

Reading 2 — Earning a Living

I was in the middle of my breakfast when I heard someone shouting out in irritation. Turning, I saw a group of boys yelling at an old lady for touching the drinks on their table. The old lady raised her hand in apology and shuffled away. She was dragging a huge plastic bag in her hand that was half-filled with aluminium cans.

Gulping down the rest of my drink, I rushed up to her and tapped her on the shoulder. When I gave her the aluminium can, she smiled appreciatively and thanked me in dialect. Taking pity on her, I decided to help her collect the cans. Looking around, I realized that the customers from several tables had left. I hurriedly walked over to take the aluminium cans from their tables. When I gave them to her, she thanked me profusely again. Then she grabbed my hand and shook her head. She spoke to me in the same dialect which I did not understand but I knew that she did not want my help. Shrugging, I left her alone and returned to my seat.

After my breakfast, I went to the provision shop to buy some groceries. When I passed an alley, I saw the old lady seated on the ground, pushing the aluminium cans into the bag. Then she tied the bag and put it aside. I was about to walk off when I saw her picking up three huge cardboard boxes from beside her. They were cumbersome and much bigger than she was but she managed to fold them. Then she tied them with string. Afraid of being scolded by her, I hid behind a wall and peered out at her. A few minutes later, a lorry stopped at the entrance to the alley. A man jumped out and collected the plastic bag of cans and the cardboard from the old lady. He then gave her a few dollars in return.

From my position, I watched as the old lady walked to the coffee shop. There was a spring in her step. She looked much happier than she was earlier. Using some of the money that she had earned, she bought herself a bowl of noodles and a cup of tea. I was full of admiration for the old lady. Despite her age, she was willing to slog to earn an honest living. I wondered if I would be able to do the same if I were in her position.