



## The Screaming Mimi

**Abd Alrahman Orabi**

*International Islamic University Malaysia*

*Email: abdulrahman.arabi94@gmail.com*

**Arif Hassan<sup>1</sup>**

*International Islamic University Malaysia*

*Email: arif.hassan@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** The case presents the work experience of an employee named Ali. He worked in a fashion designing and talent development company located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He was very excited and enthusiastic about the job as this was his job after graduating from a local university. He was looking forward to rewarding experiences as the job belonged to his interest and expertise. However, his enthusiasm and motivation soon waned as he encountered his lady boss and learned more about the work culture of the place. The company was headed by a lady who believed in theory X of management. She would scream, humiliate and bully employees, and would not care for them. She would arrive to office late in the afternoon or evening. No one would dare to leave the workplace until she left. She personified a good example of an abusive supervisor. Ali felt disgusted as he got no opportunity to show his talent and decided to leave the job.

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Right after his graduation, Ali was offered a job in a fashion designing company in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The job looked very exciting to him as it belonged to his interest and expertise i.e., creative multimedia management. He had studied and mastered all kind of visual effects, from graphic design to video editing to 3D and animation works. Ali was an outstanding student and well known among his peers for his ability to change perspectives and concepts when it came to creative work. He loved to explain and teach people about it and work with it. Literally, he lived the creative art life and loved it.

### The Company

The company where he secured the job had business in fashion designing and talent development. They had unique business style where they would turn and develop amateurs' fashion designs to real products and sell it worldwide. This made Ali really interested in the job. He was to manage and develop the visuals of the company, graphics, videos, websites and applications. He prepared himself pretty well to start his very first official job after graduation.

The first day was really cool and chilled, because he was the only one in the office at 09:00 AM, the time the office opens. The first employee arrived at 10:00 AM. Ali was surprised and confused. Around 10:30 AM almost everyone came. The general manager Mr. Tommy introduced him to the office members which he called as "family." Ali was happy to find diverse nationalities and several others like him in the

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding Author

office. Ali was looking forward to have established himself through his work in such a wonderful environment. Employees were working in teams handling different tasks.

### **The Office Structure**

**The Creative Director:** Ms. Lin was a lady in her mid-30s who was the owner of the company. The official name of the director's position was Creative Director (Ms. Lin). She was very fashionable and moody.

**The General Manager:** Mr. Tommy managed all the administrative tasks such as organizing meeting, distribution of tasks when Ms. Lin isn't around, advising and helping others. He too was moody as sometimes he'd be the nicest person explaining the task and some other time he would appear very painful as he would not entertain any discussion.

**Fashion Designers:** Four of the main heavy tasks went to this team. They developed, fixed, and designed new products. As a result, they would have numerous meetings with the creative director (The boss).

**TRUE Magazine Team:** The team handled a magazine called True published by the company to showcase their new products, thoughts, designs, and events etc.

**Public Relation Team:** This team handled all the contacts with manufacturers and firms with which this company dealt with.

**Design Team:** Ali joined this team which consisted of one another person, a simple graphic designer. He did almost everything for the whole office. He was super pressured and had so many unfinished works to complete, and tens of new projects to start.

### **The Creative Director**

Ali's office colleagues briefed him about several incidents and stories to learn how to deal with the "Boss", but he did not care much about it. He was determined to do his job well. Ali told to himself, why would there be any problem if I do my job well and make no mistake? Ms. Lin came around 5 in the evening, though the office working hour supposedly had to end at 06:00 pm. Ali thought may be some urgency needed her come at this time. Ali was introduced to her as the new creative person to fix and develop the visuals. She barely spoke to him for few minutes, and asked him to work and help the other designer in the office. Ali noticed a sudden change in the office environment as soon as the Ms. Lin entered in the office. It turned to super quiet, employees looked nervous and scared. Ali was very uncertain about what was happening. Ms. Lin remained in the office until 10 pm and no body left for home until then. Ali too remained in the office attending discussions and meetings. As soon as Ms. Lin left, everyone packed their bag and went home.

