

## APPENDIX 1: FULL TRANSCRIPTS

### First interview: Cooper

- Alice Cooper, how are you? I am Alice. Actually, I also studied in Hong Kong, graduating from the Chinese University. Yes, I studied in Hong Kong. After school, after graduation, I am working now, and at the same time I have also taken great interest in psychology and psychoanalysis. That's why I am studying a part-time degree. It is a PhD degree, about... also I am very interested in smoking, and in learning about smoking cigarettes. My thesis is about smoking. I have asked Soso of Field and Tab to organise some interviews for me. I also want to speak about this interview, which is not the same as usual interviews. The usual interviews... actually I work in marketing... so usually those interviews have about fifteen to thirty questions. The questions will be asked one by one. It won't be like that in this interview. Because ... what I want to know most is your story. So, I won't speak too much, but I will let you tell me your story. You may use your imagination sometimes, coz it is not about right or wrong. Say what crosses your mind; it's no problem. I just want to listen to your story. I have talked too much already, and I will try not to from now on and leave you to do the talking. I'm going to tell you the areas I am interested in, and you just need to speak what comes to your mind. There's no need to worry about whether it's right or not before you say something. Coz this interview is about your story, and nothing to do with anyone else's. That's about it. Firstly, could you introduce yourself? Anything you want to talk about, like your background or some introduction is fine. That way, I can get to know you more.
- Cooper Right, my name is Cooper. I am studying Hotel Management, I am in year one. I did the DSE exams this year, and I am twenty years old. I took a break for a few years. I started smoking when I was in form one, form two.
- Alice Why did you quit school? Did you want to work? To get some working experience? Or what?
- Cooper I was too happy-go-lucky. I repeated form two twice. I was fifteen, sixteen after spending three years doing form 2. At that time, I had a choice not to study, but then the school kicked me out anyway. Afterwards, I didn't go back school for three years.
- Alice Is there still nine years (compulsory education) ...? I graduated a long time ago. I'm actually quite old. Is there still nine years of free (and compulsory) education in Hong Kong?
- Cooper Oh yes, oh yes. That's why I was kicked out right away when I was fifteen or sixteen.
- Alice Right. You were not interested in studying, not fun at all?
- Cooper Right, those days... I went out a lot, for fun.
- Alice Mmm.

Cooper After that, I went back to evening school, enrolled to study form three, and I did that for about one or two months, and quit again. Around that time, I started working in a bar, on night shift. Then I came across a friend who referred me to a secondary school. I was admitted to study form four.

Alice Mmm.

Cooper Right. Then jumped... like that, actually skipped a lot of stuff, then form four. I was caught smoking at school, and got sent to study in an "unconventional high school". Have you heard of "unconventional high school"?

Alice Oh, what's that about?

Cooper It is a transition to normal school. Yeah, I studied there for half a year, then I got admitted back to the previous school I was at. Then I was transferred to another one in form five. Then in form six, I went back to the school before. Yes, it has been like that, back and forth between different schools, till now.

Alice You have a lot of perseverance, I think it is not easy, quit and then ...

Cooper Back again.

Alice Really, not easy at all.

Cooper Really difficult. Couldn't catch up with the (study) stuff.

Alice You worked day time when you were at evening school?

Cooper Didn't go (to evening school).

Alice Didn't go (to evening school), what time were evening school hours?

Cooper Seven o'clock.

Alice Seven o'clock to?

Cooper Nine forty-five.

Alice Wow, three good hours.

Cooper Yeah.

Alice So, it is not easy, not easy at all. Let's talk about your home, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

Cooper I've got an elder sister.

Alice A sister. Was she at the same school as you?

Cooper Not in secondary school. In primary school. She quit in form 2. Well, my mum also quit in form two but I didn't want the whole family to study just to form two! Then I realised that girls who failed in their studies would end-up good for nothing, so I went back to school. Sigh ... I don't know what to say about my sister. My sister is the kind who doesn't like to study or work. She likes cosplay (costume play). But she is a good girl, she doesn't smoke.

Alice Cosplay, like those dressing up in different costumes?

Cooper Role play.

Alice Oh, role play, so it is then, like in parties ... role playing what?

Cooper She probably is having fun with her friends, in those comics festivals.

Alice Oh. So, it is not like she was employed by the comics festivals organisers. She just went for fun with her friends.

Cooper For their own amusement.

Alice Oh. Very interesting. I saw some young people ... I call them young

people... they dressed up in special costumes and they go on the streets. So those are called cosplay (costume play) right?

Cooper Yeah.

Alice How was your relationship with your sister when you were little? How many years apart between you two?

Cooper One and a half years.

Alice Oh, so few. So, you two are buddies?

Cooper Actually, we are, but we argue all the time; we fight all the time ... bicker all the time and we beat each other.

Alice Umm. Well, having a sister is better than no sister. I don't have any brothers or sisters. I actually quite desire to have a sister or a brother.

Cooper But they can be troublesome sometimes. Perhaps my sister is not doing well; no work. Also, my daddy is not around. Then my mum ... mum's work is not stable, something like freelance. Household income is not high, and my sister just likes to have fun and always asks mum for money. There was a time mum refused to give her money as mum didn't have any, and she hit mum.

Alice Not really hitting, just having fun, right?

Cooper No. She lost her temper, smashing things, hitting. Not hitting very hard. It made my mum's mouth bleed.

Alice How old was she?

Cooper I think it was three years ago.

Alice Oh. Quite old already. Your mum was all right?

Cooper Nothing serious.

Alice Bleeding in the mouth is quite serious.

Cooper She threw something at her unintentionally.

Alice Umm ...

Cooper That's why, sigh! Having a brother or a sister is sometimes ...

Alice Between the two of you, would you be the one who is relatively more mature, progressive and stable? Compared to your sister ... coz you have been flexible (with your schooling and work) ... you are quite accomplished, I think.

Cooper Compared to my sister, yes.

Alice Doing this and that for so many years, and back to school to study now. It is not an easy thing.

Cooper Oh yes. Actually, it's quite hard work.

Alice Oh. Very hard work. Year one... how many years is your hotel management program?

Cooper Two years.

Alice Two years.

Cooper Two years for a high dip entry.

Alice So, you'll look for a job in a hotel in Hong Kong after graduation?

Cooper I am thinking of studying for a degree.

Alice How long does it take?

Cooper They said that I can transfer to an institute overseas after two years. I'll see by then. After that, it takes one and a half years to complete

the degree.

Alice Will be in the same school?

Cooper Not really. Will be transferred to another school overseas.

Alice Oh. That's quite good.

Cooper But it should be very expensive.

Alice Any scholarship?

Cooper Don't know yet, wait till then, coz the latter half year is still an unknown, and then who knows how long it takes to get there. Also, there are a lot of universities to choose from.

Alice Um. Any idea which one to choose?

Cooper Blue Mountain.

Alice Sounds familiar. Where is it?

Cooper I don't quite remember... maybe in Switzerland. It specialises in studies in tourism. I heard that it is also a hotel, and it has an open degree (programme). .. something like studying and practising at the same time.

Alice That's quite good. Is that self-sustaining, like no tuitions need to be paid? I work for you while I study here ... Is it like that?

Cooper Probably need to pay tuition.

Alice Oh, pay tuition, but less?

Cooper Should be.

Alice Overseas experience ... living overseas is already a good experience.

Cooper Yeah.

Alice Um, ok, you said that back then, your dad was seldom around. So, he is still not at home most of the time?

Cooper They're getting divorced.

Alice Oh, getting divorced ...

Cooper When I was little in primary school, he had a row with mum, and he went away.

Alice Ha.

Cooper Went away.

Alice Went away. Did he ever come back?

Cooper He did. He sent a letter, in form one and said he was working as illegal worker in Italy, but he got caught. He asked our uncle, his younger brother, to send him money for the court case. After the court case, he came back. We met two, three times, and then he disappeared again.

Alice Disappeared. Hmm, how old were you when he disappeared for the first time? Which year in primary school?

Cooper Primary two, primary three.

Alice Very young.

Cooper Yeah.

Alice He disappeared, just like that.

Cooper The night before ... my parents had a row... I heard them arguing. Then my sister forced me to go to bed, and I didn't see him anymore when I got up the next morning.

Alice Couldn't find him.

Cooper Tried keeping in touch with him during that time. Later, I didn't see him for a while. Then he called home, said he had been in hospital, but nothing serious and not to worry. He has been out of touch after that phone call.

Alice Then he was caught working illegally in Italy, and now getting divorced. So, they were not divorced in those years he was away? It's only until recently they discussed that? Is he in Hong Kong, or still in Italy?

Cooper Don't know. We can't find him. He worked as an illegal labourer in Italy. He came back after the court case, and he met us a few times ... then we couldn't find him again.

Alice Oh, do you miss your dad?

Cooper It's not too bad. Can't say I miss him too much. Perhaps because I was little when he went away. We are very used to living with mum, the three of us together.

Alice Should be six, seven years old then.

Cooper Oh yes, very little... around eight, nine years old.

Alice Your sister was ten years old, give and take, but still really little.

Cooper Oh yes.

Alice So now, can you tell me the happy childhood moments you can remember?

Cooper The happiest time, I think I was with my friends. There's a group of friends, really good friends ... we can talk and do anything and there's no need to think too much. Sometimes, at home, I just felt unsettled. My mum asked me for money all the time, and my sister also asked me for money all the time. And I have to do everything for them.

Alice Um. A lot of burden on your shoulders. Are you working now? Shouldn't be, right?

Cooper Yes, I have a job.

Alice So, you are working ... working and studying?

Cooper Oh yes.

Alice Wow, that's really something.

Cooper But my job is very free, doing finance stuff, soliciting clients and I don't really need to be in the office. So time is on my side.

Alice Do you have full day school?

Cooper I go when there are classes.

Alice Um.

Cooper Just like today. No school today. Sometimes just a few hours.

Alice Um. Does your mum have a job now?

Cooper Mum works in a Chinese herbs wholesale place. Her income is not stable; her working hours are not stable. They do wholesale to drug stores.

Alice Oh! Um, so it turns out that most of the time, you are the only one who supports the family financially.

Cooper Yes.

Alice Um. You are such a good girl.

Cooper What else can I do?

Alice Really good girl.

Cooper It is all in my face; I really can't ignore it.

Alice Your sister does not want to get a job?

Cooper Right. She relies on her boyfriend to look after her.

Alice Um.

Cooper It's been slightly better recently. Her boyfriend seems to have a job now. Before that, she just kept asking mum for money.

Alice Um. But you three live in the same flat?

Cooper Yes.

Alice Your sister hasn't moved... hasn't moved out for now.

Cooper No, she hasn't moved out.

Alice Do you remember any particular moment or event that made you very happy?

Cooper With friends, probably in the Flower Market in Victoria Park, in a stall which was set up and ran by my friend's family. We went there to help. That time we only slept just a few hours every day. We drove over there in the morning, and left at midnight. We stayed there for three meals every day, coz there were so many people. Then we pushed our way out, and pushed our way back in. It was so hard, and we used a bucket behind the stall, and used it like a home-made toilet. Back then everything was there. I was so happy at that time, and we had so much fun. We shouted, "Flowers for sale here! Come and buy flowers here!" until we almost lost our voices.

Alice Was the business good?

Cooper Not too bad.

Alice How long did you work in the stall for? Two weeks?

Cooper Not really, something like five days, give and take. That's the Chinese New Year market.

Alice Right, Chinese New Year market! How long ago was this?

Cooper Two years ago, I think.

Alice Two years. I haven't been there for a long time. I have only been to Victoria Park twice. So many people!

Cooper So many people! We couldn't get back in once we got out... goodness knows how long it took to get back in!

Alice Weren't there many mobile toilets?

Cooper Not in the middle section. They were all in the front or at the back.

Alice So, you couldn't push your way there... in the front, at the back?

Cooper That's right. It was extra hard to push ... so many people ... and I couldn't push my way back in!

Alice Um. That was the happiest time even though there was so much hard work and sleeping for only few hours a day. Only you were there? Your sister too?

Cooper My sister, no.

Alice Oh. You and your sister don't have common friends?

Cooper Not the same crowd.

Alice Oh. Even the age groups are different.

Cooper Her friends are all in cosplay. All of them ... all of them read manga

and play TV games.

Alice Oh.

Cooper Oh yes. So not my type!

Alice Does she play games at home?

Cooper Yes, every day!

Alice Um.

Cooper She starts from midnight.

Alice Very interesting.

Cooper She gets up at midnight to play games and she goes to bed in the morning.

Alice Um. Right right. Mmm. So, is there... see? You just mentioned some moments of happiness that you still remember well. Are there any particularly unhappy moments that you remember?

Cooper The most miserable moment? No, not much... Coz after I had stopped school, I actually felt very free. Nothing much really concerned me. I think I am not very happy now because I am much more mature than my sister, and I feel responsible for a lot of things ... but maybe I've heaped this responsibility onto myself.

Alice Um.

Cooper Look, she is my elder sister. She should be the one who takes care of me. But it turns out that I am the one who looks after her; a younger sister to provide for her. I think it doesn't really make sense. Mum is also like that ... sigh, so is my elder sister. So be it. So much... so much on my shoulders.

Alice So, now you turn out to be the boss of the family.

Cooper Not like that. They come to me only when there are problems!

Alice Oh. They come to you only when there are problems! Mum is still the boss!

Cooper My older sister is the boss, I think.

Alice Ha? Your older sister?

Cooper Yes! Despite the behaviour of my elder sister, my mum won't be hard on her. She won't lecture her or tell her off. My sister is like a "little princess"; everyone and everything just revolve around her.

Alice Um.

Cooper Mum spoils her.

Alice Right. Nothing you can do.

Cooper I've tried. We used to have a maid when I was little. One time, my sister bought some boxes ... the maid saw them and thought they were useless, so she threw them away. My sister lost her temper, fetched a knife and pointed it at the maid. I really didn't know what to do with her. I couldn't really say anything to her. My mum didn't want to make a big fuss about it.

Alice But your sister doesn't have emotional problems and there's no need to...

Cooper I don't know.

Alice You don't know...

Cooper She wouldn't listen to us when we tried to get her to see a doctor. I

think she only goes mental when people don't follow her ways.  
Other than that, she is quite normal.

Alice Um. So, this is the unhappiest incident...

Cooper My responsibility becomes bigger is bigger. So, everything is on me! Like when my sister went to Taiwan for a holiday, she came to me for money, and I had to do all her hotel booking and buy an air ticket for her. I am the one who does everything for her! Even such simple things! And my mum would say, "Sigh, your sister doesn't know a thing, you should help her." It's easy, you just go on the Internet, fill out the personal information. There is no way she doesn't know how to do these things, but she just throws all these tasks to me!

Alice But you have to do it. Can you tell your mum you won't do it?

Cooper I can't since that's my field of study. Maybe I could really get her a good deal (on the Internet). But I don't know; I don't want to be like this. About the air ticket, she said she would pay me back. I got my boyfriend to help her coz I don't have a credit card. So my boyfriend used his credit card for the booking. And she didn't pay him back afterwards.

Alice Right. Then what? You paid him back for her?

Cooper Yeah, forget it. I think she seemed to have asked one relative to give her money for the Taiwan holiday. Then the relative gave the money to mum. But my mum didn't return the money to me. My mum said they wanted to have a regular monthly credit to a bank account, so they can apply for a credit card.

Alice Oh.

Cooper Then she said she would pay me back, but I don't think she will.

Alice Hmm. I agree. Once the money's gone, it won't be returned anymore. Can you tell me more about your elder sister, does she smoke?

Cooper Sister? No, she doesn't smoke.

