



# Fiction

Group 3

## The Force of Truth and Grace

*British International School Shanghai (Puxi), Choi, Jiwon – 12*

Let's tick our time back billions and billions of years ago. Picture this, when the Earth first began to rotate and when the sun just arose from the endless ashes. When the various creatures were first given life, that was the age that I was born. When the age of creation was just about to emerge, that's how our tale was written and how our adventure began.

My life, before this adventure to the west, was pretty much spontaneous. Unexpected adventures always chased after me. When I was at the age of five million, I left the wizardry world of Olympus. Yes, it was depressing and heartbreaking to abandon the land that I've been breathing forever, however I was also delighted for the next destination of my anecdote.

About a month after I left the Olympian wizardry world, I received an envelope with a golden feather inside. As soon as I unlocked the envelope, the feather swirled and pinned itself to my silver droopy hair, taking me to the grand, graceful palace of Olympian gods. A glittering rainbow filled the sky and gold had gobbled up the whole palace. The angelic statue of Cupid gracefully glistened as the sunlight gently shone through. Gorgeous melody from a golden harp was forming a pulchritudinous harmony with the glorious fountain. Whilst admiring the peaceful melody from the angel's harp, a powerful voice flew down to my ears.

"I sent the golden feather to bring you here," Zeus blurted out his concern as he walked out of the Parthenon arch, "And this is why. There is a barbarous fight going on in far Western Europe. The place is in ruination. I need you to travel to the Franciscan palace and cease the war by bringing the cursed sword of war back to us, so that the world can come back to peace."

"Oh! I forgot one thing!" Zeus remembered, "There will be monsters and poor souls that will be willing to join your journey. Take care of them with the force of the truth and grace. They will help you during your adventure. I trust you Harold, to finish successfully. Now, good luck!" Zeus and the other Greek gods all wished me luck as I stepped out of the gate and moved one step and one step closer to the destination.

I swam across the peaceful lake of elegant swans and galloped through the mysterious woods where yellow and orange eyes were glaring at me through the pitch-black dark. I ran, swam, flew, dashed, walked and rushed until no such land was standing in front of me. Only an ocean was flowing and letting its tide in. As I swished across the crystal-blue sky on clouds, I could foresee the aura, rather mysterious.

"Whoosh! whooooo." The wind was howling wildly as the thunder cracked up the beautiful blue sky. The wave swallowed everything as the thunderstorm clashed into a humongous creature, swirling like a column of tornado. It had ice-cold, diamond-shaped eyes with a body full of blue and turquoise spots. Its chest and legs were a blended mix of Chinese dragon and whales. Its spike was as sharp as a tooth of a cobra and its kite-shaped face was sparkling frantically with ice crystals.

"My name is Poseideire and I am a grandson of an Olympian god, Poseidon. I used to guard the palace of Olympus but I have been executed because of my poor guarding skill. I've been waiting for million years in the cell of Polsharks. Can you please release me and let me follow you?" the monster begged in hope.

“You are more than welcome to join my journey if you want, however the adventure won’t be smooth or straightforward. Are you still following me?” I repeated once more, trying to make sure.

“Yes. I am more than happy to follow and will support you in any form.” Poseideire joyfully saluted.

We travelled miles and miles for weeks and weeks, panting and sweating. When there was an obstacle in the journey, there was always a light streaming out of my dark soul – Poseideire. He guarded me all night even though he, himself was exhausted. He never complained, he just silently carried on. Whilst I was marching towards a rooted, hollow woods, I figured out that something was atypical. The trees started to replace themselves with rusty, ancient coffins and tomb stones as the whole woods rapidly became a spooky, horrendous graveyard. When the suspicion was building up, I felt something whooshing through my heart. It felt frigid, as if someone had shoved my heart in a tomb full of freezing ice. White substance was ruffling its gown when I opened my eyes. I pinched my cheek, holded my breath and punched myself on the nose, but it was reality. The blurry creature finally shoved its gown off and revealed itself to me and my mate.

“Hmm.. Yes, you are confused. But on the other hand, you are amazed of how this could actually happen. I can always read your mind... so do not lie to me... You are going on a journey to the Franciscan castle, right? Yes, you are.... I am Mr. Phillipé. I used to be the guard of Parthenon gate but I got executed because I.. did something terribly wrong. That is why I am stuck in here, at the spooky, dark forest with a human body! Will you get me out of here?” Mr. Phillipé questioned in a polite manner with a desperate look on his face.

“Finally! It is the land of Franciscan palace(Rome)!” Poseideire screeched in excitement. The Franciscan palace was a land of joy and grace. Fresh crops had been washed with clear raindrops and deer were having a peaceful nap, tanning itself lightly on the gentle sunlight. Gentle breeze tickled everyone’s noses as aromatic scent of flowers danced through the wind.

“Help me! Get me out of here! I’ve been holding earth from million years ago! Just get me out of here and I will do anything for you. Please!” a centaur roared, shattering peace. As Harold picked the centaur up, the centaur turned aggressive towards the others right away.

“Who are you? What are you doing to Harold? Don’t you dare? You should get a taste of my fist! Come here, you coward!” As I tied the centaur’s head with magic rope, it began to turn milder and optimistic– the magic rope was my emergency gadget to use in this type of situation.

Clash! Swoosh! Chang! A herd of minotaurs galloped speedily towards us as we locked our eyes and prayed for the best. One... two... three... We all waited for the minotaurs to collapse us right away, but nothing had occurred. Thud! Just then, I witnessed an astonishing sight– the centaur was fighting the last Minotaur left in the field. All of them had been knocked up. Blood was drizzling down its chin and its biceps were rumbling in agony. Its legs were immensely wounded with a nasty scar of a fierce axe. As the last Minotaur thudded on the ground, I dashed up to the centaur and examined through his body to check that his wound wasn’t too severe. I was impressed of how he could sacrifice himself for the safety of all the others. I then blessed the centaur and marched along the endless path.

“I know where the sword is. In fact, I’ve been suffering because of that sword.” The centaur roared miserably. He confessed that he was trying to steal the sword since it was rumored that the true owner of the sword will be able to live forever. He exclaimed that a terrible monster called Artagon snatched it away from its owner and took it to the hazardous, horrid dungeon of the Francescan castle. As we silently slipped ourselves into the dungeon, Mr. Phillipé pointed at a microscopic, golden dot which was spreading the aura of depression and aggression. One step... two steps... three steps... the golden dot had transformed itself into a spectacular, golden sword now. My finger grasped the edge of the sword as the owner of the sword woke up. This time, the centaur wasn’t alone. Everyone joined in, smashing, punching, kicking, and boxing, doing a mini celebration when the owner finally gave up fighting. Everyone had learned a lesson there— *Two brain is better than one* and *nothing is impossible when the whole group’s participating*.

“I, Zeus give Harold Fordman a permission of being a Greek goddess as he did me a gigantic favor of bringing the world’s peace back. I couldn’t do it without you, Harold, thank you. Secondly, I give Posideire a permission to come back to the Olympus castle as he supported Harold and made his adventure more secure. Thirdly, I ask Mr. Phillipé to come back and once again become a guard as he kept the journey lively and enjoyable for everyone. Lastly, I request Cemoires, the centaur to become Harold’s assistant as a goddess as he proved his braveness by sacrificing himself for everyone’s safety.” Everyone had a huge cheer, congratulating themselves. They were reborn.

## Between Dimensions

*British International School Shanghai (Puxi), Tang, Emma – 13*

The silence of the night was interrupted by a murmur. "Where are you, warrior? Give me a sign."  
Across the mountains, a meteor lit up the horizon.

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2 days ago:

Thomas woke up to find his vision heavily clouded by bright dots. He attempted to recall what had happened but was only met with a chain reaction of questions. He couldn't even remember his name. "Drink this," a voice insisted.

He had a vague memory of someone telling him not to accept food from strangers, but as every second dragged on, he could feel the skin on his throat burning. So he drank it. It was impossible to describe how he felt, or rather, how he didn't feel. In any case, his memory was coming back. He remembered looking at the distant star, which somehow seemed to get closer to him, then a flash of blue light. He still didn't know where he was though, and as he surveyed his surroundings, he didn't feel the expected comfort.

"We're in space time, if that's what you're wondering, little boy."

"How can we be in space time, it is not something you can be in. By the way, I'm not that young, you know," it was all coming back, his endless hours of research and experimenting. He figured he was no longer on Earth.

"You're fourteen, which, in the grand scheme of things, is the equivalent of an atom compared to a supercluster. And to answer your question, not in a three dimensional world. Our physical bodies aren't here."

"But how can you do anything if you don't exist as a substance?" Thomas had a horrible feeling this conversation was going exactly how the voice intended. "And can't I just imagine myself back to the normal world or something? And where's everyone else and why can't I see you?"

The voice drifted closer to him "You do exist as a substance. For example, your bones are still here, just not made of bone matrix. This is Earth, except it's the dimension between dimensions. Few living organisms on Earth can comprehend this. Feeble brains. You *can* see me, technically."

Thomas squinted hard at where he heard the voice, he still saw nothing though, so he gave up. As he eased his concentration, color flooded into him, and he could see yet not in the way he normally saw. Everything was so much more realistic than the bland, dull world he was used to, but not really all there, not in its usual substance state, in a much more complex manner.

He realized with a jolt that the voice was coming from his blind tiger-patterned cat from home.

"Wait, but how can you talk?"

"I am not talking, technically. You only understand what I'm saying because you think it's possible. Don't confuse yourself with the strange thing you call imagination, though."

His cat spat out a translucent black stone into his hand. "Thomas, that is your life-line. Don't lose it."

Thomas chose not to question that. Instead, he put the stone into his pocket and asked "Well, what am I supposed to do? I can't stay here forever, can I?"

"No, you have to find the switch which brings us back to reality as how you normally interpret it. On top of that tower. "

Full of dread, Thomas looked at the tower and felt his stomach churning with fear. It was a tall, tyrannical building, the kind that radiated with such hostility that it sent visions of dark tunnels and people locked up in cages, dangling from the ceiling of a dark enclosed chamber. But he knew somehow that that was what had to be done, that the troubles ahead he needed to encounter, to get back to his normal world.

He walked towards the tower. And as he did so, he felt the temperature decreasing rapidly; this did not have any effect on the beads of sweat rolling down his back. His cat trailed behind him with an air of superiority, occasionally lunging at small creatures which Thomas did not recognize. They got to the tower without any trouble, something, on a later note Thomas should have seen as a bad omen. The cat, evidently thinking that he had done all he could to help, disappeared behind a bush. Thomas swallowed nervously and stepped into the building. The lobby was a spherical room, completely empty except for an unoccupied front desk built out of black glass and an elevator at the other side of the sphere.

The moment he stepped in the tower, a wave of nausea rolled over him. Every single part of the sphere was made from millions of screens, every single screen was projecting a shade of orange and, starting from the screen on the left, each screen changed to the second shade of orange, darker, until it got back to the first screen which changed to the third shade of orange. The pattern continued, and Thomas felt like his eyes were glued to the screen. He couldn't bring himself to look at anything else even though every cell in his brain was futilely screaming for his eyes to look away. Inside his mind, he felt his vision split into two, then three, continuing forever.

He called every ounce of willpower left and commanded himself to close his eyes. When he did, he immediately felt his consciousness return and seizing the chance, ran towards the elevator behind the front desk. Frantically, he pressed the buttons for the top floor, his heart nearly beating out of his chest. For some reason, while the elevator ascended, fear built up in him, like oil feeding the cold fire inside him that was burning him down. The idea of death shepherded all his positive emotions into a hut too far for him to reach as the elevator opened on the top floor. There was only one person in the spacious room, which puzzled him since he knew how powerful the switch was.

Instantly, he was seized by the man whose outline was the only visible thing. He felt the air being squeezed out of his lungs after he tried to kick at the man, who quickly ducked under him and flipped him over. Pain shot up his spine, temporarily paralyzing him. All he could do to save himself from the next attack was roll over, but the man had anticipated it, and before Thomas could react, the man stamped his foot on Thomas' chest. Thomas felt a scream of agony escape from his lungs. The pain made him feel more awake than ever, now masked by the adrenaline pumping in his veins. When the man launched into another attempt to kill him, Thomas caught his foot in midair and spun around, aiming a kick at the man's knee while using his free hand to find the pressure point in the man's neck. The effect was instantaneous. He heard a sickening crunch as the man crumpled to the ground like a piece of paper. Once his brain realized the fight was over, the pain immediately returned and he doubled over. He used the last of his strength to pull himself over to the lever at the end of the room and pulled it.

Thomas rubbed his eyes sleepily and climbed out of his bed. He made his way to the window, pulling the curtains as sunlight flooded into his room. He then trudged downstairs, expecting to be met by his butler, and saw that there was no one there, just a dust covered post-it on the kitchen table which read: 'Thomas, you can't exist in this world anymore, so when you're here, the rest of the living things can't exist. It's up to you. And you never had a cat either.' There was no signature on the note, almost as if no one had written it. He read the note over and over again, waiting for the meaning to sink in. Slowly, like he was in a trance, Thomas walked back to his room, where he pulled out a hammer from one of his drawers. He reached a hand into his pocket and pulled out a small, black stone. He knew what would happen next was inevitable, but as his own death approached him, he found that he was not intimidated by it. In fact, he didn't feel anything at all, just peace, a different kind of peace. Thomas brought the hammer down on the stone as hard as he could. The stone shattered, its pieces all exploding in midair.

There was a flash of blinding black light. And then the feeling of a million needles against his skin. And then a loss of consciousness. And then he became nothing. Yet more than everything. An infinite helix. A warrior.

## Brand

*British International School Shanghai (Puxi), Wang, Helena – 13*

The old trees were stripped of their outer layers by the harsh seasons, creating wave after wave of patterns spiraling into the center and around its trunk. The withering moss, damp with rain, rubbed roughly against my palm, leaving the fresh cuts tingling. Gingerly, I pulled myself onto my scraped elbows, my head pounding with a ferociousness I've never felt before. As I placed my feet under me, my right leg crumbled to the floor, a sharp electric pulse of agony ripped through me, my bones screeched as I tumbled back down with a cry, exploding with fire and ice. Thoughts rushed back to me, the gleaming eyes of Master, the pleasure he felt as he brought down the club onto my ankle, the way his eyes widened at my shriek that bled through the leaves and pierced the air, the blind panic as I ran. Fear gripped me, my body stilled, paralyzed as the events went by before my mind in a scroll of flickering pictures. With a gasp, I wrench myself away from the thoughts, all pain fled me as I hurriedly dragged myself across the forest floor, my eyes sewn shut; blocking out the dark images, cold sweat stained the collar of my ragged shirt, my hands turned clammy.

"You disappoint me dear," a low voice sounded behind me, a shudder of despair swept through me and my legs froze. "haven't I taught you to behave better?" I opened my eyes straight into a coal black void, vacant of human emotion and instead glazed with animalistic hunger. He drunk in the sight of my blood-covered hands elevating my shattered ankle, the fear that clouded my pupils. A slow smile spread across his features as he gripped my face, yanking it towards him, his eyes flickering with a frightening coldness.

"How long do you think it would take you to break if I left you? Humans do need company don't they? They go a little crazy without it. It's why you should – in fact – thank me for caring for you all these years." I whimpered. "Hush now dear, you'll never be more of a monster than you are now." I could feel his eyes as they bore down on my head, sending a blazing hole into my skull.

"Perhaps you'd maybe prefer to be left on your own, hm?" He tilted his head. "To be left to insanity, to rot and for your flesh to be devoured by insects. To be paralyzed as the shadows stare at you right in your face. It's what I've always imagined death to be like. Trapped in your own head, with no one to guide you out of the darkness you end up in. An eternity stuck in a deep hole of nothingness." His fingers tightened on my chin, teetering on the edge of leaving a bruise, his vile breath on my lips.

"Unfortunately, we've got company tomorrow." he said, eyes narrowing as he summoned a weave of *zezalav* that dissipated the pain from my ankle like fog and formed iron shackles around my weak limbs.

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I looked down at the black tiles on the floor, the cracks filled with specks of dried blood. Slaves worked around me with robotic movements, not stopping to rest, their hands jerking and sweeping the brooms back and forth, or dusting the dustless tables, their eyes unfeeling, their white collarbones evident with Master's brand, carved into the soft tissues of their skin. A disfigured man was strapped to a table in the center of the room, I caught sight of the masses of black hair that clung onto his forehead with sweat and the faint silvery glow of his skin against the daunting atmosphere. I couldn't keep from watching out of the corner of my eye as the black-garbed slaves released the heavy leather straps binding him to the table and helped him to his feet. There were only a few smears of blood and grime on the table and almost none on the floor. And within ten songs the room was spotless. Swallowing down my rising bile, I continue to follow him – shackles scraping against the floor – my body curling into itself at the chilled air, at the paintings that stood up against the walls and stared down at me with soulless eyes. I flinched as the scuttling feet of spiders pattered along the dry, cracked ceiling, their legs a thousand clocks, ticking and tocking in unison.

He clicked together the ends of my shackles to the protruding iron snake on the side of wall number 2 with twenty-six cracks. His wiry fingers locked them in place before he sat down with a creak on the side of the straw-made bed, pushed up against the wall with the barred window. My blood turned cold.

"Tomorrow, I want you at the *opler* at precisely five-o-two." he ordered, before proceeding to lock up my cell for the night, surrendering me to the whispers and the hisses of the nefarious night. I gave a small, involuntary gasp at the mention of the place, then covering as the small sound caused him to whirl back towards me. I could feel his breath upon my neck as he leaned down. I could smell the metallic stench that always radiated off him, that had formed itself into his very essence.

"Perhaps you'd like to know why? Mhm, you see." he said. "A predator normally wouldn't care if his prey got away the first time. It is still prey. But it's been contaminated, hasn't it? It's begun to think. It has begun to feel. So the predator will push the prey, until it will no longer think. Until it will no longer feel. Until it is nothing, but perfection."

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I stared down at the three figures before me, the black hoods that draped over their heads and rested on their broad shoulders, their battered shirts caked with dirt.

"The predator has allowed the prey freedom," he said. "That is, of course, earned only with a test."

"What use is freedom when freedom is slavery?" I whispered. The first words I've dared to utter in seventeen years. I lifted my eyes to his, uncertainty twinkling in them.

"What use will freedom be when you have become a slave of all?" He drew a dagger from his jacket, the hilt a dull grey with a single ruby carved into the bottom.

"Brand them," he said malevolently, wrenching off the hood of the man in the center. I went rigid. His face was swollen with bruises as he gazed back at me, blood oozed out of the cut on his pale lips, down the fair skin of his forehead. His pianist fingers were dug into his sides, ending in sharp talons. His eyes – a lovely, dark violet hue – were a moonlit sky, with stars spinning inside them, a moon rising and waning where pupils should be. He groaned. "My *ferneiza*..." My hands clenched tightly on the dagger as my brain processed the words and broke through my thoughts. *Ferneiza*. Fernei Mate. *Souhmate*.

A sudden, abyssal, curling anger unfurled within me. Rage began to darken my vision. My mate.

"Go on dear," said Master.

Mate.

"He deserves it."

Mate.

"He's killed so many,"

Mate.

"So many of our kind."

Mate. My soulmate. My *ferneinen*. I shook with rage. I found my mate.

"Brand him."

Mate.

Yelling in a newfound defiance, I reached into the well of power that had been hidden, suppressed inside of me for years. I reached for the energy, for the force tucked deep in my body, a force that made me stronger than any human. I screamed as the Change took over me, as my ears lengthened into velvety ears, and vines and blossoms spread across my skin, shifting with the little light there was and slithering with my emotions. My eyes flared wide with scorching flames as fury boiled over me. Fire erupted from every crevice of my body.

My Mate. I've finally found him.



## New Journey to the West

*Carmel Pak U Secondary School, Chan, Yu Him – 14*

I opened my eyes as my seat shook suddenly. I looked out the window, seeing the endless sea for the fourth time. “Are we there yet?” I asked, as I turned and looked at my mum. She didn’t answer my question, maybe annoyed as I had already asked it for ten times since we went on the bus. I rubbed my tired eyes, and yawned. Mum was still reading the Bible with the same posture that she had since she sat down on the bus. I sighed, I wasn’t supposed to be here, on the bus to Laos. I should be at home, enjoying my Christmas holiday...

“Mum, why do you need me to go with you?” I had argued as I packed my belongings reluctantly. “I have to enjoy my Christmas at home, but...” “No buts my son. Those people need our help. They need to learn, and it is our job to teach them. Let’s go,” she replied. “You have just told me to go with you three days ago, and why are we supposed to teach them? They are a thousand kilometers west from us, why do they expect any of our help?” I asked, as I locked my luggage and lay down on the bed. She took a deep breath, trying her best to lower her temper, and answered with a calm voice. “Okay son, let me tell you something. When I was a child...” And then she started to tell the story about her fight with poverty and led her to decide to help other poor people whenever she could. It was her third time recounting the story to me and it was totally unpersuasive. Knowing that I didn’t have any other choice, I gave up arguing and got off with Mum.

The bus shook again, bringing me back to reality. I looked out of the window. The disappearance of the sea was the only change in scenery, leaving the fields alone. I took out my mobile phone, hoping that the 4K signal will come back. But that wouldn’t be happening in a few days. It was six o’clock in the evening, and the sun had started to disappear under the horizon. Darkness filled the sky in a short time, though the glimmering moon was hung above us, still there was not enough light to brighten the road. I just hope that we wouldn’t arrive there on time, so that we could shorten the time we stayed there. The driver flicked a switch, turning on the front light of the bus. I put my phone in my bag and took out a book to read.

The bus suddenly stopped. I bumped onto the seat in front of me. The driver walked towards us, and said, “Sorry, I think there is no fuel left in the bus, I am afraid that you’ll need to walk to your destination. It is ten miles from here. Sorry.” I opened my eyes, wide. “Fine, we’ll walk, thank you.” Mum said, calmly. Now we need to walk, what a great journey. Thanks for ruining my holiday, Mum. I just wanted to leave this place. I stopped myself from thinking about the bad things that had happened. In fact, if we could arrive there later, that means that we could stay shorter. I got off the bus, feeling the chilly wind. And I started walking.

As houses started to appear in front of us, hope drained away from me. I thought it would be a long walk to finally get to the village. It seemed that the driver and Mum had fooled me to have hope of being delayed to get to the village. It just took us a total of ten to fifteen minutes to get here. There were a couple of houses scattered around the whole place, it was clearly seen that there were flies flying around. Locals stopped their work and stare at us, making me feel a little bit scared and embarrassed. A middle aged man came towards us and speak with us. Mum spoke with him with their language and shook hands with each other. He turned to me and shook hands with me. But when I grabbed his hand, I can feel that it was thin and weak, without any energy.

He turned around and shouted to the villagers about our arrival of us. The villagers suddenly became joyful, their frowns had vanished completely. A kid ran towards me with a smile, he hugged my leg. I could feel his warmth, but I could also feel his ribs, sticking out from his chest beneath the layer of skin. He was so thin, I’ve never seen someone that was this thin before, because this wouldn’t ever happen in Hong Kong. I grabbed the child and hug him. Tears dropped onto the ground, I suddenly feel bad about myself from being too stubborn to hear Mum’s words. I felt sorry for those kids here, I should have not said those words to infringe these kids. I put him down on the floor, patting his head gently and let him go back to his house.

I walked over to my mum, who was talking with the man about the teachings of tomorrow. And I whispered to her. “Thanks for bringing me to here, this is an amazing journey to the west.”

## New Journey to the West

*Carmel Pak U Secondary School, Choi, Kit – 13*

Sally stood in front of this enormous house as her white and black fluffy Papillon sniffed around excitedly next to her feet. How many times have she moved? She couldn't remember. Sally's parents were the bosses of a famous jewelry company, therefore, they were always busy and they are used to move from country to country. The only thing that kept here company is her beloved Papillon, Marshmallow. (She named him Marshmallow because of his fluffy fur and soft tummy.) This time, Sally's family have moved to the west, from China to India – another unfamiliar country.

Sally sighed as she entered her new home, Marshmallow followed her through the entrance. Her maids have already helped her with her luggage, all she have to do now is wait for dinner. Sally looked out at the window. The house is located away from the town, and all she could see were trees and a cave near her house. 'Another boring place,' she thought. Sally walked into her cloakroom and picked a grey hoodie from her rainbow collection. She had already gotten used to her parents spoiling her with clothes and accessories, for they thought this would make up for not being a part of her life. Her maid knocked on her door, reminding her that dinner is ready.

She got down stairs by using the elevator. Marshmallow was clearly hungry, as he ran right into the dining room right away when they arrived. Sally walked past her parents' room and saw something shining, but she thought it was one of those boring jewelries so she didn't pay attention to it. Sally sat down. Tonight's dinner was seafood chowder, roasted beef, and lemon pie. Her parents were absent as usual. They must have been busy at work. She wasn't hungry at all. She took a sip of the chowder, a few bites of the roasted beef, and half a slice of the pie. Sally didn't have any appetite, so she asked the maids to clean up as she left the room.

After dinner, it was time for bed. She buried herself in the big cozy bed, and Marshmallow lay beside her, asleep already. Sally stared at the cave outside the window, unable to sleep. Sometimes, in these insomniac nights, she felt lonely. The bed was too big for her alone, her room was too big for her, the bathroom was too fancy for her, her life was too lonely for her. Sometimes, she just want to live a normal life with her parents, a father that would make stupid dad jokes, a mother that would cook Sally her favorite dish, and someone to talk to when she felt sad. Sometimes she just wanted a hug. As a tear slid down her cheek, she curled herself into a ball.

When she was about to fall asleep, she saw something shining in the cave. She rubbed her eyes and looked again. She wasn't dreaming! There was really something shining! She got up excitedly, and put on her hoodie, 'Well, sometimes, life needs adventures too,' she thought. She took a torch and sneaked out of the house. She was too concentrated on not letting other notice her that she didn't saw Marshmallow following her out of the house until her barked. She looked around in shock and glanced down before sighing in relief, 'Shush! Marshmallow, you're gonna get me in trouble!'

When she got out of the house, she turned on her torch and walked to the cave. 'You know what, I don't even need this torch. Whatever shining in there is already bright enough. I wonder why others didn't see this,' she said to herself. She approached the cave and peeked inside. There was something shining at the end of it. She walked into it bravely as Marshmallow quietly followed. The squeaky sound made by Sally's shoes and the wet ground made the atmosphere much creepier. The sound of water dripping onto the ground wasn't making it better either.

After a couple minutes of walking, Sally had gotten to the end of the cave. She found four coffins which nearly scared the life out of her. She froze in front of them, her legs trembling in fear. She wanted to leave quickly so she turned around and tried to walk away, but then she heard a male voice, 'Please...Please help us...' That's when she collapsed on the ground, she was too afraid to turn around, she begged in a shaking voice, 'I'm... I'm so sorry I didn't mean to disturb you...I'm terribly sorry, please... let me go' Marshmallow stared at Sally as he tried to comfort her with his tiny paws.

Then she felt something warm touched her back and she felt calmer. She looked back and saw a monk smiling at her. She wiped her tears, and asked curiously, 'Who are you?' The monk answered, 'My name is Xuanzang, I'm a monk who was supposed to die five centuries ago but...' 'Wait, WHAT?' Sally interrupted rudely, remembering the story, "Journey to the west" told by her teacher when she still lived in China. Xuanzang comforted her by putting his hand on her shoulder and said, 'Don't worry. I'm not here to hurt you, but I need help from you instead. You probably have already noticed that others can't see the light shining from here. It's because only the one who have the sutras can see it. People thought me and my protectors have already obtained the sutras successfully, but we were defeated and chained with these coffins instead. It's been 500 years, we still can't rest in peace because of the missing sutras. You must help us with

it!' Sally answered disbelievingly, 'Wait, so you're really the Xuanzang from that story? Fine, but I don't even have that sutras. How can I help you?' She noticed Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wuzang standing behind Xuanzang, Xuanzang said, 'Don't worry, try to think where you've seen something shiny in your house. It would have been obvious.' Sally closed her eyes and thought really hard. Then she remembered one time a client of her parents visited them with a sutras as a gift. He said the sutras was really "valuable". Then Sally remembered the shiny "jewelry" in her parents' room. 'I know where it is!' Sally opened her eyes. 'Really? Where?' Sally stood up and said, 'Wait here.' Then she rushed back to her house and right into her parents' room.

It seems that her parents weren't home yet. She saw something shining in the safe and immediately tried to open it, but it was locked. She tried her mother's birthday date, her father's, even her grandmother's, but none of them was correct. Hopelessly, she tried her own birthday date, and unexpectedly it opened. Sally was shocked but quickly grabbed the sutras inside and wanted to leave. However, it was too late, she saw her parents entering the room, surprised. Her mother then yelled at Sally, 'Sally, are you stealing? That's unacceptable! I thought we gave you all you wanted!' Her father then joined in, 'Yes, your mother is right! I'm really disappointed in you!' Sally felt anger inside her, 'What does she mean by she gave me everything I wanted? Where were you when I need you the most?' She thought angrily. Sally roared in anger, 'Who are you to judge me? You two are parents who have failed to be a part of their daughter's life! You're the parents who never cared about their daughter. I'VE NEVER ASKED TO BE BORN! I HATE YOU!' Sally stormed out of the room with anger, ignoring her parents shouting behind her. This was already been the third time crying this night for Sally.

Sally got back to the cave, heartbroken. Marshmallow barked at her for leaving him alone in the cave. Xuanzang looked at her calmly. 'So what happened? Mind if you tell me about it?' Sally shook her head and handed Xuanzang the sutras. He then nodded, 'I understand if you don't want to. Thank you for helping. But before leaving, I feel like we have to repay you. How about I grant you a wish? You can ask for anything.' Sally looked down at her shoes her mother bought her as a birthday gift, and she thought for a while.

At last, Sally said softly, 'I wish I could live a happier life with my parents.' Xuanzang nodded, 'As you wish.' Then Sally passed out.

Sally felt light shining on her face, she opened her eyes and found herself lying between her parents on her parents' bed. Sally's mother said, 'Good morning darling,' to Sally as she smiled. Sally asked her, 'Don't you have to work?' Her mother answered to her, surprised, 'What work? Today's Sunday! Come on, let's have breakfast. I smell bacon.' Her parents and Marshmallow left the room. Sally left the bed and looked at the cave through the window.

And she whispered, 'Thank you.'

## New Journey to the West

*Carmel Pak U Secondary School, Lee, Yan Ching Yannes – 12*

The red sky was slowly fading into darkness once again, I laid back on Tianlong's hard yet warm scales. 'We would arrive to our destination soon', Tianlong had assured me. It was the second night. I closed my eyes, awaiting for the day ahead. Only the fire was crackling and the crickets were chirping, but they were slowly fading away, drowned by the peace and quiet that filled my head. Peace and quiet.

I stepped out of the hot and humid minivan and let out a sigh of relief, but Mum and Dad were too busy to hear it. They were getting ready for the 'adventure'. My dad had decided that it would be a great idea to take a walk in the vast forest behind the abandoned building on the edge of the town. After the long ride in a car with no air-conditioning, I was eager to be surrounded by nature and breathe in fresh air. 'You can go in first if you want, Sweetie. We'll catch up in a sec.' I rolled my eyes. My parents were always slow. Suddenly, I caught a glimpse of a pack of monkeys swing in the trees.

My itching impatience got the best of me, I could not wait any longer, so I trotted inside to chase the mischievous monkeys. There were dozens of them, all swinging in harmony. However, they disappeared into the leaves in mere seconds. I glanced around only to find trees. There were only trees: even the path has disappeared too. How was that possible? 'Mum? Dad!' My voice echoed through the forest. I knew they could not hear me, but I kept shouting for them. I tried to convince myself that everything was fine, when in reality, I was in the middle of nowhere, all alone.

I looked up to find a black sky covered in sparkling white dots. Time really flew by fast, since it was only noon when we arrived. There was a faint line of green stars sliding gracefully in the sky, growing nearer and nearer, eventually landing on the space next to me. The green shape came to view, knocking me off my feet. I looked up to see a green creature stood regally. With claws as sharp as knives and scales as shiny as jewels, it looked down at me with wise and kind eyes. 'I, am the Tianlong, the celestial dragon. I was sent by the Guanyin Bodhisattva to guard and protect you.' Overwhelmed by the all information, my head spun and my vision blurred, My legs wobbled under the pressure of my heavy body. I fell to the ground dizzily, but Tianlong's tail caught me in time and gently set me on the ground, as I became unconscious.

I woke up with a sudden jolt. I was overcome with confusion. It was all just a dream, I thought, but I was clearly lying to myself. An unfamiliar yet cozy scene greeted me, a bright fire burned next to me, and I turned around to see Tianlong sound asleep, mist coming out of its nostrils as it breathed. Its long body coiled into a circle to form a barrier from the unknown outside. My scraped and bruised limbs ached from the scratches I got from sharp twigs and rocks that littered the forest floor. Although my heart longed for home, I knew that I needed rest to continue my journey home. I relaxed my body and laid against Tianlong. Its hard scales were comforting in a way. I drifted into sleep.

The intense sunlight lit up the whole forest. I shielded my eyes from the sun. The fire that once burned brightly has disappeared into ashes. My eyes slowly adjusted to the sunlight, and I heard birds of all shapes and sizes singing lovely tunes. The Tianlong stood with its back towards me, I nervously walked up to it. 'My spirit shall guide you through your journey westwards, for I have other duties in the heaven above.' With that, it flew up and disappeared into the clouds. Left all alone, I looked up in the sky. I guessed that following the opposite direction of the sun was the best way to go, I could not see the tall abandoned building but I trusted Tianlong's judgement, so I got up and got on my way.

I walked until sweat trickled down my face. My stomach grumbled, and my throat felt dry. I was on the verge of giving up when I saw a small stream from the far corner of my eye. I immediately knelt down and drank from it. The stream water was sweet and refreshing. I heard a soft snorting sound and looked up. From across the stream, a wild boar stood majestically with some sort of bright purple berry dangling from its mouth. I heard a soft and calming whisper in my ear, 'It means no harm, take them.' I cautiously withdrew them from its mouth, and it ran off as soon as I took the berries. The berries were sweet and juicy. They gave me a sudden burst of energy and filled the empty pit in my stomach. I carried on my path home in silence.

Nighttime came sooner than expected, and the line of green stars came once again. 'Night is when the Yaoguais come out. Guanyin Bodhisattva has sent me to protect you from the demons,' Tianlong said in its usual calming voice. It used its tail to strike a bright fire on a pile of firewood, curled its long body into a circle surrounding me and closed its eyes.. I laid on Tianlong's scales and whispered under my breath, 'Goodnight.'

The next morning, I woke up to a loud chattering noise. I rubbed the sleep out of my eyes and was blown away by what I saw. Tianlong has mysteriously left again, but in the trees, were hundreds of monkeys all staring at me with big eyes. Out of all the monkeys, one with a golden stick stood out. It looked familiar in a way, but I just could not put my finger on it. It opened its mouth, and its loud voice rumbled the forest, 'You have been through much. Those were not us that led you here, they were just Yaoguais that used their magic to transform themselves into our likeness. They were hungry and wanted a snack. You were the perfect choice, and fell for their trap. The Guanyin Bodhisattva saw you from the heaven, and sent us to give you a shortcut.' I was speechless. Without warning, one of the monkeys grabbed my arm and carried me. The pack started to move. Even without being able to use its arms, it still moved swiftly from tree to tree.

It was almost like riding a racecar, with the wind blowing in my hair and the speed making me sick. It carried on for what seemed like hours, until they finally came to a stop. There, in the opening in front of us, was the abandoned building and the all too familiar minivan. The monkey let go of me and I ran towards the minivan without even looking back. My mum poked her head out from the trunk and yelled out to me, 'We're ready now sweetie. I'm sorry we took so long to get everything ready, but we can go in now.' Dad got out of the driver's seat and piped in, 'I saw that you were looking at some monkeys, did you get any good photos of them? Where have they gone anyways?' I stared at my parents in disbelief. I grabbed my mum's wrist and looked at her watch, it has only been ten minutes.

## New Journey to the West

*Carmel Pak U Secondary School, Leung, Wai Chung – 13*

Above the sky, four people are talking in the floating cloud. “Teacher, where are we going to?” said one of them, who was fat like a pig. “Is there anything to eat?” A monkey hit him with a great punch, and said, “You stupid pig! Don’t always think about food! You have just eaten ten buns, sixteen bananas, twelve peaches and five enormous pears!”

“And also drunk seven bottles of wines!” continued a friar, who was carrying a lot of things. “Stop arguing! According to the order from the king of God, we will go to AD2017,” said a monk who was riding on a white horse.

They are the team who had went to borrow the scripture from the West before. The monk riding on a white horse was Xuanzhuang. The monkey was the Monkey King. The pig was Zhubajie and the friar was Shawujing. They were going to find the secrets to how people from the future could keep themselves cool in the summer. The problem of global warming in the heaven was very serious—heaven was even as hot as hell!

They stopped talking and walked toward a large, colourful cloud. They stepped on the cloud, looking at the place far away. They had never been to the future. Though they had been immortals for a long time, curiosity and nervousness still filled their heart. The monk was still reciting the scripture. The monkey was telling the horse that not to worry about the trip. The pig kept eating his hidden snacks. And the friar was checking his suitcase and the passport. Just in a short time, the sky changed its color and a large crack appeared in front of them. The cloud directly rushed into the crack. Everything became silent again, except for a pair of red eyes still staring there in some bushes nearby.

When they arrived, all of them had turned into normal people, wearing some fashionable clothes. “According to my golden eyes, this is a place called Hong Kong,” said the Monkey King. “Let’s walk around,” said the white horse, who had already turned into a human. At a large shopping mall, they saw lots of shops selling the electric appliances. One of the banner wrote, “Special discount on air-con!” They walked into that shop. “What evildoer is here? Teacher, do you feel that there is some cold wind blowing?” asked Monkey King, trying to take out his weapon from his ear, “Arm yourselves, guys. The wind is blowing out from The white boxes above.” Everybody, except the monk, took out their weapons and rushed into the boxes. However, Monkey King felt something was grabbing his collar. “You evildoer! I need to get rid of you for the people today!” yelled the Monkey King, swinging the golden cudgel to the back, but suddenly his head felt painful and his cudgel dropped. Monkey King asked confusedly, “Teacher, are you crazy? Why did you grab me and speak the magic spell?” “You absolutely misunderstood my meaning. This white box is called air-conditioner, not ‘evildoer’. The salesman has explained it to me,” replied Xuanzhuang, taking a leaflet introducing the appliances, “Let me show you.” He took out a remote control and pressed a button. The wing of the air-con started swinging. “Em...It’s very cool everywhere. Is this the secret to coolness?” asked Shawujing, “Do we need to buy...”

“I think we can buy it after having lunch,” interrupted Zhubajie, staring at the golden “M” nearby. “Ok,” said the monk, and stopped the monkey, who wanted to punch the pig. They walked into the shop, which had a large “M” on the wall. After they studied how to order the food on the self-order kiosk for 10 minutes, they finally ordered 4 “My signature” burgers—of course, all vegetarian food. Monkey King picked a piece of hair from his head, and blew. The hair disappeared into a credit card!

While they were eating, the pig was staring at the ice-cream on a child’s hand. “Be more polite! Don’t stare at other’s food!” scolded the monkey quietly. “Ok! Ok! Ouch! My tummy is painful! I think I need to go to the toilet!” moaned the pig distressfully. And he left the table. He walked toward the ice-cream cashier, took out the credit card he stole from the monkey and purchased a twist cone. However, he was afraid to eat it as its shape looked like a piece of poop. Therefore, he took it back to the table. Five guys surrounded the ice-cream and decided to play paper-scissors-stone. The one who lost the game tried it. Soon there was a result: the pig had a chance to taste it. Four guys opened their eyes as big as possible, watching him. The pig closed his eyes and took out his tongue towards the cone. “...Delicious!!!” shouted the pig. “Really?” said the monkey doubtfully, grabbed the ice-cream and savoured it, and shouted, “Cool!” The monk also tried it and said, “Maybe this is another cool secret. Let me write that down: ice-cream.”

They went back to the electrical appliance shop and bought the air-con. When they were packing the air-con, a monster with red eyes rushed out and snatched it. "STOP!! STOP!! YOU FREEZE!!" cried the monkey, taking the golden cudgel from the ear, "How dare you rob my thing? You have to pay!" The monster said, "Not only is heaven hot, but hell too! Please also consider the ghosts in hell!" Xuanzhuang started crying, "You are a poor guy. Running here and spying on us is not easy. Poor boy, take the credit card and buy one yourself."

The friar took out his new smartphone, and opened the GoGoCloud apps, trying to call the cloud to Tang Dynasty. However, there was no Wi-Fi. Everyone turned into a stone statue. They knew that they couldn't go back. "Doesn't matter," said the monster, after understanding their situation, "Let me share some Wi-Fi with you." At last, the group went back by a luxurious cloud.

In the end, they took the secrets to coolness to the King of Gods, but they could not get the award. The reason was: they had spent too much money in this trip.

## New Journey to the West

*Carmel Pak U Secondary School, Man, Tin Wai – 12*

A girl woke up and felt thirsty. She tried to grab the bottle next to her but she failed to do it. She couldn't move and she felt unhappy and the most misfortune people on the world. She thought about herself. Her name is Jane and she lived in an ordinary family. She was very weak since she was born and she was not allowed to get out of the house a step. She liked reading books and explored everything she saw. But she couldn't do it and she stayed on the bed all day.

But one day her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, she found a little window in her room. She was very curious so she looked out. She saw boys running around the park, girls dancing, babies crying for food and many interesting things she never saw before. She quickly took out her sketch book and drew everything she saw.

Every day after, Jane did the same thing. She couldn't wait to get outside and look around. On her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, her mum and dad decided to let her out and explore the world. She quickly ran out. She sat on a bench and started drawing. Suddenly there was an old man walking slowly to her. The old man slowly said "My name is Xuanzang. I was a monk and I travelled for years and I found a magical community of learning in India called Nalanda. I lost it and I am too old to find it. I didn't even know where it is. Could you find it for me?" Jane asked "What do I have to do?" Xuanzang answered "I'll give you strength and braveness if you promise to help me and solve all difficulties you face on the way and never give up. I will also grant you a special gift when you finish your task." Jane said "You have my word. I will help you no matter what happened."

Jane started her journey to find Nalanda. All she knows is that the Nalanda is at the west of the world. She brought a compass with her. She kept walking and she felt very tired and thirsty. She sat next to a huge lake and drank water. The water was very fresh and she couldn't stop drinking. Suddenly Jane fell into the lake. She could not swim so she struggled. When she was about to give up, something pushed her up. She could breathe again and she looked at the thing. It looked like a horse but it had wings and a horn. It said "I am a flying unicorn. You can call me Rainbow. I am sent here to help you by Xuanzang." Jane said "Thank you so much! You are exact the flying unicorn I need for now." So Jane and Rainbow became friends and they went together to the west.

Jane was chatting with Rainbow when she heard a big sound. "Boom!" A huge and terrifying dragon appeared. "I am very hungry! This is the perfect timing you two come! My perfect lunch!" Jane screamed "What should I do?" She panicked and she saw a sword flying in the air. She quickly grabbed it. She fought with the dragon with the sword. At first, she almost hurt herself. But she became more confident and better of using the sword. 'I need to believe myself!' She thought. She held the sword tightly and slayed the dragon.

The dragon disappeared in a mist and left a baby dragon. The baby dragon was terrified and it said "I am Fire. I lived in the dragon's pouch since she caught me from my mum and have never been out once because she didn't want me to get away. I won't eat you I promise. I was lonely all that time. Please let me join your search for the Nalanda!" Jane and Rainbow said "Okay! As long as you promise to never eat us! You're welcome!" They continued the search for the Nalanda together with Fire.

The three friends flew together to the west and slowly became tired. They decided to rest on the huge tree they saw. The leaves on the tree were large and strong. It looked just like a hammock and it was very comfortable to sleep on. They laid on the huge leaves and slept quickly. Abruptly, they woke up and saw the tree walking to the east. They were shocked and they saw the leaves starting to tie them up. Jane quickly pulled out the sword and cutted the leaves that tied her and Rainbow. She quickly got on Rainbow. Fire spit fire and burnt the leaves to free him.

Fire was flying and suddenly said "Look! There is a monster with two horns, a long tail and wings like bats! What is that thing? There is a palace behind it too!" That monster noticed them and flew slowly to them. They were scared but they couldn't move and they didn't know why. The monster spoke with a terrifying voice "You shall never get past me! I am the guardian of this magical palace and I will never allow anyone in!" Jane said "What do you want us to do to let us in?" The monster answered "I was a huge bird once.



One day, I stepped in to a garden and I saw many apples in it. I love apples so I ate them all. When I finished the last one, a witch appeared and she turned me into this monster! If you turn me back into normal, I will help you and show you the way to find the Nalanda.” Jane said “How can I help you?” The monster said “You need to find a wand first and look for the magic crystal. It can make dreams come true. I will hold the magic crystal and you will need to say the magic word in the crystal. Oh I almost forgot! The crystal is in the windy mountain over there. Good luck!”

Jane and her friends went to the mountain easily but the mountain was very windy. Rainbow and Fire couldn't fly up the mountain so they need to walk to the top of the mountain. They walked for hours but they still couldn't get to the top. Jane was tired and she said “Let's take a rest! I am too tired to walk!” They sat on the ground and drank much water. Rainbow tried to fly up to the sky and she stopped flapping her wing because of the strong wind! She was going to fall but she floated up in the air slowly! Rainbow screamed “The wind can bring you up to the top! Come quick!” Jane hopped on Rainbow and them three floated up to the top of the mountain together. They took the magic crystal and the wand next to it and flew back to the monster.

“I can't believe you are so fast. Others took days and they still couldn't get up the mountain but you guys just took hours!” the monster said. Jane said “Now you take this crystal and I will say the magic word!” The monster took the crystal and Jane said “Return this monster to normal and never cause trouble again!” “Splash!” The monster turned into a bird and said “Thank you so much! I shall follow you and lead you to Nalanda, which the witch stole! But remember, the witch is very powerful with her special wand that belongs to the good wizard. She stole it from him long time ago and locked him into a cage. Here we go!” Jane followed her and they got in the palace.

“Who sneaks into my palace? They shall be my slaves forever!” The evil witch screamed. Jane answered bravely “We are here to free Mr. Wizard and take back Nalanda! Also, that wand is not yours so please give it back to Mr. Wizard!” The witch laughed evilly and said “Never! I will never be defeated with this wand!” She said a spell and made Fire a snake! Fire told Jane quietly “The sword you used to slay the dragon is full of her powers! You can use that to fight with the witch! Remember that you can do it!” Jane felt confident of her friends' encouragement. She stood up with the sword and said “I can defeat the evil witch!”

Jane held the sword and pointed it at the witch. The witch was not afraid and she cast a magic spell! Jane reflexed the spell using the sword and the witch dropped the wand. Mr. Wizard ran to the wand and grabbed it back. Finally, the witch was defeated and Jane returned Nalanda to Xuanzang.

Xuanzang said “Thank you. Say goodbye to your friends too because you may never see them again. Here are the adventures you've grew through. I've putted it into this book. Now, you really must return to your world.” Jane hugged Rainbow, Fire and bird. She held tight to the book from Xuanzang and she fell into sleep.

Jane woke up and she found out she was in her bed! She was shocked and she looked everywhere. A book caught her eye and she saw the cover of it, it said “The brave girl and the Nalanda”. It even had her photo on it. She found out she had strength and she was strong. She could run really fast and do almost everything. She picked up the book and read the last sentence “ The girl named Jane was granted strength and special power by what she have done for The West — our unknown world that's waiting to be discovered.”

## New Journey to the West

*Carmel Pak U Secondary School, Yip, Hin Ching – 13*

I woke up in tears.

Della.

I dreamed again. Her midnight-black hair flowing over her shoulders, her cherry sweet lips ... My girlfriend, my Della.

Della, the girl I met when I was thirteen, the girl I had loved since first sight. She was so kind, so gorgeous, like an angel from the heaven. I told her how much I loved her. I asked her if she would be my girlfriend. "Yes." -- the one word that gave warmth and love to my cold heart, the one word that changed my life forever... I couldn't believe she would say that.

However, things didn't go so well. Her mother would never let her daughter marry a poor guy. She was so beautiful, so young and so rich. I was a stupid, ugly and poor guy. Being with her would only make her suffer. I didn't want that to happen. I was about to give up when she told me, "No matter what, we have to be together."

"Come on," I said. It was midnight. The moonlight and the twinkling stars illuminated the pitch dark sky, forming a beautiful picture. We packed our things well. I looked at her in the dark. Her eyes were glistening in the dark, like crystals. I held her hand, and our journey began, to the West, to the unknown world...

At that night, we slept on the grass, watching the stars and the silvery moon glistening in the sky, feeling the gentle breeze caressing our faces, smelling the damp scent of the grass, holding each others' hands... I looked at her, lying beside me, her ocean blue eyes shone in the dark, even brighter than the stars, and my heart was illuminated with warmth and light.

"I love you," I said. She smiled back. And it was when I suddenly had a strange feeling that I was going to lose her, that I needed to protect her from something, but I didn't know what that was. I held her hand tighter. And suddenly, everything vanished in front of me.

When I woke up, it was at dawn. The sky was grey, and the sunlight was sickly; the birds stopped singing, and the flowers stopped dancing.

"Della."

I looked, and right next to me, there were a lot of snowy-white feathers. Where was Della? Panic rose inside me like a swelling tide. Where was Della? Tears streamed down my face. "Della!" I cried desperately, until I lost my voice.

She was gone. I tried to believe she was still next to me, sleeping, that this was just a nightmare. But no, I knew that she was gone, and that I might never saw her again.

I hadn't eaten for days. What was the meaning of my life if I had lost Della? But then, I thought of her eyes. In her eyes, I saw faith, hope and love. I felt strong. I had to live on, for Della.

"I'll find you, Della." And I continued my journey to the West.

One, two, three... And here I was now, walking and walking, hoping that I would see her again someday. The beautiful memories were now so painful. The day I met her, the day she said "yes", the day I held her hand, the night we eloped ... I couldn't help thinking about her. I had to find her. Despite the ache, I continued my footsteps, slow but steady. I hadn't stopped for days, for months, for years. All because of Della.

But then, one day, I saw something, something I hadn't seen for a very long time -- a rainbow. It hadn't rained for a long time. How could there be a rainbow? I walked, and walked, finally to the end of the rainbow. And then I saw some eerie green mist. I walked inside.

My eyes hurt from the bright light. I couldn't see anything.

"Luke!"

I recognized the voice. But could this be happening?

"Is it you?"

"Yes, Luke. It's me! I'm Della!"

I rubbed my eyelids, and looked again. And I saw her.

She still looked the same, like when we eloped. I looked at my wrinkled hands. How could that be possible?

“Xuanzang,” a low, echoed voice said, “I know who you are.”

Except my parents, no one knew my real identity. I panicked.

The unicorn appeared from nowhere, and stared right into my eyes.

“What? What's going on, Luke?” Della kept asking.

“The son of Mal, the most evil spirit of all, your fate has brought you here. Now, this girl and your fate is in your hands. You can choose : you can inherit after your Father and be one of the most powerful gods. But if you choose that, she dies. If you want her to live, you die.”

I would never, ever let Della die, even if I had to sacrifice myself. But , the words came out of my mouth uncontrollably, “I'll inherit after my father.” And I heard some echoed laughter.

My father. I was controlled by my father!

The ground beneath her began to shake.

“Luke!” Della shouted.

“No, I don't want to inherit my father.” I said it out loud, firmly.

“Ha! Ha! My dear son, it's too late. You can't save your little girlfriend. But you can be a god, as powerful as me, and do whatever you like. Isn't that great? Ha ha!”

“Xuanzang, you've chosen your fate. Words can be powerful. But sometimes action speaks louder than words.” I could barely hear the voice of the unicorn over the cracking sounds of the falling stones.

Without a second thought, I ran to Della. And the both of us fell.

When I woke up, I was in a garden. I looked around. The sky was opalescent, the flowers were exquisite, and the lake was silvery blue. All the memories of my childhood flooded in my mind. I remembered this place. It was where I lived when I was a baby. It was where my mother sang me lullabies, where she read me stories. After knowing how evil my father actually was, she escaped from the heaven with me. Since then, we lived in the poor village.

“Luke,” the unicorn said, which interrupted my thoughts, “As you and your mother escaped from the heaven, all of your memories here were removed by the gods as a punishment. But now that you're here, you've broke the curse and you can recall all your memories.”

It smiled and continued, “You have changed the fate. Both Della and you can live on. Though maybe, not together. And now, your fate is in your hand. Do you want to stay here and live peacefully ever after? Or do you choose to live again?”

I thought of my mother. She must have missed me so much.

“I want to live again.”

And there I was again, in the village. I saw my family, my home, my friends. Everything was still the same. And in the ocean of crowds, I saw a girl, the prettiest girl I had ever seen...

Della.

## Stomp

*Carmel School Association Elsa High School, Aloobi, Shelly – 13*

We're stuck. Or at least that's what I'm told. Stuck in the worst place of all. A place that is so horrid you would have never thought it existed. We're stuck on the bottom of a shoe. You, the reader, are a person while I, the narrator, am an ant. You probably step on ants, us, just for fun. A relief, you may call it. We do no harm to you yet that is what happens. That's just the way the human society works and we all live with it. On the bottom of a shoe.

After we got stepped on by it, the shoe, it, and us were taken to a cold place, called museum, or California, people call it both so I'm not sure. Here, in this place people constantly look at the shoe and their mouths suddenly drop open. I believe the shoe has a power, a power that causes people's mouths to open wide like they are a roaring lion. We must escape the bottom of the shoe, not only to return to the other ants in the tribe, but also to make sure that the shoe won't cause our mouths to fly open forever. If I could escape, I would, but I can't. I cannot escape myself, I need others who will help me. Other eager ants. Not those which I am stuck with. They don't believe in change. They are the lazy ants of the tribe. We like to call them grasshoppers. They're hopeless but I must convince them. We must escape. My name is Antonio and I will be the first ant in existence to escape a shoe! Operation escape begins now!

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All is dark and the nonchalant ants, the grasshoppers, are asleep. They have finally stopped chewing on the shoe's bottom roof, our only food source. I suddenly feel something. Something is touching me. Like it wants to squash me with its finger. A finger, a human. Someone is touching the shoe. Is it trying to kill it, the shoe, or kill us? Wait, no. It's picking it up. The shoe is moving. We are moving further and further from escape. I must wake up the other ants, the grasshoppers, they will understand now and they will help me escape. I call the other ants in panic, 'Wake up, wake up!' I say but there is no answer. 'Wake up!' I say once more but they refuse to answer. All I hear is the echo of my words calling and answering me. 'Up, up, up,' they say to me. With the other ants asleep, all hope of escaping is starting to vanish so I listen to the echo, the only voice I can hear except my own one. I look up. All I see are small engravings from when we ate. I then look closer. That, is when I see the real purpose of why the other ants were eating all day for weeks on end. They created a hole in the shoe. An escape. There is hope. Perhaps this was a surprise, they listened to me. I climb through it and see a human with blue eyes looking and examining the shoe. There is something odd about the human, not only is he wearing this black mask on top of his face only revealing his blue eyes, his mouth is not wide open. He's not harmless like most other people who come to museum or California, he's different. He has a stare like he has some sort of intentions, evil intentions. That is when I realize, he is stealing the shoe to get power. The shoe has power so it would all make sense. He's a thief! 'We must stop him!' I yell as loud as I have ever yelled so that the other ants hear and help. They come running within seconds and spot me but it's too late, the thief has left while the shoe with us in it has been stolen!

I start sobbing in terror. Not only could we have escaped together, we could have also stopped a thief. I now feel that I wouldn't be doing justice to both the ant tribe and the human society if we don't do both. Suddenly in the midst of my crying, we start moving. We are in a human vehicle. A huge one. One of the other ants hushes me and tells me to stop crying rather angrily which encourages me to cry even more. I cry as if I have the moon toppled on top of me, tears streaming. That same angry ant approaches me again and apologises yet hushes me once more. 'They are thieves and we must stop them! Now's not the time to cry about your failure, it's the time for you to learn from it. Don't underestimate us ants, just because we are labeled as lazy does not mean we lack strength and the ability to learn from failure, something you need to develop. We are stronger because we have a name splattered before us. Now, it is time for you, Antonio, to become stronger. If you want to succeed in life, always remember to learn from your mistakes not go down and fail from them.' He tells me compassionately. I stopped crying. I now understand.

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I call the other ants to me. 'A few of us must listen to the thieves, spy on them. According to ant-map, we are heading eastwards as it is just the crackle of dawn where the human vehicle is heading to. We must return at evening to the place where we came from.' I explain. 'What if that doesn't work? What is the other ant-plan?' A young ant asked. The human vehicle came to a stop. 'There is no other ant-plan. This one must work. Do as I said!' I encourage and take a step about to leave before returning and adding 'We leave at evening.' The shoe is picked up again by the thieves. The angry ant hushes us all and brings us into a huddle. 'This is the time for us to spy on the thieves. We must know of their every move.' He explains. Ant- Intelligence begins now!

The other ants return huffing and puffing from their mission. They look like they have just seen something terrible. As if they remember death after waking back up. They saw death. 'How many dead?' I asked with tremor. 'None, they killed one of their own, they said he knew too much.' They replied shook and trembling. 'What else? What are they going to do? How can we stop them?' I ask quickly. 'What is their strategy?' I add. They flinch. 'What is it?' I yell at them. 'They are doing it to get something. They call it money. I think it means power. We must stop them. They even said that they would kill anyone in the way.' They said shivering. 'Also something about the shoe. Called it Michael Jordan.' They added. 'Right now, we are out of the human vehicle. The sun is beginning to set meaning that we are leaving right now towards the sun. Everyone gather strength. We may fail at first, but we must get up and try again until we succeed. That is the meaning of us ants. Put the shoe on your backs and start walking towards the place where the sun is setting.' I say.

We walk at evening. We sleep when the night is black and the owls are howling. We then wake up at dawn, walking in the opposite direction of the sun – Westwards. Then at noon, we rest again as the sun is the centre of our world. There is no knowing where to go. Then when the sun has moved we walk towards it until it is dark again.

That has been our routine for months on end. Sooner or later we will get there and I know it. We will walk until we get there.

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I stand up to give my speech. The crowd full of both people, and ants. All silent waiting for me to speak in anticipation. I spot Michael Jordan who smiles at me. I start. 'Hello everyone. It may seem very odd for you all to see an ant on such an important stage dedicated and which was built for human kind. I locked away an organization of very bad people. An organization that in fact kidnapped my friends and I on the bottom of a shoe. They took us far into another world, a scary one. One which was unknown yet we escaped. We learnt from our failures not cried to the moon and back. We escaped the thieves not by feeling sorry for ourselves. We escaped because we wanted to prove that we can. You can do anything you want as long as you learn from failure. I sit back down.

And that, that is the reason you, people stopped stomping on us, ants.

## Holding onto Mong

*Carmel School Association Elsa High School, Effron, Sophie – 14*

Hope. Leaning down my mother whispered in my ear, she'd say it every morning once I'd leap out of bed and every night while I'd climb back under the covers. Even after 4 years she forgot not once to say it to me. But what is hope? Is hope waiting for the chance to flee your own country or for finding a single penny? At least this was hope in my eyes. My family, we are refugees waiting upon the moment we can leave our country, Vietnam. The war finished about 5 years ago and already thousands of our people have fled. We were next. How do I know? Hope.

There was a loud continuous knocking from outside the door; I had no clue the time and when I looked outside it was pitch black. Mother woke up and almost instantly opened the door and stepped outside closing the door behind her, blocking the conversation. Five minutes passed and the door swung open and Mother ran in our room beaming the brightest I've seen since Thom was born, my younger brother. "Children, grab your valuables and be ready to leave in two minutes." Once my mother finished her sentence her smile then traveled on to me, we were finally leaving. I didn't care where we would go as long as it wasn't here that's all that mattered. A minute had already passed and I was just standing and smiling, I then snapped out of it and rushed to grab my jacket, elephant and picture frame. Two minutes gone, we were all gathered lacing up our boots and out the door. Mother brought us down to the river where I saw a man in a medium sized boat, one by one each of us hopped in. Mother was the last to get in and once she jumped on we left. I wondered where we were headed so I asked mother, "We're going West." she replied. I laid on her lap staring up at the sky, I looked at the stars remembering the constellations I had learnt when I was little. I whispered, "Look its the North Star, the brightest star in the sky." I looked down at mother and noticed a small smirk, " Hope my darling, hope."

As the sun hit my face, I opened my eyes. Mother was awake looking out and stroking my hair. I sat up wondering where we were and looked out of the boat. "India," Mother said softly, "We're headed to India for a little while, lets see how that goes hey." I smiled and laid back down shutting my eyes trying to imagine India. What would it be like? I've heard about all the spices they put in their food, was it tasty? I didn't realize how excited I was until I remembered that this is my first time leaving Vietnam ever. 13 years and I haven't left once. Rhea tapped me on the shoulder and my eyes flung open, she handed me an apple, I was starving. I chomped down that apple, every bit except the seeds, which I slipped into my jacket pocket. I always believed that if you plant seeds from a fruit in soil that it will grow into a tree. Every fruit I ate, I would keep the seeds so that when one day we find home I will plant all my seeds and have hundreds of fresh fruit falling from trees. Our home will have a sweet scent throughout the house and every time you smell it, you smile.

We arrived to a dock with a woman watching us while walking towards the boat. The driver threw her a rope and she tied it to the dock. We got off one by one and then the man drove away. "What happened?" I asked mother, "Nothing darling this is the farthest he could take us, now we go on our own." She squeezed my hand and started walking along. I carried Rhea half way through and we giggled the rest of the walk. We stopped at a sign, which said, *India population 1.3 billion*. We were here, finally home. Mother said it would be a short walk now to a bus station, which would take us home.

Mother made us close our eyes once we stepped off the bus and we all held hands walking blindly towards home. I wanted to peek already so I could see but I didn't want to spoil it. We all counted down and on one we opened. It was no mansion or house but when I opened I saw a building looked old and maybe dirty but it looked like home and no matter how gross and old it could've been I knew it was home when I saw it. We took the stairs up to the sixth floor, which was the top. I looked around slowly; taking everything in and realized there was even a roof for us which had soil so I could plant the trees.

All of this was unbelievable and I was curious to how we even got this place and I asked mother, "That man driving the boat, this is his house and he's been driving families from Vietnam to India for over 2 years. He's given homes to these families and now it was our turn." I was confused, why would this man give all these homes to families without a price? So I asked mother, "While you were all sleeping, he told me a story. He had a daughter about nine, she went outside to play when a car came by and didn't see her there. She got hit and her dad ran out side and rushed her straight to the hospital, five minutes passed and

she was gone. Her father could never forgive himself for not being there and watching her. Weeks passed and the war was getting worse, the man swore to himself that if he couldn't save his daughter, at least he could save other people who are suffering and have families. He soon got a job and saved up for a boat and used every penny made on buying homes for refugee families. He doesn't regret a single moment of saving these families lives."

I wanted to give that man all the happiness in the world but I couldn't because that is what he did for me and my family, and many other families. That man was the answer to our hope and because of him I can live and have a future; because of him I can be happy and not afraid. Later that evening I went to the roof with my seeds and a bucket of water; I carefully made holes in the soil for each seed and dropped it inside. I recovered the holes with soil and poured a bit of water over the soil.

Eight months passed by and my trees were growing big, I went to check up on the roof and saw one ripe rosy red apple. I carefully picked it off and wrapped it in a cloth. Heading downstairs I told mother I was going for a walk and left the building. I hopped up onto the bus still holding my apple. I soon arrived at the dock where my new life began and I sat down, waiting.

After an hour I heard a boat and could see it in the distance coming closer, slowly. The boat came, the man driving, threw me the rope and I tied the boat to the dock. A family of four came out, the mother with two girls and a boy, just like my family. I smiled and said welcome and they smiled back and moved on. The man then came out and stood next to me, I got up, unwrapped the cloth and handed this man my rosy red apple and said, "Hope."

## Quest for a Name

*Carmel School Association Elsa High School, Gefen, Ella – 11*

I sit at my desk with my head in my hands. I was trying to concentrate but nothing my teacher, Mr Walker, said made any sense, so I fell asleep. I'm 14 years-old, but I'm *still* learning simple algebra.

"You with the black hair," said Mr Walker. Lots of kids have black hair, but I know that he is talking to me because all the other kids have names, I don't. "Come show us how to calculate this equation."

"Alright." I try to keep my voice steady. He's picking me on purpose. I write something I don't understand on the board.

"It's 20," I conclude.

"Incorrect. Stay here after class," he says. I know what he's going to do, and it isn't going to be pleasant.

"I'm afraid that your grades aren't improving," Mr Walker says after class, with a wicked grin. Before I have time to defend myself, he pulls out a ruler and starts smacking my knuckles, which are already a dark shade of blue, from all the times that they were smacked by other teachers.

I have bright green eyes and I'm quite tall for my age. I'm thin from eating so little and I have a long narrow face that rarely smiles.

It's 2:30, school's out for the weekend. At home, I start working, sweeping, cooking, vacuuming, I could go on, but I won't bother. These tasks were given to me by Helena, my legal guardian, ever since my parents died. She threatens that if I don't get my work done, she will throw me out of the house with no possessions and nowhere to go. At first I didn't believe her, but then I got a taste of what she was like and I don't doubt that she would do it.

When I finish I lay down. *Finally*, I think *I get to relax*.

I am reading *Insurgent*, the second book in a series. I have an entire reading plan; English is the only subject I'm interested in.

And now to *Insurgent*.

"*And then there's Tobias, who switched to Dauntless to escape his father.*"

All of a sudden it hits me. The greatest idea in the world.

My bag is almost full. I really hope my plan works, I don't know anyone who's ever run away from home before.

