

APPENDIX 1: FULL TRANSCRIPTS

First interview: Emerald

Alice Let me introduce myself. I also graduated in Hong Kong, from the Chinese University many years ago. I found out that I had an intense interest towards psychology after graduation. I tried to study psychology at university, but I couldn't catch up with the requirements because of my bad English. I am from a Chinese high school hence my English was not good. I went on to study MBA after my BBA, and after working for a few years, I saw improvements in my English, so I started to pick up psychology again. I am currently doing a part-time PhD programme and I've got two more years until graduation. I have a full-time job in marketing and thank you so much for helping me with my research. My PhD thesis is about smoking. How does it feel when you are smoking and what kind of a world are you in? I am generally interested in the entire smoking process, so my thesis will be around that area. I have asked Soso to help me recruit eight respondents for my research, and you are one of them. There will be two one-hour interviews one week apart. This introduction is the time when I speak the most. For the rest of the interview, I will try not to speak too much so that you can do most of the talking. I am interested in your story, and sometimes I may ask you a few questions. Please tell me whatever comes to your mind, not necessarily related to the questions. So, do you have any questions before we start?

Emerald No questions.

Alice No questions, ok. Before we start I would like to say that you have a very special name. Did you or your teacher give you that name?

Emerald I named it myself! I used to live in Malaysia, and I came to Hong Kong four to five years ago to attend university. My name was Wing because that was my childhood nickname, from Kar Wing. Then I found out that many people have the same name, so I changed it by myself. And I checked the dictionary and it says that it means emerald.

Alice Oh, wow, I've just learnt a new word!

Emerald Hahaha.

Alice Do you like emeralds?

Emerald I like green colour.

Alice So, you got your name from emeralds! Emerald is a very special name.

Emerald Yes, yes, haha.

Alice You were born in Malaysia?

Emerald I was born in Hong Kong, and then I went to Malaysia when I was three or four years old and lived there for more than ten years.

Alice Oh, was that in Kuala Lumpur?

Emerald KL!

Alice Traffic is very bad there. I just got back from there recently.

Emerald Haha, yes, you can get stuck in traffic for more than an hour! Hahaha.

Alice Yes, very depressing. And then there are a few months when it just keeps raining non-stop. Oh! Traffic jam and rain!

Emerald Yes, it's bad!

Alice I guess it must be those rainy seasons. And then I dare not fly Malaysian Airlines these days. I only go on Cathay Pacific and the flights are so packed. I mainly go there for work. Ok, let's get back to you. Emerald, can you tell me a bit about yourself and your story?

Emerald Yes sure! So, you may wonder why I chose to major in translation when I came to Hong Kong. Because of the influence of the Malay culture. Malaysians talk ... have you heard them speaking Cantonese or English?

Alice Yes! I have many Malaysian colleagues; their Cantonese sounds ancient.

Emerald Yes, I mean their use of words is relatively ... more like slang than a language.

Alice For example, they ask you whether you have "bucks" (instead of "money") or not.

Emerald Yes! And then they would say "bend left bend right" when they want to say "turn left turn right" ... especially when asking for directions, you will end up getting a very ambiguous answer. They would say something like, "You walk straight for a while, and then you "bend" when you see something and then you "bend" again." Nobody can understand these kinds of directions! I mean it's not clear at all. I went to primary school and high school there. I also went to kindergarten there for one or two years. I thought that my language skills were really... it was ok when I was there because everybody mixes the languages up. They use some Cantonese, some English and some Malay when they speak. They wouldn't just speak one language, like all English, or all Cantonese, or all Mandarin. I want to be able to express myself using just one language. That's why I've decided to choose translation. When I came to Hong Kong, people thought that I speak in a strange way. Maybe my organisation skills are not very good or that I have changed the way I speak (by using just one language) ... people found my speaking strange even if I focused on speaking Mandarin or Cantonese alone. They told me that I sometimes "short circuit" when I speak! Yeah, I only realised my poor language skills after studying for four years. I made up for my shortfall by keeping up my confidence. Well, after talking about my studies, let's talk about my hobby. I like yoga, and I have recently picked it up again. We used to have a private instructor come to our home in Malaysia to teach us yoga. I quit after taking only a few classes, maybe my family was lazy, and I was also lazy too. After I came back (to Hong Kong), I started learning it again from YouTube. I can do the poses at home probably because I have some foundation, and I have also learnt ballet before. And then I wanted to teach my family to do it. It's ok if they are lazy because I can always push them, unlike teachers we hire, when they would just tell them they didn't want a lesson. I am doing a Yoga instructor's course now and I will graduate in September. I can start teaching yoga once I have the certification. But I can only teach at elementary level. I need to get the more advanced certifications gradually. In fact, I think yoga has some linkage with my smoking habit. I used to smoke more before I started practising yoga, and I didn't think that it would affect my respiratory system. But now, whenever I start

smoking, I would feel a bit dizzy and cough a bit. Or maybe it also depends on what type of cigarettes as there are many different kinds. Those high tar, high nicotine ones make me feel dizzy easily. But if I smoke menthol cigarettes and it's less so. I can usually smoke a whole cigarette, but the reason why I started smoking was because... err... am I allowed to talk about why I started smoking at this point?

Alice Yes, no problem, please go ahead.

Emerald When I was little ... sixteen years old, I had a Facebook friend who let me try a puff. After that I didn't smoke anymore, because I found out that... err... I was very little, only sixteen, my friend was also a teenager. That time, both of us stood in the street to smoke. And then there was ... I remember that scene, there was a mother pushing a pram with a baby, and she looked at us when she walked past. She just glared at us in a disapproving way ... a look of disapproval, not too happy, and then she walked past us. And then I thought that I was affecting other people's moods and respiratory systems. I made them inhale second hand smoke, and the baby... it was not good for the baby. So I stopped afterwards. When I was eighteen or nineteen, I got interested in the bar industry. I had never been to a bar, and I was also lazy and liked to sleep. I didn't like going out or roaming in the street, not to mention hanging out, which was so exhausting for me! So, the only way to go to a bar is just to work there! Because I don't have many friends who go to bars, so I went to work (for one month part-time in) a bar ... it was a free-flow bar in Tsimshatsui. People smoked and played darts there. I saw the same group of people in the entire week, and they probably went very frequently. Sometimes a couple would go to the bar together just to hang out and kill time. It seemed meaningless, but they probably got a lot of pressure at work, so they just went there to do something meaningless. They probably went to work the next day to do something stressful, and then they came down to the bar to chill after work. In fact, I don't know how they could de-stress in a bar. I was there taking in all the second-hand smoke. So, I thought I might as well smoke. I felt I was losing out less since I had to inhale second-hand smoke anyway! So I started smoking. I started off with menthol cigarettes, err... Marlboro Ice Blast. It has a capsule inside which I thought was quite interesting. So err... in those days I smoked ... not many, only a few sticks ... I mean like four to five cigarettes maybe ... only at work though. I wouldn't smoke during the day. After a month I ... after working there for a month, I stopped working. And then ... for about two months, I went to bars more frequently, with friends, just to hang out, chill and smoke. I wasn't really addicted to it. But I really did go more often when I had nothing to do. And then when I was at university, I didn't feel like studying. Instead, I went to bars to hang out, and then... I was quite naughty at that period, and I smoked even more, maybe one pack a day. I started smoking during the day when I was busy doing homework and writing papers. I felt that smoking did pick me up. Because there was a time when I got really drunk, it was one stick of cigarette that woke me, or

made me more sober. When I was rushing a paper, I would drink red wine and smoke cigarettes so that I could finish my work. And then slowly I changed my cigarette brand to Pianissimo. It's the lowest tar one, 0.1mg nicotine and 0.1mg tar. I heard from a friend at the bar that this cigarette wouldn't cause bad breath, and they wouldn't make a mark on the lips ... I mean your lips get dark when you smoke for too long, and sometimes there is stain on the teeth as well. That brand doesn't have that effect. Of course, I wouldn't totally believe it as there is tar even though it's a small amount. It's just a matter of quantity. So I switched to this brand and have been smoking it since then. I started smoking again about a year ago, but I only started the yoga instructor training a few months ago. The more I practise yoga, the more I feel dizzy when I smoke during the day. That dizzy sensation came back again. So, I think maybe there are some structural changes to my body and it's telling me that I shouldn't be smoking that much. So now I would smoke a bit more when I am drinking, but only something like three or five sticks when I'm not. It would be half a pack when I drink. So, all in all, it's around eight sticks per day on average, yeah.

Alice On what occasion do you normally smoke? Can you smoke on campus?

Emerald Can't smoke on campus! So, I just hide in a dark corner, hoping there is no CCTV, and not many people would pass by that corner. There is a close friend who also smokes, but she wouldn't smoke on campus. I saw some people smoking near the outside of the campus. When I am alone, I wouldn't normally go outside the campus to smoke. I don't want other people to talk about me. I don't like my family in Malaysia to know about this. I don't want rumours to start flying around, so I would just hide in a corner to smoke, yeah.

Alice Do you usually smoke by yourself or with your friends?

Emerald If it's on campus or during day time, I would normally smoke by myself. If I go out for a drink or chill, then I would smoke with my friends.

Alice You mentioned something quite interesting just now. You said that the reason you are studying translation is because you feel that your language skills are weak, but I really don't think so. Why would you have this feeling?

Emerald When I came back to Hong Kong when I was sixteen, I was looking for... a summer job. I've always come back to Hong Kong for a month every year, ever since I can remember. I would visit my mum and dad, because they live in Hong Kong. I lived with my mum's relatives in Malaysia. And then when I got older, I felt that I didn't have anything interesting to do when I came back to Hong Kong. I didn't want to follow mum and dad around anymore, so I found a part-time summer job. I met that Facebook friend who gave me my first cigarette there. Yeah, and she said I looked like I was from mainland China. I had an accent when I spoke, and she didn't know what dialect I spoke. Back then I didn't know how to say "straw" in Cantonese. I didn't know what "straw" was. We call it "waterweed"!

Alice Waterweed? That's interesting.

Emerald Yes, that's was very funny. You could make stars with straws! Yeah, You

could make stars with straws by folding here and there. So, one time I asked my friend to pass a “waterweed” to me. She said, “What's that?” I said “straw” in English, but then she didn't know the English. So I just pointed to her, and she said it's called “straw” (in Cantonese). Ha ha! So, that was why she said that I was from mainland China! And then my friends from university would say that I don't speak logically. Maybe I am a bit more formal when I talk to you, maybe... more formal, a bit more organized, but when you get to know me better, I would suddenly say something totally out of the blue. But my friends are used to me being like that. Or I would say some terms that are not normally used in Hong Kong, such as ... there are many of them, like MK girl in Hong Kong is similar to 'nala' girl in Malaysia. It's the same description for a particular type of people. They feel that my Cantonese is weird, but also quite funny, and that's why they say I speak Cantonese with an accent.

And how did I find out about my bad organising skills? It was from my sister. My sister, like me, came back to study in Hong Kong, but she returned two years earlier than me for high school. I, on the other hand, finished high school in Malaysia before I came back to Hong Kong for university. She is quieter than me, and she reads comics and then goes to those ball game centres to play chess with others. She can't drink nor smoke as she would get dizzy. She would get dizzy when she goes to those bars that are filled with smoke. So, she is very different from me. And also, she likes to read but I don't, maybe because I am younger than her. I rarely read books ... those that have some cartoons inside are ok, like comics. But she's different, she reads Romance of the Three Kingdoms!

Alice Wow!

Emerald She has loved reading since she was very little, staying up until late at night and turning on the lamp and continuing to read in bed. She's quieter than me. She said that my composition is very bad. Composition requires a lot of organisational skills and I am really bad at that. I don't do mind maps and wouldn't know how to. After drafting something I struggle to organise it in a meaningful way. On the contrary, my sister is very good at Chinese composition and English essay writing. My English is slightly better than my Chinese, both written and spoken, err... now my (spoken) Cantonese is more fluent than my English, but I write better in English than Chinese. That's why she thinks I have issues with my organising skills. I mean I only realised it when she told me, yeah. Like when I did presentations at university, I sometimes messed up the order of the slides and phrases, and my friends have also noticed that.

