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“ONLY GUYS WHO can’t get hard fight with no fear of death,” Iwan Angsa once said about Ajo Kawir. He was one of a small handful of people who knew that Ajo Kawir’s penis couldn’t stand up. He’d seen it, nestling like a newly hatched baby bird—curled into itself, looking hungry and cold. Sometimes in the morning when its owner had just awoken, it seemed longer, full of urine, but it couldn’t stand up. It couldn’t get hard.

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Ajo Kawir sat on the edge of his bed, naked. He was looking down at his crotch, gazing at his pecker which seemed to be resting in an eternal slumber, so lazy. He whispered to it, get up, Bird. Get up, you Wretch. You can’t just sleep forever. You have to get up. But that damn little bird didn’t want to get up.

He thought about that girl. Iteung.

You have to get up, he whispered again, for her. That girl wants you. She wants you to wake up and get big and hard, the way you used to. You loser, get up. I’m out of patience. I want you to get up. Now.

But the Bird thought it was a polar bear hibernating through a long frigid winter. It was dreaming of gently falling snow, which its master had never even seen.

He went into the bathroom. He stuck a page ripped out of an old crossword puzzle magazine up on the wall. It was a photograph of a singer. He didn't know her name but he liked her face, and her body even more. She was wearing nothing but a low-cut bikini. Her breasts swelled as if they were trying to pop free of her body, but what he liked best of all was her armpit hair, thick and black. He imagined what those armpits must smell like.

Ajo Kawir splashed water all over his body and he calmed down a little. Scooping up more water from the tub, he poured it over his head and a feeling of refreshment settled over him. His hair stuck to his forehead and his ears. Water dripped off the tip of his nose and his chin.

I'm going to try again, he thought. He looked at the photograph. Eyeing the woman's cleavage and her thick black armpit hair, he took hold of his penis. Stroked it.

Get up, he whispered.

He picked up the bar of soap and rubbed it in between his hands. He closed his eyes for a moment, and then grasped his penis again.

Get up, he whispered. Wake up, you clown, he whimpered, softly like a dog in heat.

But this Bird thought it was a polar bear and now was the time to hibernate. This Bird was sleeping soundly. Dreaming of snow.

Shit, Ajo Kawir grumbled.

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Gecko also knew that Ajo Kawir's penis refused to wake up. That's why Gecko never invited him along to loiter in front of the post office and catcall the girls passing by, and why he never invited

him to watch pornos together and never loaned him any trashy novels, believing that things like that wouldn't cure the kid, but in fact would only aggravate him. And guys who can't get hard should never be aggravated—after everything that happened, that's what Iwan Angsa would admonish him.

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They were walking along the sidewalk, each with a clove cigarette between his fingers. One was sucking on a Djarum, the other had never strayed from Gudang Garams. Gecko placed the clove in his mouth, let it hang there, and slipped both his hands into the pockets of his jeans. He bit the cigarette a little so it wouldn't fall when he exhaled. The smoke slowly emerged from his mouth, and with the finesse of a longtime smoker he inhaled the plume back up through his nose and then exhaled it out his mouth again, in a smooth rolling circle.

Ajo Kawir gazed up at the sky and blew his own fragrant smoke into the air. Then, looking over at Gecko, he said, "I want to beat someone up."

"How about those two kids sitting against that wall over there."

Ajo Kawir glanced to where Gecko was pointing and saw two guys who looked to be about their age, whistling at the girls passing by on their bicycles. Ajo Kawir and Gecko approached. Ajo Kawir took a long final drag on his cigarette. There were still about three centimeters left until it was down to the butt, but Ajo Kawir knew he didn't want anymore—instead he tossed it, with its red-hot tip, into one of the guy's laps. They both looked up at Ajo Kawir, startled.

"Hey!" they shouted, angry of course.

"You got a problem?" challenged Ajo Kawir.

Gecko opened and closed his fists, to limber up his fingers. It