Alice Nor your mum? You started smoking when you were in form one.

Cooper Umm.

Alice Under what circumstances did you start?

Cooper That time was just for fun. All of my friends smoked so I followed suit.

Alice Classmates?

Cooper Those classmates... the high school I went to ....they had students entering in the middle of the term ... the whole group followed them when they smoked, and I smoked too.

Alice Didn't you feel the taste was bad?

Cooper No.

Alice Oh. What did the first cigarette taste like?

Cooper At that time, I felt that it smelled really bad, and I choked. Since I didn't know how to smoke ... I didn't know how to draw in, so I choked.

Alice What was the brand? Do you remember? The first cigarette?

Cooper Should be Green Luck.

Alice Green Luck is...



Cooper Lucky  
Alice Lucky, the green one.  
Cooper Yes.  
Alice Did they sell it in Hong Kong then?  
Cooper Yes, they did.  
Alice I thought it was only available in duty free shops.  
Cooper Yes, they did ... they did have it on sale.  
Alice Oh, now you don't smoke green Lucky anymore?  
Cooper No, not anymore.  
Alice What do you smoke now?  
Cooper Ice Blue.  
Alice Marlboro Ice Blue, higher, or lower? I mean the tar level.  
Cooper Didn't pay attention (to the tar level)  
Alice Oh, so it's fine as long as it is a good smoke.  
Cooper Yes.  
Alice Um. So, has the number of cigarettes you smoke changed over time?  
Cooper I smoked very few at that time. Then I quit school... I had a friend and we've been very close until now. I repeated form two, repeated three years in form two, and she repeated three years in form one, and we became good friends. We moved out from our homes and shared a place. We lodged in someone else's home. After that, I started to smoke more and more.  
  
Alice Um. Moved out from your mum's place?  
Cooper Yes.  
Alice So, was your mum very unhappy? Coz you left at such a young age.  
Cooper Yes, she was very unhappy. She kept calling me, and I kept leaving her calls unanswered. I remember the first time when I didn't go home to sleep at night. She sat at home and didn't sleep, and she waited for me until deep red veins appeared in her eyeballs.  
  
Alice Wow! Where was your elder sister? At home too?  
Cooper Yeah.  
Alice Was your sister concerned about you?  
Cooper I don't know. I think she was asleep.  
Alice Um. So, it was that day, that time that you and your friend had made up your minds to move out to another place...  
Cooper Not that time. After she had deep red veins in her eyes. After that, I moved out to my friend's boyfriend's place.  
Alice Um. So, it was near your home, wasn't it? Was it far?  
Cooper Quite near.  
Alice Did your mum know where you had moved to?  
Cooper She should know. She was really smart. She put a GPS in my phone!  
Alice So smart.  
Cooper Oh yes. Sometimes she would text me, "I can check your position at this number. Call this and that number if you want to delete this message."  
  
Alice Ha! What kind of phone do you have? Was it iPhone?  
Cooper No. I don't know what she did, but the message was sent from my

network provider.

Alice Did you call to cancel it?

Cooper Yes, I did.

Alice Oh. You called to cancel it right after receiving the text message.

Cooper Yes. Just press some numbers ... texted something and then it was cancelled.

Alice So how long had you lived away from home?

Cooper Almost a year, I think.

Alice Almost a year. So about form two, three.

Cooper Oh yes. About form three. Counting back ... it's form three.

Alice Did you have a job then?

Cooper No.

Alice No job. Did your mum give you pocket money then?

Cooper She did once when I returned home.

Alice You asked her for pocket money?

Cooper I didn't listen to her, and I used up all my money. Then I just went home and asked for money, and took off after that.

Alice Oh. I wonder why you had such an idea back then... Have I ever thought of leaving home? Ah, I haven't. I had thought of running away, but not away from home. My father and mother had to work, so they didn't have time to look after me and they had to put me in a nursery. I had a fight with the carer and the kids there. I was so angry. Then I ran away. That nursery was close to my home, just two blocks away. From then onwards I insisted on staying at home and refused to go to the nursery anymore. Just that time.

Cooper Why did I do it? Actually, it is not that I really wanted to leave home. I just wanted to be with my friends. And my best friend would live there, so I went with her together.

Alice Her boyfriend had his own apartment. It was his parents' apartment.

Cooper He was supposed to live with his grandma, but his grandma had returned to the mainland, so it was only just him in that apartment.

Alice Oh, so you lived with friends ... Did you have a good time that year when you lived with your friends?

Cooper It's okay. But I wasn't there the whole year. I was there, I think about three, four months. Then they broke up. After that, we were here and there. Yeah, I was very happy then, drinking, listening to loud music, we turned up the music really loud.

Alice She had quit studying then?

Cooper Not studying anymore.

Alice Not studying anymore.

Cooper I got a place but didn't go to school.

Alice Oh, so did you have a job?

Cooper No.

Alice No work. Wow, that year was...

Cooper Very happy.

Alice Happy. I thought it would be a big thing to you. I think we are quite different. Back then, I studied at the Chinese University, at that time

we were guaranteed one year boarding out of the four years of study, no matter how close you lived. I lived in Shatin at that time and CU was not far away, in Tai Po. But still, I took that boarding space. Actually, it was a good opportunity to be away from home, to be more independent. But I went home three times a week. Sometime later, I even took home my dirty laundry to be washed. So, I was not quite living in the boarding house, coz I didn't feel too comfortable living with strangers, since I was in a twin-sharing room. There was nothing wrong between my roommate and I ... nothing particular about her, but we were not close and I didn't really like to be in the same room with her. Therefore, I went home three times a week. I always went home at weekends. So, I want to understand if you were really happy living with friends, and not being controlled by your mum.

Cooper Maybe it was because I could choose who I lived with but you couldn't.

Alice Ah, so it is.

Cooper We lived together coz there was good chemistry between us.

Alice Your mum kept calling you day and night, but you didn't answer her calls. Did she continue to call you?

Cooper Oh yes. So, I got my friend to answer the phone and she told her I was away in the toilet. There was once when I answered the phone by mistake, and I tried to speak in a fake voice, saying, "She is away in the toilet." Then she said, "You are my daughter. How could I not recognise your voice?" Then she asked when I would be home. I said, "All right, all right, bye bye." Like that.

Alice But, your mum didn't go to your place to find you, to drag you home?

Cooper No, no. She didn't know the exact address, I suppose. She only knew it was somewhere near where they lived.

Alice Um. So, a year later, why did you decide to go home?

Cooper No. Actually you couldn't say that I had really moved out from home. Maybe it was because my friend broke up with her boyfriend, then we went out a lot for fun. We slept around in different people's places. When we were out late, we slept over somewhere. When nothing happened, I would go home to sleep. Actually, it was not much fun afterwards, so I went home, and sometimes I didn't quite sleep at home. After that year, sometimes I would stay with my boyfriend for a few months.

Alice Oh, not a few days, but a few months. Did your mum keep calling you day and night?

Cooper I did answer her calls during that period.

Alice Oh.

Cooper Afterwards, perhaps I got older, I didn't really want to ignore family members' phone calls. So, I answered her calls, and she felt more at ease.

Alice Oh, so contrarily, the older you got, the more you felt like obliging

her, taking her calls?

Cooper I didn't want her to get worried.

Alice Matured, coz you got older.

Cooper Yes.

Alice Um. Can you tell me how many cigarettes you smoked yesterday?

Cooper About half a pack.

Alice Half a pack.

Cooper Around ten cigarettes.

Alice Can you tell me about the ideal cigarette you smoked yesterday? And how it felt?

Cooper How was the feeling, actually I didn't have any particular feeling.

Alice The ideal cigarette...

Cooper Probably the first cigarette when I got up in the morning. Should be the first cigarette right out of bed. Coz after a whole night sleep, since I hadn't smoked for a few hours, the sensation from the first puff is usually stronger. The feeling was "strong"; it gets me completely awake.

Alice Um. Usually on an empty-stomach, or smoke after breakfast?

Cooper I smoke on an empty-stomach. I usually don't eat breakfast.

Alice Oh. You don't eat breakfast. Do you eat lunch and dinner?

Cooper Yes, I do.

Alice You only skip breakfast?

Cooper Yes.

Alice Do you usually smoke before sleep?

Cooper After smoking... if I smoke before bed, I would wait a little after smoking, then go to bed. Coz the cigarette will leave a smell in my mouth. Smoking would pick me up, so I can't get to sleep right away. I just wait a little after smoking, then go to bed.

Alice So, you smoked around ten cigarettes yesterday, and you felt that the ideal one was the first one after you woke up from bed.

Cooper Yes.

Alice I don't smoke, therefore, I actually have difficulty understanding the sensation of smoking. So, I need you to help me understand the feeling when you smoke.

Cooper I feel that I am more awake, the whole body would wake up. Sigh, coz if I don't smoke when I get up, it would be very difficult for me to get out of bed. I just need to smoke a cigarette to wake me up.

Alice What is the world like when you are smoking?

Cooper The feeling of the world...

Alice Someone said to me... I have many friends who smoke, and they told me that sometimes when they smoke, they feel like everything is exaggerated, like they have gone into another world. That world is very quiet, and it feels like he is alone, with no one there to bother him. So, in that world, he can do whatever he likes. All the unhappy stuff is left behind at that moment. Someone illustrated the feeling like this. So, I want to know what kind of world it is when you smoke, and how you feel about it.

- Cooper I think, if the world of smoking is like that, it can't be the first cigarette. Sometimes, when I was unhappy, like after breaking up with my boyfriend, I just smoked, smoked, and smoked, and then blew the smoke out. Afterwards I just cried, cried and cried. I felt like... how should I put it... maybe there is only me in the world (of smoking) ... I really don't know how to express it, probably just want to blow it (the smoke) all out, then all would be gone, out! I think smoking and emotions are closely linked together. Coz I just smoke when I am very happy, when I go out drinking at night, or when I'm not happy. Within an hour... I usually smoke one cigarette every one to two hours. When I am happy or unhappy, I can smoke three to four cigarettes in an hour. There was a time when I was super, super unhappy. I chain-smoked, three to four cigarettes, until I felt like throwing up.
- Alice What is the role of the cigarette when you are unhappy?
- Cooper I feel better (after smoking), at least. Perhaps I think I am doing something, and there's no need to think about unhappy things. Having a cigarette to keep me company, so that I am not alone.
- Alice Um. So what is the feeling like if you smoke when you are happy?
- Cooper When I'm happy, I just want to do something, do something, then I smoke. When I'm happy, I won't smoke the cigarette to the end. I would just light the cigarette, smoke half of it, and stub it out. Then I take another one out, and smoke that one. That feeling ... that feeling... is very happy. Actually, it's nothing too extraordinary.
- Alice What was the last occasion when you had a happy cigarette, do you remember?
- Cooper Should be the time with a good friend. A boy we haven't seen for a long time, so we went drinking. Then we talked about the good old days. We just smoked and smoked that time.
- Alice Um. Does he smoke?
- Cooper He does.
- Alice So, he does. That's interesting. Just a while ago, you said you wouldn't smoke the entire cigarette when you are happy, and that you would smoke only half of it, and then smoke another one. On the contrary, you won't when you are not happy, is that so?
- Cooper I won't if I am not happy. When I am not happy, I will definitely smoke out the entire cigarette.
- Alice So, will you smoke more than usual? Smoke to the very bottom?
- Cooper Not necessarily. Coz the filter at the very bottom will melt and it's hot. My fingers will feel the burning sensation. Also, the smoke will taste like burning plastic. So, I won't ever smoke a cigarette to the bottom.
- Alice Ah, so amusing. I am thinking you smoke half of the cigarette when you are happy, one after another, chain-smoke.
- Cooper When I am happy, I won't smoke to the end of the cigarette. It's just because when you are happy and drinking, there will be a lot of action, like when we're playing dice. Sometimes you keep losing, but you don't want to drink too much, so I just fetch a cigarette to

smoke. Or when I get bored from continuous games too much, I will also fetch a cigarette, smoke maybe half of it, then I go back for some fun. Anyway, I definitely won't smoke the whole cigarette. I rarely smoke to the end of a cigarette.

Alice Is there a specific time of the day you usually smoke? Or is there any specific time you would not smoke? Can you smoke at school?

Cooper I will smoke during recess at school. I don't smoke at home.

Alice Oh, definitely not smoke at home.

Cooper Coz no one else smokes at home.

Alice You don't want to irritate them with the smoke, or what?

Cooper Yes. Also, my sister "little princess" always says, "Sigh! Cigarettes are foul." And when I blow the smoke out, she just coughs and throws up.

Alice Your mum knows you smoking?

Cooper Yes, she does.

Alice Has she said anything about it?

Cooper She asked me to quit. Coz, hers and daddy's folks have had throat-nose cancer and died. Then she spoke to me, "My folks are like that, your daddy's also like that. It is hereditary and it's easy for you to get cancer too. Do you still want to go on smoking?"

Alice Um. But you don't care.

Cooper No. I just said, "Got it, got it! This is not my pack (of cigarettes). I'm just keeping it for others!"

Alice Um. But you definitely don't smoke at home.

Cooper That's right.

Alice You just don't want your sister to nag, nag, nag ...

Cooper Midday, my mum is up and about. At that time, my sister is snoring at home. At midnight, my sister is up. So my home is occupied 24 hours a day. I can only smoke when both of them are asleep, so forget it!

Alice Um. Do you have your own room at home, or share a room with your sister?

Cooper I have my own room.

Alice So, three rooms there.

Cooper The other room is for my sister and mum. Actually, my sister and I used to be in the same room, but then she kept heaps of things on her bed, and slept in my bed. After that, I went to my mum's bed and slept there. Then she put heaps of things on my bed too, and came to sleep with us. The three of us in one bed! I could not bear it anymore, so I went to tidy up my own bed, and went back there to sleep.

Alice And she carries on sleeping with your mum?

Cooper Right.

Alice Her bed is still full of stuff.

Cooper Yeah, she came back after tidying up.

Alice Two beds, or a bunk bed?

Cooper You may call it a bunk bed. There's a slide-out bed at the bottom.

Alice           The slide-out bed is full of stuff?  
 Cooper       Yeah, it slid-out, heaps of stuff was put on it and then it couldn't slide back in.

Alice           Oh. You sleep on the other bed now?  
 Cooper       I sleep on the slide-out one.

Alice           Oh. You sleep on the slide-out one. You are such a good girl, letting your sister sleep on the better bed.

Cooper       No choice.

Alice           Do you always lose to your sister in fights?  
 Cooper       Sigh ... I don't bother to fight with her so much. And she is my older sister, and she is not brainy ... why bother to fight at all?

Alice           Mmm.

Cooper       There was a time, I fought hard with her. One time, I was using my computer at home for my project. She demanded to use my computer for games when she came home. I was working; I was using it, why should I let her use it? Hey, I am your little sister, don't you think you should let me (use it)? Then she lost her temper big time, and tore off all the keys of the keyboards and smashed the keyboard in pieces.

Alice           Oh really. So, who fixed it, you or her?  
 Cooper       I fixed it.

Alice           Coz she lost her temper again?  
 Cooper       If I can't use it, nor can you! (she said)

Alice           So, what happened? Nobody could use it?  
 Cooper       We bought a new keyboard, plucked it into the USB slot.

Alice           Oh. Do you remember your worst temper tantrum? When was that? And was it at home?

Cooper       I think that was the one.

Alice           Oh. The one with the keyboard smashed to pieces?  
 Cooper       Or, there was an instance when I was little, when my old man was still around. My old man was the chauvinistic type; a very fiery type. At that time, he beat us all the time, so I thought I must do the same to him. He lifted me up and beat me. I intended to fight back, but he grabbed me and hung me up.