Alice Ah, but you are pretty clever to know Chinese even though you studied in Malaysia. Can you write Chinese?

Emerald Yes, we learnt the simplified version of Chinese writing.

Alice Oh, simplex.

Emerald And also, my sister and I went to a Chinese school. They have Indian schools, Malaysian schools, International schools and Chinese schools.

- Alice Oh, so they use English as the teaching language in International schools? You got to study Chinese, apart from English, in Chinese schools?
- Emerald And also, they have one class of Malay, so I also learnt Malay.
- Alice So, you can speak and write Malay?
- Emerald Yes, I can speak and write!
- Alice Wow!
- Emerald But still, my composition is very bad, regardless of what language I use.
- Alice Have you noticed that your English is much better than that of Hong Kong students?
- Emerald Yes, better than most people who are in the same class as I am. We are all studying translation, and we are about the same level. But then I speak more naturally and fluently.
- Alice Yes.
- Emerald Yeah, ha, that's it.
- Alice Even though English is supposed to be our second language in Hong Kong, the standard of English has been getting worse and worse in the past ten years or so.
- Emerald There are less people speaking English in Hong Kong. Hong Kong people rarely speak English anyway. I mean, you can use English to order food if you go to Central or some cafes on the island side, but people wouldn't speak to you in English on Kowloon side, so you have fewer opportunities to practise. I used to go to Starbucks in Malaysia. I either talked to them in Malay, in Mandarin, or in English, but not so much in Cantonese. So I ended up practising a few more languages.
- Alice I went to Malaysia for work two weeks ago. I stayed in a place called PJ because the printing company was there, and I noticed that a lot of people in PJ speak Cantonese. When a member of staff from the printing company took me out for lunch, everyone around me also spoke Cantonese. Why is that?
- Emerald Ah, people in that community speak Cantonese!
- Alice It felt really strange. PJ was only less than an hour... half an hour's drive away from KL if there is no traffic!
- Emerald Oh, is it above Penang? I can't remember.
- Alice Penang, do you need to fly there?
- Emerald You don't need to fly to Penang. It's only an hour's drive away.
- Alice Oh, maybe. Actually, I think my Malaysian colleagues are quite talented, because they speak English, and most of them speak Cantonese, and some speak Mandarin too.
- Emerald Yes, but their Mandarin is very strange. It doesn't sound as nice as Taiwanese Mandarin, and it's not as authentic as the mainland Chinese Mandarin. It's in the middle, and then it's mixed with Malay English. Hahaha!
- Alice They learn Mandarin at school, right?
- Emerald No, they don't learn Mandarin at school, and not everybody speaks Cantonese. Not many people spoke Cantonese at the school I went to. I use Cantonese because my family speaks Cantonese, so at least I know how to speak it.

- Alice You've lived in Malaysia since you were little, and you didn't live with your parents?
- Emerald They separated.
- Alice After the separation you just lived with your mum's relatives – your aunts and uncles?
- Emerald Grandma and grandpa.
- Alice Grandma and grandpa. Are they from Hong Kong or they'd settled in Malaysia?
- Emerald They emigrated to Malaysia. I remember my grandpa was from Panyu, China.
- Alice Oh Panyu. Your grandpa is your mum's dad, not your dad's dad, right?
- Emerald I am not close to my dad's family members, because after they divorced when I was little, mum fought and won the battle for our custody. After that, she "dumped" us there.
- Alice They fought for custody in a court?
- Emerald My mum won the fight, haha.
- Alice But she didn't keep you in Hong Kong?
- Emerald Right. I don't understand why she fought so hard and after she won, she didn't want to look after us. It's such a joke!
- Alice But did your mum visit you in Malaysia frequently back then?
- Emerald Rarely, very rarely. She is very career- minded and she likes to have fun and hang out with friends and to stroll the streets at night. She doesn't like to drink or smoke. In fact, she doesn't smoke at all... she can't even drink much, but she likes to go to Karaoke and enjoy the nightlife. I mean err... she didn't want to come home at night. I used to say that she likes to have fun in all sorts of things. She would make long distance calls to chat with us for a while when she felt like it. That's why my sister and I came back to Hong Kong for a month at the end of every single school year.
- Alice So, you came back to Hong Kong during term breaks? And did you live with your mum when you were in Hong Kong?
- Emerald Mum wouldn't allow us to see dad. When we got older, we went to see him by ourselves.
- Alice Did your mum know about that?
- Emerald She didn't know that at first. I used to fly back quietly with my aunt, since she also had some business to deal with in Hong Kong, so I just came back with her. She helped me contact my dad, and we went out for lunch a few times. My sister was not around at that time, and that was the first time I saw my dad again. Since I hadn't moved back to Hong Kong at that time, and mum still needed to lie to dad. I mean she asked us to lie to dad! We could only talk via long distance calls because she said that my sister lived in Singapore, hence it was not possible to see her. So, my dad believed it at that time. Since he paid alimony until we were eighteen, my aunt said that we should meet him as he is our dad after all. I said it was ok. After all, I don't really have any emotional attachment since I didn't remember anything. I was too little, only three years old. I'd completely forgotten about what happened. I didn't spend time with him when I was little but my sister did. She told me that she remembered dad taking her

to Jumping Gym every week ... I didn't.

Alice That's right, I've also been to Jumping Gym!

Emerald Hahaha, yeah. They went to (play) throw the golden coin (game).

Alice You could easily spend a lot of money there.

Emerald Yes, she was really happy back then. I am not close to my dad; she is closer to him. Maybe that's why she didn't like dad when we started seeing him again. There was emotional attachment to him, right? So, she would hate him more. But it's ok now. We see dad once a month and mum knows about it too. At times, we leaked the information about our meetings by mistake, or she tried to find out from us. That's how she knew we are in contact.

Alice Your sister is older than you by how many years?

Emerald Two years.

Alice Mmm... not a lot. So you and your sister live with your mum in Hong Kong now?

Emerald Yes, the three of us live together.

Alice Good. Now let's talk about smoking. Can you tell me the ideal cigarette you smoked yesterday or today? Do you remember that moment?

Emerald Ideal cigarette... it really depends on my emotional state... if it was yesterday day time, err... I went for a written exam for my driver's license and before that, I sent my aunt off at the airport. She had stayed five days and she left yesterday, and I was with her the whole time she was here. She sleeps with me in the same bed. She came to our place to sleep and I couldn't let her know I smoke. So I didn't smoke for five days! She always dragging me to go shopping and I was so exhausted after shopping the whole day. I don't really like that. Also, I had to have hotpot dinner with her, something I also don't like. Having hotpot dinner takes two hours which is way too long for me! And then I couldn't smoke. Then finally I saw her off at the airport but I had to rush to my exam. I completed the exam in eight minutes as I wanted it to end asap. After that, I quickly went out to have a smoke! That cigarette was so good! Because I already felt so exhausted, and I was sleep deprived, and my voice was coarse ... even until today my voice is still coarse. Every time when I went back to Malaysia for a holiday, and since there is a big group of family members there, it's very tiring to cope with so many people. Even one of them from Malaysia is already exhausting enough for me, because I need to take care of her, think of where to take her to eat, where to show her around, and I had to wake up at ten eleven o'clock every day to get ready ... no, it was nine or ten o'clock, and then by eleven o'clock we must leave home, and I had to chat with her all day and until two or three in the morning! And since we slept together, we had to chat again. So I got really exhausted, and my voice is coarse. I tried to tell her, or hint to her that every time when I get tired, my voice would be coarse. I thought she would let me sleep earlier after this kind of hint, right? So, I said let's sleep earlier. That was why the next day right after I saw her off at the airport, (and after the exam) that cigarette was so tasty. I felt so good. After that, I went to... mmm... (I had lost my wallet earlier, so I had to get a

replacement) ... get a replacement HKID card. So I felt that the cigarette was extremely satisfying after finishing all the errands! I don't like to smoke in a rush, even though that happened before, but I don't quite like it. I prefer to enjoy it in a leisurely way. Sometimes sitting in an outdoor cafe smoking a cigarette is a very restful thing, and I also enjoyed a smoke when I chatted with my friends last night. Yesterday was really relaxing, and the most best cigarette was the one after seeing her off at the airport and finishing my exam!

Alice Where do people take written exam these days? Still in Wong Chuk Hang?

Emerald Ah, not really. They have a few locations, inside Hong Kong Government Offices. I went to the one in Cheung Sha Wan yesterday.

Alice That means right after the exam, you just smoked inside the building?

Emerald I smoked outside the building.

Alice Since you hadn't smoked for five days!

Emerald Yes.

Alice Poor you! Why didn't you sneak out to steal a smoke outside your home?

Emerald I used to do that in Malaysia. My aunt was on her own in Hong Kong and she followed me all the time. I was scared and even afraid of having bad breath. Even chewing gum wouldn't wipe out the smell completely. She is a very observant person and I didn't want her to find out that I smoke! Because this aunt is my favourite. She renews my student visa for me every year and, she really cares about me, even more so than my mum. So I don't want to disappoint her or make her unhappy.

Alice Is she your mum's elder or younger sister?

Emerald She's my mum's younger sister.

Alice Your mum's younger sister. So she was the one who brought you up in Malaysia?

Emerald Yes, yes.

Alice How many sisters does your mum have?

Emerald Mum is the oldest one, and she has four younger sisters, two younger brothers, so altogether seven of them.

Alice Seven children! Big family!

Emerald Yes, it was very "tiring" to live there!

Alice All six of them are in Malaysia?

Emerald Yes, hahahaha. And also, this aunt rarely comes to Hong Kong. She's never travelled to Hong Kong alone but this time she came with her friend. But this friend went and stayed at someone else's place. So, my aunt came to stay with us. That's why I had to look after her and take care of her. She's used to coming with a big group of people, with my other aunts, but not this time. So I had to accompany her just about every single minute this time.

Alice Ok, that ideal cigarette you had after seeing your aunt off at the airport and finishing your written exam. Do you remember how it felt to smoke that cigarette?

Emerald Mmm... It may be psychological, but I felt more at ease, more relaxed. Maybe my brain was cramped with a lot of stuff and it was very stiff. After the cigarette, it became more relaxed. The feeling after drinking and the

feeling after smoking is different. After drinking, I'd feel dizzy but after smoking, my mind seems sharper and more awake. But that smoke yesterday helped me relax because I was very tired. It's like after I finish doing yoga and stretching exercises, I feel very relaxed. Smoking has that effect too but only half as much as yoga.

Alice So, you feel the whole person is relaxed ... the brain is relaxed, the body is also relaxed.

Emerald Yes, the brain is definitely relaxed.

Alice So, in the world when you had your ideal cigarette yesterday, do you remember who was in that world?

Emerald Nobody, nothing... maybe I didn't want others to be there. People around me in that world would always ask me to quit or try to smoke less, so I try not to think of anybody when I smoke. I would only think about self-control, smoke less.... But when I am really tired, smoking would make me feel at ease. It's not that I'm so addicted that I have to smoke. No, I wouldn't think of any other things while I'm smoking

Alice So, there is only you in the world, and it's a world you feel relaxed?

Emerald Yes.

Alice What was the surrounding environment like?

Emerald Emma... nothing changed. I saw some people looking at me, and maybe it was my own imagination ... I am not sure if I was imagining it, but I would see people looking at me thinking how such a refined girl would be smoking cigarettes. Or maybe because I would normally stand still when I smoke, and I could see things around me more clearly and have better observation. Unlike when I am walking, then I won't be able to see things and people clearly. When I am smoking while standing still, there is a space for me to think and I can observe other people's movements like how they cross the street.

Alice Do you enjoy watching the streetscape like that?

Emerald I love it! I love to be a bystander to observe things, hee hee.

Alice Even when you are not smoking a cigarette?

Emerald I like to do that too. Sometimes I can't sit outdoors, so I would just pick a window seat in an indoor café. I like to look at people crossing the street or just enjoy the streetscape.

Alice Mmm ... We just talked about your ideal cigarette. Now can you tell me the most disappointing cigarette you remember smoking recently?