I wake up at 6:30 the next day. I'm really nervous for this journey. I've never been out of town let alone outside Australia. My plan is to go Boston because that's where my parents used to live. Maybe I could find the place where they lived before they came on vacation to Australia and past away. I don't know how I'll get there.

After Helena sends me out with a list of groceries, I run to the tram station.

The ride ended much faster than I expected. I'm free! After 14 years of torture and hard work! Now I need to find a way to leave Australia, cross the Atlantic Ocean to Boston.

I see an advertisement saying:

*Moving? Overseas cargo container for only €600 to anywhere anytime! Just call – (620)759132 – we'll make it happen!*

I know I can't afford to pay but maybe I don't need to...

I run behind a large container and hold my breath. *Please don't see me!* I think. When the coast is clear, I sneak onto the ship to Boston.

It could have been hours or days later, I may never know. I'm in Boston! I wait until the guards look away and run outside. All I see is a long brown dock and a man walking towards me. There's nowhere to hide. I know I'm going to have to pay for sneaking on the boat.

An hour later I find myself in a Juvenile Detention Center. The warden asks a girl, Christina, to show me to a dorm. Christina has tanned skin and light brown hair. She is tall like me and has hazel eyes.

"This is your dorm. Here's your schedule. If you need any help, my dorm is G63, right across the hall. Oh and be careful, not everyone is as nice as I am." She flashes a smile and goes into her dorm.

The next morning, I wash a bowl and hand it to Christina, we're both on dishwashing duty.



"You know, even though you only joined yesterday, I feel more comfortable talking to you than anyone else here," she says. All of a sudden I feel too nervous to say anything. Like I'll say something that'll change her mind about me.

"How did you get in here?" I ask.

"I stole cucumbers from a market. I've been here for a month and my release is in 5."

"Mine too," I say. "If you don't mind me asking, what happened to your parents?" She looks at her shoes.

"We were starving. My parents were sick and needed food. So I stole the cucumbers. It didn't help though. I was 13."

"I'm so sorry. My parents died before they could name me. I was found by a woman that raised me."

After 4 more hours of work, it's lunch break. I run up to the dorm with Christina for our 1 hour break. She teaches me a game and we play for a while.

This is how it was for 5 months. Me and Christina became close. We've been talking about what we will do when we get out of here. Christina said that she wants to visit her old house and so do I.

Christina and I are in my dorm, talking.

"Christina and no-name," says a voice on a speaker. "Please pack your bags and come to Sir's office."

We grab our bags, which have been packed for days and sprint into Sir's office.

"Congratulations," says Sir. "You are being released and transferred to an orphanage."

After we arrive at the orphanage, we start towards Christina's old house.

"This is it," she says looking around. It's a small shack with 3 mattresses inside it. I can see tears swimming in her eyes. I've never seen Christina cry before but the memories this place holds must be awful.

"Come on," I say, steering her out. She throws her arms around me and buries her face in my shoulder. I freeze. I want to comfort her and say that it's alright. But I'm frozen. She looks at me. Her face streaked with tears.

We wander the streets when Christina suddenly says, "That lady is staring at you." I follow her gaze and see a woman approaching us.

"Young man, you are the spitting image of George Shaw," she says. "Are you related?"

"I'm not sure," I say. "I'm looking for my parent's house. I've spent the last 14 years in Australia and came to see where my parents lived before they died."

"In Australia?" she asks, curiously. "I think there's someone you should meet."

She leads us to a cosy house and I see a couple, sitting in the garden. The man looks a lot like me.

"Hi, Clarissa. And who might these guests be?" says the woman.

"This boy says he's lived in Australia for the past 14 years and his parents passed away there," says Clarissa.

"It can't be," says the woman. "George, he is the spitting image of you."

"I think it is, Alison," says Clarissa.

"Jason?" says the woman. "Is that you?"

"I'm sorry you must be mistaken," I say. "I don't have a name."

"14 years ago," starts the man, "myself and Alison went to Australia on vacation. Alison gave birth there but we were told by the nurse, Helena, that the baby died in the process."

"I'm sorry," I say. "Did you say Helena?"

"Yes. Is that name familiar to you?"

"She was my guardian. She told me that my mom died giving birth and my father died a few months before. Therefore no-one had named me and she wasn't bothered to."

"It is you then!" yells Alison, with tears in her eyes.

"Does this mean that... you're my parents? And that my name is Jason?" Now I'm crying too.

We run into a family hug. I've been waiting to find my name my whole life but I never imagined that I'd find my parents, too.

“It’s getting dark. I should get back to the orphanage. I’ll tell them you won’t need to stay there, Jason,” says Christina sadly. I almost forgot that she was there.

“All my stuff is there,” I say. “I’ll come with you.”

I collected my stuff and said good-bye to Christina. I can see my parents, who came with me, talking to the orphanage people.

“Good news,” they say. “Christina is coming to live with us!”

“Yes!” me and Christina yell, hugging.

I never imagined that I would find my parents and that Christina would move in with us. But from now on nothing that happened in the past matters. I know the future is bright.

## Drifting Away From the Western Shadows

*Carmel School Association Elsa High School, Tang, Liana – 12*

*T*ears were forming endlessly, covering my sea-blue eyes. Everything was dull, blurry, the salt stinging my view. The warmth of his hug, wrapped around me as he spoke his final words.

*“At least... You won’t have an annoying brother anymore.”*

*My hiccups increase, refusing to be tame as my vision started to black out, but even if for just a moment longer, I wanted to stay with him. Even for a second, I wanted to just pretend that we are back in our straw cottage, fighting over who gets to play with the wooden dolls first.*

*I wanted to scream, I wanted to punch my brother for saying something this idiotic, and yet... My body is not responding to my orders, my mouth staying wide open but felt restrained, my eyes forbidden me to let myself enter the realm of darkness.*

*“Sis, I tell you this... Once. The army... The soldiers... Looking for you... Go.. west... North... too... risky... You... be... more safe... that... Way.”*

*His breathing consists of more pauses in between, each word seems like to take all his might as the colour started to drain from his face.*

*Why...*

*Just why...*

*I would be willing to provide all my life to save him. I would be more than accommodating just to see him laugh one more time. I would do anything to go back how everything was.*

*His soft pale hand that is covered in gunpowder weep against my cheeks, as his lips starting to form a ghost of a smile.*

*As if time had stop, everything fell silent.*

*“Stay ali... v... e, sis.”*

Ever since that incident, I have been wandering all over the world, hiding in the darkness, like some sort of shadow. Always staying on my guard, fighting for survival, as my path cross by betrayal.

Hiding, hurting, deceiving. Things I never thought I would have been doing, yet it comes as a second nature to me.

Should I be ashamed of such ridiculous actions?

Should I feel pity for those that I have hurt?

Should I feel remorse for those that I have betray?

Would... *he* be proud of what I have become?

No, it doesn't matter anyway.

It wouldn't have matter in the slightest.

It's in the past, and *he* told me to stay alive. I'm just doing what I am told to do.

~

I'm just that pathetic, huh?

Escaping the consequences of my actions, and just pretending that this is what *he* desire of his little sister.

A flood of memories came flowing back to me. The times before all this began, and that day when I have discovered the true meaning of reality.

I don't need this, I don't want this, yet this is what I have ask for.

I need to take my mind off this.

Out of the corner of my eye, around 20 meters away, I spot a oddly shaped train, with crimson red and murky black splatter all over. It's two colours that aren't destined to be together. Additionally, it has rusted windows that look like it haven't been clean in decades.

It's isn't a dream ride, but at least there aren't going to be many people boarding, since who is going to hop on into this madness?

I swiftly ascend to this vehicle we called absurdity and hoping that nobody is catching my trail.

The inside isn't any better as well, and you would think that this monstrosity would end.

The whole entire ride is coated with dust as if every single breath would cause a instant suffocation.

It is a nightmare navigating the whole train as if the reason for this deformity existence is to mask what's 5 centimeters ahead of me.

Without warning, all the dust just flew in the air, creating what seem like an impossible maze. The microphone goes a little haywire with tiny flickering sparks coming out until a 20-year-old man with a heavy Australian accent speak for what seem like eternity.

“Welcome to our wonderful service, Flower Tiger! Where our train looks magnificent as a white—tiger, but be careful, it does bite if you don't take good care of it. Anyways, our destination for today is Hiroaki Mountain. Buckle up cause this is going to be a bumpy ride.”

What the... First and foremost, what kind of insane person would think this... this pain of a eyesore is so—called “magnificent”? Even a 5 year old would cry in disgust to find this so—called “magnificent” being better than a 2 dollar chew toy.

Secondly, did he say Hiroaki Mountain?

No, I must have misheard it. It could always just be another mountain with almost identical names. All the times where I need to bury myself in those dark alley—ways could have messed up my hearing.

What am I doing?

Trying to block myself from the truth?

There goes me being a idiot again.

Hiroaki Mountain, the place where *he* used to dream of visiting as a little kid. It has glorious scenery, where each petal has it own unique arrangement as the light snow tumbling down the misty sky, like creating some sort of dance as it captures your senses in some sort of spell. It is a paradise, a dream coming from a fantasy book.

A sudden jump have interrupted my train of thoughts. I really need to be more aware if I want to survive in this miserable place.

It is unusual, but I shouldn't even be remotely surprised by this enormity of a train.

I have realized my mistake too late.

The vehicle have exploded into flames, as little pieces disintegrate into nothingness. The smell of burnt charcoal permeates the atmosphere, the endless amount of smoke indulge me into eternal darkness, as everything is going in slow motion.

My perception starting to darken, the world twirls around like a floating ballerina as I progressively fell onto the compressed clay, which gradually turn into an erubescant pile of smulge. Guess this will be the last page of my book.

Somewhere in the distant, I heard a child voice. A bloodcurdling scream, crying out for help, as if it's the only thing they can do.

What could I do?

What should I do?

What would *he* want me to do?

I thought about all those times where I am on the edge of survival, desperate to live, desperate to hide, desperate for the war to be over.

I thought about all those times where I did unsavory actions, just for another chance to run away again.

I thought about it, and I'm tired.

I'm tired of having to look everywhere I go, not being able to trust anyone, not being able to live a normal kid life.

I'm tired of having those thoughts that no matter who I come across, they will abandon me in the most gruesome way possible in the end.

I'm tired of this...

If I'm going to want this to end, I can't run away anymore.

I have to face my problems head-on.

I know you want me to live brother, but sometimes living is different from being alive and making a difference in the real realm.

I muster all the energy I could, but every limb inside me is begging for mercy, burning away like the flames that have shatter our train into another dimension. My vision is starting to fall apart and the weigh seems to fall more burdensome each second.

But just the realization that if I back down now, the child will be perish into ashes and everything I have done until now have been anything but impactful left a distasteful feeling in my mouth.

It's **now** or **never**...

## Journey to freedom in the west

*Creative Secondary School, Abu Khaleel, Maryam – 14*

In the first refugee camp that Ahed could remember living in, one of the volunteer women was Chinese. China's youth volunteer corps had been sending medical volunteers to refugee camps throughout Africa and the Middle East. Xu Hui used to round up all the young children and tell them little snippets of stories from Journey to the west, from start to finish, especially highlighting the humor and thrilling moments of victory. Ahed enjoyed them immensely. She came to every session once she knew of it and she clung to them like a lifeline.

Xu Hui had taken a liking to her after noticing that she had been coming to every session, and occasionally pulled her over to chat with her after the sessions, mostly to discuss which parts Ahed liked the most in the story she had told that particular day. Sometimes Xu Hui would tell her a story that she hadn't told in the story time sessions, specially told only for her.

Perhaps the reason she clung to them so much was because these stories were one of the only sources of childhood delight she could have while on the run.

Though Xu Hui left the particular camp after only 2 months of staying there, Ahed remembered the woman and her stories vividly. The day she left, the children who came to her sessions all surrounded her and hugged her, one by one. Some of them were bawling, with tears rolling down their cheeks, while others were visibly trying not to cry. Xu Hui herself was sobbing as she tried to hug and give an individual goodbye to everyone there.

Ahed was the last one left— when Xu Hui saw her, she pulled her away from the group, and pulled her into a fierce hug. Ahed immediately reciprocated the hug with an even tighter grip, wetting Xu Hui's shirt with her tears. When Xu Hui pulled away, she reached into her bag and pulled out a small book with 'Tales of Journey to the West' scrawled on top of a drawing of all the main cast, with Sun Wukong at the head.

Xu Hui pressed the book into her small hands. She leaned forward and whispered into Ahed's ear, "When things get hard, just think of the stories. Never let what is happening to you ever make you lose your happiness. Stay safe, Ahed." She hugged Ahed one last time, then walked back and made arrangements to leave.

That was the last time Ahed had ever seen her. Soon afterwards, she and her family also left that camp.

Unlike the group of Journey to the West, Ahed and her family— mother, father and little brother— were not a band of beings that included various fantastical creatures nor did they fight mythical creatures with magical skills. Their family had been refugees for as long as she could remember, and even her grandparents had had similar stories to them, fleeing from Haifa to Nablus. Later on they had to move to Deraa and from there they finally ended up in the Ain el-Hilweh camp in Lebanon.

Maybe they were a bloodline cursed to never have a homeland.

But like the group, they were journeying west to seek something that both groups desperately need. The Xuanzang group to retrieve the true scriptures from the Lord Buddha in order to fulfill the wishes of their elders. And for the refugees — her family— they were journeying west in order to survive, to pick up the broken pieces of their lives and try to move on.

Like the characters of Journey to the West, their futures depended on this journey. For the group of ancient legends, they received a request from a divine being, and so they completed it. Xuanzang was fated to lead this quest, and Monkey, Pig and Friar Sand were required to complete this quest after giving a promise to Xuanzang in exchange for freedom from their respective imprisonments. For the struggling family, the quest was to safety, through all means possible. As to whether they manage to reach the west and how far into the west they go, it will affect the rest of their lives, what jobs they can take up, schools the children go to, if they are even able to integrate into the country as refugees.

Like Xuanzang and company, Ahed had grown up hearing stories of Sun Wukong and his incredible powers. She used these stories of heroics and bravery to compare with her own life and struggles, using them for, as a child does, to imagine that she, instead of being a child refugee and running away, is having adventures to a faraway land with Sun Wukong as her companion, and them fighting demons together, as her childish mind tries to protect her and shy her away from the traumatic events that are actually occurring around her.

In her mind, she was Xuanzang, with Sun Wukong as her companion and helping her through the journey. Her family were Pig and Sand, people that were just along for the ride, but key to her story nonetheless.

Every time she felt overwhelmed, she would take out the little comic book that Xu Hui had given her. She would trace the images of every page for the thousandth time as her main source of comfort.

This latest journey she hoped would be her family's last. Her mother took the keys to their house, their passports, photographs and all her gold, and tied them in a tight wad to stick in her waistband. Her father Shahid had stayed behind, telling her and her brother Fares to take care of their mother Mumina.

From their home they traveled by sea to the Turkish coast, their boat nearly capsizing in the turbulent seas crossing the Aegean sea across to Lesbos. They had to stay more than a month in a no man's land. Her mother traded her wedding dowry for the family to buy a passage through, travelling on foot from Greece to Macedonia, hoping to cross to Germany.

When a country barred refugees like Ahed from entering and caused them to move on even further into Europe, it wasn't because the government was selfish to her. No, it was because there was a dangerous creature that was blocking their way that she and Sun Wukong weren't destined to fight, and so they moved on.

When she and her family barely had enough food and water to stay alive, it was because this was a test for endurance and patience, and that she and Sun Wukong would be rewarded for their patience once they settled down and this time period passed.

*This time, she thought, our next great adventure will be to face off against a giant fire-breathing dragon-like creature. We'll fight him together, me and Sun, and though it may be hard in the beginning, we'll win in the end. Just like that! 'Cause we two together are greater than any other force in this world! We'll defeat anything, or anyone that stands in our w-*

But Ahed could only hide behind daydreams for so long.

"Hey." A hand was shaking her shoulder. "Hey. Hey. Snap out of it!"

"Wh- what is it?" She sat up straight and looked at the person who had shaken her out of her stupor, Fares.

"Mom said we have to eat breakfast, then leave this place." Her brother stood up and walked to where their parents were.

She sighed. Every day they moved from place to place, not able to stay in one area for long, her parents desperately searching for a place to settle down for at least a couple more years, for her and her little brother to settle down and have a chance to learn to read.

As they prepared to leave, a soldier's voice suddenly blared through a loudspeaker, speaking in broken Arabic, "The border has closed. There will be no one crossing anymore."

Her mother was desperate and traded her last gold, her wedding ring, for a passage. They were eventually given a chance to pass, but they were forced to cross in the evening.



That day, somewhat miraculously, they were able to cross through train tracks in the dark. Ahed sleepy, dropped her little comic book once, near the train track. She immediately cried out and started looking for it. They could hear the faint whistling of a train approaching from afar, but Ahed was so frantic that nothing reached her ears. Fares suddenly stumbled upon it while trying to drag her away. He shouted, "I found it! I found it. Let's go, we have to hurry up!" The train was approaching and it was just a hair's breath away when her mother pulled her from danger.

Years later, after she graduated from high school, she would wonder why she had been so attached to folktales which were not even her own, so much that she had risked her life just for a simple comic book on it.

Xu Hui had been a person very dear to her— but it was something about the symbolism in the stories, the way the characters faced many difficulties on their journey but still pulled through and succeeded in the end, that made her try to relate it so much in her own life. The book was a physical copy of those dreams, she supposed, and her source of comfort during those years.

## The Shady Truth of the Saint

*Creative Secondary School, Chan, Athena – 13*

“So you, my fellow master, are the perfect creature and had never committed any mistakes or crimes? That is the most ridiculous lie I have ever heard so far in my life!” Wukong smirked disrespectfully as he was actually responding to his master’s teachings. His master, Xuanzang had no idea what to do about his undisciplined pupil but to sigh disapprovingly. Among his disciples, Wukong was the hardest to deal with as he was mischievous, sarcastic and arrogant, but at the same time his favourite one because he saw himself in Wukong. Jaws would drop at the unique but uncommon thought of how such a perfectly mannered monk who had great knowledge of moralities, could possibly be compared to a misbehaving and rude monkey, but Xuanzang’s blurry past had always been remained as a mystery to everyone including his beloved pupils, except for himself.

Bits and bits of his memories, as if pieces of shattered glasses, started coming together and forming a humongous deep web of memories inside Xuanzang’s head. The overload of unpleasant memories started to spill all over his brain as if a volcano was about to explode inside his head with ashes blinding his eyes. He was overwhelmed, as warm streams of tears started welling out of his eyes. His expression went blank, his vision was blinded out of the blue, and his whole body collapsed to the ground and he lost his consciousness.

That was the moment his disciples became fully aware of what was happening and scurried next to his unconscious body. But still, nobody knew what happened except for Xuanzang himself, who was spiritually aware of himself starting to enter his memories, which reminded him of the long lost world he once belonged to.

As a path started to form in front of his blurry vision, his vision became clear and settled on the familiar image ahead of him. In a luxurious looking yard appeared a teenage boy, dressed in such gold colours that might blind one’s eyes. However, the boy’s entire body was tied to one of the tall gold statues in the middle of the yard. He was the Jade Emperor’s oldest son, and that explained why he got to enjoy such a luxurious lifestyle, thanks to his father, the king of gods.

Xuanzang’s eyes bulged as he recognized the teenager whose eyes were full of hatred and lack of remorse. It was himself. Xuanzang attempted to speak to his younger self but failed miserably. And as he recalled, he was actually waiting for the judges of heaven and his father to arrive, as he was about to be sentenced for his crimes despite his royal identity.

Xuanzang, who was staring emotionlessly into the memories, became paler and paler as he recalled his entire childhood as an arrogant, mischievous and disruptive brat, who would do anything just to entertain himself. This time he had kidnapped the water god and fire god in order to cause chaos and mayhem in the mortal world of humans, which unexpectedly killed half of the mortal world’s population.

As the loud footsteps of the Jade Emperor and the judges spreaded into young Xuanzang’s ears, he held his breath as he quietly listened to their discussion about his sentence. “He must be forced to take a risk when he put the entire world at risk,” his father finally spoke up. Xuanzang’s body felt like as if it was burnt because of the pouring sweat of nervousness, but he had no choice but to keep everything to himself. “He shall go through a toxic and risky journey to get the scripture of the west and had to live his life as a monk, decision made,” his father concluded as Xuanzang sank into his knees, feeling he’s fallen from heaven to hell within seconds. He was finally declared to be sent to the mortal world to be a well educated monk, and most importantly, he was not allowed to enter heaven unless he had completed his mission which was to get his hands on the legendary scripture that was located in the west, and this is how he became the famous saint who set foot on the toxic journey to the west, in order to get permission to be returned to where he belonged to.

## Unknown Journey to The East

*Diocesan Boys' School, Chan, Darren – 14*

I drafted off to sleep... Suddenly, loud cheers and claps surrounded me. "Huh?! I thought I was in sleep, in my room?" I then heard other people, shouting "Hail the king of the hills", wait, they weren't people, they were monkeys, I was a monkey, oh well, have to adapt to the surroundings. The king then shouted in a booming voice, "I will be going to a new place, but to assist me, I need a volunteer to come with me to this dangerous yet difficult journey to the east. The chosen one will receive the highest honor in the kingdom." Once the monkey king halted, all hell broke loose. Everyone jumped as high as they can so that they can be chosen. Then, complete silence. The monkey king raised his hand and shouted, "I have chosen, you!!!" He pointed at me and I was confused... "Me?" I asked timidly. "Yes, you. I have chosen you to come with me to this journey. We will pass mountains, rivers, giant waterfalls and meet other people." I was like yes, finally, an exploration, an exploration that is worth to do and have fun in. The king then called me into his lair and told me to bring a walking stick and a weapon in case of fighting and defending ourselves if we are in danger.

As I went to find a place where there were stuff in, I thought to myself, "this may be a dream, but this may also be real life in some stages." I quickly ran to get random stuff and went to find the king, who was waiting for me as the gate of the city of Monkeys. The king asked: "Ready to go on an adventure?" I nodded with confidence and we both went out. Everyone waved good bye and have a safe trip. I would miss them, although I don't have a family of monkeys anyways. As we walked, the king questioned me, "You don't seem to be aware of something. Do you have any problems in mind?" I was processed and answered with a stern "no" and I said, "Where are we actually going and do you know where we are supposed to go?", since I had no confidence in myself in real life too, so I questioned. The king replied by a phrase that made me think of a friend in school, "Where the wind takes us, we follow." Then we arrived by the river side. I asked him, "What will we do now?" The king then waved his staff up in the air and in no time, an ogre jumped out. I jumped back and hid behind a rock within sight. The ogre shouted and hugged the monkey king and he said, "Sun Wukong, nice to see you!!!" The king also greeted the ogre and said, "Are you still having fun in this river, Sha?" "Yeah, it is starting to get boring to be sitting in the river all day long." The ogre stammered. "We are going to a place of unknowns. Would you like to join us on our journey?" The ogre agreed and followed us for the rest of our journey.

1 month passed, and we were, basically, nowhere. It was chilly, snowing like crazy, the wind was howling and the trees were weaving. The 3 of us were in no condition to continue on our journey. But Master Monkey wanted to continue on. So, we decided to follow instead, but as the weather got worse, I collapsed off tiredness and past out. After I woke up, I saw that I was in a cave, by a warm fire and the ogre beside me. The monkey king was strolling around by the fire and being all nervous. As I was up, the king knelt beside me and asked me, "Are you okay?" I weakly responded with a wee little yes and the king sighed with relief. The ogre went to get a bucket of water and asked me to drink it. After the drink, I sat up and looked out of the cave entrance and saw the bright shining sun glaring at my eyes. The ogre then said, "Ready to continue on the journey?" The Monkey King then led the way, and walked up to a waterfall, a pretty majestic waterfall. The ogre immediately pick up a stick and threw it into the waterfall and..... a secret door????!!!! It just appeared in front of our very eyes. I was mind blown and when the ogre called me, I just, well, stood there for a minute or so to finally, believe in what I just witnessed. Then I entered, only to stop and admire the place for another 5 minutes.

After we passed the cave and the admiration of the cave, we arrived at, a barren land? I thought there would be trees or flowers. Guess not..... The Monkey King decided to name it, the barren land, or as known as, in present days, Mongolia. It was freezing as well. I just can't stay away from the cold places. I wish I was at my bed, all warm and cuddly. But, nothing I could do, just have to stay with the team. But, suddenly, we all heard a loud growling. We all prepared for an attack, but, all the commotion was just a fraud, because the one thing growling, was, my stomach. "Sorry for all of you... but I am very hungry. Can we sit down and find some food to eat?" The ogre and the King agreed totally, they were starving too!! But they were focused to getting to their destination. "Let's split up and find some food. Meet after an hour." The ogre said. The ogre went one way while the king and I went the other way. "Hopefully there will be some food... I need to fill my stomach for the rest of the journey." I desperately said tiredly after 30 minutes of walking and climbing trees. But, after a total of 2 hours, we couldn't find anything. Only leaves and some fruits. All thanks to the ogre. "Wait, Sha, what are you going to eat?" Then, a faint smell of roasted chicken and a bowl of noodles caught me interested..... wait a second... I am back in my room. Tyler, is dinner time. NICE!!

## Xuanzang's Dream

*Diocesan Boys' School, Yeung, Thaddeus – 14*

The boom of cannon fire echoed in the hills; for a moment, a fiery amber spread across the night sky, and then all was black.

“The *Gokturks* are trying to bring the Wall down again,” the general explained. “Their efforts are futile – the Wall has been standing for four hundred years now, and it’s not coming down anytime soon.”

The general turned to the monk, who was standing in front of him in a corridor lit by torches fastened on the stone brick walls – the interior of a fortress. There were two giant doors to the side of the pair, latched shut by a giant wooden bar.

“I hope that you understand what I am saying,” the general continued. “The *Gokturks* may not be able to penetrate the Great Wall, but we are still in a state of war. Leaving the safety of this side of the Wall means almost certain demise.”

The monk remained silent.

“Even if you manage to evade the cannon fire, odds are you will not go far. Unlike us, the *Gokturks* are barbarians, and they will not hesitate to kill you for your belongings, or simply slit your throat for sport.”

“I understand the risks, general,” the monk said. “I have thought about this for some time now, and I know of the dangers I may have to face.”

“You do not understand,” the general said. “You are a monk who lives in a monastery and have never seen a pig slaughtered. As a soldier who has fought, I can tell you that what you plan to do is madness.”

“I had a dream a week ago,” the monk said, ignoring the general’s last comment. “In that dream, the Buddha told me to trek to India to retrieve the Holy Scrolls. These scrolls will save mankind from sin – it is all the will of the Buddha.”

“That was but a dream,” the general retorted. “What happens in dreams does not happen in reality. Surely you can differentiate between the two?”

“It was no ordinary dream,” the monk said, indignant. “The Buddha appeared to me in that dream.”

“Don’t they all say that?” The general scoffed.

The monk continued, unfazed: “In that dream, I was standing in a field. The field was barren with growth, and the soil of the ground was rock-hard – it had been abandoned for a long time. Around me were several houses forming a small town.

“I heard yelling and shouting coming from the town. I advanced to have a look, and I saw a woman with child wailing in a heap. A man lying in a pool of blood before them, and a man robed in armor – a soldier of some sort, a bloodied sword in one hand and a sack in the other, was sauntering off into the distance, unhurried. The bystanders seemed oblivious to the woman’s wailing. I realized I had witnessed a brutal robbery.

“Then, I was whisked away into the clouds. I was pulled through a vast sea of blue, and soon before me was a great temple in the sky. I was then delivered inside by some invisible force, and before me was the Buddha on His throne.

‘Xuanzang,’ the Buddha summoned. ‘Come before me – I have a task for you.’

I did as He commanded, but also because I was attracted by the Buddha’s radiance, like a moth attracted to light.

‘Man is corrupt,’ the Buddha said, resting his eyes on my face. ‘As you have seen, man has embraced a life of sin. People are willing to go to great lengths to fulfill their desires, even if it means the performing of horrible sins.’

Then, the Buddha instructed me to retrieve the Holy Scrolls: ‘These scriptures will enlighten man and purge mankind of its sinful ways. With their retrieval and translation into your tongue, mankind will be redeemed from its eventual undoing. They are located in a western land known as India, and you shall reach this land and retrieve the Holy Scriptures.’”

Having finished his narrative, the monk turned to the general, hoping to find approval on his face.

What he found was discomfort.

“About your dream,” the general inquired, “How much of it do you remember?”

“Every detail,” the monk assured him. “This adds to the reason why you should believe what I told you.”

“If that is so,” the general said, “Describe for me the appearance of the killer in your dream.”

The monk looked at the general, confused.

"Well, he was about eight feet tall," the monk replied. "He was of very large statue, and had a beard. His face was red, as if drunk, and had a tuft of red strands adorning his helmet. Some sort of officer, I suppose."

The general's face paled.

"By the gods," the general groaned. "What trickery is this?"

The monk stared at him, empty-eyed.

"I believe you," the general replied. "I believe that you have indeed been chosen by the *Guanyin*, and that every word you have told me is true."

The general paused. Perspiration was sliding down his forehead. He wiped at it, and continued:

"Do you know why I say this?"

"I do not," the monk replied.

"The man of explicitly large statue," the general said, "was the lieutenant who was put under my command a month ago."

The color drained from the monk's face.

"What you saw," he continued. "Every last bit of it was real."

"Quan Yu was a soldier with massive potential," the general told the monk. "He was an abomination on the battlefield, a one-man army. It was thus no wonder that he was made lieutenant in only a year after joining the army."

"He was a most enthusiastic soldier; the battlefield to him was as if water to a fish. His passion for war was unrivaled; he rose through the ranks so quickly he could have surpassed even me had he been given some more time."

"His thirst for battle was unquenchable; about a while ago, the fighting on the northern front intermitted for about a week or two. And so he decided to look for sport."

"He left for the village nearest the camp about a week ago, claiming to be wanting a drink. Even though this was forbidden, the soldiers under my command did not dare stop him. He had a drink at a local eatery, then went in search of what he was truly thirsty for."

Beads of cold sweat cascaded down the general's forehead.

"He was a monster," the general said. "He saw a villager hoisting a meager little sack of silver to the bank, hoping to deposit it for interest. He strode forth, and snatched the sack from him. It was a small amount to him, but a colossal sum for the villager. Not knowing who he was up against, the villager tried to retrieve his sack. He was no match for the lieutenant, and left in defeat. But the lieutenant was not satisfied – his thirst for bloodshed had not been quenched. And so he drew his sword, and decapitated the villager in one swift stroke."

"We have tried our best to cover up this incident," the general said. "We paid the villager's grieving wife a hefty sum, and pleaded with the villagers not to spread news of the killing. I even had the lieutenant executed."

Having ended his narrative, the general turned to Xuanzang.

"You could not possibly have known of this incident," the general explained. "This is why I believe you."

The general barked a command, and two soldiers stepped forward. With a great heave, they lifted the heavy wooden stopper, and gave the doors a big push each. The doors swung back to reveal a great horizon of green, and a fiery golden orb peeking out from the peak of a faraway hill, dyeing the lapis sky a shade of amber.

"The *Gokturks* assault the Wall at night, under the cover of darkness. It is almost dawn – this would be the optimum time for your departure, since the Emperor has banned foreign travel. You must not be discovered, so be careful."

"May the *Guanyin* bless you, general," the monk said, grateful. "You will not regret your decision."

"May the wind be always behind your sail," the general said to the monk. "I wish you good luck on your journey."

And with that, Xuanzang stepped out the wooden doors. Very soon, the silhouette of the monk had shrunk into but a tiny black speck in the embrace of the rising sun.

## The War in my Heart

*French International School, Bansal, Urvi – 12*

**M**y name is Fritz Godfrey and I am the unluckiest boy alive. It all happened in 1939. I was a young boy of seven. I lived with my mother, two sisters, brother, and Aunt Dina, who had come to live with us after my father had gone to war and died tragically; a hero's death, they said. We all missed him terribly, but other than that, life wasn't bad. My mother and Aunt Dina would give me a hard look if I did something wrong, but it was always tempered with a hint of amusement on their faces. They were happy simply to be alive.

Everyone was content. Until *they* came. The Nazis. That day is the only one I remember clearly from my childhood. They told us we were one of the lucky villages. All the people in the villages around us had been slaughtered. Not one survivor.

They took my brother and I along with some other children—the ones that looked strong. When they picked us, my mother's stoic face crumpled. She sobbed uncontrollably. She begged them to take her instead, pleaded them to spare us. I was young. Too young to witness what was going to happen.

They shot her. They shot my mother. The one who would feed me every day; the one who would carry me to bed when I was too tired to walk up the stairs; the one who would look after me when I was sick and tend to my scrapes and wounds. I sank to my knees, and like the pathetic little boy I was, who didn't even try to stop them killing my mother, I cried, tears streaming down my face, hatred flooding my heart. The man who killed my mother, laughed. He turned to me and saw my face. For a moment, I saw him hesitate—as if he feared my anger—but it was brief. I was trembling with fear, all the while; the tears an uncontrollable river cascading downwards.

The man grabbed my hand roughly, then put my finger on the trigger of his gun.

“Who should we kill next,” he rasped.

“No!” I exclaimed, “Please. Nobody else.”

I glanced at my family, cowering in fear. A mistake on my part that I would regret forever.

“So, this is your family...” the man drawled.

He gestured to his men to prise my eyelids open. I yelled, I kicked, I struggled, but their iron grip held my eyelids open steadfastly. The man told me that it was so I could see it when I killed my family. He put his finger on mine and pulled the trigger.

I watched my sister Elisa fall to the floor. Then her twin Erika, and finally, my Aunt Dina.

“He didn't even try to stop him.” the villagers' eyes seemed to say. “Fritz Godfrey is a coward who killed his own family,” they looked accusingly. The entire village gawked, gasped and glared at me, and as the lifeless, limp bodies lay on the ground, the red liquid trickled through the grass towards my shoes. I thought my heart would explode. It was too much to bear.

After what seemed like hours, they let go of me and herded all the children on the first train to Chabbor. They called it the Gates of Death. It was the worst place on Earth. We woke up at 3:00 every morning and made weapons until 10:00, when we were to have breakfast. Whoever grumbled, was late, or was caught talking ill about Hitler or another Nazi was sent to the torture chamber. For some, death didn't come easily. If you didn't die of pain or blood loss, you were killed in front of the camp.

One day, a Nazi man lead us to a cold, silver metal door, and unlocked it. The sight screamed back at us. It was the room where all the suffering and anguish took place. It was ghastly; even today, when I remember the sight, all the terror floods back as if I were young Fritz again. There wasn't a single little spot where you couldn't see bodies, but the scariest things in that room were the torture devices. Just thinking about it is enough to make me vomit my insides out until I am limp and lifeless. So you'll have to do without the description.

My first day at camp was the worst. Breakfast was served. The colourless, watery mixture of what tasted like melted rice with runny, expired eggs and condensed milk filled my mouth which I spat promptly onto my brother's shirt.

"Ewww Fritz, please! I know the food is disgusting, but don't spit on me!" he whined.

I laughed, despite myself, and for a brief moment we forgot where we were... until a shadow loomed over me. I turned and saw the cook, his face as red as a tomato.

"My food is disgusting, is it?" he asked my brother. "Well then, I'll bring you to Erwin's office. You can complain to him." A murmur spread round the room like a wave.

"Please Cook, who is Erwin?" my brother asked, the smile on his face quickly replaced with terror.

"He's the head of this whole bloody camp, you insignificant worm!"

"No, p...p...please Cook, I didn't mean it," my brother stuttered.

"Come on, let's go," he dragged my poor brother across the floor while he was struggling, straining to get free.

"Help me Fritz!" my brother yelled.

I should have grabbed him before the cook did and run out of the door. But like the coward that I was, I pretended not to hear him, for fear of them taking me to the torture room. His screams echoed across the halls. They still do. I couldn't stop the tears. Slowly at first, then fast, until they were pouring down like torrential rain. A tall boy who I had seen playing football with my brother walked over to me.

"It's a shame what happened to your brother. My name's Dirk. I've heard a lot about you from your brother. Would you like to be my friend?"

"Why?" I asked timidly, "I'm not athletic, or brave like you."

"I like you for who you are – kind and caring," Dirk quietly.

I brightened a little, but it seemed the universe would not allow me even that brief moment of joy. The cook came sauntering back. He clapped his hands for attention.

"The brat is in the torture chamber." I fainted.

From then, every night I thought of escaping. I schemed and plotted in my notebook that I had found on the floor. I explored our cabin and found a dusty old map of the camp, a torch and a warm coat. For 20 years straight, I didn't get one second of sleep.

One day, I did some sneaking around and discovered a weapons room, the headquarters belonging to Erwin and his men. I heard someone coming, so I hid under some old bags. The guard passed and I was about to get up when under my foot, I saw a bolt. It was a trapdoor! I opened it cautiously and peered in. I climbed in and looked about.

Money. Tons of it. Everywhere.

On the twelfth night at the camp, I chalked out an escape route. I shared my plan with three other boys I trusted including Dirk. All we needed was a distraction. We would all carry some money to help us on our journey. We decided to escape on a night when there would be no moon.

The day arrived.

As planned, Dirk sneaked into the weapons room and threw out smoke bombs. There was commotion all around. We ran for our lives and made towards the boundary of the camp, each of us carrying a sack stuffed with money.

We headed to where the barbed wire was cut. We squeezed through as the guards chased after us. The train station was close and we managed to catch the train as it was pulling out. Triumphant, out of breath and our faces damp with sweat, we peered out into the dark.

We could make out the shape of some guards running. One of them stopped, bent over and lifted something or someone from the ground. I looked around and counted three heads, including mine.

Where was Dirk? My heart sank.

Our victory was short-lived and bitter. It came at a cost. Dirk was the price we paid.

It took us two weeks to get to France and then to London. We booked a hotel room and gave them one of our sacks of money. I was finally 28 years old and I was free, but would I ever be free of the vision of the helpless faces that haunted me every waking hour of my life? The faces that never made it and lie buried in the darkness.

The only solace I could find was sleep.

And for the first time in 20 years, I slept.



## Journey to the West

*G.T. (Ellen Yeung) College, Chu, Hedy – 13*

Dear Lana,

It is January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1867, and it is freezing.

Well, considering the fact that I have joined the Chinese navy and am to set sail from China all the way to London, I guess the cold just has to be there.

I know that I had promised you to never sail again, but the miles between us are driving me crazy, my only way of comfort being a piece of letter you gave me before I left for China the last time I was in London.

I need you, Lana.

Consequences be damned.

Your one and only,

Zhang Lee

★

Dear Lana,

Today is January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1867, and the crew members are getting antsy.

Two stowaways were found, and they were hung the other day.

Some of the sailors say that they could hear the two girls screams at night, some say they shouldn't have killed them.

The captain, Shunway, is adamant about his choice of murdering them.

I don't know what to do.

Love,

Zhang Lee

★

Dear Lana,

February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1867.

It was one of my boy's birthday yesterday.

We celebrated it by drinking really expensive wine and telling each other stories.

I told them about you.

I told them everything.

Now, everyone is fast asleep, but I couldn't.

So instead, I choose to climb to the upper deck and am now currently sitting on the foremast, writing this letter that you are never going to read to you.

We crossed the Pacific Ocean today.

It's beautiful, Lana.

When the Pacific Ocean meets the Indian Ocean, olive green mixing with indigo.

It's so magical.

If only you were here to see it.

On the side of the boat is a small net, so the boys and I all stripped down and jumped in, following the sway of the boat as the net bobbed in and out of the water, bringing us along with it.

It was really fun.

Eternally yours,

Zhang Lee

★

Dear Lana,

February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1867.

We stopped by a little port today.

Me and the boys got tattoos.

I mean 'the boys and I'.

You always remind me that it should be 'The boys and I'.

Back to what I was saying though.

I got a tattoo of your name right above my heart, so that you're with me wherever I am.  
The port was so full of life, Lana.  
You can buy anything you want there.  
I found a dress that will look nice on you, I bought it so you could wear it.  
When we got back to the boat, one of the sailors stopped me and laughed at the dress in my hands.  
"Aye mate, I see you got yourself a lassie waiting," He clapped me on the shoulders, "well, I wish you good luck my dear friend."  
I like to think of it like that, that you are all the way in London waiting for me to come for you.  
I would hate to think that you have found someone else.  
Forever yours,  
Zhang Lee

★

Dear Lana,  
It is March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1867.  
Things are, fine, right now.  
No fights, no stowaways, no deaths, no nothing.  
Just my boys and I, and celebrating the night away until London come along.  
Life is, not amazing, far from it, actually, considering you're not here with me, but it is easy to cope with, easy to pretend that everything is fine.  
I had to wake up at 3 in the morning today to stand watch.  
Standing watch basically consists of sitting on the foremast staring out at the open wide sea, making sure that nothing bad happens.  
Staring out into the dreary darkness, the only strip of water I could see from the moons reflection, I was bored, so I decided to carve a small piece of wood into the shape of your dog, Bubbles.  
Suddenly, a whoosh came from beside me, and one of my boys, Mike, landed on the foremast next to me, swinging in from the main mast.  
"Lee, you need to see this," He said, handing me his telescope.  
Looking into them, I cursed," Oh no, "I groaned.  
At the distance, was a pirate ship, and they were coming straight for us.  
"All hands on deck," I shouted at the top of my lungs.  
Instantly, all the sailors and ship boys stumbled onto the deck, some of them still in their pajamas.  
"What happened?" The captain shouted out to me.  
Sliding down, I gave him the telescope, "Well, that's not good," Shumway muttered, "Everyone, man the guns, now!"  
Instantly, all the sailors and ship boys ran to the gun port, loading in the gun powder and making sure that everything was working smoothly.  
The pirate ship was coming closer, close enough that we no longer need the monocular to see them.  
"On my mark," The captain shouted, "three, two, one, fire!"  
Everyone covered their ears, turning away from the cannons as the ball of gun powder sailed through the air and smashed onto the pirate ship, making holes in the sides.  
Eventually, after an exhausting hour of reloading the guns and dodging cannons, the pirate ship finally sank.  
Today was too close, Lana.  
I fear something bad may happen on board.  
Wish me luck, and hope that I survive for another day, Lana.  
Forever yours,  
Zhang Lee.

★

Dear Lana,  
March 23<sup>th</sup>, 1867.  
Someone killed Captain Shumway, a dagger to the stomach.  
Now Rothenberg is Captain, and he is adamant in finding out who has done it.  
People are getting wired up from this, Lana.  
Please help me.  
Yours,  
Lana.

★

Dear Lana,  
March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1867.  
People are blaming me, Lana.  
I was the last person who was seen with the Captain, giving him his food.  
Now people are suspecting me, but I didn't do it.  
My boys are standing on my side though.  
Pray for me, Lana.  
All my love,  
Zhang Lee

Dear Lana,  
April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1867.  
They arrested me.  
My boys got flogged for defending me, and I was thrown in the 'Bloodhound' for what I haven't done.  
I'm going to get hanged tomorrow.  
I honestly don't know what to say.  
This is the last letter that I can write to you, even though you are never going to read any of the others that I wrote.  
I love you, Lana Kane.  
If you could see me, you would ask me why I chose to go aboard this boat.  
But to be honest with you Lana, I don't regret any of it.  
Not one bit.  
I love you too much to regret setting sail to see you, in your quaint little house on the hills.  
Please don't forget me, Lana.  
I know that, one day, one day, you are going to find someone else, and I would be nothing, nothing but a distant memory.  
But please don't forget me, Lana.  
To the one who holds my heart,  
Zhang Lee

## New journeys to the West

G.T. (Ellen Yeung) College, Lun, Matthew – 13

““K ick, punch, stab!”  
Ronnie couldn’t be happier at the moment because the new video game Journeys of the West.

“You must have faith he’ll come back to save us! Read him the prophecy so he can have a way to find me!” a monk said to a woman..

“ Okay...” the woman trembled. “*Hanuman is soon to come, the world is soon to come to end. Save the world, but be aware, evil lies inside th...*” She ended this sentence with a scream of fear. Then there was that blinding red light and a voice telling him to... to wake...

“Wake up!”

Ronnie sat up straight and saw his brother Nick. He told Ronnie “I finished playing this game yesterday.”

Their father Alex came home before Ronnie could say anything. He looked at the two kids and suddenly remembered his past—It was already hard enough for him to raise his own child Nick, but adopting Ronnie, an orphan that he found on the streets, was the least expected thing one would ever have done under the pain of the loss of his wife in a car crash.

That night the family searched the word *Hanuman* on the internet—A god with a monkey face. There was a temple built for him called Western king...They were excited to see the location of the temple was in Switzerland, as it was where they were going for the Christmas Holiday. “What a coincidence...” they laughed.

Soon it was Christmas Holiday. The three went to a lot of places. Swiss National Park—pine forests, fast-flowing rivers, and limestone crags. A nature-lover like Alex was more than happy to visit. Zurich, a city lying along the river Limmat, had the tallest cathedral in Switzerland, with wonderful views from its tower. But the only place Nick cared about was the shopping arcades as it was his dream of collecting souvenirs from every place on Earth .

It was a hot sunny day and the last place they went was the Western King. Vines were covering stone walls that seemed vulnerable. The whole temple was like a pyramid, only grey in colour. There were a lot of tourists there, but Ronnie only seemed to notice a girl with curly brown hair, and beautiful blue eyes—Elena, the most beautiful girl in class.

“What is she doing here?” Nick asked when Elena noticed him.

“Sightseeing of course! The Western King is one of the oldest temples that still exists!” Her unique accent nearly made Ronnie faint.

The kids decided to visit the temple together. Things were quite normal inside the temple until they saw a carving on the wall that wrote “Evil lies inside 1 of the 4” Wasn’t it the unfinished sentence in the game? It was to warn Ronnie that one person of this gang was evil. Who would it be? Nick’s eyes were fixed on Elena. “It must be her. No one would just pop out of nowhere.” He joked. “It’s just a game, okay?” Ronnie said.

The floor started to rumble before Nick could react. Lights started to shake. “What the...” Ronnie panicked. He grabbed Nick and Alex and they ran as fast as they could. All they could hear were the screams of the people and the sound of the falling stone walls.

At the exit of the temple, Ronnie turned to see the sky turning to bright red and a giant black cloud hovering above the remaining parts of the temple. It was so much like a sci-fi movie scene that he could not believe what he was seeing. Was this the end of the world?

“This is exactly what happened in the game!” Nick told Ronnie, who was turning to see if Alex had anything to say as he had been quiet the whole time. But what he saw...

All Ronnie could see was a big hole in his chest and blood all over his blue coat. A flying sharp rock hit him. His I-don’t-know-what-happened expression made Ronnie scream with terror “Noooooooooo!” Then Alex collapsed onto the ground. Ronnie couldn’t understand what was going on but he held Alex in his arms tightly.

“ You are going to be okay...” It was the only thing Ronnie could say.

“I know I’m not. Just let me say my last words...” Alex said with pain. “Remember when I adopted you?

You were only 3 when I saw you on the streets, but your cute face reminded me how hurt a person can be with their family gone. So I adopted you, even though I knew it was going to be hard.”

“Stop!” Ronnie cried “You are going to be okay!” But Alex already closed his eyes for the last time. Ronnie turned to find comfort from Nick, but what he could see was a giant monkey made of the remaining parts of the temple. It had a fearsome look with fangs and red eyes. “Well, I guess today’s surprises are more than you expected. Isn’t it fun?” It was Nick’s voice. The monkey grabbed Ronnie and.

“Why, of all people, is it you?” Ronnie couldn’t be more ashamed and angry of himself. “Where is Nick then? Where did you take him to?”

“I kidnapped him when he was shopping Zurich. He’s now in a very safe place—heaven. What a poor boy he is! But he should be grateful because the god of death Hanuman had killed him and used his face.”

“What? You’re telling me that this is really happening? Why are you pretending to be him?” Ronnie was confused.

“The prophecy The End Of The World said a saviour was born on the coldest day of 2008. It was you, and you were meant to destroy me. The prophecy said the saviour could only be killed in my temple. It also said that an evil creature is going to destroy the world if there is no saviour...” It was busy talking that it didn’t even noticed that Elena was standing behind it, whispering to Ronnie “Come here!”

“Elena! I thought you were dead!” Seeing her was the most comforting thing for Ronnie. He buried his head onto Elena’s shoulders and cried.

“Wait!” Elena said. “You cannot cry right now! I have something to tell you! I’m Xuanzang!”

“What?” Ronnie froze. “You killed Elena and took her face like that freaky monkey did?”

“No. It was always me. I’m here to help you kill it! Here, take this.” She handed him a gold sword. She then whispered something into his ears.

The monkey suddenly noticed Ronnie had disappeared. It was furious and suddenly had 6 arms and 4 faces. He saw the two standing in front of him.

“Run, Ronnie, run!” Elena shouted as the monkey started using stones to hit them. Some really big stones started dropping to the ground. Ronnie noticed them, but he didn’t noticed that every place on Earth was being attacked by these “Meteorites” at the same time. buildings were falling and people were dying. THIS WAS THE END OF THE WORLD.

Elena, or Xuanzang, held her hands in the air and the flying rocks turned into a staircase. “You have to get to the top! Crush the red thing up there! If you destroy it the Hanuman will die! Be the saviour that the world needs you to be!”

Ronnie dashed. He never thought he could run so fast. Soon he ran to the top and saw a table. On the table there was a round object which was shining so brightly that Ronnie had to cover his eyes. He barely opened them again and saw Alex and Nick standing in front of him, but looking like zombies—grey coloured skin, swinging their bodies when walking. Ronnie took a deep breath and said “I’m sorry.”. Then he kicked Alex, punched Nick’s head and stabbed the gold sword in both of their stomachs. Lastly, he stabbed the red thing with the sword.

Suddenly, a blinding red light flashed...

There was the screaming of the Hanuman “ I will be reborn...”

Ronnie woke up in his home. Elena was at his side.

“So Xuanzang is real and immortal and he is right in front of me. I just killed the evil monkey god... I should really have paid attention to the Chinese Literature lesson...” Ronnie said.

“You won’t remember any of this. I can help you to create a new life and forget about now. I will be there to protect you, saviour...” And she forced him to drink something that made him feel dizzy...

Ronnie woke up in his orphanage as usual. He ran to the classroom a few minutes later and saw his classmates. It was Chinese Literature lesson. “A saviour’s duty was to save the world, then sacrificing his or her body to Xuanzang, so that he could live forever to help fight monsters in the world...”

There was a new girl in this classroom who had curly brown hair and beautiful blue eyes...

## The journey to the West

*G.T. (Ellen Yeung) College, Tse, Alison – 13*

Year 2017, in the modern age of technology, three people dressed in old-fashioned Chinese clothes descended from the clouds. They were the three disciples of Xuanzang from the Tang dynasty, and they seemed to be on a mission.

'Time sure passes quickly,' said Monkey as he landed on the hard concrete, his head turning in different directions to examine the apartments and skyscrapers around them. 'Things seem to have changed quite a lot since we have last been in the mortal world.' 'Oww!' squealed Pig, whose landing skills were not as perfect as the monkey's, fell hard on the ground. 'Of course, big brother!' Pig replied as he climbed up, 'years and years have passed! See? They are even wearing clothes different from ours!' He pointed at a pedestrian who was wearing a dress and high-heels in astonishment. 'Alright, we can discuss that later. For now we are on an important mission from master Xuanzang,' reminded Friar Sand. 'Yes, sure, last time we were travelling to bring back the sutras, this time we shall travel to the Western countries to search for democracy and bring it back to the Chinese. It is said to do a lot of benefits to the country.' Monkey added. Pig was confused. 'But how?' 'We can go there simply by taking the newly developed China Railway express. Remember--- now is the modern age of technology. No more flying clouds are needed here.' Monkey replied with a smile.

Now let me explain a bit about the train they're taking. The China Railway express, or CR express, is a railway system which travels straight to Western countries in Europe from China. Which means it is the perfect transport for the three of them, who are in search of democracy in Western countries. The next day they got on, dressed as normal passengers, headed for Spain. 'I've heard that there is democracy work going on in Spain, the name was...' Pig scratched his head, frustrated because he had forgotten the name. Monkey lowered his tea cup and shot him a helpless look. 'It's the Catalan independence referendum,' he sighed. 'Yeah, that's it!' Pig laughed, embarrassed. 'Catalonia is trying to fight for independence from Spain. Maybe we can find some clues about democracy there!' 'That should work out pretty well,' accompanied Friar Sand. The three disciples rested silently on the express train and waited for the arrival of their destination.

Approximately after twenty days of enjoying the beautiful scenery, the view of Spain loomed on the horizon. 'Here we are,' Monkey announced as they hopped off. They went onto the streets, hoping to see a better place under democracy, but the truth was not what they imagined. Heaps of people were on the streets, protesting against Spain and shouted their opinions about Catalonia's independence. At the same time, an army of local policemen came and scuffled with the protesters. It was complete chaos, and the three were stunned by the view. Why did the country turn into a mess? They each wondered the same question over and over until they heard some protesters shouting at each other:

'Catalonia should be independent from Spain!' shouted a plump middle-aged man.

'No! Catalonia should not become independent from Spain!' argued another old woman. 'See what it has brought us! Spain is against us, the whole place is chaos, and even the government is in a complete crisis!'

Monkey was surprised by this. He asked the old lady, 'what has happened to the government?' 'Well, there's no way that you haven't heard about it, young man,' she replied angrily, 'many of the governors of Catalonia have been fired or imprisoned! This is getting crazy!' She screamed at the others.

But her argument was soon quickly responded by more and more shouting and yelling. People were starting to gather around the old woman to argue about her opinions. Foot after foot stomped on Monkey. He fell. 'Hey! That's not nice! Watch your step!' Suddenly the large screen on the wall of the mall beside them glowed and that got Pig and Friar Sand's attention. The news was on, they listened. 'This is Everyday News. TODAY'S HEADLINE NEWS: Many companies and banks have relocated their headquarters due to the Catalan independence referendum. Their chief executive officers have announced that they fear the business of their companies will be affected by the referendum.....'

Finally Monkey squeezed out of the crowd and retreated to where the other two were standing. They glanced at each other, carrying a gloomy expression on their face. A silent agreement seemed to have been made; they nodded and disappeared quietly into thin air.

Back on the clouds where Xuanzang was, the three disciples returned. Xuanzang asked in a curious tone, 'why are you back? You just left not long ago.' Friar Sand sighed. 'We were originally on a mission to bring democracy from the West to the East, but now we have come to tell you that their democracy made the countries worse than before!' Pig nodded in agreement. Everyone went silent for a while until Monkey broke the tension. 'Democracy should be about respecting each other's ideas and compromising, and the aim of it is to make citizens' lives better. But the people have done nothing but worsen the situation through their so-called 'democracy'. They kept shouting about their own opinions but did not compromise. "Respect is a common sense." What I see from this mission is that they should think deeply about themselves and reflect on what is the true meaning of democracy.'

## The Story of a Cold-Hearted Beast Lurking in the Mountains

*German Swiss International School, Chang, Andrea – 14*

The sound of howling filled Sun-Wu Kong's ears as he trudged through the thick and heavy snow. The trio and their master had expected a blizzard, but nothing as dangerous as this one – snow and wind seemed to come at them from every angle, small chunks of sharp ice clinging to their fur or skin. The harsh winds howled and whistled with each step, trying to knock them over relentlessly. Each inch of the mountain they were climbing was covered in snow, so they had no sense of direction and could only depend on their master, who led the way.

With each step, the monkey could feel the harsh cold bite on his fingertips and toes. He couldn't even try to spawn anything now – his fur was too brittle, and even icicles hung off them. All they could do now was just walk.

Just when Sun-Wu Kong thought he was going to freeze to death, he bumped into Sha Wujing, who was standing in front of him. "Hey, watch it!" The monkey grumbled angrily, shivering. Peering over the man's shoulder, he noticed a huge, gaping hole in front of them. The sides of the hole were jagged and rough, and a steely, metallic scent rose from the center.

"Will this do as a temporary campsite, Sun-Wu Kong?" Xuanzang, their master, inquired. Wearing a weary look on his face, Xuanzang added, "We should wait for this blizzard to pass. I don't want to get lost."

Closing his eyes, Sun-Wu Kong tried to sense demons in the crater. "All clear." Bending down, the monkey proceeded to slide down the slanted side of the hole, the friction warming his cold hands ever so slightly. Landing at the bottom of the pit, he noticed that the only source of light was from the sky above them and proceeded to use a strand of his fur to conjure a ball of fire. Looking left and right for demons, the monkey confirmed that there were no enemies down in the cave.

As Sha Wujing and Zhu Bajie helped Xuanzang down into the cave, Sun-Wu Kong started to explore, breathing in the musty air of the cave. Nobody had been in here for ages. Pressing a palm against the rough walls, Sun-Wu Kong noticed that despite the warm head that came from the stick he held, it was still a lot colder in here than outside, where the blizzard still raged and screeched.

Xuanzang stared at the strangely smooth walls, running a hand against the rocky surface. Upon contact, strange markings suddenly appeared on the walls, glowing a bright, unnatural blue and illuminating the entire cave. Gasping in shock, the trio and the master watched as the strange markings continued to glow brighter and brighter.

"That's... kind of beautiful." Sha Wujing commented. As they looked around, Sun-Wu Kong felt something beneath his feet. Some sort of rumbling. With each second passing, he felt the rumbling get stronger and stronger, to the point where his bones felt like they were going to crumble.

"Guys, watch–"

Before he could even finish his sentence, a creature burst through the ground, sending large chunks of stone and rock everywhere. In the darkness and the heat of the moment, Sun-Wu Kong couldn't see what exactly it was. The creature then roared, the sound echoing in the hollow and causing everyone's bones to quake. The force from the roar sent all of them flying out of the cave and back outside.

The weather pierced all of them like a knife, slicing through whatever warmth they had down there and causing them to shiver again. The snowstorm seemed to get even worse, with the snow more icy and hard than usual, almost like hail. The wind almost knocked Xuanzang over once they landed on the icy ground.



A burst of snow and ice rained down on the trio suddenly, accompanied with a loud screech. Just in time, Sha Wujing managed to shove everyone aside to avoid the falling debris.

For the first time, they managed to get a good look at the creature. It was a huge thing, around 5 meters tall, with gleaming, bold cerulean eyes that flashed when it stared down at the trio and their master. As chunks of snow rolled off its back, the creature exposed more of its' strange, crystal-like scales, each scale as big as a person's head. Bending down and sneering at the petrified guardians, the creature exposed its' long, sharp fangs, each black like tar.

"And who are the people who have awoken me from my slumber?"

Its voice, low and gravely, made all of them shudder with fear. Only Sun-Wu Kong stood forward, trembling slightly. Raising his golden staff, he pointed it directly at the creature with a threatening glance. "We are the guardians of Xuanzang, and we wish to pass through to India."

Cackling with amusement, the creature's eyes flashed as he spoke. "Xuanzang. You're the one with the special flesh." Without warning, the monster slammed its' claws down, a few inches away from Sun-Wu Kong and the others. Snow and ice sprayed upwards, blinding the three guardians and startling the horse.

"Protect Xuanzang! Sha Wujing and I will get it!" Sun-Wu Kong summoned a cloud below his feet, Sha Wujing following close behind. Zhu Bajie stood next to Xuanzang, using his weapon to knock away boulders and chunks of ice.

Swiping its' thick, ice-covered tail, the beast tried to attack Sun-Wu Kong, who managed to strike back with his staff. The creature tried to knock the monkey into the wall, and the monkey tried to shove its' tail away at the same time.

"Sha Wujing, a little help here!" Sun-Wu Kong shouted, grinding his teeth. After a moment of grunting and shoving, the creature's tail slammed again the steep mountainside, causing the whole ground to rumble.

Taking advantage of the moment, both guardians launched themselves at the beast, wielding their weapons in the air. Sun-Wu Kong slammed his staff down onto the beast's scales as hard as he could, but the effort was futile.

"What can we do?" The monkey shouted at Sha Wujing, who was pounding furiously at the creature's neck. Before Sha Wujing could respond, the creature slammed its' tail into the two guardians, who were then launched into the air and landed by Xuanzang and Zhu Bajie's feet. As their bodies made contact with the ground, they both felt the air rush out of their lungs. Gasping for air, Sun-Wu Kong could barely hear Zhu Bajie's comment.

"Look! There are icicles above the lizard." Head still pounding, the monkey turned to look at the roaring animal. Indeed, hung above him, near the top of the mountain, hung some icicles, each as long and as sharp as the beasts' claws. "If you aim for the icicles, they'll fall onto the creature and kill him." Zhu Bajie said, using his rake to point out the sharp stalactite-like ice.

"Good idea, Zhu Bajie. Go with Sha Wujing to knock down the icicles. Sun-Wu Kong, distract the beast. I will be fine on my own." Xuanzang commanded.

"What? Why am I the one distracting the stupid lizard?" Sun-Wu Kong demanded indignantly, his tail curling up in frustration. "Zhu Bajie should be the one distracting. I'm sure the lizard would like to eat a fat pig after all this fighting."

Collapsing to his knees, Sun-Wu Kong felt something equivalent to fireworks going off in his head, pain sparking left and right. The monkey then reached up to his head and began clawing at the golden band that was wrapped around his forehead, screaming. "Stop! Stop! I'm sorry!" He cried out, rolling around the floor as if that could lessen the pain.

“It was Zhu Bajie’s idea, and therefore he should contribute to it. You are the strongest, and the creature would most likely go after you. Xuanzang said calmly. The pain in the monkey’s head died down slowly.

“Fine.” Grumbling, Sun–Wu Kong followed the rest of the guardians. Picking up a nearby rock, he threw it as hard as he could at the beast, getting its’ attention. “Hey, lizard!”

Darting towards the creature, the monkey brandished his golden staff and started swiping and attacking. Out of the corner of his eye, Sun–Wu Kong noticed Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing scaling the mountain and starting to whack at the icicles that hung there.

Suddenly, the icicles above the creature fell onto him, piercing his scales immediately and digging into his body. Screeching, the beast abruptly collapsed, tail thrashing as the icicles impaled his body repeatedly. Sun–Wu Kong fell backward, arms aching slightly from their fight, and watched as the creature’s movements eventually died down.

“That was a little gory.” Sun–Wu Kong commented, eyeing Zhu Bajie wearily as he and Sha Wujing returned. “But... Good idea, Zhu Bajie.”

As the trio walked to their next destination, Xuanzang smiled at the fact that the trio wasn’t arguing anymore and would work together for more battles to come.

## What Is A Journey?

*German Swiss International School, Cheng, Edgar – 12*

The boy trudged dejectedly into the street, forcefully kicking away a tin can as he did so. The hollow sound echoed through the empty roads like a funeral bell. His eyes were thin and narrow, shadows smoothing beneath them from lack of rest. His limbs were slim but sallow, allowing his ragged uniform to dangle loosely off his frame.

The boy walked with a slight swagger, and yet his hands hung stiffly by his sides. He paced with an urgency, as if he were trying to outrun his past. He looked barely nineteen, and yet he radiated a sense of weariness that seemed so unlike someone of his age.

His gaze finally rested on the building in front of him: *The Dynasty Atheneum*.

Without hesitation, he strode through the glass doors. The building was cold and empty; yellow-and-black police tape was strewn around the room, blocking off exits and entries. Scattered haphazardly across the room were shards of shattered glass; tossed in among them were dozens of books that had been violently pulled from the shelves and lay trailing to a display case at the back.

The boy cautiously made his way across the mess. When he reached the display case, he glanced at the parchment label inside:

*[Journey to the West, Full Volume Original Manuscript]*.

He stared, in a grieving trance, at the blank metal stand where the manuscript should have been. Where it *would've* been, had things turned out differently.

This had once been Sun's go-to place when his mind wasn't clear; it had once been a sanctuary of endless hours of reading and learning. Now Sun's mind wasn't just unclear; it was in a state of turmoil.

"Running away from your problems isn't going to fix them."

Sun's ears perked up at the sound of his old friend's voice, then sagged at the implications of his presence. Anticipating a lengthy lecture, Sun swiveled around. Behind him stood a man, only in his mid-forties, but with the wrinkles of an old man. His hair was thin and balding, grey like the feathers of a snow-owl.

"I'm not running. I'm... pondering," he feebly responded.

"Pondering our failures? Or the reason we came back to Hong Kong? Or, perhaps, the reason we set out on this great journey in the first place?" the man said with a smile, tinted with sadness and a hint of pride. When he smiled, the edges of his eyes crinkled up like fresh parchment.

"Why... why I wasn't good enough. Why I didn't have the courage to confront them." Sun confessed, with deep regret in his tone. "Xuan, I could have halted them in their tracks. If I had the willpower to, they couldn't have gotten away."

"Brother, it was not your doing. It was not your fault that those heinous thieves escaped. There was nothing you could have done." From behind Xuan stepped out a second man. He was broad and burly, slightly intimidating, but gentle brown eyes hinted at his benign soul. His most notable feature was his massive girth; his thin, tattered jacket stretched out over a large pot-belly.

"Zhu? Fancy seeing you here." Sun chuckled weakly. Zhu rarely ever bothered to travel long distances, so it was quite unlike him to come all this way. Then again, he had travelled with them all the way to India and back, so perhaps he had changed his habits.

Zhu grinned jovially. “I would walk to the ends of the earth to find you!”

Sun smiled, melancholy. After the robbery, police forces had captured and interrogated one of the culprits, but all they’d been able to find was that the thieves were headed to India on another crime spree before going into hiding. To retrieve the manuscript, Sun, Zhu and Xuan had been sent as a group to pursue them; during the six months to India, Zhu had often groaned about how tired he was.

But now, Zhu’s face grew solemn. “Brother, why did you leave? We were sent on a mission, and we failed. There is nothing to be ashamed of.”

Sun paused, head tilted at an odd angle. “It’s just—that manuscript was the last of its kind. It was *valuable*. Think of how many lives it changed, how many people it impacted. We failed.”

“There are other copies,” Xuan reminded him. “The story isn’t lost forever.”

