



SIDELINE
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The Story Book

A New Chapter Beckon

“ONCE UPON A TIME in a far away land...” is a common phrase in many fairy tales which more often than not would send us, the readers, on to a delightful adventure in some make believe fantasy world.

Such is the power of books, especially fairy tales. It can make us happy, laugh, fall in love and even shed tears.

That is exactly what The Story Book director Jeanisha Wan intended to achieve when she decided to launch The Story Book - an event space dedicated to run storybook-themed activities and performances.

The shop is the first of its kind to encourage people to discover stories from books through interactive events and performing arts.

Jeanisha says, “Many people, especially the young generation, find it

hard to read books these days. Social media particularly has contributed to this phenomenon. The cold and quiet facade of traditional bookshops simply do not appear inviting enough to encourage people of this generation to love books or reading.

Hidden like a precious treasure on the first floor of Plaza Arcadia’s Eaton block in Desa ParkCity, Kuala Lumpur, The Story Book’s first impression is that of a normal but appealing book store.

With a vintage storybook cover as a door design and a glass window to peek into, it did not even begin to express what is truly behind that facade.

Step inside and one would immediately register that it was no ordinary bookstore as on the right shelves there are numerous literature paraphernalia from classics like Romeo and Juliet to modern novels like the

Harry Potter series and even children’s classics like Alice in Wonderland.

Besides that, there are also several pop-up corners selling ice-cream from The Last Polka and a bakery.

To the left, one would see a cosy little nook where shelves of books, mostly catering towards the children and young adult fictions are set up by Subang Jaya based bookstore called “Bookalicious”, provided for those who entered with the intention of purchasing a reading material.

The eye-catching statement piece of the entire place would be the theatresque red curtains reminiscent to that used for operas and other theatre performances - situated at the very centre of the space. The bold colour itself demands attention be given to it, but truly it piques people’s interest as to what lies behind the curtain.

Concealed behind the red draperies is a





multi-purpose space with a pantry for rent.

Jeanisha shares that this space was built with the intention to change the way the conventional business is run so that how the way youth these days, view and read books will change as books she believes are something to be experienced.

With The Story Book, Jeanisha is aiming similarly to what Tan Sri Tony Fernandez had done when he first took over Air Asia, where he targeted the then non-flying market instead of tapping onto the existing flying market.

"I aim to do the same with this space and that is by targeting not the book readers but rather the non-reading public."

"This place sets itself apart from every other book-related location such as bookstores, book cafes and even libraries, as we are aiming for people who are not reading and those who are not even looking at books to begin with," she adds.

The Story Book is facing up to the challenge of enticing this tough crowd to give books a try by engaging them with something interactive where they can participate in, like creating events surrounding their monthly theme such as open mic reading session for the everyone where the themes could be 'Horror' or 'Mystery' and even having tea parties for the kids.

"With the activities organised by The

Story Book as well as the events we host for partners, we hope to encourage people of all ages to once again discover the magical world of stories within the printed sheets of books. In The Story Book, people do not just read stories in books but they get to experience them with all their senses by listening, watching, performing and participating in interactive activities," she adds.

For example, last month's theme was 'Fantasy' where The Story Book, among others, organised Tolkien (JRR Tolkien who is the author of The Lord of The Rings trilogy) Reading Day on March 24, following the successful Romeo and Juliet open mic night in February and Beauty and the Beast Day in January, where patrons attended the reading came dressed as any character from any of Tolkien's series.

"Such events are also created to gather existing book lovers to encourage them to hang out together, meet new people and exchange opinions on their favourite books.

"However, I must stress that the space for rent is not limited to only literature-related event but it is also open to be rented for any other events such as a yoga events, talks, even birthday parties and many more," Jeanisha says.

Finding the right partners to fill the spaces in The Story Book is another challenge and it being still a new venture,

it is still ever changing in nature, still accepting feedbacks from patrons, still experimenting with new pop-up stores every now and then to find a partner that just clicks with the vibe of the place. Suffice to say that, at the time of this writing, The Story Book has yet to settle into one definite picture.

Jeanisha also explains that she chose to open The Story Book in Plaza Arkadia, Desa ParkCity due to it being strategically located among a high concentration of both government and private schools as well as education centres. The shop is directly adjacent to an international school and a number of dance and music schools.

As Sukhdev Singh, General Manager of Township Management, Perdana ParkCity Sdn Bhd puts it: "Their unconventional concept of bringing stories from books to life through activities and performances will definitely benefit our community here, by giving people easy access to storytelling activities and story-related artistic pursuits."

With The Story Book, all Jeanisha wants to do is to share that loving books is an advantage to everyone.

"Stories are able to open your mind so much to an unlimited world. When you're in the world of stories nothing stops you, there is no limit," she adds.

Welcome to The Story Book! **mb**