Alice           How old were you then?  
 Cooper       Very little, not even in primary one, I think.

Alice           So little indeed, at that time.  
 Cooper       Six, seven years old, or less.

Alice           Less than that, He actually lifted you up by the foot and beat you?  
 Cooper       Lifted me up by the arm, I was dangling.

Alice           Lift you up by the arm ... you were dangling ... and he beat you?  
 Cooper       Yes.

Alice           Aiya. So how could you fight back? Did you try to fight back?  
 Cooper       Before that, when he was dragging me and beating me, we were very close, and I struck back. But my arms were not long enough to hit him.

Alice           Were you injured or not? Were you beaten really hard?

Cooper It was not too bad, but mum came out to stop him. Coz mum is the loving, caring type.

Alice Did mum beat you when you were little?

Cooper Mum didn't. Just one time, mum slapped me in the face, coz I was smoking.

Alice Oh.

Cooper The first time she found out I smoked.

Alice How old were you then?

Cooper Should be shortly after I first started smoking ... the time from form 1 to form two.

Alice Um. How did she find out?

Cooper There was cigarette smell on me.

Alice Then she asked, "Did you smoke?"

Cooper Then she sniffed my hand, and sniffed my mouth.

Alice Did you deny it?

Cooper Just when she started sniffing at my hand, she saw I got a pack of cigarettes. She asked about it, and I denied it. I said I kept it for others. Then she said, "Really smart! I've never heard of such an excuse!" Then she sniffed about. "So, you also smoked for others!" I really couldn't deny it any more.

Alice Then she slapped you in the face.

Cooper Oh yes.

Alice So, what happened afterwards, as a closing?

Cooper Nothing. I didn't dare to utter a sound.

Alice Did you cry?

Cooper No. The slap wasn't too hard.

Alice Afterwards, she wasn't on speaking terms with you for a while?

Cooper Not really.

Alice Oh, so it was like nothing happened?

Cooper That's right. Coz we were in good relations. Perhaps there were just us ... three women clinging onto each other since we were little. We are really like friends. When people see us, maybe because my mum looks young, they don't think she is my mum. She is more like our elder sister.

Alice How old is your mum?

Cooper Forty-one this year.

Alice Forty-one, really young... So, she gave birth to you when she was twenty-one.

Cooper Yes.

Alice Um. Can you tell me about any interesting episodes with your mum when you were little? Stuff that made you most happy, or most amused?

Cooper Interesting episodes?

Alice Or those you still well remember now, really happy incidents.

Cooper With mum?

Alice With daddy too, if you remember any.

Cooper Maybe with mum. We went to Disneyland with my elder sister. That



was really fun. We got the tickets from a social worker. At that time, the social worker thought my mum was my elder sister, and my elder sister was my mum.

Alice Your sister looks older?

Cooper Maybe because her skin is really, really bad. What a blunder! It was so funny. Then we went out for fun. Later... we went to Ocean Park, I think. I remember my mum went on the Pirate ride. She is actually quite scared of these rides, but she that time, she wanted to go on. Then I was so scared; I was also very scared. I was so scared that I didn't dare to look, and my mum was so frightened that she froze. Her face went pale green, shocked out of any expression. My sister was not frightened, and we just looked at my mum.

Alice How old were you then?

Cooper I think I was in primary six.

Alice In primary six, so eleven years old, ten, eleven years old.

Cooper Twelve, thirteen.

Alice Twelve, thirteen. Oh, that is so memorable. Did you laugh at your mum?

Cooper No. I didn't. How could I? I was also very frightened.

Alice So that's the most unforgettable incident. Are there any other unforgettable, happy memories?

Cooper A happy one. Perhaps the time when I was helping my mum. I sometimes carried the goods for her to deliver to the shops. I don't think my elder sister is willing to give help like this. Perhaps because my sister wouldn't do it, I was the only one helping her to finish this (the task). After I go to school, I had my own job. After that, I was still willing to help mum. I had a sense of pride and happiness inside of me.

Alice Oh. That happiness is "Look, how useful (helpful) I am!"

Cooper Oh yes. You look at me, and look at my sister.

Alice So, look, compared with my sister, I am so useful (deserving)!

Cooper Right.

Alice Do you remember any happy episodes with dad?

Cooper Can't remember. I was too little. My impression is that my dad was very stupid. My mum said so about my father. When we were moving to a new house, she asked my dad to double check to see if there was anything left behind. He said no. Then we went off to the new flat. Suddenly we noticed that a picture was missing, and it turned out that it was in the old flat. Before we left the old flat, he looked around a few times and he still missed that! So, my impression is that my father is stupid. After that, he had a row with my mum once. My father had his own company in interior decoration. He always had bad debts. Some people didn't pay him (for the work done), but he had to pay his workers, so he really messed up the family money. That was why my mum kept saying that he was stupid.

Alice How much older is your dad compared to your mum?

Cooper        Something like two, three years older.

Alice         Still very young.

Cooper        But we don't know where he has gone off to.

Alice         Do you want to find out?

Cooper        Actually, I wouldn't say I really want to. Also, we haven't moved to a new place since he left, and we haven't changed our phone number. He can find us if he wants to. So, I think if he doesn't want to look for us, then perhaps the status quo is better. The three of us are quite happy now. Maybe the reason he doesn't come back is that he is happy too. So, it is better for him not to come back at all.

Alice         In your mind, what do you think of your mum, ever since you were little?

Cooper        She's a very young mother. Coz, no one would believe that she is my mum when they see her. She is really trendy, and it was she who taught me how to use WeChat and WhatsApp. She taught me all these. Right, and she thinks highly of me. When I broke up with my boyfriend, she thought it was I who dumped my boyfriend. That has made me try to hide things from her. But she wants to be close with me. She also has a boyfriend, so she may think that we should have something in common. So what kind of a person is she? She is a very, very, very... well, she never speaks loudly on the street; she's very polite. Maybe she would nag, nag, nag when we get home, but never when we are in public. For instance, I said to her, "Look, the guy is so and so ..." She would just smile and not respond to it, in case we were heard. She is very well-mannered when she goes out.

Alice         Mmm. You feel that she thinks highly of you; that's very important to you, but it makes you hold back. What are those things you deliberately held back from her, something that you don't want her to know?

Cooper        Probably things about my boyfriend. She also thinks my boyfriend is stupid. I don't bother to talk too much about him and I would deliberately hide things about my boyfriend from her. Like some time ago, I bought a mattress with my boyfriend. We spent something like four thousand dollars. Then my mum found out about it, she said, 'Aiya, people cheated on you. Why is your boyfriend so stupid?' Then I said, "No, I think the mattress is very comfortable, so I asked him to buy it. He thought it was expensive too." So, I kind of deliberately covered for my boyfriend.

Alice         You don't want her to know stuff about your boyfriend.

Cooper        I don't want her to think my boyfriend is stupid, or even more stupid. She already thinks so now.

Alice         Does she think that your elder sister is stupid?

Cooper        I don't think so. She doesn't talk about these things with my sister. Coz my sister just plays TV games the moment she is out of bed. Shortly afterwards, my mum goes to bed, so they have very little contact.

Alice         Oh. Where is your home? Who has been doing the cooking and

tidying since you were little?

Cooper No cooking or tidying at home.

Alice What? No home cooking?

Cooper I do the tidying up. But what's the point? I got told off by my sister after tidying up. She said, "Aiya, why did you tidy up? Where are my things now? People put things somewhere, you should just let the things be there. I know where to find them when I want them. Now you cleared everything up, and I have no clue where my things are." The kitchen is full of junk, heaps of stuff, coz for many years, there was no cooking after the maid quit. Then my mum needed to work and my sister and I were little. So the kitchen became obsolete. We used a microwave in the past. Then my mum said it was that microwaved food is cancerous. So, she dumped it.

Alice Dumped it? So, you eat out every meal?

Cooper We eat outside before going home.

Alice Even lunch?

Cooper Oh yes, three meals a day.

Alice Does your sister eat out like that too?

Cooper Yes.

Alice Can you cook?

Cooper Can I cook? No utensils to cook with.

Alice Oh. Not even a wok there?

Cooper There should be one, but I don't know where it is. Also, the stove has not been used for so long. Maybe it is dangerous; it might blow up.

Alice It's possible. You haven't used it for such a long time.

Cooper So, I just don't bother to cook.

Alice Do you cook at your boyfriend's place?

Cooper I do.

Alice Oh, you do. So, you don't cook at home only because there are no cooking utensils.

Cooper Oh yes. Now we are much better after buying a steamer. My elder sister just needs to put water to steam rice.

Alice Does it work?

Cooper It works.

Alice Ah, it steams. I thought only rice cookers could do that.

Cooper It works.

Alice So, the steamer is the only cooking apparatus at home?

Cooper Oh yes, but my sister never refills the water, it gets dried out. We so want to punch her. How do you steam without water? It's so dangerous!

Alice Is that the one with three levels?

Cooper There are three levels but you need to add water at the bottom.

Alice Oh. Never used it before; I wouldn't know.

Cooper It is very dangerous if she doesn't refill the water. The steamer gets dried up and it can easily blow up. I so want to throw it away.

Alice Now, I want to ask something ... regarding some children ... when you were much younger, say two to four years old, do you remember

having some kind of dolls that you wouldn't let go of? You would go everywhere with them?

Cooper I do; I have two.

Alice Two... can you tell me more about them?

Cooper One was given to me by a relative when I was born, so it is as old as I am and has the same birthday as me. Then there is another but I don't remember much about when I got it because I was so little. I only remember seeing it when we passed by a place with dolls (for sale). I said, "I want to have it." My old man wouldn't buy it and tore me away. I cried and sobbed and wept. Later, my mum went back by herself to buy me the doll. In the past, my mum would take it away whenever I was naughty. She'd say to me, "I have thrown it away." Oh no. I cried badly. Later, I came to discover that it was hidden in the tumble dryer. After that, whenever she said she'd thrown it away, I wouldn't believe her and would always go to the tumble dryer to find it.

Alice What kind of dolls are they?

Cooper One is a bear, a very common one. One is Melody.

Alice They are still here?

Cooper Still here.

Alice (Your mum) still threatens you?

Cooper No, not anymore now.

Alice You played with the two dolls until you were how old?

Cooper Until how old? Actually, I still hold them in my arms when I sleep. So, there is no such thing as until what age. On the contrary, I am the one who threatens my mum now. Coz my mum is not drinking enough water. She just keeps drinking coffee. So, I say to her, "If you don't drink water, I will throw your dog away."

Alice Ha, she has a dog?

Cooper Oh yes, not a toy poodle, a real dog.

Alice A real dog.

Cooper The dog is very old and it is blind. So, I said, "If you don't drink water ..." I threaten her...

Alice Does she go and drink water, fearing that you will throw her dog away, or does she think it's just an empty threat?

Cooper She does.

Alice What kind of a dog it is?

Cooper Schnauzer, a mixed breed one.

Alice Like Shar Pei, or those long-haired one.

Cooper With long hair.

Alice How long has it been with you?

Cooper The dog, actually not a long time. Coz we have had three dogs before, but they all passed away. Three of them passed away. This one was given to her by her boyfriend. It's been with us for half a year. But the dog is quite old, sixteen years old already.

Alice This kind of dog.... usually how many years do they live until?

Cooper Actually, sixteen years old is already quite old.

Alice Is that so?

Cooper Sixteen years for dogs equals to eighty something human years.

Alice Oh, really something! So already quite old.

Cooper Yeah, it had an operation some time ago.

Alice Um. All those dogs that died were your mum's?

Cooper Yes, you may say so.

Alice So, every time a dog died, was she devastated?

Cooper Yes, the whole family would be very sad. Coz, they had been with us for a long time.

Alice What kind of dogs were they? Were they of similar breed?

Cooper Pomeranian.

Alice Ah, Pomeranian. I've heard of it.

Cooper One Pomeranian, one Yorkshire, one mixed-breed.

Alice Um. You kept one after another, or three of them together at one time?

Cooper One after another. One was caught when I was in kindergarten. The occasion we caught it was so funny. I saw it when I finished my drawing class, so I quickly put it into my drawing bag. Then we got in a taxi to head home. Just when the driver was about to start the car, someone knocked on the taxi door. It must have been the owner. Then the driver asked, "Do you know the guy?" I said "I don't know the guy. Drive on!"

Alice Just like that, you kidnapped someone else's dog?

Cooper Yeah, coz I saw it lolling and loafing around and it was so cute! So I just took it home. The second one we bought when I was in form one. That was a Pomeranian, from a pet shop. The third one was from my mum's friend. If we didn't keep the dog, he was going to have it put down. Coz his original idea was to buy a new dog to keep this old dog company. However, the two could not get along. They were fighting all the time and biting each other. So, he was thinking about having the old one put down. Meanwhile, he asked my mum if she wanted to keep it, and she did. That's why it is here.

Alice So, there were four, including the existing one.

Cooper Yes.

Alice But then you don't know how long it will live. People who raise dogs usually won't keep cats, right?

Cooper Right, I haven't looked after a cat before. I want to try.

Alice Do you like cats?

Cooper I like them, but I've never raised any before. Also, my home is a mess. How can we raise a cat? And I worry that it may bite cables.

Alice So, dogs don't bite cables?

Cooper No, they don't.

Alice Really. So tractable. Who takes it out for walks?

Cooper We do, we all do.

Alice Your sister too?

Cooper I think so. I don't know. She takes it out at times. She took it to a BBQ once.

Alice How many times do you need to walk the dog each day?

Cooper Once is enough.

Alice Once is enough...

Cooper Yes.

Alice So poo poo too, all during the same walk?

Cooper They know how to poo poo at home. Also they are small dogs, not those big breeds. Big dogs like going out. But ours are small, and suitable for home rearing. They are okay even if they don't go out.

Alice That's interesting. I have never kept a dog. Actually, I am slightly afraid of dogs. My neighbour has a dog. I hate its guts ... barking non-stop. I've been thinking ... when is it going to die!

Cooper That's really bad.

Alice But they are really bad. There are four flats on each floor. That dog and my horrible neighbour are lunatics. The dog is never put on the ground. It is always held in the arms of my mad neighbour. Going in and out, held in her arms all the time. So, every time it is in her arms, every time it sees people coming out from the lift, it just barks madly. It's one of those small, long haired ones, like a toy poodle.

Cooper Curly hair?

Alice Yes, brown colour, dark brown.

Cooper Poodle.

Alice Something like that. Some poodles are white coloured and shaved, so that their legs ... but that one doesn't look like a poodle.

Cooper Maybe it hasn't been shaved

Alice Oh yes, probably it wasn't shaved. That dog is quite a lunatic. There is a little boy living opposite us, about one to two years old. He has been frightened by that dog every time he comes out from his flat.

Cooper I think the dog wants to get down to the floor to play, but the owner just keeps holding it in her arms, not letting it go on the ground. No playing or walking.

Alice Could be. I think she is so afraid that people will poison her dog. Coz her dog is quite notorious in that area.

Cooper Really?

Alice Yes, that's my view on dogs, coz I've never had a dog.

Cooper Dogs are cute, and so good. They know how to follow their masters. But I am scared because some people don't keep their dogs on a leash. I've seen it many times. Even if they know their masters and will follow them, it shouldn't be like that. The dogs may suddenly get freaked out and run off and may get knocked down by a car! So horrible. It sends shivers down my spine. It's frightening! Every time I see any dog not on a leash, every step they walk, my nerves get rattled a little.

Alice Would you take it up and hold it in your arms?

Cooper The dog is someone else's. I can't just go and carry it; of course I wouldn't.