“I know, but this was the last *real* manuscript... and it was *stolen*! And it was *my* fault!” Sun’s eyes welled up as he spoke. “If I hadn’t abandoned the team and run away, I could have helped you capture them. One of the Four Great Classical Novels! We were the last hope to retrieve it, but now the original tale is lost... because of *me*.” Sun looked down, his fear clenching in his gut, a knot of despair and self-doubt.

Xuan reached out a bony hand and gently comforted Sun as the boy wept quietly into his shoulder. “Sun, it’s okay,” Xuan coaxed as he patted Sun on the back. “We tried and we failed—but the effort is what counts.”

“That’s... such an... old saying,” Sun choked in between sobs. “You’re... just trying... to make me... feel better.”

“It’s an old saying because it’s true. If we truly tried our best to retrieve the manuscript of ‘Journeys to the West’, and we couldn’t do it, what shame is there in that?”

“Besides, it isn’t the prize that matters. It’s what was gained over the course of the journey. Isn’t that right, Xuanzang?” Sun heard Zhu’s deep voice say.

“It seems you have picked up some lessons, Zhu, because that is exactly right.” Xuan agreed.

“What *did* we gain during the journey?” Sun asked curiously. “What *was* there to be gained besides the manuscript?”

Zhu rolled his eyes, as if it was obvious. “Our friendships, brother! Isn’t that what all the fairytales and folk stories say?”

“The lessons. The hardships. The struggles and their resolutions.” Xuan listed. Sun felt his eyes welling up more with each reminder of their arduous journey; but not with tears of sadness. Tears of joy, and of remembrance.

“With every problem faced and solved... with every moment spent together...” Xuan said quietly. “We became more knowledgeable, more enlightened; more mature, more competent.”

“Some pep talk,” grumbled Zhu from the sidelines, gnawing on an apple that he had somehow pulled out of nowhere.

“Ask yourself: what is a journey?” Xuan prompted.

“I dunno... a process from point A to point B?” Sun shrugged, unsure of where he was headed. But noticing Xuan’s disappointed look, Sun tried to think of another answer. “Maybe... something more?”

“A journey is a teaching in disguise. It isn’t just an attempt to receive a prize; rather, a rite of passage that can allow you to gain so many things.

“A journey forces you to grow up, to deal with problems that you’re not comfortable with. It helps you mature into a better being.” Xuan explained, in the calm tone that Sun had learned to appreciate. Xuan had a nice way of putting things. “Not every journey must end in success; for the journey *itself* is the real success, the real reward.”

“I guess so.” Sun agreed, realizing that what Xuan was telling him was true. He suddenly noticed the deep gentleness in Xuan’s eyes, worn away with weariness, but still inspiring as ever.

He was struck with how far they’d come since the beginning of the journey. He and Zhu had detested each other at first; after a few months, they became the best of friends, even calling each other ‘brother’— and now they were here, having this conversation, reminiscing about the past.

It was like one of Xuan’s teachings: life had a way of making things turn out in unexpected little ways. Not always good ways. But always unexpected.

“Ready to go home, brother?” Zhu asked, offering his hand to Sun.

Sun nodded.

With a wide grin on his face, Zhu comfortingly placed his bulky arm around Sun’s shoulders. He took Xuan’s bony hand in his own as the three of them strolled towards the rising sun on the horizon. As they walked, Sun recalled fondly his first days in the police force: when he was cheerful and naive, bumbling about without a care in the world. Those days were long gone by now, but he knew that he had changed for the better.

He decided to use a technique that Xuan had taught him to relieve his stress. With a deep breath, Sun summoned all the rage, frustration, and anxiety that had plagued him over the past few weeks. He recalled what it felt like to fail, and to know that he had failed. He brought together all the terrible thoughts, feelings, and memories that had haunted him for so long.

And in a single exhale, he let the past go, moving forwards towards a brighter future.

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*What is a journey?*

*That’s for each one of us to answer.*

## The Game of Life

*German Swiss International School, Fan, Tiffany – 14*

“Can we take a snack break?” Penny pleaded.

The Flower, an ancient artifact, was in sight mere meters away. A single sun ray caught the glistening blossom, pure heaven against the mulch we hastily trudged through to get here.

We shall make the millions of inhabitants of China proud. We had been selected by the King, the best gamers in China to compete. We would win the holy title of ‘Gamers of the Century’, the highest rank a mortal could attain, since no one can rival the ‘One True God’: one with everything, creator of the laws we must all abide by—and I believe he’s watching over us somehow. I can feel it.

Sun, our team’s strongest, was dashing ahead; then always hungry little sister Penny and mature longtime friend Deus; with least fit me lugging behind, sprinting with all my measly might, centimeters ahead of the American team. Death games are not ideal, but the aim is to get The Flower and return it to the country we represent. Only us and the American team remained, a fierce and merciless battle.

The ground was rocky and uneven, but within an arm’s reach, then... *splat*. Something firm grasped my neck. The opposing team had a hold of me, about to eliminate me... “Help!” I manage to squeak.

My team rushed to my aid, Deus securely grasping The Flower, anxiety written on their hesitant faces. “If you want her back alive, give us The Flower,” a rival member negotiated.

“Not a chance,” Sun spoke whilst simultaneously completely annihilating the opposing team.

They didn’t stand a chance. A kick there and a punch at another’s chin. People were flung all over the place, and despite the man tugging at my neck with as much force as he could muster, I breathed easily. *Magic?* Penny kicked him in a very painful spot; I almost felt sorry for him.

Euphoric was an understatement. We had The Flower and were the only team standing, but there was still this tugging feeling that something was out of place, something that felt too much for us, a feeling I had for a long time... perhaps since I met Deus.

I see the end, the glory of the finish. We did it! Sun and I hang around, basking in the limelight created by surrounding proud citizens of China, whilst Deus simply observed the situation, looking wise. After all, we beat out the other countries for the our glory. I felt as proud as a mother seeing her newborn, as we were about to present The Flower to the King, cementing our achievement in history. He entered the scene, perching himself upon the high stage.

Hushed silence fell upon the people. The four of us piled onto the stage: falling, pushing, pulling. Deus gracefully eased his way to where the King stood—I swear I saw a look of greed in the King’s eyes. Definitely my imagination. The Flower almost reached the King’s hands when... *crack*, leaving a shattered mess, the King’s fiery stare bore into our skin.

“Why did you slap the flower out of Deus’s hand, Sun?!” Penny shrieked.

“Sun, I don’t know what to say,” I added, dismayed and confused. He couldn’t have done this on purpose, surely. I looked to Deus, unfazed, but almost happy. *Very odd*.

“No, I—uh,” Sun stuttered, then he stormed off, his face unreadable, almost teary.

Unfamiliar heat flowed along my bones. Why would he do that? Out of the blue, I opened my mouth and declared: “I challenge you for the rights of being King!”

*Oh God, why did I say that! I can't take it back! Everyone saw me!*

“Sure,” the King replied, with an unsettling sly smirk. “I’m a gambling man, so let’s play a game I choose, but what do I get if I win?”

“Um–,” I stuttered.

“We’ll give our lives to you. Use us as bait, kill us as you please, if you can...” Deus unwaveringly proposed.

“Fair enough. I choose snakes and ladders, but listen. There are no ladders, only snakes, but only particular snakes push you back. So you and your loser team may work together to try to beat me. Good luck... you’ll need it.” The King instructed, overconfident.

“Ok,” Deus replied, unwavering, “But first I’d like to make a phone call.”

It should be simple. Roll the dice, advance, just like any other game, but I was sorely mistaken. The board was littered with blood-eyed snakes, so we kept falling back, whilst the King advanced, suspiciously landing only on snake-free squares. However, the King rolled a six, only to land on a snake. *Finally* I thought, until he whipped out a shadowy pistol and *bang*, piercing its right fear-stricken eye, a crimson puddle flowing and a motionless creature lying. He didn’t move backwards.

“The snake can bump you down,” Penny began, solemnly. “Whether it’s alive or not, or even injured.”

We turned to each other. *Miserable*. None of us had the guts to kill another being. *Hopeless*. The King swiftly advanced whilst we were stuck on square 10. *Forlorn*. Penny dropped the dice, scarce of any hope, it landed on a six. I look up, another snake. *Lost*.

But, I won’t back down. No, the best gamers will never lose. As far as we may have come, we were now at the snake, about to be bumped down, when something swooped past my vision, a humanoid blur. *Smack*.

I saw a stone-still snake and a beaming Sun. “Well, let’s get going,” he cheered.

My voice trapped in my throat, waterfalls pouring from my eyes. I smiled from ear to ear, ecstatic.

“Why is he here?” the King roared savagely, hands clenched.

“Your ‘loser’ team may work together, you said,” cleverly remarked Penny.

The King was still winning. The snakes were subverted, but...

“Penny, you’re good at science, see what you can do,” Deus mentioned.

“Let me give it a try,” Penny said. “If I align the dice and set it at the right angle at the right speed...” *Drop* “I get a six.”

“Genius!” Sun exclaimed at the top of his voice, whilst strangling another snake.

Fired up, a new hope raged within us, unfaltering, not to die down: a fiery passion for games and an unwavering will to defeat the King. We flew through the game until we were neck-to-neck with the King, one space behind him. I could feel heat radiating off him. He sure was angry, enraged enough to do what he did next.

The gun pointed to a snake, he lifted it, and directed it square between my eyes, just above the nose.

“Don’t get in my way,” the King asserted, in a deep, menacing voice, flames in his eyes.

Well, this was my turn to do something, my teammates helped me enough, I am not a damsel in distress, but what do I do against a gun?

“Oww!” howled the King, clutching his reddened, newly-punched face. But it wasn’t just the punch that had defeated him—it was the bullet from his own gun, somehow changing its own course. “That’s cheating!”

“We won fair and square, selfish lowlife,” Deus declared, so sure.

There are times to be kind, grateful, but I cannot let this man rule any longer, not when he has shown to go lengths so far as to kill me. This is the fate he was given by God. With the King unable to move, we roll the dice for the last time. We win. Celebration? I still have this tugging feeling I did something bad. Was punching this man right? Hurting someone isn’t right. Deus’ words broke my thoughts, as if he could read my mind. “Don’t put yourself down, I know you did the right thi—”

“How do you sound so sure!” tears spilled out in unstoppable rivers.

“If you must, then, brace yourself,” he whispered.

“I changed the path of the bullet.”

“What?”

“I’m the ‘One True God’.”

My jaw fell to the ground. Sun and Penny were equally flabbergasted. The One stood beside us this whole time! Speechless was an understatement. My senses had to be tricking me, but they were not. Trying to calm us all down, Deus said: “that man only wanted The Flower because it grants powers rivalling mine. Sun didn’t break the flower, I did, and for that I am sorry.”

“None taken,” squeaked Sun, still paralysed on the spot.

Deus continued. “And I made Sally challenge his title to eliminate him once and for all. Anything abnormal in your lives, it was me.”

All I can do is nod. God was standing right before us. It felt so out of place. This was the feeling I’d been having all along. Yet it felt like piece of me was filled. The tantalising spell on us broke as Penny exclaimed: “I’m still hungry!”

Laughter filled the air, tension and anxiety wearing away. “Go ahead,” Deus grinned encouragingly. “You’re all Kings and Queens now.”



## For The Greater Good

*German Swiss International School, Li, Mohan – 11*

I trudged along the snowy path, as the wind surrounded me like a pack of wolves would surround a stag. I could feel the icy shards around me as it tore at my last hopes and gnawed away at my soul. The smell of rotting carcasses shoved itself through my nostrils like a hand and groped for my brain, as my callused hands fumbled for my satchet. I couldn't remember the last time I had tasted the cool and sweet drops of water on my ripped and torn lips. My boots were streaked with mud and torn in places as my filthy cloak billowed in the wind, clinging to my gaunt skin. My eyes were red rimmed, veins bulging across my eyes as I let the harsh gale surround me, enveloping me in a shield of flaky white snow. I didn't even recognise myself.

I had been a fool going on this journey, promising my apprentices this futile image of redemption and dragging them on this quest to the so called "holy land". No monk was sane enough to help me, so I recruited three mystic creatures as apprentices and snuck out the monastery. I was young, foolish and angry back then, agitated at the conflicting preachings of Buddhism in China. As if I could have done anything. Slowly, as the journey passed on, they had left their corpses on this desolate road. First was the loyal friar Sha He Shang, then it was Zhu Ba Jie, the pig warrior. Each of these brave apprentices had travelled with me on this holy journey believing they could be "redeemed", only to die for my stupid cause. I had begged the Buddha for forgiveness, kneeling by his shrine and pleading with everything that was left of my heart. The Buddha had one last crucible for me however and it would utterly destroy me.

Wukong, the monkey king had been my trusted companion for years. He was the last pillar holding up the tattered roof I was, under the continuous pressure from the rain of grief. He had always been strong and by my side. Strong even in his last moments. I remembered that a small conversation I had with him about Buddhism had escalated into a full blown argument, with both of us taking jabs at each other. I had stormed off fuming and blind to my anger, walking for another few minutes before realising my fatal error. I turned to dash back down the path but it had been too late; bandits had charged out together from all sides and pinned me down against the rocky path, pressing my face against the uneven path with dirt clawing into my eyes, as they scoured my bags. Realising I had no valuables, they had dragged me up, my mutilated face a watercolour painting of red. I had begged them for mercy. Then, one of them had drawn an uneven dirk, almost like a wolf's tooth and shoved it against my throat.

"Here is your mercy," he had barked, his harsh voice like the clattering of swords. Suddenly, Wukong had burst out from behind, and flung him across the path. Like an enraged lion he let himself loose onto the rest of the bandits. He elegantly ducked and parried the blows of the bandits, then to strike in a flurry of savage blows with his staff. Eventually, most of the bandits lay dying on the uneven terrain, like the victims of a storm of death. Wukong faced off the last one, as he swirled the staff around his head, and with a swift strike, disarmed him.

Wukong turned back to me, when red started suddenly blossoming down his throat, gushing onto his breastplate. He had fallen to his knees as a wounded bandit pulled the knife sticking out Wukong's throat, leaving a sticky smear of blood. His body flopped forward like a rag doll as he choked on his own blood, but I could make out a word on his bloody lips.

"Run," he gasped, as he gagged on his blood. It took me a few seconds to comprehend what happened, before I dashed off, my brain frozen with grief. I ran and stumbled for about another 2 hours, before collapsing head-first across the ragged path like a wounded deer. I saw my dirty robes, remembering how Wukong would've laughed at me for the dirt smears all across my robes, when I always scolded him for hygiene. Then, the hammer of grief hit me, when I realised that Wukong would never say anything again. I had let the tears flow as I buried my head into my robes. This was the day I had given up, when my morale died.

The wind continued to howl around me, as it flung my bags back and forth. The cold was slowly devouring me, eating away at my warmth and slowly gnawing at my soul. I didn't care though. My soul had died already. All I wanted now was to join them. I strode on another few miles, working my flimsy and frail legs as I dragged myself forward, aimlessly.

"There's no point in trying, just accept it," the icy wind whispered as it inched closer to my ear. "Join us, join us," the wind chanted in a steady rhythmic beat, slowly surrounding and mesmerising me, as their freezing bodies encased me in a ring.

I could feel it coming now. The cold had done its work. The cold thrust itself into my chest, as I lurched backwards, falling onto the snow. This long torture was finally at an end. I closed my eyes, as I felt my spirit pushing through the wreck that was once my body, entering a sphere of calm darkness. Death was close. Suddenly I was interrupted by a gleaming yellow shape. It started swirling and taking on a familiar humanoid shape before started to resemble the body of Wukong.

"How..."

"Have you come this far just to die?" he questioned angrily, cutting me off. "We gave our lives for you yet you give up steps away from the glory you've been searching for,". His body shone brightly like gold, as he jabbed at my face. "You've endured all this pain. For what?"

"I can't carry on," I rasped. "I've lost too much."

"If you are knocked down seven times, get up eight times. Eventually, you will reach your goal. You need to keep getting up. People need you to show them the true Buddhism, the true Buddha. They need you most at this moment. I chose to die for you, because I believed in you. I sacrificed myself for your mission. I will not see it fall apart now. If you stop here, I would've died for nothing. If you continue to head down this path, and bring glory to your name, I would've died for a greater cause. We all need you more than anything now".

The vision of a bloody battlefield suddenly enveloped me, with two armies clashing viciously. The brutal carnage spread like an octopus's tentacles as fleeing villagers were hacked down as they begged for mercy. Soldiers who had lost their weapons resorted to their fists as they lunged at their enemies, caked in dried blood. Then the cavalry came charging down as they mowed over the injured, reducing the field to a bloody pulp of death, as torches were flung against the thatched roofs of huts. The huts were like weary old men as they slowly melted under the fierce burn of the fire.

"Where is this hellhole?" I gasped before trailing off after recognising a familiar temple, with corpses littered across the steps. This was where I had grown up and studied and where I had first experienced the lull and calmness of Buddhism. Now it was in ruins, my family, friends and fellow monks all massacred brutally and the whole place annihilated. A tear rolled down my cheek as the sadness overwhelmed me. Instead of just the chasm of despair however, I felt something else. I felt the weight of all of China on my back as I felt my grief evaporate, replaced by the steel of determination. China needed me more than anything now. I was the one who could fix all this. If I died, so would Buddhism in China.

"Seven times down, eight times up," I muttered as I smashed myself out the sphere, pulling myself into my body and ignoring the excruciating pain that tore at me like a wolf. It was freezing, yet I could feel the fire burning inside me and wrapping me in a blanket of warmth and determination. China needed me now. My head spun as I pushed myself off the powdery silky snow and slung the heavy baggage over my back. I started down the path, my eyes glowering with determination and finally, since the last few months I felt there was a purpose dragging me forward.

## A Trek of Ambition

*German Swiss International School, Yang, Jack – 14*

“And so today in Beijing, in the midst of inner and outer turmoil across the country, thousands of candidates sit the imperial examinations, vying for the coveted role of being a government official. Glory and opportunity to fix the nation await—”

“Zhang. Give me that newspaper.”

Zhang’s gaze floated up from his newspaper and found his father’s beady eyes. His father Long was one of many grain farmers in the village. While his farm wasn’t necessarily the biggest and most prolific in the area, he certainly harbored a strong ambition for its future.

“Nothing, father. Just reading the newspaper.” Zhang mumbled begrudgingly.

“I see.” His father snatched the paper from his hands, sank into a sofa, and began to examine its contents. “My son, will you ever learn? A job like this was never meant for you or me. As my heir, you should be producing crops to help our family survive. Understand?”

“Yes, father.” Zhang responded monotonously.

His father’s expression grew stern. As he got up, his calloused hands shredded the newspaper apart bit by bit. “Zhang. I don’t know how much longer I can tolerate this. If you aren’t willing to take control of your future, I can do nothing for you.”

Zhang didn’t bother responding. He had heard this lecture before, he knew resisting would be futile.

But as his father left the room, Zhang couldn’t help but feel hopeless. After a second straight year of food shortages at the village, he wanted to do something other than help produce more crops, but his capabilities were repeatedly being questioned and he was now even doubting himself.

As he sat on the floor contemplating what to do, he heard a knock on the door.

“What is it!?” He exclaimed loudly.

Nothing in response. He thought it might be a young street heckler, and thus didn’t think to waste his time. But ultimately, his innate curiosity took over. As he opened the door, surprise sprang into his eyes, which were now staring into the sage ones of the village elder, Tang.

“Hello, Zhang.” he chuckled. “Pleased at all to see me?”

Any and all of Zhang’s prior frustrations quickly melted away, replaced with a flurry of unanswered questions. “Thank you for taking your time out of your schedule to visit us, your Honour.”

Tang’s grey eyes twinkled. “Thank you. You know I am, after all, just an old man. Come, sit down.” Zhang gladly bowed to perch opposite him.

“So. What is this I have been hearing from your father, Zhang?” Tang started simply.

Zhang immediately heated back up again. “Village Leader, look at the state of our country right now! It is a total mess! I have read the daily newspapers. I strongly believe I *am* smart enough and I *am* good enough. Please, let me go to Beijing to take the examinations. My father clearly doesn’t know me well enough, otherwise he would have more confidence in me!” he ended, breathing heavily, passion etched into every syllable.

Seeming unfazed by Zhang’s anger, Tang continued on in his passive tone of speech. “And you don’t believe our village might need some crops, Zhang? We are all starving. If you do succeed in the Imperial Examinations, what can you do for *us*, Zhang— the ones who helped nurture you and enabled you to become the person that you are?”

Zhang immediately fired back. “I— I don’t know yet, Village Leader, but I do know that what we are trying to do is useless and will amount to *nothing* in the long run! Have you not heard of the term “subsistence farming”? We cannot survive like this! The government is far too busy at war to deal with us. If I get into a good position there, I will help!”

Tang surveyed him with curiosity. “I hope you understand the risk that you are taking, Zhang. If you don’t make it to Beijing or you don’t make it to the examinations, no one will be there for you. No one can support you. You will die unsupported and alone, and—”

Zhang cut him off. “Please, Village Leader. I am ready. If I don’t believe in myself, no one will believe in me.”

The conversation stopped for a while, with Tang looking deep into Zhang’s eyes, finding nothing but a burning passion washed over with endless determination. There was a great pause.

“You know, I think so too.” Tang finally whispered. “I honestly believe that no matter what contributions your father has made to this village... he could be wrong. Your determination is impressive, Zhang. We will leave under cover of night, the second day after tomorrow.”

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The next days were a flurry for Zhang. At first, he mostly felt a frustrating regret, having entered school knowing that he would not be able to see any of his best friends anymore, all while not being able to tell them about it for fear of letting his father know.

However, it turned out that Tang had set up a clever scheme, involving a letter supposedly sent from the Ministry of Agriculture, summoning him to the nearby Lanzhou for a supposed lecture on improved farmland nourishment methods ("I had to rack my brains around for that one!", Tang had chuckled.)

Tang was also generous enough to share village supplies to aid his journey. Zhang received ample rice, vegetables, and mutton, along with a big vat of water. Aside from the human necessities, Tang gave him a "life-saving" map which conveniently lined out all the oases along his path through the desert.

Stunned at first with the load a skinny boy like himself was apparently meant to carry, he was relieved when two hours before departure, Tang knocked upon his doorstep, accompanied by a robust camel, dubbed Xiao Luo.

The journey started off really well. He and Xiao Luo worked together seamlessly. By the time they had reached halfway at the Xiangbin Oasis, only a third of their supplies had been used up. Zhang slept like an infant.

When he woke up, his world collapsed.

Xiao Luo was lying on the floor, his body broken. Bandits had clearly come overnight and raided the supplies, leaving nothing but a few shredded piles of clothing, meager stalks of vegetables and the water vat.

★★★

The next few weeks were a struggle. Zhang had to eat whatever he found along the way, and more often than not, he had to beg for food. Soon, he had become mere skin and bones.

Six months into the journey, each step felt like a trial. The rain started to pour down now, followed by a savage wind which tossed him around. Even as he slipped in and out of consciousness, doubts drifted between his mind. His feet slogged like lead; his hair drenched under the smattering of rain; his thoughts hit him harder and harder with the apparent reality. *This is it*, he thought. *I have failed*.

He reflected on his ambitions, which now indeed seemed fruitless. He yearned of the comfort and the warmth of his home. He thought of his father, undoubtedly returned to the village empty-handed and predictably devastated. And then his thoughts drifted to that of his village leader, Tang, of all the faith he put in him, and all the village resources invested in him, and how he was about to let him down. The death of Xiao Luo took root in his head. Tears streamed down his tired face, but subconsciously, he knew he could not afford to stop and weep.

Just as he was about to give up, to stop walking, to chuck his water vat aside and die forgotten, merely another victim to the elements, his swollen feet rammed into a blunt object in the howling darkness. The resulting pain shocked his system, almost waking him up. Upon focusing up, he saw that he had hit a curb. The road, after careful inspection, was paved.

Invigorated by this discovery, Zhang erased all negative thoughts from his head. He kept walking and walking. It seemed like forever. He thought of nothing else; he was too tired to. Slowly, the rain stopped. The wind ceased. And eventually, the sun rose, its magnificent rays drying him and giving him energy to press on.

Then, he heard it. Noise flooded his ears. The noise of people, of crowds! Homes of varying shapes and sizes appeared around him, followed by great crowded marketplaces and magnificent statues of famous historical figures, some of whom he recognised. It dawned on him as if the weight of the universe had been lifted from his shoulders: *he had made it. Here was Beijing, in all its glory.*

Zhang wiped a cloudy fluid from his eyes in excitement. With his vision now cleared, he caught a glimpse of the government building, a grandiose structure gleaming in the foggy distance.

*This is it*, he thought. His legs got the message first, and he dashed for the steps.

## New Journey to the west

*Harrow International School Beijing, Cui, Hanna – 13*

I booked a flight to America, because I seriously need a holiday and take some days off from my schedule to have some rest. My flight is this evening and I'm going straight to New York. First I finished all my work so I don't need to worry about phone calls from my partners and get some sleep cause there is time in the western countries is different from the eastern countries and I know that I'm already have to struggle because of the time differences. 2 hours later I finished everything I need to do and before going to bed to take a nap I prepared a dairy that I named "journey to the west" that I'm going to write during my trip and put it in my suitcase, then I went to sleep.

Several hours later I was in the airport when I saw a man wearing a hoodie to cover his face and I didn't know if it was my imagination but I though I saw a tail behind. I followed him to get a closer look and what I though I saw was a face of a monkey. Just when I was about to freak out the thing caught me and dragged me to an empty room with no security camera, he took off his hoodie to reveal its face and I could not believe it when I realized that a monkey just captured me. The creature told me that his name is "Wu Kong" and he is on a mission and he needs to travel to the western civilization to find a precious object. He needed my help since he need a human companion to hide him from suspicious people and also we don't need to ride a plane says that he already prepared a transport. Then he grabbed he and dragged me out of the airport and I realized that my feet is not on the ground. Wu Kong was flying while dragging me with him. I was freaking out but eventually calm down when I started to enjoy this moment.

Later we arrived at New york and Wu Kong said he doesn't have all day and told me to hurry up and follow him. When we were walking he told me that he is a native of Dongsheng of China, and has entered the cave and led a group of monkeys, and is known as "monkey king". He said that his weapon which is the "golden cudgel" was stolen and he is able to track down where it is before its too late. Wu Kong told me he does not know who took it and might be one of his enemies or his friends that has the intention to play a prank on him, also he only need me to block him from suspicious people and get him to the area where the empire state building is which apparently is where the golden cudgel is. I really wanted to leave him but at the same time I want to know more about him and his experiences, but I was afraid to ask him since its pretty clear he is a powerful creature. While I was leading him to his destination which isn't far at all I had a million questions I had and if I'm going to ever encounter this "Monkey King", I was thinking so deeply that I didn't realized we had arrived. Wu Kong told me that if he encounters me again he will properly tell his story to me and told me to go away cause he have some private business. I have to admit even though I barely did anything I hope I would see him again and I definitely have to record it in my dairy about my "journey to the west".

## New Journey To The West

*Harrow International School Beijing, Ge, Bob – 13*

In Yunnan, there are lots of forests. One day, a dinosaur looking beast ran out from the forest and attacked a village. In that attack, 138 villagers lost their life. The government was taking very serious on this thing. But in one month, similar things happened even more. The government decided to send a group of soldiers to the forest in Yunnan to find out these strange things.

There are ten soldiers in this group. All of them had their equipment the highest technology on that time. Practical guns with high damage bullets, useful medicines and nutritional food carried in bags, which can compress stuff to make more space are enough for half a year. Most comfortable tents are used and they are all good at protect against the wind. All their equipment seemed heavy, but actually very light for soldiers. All these with soldiers made the group very superior and selected.

When this group of young soldiers entered the forest, a red velociraptor ran out and stopped in front of them. At first, the velociraptor seemed inquisitive about the soldiers, and the soldiers were a bit flustered. Both sides of them didn't move. Suddenly, the leader of soldiers, Tang Hao, realized, and he secretly made a gesture. All soldiers started to surround the velociraptor very slowly. Then Tang fired his gun. The velociraptor screamed very loudly, and straightly fell on the ground with a bullet hole surrounded by blood clearly shown on its forehead.

"Let's go! Others of them may come because of the sound. We should found out the problem straight away!" said Tang.

On the way to the middle part of the forest, the soldiers met a few other dinosaurs, but they were all very small, that the soldiers even didn't want to waste bullets on them.

"What is that light coming out?" said the second leader, Lin Tian.

"Check it out!" Tang said.

Soldiers made their way closer to the place the light came out. There was a transmit door located right in the dense forest.

"What is that?" asked Lin.

"It must be the problem." Said Tang.

Suddenly, another velociraptor ran out from the transmit door. But the guns were all pointing at it.

"Shoot!" shouted Tang. This time, a weird thing happened. The transmit door dragged the whole group in as the velociraptor fell down bleeding.

They appeared in a village. This village seemed backward in skill. Well, it was still in the cold steel period. Houses were all built by wood, and carriages were used for transport. All soldiers seemed surprised and amazed by this.

"Look! There are ten strange guys suddenly appeared!" shouted a villager. "Everyone! Keep away from them!"

"Hi, we are not being mean to you. We are good." Said Tang.

"Well, sorry about that. There are too many problems now in our world, we must be aware about things. Ok, I will take you guys to the head of our village." Said the villager.

The soldiers followed the villager and arrived at the head's house. "Well come to our village. But firstly, who are you?" said the head.

"We are soldiers from China on earth. We are here to solve a serious problem." Said Tang.

"Oh! The problem of dinosaurs also affected you? That was not very nice. But why are you here? How could people from earth get to here?" asked the head.

"I'm very happy that you know us. When we were having our mission, a transmit door drag us to here. But wait. Did you just said the dinosaurs?" replied Tang.

"Yeah! The dinosaurs started attacking us not long ago. Before that, they were in the other side of the forest in the west. I've heard there was a person also from earth went to there, and the problems of dinosaurs came after that. It might be his doing." Said the head.



“All right, we are going now.” Said Tang.

“Be careful, some of them are huge.” Said the head.

“Sir! A big one came to our village!” A villager ran in and shouted.

“Ok, we will show you our strength.” Said Lin.

The big one is actually quite big, as big as the buildings in the village. The soldiers slowly made a semicircle to surround it, and shot it in the same time. The big dinosaurs slowly fell down, and villagers started cheering.

“See that, we are strong enough.” Said Lin to the head.

“We will go to the west now. For our country and our people.” Said Tang.

“Good luck! People from earth!” Said the head to soldiers.

As they started walking to the way of sunset, new journey to the west begun.

# New Journey to the West

*Harrow International School Beijing, He, Ethan – 11*

[2016 January 18, 7:00am]

[Beijing Zoo]

This was the third day of testing for the animal's health. A big monkey with golden hair who was new to this zoo was being tested. A few days ago, the zoo keeper found a monkey in front of the door of his house, so he brought the monkey into the zoo, and called him "Golden Hair".

The doctors put the monkey on table, and a machine with a special sharp needle pierced the monkey's skin, and took some blood. The blood went through the machine and to another one. It was a strange box that scanned the blood and sent the data to a computer.

"That's strange," the doctor said. "I have never seen that kind of DNA before!" He pushed the "match" button.

"No matching DNA in the database!" the computer said.

Does this mean the monkey had never born before? The doctor used the computer to review the monkey's life and was given a birth date in 711AD! His father is—Monkey King!

[2016 January 18, 6:00pm]

[The Cage, Location: Secret]

After a long trip, the monkey finally arrived at the cage, and went into a room which seemed like a lab because it's full of people wearing gas masks and there were many strange machines. The monkey was placed on the table again, but suddenly...

BOOOOMMMM!

A bomb had landed on the Cage!

BOOOOMMMM! CRASHHHHHH!

Another one, and...

Bullets could be heard outside the lab. The army and the *Underworld* were fighting.

CRASHHHHHHHHHH!

The door was suddenly kicked in and lots of guys with black masks ran in. The monkey was scared and it ran up the ventilation chute, but somebody yelled, "Catch that monkey!" He ran away as fast as his legs could carry him.

Hundreds of cars were chasing it, and someone yelled, "Don't run, surrender to the landlord!"

The monkey saw a tree and climbed on it. The monkey saw someone pointing a gun at him and he became very frightened. He jumped off the tree and onto the guy's head and with his super powers he killed him and his partners.

[2016, January 19–31, Beijing]

The monkey was doomed. He had nowhere to go and was pretty hungry.

[same time]

[underworld's nest, location: Secret]

"WHAT!?" The landlord shouted "ten soldiers have been killed by a dirty monkey!? What are you guys doing? Are you just here to eat and sleep? Why can't you do something useful!?"

"Sorry, boss, we will be more careful next time."

[2016, February 1, 11:00am, Beijing]

The monkey met a man. He took him to a secret base in a mountain where he met a pig and a man.

"You are not just a monkey, you are Monkey King II!" the man said. "Now, you three have to undertake a journey to the west again—but you must travel even further because your fathers are in San Francisco! You need to find your fathers, because they can help you destroy the underworld!"

Tomorrow they will begin their journey with a special car that the man gave them.

[2016, February 2, 6:00am]

[Secret base, location: secret]

Monkey King II woke up very early and they met that man who said, “Bye, now I will give all of your fathers’ magical things. This is your father’s magical stick. Follow me!” He went to a garage and pointed at a toolbox. “This is everything that you will need on this journey. Good luck!”

[2016, February 2, 6:30am]

[Secret base, location: secret]

They went in the magical car. It was huge and looked like a plane.

“So,” the pig said as he pulled out a map “We should go west, through Europe and across the Atlantic Ocean to San Francisco. Our fathers are there! Let’s go!”

[2016, February 2, 6:00pm]

[Highway, Location: somewhere near Xi An]

“We still have a long way to go! The book in that bag said we will face a lot of trouble along the way!” said the man who is the only person that can read in this team “and it’s late, let’s take a rest first!”

The car changed to a huge house in a park, and soon they all fell asleep.

[2016, February 3, 8:00am]

[Hotel, Location: Unknown]

“Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!”

The clock shouted.

The team woke up and after a quick breakfast, they went on their journey again.

[2016, february3, 12:00pm]

[somewhere]

“Alert! Alert! Incoming bomb!” The car cried

BOOOOMMMM! BOOOOMMMM! BOOOOMMMM!

Three bombs landed just near the car, but the car was very intelligent and it turned on the “Shield” when the alert sounded. The bombs didn’t hurt anyone.

BOOOOMMMM! BOOOOMMMM! BOOOOMMMM!

Again...

In the sky, there are five planes, and...

“We have to fight!” The monkey king II said

The man pressed the “FIGHT” button and after one second, they could feel that something had crashed near them. The car had just changed in to a monster. It has two legs and six arms, each arm has a bunch of weapons!

And then...

The monster’s leg was on fire and flew across the sky towards the planes, and then all of its hands were pointing at the planes, and...

“AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH” the team could hear the pilots shouting, and the plane crashed to the ground just like a huge rock.

Suddenly all the planes crashed and the team heard a loud noise...

CRASHHHHHHH! CRASHHHHHHH! CRASHHHHHHH! CRASHHHHHHH! CRASHHHHHHH!

The five planes all crashed and the road was severely damaged so they couldn’t drive anymore! Only thing we could do was to fly!

[February 3, 9:00 pm]

[Frontier, China]

They took a rest on the plane. It was very dark and the plane couldn’t land.

[February 4—March 3]

[India—Poland]

The car landed.

[March 16, 3:00pm]

[Hawaii]

They finally arrived in the USA, but they still had a long way to go. The underworld seemed scared, and they didn't attack for a long time.

[same time, underworld]

"We will have our final attack in ten days' time!" the landlord said. However, they didn't know that the team were listening.

[March 17, 1:00pm]

[Los Angeles]

"Alert! Low battery! Low battery!"

The car cried.

"So, what should we do!?" the pig asked.

"I don't know!" the Monkey and the man bellowed.

The car stopped.

"We still have hundreds of miles to go!" the man said.

"Let's check the toolbox," the monkey said.

The pig opened the toolbox. "Try this," he said, "It's the emergency battery!"

So they put the emergency battery in. The car started again!

[March 21, 5:00pm]

[San Francisco]

They finally reached the target! The car was really slow because it's the emergency battery, so it took a long time!

The entrance was at a field with "*No Entrance*" on it and they went through. Then they saw a hallway and carried on walking until they saw a huge machine, and a screen with the words:

Your ID please

Monkey King II put his hand on the machine, and said "We are monkey king and his team mate's later generations. We came here to meet our forefathers."

ID correct

Then it said:

This is the entrance to paradise.

Are you sure you want to go?

If yes, press Y

If no, press N

He pressed Y

Are you sure you want to go?

If yes, press green button

If no, press red button

He pressed the green button

Are you sure you want to go?

This is your last choice

If yes, press 1

If no, press o

"Are you guys ready?" said Monkey King II.

"Yes, we are!" said the pig.

He pressed 1

Welcome to paradise!

Only one second later they felt the house was spinning, and their eyesight became darker and darker, and at last, they couldn't see anything...

A light could be seen through their failing eyesight and suddenly they could see everything. The sky was blue, the grass was green, and it's all covered with flowers. In front of them was a palace which they tried to enter but they couldn't open the door.

There was also a screen:

ID correct  
Opening the door

The door opened.

Downloading your personal details

A robot went through. He looked a little bit like the scanning box at that lab, but it was just any old box and it could do everything!

At last, they saw the real monkey king! The under worlds had already been destroyed by the machine!

## New Journey To The West

*Harrow International School Beijing, Liao, Jacky – 14*

This was a peaceful day, the sun was burning, the green blanket on the ground looks beautiful, but a message has broken the peaceful day. “Dear Lord! Alsace has went to find the dread lord Mal’Ganis!” “No, no, no. His power can not against the dread lord, it’s too danger.” Said the King of Lordaeron, Terenas, “Call Antonidas and Uther to help him! As quick as possible!”

The ‘rescue team’:

Antonidas was the master of mage and Uther was the mentor of Alsace. The path that go to the dread lord was very unsafe, the darkness was all around, the monsters... They met trouble when the first day, they have been attacked by a Orc. “Why the Orc attacked us! I thought the war between us has finished for a long time!” Uther said. “%332@3u4” said by a Orc. “He is saying that someone has let the cold and the darkness thing came out.” “What?” “How do I know?” said Antonidas. The Orc stretched his arm, grab his hammer as he ran to us a arrow has split the air and stab in to the Orc’s skin, Uther use his sword to hack the Orc, “awahatuipa!(the magic)” When the magic has touch the Orc, the Orc disappears. “Thats a very good timing Alleria” said Uther. “Thanks my friend. I heard the noise so I came.” A woman with brown hair and her eyes were white. Uther told Alleria what has Alsace did and Alleria join the group.

The near the dread lord the dangers the monsters are, the colder the places are. They travels to a place that has lots of rivers and lakes but with only a few of roads and land. “A fish!” Antonidas said, “No don’t touch it, it’s a merman!” But what Alleria said was too late. Tons of merman has came out from the water. “\*&ih% \$67\*—^7y” The merman said. “ They said they also felt cold” said Antonidas. “There’s no time to translate what they have said!” said Uther. Alleria shout “There are too many them, Antonidas!” “I need time! Cover me so I can use my power to kill them.” Said Antonidas. The merman is getting more and more, the protected shield cannot take anymore. Uther and Alleria was surrounded by tons of merman. Finally the sound of magic has been shouted out “oruhbooxha!!(the magic)” The fire has burn out from the great mage, it burns the merman. “Finally.” said Alleria. “This still not finish.” Someone said in the darkness. “Ahhh! How could a merman talk!?” said Antonidas. “We are not merman! We are trolls.” A lots of disgusting and ugly creature walked out from the darkness. The trolls extended their arms, they raised up their spear. “Wow, how can you looks so ugly! Guys look at this.” Antonidas turned a troll in to a sheep. “That well be very easy for us, can you do this to all of the trolls?” Uther said and relax. “I can’t, they’re many but my power can only do about 4.” Two troll rush out from the darkness, they both have a spear and ran to us with a scary face. ‘Puff’ Both of them turn in to sheep. Now the ‘rescue team’ has infuriate them, all of the trolls ran towards to the ‘rescue team’. The bow, the sword and the magic has teamed up together and break out their extremity. Alleria took the arrow from the died body and shoot to the other troll, Uther uses his sword to split the trolls apart and Antonidas’s magic blast the trolls. When they thought the trolls are all died, one rises the spear and try to throw to Alleria, “Careful! ” Uther shouted. When the spear just about to throw, “Uphaa!(the

magic)” The spear fall from the air, ‘baa, baa’ it turns in to a sheep. “That was close.” Said Alleria, “We have to hurry up or we don’t have any chance to hurry up.”

The other side:

“I can do this, I will be the king of Lordaeron just like my father.” Said Alsace, walking down inside the dark forest. “The sun is going down, the forest is getting darker and colder I have to find a place to sleep.” He cut the branches to built a small shelter. As he went to sleep someone came to find him...

Back to the ‘rescue team’:

“This place is horrible!” Said Uther, “I think I teach Alsace what all I have learn but my experience, so I think he can hang with the dread lord” “But I think the experience is more important than the skills”

Antonidas argued, “I’m not saying he can’t beat the dread lord, I’m just saying that the only thing can kill the dread lord is a sword called Frostmourne and you must resist the tempt or you’ll be control by Ner’zhul who is the old lich king.” “But we need to rest.” Said Uther. “Fine, but not too long.” Said Antonidas. They saw a village just in front of them but covered in dark, they went in to take a rest. The low building made of bamboo seems very familiar. This place is full of the brew beer, “creak, creak.” “What is it?” Said Antonidas. “Please help us. Please, this place has covered in dark for a long time.” Said a fat person with a hat walk out from the dark.

The other side:

The person try to took his sword and kill the prince but the reflect light was too shiny in the night, it bright the prince to wake up. "Who are you?" Said Alsace, "Try to kill me? You are not good enough to kill me." Alsace took his sword and dodge the blade, "You are Kel'Thuzad?! You are one of the student of Antonidas!" "I used to be." Said Kel'Thuzad. The prince felt anger because he thought Kel'Thuzad had abandoned Lordaeron and turns evil, so he ran to him and try to kill him with his sword but Kel'Thuzad ran away. Alsace went to chase him, for a long time they didn't stop running, they finally stops. Alsace race his sword up and said "Believe in the light and hope!" He swing the sword between the sky that you can heard the sound it makes, although Kel'Thuzad was the student of a great mage but he has betrayed Lordaeron, Alsace chop the sword down to him. "For the lich king!" Said Kel'Thuzad and he turns in to dust.

Back to the 'rescue team':

"You are the Pandaren." Said Uther, "But why your village..." The Pandaren break in, "The evil side is growing, we felt cold and no light comes since the day before yesterday." Antonidas said "That was the day that Alsace go to find the dread lord. We'll help you to get away from the dark and cold." "The way you can help us is find the prince and let him get away from the sword Frostmourne." Said the Pandaren. The 'rescue team' went to find the sword before Alsace dose.

The other side:

"He lead me to the place that where the sword is." Said Alsace looking around the snowy place. As he go near the sword the colder the weather, the extreme the weather is. Alsace took out his hand try to carefully touch the sword, "Wait! Don't touch it! You can't resist the tempt!" Uther shouted to Alsace, but they were too late he already grab the sword out of the ground. "No, no, no! What is happening to me?" Alsace cried, "I am suppose to me like this, why the king of Lordaeron? Is so boring, lets do some thing fun." "No I shouldn't took the sword, is my fault." Alsace turns to a dark knight his soul is half his and half is the lich king's. Antonidas transfer the other two back to the castle to keep them safe. "The Frost Legion you can awake now." Said the new lich king. The frozen people all raised from the ground, some with sword, some are knights and some are mage. "I can't let you do this!" Said Antonidas, "ioduhtominas!(the magic)" A fire wave hit The Frost Legion, but as the magic hit the Legion, Alsace stab the sword into Antonidas's heart, "For the king!" He died, a great mage has died. "Put your faith in the light!" A knight drop from the sky, is Fording, a great knight, "I felt the darkness has come, so I some and take a look." He sent warriors to fight The Frost Legion and he went to fight the lich king. The sword bumping sword, The light versus dark. Fording jumped over the lich king and cut his back, the lich king falls down and said "Long live the lich king."

The world finally lives in peace, the dark and the coldness were gone but a great mage has gone with the darkness and a great knight also. The sword Frostmourne has been destroyed by Fording.

## New Journeys to the West

*Harrow International School Beijing, Lin, Bill – 13*

He saw a familiar face. “My friend, how long has it been?” said Xuanzang while he took time to realize that this was reality. “Master!” shouted Sun Wukong with glee. They embraced each other, brother to brother. They then talked and talked like they have not talked in a millennium, mostly Xuanzang was doing the chatting. Sun Wukong then lead Xuanzang to the cave inside the waterfall of Spring Mountain, where they can roam about freely. “My friend, I have one last adventure for you, one that takes you further than Vulture Peak, one that takes you to the new world. .” Said Xuanzang. “I am always ready for adventure, master!” shouted Sun Wukong with excitement. He then lifted his Ruyi Jingubang and armed himself for adventure. “Don’t be too rash, our adventure takes us the El Dorado, the hidden golden city. Remember you are still my student.” Warned Xuanzang as he snatched the Jingubang. “We can take your cloud to Vulture Peak where I can pray to the Buddha. Then we have to cross a great desert all the way to a city glittering with gold. After that, we go North to the real West.” Explained Xuanzang. Then they packed their things and got on the flying cloud for another adventure.

They flew past the capital, past the land of the Buddha to Vulture Peak. That is where they prayed. They traveled on foot as always, bringing lots of water with them. They strolled through the jungles of India; they then heard a familiar trot. It was Yulong, the dragon horse and guess who was with them. “Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing!” Shouted Sun Wukong, it was just like old times again. “I heard you people are going to the Golden city, so we decided that we did not want to miss out on fortune.” Proclaimed Zhu Bajie as he snorted. Xuanzang then mounted Yulong and they made way. The Great sea of sand then fell before them, they were not afraid they just went. Xuanzang then caught sight of a priest of the desert and seized this opportunity to spread Buddhism. “My friend, would you want to see the power of the Buddha?” Preached Xuanzang. The priest said no word, he then showed Xuanzang a symbol of a Crescent and a Star, “I only listen to Allah.” Proclaimed the priest he then vanished into the sand. They continued on they dry journey; they bought souvenirs from a merchant. The merchant had a strange animal called a camel, with two humps on its back. The merchant then led them to a shining city. The city of Agrabah

The city was full of traders with weird hats. Everyone looked at Xuanzang and his disciples with confusion. “Dad, why aren’t they wearing turbans?” Asked a girl as she was pushed inside her house with her dad. “We should split up and enjoy this city seperatly.” Said Xuanzang. The group was split and everyone did their own thing. Xuanzang then came upon a lot of young men playing sport. They talked about a cave with riches that can make you richer then the Sultan. Sun Wukong was getting into lots of trouble; the man was chasing him for stealing. Suddenly, there was a huge parade. The man had to scam. Guards then caught the five companions and brought them to the palace. The Sultan is pretty nice, he just wanted to know what they were up to. The Prince then took them to his room. “What is your name? Young man.” Asked Xuanzang “My name is Aladdin.” Said the prince.

Aladdin then told them of his adventures about the Cave of Wonders, the magic carpet, and most importantly, the lamp. “The lamp is still in my hands, I still talk to The Genie when I can.” Said Aladdin. He then handed the lamp to Xuanzang, “You just rub it.” Reminded Aladdin. Xuanzang cautiously rubbed the lamp, out sprang up a The Genie. “Master, how great is it to see you again? I see you brought some guests too.” The Genie then examined the five and got excited. “You guys are from the East! I have always wanted to go there!” Shouted the Genie. Xuanzang then told Aladdin about Buddhism and what they believe in. Aladdin did not seem interested about religion. He told them about how he is going to marry Princess Jasmine. Jasmine came into the room, dressed in a light silk dress. She kissed Aladdin on the cheek and sat down to talk. They then talked about how Jafar, a wizard from Morocco is in the Cave on Wonders and is stuck there for eternity. They then dismissed themselves.

The next day, Aladdin and Jasmine got married at a huge palace and then they soared on the magic carpet. The people of Agrabah were cheering at the new prince and princess. Xuanzang and his four companions then said farewell to Aladdin and Jasmine. The gates of Agrabah opened for them and they moved along.



Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing stayed in Agrabah, Xuanzang and Wukong and Yulong moved along. They trotted along the great desert and Xuanzang continued to fail to spread Buddhism. They then heard a carpet fly pass them, it was Aladdin and Jasmine. "We wanted to see the world, so we decided to come along." Said Aladdin, he then lead the way to a port city. There they could get a ship. The ship was bound for the city of Marseille in the West they then boarded the ship. "Oh I hate the sea." Complained Sun Wukong.

The journey on sea was long but it was interesting to see people with white skin. They talked in a different language, only some can understand the common tongue. The next day, they arrived at Marseille. It was a city of sweetness; the smell of pastry filled the air. They then took a carriage to Paris where they would continue to have fun, they rented and room at an inn. Aladdin and Jasmine went off, leaving only Tang Sanzang and Sun Wukong. On the street, a mysterious figure stalked them. Everyone looked at Tan Sanzang strangely; they have never seen an alien like this before. The mysterious figure then approached Xuanzang, "Athos, at your service monsieur." Said the mysterious man. "No thanks." Retorted Xuanzang. Paris was bustling with people even in the Night. Sun Wukong cooked noodles Tang Sanzang went to pray. There was a knock on the door, Wukong went to get it and out came Three Musketeers.

Athos, Porthos, and Aramis said that they were musketeers of the kings guard and they'd like to have dinner with the two. They sat down and took forks to eat noodles. "You eat noodles with chopsticks." Said Tang Sanzang. They then spilled wine and spat on the floor and did a lot of things, which drove Tang mad. "You do not come here to eat like fools! Kong Zi taught us many manners." Shouted Tang Sanzang. The three musketeers then started singing.

Snap the sticks  
Spit on the floor  
Eat the noodles with a fork  
Spill the wine on every floor  
That's what Tang Sanzang hates

Smash the cups  
Slash the mat  
Swearing to everyone at the door  
Drink the wine like a dork  
That's what Tang Sanzang hates

What are you doing?  
What are you doing?  
Hey hey!  
What are you doing?  
What are you doing?  
Hey hey!  
What are doing?  
What are doing?  
I thought Kong Zi taught us manners!

Put the chopsticks upright ho!  
Fire a musket down the hole!  
Smash ugly statues oh!  
If any are still whole!  
Send them down the hall to roll

That's what Tang Sanzang hates  
That's what he hates!  
So carefully carefully with the place

“Out of here fools!” Blasted Tang Sanzang. Athos, Porthos, and Aramis then went out of the room. Then, Aladdin and Jasmine came in, “Oh what happened here?” Said Jasmine as she stepped on a chopstick. “Three idiots came in.” Replied Wukong. Wukong was bursting for revenge.

The next day, Wukong met Athos on the street. “Oh hey, I had a good time last night.” Sneered Athos. Wukong said no word and he drew his Jingubang. Athos then cleared the people off the street. “If it is a duel you want, a duel you get.” Said Athos Wukong swung his Jingubang but Athos dodged it, Athos then fired a musket at his head. Wukong was knocked out and was sent to the palace of Louis XIII. Meanwhile, Xuanzang heard about a new world. Full of gold and they had no religion. Perfect for spreading Buddhism, he had to first find Wukong. He searched all of Paris but he found no trace.

Wukong woke to the smell of French perfume, Louis XIII stood like the Notre Dame. He towered over Wukong and said “Oh what a creature you bring me Athos. I have never seen any monkey like this in our empire.” Athos cut the chains off Wukong and says “His majesty wanted to see you, so you are here.” Louis then told Athos to leave them. Louis then told Wukong of a golden city, El Dorado. His eavesdroppers told him that they are venturing to El Dorado too. Louis then senses competition and challenges Wukong to a race with him and the Spaniards. Wukong agreed and the race for gold began.

## New Journey to the West

*Harrow International School Beijing, Qiu, Jason – 12*

On the hot and humid desert. Four staggering shadows appeared. These people had just got a order from the jade emperor. There is another devil committing all kinds of evil all over Singapore. It is called the Wu Tian patriarch. It harmed a lot of ordinary people over the world. It is really powerful, even a atomic missile can't harm it. The worst thing that it did is that he exploded a chemistry lab that was inventing weapons for destroying the world. The weapon didn't harm anybody, but the energy blast shattered the heaven. So the jade emperor was very frustrated so he needed some one who can get rid of this foul. So the Wu kong and his partners are on their way to defeat them. They're prepared for fighting against the devil.

The devil was an arhat before when he was first born, he was the Kinnara Bodhisattva before. The Buddha patriarch one wanted him to descend to earth in order to preach. He met a Brahman high priest, and the priest told him to do three things that is almost impossible for a ordinary person to do:

1. He has to stop A LIU from stealing other people's stuffs
2. He has to stop A Dao from fighting against others.
3. He has to stop A Xiu from being an prostitute.

When he completed these tasks, the high priest disobeyed what he said and wanted to kill Wu Tian. So A Xiu disobeyed what she told Wutian and killed herself. So Wu Tian is very angry so he sealed his moral good into the black lotus, and he swore to seize the Trailokya. So he became the first evil spirit—Mara.

He has the same ability as the Buddha Patriarch. He can only be destroyed with seventeen Buddha's relics. He had been destroyed by Wu Kong before with 17 relics, now he reborn again 5 thousands years (according to heaven, a day in heaven is a year in this mortal world). He chose to reborn as a normal human being so that it wouldn't attract much attention of other people and the heaven.

When he was 27 seven years old, he went to the Nuclear bomb centre in Metropolis, and he absorbed the energy particles in those bombs and became powerful. He used this power to create powerful explosion all over the globe, 19 major cities have already been bombed, he only has one target left—Singapore city. The Buddha Patriarch was annoyed. So he sent Wukong again to defeat him. This time Wukong is prepared so he ate again the 17 relics. While they were marching, the devil created a powerful trap for them. He also used his power to resurrect his henchmen.

While they were marching, three devils prepared a death trap for the master and apprentices. They disguised as some rich people, and they planned to allure the Wu Kong into their house and put a very deadly, deadly and deadly poison in to their food and they wished that the poison would kill them. They waited and waited, until Wu Kong came in.

"Hello, Wu kong, and your friends, want to have a rest in our inn?"

"Okay, it looks comfortable and nice, is there any food provided?"

"Yes, sir"

"Then provide us with some and we will live here tonight!"

The inn wasn't expensive at all, so the monkey king is alerted, he also saw sense there is some sinister—looking in the faces of the nobles, so he changed himself into a fly and flew into the inner kitchen. The house was not so developed, and this attracted Wu Kong's vigilance too. Then he was astonished since he saw that the nobles was pouring some strong Melatonin and some intense American Shengdiyao into their main course—the chicken that Pigsy (Zhu Ba Jie) loved.

He thought for a moment and came up with an excellent idea.

"Sir, here is your dinner."

"Is it delicious?"

"It definitely is, sir"

"Then would you taste it your self first"

The spirits suddenly changed it self for the nobles to the evil spirits, Wu Kong was ready so he beat the spirits up and the spirits confessed frankly that Wu Tian sent them here. They also said that this is the first gate that they have to pass. There is altogether 2 gates that they need to pass in order to beat Wu Tian.

The spirits diminished suddenly and the house disappeared. What was only left is darkness and black out. Wu kong was horrified, since out of sudden, a shadowy figure appeared. Out of nowhere four spirits appeared, and he noticed, it is exactly they feared. A voice trembled, and it said

"This is the second gate, you have to win against your worst fear to overcome this thought devil, now is you turn to be frightened to death." Then the voice faded away with laughter. Suddenly, four Wu Tian duplicates emerged. They initiated to attack the four people. So Wukong and his friends started to fight with him, but soon more duplicates appeared and they're outnumbered. Wu kong suddenly realised how to overcome this devil, and the answer is not to fear him anymore. So they tried to not to be afraid, but they didn't succeed. So more duplicates turn up and the four people fell into their worst nightmares.

Wu Kong saw the five-finger hill, which is falling towards him. He was so frightened that he fell on the ground and waited for the object to fall on him. Then suddenly illusion of the Buddha patriarch uttered some words, and it sounded like

"Overcome your fear Wu Kong, it is just a false vision, you need to overcome it, otherwise you will be staying here and trapped for eternity."

Wu Kong suddenly realised that the vision is not the reality, and he broke the curse and he is now sober, and looking at the other three, they're still fighting with their horrible dream.

Pigsy is still fighting with his nightmare, his nightmare is when he was kicked out of the heaven and sent to the mortal world. He has been whipped by the heaven's guards, and he was shouting and twisting around with agony. Suddenly he realised that this wasn't true since he is already a true person looking like a pig and he already did some good deeds so he shouldn't be whipped. Then he escaped from his nightmare too. When he saw that Wu kong too escaped, he was very happy and excited. Wu kong was delighted too and they both waited for the other two.

The sand priest saw himself falling towards the deepest area of the river when he was beaten by Wu Tian. He suddenly realised that this river is the river when he became friends with Wu kong and Tang Seng. Then he saw that they were making an oath with each other, suddenly he felt his strength come back and he is powerful again. So he overcame with his own fear, then he is again with his friends except Tang Seng, and they waited eagerly for him to arrive and muster with them and continue the journey of beating Wu tian.

Tang Seng fell into his dream, and when he woke up again, he saw some body that looked familiar to him. It was the devil who caught Tang Seng and tried to throw him into the oven and eat him with his friends. He feared that they would eat him. Then he heard a banging on the door then Wu Kong broke in. He was relieved and suddenly he was back in the normal world, The four people are all very happy, but when they haven't even started to celebrate, Wu Tian's real body appeared, but he was beaten since he was the thought devil, when he succumbed, he was trying to say something, and it sounded like

"BE WARE OF YOUR POWER, IT WILL DESTROY YOU AND YOUR WILL NEVER BE ALIVE AGAIN", and the voice faded away with laughter.

## Journey To The West

*Harrow International School Beijing, Shepherd, Calista – 14*

**A**pril 20th 1914... the ludlow massacre killed hundreds of men, women and children it practically whipped out the entire town the town was known very well for the fortune that they made on gold the massacre was a result of the colorado coalfeild war its a ghost town now and my dad is moving my entire family there this summer !

I have been living it this town for almost a week now and i could swear something has been following me, watchg my every move. My dad bought this place to build his theme park and construction started three months ago. I am not one to beleive in super stitions but when you live on the 13th highway route, in the thirteenth apartment that only has 13 people living in the entier thing and you are constantly seeing the number because my dads theme park is called the 13th haunting of the gold rush or T13HOTG as every body sais you begin to think something is fishy and it's not the canned fish that i have been living off for a week .

uhgggg i just want to go home i hear whining at night and the wind is NOT that depressed.

My mom thinks so to she and my dad have been fighting beacause she hates it here. We have been living here for 6 months now and when ever i try to tell my dad its not safe here he tells me i am a kid and i dont know better, but i do! I just need a way to prove it Its coming i don't know what it is but its coming , i am trapped in the gold mine with no way out all i can make out is a man women and child .Oh! It mut be help oh thank god!

It is NOT help its a monster!The most monturous thing i have ever seen it has eyes glowing like gold but a sikening green face and torn clothes he has no right arm.... i knew this place was haunted by something oh but if only my dad could here me now! all though i don't think he ever will, because the monster family has me trapped and they have left me to rot down here forever while they use me at bait to kill my dad! After he blocked thier only way back to the relm of the innocents with a giant pot of fake gold that is heavyer that a humpback whale all i can do is scream but it doesn't help!

I can hear something pounding on the ground above me but i dont whant to know what else may be here with me.

Oh my goodness its a gaint digger my dad has come to save me oh my goodness oh my goodness i wont be buried alive !

i am back home now no, not in the poor old town of ludlow i am home in ney york where i belong, however that night came with reminders that will haunt me forever my dad has no left arm and my mom lost her vision they wont tell me why because it would make my mental condition worse... you see when i was saved i whent in to shock and woke up in new york. The doctors tell me i have post dramatic stress disorder, PDSD i get scared in the night and i cant sleep on my own i sometimes scream in the middle of the night or randomly during any time day .

## New Journey to the West

*Harrow International School Beijing, Su, Sacci – 11*

‘Hey! Wukong!’ shouted Xuanzang.  
“Yes, master?” replied Sun Wukong.  
“Where is Zhu bajie?” asked Xuanzang.

“I have no idea,” answered SunWukong.

“Wukong, you go find him because we need to get a move on! Sha Wujing you stay with me,” demanded Xuanzang.

“Yes, master!” Sha Wujing answered while untying Bai longma—Xuanzang’s horse. Bai longma is not just a horse, he is a dragon that has turned into a horse but no one knows that.

“Yeah. Sure. Whatever!” answered Sun Wukong before flying on a cloud and disappearing out of sight.

“Thank you,” Xuanzang said with a loud sigh. After a while Sun Wukong did not return, however Zhu Bajie returned with a bag of fruits and vegetables. “Where were you?” asked Xuanzang looking troubled.

“Master, I went to get some food because we don’t have any more,” said Zhu Bajie.

“Fine! I sent Wukong to find you. It is nice of you to find us food apart from... Tell us next time,” moaned Xuanzang while the disciples gobbled the fruits up like starved hippos. They waited and waited but they just couldn’t see Wukong anywhere.

“Master, should we go and find him?” asked Sha Wujing.

“No. What if he returns right after you have left?” shouted Xuanzang. “We don’t have time to wait for you as well!” he snapped.

It was midnight.

“Master, may we sleep?” whispered Zhu Bajie.

“Master, is there a flying man—cow above us or am I seeing things because I am so tired?” asked Sha Wujing.

“Yes, disciples, sleep tight and don’t let the bed bu...” Without finishing his sentence everyone was already asleep.

Xuanzang was snatched away by a man-cow whilst he was asleep. Right after Xuanzang and the man-cow left, Sun Wukong came back.

“Hey! Bajie! Wujing! WAKE UP! bellowed Sun Wukong.

However, neither of them woke up, they didn’t even move. It seems like someone had put poison in their food. Sun Wukong had no other choice but to take them to Taibai Jingxing. Sun Wukong suddenly noticed that they had blue lines all over them. It was like a blue rash or something. Sun Wukong dragged them on to his cloud and flew up into the air and instantly disappeared out of sight.

“Taibai Jingxing!” Sun Wukong shouted from inside the sky palace.

“Yes, Great Sage Sun?” said Taibai Jingxing appearing out of nowhere.

“ Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing have been poisoned!” Sun Wukong said in an alarmed state.

“By who?” Taibai Jingxing said with a strange sound.

“How am I supposed to know? You must heal them,” said Sun Wukong.

“Where are they?” asked Taibai Jingxing.

“They are in your room. I left them there before I came here shouting,” said Sun Wukong. “Let’s go take a look.”

Sun Wukong and Taibai Jingxing walked off not knowing that someone was watching them.

“No! Oh my goodness!” Taibai Jingxing shrieked.

“What?” asked Sun Wukong anxiously.

“No way. This is almost impossible!” he shrieked again.

Sun Wukong started shrieking too. “Talk! Talk! Old man! Talk!”

“Great Sage Sun, it is the Anmora!” said Taibai Jingxing

“Anmora?! The type of poison that only the King can use?” Sun Wukong screamed with horror. “Let me go and find this man who doesn’t deserve to be king!” Sun Wukong shouted with a furious sound.

“It might not be him!” said Taibai Jingxing.

“Then who is it? Huh!” asked Sun Wukong. “Someone might steal the poison!”

“Ha! You old man! Finding excuses for your king! No one in this world is fair! If you are not by my side then I’m chopping this place in half, just like the way I did before!” Sun Wukong stormed out of the room.

“King! King! Why, why did you poison my friends!” Sun Wukong shrieked on his way out.

“I didn’t. However, my Anmora has indeed been stolen but they didn’t steal the antidote so I can still heal them!” said Taibai Jingxing.

“Sure! As long as you heal them then it will be ok!” Sun Wukong shouted from a distance.

When the King came back empty-handed Sun Wukong realized that the potion was gone. He flew down to Bai Gujing’s hideout and kicked up a storm.

“What have you said to him?” shouted the King.

“I told them that I saw a white pearl on the floor,” Taibai Jingxing said. “So it was Bai Gujing who stole my Anmora and gave the poison to the pilgrimage.”

“So that’s why he was so angry?” enquired the King.

“No, because he just found out that his master was missing,” Taibai Jingxing explained.

“Hey! Queen! Congratulations on the first monster who captured Xuanzang without letting the monkey notice!” one of the Bai Gujing’s sisters said.

Sun Wukong heard them giggle and laughing at what a stupid monkey he was. He couldn’t hold the pressure in and exploded. Sun Wukong’s shape shifted as Xuanzang and start talking. “Hey! You ladies are not polite! You were supposed to say sorry when you locked me inside a dirty and bloody cellar! You know I am a type of monk that every monster is trying to get their hands on, at least show me some respect and upgrade me.” Sun Wukong started mumbling like that and pretending to be his master for about two hours before Bai Gujing could take no more and locked him in to the basement. Sun Wukong was smart because he had a plan. Sun Wukong’s shape shifted into a fox and he sneaked out of his cellar and started looking for his master.

Sun Wukong untied Xuanzang and threw him out the kitchen window, however he wanted to finish up the little trick he did and when he was looking for Xuanzang he sneaked every single bit of oil into Bai Gujing’s room. It was incredibly hard because she and her sisters were chatting in her room but he needed



to sneak into her room again, take the antidote and start a small fire in her room. Tada! Magic trick finished!

So his shape shifted into a snake, slithered into Bai Gujing's room, took the antidote, lit a tiny fire under her bed and he slithered away.

Sun Wukong and Xuanzang safely returned back to the palace into Taibai Jingxing's room and gave the antidote to Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing and within a second the antidote worked. Later on they returned the potion back to the King. He was so happy that he accidently dropped the antidote. Later on Zhu Bajie traded with him. Obviously they did not know there was poison in the fruits so they gave all their fruits to the King for two packets of gold coins. I guess you know what happened later on! The King ate the fruit.