Emerald The one just now! Hahaha. That one was quite bad. I threw it away after smoking only 60% to 70%. I just bought a pack of cigarettes since I'd run out. Mmm... so I walking in one direction to look for this (interview place) address, and I walked a little too far as I thought it would be around Southorn Stadium. I had come out from the Hennessy Road MTR exit, and I thought I would just walk towards Southorn Stadium. But then I found out... err... it's not Southorn Stadium! It's actually in the opposite direction. Southorn Stadium is on the left and the building is on the right! I had almost arrived Southorn Stadium when I realised I was wrong when I looked at the map. Maybe I didn't look at it clearly. I am already a hot tempered person, and having to walk back all the way I came When I

got near the MTR station, I saw some officers in grey uniform trying to catch people who threw cigarette butts on the ground. One young man walked into the MTR station and then one officer kind of dragged him back out. I thought, "Oh dear! He must have thrown a cigarette butt in the gutter!" Haha, I had already bought the pack of cigarettes and wanted to smoke it but didn't. I felt sorry for the guy because I had a similar experience before. So, I was in no mood to smoke right there but thought I should walk farther away before I lit up because I was still preoccupied with the thought of being caught by officers when I threw the cigarette butt onto the ground. So, I stood beside the rubbish bin to smoke. Usually I would look at how I was dressed before doing that. It wouldn't have mattered yesterday since I was dressed very casually. But today, I had a photo shoot in the afternoon and I was asked to wear red so that I would look quite sharp. I really didn't want to be seen while I am smoking dressed as I am. Coz you know people on Hennessy Road are not like those in Central. I think they belong to a different community. People in Central would just chat and look around but not in Wanchai. In the end, I just put on my sunglasses and started to smoke. I discarded the cigarette after dragging six or seven quick puffs. I would normally get dizzy like that, just a bit. And I was a bit dizzy when I made a turn after throwing away the cigarette, what with wearing my sunglasses and all!

Alice Drag means you inhale deeply?

Emerald Inhale deeply and massively, and then blow it out and inhale again!

Alice Do you normally drag a cigarette when you are in a hurry?

Emerald Huh. In the past, I didn't even want to waste the cigarette, and I used to smoke until 90% of the cigarette is burnt, nearly until the end. People said that it's very unhealthy if you smoke until the end of the cigarette. The taste is at its strongest when you get to the end. But I didn't want to waste it as cigarettes are quite expensive ... HK\$50 plus each pack!

Alice Really!

Emerald Yes, very expensive. The price has just been increased again. The one I buy is a few dollars more expensive ... six dollars!

Alice How much is that?

Emerald Mine is HK\$58, as opposed to around HK\$52 for other brands. A long time ago, I didn't want to waste the cigarette, so I smoked until the end! Of course, I wouldn't do that now. I would usually smoke until 80%, just leave something, and just now I smoked even less!

Alice Because you were in a rush, so you had to drag.

Emerald Exactly! I was feeling uncomfortable ... standing there made me feel uncomfortable, so I just dumped the cigarette and left!

Alice So, you normally wouldn't want any people to notice you when you smoke, right?

Emerald Right! I don't want others to ... I mean judge me, sorry, hahaha!

Alice I understand. I have many friends ... I mean colleagues...

Emerald And they have this kind of phobia like me?

Alice Yes, they do.

Emerald Can I ask you a question?

Alice Oh, of course, no problem.

Emerald Have you smoked before?

Alice In fact... hmm... when I was very little my dad smoked Kent. He let me try it once. I think Kent is also available in Malaysia?

Emerald Yes, yes.

Alice We have Kent in Hong Kong as well. It was not the new Kent that he smoked. It was the old Kent, the strong one.

Emerald Was it blue in colour?

Alice Deep blue on white. I don't know if they still sell that old Kent in Hong Kong. Now Kent has changed its packing to a rounded corner pack, and it's also low tar. Back then it was 13mg, quite high.

Emerald Wow, 13mg!

Alice Yeah, my dad had always smoked Kent, and then there was a time we went to his friend's home. There, I asked dad how the cigarette tasted, and he let me try. So, I took one puff and then I couldn't stop coughing, I didn't like it at all. I never smoked again after that.

Emerald Why would he let you try?

Alice Yeah, maybe it wasn't conscious, and he had no health concern. In those days people didn't talk about it. It was really a long time ago.

Emerald How old were you?

Alice That time... mmm... let me think... eight or nine years old.

Emerald That's quite good because you never wanted to try smoking again after that time!

Alice Right, because it was too disgusting, and I didn't like it at all. I also think that my dad is getting older and his health is getting worse. Mum and I always nagged him to quit smoking and dad kept saying that he would. And then mum said we didn't have much money. In fact, we were quite poor and we lived in public housing. Mum said cigarettes were expensive, so dad should smoke less in order to save more money. My dad just kept telling us he would quit very soon. And then when he got older, he lied to us and said he'd quit already. Mum told me that he was lying to us, because when we walked pass him, we could smell cigarette smoke. I mean my nose is very sensitive, so I asked if he was smoking again, and he said no. My dad would never admit that he smokes.

Emerald He would never admit it, or maybe he is already smoking less and doesn't want you to worry about him.

Alice I think so. He probably smokes one or two occasionally, but the smell is very strong. You can tell it's Kent once he's smoked.

Emerald Does he have the same smell as before?

Alice It's that same smell. You can't miss it.

Emerald Or maybe it is Marlboro Black, or, Marlboro Red.

Alice Or Kent. But Marlboro Red is the same type of cigarette as Kent. They are all US-blended varieties, so they are relatively more...

Emerald Wow, there are US-blended cigarettes?

Alice Oh, there are! The one you smoke should also be a... ah, most cigarettes in Hong Kong should be US-blended cigarettes, so they are stronger.

Emerald Oh.

- Alice If you go to China, then they have Virginia instead of US blend, and Virginia blend is not as strong.
- Emerald So those cigarettes from China are not as strong? Double Happiness is...
- Alice Only the Double Happiness sold in Hong Kong is strong. Those in China are only 11mg tar.
- Emerald 1.1mg in Hong Kong.
- Alice 1.1mg is the nicotine level. 11mg is the tar level. I think the tar level of cigarettes in Hong Kong can go up to 15mg to 16mg. In contrast, those in China are lower because it's restricted by the government, and their tar ceiling is 11mg. The reason why people say mainland Chinese cigarettes are strong... I think it might be due to the casing and flavourings added to their cigarettes. And also, they normally produce a higher tar version for Hong Kong, knowing that there is no tar ceiling in Hong Kong.
- Emerald Oh.
- Alice So, they increase the tar level, because when you are more addicted you need higher tar cigarettes.
- Emerald Yes, only that can give them the feeling!
- Alice I don't have much experience with smoking, and that's why I have been asking you so many questions.
- Emerald You have knowledge, haha.
- Alice I know, but I have no practical experience, that's why I need to ask you more detailed questions related to how smoking... I want to know what it feels like.
- Emerald Understand.
- Alice When I talked to other respondents, some told me that they like to bite the filter. Do you have such a habit?
- Emerald I don't like that. I think he must like to bite straws too. He probably bites the filters the same way!
- Alice He said that biting the filter makes the cigarette taste better.
- Emerald I would be preoccupied with the thought that it's unhygienic! I mean I do many things with my hand ... if I have lipstick on, then the filter will be stained with red. I wouldn't even use my hand to touch that stain. Instead, I would hold the cigarette at a lower position. I would feel really disgusted if you ask me to bite that filter. No, I won't do it, and I've never tried it.
- Alice Oh, if you bite the filter, the lipstick stain will be stuck on your teeth!
- Emerald Or I am afraid that my saliva would come out too! My lips are not wet (when I'm smoking). You know, sometimes we share cigarettes, or light my cigarette using other people's lit cigarette... if I happen to puff on a wet cigarette, I would feel that this person must be very dirty. If not, why would his saliva come out! You only use your lips and mouth to smoke. You don't need to use your tongue to lick it, so I wonder why the cigarette is wet! If I bite the cigarette it would be wet, and I wouldn't do that!
- Alice Some people do that because they want a stronger cigarette.
- Emerald Would it get stronger? I don't know, because the filter has a tow inside? So, it would come out after being bitten?

- Alice Take a look at the filter. If you look at it from a light source, you can see that there are many holes around it. Those holes are ventilations, like air...
- Emerald Oh, so it's like ventilation!
- Alice Yes, it dilutes every single puff you smoke. The reason why I know that is because I worked in South Korea for two years. Korean men love to smoke, and they like to enclose (with their mouths) and bite the filters. Then you will really see lots of saliva on the tipping paper. By doing that, they block those ventilations on the filter, making a low tar cigarette a high tar one, because the ventilations are gone! They want that strength and kick from their cigarette, but at the same time they feel more health conscious when they smoke lights cigarettes. It's just an excuse for them. They probably heard it from their friends that smoking in that way would give the cigarette more strength without knowing that they are in effect smoking a higher tar cigarette.
- Emerald So, they enclose the entire filters with their mouths?
- Alice Yes. They block all the ventilations on the filters by enclosing the entire filter with their lips...
- Emerald Do they still need to bite it?
- Alice Not so much, but they still bite the filters. I've seen a lot of flattened filters...
- Emerald Really?
- Alice Wet and flat!
- Emerald Enclosing it is ok, but not biting, because you get more strength and a bigger kick by enclosing the filter anyway.
- Alice Or maybe once they enclose the filter, saliva will be secreted naturally, and then they just bite the filter.
- Emerald Ok.
- Alice But since I don't have actual experience, I have to ask more detailed questions. You told me that you grew up in Malaysia. Do you remember the day you left Hong Kong for Malaysia?
- Emerald Oh, I was really little, really little when I left Hong Kong. Do I remember what happened that day...? I don't remember much, but I do remember when I returned from Malaysia to Hong Kong, because I didn't want to come back. I didn't have much feeling when I flew to Malaysia... maybe because my dad and mum were not close to me. My mum is the type of person who doesn't know how to take care of kids. She would microwave the milk for us to drink and that's all. How could a mum behave like that? She didn't really care much about us. She just liked to stroll in the streets... took us along to stroll in the streets. I remember she cut my nails really deep. It was my aunt who told me that she cut so deep that I bled. And when she fed me rice, she didn't even wait for me to finish the first spoonful before she gave me the second spoonful! I mean, she was the careless, sluggish type. That was why I was ok when they asked me to leave. In fact, I had many people to care for me when I got to Malaysia. There was someone who bathed me every day. I was very clean. I just needed to stand there and do nothing. When they fed me, they did

it attentively. So, when they asked me to come back to Hong Kong, I told them I didn't want to come back. I was only four or five years old and they asked me to return. My sister also asked me to come back. She was six at that time and she came back to Hong Kong for kindergarten. I was supposed to do the same but I said I didn't want to ... I didn't want to, and I held onto my aunt, refusing to come back. I managed to stay in my Malaysian home! My sister, on the other hand, lived in Hong Kong for a while before she went back to Malaysia for primary school.

Alice So, you've never come back after that?

Emerald When I got older, I came back every year. I was in primary school ... around seven or eight years old, and I would fly with my sister (in the care of an air stewardess). I came back to visit her... to visit mum.

Alice You could fly alone at seven or eight years old?

Emerald Yes, as long as you were accompanied by an air stewardess. We were the first ones to get onto the plane and the first ones to get off the plane, which was even better!

Alice That's nice!

Emerald Yes.

Alice I haven't seen any seven or eight-year-olds flying alone on the plane, but...

Emerald The two of us together, one seven or eight and the other ten years old.

Alice So that's ok?

Emerald Yes, so funny.

Alice But your aunt didn't come back with you?

Emerald No.

Alice Mum wouldn't pick you up from Malaysia?

Emerald No, she waited for us at the airport and saw us off at the airport. Those relatives in Malaysia would pick us up when we got there.

Alice Why did they ask you to come back to Hong Kong to study after moving to Malaysia?

Emerald I guess it was because mum had a new boyfriend, and that boyfriend asked her to take us back, so she could take care of us. We are her biological daughters after all. That man had seen us before ... when they first started their relationship. He took us and we had fun together, and afterwards, not long after we went back to Malaysia, he asked mum to take us back, so that we could study in Hong Kong. So, they took my sister back, but later on, they probably realised that it was not easy to take care of a child, so my sister got sent back to Malaysia in Primary three.