Alice But it's so scary, no dog leash.

Cooper Oh yes. I just look at it, and wonder if it would run out to the road at

the next moment.

Alice Um. I'd almost forgotten; I've just remembered something ... Do you usually smoke alone, or with friends?

Cooper By myself or with colleagues when I am at work. In my workplace, nine out of ten are smokers; that's why I smoke too. Sometimes we go out together to smoke when I work in the office. I usually smoke while I'm walking to the bus station ... I smoke by myself then.

Alice Ah. Let me ask again ... What's so good about smoking?

Cooper It's a habit. Maybe when I was little, I wanted to look for fun. But now, it's really a habit. I think I'm missing something if I don't smoke. Like at times, you may feel you're missing something, for example not having a phone to fiddle with. After all, I would be able to feel that moment when I want to smoke.

Alice What sort of moments are they ... the moment you fancy a smoke?

Cooper When I am out of bed, when I am on the street, or after dinner. Anyway, once I am out on the streets, I want to smoke, or even in places that smoking is not allowed, like in a shopping mall.

Alice The moment you are out of bed and fancy a smoke, besides waking you up, any other sensation can you feel? Actually, you could wake yourself up with other stuff, like eating a lemon.

Cooper Lemons are so sour.

Alice Or take a cup of coffee, a bottle of Coca Cola ... surely these can wake you up?

Cooper Perhaps I don't like Coke, and coffee makes me nauseous. Anyway, I want to smoke once I am up. Coz smoking takes longer than drinking, and it's that period of time (when I'm smoking) that can wake me up. It is not possible to be fully awake as soon as you are up. I need to wait for my brain to start turning, like waiting for an engine to start and warm up. That's why I smoke.

Alice You don't think it has a bad smell?

Cooper I don't think so. But if I don't smoke, like when I haven't smoked since waking up, and someone smokes next to me, I will feel the smell is bad.

Alice But you don't feel the bad smell when you smoke ...

Cooper Right.

Alice Would you smoke less or more in winter or summer? Any difference?

Cooper I smoke stronger cigarettes in winter, coz I feel warmer smoking strong cigarettes. I wonder if it is because of the fact that menthol cigarette has a minty and a cooler taste... therefore I smoke strong cigarettes in winter.

Alice Strong cigarettes, also menthol?

Cooper Not menthol.

Alice Oh, not menthol.

Cooper Those red top are strong cigarettes.

Alice So, you smoke Marlboro?

Cooper Yes, Marlboro Medium Red.

Alice Marlboro Medium Red... and you smoke menthol cigarettes in summer. Have you tried those with capsules?

Cooper Those have too much menthol. I think they overshadow the tobacco taste. I think those are for very young kids who have just start smoking. Actually, I can't feel the tobacco taste; it's all menthol taste, and I don't think it is a good taste.

Alice Have you experienced a sudden change of taste in your regular brand?

Cooper Marlboro Ice Blue, it has changed! All of a sudden it tastes differently! No matter where I buy it, I just feel that it tastes differently! I don't know what exactly the difference is, anyway, the taste is just different!

Alice Um. So, when you found out the taste has changed, what was your response?

Cooper I wondered if it is a counterfeit, because I am concerned with what stuff they put in there. Coz my former boyfriend was in cigarette bootlegging. He told me that menthol drips are used in some bootlegged menthol cigarettes. They just put menthol drips to create the menthol taste. Therefore, once I realise the difference in taste, it makes me nervous, not sure if it is a counterfeit, I don't know what stuff they've added to the cigarettes!

Alice Um. And no matter where you'd bought it, you found that the taste was different.

Cooper Right. But I even bought it in 7-11, there is no way that 7-11 would sell counterfeit cigarettes!

Alice Did you get so angry that you quit that brand? Angry with why they've changed the taste?

Cooper Yes, I did (get very angry). I stopped smoking it for one, two packs, but I smoked it again afterwards as its taste just miraculously came back ... despite the anger... maybe it has not changed at all!

Alice Now, you've gone back to the same brand.

Cooper Oh yes. Maybe it was just me ... smoking it for so long, so used to the feeling of it ... the taste of it. When I feel that the original taste (of my regular cigarette brand) has disappeared, I started trying out other brands. After a while when I went back to the old brand, its taste just miraculously came back. Perhaps it has not changed at all.

Alice Do you mix brands, smoke other brands?

Cooper Sometimes I smoke my boyfriend's cigarettes.

Alice Oh. What brand does he smoke?

Cooper He also smokes Marlboro, but different ones. Sometimes black Marlboro, sometimes those with double capsules.

Alice Ah, double capsules, have you tried those?

Cooper I feel that the taste is not good.

Alice They have blueberry taste, and other goodness-knows-what tastes.

Cooper Oh yes. I can smell the blueberry aroma, but I can't taste it when I smoke the cigarette. There was an orange flavour before, have you heard of it? It was in an orange packing?

Alice Ah, I think I have seen it.



Cooper White colour...

Alice Ah, what brand?

Cooper The base colour is white, with an orange circle. I could smell the orange aroma, but it has a don't-know-what taste when I smoked it. It's definitely not orange.

Alice Ah, I know. Is that the one called DJ Mix? The pack is yellow or orange?

Cooper I can't remember and I can't tell what brand. I only remember it's called orange cigarettes.

Alice Have you seen any tobacco advertising that made an impression on you?

Cooper Tobacco advertising? You mean those that are on cigarette packs?

Alice Um. What came to your mind when I mentioned tobacco advertising?

Cooper A leg, completely rotten.

Alice An image of a rotten leg.

Cooper A limp penis, rotten hands and rotten legs.

Alice Are you frightened?

Cooper Not really.

Alice Not frightened. So, you won't quit smoking because of images of rotten legs and rotten hands?

Cooper It can't be that serious. Even so, goodness knows how many years later, we will die anyway. If you ask me to change my habit just to prolong my life ... this kind of life is no fun. I'd rather die early and do what I like. That's what I think.

Alice Did you see any advertising in the eighties and nineties, when cigarette advertising was still allowed on electronic media?

Cooper No. Coz I seldom watch TV.

Alice You don't watch TV much ... so you've never seen the Marlboro cowboy advertising. When I said tobacco advertising, you thought of cigarette packs with rotten hands and rotten legs.

Cooper Or I would think of those buses, with advertisements of some "quit smoking hotline". I was forced (by my school authorities) to go there (Quit Smoking Association). It was actually quite useless.

Alice Oh, so the school authorities knew you smoked and forced you to quit?

Cooper Yes.

Alice When was that?

Cooper In form four.

Alice Form four.

Cooper I was in form four and my friend referred me there. I was late the first day of school, nothing special. I went to a friend's birthday party the next day, so I didn't go to school. At that time my friend had quit school, and I was a mid-term student. On the third day, my friend went back to school and we smoked in the toilet together. Then I was forced to go to an "unusual" high school, and a place to try and quit smoking.

Alice            You and your friend smoked in the toilet ... bad luck you were caught by the teacher ... then you were sent to a "Quit Smoking Association"?

Cooper        Yes.

Alice            How many times have you been there? Once or twice?

Cooper        Of course not! Something like four, five, six times. I can't really remember as it was quite a long time ago. I went something like once every fortnight.

Alice            Did your mum know about this?

Cooper        I think she knew.

Alice            Did she nag at you?

Cooper        No. I was not a kid anymore; I was in form four i.e., two years ago, I was eighteen already. So, no nagging.

Alice            Oh, quite interesting. Good, so that's about it for today. Let me tell you what I am going to do next. Today we have made some recordings. I will go back and listen to the recordings. I will have some follow-up questions on those topics that interest me, those that I want you to tell me more about. Around a week later, Soso will contact you again to arrange another one-hour interview. I will ask you something that I have missed in this interview. Actually, after this interview, if you have any particular feelings, anything you want to talk more about or to ask, you can tell me next time. It is not a problem at all. For now, do you have any questions?

Cooper        Not really.

Alice            Has this interview made you feel uncomfortable?

Cooper        Not at all.

Alice            No? Okay. Thank you so much for your help with my research. I will have two more years to go before graduation. It's so painful ... just the research proposal took me three years to complete!

Cooper        Three years for a proposal!

Alice            Oh yes. The first one was turned down by the professor. He didn't accept it and said it was not good enough. He said if I carried on with it, I'd better go to another school. So, I wrote another one about smoking coz I am very interested in it. I sent it to him. Since I have a full-time job, it took me a lot of time to write a proposal. Altogether, it took me three years to get my proposal accepted by the professor.

Cooper        I want to ask ... why are you interested in (knowing about) smoking?

Alice            This is quite interesting. This is actually a very interesting question. Coz I'm not only interested in smoking, I am also very interested in addictions. I was once in a conference organised by the school, which was very interesting ... I am studying psychoanalysis, which is a kind of human psychology. We know what's happening on the conscious level ... have you seen a movie called Inside Out? A film from Disney. What do you call it in Chinese?

Cooper        No, I haven't.

Alice            It is an animation and it's showing now. It's about a kid ...

Cooper        With a few compartments inside his brain ...

Alice Yes, those emotions, quite amusing, actually not quite relevant to what we were discussing just now...

Cooper Oh, it's already released now?

Alice Yes. It's been showing already for two weeks. You'd better hurry if you want to watch it.

Cooper Lots of people have watched it.

Alice Yes. My friends suggested watching it and that's why I went. I watched it only yesterday. I think it is quite amusing. It's actually about psychology ... very psychological stuff. I am interested in psychology. Also, I am keen to know more about addictions. But I don't smoke, and not familiar with other addictions. And, I want to understand more about myself through this study. Perhaps you haven't heard about this saying, but if you think more about it, you may find it very true. The saying is from a book. The book is called Wounded Researcher, which means a researcher who has gone through some trauma. In our lives, we often make decisions. For instance, I needed to decide whether to study arts or science subjects. So after I made the choice, I went to a certain school accordingly, onward to a certain kind of university or college, and then I picked a certain kind of job accordingly. You think all these choices are choices of your preferences and free will: I like arts subject that's why I choose arts. I like marketing, so I work in marketing, in hotel management. All are logical choices, but they are not. Those jobs, those choices are actually waiting for us to find them. Every big decision in our lives is not merely a random happening. It happens according to a central thread in our brains which links all our choices and decisions, but we don't know this. These reasons ... these reasons are not known to us. So, I am studying this subject in order to understand why I made those decisions. For instance, in the group of the twenty odd research students I am in, each has chosen different research subjects of their own. There is a reason why each student had picked that subject. Every job you are in, every decision you make, there is a reason behind it. The reason is something we have to find out for ourselves. The reason is related to all decisions I have made in my life, all decisions. Coz I don't know that reason, I have to find it.

Cooper Have you found it yet?

Alice Not yet.

Cooper Wow! Actually, it's very difficult.

Alice Yeah, those reasons are usually seeded in the first one to two years of your life ... those reasons are...

Cooper Karma?

Alice Yeah, and it's very much related to your mother or the person who nursed you.

Cooper So, actually it could be the one just next to us who has a great impact on us. I think so too. Coz my mum, I mentioned that my mum is the kind of person who is very well-mannered when she is in public. I am

- like that too, sometimes. When I go out with my boyfriend, I will say to him, "Don't do this, and don't speak so loud, bad manners!" I am like that too. My mum is like that, and I am like that. It's really related.
- Alice Definitely. Especially with you and your mum. Also, do pay attention ... I have observed from many of my friends, especially those whose fathers and mothers I also happen to know ... I have observed from these friends who are married, have children ... very often, their partners or husbands whom they have chosen, whether it was intentional or not, actually resemble their fathers! Not in appearance, but in personality.
- Cooper Equally stupid (in my case).
- Alice Stupid, but only from your perspective.
- Cooper One of the factors...
- Alice Right. It is so interesting. He (your partner) is really like your father, and you wonder why you have made such a choice.
- Cooper I think he (my boyfriend) will be like my son in the future. I often think that I talk to him like a mother.
- Alice Oh.
- Cooper Time and again, I said to him, "You are playing games again?" I feel that I am more like his mum.
- Alice Actually, do you feel more like a mother when you are at home?
- Cooper It happens, but not too often. I think ... my sister knows (how to deal with things) ... she is older than me, of course she should know ... So, if she behaves as she does, (and I think she's not right) why would I bother to say it out loud (to voice my concern / to criticise)? She won't listen to me even I say it out loud. If she has a brain, she should know even if I don't say it. Therefore, I don't concern myself with her affairs too much.
- Alice Um... It is interesting. Among those girls I know who are similar in age as you, you are more mature. I mean in thinking; you still look young, but your thinking is very mature.
- Cooper Maybe I quit school and came out to society early ... I have seen a lot more.
- Alice (Had more) life experience.
- Cooper Also, I studied and worked at the same time, and I had to take care of the family in many ways.
- Alice I think you have quite a lot on your shoulders, compared to others.
- Cooper Actually, I don't know if it's a good thing or not.
- Alice It's a good thing.
- Cooper Maybe ... it may be so for the future. But for someone my age, at present, the pressure is a lot bigger than others of the same age.
- Alice Therefore, earlier on ... you have said you are not happy. Is it because of the pressure, the load on your shoulders?
- Cooper I am the youngest in the family, but the busiest one. My family is not really supportive of me in school. It is me who wants to study again. My mum always says, "You study so much, but it's useless. You study,

- but you don't know a thing. It is not useful; it's a waste of money!" I borrowed money from the government to study, sort of like a grant & loan, and she kept asking about my boyfriend, coz he has a job. My mum kept borrowing money from my boyfriend, like three thousand this month, four thousand that month. We don't have much money... so my mum thinks that ... sigh ... why don't you quit school and go find a job!
- Alice Did you blame your mum for saying you should quit school and find a job, because it's useless for girls to study so much?
- Cooper No, I didn't. I just ignore her. I suppose it's because she doesn't think long enough into the future. The main reason for my going back to school is that I think if girls don't go to school, they are quite useless. People say just go find a husband! Let's say you don't have good qualifications, no knowledge, but you find a husband who is rich enough to provide for you. But what if your husband has affairs with other women? What can you do about it? Are you going to divorce him? Then what happens after the divorce? You have no work experience, no academic qualifications, who is going to provide for you? That's why I think girls must study, more so than boys.
- Alice Ah, from this perspective it is not bad thinking at all. It's actually quite good.
- Cooper For boys, quitting school and going to work as a blacksmith can earn them a few thousand dollars a day. What can a girl do? This is the most important point.
- Alice Does it concern you that you may need to provide for your elder sister and your mum in future?
- Cooper For my mum, I think I should do it no matter what. She has taken care of me for so long. For my sister, sigh, forget it. Let her boyfriend provide for her. I can't take so much responsibility. I can only take care of my mum.
- Alice It's tough, really not easy at all. Therefore, you have to work hard. I hope your wishes are answered. Finish the high diploma programme and complete the degree.
- Cooper A long way to go.
- Alice Not really. It should be done by the time you're twenty-four, not even twenty-four ... done by twenty-three!
- Cooper Right. Twenty-three, twenty-four. But I am afraid I may not be able to catch up. Say if I go abroad in year three, I do worry that I may not be able to catch up...
- Alice Don't worry. We Chinese are really something. Once we are abroad, we will be able to catch up, coz foreigners are just lazy and bad.
- Cooper Really?
- Alice Yes, even if your English is not good enough, you can still get straight A's. No problem at all.
- Cooper Are you sure?
- Alice As long as they understand your writing. We have substance; we have content, and having good English is not everything.

Cooper        So, I wish. But this subject I'm studying is rather stressful. Set aside the English; I haven't managed my English yet, and now I need to study Japanese and Korean this afternoon.

