



# A Midnight Journey Home

Pandu Mahardhika



Rain has just stopped in Jatinegara as Pak Supar pulls his taxi up beside a bright convenience store. Streetlights flicker awake one by one, casting a warm yellow glow across the slick, wet pavement. Maria steps into the back seat with tear-swollen eyes, softly whispering her mother's address before closing the door with a quiet, fragile gentleness.



Sitting hunched in the backseat, Maria clutches her small handbag like a protective shield against the world. Her wavy hair falls loosely around her damp cheeks, and she barely realizes she is still wearing her soft house slippers after fleeing her apartment in deep sorrow.



Deep inside, the painful echo of her husband's harsh accusations cuts far deeper than the argument itself. His sharp words blaming her for their childless marriage replay relentlessly in her mind, leaving her feeling wounded and utterly isolated.



Maria remembers her confidential doctor visit where tests were inconclusive, yet her husband refused to seek medical advice together, placing all judgment solely on her shoulders. She had quietly picked up her bag and walked out, letting her tears fall only when she reached the safety of the elevator.



Pak Supar glances through the rearview mirror, his experienced eyes recognizing the heavy silence of a heartbroken passenger. Understanding her need for quiet comfort, he gently switches off the lively radio music to offer her a peaceful space.



Outside the taxi window, Jakarta glows under a dusk sky painted in shades of orange and twilight gray. Maria stares at her faint reflection in the glass, watching motorbikes weave through the bustling traffic while feeling completely adrift in the city.



As the taxi sits trapped in a momentary traffic jam, Pak Supar quietly taps his fingers against the steering wheel. Though he wishes to offer comforting words, he chooses to remain silent, honoring her grief with a respectful and quiet presence.



The taxi eventually turns off the busy main road into a narrow alley in the Klender neighborhood. Modest homes line the lane where neighborhood children play outside and an elderly man sits peacefully on a plastic chair under ambient street lamps.



Pak Supar breaks the long silence with a gentle, respectful question, asking which house is hers. Maria wipes away her tears with the back of her hand and points toward a cozy home at the end of the lane with a weathered green iron gate.



The taxi stops softly in front of her mother's house, where warm porch lights illuminate neatly arranged potted plants along the fence. Opening the car door, Maria takes a steadying breath, stepping out into the cool night air to find comfort and sanctuary.