Alice Huh.

Emerald It was like that.

Alice Did your mum re-marry that boyfriend?

Emerald Heard that they went to the marriage registration.

Alice Oh, they got married. And now you live with your mum and her boyfriend?

Emerald They are separated! They were together for around ten years, before I came back... around four or five years ago, they separated. I helped them with that, haha.

Alice You helped them separate?

Emerald I made the decision for my mum! Because even before he moved in officially when we were around during the summer holiday, they already argued all the time. My mum is a person who is hard to get along with. She is always anxious, and she likes to call us every single minute. That was one of the reasons why they separated, but he managed to put up with her for ten or eight years before that. The reason why they argued was because she suspected that he had a mistress, and she also got evidence. My mum must have hired a private investigator to spy on him. That's why she got a photo with him and his mistress holding hands!

Alice Oh, that's really something!

Emerald Mum said that her friend took the photo, and then I said yeah right, and your friend even went the extra mile to develop that photo for you! I don't know, maybe it was really her friend, I don't really know. And then since the photo evidence was there, he couldn't deny it anymore. We were there at that time; my sister and I were there but they continued to shout and quarrel. I was sixteen or seventeen back then. I had finally finished high school, and they still continued to quarrel like that. One day I thought that it was really serious, why was that? Because she... I had to go to school at 9am, and it took me an hour to get to Shatin from my home, so I woke up at 6am, 6ish, and I saw my mum sitting on the couch. I just came out from my bedroom, and she said, "Aiya, you are up? Good morning May May. Are you going to school soon?" I normally wouldn't see her at this time as she usually slept until twelve or one o'clock in the afternoon. Of course I was shocked when I saw her sitting on the couch at that time! And then I asked her what happened, and I shut my bedroom door. She said, "Aiya, don't be so loud! You might wake him!" So, I asked who "he" was. She said, "Your dad." He was sleeping in her room. Then I said, "What? That's your room. Why don't you go in?" And then she replied, "Aiya, leave him. Let him sleep." And then I asked her why she let him occupy the apartment and the room, and be enslaved by him even though both the apartment and the room belonged to her! I also told her, "Sigh, you go back to sleep, and let me handle it for you, ok? You are not happy with him anyway. Do you want me to handle this for you?" She said yes and she wanted me to handle it and talk to him for her. So, I said, "OK, it's your decision, right?" And then after a few days, they quarrelled again and woke me up. It was around 8am, so not too bad for me. But then I thought they would affect other people when they quarrel. At least they could go outside to quarrel. I believe that waking people from their sleep is a really an evil deed. And then I said, "Why don't you end your relationship now once and for all! There is a breakdown of mutual affection between you two. It's time to separate. Look, I am a very fair person ... when it comes to the question of who should leave, I think there is no reason for the apartment owner to leave. It should be the other person who leaves. I know that this apartment belongs to mum, so you should be the one who leaves. I can help you call a taxi, and also help you pack and take everything downstairs!" He was a little scared and started

to get evasive. So, I went on and said, "Dad, you shouldn't be like this. You should tell us when exactly you are leaving!" And he said, "OK, OK, OK," and I said "You've said OK, right? But you still need to tell me a time you plan to leave so I can make necessary arrangements. It also makes it easier for me to help you pack your stuff and take them downstairs." And he just walked away without saying anything, and then mum went after him, saying he had left something, and she had to take it to him. I didn't stop her. Well she probably tried to get him back, but in the end what caused the final separation was when mum was in Malaysia. She was there to visit grandma or something. We didn't have any school holiday so we couldn't go with her and we were alone in the apartment. I told my sister that that man was there. Hahaha. I had no emotional attachment to him anyway. I'd known him for a long time, but my aunt said I should be careful of him. She said she felt that he peeped at her when she was changing her clothes!

Alice Oh, was that in Hong Kong?

Emerald Yes, it was in Hong Kong! And then, I don't know, there was no evidence, only what my aunt had told me. Of course, I trust my aunt, and also, I can observe him by myself. I hadn't noticed anything before but he did one very disgusting thing... am I talking too much about things that are unrelated to smoking?

Alice No, it's ok, it's your story; it's you.

Emerald Eh... yeah, it was partly due to my personality. There was a time when I was in this rebellious phase of fifteen, sixteen-year-olds. At that time... eh... he wanted to hold my hand. He'd always hold my hand and every day, my sister and I had to kiss him on his cheek once. We used to come back (on holiday) for one month, so it was ok, and he also took us out to have fun and eat lunch at Chinese restaurants. But you know I was in this rebellious phase, and when he asked me to hold his hand, I really didn't want to. He even asked me to put my hand in his pocket and at the same time he would put his hand in! I feel that this incident is really disgusting. I mean, it's perverse! Or I feel that it was really dirty. And then I started to dislike him. I didn't kiss him even when he asked me to. A few years passed. He had no real job, and it was mum who earned all the money and he just didn't do anything. He said that he was in the jade business, but then he didn't go to his shop every day or the jade market to sell his goods!

Alice So, he had his own shop?

Emerald It was a small booth. A little stall in the Jade Market. He claimed that he shared that booth with his friend, so he didn't need to go back every day, and his friend would give him the money after he sells the jade. I thought he was extremely lazy, so I started to dislike him a lot. It felt that he sponged off women, so I wanted to get rid of him as quickly as possible. At least, mum would have more money to spend on herself, right? So, I changed all the door locks at home when mum was in Malaysia!

Alice Ha! Wow, well done!

Emerald Yeah, it was funny! I changed the wooden door lock; the gate lock was

very expensive. It was my aunt who asked me to change the wooden door lock. My aunt said that I had the right to do that, and so I did, from top to bottom! It was me who made them separate. My sister didn't like it. She may have hated it when they got noisy and caused problems, but she wouldn't do anything about it. I am the one who would change things, because mum is a sloppy person, and since she was unhappy, I might as well help her separate and solve the problem once and for all! It's been four five years since they separated, and my mum hasn't got another boyfriend. Sometimes, she would mention that the TV was bought by him. I don't know why she would suddenly mention something like that out of the blue! Just throw the TV away; I don't watch TV anyway, or I can pay her back. She just needs to tell me how much! I said to her, "You never mention those things that you had bought. If you want you can get him back. I am ok with it, but it was you who asked me to solve the problem for you. I didn't want you to be unhappy and scared." But I don't know ... I have a tiny feeling of guilt. On the other hand, I feel that this man is useless and he's not worthy of her love. He told my mum that we were very cold-blooded and merciless, so I guess they are still in touch occasionally.

Alice How old is that man?

Emerald I don't know, maybe one or two years older (than mum), oh not really... significantly older ... should be five years!

Alice Five years! When you and your sister lived in Malaysia, how did you feel about your mum?

Emerald Haha, I felt that she was a bit irresponsible, there was no reason for her to give birth to us and yet neglected us! And I also felt I had more people to love me when I got to Malaysia. There are pros and cons ... I've learnt how to be more tactful when being with others, because we had to get along with so many people. My sister is a negative example. She always had a sullen expression on her face and she felt unhappy about living under other people's roofs and having to depend on them for a living. But it really depends on your psychological state and how you look at the whole situation. If you think about it in a positive way, then things would immediately become better. The reason why she didn't finish high school in Malaysia was because she felt it was too difficult to study there, so much so that she wanted to kill herself. She told everyone that she would commit suicide if they didn't allow her to go back to Hong Kong. That was why she moved to Hong Kong when she was in Form four or five. But then she procrastinated after she got to Hong Kong and had to repeat school all over again because of her poor grades. She had to repeat Form six and seven. That's why she's only graduating this year together with me. She was two years late, and had to use her higher diploma to transfer to the Polytechnic University. She did admit that she regretted having to do that, but she still hasn't changed her way of thinking even now. She hasn't become more optimistic; she only regrets what she's done. She would also blame others for what happened to her. I mean, she can't just blame mum. Things happen so it's a matter of how you face up to them. I had no

emotional attachment with my mum, until one or two years after I came back. I have become relatively less cold-blooded. Well, she's my mum after all, and in these four, five years since my return, she has given me pocket money when I didn't have any part-time work. When I first got into university, I had difficulty getting used to the way of life there and didn't have time for a part-time job. She would give me a few hundred dollars per week. It's not a lot; it's really too little, eh... three hundred a week ... it's very little and I still don't know how I managed. It's the same for my sister, but at least we didn't need to pay rent, water, electricity, gas or anything like that. And also, my university tuition is covered by the government. It's easier to get the subsidy with her single-parent status, so I felt that it was ok. And then... eh... she tried to make up for it. But I was used to talking straight and saying whatever I like and I didn't care about anything. Out of my mouth comes evil! There was once when we were on a flight back to Hong Kong. I told her, "It's very difficult for you to compensate for what you've done to me. In fact, I have no feelings for you, but I will still support you even though I have no feelings for you. But you need to know that I won't love you, coz you don't deserve it!" I said those words to her. She should be quite hurt at that time, but she has a bad memory and maybe she's forgotten about that already. Maybe I am the only one who remembers it, yeah.

Alice How old were you? Do you remember?

Emerald I was in high school, around Form two or three I guess.

Alice Around thirteen or fourteen.

Emerald Yes, I told her in a very calm manner; that has always been my emotion towards her.

Alice Do you hate her?

Emerald No, I don't hate her. My aunt also asked me the same question last night or the night before. She said she felt sorry that she didn't really consider our feelings ... eh... "You girls have always been very courteous, I know that!" She said she knew that there were many things that we wanted but we didn't have the courage to ask, and that they always did the wrong thing. The only thing they did was to scold us and nobody tried to assume another role to listen to the two of us. Nobody was able to communicate with us and my sister ended up like how she is. I said, "There are pros and cons ... you shouldn't blame yourself, because it was your choice when it came to how you wanted to treat us." She could have... I mean, she could have treated us like we were really living under another person's roof. She could have only given us food whenever she felt like it ... she could have not given us pocket money ... she could have not bought us things or spent birthdays with us ... but she didn't! In fact, all of them treated us very well. The good thing was that we felt like we had many more dads and mums to love us. The downside was that we had to be more polite. We couldn't butter someone up to buy what we wanted and never let go, or we couldn't throw tantrums, we couldn't and wouldn't do that. This resulted in a sense of distance with all of them. It was the same with mum and with them. Even though I feel that they are very important to me, I

don't want to trouble them. And my aunt also felt that emotion from us, and that's why she felt guilty towards her sister. But she knew I understand, and she felt OK about that and I told her not to think of things that way.

Alice Huh... when you were in Malaysia, did everyone live in the same big house?

Emerald In two big houses next to each other, yeah, very interesting. I lived with my grandma, grandpa, sister, 4th aunt, youngest aunt and youngest uncle. Third aunt and her husband and their kids lived next door. We went to their place to have dinner every night. Another uncle and his family only lived a few blocks away. So everyone just had dinner there every night.

Alice That's quite interesting.

Emerald Yeah, more people also meant more gossip, even though we were very happy every Sunday. It was our family day, so we went out to stroll the streets and watch movies together, and we were happy. But I got more things to think about when I got older. Perhaps I am more tactful when dealing with people. I used to enjoy listening to other people talking when I was little and I loved to smile too. So maybe because of that personality, many people asked me to be their mediator, like when someone had a fight with another person, then I had to be the middleman. All the aunts adored me, as I listen to everyone. But then it's very difficult to ask me to help solve the problem, as I couldn't be on anybody's side. They wouldn't tell my sister about anything. I felt that nobody was close to my sister, or maybe she was more selfish and wouldn't think about others, so most of the time they only talked to me, and wanted me to help them resolve their conflicts. I felt really tired. They asked me why I wanted to come back to Hong Kong, and why I couldn't stay there. Firstly I didn't want the trouble, and secondly, I was afraid I would be too tired (mentally) and that I would lose all my personal space and time and end up not doing anything I wanted. So, when I came back to Hong Kong, I can have myself back. I have been very free since I came back. Mum wouldn't care what time I came home as she also returns home late herself. She now calls me but only because I forced her to separate with her ex-boyfriend. Now that he's no longer around, she has no one to call except me and my sister. My sister didn't even pick up her calls, but I would. Recently, since last year, I told my sister to pick up her calls, because there might be something urgent and she wanted to get in touch with her. When my sister didn't pick up her calls, my mum would call me and ask me where I was, what I was eating, what I was doing, whom I was with ... always those four questions. So I just tell her something and hang up. I have a lot of freedom to go out at night, to hang out with my friends. Back in Malaysia, I didn't have many opportunities to hang out with friends or go on a proper date. That's why most of my dates were "puppy love" in Malaysia. I only get to go on a date with someone or half cohabitate with someone after I came back to Hong Kong. It was at that time... eh... I almost broke up with this boyfriend, because my mum saw him dating another girl, so I just ignored him and his advice and tried going to bars.

