

The 1st Runner Up of English Section

Junior Division

Name of Winner : Chung Wing Yan Joycelyn

Name of School : Belilios Public School

Book Title : The Undomestic Goddess

Author : Sophia Kinsella

Publisher : Bantam Dell

Suppose there are two job offers in front of you right now – being a partner of the most prestigious law firm in the country, or being a housekeeper of a wealthy family. Which one will you take? Will you hesitate before making the decision?

Workaholic attorney Samantha Sweetings used to be a rising star in her law firm – not anymore after she makes an unbearable mistake. Going into utter meltdown, she gets on a train and ends up in the middle of nowhere. She asks for directions at a mansion and finds herself hired as a housekeeper. Samantha does not even have the

faintest idea how to bake a potato but she decides to learn and cope. Meanwhile, she finds the love of her life. Just as she starts enjoying the slow-paced life of a village housekeeper, she discovers the truth behind her alleged “mistake” – she is actually set up by a partner. Her story is reported and goes viral on the internet. To save the PR disaster, the law firm offers her a partnership. But will she want her old stressful life back?

I knew *The Undomestic Goddess* would be a perfect fit for me when I flipped through the first few pages. It describes the high-powered city life of a young ambitious lawyer, which entirely matches my fantasies of working in posh offices and solving knotty problems. As I continued reading, I could not help smiling unknowingly and sometimes bursting into laughter as the story is full of wit. Also, Kinsella gives the protagonist so much charm that it made my heart beat with her actions. When Samantha’s lie is about to get busted, it hammered my nerves; when she is scolded and insulted, I got twinges of

pain. The novel is as light and sweet as a Tofutti but at the same time it delves a little deeper.

To be frank, when I first read about Samantha's decision of declining the offer of partnership, I was genuinely disappointed. The girl has a legal mind. She is intelligent, quick witted and she can come up with a sound and convincing argument within seconds. She was meant to be a lawyer. Also, she is so passionate towards her job. She put in more effort into her job than any of her colleagues in order to excel in every project she is assigned to. She earns her promotion and she just gives away what she deserves so easily. I thought it is a pity and a waste of her talent. However, I guess I could understand her decision. Before, her world only consists of never-ending work. She is so busy and strained that nothing other than work interests her. She does not give the slightest care to things like picking up a habit or catching up with friends. Despite her eye-catching performances in the firm, she lacks qualities of living as

a person. After she becomes a housekeeper, she has the time and courage to experience more. In her new workplace, nobody knows about her past or her breathtaking failure. People forgive her for her mistakes and did not put pressure on her. She changes a lot and gradually discovers aspects of herself that she does not know before. She changes her once dull and plain appearance into a lively and lovely one. She learns and surprisingly, loves cooking. Because of her new life, she now dates a guy that might otherwise never catch her eye. She matures. Seeing her being able to relax with her loved one under the sun and enjoy some quality personal time without having to check her Blackberry every 10 minutes, I felt glad for her.

After finishing *The Undomestic Goddess*, questions lingered in my mind: how much would I sacrifice for my career? Is it worth to give up leisure time for work? Since I am still young, I could not give a concrete answer to the questions. But I am quite sure I would not make

the same decision as Samantha if I were her. Work gives us an opportunity to shine and to obtain a sense of fulfillment. But at the same time it can make us feel stressed and even deprive us of our time to enjoy life. Therefore it is important to identify what kind of life we really want and then prioritize goals that you wish to accomplish. It could be climbing up to a certain position in your company, or travelling around the world, or to have a lovely family. Everyone may have different focuses at different stages of life but one thing they share in common is that they make compromises for their choices, just like what Samantha did. Most people are not as bold as her though. We try too hard to make everything in life perfect and strain ourselves too much. The truth is, sometimes you just cannot have your cake and eat it. We have to accept the fact that our ability is limited and thus we cannot fulfill so many plans at the same time. Allow yourself to take a break. Learn to let go of things. You will find life easier and happier.

Just like Samantha, sometimes unexpected events happen and change our lives, making us bewildered and lost. However, we should always keep calm and carry on as life is full of opportunities. When God closes a door, he opens a window. It is absolutely not the end of the world if you lose your job or break up with someone. Samantha experiences a drastic change – from being a lawyer to someone’s housekeeper – and she finds it even better than her old life. So do not be frightened by the changes because it may lead you to somewhere pleasant, a place where you belong.

This novel is light yet charming. I recommend it to anyone who craves a good read with lots of laugh, especially to those who are stressed out by work.