

Teen artist paints beautiful artworks to pay medical debts

By Noel Wong @ FMT Lifestyle - January 26, 2021 8:00 AM



Belle Chok is a 13-year-old artist looking to help her father pay off her medical bills. (Facebook pic)

KUALA LUMPUR: The issue of stateless children is often a complicated and heartbreaking one, with children often left in an unfortunate state of bureaucratic limbo.

Without citizenship, children are left at the mercy of slow-moving government proceedings and families often have to wait for ages to get an official response.

This is indeed the case for Belle Chok, 13, who was born in Malaysia but still has not been awarded her right of citizenship.

Chok's mother, a Thai national, left the family nearly a decade ago, causing the nightmare that is the process of certifying her citizenship.

What's more, the girl was diagnosed with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) in 2018, an autoimmune disease that will stay with her throughout her life.



A painting done by Chok. (Facebook pic)

The disease causes the immune system to attack its own tissues, resulting in a variety of painful health issues she has to deal with. If left untreated, the disease can be life-threatening.

Since her diagnosis, Chok has been admitted to the Selayang Hospital around ten times, and warded at the Intensive Care Unit twice.

As it stands, the cost of her medical treatment weighs heavily on her father, the sole breadwinner of the family, who works as a plumber.

The teen requires daily medication to treat her condition, and this costs her family RM60 per day. That's excluding the RM500 her father pays each month for a clinical blood test.

As long as she was under 12 years of age, Chok's medical bills were subsidised by the government. However, this is no longer the case, and the financial burden now falls on her father.



Chok found comfort in painting. (Facebook pic)

On the flip side, with access to medication, Chok can live a relatively normal life and she reveals that she is looking forward to going to school like any normal Malaysian student.

That is one of the reasons why she chose not to sit on her haunches and picked up a paintbrush and palette instead.

With the guidance of her interior designer and part-time art teacher aunt, Angie Lim, Chok has learnt to paint using acrylic and taken to art with gusto.



With the help of her aunt, Chok has learnt to paint with acrylics. (Facebook pic)

According to Lim, Chok has been doodling and drawing since she was young, so it only made sense to impart some painting skills and knowledge to her.

"I handle and coach Belle on the more difficult parts of the fine painting, and she is doing most of the work," Lim said.

Apparently, during long stays in the hospital, Chok would doodle and colour cartoon and animal characters.

Art, it seemed, was her only means of respite from the tubes and machines attached to her.

Despite the fact that art is a skill that takes much time to master, Chok has put her heart into it, adorning the canvas with deft strokes, patience and determination.



She hopes to sell her paintings to help pay for her medical bills. (Facebook pic)

This seems to have paid off, as Chok has completed a total of ten paintings since March 2020, mostly focusing on natural subjects such as animals and flowers.

She hopes to sell each painting for RM380, which will help pay off nearly a week's worth of medical bills.

Each painting takes Chok about three months to complete, said Lim, and it is likely that Chok will have less time to paint once students return to school.

At the same time, Lim said that Chok and her family are hoping that the young artist will receive an update on her citizenship application soon.

Without citizenship, access to financial aid is limited and her future remains somewhat uncertain for as long as she remains a stateless person.

But until then, Chok is content with painting to her heart's desire, knowing that she is doing her part in lifting her family's spirits and financial burdens.

For more information and to view this talented young artist's paintings, visit Belle's Medical Fundraiser Facebook page [here](#). To get in touch with Angie, drop her a line at (012) 211 5564.

As for those who would like to purchase the paintings, please direct payment to Belle's grandmother, Chew Yoke Lin:

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