And that just changed me completely, because my first cigarette at sixteen-year-old... the one I smoked for only two puffs and felt like coughing afterwards. I didn't know how to smoke and inhale into my lungs. It was really nothing, I only had smelly breath and that's all. What's the point of sucking something in and then blowing it out? I spent HK\$40 plus to buy cigarettes, what's the point of doing that? And then I was also afraid of being talked about. I was in another phase when I was sixteen. I didn't listen to him and I wanted to get a job at a bar. We broke up after a while, and then I started smoking, right until now.

Alice So, you only puffed the cigarette and wouldn't inhale into your lungs when you first started smoking?

Emerald I didn't know how to inhale into my throat and my lungs when I first started smoking, yeah. How did I learn that? I really don't remember, how? Who taught me? Who taught me? Should be my tomboy friend. We've been friends for many years. Mmm... when I worked at the bar... just before that... my tomboy friend and I started smoking when I worked at the bar. She would discuss that with me, and she would also teach me how to smoke. And then I learnt how to inhale into my lungs naturally. But inhaling into my lungs didn't really give me that effect... that stimulating effect.

Alice Can you describe how you feel when you inhale the smoke into your lungs? I mean both physiological and psychological effects. Is there any itchy feeling in your throat?

Emerald Ah, yes but not right at the beginning. Smoking is like drinking, when I get to the fifth, sixth or seventh cigarette... I mean when I get to my fifth, sixth or seventh cigarette in a very short period of time, something like within two hours, I would have the itchy throat feeling. I mean, I start to feel really uncomfortable. When I start smoking the cigarette on a normal day, it feels like it is injected into and then circling around my lungs, and then it comes out again, so my lungs would be inflated, the bone would be inflated! And then... I would feel very confused, I would think that I am going to die, my lungs are getting darker and darker, and the smoke that is injected into my lungs is really strong... and then I blow it out. On the other hand, it's really stimulating... a big cloud of smoke getting inside, it's really comfortable, and then it comes out again... just like that... sometimes when I am in a rush, I would draw in a bigger puff... if I want it to feel stronger, I just hold it and wait for it to get to my brain, to go around in my body, and then blow it out!

Alice So that big cloud of smoke would darken your lungs but at the same time wake you up?

Emerald Yes, and you can also hold it! Sometimes when I am in a rush, I would draw in a bigger puff... if I want it to feel stronger, I just hold it and wait for it to get to my brain, to go around in my body, and then blow it out!

Alice Oh, so you feel that it's travelling to your brain, and your lungs, and the smoke is moving around in your body?

Emerald Yes, it does!

Alice Will it go to your arms and legs and belly?

Emerald Not really, I feel that it only goes to my lungs and head.

Alice Lungs and head...

Emerald Sometimes my nose too. My friend always said when I smoke shisha or cigarettes, the smoke will come out from my nose too. So my nostrils are clear with no blockage, haha. It's not that obvious in others. The smoke doesn't come out from their nostrils. They can usually control the smoke to only come out from the mouth. But I can't control (stop) the smoke from coming out of my nostrils.

Alice You don't intentionally blow out the smoke from your nose?

Emerald No, I don't want that, I don't want that. There is something called 'chasing the dragon' (using the nose to inhale heroin). I don't know if you've heard of that?

Alice What is 'chasing the dragon' like? Can you tell me more about it?

Emerald They only use the nose to blow out the smoke.

Alice That means nothing comes out from the mouth?

Emerald Nothing comes out from the mouth, and that is really damaging. I think it would significantly increase the probability of nasopharynx cancer! My grandpa died of nasopharynx cancer. So I say, and... that's why my family... excluding my aunts' husbands, if we only talk about these four aunts and two uncles, only one uncle smokes. After he started smoking, our family members... at first, he didn't want to let the family know about that. He told me because we are good friends. And then he felt that there was something wrong with his nose. He has had nasal allergy for a long time. Well you shouldn't be smoking if your respiratory system is not good, right? So, he went for a medical check and I went with him. He cried and told me he was scared of dying like grandpa, and he said he wanted to quit smoking. He was fine after the medical check up. He was scared to death and he hugged me, and then he started smoking again after a short while. But now, he's really stopped smoking. His health condition is very bad, really bad. Back in the days when I went back to Malaysia for a holiday, we were both quite sneaky and secretive. When we were out in a big group, we would tell the others that we wanted to buy something, and then we would go and have a smoke together, yeah!

Alice Is your uncle about the same age as you?

Emerald Oh, not really. He is forty something already.

Alice Ah, so he is much older than you.

Emerald Much older than me!

Alice But you two became friends. Was it because of smoking?

Emerald Apart from the smoking ... he is relatively more childish... more childish, so he likes to talk to me. He is a designer, and he likes to draw wedding gowns or do make-up for others, or hairstyling ... doing all these things for younger people. That's why we are able to communicate with each other.

Alice Oh, I want to ask you something ... would you sneeze when the smoke comes out from your nose?

Emerald No.

Alice Oh, really?

Emerald I actually can't feel the smoke coming out from my nose. It is others who told me about that. But if I smoke using that 'chasing the dragon' style, I

mean if all the smoke comes out from my nose... my friend showed it to me once and he asked me not to do that, (I am not interested anyway,) it's ugly. Afterwards, he used a tissue to wipe his nostril, and it was brown! The tar actually stayed there! So, I felt the damage when I saw it. It's really damaging!

Alice Do you feel any difference between the smoke you inhale and the smoke you blow out afterwards?

Emerald The smoke that is blown out is very unreal. Only those you suck in can give you feelings. Those that comes out doesn't give me those feelings.

Alice Unreal means it's tasteless or what?

Emerald The smoke is very scattered. Shisha smoke is different. The smoke suspends in the air and it's denser. Maybe its smoke has more molecules, I don't know. But you can see the air is full of smoke. When we take photos, you can actually see the smoke from the hookah is visible like our face is. But if you take a picture when you smoke cigarettes, you wouldn't be able to see a cloud of smoke. Cigarette smoke is a lot more scattered.

Alice Ah, that means it's more transparent, more scattered.

Emerald Yes, exactly!

Alice If the smoke were a person or an object, is there any difference between the one who comes in and the one who goes out?

Emerald Oh, a metaphor... a... a person... huh... it (inhaled smoke) is like a person of the opposite sex, he is interested in you and you've just known him for a short while, and then he falls passionately in love with you, the emotion is very strong, the feeling that he gives you is very strong, very sweet and very happy. And then only after a short while, he suddenly leaves mercilessly... after a short while, bye bye and he's blown out (exhaled smoke).

Alice Haha, that's very interesting, this compassionate love and leaving analogy.

Emerald It cools down immediately, cools down and drifts away!

Alice Huh, ok, it's been over an hour since we started talking and I won't take up more of your time. I will have some more questions, but I will review the recording first and then come back with some follow-up questions and unfinished questions for next time. Your story is very...

Emerald I am sorry I may have talked too much.

Alice It's a good thing. Your story is very interesting and special.

Emerald I hope it helps your research.

Alice Definitely. I will jot down those additional questions I have, and then ask you about them in our next interview. Sorry for spending more than an hour. I think I was so happy that I didn't notice the time. Please go ahead and have your dinner, and Soso will be in touch with you before our next interview. It should be sometime next week.

Emerald Next week? Also, this time?

Alice Yes.

Emerald What about in the afternoon?

Alice I think she will be in touch with you to confirm the date and time. It will be after office hours.

Emerald Because I will be in Thailand from the first to the seventh.

Alice Oh, for a holiday? Be careful.

Emerald I am scared of bomb attacks. We are scared explosions will happen again.

Alice You still want to go?

Emerald We've booked it already and we can't cancel. It's a group tour so all the other girls need to cancel if I do. So I said it's ok. Let's just stay in the hotel.

Alice Is it black outbound travel alert?

Emerald Not yet! What a shame that we can't cancel the tickets. There is no refund if we do that.

Alice Aiya, then just be careful, and don't go to the Erawan shrine.

Emerald No, I won't go to the Erawan shrine. Luckily, I don't need to go there to pay my respects to the god. Yeah, I'll just stay in the hotel. We are lucky that our tour involves staying in Bangkok for four days and three days in Hua Hin. Hua Hin should be better.

Alice Yes, Hua Hin is better, but you still need to be careful.

Emerald I need make an appointment with you, right?

Alice Yes. Soso will be in touch with you.

Second interview: Emerald

Alice Hi Emerald, I reviewed our recording in the last interview, and I have some follow-up questions for you. Like last time, just tell me whatever that comes to your mind, even if it's unrelated to my questions. Ok, the first question I have is related to the smoking analogy you mentioned last time. I asked you how you felt about inhaling the exhaling the smoke, and if it were a person, what kind of person that would be. And you told me that it's like a new couple, but their passionate love is very short lived and the guy just left mercilessly like a gust of wind. If that's the feeling that smoking gives you, I would like to know if a cigarette is like a person of the opposite sex to you, and what do you think is your relationship with this person?

Emerald Is a cigarette similar to a person of the opposite sex?

Alice Just your feeling is enough.

Emerald I don't think so. But it is very much similar to... I associate that with the cigarette after sex... or a social smoker who smokes because other people smoke, so it's like a group activity with at least two people. If it's only one person then he would really get tired, or... eh... I mean if a person smokes alone, then he wouldn't smoke that many cigarettes. But if a group of people smoke together then they would smoke more. If I have to smoke alone...

Alice Cough... cough... cough... sorry.

Emerald No problem. If I smoke alone I wouldn't drag on the cigarette. But some people probably got used to that. As soon as they have a chance to smoke, I mean if they work in a restaurant and they have just finished a shift, they would just drag two cigarettes quickly. Similar to those who is on a break.

Alice Wait .. wait for me... (left the room to cough outside)

Emerald No worries, no worries.

Alice Sorry, I don't know what's happening to me.

Emerald It's ok.

Alice I was ok before I left but I got sick after I came back. I don't think it's the flu.

Emerald Itching throat, right?

Alice Yeah, cough... cough... cough...

Emerald It's ok. After all, it's an interview today so I can talk more.

Alice Yeah, you talk more and I listen.

Emerald Ok.

Alice I need your help, please continue to talk, I mean that opposite sex analogy.

Emerald Ok... mmm... when I first started smoking... the first cigarette was given to me by a friend, and that friend was actually in love with me, and she's not the opposite sex. She is the same sex, and she fell in love with me. She let me try smoking. I tried it because I trusted her. I think I must also be interested in her at that time, yeah. So when you asked me if a cigarette would remind me of the opposite sex, ah, you did say the opposite sex just

now, right? Not really, but there is an element of love in it. I mean if an ordinary friend offers a cigarette to me, like those high school students in the movies, when they say if you don't take this cigarette, then we are not friends, then I wouldn't smoke that cigarette. I just wouldn't smoke it, period! But if it is from someone I am interested in and if she wants me to try it, and she is someone I trust, and I believe that I wouldn't get addicted, then I would try. That's why I associate smoking with romantic love more than friendship. And then why do I have this idea of romantic love? I wouldn't get to a stage of wanting to smoke if I am merely unhappy with my friends. At most, I'd just be upset with them, and you can always ignore them. But if you are lovelorn or had a fight with your boyfriend, then you get really upset. I am not the kind of person who would moan over those things in front of friends, so I would just smoke! I smoke when I am happy, I smoke when I am unhappy, but this happiness and unhappiness are both linked to romantic love.

