

## ♡ Hello Kitty ♡

When Tsoi Kit-Yuk started primary school, everyone was required to have English names. So her mom wrote Kitty in her notebook, saying that Kit-Yuk's sharp little eyes were just like a kitten's. Kit-Yuk didn't grow up to look much like a cat, nor was her personality at all catlike. But for every birthday and holiday, all of her friends would get her Hello Kitty presents, because everyone thought Kit-Yuk was obsessed with Hello Kitty. ☆

Kit-Yuk in fact had no special affection for Hello Kitty, though she didn't especially dislike her either. It was just that once, when she had placed third in the fourth-grade examinations, her mom had bought her a Hello Kitty thermos as a reward. After that, all her friends started getting her Hello Kitty gifts, and, to make things easier for them, Kit-Yuk always acted like she loved Hello Kitty. Of course, they thought it was easy being friends with Kit-Yuk. ♡

Just as the Hello Kitty gifts piled up in Kit-Yuk's home, so her friends accumulated over the years. Friends from university, secondary, and primary school were always keeping in touch with her, constantly planning reunions. Kit-Yuk wasn't very outgoing or talkative at these get-togethers, but her old classmates always thought first of Kit-Yuk, and once they remembered her they would want to plan yet another reunion. ☼

In university, Kit-Yuk studied accounting, so her friends would joke about how someday she would work at Sanrio, the company that makes Hello Kitty. Kit-Yuk would avoid saying anything, and after graduating she went to work instead at one of the Big Six accounting firms. She put away all her Hello Kitty pencil cases and cell-phone holders, and strode to the office in proper business attire. During the first week of training, a young man who was wearing a dark-blue dress shirt with a golden yellow tie passed her in the hallway and said to her, "Hey Kitty, I'm Stephen, I'm also in the H group." They shook hands. ☆

Stephen was her senior at that time. From then on, whenever Kit-Yuk worked with him, he would be very patient and helpful. Stephen, like Kit-Yuk, wasn't very talkative, sort of the opposite of his loud gold

tie. Every morning he would say "Hi Kitty!" and then lower his head to work. As far as dating, that was something that wouldn't happen for a full year. They took seven days off then and went to Japan for a holiday, which made all their friends envious. But the fact that Kit-Yuk didn't go to Hello Kitty Land or Tokyo Disney was completely unthinkable for everyone. When pressed to talk about what they did on that vacation, Kit-Yuk was at a loss. All she remembered was the misty atmosphere and long slow days of the Hakone hot-spring resorts, the two of them lost in silent intimacy. ♡

Hello Kitty is not only timeless, but is now growing stronger and stronger, suddenly extending into many product lines. Aside from stationery, you can now buy a Hello Kitty toaster, radio, TV, camera, cell phone, vacuum cleaner, electric fan, credit card, blanket, furniture, PDA, car - practically everything under the sun. Nowadays you can find Hello Kitty dressed as a panda bear, a chick, a puppy. Hello Kitty can simulate anything, and everything becomes a Hello Kitty simulacrum. Fans say that Hello Kitty is the only gift-product character without a mouth, and that this makes her unique and unearthly. Critics say Hello Kitty is dispassionate and expressionless. ☆

When Kit-Yuk and Stephen separated, her girlfriends rushed to get her the newest Hello Kitty stuff - supposedly for her birthday, but really to cheer her up. They were all eating at a restaurant and Kit-Yuk opened each gift to the group's bubbly excitement. Kit-Yuk felt truly grateful. After dinner, Kit-Yuk went to the ladies' room to fix her makeup. She put on layer after layer of lipstick, and then, grabbing some tissue, practically rubbed her mouth off. ☹

That night, before going to bed, Kit-Yuk drew lipstick mouths on each of the 126 Hello Kittys in her room. She dreamt that she was in the hotel at Hakone. It was dawn and she was applying lipstick at the dressing table, while an unknown man slept on the tatami. Her lipstick got thicker and darker, and with one wipe of the tissue, her mouth was gone. ♡

Kit-Yuk woke up with a start. The sky was half dark. The Hello Kittys around her all had no mouths. ☹ ♡ ☆