## The Short Story: New Journey To The West

*Harrow International School Beijing, Wang, Alan – 14*

It is a sunny day, when my parents and I go to the west of America for the new golden wave, where they discovered loads of golds and silver in the west of America, my parents took me excitedly to the west to seek for the fortune.

Well, this is the sixteenth day that we are traveling on the plain, and this we still got more than a month to go, well, my parents told me that this is the fastest and most comfortable way to go to the west, otherwise, we would have had to take ships, which will take us more time and we would have had to face the deadly disease.

6/7/1700

Richard put down his diary book, and stared at the outside of the horse car. "Another boring day." Richard thinks, he doesn't understand, before, their family had a large plantation, and had a very good life, but then when Richard's parents heard the gold wave in the west, and their parents became crazy about the gold, that they spent a lot of money on the horse cars and the equipment of gold, which Richard thinks that is completely a waste of time and money, by the time when we got there the gold would already be taken away by others!

Suddenly, there is screaming at the front of the carvery, every car stopped, Richard is very tense, because he is a 13 years old who had no experience this kind of emergency situation, he carefully goes to the window, and saw a lot of people riding on the horses and are shouting at sky with their pistol, Richard quickly moves back from the window, and sits on the floor, but suddenly the flower vase at the back falls down and makes a sound of a big flash. Suddenly, the sound of the pistol stopped, Richard sits on the floor and moves back as slowly as possible, but unfortunately, with a big bang, the door was opened, a person with a pistol came in, 'A little boy?' The guy says that in a very tough voice, Richard says nothing but tried to squeeze himself in to the darkness, but it is not going to happen.

The guy grabs Richard's hair, and pulls him violently out of the car, 'You are such a weak little boy, you are useless to us.' Then Richard could see the violence in the big guy's eye, then he took him on to the horses and ran away, Richard kept shouting: "Please let me go, please!" But there is no response from the man in front, then the last thing that Richard saw was a white world.

Richard feels that there is wind blowing on his face, he could feel that he is on the ground and something is moving beside him, then he tried to open his eye as hard as he can, but then what he saw was a beak of a vulture's beak, he screamed as loud as he can, and all the birds around him fly away, Richard has no idea where he is, he just sits there, thinking about what happened before, "Damn, I was left in a no body know place." Richard stands up, looks at the sky, and he thinks "Ok, I know how to use sun as my direction, so now I can't find my way to the city." After having this brilliant idea, he sits down, and stares at the sun, because it is afternoon, so the sun is right above Richard's head, so he stares at it, watching it goes a little by a little, then he finally figures out the direction of the city.

He started walking to the direction, in the way, he tried to remember the direction that he needed to go, also trying to go at his fastest speed, but after a few hours of this high workload, soon the feeling of thirsty and hungry, came upon to Richard's feeling, Richard looks at the sky, thinking about his parents safety, and the journey that he needs to continue.

Suddenly, a sound of water came in to Richard's attention, River! The place where there is river there is water and there are foods! Richard is so excited, that he even forgets the feeling of thirsty and starvation and runs straight away to the place where the sound came from, then as the sound gets bigger and bigger, louder and louder, instantly a river came in to his eyesight "YES!!!!" Shouted Richard, he could even see the fish inside the river and the purity water inside the river.

He lower his body so that he could touch water , and then he drink and drink and then , he just jump in to the water to enjoy this satisfied feeling , after serval minute of drinking , the feeling of thirsty disappeared , and only thing that stayed is the feeling of hungry , he looked at the fish greedily, and then he jumped over to catch the fish , but of course , fish is not an easy thing to catch , especially in water , their stream body make them have no problem in swimming in the water , after spending a lot of precious energy to catch the fish , he soon realized that this is not the way to catch the fish , but then he think of a brilliant idea.

He goes to the shore and found a lot of stones that is sharp and heavy, then he put It one by one in to the water to form a wall that the fishes can't pass, then after he scared the fish In to a small area that the fish will have no place to hide, then after doing all this work, Richard carefully approached the fishes , then he dash to the fishes , but, unfortunately , the fish swim away, but it is too early to give up, so he changed the position of the wall and move them even closer to the fishes, then another dash, finally, Richard's got it.

After the satisfier of the fish and water, Richard feel as good as a healthy man, he started to think what he is going to do next , then he made his choice , he is going to continue to walk to the city , and he is not going to give up until he had arrived the city.

After a walking of 7 days, Richard's cloth is already in shreds and patches, his face is dirty, and his hair was greasy, but you can still see the power in his eyes, that he is still going forward , in this seven days he experienced the tiger , the bear , also all kind of natural disaster, but he Is still going then he heard something noisy, something like a train! Richard's lifeless eye suddenly become full of energy and he runs to the sound as fast as he could, he Is so happy, that tears fly away when he is running , he could even see the city waving at him , and his parents waiting at the side of the city and looking anxiously to the field.

HE runs and runs, the sound is getting bigger and bigger, he could hear the people shouting , he could hear the baby's crying, and chat between the ladies. Then when he get up the hill, he saw the metal that shin under the sun, finally Richard find the city and Richard is too tired , then he fell on the ground.

## New Journey To The West

*Harrow International School Beijing, Wu, Emily – 13*

Tang monk apprentice West, traveled, very hard. Pig proposed: "If we fly how good!" Tang's monk touched the pocket of the travelling, let monkey to buy a small helicopter, continue to move forward. But Tang machine, a little unbearable, said: "This plane is fast, but not as comfortable as riding." Disciples, let's Ride away! "

Tang's monk teacher and pupil came to a big city, in the post, said: "Eight precepts, while the sky is still early, to walk graduated bar!" "Eight quit to move out White Dragon Horse, go out Shang, and soon, eight precepts will come:" Master, White Dragon Horse in the street put a fart, traffic police a check, exhaust excessive, to buckle down. "Tang's monk hurriedly contact the mayor, find the traffic police captain, just the White Dragon horse to pull out."

Master and pupil four continue westbound, suddenly see the front of the crowd, smoke steaming, aroma smell, come closer to see, originally here is holding food festival, the world's food gathered here, eight precepts can happy, volunteered to buy food. Tang's monk, Wukong and Sha and so on right etc also don't see the shadow of eight precepts, Wukong is going to find, eight quit dangling back. I saw him shy out of a big belly, playing burp, spray wine gas, empty-handed. Wukong reached out and grabbed the ear of the Eight commandments: "Say, where did you get the food?" Eight quit red face to say: "All ... All ... Have eaten. Wukong to the Sand monk made a wink, two people together to seize eight precepts of arms to the air a toss, eight quit flew out.

The eight commandments could not hold the feet and flew to the moon. There is no such thing as the shadow of Chang ' E. Eight precepts walked here for a while, simply put cloth shirt a pull, made a flag, bite broken fingers, the letter eight characters: "Datang Monk to this visit!" "Jumped off the moon.

See eight precepts also return not come, Wu empty said: "Master, eight precepts certainly covet the moon, not come back, let's go!" Tang's monk had to agree. Not long, Tang's monk, Wu empty, sand came to the western Lei Yinji, just into the temple door, was surrounded by a group of small monks: "absolute true gold disc, Cheap u, just 5 yuan!" "Wu Empty open fire eyes, what there is real gold, all piracy!" Wu empty take out Golden, kiss a sweep, small monks cry day shout, have dispersed. Tang's monk with disciples came to the hall, saw the Buddha's right hand an extension, caught from the moon fell from the eight precepts, master and apprentice four people here together, everyone immediately face this Buddha, kneeling in the ground. Buddha asked them, "Have you brought you a plate?" "No," said the monk. "Do you have a mailbox?" asked Buddha. "Tang's monk See Wukong:" Sold. "Buddha said:" I had to use QQ to send you the real gold passed. "Tang rush to catch Monk Master and apprentice a listen, think back to the road distant, all the way hard, hurriedly to the Buddha Kowtow:" We also send the past together! "

## New Journeys to the West

*Harrow International School Beijing, Xiao, Michael – 11*

**A**t night, a shadow moved on a hill that overlooked the city. The city looked even larger at this point, with the streetlights, car headlights and the lights in buildings, the whole city looked like it was glowing.

'No monsters had ever really stopped us, but this city, the eightieth challenge we need to pass, it had blocked us. We have been discovered, so the police might come here at any moment. We have to go across this city, even if it is filled with cameras and policemen that think three of us are dangerous beasts and will shoot us with guns.' the shadow thought.

At the same time, Sam and his sister Annie, two students, were at home. It was summer holiday. Their parents were watching the news on TV. Suddenly, Sam and Annie glimpsed something on the TV. 'Three dangerous unknown beasts and a man wearing odd clothes were discovered on a hill near our city today.' The reporter said, 'The police are now fully prepared and will shoot at these beasts if they appear again.'

'Isn't it strange?' said Annie. 'Yeah...' wondered Sam, 'This also reminds me of something familiar, but I just can't recall it.'

The next day, the two children turned on the TV, and went straight to the news channel, they were desperate to know more about it.

'Today we had some breaking news about the strange beasts!' the reporter said, 'They were discovered by a policeman called Dan at Booker Street.' The TV then showed an interview with Dan, who was a tall and strong looking man. 'How did you find these beasts?' 'Well, I was just patrolling the street, when I saw four men walking past me. Then, something strange caught my eye, lots of brown fur poked out from the small gaps between one of the stranger's pants and his feet! Something was definitely wrong about that person, so I shouted, 'Stop! Stop!' But the four people, instead of stopping, ran away at top speed. I knew that they were the beasts, so I fired one shot after them, it hit right on the leg of one of the four! But the shot didn't slow them down too much, as they still escaped.'

'It comes to me!' cried Sam. 'The news reminds me of the Journey to the West! You must have known that story! It's about the adventure of Tang Monk, Monkey King, Pigsy and Sandy.' 'So they are on a new journey to the west?' asked Annie, amazed by the possibility. 'I'm not really sure about it,' said Sam.

The next day, their family went to the park. It was a sunny day, so the children decided to kick football before lunch. While they played, they talked to each other about the four travelers in the new journey to the west, and how unlucky they were to be shot by the police.

They had no idea that there were pair of eyes looking at them from behind. Sam kicked at the ball hard so that it flew over Annie's head with a whiz, and landed right in front of the bush with spies. Sam and Annie both turned towards the ball, and caught sight of the eyes just before they vanished. 'Oh my goodness! We're being spied on!' gasped Annie in surprise, she nearly screamed. They walked around the bush and looked around immediately on the other side. Nobody.

'Come over here, Annie, I have something to show you,' called Sam. Annie came and was stunned. There were a lot of leaves on the grass. They seemed to be normal. But when Annie looked at them closely, she realized they formed letters! Not only letters, but a clear message! 'Meet at your attic at 11, don't be scared, you know who we are.'

'It's so weird!' said Sam. A breeze suddenly went by and all the leaves were blown apart. 'Who sent this message?' wondered Sam. 'It must be the people that spied on us,' said Annie. 'I think the travelers sent this message,' said Sam, 'They must have heard what we said while playing football, and trusted us. They didn't say their names because the police are hunting them. It makes sense now!'

That night, the two children didn't sleep. Their minds wandered. What would they look like? Why did they come to their home? Questions kept appearing in their minds. Finally, it was eleven o'clock, and they crawled out of their beds, tip-toed out of their bedrooms, and climbed up the ladder leading to the attic.

The attic was almost empty, with only a few chairs and a dusty old sofa. Sam looked out the window, and suddenly saw four figures coming out from the dark. One of them started climbing up the palm tree outside their window, and he leapt lightly onto their window, then climbed in.

He appeared to be a monkey. 'Hello! You must be the Monkey King!' Sam greeted him. 'Yes,' he answered in a high-pitched voice that clearly belonged to a monkey. The Monkey King threw down a rope ladder, and the rest of them climbed up and went through the window. They introduced themselves and started explaining.

'I got shot by the police!' said the Monkey King. 'But luckily, I'm tough. But I am still weakened, so my magic powers can't work well, which is a big problem, because the new journey to the west is still not finished.' 'But I've heard that you have a powerful weapon, why don't you scare the police off?' asked Annie. 'Because of Tang Monk, of course,' said the Monkey King. 'He told me that I shouldn't use my weapon.'

'So, here we are, seeking refuge at your home. We will stay here for a few days until I will regain my magic powers. Then we shall leave, to continue the new journey to the west,' said the Monkey King. 'Oh, and also, if someone is about to come up to the attic, please warn us. Good night!' And the children went back to their beds.

At meal time on the following days, they bought food for them. The Monkey King was regaining his special powers. Soon the travelers would leave. Everything seemed to be fine.

Until the fifth day, a bad thing happened. It started like this. After breakfast, the two children started a game of chess. When suddenly, the doorbell rang. Their mom opened the door. And saw it was a delivery man and he was carrying a huge box. 'Can you help me to carry this large box into the attic?' said their mom. 'All right,' said the delivery man.

She turned to the children, 'Isn't it perfect? It's a new book shelf I'm going to put in the attic.' But at that moment, the two children didn't feel perfect at all — the delivery man would surely discover the four travelers! 'Go and warn them! I'll distract the delivery man!' Annie told Sam urgently, and Sam ran towards the ladder leading to the attic.

He went into the attic, and quickly told the four travelers to hide. Meanwhile, Annie came up with an idea, when the delivery man was just walking past her. She tilted the chessboard, all the chess figures scattered onto the floor around the delivery man. Annie started picking the chess figures, stopping the man. All the travelers needed was that. They threw out the rope ladder, and climbed out one by one, hiding in a bush just under the rope ladder. At that second, the man came into the room and set down the huge box. 'That was so close,' thought Sam.

The day of departure soon came on the following day at night. The children took the travelers to the place they would depart. It was near a shopping mall. 'Goodbye!' said the children. 'Goodbye! Thanks for taking care of us!' said the travelers. And they departed.

Just as the children were walking back, a shout came. 'Something's wrong!' shouted Sam. They turned and ran back to the spot, hiding behind a bush and watched. Out in the dark stood four figures and an extra one, his arm seemed to be raised, as if holding a gun. A deep voice threatened the four travelers. Annie recognized the person, it was Dan the policeman! He must have bumped into them! Sam looked around and saw a poster hanging on the shopping mall's wall—'Journey to the West Costume Party!' A wild and crazy idea suddenly popped into his head, and he ran at top speed towards the mall.

He soon came to the party and looked around. Everyone was dressed as one of the travelers as he had thought. He started making his way towards the stage, where a microphone lay on the stage with no one using – everybody was busy dancing or talking to each other. He crept onto the stage, picking the microphone up. 'This is going to be crazy!' he thought, taking a deep breath and then spoke into the microphone. 'Hello! the next part of the party is meeting the real travelers, and they are all outside, waiting for you!' Then he jumped off the stage and zipped away in no time. At first there was silence in the crowd, then there was murmuring, then there was cheering. The crowd started marching outside excitedly. 'I can't believe it worked!' Sam thought.

Outside, Dan the policeman was still threatening them, and Annie could do nothing to rescue them. Then all of a sudden, a huge crowd of journey to the west travelers came charging out of the mall, going straight for the real travelers. 'Hey!' cried Dan in surprise. He was surrounded by the crazy 'travelers' and had lost sight of the real travelers. 'I'm will get you someday...' he fumed.

Soon, the crowd realized they couldn't find the travelers either because of their own costumes! When the crowd had finally calmed down, the travelers had already gone to continue their journey. 'Good luck! And... may the force be with you.' said Sam. The children stared into the darkness...

## New Journeys to the West

*Harrow International School Beijing, Xue, Haotong – 10*

It all started when a messenger from the Department of Ancient Relics strolled right up to our headquarters and demanded us to bring back a lost Buddhist relic from places to the west of China. And by ‘we’ I mean an elite unit of agents consisting of me the action guy, Michael the dork, Samantha the geek, and Leo the captain. We didn’t have much choice but to embark on new journeys to the west.

### EVEREST

Climbing Mt. Everest was straight up *hard*. Everest was the sacred Buddhist mountain so we’d decided to look here first. My legs turned to lead as we trudged along the punishing climb. Suddenly, a howl, like a wolf’s, pierced the air. I halted. As quietly as I could, I lowered myself to a kneel, inclined my head, and listened. Instantly, an immense figure the size of a bus with brilliant white fur barrelled out from behind a jagged piece of rock, let loose a guttural howl even worse than the last, whirled on us, and charged.

Samantha shrieked in alarm as she tackled Leo and Michael, who went hurtling out of view. I went into a daze. Time seemed to slow down as tendrils of burning pain seared across my chest. I flew backwards and, with a sickening thud, bit snow.

“Run,” I croaked, “Go!”

A blood red flare roared to life in Samantha’s hands. The beast bounded after Samantha who threw the flare, which streaked across the sky like a comet, and landed out of sight.

Without looking, we darted off up the hillside, hoping the beast wouldn’t chase us...

Suddenly, my legs were scythed out from behind me. I bit snow – again. “Wait up!” I hollered to my friends. I got up and crept towards the thing that tripped me over. It was a barely visible piece of corroded rock jutting out of the snow. On it, inscribed in Hindustani, said: “YoUr jOurNey HEaDs tO InDiA.” We reluctantly obliged.

### INDIA

After a few days of travel, we had arrived at the Ganges River – one of the most sacred rivers to Hindus, an expanse of muddy water that seemed to wind on forever.

While we were wandering, we heard a hopeless cry, from an elephant, like ice shards scraping against metal. “Duck!” warned Michael as a dart whistled past me and rustled my hair.

We shuffled in to investigate. I heard a gentle rustle in the bushes as Michael tensed. Before I could warn him, he lunged in a blur of silver and blue and launched into action, only to be smacked upside the face with a wooden stick. “Michael!” I shouted, running forward and ready to cradle him for medication. Instantly, shadows lengthened, what had seemed to be tree trunks advanced on us. Then, with a shudder, I realised that they were bulky men with muscles the size of my mini-printer packed under their tree costumes. “We are the servants of Nagini,” They chanted in eerie unison, “And you are here to die.” Immediately, Leo’s hands shot into the air “We come in peace!”

The next few days were awesome. The native folks – the Brahmins worked out that we were friends and taught us their native mythology and their gods: Brahma, Saraswati, Nagini, and the rest. I found the Hinduism culture pretty interesting, especially this story: In the start of time, the world was made of limbs of a man – Purushu, whom was sacrificed by the gods. The dude expanded until he formed the cosmic egg, hiranyagarbha as the world shimmered into existence.



When we bade the Indians a goodbye, their captain, a tanned muscular guy pulled Leo aside and said gravely “Go to Jerusalem next.”

## JERUSALEM

The trip to Jerusalem was speckled with dangers – poacher attacks Israeli guard patrols, and even wild animals started checking us out.

As we entered the gates of Jerusalem, my jaw dropped and I gawked. The dust-caked columns rose up to fifty feet high, inscribed with ancient charms and curses. Out in the distance, I could hear the buzz of locals. I turned, there, right in front of me, was the dome of the rock and western walls. The dome of the rock’s roof glistened gold under the lazy evening sun, arrayed in front of it neatly were loosely lodged bricks the colour of caramel, forming the western walls.

Somewhere to the north, we heard a deep and resonant groan, rather like the hull of a Greek warship. Instantaneously, a bolt of lightning split the sky, startling the locals. The distinct smell of ozone and sulphur sizzled in the air.

I realised that the lightning was actually an extra-large laser pointer and the smell was a fire pit. “Come on!” Leo ushered us as he darted off, pushing locals and making cars swerve. A few minutes later, we found ourselves stumbling across an ancient ruin buried under tonnes of rocks. All we could see was a delicate shining marble altar. We shuffled forwards. Leo, instead, strolled right at the altar. Just as his trembling hand extended to touch it, the floorboard under him creaked. And Leo, my best friend, disappeared down a pitch black chasm...

“Let’s go save him” Samantha sighed exasperatedly, and swiftly leaped into the hole. I did, too.

The wind screamed as I plummeted down the hole. I was a little stunned so I failed to do a roll but landed on a damp surface with my foot. Pain flared up my ankle. I stood up and scanned the surroundings. We were in a vast, circular chamber as big as a football pitch. The walls and floor might’ve once been blue but were now caked in dust. Miniature crevices crept like snakes down the floor, up the wall and onto an altar exactly the same as the one upstairs.

Somewhere to my right, I heard a discreet groan. I whirled around, only to find Leo sprawled across the floor, his once-slick hair matted with blood, a nasty gash across his scalp. “Where are we?” he managed weakly.

Michael and Samantha were nowhere to be seen, that’s not good. I helped Leo to his feet. I looked at the second altar. Somehow, I recognised the runic inscriptions on it: “youR nexT stoP: egypT”.

Promptly, a rope descended from the hole we’d fallen through. ‘C’mon!’ Michael’s voice hollered from overhead...

## EGYPT

Finally, when we had reached Thebes, my jaw dropped (I really need to take better care of my jaw). Jagged sandstone columns soared hundreds of feet into the sky, like greedy fingers grasping for freedom.

In a daze we drifted into the city of Thebes. The vague silhouette of the city skyline stretched on for what seems like an eternity. I could almost imagine the gods of Egypt, Ra, Horus, and Isis sitting here in all their glory. Next to us, jutting out from the ground was a building looming over us like a glowering beast – our target, the Khufu pyramid.

As we clambered down the slippery slope of the Khufu pyramid with its sulphuric smell, I was really starting to get a bad impression on the place.

Fifteen minutes later, my foot hit something hard. "Ow!" I muttered. I looked down and found a wooden trapdoor the size of a table. I tapped it gently and with a metallic creak, it swung open, revealing a definite smell of odour. A split second later, a hail of darts embedded themselves in the ceiling. With a low, grumbling sound, and a circular disk shot out like a frisbee, sending an old papyrus scroll fluttering towards the ground. Inscribed in hieroglyphics, was a message: "GO TO GREECE..."

## GREECE

If you thought the walls of Thebes I described sounded impressive, let me tell you this, the Acropolis hill in Athens, Greece is better. The columns soared even higher, and the statues were even more detailed. In awe, we strolled through the countless corridors of exotic ancient culture. A few minutes later, we found ourselves in a clearing the size of a playground with two things in it: a gnarled root that rocketed towards the sky like the arm of the giant Atlas and ended in a vast canopy of lime coloured leaves. There was also an immense crystal clear salty spring that rocketed well over 30 feet into the sky.

I knew this place: a temple to the Greek gods Poseidon and Athena in honour to their contest over the patronage of Athens. I heard the sound of a person bounding out from behind the bushes, but I couldn't see anyone. Michael nudged me. I looked down and found the most stupendously small person I've ever seen. He wore black coveralls that covered his body. His face was elfish, with a mischievous glint in his eyes, blond hair, and a crooked nose zigzagging down his face like a canyon. "Hi, I'm Jarvis. I have what you want." he confessed grimly, "Come to bargain..."

# New Journeys to the West

*Harrow International School Beijing, Yi, Susie – 10*

## Chapter 1 – President Xi’s Dream “China 2 Qatar 1”

The president of China, Mr. Xi turns off the television quietly, sits in the dark and drifts into deep contemplation. His country has won the game but still didn’t manage to qualify for the 2018 football world cup. China has become an economic giant in recent years but has only qualified for football world cup once in its history. That deeply pains president Xi who is a huge football fan. He looks at his watch, it’s quite late, he hesitates for a second, and picks up his phone and dials the number of his sports minister.

After a 3-hour meeting chaired by president Xi, a major decision is made: A group of chosen 4 people will travel to a football club in the West, more precisely England, the original place of football to learn how to produce a Champion team with the aim of China holding and winning the world cup in 8-year time. The group consists of a manager / coach – Mr. Tang, a striker – Mr. Sun, a nutritionist – Mr. Zhu, and a physiotherapist – Mr. Sha.

## Chapter 2 – This ‘leg’ is not that leg.

After 12 hours flying to the west, the four arrive at the Heathrow airport in London. They are so excited and slightly nervous. At the immigration, an officer asks Mr. Sha what his job is, with the nervousness, Mr. Sha’s English suddenly gets from bad to worse. He can’t remember how to say his job, so he says “I do massage”, with desperation, he illustrates how to do massage. The officer looks at his paperwork and looks at him in a strange way. If Mr. Sha’s English is worse, then Mr. Zhu’s English is the worst. He has a Chinese gammon with him, when he is asked by the custom officer what it is, he says a “leg”. That certainly gets the attention of the custom officer and as a result of it, four of them are locked in a dark room for about an hour before they are cleared. When they finally get out, sitting in a taxi, none of the four is talking, but they are thinking of the same thing – this journey to the West hasn’t started well.

## Chapter 3 – Which love is stronger

As the manager and coach, Mr. Tang has the toughest job. The coaching classes are hard for him to start with due to his less advanced English, but after 6 months hard work, he passes his exam with flying colors. At the closing ceremony of the course, Mr. Tang gives a speech as the representative of his class. Lady Monasahala is also at the ceremony representing the Royal Family, she is attracted by Mr. Tang’s charisma and falls in love with him immediately. After a few months Lady Monasahala tells Mr. Tang that she wants to marry him, and asks him not to go back to China and settles down in England with her instead, she believes that they will have a better life here than in China. Mr. Tang loves Lady Monasahala too, but after a long and hard think, he makes a painful decision. He tells Lady Monasahala that he loves her very much but his love to his country and football is even stronger. He is carrying the hope of the whole nation, and he can’t let them down.

## Chapter 4 – Who is Bruce Lee

Mr. Sun started learning martial arts when he was 3 years old, and turned to football when he was 10, joined the Chinese national football team when he was 16 and became the best striker in China when he was barely 20. Now, at the age of 21, he is the best hope for China winning the world cup. Since he arrived at the club in England, he is always the first one to come and train and the last one to leave every day. With the hard training, he improves fast and the team coach is very happy with him. The team is thinking of signing a 6-month short contract with him, it means he can play in the English Premier League with the team. This experience is crucial for the success of this journey to the West. In order to close the contract, he has to play well in a key training game, Mr. Sun is excited and he has every confidence that he will be on the top of the game. On the morning of the game day, Mr. Sun doesn’t come early as he has always done, in fact he is nowhere to be seen until 10 minutes into the game. And when he does appear, he appears with a torn shirt and injuries on his face, clearly he was involved in a fight. His coach is furious, he tells him that

they do not need a trouble maker and he can forget about the game and the contract. Mr. Sun doesn't get a chance to explain. Half way to the first half, two policemen walk into the stadium looking for a Chinese who can do martial arts as Bruce Lee. They show a key card with the club name on it to the coach and explain that someone from the club helped them to catch a mugger who mugged an old lady. He didn't leave his name only dropped the key card, but his Bruce Lee-Like martial arts was quite distinctive. By this time, the coach understands what exactly happened with Mr. Sun, he apologizes to him and tells him to get ready to go on the field. Mr. Sun plays extraordinarily well in the match, and signs the contract the same day.

#### Chapter 5 – The adventure at the airport

After a year of learning and training, four of them successfully fulfill their tasks. Mr. Tang receives the certificate for coaching and has gained extensive knowledge and experience from English Premier League; Mr. Zhu becomes a UK-certified nutritionist and is an expert on how to enhance footballers' performance with correct diet; Mr. Sha gets an UK-issued certificate of physiotherapist and is able to provide world class care to footballers. Mr. Sun has earned himself a place in English Premier League with the record of 108 goals in 50 games. Finally, it's time to say "good bye". At the airport, just when they are about to board the plane, suddenly they realize that their briefcase contains all their certificates is missing. They are in a huge panic, the boarding gate is closing soon, and they can't afford to lose everything they have worked hard for. At this desperate time, they hear a message being broadcasted, it's a message asking them to go to the Coffee Shop they visited in the airport, they have left their briefcase there. When they get the briefcase back, they feel like it's the happiest time in the whole journey.

Sitting on his seat, Mr. Tang looks out from the window with complicate thoughts. He is happy that he is going home so he can put everything he has learnt into practice; he is also sad that he has to leave the woman he loves. "Excuse me, is this seat taken?" suddenly a familiar voice comes to his ear, he turns around, and it is Lady Monasahala standing there with a smile on her face. Yes, it definitely is the happiest time in the journey for Mr. Tang.

#### Chapter 6 – 2026 China

The whole nation is in jubilation! China has just won the World Cup the first time in its history and it happens on China's home soil. As the captain of the winning team, Mr. Sun takes over the Remit Cup from President Xi, the happy President shakes Mr. Sun's hand and says "seems like your journey to the West has paid off!" Mr. Zhu and Mr. Sha are also in the winning group. As the manager and coach of the winning team, Mr. Tang is being tossed to the air by his players, and the one watching with tears in eyes is her proud wife – Lady Monasahala.

## The Music

*Harrow International School Beijing, Yu, Cici – 13*

It was almost Christmas, it began to snow and the weather became colder and colder. I walked on the street, I stopped and stranded in front of a shop window which was selling the music box. I stare at a music box which has a little puppy on it and playing with the snow. It was so cute and pretty. But when I looked at the price,

I realized I don't have money to buy it.

I was so sad, looked at all the people and children who walked pass me, they all got a present and they were all smiling. Only me, didn't got any things and parents were all busy on their jobs. I drop me head down and feel so lonely. I looked at the time, is almost 6:00, I need to go home now, before I left, I looked at the music box again and I started to go home.

When I got home, I saw there was a carton putted in front of the door, I slowly walked closer and closer, I opened the box and saw there was a puppy in it. It got the white fur, big black eyes and a little black nose. It was so cute. I took it out and put it in to my arms. I looked at it eyes, I feel that it looked so familiar, I have seen it before. We stared at each other and suddenly I realized the puppy I am hugging now looks exactly the same as the puppy which I saw on the music box.

I was so surprised, I opened the door and took the puppy strait into my room. I found some milk and food for it and than I set on my bed looked at it. "Hey, doggy, why you are here? Who sent you here? What is your name? Are you a boy or a girl" I asked the puppy, but nothing happened. " Never mind, you are a dog, of course you cannot speak" I said that to myself. I lied down on my bed and wanted to take a rest.

"Hi....."

I suddenly set up and looked around "Who! Who is talking!?" But no one answered and also no one was in my room. I checked again, and thought I may just heard wrong. I lied down again.

" Hi, you didn't hear wrong. there are someone talking, but that is not a person. I am the doggy."

I froze on my bed, and stare at the ceiling. I cannot believe the sound is true. I felt scared and I told my self I was dreaming and all the things I heard were just a dream.

"Um..... You didn't hear wrong." The doggy jumped on to my bed and set beside me. " My name is Maggie, I am a dog but I till can talk. You may be very confused about this for now, but you will find out more about me in the future." The doggy told me. I slowly set up and look at her. " So you can understand what I am talking about?

And even sometimes you can know what I am thinking?"

"Yes, exactly. I don't know why I can understand and talking human language, and with out these abilities I can do more things you don't know. You will know in the future, trust me." She answered. I totally shocked, I cannot believe all the things which happened were all the truth, I still thought that was a dream.

" I know you need time to accept those things, but I won't hurt you I promise. In front of your friends and your parents I will just be a normal puppy, but if you want something or want to share some your secret or unhappy things I can help you with my best. But can you also promise me a thing? Please don't tell anyone I can speak human language and I have some special abilities OK?" Maggie told me. " OK, I won't tell anyone." I answered.

Than we became friends, and I share the things happened at school to her, if I am not happy she will came and comfort me, if I got the problem in study or any question she did her best to help me with everything she can. Finally after the last week of school, or you can said the first week me and Maggie spend together is the Christmas holidays, and tomorrow is the Christmas.

At the Christmas Eve, my mom, my dad, Maggie and I set under the Christmas tree, there were 2 gifts under the tree, one is red, one is purple. I opened the gifts, my mom gave me a book, my dad gave me a pencil case. I acted like I was so happy to get this two gifts, but actually I was still thinking about the music box that I saw a week ago on the street.

At the night, I lied on my bed cannot falling asleep. I closed my eyes and imagined that I got that beautiful music box, I putted on my desk, every day can looked at it. But when I opened my eyes again, looked at my desk, there were a box on the desk, which was covered by a blue shiny paper. I slowly got down my bed and walked to the desk. Take of the paper and there was the music box in it. The exactly same one I saw that day on the street, but the only different is the puppy were gone. I was so surprised and also confused who gave me this. I looked down, Maggie set on the ground and looked at me with the smile.

Suddenly I understand. " Hey, you brought me this?" I asked Maggie. "Yah, are you happy? Haha" She answered. " Of course I am happy, but..... how you know I want this one?" I asked her again. "Oh, Did you realize the puppy in it is gone?" " Yes." I answered. "Right, cause I am the puppy who was there but now I am here." She said. "Huh? What do you mean? You mean you are the puppy who was in the music box before?" She laughed " Yes, that day I saw you were staring at this music box, so I know you like it very much. And that is my house and also I come from there. You know? That is a brand new world, you wanna see?" " You mean, there is another word inside the music box?" I asked. " Yah, if you wanna see, I can show you, when I count 1,2,3 you close your eyes and try to do not think anything." She told me. " OK, I will try." I answered. "1, 2, 3"

I opened my eyes again, and I was standing on the snow, all the things I saw around were all same from the music box, the only difference is they were bigger. Maggie walked to me. "Now you are in another world, is the world in the music box and I came form here. Do you like it?" I looked around. It was so beautiful and peace. The snow fell from the sky, everywhere were white. The ground, the roof, the tree, the snow as white as the white paper, the sunlight went through the leaves, shoot on the snow, make the snow looked shiny, just like the silver dress cover all the world. Children were playing snow and building the snow man, adult were all busy for the Christmas dinner. In this world, every day is Christmas and is Christmas for ever.

In this world, all the things can talk. Animals, human even trees and snow man. Maggie took me into a house and introduced her friends for me, also I met some good friends there. I told them about my world, about my school, my friends, my family. They told me about there world and friends and family. Next day morning, when I woke up, opened the curtain all the things were so peace and happy. I found Maggie and some friends we decided today we went to climb the mountain. We packed up all the stuff we need and than we started the journey.

At first, all the things were fine, we limbed half of the mountain and decide to sit down and took a rest. But after the break, when we started to walk again, something happened. The sun were running away, clouts began to turn black, the wind were more stronger, the sky were turning black. Than there was a huge white monster came out from the snow. Everyone were shocked and try to escape away, but the avalanche were coming, we all get into the snow and fell down the mountain.

After I fell down I loss all my consciousness I don't know when I woke up and realize I was still alive.

"Maggie? Hi? Anyone can hear me?" I shouted. Wait for a few minutes no one answered. I stand up and clean the snow on my cloths. But my leg hurts so I can't walked very far. I shouted again " Hi, can anyone hear me? Are you guys ok?" Than I heard some sound, seems like some one was moving in the snow. I followed the sound and found Maggie. " Hey, Maggie, are you ok? Did you get hurts?" " No, I am ok." She answered. " Where are other people?" I asked.

We searched for a while and keep shouting. No response at all. The day was getting late, I have to go back to the real world. I ask Maggie “ Can I stay here? I wanna be with you.” Maggie says “ I know I promise you before, said I will always be with you. But Christmas was already gone, you get your gifts which you want, so I finished my mission. And I took you here for 3 days, now is time to say goodbye.”

The tears in my eyes fell down, and I looked at her and hugged her again.

“Thank you so much for your help, you took so much fun to me. The gift you gave me are not just a music box, the thing you gave me is the real fun and a wonderful memory in my mind. The good memory will stay forever.” I said with my tears falling.

“ I won’t forget you, and remember, I am always be with you. Cause I am in your mind.” Maggie said.

Then she counts “ 3, 2, 1” I was on my bed again, and the music box was still on my desk. The night was still that peace and quite. In the music box, Maggie was sitting in the music box, smiling at me. All the things were there, seems like all the things were just a dream. Moon light shoot on the music box, the snow in it were shining, and all the memories were there, only I know it and also I will remember it forever.

## Infinite Identities

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Chao, Catherine –13*

I never intended this to happen, I'm sorry.

I have a secret. A secret that no one knows except for me. I'm standing in the centre of the empty field, gazing up into the starlit sky of the early morning. I rubbed my fingers against the ring in my pocket. The sun has yet to rise, and the stars are still glowing above me, beaming into my eyes.

"Christine!" I heard a faint voice calling behind me, it was Kate. She eyed me suspiciously, as if she could see right through my mind. I sighed, I can't possibly tell her, it's too difficult, too complicated, but she ought to know somehow. Suddenly, I was disturbed by a loud clatter along the street. I looked around, but nobody was there. I hesitated. Kate glanced at my ring, her head tilted slightly. "It's..... magical?" Kate asked. I nodded. She stood there, her glassy blue eyes staring into mine. Silence echoed around us. "She must be insane." Kate murmured under her breath. There was a sharp pain in my ears. I stared at her, hurt. "No, I'm not." I was aware that there was an edge in my voice. "I'm not a freak!" I shouted, my tone as hard as steel. Her concern immediately turned into rage. "Oh please! We both know you're not three!" She shot back, sharp words thrown out at me like swords, each one stabbing right through my chest. She grabbed my ring and tossed it into the distance without a hesitation. I gasped, staring at her in shock. I wanted to yell, I wanted to scream, but nothing came out of my mouth. Kate looked as horrified as me, she went too far and we both knew it.

A gush of wind brushed past me, chill creeping down my spine, waking my nerves. Kate flinched, she felt it too. I stood still, listening attentively, but there was a deathly silence. The eye of calmness didn't last long. Without a warning, the wind started again, but this time stronger, louder. I lost balance and fell to the ground. Panicking, I struggled to stand, but Kate didn't move, nor did she twitch. She just stood there, frozen. "It's a tornado." She whispered. The words echoed in my head as I looked up, a rush of terror washed over me. Voices in my head are telling me to run, but my legs have completely given up. Then everything went black.

I heard a scream. I heard a cry. But then there was silence. For a second I thought I might be dead, but my heart keeps pounding rapidly, nonstop. I was disrupted by a sudden light, beautiful colours poured into my sight. I'm surrounded by an ocean of blue, fluffy clouds of every size floating past me. There's a fragrance of fresh roses following me like a trail. I've never been here before, but I recognise this place somehow, a place I vaguely remember. Kate was standing next to me, her face as puzzled as mine, but it didn't take me long to figure out what it meant.

I'm in a different dimension.

Without the ring, my life will gradually fall into a million pieces. I might die in the next hour, minute, or even second. Finding the ring isn't a choice. I turned around and ran as fast as I could, heading towards the West. I'm not going to waste my breath, and I'm definitely not going to waste any of my time. I sprinted towards the distance, following my senses wherever it takes me, but I honestly have no idea where I was heading to. I could've stopped, I could've asked for help, but I have no time to pause, nor to think. My heart is beating rapidly, the blood crashing in my chest like tides in the ocean, so strong I could hear it like drums in my ears. I have no idea where Kate was, but I couldn't care less. She was the one who created the fire, yet I'm the one who's cleaning the mess. My lungs are crying out in pain, but I refused to stop. Time seems to be running ahead of me, racing towards the finish line, but I'm struggling to catch up no matter how hard I try. It's as if I could see the hands of a clock slowly ticking towards the end, and I can't do anything about it.

Suddenly, a tiny light appeared in the distance. I took a closer look as my eyes adjusted to the light. A smile grew on my face. It was my ring. I walked towards it, each step attentive with caution. Tears that I have held on was finally let out in relief. The knot in my stomach seems to be released, weight from my shoulders eased away. I relaxed my clenched fists, but the eye of calmness didn't last long. Suddenly, the light dimmed, and then darkness. I looked around in confusion, but nothing was left except for the cold fear creeping in my heart once again. I panicked, I have to find it before something goes wrong. Suddenly, an image flashed across my mind. I saw my parents. I saw a car. I watched as the car raced at full speed, heading closer towards them. I tensed, my heart stings. I put my hand on my chest, praying for it to stop.

Then it crashed.



I fell to my knees. My life has already begun to break down. I could feel the hot tears rolling down my cheeks, this time not in relief, but in fear. I tried to make up reasons and excuses to deny the fact, but nothing made sense. I closed my eyes, the scenes rushing through my sight like a rocket, one after another, not giving me a single chance to breathe.

"Christine." I heard a familiar voice whisper. I opened my eyes to find Kate in front of me. I flung my hands around her without a hesitation, hugging her tightly. No matter how mad I was before, I'm glad I'm not alone. "Christine, I think this scroll is relevant to you..... and possibly to your parent's death." Kate said, her voice quivering. I looked down at the scroll, the letters shaking as my fingers trembled. I held my breath as I read it. "Your parent's death could only be saved by one way." My heart skipped as I glanced at the next line. "Everything can restart..... only if your identity changes." I froze, there was a lump in my throat as I tried to hold back my tears, my eyes aching with pain. I stared up at the sky, my vision blurred. I released my fingers, allowing the scroll to fall with a deafening crack echoing around me. My heart sank as I fell to the floor in pain. I laid my head against the cold, hard ground. I wish I didn't know, I wish I didn't understand, but I knew all too clearly. I forced myself to stand up, despite my trembling knees. One, two, three. I'm ready.

I jumped, sat up, panting deeply. I looked around, and found myself on my bed, in my bedroom. The sky was still dark, but I could see rays of sunlight at the edge of the mountain. Everything is so quiet and still, but for some reason, my head is screaming with fear. "It's just a dream," I whispered, "it's just as a dream." Suddenly, the door creaked open, and a stranger came in. "Hey honey, are you ok?" He asked with concern. I blinked at him, confused. "Who are you?" He laughed hysterically, but I wasn't joking. "Oh Lauren, you're hilarious. I'm your father!" With that, he left the room before I could say another word. Lauren? I scratched my head in confusion but I couldn't remember a thing, all my memory has completely wiped out.

I took a walk outside and saw a familiar house. I hid behind the walls and took a closer look. I saw a girl standing in the centre of the field, gazing up into the sky. Suddenly, she took something out of her pocket, it was beautiful. I squinted, and gasped to find that it was a ring, my ring. Terror washed over me as every puzzle pieced perfectly in my mind. As promised, my identity changed, but everything is repeating itself. "Christine!" I heard a faint voice calling. I immediately ran, but I tripped over a glass bottle and fell. My arm was bleeding as waves of memory came rushing back. I looked behind and saw that girl walking towards my direction. I got up and ran, despite the pain. For once in my life, I wanted to slip away from my memory, to let it drip away like the blood on my arms. I could've warned her, I could've told her where she's heading to, but fear has taken over me.

I never intended this to happen, I'm sorry.

# The Awakening of the Golden Buddha

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Chin, Matthew – 13*

When William Wong announced that he would shortly be leaving on yet another one of his adventures, no one in the village of Yuntai even batted an eyelid.

Wong used to be an erudite entrepreneur. Ever since he graduated from the University of Beijing, his heart had been with the world of finance. However, only recently, he came across an iniquitous man, one who desired ever so dearly to get his hands on Wong's copious amount of wealth. The man kidnapped Wong, only for our dear friend to slip his way out of his captive's reach. Howbeit, ever since this calamity, Wong was never the same again— he was always agitated and full of an unexplainable melancholy. From then on, Wong perpetually wanted to go on adventures, to seek the impalpable nirvana, and to be released of his dolefulness.

A week before Wong's departure, something truly magnificent happened— as Wong entered his parlour, he could descry a tall, daunting man in plaid red robes floating cross-legged above the table. The man had an aura of immense power, his body radiating a soft, golden hue. His hair was tied into a black bun, eyebrows drooping over sharp, intelligent eyes. His right hand was held up, pliant fingers finely webbed like that of a frog. This man was Buddha.

"My lord, what are you doing in my house? Do you wish for *pūja*, or *prashad*? I have a few flowers in my back garden which I can give to you! I hear you love lotus flowers!" Wong's trembling voice indicated his disconcerted feelings. He had always longed to see this man, to speak to him about hedonism and the way of life, but this man— Buddha— was so...intimidating. Even as Wong spoke, Buddha was humming the sound of creation— Aum— his eyes shut with deliberation. "Why is the almighty Buddha here?" Wong thought to himself. As if reading his mind, Buddha spoke with authority. "I am here for you, Wong."

Suddenly, as if in a trance, Buddha opened his eyes, a beam of blinding snake-green light streaming out of his eyes. A wave of nausea passed through Wong's body, and he feebly fell to the floor, his breath raspy and acrid. Just as Wong was about to pass out, he discerned Buddha's prepotent voice. "You shall go to the west, like your ancestor Xuanzang did, and find the Golden Buddha." Buddha's voice died away as his form receded from view. Soon, Wong fell into unconsciousness.

Wong sat cross-legged on the cold stone floor of a cave, the name 'Yuanzhou' neatly written on the entrance. Around him, he could see tapers, their fires extinguished after centuries in the cold, damp environment of the chamber. In the corner of the cave, Wong could see a wiry man in a dark, plaid shirt, the number '1' printed on it, like that of prisoners he had seen in the Drapchi prison. "I have been waiting for you, Master Wong." The man's voice was as deep as a baritone, soothing to listen to. "Free me, Master, and I will protect you on your treacherous journey to the west. Then,..." His words were cut short by an unearthly howl, and Wong woke up with a start.

"It's just a dream," Wong reassured himself. However, even as he thought so, he knew that the dream was a premonition of what is to come. "I must find him!"

The next day, Wong packed his small duffel bag with essentials— a water bottle, some energy bars, and a phone before he headed out of the village.

After a few weeks of travelling west, Wong rode into a forest and stumbled upon a deep, dark hole. Before he could stop himself, Wong fell into. "Well, that's it," Wong thought to himself as he plummeted.

"Argh!" Wong landed in what seemed like a volcano, with red lava pouring out in all directions. Lava soaked through his denim jeans but he did not feel the sweltering heat; on the contrary, it felt soothing, like bathing in spa water. Subsequently, Wong realised why: he had fallen into *Avīci*, the pit where the most flagitious people fall into after death.

As Wong wandered around the sea of lava, looking for an exit, he stumbled upon a dagger, no longer than his arm. Its hilt was leather-bound, a serrated, rust-free blade protruding from the handle. Wong studied it for a moment, before picking it up. “Khagga Dhanasañcaya Mara” – Dagger of Mara. In an instant, a wave of lava slammed into him, sending him over the edge of the volcano and into a dark, damp prison...

“Where am I?” Wong’s voice reverberated around the room. “You are with me, Wong.” Wong whirled around, only to face a red-faced man with two demon horns sticking out of his scalp, canines protruding from his Hitler style moustache. “Mara – the demon of the underworld.” Wong hid his palpitating hands behind his back, not daring to show fear in front of the enemy.

Mara leaped at Wong with two deadly swords. Wong dodged, the blades missing him by two centimetres! Wong fought back with the dagger still in his hands. He lashed with surprising speed and agility, knocking Mara in the face with the butt of his dagger. Wong gritted his teeth, dodging Mara’s every strike. As swift as lightning, Wong stabbed Mara in the chest. With a final howl, Mara collapsed before his feet. “How did I do that?” Wong thought, before pattering out of the cave and into the open.

Soon enough, Wong came across yet another cave, this one with the name Yuanzhou engraved in neat cursive on the entrance door. He felt compelled to go in, as though an invisible force was urging him onwards. He rapped on the door, and it instantly opened. “How strange!” Wong thought, walking gingerly through the doorway. After a while, he heard a whimper, and a man, dressed in a dark, plaid shirt with the number ‘1’ printed on it, emerged from the gloom of the cave.

“Master Wong, I’m Yuanzhou. The Buddha had me waiting for centuries for your arrival. Please free me from this place.”

Wong instantly identified the man from his dream! Reaching out his hand, Wong willed him to be emancipated from his taut bonds.

Yuan heaved a big sigh of relief. “Thank you, Master! Follow me and I’ll bring you to the Golden Buddha.”

In the corner of his eye, Wong saw a shadow flashing by but dismissed it as his imagination.

Within a few minutes, they arrived at a security vault. “It’s right here, Master!” Yuan cheerfully said as he jumped around, ecstatic at his newfound freedom. “Only the chosen one can open the vault” Wong reached for the door and with the gentlest of touches, it opened. There was...nothing in the vault! Instantly, Wong’s jovial smile was wiped off his face.

“You are too late!” a voice echoed around the vault. Wong whirled around, and standing before him was a hideous man in a checkered shirt. In his right hand was a golden statue of Buddha!

“Who are you?” Wong pointed his dagger at the man

“I am Huairan, Chinese for bad person. I am the most powerful evil spirit in this world.”

Instantly, Huairan wielded a long blade, and with his first strike, grazed Wong’s side. “My skill is unmatched!” Huairan struck again, and this time, he cut a gash down the side of Wong’s face. He lashed at Wong again, toppling him over.

Huairan had his sword right up at Wong’s face. With no thought for his own safety, Yuan lunged at Huairan. With Huairan losing his balance, Wong ran and hid behind a rock.

A fierce battle between Huai ren and Yuan ensued. They leaped high into the air and threw kicks and punches at each other. Beams of lights flashed whenever their powerful strokes met. As Yuan dodged a swinging punch, he saw his opportunity and mustered all his strength to give Huai ren a blistering upper cut! Yuan dropped onto the ground, utterly exhausted as he looked over the limping body of Huai ren before it slowly disintegrated into dust. The fight was over.

“The Golden Buddha is saved!” Wong exclaimed. “We did it, Yuanzhou!”

“Yes, we did...” Yuanzhou forced a smile before he too turned into a pile of dust.

“NO...!” Tear streaking down Wong’s cheek as he tried to grasp onto Yuan.

“You have done well, my disciple.” A familiar voice boomed. “You have fulfilled your destiny.”

Wong looked up to see the Buddha, with a blinding golden glow in the dark vault, before him again.

“You are hereby bestowed the title of Enlightenment Buddha in the Heavens of the Jade Emperor.”

“What about Yuan, my Lord?”

“Yuan will be reincarnated to a good family to serve the country.”

Soon, the story of Wong spread all over the country and to remember him, a temple was built in Yuntai for the people to worship him.

# The Odyssey of Sorrow

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Clowes, Luca –12*

It happened again, again and again. It was the feeling that made my blood run cold, that feeling that made me quiver, that dreadful feeling that stopped my heart beat. I stared out into the vast abyss of land. This land wasn't your normal land covered in a luscious green sheet of grass – it was a wasteland of grains of tempered sand.

Abuss stood by me, a few feet below me. He was panting as the scorching sun billowed its fiery breath down on upon us and his thin coat of golden fur reflected the harsh light of the sun, just like he was a mirror. 'Why am I doing this?' I questioned myself. I didn't want to think about why I was sent out, even though I pretended I didn't know why.

We took our first step onto the sand. It felt like I was plunging through water to touch the bottom of a lake. It was like I was crossing a border to a different country. I took my final look back. No one was there, not even my family. My insides churned. A tear was coming out but I had to force it back in, as I knew I couldn't waste any water.

Abuss and I set off into the blissful pink sunset. Minutes became hours, hours became days. When night came we set camp. I stared into the moonlight. It was beautiful but harsh as it illuminated on my sins and bad deeds. Abuss drooled as he fell into a peaceful sleep lying by my feet. I tried to go to sleep but the thin midnight air seemed to pierce my eyes open. However, when I slowly drifted to sleep, I was awoken by my mind as I couldn't handle this situation – ideas and thoughts flew around my tortured mind. When the moon went back to a peaceful rest and the baking sun awoke, we set foot once again on this abhorrent journey to who knows where. We only saw sand, lots of it. This way of life repeated many times. Slowly, I lost count of the days; the times the sunset came and the nights I couldn't get a sliver of sleep. When the time came when I ran out of water, food and hope, all of these things seemed to become a delicacy.

My mind rapidly deteriorated as I lost vital water that my brain so needed. My mind raced as in the vast distance stood a oasis, with an abundance of rich water and fruits. "Have I hit the jackpot?" I eagerly questioned myself. A walk became a jog and that jog rapidly became a sprint. It was a race against myself. A fearsome race for survival, Abuss trailing behind. When I arrived, I couldn't look at it – the sight was ghastly, breath-taking. The oasis was no oasis but now a mirage. TOO MANY TIMES!" I shouted to god, If there was a god, the holy one, the one who created us. If he was out there, I now knew he was definitely not on my side. A tear swelled out of my puny eye. I couldn't hold it in any more. My feet and legs began to crumple down till I hit the golden wasteland.

Sorrow consumed my wasted body covering me like a horde of leeches, as I howled in pain, fear and dread. In that moment, I wished I could crawl up in a small ball away from the abhorrent West but out of the blue, I found courage, strength and hope to push me to the end. I stood up, my heart bursting with courage and set off into the vast endless desert, to find life.

Months have passed since I started this journey, living off the bitter sap of dried cactus. In this vast wasteland, food was always scarce. I lived off small rodents scuttling around at the brisk cold night. Shelter wasn't as big of a problem as I used the same crimson red cloak to cover me like a blanket, even though it contained some rips and got smaller each night as Abuss couldn't stop toying around with it. Even though it was only a few millimeters thick, it was there to comfort me at night, repelling the monster in my head. However, the heat was unbearable as it bellowed a steaming hot ray of light down on us. When the torturous heat became unbearable, we had to travel by night. The darkness blindly led us to an endless loop of fear. We travelled through the vast West by foot, our maps were our guts (just like I was attracted to a large magnet).

I was awoken by the dreadful words of the sun shouting at me. Abuss was also awoken by the heat. I still remember Abuss before I got banished to the West, even back to when I received this bundle of joy and happiness. He was your normal terrier with an abundance of energy. His excitement seemed to always radiate from his gorgeous face. Everyone from where I came from, was given a companion from the age of ten, that reflected our personalities. My brother was given a turtle to reflect his shyness and resilience. He is

no longer my brother, not since I was banished. The further I ventured into this nightmare, the further I wandered through this corridor of solitude and despair. The more the truth came, that I wasn't finding hope or life for myself but for my friend, Abuss. "Get up Abuss" I ordered. He rapidly sprung to his feet and was ready for another day of this journey which seemed to cover up months of my short life.

Once again we set off into the West, the decaescent sun hitting us with rays of golden streams of light raining over our burnt heads. The sand made way for our feet like the grains of sand parted like a crowd to let us travel through the vast desert. As the day slowly ticked away into afternoon and then to evening, I tried not to take any notice that my legs were shaking, trembling in front of this vast pile of sand, in fear and fatigue. "I can't give up," I whispered to myself as my brain slowly began to shut down, my knackered legs gave in and crumpled till I hit the ground with a colossal thump. All that I saw was darkness, an abyss of darkness.

I awoke several hours later. My eyes just started to flutter open as I readjusted my view of where I was. I quickly discovered Abuss by my feet, his silky golden coat was now drenched in sand. He had become as haggard as I. Soon after my dwelling over Abuss, I came to realise a tree towered over me. My teeth started to rattle to a point where I thought they would pop out of my mouth. Over the journey I almost forgot the luscious smell of the emerald green leaves sweating water from the bottom of the dense earth. Then it hit me – if there's water, there's life. My heartbeat began to race, flying through my chest with joy. We started to sing and dance. I slowly brought my leg down to the ground then put my mouth to Abyss's flipped ear and whisper, "The journey is coming to an end." I rapidly scoped the vast wasteland with caution not leaving a stone out of my view, till I stopped spinning my head. A smirk emerged from my face. "We found it!" I chanted. In the distance stood a fortress, a city, a village. I could not comprehend this miracle but all I knew was that it was beautiful.

Our legs began to churn into a run. The closer we got, the more this place revealed itself. Camels carrying cargo from all directions funnelled into this kingdom bringing goods from all around the world. The material to create a behemoth of a kingdom was not stone, nor brick or sandstone but thick gold plastered around the endless circumference of the kingdom. The gold was embedded with symbols telling the saddest stories, including my story of sorrow, pain, suffering and joy. This is how I found life with my best friend, Abuss.

## Hui and Me

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Haik, Lily – 14*

Come back. Even as a shadow, even as a dream. Since his absence, everything that was once bright and beautiful had disappeared and now I only saw the dull hues of this harsh world. He protected me from the dangers of life and celebrated me during the best of times. His warm hands would caress my rosy red cheeks on the chilling winter nights when Mama was working on our broad tea fields. After Baba died he took care of everyone. Hui was our guardian and my savior; he was profoundly loved by everyone and everything.

I was Hui's shadow and I would never leave his side. I wanted the same distinct gleaming smile and the same irritated frown, the same broad shoulders and the same proud stance. Even his smell still lingered in the air of our home. Brother always smelt of sweat from the hard days of work that he had endured to ensure safety and security for his family.

I distinctly remember the helpless shrieks of Mama when he was taken away; she grasped for her beloved son and watched him slip through her fragile fingers. She knew the men were stronger, she knew they had more power. She had to let him go. Mama let brother go.

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My family was a family of merchants. For generations we had harvested our precious tea bushes on the vast fields of our town, Shandong. Through the spring and summer seasons, the crops would play games and sing sweet songs. During the winter they would rest, exhausted from their expenditures. The emerald green leaves beamed proudly in the sun and reflected into our eyes as we toiled away on the fields of Shandong. Carefully, we would pick the special leaves fit to sell.

The first time I set foot upon the Silk Road, I was with Hui and our Uncle. In Uncle's battered caravan accompanied by our two camels, Fan and Fu, we all journeyed towards the west to sell our tea leaves in the European market. Uncle took us through a series of winding routes ranging in various terrains. When I close my eyes I can still picture the endless desert: the sand consuming our limbs and beckoning us to be one with each grain that stuck to our exhausted bodies. The blazing sun deprived us of the luxurious taste of fresh water and the refreshing breeze, which we had become accustomed to on the tea fields. Throughout our journey, I painted images of the places we had travelled to. My plain turquoise paint was no match for the royal blues of the Yellow River and my dull orange paints did not suffice for the fiery stripes on the fearless tiger we encountered during our quest.

The time passed fast on the road. I would play games with Hui at dusk and laugh with him until dawn. Before we knew it, we had arrived at our station. The small house was isolated from the rest of the society like a caged animal. It boasted of its silk, spices, porcelain and jewels that eagerly awaited to be collected by the next series of merchants. The expensive products glistened in Hui's deep brown eyes. The peculiar men stationed at the hut were very different to men I had met before. They were taller and stronger and looked upon us in a condescending fashion. They had thick, black bushes of facial hair and gestured in a more aggressive way. They tended to shout at each other and Uncle, which made me frightened. I would hide behind Hui as Uncle negotiated with the foreign men. Hui would place his coarse hands in my hands and I would squeeze them tightly to reassure myself. He grimaced as I touched his scar.

Hui had a distinct mark on his pinky finger. When he was six, he tripped over a rock and deeply cut his finger while working in the tea fields. Baba scooped him up into his loving arms and rushed him to Mrs. Lao's hut. Grasping Baba's hand for comfort, Hui yelled in pain as she tended to his wound. Baba always made everyone feel safe. Baba had the power to remove suffering. Everyone said that Hui was the spitting image of Baba.

Uncle collected the shining coins from the intimidating men and we set off upon the Silk Road traveling East, back to Shandong. Our baggage was lighter, for all that remained was the money we had earned in our pockets. To keep us entertained, Uncle told us stories about his past adventures on the road. One story featured a gang of armed pirates, attempting to steal Uncle's fortune. They threatened to kill him and his crew, shoving the men onto the ground. Hui and I sat on the edge of our seats, listening attentively, eyes bright with intrigue and disgust. Luckily the men got out alive by fighting with all the energy they had left from the trek. These dangers were not uncommon on this winding road of unpredictability.

Upon our arrival, our loving family greeted us with eager ears and open arms. We came home with thrilling stories to tell and souvenirs we had picked up on the way. Uncle gave a dusty idol carved out of stone to Auntie, kissing her on the cheek. I gave Mama one of the canvases I painted of the impenetrable jungles we had passed through. The strange and mystical animals seemed to leap out of the paper at her. Finally, Hui removed his souvenir from his pocket. With a complacent grin he placed it on the table. Relatives from around the table marveled at this stone. What was it? I leaned in closer. The brilliance of its shape reflected the dimly lit candle light of the room; the pure angelic white sparkled in everyone's eyes. Then realization hit me: Hui had stolen a jewel.

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They came for him quickly. The following day I was roused from my sleep by a hollow knock on our front door. Thud. Thud, thud. Thud, thud, thud. The sound seemed to grow in vexation, each moment that passed. Suddenly the door swung open to reveal a tall, broad silhouette surrounded by streams of sunlight. He appeared to be godly: an omnipotent figure, here to offer a solution to the problems that plagued our family. I would soon find out he was in fact the devil in disguise.

I can hardly piece together the remains of this memory. Eyes hot and heavy with tears, I can make out several blurry figures thrashing in slow motion. My mouth feels raw and dry, screams sit on the tip of my tongue but no sound escapes my throat. Mama stands by the doorway, sobbing helplessly as she watches them haul him out of the house. I remain motionless on the floor. They took him. They took him back to the west.



## The Heart's Voyager

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Ho, Sophie –14*

Reader, I'd like you to put this piece of writing down, close your eyes, and just think: if the world decided to take away the source of your happiness and your greatest love, would you choose to forgive it? Or, would you live your life in despair and choose to take revenge?

People say that they would choose forgiveness no matter what happens. But, when given the situation, why do they always choose the route of revenge, despite what they have said before?

A couple centuries ago, along the Silk Road, there lived a demon. A rather barbaric demon, she seemed. Her appearance, though somewhat polished, still bestowed an eerie air to her character. Along with her heartless nature and her selfish want for a certain man's flesh, it was no surprise that people hid away from her. Yet, on a blustery winter's day, with the whispery moans of the wind whisking past her ears, carrying away the dead leaves of autumn, Baiguji's reverie was far from thoughts of the barbaric kind.

This barbaric demon once had a husband, one of pure heart and goodness, who passed away over four hundred years ago. She was so sure that she could change his death and tried to bargain with the spirits for his revival. Nonetheless, it led to her banishment to Hell, and as a result, her becoming of a demon. It was then where her thirst for feasting upon Xuanzang's flesh to gain invincibility began. And, if she did, she could finally conquer nirvana, break the chain of reincarnation, and bring her love back to life. Since then, she had spiraled into depression and was struck down with hallucinations, pushing her to the brink of insanity.

Baiguji broke out of her trance and scolded herself for the distraction, whilst, though not purposefully, also reminded herself of the guilt she had stored up, rocking to and fro like a ship in a raging ocean. She willed her shape—shifting powers to transform her into an old man. Her back arched and her wrinkles ever so prominent, she hobbled out of her lair and headed towards the hazy shadows of Xuanzang and his crew.

"Hello there, good sirs!" She called out, dropping her voice to a low croak. Her first two disguises had failed, but she was determined for her third to work. "Have you seen my daughter? A young village girl, about fifteen, selling fresh fruits from our garden? Or my beautiful wife, who went off searching for my daughter?"

Xuanzang, perched on his white dragon horse, lowered his eyes. A deep flush overcame his cheeks, and he inclined his chin towards Sun Wukong, looking at him warily. The others, whom lacked the sophistication of their leader, glared overtly at the monkey as they recalled how he had brutally slain the two women.

"If you would excuse us for a moment, we would be glad to recall those we met on our journey." Xuanzang said as he turned to the group and began murmuring indecipherable phrases.

Meanwhile, things were going splendidly for the demon. It was too good to be true! They all fell for her disguise, with the exception of the cunning monkey and his supernatural powers. Using her inner voice, she decided to taunt the monkey, knowing just the slightest mention of harming his master would stimulate violence. And if the monkey proceeded, Xuanzang would tighten the magical gold ring around his head, trapping him in a world where there were no boundaries but himself.

"They will not believe you. Shall you manage to persuade them – you will be dead already," she thought as she mind linked to the monkey, pleased by the fact that only he could hear her.

As expected, Sun Wukong spun around, his beady stare striking directly into her eyes. With a shrewd smile on her face, she traced her path back into the cave. The monkey followed her, hot on her trail, leaving the rest of his friends behind, whom were still in deep conversation.

At the heart of the cave, Baiguji changed back into herself, resisting the urge to gasp for relief. She hurled her powerful wand in the air and began to chant.

"O Powerful Spirits, pleasing than ever, hide from the truth and also the clever! Banish the ones who hunt and prey, destroy them to death at their very last day!" She cried out, creating a violent gust of wind and smoke, circling around her before a blinding light shot out.

Sun Wukong waited a second. He dodged, his agile movement quickly missing the missile of light thrown at him. Furious, the demon raised her wand again and pushed it at him, pounding her feet toward him one step at a time until his back was to the wall.

“You have ruined my plans, and now I will ruin *you*,” she whispered menacingly.

Alas, it was her innermost desire for revenge that unveiled when she paused. She waited for a reaction, but was unsatisfied at the drag of solemn silence. When she looked at Sun Wukong, she was surprised to see a look of not fear or even hatred, but a sort of sorrowness.

“What?” Baigujiing demanded, her voice raising a notch. “What?”

“Who did this to you?” He asked her quietly, seemingly almost unaware of the fact that she had the full power to kill him. “Who ruined you?”

There it was again. His presence always lingered around her, suppressing her, not leaving her alone. When could she possibly undo the hurt he caused when he left her? But, in her heart, she knew that time couldn’t be erased. And deep down, she also knew that she was jealous – a feeling so raw, so deep, digging away at her heart to the core. Not because he had passed, but because he was content without her; that he was content in Heaven, in the place he truly belonged, with a heart so kind and good.

“What if he’s not here? What if he left me?” She whispered, her voice cracking.

“Then maybe it’s time to let go.”

“But what if I *can*? What if I can’t let go? All these four hundred years, trying to break the chain of reincarnation, and I finally, *finally*, find the key! I have to do this,” Baigujiing declared, almost hesitantly..

“Does the key work? Does Xuanzang’s flesh really give you the power to bring him back to life? Maybe it isn’t revenge that you should seek, but redemption. Redemption of being saved from the hold he has on you! But if you do choose the key, you do know that doing so can perhaps destroy the cycle of life? It can destroy the world! The world that brought your husband and you to life! Why can’t you just forgive it?”