Alice         Um. It's all because you are in tourism.

Cooper        Right, coz it's the hospitality industry. Wow, how could I handle so much? I am so stressed, I am going to die!

Alice         Then focus on English. Japanese and Korean come second, I think.

Cooper        But their English is so sub-standard, not intelligible. Japanese ... the pronunciation system is rather different from English. Those are called Romanisation, and they pronounce the "r" sound like the "l". Therefore, it's so difficult to catch. I'm still learning bit by bit.

Alice         You will be so accomplished. You speak Cantonese, and you know English, Japanese and Korean too.

Cooper        I'm not sure if I can make it. But, I think I should be okay.

Alice         Practise the languages on the job, and you will be fine.

Cooper        My English has improved since I took up part-time jobs. It was hopeless when I was at school.

Alice         So, you see? On the job, you only need to speak a few sentences, over and over.

Cooper        Right. Also, the more you are in touch with the people, Japanese, Korean, you will speak better.

Alice         So, you have a bright future.

Cooper        Thank you.

Alice         Thank you.

## Second interview: Cooper

- Alice Do you need to present (do presentations) very often?
- Cooper No. Next week is the final semester of the four semesters, that's why this presentation counts.
- Alice Oh. You spoke in front of a group of people about Hong Kong?
- Cooper Oh yes, like selling Hong Kong to them.
- Alice Oh ... What did you tell them about?
- Cooper I spoke about Yum Cha (Chinese dim-sum lunch). My team is responsible for food, so I spoke about Yum Cha.
- Alice You needed to prepare slides?
- Cooper No need.
- Alice Just a verbal presentation?
- Cooper We did a presentation deck, but not by me.
- Alice It was done by others? I mean your team ... was it successful?
- Cooper I think it was quite okay. But we used Chinese. We initially planned to do it in English, but then Miss (the teacher) said that English wouldn't get us more marks, and she was concerned that we might not be able to present properly in English, and end up losing marks! Therefore, I thought Chinese would be better. At least we have facial expressions when we use Chinese. If we did it in English, we would be just holding the paper (script) and reading it out. For instance, we are going to present today, we would usually only prepare the presentation in the preceding class, which doesn't give us much time to prepare the presentation beforehand. If it were in English, we would only be able to read it out from the paper.
- Alice Will you have the opportunity to present next time?
- Cooper Tomorrow.
- Alice One presentation each day? Quite stressful! How many times do you need to present?
- Cooper This week, three times.
- Alice This is your second presentation?
- Cooper Yes.
- Alice Actually, let me tell you about this. Those teachers are naughty. If they see you present it in English, they will add marks.
- Cooper Really?
- Alice Of course. They will think this student is really progressive. Although her spoken English is not good, but she still takes the trouble to do it. So even though they have told you that it won't earn you more marks, you still try.
- Cooper Perception scores.
- Alice Oh yes. Perception can score you high marks.
- Cooper But I am concerned that it won't be like a presentation if I speak English.
- Alice What do you think it will be like?
- Cooper Just like reading from a script or book.

Alice Oh. Just remember the key points, and you improvise at that time; that's the best. I think I am better than a lot of people. If you just read out word by word, they will all fall asleep.

Cooper And then it's not really a presentation.

Alice They could read it themselves, why would they need a presenter? They need you to present because you can bring out the essence of the deck. There is a lot of body language to help you. I have to do presentations all the time, so I know.

Cooper But I think English is difficult!

Alice It will add marks.

Cooper No. Actually the presentation itself is not difficult, but I feel that it would be difficult if I have to present it in English.

Alice Um. Break through your own boundary; come out from your own comfort zone...

Cooper Sigh ... Our PowerPoints were all in English, but they weren't done by me. So I didn't know what was in them. And I was supposed to read out the table of contents. There should be Chinese translation next to it, but they had deleted it. So, I was lost and had to ask them.

Alice Simultaneous translation? Looking at the English while speaking in Chinese?

Cooper Oh yes, so hard.

Alice Let me tell you one thing. I have found that presentations ... I have done them for so many years, coz I have been working for more than twenty years since graduation. I am actually quite old; I could be your mum. We need to do presentations all the time in marketing. We also had to present at school. There is a method to deliver good presentations. You need to do it as if you're telling a story. Like... oh, I am not the one who needs to present! Aiya ... but you could go like this ... What is so good about Hong Kong? Firstly..., secondly... etc.

Cooper Talking about the origin of Hong Kong.

Alice The mentality is to tell a story. I am here today to tell you a story. This story is... So, if you have this mentality, a good story has a beginning, and there is a storyline in between the beginning and the ending. People usually will remember stories; they won't remember the narratives, but they will remember the story. Therefore, in a presentation, you can do it like you're telling a story. That way, you will get a lot of resonance from your audience. They will listen. So, when I do a presentation, I will read it like a story. Very interesting. Once you have this mentality, the narratives will be very different. The way you speak will be very different, coz everyone likes listening to stories.

Cooper I think so. You may not like it (the contents) but it's better than a dry read-out.

Alice Reading out is really dry. So, if you try to do a presentation like telling a story, this will be an area for high marks. If you try to speak English, even though you don't speak well, the teacher will give you a better grade.



Cooper Now we have four people, and each of us will present for 20 minutes. I think it is not good enough. I keep thinking about what I can add to it!

Alice Oh. Wondering how many slides to build?

Cooper We have the slides prepared already.

Alice How many slides are there altogether for the team?

Cooper Actually, about seven slides for each person.

Alice More or less, say 3 minutes for one slide.

Cooper Three minutes for one slide!

Alice Three, four minutes for one slide, roughly three minutes.

Cooper But, some of them are about the table of contents.

Alice You need to talk about the table of contents. It can take some time.

Cooper What can you say about a table of contents?

Alice I can speak for 10 minutes on one slide; I can speak for 20 minutes. I feel confident I can do it.

Cooper Can you really?

Alice Yes, I can. A table of contents, the objective of this presentation ...something like that. You can make an introduction. Leaders do this. Usually in a business presentation, it is the boss who comes out to talk about the table of contents. I open this forum; open this event, then the juniors come out to talk. I am the boss who opens the forum. Therefore, you can talk a lot on the table of contents. A table of contents can be about why we have this forum, why it is held here, my expectations, what you will see in the following 20 minutes, what I will talk about. A table of contents is ... coz yours is a team effort, and if you position yourself as the leader of the team, that is, if that is your intention ... you can first introduce the team members ... This team member will present this section, then afterwards, that member will ... There's so much to talk about. Actually, presentations are a lot of fun.

Cooper I still have a lot to learn.

Alice You are still very young. Be patient. When you get to my age, and I've been doing presentations for twenty years, you will know what it is all about.

Cooper How long is the presentation for your degree?

Alice A presentation is required of each of our projects. Actually, all my skills for presentations and writing slides are not from my university days. They are all from work. I also improved my skills in English from work.

Cooper Do you need to do hour-long presentations at university?

Alice Yes, I do.

Cooper For one person?

Alice One person.

Cooper Sigh! Oh my goodness!

Alice Perhaps, in a team, depending on who is responsible to present, one hour goes by easily. 10-20 hours of preparation work is required for an hour-long presentation.

- Cooper Should be more than that, surely.
- Alice Perhaps it may take longer. But usually it is one hour per team, including Q and A. The teacher would usually require this: within the one hour, thirty minutes for the presentation, another thirty minutes for Q and A. In a thirty-minute presentation, with a team of three or four members, we share the time. Each student presents one section. So, it is pretty good if you have ten minutes to present. You're given ten minutes to present three to four slides. That's pretty good. If you can manage the presentation, it could actually be quite fun. Presentations are fun.
- Cooper It is fun if I can present in Cantonese.
- Alice Not necessarily. English is also fun. It's just a matter of habit. Practise more and you will get better. I practised my English by watching American TV series.
- Cooper Someone told me that too.
- Alice It's useful. You learn a lot from American TV series. You can usually watch them on DVD. I like The X-files. I watched all nine seasons of The X-files. They usually have subtitles. You just listen, and read the Chinese subtitles, and you will pick up how they say things.
- Cooper I can't. I do read the subtitles when I watch drama. Oh, that word means this in Chinese, and I start loading it to my brain. But then I would miss the rest of what was being said!
- Alice Oh. It happens at the beginning.
- Cooper Then I will miss some developments of the story.
- Alice After you have done it for a while, you will get used to it. You don't need an active mind to do it. All you need is to repeat, repeat and repeat continuously. In those days, I liked to work out in the gym. Every day, If I had no better things to do, I spent one hour in the gym just on the treadmill. It is not the right way to work out.
- Cooper Why not?
- Alice Running, and watching DVD's at the same time.
- Cooper Oh, watching while running.
- Alice Actually, it is no good. It should be just running, or just watching. Doing running and watching together is not right as you won't get the effect of training. But my improvement in English happened during that time. It helped and it also made me more willing to speak English. You learn how to speak through listening, though you may not know how to write. It may not help with the written English, but it definitely helps with spoken English.
- Cooper Hope so. So hard.
- Alice No problem. You prospects are promising!
- Cooper English, so hard.
- Alice The more you speak, the less difficult you would find it. Oh, Cooper, we had an interview last time. I went back and listened to the recordings and jotted down some questions on those topics I want to know more about. Therefore, I will ask you some more questions, about what you said in the last interview. I have missed some points.

I didn't have a chance to ask you about the feeling. I hope you can say as much as possible what comes to your mind. In this interview, I hope you are the story teller. You tell me your story and I am a...

Cooper Listener.

Alice Listener! Exactly! I'll be a good listener. I shouldn't talk so much. You should stop me if I talk too much. Good! To start with, can you tell me about the most enjoyable smoking moment in these two days, the most ideal cigarette that you've smoked?

Cooper After the presentation.

Alice Yesterday, or today?

Cooper I think today. Coz I feel that today's presentation is very abstract, and I don't even know what the topic is! At first, I thought that there would be two presentations today. But then I found out that one has been changed to tomorrow. The presentation I was supposed to do today... I have no idea what it is all about! That subject ... other subjects are mostly based on something concrete. "Hospitality" is very abstract. Basically, I had no idea how to prepare for it and what to talk about. Then I went to join the team members who were deeply immersed in the work, and with so much talking going on. We are supposed to present three subjects. The three subjects were done by the other three classmates, and had nothing to do with me, until the semester which starts next week. So, I was completely lost when I looked at what they were doing. They have been working since midnight yesterday until today, with no sleep at all. I felt so awkward. I even went to have my eyebrows trimmed yesterday, like an outsider and not part of the team. They initially planned to use English in the presentation, a sales pitch to attract foreign tourists to visit Hong Kong. Then later, before we went in, they suddenly changed their minds and used Chinese. We were supposed to split the presentation into different parts and each of us was responsible for one part, but we hadn't done the splitting. At that very last moment, we quickly split the presentation and changed from English to Chinese. Wow, that moment was so confusing, really confusing! Then someone in the next class, who was from my former secondary school, a very vexing guy, came and sat next to me and he just nagged and nagged. That moment was really confusing. In fact, I think our presentation was quite okay. We were the sixth group; the five groups before us were not good. I don't think they did proper presentations at all; it seemed to me they were there having fun! So, I think ours was pretty good. After the presentation, I felt that the big rock in my heart had finally been lifted, and I went out for a smoke immediately after the presentation was over.

Alice You went down to smoke by yourself, or with your classmates?

Cooper With my classmates. Once the presentation was over, I went with the vexing guy. As I said, he is not in my class. He was outside at the door of my classroom. Then I went out as soon as the presentation was over. I said to him, "Let's go down for a smoke!" Yeah.

Alice           What time was that?

Cooper        4:30pm.

Alice           At 4:30pm, you went down to smoke, was that okay? You can smoke nearby?

Cooper        Yes, we can.

Alice           No big deal even when you were spotted?

Cooper        Right, they didn't care.

Alice           OK. Can you describe your feeling at that ideal cigarette moment? Just say whatever comes to you mind.

Cooper        That feeling... I wonder if I had smoked too fast, I felt nauseous.

Alice           Oh, okay.

Cooper        Oh yes. Actually, I often have a nauseous feeling when I smoke, and I really don't know why. Afterwards, I felt very jolly, and wanted to leave immediately, like nothing concerned me anymore. I had been so, so busy up to that moment, and then, I finally have the luxury of going down there to relax.

Alice           During the relaxation time, the vexing guy was next to you. Did he keep talking to you or what?

Cooper        He did. I really didn't want to talk to him. He just kept saying who is who in my class, who looks cool. Oh, so annoying, and I really don't want to deal with him. Before my presentation, he had taken me to his friend's shop, where I was given a roll-your-own cigarette to smoke.

Alice           Roll-your-own. What was it like?

Cooper        There was a big pouch, with only tobacco leaves inside. Then there was a piece of paper, and you put the tobacco leaves on it and roll.

Alice           You rolled it, or he rolled it for you?

Cooper        He rolled it for me.

Alice           With a filter?

Cooper        Yes, cotton, nothing else.

Alice           Oh, a cotton filter. How was the taste?

Cooper        Not sure ... a bit bitter, not really like cigarettes.

Alice           Obviously not menthol.

Cooper        Not menthol, a bit bitter, tasted bad. My classmate said it was too mild.

Alice           Ha, what brand of cigarettes does he smoke? I think that should have a rather strong taste.

Cooper        Not really. He smokes Marlboro Black. I am not sure. Maybe he's just saying it. I really don't know. But I do think that cigarette tasted very bad. What's more, it was very difficult to light. I wonder if it was the problem of the guy who rolled the cigarette!

Alice           Like it couldn't be lit up?

Cooper        I drew one puff and blew out the smoke. I tried to inhale again but the flame had gone out. Maybe there was not much (tobacco) left. Maybe it was the way it was rolled ... the paper kept burning, right through to the inside. There was still some tobacco left in the middle.

Alice           Oh, it was the paper which burned off, and some leaves were still

there?

Cooper Right. Perhaps it was not properly rolled. The leaves were still burning, but not the paper.

Alice How many times did you try to light the cigarette?

Cooper Four, five times. The cigarette was very short.

Alice Including the filter, that short?

Cooper Oh yes.

Alice Rolled with a device or by hand?

Cooper With a device, a very small device.

Alice I think I have seen that rolling device. Do you know why the cigarette went out so easily? Coz the tobacco leaves were too tightly packed. There was not enough air. The cigarette was too compressed.

Cooper It wasn't rolled properly.

Alice He'd better learn how to roll cigarettes properly.

Cooper Well, he is the one who opened the shop.

Alice He only sells roll-your-own cigarettes?

Cooper Yeah.

Alice Where is it? Are there shops like this?

Cooper In Causeway Bay, on Hennessey Road.

Alice Oh, really? Was it him (shop owner) who asked you to try?

Cooper My friend knows him. I suppose he asked the vexing guy to bring him customers. He got us to try (when we were at the shop). I just think the taste was really bad; very bitter.

Alice Did you finish the whole thing?

Cooper Well, I did. The thing was that he let us try the cigarettes for free. That was why I couldn't just drag a few puffs and stub it. It would be bad-mannered not to finish the whole thing.

Alice He smoked it indoors or what?

Cooper No. He did the rolling in the shop, and we went up to the ground floor to smoke.

Alice Smoked on the ground floor? His shop was in a basement? Can you talk about what the world was like when you smoked that cigarette?

Cooper I think that cigarette made me feel very dizzy, like I had sucked in a big puff of smoke, a big draw of a strong cigarette. That world? I just wanted to finish it as soon as possible.

Alice Get it over and done with.

Cooper Oh yes. Really nasty taste. I felt... I don't know... that cigarette ... it wasn't like smoking a cigarette; it was more like "smoking" drugs.

