



November 28, 2010

Mike (& Cindy) Gingerich

An Airport Journal Day 1.0 "Jodi"



My thinly padded seat is one in a row of six that sit back-to-back overlooking the main crossroad of Hong Kong International Airport on the floor below. I can see the world from here.

Two women with brightly colored, sequin-laden scarves covering their heads just spotted each other from across the granite floored lobby and ran in to a long embrace.

Two chubby laughing Chinese brothers -- one in a gold lettered "Elvis Rules" shirt and the other a batman shirt -- are pretend shooting the arriving passengers below with their universal thumb-up pointing-finger guns, complete with pow-pow sound effects.

A smiling grandfather speaks intently to his dazed face, 2 year-old granddaughter.

I can hear the world from here too. This place is a testimony to the effectiveness of Babble. I can pick up at least half-a-dozen distinctly different languages without moving an inch. Suddenly they're all drowned out by the universal sound of a Nokia phone receiving a text

message. The lady beside me just sat down her can of Coke on the small table that joins our seats -- the taste that unites the world.

Hmm ... she and her friend look like they could be Filipino. A few of their words sound similar to Tagalog. I decide to risk it, "Taga saan ka?" (Where are you from) She answers in broken English, that she is from Indonesia and does not speak Tagalog. So I apologize and try to remember to stick to English.

Jodi is a 30 year-old widow with three children back in Indonesia. Sundays at the airport are her escape from work as a maid for a wealthy, young, Hong Kong family. It is her only day of rest from a job she does not really enjoy. She needs to work here though because there are no jobs back home and her family needs the income. Jodi's friend Nur speaks very little English but her eyes tell me she's out-going and a little mischievous for a Muslim woman.

Nur has been in Hong Kong for six months and Jodi for only two. Even my simple questions about their families bring tears to their eyes -- and mine -- no translation needed. I tell them that I'm a missionary and show them a family picture left on my camera from last year's beach trip.

Two SWAT team looking, machine gun toting airport security guys walk past two Buddhist monks in tan robes, backpacks, and loafers with white socks in the lobby below. Maybe there is a bigger game in play than me not being able to travel back to Manila with the rest of the Faith Academy basketball team and parents who were here for a tournament. Why me? Why here? Why now? Maybe just to sit and watch, and pray for a world I'm usually too busy to notice. Or just to strike up conversations with complete strangers ... like Jodi.

I ask about the music she is listening to on her MP3-playing cell phone. "Do you have any Indonesian music?" I ask. She offers me her headphones and puts on a song called "Jodi." She says it's "her song." I listen to the whole thing. I guess screaming guitars and emotion filled lyrics are pretty universal too.

After the song finishes I ask what it means. Jodi explains that it's a love song with a sad ending. I ask about the name of the song and she explains that "Jodi" is not her real name but only a nickname derived from the Indonesian word for sadness. It sort of means "lonely one." It has been her name since her husband died two years ago at age 29 from cancer.

Maybe I'm here just to smile and talk to this "lonely one" for a few minutes.

Jodi is playing peek-a-boo with a formerly crying Chinese baby in the row behind us. Babies' cries or giggles are the same in any language. So are the smiles of a mother.

"Jodi" and Nur just shook my hand and headed back to their "homes." Time to pray. I remember hearing one time that almost every Muslim that comes to Christ starts toward Him because of a message in a dream. Pleasant dreams, ladies. *God, please speak your Word in the dreams of this "lonely one" tonight. Turn her tears of mourning into Joy.*

Mike @ HK International Airport



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