During the meeting, Ali got to see his colleagues' personalities and the way they interacted with Ms. Lin. He noticed that Ms. Lin hardly listened to anyone, would take decision herself and would not entertain any explanation or comment. She forced her opinion impolitely and disrespectfully on her employees, and that the employees took her demeanor as normal. However, for Ali the meeting with her was comfortable as she treated him well, discussed few issues about the website and models for upcoming shooting. Ali gave his opinion and she didn't comment on anything. He was asked to get in contact with her personal assistant to update his work.

Ali got down to his work with commitment and all seriousness. He was supposed to present his work after a week. He worked hard to complete the tasks within the time

frame given to him. However, he saw that every day Ms. Lin would come really late in the evening and would force all employees to stay until she was in office. In fact, no one dared to leave the office when the boss was around. The office hour would start at 09:00 AM, and would continue until the boss left, mostly after 9:00 PM. Ali got to know later that this was the normal life of this office, with no overtime, replacement or extra salary.

### **Disappointments**

The day when Ali was supposed to present his work, he came to office earlier than usual. He was excited to show his work as also his presentation skill. But he was disappointed as he waited the whole day and Ms. Lin didn't turn up to the office that day even in the evening. Nobody knew when she would drop in the office.

Days passed by and Ali continued to do his day to day works, helping the designer to do his work and develop some others, got his time to make new plans and outlines for the websites and shoots. However, nothing could progress for want of Ms. Lin's approval. Ms. Lin came next day in the evening but was supposedly very busy. This situation continued for days. Ali tried to approach her but failed to meet her. That routine remained the same for days and nothing could be done and no one could help him. The days passed like that and then suddenly after almost a month Ali got a call in the middle of the night from Ms. Lin's personal assistant that Ms. Lin wanted to see him tomorrow.

### **The Critical Incident**

Next morning Ali was well prepared to meet Ms. Lin. He lined up everything nicely to present to her, however, this time his enthusiasm had waned. As usual Ms. Lin came late in the evening. She appeared very sullen and angry but no one could understand the reason. The office was super charged and nervous. Ali and his team member, the graphic designer Sam, approached Ms. Lin for presentation. They had printed out everything nicely and arranged them with a cover showing the title of the project and its objectives. Sam forgot to put his name on his envelope. Both Ali and Sam put their envelopes at her desk. She looked at them and asked "what is this?" She noticed that Sam's envelope had no title, and suddenly she lost her mind. She started shouting and yelling and getting louder and louder in her voice. After a while she completely turned into a beast mode, shouting and throwing our work on the ground. She began questioning and complaining everyone in the office on issues and cases that has had happened from recent to distant past. Showing the middle finger to employees she accused them as horrible, bad, irresponsible and useless. No one was left out. Ali was terribly shocked. She then looked at Ali and said "...and you sir, we thought you're much faster and proactive than you are, do not think if you hold a degree of a creative field makes you a smart person". Ali tried to talk back and defend himself but his colleagues poked him to just remain silent. Ali went back to his desk after the whole mess, thinking about what has just happened? What did really go wrong? He felt badly insulted.

Ms. Lin left office after that shouting and ranting. Once the tormentor disappeared Ali's colleagues came straight to him trying to calm his nerves. He asked them if he did anything wrong. He was told that it was just her and he has to get used to such encounters. Ali was bewildered. For others, it was not big deal. It was just normal.

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Ali decided to quit the job and informed his colleagues about his decision. He was informed that Ms. Lin is leaving for Paris next day and shall return back to office after a week. Ali decided to stay until then. He respected his colleagues who were nice to him so he wanted to give a decent goodbye to them. Ultimately, Ali quit the job and did not meet his tormentor again.

Ali got to meet some of his colleagues later after two months on a dinner. They told him that she had a look at his work, liked the art work, and was wondering if Ali would like to join the office again and continue his work. Ali laughed loud on this news and told them that he would never ever step in that place again.

### **Narrative**

The case study is based on true and personal experience related to a close friend of the first author. However, identity of the company and characters have been disguised or changed to maintain confidentiality.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What are the main problems highlighted in this case?
2. What are the root causes of the problem?
3. What are the solutions or recommendations?