Alice Oh, you felt like you were smoking drugs coz you felt dizzy?

Cooper The feeling was like ... my head was kind of spinning. There was some pain, something like that, and it all went up to the brain, like smoking drugs.

Alice What sort of sensations did you have when you smoke drugs?

Cooper What kind of sensations on me... Now I think very negatively about it, but before, I would chase that sensation. That sensation is ... actually it's not about how you feel afterwards ... it's more about how you feel during the actual smoking (of drugs). I felt very free; my head

was spinning and the body felt very light.

Alice Oh, it is the feeling of smoking cigarettes or drugs?

Cooper Drugs.

Alice You said drugs ... actually what kind of drugs? Marijuana ...

Cooper Meth.

Alice Oh, meth. You could still see? And hear? ... You just felt a bit dizzy.

Cooper And I felt very "similar".

Alice Felt very "similar"? What is that?

Cooper It was like repeating the same thing. Once, I felt that there was something in my eye, something dirty, so I tried to rub it off... rub, rub, rub, even until the eye has gone all red and welled with tears ... even so, I didn't stop. Or, there was a game inside my phone, I kept playing, playing, playing, until the battery went dead. I kept playing while the battery was being recharged and it was getting so hot it could blow up at any moment. But I just kept playing the game ... doing the same thing over and over.

Alice Oh, so these are the outcomes of taking drugs, soft drugs. Was there really something in your eye?

Cooper Not really. I don't think so.

Alice Just that you sensed there was something inside.

Cooper Oh yes, coz I kept repeating that rubbing action over and over ... doing the same thing.

Alice So, the roll-your-own cigarette that you smoked was like a drug?

Cooper Yes.

Alice Did you keep repeating a particular action?

Cooper No, I didn't. There was just the feeling of it, but the taste was very bitter.

Alice Not enjoyable at all.

Cooper Not enjoyable at all. Also, it was so tiny. Then I don't know, I felt that it was unhygienic. I don't know. Perhaps it was hand-rolled, so I felt that it was rather unhygienic. The girl (assistant) in that shop was rather coarse (rough), so rowdy, and laughing so loud. I was really scared of the guy who rolled the cigarettes; who knows what he put inside them.

Alice I don't know what he put in that made you feel dizzy ... How long did that dizziness last?

Cooper Actually, I felt dizzy while smoking the cigarette, and ten minutes after smoking the cigarette. After that, I went back to school and drank a glass of water. And then, the dizziness was gone.

Alice The sensation was not a good one, but when it got to a stage when the sensation was like taking drugs, taking meth, then you felt okay?

Cooper Yes. It was not bitter any more, and it had taste.

Alice Ha, does meth have taste? Isn't it tasteless?

Cooper We used bottles ... and when we are using, we added flavour to the bottle, and when you took it, it had taste.

Alice Isn't that like smoking cigarettes?

Cooper Yes, oh yes.

Alice Oh. Understood. Could be strawberry flavour, grape flavour ...

Cooper We made them ourselves, so it was definitely not bitter.

Alice So, besides the bitter taste, it's like meth.

Cooper Very similar.

Alice The thing that made you unhappy was the bitterness.

Cooper Yes. It was really bitter.

Alice So bitter that even now your facial expression shows it!

Cooper Really, so bitter, can't tell what kind of taste it was.

Alice What about your friend, the vexing guy, did he get that bitter taste too?

Cooper Oh, the vexing guy. I don't know. He is the pretentious type. He quickly finished his, and said, "Oh you guys are just not used to it. Well, I am so used to it." Then my other friend said it was very mild. Maybe he meant the tobacco taste was mild.

Alice So, would that cigarette be the unhappiest, the worst one that you have had recently?

Cooper Yes.

Alice The roll-your-own one. The happiest one was the one after the presentation, with the vexing guy whom you went down to smoke with. So, the worst and the most ideal cigarette were both with the vexing guy.

Cooper Oh yes. Actually, it's got nothing to do with the person. It's all in the psychology. It doesn't matter who is next to me.

Alice Could you, perhaps tell me the ideal world in your heart, what is it like?

Cooper My ideal world probably is... sometimes when I am smoking on the street, some people's gaze is really annoying. I haven't blown smoke onto them; I did nothing to really irritate them, but their looks were just so malicious, and my sister is like that too. When my sister went out, sometimes people (smokers) just walked past, not blowing smoke at her, but she would say, "So disgusting!" and then she would cough. I think this type of behaviour is such a nuisance. Well, we (smokers) haven't offended you, but those discriminatory looks are totally unbearable! I think my ideal world is one with no discrimination, no quarrels; a very peaceful place.

Alice So, you can do whatever you like, and people won't come to bother you?

Cooper The thing is I haven't crossed the line, I haven't irritated you. What right do you have to treat me like that? I hate their gazes!

Alice Your sister is like that too, isn't she?

Cooper My sister is like that.

Alice Your mum, any discrimination from her?

Cooper Not from her. Perhaps she has tons of things to discriminate against, so she hasn't paid any attention to this. Sometimes when rowdy people walked past her, she would give them a discriminatory look. Some mainlanders asked her for directions, she would again discriminate them. She discriminates against lots of things.

Alice Oh, she is so used to discriminating against others, but you don't feel she has discriminating towards you. On the other hand, your sister doesn't discriminate against a lot of other things, except smoking. Have you spoken to her, saying something like, "Can you stop behaving like that?"

Cooper No. I can't talk to my sister. Forget it. I have given up on her. So, I wouldn't smoke in front of her. And now I am getting older, I seldom go out with her. Maybe she still has that prejudice against smokers when she goes out. I don't know.

Alice She is discriminating towards others. Now, can you tell me what role does smoking play in your life?

Cooper What kind of a role? (A cigarette) keeps me company when I am alone. It helps me when I am unhappy, happy, or when I've had a full meal. It's around at all these times. It helps me whenever I need it.

Alice It will help you irrespective of whether you are happy or unhappy.

Cooper Oh yes, happy and unhappy, I will smoke, I will keep smoking. Its role is to stand by me whenever I have quarrels with my folks, break up with my boyfriend, or go out drinking with my colleagues, all these occasions it is always next to me.

Alice Is it a vexing one, or not?

Cooper A gentle one.

Alice Is it like an object, a plant, an animal, or a person? Which type? Or a shirt?

Cooper It is food to my mind. It doesn't make sense to me to treat it like a person. I think it is feeding the need of my mind. I don't think it is... how should I put it... I did try to quit smoking before, but it didn't work. Sometimes some people tried to stop me from smoking. I got really pissed, and lost my temper, yeah.

Alice When did you try to quit?

Cooper Two years ago.

Alice For how long did you not smoke?

Cooper Not even one day.

Alice I wouldn't call that quitting.

Cooper As I said last time, I had been admitted to those quitting clubs. They were completely useless, as nothing positive happened to me. But I kept going there ... I tried to, because it was a treatment programme to get you smoking less and less, and the addiction was supposed to be gone in one year. At that time, I smoked one and a half packs a day. They advised me to take only one pack with me when I went out, for a few months, and not to bring any money either. They said I would smoke more when I was happy or unhappy. I tried to cut down smoking in the morning, and left it till dinner time. That didn't help at all. I just couldn't quit smoking successfully.

Alice Did you follow their instructions? Not taking money with you when you go out?

Cooper Ridiculous.

Alice Did you try to smoke one pack a day, instead of one and a half packs?



Cooper I did try to cut down, but not taking money with me when I go out is impossible. What would I do if something urgent happened? I can always use Octopus or EPS (to buy cigarettes) even if I don't have cash on me! So, I think it's useless. If you don't buy, you will... They suggested that I only take six sticks when I went out. However, doing that only forced me to buy a new pack when I ran out of cigarettes when I'm out. So I ended up leaving more and more cigarettes at home. It didn't work at all. So, I didn't follow what they suggested. I just think it's useless. They have two treatments. One is to cut down, little by little. Another one is to take medication. Once you're on medication, no more cigarettes are allowed, not even one. Otherwise the medication wouldn't be effective.

Alice What kind of medication?

Cooper I don't know. It's for quitting.

Alice Should be nicotine.

Cooper They also gave me nicotine chewing gum. They said when you crave for a smoke, a message is sent to the brain. They said the medication would help create a barrier between the message and the brain. But as soon as you smoke, the barrier will be destroyed. I think it's impossible for me to quit smoking immediately, so I never tried that option.

Alice You didn't choose that option. So, you had a choice?

Cooper Yes.

Alice Was it a tablet?

Cooper Should be. I didn't pay attention. They also had nicotine patches, chewing gum.

Alice Have you used them?

Cooper No. I don't like chewing gum, and having patches on my body is so gross.

Alice Ah, rather interesting. You don't like coffee, and you don't like chewing gum. Don't you like the senses these things give you?

Cooper It could be that I don't like mint.

Alice Oh.

Cooper Except cigarettes, I can't bear anything with mint. Throat candies, food served with mint leaves ... I won't eat any of those.

Alice You just think that they taste bad or what?

Cooper I don't know. I smoke menthol cigarettes. But not those with a strong menthol taste ... maybe with a strawberry taste, but not all the time.

Alice Those cigarettes, is there any menthol taste?

Cooper No. Only when you are inhaling the smoke.

Alice Some coolness in the throat while inhaling the smoke, but there is no menthol taste? What about smoking mild cigarettes or strong cigarettes ... is there any cooling sensation?

Cooper No.

Alice So, you'd rather inhale the coolness.

Cooper Actually, I smoked strong cigarettes before. Then I wanted to quit, therefore I didn't want high tar ones anymore. I changed to menthol

cigarettes. I smoked mild Hilton.

Alice Oh, you also smoked Hilton. It tasted good?

Cooper Good taste, I think.

Alice I think it is very strong. Do you know that Hilton is not very profitable?

Cooper Prison cigarettes!

Alice Prison cigarettes, really?

Cooper Hilton and Marlboro Red.

Alice Marlboro Red too?

Cooper Oh yes. So, I heard.

Alice I thought it was Good Companion.

Cooper I heard people said that too.

Alice It seems that Hilton is quite expensive. It's still available in Hong Kong?

Cooper Yes, same price as when I smoked them before.

Alice They should be cheap cigarettes.

Cooper No. It seems they are quite expensive.

Alice More expensive than...

Cooper I remember I bought a pack of Marlboro for twenty-nine dollars. Hilton was something like thirty or thirty-one.

Alice Oh. More expensive than Marlboro.

Cooper More expensive.

Alice But now the price has decreased for all of them.

Cooper I don't know about now; I don't smoke (them) now.

Alice Coz they're too strong, so you changed to menthol cigarettes.

Cooper Changed to menthol cigarettes, yeah. I tried switching back to non-menthol after smoking menthol, but they were too strong for me and I felt very uncomfortable when smoking them.

Alice And did you feel nauseous?

Cooper Yes.

Alice Smoking makes you nauseous?

Cooper Oh yes. Actually, I always feel nauseous when smoking. I don't understand why.

Alice So, when you smoke, you feel nauseous regardless of whether you are happy or not?

Cooper Correct.

Alice Do you feel nauseous only when you smoke too much, or will just one or two puffs give you the same effect?

Cooper I don't think it's related to the volume. For example, I feel nauseous when I get up in the morning and smoke in the bathroom.

Alice Oh, you want to throw up even when you're smoking your first cigarette?

Cooper Yeah, so I don't think it has anything to do with smoking too much. I just don't understand why.

Alice So, you don't mind feeling nauseous?

Cooper I just vomit (no big deal)!

Alice Has it ever happened?

Cooper Yes, I did throw up.

Alice But it's so uncomfortable. Do you like the sensation of throwing up?

Cooper Not really. I like the sensation of expelling something if I really want to throw up, but I don't like throwing up for no reason.

Alice Oh. Like vomiting everything out.

Cooper I feel more comfortable (afterwards).

Alice More comfortable. Do you like the sensation of feeling nauseous when you smoke?

Cooper I do like that sensation when I feel like vomiting, but when I don't want to vomit, then I don't like that feeling.

Alice Would you get nauseous whenever you smoke?

Cooper Yes, I would get nauseous when I smoke. But I can accept that level of nausea. Once I was sick and I vomited so badly that I had bleeding in my throat and my throat hurt every time I vomited. That kind of nausea is unacceptable.

Alice But there is nothing to expel in the morning before breakfast?

Cooper Maybe I'd had water, so I just expelled water at first. Afterwards, I would vomit some saliva-like liquid, could be stomach acids.

Alice Do you vomit almost every day?

Cooper If it's the first cigarette after waking up, maybe once every three, four days.

Alice Every three, four days you get a nauseous feeling?

Cooper Oh yes.

Alice Any solids in the expulsion?

Cooper Yes.

Alice You feel more relieved after that?

Cooper Oh yes.

Alice It's the first time I've heard of this; feeling nauseous from smoking. Is it only the first cigarette (of the day) that would evoke the nausea, or any other cigarette would give you that same feeling?

Cooper Sometimes when I've smoked too much, I would feel like vomiting. This should not be the case with the first cigarette in the morning usually. However, in the afternoon, I may get nauseous because I've smoked too much.

Alice Do you actually vomit?

Cooper No, not actually. But just an example of how I might smoke too much too quickly ... say, I had a cigarette just before class. Then when I arrive at school, my classmates asked me to smoke another. This means I have smoked two cigarettes within 10 minutes, which is too many too quickly.

Alice But for appearance's sake, you won't vomit on the street. You will do that at home in the morning or after you get back in the afternoon.

Cooper Or in the toilets, depending on whether there is anyone around or if I am in a hurry.

Alice Previously, you said that when you are happy, you will only smoke half of the cigarette, then stub it out, and then start a fresh one. And when you are unhappy, you will smoke to the butt of the cigarette.

Do you get nauseous when you smoke irrespective of whether you are very happy or very unhappy?

Cooper Yes, that's right, all the time.

Alice Oh, all the time.

Cooper Because I tend to smoke a lot in those situations, I want to vomit 90% of the time.

Alice But will you actually vomit?

Cooper Yes, because I am usually drinking during those times and that makes me even more prone to vomiting.

Alice Oh. You're more likely to vomit after drinking? You must drink a lot then, because drinking a little shouldn't have that effect.

Cooper I can still vomit after only drinking a little. I don't know. Perhaps it is me. If you ask me to vomit now, I can.

Alice Seriously? You can do that?

Cooper Yes, perhaps because I have got so used to vomiting, and I can, easily. Perhaps a lot of smoking and drinking is involved in those situations, so yes, 90% of the time I can vomit.

Alice Could it be you have had a weak stomach since you were little, so you are more prone to vomiting?

Cooper Possibly. Because the folks on my father's and mother's side have had incidences of nasopharyngeal cancer. That's why mum asked me to quit smoking. So, it could be that my body cannot handle the smoking, but I don't know.

Alice Were you prone to vomiting before you developed a smoking habit?

Cooper No, not as far as I can remember.

Alice No? So, nausea and vomiting developed after you began smoking?

Cooper It could also be due to a lack of exercise. I started smoking in Form One. Before that, I used to run a lot in primary school.

Alice You stopped exercising since Form One?

Cooper Usually people start exercising when they get to thirty years old, because they start to put on weight and feel they should exercise to get it off.

Alice Me too. Recently I starting to run outdoors.

Cooper You should have more fun when you are young and worry about losing weight later.

Alice Actually, there is one thing I want to know more about, and I have tried to understand it, to see from your perspective .... You said you only smoke half a cigarette when you are happy - that's very interesting.

Cooper This behaviour...

