

A volunteer personal email to her parents and siblings:

Sent: Thursday, January 27, 2005 1:13 PM

Subject: Hoe Fun

Dear all

Just came back from Toa Payoh after visiting the infamous odd couple, whose flat we painted 2 weeks ago. They've been really bothering me and I just felt I needed to go. Took some of my old sheets & pillow cases, bought 2 new pillows, a towel blanket (only \$5, so cheap) and some coffee buns. They sleep on a mat on the floor cos their mattress not very clean ;-). Both have bladder problem, so you can imagine the state of the mattress.

When I went, they were both sleeping on the mat. The mentally challenged wife said, "hey tid toe" pointing to the old man. He said he "tau wun" this morning and he did look rather pale. I made up their bed, folded up their clothes strewn on the bed, purportedly clean ones (!), and made the 2 of them get on it, while I said I'd mop the floor for them. The floor was really dirty as I had suspected it'd be. Not sure where all the black gunge comes from, doesn't smell like shit, not sure what it is, but it is black! There is no way either of them can clean house. The old man is so frail and the wife "mong char2". She leaned back on the new pillows, new sheet, arms folded behind her head and feet crossed, and I teased her, "hoe fun mah?", she replied, "HOE fun!"

Then I saw one blanket spread out under the window. The old man said, "sup chor". I knew it was pee and true enough. Soaked it, and later washed it and hung out for them. They were not going to wash it, I know cos we threw out 2 blankets that stunk to high heavens the first visit. The old man went to "or new" 3 times during the hour I was there. So its not just his wife as I thought, but he himself that is incontinent. The HDB fixed their flush so it works but the toilet bowl still black. They can hardly keep themselves clean don't talk about the flat. Good thing the cleaning stuff was still there from our first visit -- everything was laid out the way we left it, so I don't think they used any of it at all.

After I left and went down to the car, I felt so sad. Cried as I was driving home. Don't know what to do with them! Anyway, I have resolved to check with the RC nearby here in the slab blocks if there are any single infirm elderly that could use some help. At

least I can just walk over. Papers have been publicizing these "hidden" old folk ever since PM's call to reach out to needy & elderly. The MPs meet all the time families who get their utilities cut cos they can't pay their bills. Laxmi (not her real name) knows the feeling. She's known how it is to go downstairs to the car park and pump coins into the tap to wash up the kids when their water got cut. There are so many more like her.