She sunk down. Watching her fingers, she let go of the fist she clutched each day. But as she spread her fingers apart, she felt as if he was slipping right through them, away from her grasp and away from her. She closed her eyes and contemplated silently, aware of Sun Wukong’s daggering gaze resting on her back.

He was the light to her darkness. He was the laughter to her tears. He was everything she wasn’t, and he brought out all the good in her. It was right, she decided. She could feel it. It was right to let go! There was just a string – just a small string, holding on to a part of her old heart, the pure heart of the young maiden that was just in love. It was time, not just to hold onto the string, but to let him go as well!

Yet, just *imagine*, being back in her husband’s arms, waking up to his gentle smile every day, pondering upon life with him waiting at each door! How often had she dreamed, each day and night, finally being back with her lover! It was a greed, a reward that she did not deserve. And putting up such a risk of breaking the cycle of death and rebirth, and putting the whole world on a dislocated axis – it was indeed not worth it!

Would it not be better to let go of the memories that catapulted her into misery, through forgiveness?

But, just to think of it, finally having her lover back once and for all, through revenge?

Her decision, albeit of much importance, is one not to be made by me. I’m afraid, dear reader, that is all up to you.

## Annals of the West

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Kwok, Russell – 12*

**H**ave you ever wondered why there are so many ancient mysteries in Ireland? I know since I created them.

It started 19 years ago. On a bright sunny day with blossoming flowers on the countless orchards on the Wentworth–Nethercott estate and the buzzing of meek bees in our ears, I decided to have tea with the servants: footmen, chambermaids, cooks, parlour–maids, housemaids, kitchen–maids, scullery maids, gardeners, the valet, the housekeeper and even the butler Smithers himself!

Swiftly, on the table was laid a fine silken tablecloth embroidered with gold thread and the finest china of all the Orient painted with authentic lapis lazuli paint. Then, the foods and beverages came: The most gorgeous blend of Assam and Darjeeling, quaint cucumber sandwiches, fresh scones with warm Devonshire clotted cream, coconut macaroons imported from New Caledonia, rich chocolate éclairs, meticulously iced fairy cakes, and warm Eccles cakes going through thermogenesis with the most doddering of all veteran Stilton cheeses along with more treats than you could imagine would exist in the land! Whoosh. An expensive vellum letter, sealed with sublime beeswax from the Mediterranean whooshed onto my lap. A letter.

Oh no! I am exceedingly sorry to not have introduced myself! My name is the Most Honourable Reginald Cecil Wentworth–Nethercott, third Marquis of Clitheroe, ninth Duke Shrewsbury, first Viscount Doncaster, twentieth Earl of Carlisle and sixth Baron Perciford. Anyway, you can call me Lord Wentworth–Nethercott if you please. Through my name, you might be able to deduce all my kin are aristocrats and royals from Europe and we meet annually. Most of these soporific ceremonies can be ignored but let me continue with my lovely tale.

Then, within the letter, with bold gold ink was written, ‘The Crown Prince of Tara, Cormac mac Airt, cordially invites ye to the coronation the High King of Ireland on the 12th day of the 12th Month on the 12th Year of the 12th Irish Lunar Calendar in the most west of all known lands–Tara–. His prominent father, the great Art mac Cuinn, has just passed away to Tír na nÓg.’ Usually, a voyage to Ireland will take a fortnight or so. In that situation, there was a vast abundance of time, an epoch even! Although I might arrive promptly before the deadline, I shall never be tardy and unpunctual. Nevertheless, I never knew such a lucid task would bring me to the verge of experiencing rigor mortis...

In time, I booked one of the returning galleys of the Fianna. Along with the pious chaplain from the local parish, Reverend Dominic and faithful bodyguard Finlay, we loitered patiently on the creaking decrepit wood jetty at Whitehaven.

Many hours past, though they were not wasted since the local pub on the staithe was open. Porter, ale, and beer of all kinds flowed majestically through the gravity beer taps into grubby pint–sized hand–blown Venetian nonic glasses. The venerable elderly sat on the wobbly weathered wooden stools sipping some bland imported fresh from the Shetland Isles. Pigs–in–blankets, bashed turnips and pork crackling was dished out like meretricious clothing from sweatshops and everyone was having the most frabjous time of their lives but then...

Swish! Boom! Honk! The Fianna had arrived with their vociferous foghorns! With haste, we perambulated, still looking dignified, onto the galley. Finn McCool was on the boat and he welcomed us with great hospitality. It felt more like a cruise than a hitchhike! Soon, we set sail for Linns.

The weak but plentiful sunlight shone on us with warmth, giving the whole crew a sense of homeliness and snugness. The persistent but gentle waves lapped on the sturdy copper–plated hull, providing a constant jiggle that funnily, didn’t cause seasickness. However, within hours, a great storm brewed over the horizon, promising nothing but gales to level even the mightiest of trees. So powerful it was the throng though it must have been the creation of Beelzebub! Then there was a bang. A groaning sound told us the ship had cracked. Then...

Air. Spring meadow air. We had meandered through the Irish Sea to the magnificent Isle of Man, the greatest tax haven ever existed! Nevertheless, we couldn't enjoy this moment for even a jiffy. A thewy man with a golden aura surrounding him on our miraculously reconstructed ship materialised...

With great pride and pomp, he bore a great chariot towed by a horse named Enbarr on the surface of the water. Within his ample hands held a great sword called Fragarach and a silvery cloak made of mist named féth fiada, it's edges blurred into the surroundings. Fragarach had the ability to cut through and shield and wall and gave a piercing wound which one could not ever recover from! Furthermore, the féth fiada could help its owner(s)—the Tuatha Dé Danann—hide from the ever-mooching mortal men! The great Finn McCool noticed it and immediately prostrated on the soft spring grass with his now astounded expression and uttered with great reverence, “The Sword of Cúchulainn! You must be Manannán mac Lir! The Churl in the Drab Coat!” The strange man hollered back with haste and arrogance, “Incompetent giant! It is appreciated that you know me and call me the God of the Sea if you please! Now, the Morrígan sisters, the triad of War Goddesses, have basically screwed up the whole Irish Sea! If you go by sea, even with my blessings, you'd drown within a twinkling of an eye! You can only go through Tír na nÓg.” Now, if you go to the Isle of Man, you can still see the boat we left there. It's called Balladoole.

With such a great dilemma obstructing us, we decided to go with Manannán mac Lir's advice. He lead us for one and a half leagues through winding dirt paths and meadows filled with dandelions until we came to some burial mounds. Mac Lir abruptly walked straight into one of twelve barrows and vanished through it! One by one, from the bravest to the most cowardly, the Fianna slowly entered the mound. Finally, everyone was in the mound. Except for Reverend Dominic. My chaplain was busy consecrating all the burial mounds, humming his compendium of Requiems and giving every exanimated person a Catholic funeral! Finlay, my loyal bodyguard, was so frustrated he turned as red as a beetroot and bestially seized the unknowing clergyman and pulled him into the barrow.

“God bless my enemies! I forgive them! Please save almighty God! I devoted my life to you—!” muttered Reverend Dominic in a swift prayer. “Be quiet! I have no mashed potato to stuff into ye ungrateful mouth! You knotty pated laughing stock! You dunce—like maggot! Bite your finger! You are as thick as a roux—!” chided my dyspeptic bodyguard Finlay. Meteorically, Manannán mac Lir broke up the heated debate by summoning seawater over them and in time, we arrived.

We had reached Tír na nÓg. A beguiling lady with an exquisite white dress, covered in mauve gems rarer than diamonds, wore a great crown made of the purest platinum, rhodium and lutetium, with tritium-filled diamond bulbs covering the lot. She spoke elegantly and apprised us her name, Niamh, and how she was the Queen of Tír na nÓg and daughter of Manannán mac Lir. It was a load of tosh but then, without warning, she flicked her hand gracefully and we all fell asleep...

“Get out! We have to abscond quickly!” murmured Finn McCool. “My son was here before and he spent 300 years here! Leave!” With such energy and power, we all rose, even the chaplain! We peregrinated aimlessly until we bumped into mac Lir himself. His face was as crimson as fresh blood and he was palpitating with tetchiness. “You pox! My daughter was helping you recover from the time difference! You lot are as thick as the Earth!” Manannán vociferated at us. Soon, we recouped our trust and continued.

Darkness. It was dark, damp and the air smelled of rotting wood. When our eyes slowly adapted to the light, we saw bones, human bones. They were placed in 3 granite lintels. Triskelions covered the passageway and we heard a constant scratching noise. It was Finlay making ancient graffiti in the shape of a human! Nowadays, if you go to Fourknocks, you can still see the face on the left side of the chamber. When we existed, Enbarr was waiting with his chariot.

In haste we rode, all on the chariot pulled by Enbarr to the coronation. We had arrived just in time to see Cormac Mac Airt become the High King. Manannán gave his blessings along with Niamh and evanesced. We retold the story of our adventures to the High King of Ireland. “I want to read it!” I hear you say. You're reading it now!

## The Cliffside

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Law, Noah –13*

They were concealed by the shroud of darkness, faces slathered with black dye. Slowly inching towards their prey. The crickets filled the air with restless chirping whilst the reeds danced in the wind. The hunters slowly shuffled forward, making sure that they stayed behind cover. The caribou stood up, somewhat alert of the danger awaiting it. One of the hunters raised his spear, resting it against his shoulders for a brief moment, then quickly launching it at the animal, exhaling immediately. The spear had lodged itself into the caribou's chest, resulting in a swift, honourable death. Dinner would be pleasurable that night.

They all let out a sigh of relief, as they knew that this would suffice. Ahanu and Kanti slung the carcass over their shoulders, whilst Urika and Chatan figured out how to get back to the rest of the tribe. "Good hunt today," grunted Urika, directing the rest to go.

"If the white skins get any closer to our tribe, we will have to fight back," Chatan explained turning his head to the rest, "they have been trading with other tribes near us, but we do not know if they could be a threat."

"But can't we make an agreement with them, word says that they haven't hurt any of our kind yet". Kanti responded.

Chatan rose and shouted "How do we know that!? He was puffing with fury. They continued to walk without exchanging another word to each other.

As they neared the town Urika slowed them down. "Shhh," he hushed softly as he knelt down. He placed his hand on the dirt ground and paused for a few seconds. He exhaled and stood up. "They have been here."

"How can you be sure?" Questioned Kanti, Urika gradually shifted his feet to the side. It was worn out, but it was still quite apparent that a boot had trodden there. And this wasn't just any boot. It was an English-mans boot.

The air filled with the sound of distant cries, followed by the distinct crackle of burning embers. The atmosphere began to fill with black smoke, it seemed to be emitting from up ahead. It seemed virtually impossible to see anything further than ten metres away from you. "I say we turn back and try to set up camp somewhere else, it doesn't seem right," Kanti explained.

"But what if our tribe is in danger?" Ahanu asked forcefully.

"I don't know guys..." Kanti nervously muttered under his breath. "I'm going to turn back," Kanti continued. Ahanu, Urika and Chatan forcefully pushed on, undeterred by Kanti's caution.

In the village you could see thick plumes of grey smoke wafting into the skies, there were still weak fires, it was obvious that it had already devastated the village. As they got closer they began to hear noises, someone was speaking, cautious, the group approached the sounds. There were white-skins, and they were holding things in their hands. "Boom-sticks," Urika said. As their view became clearer, Ahanu spotted something sitting at the knees of one of the men. Suddenly one of the men pointed his boom-stick at it's head, and fired. The thing collapsed to the ground, silencing immediately. Frightened, the group left.

They went further, and further, until eventually, they couldn't take it anymore. And blacked out.

Chatan woke up to the sombre sound of the native birds that flock in the trees. It was early. Suddenly Chatan leaped up, frantically scanning the forest around him for his friends. *Phew*, he thought, Urika and Ahanu sleeping at the foot of a pine tree to his left. He felt his throat, it was still sore. Chatan began trying to piece together what had happened, it made his head hurt. Chatan decided that it would be best to wake up Urika, Ahanu and Kanti, perhaps they would remember. This was when it struck him. *Where was Kanti?* He woke them up, and they all set off to find Kanti, surely he wouldn't be far.

“He isn’t here,” Urika sighed “We must get moving, that fire must have been made by somebody”. Chatan was pacing around in a circle and Ahanu was sitting on a tree stump.

“That can’t be right!” Chatan exclaimed, quickening his pace.

Ahanu exhaled deeply “I agree with Urika, whoever set that fire, must have had an intention.”

Chatan’s eyes faltered, “Uh, maybe we can try searching past the crooked stone again, or we could—” He realised that Kanti was gone. With a tear forming in his eye they set off.

They travelled for days, only stopping to sleep, they were making progress. It seemed as though they were always marginally ahead of the Englishmen. Chatan was still bothered after the disappearance of Kanti, everyone was. Apart from Ahanu’s occasional groans, no-one spoke, perhaps it was out of fear, perhaps it was out of the lack of things to say, but this wasn’t to say that things weren’t uneventful. “Are we nearly there yet?” Ahanu moaned.

“Patience.” Urika bluntly responded, squatting down and sniffing the dirt.

“But you told me that two days ago,” Ahanu protested half-heartedly.

“Let Urika do his thing,” Chatan explained, “Urika is still developing his tracking skills, you *know* that Kanti was the original tracker.”

“Wait,” Urika announced. The two halted and crouched. Urika lay his head the ground and closed his eyes.

“Get to cover.” *Could it be the men from the village?* Chatan glanced at the horizon. Small figures the size of a thumb were travelling towards them. The shapes were too hard to make out, but as they got closer, they seemed to grow into the creatures that they saw in the village. They also appeared to have things on their backs. The white-skins. They were coming. The group agreed to run towards the end of the river, as it would probably lead to other tributary rivers and it be easier to hide there. “Hurry!” Shouted Chatan, seeing Ahanu slow down. Almost there. The white-skins were closing in on them. Urika, who was the furthest ahead, began to ease his pace, until he approached a stop. As the rest of the group neared, they all saw, that it was a dead end. It was a cliff. “Oh Gluskab,” cried Ahanu, realising the danger that they were in. They were stuck.

“You didn’t think it would be this easy. Did you?” The plump man from the village jumped of their creature. “You would’ve made it.” He said grimly, looking Chatan in the eyes. He pulled a boom-stick from a pocket in his jacket. “Oh, it appears to me that you have never seen one of these before? Would I be right in assuming that?” He continued. Chatan, Urika and Ahanu didn’t dare to respond, they had seen what those ‘boom sticks’ could do. “This is a gun,” he told them, “this is what we will use to kill you.” Two men began to prod someone with a sack covering his face forward. It looked battered and bruised, but it was still breathing. One of the men pushed it to the ground, and unsheathed the sack. It was Kanti. “We owe it all to this one, and may I say, *it’s* tracking skills are *amazing*.” The plump man grinned, displaying a row of sharp blackened, decaying teeth.

“Th-th-they made me do it, I’m s-so sorry,” Kanti’s eyes began to well up, he shed a tear. It rolled down the side of his bruised cheek, and stopped at his chin. The silence of his cry disturbed them the most. The man began again, “I’m terribly sorry to say this, but we don’t need you anymore. Your job is done.” The man snatched Kanti’s neck and pulled him towards the side of the cliff and fixed his gun towards Kanti’s head. His crying became more violent now, and it looked as though he just might have put up a fight, and then he just stopped. Kanti mustered up all of his strength and managed to gasp

“Goodb—” Bang. His lifeless body dropped of the side of the cliff. Out of sheer instinct, just as this happened, Ahanu, Chatan and Urika all leaped off of the cliff too. Chatan watched Kanti’s body fall beside him, he looked at peace. Sploosh.

The fire embers flickered in his cold lifeless eyes.

“What happened next? Oh please tell us great Grandpa!” Hanzi pleaded, running around the room, “did they live?” He yelled.

“Shhh,” Grandpa hushed, “we can’t disturb Mummy or Daddy, can we.”

“Please,” Hanzi repeated, whispering.

“The group fell into the river, and were carried down it, until they reached the safe haven, where we are now.” Grandpa finished.

“Cool!” Hanzi whispered, “Um, it’s getting quite late now, I’m going to bed.” He said running off giggling.

Grandpa began to rock back and forth in his rocking chair. Chatan grinned and leant back. His adventure was over.

## The Old Man's Cane

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Li-Kato, Brayden – 11*

The four friends trudged across the mountainous terrain.

Tang rested on his cane. “Get up, you great buffoon!” snapped Tang.

The great Monkey King, born from the five elements and called “The Great Sage Equal to Heaven,” had collapsed from a mere five minutes of hiking. Tang hit the monkey sharply with his stick. “If you’re ‘equal to heaven’, why can’t you walk for five damn minutes?”

The monkey groaned, rubbed his head where he had been struck, and slowly got to his feet.

Pigsy giggled, chewing his way through the last loaf of bread. “I’m not ‘equal to heaven’ or anything, but I can still walk for more than five minutes.” He finished his sentence as he tore through the last piece of bread, pecking at every last crumb.

“Well, there goes all of our food. We’ll have to stop at a nearby village or something for more,” the Monkey King groaned, rubbing the spot where Tang hit him with his cane. Sandy, the pilgrim who had followed along with the other three, stayed silent.

“Come on Sandy, why so quiet?” Jeered Pigsy.

It was at this moment when he seemed to snap out of a trance.

“Oh, nothing,” he replied. “Just got distracted. Look,” he said abruptly, “there’s a town over there. Maybe we can get food, since we don’t have any left.”

He, and everyone else, was staring intently at Pigsy. He blushed. They continued down the mountain and headed towards the village Sandy had spotted earlier. Monkey lay down and started to roll down the mountain.

“Weeeeeeeeeee!” shouted Monkey, as he started to gain speed.

“Come back!”

Tang, brandishing his cane, started to sprint down the mountain after Monkey. The other two looked at each other, shrugged, and followed suit.

They eventually reached the village, and Tang leaned on his cane, panting. The Monkey King got to his feet, muddy and covered with grass juice, but grinned all the same. They walked up to a house and knocked on a door.

“Hello?” Tang asked.

A friendly face appeared. “Hello, to what do I owe this surprise?”

Tang gave the villager a weary smile. “Just some travellers who need some food and rest, then we’ll be on our way.”

The villager nodded and turned around to prepare for the unexpected guests. Monkey’s beaming face appeared from behind Tang’s head. Tang turned around with surprising speed for an old man, and swiftly hit Monkey’s head, as if he was playing whack-a-mole at a carnival before the townspeople could see him. The townspeople emerged from his home, smiling.

“If you continue forward, your room is the second one on the left.”

As they entered, they noticed his house was a lot bigger than they had expected. From the outside, it looked like a rundown shack made of rotting sticks and weather-beaten cobblestone. On the inside, however, was a completely different story. It was a cosy but spacious home, the fireplace burning away with a merry crackle, with staircases leading up and downstairs and numerous plush armchairs that were various shades of brown and grey. There were bookshelves filled with interesting titles and the entire room was filled with a golden glow. The unusual band of friends walked into the house, feeling the warmth of the fireplace. wash over their sore and tired bodies. Tang quickly walked over to the bookshelf, spent a good five minutes staring intently looking at books, finally chose a title and then promptly collapsed into an armchair and began to read. Monkey started cartwheeling all over the house and got the villager’s exotic purple and red mat dirty, and it looked more of a reddish brown after Monkey had trampled over it. Tang yelled at Monkey but didn’t get out of his chair. Pigsy was offered food by the villager and he eagerly agreed, as he snatched the bread out of his hand. Sandy engaged in conversation with the local, and he seemed to relax a bit more when he found someone to talk to, considering Monkey had wrecked his expensive rug.

They continued like this and Tang occasionally heaved himself up, chose another book, and went back to his armchair. Monkey had gone upstairs, Pigsy was now chewing his way through an apple he had stolen from the man's fruit bowl and Sandy was still engaged in conversation. They continued in this manner until late in the night, when Monkey finally tired out and collapsed, heaving, onto the antique rug he had been ruining for the past twelve hours. Tang fell asleep in his chair. Pigsy went to the room the villager had given them, and Sandy continued chatting deep into the night.

The next day, the friends awoke to the sun shining through the curtains. Tang carefully lifted the book he had been reading last night off his face. He stood up reluctantly, lifting himself off the cushy armchair and looked around. Pure golden sunlight streamed through the windows, birds were singing their merry songs, and there were no clouds in sight. After Tang finished admiring the landscape outside, he turned around to find the beaming face of the villager and the smell of cooking rice.

"Good morning!" greeted the villager cheerily. "Had a good rest?"

"Yes," Tang yawned, stretching.

Sandy smiled at him.

"Look at Monkey," Sandy smiled. "He's still sleeping."

Tang turned around, and sure enough, Monkey was sleeping peacefully on the antique rug.

He rolled over and murmured something in his sleep.

Shortly after, Pigsy came stumbling into the living room, still looking drowsy from his long rest.

"Good morning," the villager, Sandy and Tang chorused.

Pigsy grunted something and sat down with them at the table, eagerly grabbing his bowl of rice the man had prepared for him.

"You know," remarked Tang, "We never go to know your name, even after all the hospitality you've provided us with. So what is your name?"

The villager took at Monkey, who murmured something again, and chuckled softly. "The name's Jack," he said.

The room fell into awkward silence.

"Shall I show you around town?"

The others nodded, seeing as they had only seen his house so far.

They walked outside and blinked in the dazzling sunlight. They were left speechless.

It had many houses similar to Jack's – tall and, while shabby on the outside, if you peeked through the curtains, it was a different story. The village was bustling with people, there was a grand town hall that towered above them with pillars made of gleaming marble, a temple with a mighty statue of a praying man, cross-legged, towering over the populace, gleaming gold in the sunlight as people poured in and out.

"This is our place of worship for our religion here, Buddhism."

They followed Jack inside and were dazzled by what they saw. The main hall was colossal, with towering ceilings and it was big enough to hear your own echo. The walls were painted in bright colours with beautiful art on every inch available, there was an elaborately-decorated carpet coloured with a dozen different shades of red, gold and purple, about the real grandeur was in what was assumed by the friends to be the front of the hall. There was many smaller golden statues that depicted a man praying cross-legged, similar to the one outside, that were so shiny you had to wince when you looked at them. There was an ornamented sort of fringe to the area in the wall that had been carved out, with the golden metal in swirls, knots and the like. But the most breathtaking of all was the statue, with the praying man again, this time sitting in an ornate throne and wearing a jewel-specked crown that scattered light across the hall. After they had taken all of this in, they sat down next to the Jack, and tried to fit in by copying what he was saying. Slowly they managed to join into what was the low drone of prayer.

"Tang..."

He looked up.

He saw a man that was almost a vision, but was definitely real.

"Answer me..." His voice had a godly sense to it, but was still gentle. "Do you seek spiritual enlightenment?"

Tang remained silent. The mysterious man drew closer.

"I'll take that as a..." he paused for a moment. "Yes."



He then proceeded to tell Tang the Tripitaka, three baskets, comprised of:

1. Everything about being a monk
2. All of the Buddha's teachings
3. Finally, he told everything from short stories to poems that didn't fall into the last two categories.

Tang remembered every word.

After a rushed journey back to China, these scriptures spread and more people converted to this new religion. They were passed down among generations and still survive many centuries later to this day.

*Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened.  
Happiness never decreases by being shared.*

*—Gautama Buddha*

## A Pioneer's Odyssey

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Melwani, Kush – 13*

Satya hadn't realized how hard travel—sickness really was. Nearly sixty days completed, and there were still 30 days left of this horror. He had always thought you just needed control over your mind, but now he realized you had absolutely zero control over it whatsoever. His stomach wrenched with every breath he took and just standing was becoming a very taxing task. He despised the dhow, its constant rocking on the waves, the strong smell of sea salt burning his throat and the humidity in the air making his clothes cling to his body like a sloth to a tree. Originally, Satya anticipated it would be a wonderfully relaxing journey, with the fresh smell of the sea wafting into his lungs, the rocking of the dhow, like a mother rocking her baby to sleep. He imagined the nights when everyone would play games, like cards and chess. He imagined the beauty of the ocean mesmerizing him. He imagined greeting his father with a victorious smile. Now he knew what it was really like.

It really was his own fault he came to be on this boat. If only he had behaved better at school, then he would still be at home in India, hopefully working for his uncle's engineering company.

One day, after another fight in which he gave another boy a black eye, his mother called for him. "Satya! Come here! I have some extremely important news for you!"

"What is it mother?" replied Satya, coming out from his room.

"Your father and I ... We have decided that it is now time for you to travel to Kenya to stay with him." She continued, ignoring his protesting expression, "We believe you will be better off under is care, and more watchful eye. You have been constantly getting into fights and skipping school. You are setting a terrible example for your younger siblings and you are putting our family's reputation at stake."

She breathed a deep sigh and continued more gently, "I would come with you Satya... but I must find someone to take over our village from us before I can leave."

"I understand it's wrong mother, and I have put every effort into making it happen less. I'm only fourteen! You need to be sixteen to travel by boat!" said Satya trying to protest, though knowing it was in vain. "I won't be allowed to go!"

"Whatever it takes, we are getting you there before the end of the year" replied his mother sadly. "Even if it takes forged identification papers...."

So, his Identification Papers were forged, and he was sent on an overnight train journey to the renowned port of Bombay, British India. The port was known across the world as being one of the world's greatest, but it looked like the 1940s hadn't been great for it. World War 2 had just finished and the British had spent all of their money on the war in Europe. Now, the Indians were craving for their independence. Everything looked shabby, smelt like rotten fish and, somehow, even the air tasted bad.

He stood there, gazing at the red sun rising on the horizon, about to accept the greatest task in his life – to embark on a dhow across the Indian Ocean, to the Kenyan port of Mombasa, then on a train journey across the Tsavo to Nairobi and his father. Though he was very brave, this was all very new to him, and lingering around him was the thought "Will I survive this journey?"

Shouts brought him back to consciousness. Large black clouds were looming in the distance and he could feel the charge of the lightning in the air. The waves were slowly growing in size and height, as the dhow got closer to the titanic storm. Butterflies came alive in Satya's stomach. The storm was approaching like a moth attracted to a light. Satya's greatest fear was coming to life. Again, the constant thought of "Will I survive this journey?" resonated in his head.

"Get the water out!" was the only thought in Satya's mind. The boat was overflowing by the second and he was praying that it didn't spoil any of the food! Everyone was terrified, and they had every right to be. The day had been beautiful until a storm came out of the blue, bringing monstrous waves to hammer at the boat for hours! Nobody knew what to do apart from trust their instincts to survive. Satya was feeling so alone, like he was the only one in the dhow, swirling in the whirlpool.

After what felt like days, the roaring of the wind and the banging of the thunder were left behind. So much damage had been done. The wooden dhow was beginning to rot, most of the luggage had disappeared and nearly all of the damp food had become the nesting place for some sort of insect. How were so many people supposed to survive on such little food, on a half destroyed boat? This was going to be the hardest, toughest part of this already troublesome journey.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity of food and water rationing, the journey that was supposed to take 90 days, took over 100! The last ten days were the hardest of Satya's life. There was virtually nothing to eat and it felt like every internal and external part of his body had stopped functioning. His head pounded from dehydration. He crawled onto solid ground for the first time in over 3 months. His father's friends were at the port to meet him and took care of him for a few days before the train journey through the Tsavo to Nairobi. Satya would constantly choke up the food he was given and there was nothing anyone could do to help him.

While he was still quite fragile, he was sent on an overnight train journey to the capital Nairobi, which paused in the Tsavo overnight to refuel on coal and for the train driver to rest.

As the sun set in the Tsavo, Satya could see a herd of majestic elephants drinking from a river. His grandfather who had come to Africa to work some 30 years ago had told him stories of what it was like to see such a sight. It was gorgeous. However, while the train was at a standstill, there was a large risk of lions entering the carriages. Satya remembered his grandfather's stories of the man-eating lions of Tsavo and how he had lost a dear friend. But, Satya was determined to get to Nairobi. Not even man-eating lions would get in the way of his dreams.

"ROAR!" Satya woke, startled by the sinister sounds of the dark, black African night. He heard the pattering footsteps of lions outside the carriage in which he was sleeping. A hyena's evil laugh echoed in the dark night. Barbaric baboons barked in the distance while warthogs snorted in fear. The dangers of the African night were ringing in his ears and fear gripped him tightly as he curled up in a ball, scared of the dark and sounds. Alone.

The morning sunlight streamed through the windows of the carriage. Satya awoke with his fear of the sounds of the dark night still gripping him. He was sure that he would always despise this dreadful, deplorable place. However, when he gazed out of the window, he was in a trance. The Tsavo provided the most spectacular view he had ever seen. The ground was red like Mars, and gigantic, thick baobab trees were littered around in the horizon. Satya admired the abundant, unique wildlife roaming the plains, and the queer baobab trees, that looked as if they were upside down. He opened the window and smelled the freshness of the grass and tasted the nature in the air. He adored it. Little did he know that his ashes would be spread here in 56 years time.

The train chugged out of the boundaries of the Tsavo national park and into the rolling hills that bordered Nairobi, weaving in and out of them like a snake. Satya was breath taken by the beauty of the expansive African savannah, the teeming wildlife and spent the rest of his journey staring out of the window in awe. Suddenly all his hardships and trials now seemed a distant memory. He felt free.

Eventually, the train stopped in the Kenyan capital. Satya was ecstatic. He had completed the greatest journey he had ever, and possibly would ever, undertake in his life. He spotted his father in the sea of people on the platform that all had friends and family on the train, each one praying that they had made it safely. His father had changed so much in his time away. He looked like a new man, with a new life, but older and wiser. It was now time for Satya to become that too.

## The Room Was Quiet

*Harrow International School, Shanghai, Qian, Flora – 11*

The room was quiet, the only thing that could be here is pencil scratching paper. There isn't even clock in this room.

A boy in grey shirt is sitting in the middle of the room, scribbling something down on the paper.

Minute after minute, when it's six a—clock, a voice of a servant comes from outside the room: “Link it's time for dinner!”

Link stops writing, he stand up, push the chair back and walk outside.

Link White is the fifth children of the White family. The white family is one of the riches family in the city. The householder of the the White family—Taylor White was married twice. The first wife given him two children. After she passed away, Mr White married the daughter of the house holder of another rich family—Taya Jande.

Link White was the third children of Mrs White. He didn't talk much, so there's nobody in the family care about him, the only one that will still talk to him is the servant that call him downstairs to eat.

Link finish his dinner in 30 minutes, while thinking about his past.

When he was six, he saw how his two brothers make accidents to make the leg of the ex—Mrs White's daughter broke, just because she got high score in her test. She stay in the hospital for 3 months because of that.

From that on, he knew that if he shows to much talent, he would probably get the same result as his sister, so that's why he don't talk much, so his brothers wouldn't pay any attention on him, and then he will be safe.

Nothing happen these year, since he was so miserable, his brother wouldn't have to worry about him getting the heritage, that's how he gets to grow up safely. Link decide that after he was 18, he will move out of the white family, move out of this city, and live a normal life.

Just at the thought of it, suddenly a dizziness comes over him. Link try's to keep consciousness, but his's sight gradually turn black, Link fainted.

Link wake up in a strange room. He look around, he was in some kind of room, certainly not one at his house, because he've seen them all, and he haven't notice anyone similar to this.

“Are you ok? I woke up in this place and I'm frighten too.” Suddenly a voice came from beside Link, sounding like someone his age.

Link jump up and turn around, there's a boy with T-shirts and shorts sitting there. Link stare at him, didn't say a thing.

“My name is Arcas, what's your name?” when the boy saw Link turn around, a smile appears on his face.

Link still didn't say any thing, from his experience, everyone around him is up to something. Link doesn't really believe the boy is not one of them.

There's a awkward silence between them.

“Whoever's in this room now get out at once!” Before Arcas gets to say any thing, there's a bang on the door of this room.

Link roll his eyes and walk to the door, open it before the people outside gets to hit it again. There stands another kid his age, around 13, looking really unpleasant.

“What in the world are you two doing inside? Don't you know that everyone is waiting for you?” The as soon as Link open the door, the kid just started talking like some kind of eighty—year old woman.

Link stands there for a second, then he decided to close the door in front of the nose of that kid, and lock him outside.

The kid stop for a second, not expecting what's going on, then he start hitting the door even harder.

“Let's go out, John Doe, he says there's more people outside, let's go join them.” Said Arcas, while grabbing Link's hand and trying to bring him back to the door.

“I'm not called John Doe.” Reply Link, he pull his hand out of Arcas's hand and walk to the door by himself.

Arcas open the door, and walk out. The kid saw them coming out, shut up for a moment, then start saying things under breath again.

As soon as Link walk out, he felt something's wrong, including the kid before, there are five teenagers outside the room, and all of them was looking at him and Arcas, especially on him, just like the look his brother have when they are look at his sister, sharp and dangerous.

Just after this thought appear, Link felt Arcas push him by the shoulder, Link fell to the side, and a hole appears at where he's standing just a second ago.

He saw the five teenagers's expression suddenly turn from hopeful to unfortunate, the kid which one bangs the door said with unpleasantness in his voice: "That could of got one player out!"

Link's eyes darken, the hole just then wasn't deep enough to make his legs broke like his sister, but it's certainly enough to twist his feet, if it's not Arcas, he wouldn't be able to stand here unharmed.

"Come! John Doe! Look at this!" Arcas voice came from beside Link, Link turn around, and saw Arcas standing in front a wall of words.

"I'm not called John Doe." Link repeat this sentence, but he still walk towards Arcas.

"Welcome to this game. All people being chosen are random, and before you are brought here, your parent has agree about this game, in this game, anything that could kill you, for example falling in to a hole, would make you out of the game, the last one survive would get a large amount of money. So good luck at winning the game" Arcas read out the whole wall of words and looking a bit shock.

"That's why that boy try to make me fall into that hole." Said Link Calmly.

Just after he finished the sentence, Link hear some sound coming from above Arcas, Link pulled Arcas away from there, and turn around, kick the kid before into where Arcas was before.

Just a few moments later, a bag of flour came from the ceiling, pour over that kid, and while that kid was still puzzling, a voice came from the ceiling: "Luke, out."

Luke was still amazed when some kind of people in black came and brought him down.

Link's eyes narrowed for a moment, then he turn around and said to Arcas: "You save me once, and I save you once, now's free."

And Link turn around before Arcas get to do any thing, he follows the other teenagers into the hall of the building.

While walking, Link and other people did met some traps, which caught two kids out, from the words other two kids say, there are thirty kids before, but most of them were out on the traps, because Link wake up two hour later then the other kids, that's how he was one of the last four kids.

Actually Link wasn't very well the way he walk with other kids, he was confused, because he thinks in this world no one but himself is trustworthy, but Arcas Change his thought, because just then he save him again.

Link was confused why would Arcas help him, he still can't really convince himself that Arcas wasn't to any thing, but this is the only possible reason there is.

While he was thinking, he hear the sound of trap again, but before he gets to move away, one of the two kid had grab him in the arm, and not letting him going and where.

Link try's to get rid of the kid, but his hands just glue to his arm, just when Link is getting a bit worry, out of expect, the kid let go, Link jump aside, turn around, kick the kid into where he'd just been, and look at Arcas who had helped him the third times.

Three people remain silence, it's not long until the other kid's out, he and Arcas was the only two left. He knew that Arcas is a very kind person, he have no doubt that if he ask, he would be the winner of this game, but Link choose not to.

"Thank you." Link was the first to break the silence, which surprise Arcas, "You taught me that not every one in the world is selfish, and also I'm not lonely."

Arcas was puzzled, not really under standing what he's saying.

Link smiled at Arcas, that's the first smile he ever make after he understands his states at home: "My name in Link, Link White."

Before Arcas can stop him, Link step one step backwards, into a trap on the ground, the voice appears again: "Link, out."

The people in black came out again, and brought Link out, but before that, Link said conscientiously to Arcas: "Hope we meet again."

Arcas smile as well: "Hope we meet again."

## The New Year Incident

*Harrow International School, Shanghai, Cook, Emma –11*

It was a crisp and wintry day and everybody was shopping for the astonishing year ahead. People had joyous, contented and jovial smiles on their faces. The feeling was simply ecstatic and I would cherish this feeling forever and ever.

We then arrived back to our snug and cozy house and I was delighted beyond believe. We had elated smiles on our faces during that night it was incredible. I was heading into our quaint kitchen and I realized we did not have any delicious food for the new year ahead... What were we going to do?

It was December 31<sup>st</sup> and we didn't know what we were going to eat. Ron was then quickly running through the door so he could be back as fast as he could and then he muttered "I promise that I will be back before the new year" Ron said with compassion. The roads were unfortunately bumpy, destroyed and disheveled, but Ron luckily got through it without being hurt!

He finally arrived at the nearest supermarket and it was empty with not even a single sound echoing through the supermarket apart from his feet clattering along the lifeless aisle. He knew why it was empty because everybody was already organized and having such an entertaining night playing games with their family and eating till their heart contents. A single tear fell from his eye it was heartbreaking. It was only two hours until the new year so Ron knew he had to hurry up so he gathered all the ingredients for a scrumptious dinner.

Ron then left the supermarket (after paying) and got into his car and rushed home, but then a disastrous storm hit his town and there was no hope of getting home now because all the roads were closed. What was he going to do? He needed to get home to his beloved wife who loves him so much if he didn't it would absolutely shatter her heart in a single heartbeat. He decided to try the long way, but that way had been closed for days for repairmen to come fix it. Ron didn't care if he hurt himself on the way he knew that he had to get home and he had no other choice. He was thinking and thinking of an idea until He finally came up with a genius idea to get home.

His idea was to ride right through the closing sign without even thinking about it he knew this was risky, but he made a promise and he couldn't break it.

Counting down until he was going to crash through the sign was intimidating his hands were sweating and he had Goosebumps from head to toe, but then the counter began. 3...2...1 GO He was driving at an unimaginable speed and then the big BANG and the car suddenly stopped and we were all worried. Was he hurt? Nothing moved for over 10 seconds and we started to think that it was all over, but then abruptly the car was turning on its lights and the wheels slowly started to move and there was a relived smile on Ron's face, but there was no time to waste so Ron was on his way. Ron was going so fast it was hard to even see him, but then he was suddenly interrupted by a siren coming closer and closer and then he realized that it was him who the siren was trying to alert Ron didn't know whether to stop or just try to escape the police, but he decided to stay with the safe option and so he pulled over to the side of the road.

His hands were trembling with trepidation and his face was turning a ruby red and he was starting to get a bit scared.

The police officer finally arrived and he looked like he was a very tall man with a long beard. His eyes were a light blue colour and his uniform looked a bit scruffy, but then he suddenly knocked on Ron's car window and Ron rolled down his window and the police officer said

"Hey can you tell me why you were going over the speed limit?"

"well officer you see I was in a bit of a rush as you know" Ron was then interrupted by the officer "I don't give exceptions for people who violate the law yes I said the law so I am not very happy with you"

"yes officer I understand, but tonight is a very important night" "I know tonight is December 31<sup>st</sup> you are not the only one who has important things going on in their life's right now so I am going to need to give you a ticket and take you in for questioning about why you hit a sign that was for your own safety do you understand?"

"yes officer" "good" the police officer said with delight "officer before I come with you can you just hear me out I have a wife waiting for me at home so I am just asking you in the nicest way possible can you just let me get back to my wife and let me and her have a relaxing night together"

"Fine, but don't you dare think that you will always get off like this I am only letting you off because it is December 31<sup>st</sup> and I have been in the same position as you before so I know how it feels, but don't you

dare think about telling a single soul that I have let you do this do you understand?” “Officer thank you so much I will never tell anyone about this and I will never forget this kind favor you have done for me today”

Ron was then on his way with a massive smile on his face. He was just relived that he didn't get taken in by the police.

Ron was nearly home and it was exactly five minutes until the new year, but it said it would take him six minutes to get home. The only hope Ron had was to get out and sprint home, so that was exactly what Ron was going to do so he got out of his car and ran for his life. His feet were sweating and the further he went the more blisters appeared it was unearthly, but then he saw his house in the far distance and his face was lit up with contentment, but it was only one minute till the new year so he sprinted like a cheetah to his house and it was then five seconds until the new year so he walked into his house and he ran up to me and kissed me and then the bell started to ring for the new year.

The End

## We shall meet again... in Heaven

*Harrow International School, Shanghai, Horsnell, Ella -12*

**B**ang!Bang!Bang!  
"Murderer!"howled my frantic mother having a hysterical trauma so immense that she dropped my baby sister.Her head smashing into the glass table. Disintegrating the baby's head into a billion precious, fragile fragments; heavily pouring out insufferable blood it was a flaming river in a raging storm from her minute head.

Mum collapsed on the floor(her hand placed over her mouth.) Not a sound was heard apart from the frightful gunshots that occurred outside of the assassins attempting to brake in.Mum listened out for her beloved baby to hear a horrendous scream or a breath while she grasped her close to her chest, consequently agonized from her own actions.

Unfortunately, Mum was disturbed to hear the silence(not even the gunshots were continuing.)

"Shes dead..."Mum muttered inaudibly paranoid.

"She's dead!" Mum yelled trembling, her eyes streaming with mournful tears.

I could hear the fearsome gun man stamping his way up the stairs.

"Shhh," I hissed at my mum.

Bang, a gun sets of. I hear the frightening bawl of my mum trying to dart out of the room.

The alarming masked killer creeps up.His mask pitch black, that nauseating sight of a dark color; that makes your mind visualize and paint pictures you wish you had never sighted.Till you wake up traumatized in your sleep shrieking "MERCY!" To your mind to let go of that ghastly image.You can only pray for a catastrophic, cataclysmic spirit like death to take you...

I try to keep my tears from descending, and scrambled my wheelchair behind the sofa.Hearing my mum being slaughtered. How would you feel if the one most valued thing in your life had its life being taken right in front of your very eyes?

Should I let the executioner take me and my splintered heart?

My parents were my everything. The reason why I would smile. The reason why I would laugh.The reason why I had inspiration to live another day of my obscene life, despite my life being controlled by drugs. The reason The reason why I would have hope that my disorders would some day pick up and perish for eternity.

I peeked behind the Sofa to glance my mum lying there dead on the floor, a bullet protruding from her chest. I would of took that brutal bullet for her.

My last thought(or so I thought) was how fortunate I was to be breathing. Then all I can remember is getting knocked out and seeing that same shade of darkness that revolted me.

"She's awake," a low voice bellowed.

That voice I recalled I had heard before.

Finally; I raised from what felt like I had been put into bed then been awoken. I saw a petite lady in a white dress, she had: dark brown curly hair, black eyes and an unusually small nose. The man to my right had

black hair, similar to mine and dark brown eyes. He was also dressed in white; I assumed I was in hospital. For most of my life I had been on medication; in and out of the hospital to prevent my issues.

They then told me that they were going to take me to the authorities to see my granny.I was jovial to go and see my long missed granny, I hadn't seen her in years. But yet everything I turned to look at had a despairing and tribulation emotion to it, an emotion that reminded me of my departed parents.

We then drove to a large building with 'authorities' written in red capital letters on it. They told that my granny was already there. We entered small room with someone sitting in a chair.

"There she is!" Exclaimed the lady in the white dress.I searched round the room I couldn't see her.The lady in white pushed my wheelchair into the direction of my granny.

"Why can't she see her, I hope this is the right lady," discreetly said the man in a green suit,(he had just entered the room.)

"Oh you don't know, Lily is a patient at the Mental Hospital, she has a couple of issues such as: not being able to recognize people despite her being familiar with them, she is incapable of reading or writing and can barley say anything, she is also lacking in physical education, she will be in the wheelchair for her whole life."Replied the lady in white, a trifling tear drop rolled down her cheek, as a result of this she rapidly wiped it. I didn't understand why she was sulking.



The old lady in the chair got up and squealed, "Kumi when shall you pay me?"

The lady in white frowned. She also gave her hand signals to be quiet. It flashed back a sentimental moment my mums name was Kumi.

The old lady took me home in her worn down blue car and brought me to a compacted cottage by a train station. Although I was aware that I had mental delusions I was positive that this wasn't my caring grannies home.

I went to bed early that night, I was put in a minuscule room with vandalized wallpapers, it was also very dimly lit. I had previously asked granny if she could tuck me in and she agreed.

I needed to write my letter to my parents to send it up to heaven where they will be looking over me optimistically in pride. I have so much passion for them. That they didn't deserve what devastating and appalling event that we experienced. They are forever my inspirations. I love them.

It had been a long while; so I scurried down the stairs to discern a gambling table. Granny was in tears due to her losing her money consequently gambling.

At that point I was sure this wasn't my magnanimous granny. She would never gamble.

I packed my belongings indignantly I was so infuriated I feel the desire to light the house on blistering flames.

I packed my stuff and got out (keep in mind I'm only ten.) I yearned to get out!

Away from the tormenting, piecing atmosphere that the authorities thought they could replace my parents. How could they? It felt like the world is going to come crashing down onto, searing lies is all I could hear.

On my way here I noticed a train station; I was going to go there... I was to become a beggar and eventually earn enough to get my tickets out of here.

Everything was closed so I sat myself in a dismal corner next to a bin, got out my cozy blanket and slept.

I was woken up by a voice clamoring in exhilaration "Kumi and Aki are coming to save us, they are the best doctors in the world, thank god." A very boney man (to the point where the bones where protruding and was wrapped in a thin wrap of skin.) He got onto his knees and started praying muttering "thank-you."

He came up quite close to me and bellowed "thank-you!"

I smiled until he repeated what he stated in the beginning which I couldn't quite figure out what he was attempting to communicate to me.

"Kumi and Aki have saved my life!" He screeched bursting into tears of joviality.

All the thoughts galloping in my mind like horses ready to brutally battle in fright of risking a their own lives. Kumi and Aki are my parents... They work as doctors and I presume this man needs urgent medical care as a result of his severe starvation.

"When do they come?" I questioned the man anxiously.

" five minutes," he replied with a a large grin on his face.

A train came from round the corner there stepped out the same people in white that I saw at the hospital. I realized that they were my parents. I ran up to them hugging them and shrieking " mum, dad!" Their reactions were so distressing and blemishing I felt my world end...My heart stoped pumping, I discontinued to breathe.

Their reactions were that, they were repulsive like as if they on purposely died. Then it hit me... Everything was planned; the deaths, my granny. But why?

The same lady in white (I shall never refer to her as my mother ever again). She uttered " Ayami, I'm so sorry I lost a cherished gem in my heart, how can I ever ask for you to accept my apology." The man in white was silent but seemed to approve to everything she claimed.

My whole body started shuddering I triggered a pulse of desolate and despondency it spanked me so rigid I couldn't take it .I could feel the floor hollering "betrayal." I fell on to my hardened wheelchair.

I woke up. There they were surrounding my snug bed. From then on they had great passion for me. But I will never ever exonerate neither forget. I am heartbroken.

# Hunted

*Harrow International School, Shanghai, Li, Rianne – 11*

## Chapter 1– My life

**M**y name is Stella! You'd probably think that I'm a person, but I'm not. I'm a wolf... don't freak out because I am **so** not like the other savages. I'm actually relatively weak compared to others, so I'm always bullied by the 'other wolves who think just because they're bigger than me, they're better than me and therefore have the right to bully me'. You can tell from that long sentence that the 'other wolves' are very dumb. But the meanest is Catherine. Now I know the name 'Catherine' does not sound like a bully but trust me, she is. OW! Catherine just pinched me for saying that about her, but she just proved my point. Catherine! Cut it out! Sorry, she doesn't like the fact that I'm writing things about her... Anyways, since I was part of a big 'herd', I was bullied and no one cared, except Chloe (whom I'll talk about later). That was my life for 9 years... From birth to before I was attacked.

I had only one friend, her name was Chloe. She was my best friend until we're attacked.

Now, Chloe and I, we did everything together... We'd play together, we'd eat together, we'd even get bullied together as we were both weak and small.

This is how we lived our lives for 9 years: on a sunny day, we'd go outside and chase butterflies on a field of daisies; on a rainy day, we'd build a fortress and draw pictures on the mud with sticks and stones; on a cold day, we'd huddle together like frozen penguins; on a hot day, we'd lie down on the field of daisies, stare up into the bright blue sky and look for incoming clouds; on a snowy day, we'd stick our tongues out and see who'd be able to catch the most snowflakes with our tongues. But that was all before we're attacked... by wolf hunters.

## Chapter 2– 'The Attack'

Now you may wonder: 'What are wolf hunters?' or 'Why would anyone attack you?' or 'Will anyone please tell me what is going on in here?'. But fear not readers! For I will talk you through every single detail of how we were attacked...

It was a cold and snowy morning, roughly 6 AM, when the hunters came... We were all woken up from our 'lovely' wolf den by a ear-deafeningly loud BANG! And that was only the sound of a mere little bullet shooting out of a mere little handgun... But what you're about to read is **way** worse...

After we're all woken up from our sweet, innocent slumber of the night, the real 'fun' begins. Firstly, for a warm up to wolf shooting – arrows. Let's see who can injure the most amount of wolves without killing them! What a 'fun' exercise! And the next thing we knew, arrows were shot...from what seemed like the 'heavens'. The 'gods' must've been angered by our very existence or something. Otherwise, they wouldn't have sent these mortal 'assassins' to murder our entire herd. This measly 'warm-up' was enough to injure or kill our entire family. I stared in grave shock when the 'arrow rain' fell on our herd. Everything was chaotic. Everyone was running – except for Chloe. She was amazed by the very sight.

Ever since she could read, every time I saw her, her head was buried in a book – about humans... I don't understand at all why a wolf would in their right mind ever like humans, but Chloe ... She's Chloe, plain old Chloe. Her biggest dream was – to make a human friend. That is something so silly that even Catherine wouldn't dare to do. But I never told her. So, back to 'The Attack'. While everyone was petrified by the idea that they were going to die today, or desperately trying to find shelter because they don't want to end their life when they're still so young, or being heroic (which is not the best idea as it was an apocalypse for wolves) and sacrificing their lives for others (the wolves they were trying to protect died anyways). But Chloe was doing her 'happy dance', running towards the humans, trying to make friends with them and saying it is the best day of her life when she is going to the wolf hunters. But those unmerciful beasts thought she was hostile and... I'm sorry, I just can't bring myself to say it. They beat her up, stabbed her with one of those horrible arrows and left her there to bleed to death. Hey! Catherine off my notebook! You know this ink is permanent! But Catherine is right, unfortunately that is what happened to Chloe, my dearest best friend whom is in heaven as we speak.

During the attack, I was so busy looking for shelter and for Chloe that I haven't had enough time and energy to work about the arrows flying right next to me at all. Eventually, an arrow flying high up in the clear, blue sky shot down as fast as the speed of light, right into my front left leg. I was paralyzed and I became unconscious, I thought I was dead for sure, but the next thing I knew, was that I woke up in a weird place, with two people in white standing near me.

### Chapter 3 – The human world

At first, they looked a lot like the wolf hunters who tried to kill me, but when I looked again, I realized that I actually didn't know who they are. I didn't know what they're doing but I must have squealed because then, the weird people came to me and said "It's okay. You can get out of here in..." she thought for a moment, "...half an hour." I was on a dark blue table that was used for operations. I tried to stand up but I was tied to the table and my wounds hurt me like crazy, so I made the wiser decision and decided not to try to stand up on the table.

A fair amount of time later, the white people came to me with a very sharp knife. They told me to be still and it was going to hurt less and that it was going to be over shortly, so I kept still and a short amount of time later, it was finished and I have finally been released from the blue ground and they led me to a cage which I refused to go into but got shoved into it anyways. My cage was carried to a small dark room that started to move shortly after my cage was shoved into it. Even with the very dim light from a hole in the roof, I couldn't quite make out if I was the only one in the room or if there were others with me.

After an extremely long time later, the room stopped moving, and the door opened...

### Chapter 4 – My home?

When I was released from my cage, I was lead to a rather peculiar white building. The first room I went into had rather soft white chairs which I wasn't allowed to touch. In front of that was a long black box which has people trapped inside it. To the left, there was a room connected to the room, which had lots of metal boxes, circles and sticks in it. I wasn't allowed to touch any of that either. Then there's floating metal rectangles that lead to more rooms above my head.

I was astonished by what this peculiar white building had inside, but I was shocked to see that three humans walked down the floating rectangles and came over to me. "Is it coming to live with us?" Asked one of them.

"Yes, it is." Answered the other, and then came over to me and said, "This is your home now. I am your mother, this is your father", she pointed to the tallest one, "and this is your sister..." she pointed to the smallest one.

"You'll sleep here," 'Dad' said pointing to a blue mat, "you'll eat here," he said pointing to a metal bowl, "and you'll do your business here," he pointed to a stack of peculiar looking paper, although I didn't quite understand the term 'business'.

"Oh, I almost forgot!" said 'Mom', "You are forbidden to go upstairs."

After 9 years of doing the exact same thing everyday, every week and every year, I finally learned to live like a human. But just when life was getting comfortable, I was sent back to the exact cage that brought me to my human home. I got into the van again, but only this time, after a long time, I was dropped off in the middle of nowhere... But before they left, Mom came up to me and said, "Stella, your dad and I, we decided that you should return back to the wild."

## Journey to the West

*Harrow International School, Shanghai, Li, Yihan – 12*

**M**y name is Millie. I Live in California. I have a family now I am bliss, I have my husband and two other kids, one called Mandia and the other one Jassi. I do not have other family members, not even my mom, dad or siblings. I was born in Vermont, how I got here was a very long story. I will tell you from the beginning.

This was the year when I was thirteen. I was laying in my bed, listening to my parents talking. I didn't mean to listen to the conversation until I heard my mom, actually, my step-mother saying to my dad: "You know that many people got rich just because they went to California! They found gold! A lot of gold! We can also get rich too! We should go. You know we can get rich! ..."

Wait, what did she just say? Going to California? What? No! That is not happening! I just want to stay here. I almost burst out of the door and I wanted to punch her. She is very mean to me and all she does is spend money like she has burned a hole in her pocket. And now she wanted to get rich by finding gold!

I went to sleep with anger and confusion.

In the next morning as expected my dad told me that we are going to California, and he already prepared all the things we need and we are ready to go. This shocked me because I was expecting to go like in a week or so.

"Get on the wagon! Quick!" My mean step-mother shouted at me.

My dad stared at her, so she gave me a smile, a fake one. I went on the wagon and sat down, it was a small one, I can not calm my self down. We started our way to California.

Days and days past, we still didn't arrive at the next town. Our food and supplies got lesser and lesser. Our bits of patience are also running out day by day. Until one day our nightmare became true, we really ran out of food!

I got sicker and sicker every day. One day I fell like I am going to die, but surprisedly I lived through my hardest time, meanwhile, someone was not very happy of my recoverability and was planning for my death—my step-mother.

One day in the morning. It is quit a nice day, the sun was bright, the sky was blue and clear white clouds were drifting through the sky. Everyone feels like this will be the day of their luck. But for me, it was a nightmare.

My stepmother threw me out of the wagon and abandoned me. For the second I was like: This is a dream! This can not be true! But it is real.

I was starving, I lied on the road and I asked people for food, but they just looked at me and gave me a disgusting look. I felt so bad that I feel like I am going to die any moment. I closed my eyes and waited for the god of death to come and pick me up.

"Are you okay? Can you hear me?" A soft voice talked to me. I thought to my self: am I already in heaven, am I already dead?

I think it was because of the excitement and also fear, I just sat up and opened my eyes, I scanned around and found a family all standing beside me.

"Who are you?" I inquired softly to the family. They all turned their head and looked at me.

"YOU ARE AWAKE!, finally! We thought you are dea...(here she wanted to say 'dead')"

One of the girl remarked, but the woman beside her covered her mouth at the last word. The girl was not very pleased.

"Sorry, umm, Mandi didn't mean to say that. I am so sorry! Are you okay?" The woman explained and asked me.

"I am okay...um, I guess." I lied.

This was how I met my step-step-mother, my step-father, Jasmine my bigger sister which was sixteen and my little sister Mandi, she was ten. I loved my new family, I cared about them, and you know what, they also cared about me. I asked if I added trouble to them, but they said joyfully: "It was like I had bear a son, I have always wanted one!" I spent my happiest days with them, but...

"You may not harm my children and my wife! I am not afraid. If you move one more step, take care!" my father said angrily.

"HA! HA! HA! HA! Oh really! You can try!" The robber laughed.

My father raised the kitchen knife and ran to the robber. The robber just jumped aside, and he pulled out a dagger and...

“Take care! Papa! Take care!”Mandi shouted.

But it was all late. Blood dripped down from the dagger. Our father was... killed. We didn't believe it, how can he be killed. He liked jokes, this must be one. Until one minute later we faced the truth. But my mom didn't seem like she wanted to face the truth.

“Hack, ke, hack, hack(coughing)”

“Are you okay Mom?” Jasmine said distressfully.

“Yes, mom are you...” Mandi added, but was broken-in by Mom's cough.

Two days later mom died because of some unknown disses.

That Day was the worst day in my whole entire life. I thought to my self: How can this happen, this is not possible. My life was already bad enough. I met my stepmother and she threw me out of the wagon and now... I do not know how my life can be even worse. Now there's only me and my two sisters. I did not know how we can live through this.

“It was all because of you! You Hoodoo! It is you who killed mom and dad. You! It is all because of you!” Mandi said angrily and burst into tears when she said the words mom and dad. From that, we did not talk to each other for days. How can this be my fault!

We did not quit know how to drive a wagon so we just walked. “ I can not walk anymore, can we just rest, please!” we walked and walked until Mandi protested that she can not anymore. If she did not complain about this, the one will be me. We all did not sleep well last night I bet. I cried all night, and I believe that I have only slept for one hour.

It was the third day till we started walking, we did not want to move on, and most importantly we didn't know where to go anymore. The only good thing is that we have enough food. We sat there waiting for some help, we asked every wagon, if they are going to the same place as us. But for the whole day, there was no progress.

Night fell, we had nothing to do, so we are going to bed.

“ Pitter-pat, Pitter-pat.(sound for walking)

“Did you hear it? I heard something, I think is someone walking towards us. Who will be here this late? Oh no it must be a robber!” Jasmine whispered to us.

“He is coming closer, quick, hide!”Jasmine squeaked.

The man spoke again “Hey! Why are you guys hiding, is there a robber? OMG, Let me hide too! Quick!”

“Please do not k..ki..kill me, I beg you! What do you want, I can give everything to you! Please do not kill me!”I begged him.

“What? I am not going to kill you. Do you think I am a people killer? Ha, I am just a farmer. Why do I need to kill you anyways!”He laughed and taunted me.

This is how I met him, he is the one who saved our lives. He brought us to the town. He gave us a home, he helped us in life. He is a nice man, he is like my third father. There's actually no luck, But I thought life will always become better.

Blessings never doubles, disasters never come alone, my sisters, both of them, then be flushed away by river water when they are mining for gold. At first I did not believe it, this seemed impossible to me.

This time life really cannot be worse. I thought to my self: Maybe Mandi is right, I am a hoodoo, maybe I am cursed. At that point, I almost wanted to end my life, but again I thought to my self, life will always be better, and over time this kind of feelings got weaker and weaker.

This was twenty years ago, but it is still like yesterday. In this I have grown, I became stronger, both inside and out. I went on this journey, the journey to the west.

## Gemma's Story

*Harrow International School, Shanghai, Littler, Julianna – 11*

The clouds shifted and the moon came into sight in the dimming atmosphere. Down on Spring Field Street, there was an industrious house—hold. Within the house there were three people rushing around in stunning prom dresses and striking suits.

It was Gemma's first prep school dance as she was only nine years old, and her parents were determined to make it perfect. Her hair was put into the most flawless bun, and her mum, Margaret, treated her to a bit of blush and lipstick. Gemma's dress was glamorous with a layer of sequins wrapping around the top half of her elegant figure. The skirt of the dress draped down at the back and left the front shorter. She did look mature for her age. The exception was that she wore cheap, plastic '*clip clops*' that were originally from her human size Barbie that she had recently got for Christmas.

The dance started at quarter past six and the clock had just struck five.

"We need to go, DAD!"

"One sec honey, just need to gel down this protruding hair!"

Gemma and her mum were chatting at their front door about how memorable the dance was going to be, meanwhile her dad came out of the bathroom with a loose hair sticking up like a penguin. Gemma and her mum were taken over by laughter as her dad stood there taking it all in. Before the three left the house, Gemma's mum stopped and looked at Gemma "Your dad and I are going to be here throughout every milestone of your life" They then had a sweet family cuddle.

After the extraordinary night of entertainment and dance they came back worn out and exhausted.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Gemma sat in the waiting room of the dreary hospital, staring blankly at the new born, in the arms of her ill looking mother. All her relatives were there admiring Gillian (the yet to be decided name of Gemma's baby sister)

Gemma's mother was not beaming with happiness after all the family members had left, she grew quite discreet... Her face began to turn unusually pale and her lips quivered as they went deep blue. She tried to speak but no words seemed to come out. "DOCTOR, DOCTOR!"

"What's wrong with her dad?"

"It's ok sweetie, your mums going to be ok." A doctor and nurse came rushing in with different anesthetics on a little steel tray. Gemma's dad was breaking out in anxiety whilst Gemma was watching.

"Calm down sir, your wife hasn't reacted well to this antibiotic that we gave her after surgery to stop her womb from getting infected, so what's happening is, her blood has started to clot somewhere around her chest, and if we don't treat this now then there is 90% chance that your wife won't make it." The nurse and doctor detached all of the electrodes and ECG pads which were connected to her body and then with force, charged the hospital bed down to the operating theatre. All strained out, Gemma's dad picked up baby Gillian and pulled Gemma close he needed time to take in all that had just happened.

In the chaotic waiting room Gemma and her dad sat, waiting impatiently for the doctor to come out with some good news.

Later that day Gemma and her dad returned home depressed and teary eyed, as for the baby, she would not stop crying. Days went by and all they had eaten was Weetabix, for breakfast, lunch and dinner. "Dad?"

"WHAT!" he snapped, "Can't you see I'm looking after your sister!"

Gemma spent the rest of her time in her room, she painted the walls with her mother when she was five. There was a part of her room that meant the most to her, just above the head—board of her bed there were three hand prints, Gemma, her mum and her dad each dipped their hands in colored paint and pressed it against the wall forming a heart shape, with Gemma's in the middle, she looks at it every night and says her prayers. Her parents used to know exactly when she had finished, and they would both come in and say 'goodnight', but now she can't rely on her dad to do much anymore since he is either looking after her sister or he had fallen asleep on the sofa.

This particular morning Gemma didn't wake up to a baby crying, there was a sound of someone shuffling through junk or files. She got up and skimmed through the house to see if anyone had gotten in as her dad forgets to lock the door, but she found her dad in the living room with a fully packed suit case. "Dad, are we going on holiday?"

“Um...we... I... “Just before he finished his sentence, Gemma skipped upstairs. “I knew you were going to come through dad! A family holiday, well, a father and daughter one. Does Gillian have to come? I don’t think she should! Just me and you, oh I love you dad!”

“Hold up honey, I’m going on holiday on my own... and— “

“Wait, you’re leaving me here with... her!? Gemma started to sulk as she dropped herself down onto one of the steps on the stairs. “Just go, you’re probably never going to come back anyways, it won’t make a difference as you barely even talk to me.”

“Honey... you know I love you, but this is just too much for me to handle.”

“WHAT, are you saying that you can’t handle the baby and me or that mum is gone?” There was no response. He didn’t hesitate to stop what he was doing and stay with his daughters and as he opened the door he turned around and looked at Gemma, “I love you and I’m sorry!” and he was out the door before you knew it, he didn’t even tell Gemma where he was going.

It was the start of the month after the girl’s dad left and an envelope came in, it was from their dad, there were no ‘I love you’ notes or ‘I miss you’ notes. There was just money, 200 pounds, and the same type of envelope was the same every month. As the two girls started to grow up they started to get rather close and what brought them closer each month was the way they were living: they did not use much lights, just natural light from the windows, Gemma and Gillian shared a room because Gill was scared of the dark. When Gemma prayed before she slept, there were now four hand prints. Gemma would pray that one day her dad would come back, and that Gillian would get to see him as the dad he used to be, not the one he was when Gill was a baby.

Gemma had been through a lot as she grew up and she didn’t want her sister to follow the same path she took, so Gemma was very protective of Gill and she acted like a mother to her, like the mother she wish she had through her early stages of life. Maybe their mum was not with them physically, but in Gemma’s heart she would take her mum through every milestone of her and her sister’s life.

It was the start of a new month and Gemma went outside to the mail box to get their subsistence money from her dad. However there was nothing in the mail box... They waited the whole month and lived off scraps and bits and pieces of food, but nothing was in the mail box the next month either. What if something might have happened to their dad? Or maybe the two sisters were relying on him too much and he just didn’t come through? Whatever it was Gemma and Gillian had to figure something out...

# Torture House

*Harrow International School, Shanghai, Milford, Carlotta – 12*

It was dark.  
Xiao Ling was running away——fast. She couldn't afford it if they caught her.

Not now. Not ever.

She turned a sharp right, jumped over a fallen tree and slipped through the mud into a forgotten river. She had cut her foot badly with a sharp rock in the river and blood was oozing out. No time to complain.

They were gaining. She had to get going.

She stood up quickly and a sharp pain shot through her body paralysing her for a millisecond. But that was enough for them to catch up. She had to run. It wasn't an option. If they caught her who knew what they would do? They would probably torture her and turn her into a weapon of some kind.

She limped to the edge of the river and tried hopping out but it was no use, her foot shot pain through her with every step she took.

**BAAANNNGGGG!!!!!!!!!!**

Her world went black.

She woke to the noise of trickling water. She opened her eyes, it was so bright she thought she was in another world.  
Then she remembered: "Last night" she whispered.

She jumped up forgetting about her foot and fell back down again. "Argh," she groaned. She slowly sat upright and looked around her.

Everything was destroyed.

The city Audweener had been eliminated from existence. A tear rolled down Xiao Ling's face and dropped from her chin onto the remaining earth beneath her. She held onto her arm where she had broken it from flying in the air and falling on the floor from the explosion and slowly turned and limped into the woods opposite the remains of Audweener.

She lingered in the woods a few days grabbing and scrapping whatever she could find until she saw it:

The Palace.

