaysia's very own Gestapo.

Lying wouldn't help, so I went with the truth. 'Yes, I am, but—'

'You must come with us.'

They clutched my arms, pulling me away from the trolley, and hustling me towards the exit. My feet swam; everything was happening too fast. As I craned my neck, I saw the third officer taking hold of the trolley and pushing it along. All around us, people were staring, murmuring, pointing. *Oh God.*

'Please, sir.' I turned to the officer on my right. 'What is this about?'

He didn't even look at me. 'Quiet.'

I turned to the officer on my left. 'Am I being arrested?'

'Quiet.'

The automatic doors at the exit swished open and I felt the full blast of the humidity outside. It was strong enough to make my head hurt, even though it was ten o'clock at night. I broke out in sweat and my shirt became glued to my skin.

Just beyond the taxi queue ahead, a Toyota SUV was waiting.

The two officers pressed me into the backseat and sandwiched me on either side, while the third tossed my luggage into the boot. When he was done, he got into the passenger seat up front.

He nodded at the driver. *'Kita jalan sekarang.'* We move now.