Alice So, I want to know what's so good about this, just finishing half the cigarette. Isn't it better to smoke the whole cigarette? I did think about this, wondering if it is something to do with your relationship with the cigarette. Let's take an example ... this may not be the real case, but hopefully it will trigger some ideas in your mind. This is one way to look at it ... When you're not happy, you smoke the whole cigarette, to the butt. So, is it something like destroying it

completely? The sense you are able to cause total destruction. The process is, I am not happy, I'm angry, thus I smoke the whole cigarette, which is akin to destroying the cigarette. When you're happy, you smoke half of it and start a fresh one. Do you get the feeling you are allowing it to live on? Say the cigarette was a person or an item. That would be the same as saying I won't destroy you because I am happy. Do you get that feeling? Do you get a sense of accomplishment from starting a fresh cigarette? Like saying, "See? I have destroyed a few of them!" or "Look! I have finished so many cigarettes." These are just my thoughts - I'd like to hear what's on your mind.

Cooper      Actually, it could be all of these, and I think they are related in certain small ways. But I think the key problem is when you are happy, you won't stop to smoke. However, it takes about five minutes to smoke a cigarette - it is impossible to sit still for five minutes to finish that cigarette. You look around at the people around you, and you are compelled to join them. Therefore, I would smoke only a little of the cigarette, perhaps just half of it, then stub it out and join the group. Then afterwards, when I crave for a smoke, I would just get another one and the process repeats. On the other hand, when I am unhappy, the cigarette is like a companion keeping me company and I don't want to waste it. It is the only thing there for me and so I will focus on it and won't leave it aside.

Alice        So, in your world, you believe that when you're unhappy, it's just you and the cigarette. But when you're happy, you have many friends around (and the cigarette is forgotten.)

Cooper      That's why I won't focus on the cigarette.

Alice        Oh. So, after finishing half the cigarette, you join your friends for fun, then come back to smoke another one. So that's the difference between the worlds when you are happy and unhappy.

Cooper      Yes.

Alice        Has someone ever taken away your cigarette while you were smoking it?

Cooper      It happens all the time.

Alice        Can you talk about it, the most memorable one, or a recent one?

Cooper      I have a god-brother, we are very close. We were very poor when we first met, the whole gang was penniless, no job, but we still went out for fun, to an extent we only had a few pennies left for the bus, then we rallied for money. At that time, it was HK\$29 a packet (of cigarettes). After fund rallying, we just got enough to buy one packet. Well, there weren't enough cigarettes to split among so many of us, so we could only take it by puffs. And sometimes, some people just took away the cigarette without returning it to the group. So, when I was smoking, I was so afraid that he would just take it away, so I just held the cigarette for him to draw in, and then he would suddenly turn away and take the cigarette away in his mouth! So maybe it's become a habit for us, now we've all grown up, and we are still smoking, and he will snatch my cigarette away from time to time.

Alice        Really, just snatch it away, just like that? Won't it burn his fingers?

Cooper He would be able to snatch the cigarette. Well, I don't hold the cigarette in my mouth all the time. Sometimes I hold it in my hand. There was one incident ... it was so funny ... he wanted to snatch my cigarette, and I refused. So, I said, "Let me feed you," and then I held onto the cigarette while he inhaled. Just before he finished drawing the smoke, I pretended to take it away, and he looked so awkward. As he thought I was going to take away the cigarette, he had to stop inhaling abruptly, otherwise he would choke. We play like this all the time. If he did manage to snatch my cigarette away, I would light another one. But I would find that the taste was different. Coz I think there are three different kinds of taste ... one kind of taste at the front part when the cigarette was first lit, the middle part and the end part.

Alice Three tastes in one cigarette?

Cooper Because at the beginning of the cigarette, the burning part is the furthest from the filter, so it's not so strong. Then when it starts to burn to the middle ... there is more smoke to draw in. The end part is when the cigarette is at its shortest, and strongest and most bitter. Maybe the taste is too strong, and it's also getting too hot for my fingers to hold.

Alice Um. How did you feel when your friend, your god-brother snatched your cigarettes?

Cooper "You are such a bastard!", I'd say to him.

Alice So, a bit angry, although it was for fun.

Cooper Not really angry. I just thought, "Don't let me catch you smoking. I will snatch yours!"

Alice So, you are not really angry with him.

Cooper No, not angry at all. Coz we are so close and it's just for fun, and I am not really running out of cigarettes.

Alice So, when you were young, rallying money to buy cigarettes, and he came to grab your cigarette when you were smoking ... what did you feel at that time?

Cooper Wow. I was really angry then, because I was really penniless, and I didn't have enough cigarettes for myself! Then I kept asking people for cigarettes. Oh yes, It was so ridiculous (embarrassing). I mean, are you kidding me? I let you take one draw, and you snatch the whole cigarette? But then just in the next minute, he would let me do the same to him. He knew I would definitely try and get my cigarette back, and I waited and didn't do anything during his first puff, and then I would grab it as he was taking his second puff! Actually, I wasn't really that angry, coz he didn't keep me from smoking completely, and maybe I wasn't that addicted back then. Those days, I couldn't smoke because there were no cigarettes. Nowadays, I cannot smoke even when cigarettes are around! I am really upset about that. I do have cigarettes now; unlike before where I didn't have any cigarettes because I didn't have money. Now I have money, and you're stopping me from smoking? Who do you

think you are to stop me from smoking? It is my own business, I am old enough to make choices. I can take care of myself. I know my health is not good, and I will try and smoke less. But I don't think you have a right to stop me from smoking.

Alice Those who stop you from smoking are your family folks, or other people?

Cooper It depends, sometimes friends also try to stop me from smoking.

Alice Those friends do not smoke, I suppose?

Cooper Not necessarily. Like two weeks ago, I went drinking... I was hospitalized because of drinking, yeah. After that, I starting going out again. Then my friends said, "You should stop smoking so much", and they tried to stop me from smoking. They also smoke, but they are concerned about my health, so they just stopped me from smoking.

Alice So, how you feel about it? They said that to you probably because they meant well.

Cooper Yes, oh yes.

Alice But you wouldn't listen to them?

Cooper No, I won't listen to them. I may try to smoke less, but not stop smoking completely.

Alice So, you were hospitalized because of drinking. Was that a stomach problem?

Cooper Acute alcohol poisoning.

Alice Did you drink a lot that time?

Cooper Actually I didn't feel tipsy when I was drinking. I got drunk only the next day when I got home. I must have mixed too many different types of alcohol together. Look at all the injections (marks) I had, and all the bruises here, they have not faded yet!

Alice How come? Treatment for alcohol poisoning did that?

Cooper Drips. The nurse unplugged the needle and I got bruises all over. It's been a week.

Alice How much did you drink? How many types of alcohol?

Cooper Wow. I ordered a snowball to begin with. Then I ordered a second one, but they said they were out. They should have told me that to start with. I wasn't happy, so I ordered an orange vodka. Then vodka 151. I mixed a lot of drinks. Also, I think those were really strong ones, coz you can light a fire on them!

Alice Oh, those.

Cooper Yeah, those can kill you.

Alice But your friends drank all of them.

Cooper Yes.

Alice But nothing happened to them?

Cooper They were all drunk, everyone was down! I was the only sober one at that time, and I even sent someone home. After that, I went back to my boyfriend's place. Then something started to happen ... I could not eat, could not sleep, could not drink water ... until the following night, I was still very sick. I thought I was drunk. But it carried on until

the following night, and my boyfriend called an ambulance and I was admitted to hospital with acute alcohol poisoning. I was on saline drips, had an injection to stop the vomiting, and I even went for an x-ray.

- Alice How many days did you spend in the hospital?
- Cooper I was discharged at midnight on the same day, no staying overnight.
- Alice Did your mum know about it? I think she knew, right?
- Cooper Yes, she knew.
- Alice So how did she feel? What was her reaction?
- Cooper She asked me to drink less, and she asked if I was pregnant.
- Alice Was she worried that you would be pregnant, or she was happy that you might be pregnant?
- Cooper I think she was worried.
- Alice Coz you're too young. What about your sister. What was her response?
- Cooper I don't think my sister knew. I only called my mum, so I doubted if my sister knew. I was in my boyfriend's home. I called mum and told her I was very sick. I asked her what to do, whether to call an ambulance, or go straight to the hospital. I was worried that people might think I was drunk only and if I went to the hospital (emergency unit), it would take ages for them to attend to me. It would be worse than being in my own home, so I called mum. She told me to call an ambulance and to tell the driver that I had passed out.
- Alice Called 999?
- Cooper Not sure. My boyfriend made the call.
- Alice Wow, you waited for twenty-four hours before you called an ambulance, right?
- Cooper Yeah, coz at first, I just thought that I was drunk, no big deal. I didn't expect the discomfort to last until the next day. I was quite all right when I left (the bar), I even sent a boy home. After that, I was still pretty okay, and then I went home. When I got home, I started to feel dizzy and nauseous.
- Alice So, on the contrary, those where were stoned ended up okay.
- Cooper That's right.
- Alice Different people have different physical conditions and reactions. So...
- Cooper Yeah, maybe my health was not good.
- Alice I think you really should cut down on the drinking. How many more alcohol poisonings can you survive?
- Cooper Right. I think that time... but I used to drink a lot more in the past, even worse. But this time, I was sober, but goodness knows why I got so sick ... so sick that I needed an ambulance. But it was quick; the ambulance arrived in just five minutes, so I didn't have to wait for long.
- Alice Perhaps it was really because of the 999-emergency call.
- Cooper I don't know.
- Alice If not, you wouldn't have been treated that quickly. It usually takes



ages if you just went to the emergency unit by yourself.

Cooper Yeah, usually people wait for hours! That's my worry, therefore I asked mum.

Alice Um. This time, did you vomit a lot?

Cooper I did. There was bleeding because of too much vomiting.

Alice So that was the incident when too much vomiting caused bleeding.

Cooper Yes, and before too. Actually, I always get bleeding from vomiting. It happened just last week.

Alice Wow.

Cooper It was not too serious that time. I vomited in the morning, and the bleeding started. Then I had an injection to stop the vomiting, which really helped. Then I fell asleep and the vomiting stopped. When I woke up, I was all right and there was no more pain in the throat.

Alice So, the past few times that you vomited were all caused by drinking or smoking?

Cooper Because of drinking.

Alice Vomiting from drinking...

Cooper Smoking wouldn't cause so much vomiting. I would only vomit once if I smoke, and I would be fine after rinsing my mouth and taking a glass of water. But after drinking, I would vomit a few times, until even stomach acids would be expelled. If I feel there's more to vomit and I can't, I would stick a finger down my throat to induce more vomiting.

Alice You must be careful. Wow, your condition could be very serious.

Cooper Yeah.

Alice Aiya, I feel uncomfortable after hearing all this... Ok, last time I asked about the happy and unhappy moments in your life. It seems that happy moments are all with friends, for example, at the stall in the Chinese New Year market. When you mentioned the unhappy moments, it seems they are all related to your family...

Cooper Maybe I am usually more receptive to things said by friends. My family folks, they like criticising everything about me. Everything I do is just not good enough for them; everything is wrong. But I think I am the one who have done so much for the family. That's why I don't feel good with them. But with friends, I can say whatever I like. Maybe we have similar personalities and we care about each other's feelings, and we won't say hurtful things to each other. I suppose that's a better feeling. With family folks, oh my goodness, maybe they are just joking, but they would say, "Oh you are getting fat!" Then my mum and sister would be like singing a duo, keep going on and on about me. It is very irritating, and it feels so difficult... being with them. Maybe they are just making fun of me, trying to get some common topics to talk about. But these sorts of things hurt, and you wouldn't want others to do it to you.

Alice Don't you feel that your mum spoils your sister?

Cooper I do, all the time. When I was little, I asked mum... when I was little, "Why do you scold me all the time, but you never scold my sister?"

Then mum said, "She is like a half-detonated bomb. She will blow up immediately if you detonate the other half." This is always in my mind; it is possible. I need to go to school and to work, but my sister just stays at home and plays TV games all the time. I went to Taiwan, using my own savings. She went to Taiwan and I paid for her trip. Mum ran out of money, I gave her some. Oh well, but I'm still at school studying, so I applied for a government loan, which I need to pay back. They just borrow money from me and from my boyfriend all the time. They promised to pay us back on certain dates but that never happened. When I asked mum about it, she said she had no money these days, as it's low season, and that she would pay back later when she has money. Oh blast! I need to eat and to pay rent too! Sometime ago, someone harassed me sexually at a bar, so I reported that to the police. I got some money as a settlement. I gave twenty thousand to my mum, but she still kept borrowing money from my boyfriend every month. Borrow... kept borrowing from us, and now we have only ten thousand odd dollars left. Tell me, how can I afford things? I wish to go to Taiwan with my boyfriend for our wedding photo shoot. She is my mum; I have no reason not to help her. But she doesn't work hard enough and is dependent on me. Those two have no jobs, and at the same time I need to pay my own food and rent! That feeling, that pressure ... is really heavy and suffocating. I am the youngest in the family, and I shouldn't be the one to shoulder all these responsibilities. My sister plays TV games all day, or goes out to the games centre, and asks for money every day. She has no income and has nothing to bring home. That pressure....

- Alice Your mum has always shown favouritism towards your sister since childhood?
- Cooper That's how I feel.
- Alice And biased too...
- Cooper But I did talk to mum about that. She said she thought I am more mature than my sister, so most of the responsibilities naturally fell on me. My sister is not like that; she doesn't listen to anyone.
- Alice Did she have any illness when she was little, hence she got more attention from your mum?
- Cooper No, it's all her own problems, ever since dad left, she became more and more problematic. Then she started doing cosplay. There's nothing really wrong with her. My sister is pretty normal ... it's just that she has those "princess tendencies", or "queen tendencies".
- Alice Wow, or she can go higher up still ... will she have "queen mother tendencies" later?
- Cooper Almost! Really... the problem is her personality. So, I have been thinking about this all the time. I could be just like my sister, behaving like nothing is my business ... not going to school, not working, just play TV games at home ... Life would be so wonderful! But my conscience won't let me do that! Actually, I am thinking

about my mum... her husband has left, leaving two daughters for her to raise. If both daughters are not useful (helpful), her life would be very tough. So, I don't want her life to be so difficult... but now I think she is too relaxed.

Alice You've said that your dad and mum always had big quarrels when you were little, and in the end, your dad left you all. At that time, your sister asked you to go to sleep and pretend that you didn't hear anything. Can you tell me about your feeling on that night? Actually, I also saw my dad and mum quarrelling frequently when I was little. Sometimes my dad, or my mum would leave ... go away for a day and come back. I was only a few years old then.

Cooper You didn't know what was going on?

Alice I was so frightened. Every time my mum or dad went away from home... well, not that many times ... some were just threats to go away but they didn't end up going away ... Those experiences were really horrifying to little kids. Well, they did come back in the end, but I was really scared that they would be gone forever. So, I want to know if you were able to...

Cooper Accept it?

Alice Right. How did you feel when your mum and dad had quarrels when you were little?

Cooper Actually, I felt guilty, coz one time, the quarrel was about my school textbook fee.

Alice Oh.