Alice You mentioned last time that your recent ideal cigarette was the one after you'd seen your aunt off at the airport and after you completed a written exam, and then you were in a world without other people. Can you tell me more about that world? I mean the world when you were smoking your ideal cigarette.

Emerald Eh... It's like ... I mean it's like when I am in the middle of this very crowded city in this world. I can pull myself out and take up the role of a bystander. I didn't think about what world that was, because it's me who's circling around the world, and not the world circling around me. I mean if I look at it that way then I am really tiny and insignificant, and I would feel dizzy if I drag a big mouthful of smoke, but then that's ok. Being dizzy is no big deal; it's like enjoying your life right? That's why... mmm... that world hasn't changed. It's also a very realistic world ... it's just that I walked away.

Alice Is that empty world your ideal world?

Emerald To me, I don't know what the ideal or perfect world looks like yet, so I haven't thought of this question.

Alice Cough... cough...

Emerald I think... when it comes to the ideal and perfect world, I would rationally think of the citizen happiness index. I mean the country with the happiest people last year was Dubai or some middle eastern country. Nobody has much to worry about, and the government also provides sufficient welfare and subsidies. Income is high and the tax rate is low. I think that city should be ideal. I mean there must be some comparisons for you to find our ideal. I think smoking is not related to the ideal world, haha.

Alice So smoking can bring you to a world that is away from reality, and then you become a bystander looking at reality.

Emerald I mean I feel like I can take a rest there (when I smoke), but I need to go back after I finish the smoke ... I only went there to take a rest, mmm... and after taking a rest I will need to... eh... do whatever I need to do afterwards. So, it (smoking) gives me a moment of quietness and peace.

- Alice So when you come out from the reality, there is nobody in this other world. It's like a protective covering and you've come out to this protective covering and then there is nobody around you ...
- Emerald (This world of smoking is connected and yet separated by) a transparent protective shield (from the real world) ...
- Alice And then you look at what's happening inside the protective covering ... Can you tell me your best cigarette in the past few days?
- Emerald These two days... the one that made me relatively more relaxed was when I smoked alone after swimming. My friend was still swimming ... I am not very used to community life. There is way too much gossip when I travel with three other girls. It's too troublesome. I normally travel by myself. I don't really know how to travel with others, not to mention with so many girls. So there was a time when I went down for a swim with another girl, and I wanted to go back for a shower. I hadn't returned to the hotel room yet, and I just sat in the tent beside the swimming pool. I lit a cigarette and had a smoke by myself, and I felt really good ... and then the waitress came by and brought us some welcome drinks ... those cocktails, well... eh... In fact, cigarettes and those drinks don't really go well together... and before I finished my cigarette ... I had to pass the drinks to my girl friend, and she said we should go up. So I didn't really manage to finish even one cigarette alone. Just let me enjoy my life peacefully and quietly ... that would be enough! Since she had already come over, we had to find something to talk about. That was why I only managed to finish half a cigarette. But half of it was already good enough. The other half was just like those I smoke every day! The other two friends also smoke, but this girl I was with doesn't. That's why I went for a smoke by myself. I had some peace while I smoked half a cigarette.
- Alice Was it like you were half outside the protective covering and half inside?
- Emerald Went outside (this world) for a while, like half the time, and then I had to come back in again and pass the drinks to her and talk to her!
- Alice Do you share your cigarette with your friends? Has anyone ever snatched your cigarette away before you had finished the cigarette without your consent?
- Emerald I had to stub one out immediately! Everybody was done with their cigarette, and then we were kind of in a rush, so I had to stub out my cigarette. It wasn't taken away by others; I stubbed it out myself. It was a bit wasteful I guess, and then the following seconds I just reminded myself that it was ok to smoke less. Otherwise I would just drag the smoke and feel dizzy. You know I always feel dizzy when I drag a big mouthful. So, it's ok not smoking the remainder of the cigarette. Smoke another one later; I've got a whole carton with me. And I just cheered myself up like that...
- Alice Have you ever experienced any discontinuation of your brand from the factory so you couldn't smoke it anymore?
- Emerald No, not really. There was no Marlboro Ice Blast when I was in Thailand. They didn't have my regular brand Pianissimo either. Neither of those was available there. They only had this brand ... I mean, in Thailand, they

didn't have the one that I regularly smoked, so I just bought what was available, and the packing was so ugly too. They had some horrible pictures all over the pack. Since I had no choice, I had to smoke this. And I've got a whole carton with me, hahaha.

Alice Oh, so they were sold in one carton?

Emerald I was at the airport, so I just grabbed a whole carton at the airport in Thailand.

Alice Is it cheaper than in Hong Kong?

Emerald Cheap, it's cheap. Duty free cigarettes at the airport are already cheaper. It's HK\$50+ each pack in Hong Kong but in Thailand ... eh ... how much is it in Thailand ... I don't remember how much I paid ... Bht780! Yeah, have to divide it by four!

Alice So it's around HK\$200 (for the carton), HK\$20 per pack.

Emerald Ah, really? Only HK\$20 per pack? That's very cheap!

Alice Very cheap, and it's duty free too. And yeah, those packs in Thailand are all terribly ugly like this one.

Emerald Yes, the horrible pictures were glued all over the pack, on both sides. We only have them on one side in Hong Kong. This one I smoke doesn't have those pictures, or very few!

Alice Is this one from Hong Kong?

Emerald This one is from Hong Kong... ah... No, it's from Japan! It's Japanese... Japanese brand!

Alice Ah, made in Japan, but they used Hong Kong's graphic health warnings.

Emerald On the packaging, yes.

Alice I'd like to know how it feels to smoke that cigarette from Thailand? It's not your regular brand in Hong Kong since it's not available in Thailand, right?

Emerald Eh... slimmer. I mean, it didn't feel that good when I held it in my hand, and then there wasn't much menthol taste. That's why I didn't have... didn't have a particularly good feeling. It was just because my friends lit the cigarette so I lit it too. There was only one that I myself really wanted to light ... The only cigarette I wanted to smoke was the one after I swam. I walked up by myself, and I didn't ask anyone to wait for me. I didn't need to stand there and wait for the two of them to finish their cigarettes. The rest of the time was more like I went smoking with them because they wanted to smoke.

Alice Which brand of cigarettes did you smoke after swimming? The one from Hong Kong?

Emerald I didn't bring any from Hong Kong because I only had one cigarette left. In fact, it should have gone stale by the time I came back. But I still brought it out to see how bad it was, mmm... like that.

Alice Ah, so the one you smoked after swimming was...

Emerald From Thailand.

Alice So it felt different even when you smoked the same Thai cigarettes with your friends?

Emerald Different, it was different. Those with friends were like 'I will also smoke'. It wasn't about whether I wanted to or not. I forgot to think about myself, because I had to chitchat with others, and also that brand didn't have

much menthol taste and I didn't really want to smoke it. My friends also didn't smoke that brand and they didn't like the taste either. I felt that it wasn't good enough, but since I had already bought it, of course I had to smoke it. They also bought menthol cigarettes but theirs were higher tar higher nicotine ones. So, I didn't smoke theirs.

Alice Did they manage to buy their own brands?

Emerald Not really. They usually smoke Marlboro Ice Blast but they went for Marlboro Black ... those with capsules. The menthol taste will come out after you crush the capsule. They didn't manage to get Marlboro Ice Blast.

Alice Ah, mmm... can you describe... now I feel better after eating the throat drop ... I am going to get some meds later as I don't want to be sick forever. It's really annoying. Did I tell you last time I was sick for five weeks?

Emerald What kind of illness did you suffer from?

Alice Flu and cough, those trivial ailments. I was already sick and then the company asked me to go on a business trip... where did I go last time? No, it was a personal trip, or maybe it was a business trip to Vietnam first, and after that I went to New York.

Emerald Wow.

Alice Those trips took place over three weeks, and then I was dead.

Emerald Dead?

Alice I was already coughing when I got back from Vietnam, and then I went on another trip ... can't remember when I went, and then I went to New York. Now the cough just wouldn't clear up ... wouldn't completely clear up.

Emerald Did you need to discuss business in your work? I mean did you need to talk?

Alice Yes, yes I did. I had to attend meetings and see my colleagues. And once it was really bad. I was in a meeting, you know in Thailand, people just don't care. They just continued to smoke, and we fly to Thailand regularly on business.

Emerald So you mean you went to Vietnam and then Thailand?

Alice Eh... didn't go to Thailand ... it was Vietnam! Got it wrong! There were people smoking in Vietnam, and I almost suffocated to death.

Emerald Yes, you must have felt dizzy, and wanting to sleep.

Alice Yes, and then because I don't smoke, so it wasn't pleasant for me to smell that. I am sure I would be ok this time ... I hope I would be ok this time. Anyway, let's get back to what we were discussing ... Cigarettes would taste different in different situations.

Emerald Huh.

Alice Was that the most disappointing cigarette in these two days?

Emerald Which one?

Alice Did you have any in these two days?

Emerald All of them were only average. The best one was the one I smoked after swimming.

Alice So all them were average except that one after swimming. How did you feel when you smoke that cigarette?

- Emerald Finally nobody is there to disturb me!!! The others (cigarettes) were like... eh... it was either the girl sitting next to me asking whether I wanted to take a tuk-tuk or taxi ... and then I was standing on the street after coming out from a mall, ... or I had to gossip with the girls. You know girls love that, so I had to gossip while I smoked! I only wanted some peace and time by myself, but I couldn't have that. So sometimes I just played on my phone, yeah. I didn't really have my own space there, except that time after swimming. I actually didn't have to agree or listen to other people talking or trying to answer their questions, yeah.
- Alice Have you ever felt that the taste of your regular brand has changed?
- Emerald Don't know about that, not really.
- Alice Never felt that before?
- Emerald Never.
- Alice So that means your regular brand always ...
- Emerald Has the same taste ... I've noticed that the taste hasn't changed.
- Alice Did you notice any change in pack design?
- Emerald Mmm...
- Alice Any cigarette brand, any brand you've smoked or are currently smoking ...
- Emerald When I started smoking Marlboro Ice Blast, they didn't have this pack design yet. They added it later. When was the "love in a puff" movie released? How many years ago was that?
- Alice Wow, many years ago, Miriam Yeung and that...
- Emerald They only released this kind of packaging and graphics at that time. There wasn't any before that. But it's ok, I still continued to buy it. Some people even collected the whole set, but I didn't. I don't care, really.
- Alice They even collected the whole set? They felt that they were attractive?
- Emerald This one is lung cancer ... and that one is nasopharynx cancer ... and there is a rotten lungs one ... so they collect all those different graphic health warning packs.
- Alice Did you feel that the cigarettes taste different after they've changed the pack design?
- Emerald Not really, I don't look at those pictures.
- Alice So you just go straight to the cigarettes inside without looking at the pack?
- Emerald Right, I don't care about the pack.
- Alice So you don't care... have you experienced any change in the cigarettes inside?
- Emerald Not really. They usually smoke Marlboro Ice Blast but they went for Marlboro Black ... those with capsules, I mean the menthol taste will come out once you crush the capsule, but it's not Marlboro Ice Blast.
- Alice Those tipping design, those filters, did you notice them?
- Emerald There was no change. I did pay attention to see if there is any change. A while ago I tried this... eh... capsule. Well Marlboro Ice Blast has always got a capsule inside. It is a blueberry flavour, blueberry flavour... and then there is single and double capsule ... the double capsule one is very strong ... very strong blueberry and menthol flavour, so its taste is stronger than the menthol one or the single capsule one. I am able to tell the difference

with this kind of change. They also have different packaging. There is a double capsule shape for you to crush.

Alice So you need fire to light up your cigarette. What is your impression on fire?

Emerald I am not afraid of it! Because back then I used matches to light incense sticks. When it gets warmer (the match is burning up), I just throw it away. It's even easier when I used a lighter. The flame might suddenly flare up ... I mean some lighters would produce a big flame here... and smaller flame in the middle. It's ok to have either a big or a small flame. My friend told me that he once burnt his hair while lighting a cigarette. He could even smell his hair burning! But I haven't experienced that before. I'm ok with fire ... I wouldn't resist it.

Alice Do you like to play with fire? Have you tried that before?

Emerald Not really.

Alice What about lighting lanterns during mid-autumn festival?

