

Nothing can stop her



NEVER an ordinary child, Poesy had extraordinary talents. She started painting when she was six years old, and had her first exhibition at 11. She started welfare work at 11, and ventured into the TV industry starring in a Levi's commercial when she was 14. She studied architecture after SPM and then removed herself from the glamorous world to pursue law and an MBA. She tried out virtually every job, including being a bartender, shop attendant and stock broker.

You might now be envious of Poesy's almost perfect life — being a celebrity and having success in her studies. But as clichéd as it sounds, life's like a roller coaster ride.

When she was 17, Poesy was diagnosed with tumours on her spinal cord. After the operation, she was told by the doctor that there was only a 20 per cent chance she could walk again and even then, one of her legs would be shorter than the other due to muscle deterioration. She grasped that tiny chance and pushed her body over the limit, and recovered beyond the doctor's expectation. Comically enough, she chose to walk back into the doctor's office in high heels, just to prove him wrong.

However, the good days did not last. When Poesy turned 27, she was jolted by the discovery of new tumours coiling around her spinal cord. Her operation was a messy business involving fused blood vessels and "shaving off" the tumours. Some of her nerves were sacrificed and she lost a major part of sensation and control of her legs. She could not feel any itch, temperature or pain.

Once again, she pulled off a miracle. Poesy has learnt to walk using her visual senses. She plans her route around objects that she sees. What I found intriguing was how she keeps herself motivated at all times.

Poesy is very curious about her limits. After her second operation, she wanted to know if it was possible to walk again, and that's when she pushed herself to swim 1km a day for more than a year. Then, she challenged herself to climb the stairs and is currently learning to walk in heels (again).

It is amazing to hear a partially paralysed person claim that she is waiting for the right dance instructor to come along as she dreams of picking up the Waltz again. "Life's about putting one foot in front of the other every time," she said, and that's also Poesy's secret to achieving the unattainable.

Even under adverse conditions, Poesy continues to be actively involved in social work. This is because she strongly believes everyone can make a difference. She founded Helping Angels in 2007 — a movement of compassion based on random acts of kindness. She holds on tightly to four rules which are, no involvement in fund-raising or collection of donations, no commercial marketing, no political rallying and no religious evangelism.

Then my inquisitive mind started to question: how does Helping Angels survive without fundings? Well, according to Poesy, Helping Angels is a platform to connect people who are willing to help the unfortunate in need. The sponsors deal directly with their beneficiaries.

Helping Angels also collaborated with Socks for Japan during the 2011 Tsunami. Members provided a pair of clean socks in a clear re-sealable bag with a note to the victims struck by the catastrophe. They successfully distributed around 160,000 pairs of socks but more importantly, they sent heartfelt notes that showed the victims there are people who care.

Thursday Tutoring is another project Poesy works on. This aims to illustrate that individuals can make a difference too, just by contributing time. Volunteers clock in at the Agathian Shelter and Trinity Children's Centre to provide academic aid to young children on Thursday evenings. Hopefully these children excel academically and at least pave the way for a better life in the future.

Poesy explained that compassion is when our worst fears befall our neighbours, and empathy is activated when we reach out to help. That act connects our hearts with another.

She has been touched by compassion and is spreading kindness like wild seeds without expecting anything in return. Throughout my 17 years,

I have been fortunate to be healthy. However, on certain occasions, overwhelmed by obstacles and emotions, I give up and make excuses.

However, the chat I had with this strong woman was an eye-opener. Despite the numbness she feels in her legs and the lack of sensation or feeling, she takes every day as it comes and challenges herself to go beyond her limits. She has taught me that the sky is limitless and we can achieve whatever we desire if we truly believe. Poesy believes that it is up to you: "If you think you can, or if you think you cannot, you are right".

Poesy Liang is truly the best portrayal of how we can always push ourselves to overcome challenges, be they physical or otherwise.

● If you are interested in joining Helping Angels, check out <http://www.facebook.com/groups/helpingangels/> or their Twitter @HelpingAngels.

By Eer Kai Song
17, Selangor

Editor's Diary



Eer Kai Song,
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Editor

SWORD swallowing, conquering mountains, scaling skyscrapers - they are not just high-risk stunts that you see in

an action-packed file. A small minority of extremists have the guts to gamble their lives and achieve the unattainable, making the impossible possible.

This issue is dedicated to those who push their bodies to the limit. You can read about Stevie Starr, a well-known "regurgitator" and Wang CT who pulled a car with his nose. Unfortunately, there is always the flip side. Some performers got involved in accidents that caused them serious injuries.

On a lighter note, be entertained by the weirdest things that the teens in Malaysia can do.

Want to push your mental limits? Learn how to hypnotise someone!

If you happen to be a queen of procrastination like me, you definitely should not miss out on reading Poesy's story. Be inspired by this young lady who doesn't believe in allowing disability to slow her down.

Enjoy this fantastic issue!

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