It was a giant palace made from green crystals, chrysoprase, that formed wonderful translucent green and sometimes turquoise sculptures. She wandered around the palace speculating every splendour that it contained with delight. It was the most amazing place ever.

"Hello," said a mysterious voice from behind her. She spun around coming eye-to-eye with a man. He had a shaven head that rebounded the sun's reflection, spectacles and a clearly very expensive suit. He was grinning. He was probably in his mid-thirties.

"I can see you are not from here," he added with a very calm tone. He was not particularly handsome. He was rather plain.



“I am Professor Sfvder,” he continued “librarian and magimatitian in ‘*Elavadores Migtagnicus Yalore’s Escuela Mágica*’.”

“Ela—what?” Xiao Ling asked dumfounded.

She had almost been killed, caught, found a wonderful palace that somehow belonged to a weirdo that spoke in a different language.

Professor Sfvder chuckled.

“Now, now. We need to get you inside the——y—you” the professor stuttered. Then after comforting his nerves and quickly regaining himself, he pulled himself back together and said “Have you ever tried magic?”.

He eyed her watchfully. It made her nervous. He wasn’t grinning anymore.

He might be with them she thought!!!

Suddenly through the corner of her eye she saw—**HIM!!!**

The man that had murdered her parents and tried to capture and torture her for her powers.

She squirmed a tiny bit and the “*Professor*” squawked “Welll????!!!!”

After quickly calculating what she was going to do, she used him as a wall to run up on to the ceiling.

She always had a special power to heal, do parkour and gymnastic moves, karate and read minds. But now she could run on ceilings.

After kicking the “*Professor*” really hard he stumbled back stunned. Then he realised what had happened and he chanted, shouted and screamed some sort of spell that dragged the chrysopraxe from the ground into the air to try and stab her.

“**ARRGGGGGHHHHHHH**” screamed a voice.

She didn’t know it.

She didn’t mean it .

But with one blow she had destroyed the palace.

Shards of chrysopraxe shattered, shooting everywhere. Xiao Ling’s torn up clothes were turned to rags in seconds. She looked behind her, everything destroyed... all...her...fault. Just like Audweener. It was bombed. Or did someone blow it up by mistake?

When she was in the middle of thinking a dagger sliced threw her shoulder throwing her against the wall in pain. She saw the “*Professor*” on the ground. But the suspicious people from before were hiding—and she was pretty sure they had thrown the dagger. She saw them pull out a weapon, it looked like a Hydrosour, it was well built and very, very deadly. They began warning it up and Xiao Ling took it as her chance to escape.

She dove behind a block of crystal that had fallen and saw a door at the corner of the hall. It was her chance!! She had to take it or die. She took it.

She sprinted with all her might to go as fast as possible. She opened her once closed eyes and stifled a yelp.

She was flying!!

She was so shocked and happy so that the sound of the Hydrosour scared her badly. They had shot it and barely missed. It had slammed into a bit of the chrysoprase palace that still held together and made it explode just as she made it past. She was blown through the door landing on the other side. The crystal had fallen from the palace blocking her exit.

It was hot.

It was dark and fiery red.

Xiao Ling turned around and saw a giant palace. It was crooked, red and was on top of a fiery mountain.

Molten lava was oozing out the side.

Xiao Ling gulped.

She knew exactly where she was:

Hell.

## Journey to the West

*Harrow International School, Shanghai, Yang, Elina -13*

Look, the sky turns dimmer and dimmer, spreading shades of dusk that covered the earth. The misty side of the mountain is lightened by golden rays. Not just the sky and the earth surface, but Ling herself is covered in golden waves. Ling settled down slowly, watching and enjoying this last light of the day. By and by this golden light faded and faded. The rosy tint vanished and the day cooled. Darkness gathered together and became thicker and thicker, the night is coming. Ling crept through the soft ground and went into her tent, soon feel asleep. It is a long night, but after a day of traveling, Ling slept deeply in her sleeping bag, not noticing that the sun has already sneaked from the other side of the earth to here.

Ling is a 16 years old girl who is seeking to find peace in this bustling world. She yearns to listen to the voice of nature. Himalayas, the place she dreams to be, she believed that Himalayas is the only place she can find true peace, true shelter for her heart! However, her parents are always dissenting with her idea that her dream couldn't come true. Three years ago she found out herself suffering from cancer, and that's when she decides to start the journey to the west.

After a month of traveling, Ling cleaned up her camp swiftly and got up from the ground quickly started another day of long journey. Across the mountain, Ling stood at the highest point of the valley. She took out a map, a compass, pointed into the direction of west, and walked along the path. She kept walking and walking until she can't walk any further, she kept looking and looking, hoping to see Himalayas right in front of her. She didn't know how long has past, she no longer knew where she was going, she is lost. The sky turned dark, Ling kept on walking, she is extremely tired, but she is too scared to stop. As time past, Ling felt hopeless, but suddenly, a bright spot light appeared, as Ling got closer it became clearer. Finally, Ling is standing at front of a small wooden house. "Dong, dong", she knocked on the shabby door. After a while, an old man came out and lead her in to a poor filthy bedroom, the old man said coldly, "You can stay here for tonight, but tomorrow our family is going to leave!" Then he left Ling to sleep.

"Dong, dong, dong" The noise outside the room waked Ling up. Ling opened the door and saw the same old man standing there "We have to go now, you can't stay here anymore." Said the old man with the same tone. "Where are you going?" Ling asked helplessly, "I want to go to the Himalayas mountain range, can you give me a lift and guide me there?" The old man walked away ignoring Ling's request. After a while, the old man and his family appeared. The old man asked "Are you going or not?" Right from then, she started her journey to the west.

Ling followed the old Chinese family all the way to the west until they reached a broad highway. Everyone in the family started to make long kowtows, they put their hands over their head's and slowly came down to chest, and every 3 steps they walk they do one kowtow. They repeated it again and again. Ling realized that they are all believers in the family who pray all the way from here to the Himalayas. Ling watched them doing kowtows one by one without stopping, and it last for so long that Ling can not bear the anxious in her mind but asking the old man "Why are you doing this? What is it for? It's wasting time! Why don't you guys just walk properly? It is much faster!" The old man answered calmly "It is what we are born to do, it's our religion. Every step, every kowtow, every greet is our meaning for life, we pray for all man on earth, and this is faith. The road of prayers is meant to be tough, if you want to give up, then go now." Ling looked up to the endless road, she had no choice but to keep up with the guys, to keep up with her dream.

Ling followed they day by day, month by month, years by years. However, they still haven't arrived yet. One day, when Ling woke up and opened her eyes, she can't see clear, and all of a sudden, she felt that her throat is cut opened and she can't breath. She was terrified, and she struggled to try to breath in air, a few minutes later, she is finally well again. Ling quickly grabbed some medicine from her bag and swallowed it. The old man came to Ling and said "Young lady, go, you don't have to stay with us, if you have something that you want to do, go do it, just go" The old man went away after saying that to Ling.

This is a special evening, to Ling it is the most beautiful time in her life. The sky turns dimmer and dimmer, spreading shades of dusk that covered the earth. The misty side of the mountain is lightened by golden rays. Not only sky and the earth surface, but Ling herself is covered in golden waves. Ling settled

down slowly, watching and enjoying this last light of the day. By and by this golden light faded and faded. The rosy tint vanished and the day cooled. Darkness gathered together and became thicker and thicker, the night is coming. Ling crept through the soft ground and went into her tent, soon feel asleep. It is a long night, but after a day of traveling, Ling slept deeply in her sleeping bag, not noticing that the sun has already sneaked from the other side of the earth to here. Slowly, a strong beam of light shined through the tent and straight onto Ling's face. After a night, it's another morning, another brand new start. However, this time Ling didn't get up. She slept there quietly and peacefully, and finally find the true shelter for her heart!

Ling's dairy:

Today is another peaceful day in my life. I know that the time for me would not be long. However, my life is a journey, the destination no longer bothers, what really matters is now! The believers went to the Himalayas for faith, the same people repeat the same movement but with different view. They take it step by step, kowtows by kowtows, every footprint they left is their religion. Sometimes we went too hurry, ignoring many beautiful sceneries and things that truly belongs to us in the journey of life, so let's slow down the pace and watch carefully for those beauty around us. People are born by chance, but die for sure. Why do we need to worry about things that doesn't matter? Enjoy the life you have, do what you can, because when you are at the end of life, there wouldn't be regrets.

# The Real Distance Between Friends

*Harrow International School, Shanghai, Yeung, Hoi Shun – 12*

## Chapter 1

Jaclyn and Audrey had always been super close friends since they were very young. They met on the first day of school, and shortly after a few months, they became inseparable. They found out that both of them had a lot in common. Jaclyn and Audrey stuck together all the time, especially on the bus. They played together in almost every recess, they sat together every lunch break, and they had tons of playdates whenever they had free time — almost once or twice a week! They would talk about all sorts of different topics, share all secrets, do weird things that people will never understand, and sometimes even use their “telepathic powers” to communicate. They were very supportive and respectful to each other. They know that they can count on each other all the time, and that they can trust each other with their top secrets. People were so used to seeing Jaclyn and Audrey together that they get confused when only one of them shows up. People also thought that they spent way too much time together but it was never enough for them!

Whenever Jaclyn had anything she thought was interesting, she would always show it to Audrey. And whenever Audrey had anything she thought was interesting, she would always show it to Jaclyn. They were so close that they were like siblings, and had nothing to hide from each other.

One day though, Audrey told Jaclyn that she had to leave to another city. Jaclyn thought that things would never be the same again...

## Chapter 2

Audrey was leaving to Hong Kong the next day, and will not come back to Shanghai anymore. She will be staying in Hong Kong for at least 7 years. After hearing this news, Jaclyn felt hopeless, and she was very, very upset.

She thought that they would never be able to go to school together like before and that there would never be anyone else like Audrey. She thought that there was never going to be anyone to sit with her on the very front of the bus and play with miniatures, she thought that she will never have playdates with someone that lived so close to her, she thought that she would never find anyone else that had so much in common with her, she thought... She felt like as if a huge part of her was missing, but she can't do anything to fix it.

Every time she thought about it she would feel heartsick.

## Chapter 3

That night, Jaclyn went home with a heavy heart. She walked into her house and her parents greeted her and asked her how her day was, but she ignored them, went straight to her bedroom and locked her door up. She tossed her bag on the floor and threw herself on to her bed. She grabbed a pillow and buried her face into it. As soon as the first tear got out of her eyes, all the rest followed like an endless stream. Her whole body was shaking, and she sobbed into her pillow unceasingly, hands clutching at the edges of her pillow. The sobbing softened as her tears slowly soaked her pillow. She cried to herself the whole night until she had no more energy to cry anymore and finally fell asleep.

## Chapter 4

Jaclyn woke up the next day with swollen eyes. Although she didn't feel like crying anymore, she still felt acrimony and already missed Audrey. She asked if she could skip school that day, but her parents said no. So she got through her morning routine and went downstairs to wait for the bus.

When the bus arrived she walked onto the bus alone with her head down. Almost everyone on the bus was staring at her, whispering to each other. Jaclyn tried her best to ignore she didn't hear or see anything.

Jaclyn looked to the seat next to hers, but Audrey wasn't there. She started to think about Audrey but stopped herself for doing so before she was going to start crying again. She knew that no one was going to come sit next to her, so she was all alone on the bus from the way to school and the way back home.

Days past, then weeks, then months. No one ever came to sit with Jaclyn, and Jaclyn was all alone. She tried really hard to not think about all those bitter thoughts, and that did make her feel a bit better over time.

One day after school, when Jaclyn came home, her parents had some exciting news for her.

## Chapter 5

"Jaclyn! Welcome home! How was school today? We have some really exciting news for you! We have been contacting Audrey's parents recently and found out that Audrey is free during summer break this year! They're staying in Hong Kong for quite a long time, and we have scheduled a trip to Hong Kong during summer break a long time ago! We can be visiting Audrey very soon! Aren't you excited for that?" said Jaclyn's parents that day when Jaclyn arrived home.

Jaclyn dashed towards her parents and hugged them as tight as she can with all her strength before her parents even got to finish. "This is one of the best things I've heard in my life! Of course I'm excited! I'm extremely thrilled to hear this news! I can't wait until summer, I wish summer break can just start tomorrow!" Jaclyn exclaimed frantically. She was deliriously happy, she felt pumped, excited, more alive than she had ever been. She glowed from inside out, like a brand new golden ball. She smiled her biggest smile, so big that it cracked her face. She just had a wonderful feeling about the day, nothing that felt this right could possibly go wrong.

## Chapter 6

Summer arrived very soon, and Jaclyn was off to Hong Kong with her family members to visit Her friend that she felt like she hasn't seen in ages. The way from home to the airport seemed to last forever, Jaclyn was desperate to just jump out the car and fly to Audrey's house within a few seconds.

Jaclyn arrived in Hong Kong and met up with Audrey the next day. Both Jaclyn and Audrey were both so glad and so overjoyed to see each other! They played together like they have been with each other the whole time and they were just continuing from where they left off last time. They went shopping, they went swimming, they went ice skating, and They also went to each other's houses and had 7 day sleepovers.

After the first time meeting up with each other in such a long time, they decided that every year they would at least visit each other once during vacation. Every time they visit each other, they go to a different place to spend their time together. Ocean park, Disney, and The Hong Kong park, have been their top 3 favorite places to have their playdates at.

Jaclyn and Audrey got in touch with each other shortly after the first playdate that they had in Hong Kong. They found out that they both had Skype, so they added each other and talked/texted each other whenever their devices are with them, like they were never separated before. Both of them mail gifts to each other on certain holidays and of course, their birthdays. This has been one of their traditions that they started doing since Audrey left.

## Chapter 7

After all, being separated from a very close friend doesn't seem that bad. Jaclyn and Audrey still get to visit each other every year, and they both have skype to keep in touch with each other.

Friends don't have to be together every day in order to retain their intimacy. If we all cherish this friendship, no matter where you are, what city and country you are in, you can always keep this friendship as long as both friends have each other in their heart and are in touch. Friendship will only get more and more profound as time passes.

## New Journey to the West

*HKUGA College, Chan, Tze Kwan Macus – 13*

I found myself trapped at a dead end. The siren kept howling ominously. Barely holding my breath, I couldn't help but quiver like a rabbit under the shadow of its nemesis. Numerous flashlights and pistols scanned around, and missed me by inches, and halted.

"Target not found. Team Alpha, proceed to Cameron Road."

"Copy that."

In what seemed like ages, I watched as the footstep and the flashlight faltered.

"What have I done, what have I done!", I contemplated at the 5k diamond I had stolen, sitting right at my palms. I cannot go back home. I have no friends. My heart crumpled like the remaining cash concealed in my pocket. And so I ran, away from those towering giants looming around me.

Inside the labyrinth, I could only hear the roar of cars and the squeaking sound of rats scuttling around the rubbish bags, where I was hiding. My throat was burning. Sweating wouldn't help it. It was an endless journey which... Led me to oblivion, to nothingness. But what could I do?

I kept on trudging through alleyways between buildings. I kept on trudging while the homeless slept. I kept on trudging till something suddenly caught my eyes, like a mist swirling in front of me.

"Are you lost in your life? Are you in despair of what to do next?" The mist said.

"Yes," I muttered, reaching out my hand.

"Do you want to assist me in my quest to the West?"

"Yes," I replied without considering and then everything blurred.

Slowly opening my eyes, I barely saw anything as my eyes were adapting to the daylight. But I felt refreshed. I felt energy recovering. I cannot tell. "Are there twenty eyes? Or thirty?" I only knew that my cheeks were burning hot facing all these curious stares. "Are you the one? Are you the one with the greatest desire to change?" One doubted. Meanwhile, a million questions popped up at once in my head, "Where am I now? Why are they all dressed up like monks?"

"Why are you treating me like that? I deserve to go to hell."

"We forgive anyone who is willing to make up for their sins." An old monk solemnly replied. Sitting on the mat calmly, he slowly opened his eyes, "What's your name?"

"John," I replied.

"You promised that you would help me finish the quest."

"What quest?"

"We will finish a quest to walk from here to the Himalayas, in order to discover the greatest treasure."

"Where is 'Here'?"

"This is a very remote place in Bao An."



I was tongue-tied. I was utterly confused about whether they were on an expedition, monks, or just buffoons with delusions. That whole idea of walking to Himalayas was just insane, but what else could I do?

“These two men and I will assist your journey. Let me introduce ourselves. I am Xuzu, he is Duan Yu, and the latter is Qiao Feng,” He continued.

“Then... How are we going to start?” I shrugged my shoulder, and laughed.

“First, we paddle a boat to the origin of Zu Jiang (River),” He led us to the coast, where there is a small boat and bags of items.

I didn’t think twice before boarding, “I can escape from here!”

Within hours of my expedition, I immediately regretted it. My hands were sore, sweating wouldn’t help relieve it. And my companions seemed enthusiastic, humming songs as we rode.

In what seemed like ages, I finally caught sight of an island standing on the ocean. I was same as the island, lonely in the currents, I thought.

“Let’s stop there to rest!” Duan Yu yelled.

We walked leisurely along the shore, enjoying the tranquil moment in the night. Then, thousands of black dots arose from the silky sand. Petite tortoise! Were they waddling to the shore? Why were they doing that? The predators and dangerous waves were killing them.

My heart ached as I peeked at them. Some being taken by hawks, some being washed away instantly when it touched the water, some even couldn’t manage to make their way through! But I was certain that all had attempted to face their fears.

“But why can’t I? Why am I so afraid of my life?” My brain was in turmoil, with thousands of opposing thoughts rising up at the same time. The only thing that I was certain about was that this journey would give me some answers.

My journey continued for weeks, and we all soon became good friends. We chatted together. We foraged food together. We lived together in tents. Meanwhile, as the journey continued, I felt that the air was getting thinner and thinner. I knew that we were approaching the Himalayas.

Then a resort appeared in front of us. My companions immediately sat down and meditated, mumbling curses and passages that I couldn’t understand. “Why are they doing that? Why can’t we get inside and relax for a bit?” And the more I thought about it, the more my heart urged me to go inside. I could hear the water splashing sound of the swimming pool and feel the warm air steaming out from the room.

“Welcome! Why don’t you get in and have some fun?” An angel like voice said from nowhere. I just couldn’t resist it. Thus my footstep accelerated to the doorstep of the resort. However, I stopped. I was not there to enjoy. I was there to finish the quest. Struggling to turn back, my companion’s face caught my eyes. For the first time, I could see their satisfied face because of me, and this brought me a sense of pride.

After months and months, we reached the summit of the Himalayas. A sense of serenity swept towards me as I heaved a sigh of relief. I felt a new hope igniting in my heart, even while the howling wind brought us bittering cold. Thoughts ran around like wild horses, filled with the dreams that had once been burned to ash. And a voice rang clearly inside my ears.

“You succeeded in finishing the ultimate quest. The treasure you have is a chance to turn over a new leaf,”  
And everything became blurred again.

I slowly opened my eyes, and I realized that I was in the warm cozy bed of my home. Letting out a loud yawn, I flipped over the calendar, and there was a small scribble on it, “Rob the diamond today.” I peered around, a crowbar, a bolt cutter and a pistol lied quietly on the table. Then I knew what I should do.

Remarks:

1. Bao An: A District which included Hong Kong in the old times.

## Journey To The West

*HKUGA College, Chan, Sze Wai Sophie – 14*

I burned through the vines tied around me. Damn it. I wasn't fast enough. They got away.

"Brother, why didn't you stop them? We're going to have to starve again tonight." That annoying voice of Ba Jie rang again.

I snapped at him, "You weren't even able to do anything yourself! So shut up!"

"But..." He pouted.

"One more word from you," I glared him, "And you shall stay tied up for the rest of the week."

"Chill brother. Chill" Sha Wujing told me. I gave him a death glare, too. "Ok, ok. I'll untie Shifu first." He scurried away towards Shifu.

I leaped onto a peach tree. I couldn't let them get away with our food and leave me starvin', no way!

"Where are you going?" I heard Shifu call from far away.

"I'm going to hunt them down and retrieve our loss."

"You shouldn't kill them! They're living creatures after all! It'll hurt!" "Hey! Come back brother!" I didn't even bother to answer them. My blood was boiling just to think I, the Monkey King, would lose to those little wolf cubs.

I saw them sprint towards a village. Villagers screamed. It annoyed me a lot. That's it, I'll finish them once and for all. I pulled my Jingu Bang from my ear. Yes, that's right, my ear. That's where I kept it. I extended my weapon and slammed it on their backs.

Slam! Boom! Their blood stained the floor and bushes. Their dead bodies were scattered around.

"Wukong! I told you not to hurt the living!" "Here we go again," I thought.

"You either be killed or you kill! That's the rule of nature!" I retorted after his splendid speech of respecting life.

"That's not the point!" I ate my peach, ignoring his annoying lecture. "Are you even listening?" I heard him yell.

Oh well, time to go down. "Yes, I did Shifu," I replied, obviously pissed off.

"Whatever. Ba Jie! Go fetch us some food if you don't wanna spend the night starving!" Shifu chirped happily.

"Also ask the villagers if there are any monsters living on this mountain!"

I don't trust Ba Jie. He simply never does his job well.

"Shifu, Sha Wujing, I'll go check on him, just in case he falls asleep on his way." I told them. "I bet he's asleep already!"

"Wukong, have some faith in him," Shifu commented.

“Shifu, brother! Count me in, I bet that Ba Jie is already asleep!”

“Come on, Shifu! Let us go and check,” We begged.

“Ok, but...”

“Done deal.” Sha Wujing gave me a fist bump.

I leaped above the ground into the air. The clouds washed my face, the breeze combed my messy fur.

There he was, a big piece of pink fat down there. “Game time!” I shape-shifted. I flapped my black and white wings. Then, I adjusted my wings and tail feathers, pointed my beak downwards, narrowed my eyes at my pink fat target. Angle, check; wings opened, check; direction, check; ready to go, Wukong woodpecker ready for flight.

Whoosh! I felt the wind hit my face. I winced and narrowed my eyes, and the pink target was growing bigger and bigger.

Boom! Head shot. Bull’s-eye.

“Ouch!” Ba Jie’s voice boomed. He leaped into the air and landed on his butt, creating shock waves in all directions. I could totally feel my feathers shuffling.

“Shoo! Go away you pesky bird.” He waved his hands crazily in front of me. Nice try. I slammed my beak onto his forehead again and again.

“I’m not a tree, you dunce!” He yelled, protecting his head.”

I laughed at his foolishness. Of course, he didn’t understand me. I made sure he didn’t understand birds! I flew back to Shifu and Wujing in circles.

“Oi, guys!” I yelled as I landed in my original form.

“Ba Jie was indeed asleep! Shifu you lost the bet! Now you are not allowed to give us any of your lectures for the following three days!”

“Wukong,” Shifu said in an annoyed tone, “You know the rules.”

“Shifu, you’re going to let Ba Jie carry the luggage tomorrow!”

“Not you too, Wujing!” Shifu wailed.

“Shifu! Brothers! I’m back!” Ba Jie’s belly was wobbling around again.

“Got any food?” I smirked. “What mountain is this? Any monsters around here?”

“Eh,” he paused. “This is known as the rock mountain...”

“Where harmless Golems live.” I chirped in.

“The village is known as the rock village.” He nodded awkwardly and continued, “they don’t have any food...”

“Because they live on rocks!” I chimed in.

“How did you know, brother?” Ba Jie gave me a confused look.

I spread my beautiful wings right in front of his face. My beak shone under dawn's warm sunlight. Peck! Peck! Peck! Bull's-eye.

"Ouch!" He yelled and landed on his butt again, "Oh, it was you." He gave me an annoyed look.

"Yup! You made up those lies. Now go again when there's still light!" I yelled.

"Stop it. I'm gonna go deaf if you keep it up like this! I got it, bring food right? Just leave it to me." He groaned.

...

"It's midnight and Ba Jie isn't back?" Wujing seemed to be worried.

"Don't tell me he fell asleep again!" and I soared through the sky on my own to look for him.

There he was!

"Finally, we can eat! Let's go back!" I got all fired up.

"Shifu's gone!" Ba Jie yelled, "Wujing too! Only our horse is left!"

"White dragon! What happened to Shifu and Wujing?"

"The wolves took them," His voice trembled weakly. "They decided they didn't need a horse so they left me here, wounded."

"Where did they go?"

"They went to the peak," He continued, "They seem to gain their power from the moon. It's full moon tonight so they will be the strongest!"

"Shifu will be eaten! I bet they're having a feast on this full moon's night!" Ba Jie stated.

"I'm going now!" I insisted.

"But it's too dangerous!"

"We don't have a choice. You two can stay here and look after the luggage. If I don't come back in five days. You must not delay it."

I left and flew under the moon, searching for the highest peak.

"Shifu, please be safe." I snapped out of my thoughts as I saw a campfire. I squinted my eyes at the dancing black dots around the fire. They were wolves.

"We've got intruders." I heard them say.

They all disappeared into black puffy smoke. Only a bulky one stood beside Shifu, guarding their treasure.

"Give Shifu back!" I ordered.

"No way!" He stood his ground and swung his mace at me. I did a black flip and dodged it.

I felt a sharp pain at the back of my head, and then I blacked out with a thud.

I felt the ground shaking. Someone was shaking me. My eyes fluttered open. My sight was blurry for a second or two, and then I saw the most disgusting pig face.

“Oh, hi Ba Jie.”

“Thank goodness you’re awake!” Ba Jie exclaimed.

“I thought I was captured.” I questioned them both. “Is this an illusion?”

“White Dragon managed to save you at the last second.” Ba Jie replied.

“Oh, good to know it wasn’t you. I’m ready to go again... or maybe I should just go seek help from Guan Yin.” I stated as I tried to leave.

Tried.

“Nope, we’re comin with ya this time. I promise we’ll be useful.” Ba Jie insisted. White Dragon nodded in agreement.

“You better not drag my tail.” I snorted at his commitment.

Soon, we arrived at Guan Yin’s.

“Guan Yin, how can we beat the wolves at the smokey hills?” I rushed at her.

“How many times do I have to tell ya?” She scolded, “Can you just respect me once? Just once is enough.”

“Um, sorry Master Guan Yin, we’re in quite a hurry right now. Shifu’s gonna be eaten any second!” White Dragon covered me.

“Teamwork guys, teamwork! Have you noticed you’ve been failing every time you go alone?” Guan Yin shook her head in disappointment, “Three of you are more powerful than one.”

“Thank You for your advice! We owe you a big one.” White Dragon said politely, “I...”

I yanked his arm and dragged him along.

“No time for that.” I explained.

The peak came to view.

“Hmm... they seem to be excited about somethin.” I stated my observation.

“Wait, are they roasting Shifu on a stick?”

“What did you say?” Ba Jie roared, “How dare...”

“They are. We should go save him and we gotta be quick!” White Dragon cut him off.

I leaped off his back, and landed in the blazing flames. I reached for Shifu.

He was so close yet so far...

## The Quest For Virtue

*HKUGA College, Chung, Chun lam Ryan – 13*

Walking along the forest, Bennie felt a gusty wind blowing his face. Suddenly, the lusty trees around him started shaking. The gusty wind picked up. While he was struggling to walk, a rock hit him straight in the face and knocked him out.

When he opened his eyelids, it was already daytime. A warm ray of sunlight shone on him as he tried to stand up. A wave of nausea hit him, and he fell back down.” Slowly, my dear. You’re still not stable. I found you bleeding with a head wound.”

“What? How did he get here, where was he?” There were so many questions that he wanted to ask the unknown figure.

“Do not worry. You are in a safe place. For as a gift of thanking me, you must help accompany me to accomplishing the ultimate goal of enlightening myself.”

“Why would you think that I would help you? I’ve got other things to do.”

“Because you simply cannot go back into your normal life again. You’re not even in Hong Kong. Also, go look into a mirror.”

I staggered up, wobbling a bit, and walked to a nearby mirror. I was shocked. My whole face was bandaged, and I wondered why I even didn’t feel the cloth before.

“Do you want to know where you are now?”

“Yes! Please tell me.”

“You’re in the northern part of Yunnan, China.”

The piece of information struck me so hard that I had to sit down again. What? How did I get to Yunnan? Yunnan was very far from Hong Kong, and I had no money to get back.

“Fine. If I help you with your goal, you ought to help me get back home.”

“Yes, if you can accomplish this task. First, you must go complete a quest. Go meet Goblo there, and he will guide you to it.”

I turned my eyes towards the bright light shining down to the cave, and there he was. Or rather, it was, green in whole. Its eyes were huge, covering almost half of its face. It had no hair, and it was very short. Like half the height of my body.

“Hey there, Bennie. I’m glad that you came. Help me do my job, and you will be free.”

“Yeah, yeah. He’s called Matulo. So here’s the thing. There is a local legend that says a kind-hearted person with a passion to explore will help find a treasure hiding in the Himalayas. The treasure is there to give the people who find it ultimate intelligence. Matulo and I were roaming through the forest when you fell down from the sky. We thought it was a gift from God to help us find the treasure, so that’s why we brought you here. You wouldn’t even have survived without us.”

“Well, thank you,” I muttered. “So where do we start?”

“Matulo and I have done some research on the local map of China. We’re supposed to walk from here to Nepal, find the local villagers there, and finally to the Himalayas, where we’ll consult the oracle and find the treasure.”

“Well before we start,” I replied, “At least give me a good night’s sleep. This is going to be a long week.”

The sun started to rise, and as with the sun, the trio woke up. Goblo strode towards Bennie and shook him up. “Dude, it’s time for you to wake up. Come on.” Bennie slowly stood up and rubbed his eyes. “Okay, I’m ready to face this challenge.” They woke up Matulo and set off from the cave.

Outside, the sun shone brightly through the thick clouds of Yunnan. Bennie, Goblo and Matulo walked into the bustling markets in Deqen. Bennie exclaimed, "Whoah! I never thought that there was a city in this remote place in Yunnan!" "Well, there are always things that you never know," Goblo replied. They

walked to a mountain, and Bennie grumbled, "We have to climb this mountain?? Well, I guess I signed up for this..." "Here, I have some supplies for you. Take this sword, it can slay goblins of any type. And take this bag of wind, when used, it will blow a huge amount of wind that can help you escape. I'll give you later." Matulo took a sword and a duffel bag from its pocket and handed it to Bennie.

Bennie put it back on his back, just like any other hero would do in a show. They walked up the snowy mountain road, which was slippery and windy. Bennie and Matulo walked up the road, as a band of goblins rushed towards them. One of them held an axe, one of them held a shovel, waving them as they attacked. Bennie felt a rush of adrenaline, and took out his sword, and swayed his weapon against a goblin's neck. It cut through the neck like butter, and the neck fell to the ground. Bennie swung his sword again, and another goblin fell to the ground, but there were too many of them.

More and more goblins came running in, and Bennie couldn't handle them all. "There Goblo," Bennie shouted as he tossed Goblo the bag of air. Goblo jumped over the attacking goblins, carried Bennie and Matulo, and opened the bag. A whooshing sound came out, and the trio flew away.

"That was good teamwork right there, Goblo and Bennie! I don't think I could have survived without you two."

"Yeah, it was good teamwork. Well, we're almost landing here, so prepare to continue."

They dropped onto the ground and continued to walk up the road again. They came up across a very high ledge, and no one was able to climb it. "Here, we're gonna need all three of us to get through. So Matulo's going to use the final charge of the airbag to blow himself up and drop a rope down on us."

"Thanks, Matulo. We couldn't have done it without your help," said Bennie, as they climbed up on the rope.

They finally arrived at the temple of the oracle. They had become very close friends, they would help each other to overcome challenges, and they provided aid to any other person on the way who needed it. Bennie asked the oracle, "Are we near the treasure?" The oracle answered calmly, "The treasure is very close to you, as it is in your hearts. The treasure is actually of adventurers to acknowledge the power of friendship and helping each other. Congratulations, you three have finally achieved the true treasure buried in your hearts."



## Save Me for God Sake!

*HKUGA College, Ho, Pak Lam Samuel – 14*

A long-wailing scream pierced the stillness of night, and had forced Jay Han to wake up from dead dreams.

“Huff...huff... Why am I even lying on the cold hard ground? Is this...a nightmare?”

Ryan murmured. At that moment, he heard a loud shriek on the other side of the river. He then quickly wore on his telescope and saw two muscular soldiers dragging an alluring young lady. The young lady was wailing under the radar tower, but her tempting voice was useless in this vast grassy plain.

At that moment, Jay Han recovered his memory as fast as the speed of light, and he soon realised that this time he must escape to China or he may face permanent torture in the notorious concentration camp. This would also mean all of his hard work would have ended up in vain.

“Dear God, Buddha, Allah, save me from death! Oh heck, I’m surely dead. How the heck am I even going to cross this frozen cold river?” He murmured to himself hopelessly.

He couldn’t hold the heartbreak any longer and he fell to the floor in a dishevelled heap as his grief poured out in a flood of uncontrollable tears.

“Eat this you munchkin!” a boy from far away yelled, splashing water on other kids. With naked bodies, it **looked like they were wearing brownish hide on bones**, but their face was full of joy and happiness, and maybe some exhaustion too.

“Such tall kids. They must be having only half a meal per day. How’s this possible? The water levels were not even reaching their waist... If I were them...”

At that moment, the kids stopped splashing water and swimming all around. They stood up slowly, slowly, and slowly. Ryan couldn’t hide his fright from his face.

They weren’t as tall as NBA players, just because the water weren’t steep as it looked like, and that made the kids look incredibly tall. Now that he was feeling way better, he started to gain confidence.

He slowly took off his orange and white striped prison uniform, and carefully placed it on his head. Then he started to cross the long river.

Although the water level didn’t even reach his knees, but the river was so wide that the other side was covered by clouds; and there was a sign warning the villagers that the river’s unstable and that sometimes it floods.

All kinds of horrors and consequences appeared on his mind, but that was the only choice he had.

Hours and Hours had passed, but nowhere could he find the end. The bright shiny sun was high on top of the hills, and the weather was terribly hot that his skin started to turn rush red. It was weird.

As the sunlight got brighter and brighter, the river got cooler. Some small transparent glaciers that gradually turned to white colour could be seen floating on the water. The glaciers got larger, and they started to make some kind of connection.

“Unscientific. Illogical. Why does the river keeps getting colder? I have to walk on the ice before my legs get stuck,” he murmured to himself, but it was ‘mission impossible’. He weighted almost 200 pounds and the glacier were still thin as paper. But his desire to escape made him to step on ice forcefully.

*Dung...*

The ice glacier seem to sink a little bit, but it soon float on the water.

“Yeah, yeah, I knew it, this place is full of mysterious features that even modern science can’t prove. Maybe their gods and myths made these happen? No, no, God does not exist. Things ain’t true if they aren’t scientifically investigated or proofed.”

He was so hyper that he went to investigate this mysterious river and weather, but he knew he couldn’t even carry his investigations and theories to the outer world if he kept staying there, so he calmed himself down and kept on walking.

As he walked on, the sun seemed a little bit tired, and it hid its face back of the hills. The sun kept beaming sunlight, but it was not as hot and bright white as before. The orange-purple sky, featuring little stars, matched perfectly. Charlie was so surprised of what he had seen.

Bling. Boom. BOOM.

The ice layers started to break apart and he started to run. He was running unusually fast, and he thought that was some kind of supernatural power too. As he ran faster, he was even more surprised, and he couldn’t wait to finish crossing the river and arrive in China.

“I’m going to tell the news media what happened to me, and I’ll say this is some kind of supernatural power that could only be found in that river. I’ll say that’s a holy river, protected by Korean Gods, and maybe I’ll publish my story and get fame! Fame and money are just two miles ahead!”

He rushed even harder and harder, and now he could see everything in front of him. But he didn’t want to lose this supernatural power so he decided to close his eyes and concentrate.

As he finished crossing the river, he eventually opened his eyes. He finished his Journey to the West.

“Eat this bro! I’ll come and get you!”

He saw two skinny boys, with naked appearance, splashing water to each other.

What next?

## Journey to the Answer

*HKUGA College, Wong, Chun Yat Curtis -13*

“Come on, Zang! Come on! It’s the demon from the underground! He’s here! We have to go! Before he kills us all!” The guardian of my orphanage cried. The ground was shaking, causing everything to collapse, crumble, including our home. And our farmland. The guardian would lead the orphanage to rush and kneel before a sculpture which we believed was God, and pray to it until the shaking stopped.

This phenomenon happened very often here in China. People in my village never knew what really happened. They liked to believe it was a demon from underground trying to take their lives. So, they would then start praying. This is what the people liked to believe. However, I did not see it that way. I believed that the shaking of the ground could be explained by how the world worked. I didn’t know how it really worked, but surely not like how the villagers in my village explained. But the thing was, no one seemed to agree with me.

One day, a man came to our orphanage. He was there to educate us. He told us things that I had never heard of before, something different from what people said, something that explained how the world worked, something he said was called “science”, and I had always been longing to know more of it. As he was explaining, I was sitting there still. I did not move a bit. All I did was listen to what he said. Then his speech finally came to an end.

“Sir, may I know where did you learn about all these things you just told us?”

“I learnt them from my hometown.”

“Where is it?”

“It’s far from here, it’s in the West. Here, you can have this map,” he pointed to a spot on the map, “right here.”

“The West,” I knew that I had to go there. I needed to know more, to prove people in my village wrong. I had to tell them the truth. I needed to let them know what was right.

After a few days, I had made up my mind. I packed up what I needed, then I left the orphanage at midnight. I stood just behind the main gate of the orphanage and I looked at the journey ahead of me. “Journey to the West, journey to knowledge” I thought to myself. I looked at the far end of the world and it was dark. My legs shivered. I heard voices telling me to hold back. But then I looked at the stars upon me, trillions of them shining bright in the sky. “The light will guide me through, I have nothing to worry about.” I told myself.

I landed my first step out of the orphanage, “The journey has begun” I whispered, “No turning back.” Then, I stepped out for my second step, third step, fourth step... And so I continued walking, step by step to a place far away, to a place where I could find what I desired to learn.

I was holding the map, gazing at the path ahead of me. The sky was slowly getting brighter. A bright, orange Sun was slowly rising and the sky went from dark grey to a combination of red, orange and yellow. The land, trees and flowers were covered by a golden yellow sunbeam. The wind was sweeping gently on my face. The temperature was getting warmer as the Sun rose. Everything was beautiful.

For nearly a week, I walked day till night, ate the food from my bag, and found shelter to sleep in. I came across different places, deserts, hills, ridges, oceans... I saw them all. The weather was pleasant, until this happened.

One day, I was walking as usual. I came across this forest on the route. As I was walking deeper into the forest, the trees had all collapsed and laid dead on the ground. I could see cracks on the ground. they were in every size, and from every direction. The grass on the floor was all in a dark yellow color. I saw it but I did not bother to take a closer look. My mind was telling me to continue walking, and so I did, until dawn.

As the Sun was slowly falling, I found an old wooden cottage on my way, so I decided to walk in, and stay for a night there. As I entered from the front door, I saw stools, a table, cupboards, but their placing was all messed up and some of them were broken. Some stools and the table were flipped over. I could see some legs of the stools at the other end of the room. The cupboard was laying down on the floor too. Then I looked up at the ceiling, there was a broken hole in it. It was a size of a table. it was huge. I turned my eyes to the walls. There were cracks in them, cracks that were big enough to let light shine through. I placed my finger through the crack, and I could fully stick through it. "What caused such damage to this place?" I wondered.

That night, I laid down on the floor, my eyelids slowly closed due to the tiredness. I could finally take rest. And I slept peacefully.

Suddenly, I felt a sudden shaking. I woke up in a fright. "Who's there?" I shouted. I thought it was some sort of creature running by. A few seconds later, the shaking stopped. I went back to sleeping again.

A moment later, I felt another shaking. It woke me up again, "Oh, stop it..." I still thought it was some kind of creature. I went back to bed again.

Another shaking occurred again. I knew this time it was no creature. It was from the ground. In the first minute, the shaking was weak, but greater than the first two shocks. I could see the stools and cupboards shaking, moving around the place. My face turned white, my hands started shaking and I did not know what to do.

The shaking gradually got more vigorous. The entire cottage started shaking. I looked through the door to outside. Even the trees were shaking as if they were going to collapse any time. I screamed, "Help me!"

As the shaking was getting more violent, I could see trees from outside starting to collapse. "Ahh!" I shouted. I hid myself under the table, as I felt it would be the safest place. I rolled myself into a ball, covering my neck with my arms. I kept my eyes shut. I was scared.

At this moment, a tree cracked and fell onto the cottage I was in. It completely shattered the ceiling. Pieces of wood fell onto the table I was under, splitting it into half. I was no longer covered, but I did not move. I stayed there, not knowing what to do.

Then, another tree cracked and fell straight onto my back. I laid on the floor flat. I did not have any energy to roll back up into a protective position. Even more unfortunately, I was now under the tree. I could not move, even if I had the strength to.

Raising my hands as high as I could, I was hoping get others attention "Help... Help..." I yelled with the last breath I had left. My eyes were slowly closing. I could no longer raise my hands. I ran out of breath. With the ground still shaking, I fainted.

I slowly opened my eyes. The ground was no longer shaking. I felt no tree on top of me. I looked up and saw a ceiling. It was intact, without a single crack.

I heard an old man's voice, "Hello boy," he lended me a cup of water. "You fainted. I found you under a tree. An earthquake just occurred."

"An earthquake? What is that?" I asked.

“It refers to the shaking of the ground. The place you were at was between the seismic zones. That’s why you experienced an earthquake there.”

“Earthquake? Seismic zone? Where did you learn all these?”

“I have been doing research on earthquakes for decades. I’m a seismologist.”

I asked him to teach me all he knew, and he did. I learnt it all, wrote every single thing he said into my notebook. My first task was finally done, although I got scratches all over me, broke my arm, but this was still worth it. I could finally get the knowledge I wished to learn.

I stayed in the cottage of the old man. My wounds were healing day by day. Eventually, they were fully healed. I left when I got better, and walked all the way back to the village. I told the villagers everything I had learnt. Some of them believed, some of them did not. That was fine. They would soon understand the truth. I was delighted as my job was finally done.

## My Own Way

*Hong Kong International School (HKIS), Archer, Jack -14*

*New Journeys. That's what he told me. New ones.*

What new things can I do when I'll always be in the shadow of his flying cloud. He was born from stone, exploding out of solid rock.  
How can I top that?

I take another deep breath without opening my eyes, trying to expel all my thoughts with an exhale, but to no avail. What's the point of journeying west when everything I do will be nothing compared to the things he's done?

He wants me to do what he did, which is an insult all in itself. He already did it, and way better than I could, so why should I?

I have already spent my life in his insurmountable shadow. Everything I do, he did it when he was half my age. Everyone I meet will only tell me, "your father is a great man" "your dad, wow!" "You're so lucky to have him as your father!"

*My father, my father, my father.*

He is an immortal king, and I will always be one of his subjects.

My father is Sun Wukong, the monkey king, and I can never be anything like him.

Footsteps behind me. I listen to the steps. Light, but powerful.

He sits down next to me, cross-legged like I am.

"Son."

"Father."

"The monk has arrived."

I open my eyes, and gaze off the cliff top in front of me.

I look at my dad. I wonder how he'll respond to this.

Another deep breath.

"Dad, I don't want to go. I don't want to just redo what you did before. There's no way I could match up to the way you did it, so what's the point?"

I realise I am holding my breath, but I don't dare to let it out. My father's breathing stays level, no sign of anger and sadness. A few eternities later, his breath becomes choppy and ragged. I tense up. Is he... Laughing?

He turns to me. "Sun Wudi, this monk requested to be guided by you."

Still skeptical, I reply, "Why me? I'm normal. How can I protect him better than you?"

"You can." He says, "In your own way. Maybe you don't have powers like I do.. But you have your own strengths."

Anger flies through me again. "But everything I can do, you can do better."

"That's not true. There are things you are far better at than I am. The reason I want you to guide this monk across the country is because I want you to discover who you are., And I know you can't do that with me around, so I think going on this journey is the only way you can do that. Figure out who you are. Don't let me get in the way. Go."

I understand. Dad isn't trying to make me redo what he has done. He's wants me to do something that he has done before, but in my own special way. So that I won't always be Sun Wukong's son. So that I can be my own monkey.

I smile at my dad, and stand up.

"Bye, dad."

He raises a hand, but I'm already tearing down the mountainside to get my satchel, now filled with eagerness and determination.

I head in the back door, grabbing my rucksack without stopping, then tear out the front door, skidding to a stop to avoid running head on into a horse's behind.

I head around the horse to meet the monk who I will protect in my own way as he makes his way to his monastery. I look up to greet him.

A grumpy face frowns back at me.

He's bald, with a face permanently etched into a frown, with a long, pinkish nose protruding out of the shadow of his cloak. He looks down at me silently, a vulture eyeing its prey from above.

Deep breath.

“Hi... I’m Sun Wu—”

“I know.” he says, his mouth unmoving as he speaks.

“Um, I’m here to—”

“I know why you’re here.” He says again, his voice monotonous. “Now let’s go.” He turns his gaze to the lead rope tied to the horse’s neck. It’s as if he pulled a plug on my foot, draining all the vigour and excitement I had once had down onto the dusty ground below my feet. I take hold of the lead rope and guide the horse away from the small house my father and I live in, built with our own hands, wondering if I’ll see it again. As I’m thinking, I trip, stumbling a little before regaining my footing. I look back at the monk, expecting to meet his glare. Instead he’s looking over his shoulder back at the hut. Then he turns back to me, eyes wide and fearful.

Then I realise what made me trip.

The ground is shaking.

It rumbles again, a tremor spreading through the ground. Jostled, I look up at the monk, wondering if it’s an earthquake.

“WU DI!” The monk yells, frantic. “RUN!”

I don’t understand, but my feet automatically obey, and I let go of the lead rope and sprint forward with a quick glance backward to make sure the monk is galloping behind me. As a monkey, I can run on all fours, meaning I can almost match a horse. But as I look back, I see that the monk’s hood has blown off, revealing... What?

A pig’s head protrudes from the green cloaking, the pinkish snout I mistook as a nose scrunching up as it meets the wind.

“Run, Wudi, RUN!”

I push myself to go faster, my thoughts going as fast as my legs. There is only one pig this “monk” could be. But why?

The rumblings are coming more often now. Then one is truncated by a huge explosion. I have to glance back once again, only to see a column of fire shooting upwards, right where our house would be. I choke back a sob. *My home.*

The horse draws up alongside me, and I swing myself onto it, gripping the pig’s cloak as the horse speeds up even more.. I look up at the back of the pig. Could it be..?

“Bajie?” I ask.

“Who else, Wudi?”

Bajie the pig was one of my father’s companions as he made his journey west. Is he a monk now?

Just then, I hear a screeching battle cry, the one I know is my father’s, followed by another explosion. My mind goes blank, and I bury my face into Bajie and close my eyes.

When I open my eyes again, we are on a desert plain, in the middle of nowhere. I hop off the horse to see Bajie sitting down on the sand, looking at me.

“What—what happened?” I ask him.

“One of your father’s old friends came back to pay him a visit.”

“Who?”

“The immortal Zhenyuan, your father’s most powerful enemy.” he says, looking back at me with something new in his eyes.

“But they parted friends! My father gave him back his tree of eternal life!” I exclaim. “Why were there—”

“He was lying!” Bajie says, nearly shouting. “Maybe he really thought of Sun Wukong as an ally at first, but his dead brethren never left his mind. He came for me and my family first, with an army of troops. I escaped but I’ve lost everything now. I knew he would come for your father as well, so I contacted him. Zhenyuan didn’t know he had a son, so as long as he didn’t follow, he knew you were safe. So he asked me to get you, while he tried to face his old enemy. He never had any chance.”

I am silent for a minute, processing. “So.. he’s dead?” The words exit my lips hollow.

“No. he can’t be killed. But imprisoned. Trapped forever. Unless we get him back.” “us?” I say, unbelieving, still reeling with the relief that my father is alive.

“Well, no, we can pick up a friend first. Remember Sha Wujing?”

“Yes, but.. If my father can’t take him, how can we?”

“With surprise. And with you. Your father was powerful, but sometimes he let his ego get in the way. He’s observed you. He knows you are smarted. You have the ability to think fast, to find ways to do things better than anyone, just so that you could keep up with your father. You may not have powers, but you are stronger than any other normal human. With Wujing any my help, we can right this wrong. So what do you say? Do we get your father back?”

I should be shocked, I should be scared. But I’m not. I’m excited. This is my challenge, my journey. I will save my father. I will prove to everyone that I am not just his mortal son that will never measure up to him. I will make a new journey to the west.

I turn back to Bajie.

“Let’s do it.”



## Journey to College

*Hong Kong International School (HKIS), Won, Elizabeth –13*

Although it was Saturday morning, I was at the school library, along with three other girls. As our principal lectured us, I could only think of one thing: my college application. It was impossible to pay the tuition, which meant I had to get a scholarship. I knew it would be difficult, but I was determined to try. Now, as I sat in the library, I went over my plan to drive to Chicago. It would be hard to do without a crew...

I looked around the room, identifying the three other girls. I knew of them, but I've never talked to them before. I barely recognized Jay, the captain of the rugby team. Her broad shoulders and long legs made the chair she was sitting on look puny. Even though she was sitting still, she looked intimidating. My gaze drifted to Helen. She was the bookworm, the classic A-student. When she caught me staring, she smiled.

The sound of the heavy door closing derailed my train of thoughts and I realized it was now or never. I stood up and felt the girls' stares burned holes in me. Just before I reached the door, someone seized my arm.

"Where do you think you're going?" I turned around to see Jay with amusement in her eyes.

"If you must know, I'm going to Chicago to submit my application and do my interview. They said that I have to go to the campus to do this," I held up my papers. "Anybody interested in coming with me?" Immediately, Helen stood up.

"I'll go with you! The only reason I'm here is because I didn't have anything better to do. I got into Penn early."

"I'll go too. I don't want to be stuck with a princess like her," Jay said, eyeing Sara. "We can take my car. It's probably the biggest."

"Hey! I'll go, just because I have nothing better to do," Sara glared at Jay, and flipped her glossy blonde hair. Jay seemed unaffected, and just rolled her eyes. I smiled. This was going to be a fun trip.

In Jay's matte black Jeep, Jay and Sara sat in the backseat, while Helen sat shotgun, next to me. I had memorized the way to Chicago the week before, but I was still nervous. Helen seemed to notice my uneasiness.

"Hey, relax. It's just a road trip. We're here to have fun. How long would you say is the ride and back?"

"It's around eleven hours to Chicago with traffic, and I'll take an hour for my interview. Stopping for food and gas will take around ten minutes, so I think we can get back home in 24 hours."

"Well, in that case, we should take turns driving, no?"

"Yes! I haven't thought of that," it was a good idea. I was glad I had decided to bring the girls.

"Guys, so here's our game plan. We take turns driving for around two and a quarter hours, with gas and food breaks whenever we switch. It will take eleven hours to Chicago, and the same back. The order of driving will be Gisele, me, Sara, then Jay. Just follow the route on Gisele's phone, alright?" I could hear the arguing die down as Helen explained, but as soon as she was done, it resumed. "This means you should both sleep!" Helen said, which muted the voices.

When Helen was driving, Sara and I both slept. I could use some time to rest. But when Jay started to drive, I was woken up because of how much the car was moving.

"I think I'm going to be sick," Sara said, taking a pill and gulping down water.

"Don't throw up in my car," Jay said from the front.

"Stop driving so badly then," Sara replied. She was interrupted by a snore. It seemed as though Helen wasn't bothered at all with Jay's driving.

Suddenly, Sara turned to face me. "Darling, how are you going to an interview like this? Your clothes are fine, but your face..." I stared at her mirror. My hair was the true definition of bed head, and I had bags under my eyes, even though I had napped for three hours. "Don't worry. Thankfully, I'm here. I'm basically a professional at this." Sara reached into her bag, and set brushes, lipstick, and palettes in her lap. Without warning, she grabbed my face and got to work. She put on concealer... eyeshadow... lip balm... it was a flurry of movements, and I just followed her orders to look up, down, and to face right and left. She used much more products than I thought was necessary, but when I looked in the mirror once more, I was blown by her work. Sara quickly moved on to my hair. My black hair was brushed, then put into a bun with bobby pins that made me wince every time I turned my head.

At one point, Jay turned on music, which turned the car into a karaoke night club. We were singing our hearts out, pointing at other people in cars who sped away. When we got tired, we told epic adventure stories and ended up in a fit of giggles. It was the happiest I've been for a long time. I felt a connection between me and the girls that I knew would last for a long time.

We soon saw the gates of Chicago, and I had been practicing my speech with Jay. Helen had volunteered to drive, while Sara napped.

"You need to be confident, but not too confident that it intimidates the interviewer. Start off with saying thank you for making time for me, and ask them if they're having a good day. Be polite, and stand up straight. Don't worry too much, G. You're going to own it!" Jay punched me in the arm, causing my whole body to slump on the seat.

Finally, it was the moment I had been waiting for. I walked into the neat room, and smiled at my interviewer. I answered all the questions he asked me, and made a few jokes, which he laughed at. I thought it went smoothly. As I walked back to the waiting room, I saw my friends waiting for me.

"How was it?!" They asked in unison. I smiled and gave them a thumbs up, and we all huddled into a group hug, laughing and talking over one another. When we all piled into the car, Sara turned up the radio and we sang along, not a worry in our minds.

It was nearing sunrise now, but everyone was up. We talked and gave advice to each other. Even in my sorority, it was hard to have this sisterly ambience.

Abruptly, the car stopped, and sent us flying even with our seat belts. Sara had her hand on her forehead, which had blood on it. Jay rushed to treat it. As much as they argued, they had become very close. Helen took out her phone.

"Our gas tank is empty, and the nearest gas station is... three miles away." We stared at each other, all thinking the same thing. How could we have forgotten to recharge?

At last, Jay spoke up. "Three miles... I mean, we could do it," she said, looking nervously at us.

"Do what?" Sara asked.

"You know... pull the car," we all took a collective gasp, even though we knew this was coming. "I have rope and gloves in the trunk, so we could use that."

"But..."

"Jay's right. This is the fastest way we're going to get there. Just think of it as exercising. At least you'll have great arms," I said, trying to lift up everyone's moods. "And if we're going to do that... we should probably hurry."

"Okay, I'll get the rope."

For two hours, we pulled and tugged the car to the station. When we arrived, the guy on duty stared at us as if we were crazy before helping us.

When we were back on the road, I let my mind drift to our small adventure. As if she was reading my mind, Helen said, "Isn't it crazy? I feel as if I've known you guys for ages, not a few hours."

"Do you think we'll hang out after this? Like, when we get back to school?" Sara asked, and we all became silent.

"Yes, I think so. At least I hope so. It's been so fun with you guys," Jay said. We all nodded. The party mood we had been in was replaced by something deeper, and at that moment I knew these would be the girls that I would contact for any special occasion later in life. I would call Sara for any styling tips, Jay if I need to toughen up, and Helen if I need someone to review my life decisions. As different as we were, we had all found our way into each other's lives, and I was thankful for that.

## Battle of the Flying Monster

*Hong Kong International School (HKIS), Zhang, Navia – 13*

“Monkey, what have you done now!” Xuanzang sighed in disapproval, as he stared at monkey, who was lying down on the floor, cradling his head and jerking side to side as if having a seizure. This was the only way Xuanzang can control the incorrigible Monkey King, notorious for many crimes he had performed out of curiosity.

“I...I'm.... so...rry! He...lp! Stop...please!” Monkey turned to one side, and crashed into the basket of peaches next to him. They tumbled down the hill, and rolled far away. Xuanzang crinkled his forehead and said, “Great! Now they're all gone. Why did you take these peaches hm?! You know they're not yours!”

“It's.... just... s...o temp...ting! Please forg...ive...me!”

“Those people worked hard to collect these peaches! You cannot steal from the innocent again!”

Suddenly, Monkey slackened and laid face down on the grass. He panted heavily and grabbed handfuls of grass to ease his pain.

“I understand, master. I won't do it again,” Monkey whispered in defeat. Without another word, Xuanzang turned his back to Monkey and sat down in position for prayer. Just as he was about to go into Zen mode, distinct voices could be heard nearing. From the distant mist, two figures made their way closer. The fog separated to reveal Pig and Friar. Friar's back was hunched and he carried two barrels of water, while Pig jumped playfully around him. Soon, Pig spotted Xuanzang and Monkey.

“HEYYYYY” Pig shouted, “We're back!!!”

Xuanzang opened one eye and spied the two companions. Then, he shifted himself and pretended he didn't see them.

“Sheesh, someone's in a bad mood.” Pig grunted.

In a few minutes, the group had reunited and they sat together, enjoying their meal in silence. They were surrounded by an endless grass plain, with no shade or water source near them. The summer breeze blew past occasionally, causing the slightest stir of noise other than the group's conversation.

Gradually, dark clouds floated across the blue sky. “Boom” a streak of piercing white lightning illuminated the now pitch black sky. The group immediately became alert, all of them jumping onto their feet and gathering their belongings.

“Let's start our journey,” said XuanZang, “we've been resting here for too long.” The three of them nodded their heads in unison and started walking. Before they had gotten far, raindrops started shooting at him like lethal arrows, and Pig groaned.

“Oh great!” said Pig, “Now we're going to be drenched in rain, and I don't even have spare clothes!” All of them stared at Pig in disgust, and Monkey rolled his eyes and scoffed.

Soon, another lightning lit up the sky. This time, it was a green–purplish color, and a lot bigger than the other.

“Just a moment!” a menacing voice boomed out loud. The four companions jumped into fighting stance and tried to search for the source of the voice. “I'm afraid I can't let you do that,” it roared again and ended with an evil laugh.

“Who is it? Show yourself!” Xuanzang replied in a stern voice, trying to mask his fear. He was standing in the middle of the other three because he was the most vulnerable target.

“Well...Well...Well.” The voice became nearer and nearer, until a bird–like figure broke out from the dark clouds and spiraled above the group. “I spy with my little eye...food!” The figure descended from the sky and landed on the ground next to them.

Up close, the group saw a human–like face, with pure black eyes staring back at them, a non–existent nose, and a blue–colored mouth. As it smiled, it revealed hundreds of razor sharp teeth glittering even without the sun. A pair of wings sprouted from where the ears should have been. The wings were a bloody red color, and spikes grew out at its tips. The wings covered up a tail growing out from the back of its head. Just like a scorpion stings with its telson, the true secret weapon of the monster seems to be its tail. The tip of its tail stretched into five parts, just like a human hand, but it was the sharpest thing the group had ever seen, and each finger was coated with a thin green substance.

If the group seemed intimidated by the monster's appearance, they didn't show it. Monkey looked as determined as ever as he aimed his stick at the monster. "Heeeeyah!" Monkey shouted as he switched into battle mode and leaped towards the monster. As expected, it flapped its wings and went up into the air, using flying as its advantage. However, the monster never expected Monkey to leap up and have a little cushion of cloud appear underneath his foot. Using the momentary shock to his advantage, Monkey spun his stick and chopped off the monster's tail.

"Hahaha!" Monkey laughed. "What are you going to do now? Monster, I'm not afraid of you." The monster's expression turned melancholic and he made a sobbing noise.

"I give up!" Monster cried, "You have cut off my secret weapon, what am I going to do now?"

"Just leave." Monkey scoffed and turned away to descend back to his group. What he didn't see was the Monster's facade leave, and a sly grin returning back to his face. As the Monster returned back into the dark clouds, the group didn't see its tail grow out inch by inch, just like a lizard's tail when it's cut off.

"Well, that was unexpected." Friar grunted, "but I don't think that was the end of things. It was too easy..."

"Stop worrying, Friar! You're overthinking things. Thanks to me, this monster is gone for good." Monkey replied haughtily.

Suddenly, something shot out from the clouds and came charging at Monkey as fast as the speed of light. Monkey had his back towards it, but Friar saw it coming and was just going to open his mouth to shout when – "AHHHHH!" – Monkey screamed in pain and fell. When he looked up to see his attacker, he found the Monster laughing at him and his tail was now covered in blood.

"What...did you sting me with!" Monkey asked.

"Well, that was poison mixed with acid. My own special secret recipe. Enjoy!" the Monster exclaimed, "Now that the stupid monkey is out of my way, I'm coming for you, food!"

"Oh no you don't, not under my watch!" Friar cried angrily.

"And mine!" Pig stood beside Friar, and they took out their weapons. "Charge!" They both screamed and ran towards the monster.

While the fight was going on, Monkey tried to crawl up on his knees. He seethed with pain as he moved any part of his body, but the pain didn't act as a barrier for him to observe the monster and find a weakness before his companions got killed. It was obvious that the monster had the upper hand, but Friar and Pig were trying their best to fend it off. Suddenly, as Pig's axe accidentally touched the corner of the Monster's eyes, it fell backwards clumsily and kept blinking. Monkey took the scene in and smiled internally. The monster's weakness was found.

Meanwhile, Pig and Friar were significantly becoming more tired. "I need to do this now!" Monkey thought to himself, and used all his might to stand up, despite the pain nagging in every part of his body.

"Where do you think you're going!" Shouted Xuanzang as he saw Monkey getting closer "You're going to get killed! Stay here!" But Monkey, being Monkey, didn't listen to Xuanzang's kind warning, and inched closer to the monster without being noticed. He lifted his stick, and just as the monster saw his movements and turned its head to him, he launched at it with great speed, and it landed smack in the middle of one of the monster's eyes.

The monster howled in pain, and half of its head and tail began to disappear. Because a wing was gone and it wasn't able to fly anymore, it plummeted down towards the ground and landed with a "thud".

"Quick! Pig, the other eye!" Friar shouted, and Pig immediately aimed his axe into the monster's other eye. Suddenly, the monster became a spiral of dust, and after a few seconds, a bird, lizard, and scorpion fell from the spiral. As the animals saw the four companions, they scampered away in fright.

"We...we did it!" Pig stuttered unbelievably, "I really thought we were not going to make it this time, with Monkey injured so badly!"

"Thank you, Monkey." Xuanzang smiled warmly at Monkey and said, "we couldn't have done it without you."

Monkey smiled and felt a warm feeling tug at his heart. He took a step forwards, but saw the world sway side to side and black dots cloud his vision. The last thing he remembered was his body colliding with the ground.

# The Diary Of A Monk

*International College Hong Kong, Birnbau,. Sam – 11*

**Winter, January 2nd,**

**Y**ou are probably wondering why we are doing this. I'm on a journey trying to find land that us mammals aren't very familiar with and to find my true spiritual fulfilment. Ever since my companions and I stepped foot on the path to the mountains, everything changed.

**January 25th,**

The weather has been harsh ever since last week. Sun Wukong, you can call him the Monkey King held up for these past few days. But I don't know about that talking pig and the Friar. We just overcame a blizzard. We had to seek shelter in a cave.

**January 27th,**

For 2 days we are still in this cave. The Pig is starting to give up and slowly drift into regret for joining us in this trip. We are running out of food and water. This trip is like a rollercoaster towards drought.

**February 2nd,**

It has been a month ever since the beginning the journey. Nothing important until just yesterday. While walking over to a bridge I was beginning to feel like we were being stalked by something.... Peculiar. If we were in the bright light there would be an enormous dark shadow. If it were peaceful, something would disturb us. I feel skeptical on how this is going to be in the future.

**February 14th,**

During the hike, all four of us heard flesh and bones crunching behind a rock. All of us were so confused. The monkey king made a brave and terrible decision by looking behind a rock. A horrendous creature jumped at the monkey king and threw him onto a rock. He was so badly injured he couldn't walk or even get up. The creature's eyes were hypnotising and then I realised what it was. It was a Zhenniao a hybrid between a lion and a dragon. It looked at the pig like it had a desire for its flesh. It was a bloodthirsty predator looking fear and agony on which whatever encounters it. The Zhenniao jumped at the pig and while it was mid air I grabbed a sharp stick and Impaled it's heart. In shock the pig screamed unbearably loud. He was scarred for the past few days.

**February 17th,**

For the first time the friar calmed down, but talking pig wouldn't talk about anything and the monkey king was so badly injured I had to carry him during the mountain hike. Finally we found someplace to rest. It was near a river where we can catch fish and eat meals. During the night we feasted on fish and had lots of water. The monkey king felt much better and is starting to practice his fighting skills. The Pig would actually say a few words.... Well because of the food. But at least the friar would entertain us. Later that evening we slept in trees but eventually during slumber I woke up to a strange rattling noise. It went on and on and I convinced myself it was just the wind.

**February 18th,**

I was still asleep until I heard the shrieks of the pig. I woke up and looked at probably the most terrifying thing I have ever seen in my life. It was a Zhenniao. Not one, but a whole family of it. There was only one thing I could think of in my mind, run! I shouted the word out loud that I could barely speak after that. All four of us ran and ran until we were out of breath. One Zhenniao started chasing us. I never realised how fast one can go because when it started running it was right behind us. The fear that all of us went through

was unexplainable. I felt right then and there we were going to die a painful and terrible death. Luckily enough we eventually we slid under a rock and the Zhenniao lost us.

#### **April 17th,**

I haven't written for two months. No one feels like they are getting anywhere. We have no more resources and we are beginning to have no hope. The pig is so hungry he can't talk about anything comforting. The monkey king won't even try to bug us and the friar is starting to look like a living corpse. His eyes are purple but his skin is so pale, and everytime he tries to speak or open his mouth he looks like he is about to pass out. I think I am the only one in this group trying to encourage each other to take a step on the ground.

#### **May 23rd,**

I think the the Pig has a feeling of leaving this journey. He has literally been scavenging for blue bottle bugs in caves. So far nothing important happened unless you want to hear all the complaints of everyone. I don't think they get the fact that we are actually getting closer. We have overcome several villages that have very different life styles compared the places we live. Many of the people are storytellers and they new every square centimeter of this land all around us. They offered to help us get to our destination. Many of villagers gave us notes and pictures that will show us where our destination. Many of the villagers were very fond of this place and they called it Indus. Many of the drawings were very familiar but one caught my eye. It was the same picture of a mountain.. But it was me in front of the pig the friar and the monkey king and I was holding a giant stick high in the air with a gigantic grin on my face. Maybe that meant something like a victory. So I kept it and continued on with the journey and was keeping an eye on the mountain. Everyone was so bummed that they had to leave especially the pig. He took a humongous amount of food and water just to pack up.