Emerald Ah, burn the wax or drip the wax?

Alice Burn the wax and light fires ...

Emerald Yeah, yes, it was really hot, if you want to light the one in the middle! We've got a strategy for that. You light the ones on the inside first and then you slowly light the ones on the outside. I don't particularly like it, but I just played when others were playing ... with friends and family and cousins. Of course I wouldn't play if I am spending mid-autumn festival by myself. I wouldn't be in a mood.

Alice Some people like to look at the burning and shortening cigarette while they are smoking it, as if the cigarette has a life of its own. How do you feel about that?

Emerald I would instead pay more attention to the ashes as I am afraid that it would be blown onto others or my own clothes. That's why I would always pay attention to the cigarette, because I need to know how long the ashes are and I have to flick it so that it won't continue to burn. No... I can't think of anything. If it gets windy, then it would get blown off faster, and then I... couldn't smoke it anymore. So, I'll have to light it again.

Alice Has your cigarette ever been put out by heavy rain while you were still smoking it?

Emerald Yes, it's been put out before ... I mean if the rain hits the tip then you can't light it again. If the rain hits the middle, the unburnt part, then there are ways to get that wet part off, and then you light the dry part again.

Alice Have you experienced that before? Your cigarette got put out by the rain so you couldn't physically smoke it?

Emerald I wouldn't light a cigarette if it's raining. But when I was holding an umbrella, the rain has never got blown inside when I was lighting my cigarette. So, I could still smoke.

Alice So you've never stopped smoking because of the rain.

Emerald Not really.

Alice That's good. Ha, it looks like you really know how to pick the right moment to smoke so that these things would not happen to you.

Emerald Yeah, hahaha. You have to choose a place with a shelter before you

smoke, or when you have a big enough umbrella with you so the rain wouldn't get blown in by the wind. I mean sometimes the rain is like... eh... the rain itself is a small droplet, but the wind is so strong and it blows out the cigarette. The rain could be blown under the umbrella by the wind. In that case, you won't be able to smoke even with an umbrella!

Alice Mmm.

Emerald So I won't do that when it's windy.

Alice The rain... I mean, the wind would really blow out the cigarette?

Emerald The wind would make the cigarette burn faster instead of blowing it out. So if there is a strong wind when it's raining, the rain will get under the umbrella, I won't be able to smoke even with my umbrella!

Alice Do you feel it's wasteful when the cigarette burns faster?

Emerald Yeah, very wasteful, yeah.

Alice But there is nothing you can do because it just keeps burning!

Emerald Yeah, oh well. Once I was smoking in a car as a passenger and some of the ashes got blown back into the gap between the driver and the back of his seat. He freaked, thinking there might be a hole in his back. "Oh, sorry, sorry!" I said. Luckily, nothing serious happened. The driver said he'd just got small burning sensation but he was ok. Now, I'm afraid of smoking when I am driving and I'd rather not do it unless I can open the window a bit and there is an ashtray inside the car.

Alice Is there any particular place where you don't like to smoke?

Emerald Where do I hate smoking ... mmm... those places with heavy people traffic. Like one day in Thailand. Many people stopped by to ask if we wanted to hire their car or tuk-tuk ... I didn't even want to stand there for long, let alone light up!

Alice Ah, those strangers who approached you and tried to get you to hire their vehicles?

Emerald Yes. Outside the shopping mall along the street, there were lots of tuk-tuks and taxis lined up. The drivers all came out from their vehicles, right outside the mall. We were standing there smoking, feeling a bit lazy, coz it was a long way back to the mall. So those drivers just kept talking to us. And then I thought ... "Why don't we just stop smoking and go back inside quickly?" Yeah, I don't like those places with heavy people traffic!

Alice Mmm... because you want to stay away from those people?

Emerald Yes, they were very annoying.

Alice Mmm... we talked about using fire to light cigarettes before. Does a cigarette give you a feeling of warmth, or that it has movement or texture when it's burning?

Emerald Not really. Firstly I don't know much about chemistry, so I don't know what kind of a chemical reaction takes place. Eh... I would think ... eh... because those cigarettes are grass right, dried grass, and then we said that... tar... the reason why a cigar is healthier than a cigarette is because it doesn't get drawn into the lungs ... because it doesn't ... it needs to be lit constantly, because it has no tar... with no tar the dried grass wouldn't burn anymore, as it wouldn't burn by itself. I don't really know much about that. But cigarettes are unhealthy because of the tar. Once lit, it

will continue to burn as long as there is air. And then there's the filter, if.. eh... it has more layers so the cigarette will be thinner, and then you told me people flattened the filter in order to get more smoke in. Well, these are the kinds of chemical reactions that I know about. Other things? I haven't thought about anything else.

Alice So that means apart from the chemical reason, there isn't any association between the fire and the cigarette?

Emerald Not really.

Alice What is the role of cigarettes in your life?

Emerald It's soothing, and it's also a buffer. When I am very angry and very unhappy, eh... it can help me relax, and stop me from taking it out on other people. That's why it has a cushioning effect and a stress relief function. It helps others absorb my tantrums. Mmm... when I am happy, it also helps me to get even more relaxed. It has a bigger function and a more important role when I am unhappy, and it increases my happiness when I am already happy.

Alice Can you tell me more about how cigarettes help others absorb your tantrums?

Emerald Sure. I had... eh... with a guy again, I had a fight with my boyfriend. Then it got to a point when I didn't know how to answer his questions, and I knew I would explode and scold him if I tried to answer those questions. I would inhale deeply and then light a cigarette, and then I would go silent, and I would be calmer after the cigarette, and I could talk to him again. So, I didn't explode and scold him at that moment (because of the cigarette).

Alice Ah, in a way, it means the cigarette is like a medium to absorb your scolding, and you are not scolding the cigarette either...

Emerald I can transform my anger into calmness through this channel, but I will still voice out the issues ... that means it is only a medium ... the role as a medium, it turns my sorrow and angry feelings into ... eh ... calmness. I am able to discuss things with him in a calm way; I would still be angry at him, but the tone and manner would be different.

Alice Can you tell me more about the transformation process? How do you feel about it? Not necessarily about the chemical process.

Emerald Huh... the transformation process... it's like sucking in a breath of cold air, and then you smoke a cigarette, and the other person would also be quiet when you smoke that cigarette, and he wouldn't badger me anymore.

Alice That's interesting. It seems so true now that you've said it.

Emerald Isn't that so?

Alice Yes, yes, I would normally go quiet when someone else is smoking.

Emerald Yes, right? Even if I'm not actually smoking, I would still go quiet. I don't know why.

Alice Yeah, why would I go quiet, it's not me who's smoking right?

Emerald That's very funny. He wouldn't ask me to do this and that, or continue to talk and ignore me ... he wouldn't do that. He would just look at me when I'm smoking and say, "Oh... you must be very unhappy ... don't smoke ... why you are smoking again?" Then I would say, "Let me smoke one cigarette." I would leave the topic that we were fighting over, and go and

have my cigarette. It's like I'm saying, "Let me smoke a cigarette first" and both of us will calm down, yeah.

Alice Huh.

Emerald I mean, it gives him time to calm down when he's watching me smoke, and then I also used this cigarette to calm myself down.

Alice Would you feel like you could blow out all the anger when you blow out the smoke?

Emerald Not really, haha.

Alice Not really. It only gives you some time to calm down.

Emerald Yes, my hands would shake when I am raging, so sometimes I light the cigarette with a shaky hand, and my hand would shake less when I blow it out, yeah.

Alice Is it like the deep inhalation in yoga?

Emerald Huh... a bit, a bit similar.

Alice Every time when I go to a yoga lesson, the teacher would always start with breathing exercises, and for those people who have rushed to the class would seem more relaxed afterwards.

Emerald Oh.

Alice And then we would start doing different yoga poses, the breathing exercises take up to three minutes, which is quite long.

Emerald Yes it's similar. When I practise yoga, I am used to using only my belly to breath. I mean I only use my nose. When you inhale through your nose, your belly would expand, and you exhale through your nose your belly would shrink. It's different from normal breathing. It's actually the opposite. Normal breathing doesn't involve your belly, and your belly is relaxed and expanded when you exhale. Now it's the complete opposite when blowing out cigarette smoke. When you exhale, your belly would be expanded and relaxed because there is air inside. Because I also practise yoga, I wouldn't associate smoking with yoga breathing, because after all, the process ... normal smoking is to blow out the smoke through your mouth. Sometimes we only use our nose to breathe in and out in yoga, and the mouth has not much use in this case.

Alice Huh... so smoking gives you a moment of calmness to make you less angry.

Emerald Huh... huh...

Alice Can you describe the smoking incident when you were the angriest?

Emerald Huh... well... the most unhappy incident, that time... that time I wasn't angry, because I was not with anyone but I was most unhappy. I was at home, and there is a window next to the sofa, and I was sitting there looking outside ... looking at the same spot ... at some residential lighting, in short eh ... there were a few lights inside that view, and it was at night, around midnight or 1:00am in the morning. I was crying and crying non-stop. I smoked until my throat was all dry, and I didn't utter a word. I didn't utter a word for the whole night, because firstly there was nobody at home, therefore I could be so relaxed and I could cry for so long and smoke for so long. My family members don't smoke, and I wasn't going to call them (to come home). In fact, I didn't even look at the phone. I

just vented all my anger and frustrations. At that time I felt... eh... why was I so unhappy back then? I felt that I had lost my own lifestyle because of my boyfriend. He controlled me so much that I felt suffocated and pressured. That was why I put my phone far away from me. I ignored it, because the phone gave me a feeling that my boyfriend was inside and he would call me incessantly or WhatsApp me, or call me ... it was a horrifying thought. So I only had my cigarettes and my tears as my friends at that time, yeah.

Alice That's quite interesting, your phone symbolised the incessant horrifying calls from your boyfriend.

Emerald I didn't want to look at my phone. I was very annoyed when I saw it. I had a similar episode with the same boyfriend. He just kept calling me and got extremely anxious about me. I was in a taxi on my way home, but I lied to him and I told him that I was home. Actually, I was on my way home from the bar. And then I didn't want to pick up his call, because I was with another friend, a guy friend, and I knew this boyfriend is the jealous type. I was scared and didn't want to pick up his call. Also, I was a bit tipsy so I just threw the phone on the floor, and it smashed, battery including, onto the floor of the taxi, and the phone went dead. Haha, and then when we got out of the taxi, my friend picked up all the broken parts of the phone for me. I couldn't smoke in the taxi at that time, but when I get really furious and I can't calm myself down, I would do something to relax myself...

Alice Oh... if your boyfriend is inside the phone, then who is inside your cigarette?

Emerald Who's inside the cigarette? ... huh... is there anything inside...

Alice You can tell me there is nothing inside if you can't think of anything. When you were heartbroken and the phone kept ringing, the phone symbolised your horrifying boyfriend you didn't want to deal with. So what was the role of the cigarette? Would it be your friend?

Emerald A cigarette is my friend, yes, it is my friend! I mean when nobody understands me, it is the only one who understands me, it is at my beck and call. Whenever I am upset, it can always be lit whenever I find it, but I have to use money to buy it.

Alice A friend who is at your beck and call and who can be purchased.

Emerald Yes, haha, but I will still trust it!

Alice How do you normally communicate with this friend?

Emerald I would hide it when my family is around, but when I am with my friends then of course I don't mind, I would bring it out to meet my other real friends. Mmm... we don't communicate, haha, but I feel that it would understand. I mean when I cry really hard, I don't really need to say anything, sometimes when I sing I would light a cigarette, and it would hear me, hahaha, yeah, so I feel that it's... it's like my soul mate, we don't need to talk to each other but it knows what I am thinking about.

Alice Would it be an animal like a pet?

Emerald Mmm... I am not a fan of animals. I don't like any type of animals in particular. Because I feel that there is quite a high responsibility to raise a

pet, yeah. So cigarettes to me are like... I don't need to be responsible for them, unlike pets, so these two are unrelated.

Alice So it will definitely not be any kind of animal; it will only be your friend. Can you describe this friend a bit more?