Cooper My dad was running some kind of interior decoration company. I didn't know at that time, but now I am older and after listening to mum who said that he was very stupid. His customers didn't settle the bills after renovations were completed, but he had to pay his employees. So, he ended up losing all his money. Back then they needed money to pay my school textbook fee. Mum asked me to order the textbooks anyway, coz studying was more important. But my old man thought we should order them later, the later the better, coz they may get cheaper, or we could buy used books instead. But no matter what, we didn't have money at that time, so there was no way we could pay for those books. Then they started quarrelling, all the old grudges came out too. Then my sister told me to go to sleep. At that moment, I really felt very guilty. All the quarrels were because of me. I didn't see my old man when I woke up. Then afterwards, I clearly remember, there was a time, I was keeping contact with dad, and mum told me to ask him if he had calmed down and when he would be back. But I didn't dare. I dared not ask dad. So, I really felt very guilty. I suppose it wouldn't have happened if it was not for me. They wouldn't have argued if it was not because of my school textbook fee. And if only I had the guts at that time to call my dad, my dad would have returned home. Therefore, I feel very guilty deep down in my heart.

Alice You didn't have the nerve to talk to your dad, coz you were afraid

- that your dad would come back or because of other reasons?
- Cooper Maybe because dad was going out to work all the time, and I wasn't really close with him to start with. Also, he went away just like that, all of a sudden, and we hadn't seen much of each other since. I really didn't know how to say things face to face with him. Then it seemed that I was on mum's side ... asking him when he would come back. I was really timid when I was little. I wouldn't even dare to call out to the driver for my stop when I was on a mini bus. We lived in Chi Wan Shan, and I had to change buses in Wong Tai Sin or Diamond Hill to go home. So, I'd rather take the bus with a longer journey time to Wong Tai Sin simply because I could press the bell for my stop. They didn't have that for the Diamond Hill buses. I needed to call out "Stop" and I was afraid to. I was really a very timid person when I was little.
- Alice How old were you, when you didn't have the nerve to call for minibuses to stop?
- Cooper Actually, I still don't have the guts now!
- Alice Like, calling out something like "Please stop at XYZ?" You don't want to call out loud because of the manner or what?
- Cooper I think those mini bus drivers are all deaf! I always feel that they won't stop on my calling, and the other passengers would give me a weird look. And if he didn't stop, I'm not sure if I should say to the driver "Hey! I called for you to stop!" Therefore, I won't call for it to stop. Now they have bells, so I don't need to call!
- Alice Will you wait for someone else to call?
- Cooper Yeah, I would keep looking around, like, that guy with a school bag, he seems likely to get off... I look around all the time ... the man is wriggling ... that woman is looking around ... they must be getting off soon!
- Alice Has it ever happened that you didn't get off in time coz no one called for a stop?
- Cooper Yes, it happened before.
- Alice Now you are older, you're still like that?
- Cooper Not that old. One time when I was in form two, I was taking a minibus from Chi Wan Shan to Chuk Yuen. It went on to Kowloon Tong since no one called for it to stop. I almost... What's the name of that place in Kowloon Tong? City something...
- Alice Oh, Festival Walk?
- Cooper City University of Hong Kong!
- Alice City U, I see.
- Cooper Right. So, I needed to get off there. If I remember correctly, mobile phones were not common back then, and I didn't know the bus route. It was a trip to visit my friend. When I realised that no one was getting off, I panicked. Oh blast! I looked at the route and street names attentively, and I tried to remember them and walked back. I walked back all the way to Chuk Yuen!
- Alice Wow, so far away. How long did you walk for? One hour?

Cooper As far as I can remember, it wasn't that far. Maybe because it was a straight road uphill. That time I panicked, big time!

Alice So, you didn't have the nerve to call out, coz you were afraid of others' gazes?

Cooper Yeah, I don't know. I haven't had the guts to call out since I was little, even until now. Often, I had to wait for the next person to call for a stop, which could be very far away from my destination. Then I just walked all the way back. I really had a miserable time when I was little!

Alice So besides not having the nerve to call for a stop, what else do you lack the courage to do?

Cooper Actually, quite a lot. In class, if the teacher asked for students to answer questions, I normally wouldn't answer. There are many other things.

Alice What if the teacher calls out your name specifically to answer the question?

Cooper I am so scared of being called out by name, even up to now! I don't know what to say, coz I think my voice is a bit weird, like it's a bit hoarse. I don't know. Maybe I felt my voice sounded very strange when I listened to my own WhatsApp recordings, so I don't dare to talk aloud. I don't know, but I am okay at presentations though.

Alice I don't think your voice is bad at all.

Mino I don't know. Perhaps it is different when you listen to your own voice. So, I don't know. I have no courage at all, especially when I am in front of a lot of people. When I was in music class when I was little, I always sang in a very low voice, and then when I had to do solo singing in the exam, the teacher said, "Louder, I can't hear you!" My voice was so low when I was playing the piano while singing, and the teacher couldn't hear me at all.

Alice Is your mum also like that?

Cooper As timid as me?

Alice Um.

Cooper No, not really. I see her argue with mini bus drivers all the time.

Alice Haha, was it something like "Why didn't you stop the van? I already called Stop!"?

Cooper Yeah, exactly. "I called out! I asked you to stop at the car park, not this car park! Which car park? The car park in front of the pigsty!"

Alice So, it (the timidness) was not something you inherited from your mum.

Cooper Probably from my dad.

Alice Your dad is also timid?

Cooper Actually, I don't really remember; I was so little, really. But I heard my mum say that he is very cowardly and very stupid. So, I suppose I inherited it from him.

Alice Does your dad have a good relationship with your sister?

Cooper At that time?

Alice Um.

Cooper           Actually, not too good, but better than with me. I didn't visit dad when he came back from Italy. He was working in one of the restaurants on an outlying island. My sister went to visit him a few times, but I didn't.

Alice            Your sister went to visit him?

Cooper           Um. But she stopped visiting him after a few times.

Alice            Um. Last question. People said to me that sometimes cigarette smoke is like a mask that protects you. Like my ex-boss in my company, he would smoke every time we had meetings. I observed it for a long time. Each time when he was asked challenging questions, or relatively difficult questions, he would use smoking to buy time and delay answering. It takes time to light a cigarette, draw a puff, and blow out the smoke. He did that to give himself more time, to kind of protect himself. So, what's your view on that, have you ever taken cigarette smoke as a shield to protect you?

Cooper           Yes, I have. There was a time I quarrelled with my boyfriend, and it was a very bad quarrel, seriously. So, when he came to touch me, I jumped back immediately and said, "Don't touch me, don't touch me!" Then I smoked, and smoked, kept blowing out smoke, so that he couldn't get near me.

Alice            Did that really work? Did you stop him from coming near you?

Cooper           Partly. That time, he managed to fan off the smoke, and when I tapped the cigarette (to drop the ash), he came over to touch me.

Alice            This is rather amusing, blowing smoke out to keep people away.

Cooper           Right. I do think it is like a kind of protection. And you just said your former boss was like that, it could be a way to delay things, so it doesn't make you look that embarrassed ... like blowing out cigarette smoke, or drinking a sip of water.

Alice            Yeah, and that does help to buy time.

Cooper           Yeah, coz when you are smoking, I think your mind gets clearer, and your thinking would become clearer too. That's why I think smoking provides very good protection.

Alice            Isn't it a good way! But I don't think my boss was that smart to keep people away by blowing smoke at them though.

Cooper           Oh yes.

Alice            Was it the only time, the time with your boyfriend? Did you do it on other occasions?

Cooper           Not really.

Alice            Good. I am almost done. Do you have any questions for me?

Cooper           No.

Alice            Cooper, thank you so much. So, I hope you have a very successful presentation tomorrow.

Cooper           Sigh, what a heart-breaking reminder!

Alice            Just think, "I am here to tell you a story."

Cooper           They said we should use English tomorrow.

Alice            Try your best. Never mind not speaking well. The teacher will award more marks. If I were the teacher, I will give extra marks. The

- outcome may not be one hundred percent perfect. I see you've given it a try, I will be touched. Being a teacher, I will be touched, and I will add a few marks.
- Cooper Really?
- Alice Oh yes. I will. Do your best. Let people see that you've done your best. The process is the most important. Teachers like to see you make your best effort.
- Cooper Actually, in presentations, they give marks on individuals' or the group's performance?
- Alice This is for your credits, right? Does the presentation count towards your credit?
- Cooper Yes, it does.
- Alice Then they have two presentations in total for you. See? They will grade the content, the storyline and the argument from the team, and then...
- Cooper The teacher said marks are given only on an individual's performance. That's why ... but I think it won't be just that, as there's teamwork. But the teacher said we will definitely be graded on our individual performance.
- Alice On individuals ... then it all comes down to the presentation style. Different presenters will have different impact even when they present the same thing. So, he will see if you are confident in your presentation. I studied marketing, and I think marketing revolves around our every day's happenings. Everything has an element of marketing in it. During a presentation, try to tell a story to your audience like I said before; it helps you to remember the script. If it is a story, you will remember it naturally. You will speak more fluently. Something that you may not be aware of ... when you are presenting a story, you are actually selling a story. You want people to buy your story, that's marketing. So that's why, if you want to sell your story, you have to make it appealing.
- Cooper Exactly! Therefore I think it is not good to speak in English as my story won't be appealing.
- Alice Ah, not really. Telling an appealing story also has to do with your confidence.
- Cooper I don't have any.
- Alice You do, I'm sure of it.
- Cooper I have confidence in Chinese, but I am dead in English.
- Alice Can you mix both?
- Cooper No, I can't.
- Alice Either Chinese or English, right?
- Cooper If we mix both languages, that means they speak in English, I speak in Chinese. I think I will score higher with Chinese, compared to English.
- Alice Now, there is something you can try out if you present in English. At the beginning, tell your audience, "I know my English is not good enough, and I really want to use Chinese, but I respect my group's

- decision. So, I will give my best effort to present in English. I hope you wouldn't mind if I speak badly."
- Cooper Will it be like pushing the responsibility onto others?
- Alice No. You are facing up with this. Coz they have decided to use English, I will try my best. If I speak badly, do forgive me. It is like setting the expectation, the teacher will add scores. You know how to handle it. It is all soft skills.
- Cooper Excuse?
- Alice You know how to handle this kind of situation. Also, you know what circumstances to use humour to get people's attention during your presentation. This kind of soft skills will help you soften the hard content, like a sugar coating.
- Cooper But I worry that they may think I am pushing all the responsibilities onto them. Coz yesterday, they were talking about using English. Then we asked the teacher if we would get extra marks if we use English to present. He said, " No, but of course if you can handle it in English, you should do it. But if you can't, it won't be a proper presentation if you just read out directly from a script. In that case, the score will be lower than if you use Chinese." Then instantly ... coz we were the first group, we changed to Chinese. Then it was a mess, and the presentation was bad. Later today, I heard from other classmates that they seemed to have put the blame on me, and said I suggested using Chinese. At the very beginning, I did make that suggestion. But then they said we should use English, so I followed them and used English. Just at the very moment I was about to start the presentation, they changed to Chinese. So, it all seemed like it was my fault!
- Alice Last minute changes like that is confusing. So, for tomorrow, have you decided to use English or Chinese?
- Cooper English.
- Alice So, it's English. You will speak in English, so don't say anything about using Chinese again.
- Cooper Previously, I wanted to use Chinese before a decision was made. But since three of my classmates said we should use English, I followed their decision. I immediately drafted a script, studied it and memorised it. Just before I started my presentation they changed their minds, saying that other classmates said we should use Chinese. Since I was the first presenter, I had to use Chinese to present. I don't know why they were confused and in a mess.
- Alice But you guys have decided to use Chinese beforehand.
- Cooper Right. But they said I used Chinese out of no reason.
- Alice I guess it made them feel better by blaming you, as they successfully passed the responsibility onto you.
- Cooper I don't know. Actually, sometimes I think it is difficult to get along with this group of classmates. Maybe I am two years older than they are; I think their thinking is too immature.
- Alice Immature...



Cooper Oh yes. Maybe when I entered the school, I heard them badmouthing another girl, saying that she used this and that designer items. I felt that there was really no need to talk so much behind other people's backs. After all, it's just a backpack. When we first joined the school, the headmaster came down and asked us to write to her if we had any suggestions for improvement. They actually wrote and said we should ban designer labels. Sigh! I really can't communicate with them. I feel that I can't communicate with people of my age. I don't know why. Is it my problem?

Alice They are two years younger than you?

Cooper Yes, two years, two to three years.

Alice Two to three years age difference and you can't communicate. Is there a generation gap? Because they are not mature enough?

Cooper Could be. Like I said, I wanted to buy a necklace that costs a few thousand dollars. They said it was very expensive. Really, we don't have a common topic to talk about. Then they may think that, coz they are smokers too, if they spent fifty-five dollars on a pack of cigarettes, leaving forty odd dollars for lunch, they probably can only afford to eat at McDonald's. That to me was already quite good. It could be our age difference. Then they said to me their families have implemented "economic sanctions" on them, and they were only given one hundred dollars a day. Again, I think it is already quite good. I have to give money to my family since goodness knows when! I've never thought of my family giving me money. I will be over the moon if they don't need me to give them money! Perhaps we come from very different family backgrounds. Our thinking is so different. Also my life experience is also very different from theirs.

Alice So, I guess, about getting along with this group of classmates, you would probably feel that you've been through what they are going through now. And they should get real and be more pragmatic rather than complaining about trivial matters. You have that feeling, right?

Cooper Oh yes. What can I do? I have three more years with them.

Alice Not in the same class, right?

Cooper Same class.

Alice You need to stay with the same group of people for three years?

Cooper Yes.

Alice Oh, so you are stuck with them for group projects! Perhaps they will grow up in these few years.

Cooper I hope so.

Alice But then you will also grow up, so there is a perpetual gap.

Cooper Oh yes, sigh! It's hard.

Alice In fact, it is a good opportunity for you to show your leadership skills.

Cooper They never listen. I really think that Chinese presentations will get us higher marks. Firstly, we did our own (solo) parts and none of us had read each other's work before we presented, so nobody had time to absorb and immerse in the materials. If we use Chinese, at least

we can compensate by our body language and rich facial expressions. We can't do that if we present in English, because we don't even know enough vocabulary to express ourselves. How can we possibly deliver a good presentation with those limitations? But they didn't believe me and insisted on using English. Sigh, that's fine. But just before I started, they changed their minds and decided to use Chinese. Well, why didn't they just listen to me at the very beginning? Sigh, sometimes I am really frustrated with them.

Alice Are your classmates similar to your mum?

Cooper No, they are not.

Alice Or like your sister?

Cooper My mum nags me all the time, and it never ends. On the contrary, I am the one who nags at my classmates all the time, but they never listen.

Alice So, you are like your mum. They become you or your sister.

Cooper They never listen no matter how much I nag and lecture them, so things just end up in a mess, and they even blame me when the mess is over. Whatever!

Alice Well I guess the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Have you reviewed the presentation for tomorrow?

Cooper They haven't sent it to me yet.

Alice Chase them to send it over. You need to prepare, don't count on improvising.

Cooper So, I am dying. And then they would put all the blame on me.

Alice Oh, that's interesting. Shouldering all the responsibility at home, and at school too!

Cooper The pressure is really bad.

Alice Shouldn't be a problem. You will pull through.

Cooper So, I hope.

Alice Go now, and chase them to send you the presentation material. You need to rehearse, review, write your script, and look at the "cheat sheet" like this (gestures). A lot of people do it.

Cooper I can't even read what is written out correctly, and that's really scary.

Alice You mean you don't know how to pronounce some words?

Cooper I don't know. Or I should write it all down ... what I need to read out; everything. I saw them all holding a booklet when they were presenting. That's why they were not scared.

Alice Level one is like that. Later on, when you progress and are more experienced, there will be no need to hold a booklet when you're presenting. You will be able to just look at the slides and present.

Cooper I can, if it's in Chinese. English ... really, the key problem is using English. Sigh, hard work.

Alice Work hard and good luck with your presentation. Cooper, thank you so much for your help. It's been a pleasure chatting with you.

