

**PROTAGONIST'S STRUGGLE IN PURSUING WORK-LIFE
BALANCE IN ALMIRA BASTARI'S NOVEL
*HOME SWEET LOAN***

A THESIS

BY

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Medan, July 2025
The Writer

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Biography of Almira Bastari

Almira Bastari, whose full name is Almira Illini Bastari, was born in 1990 in Illinois, United States. She is known as an Indonesian author who writes in the metropop genre, characterized by a light and humorous writing style. Bastari first gained recognition with her debut novel, *Resign!*, published in 2018. The novel explores the dynamics of office life at a consulting firm, infused with fresh comedic elements. The success of *Resign!* paved the way for Bastari to continue writing and producing novels that resonate with the urban lives of the millennial generation.

One of her most recent and widely acclaimed works is *Home Sweet Loan*, published in February 2022 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. This novel tells the story of four friends—Kaluna, Tanisha, Kamamiya, and Danan—who are striving to own their dream homes in their 30s. Set in Jakarta, the story portrays the various challenges they face, from work-related issues and financial struggles to romantic complications.

Home Sweet Loan not only offers a tale of friendship and love but also touches on relevant social issues such as financial pressure, personal ambition, and family dynamics. Through the character of Kaluna, who comes from a middle-class background and works a side job as a lip model, Bastari portrays the tough realities faced by millennials. Her in-depth research in developing these characters adds depth to the narrative and makes it feel authentic.

Bastari's witty writing style, filled with subtle satire, has become a signature that makes *Home Sweet Loan* both engaging and inspiring. The simple yet meaningful narrative, combined with deep life reflections, makes the novel ideal for readers entering adulthood and seeking a realistic depiction of life in the capital.

The success of *Home Sweet Loan* further cements Almira Bastari's position as one of Indonesia's leading metropop authors. Through her works that illustrate urban realities with humor and romance, Bastari has captured the attention of young readers and established herself as a significant voice in Indonesian popular literature.

Appendix B

Literary Works

1. Melbourne (Wedding) Marathon (2017)
2. Resign! (2018)
3. Ganjil Genap (2020)
4. Home Sweet Loan (2022)
5. Agensi Rumah Tangga (2024)

Appendix C

Summary of the Novel *Home Sweet Loan*

Home Sweet Loan follows the story of Kaluna, a general affairs employee at a private bank in Jakarta, whose life is filled with demands from her workplace, family, and romantic relationship. At 31 years old, Kaluna feels trapped in a cycle of physically and mentally exhausting work. Despite having an average salary and position, the workload and expectations from her superiors remain high. On the other hand, she also faces pressure

from her extended family, who live under the same roof, leaving her with almost no personal space to rest or even breathe.

The issue of work-life balance in Kaluna's life becomes increasingly evident as she juggles overtime hours at the office, becomes the backbone of her household at home, and maintains a romantic relationship that drains her emotionally. She even takes on a side job as a lip model for a cosmetics brand in pursuit of her dream to own a home. All of this leaves Kaluna exhausted, both physically and mentally, yet she feels she has no other choice because life's demands keep pressing in from every direction.

Almira Bastari cleverly portrays how millennial women like Kaluna are often forced to choose between personal needs and social responsibilities. Kaluna longs for freedom and a space of her own, but the reality of work, family, and social obligations offers little room for compromise. Amid her hectic work schedule and the pressures of urban life, she struggles to find time for herself, let alone to rest or build a healthy relationship. This reflects the very real crisis of work-life balance faced by many people in big cities.

The conflict between Kaluna and her boyfriend Hansa further reinforces this theme. Hansa's family expects Kaluna to follow traditions that add financial and time-related pressure, despite her already being overwhelmed with her job and her goal of buying a house. Kaluna gradually realizes that life cannot always be dictated by others, not even by a partner or family. She begins to learn how to say no to unrealistic expectations and starts prioritizing her own well-being.

In the end, *Home Sweet Loan* offers an honest and relevant portrayal of how difficult it is to maintain a balance between work and personal life, especially for urban women striving for independence. Through Kaluna's journey, readers are invited to reflect on the importance of recognizing personal limits, setting priorities, and creating safe space in a high-pressure life. Almira Bastari writes in a light and humorous tone, while still embedding sharp social commentary on work culture and family expectations that often disregard individual mental health.

Appendix D

Characters in The Novel

1. Kaluna

The main character. A 31-year-old woman who works in the general affairs department of a private bank. Kaluna is very independent, ambitious, and is struggling to realize her dream of buying her own house through a mortgage loan. She lives with her extended family, which causes her stress and leaves her with no personal space. Kaluna also faces pressure from her work environment, family, and romantic relationship.

2. Hansa

Kaluna's boyfriend. A well-established man from a wealthy family. He appears supportive, but on the other hand, his family imposes traditions and financial demands regarding their wedding plans. Hansa is portrayed as rather passive toward his parents' attitudes, which makes Kaluna feel burdened and forced to choose between love and her freedom.

3. Tanisha

Kaluna's friend since high school. A mother of one child who is in a long-distance marriage. She works at the same office as Kaluna and serves as a supportive confidant. Tanisha often offers wise and realistic perspectives in their friendship.

4. Kamamiya

Another friend of Kaluna. Miya aspires to become a social media influencer and cares deeply about her appearance and social media presence. She is depicted as fashionable, stylish, and somewhat dramatic, yet remains a loyal friend who supports her close ones.

5. Danan

The male friend in Kaluna's group. He also works with them and often adds color to conversations with his humor and distinctive way of speaking. Danan represents an urban man who is beginning to think about investments and life stability.

6. Mother

Kaluna's mother. She is a traditional figure who upholds conventional values about marriage, family, and women. She often pressures Kaluna to comply with Hansa's family's wishes, including covering the wedding costs, which conflicts with Kaluna's own desires.

7. Father

Kaluna's father. Portrayed as calmer and less involved, but still not openly supportive of Kaluna. He tends to let household decisions be determined by his wife.

8. Kamala

Kaluna's older sister, who is married and lives in the same house. She brings her own family dynamics, including her husband and child, into the household, making the home more crowded and stressful for Kaluna.

9. Kanendra

Kaluna's older brother. Also married and living in the family home. Like Kamala, his presence adds complexity to Kaluna's household life, making her feel a loss of personal space and freedom.