Emerald It's invisible, because it's my soul mate, it's my friend inside my heart and soul. It wouldn't come out to meet people unless it's necessary, I smoke by myself... It won't be there under normal circumstances, but it will be there when I am very unhappy... When my phone is gone, when there is nobody around me, I want to have a friend who wouldn't care about anything else but just sit beside me, and a cigarette is that friend... A cigarette is like a friend who always sits beside me, it won't talk to me, but it lets me use it and helps me relax. I also feel that it's quite mighty, it won't talk back, and it won't criticise me, but it would let me... I mean it devotes its whole life to me, lets me burn it all to ashes, in that sense it is really quite mighty.

Alice Would you sometimes dislike or hate this invisible friend?

Emerald No, I won't. I was scared of it when I used to smoke too much! Because I hung out too much back then, so I always smoked a lot. I didn't only smoke when I was unhappy, I smoked one cigarette after another regardless of whether I was happy or unhappy. I got used to lighting and smoking a cigarette unconsciously! So I was scared of it at that time. Sigh, I tried to put it in my pocket or not buy it, but I didn't hate it, because I would reflect on myself... it's your own choice! It didn't ask you or force you to smoke it. I could always control myself right? So I won't blame it.

Alice What are you afraid of? Retaliation?

Emerald No, it's the fear that I would become... I mean more and more dependent on it in the long run! Because when I light my cigarette by myself, it would sit beside me, I feel comfortable when it sits beside me when I am unhappy, but I don't want to be dependent on it! I don't want to be always detached from the reality and indulge in smoking every day, and not know what I am doing. It feels like there is no more meaning in my life. So I am scared that I would get too addicted. I don't want to have a long-term dependence on it and I wouldn't be able to live or relax without it! That shouldn't happen. So this is the one thing I am scared of ... I mean I have to control myself, like using external measures such as not buying it or not putting it in my pocket. And you can't ask for too many puffs from your friends, I will feel embarrassed. That's why I have to use this kind of external measures to reduce the dependence.

Alice Normally when we say we are afraid of being too dependent on a person, it actually means that we are afraid of losing that person. If I am too dependent on one person, I would be extremely miserable if I lose him. So when it comes to this invisible friend, your cigarette... you are afraid of being dependent on it, what are you actually afraid of?

Emerald I always look at things from my own perspective. I can't tolerate myself for being so dependent on others. I am used to being very independent. I am not afraid of loss ... I feel that everything is very vulnerable. This second you may own something but the next second you may lose it. I don't have much expectation and I am capable of letting go. But I will not allow

myself to be dependent on others because I don't ... I want myself to be capable of handling everything, so I don't want to lose control on that thing (smoking dependence). I am not saying that I want to possess or control others. I only want to look at things from my own perspective. I want to see my own capability and I don't want to be looked down upon by myself! You will be addicted ... you will never be able to get rid of cigarettes ... you will never be able to get rid of that guy! I mean I can't tolerate my incapability to get rid of anything, or else I would feel that I am really useless. But I am not afraid of loss.

- Alice So it was about how you see yourself, your self-esteem and dignity.
- Emerald Maybe my dignity.
- Alice Right, dignity.
- Emerald Dignity of myself ... nobody else knows it, haha, yeah.
- Alice Ok, so there is no hate, just... a fear of dependence. If you had a choice would you still want to have this friend? Or would you choose someone else?
- Emerald I can't guarantee I wouldn't choose it again, if and when I need to make that choice once more! Without this friend... but I feel that I will still have this friend with me later. I don't need it to be with me all the time, but I would... I feel comfortable when I smoke, so I will not let go of it completely.
- Alice How did you deal with your emotions before you started smoking? How did you cope with the unhappiness when you needed an invisible friend or a friend?
- Emerald Back then I would hit the wall with my fist when I was unhappy. I did bleed because of that. I had a fight with my sister in high school. I couldn't hit her right? So I just hit the wall next to her, haha, because I hadn't started smoking back then, so...
- Alice That must have been painful, to hit the wall!
- Emerald Painful... yes, very painful.
- Alice Did you hit the wall at home?
- Emerald Yes.
- Alice Was your sister frightened?
- Emerald Yes! She was shocked and went silent immediately. Ha! I scared her, and then what ... Back then, I didn't know how to cry ... I didn't smoke ... I wouldn't moan ... I really don't know how I vented my emotions. Now, I get to know how to cry! I wouldn't cry in the past, and also back then I felt that no matter what problems we had, the worst thing that could happen was to break up with him. It was ok to break up; I was very cold-hearted and nothing really mattered to me. But as I get older, I've become more emotional. I don't know whether it's a good thing or bad thing. Many things are like a double-edged sword. At least I know how to use my feelings... I know how to be sincere to others. In return, I get more unhappy moments. If I lose that thing (the cold-heartedness), at least I feel like I've truly lived my life. It's a different experience. I feel that it's better for people to have feelings; I was too cold-blooded in the past.
- Alice I noticed that you used the adjective 'cold-blooded' to describe yourself

quite frequently. In this and the last interview, you said you are very cold-blooded and you ignored your mum...

Emerald Yes, me and my family, I mean my Malaysian family ... we are close because I feel that I am indebted to them. In comparison, I feel I owe my mum and dad less, because they didn't give their hearts or... I mean they didn't give enough money to them (Malaysian family) anyway ... they definitely were heartless. What they did was just made an IDD call to us and spent twenty odd Hong Kong dollars per month. But my aunt treated me with complete sincerity and dedication; she really cared about us, and that's why I said I am indebted to her. But to be honest, the reason why it's important is only because I feel that I am indebted to her, kind of like I owe her something. I am not saying that she's not important, but I don't know how to pay back to her if she dies all in a sudden. But then I am not afraid to die; death is ok, but the problem is I can't pay back to her and that unsettles me. That's why... eh... it's ok to lose someone ... it's not that my life would end without that person, but the important thing is I want take responsibility and pay back and return the favours of others. I feel cold-blooded because whether it's romantic love or friendship, (excluding family love because I need to return the favours), I won't proactively befriend others ... I don't feel the need to be nice to a person because I want to be his friend ... I don't think like that. And I won't be loyal to this boyfriend because I don't want him to be unhappy; I don't think like that. I only feel that as long as I can hide the truth from him, then he would be at ease and I would be at ease too. I mean it's all right for me to have fun, as long as I can make up a story to coax him into trusting me and suppress the truth ... kind of like you are ok and I am ok, so everybody is ok. That's how I think. Even if something happens we can just break up; it's ok. I just tell him I am sorry and you should find a better partner, and then that's it. I won't even cry over it, I won't. It was only last year that I really cried because of breaking up with my boyfriend. I felt very strange that I would cry because of that. I wasn't like that after dating twenty odd times, so I feel that I seem to have got my feelings back. Eh... I start to understand the feeling of falling out of love; I never understood that. Falling out of love was fine by me because there are plenty of people out there in similar situations. Now I would... I would choose a boyfriend more carefully, because I have more feelings now. I am also afraid of disappointment, yeah, that's why I am very cold-blooded. There was a time when I was really cold-blooded ... I intentionally chose a venue to break up with a person. I chose a noisy venue. He said he didn't like noisy places but I insisted on choosing a noisy place to break up with him. And when I did, he buried his head in his arms, slumped on the table and cried. I had no feelings at all, and I was totally unsympathetic towards him. Well, I did say something to make him less sad but it wasn't because I was sympathetic towards him, but because he looked so wretched... eh... Well, I am not that cold-blooded to strangers, and I would cry when an animal is being slaughtered, or a beggar is pitiful. I've always been like that. But now I feel for people I know as well, but in the past I had no feelings

towards people I know. When that guy was crying... I said, "Don't cry ... many people are looking at you ... everything is ok ... we can still be friends ...". In short, I just wanted it to be over quickly. But I would have tears in my eyes when I see animals being mistreated, or a beggar is pitiful sitting on the ground. I don't understand my past self. At least, I become more normal when I get older; I feel that my emotions are more normal ... I'm not sure if it's related to smoking.

Alice Probably not, since you've been smoking for a while right. How many years?

Emerald Yeah, it's not like I've only started smoking last year. But that boyfriend I broke up with last year was more weird. He'd retired a long time ago, when he was twenty something years old, yeah...

Alice That young?

Emerald Haha... amazing! He's a smart guy. I drank with him at least two to three days per week. He was flexible with his time I was only studying, so I didn't mind. We went to karaoke and drank two to three times a week. When we went out for drinks, we had to go to those bars with free flow drinks. He had no style at all despite the amount of money he had. We went to bars with free flow drinks! Since both of us had nothing to do, we chatted with the bar owners, and then we played some... eh... drinking games. Everything (we did) surrounded drinking and smoking, and watching movies ... therefore... eh... I drank a lot more, and smoked a lot more because of that. I wasn't happy when I was with him. That time when I cried facing the window was the time I had the most cigarettes, and the unhappiest cigarette.

Alice Do you remember how many cigarettes you smoked that time?

Emerald I don't remember. I only remember my throat was very dry, and I had no more strength. I was very tired, like I had just done some strenuous forest activities for a whole day, very tired.

Alice So that was with this guy ...

Emerald He asked me to quit ... yeah. It was the boyfriend last year who asked me to quit, because he wanted me to have a baby with him. But I thought, "You have a wife and a son. Why do you want to have a baby with me? Talk to me after you're divorced." He said I had to quit smoking for a year if I wanted to have a baby. I knew that! It's only one more year after you're divorced, and I can even give that year to you. And you can't even wait for another year? So I didn't quit in the end, haha.

Alice Did your feelings / emotions come back after that incident? The feelings towards your family?

Emerald Since that time, many things have changed. And also since I started working in bars, many things seemed to be different. I only knew him after I started working in bars. Why did I start working in bars? Because of curiosity, or maybe there were some rebellious psychological conditions somewhere. My boyfriend ... I mean ex ... asked me not to work in bars. That ex was the first boyfriend I had since I moved back to Hong Kong, but I didn't want to listen to him because I knew that he cheated on me. My mum... eh... saw him holding hands with another girl on the street. He

lied to me, so I didn't love him anymore. That's why I didn't listen to him when he asked me not to work in bars. I told him that I would do whatever I like, and I broke up with him not long after working at the bar. And I learnt how to smoke there, and I saw many people from all walks of life. I also met many people, and I had to keep in touch with them. I didn't know how to handle emotional relationships, so I got a bit overwhelmed at that time. And then I got back to normal again, but I still continued to smoke, and I also can't get out of the bar industry.

Alice So you can't get rid of cigarettes and the bar industry, and you've never genuinely wanted to quit, and you don't plan to do that either, right?

Emerald Huh... I don't plan to do that. I think I will definitely smoke when I drink. Maybe I can stop smoking during the day, but I will smoke when I drink. I don't always hang out at bars, it's just that... I will go to places like that, but I don't go there because I need to, only when people ask me to. Firstly it's to give some support and face, and secondly I do understand why people want to go there. But I will not be a long term customer of bars, that's for sure. But I think it's a channel for us to meet and build relationships with people. I mean, I can't build a relationship by going shopping or watching movies. That is done usually over meals and drinks, so I will go with them.

Alice Don't you think it's very noisy? I always feel that the bars are very noisy.

Emerald Pubs are better.

Alice So pubs are less noisy bars? Do you drink while chitchatting with friends?

Emerald Yes.

Alice Some people said that you would tell the truth after drinking, is that so?

Emerald Yes, at least you would speak more openly. It (alcohol) would lower the guard for those who are usually quieter. It is noisy in places such as discos, clubs or in Lan Kwai Fong. I don't go there; I would feel very tired when I'm there, and also people you meet there are not sincere or authentic. I don't understand why my friends like to go there. And I can't say no to them all the time. They may feel I don't want to be friends. I also have some self-reflections about this. If they are not my type and it's just a matter of losing a group of friends, it's ok. Then I can meet other friends later. So I think I will slowly distance myself from them. I don't like those activities, always have to move my legs (dancing). It's very tiring!

Alice They also don't like to sit down; they stand and drink on the streets, those people in Lan Kwai Fong ... aren't they tired?

Emerald I really feel very tired, I don't like that either.

Alice Ok, I think I have asked all the questions I have. Do you have any questions?

Emerald Not really.

Alice Thank you for helping me with this interview, Emerald.