#### **June 1st,**

I'm beginning to feel much more confident about this trip. I just feel every time I take a step the grass becomes greener and the sky becomes shinier. Everything is feeling positive. I am starting to look out on mountains because all of us entered a mountainous area.

#### **June 2nd,**

I can't explain how excited everyone is. We are here. I have never seen the world like it is now. I feel like I am watching over the world. It's shiny it's glistening it's..... Just plain beautiful. As everyone leaped in joy the monkey king gave me a giant stick and I held it up to the sky like I was a God. I know feel like a leader. Everyone's congratulating me just for this one journey. Now this journey and Diary will be for ever in my heart. Thank you reader for acknowledging my work.

## New Journeys to the West

*International College Hong Kong, Leung, Chloe – 12*

“There were many stories told that existed more than a thousand years ago, and still exists to this day. You’ve been told most of the stories I know, except one. This is my story.

Back from 500 hundred years ago, when society was still a dark place, wasn’t developed and was at war. After a long time, society never changed, our enemies would never stop fighting or giving up. When I was only 3 and was still new to the world, I remember the time I was crying and begging for my mother to hold onto me tight, I remember the time I had to be carried away into the darkness, I remember the time I had to be put in a basket and ready to float away, I remember the time my mother miserably wishing me farewell. Every mother or father in the village would always want their child to stay safe and secure. The villagers all fled and took their children secretly and stealthily across the great stone wall. Hoping none of the enemies wouldn’t catch sight of them. The great stone wall was 10 meters tall, it was almost impossible to climb over it. Especially when you carry a few months old child.

There were many ways of escaping the dreadful war but there was never one that actually succeeded. Not one. The villagers confidently gave it a try but once they got it pass the great stone wall, even an inch pass it, you look up and see nothing in the dark. Nothing but a small glimpse of light in the distance. The more you stay at the top of the great wall, you can see the glimpse of light coming closer every second. An illusion it is, that’s what the villagers would say. Not all, some would say that light is your nightmare, you’d never want to come close to it. Your nightmare, because once seeing it might even be your last. The light turns out to be. Fire. The enemies have boats and giant ships parked right outside the stone walls. Every night, there will be more than a thousand soldiers taking the night shift around the whole village’s great stone wall, watching if any villagers are daring to escape. If one or even two, appears, fiery arrows will come shooting straight at them.

My mother, a bright and intelligent woman, she had a plan for me to escape the battle of conflicts. On the right side of the stone wall, there was a small hole that was able to fit, well at least me. It wasn’t that small, the hole led to the water, and the water led to freedom. You might think the ships were parked outside on water, but no none of the ships were on water, they were all pulled and parked up the sand. The hole was already the tip of the island, so it led straight to the ocean. My mother decided to put me in a basket and let me float away into the ocean, wishing the best, she released and I left her. Forever. I floated for almost two days and finally reached an island, the island I believe to be Spain. So here I am now.

A pleasant day it is. Bright colourful day. I, now an adventurer wandering through the lush trees, the tall mountains, pushing through every other thorn I walk into, stepping onto the blooming flowers just to get past this garden. I have no idea where I’m going, I have no map, not even a single compass. You see? I’m not exactly an adventurer, I’m just here now to find another island, I was back in Spain a year ago, it was a mess, we have a king, but is old of age and has no children. He announced just about a year ago, that the first person who finds India will become the next mighty king. During this time, silks and spices from India were exceptionally popular, so everyone sailed to the East to seek for India. Everyone believed sailing East to find India would be the easiest way to get there, but I say different, the West is where I’m headed. A shorter route across the sea to approach my destiny.

I was supposed to sail towards the West, but I was shipwrecked. Everything I brought was destroyed, demolished, and ruined. Nothing was left, nothing survived. Nothing. Except one. Me. That night back on water, I came across something terrible, I wasn’t exactly sure what it was. It caught red, was angry and displeased of me disturbing the wild ocean. Something terrible happened that night, something too ghastly to say, which is why I’ve ended up alone on this deserted, unknown place.

Luckily when I’ve reached this island, I’ve met a few new friends to help me on my journey. A monkey king, a friar and an unusual talking pig, going on a journey towards the west together to find a new island. Without a map, I can lead my own way. The village, my home, my roots, the villagers used to tell me, be the map of your own path. When I was younger, I never understood the true meaning of it, I always thought, to find your way to your destination, you need a map to lead you. “Be the map of your own path.” I never thought of it that way, I always had walls there to block my limited brain of thinking. It never was unlimited, until now. The wall vanished in my mind after realizing my abilities and discovering my own imagination.

The monkey king, the friar and the talking pig, they all have special abilities, the monkey king can go against millions of enemies at the same time and still stands the last one alive, the friar is skillful with navigating, and the talking pig is amazing at, well, don’t know, nothing? Wait, the pig is amazing at building rafts.

Anyways back to the story, We fought monsters, we fought beasts, we just never seemed to fail. If they got in our way or threatened us because we were stepping on their lands, the monkey king would protect us throughout the whole way. And the friar would help find the way to India. We've been hiking up mountains, strolling through the woods, we roamed almost the whole island we were on for months. We just never seemed to have an end. Everything looked so familiar, like we've seen it before. We just seemed to be walking around in circles. When we finally realized that, we decided to build a raft. To sail west India. The friar decided the land we were always on had to be America. We've been walking around America to find India, when there is no land connected to each other. We finally realized our vast mistake.

It took us no more than four days to build a raft with the pig's help. After building a raft, the friar took the wheel and sailed us across the great ocean. Listening to the harmonizing beat of the ocean, just made me feel like home already. It just seemed that it was meant to be. We sailed west and after sailing for exactly 4 months, we reached an island. A huge island. According to the friar's navigation and mapping, we have successfully reached our destination. We have reached the tip of India, which was the bottom of China. Our adventure's not done yet though. You think after we found India we could go home. Home sweet home. And have our life as mighty kings, with helpful servants. It doesn't work like that. If I just sailed for a few weeks, and just turned around going back to Spain. Telling our great old king, that you've successfully found India, well where's the proof? Before I left, the king announced too, that we needed to bring something back from India to prove that you've reached your destiny. The proof gives you the power of the whole country.

I came from India sailing all the way back to Spain bringing a rare block of gold. Back in India, when we first arrived, we parked our raft on the beach, and found a mysteriously shaped entrance which turns out to be. A cave. "The Cave of Wonders". The moment I stepped in, it felt magical, I felt extraordinary. Inside I found gold, tons of them, I decided to bring one back to Spain to show the king. Coming back, realizing the throne had disappeared. It didn't just disappear, everything didn't look as familiar. It changed. Actually everything did. There was no king. There was only a more civilized country. We weren't in the wrong place. It was only 60 years later. Now that, was my story that ended there."

My father, telling me the most appealing story ever. I fall fast asleep. Good night father. Good night.



## Thief of the Guardian

*International College Hong Kong, Lui, Natalie – 11*

Hi, I am Calypso.

Things have been much more chaotic than they use to be, lightning is shot every single second and Zeus is really angry that the statue of his guardian is lost. Annabeth's cousin promised to babysit Percy's new baby sister. Right now, Percy is sailing Jason, Piper, Annabeth, Leo and I to Hong Kong. "Jason, Piper, cook us some dinner." shouted Leo across the deck. I looked above the stars reminded me of my imprisonment. "Calypso, snapped out of it!" I felt a rough hand shaking my shoulder. My eyes fluttered open. Percy kneeled on one leg, checking my temperature, "You look fine, you don't have a fever. You should lay down for a while." he said. "Okay." I replied

I walked down the stairs, when I opened my cabin door, I have an unexpected guest in my room. I found myself face to face with a sleeping cobra, 2 meters long and curled up at the foot of my bed. This isn't possible, no snake should be able to glide this far, the middle of the gigantic Pacific Ocean, I thought. Slowly, the black and yellow cobra uncoiled, slowly turning into Frank! "Sorry Calypso, I should've known better than sleep on a girl's bed uninvited, I was here the whole time waiting for you to come down because I want to tell you something that only you and I can know." Red blotches appeared on his face "Okay, but first, tell me how did you came here?" I pleaded. "First, I flew here as an eagle. So the thing is, the statue is in Hong Kong but the pendant that activates it is in your island and you once said that you found a pendant on your island right? Can I see it?" "Sure, you can have it, but don't loose it." I shrugged. "Thanks, I'll take great care of it." Frank flew away as an eagle.

This is the first time I've been in Hong Kong, the harbour was packed, but since our's can float, we didn't have to park it there. Guess who greeted us, Hermes and Athena. Athena gave us a map of this place "Go to Tuen Mun, Dragon Bay, you should find a girl called Joey, she has the statue." she instructed. "Bye!" Percy said, "I hired a taxi, I can drive us there if we return it by 7:00pm."

We got onto the small taxi. Time rolled away, leaving me behind. "Calypso, wake up!" Piper clicked her tongue. "What's the time?" I blinked, "1:00, we bought you sandwiches." "Thanks, I'm coming." I caught up with everyone else. "Are you okay Calypso?" Leo asked "Yes." I said. Jason said, "We're here." I didn't realise that I was standing face to face with a tall building, until I saw a beautiful girl coming towards us. "Hi, I am Joey," She reached out to shake my hand " today, I'm going to show you where the statue is and you guys can find a way to hoist it onto your Argo II ." Joey led us inside the building, it is painted gold with a crystal chandelier hung up high. Joey led us into a cupboard at the corner with dusty broomsticks and filled with spiderwebs. Scuttling across the room was a family of little and big spider, they were petrified and ran as fast as their eight little fragile legs can carry them to their warm and cosy web. "What are we doing in a cupboard?" Annabeth asked "There's no way a gigantic statue can be in a tiny cupboard!" "Things are not always as they seem Annabeth," Joey chuckled "it is behind the cupboard." "Behind the cupboard?" "Yes." "How..." "You need to twist the handle of the second broom to the right." "Okay, if you say so." "Let me do it." I whispered

I touched the dusty broom handle, it was so fragile that it might break. I twisted the handle with all my might, it groaned and a secret brass door opened. Th secret room blinded me for the first time, the bright white light shone light a burning star. My eyes adjusted itself to the light. "Ready guys?" They all nodded with their eyes nearly closed. We stepped through the threshold, the room expanded around us, it is made of mosaics, stone and brass, I saw a little secret passage door the size of a box at the corner blending into the mosaics. Well, at least the door is brass. Joey trailed off as if she is reading my mind "Wait, the statue, it's gone!"

“What?” Piper choked.

“Impossible,” Leo blinked.

“Who could the thief be?” Jason blurted.

“Oh no, things always goes berserk.” Percy frowned.

“Could it be...” Annabeth began, her mouth dangling open.

“No, it couldn’t be a Greek God and all the other baddies are stuck in Tartarus.”

“Magnus,” Annabeth’s stormy grey eyes focused.

“Pardon?” I bit my lips.

“The Norse gods, I can feel their magic.” She began to scan the room.

“This isn’t possible Annabeth, how can two different religion of gods rule the same thing at the same time when either side doesn’t even notice each other?” Piper rolled her eye.

“Everything is possible, its crazy enough that we have powers that only exist in movies.” Jason rested his arm on her round shoulders.

“I agree, everything is possible.” I nodded towards Annabeth.

“Calypso, I know that it is possible that a Norse God can be the thief but we don’t know anything about Norse!” Jason panicked.

“You’re such a little baby, we’ve been on a few quest and everything turns out fine. But who can we ask about Norse history and what not?” She poked Jason’s arm and rolled her eyes.

Her brown eyes widen so much that she looks like a goldfish. “What’s wrong? You look like a goldfish.”

“Look at Joey’s tattoo, it’s moving, impossible!” Piper snarled, revealing her golden dagger from the leather case at the side of her belt.

“Relax my friends, it is just the Navigator’s marks,” she bit her lips. “In the old days, the god Heimdallr used to visit new territories. They say he fell for a girl with wild red hair and they had a child together. Ever since, every generation or two, someone is born with tattoos like these, they show you whatever you need to find.”

“Your tattoo is showing the Norse God, Loki and he is heading towards our cupboard! Hide!” Annabeth gasped so loudly that I bet someone outside could hear it.

“Guys in here!” I pushed the secret passage door open with all my might.

“You’re a lifesaver.” Percy breathed.

“Shush, don’t make a sound.” Leo hissed.

The passage stank of rot and dust, the end of the passage gave off a light green glow. “There’s the end of the tunnel, we can escape!”

“Stop right there, walnuts, don’t you dare move a muscle.” Loki cackled evilly. His pixie feature shone like the sun.

“You will never get it back!”

“Shut up!” Jason growled at Loki.

A thick stream of water was blasted at Loki, all eyes were set upon Percy, he laughed and grinned mercilessly at the still body of Loki. We ran and ran towards the end of the tunnels fast as we can. Bright light blinded us, we arrived in a beautiful garden, rose bushes the perimeter of the square shape garden. Green grasses crunch when you step on it, clean wooden benches and chairs sat in the middle and next to the lilies and daisies circling the picnic area under the shade of a tall and strong willow tree, lay the statue. From somewhere above us, Leo yelled, “Jason, summon a blast of wind and lift it onto the chains!” I jumped back and fell in alarm. “When did you get there?”

“Just a little trick.” Leo tutted.

“Okay!” Jason shouted.

Jason summoned a tornado and lifted the statue off the ground, onto a thick golden chain and onto the ship.

We stepped into the elevator, it is painted gold with the diamond buttons. Half a circle was formed in the middle of the gigantic room, golden thrones sat majestically on the pearl marble floor. In the middle sat Zeus. His nose curled into a snarl, “No child of Atlas should walk through these doors.”

“Stop, I freed her from her prison. Lift her punishment, Zeus.” Leo growled

“Okay, fine.” Zeus sighed.

“Calypso, you look as beautiful as ever.” Percy blushed.

Percy summoned a puddle of water. “Is that me?”

“Yes,” Zeus said “bring forth the statue.”

Leo returned the statue.

“I will send you to camp. Farewell.” Aphrodite said.

The campfire stood out against the night sky. Demigods were burning sacrifices. Their eyes all turned towards me. A centaur shouted towards them. “They return the statue. Go rest.” He was pointing towards some cabins downhill. We said goodnight and I collapsed and slept.

## New Journeys to the West

*International College Hong Kong, Pillard, Charmaine – 12*

Our story starts at the Evershade household, on a miserable rainy day, a young girl of 14 named Matilda or “Tilly”, as everyone called her, was bored. Everyone in her family dreaded raining days during holidays not only because there was nothing to do but also because you could hear Tilly at every second of the day, complaining about her boredom.

“Mom what can I do? I’m bored” shouted Tilly from the top of the stairs for the twentieth time that day, It was the summer holidays and there was nothing to do. “Go clean your room” said her mom, “I already did that” replied Tilly, she could hear her mom sigh from the top of the stairs. “Feed the pets?” “Done”, this happened every rainy summer day. Then, she heard a car pull up outside her house, it was her dad. “Dad!” she said launching into his arms, “Whoa, Tilly” proclaimed her surprised dad, he wasn’t normally welcomed by such a greeting. “Dad, do you know something I could do like playing football or something?” asked Tilly innocently. He was about to answer when her mom came out of the kitchen, greeted her dad with a kiss and said: “She already asked me that question fifty times, honey”. “Have you Matilda?” asked her dad, “mmmm maybe” Replied Tilly as she hid her face in her dad’s jacket, her parents hated it when she asked one of them, they said no and then asked the other one. “Your mom and I have already explained it to you a million times, you know why you can’t go out in the rain and play football,” Her dad told her patiently. “Yes, I do understand, really, but then what CAN I do?” whined Tilly “Let me think,” her dad told her. There was a silence that continued. “You can clean the attic” Exclaimed her dad suddenly startling Tilly and her mom, “I have been wanting to do that but I have always been too busy, you can do it while I work” Continued her dad. “Daaaaaad, really, the attic!” complained Tilly “Do we even HAVE an attic?”. “Why of course we do” replied her dad “I mean you were complaining about what to do...” Tilly’s dad said as he grinned at her. Tilly had no choice but to clean the attic, I mean it was that or sitting around the house doing nothing. So she just gave in.

Tilly started as soon as lunch was over, while her mom went to work and her dad went into the office, she went up into the so-called “attic”. The attic was in fact just a big room that was filled to the brim with random junk that had just been stored there over the years. “It smells in here” complained Tilly into the emptiness, but soon enough she got into the rhythm of sorting things. Just as she was about to stop to take a drink of water, a sparkling box caught her attention. “Why was it sparkling?” Tilly asked herself, everything up here was dusty and faded from being up here for so long. The more she stared at the box, the more it made her want to go open it. Soon, she forgot all about taking a break and she started walking towards the box. Almost like she was in a trance.

Before she knew it, she was there, in front of the box.

Before she knew it, she was reaching down to open the box

Before she knew it the box was open...

Inside the box, there was a small item wrapped in a cloth. She unwrapped it. Wrapped carefully in the cloth was a small necklace that was made of diamonds, in fact, there was a big diamond in the middle and small ones all over the side. “It must cost a fortune,” thought Tilly. Her mom had one and she vaguely remembered her mom telling her that it was very precious and not to mess with it.

She soon forgot about everything else in the attic. She walked downstairs and went straight to her father’s office. “What’s the matter, honey?” Asked her worried dad, “Why do you have such a queer expression on your face?”. Without saying anything she handed him the box.

His jaw fell open.

"Wh—what is this?" stammered her very surprised dad "I don't know dad" replied Tilly. Her dad immediately called her mom and told her to come here immediately. "But we were just about to go over to see your mother," her mom said to Tilly's dad over the phone. "Oh dear, could we not skip this?" asked her mom, "I mean you did say it was very important..." she heard her mom said as her dad walked away.

Very soon she found herself at the back of her father's car, driving towards her grandma's. Her hand instinctively went towards the box that contained the diamond necklace every time the car went around a corner. She had a feeling that it was definitely not her parents that put the necklace there, but if it wasn't her parents who put it there then who did?

Soon they arrived at Tilly's grandma's house. Outside there was a bunch of cars, she managed to identify her mother's car. "Wow" thought Tilly "that's a lot of people.". As soon as Tilly entered the house she was swept up with compliments and hugs, very soon she forgot about the diamond that was in her bag. "Wait, where was my bag" thought Tilly worriedly after, she saw her dad and ran towards him. "Dad" shouted Tilly "Dad" Tilly shouted again but she already knew it was hopeless, the crowd was too thick to push through it. She suddenly ran into someone, Tilly stopped and apologised then realised that the woman was her aunt, Mary. "Oh I'm so sorry, Aunt Mary, I wasn't looking where I was going," rambled Tilly "That's ok my dear" replied her aunt kindly "But now I must really get going" "Oh yes sorry Aunt Mary" said Tilly as she helped her aunt back up to her feet. Her aunt walked away, as she turned around her dad suddenly materialised in front of her and made her jump. "Why were you shouting at me darling?" asked Tilly's Dad "Oh right, Dad do you know where my bag went? I'm so worried I lost the necklace inside of it" "No dear, I put it in your grandma's room for safe keeping" "Oh ok, thanks dad" thanked Tilly as she ran away.

When she walked into her grandma's room she immediately saw her bag, but as she ran towards her bag she could already feel something was wrong as she put her hand in the bag her fear was confirmed.

The necklace had been stolen!

Just as she was about to break down and cry, she saw footprints on the carpet just in front of the window that faced the back garden. She opened the window and jumped out, when she landed in the garden she saw the same footprints, she followed them all the way to the front door. She opened the door and went into the main hall, there lined up next to the door was a pair of shoes that had muddy soles, as she lifted the shoes she saw that the shoe soles had the same print as the footprints outside...

She quickly made the decision to not call the police and instead find her dad. She ran into the living room and saw her dad talking to her uncle Turner, "Perfect" thought Tilly. Uncle Turner was part of the police force here in London. She ran towards them shouting, "Dad! Uncle Turner!" She ran to them and said "Sorry to interrupt but the necklace was stolen and I know the person who stole the diamond necklace."

"What, Who? Tell me Tilly!" Said her Dad "What are you talking about?" asked her Uncle confused. "No time to explain, all you need to know is that Aunt Mary stole a diamond necklace." "How do you know?" asked Tilly's dad "Well I saw footprints in the room that you had put the bag in and it led all the way to the front door, so when I opened the door and went to inspect the shoes, Aunt Mary's were all muddy. I then brought the shoes out to check the soles of the shoes with the footprint and it matched". The arrest was soon made, her dad went to the police station to fill in paperwork.

"Your aunt is in fact a well known burglar that has stolen from many other people, she has stolen everything from gold to emerald. This was her first diamond item that she had tried to steal and she hid it in our attic" reported her dad when he came back from the police station. "Oh well" said Tilly as she grinned "I guess diamonds really aren't a woman's best friend..."

## New Journeys to the West

*International College Hong Kong, Wan, Ciara – 12*

Trot. Trot. Trot. Rosa and her father were riding their horses across from Mexico to Alaska to make a deal with Arigo. Rosa's dad, Juan was in debt. Arigo threatened Juan that if he didn't come to Alaska and discuss the deal with him, he would take Rosa away from him and use her as another slave of his many slaves. Juan, of course didn't want to lose his now only daughter, right after his oldest son, Dreco, who got shot to death a week before his nineteenth birthday by a local that tried to mug him, and Rosa's mother, Sierra, who died at thirty while giving birth to Rosa. All that was left of the Gonzalez family was Rosa and Juan.

As the Gonzalez's trotted across a desert, they saw snakes, lizards, all kinds of creatures, Rosa had never seen before in her fourteen years of life, though her father told her all about these creatures as a child, though she thought they were make belief, and would never see them in her life. They looked so fascinating! Never before had she seen a creature without fur, feathers or hair. Well except for those icky bugs that would sometimes appear in the Gonzalez's crops. Nor with scaly skin, or yellow eyes, or with frills and no legs. This all seemed like a dream to Rosa.

Sometimes, Rosa thought about her mum, she always thought it was her fault for her mother's death. But Juan always told her to keep her chin up, and that nothing was ever her fault. Anyways how could it be her fault if she wasn't even born yet? Every time he recited that speech to Rosa, he would always end it with "I love you, and never let anything drag you down." Whenever he would say that it warmed Rosa's heart.

Like she was sitting next to a flame, eating heated quesadillas with her father.

The sun was setting. Juan always told her: "move when its light, freeze when it's night." That is just what they did. They set down their possessions, all she brought was the blanket her mother bought for her before she was born, a shovel, and that one thousand pesos note that the local was trying to mug off Dreco which could have made the Gonzalez family wealthier, but both Gonzalez's decided against that. They should keep it in memory of Dreco. Juan had all the food, so Rosa didn't need to carry as much.

They calmed the horses and started a small campfire. The fire made Rosa's jet-black hair stand out against her dark skin and her violet tunic. This was their fifth night away from home. Every night, Rosa's father would tell her a story by the fire, then they would grab their sleeping bags and snuggle up to sleep. They did the exact same routine again, today. Juan started to softly tell Rosa a traditional Chinese tale. "Once upon a time..." Started Juan. Rosa got pulled into the story. She felt as if she was really with the talking pig and the monkey king. They felt so real. But yet it was just a story. "The end." Whispered Juan, his deep brown eyes glistening with the fire.

Rosa heard her father start to softly snore. Only then, her eyes grew heavy, making it hard to keep them open. She slowly drifted into oblivion.

Slowly, she started to see her mother, yelling in pain. Rosa was looking into a room. Her mother, laying on a bed, blood pouring out of her. She heard baby wails, but no baby. As her mother screamed the last of her screams, she knew she was on the edge of death. Suddenly a sound that didn't belong in this room. The sound of a dagger coming out of a scabbard.

Rosa's eyes began to drift open. She saw the sun, rising above the mountains in the horizon. A silhouette of a man, holding a dagger, was hovering right over her father. The man sheathed the dagger and slowly backed away, to the mountains. Of course, she thought. It must be the after effect that usually happens after scary dreams. As she turned to tell Juan her scary dream, he was still sleeping. But Rosa could no longer hear his snoring. Nor his breath. She examined him. Only then she realized there was a gaping hole, pouring with dark blood, on her father's chest. She let out a small yelp, tears welling in her eyes, her heart burning. She began to search him for life forms, but found none. That man must have been real.

She used her shovel to dig a hole. It took almost all day, but she didn't mind anything if it was for her dad. As she laid Juan's body into the hole, her eyes seeping with tears, heart burning with sadness and anger, she made silent prayers. For the afterlife to take care of him. For God to keep him safe. She wanted justice. To seek her father's murderer. As she was thinking anger and sadness of how to track him down, she saw footprints. As her brain started to function, she grabbed her horse and belongings, but left the shovel as an offering to God to keep Juan safe, she galloped towards the footprints, heading for the sun.

Midday was hot. The sun was shining hatred onto Rosa. Even the sun didn't like her. But she still carried on. She would keep her promise to herself. Track Juan's murderer down and slaughter him, or die with her father.

Her horse started to gallop to a stop. Horses need water, but they didn't have any. Rosa's horse started to stumble on its hooves. As it crashed onto the sandy dirt, she thought, "is all the bad luck a coincidence or is someone really trying to play with my emotions?" She had to continue the journey on foot. She knew she was getting closer she just knew.

Countries on the map zoomed before her eyes. Maps were hard to understand only if you don't know how to read them, but luckily, Rosa knew what she was doing. She was still heading towards Alaska. Infact the way that man was going, there was no place else he could be going except Alaska. "Well that's a coincidence." Rosa thought. "Me and father were going there in the first place." Her eyes started to well up, heart burning, as if it was on fire again. It happened every time she thought of Juaan.

The sun was setting. Saying it's farewells to the creatures of the planet. Rosa set her stuff down and made a fire. She missed story time with her father, so she prayed to him in the fire instead.

Rosa took out her father's sleeping bag and hugged it as if it was really her father. Her heart started to sink again, as she remembered what had happened to Juaan. She thought: "If I go to sleep maybe it will stop." So that's what exactly what she did.

Her mind shifted back into oblivion.

An image of Juaan appeared in her mind. Then Sierra. Then Dreco. "Father! Mother, Dreco! What are you doing here? I've missed you so much! Even though I don't remember you very well mother, but it's fine."

Says Rosa in her dream world. "But don't worry father, I am tracking down your murderer and I am going to backstab him!"

A voice started coming out of her father. " No Rosa. That's why we all came to your dream world. Us three Gonzalez's are safe and sound in the shadow land. Sierra had a vision of you being murdered. You are the only Gonzalez left. Keep the Gonzalez's alive please. Don't track my murderer down. I warn you. I forbid it."

Even as they tried, Rosa was always extremely stubborn. " What could possibly happen? I am going out there whether they like it or not! I need revenge."

She slowly merged from her dream, to see the same person that she saw the night before. She started to make out his face. Black hair, tanned skin, squinty eyes, flat nose. "Hmmm familiar." Rosa thought. Before she had time to think, the person spoke. "It is I, Arigo." The mysterious man said. "Your father didn't pay me, so he had to die. His father didn't pay my father so he had to die. So did the rest of the Gonzalez family for years and years. The Gonzalez's, never once paid their debt to the Ramos family. So, wouldn't it be better to wipe out the *entire* Gonzalez family? Then the Ramos family will *never* have to lose *any* money *ever* again!" Rosa started to back away from Arigo, as he pulled the dagger out of his sheath. But Arigo was too fast for Rosa. He lunged at Rosa, dagger out infront of him. Filled with pain, Rosa fell to her knees. Down on the dirt, feeling sick, dreamy, suddenly, *oblivion*.

## A Wolf In Sheep's Clothing

*Island School, Hui, Yu Hang, 13*

*He's so close now.*

*I can smell his flesh, his fear coming off in waves. I can hear his panicked breathing, his feet straining to reach safety.*

*The thing chasing him, it's so loud. He will hear it long before it reaches him. Does it expect to capture its prey by out-running them? That's a fool's plan. They're scaring away all the animals within miles. I will have trouble hunting in the next few days. It doesn't matter though. I will have something else to feast on.*

*For once in my life, I have the Gods behind my back. My mouth is moist with anticipation. What will he taste like, I wonder? Will he taste like a normal human being, ruby-red blood brimming with sweetness, or will he taste special? Will I feel the golden ambrosia trickling down my throat, sending heat waves down my core as it travels through my body or will I feel it go through me in a flash?*

*What will satisfaction taste like?*

*He's so close now.*

~

The forest seems to go on forever, giving no clue to those unfortunate enough to venture in the next time they'll feel the sun shining on their face. Leaves and gnarled branches with a life of its own gave him no mercy as he ran past, the heavy robes useless against the shrouded evil.

The dense canopy of leaves seems to go forever, with only the occasional streak of moonlight reaching the forest floor. Only his crinkling footsteps thumping against fallen leaves and his pounding heart indicated that he still remains free from the clutches of the monster behind him.

His legs are struggling to keep running, his heart laboring to keep pumping, his lungs fighting to keep breathing, but he mustn't let it succeed in reaching its goals. He didn't know how long he had run, but the sky was bright when he started, and he hasn't stopped since. All he knew was that he had to keep running, no matter how his body begged him to give up.

An eternity had passed before a clearing appeared in the distant. No, it was the end of the forest, a great big field open to the sky. Keep running, he thought, you would be safe if you reach the field. Keep running. His body refused to cooperate. The forest was pulling him down. His eyelids were dropping. Keep running. Keep running. Keep running.

He was too tired. His vision had started to blur, and he can no longer run straight. "Keep... running..." He stammered out with his remaining strength before his legs buckled and sent him sprawling into unconsciousness, a fingertip's length away from the field.

~

He woke up to the clear harmonies of bird and the leaves rustling in the slight breeze. The smell of leaves doused in morning dew slowly brought him back to consciousness. It reminded him of his home, of a time before running and fleeing.

It was almost too comfortable to wake up from. With a jolt, all the memories from the last few days caught up with him. The beast is not far behind.



A viridescent forest illuminated with bright rays of sunlight filled his vision. It seemed so full of life during the day, in contrast to the tense atmosphere of the night.

He was not in a good condition. He seemed to have lost everything but his clothes during his flight. His robes were stiff with dried and he stank. Dirt and cuts covered his arms and legs, from the countless times he tripped on tree roots. His muscles ached of misuse and a deep hole in his stomach yearned to be filled.

He tried to sit up, ready to continue his journey, but doing so, a stinging pain shot up the muscles on his body.

A raspy voice came from his right. "I wouldn't move if I were you."

A woman of medium size stood a few feet away, on a lotus that seems to hover a few feet off the ground. In her left hand was a jar of water and her right hand a willow branch. She was wearing a niqab, a white veil and robes covering her head to feet, leaving only a pair of weary brown eyes visible, in contrast to the many drawings that depict her as a beautiful woman.

"Guan... O great Guanyin. To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"I need to resolve a few simple matters. I need nothing from you other than your participation."

"It is my pleasure. But... the monster..."

"A simple forest demon, driven away by fire, often found in these parts. They will not attack in daylight, nor when I am here."

With great effort, he pulled himself up to a crouch, ignoring the pain that shot up his side. "Your kindness blinds my mortal eyes. I must thank you for giving me another opportunity to prove myself worthy and fulfill my destiny."

Instantly, the sky seemed to dim, the bird's chirping felt more distant. His vision was blurring. The woman's eyes seemed to have shifted ever so slightly. Unsettled, he blinked his eyes in confusion, a frown forming on his face. Did he say something that angered her?

"No, Tang Sanzang, it was never your destiny." She almost sounded sad. What did she mean; his destiny is not his destiny?

He frowned again, this time in suspicion. "Is there something you're not telling me? What do you mean?"

"For 25 years, I have watched over you. For 25 years, I have protected you. For 25 years, I have been played like a fool."

"What do you mean?" Tang Sanzang asks, fear beginning to creep up his spine.

"Come," She gestured, "show your true self."

The man in a black niqab materialized behind her, the dark contrasting the light, like yin and yang. Slowly, he pulled down his veil, allowing Tang to have a glimpse of the face underneath.

He blinked in confusion, eyes wide with horror refusing to take in the sight that greeted him. Tang struggled to move, to escape from the person that greets him, but his body is bound with chains that weren't there before.

“Do you understand now?” She asks, revealing the truth that has been hidden for a long time.

“No, no .... How is this possible? This must be an illusion. No, no, no. Who are you?”

It said nothing. The Guanyin continued. “Debts must be repaid, and loans must be returned.” She turned to the monster behind her, nodded grimly and disappeared.

Then it was only him and his doppelganger.

“Good night,” it whispered, and Tang Sanzang’s world went dark.

~

*They say that his flesh brings them immortality and that only true monsters are tempted by a gift from hell.*

*I am not a monster; no I am far from that. I am the victim. He is the wolf in sheep’s clothing.*

*Pain, torment, and evil dominate my memories. My life, my well-being meant nothing to them. The perpetual winter of the court is not one that a faerie should grow up in, let alone a mortal that does not rightfully belong there.*

*While the darkness shrouds me, everything in his life is bright. He grew up in a peaceful, knowledgeable and kind environment where people are happy.*

*He is everything that I should have been. He stole the life that belongs to me. He ruined my life.*

*Nothing can satisfy the dark chasm in my heart. Not when I broke all the bones one by one of the inconsiderate faerie for placing him in my cradle and bringing me to the living hell instead. Not when I starved his parents who decided that they wanted to change their newborn for someone else’s, peeled their skin off bit by bit and forced them to eat it. Not when I watched my real parent being buried alive for not realizing that the child they raised was not their real child, but a monster wearing their child’s face.*

*With blessing from the Gods, I can finally take revenge on my changeling.*

*His flesh was delicious. I didn’t bother cooking him, not when vengeance is so close. No, this delicacy was meant to be enjoyed fresh. I tasted the distress coming from his skin, nausea as I consumed his body. I kept him conscious for this, his suffering and pain just another small pleasure for me, an entertaining performance that marks the beginning of my eternal life.*

## The Kings Reckoning

*Island School, Lambert, Maximillien -14*

Earth and stone lay flat on my hands, for 500 years I have been holding the weight of a mountain, It's been cursed by Buddha to stop me from getting out for rebelling against the heavens. I cannot die, I already let this mountain crush me thousands of times crumbling my arms to dust but my will to hold it up was strong. The gods knew what they were doing when they banished me under a mountain, I could sleep through it my whole life and it would have felt like killing the 10,000 celestial warriors was just yesterday. But they knew exactly how to break me, rumors spread that a great god was banished under this rock and ever since a village has been built around the mountain where i rest dormant. I have been awoken by constant yelling and knocking coming from toddlers and the fools who thought they could mine a cursed mountain. I COULD NOT BEAR IT! It doesn't take a dog to realise that the mountain would never even CHIP to any of the equipment they threw at it, but they still tried.

I have never wanted to die more. Everyday I try to insulate the sound of the mountain by creating a vacuum between me and the mountain itself so sound couldn't reach my sensitive ears. This is why I held the mountain for so long even if it meant losing my arms over and over again. If there was one thing that the gods knew about me is that I hate to be ridiculed by tiny unintentional actions, Buddha could have sent me to the sun to burn for eternity, to die to my own name. Though he knew that being pestered by children would be far worse.

Today my arms crumbled again creating a significant thud as the small distance between my body and the mountain collapsed. It was louder than ever. As the mountain crushed me there was seconds without silence, I grinned, being one of the first times I was able to move my face under the pressure of the mountain. My happiness for the silence was twisted by concern as there was no sound for 6 seconds straight. The silence was broken with a single person clapping at a terrifying speed. Like bees everybody started to follow with the same type of clapping and cheering. Children screamed in joy, men reciting prayers and women obnoxiously chattering just because the mountain made a noise, pathetic. I have never wanted to kill anyone more than the idiot who started clapping. I grinded my teeth with some stone that crumbled between them, a feat I never thought I would be able to accomplish. The village shot back to motion only to hear one man still clapping, slow clapping. It wasn't sarcastic, it was more like a call you would make for a pet or a monkey, which I find more insulting than a sarcastic clap.

The clapping was rudely interrupted by an omniscient voice echoing from the top of the mountain, it was Bodhisattva Guanyin one of the few goddesses that worked under the Buddha's foot. She spoke to me in a calm soothing voice that sent chills down my spine. She told me "You do not belong here, at least that's what I think will happen". That sentence looped in my head over and over again because it didn't make sense. She along with Buddha were one of the few people that sent and determined my punishment, what did it even mean? 'At least that's what I think.' what did she mean by that? From the words she whispered I have a strong feeling she was going to suggest a trade off to my freedom but what could it be? My mind raced through the numerous possibilities of torture and atonement she could have offered, however she interrupted my thought with my answer. "I will offer you freedom in exchange for protection, protection for a pilgrim. His name is Xuanzang and you will help him journey to a world outside of China, he is a monk and will not harm you or anyone. Until you are free you will be wearing a headband made by the gods. If you disobey, hurt or have Xuanzang killed you will die with him. Do you accept this journey to purity?"

I began to smirk uncontrollably with the thought of accepting this quest. It was so funny that the mountain started moving just by the breathing my lungs and diaphragm, it started to crumble. I laughed even louder to have thought this cursed mountain would move just to the movement of my stomach, it was one of the first times I felt pain in my stomach. I accepted this quest consciously in my mind, but the fact she thought that I wouldn't kill him and her afterwards is HILARIOUS. I echoed the word 'yes' through the rocks and little did I know my head felt heavier, pickaxes started chipping and I began living. I shot out like a spring, turning the mountain into a volcano of dust. The villagers started screaming retreating to their homes from ash clouds that formed. The clouds protected my eyes from the sun I couldn't see for 5 centuries. After my eyes adjusted to the light and the clouds faded away I could see every one of their ugly round faces. they

were fat and skinny but all worn the same brown clothing stained from the muddy environment they lived in. I summoned my staff and thought to myself which villager would be my test dummy, my staff was capable of supporting ungodly weights and shifting shapes and mass. It may be blunt but the force I offer it turns this staff into a blade capable of cutting threads of bamboo fibre precisely. But before I could summon my nimbus cloud to do my bidding my head started to ache of an unspeakable pain. It felt like my head was splitting but being crushed at the same time, my knees weakened and I started rolling down the mountain. Each bump on the sharp rocks created holes in my chest. With each hole that I had, a bit of my confidence and pride parted. I have realised I'm no longer immortal.

I am laying dead on the bottom of the mountain only to hear clapping and a ringing in my ear after the multiple impacts it made on the rocks. A monk was clapping, could this be Xuanzang the monk Bodhisattva Guanyin was speaking of? I couldn't believe that I, the great Monkey King would die before a tumble down a mountain and that the last face I would see is this sweaty round husk of a man. The monk stopped clapping and asked "are you ok?" with his smiling face that never changed the second I laid eyes on him. I didn't move or say anything, instead I started to think of how did I lose my immortality. I remembered my head was already heavier inside the mountain, it must have been the headband that caused this piercing pain in my head and it must be Xuanzang who must have controlled it and took my power. I looked up only to see him smiling. He was a middle aged man and like all the other single minded monks he could only smile at me and ask if I was ok or if I needed help. He had no facial hair and has a large forehead. I thought back to what he said earlier, of course I'm not ok! Maybe that's the answer he wanted from me, maybe he wanted to tease me before we embark on this horrid journey by making me say that I seek his help, a mortals help. But before I knew it my wounds healed, the headband around my head is like a parasite sucking my strength and immortality but gives it back whenever I need it, I see that the gods wanted this journey to be a challenge in hopes that I will learn my lesson. I would wear this crown for eternity, it was a symbol of my power and the fear that even gods had for it.

Xuanzang started poking my head, what did he think he was doing? It was like he demanded death this instant.

"Hello my name is Xuanzang, are you ok Wukong?"

"WUKONG!?! How dare you address me like that!"

"Sorry but we are running out of time we have to start moving before it becomes night."

Who does he think he is? This monk was radiating with so much arrogance and confidence it made me wince, he was either brave or stupid to address me as Wukong, at least have the respect to call me Sun Wukong! Doesn't he know that half of the celestial warriors died addressing me that way? I stood on my feet and began following after him, I have to remember that he is stronger than me at any moment of time, one finger laid on him would turn my brain into congee.

"So may I address you Monkey King?"

"That's the only way you will address me understood!"

I felt a bit guilty to be so demanding for once in my life, but I refuse to change, the whole point of the journey was to change me into a 'formidable' god. The feeling of being down at your knees masked this feeling of guilt and regret which I was happy about. Maybe this journey wouldn't be as bad as I thought, afterall I was hoping to kill something after being released from the mountain and after I complete this form of rehabilitation I will take my revenge, I will become a god to be reckoned with.

# The Key to 2024

*Island School, Majumder, Aarshi – 13*

Hills rippled down my spine. Stuffed and anxious from the mechanical chains wiring my body, my heart throbbed. I nudged the cycad trees, tearing off pieces of the leaf. Dashing past the ticklish leaves of the Wollemi pine trees, Ginkgo and Dawn redwoods, my face looked and felt like a wounded apple that had been perched on by a maggot fly. The smoldering sun kindled my skin drinking my every last drop of energy. Where was the key to the time machine? My head flinched. I turned. A monstrous creature with big powerful wings yanked me up into the crystal clear sky. Wind splashed against my face and dried my worries away. It felt like I pushed my body against cloud nine. Why did it feel lusty? Why was I completely free of any fear? How was it possible for me to glaze through the sky captured by a Pterodactyl gripping its thorny claws and gnawing its serrated teeth, whisking its amber wings to capsize moments in the past?

Few miles away, I came to notice a mountain. A very certain hill with powers drastic enough to destroy the multiverse. Inside this mountain was a magnetar. A magnetar strong enough to send out pulsars to the entire humanistic dimension and create a shockwave if there was a fast enough electromagnetic field rotating the hill. This would result in the destruction of every planet. Through a gruesome canal, I could see visions of the future yet I was in the past. I could see the future from where I travelled back in time from. 2024.

In my time, I was the first physicist to contrive a final formula to time-travelling. I broke the speed of light barrier and all the mathematical laws of the universe. I was worth so much. I was paid billions and billions yet one thing just couldn't put my mind to rest. I couldn't stop contemplating the remains of the world's greatest unsolvable mystery. How did the dinosaurs succumb to their extinction? The more ponderings I conquered because of the vraiths of my brain the more I tried a thousand times to wish to disappear. In such manner, I time travelled to the past but you know when you fight against the universe's rules, you don't necessarily win, you never win. The wind sang me a sorrowful song. But time did beckon to me, and in a day it would most cunningly steal me away. I was trapped at the time of the dinosaurs and the only way for me to even barely make it back to my home alive would be to find the key that I had lost when my time machine had stumbled and disassembled itself. Using my manual papers I tried to crossover all the necessary items and did put it together again though I was only missing my one key. A golden one of a kind key. It was purloined by the vicious jaws of a Quetzalcoatlus. Metal was an attraction of this creature.

The breeze murmured through the branches. I was tucked away at a corner of a cavernous hole. The mud smothered the area. Rain was splintering the jungle. I heard a mourn. An ever most quiet mourn. Sounding like a soft cry of the wind. Vanquishing every stale and tired bone in my trembling body, flicking away cockroaches, I picked myself up to stand. Stood there. Looked in inside the other corner of this sickening cave. I found imprisoned, an Echidnas. Its thorns were so jagged and barbed. I felt so distant but so close. I needed help. For days, malnourished, exhausted and guzzled up all the energy from. Me and that spikey animal sat there waiting for a call, maybe even a squeak, rattled upon our boredom, I move up on and near the animal. Its appearance was just so magnificent. Next to me, I held upon a twig for that animal to fetch. Wanted to see if he knew and could do any good. Forthcoming, I never expected what I had just about experienced. This creature was wondrous; it could be researched for its skills could be weaponries. As I threw the twig, aiming it as a bull's eye, the Echidnas triggered its spikes and darted two thorns straight at the twig. It was as if it had practiced this specific stunt for ages. Marvelous! Exceptionally marvelous!

We played around with its spikes enabling one trick after the other. The sun was chuckling loudly leaving us roasting each day and the moon smiled giving us a tint of hope each night. The escape route—how would we find out? How would I get back home? The key! The key! The top of the whole creaked. Shining a spectrum of luminous and radiant light hit our eyes with the biggest jolt of energy. Sparring to open my eyes, I carried the small animal by hand and watched the dinosaur wail. He wailed, at the top of his lungs. He wailed, ordaining all the other dinosaurs in his team to probably chomp on us. But I wasn't going to let that happen. Not anymore. Remarkably so, one of the five dinosaurs that the Pterodactyl had

summoned was the Quetzalcoatlus. The one that had stolen my key. My key. The key to go back home, the key to bending time. I was going to get it back! A shadow of relief crept up on me silencing all the wailing creatures. The one advantage me and my ally have is that we understand each other. These dinosaurs, they are all different. They all react differently to different things. They know how to capsize different moments for different surroundings working together with the elements of the Earth cooperating with the air, earth, wind, fire and rain. They fight differently. Let the games begin!

I grabbed Echidnas and threw it to feel the flesh of air in a band of a semi-circle. He jetted out his thorns like ninjas with sharp boomerangs spiraling amongst the busy dinosaurs. It shot 7 thorns and 5 of them hit two of the dinosaurs. It pierced their shoulder bones and they bawled! They bawled so loudly it nearly pierced my eardrums. Fallen upon the ground, the two Velociraptor wrapped their heads around each other and their eyes bled out. The shoulders turned iced blue and slowly decayed into purple. It was a sight for sore eyes. But I knew it was worth it. To take me back home. I knew it was worth it. It had to be. 2 down 3 to go. There was one Pterodactyl, the Quetzalcoatlus and one Coelurosaurs. This world from where I was. What have I turned into? What is all this nonsense? A thousand memories, thoughts and questions covered my head in a blanket. Questions that was impossible to answer. Like what would I say to the people when I got back? If I got back. Would they recognize me? Would they realize that I had even been through such a mess? One second I was living in 2024 and when I would get back that would be the next. But instead of thinking mysterious thoughts, I would think of what would get me home. The Key. Drop dead. Another Dinosaur. The Coelurosaurs to be specific. I listened. There were no screeches or no howl. Just the clear non-stop, speedy heat rate I had.

And suddenly, the unstoppable sound vibrations, the ear-clattering sound vibrations struck my ear and it made Echidnas shatter to pieces. Trees smashed into trees. Animals started roaring. Their outcry slashed my nervous system. The world was collapsing and in the distance I could see a shining metal piece. Something that was curved. Since my ears were bleeding and I could scarcely see, my brain thudded but I was sure I had seen it before. It was yellow or maybe even golden. It was possibly the key! No it couldn't have been! How? Where was the Quetzalcoatlus? I slid my head to the corner of the lake behind me. In the glance that he preserved for me, he quaked. There was fear in his eyes. What could that be? The earth shuddered into pieces. I nodded with patriotism in me, at the worrying dinosaur. I zoomed towards the golden object. Was it the key? I doubted myself but it was my only escape from this tragedy, at least I have my impossible question answered. All the life around me tremored and perished. Unimaginable. Could I leave Echidnas behind? Could I do that to it? He was a part of me. But I had to leave from danger, I had to go. I picked it up and ran to the time machine, clicked upon the lock with the shiny object. I was in shock but I still laughed? This Earth has overcome so much. What could it be put through now? Anything?

Family. Such a weakness. Being gone from the ones you love? It's inconceivable.

## Almost

*Island School, Malik, Alizah – 13*

It began some time ago. They had moved to a neighbourhood presumed to be safer. Calmness surrounding their home, an ever-present atmosphere. In the streets, he'd spend his time playing games with his brothers, kicking up sand as they gleefully ran through the neighbourhood.

No one expected the boy's Baba to be taken by a landmine. No one expected an ambush on their family store. No one expected it would be just him and his Mama left.

He held fond memories of his family close. Burned fragments he was frightened to let go of. What would become of them he did not know, of him he did not know, of his dear Mama he did not know.

That he would leave in God's hands.

After all, you can't stop what was to come.

What came was smoke. Thick in the air, invading the boy's mouth, nose and eyes. Leaving him squinting, coughing, desperate for relief. Furiously he'd wipe at his eyes to abide by his Mama's warnings. He still felt the touch of her hand on his wrist. The woman's soft yet trembling voice delivering quick commands and reassurances.

Now he crouched, shaking all over in the cold of the night. There were voices all around, some distant and some so very close. Explosions would sound off from afar, the sound deafening, polluting the air more. The screams roaring then fading into the next bomb miles away.

It was too much. Far too much.

Swallowing deeply, the boy crawled to a thicker hedge, one much closer to the looming, barbed fence what stood between him and freedom. He heard the masked men shout orders in the language he used to tell jokes, to greet his family. It had been contorted into its own weapon.

The words God is great, going in on ear and out the other.

That's when it happened. A high-pitched scream sounded off not too far from the boy. But the sound was familiar. One he'd bore the brunt of hearing before.

His Mama.

She'd been captured, there was no doubt in his young mind. Awful barks of harsh laughter from the soldiers only confirmed the thought. Despite his efforts, he felt wetness running down his cheeks. His lungs constricting, sobs muffled, inhaling ragged, desperate to not receive the same fate.

You'd think if God was so great, he wouldn't be here. He'd be home, in his Mama's arms, listening to his Baba's stories, running amuck with his siblings.

What a fate.

Shaken from his thoughts by a forceful hand on his arm, he thrashed. Kicking and screaming to no avail, he was dragged from his hiding place and mercilessly thrown to the gravel.

All that happened before him, to him, was unclear. Glassy eyes unfocused on several moving shapes. Blurs, barks, screams, shouts. His eyes did draw to splotches on the ground. Blood.

Oh, so much blood.

Everything shifted, spinning, driving him dizzy. There was too much to take in.

Heaving, he averted his eyes from the stained ground to his Mama opposite him.

Lip quivering, she spoke, eyes wide he listened.

“T-try, for m-” she began only to be cut off with the masked man’s gun.

The boy’s own shout was silenced.

His world white in flashes. Right before he woke up.



## Memories

*Island School, Tam, Saaara – 13*

I hadn't told my son, Henry much about how I had come to the small village we currently live in or much about my younger years. That was until one evening just as he was ready for bed he was looking at the photos on the wall outside his room.

"Dad, where are these photos from?" Memories floating back into my head I told him it was nothing because I didn't want him to know my past, yet.

After a few days of Henry asking me where the photos were from, I caved in. The reason I hadn't told him earlier was because I didn't think he was mature enough or prepared to find out about my past. I started telling him about Mongolia, which was where I migrated from. He was surprisingly keen, bombarding me with questions.

"Dad where is Mongolia?"

"Is it nice there?"

"Why did you move?"

"Can we go there one day?"

"Son, it's a long story. Are you sure you want to hear it now?"

"Yes, Dad. Please tell me everything." He urged me to continue, a glow in his eyes. I could tell this meant a lot to him so I started telling him my story from the beginning of my journey.

"When I was about 10 years old a war broke out in Mongolia. Mongolia didn't have an army of their own soldiers and were too poor to create an army with strong enough weapons. My dad had to stay and do what he could to protect our home while my mum, my sister and I fled. We took all the supplies of food and water that we could and started walking across the deserts. We walked for days and days with barely any sleep. After some time, we ran out of food and then water. At this point we had all lost hope. We were sleep-deprived and lost. We had been walking for weeks now and didn't know where we were.

Just as hope went further away from us we scanned the area around us. We could finally see the city approaching us. Relief was lifted off our shoulders as we started moving towards the city beyond us. We weren't quite sure where we were and what we would do once we arrived there. Would they kick us out or let us be part of their society?

It looked like a small village that was linked to the city through a long road that continued for kilometres. We spoke a old man who then helped us get some food and water into our systems. There weren't many people in this village and the word gets around fast, so almost everyone was aware of who we were. We were given some tents to sleep in, comfortable blankets along with a velvety pillow each. Our stomachs full, the village people kindly helped us set up our tents and beds. We then thanked them and tucked ourselves to bed. As you can probably imagine, that night we slept like babies."

## The Missing Scripture

*Island School, To, Jacy – 13*

A sea of low rhythmic murmurs echoed inside the temple. Hundreds of bald heads dipped in sheer respect. One figure rose and closed his eyes. “हम पवित्र बाइबल के लिए आपकी अनुमति, बुद्ध की मांग करते हैं।” He spoke in a clear baritone. All of a sudden, a brilliant white light blinded them momentarily before fading into a faint glow. The monks simultaneously glanced at the sacred bible hovering atop the embroidered rug. With a puff of smoke, it vanished into thin air. Chaos erupted.

“Man, this class is taking forever.” Tophier groaned inwardly. The squeaking of a marker scribbling on the whiteboard brought the whole class to attention. “ $\sqrt[9]{985\pi}$ . Does anyone want to try figure this out?” Ms Pent smiled, in a hopeless endeavor to encourage her students.

“RIIIING!”

“Oh well, we’ll get back to this tomorrow. Don’t forget about the homework! Class dismissed!” the teacher yelled over the rustling of paper being stuffed into bags and the metallic screech of chairs being pushed back. Restless with excitement, Tophier hurried over to the door and filed out along the current of students. Today was the day Tophier will be *finally* allowed to buy stuff himself. Today was the day he can officially go anywhere alone. Today, in fact, was his 13th birthday.

“MUM! I’M HOME!” Tophier hollered as he flung his backpack onto the floor. “Happy birthday sweetie!” His mum’s voice warbled from the kitchen. Tophier grinned and practically bounded up the stairs to his room. Leaping up the last four steps, he reached his head out to turn the doorknob. Only, his outstretched fingers never did make contact with the cool metal. With a mighty “BANG” the door blasted open, whacking Tophier in the forehead.

Agog, Tophier stood paralyzed as he rubbed in bruised brow. Streams of staggeringly bright, white lights shot out from his room. When the beams subsided a little, he held his arm over his eyes and with what little courage he had, Tophier ventured inside his bedroom. Heart pounding like crazy, he lifted a trembling foot into the room. All at once, the blinding beams evaporated as if a light switch had been flicked off. Breathing a sigh of relief, Tophier glanced around to see if anything was damaged. In his peripheral vision, he caught sight of a silvery, soft pulsing light. Instead of his battered green Maths exercise book, a heavy, black tome lay on his desk. The silvery sheen of light seemed to be coming from it. Eyes widening in wonder, reached out a finger to touch it. The very moment his fingertip grazed the cover, thousands of lilting voices rang in his head. Shocked, he hastily retracted his hand and frowned. Where on earth did this mysterious book come from?

Meanwhile, back in the monastery in Nolanda, everyone was in a frenzy. Robes swished about as clusters of monks swept through monastery, desperate to find the missing scripture. A battered neon green book with a title printed in a foreign language was inspected carefully by a wizened old monk. Their precious Book of hours had vanished into thin air. Only to be replaced by a useless, ugly green book. “There must be a way.” A huddle of monks spoke in hushed tones, deciding what can be done to retrieve their sacred tome. “It is in a foreign country.” A clear voice broke the incessant murmur. “New York. I am sure. Let us go forth and retrieve our sacred scripture.”

Once again murmurs and furious whispers could be heard. “Hush! I am fully aware that this might be yet another failure, but it might be the best solution we have.” A monk rose up from his kneeling position and addressed the crowd. “It is a sin to lose our sacred scripture. There is no time for discussion on the matter. Let us unite together and search for The Book of Hours.”

And so it was decided to organize a search mission.

“Yes, I’m afraid so.” The monk replied, fingers nervously twining and untwining themselves as the headmistress’s brows furrowed. “An emergency. Ok. Please follow me.” The headmistress was not sure what exactly was going on, but nevertheless the monk was persistent. They trailed down several corridors before coming to an abrupt halt at a classroom door. “Tophier? Tophier Williams? Uh...There’s a visitor who

wishes to speak with you.” the headmistress beckoned Topher over and apologized to the class for interrupting. His curiosity piqued, Topher stood up and followed the strange man and the headmistress to the office.

“I’m afraid that a very ancient scripture might be in your possession.” started the monk calmly. Topher nodded with wide eyes and confessed what had happened the day he discovered the book. “Ah well, I’m very sorry with the misfortune that has brought. Fortunately no one is harmed. Once I perform a ritual, all will be well. Might it be possible for me to perform it at your home?” the monk enquired, careful to keep from sounding agitated, which was exactly what he was feeling right now. *Was this the boy who has the scripture in his possession? Will he be willing to give it back?* Topher gave a hesitant nod. The man seemed sincere enough, and there wasn’t anything particularly scary about him anyway.

After school ends, accompanied by the monk, Topher used his usual route back home. Once they got back, the monk eagerly strode in and up the stairs. “*The sacred scripture.*” The monk breathed, his whisper barely audible as Topher reached his bedroom. “Come now, we must perform the ritual!” The monk exclaimed with enthusiasm. “Lucky my parents are visiting some friends...” muttered Topher. All of a sudden, a pool of light expanded from the mysterious black scripture and spreaded all over the room. It consumed everything in white, silvery light. “May the sacred scripture return to se—”

“My pants!” Topher suddenly yelled. “I forgot to wash them! My mum’s gonna kill me!”

“NO, No!” The monk cried in despair as the scripture glowed and with a sudden explosion of more blinding white light, disappeared again.

In the middle of the pacific ocean. “Goodness me what on earth is that?” A tourist grumbled and turned to his companion. “My, oh my! Is that a pair of *undies*? In the middle of the ocean?!” exclaimed the other man as he pointed towards a rather indistinct object rising and diving to the swell of the waves. A thick, black tome bobbed in sight, on it a rather precariously hanging pair of purple underwear. “How strange. Maybe someone made a mistake and left those here.” stated the tourist. Little did the tourist know how close to the truth he was.

## Origins of the One King

*Island School, Wu, Evan – 14*

It has been 500 years, 500 years too long that I have been away from my freedom and mischief. I do not remember anything anymore at this point. It was originally hate and anger towards the gods and the heavens, but now it is just plain emptiness, all my hate and anger has transformed into a bottomless void. I don't even know how much I hate them at this point.

I should have been the king of them all, with all the gods and the heavens under my feet. How dare they treat me as if I was some low-class warrior? I have defeated everyone in Heaven that was in my path towards godhood, the 10,000 Celestial Warriors, the 28 Constellations of the Stars, the Four Kings of Heaven and even the Lotus Prince Nezha. None of them even stood a slight chance against me. What could they have done against my Golden Jingu Bang staff, my 72 transformations and my army of Monkey Kings. I'm immortal and near-omnipotent, and they still think that I do not classify as a deity? I will get my revenge on that wretched Jade Emperor when I escape from this seal.

But what is the point? I will never be able to get my revenge. Because no matter how strong my powers are, no matter how powerful I am, I am still sealed here under the hands of Siddhartha Gautama. No one can stand up to the Buddha, no matter your strength, agility or intelligence, everyone and everything are nothing in comparison to the Buddha. There is no way for me to escape his grasp. I have tried everything. I'm going to be here forever in this cramped and dense space until the end of time. I will do anything for a second chance at seeing the outside world again.

That was when an outsider knocked on my mountain seal and spoke to me about some gibberish. I ignored the person for most of the time, because that is what I did to other outsiders who claimed that they would grant me "specialities" by obeying their orders. I don't believe in such trash that putrid mortals say. Then the outsider said something that really caught my senses.

"Do you want to have another chance at life?", the unknown person said to me. She changed her tone. I can recognise who the person was now.

That voice was definitely the goddess Bodhisattva Guanyin. She was one of the few people that worked under the Buddha's foot. Why is she here? But I will find out the answer to that another time. What she said 'Do you want to have another chance at life?', I thought about everything that has happened in my lifetime up till this moment in time. The monkeys that I have met with since my conception from a magic stone of the Elements themselves, the scavenging of my Jingu Bang staff in the deep waters of the ocean, the erasure of my name in the Book of Life and Death, the battle between what Heaven's forces and I, and my imprisonment under Siddhartha Gautama. This was my first and only chance that I am able to get out of this bottomless pit and make my return as the rightful king of the universe after I am done with whatever Bodhisattva Guanyin wants from me.

"Yes", I responded to the goddess on the other side of the wall.

"I will break the seal that the Buddha has placed on you 500 years ago and grant you your freedom, on two conditions", she spoke.

I winced when she said 'two conditions'. I should have known that not even a piece of paper that mortals use as money comes for free in this world, let alone my freedom from this everlasting hell.

"The first condition is that, you will have to follow a pilgrim on a pilgrimage. A pilgrim is a person that is religious and a pilgrimage is like a holiday to enjoy religion. As his disciple and guardian, you will have to protect him in his journey to discover another world outside China. The second condition is that, you will

have to follow his every order and wear this custom headband forged by the Gods themselves. If you want to find out what the headband will do to you, well you will have to find out yourself when the time comes. Do you still agree to these conditions?. Denial of this offer means that you will never come back to the human world and remain in this seal trapped forever.”, the goddess told me with this strange tone that made me feel uneasy.

What a shame. When I finally have the opportunity to escape from the seal that has put me down for 500 years, the only way that I can break the seal is to give away my freedom to this random person going on a pretty boring adventure. But what other choice do I have? This is an ultimatum. If I accept this person's request, I will have to hand over my freedom and be forced to do whatever the person wants me to do. If I don't accept this person's request, then I will have to remain sealed under this mountain for all eternity, never to see the light again.

So after an unknown period of time in silence and reflection, I agreed. And with a loud crack, soon followed the destruction of the walls that have trapped me for five hundred years. It was beautiful to see the light again, I haven't seen the light in what seemed like an eternity. I was surrounded by shattered rock fragments from the mountain seal, the lush green trees of Mother Earth and the wind. I was reborn. I could feel my body once more.

Then, in a quick flash of light with everything shaking and rumbling, the Goddess of Mercy Guanyin appeared in front of me.

“This will be the man that you have to serve in your journey”, she told me. Then with her hands, she created a hologram of this man on top of her right palm. “His name is Xuanzang, a person who studies Buddhism from China who desires to travel the West in order to obtain some knowledge a few men seek for themselves, the *sutras* of Buddhism, scrolls containing the secrets to his “enlightenment” or awakening.”

He wasn't too tall, he looked as short as a Celestial Warrior back when I fought them in Heaven. He had grey hair, which was strange considering most measly humans either had black or brown hair and he was dressed in a grey robe. He also had lots of things behind his back, I don't even know how he is able to carry all those things despite his frailness. It seemed that this man was really eager to seek whatever those Buddhist scriptures are that would lead to his “enlightenment”, even coming up to a god like me to help him with his journey. I don't even know if enlightenment is even a thing. But I will have to thank this Xuanzang person for releasing me from this nasty “Demon Seal” that the Buddha has put on me, I can finally return to the mortal realm and plot my revenge against the Gods and the Heavens.

Afterwards, the hologram of Xuanzang disappeared and a few more words came out from Guanyin again.

“This man will change you. I can feel it. Should you ever turn back into the demon that you once were, the gods will strike you down again and this time you will not come back, imprisoned in an worse seal for all of your days. Will you take the challenge to kill your devilish past in order to be reborn divine?”

Instead of stuttering like the first time inside the mountain, I was confident.

“Yes, I am confident to serve this man in order to have my freedom.”

Guanyin smiled, then she calmly spoke to me.

“Then if you do everything as I have stated, you will be free to do whatever you want and maybe even possibly find your place amongst us in Heaven. Use your time wisely and don't mess around. I will see you soon.”

She disappeared and I was back to being all by myself, but this time being surrounded by pitch darkness, I was surrounded by the nature that I have taken for granted before my rebirth. I no longer felt emptiness in my soul, instead something sparked within me like wildfire from the depths of Hell, my will to fight, boiling like the hottest magma that has existed.

I have been through five of the six realms of Existence before, as an animal, a mortal, a ghost, a demon and my current state, a demigod.

It is time to enter the last realm of Existence and begin my journey to become something even greater than a divine being.

A God.

## The Great Civil War

*Island School, Yau, Henry – 14*

Explosions erupted everywhere. Hundreds of shells hurled towards the fortress walls. Above in the fortress, archers fired back, hundreds of arrows flew through the air. Below, thousands of Xi troops surrounded the fortress. The troops waved their spears and bellowed: “Long live the Xi empire!” Hundreds of crimson flags rose into the air and the troops charged towards the fortress walls.

The doors burst open and a messenger wearing traditional Chinese robes rushed into the room. He bowed down and said anxiously “My lord, I received word that the western fortress is under attack, we are sustaining heavy losses”. “Should we mobilize our troops for a counterattack?” The emperor looked at the General.

The General replied “A counter attack is not necessary, my lord. “Their attack is just a distraction, the Xi troops are advancing to the west to take this sword called the Goujian.”

“What is this Goujian weapon?” the emperor interrupted.

“It’s a weapon that gives unlimited power to the wielder. If this weapon is in enemy hands, we will be doomed, my lord.”

“Very well, I will need the most elite men for this mission”. “General, assemble a team by next morning,” the emperor commanded.

The next morning, even before the sun had risen, the General had amassed a team of 20 men. They were the strongest, toughest men. Bronze armour covered them from head to toe.

The General then spoke: “We will head westward until we arrive at the western fortress, then slightly north to the temple to retrieve the weapon. Behind me are baskets of rice and supplies, this will be enough for the journey.” One by one, the men climbed onto their horses. The journey had begun. The horses advanced through the fields, and into the vast plain. The horses galloped through the deserts, it’s hooves kicking up dust and sand. Night fell, but the horses continued, flying through the plains.

13 days later, they had arrived at the Tian Shan, the mountain of heaven. The fang white mountains were massive, covered with thick layers of snow. The peak was barely visible, thick white clouds covered it. The sky was a deep azure blue. “The western fortress is located 4 kilometers from the foot of this mountain” the General said looking at the map. It will take us 1 to 2 hours to reach there.”

As they neared the fortress, they discovered that the Xi empire had occupied the territory. Crimson flags billowed in the wind, with the character “Xi” written on it. The fortress was in ruins, its walls had collapsed and hundreds of corpses piled on the floor. Xi troops surrounded the fortress. The General looked down. “There is no way we are going to sneak through that with our horses.” “What’s the plan then?” one whispered. “We head back and go around it.” With that, he pulled the reins and the horse turned round. “Let’s go! We don’t have all day.”

As they went around the fortress, they realized that there was a Xi outpost situated there.

“There is no other way. We must go through that outpost or else we won’t be able to reach the western temple in time.”

There was a loud battle cry as the horses galloped towards the outpost. The general whipped his sword out and waved it. The rest of men followed suit. The Xi troops were caught by surprise. Spears flew towards the Xi soldiers, tearing their bodies in half. The horses charged into the outpost, kicking the troops down with it’s mighty hooves before they could get their swords. The men swung their swords at the remaining Xi soldiers, cutting their limbs off and slicing their bodies in half like butter. The smell of blood and the sound of screams filled the atmosphere. Finally, all the Xi troops were dead.

“We must get out of here before the reinforcements arrive.” the General said, as they galloped swiftly towards the horizon.

They proceeded west, until dawn arrived. That evening, they decided to settle down near a rocky cliff. "We will stay here for the night. Hopefully the Xi troops will not find us here." said one of the men. The sky turned pitch black. The sun rose and the very next morning, one of the elite men realized that half of the food supply had gone missing and that some of the men had been killed. "General, I think we have been raided, some of our supplies have disappeared and a few of our men are dead."

The general was examining one of the dead bodies. Stab wounds covered the entire body. "It looks like thieves scavenged through our supplies and killed these men. The thieves usually patrol around these trade routes." the general explained. "They make a living by killing traders and by stealing their goods." The general got on his horse and placed the remaining supplies on the horse's back. "Let's get out of here. The thieves are long gone. We must hurry or else we will run out of food and water."

Another 1500 kilometers later, they had finally arrived at the western side of China. It was bitterly cold and humid there. Strong gusts of wind blew towards them. The men continued to advance in this atrocious weather, the horses ran as fast as their legs would allow. Nothing would stop them from retrieving the sword.

"We are nearly there. I think I can see the temple from here." the general said, pointing at the horizon. Surely enough, a tiny triangle appeared on the skyline. The men approached the temple and slowly got off their horses. The temple was a marvellous triple-garbled circular structure. The floor was made from white stone marble, the walls were made from oak wood which was painted bright red. Statues of golden dragons hung from the walls. "Wait here, I will go into the temple to retrieve the sword."

The general took a step on the marble floor. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a dozen guards appeared. They surrounded the men and pointed their spears at them. "Drop your weapons now. Who are you? Why are you here?" said one of the guards.

The general obeyed the guard's order and placed his sword on the floor. The rest of the men followed suit. "We were sent from the Tao Kingdom to retrieve the Goujian Sword."

"This Goujian Sword belongs to the Ming Kingdom. Only a member of the Ming Kingdom can retrieve it." the guard explained.

"200 years ago, the Ming Kingdom was destroyed. Nothing remains in the Ming Kingdom." the general said in a calm tone.

"To take the Goujian sword, you must destroy the Ming emperor."

There was a huge force field as all of the guards merged together into one giant emperor. The men were thrown backwards from the blast. The emperor picked up the Goujian sword and charged towards the general. "I will destroy you!" the emperor growled. He raised his sword and slashed at the general. The general ducked and picked up his sword. The emperor lunged at him and swung his sword. The general leaped backwards, the sword missing him by millimeters. The general darted to the left and then the right. The emperor swung his sword again. The general waited until the last second and darted back to the left and dived at him. He swung his sword with all of his might, decapitating the emperor.

The emperor disappeared in a cloud of smoke and the Goujian sword landed on the marble floor with a clang.

The general picked up the sword. His battle scarred face was reflected by the smooth blade. The blade was forged from bronze and copper, it shimmered in the light, like a glowing matchstick. Ancient chinese characters and dragons were engraved on the blade. The hilt was made from alloy gold and shaped like an upside down vase. The grip was covered with fine black silk. This was it. This was the goujian sword. The general returned a month later with the sword. With the Goujian weapon, the opposition was destroyed in a matter of days. The Xi troops retreated back to the east.



## The Sweetest Sound in the World

*Island School, Zheng, Grace – 13*

In my younger years, China was going through a strenuous period of time with Japan. When I was twenty, I left home to attend military camp with other healthy young men. It was everyone's hope that one day we'd be able to represent China and fight for our country. Many of us were torn and brought far away from home. Our training took us west, and sometimes we travelled for days. Inevitably, we missed our hometown – the emotions were hard to hide, but we were taught that it was an honor to be able to attend. We swallowed the tears and found distractions elsewhere, while our family prayed for our safety. It was in the military camp where I met Chen. Chen was in charge of handing out badges on the first day, and we shared a dorm. In first impressions, he didn't stand out. After all, he wasn't particularly tall, or particularly short. He wasn't particularly weak, or particularly strong. His eyes like most were a deep rich brown, and his simple, plain features blended him into the crowd. He didn't talk much, and I viewed him as another by passer in my life.

However, as the days passed, I noticed something quite odd about him. Every night, he would take out a tiny sound recorder from under his pillow. Then, he plugged his headphones in, tucked the pods snugly into his ear and hit play. For those moments, the world seemed to freeze around him. It was like someone pressed the pause button on an infinitely long film – he no longer heard the furious yells of the commander, or the 'brrrrrrrrrr' made by the dinner bell, or even the thuds made by boots marching into the darkness. He was truly alone, lonely, but content. At times this would go on for hours. We would all ask him what he was listening to; was it a beautiful love story? A song his beloved one sang? Or maybe a piece of Beijing opera?

Regardless of what we'd say, he always shook his head and laid back down.

Life in the camp continued as usual, with strict military routines, and small food portions, we barely had enough food to eat. It was the memories of our hometown that kept us going. Every month or so, we received a letter from our family back at home. These letters were more than just a note from our loved ones – they brought joy and warmth to those who were in the frontline, and at times of danger, it brought hope. However, only a small handful of people could send messages back, and fights erupted easily between soldiers. Whenever it was our turn to send a letter, we would write as small as possible so that words crawled across the page like an army of ants. Strangely, Chen never received any. But when his turn came to send one, he wrote no words. Instead, he would ask the kitchen for drops of cooking oil. The oil was fragrant, but tasted dreadful as the chefs would use the same oil to cook, but then not change it for weeks. He would smear the oil across the page, taking special care that every corner was covered. He later told me he sealed every envelope with a prayer.

Some mocked him and called him a fool, while others thought he could not read or write. I looked at the name on my badge that he wrote on the first day. Clean and crisp, those characters were clearly the work of a scholar. This incident only led me to question his identity even more, and from day to night my curiosity grew and grew. They all say curiosity killed the cat. I don't know about the cat, but curiosity certainly got the better of me. One day when he was on night guard duty, I took his recorder from his pillow. Eagerly, I hit the play button – but what greets me isn't a tale, a song or a play. Instead, there's no sound. Just silence, silence that deafens my ears and tears me into utter confusion. As if to worsen the moment, Chen walks in and looks at me. Our eyes meet, but we don't say a single word.

Finally, I gather up courage and walk towards him. I didn't know what to expect. Fear? Anger? My hands tremble ever so slightly as I hand the recorder to him. His face was pale; his expression dim. But he doesn't show any signs of infuriation. Instead, we sit down and he tells us about his family.

There's three people in his family. His father, his mother and him. They used to farm for a living, but now they live in the suburbs of Chongqing and own a small local business, selling freshly steamed buns. His

family was never well off, and when the days were harsh little food came by. Even though conditions were tough, they trusted and held belief that better times would come. Gradually, things appeared to have improved. They moved to a new neighborhood, and on good days there was meat on the table. Suddenly, Chen paused. Tears flowed down his face as he said the next sentence: "But a fire broke out last year in our town. My parents are both blind mutes."

A fire struck Chen's hometown last summer. Like a wild child, it tore down buildings and took the lives of the citizens. It had little mercy and for Chen, it destroyed everything he had. Chen's parents were rushed into the hospital, but it was all too late. They had lost their voice and their sight. At that moment, I understood everything Chen did. He did not need to write, as the fragrance of the oil would let his parents know he was eating well. The silence in the recorder, was his mother's voice. He wanted to keep his family with him, and whether they were separated by seas or mountains, he felt like they were together. He told me, to him, that was the sweetest sound in the world.

## Journey to the West

*Korean International School, So, Maximillian -14*

**Y**ear 2765: Earth's resources are depreciating faster than ever, for what is known as the sixth extinction, the Final encounter. "Project ATHNOS is now intact" said commanding officer Imma Urwrecked.

It was an expensive project; US\$165 billion for a spaceship travelling 298 543 198 m per second, near the speed of light. People are lacking a great amount of water and food. The human race is suffering from extinction.

The objective of the mission was to find a habitable planet, suitable for humans, with a competent amount of oxygen or nitrogen. The enhanced Hubble telescope on Neptune had transmitted a number of planets, three with a satisfying amount of elements in the atmosphere; namely Persphone, Syclite and Quostra.

Teleportation, a technique originated for about seven centuries as destructive scanning January 23, 2015 was the invention of quantum teleportation.

Quantum teleportation information a distance of ten feet, but conceivably, it means that larger objects can be transported even longer distances. But traveling as far as 2648 light years without a wormhole on the other end, is impossible to reach the Manxirious Syncry but total internal reflection triples this distance, and is very common in the Kuiper belt, due to its variety of different angles. There was no hope for reaching the comet-rich area as the rocky orbit would break our bones vexatiously. This scintillating knowledge led to the origin of the project.

I, electric engineer, Cyber Hydroid, had been kidnapped a year ago, had distinctly hired to help the program which mostly includes stealing illegally dangerous components for the ship of my electric skills and considering my well known skills, had been hired to join the crew.

The ship, named Athnos, was a combination of the god Athena, meaning wisdom and Chronos as in "right time" in Latin. The Ship was armed, with six heat blasters, and seven binocular suited assault rifles (in case of comets/asteroids flying in space).

The ship was now intact, its wings spread out, blasters ready for the trip. The port shield model was blue. The crew went on board and as a ramp amplified. As the chamber dispersed, sunlight shined onto ATHNOS, making it look seductive. One of its wings incandescent, qualified for launch. The ship's seatbelts junctioned.

The crew set in motion, the whole regiment interjecting: I, Cyber Hydroid—combat forensic scientist engineer, Combat pilot – Viper Victor, Intelligence Secretariat – Nicro Dalpar and of course the Captain, Imma Urwrecked.

"This is going to be a long six hour trip," said Victor, "Seatbelts on!"

The ship zoomed across the galaxy like a bolt of lightning, meaning Victor had the ship going to near light speed.

*5.8 hours later...*

There was an alarm, causing me to awake from my sleep.

"Mayday! Mayday! The ship crash landing on Triton," said Delpar.

“Damn it our comms are down!” said the Captain.

The ship was lighting up on fire, burning up the engines and other important components of the ship.

I realised that we were crash landing to a Neptune’s moon, Triton with all backup engines down.

I took off the seat belt harness and dashed to the emergency escape to find a jet pack and an emergency spacesuit.

“Everybody calm down!”. I said through the speaker, “Go to the exit and find some supplies for escape”

I ascended the airlock and jumped out of the crate, hoping the crew would be alive down on Triton.

**Bang!** The first door shot opened, as the captain dived down. Three other gliders parachuted down to the dwarf planet.

My glider ricocheted into the atmosphere, drifted to the left and landed safely onto the surface. The others followed suite and landed beside.

We were in the spacecraft, still with some oxygen remaining in the main peridium.

“It appears that our engines have been glitched, empennage rear section of the body, violated, powerplant and propulsion devices,in deep need of repair...”

“What?” asked Captain Urwrecked.

“Wormhole generator, unscathed.” I muttered and obfuscated.

“So,we can just go back?,” asked Victor.

“Yes, but in doubt of our destination.”

“Disregarding all the no man zones with no oxygen or other important elements essential for life?,” said Dalpar cynically.

“Yes,” I answered fatally. “All comms down, we’re stuck.”

The Commanding officer, to my surprise remained calm and at peace.

“So,” I asked, “What’s the play?” “I’ve always had a hunch about life on Triton,”Urwrecked solicited. “I think they might have what we need.” “So how do we find them?,” I inquired.

“We don’t have to,” he answered, and indicated with his index finger, pointed to the incoming horde of goblin headed golems on screen.

The strange creatures extended their solid rock hands, trying to force open the ship,yelling gibberish as they did so.

“What the hell are they doing?” I asked.

“Trying to break our ship, come on, let’s grab our guns and...”

“I think they think we are intruders,” I interrupted.

“What are you going to do, say we come in peace, drop our guns?” argued Victor.

“I get your point, but do we have trangs here.” I bickered.

“Those are for medical attention and may not really work. Plus, we don’t have much time left before they break our shields and run out of oxygen and die just because you decide to stick it to”. I grabbed my spacesuit and took a blaster, ready to show these Goblemnns what I got, while Victor fired at the bizarre creatures, backing them off. The crew acted agile, quickly getting on the suits, running to the airlock and started fixing the on board steaming blasters.

The Goblemnns split into half, going to Goblemites, I, being so pissed off that the ship’s blasters were overheated, started giving off my training, started to smack one of the Goblemnites extended foot.

It’s purple–ish pink eyes started to glow started blasting energy out, as I ducked behind the ship.

My blaster started heating up, and aiming for the target, blasted it towards their arms.

They made use of their extendable body, covering each other and backing off. I had thought they gave up, but they abruptly charged towards the ship with an inconceivable amount of speed.

*If Urwrecked thinks they have what we want I thought then attacking them might make them loose entrustment for us.*

“Everybody stand down,” I said. “I think we may somehow communicate with them.”

“Take him down it’s an order” demanded Urwrecked.

“But you said they have what we want!” I vindicated.

“Take those bloody disgraces down, it’s a damn order Hydroid!” demanded the Captain.

Urwrecked, furious that I had disobeyed him.

I gestured for my mini air to air missiles to launch, as they stunned some of the Goblemnites, as some eluded and blitzed towards me. I jumped on one of the rocky bodies and fired at its back. The other zeroed in on my head, I did a side–flip with my blaster and knocked another one out. The third’s hand morphed into a knife and cut of the barrel of my blaster.

“OK guys I’m busted.” I was terrified.

The Goblemite started slashing the knife around uncontrollably, as I dashed back inside. “That thing is outside terrorising the ship” I said, panting in the spacesuit.

“Well, then finish him” said Delpar.

“No blasters?” I asked.

“They were overused by Victor, but, the Goblemn did split.” blissed Delpar.

It was clearly gibberish being the Goblemites are even harder to fight than Goblemn itself.

There was a sound outside, the sound of rock cracking.

We looked outside the window, as the Goblemnite's body blades evolved into purple sparkling gems.

RRRRAAAAA OOOOOOOOOOOOR it yelled.

I sprinted to the airlock grabbing another blaster and firing non-stop at its chest. It sent a shockwave sending me off balance.

EO! a blast hit the critter's back with a blue heat beam coming out of nowhere.

It was Viper Victor in a space suit.

"Expecting someone else?" he asked.

I slapped my head for just focusing at its chest and not its back.

"Now we're stuck again." I stated.

"Not really," said Victor, he yanked out a piece of purple crystal from the Goblemite.

"All computers are offline, and the wormhole generator is unstably dangerous, only insight debatable where the intended destination of the wormhole is."

"This, Hydroid, will get the engines to work," he explained as he put the sparkling rock to the ion thruster, powering it up.

"What about the wormhole?" asked Delpha.

"The way I see it, we don't really need another planet." replied Victor.

"Why? But isn't that our mission," I asked.

"This has enough juice to power up a city for at least a century," he continued "And it's only a six hour trip going here"

So, from then on, humans relied on Goblemn/Goblemnite energy, which, with further research was what was endangering the Goblemnns.

## Journey with the Stupendous Monkey

*Leung Shek Chee College, Ching, Mina Lam Yuen – 13*

One wonderful sun filled day, Wukong was having a nice outing with his lovely friends Xuanzang, Bajie and also Shawujing. His mood was first-rate. They had decided they would all go to a stupendously hot desert. Why? They had to go through the hot desert or they could not get the Scripture from the West.

The desert was as hot as standing in front of a fire and that's why it was called the Fireregion. Now, in the center of this desert stood a single, tall mountain. The friends all chimed together, 'We must set out to find out the reason for why this mountain is just so hot before we continue our search for the Scripture!' But, on the way there all of the friends became very hot and thirsty; their water was almost gone and they soon began to feel extremely tired.

Wukong suggested, 'Give me some time. I will go upstairs to Heaven and ask the gods for help! I won't let you all die! Wait for me and I will be back very soon!' As Wukong finished speaking, everybody nodded in agreement.

Wukong, now flying as fast as a rocket, quickly flew through the cloud and wind. Wukong saw the gods sitting on the cloud and he sighed with relief. He requested help and one of the gods answered, 'A long long time ago, there was another monkey like you and he also journeyed to this mountain. He did the same thing as you—he tried to ask me for the answer to this mystery. I told him that there was a large magic palm-leaf fan owned by the Palm-leaf princess. When the Palm-leaf princess fans the land a powerful wind is produced, putting the fires out. Therefore, the other monkey went to the Palm-leaf princess' castle and borrowed the fan from the princess. He fanned the mountain and 'POOF!' the fires on the mountain were all put out! Isn't that amazing? However, there is a problem. That all happened such a long, long time ago and therefore I don't know where the fan is now. I think we should think of other method of putting out the fire. Wukong, do you know why there are so many fires?' Wukong said he didn't but that he would ask the god who controlled time to help him figure it out.

Wukong looked through the god of time's magic telescope at what had happened in the past. Wukong found that the mountain is so hot because of the increasing of greenhouse gases! He was surprised, but he realized that protecting the environment must be really important. Wukong decided that he was going to plant trees everywhere to improve the environment of the desert, so it wouldn't be so hot. He also asked the god who controlled the weather to allow a great rainfall over that Fireregion.

And, as the desert was changed into a beautiful, lush rainforest, people from many different cities showed their surprised at the happy go lucky Wukong being the first one who insisted on protecting and improving the dangerously warming environment. They all praised him for being environmentally friendly. His story is now famous many people know Wukong as the Green King.

And the friends? Since Fireregion was then no longer dry and had become a beautiful rainforest, Wukong, Xuanzang, Bajie and also Shawujing lived and continued their journey to Scripture from the West. But that is another story.

# The King Of Monkeys

*Leung Shek Chee College, Chung, Celia – 13*

Once upon a time, there was a monkey called Sun Wukong who was born from an ordinary monkey who lived in Kam Shan Country park. Sun Wukong was the cleverest and talented of all the monkeys so he was chosen to be a leader of Kam Shan Country Park. Quick-witted Sun Wukong was respected by all the lovely monkeys. His mum, Fiona, was proud of him. He could do everything he wanted to do without a doubt.

One day, Sun Wukong found a delicious egg roll inside the gap between two enormous and colourful rocks so he ate it excitedly. After eating it, he became a very special monkey indeed. He then knew how to change into 100 creatures! He could become a cockroach, a phantom, or even a centipede. Actually, the egg roll was a magic weapon of the Buddha. However, the Buddha had let it fall to the secular world carelessly. After learning this new magic, Wukong became arrogant and he always bragged, 'I am the strongest one on the Earth. Nothing can control me, even the clumsy Buddha. Ha ha ha.' Buddha saw this and felt very worried and angry. It was not only the attitude of Wukong but also the naughty things he did. For example, he changed to a ghost and scared people and transformed into Buddha's image and taught the other monkey bad things.

So, Buddha overwhelmed him and imprisoned Wukong under the Godiva sea for one thousand years. The sea was extremely terrible and deep. Except for Wukong, no one had been imprisoned there by Buddha before because nobody had been as annoying as Wukong. There wasn't any food under the sea because there weren't any living things on the seafloor. Buddha wouldn't let Wukong breathe fresh air but he also didn't allow him to die. He wanted to let Wukong have the experience of 'no way to seek survival and no way for death'. Wukong felt regretful and pained during those one thousand years.

After a thousand years, Wukong was released by the Buddha. Wukong had changed from head to toe. He began to help the needy ardently by giving delicious food, knitting warm, thick clothes and buying a useful machines for to them. The needy felt thankful. They believed that Wukong had really started afresh and they began to trust him. Sun Wukong became famous again but this time he was well-known for always helping others.

Although Buddha felt relieved about this change, he thought that it was a bit of a waste that a 'person' who had such a spectacular ability performed only easy and simple things. At the same time, Tripitaka, the Tang dynasty Buddhist monk, was ready to start the journey to the west. But, the journey was very filled with terrible dangers so Buddha had a great idea. He would order Sun Wukong to go on the journey with Tripitaka so that Tripitaka could be protected by him. Wukong was so excited to go on this long journey so he promised the Buddha at once.

And so, the journey began. Tripitaka gave an amulet to Wukong when they first met each other so that he could find Wukong when they were separated. Then, Wukong turned a chair into a magical flying cloud.

During the journey, a lot of monsters appeared to kill Wukong. They envied him with his great talent. Firstly, Grasshopper Jack came out from the grass palace. He stepped Wukong and Tripitaka's way. He used his sharp sword that could kill 100 people in a second to attack them. However, Wukong turned into a grass sword that could kill 1000 people in a the moment. As a result, Jack was easily killed by Wukong.

Secondly, they passed through a plain where there lived a multitude of the peacocks. The leader of the peacocks, Sharon, ran in front of Wukong and said angrily, 'You ugly monkey! How dare you pass through my angelic ladies?'

Wukong replied, 'Bah...We're going to the west. If I am ugly, then you're the ugliest peacock of the Earth! Haha...' The peacock was as angry as a bear. She took out a spear and stabbed towards Wukong. Wukong, who was now very strong, pushed the spear back towards that proud peacock and so she died with much blood on her.

Thirdly, Koala Amanda, who was in a Eucalyptus tree, saw Wukong and Tripitaka coming. She fell in love with Tripitaka so she talked to them kindly, 'Hi! Handsome boys! Where are you going to? May I go with you?'

Tripitaka answered, 'Yes, of course! We're going to the west. Let's go. And the rest of the story? That's for another time.'



## Journey to the West

*Maryknoll Convent School (Secondary Section), Amreen Mailk, Maryam – 14*

**Y**ears ago, during the late Sui dynasty, a monkey was flying high in the sky followed by his army of a hundred thousand beasts and demons. They would obey and grant everything that the Monkey King, also known as Sun Wukong, desired. “Get up you lazy Monkey! We’re about to leave!” The monkey was awoken by a big fat pink blob. And as the figure came to vision, he saw Pigsy standing in front of him. He realised that what he had just saw was nothing more than a dream. “Well? Are you going to get up or not?” “Stupid Pig”, he thought. “How dare he wake me up from my wonderful dream. One day I’ll pulverize him, I’ll make sure he gets it!” Monkey King sat there just ranting on about how he’d make that pig know whose boss. The Buddhist monk calmly examined the situation and spoke “What are you two doing?” The two arguing students paused and pulled back their fists as if nothing ever happened. Xuanzang lay his hand on his temple, looking frustrated. “At this rate, we’ll never retrieve the secret scrolls.” The two tried to make up an excuse. “Who’s hungry? I’m sure you haven’t have breakfast yet, have you?” Pigsy would always try to change the topic to food. It was all that ever really mattered to him, that and protecting Xuanzang of course.

That same afternoon, Sha Wujing, one of the three disciples of the Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang, came back to report his findings. And by finding, he was searching for food that was ‘worthy’ of the their master’s consumption. “So? Did you find anything?” Pigsy asked impatiently. “I’m—er, I mean the master’s getting more and more hungry by the second!” Sha Wujing sighed, knowing that there was no hope for the greedy pig. “I found out that there’s a village nearby, but we have no money to buy anything to eat.” “Ugh” The Monkey King said sounding irritated, “Well, I guess I just HAVE to do it, don’t I?” Sometimes he could be really arrogant. “No one asked you to. And even if you did, you would just cause trouble to those innocent villagers. I mean, who’d want brat who’s just a troublemaker?” Pigsy said with a smirk. The monkey lost his temper and yelled, “I’LL SHOW YOU WHO’S A TROUBLEMAKER!”

Moments later, the monkey was zipping through the air on his magical cloud. The outraged monkey’s eyes were looking frantically around the area for the village. And to his surprise, he saw a village with beautiful tall buildings covered in floral decorations. Marble walls glistening in the afternoon sun. It was hard to believe that he was still in the same country, it was a view like no other. He landed in front of the village’s gateway. He didn’t where to start looking, usually it was Sha Wujing who would investigate villages. Aside from searching for food, they’d also help the people with their problems to help atone for their sins.

Gazing at all the posters on billboards, the monkey still couldn’t find a place to get any food. Just as he was about to give up, a bright pink poster had caught his eye. ‘BEAUTY PAGEANT 1000 YUAN!!!!’ The over-excited monkey rushed home to tell his fellow colleagues about what he had just discovered. Later at the camp that they set up, the monkey told them about the competition. “But it’s a ladies-only competition!” Sha Wujing exclaimed. “Then I’ll just transform into one, anyway the master doesn’t want to do it. They all laughed, even Sha Wujing, the master really did look like a girl with his beautiful long black hair, even though he’s a monk. Then the monkey disappeared behind a thick smoke, and what they found behind it left their jaws on the ground. A much girlier version of their master. “Let’s go!” said the master— I mean monkey.

That night, after winning the competition by a long run, they walk home with bags of food in their hand with the rest of their money. “I can’t believe there were so many pretty girls” said the perverted pig. “Well, none of them were as pretty as me!” he said facing them and making a flamboyant gesture. All of them stop and point behind the mischievous monkey. “WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DOING?” Their master was furious, it was the first time that they’d seen their master this angry. His made a sealing sign which made the monkey’s golden headband contract, making his head hurt. The others laughed, “Oh, you were in on this with him, so I won’t have any mercy.” Thus, the master chased his disciples all night long. And they sure got what they deserved.

## Odyssey with Courage

*Marymount Secondary School, Lam, Annette – 13*

A thousand years ago, I was in India, being a follower of Sanzang, the incarnation of the Buddha, who was sent by the Tang Emperor to India to obtain the scripture. Throughout the journey, I got acquainted with his three disciples namely Monkey, Pig and Sand. In my impression, Sanzang was wise but a bit cowardice. Monkey was whimsically wistful and invincible whilst Pig was like his name, lazy. I mingled with Monkey most, maybe it's because I was born in the Year of Monkey so I bear certain similarities in character to Monkey.

Sanzang sometimes behaved in a coward way though. His vision and insight were unfathomable. Rumors had it that eating Sanzang's flesh could let you stay immortal. One day, he talked to me in private, asking me to travel to the future through the 'Time Rocket' found in Crystal Cave. Shocked by his request, I asked, "Why me?". He said, "Aren't you a 'monkey' born in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? You're more like Monkey who's always adventurous. So, go find out what is happening out there." With excitement and uncertainty, I sneaked in the rocket and in a flash, was dropped in a place called Pakistan. Pakistan was once part of India until that day came – 14 August 1947. Pakistan became independent from Great Britain.

It's the year of 2007 in which I 'landed' on Swat. I was twelve, one year older than the girl I came across in the street of Swat Valley, northwest of Pakistan. When I first caught a glimpse of Swat, I was captivated by its tall mountains, lush green hills and crystal clear sky. The story about this place was as much 'amazingly intriguing' as its scenery. The girl I met was called Malala. As told, she's named for the great young Pashtun heroine Malala. Malala was hospitable. After having a brief mutual self-introduction, she took me to her home to meet her parents and her two little brothers. She then treated me her favourite, a hot spicy pizza after that we had a long chat in her bedroom.

Through our dialogue, I learnt that her father had started a school 3 years before she was born. It's the school where Malala studied at. There was obsession of hierarchy in Pakistan – parents of richer families do not like their children sharing classrooms with the sons and daughters of people who do household chores in their houses. Therefore, students kept dropping out and that made his father financially meagre in running the school.

To me, school is a place where we quench our thirst for knowledge. To Malala, school is a place where she could get recognition for being treated equally as a human being and have her dream realized. She said to me, "Hey, Annette, Do you know when a teacher appreciates you, you think, I am 'something'! When a teacher tells you that all great leaders and scientists were once children too, you think, maybe we can be the great ones tomorrow." I silenced for a second and then said, "That's why you insist on your campaign for girls' education in Pakistan."

When I was wandering in the streets of Swat, I saw women all under wraps. We're already in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and women living here still have to observe the code of 'purdah' covering themselves in public. Finding this unfair and uncomfortable, Malala refused to cover her face even when she was little. Boldly she said, "My face is my identity. Why should I cover it?". She's right. I told her, "In our city or other countries, only the gangsters or suspects will cover their faces so as not to let the police or public identify them." One day, Malala took me to see their family tree where I found her name, being the first female name amongst the male ones inscribed there in 300 years. It's beyond my imagination that it's also the name having influence in India – She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 when she was 17.

Between 2007 and 2009, Swat was in a warlike situation as terrorism was all around us. During this period, I was all along staying at Malala's home as her father insisted on my safety. It's no surprise to see Fazlulah's men carrying guns and walking menacingly through the streets. He soon joined forces with the Pakistan Taliban, and announced that women were banned from public places and at an earlier stage, he had announced that schools for girls were "haram", prohibited in Islam.

In fall 2007, the first female prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, returning to run in that year's election was killed in an explosion set off by the terrorists. Her death struck a chord with Malala, prompting her to

bravely go fight for girls' education and the better future of Pakistan.

In that gloomy winter 2008, there came the bad news – *after the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009, no girls, whether big or little, shall go to school.* Upon hearing that over the radio, both Malala and I first felt crazy, then furious. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, how could one man stop more than 50,000 girls from going to schools. So throughout 2008, Malala, with the support of her father, tried her every endeavor speaking up, to local and national TV channels, radio, and newspapers, to anyone who would listen. While Malala and other girls were bitterly waiting for their school days to end, Malala's prayer to God seemed like being heard.

A couple of months later, a documentary filmed earlier by the New York Times about terror in Swat Valley through following Malala from day to night, was aired across the border capturing attention of the world about what they're asking for – education for girls in Pakistan. During the darkest days when the school was closed, Malala and I continued our studies at an underground school and learnt by ourselves through reading and watching videos. We coached each other on different topics. Life seemed to have a beam of hope when we talked about our ambitions. I said, "I want to be an architect when I grow up because I love designing and drawing." She sighed and said, "I initially wanted to be a doctor to cure the diseased persons but what has taken place here has changed my mind. Now, I want to be a political leader to cure the 'diseased' country." I gave her an understanding nod.

The situation became unstable in spring 2009 as Fazlullah broke the peace agreement and took Taliban took over SWAT. The Pakistani army started military operation against the Taliban. SWAT was in such a perilous state that Malala, along with her family and 800,000 others including me, were forced to flee. After rushing a farewell to each other in tears, Malala and I went our separate ways. We didn't know whether we would meet again. After that I sneaked back to the time rocket where I entered into a hibernation capsule.

When I woke up, it was 2017. I was on a plane flying from New Delhi to Pakistan. Next to me sat a foreigner, Mr Drump. I asked him to lend me his smartphone because the one I had been using since I landed on Swat a decade ago was now too old to catch up on the latest version. I made a call to Malala to see if she had returned to Pakistan but no answer. Drump didn't have to touch anything to unlock his phone but just flashed it in front of his face. He then explained to me it was the iPhone X which uses facial recognition to unlock it. Digital technology advanced a lot in 10 years.

Drump told me he was returning to Pakistan to take his niece's family back to the United States for good. Out of curiosity, I asked, "What made you make such decision?" He said to me in whisper, "You know, kid. Today, the US–North Korean nuclear crisis is unfolding and Pakistan's future is unpromising. India is contending with another border flare–up with China. Hostilities along the Line of Control in Kashmir have been igniting with fire sparks since Prime Minister Narendra Modi authorized and publicized 'surgical strikes' against Pakistani military posts in retaliation for the actions of extremist groups which enjoy safe haven in Pakistan."

Hearing that I felt sad and puzzled... Pakistan was once part of India, but today they are so antagonistic to each other. India, being the cradle of Buddhism, should be a place blessed with joy and peace!

New year vibes have just crawled away but an appalling news headline on January 11<sup>th</sup> terrified me – a 7–year old Pakistani girl was raped, strangled and left in a dumpster. Have Malala's efforts paid off? What should I tell Sanzang if I met him again? Are joy and peace too 'intangible' to grasp? With courage, what can I do to help make our land a better place to live?

## New Journey to the West

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau, Chan, Athena – 12

‘Great Buddha! Buddha!’ A respectful wail was heard. Great Buddha sighed. It must be that lady who sold fortune cookies again! Great Buddha bustled into his temple and squeezed out of his statue, revealing his translucent soul.

“I don’t want fortune cookies.” He said, closing his eyes. He was tired and he did not get his cup of tea this morning. Great Buddha has woken up on the wrong side of the bed.

“What? Buddha. It is I! The greatest monk—” It was the monk who came every Sunday morning with tea. Buddha quickly opened his eyes and saw no such cup of tea.

“Where’s my tea?” Buddha asked, interrupting the poor monk. The monk looked at him, cocked his head and said, “I have more important things to tell you except for serving you tea, but I’ll get you one.”

He clapped his hands and a few seconds later, a terrified-looking young girl rushed into the room with a perfectly balanced china cup of warm jasmine tea.

“Thanks. Now what are the *important things* you must inform me before I even have my Sunday tea? Just cut to the chase.” Buddha asked, irritated. He usually liked to read his *Good Golden Morning* post from the press when he drank his jasmine tea, but this monk kept pestering him.

“Great Buddha! I have come to ask for resources. My village has fallen incredibly ill throughout this half-year and we are fighting to collect tree-bark and clean water. Jasmine tea is scarce and sacred for you, so...” The monk trailed off with hopeful eyes. The Buddha took up his *Good Golden Morning* and flipped to the first page, eyeing the advertisement for slingshots.

“You expect me to...” The Buddha cocked his head. “Okay, I have an idea! Instead of giving you my *sacred and scarce* jasmine tea, I’ll do the obvious and send you to a difficult quest to fetch water and food miles away! Sounds good?” He put down his tea and flipped another page to an article in his magazine.

“Sounds good to me!” The monk was so hungry and full of fatigue; he would do anything for his village and himself.

“I’ll send three special people who committed crimes to escort you, to prevent your likely death! So their crimes were: calling me a bald guy, calling me Dumbo, and calling me pretty. So it’s an author, a reporter and a professor. Okay, you may go now!” Buddha said, happy with his arrangement. He flipped to another page on his magazine to another advert.

Suddenly, three men appeared. One of them had a little quill in his hand, one had a paper scroll, and one had glasses.

“Let’s go to our quest now,” The local professor with the glasses said. “My map says for the nearest resources, we go west.”

“Safety in numbers,” The reporter prompted them noisily. They began to tread along the west. After a few miles, they were in the middle of nowhere. They were incredibly beat and thirsty.

The author cried, “Buddha! Buddha! Save—”

Suddenly, an old man appeared out of nowhere. “What are you finding?” He said in a gentle, deep voice. The reporter began scrutinizing him and tried to shake his hand, but the reporter’s hand went through the man!

“I am a guide assistant god from Buddha,” The old man said, cross. “Do you want your clue now?”

“Yes, please.” The four of them said. The old man then continued to explain that if they dug down and went right, there would be a stock of little foods stored by little crabs. It was a bit unhygienic, but the four of them did not care. They were so famished!

The four of them began to look for holes. When they found a bunch of crab land entrances, they turned around and said thanks to the man. But the old man has vanished!

“I guess we’ll just do it,” The author said. But when the others started digging, he began to jotting things down. The others were exasperated, but they were too exhausted to tell him to start working.

When they finished digging down, they discovered absolutely NOTHING. The author was curious and looked down, “Hey, got somethin’? I’m starving to death here.”

The other three stared up, maddened. “Can’t you help?” After a few seconds of complete silence, except for the little birds’ sounds and some grass fluttering, the translator suddenly shouted.

“Hey! The sun’s rising at our direction! What? I thought this was a journey to the west?” He cried angrily at the professor.

The author scribbled even more down. “Is this a trick?” He said softly.

The professor was equally as surprised, but not as angry as the monk. The monk was furious. He had walked so much for his family and friends, but one humongous mistake the professor made, they had sacrificed their legs for this.

“Are we lost or something?” The translator asked. He looked around, dumbfounded. He looked over at the professor, who was examining the map, looking confused, and cried:

“You stupid thing! You’ve been looking at the map upside down!”

The monk couldn’t believe it. “How did the school board even hire you? I hope you don’t teach geography! You’re trash at this!”

The professor looked sad. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry...”

Suddenly, they were all whisked back to... the temple? They rubbed their eyes and pinched each other, but it wasn’t a dream. A grinning Buddha was staring back at them. Honestly, them four found it a bit intriguing. “It” was being the Buddha’s golden eyes.

“Good job!” The Buddha said, clapping. They were confused. Buddha chuckled and explained, “That was just a huge hallucination, people! Wake up! It helped me test if you were worthy. Well, you are, so here’s your food!”

Buddha conjured a few bags of food on horse—carts. The four of them were delighted and grateful, and they rode back to their village, happily ever after, still baffled.

## New Journeys to the West

*Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau, Cheng, Marcus – 12*

It was a sweltering and sultry day. Four people were struggling on a winding, tortuous mountain path. They were moving forward in slower and slower steps. Sand was blinding them. As they brushed the grains of sand away from their faces they tried to fend their eyes from the glare. “Why do we have to trek through this stupid Gobi Desert?” asked Monkey King impatiently.

“Be patient, Monkey King, it is essential to search for the sacred sutras which are to be found Southwest in India. Our journey is a spiritual pilgrimage and don’t forget we are on an important quest for truth. Calm yourself, Monkey, your emotions are overcoming you with impatience.”

“Yeah, Monkey King, Listen to Xuan Zang!” Friar Sa admonished in a friendly tone.

“Wow! Monkey King! How patient!” sneered Pig Bajie a little sarcastically.

They trudged on wordlessly for several days, but in unison. Their minds were set on their mission. Suddenly, after they rose, Monkey King exclaimed on an early morning trek. “It’s unbelievable. I see a cactus before me! Finally, some vegetation and water. What a blessing!” Monkey King rushed to a flowering cactus plant standing verdantly in the bare desert. “Let’s not go anywhere anymore. Let’s just stay here and rest!” Monkey King exclaimed excitedly.

“There are leaves so we can rest in the breeze.” Monkey King told the others.

“Oh! Interesting. Let’s get a sip of water. Quick! Let’s stop here and relax a while” Pig Bajie was drooling when he looked at the cactus. Moving at lightning speed, Monkey King overtook him and ran to the cactus and took a mouthful of water. “Let’s just stay here and rest!”, he echoed.

Friar Sa exchanged a knowing look with Xuan Zang. They both shared the same view that Monkey King was indeed intelligent but too distracted.

Meanwhile, somewhere beyond, a few yards behind the cactus, rushed out some threatening creatures with horns and three eyes. They threw stones and shot arrows at the four. Monkey King, Pig Bajie and Friar Sa leapt aside to escape from the volley of arrows. Moreover, Pig Bajie pulled out his trident and mercilessly struck their enemies. Monkey King just as quickly brandished his golden rod and gave a war-cry. Too devoted to his prayer and meditation, Xuan Zang failed to escape. The arrows whizzed straight at his heart and he fell forward lifeless.

The others gasped in shock and reeled in horror. Pig Bajie and Monkey King saw their beloved leader die in front of their eyes. Friar Sa wept and told the others to pray for the peace of his soul. The Pig Bajie immediately set to work with his trident. They all worked together to bury Xuan Zang with dignity. Their mission was far from complete and they had to decide what to do next. It was obvious that the mission was too important to end prematurely. Remembering Xuan Zang’s words, the trio decided that whatever happened, they must continue their pilgrimage to the West.

“Can I be the leader?” asked the Monkey King, “I want to prove that I am patient and dedicated to the mission that Xuan Zang had set for us. What do you think? Will you give me your support?”

“Emm... OK!” they chorused. “However, you have to listen to our opinions and not depend solely on your own judgement.” Friar Sa told him.

“I agree.” exclaimed Monkey King. He accepted the role as a leader even though he realized it would be difficult to follow Xuan Zang’s footsteps. They continued their journey to the West with hope and confidence as the team would work with one heart and one mind.

After ten days of weary trudging, they reached an unexpected river. Surprisingly, they also heard screams for help from a distance. Monkey King ran forward to investigate what was happening. A girl was struggling in the gurgling and menacing water. “Help! Help me!” the girl shouted at the top of her lungs, she was waving her arms desperately. What Monkey King saw in front of him was a drowning girl crying to be rescued. He hesitated for a while, and decided the rescue should be undertaken by Pig Bajie who was fearless of water.

Pig Bajie plunged in a flash and rescued the crying girl without difficulty. The girl was wet and breathless. She was around twelve years old with long hair and pale skin. She cried with relief and tightly gashed Pig Bajie’s trotters in her gratitude. “A moment too late and I would be drowned! Thank you! You saved my life! What can I do to repay you? I fell into the water when I was washing the clothes.”

“We are in a journey to the West to search for the Buddhist sutras,” Pig Bajie told her. It is a long and dangerous journey. Will you follow us? This pilgrimage is to achieve our spiritual fulfilment because we are all mortal.”

“I very much appreciate the meaning of your pilgrimage especially since I have nearly lost my life. Let me join you please!” They welcomed the River Maiden and so she became the fourth member of the group.

They travelled harmoniously through the vast stretch of desert that yawned before them. The fiery sun beat mercilessly during the day and the nights were freezing. Their friendship and care for each other helped them to forget their daily grind and woes.

Unexpectedly, one night as they were resting, a fearful ape burst into their place of rest. He had fiery evil eyes that glittered. He brandished a silver rod which was much alike that one of Monkey King. This shadow ape was a major threat to the group and Monkey King had to react quickly to save a group from this menace.

“Who are you?” Monkey King asked.

“I am the King of the Sky,” The ape said in a mocking tone, “Who are you?”

“Don’t you know I’m unique?” Monkey king shouted. After that, he raised his golden rod and started to attack the shadow ape. Estimating that his magical powers could overcome the enemy, Monkey King rubbed his fur. To evoke his unique power to create in an instant, a multitude of Monkey kings. This would certainly scare his enemy out of his wits. He smiled confidently and watched his enemy retreat. The Shadow ape realized he was no match for Monkey King.

Monkey King was unwilling to let him escape. He was determined to vanquish him so there would be no more obstacles to their journey to the west.

Victorious, Monkey King scratched his armpits and danced excitedly. This was his idiosyncrasy which was familiar to Friar Sa and the Pig Bajie. Only River Maiden, who only joined the group midway, was puzzled by Monkey King’s repeated scratching.

“What are you doing?” the River Maiden questioned, “Are you hurt? Can I help?”

“Nah. It’s just my happy dance. I’m fine.” Monkey king replied and scratched both his armpits once again to the laughter of Friar Sa and Pig Bajie.

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With all the obstacles cleared, the journey to the West could then be fulfilled and the mission of finding secret sutras was achieved. Patience, self-control, resourcefulness, and unity of the heart and mind had all contributed to the successful quest. It was indeed a memorable pilgrimage.

## New Journeys to the West

*Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau, Cho, Jessie – 14*

He walked along the marble corridor, heading towards the hefty-looking doors at the end. They swung open at a small flick of his double-bladed spear. He then stepped inside and glanced around one of the Jade Emperor's many rooms of antiques; pots, vases, jewellery sat dull and lifeless in the darkness of the marble chamber, silently waiting for him to complete his duty. He strolled to the centre of the room and thrust his staff up towards the ceiling. At once, the marble dome above his head dissipated into fractals. The constantly-shining moonbeams stretched through the chamber's roof, painting the treasures inside the room with a kiss of silver light. Job completed, he lowered his spear and started to stroll back out of the chamber. However, he didn't make it so far.

*Crash.*

~~~

I remember the agony afterwards. Apparently, as I was retreating from the room, I accidentally knocked over one of the Emperor's precious vases. This awakened the guardian spirit of that chamber, who knocked the lights out of me.

The next memory I had was being chained in the dungeons. The punishment spirits took out a smouldering piece of rod and walloped me all over. I could vaguely remember the smell of burnt flesh before pain exploded in my head, and I was rendered unconscious once more.

A torrent of ice-cold water crashed down onto my head. I woke up with a yelp.

"General of Curtains," a booming voice thundered at me. "You have sinned." The Jade Emperor. I tried to sit up, but my marred body screamed in agonising protest. "As your punishment, you shall be condemned to the earthly world. You shall be transformed into a hirsute man-eating sand demon." I lifted my head with excruciating difficulty. The face of the Jade Emperor towered above me.

It was a face of justice and cruelty.

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I watched the sand-scattered river move sluggishly down its path. This was my new home. I glimpsed my reflection in a stretch of semi-clear water. It was just as the Jade Emperor said—I have sprouted the tangled mass of a beard, which conjoined with my hair, also a knotted discord. My face was distorted into beastly features. I frowned, but quickly loosened my expression. Contorting my already distorted face led to abhorrent results.

"Greetings."

A mellifluous voice sang behind me. It was soothing, sweet. It washed over me like the cool trickle of a fresh stream. There was only one person with such a sound.

"Salutations, Guanyin." The bodhisattva of compassion.

"Look at me, child."

"But I mustn't," I muttered, a wave of emotion suddenly threatening to overtake my voice. "I am a figure of shame to the galaxy. I sinned against the Jade Emperor."

"Perhaps." I felt the warm breeze that always surround her gently caress my face. "Young one, I have come with a mission for you."

"A... mission?" Surprised, I felt my bushy eyebrows furrow as I turned towards her. Guanyin smiled at me. Her timelessly angelic face glowed with warmth and kindness. Is this a chance for me to repent of my wrongdoing?



“You must accompany a monk called Xuanzang and his disciples on their journey to obtain Buddhist scrolls from the west as his third student. Protect him, for these scrolls shall be treasured documents of our beliefs. Do you accept?”

I nodded vigorously. As a past general in heaven, offering protection wasn’t that difficult of a task. Plus, this is my chance for a fresh restart. A clean river. No sand, no grit. Uncontaminated.

Guanyin smiled happily. She reached out a fair hand and touched the top of my head.  
“From this moment onwards, your name will be Sha Wujing (沙悟淨). “Sha” from your sandy dwelling, “Wujing” meaning purity.”

I bowed my head in gratitude. “Thank you.”

~~~

I woke up the next morning with my heart hammering in excitement. I have not been this animated ever since my banishment from heaven. Feeling lighter than a feather, I whistled a cheerful tune as I quickly glanced at myself in the muddy river. A grinning, hairy sand-demon looked back at me from the brackish waters. How I dearly hope my future comrades won’t judge me for how I appear. I grabbed my double-bladed staff and began my search for Xuanzang.

As a water mage, I specialise in controlling the currents and tides. I utilised my special talent to search for my master. I travelled swift and soundless in rivers, lakes, the sea. I used water as my senses, asked fishes to be my eyes. After two days of fruitless seeking, I finally located him in a barren wasteland, with a wide breadth sea ahead— I knew at once it was my cue to step in.

I shot through the waters faster than a bullet. Almost there... I was on my way to meet my master. On my way to help. To atone for my sins. I could sense the nervous anticipation of meeting them dancing in me.

“STOP RIGHT THERE, MONSTER!”

“What the—”

Something heavy clubbed my head. Stars exploded in my eyes. An attack! I shook away the pain and swirled around. I whipped out my spear and braced for the second blow, quickly surveying the area around me. I was still at a deep level of sea. Good. The second attack landed on my spear with a deafening clang.

“Eat this, demon!”

I snapped to attention. Angry beady eyes stared back at me, accompanied by a large nose, leathery ears and a gigantic pot belly. In other words, a pig stood six feet tall on his own two feet. He was pushing a rake against my spear. My eyes instinctively zoomed to the head of the rake. Each of its nine teeth glistened dangerously in the light ocean spray. If I took one blow from that weapon, I may as well be a dead man. With a flourish, I pulled my spear from beneath his rake and glided to the side. I swung, he blocked. Soon, the air sang with the clangour of our battle. Yes, his strength is greater than mine. However, he is also relatively slow. I spun my double-bladed spear in one hand and dipped my other in the water. Just before his hit landed, I drew a ravaging tower of seawater up to the height of a mountain and hurled it at the human-pig. It snorted in bewilderment before the cyclone threw him against a nearby cliff.

“HIIIIYAAAAA!!”

I put my spear up just in time to block a flying attack from above. Blinking against the white light of the sun, I saw the shape of a furry monkey driving a golden-banded staff onto my spear. The staff glinted suddenly sprung a memory into my mind. I could still remember how heaven was tipped upside-down as the notorious Monkey King, Sun Wukong, challenged the Jade Emperor, terrorising every celestial being

there was. What is such a perilous creature doing here? Master Xuanzang was in grave danger. I must rescue him immediately. Abandoning the battle, I dove into the sea, as Sun Wukong is unable to pursue me in water. Vaguely aware of the monkey flying over to the pig, I continued my search for master, swimming though I've never swum before. I must get to Master before these two do.

Just before I reached the shore, I was stopped yet again by a hooking sensation on my robe. In a split second, I was being dragged backwards and deep underwater. I was facing the pig once again.

"I can't let a demon like you pass," he said, voice warbling in the water. I gripped my spear tighter.

"Then I'll just have to break through you!"

With a cry, I lunged at the pig, spear slicing through the water. He backed away, barely escaping my assault, and swiped back at me with his rake. Our weapons locked in a furious dance as we circled.

A horn bellowed at us from up above.

"Wujing, Wujing, come up!" That's my name! Shoving the pig away with a whoosh of current, I began to ascend to the surface of the water as quickly as I can as he landed with a grunt on the sandy seabed.

Breaking through, I quickly reached the shore, where Sun Wukong, sitting on his cloud, was holding a gourd undoubtedly given by Guanyin.

"Hey," the monkey grinned sheepishly. "So apparently, you are our master's third disciple. Sorry about that. I'm Sun Wukong." It seems like Sun Wukong was one of Xuanzang's students. I can't say that's expected.

"I apologise as well. I may have mistaken you as a threat to my future master."

He laughed. "Well, I guess I did too. Come, meet Master."

"HOOOOOLD RIGHT THERE, MONSTER!" The pig suddenly broke onto the shore, swinging his rake wildly. "I'M NOT DONE WITH YOU YET!" Sun Wukong sighed in exasperation. "Piggy!" He flew over to the pig and whispered in his ear. The pig's expression switched from anger to understanding. He walked over to me.

"Hullo, Wujing. I didn't realise you were with us. Sorry. I'm Zhu Bajie by the way. Pleasure meeting you." He extended a chubby hand, which I shook "It's all mine."

"Well, people, I think it's time to return to base. Wujing, coming?" Sun Wukong somersaulted in the air, twirling his staff.

"Sure."

As our trio walked, I couldn't help but smile. This is going to be very interesting.

## New Journey to the West

*Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau, Kok. Karina – 12*

The Journey to The West, an expedition known across the world for its mysterious gods; the composed and levelheaded Xuan Zang; the mischievous monkey king Sun Wu Kong; the gluttonous Piggy; the man-eating sand demon Sandy; and Xuan Zang's trusty steed Yulong. Their odyssey to retrieve manuscripts from India has put them in the way of many monsters, beasts, calamities and tests. Although most of them were created by the Buddha for the 81 tribulations Xuan Zang needs to face before attaining Buddhahood, a little slip of the Buddha's hand has broken the group of friends apart.

"Master, Master, where are we going next?" Piggy lamented, tugging his grime-smeared ears and licking his pudgy snout.

"Hush, you don't need to complain about everything do you?" Wu Kong smacked Piggy upside the head with his pole encrusted with inscriptions and jewels. He snickered behind his hand, lest his master Xuan Zang reprimands him yet again for teasing his "inferiors".

As they quarreled, an unknown figure crouched behind the bushes, an evil smirk on her pristine white face. She lifted her hood and waved her hand over her face, immediately transforming into a young little girl. Lifting her hand, she summoned poisonous fruit and put them into a basket hanging of her gangly arm.

"Do you want some fruit? It's delicious! Here, you can try some..." Xuan Zang seemed taken aback by the offer, whilst the greedy Piggy was already licking his lips in anticipation. But only Wu Kong was glaring at her with his special eyes. This seemingly innocent girl was a disguise created by the evil demoness called White Bone Spirit, whom ate human flesh and right now desired Xuan Zang's flesh.

A loud thud came from her, and at the speed of light Wu Kong retracted his pole, sneering at her unmoving form.

"What have you done..." Xuan Zang gazed down in horror, dread painted across his face as trepidation ran through his blood, gasping loudly as no blood came out, and yet she had no pulse. He shook it off, pointing an accusing finger at Wu Kong

"Master, she's a demoness! She's not to be trusted, I saw it with my very own eyes. She's not human at all!" Wu Kong asserted Xuan Zang, who immediately picked her body up.

"I demand you bury her at once! I never knew you to be such a heartless person." Xuan Zang shook his head, disappointment flooding his features. Wu Kong could only stare at the ground in shame and embarrassment, as he dug a small makeshift grave for the corpse.

Later that day, an old woman came up, and it happened all over again.

"Have you seen my granddaughter? She's about this tall and a cute, petite face..." The old lady waved her hands frantically, and Xuan Zang tried to alleviate her to no success. He shot Wu Kong a glare, but he was too busy staring at the old woman again. How could this be? That malignant spirit had already been hit to death by him, how could she appear again? Wu Kong shrugged it off and smacked the old lady right on the head.

"Again! She's innocent! How could you do this, this is all wrong and you should not be hitting anyone! You're just here to protect me aren't you!" Xuan Zang shouted at Wu Kong again, albeit being a calm-natured person. And yet again, Wu Kong could only keep quiet and stand there, humiliated again.

For the last time, an old man stalked up to them angrily.

“You killed my wife and granddaughter didn’t you! Give them back to me! How could you do this, they were my only surviving family! Give them back!” He shouted, enraged. Wu Kong smirked, no disguise could fool his refined eyes. Xuan Zang looked lost, not knowing what to defend himself with.

This time, Wu Kong hit her right on the middle of the skull with all of his strength, guaranteed that she would not reincarnate as that wicked spirit again. Even though Wu Kong had protected his master from unknown danger, Xuan Zang has reached his last straw.

“Get out! I don’t want to see or hear you anymore! You are a disgrace to the Buddha and me, how I wished I never took you as my apprentice!” Xuan Zang’s face turned red, veins nearly popping out and he looked like he could almost combust. Wu Kong could only hand his head low in abashment and mortification, as a pang of unjust rushed over him.

“Go back to wherever you came from, we don’t welcome you here anymore!” Piggy shouted over the wind, saddling Yulong the horse and helping Xuan Zang onto him. As they galloped off into the distance, Wu Kong walked aimlessly, drifting in a disoriented way with a forlorn expression. He was just trying to help, Wu Kong screamed out in his mind, but then he got cut off by a striking pain on the back of his head.

When he came to, Wu Kong was in shackles, his wrists raw and bruised from the rusty metal rubbing against his skin. A nicely dressed skeleton was making its way over screeching in a grating voice,

“I will take the flesh of your master, at any cost! It’s much easier to harm him without you there.” Wu Kong’s feeble attempt at escaping didn’t go unnoticed, his drowsy mind getting hazier and his heavy eyelids threatening to fall down as the skeleton cackled at his sluggish endeavor to evade her.

His heart burning in anger, chagrin and renewed vigor, Wu Kong summoned up the last of his strength, his devotion and care for Xuan Zang and the others, bursting out in a blinding light as the malevolent demoness screamed in excruciating agony. Xuan Zang appeared in front of Wu Kong, his eyes immediately softening as he connected the pieces in his mind – an injured Wu Kong, with a burnt skeleton on the ground.

“Master...promise me, you’ll...take the manuscripts...and achieve...Buddhahood...” Wu Kong took in a last shaky breath and his eyes fluttered shut, and Xuan Zang cried out in grief and anguish, despair flooding his heart.

The death of his disciple Wu Kong, motivated him even further to fulfill Wu Kong’s dying wish, and to beseech the Buddha to revive him for what he’s done for the kingdom and for Xuan Zang. Even though traveling to India the rest of the way was not easy with his strongest apprentice gone, he finally made it, and fell on his knees, pleading for his resuscitation.

“Guanyin, please revive my apprentice! He died selflessly to save me...”

A white beam of light pierced his eyes, and he waved a sleeve to cover his eyes. An illuminated shape stepped out, glancing at his arms and surroundings.

“Master?”

## The New Journey to the West

*Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau, Kwok, Alison – 12*

Up in the heavenly world, the mighty Gautama Buddha assigned his assistant, GuanYin, to select a monk that was strong and dependable. He was to travel to the West and deliver the Sutras from the LeiYin Temple back to Chang'An. Years passed, and XuanZang appeared. He was a handsome boy, with a kind personality and reliable, too! He was informed, and warned "Land of the South knows only greed, hedonism, promiscuity and sins. I will send 3 protectors along the way to accompany you. You are to only go along the silk road—don't go off route." XuanZang acknowledged GuanYin's guidance with a slight nod, then headed for the front barrier of Gansu Province.

A mischievous monkey jumped in front of him after he stepped out of the main temple. "Ha! You must be XuanZang. I am the Monkey King, but you can call me WuKong. I am to serve you and defend you in order to complete my task. Then, my sins will be erased." With a wink, he skipped in front of his master. "Sins?" XuanZang thought, confused. As if reading his thoughts, WuKong replied instantly. "Yes, sins. I defied the heaven and changed form, into a monkey." "Others, too?" "Yes, we are all sinners." This brief conversation was then interrupted by a fat pig munching his doughnut, with sugar all over his mouth. "You are XuanZang, right? I am Bajie. I was the commander of the heaven's naval force, but I was caught flirting with the Moon Goddess. Oh, it was worth changing into a pig just for that swooning moment!" he exclaimed, drooling all over his doughnut. The trio got to the border line of China, and caught sight of a friar. The timid priest spotted the troop, and moved towards them. "Hi, I am Friar Sand. You must be XuanZang." He mumbled. Everyone had to strain their ears to listen in. "Alright. Let's go!" WuKong yelled.

They travelled through the wilderness for what seemed to be like endless days and nights. Finally, they reached the deep gorges. "Wow! Look at this entrancing place!" XuanZang gazed around, fascinated. A gust of wind blew at them, eerily and spookily, like a response to XuanZang's compliment. "Are— are you sure?" Bajie asked, and shuddered. "This place is scaring me. Do we really have to go through the gorges?" Bajie's words got blew away by the strong gust of wind. An ominous bank of dark clouds hovered above them, as if foreshadowing the chain of events that would happen next. They could hear sounds of wolves howling in the distance, and the troop crept closer. It was raining heavily now, and if they lost balance their lives would end—right there. Suddenly, without warning, a pack of wolves charge towards them in full speed. Everyone was shocked by the sudden action and freezed. The wolves were unnatural, though. They were translucent and were glowing in light. In an instant, friar Sand chanted a spell to make the wolves vanish, WuKong waved his magical golden rod, and Bajie protected XuanZang. 5 minutes passed, and the pack of wolves faded into thin air. "Animal spirits." WuKong explained casually with a shrug, like it was normal. XuanZang was more aware of his surroundings now, eyeing each area with suspicion.

The group continued, and had run ins with all kinds of demons every single day. XuanZang was now conscious of how dangerous the world outside China was, and deep down, longed for his comfortable house in Chang'An. "Of course, it's an honour to be given such an enormous task, but home was always where I wanted to stay. I'm not adventurous, like some of my peers, not exactly intelligent, either. Why did GuanYin chose me?" XuanZang wondered, and stared into space. Days turned into nights, months turned into years. The crew got familiar with each other, and were now squabbling and chattering amongst themselves. "Bananas are the best! Doughnuts taste like cheap cardboard. Why would you even like it?"

“Hey, learn how to appreciate food and their unique taste! Doughnuts don’t taste like cardboard, they are sweet, with sugar sprinkled on top!” WuKong and Bajie argued back and forth, and it was clear to see who was who without even looking at them. “Sand, don’t you think doughnut tastes like cardboard?” WuKong turned to Sand, who was following their conversation. “I think you should quiet down. Master is trying to rest. What are you two doing, getting fired up over food?” At the mention of XuanZang, both fell in a hush, but they still glared at each other. XuanZang lifted his lips, forming a smile. “Ah, the thoughtful one. He is a hard worker, too! I don’t know what I’d do without him. In fact, I don’t think I can survive this without any of them!” he thought.

As the troop strolled across the gorges, they found themselves at the end of the deep valley. In front of them was a wide river. They stared at it, wide-eyed. How were they supposed to pass through the river, let alone continue the journey? As the group glimpsed around the area, looking for materials, a centaur appeared. This half horse half human being was surprisingly short, but fat. “Explain yourself. Who do you think you are, intruding my kingdom and messing with my properties?” The centaur growled. He aimed at XuanZang and roared. Fire rushed out of his mouth, and Sand hurried to defend his master. Sand watched as the fire burned him, from his toes, to his knees... He couldn’t collapse, as XuanZang was underneath him, safe from the attack. The only thing that mattered in this trip was getting his master to the West in safety. This was not about him.

Time was running out. WuKong took off his little vest and wrapped it around Sand. The fire was rising, and both of Sand’s legs were already on fire. Bajie dragged Sand, but there was still a long way to go. There was still a great distance between the land and river, but fire had risen up to Sand’s stomach now. His throat was hoarse from all the yelling, and lay there limply while Bajie pulled him. Sand stared at the river hopelessly, and gave his last speech. “Master, it was an honour to serve you. WuKong, Bajie, we were close like brothers, and I am lucky to have met friends like you. Thank you for letting me end my story with you. Farewell.” Sand took one last glance at his friends, then closed his eyes, knowing that they were never going to open again. “No!” XuanZang cried. “I should never let you defend me! The fire was aimed at me, not you!” XuanZang sobbed, knowing that it was too late for regrets, too late to say sorry. Everyone was heartbroken, and no one had even realized that the centaur was long gone.

The trio progressed, but they were sorrowful and dejected. WuKong was no longer cheerful. Bajie no longer continuing his daily eating routine. As for XuanZang, he wept at night, like a baby crying for its mother. He was hurting. No one could understand the burden he felt now that Sand was gone. The fact that he was the main reason why Sand was burned to death haunted him. He was sleepless and so lacked energy and spirits. He didn’t care about attacks, nor food or the environment. Well, he didn’t care about anything. How was he supposed to live now, believing that he had indirectly murdered somebody? Years passed, and the troop became slightly more cheerful. Sand’s death was now a motivator, making them try and do their best at everything.

After years of endless fatigue and evil encounters, they reached the borderline of India. Excited, they glanced at each other. This was the final moment of the journey. The memories they built together—friendship, experiences and joy were now alive in XuanZang’s memories. With a yelp of delight, WuKong rushed in the temple. XuanZang and Bajie followed, both wearing warm and confident smiles. They found the Sutras, right in the middle of the library section. After taking the precious script, they turned around and saw— “Ga—Gautama Buddha?” XuanZang gasped, unable to believe his eyes. He quickly swept into a deep, respectful bow. Following their master, the 2 companions also dropped their heads. The buddha chuckled. “Ah, I see that you finished your quest quite well, XuanZang!” “Tha—thank you, great buddha, it is an honour to be selected!” XuanZang replied, glowing from the compliment he was given. As Gautama praised XuanZang, Sand smiled to himself, up above, glad that his master and companions did well.

## New Journey to the West

*Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau, Li, Yau – 13*

“Search for your dream.” That was what my painting master Xuanzang told me. I was on the quest set by Xuanzang with my protector Sha-wujing. I had to find the “Legend of Art”. It was a long journey through deserts, oasis, mountains and plains. “Remember, never, fear, never give up.” my master said, before I left the monastery.

I painted as I continued the journey. The view of the desert was so beautiful and hypnotizing. The sky above looked like strokes of water colour, with patches of red and blue and at some point they joined to form a shade of violet and purple. The gold-plated sphere lying on the cotton collage-looking sky illuminated the sand underneath. The sand dunes that looked like folds of perfectly smooth silk cloth on the huge ocean of ochre yellow sand made it more flawless. Despite the scorching heat that penetrated my skin, I painted with joy, with precision, with perfection. Quite satisfied with my first piece, I walked on, up and down, painting as I admired the panorama.

After journeying for more than a year, I had never enjoyed a meal that was especially appetizing. That day, I met a talking pig, called Zhu-Bajie and he brought us to where he lived – the Wuzhuang Temple on the Longevity Mountain. It was a place of greenery. He persuaded me to stay as there was everything he could imagine in the mountain. He also believed that the “Legend of Art” was hidden somewhere in his place. To welcome his guest, he gave me two ginseng fruits that looked like small babies. They looked so attractive that I was already salivating as if there was a waterfall on my lips. “But my master is a monk and he told me never to eat kids.” I told him. “No. No. These are ginseng fruits. They take 9,000 years to mature. You can live for 47,000 years if you eat them!” He exclaimed eagerly. I was struggling to decide whether to eat them or not. Was it a trick? Or was it a gift? I took it as a gift finally. The fruit was sweet, juicy and soft on my tongue, grainy like sugary sand dissolving in my mouth. Strangely, it got the irresistible power of keeping us to eat non-stop, just like a magnet. At that moment, I didn't want to leave this heaven-like place where I was immersed in all the fun. For the next two years, I stayed and enjoyed the luxury, solely because of the ginseng fruits. But one night, I dreamed of my painting master and he foresaw a storm in the oasis that would destroy everything. I had a bad headache that night. I realized it was time for me to leave and I had to warn Zhu-bajie, too.

The next day, Zhu-bajie, Shu-wujing and I fled the mountain and continued eastwards back into the desert. Just then, I saw the horizon growing red. Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, this red chaos turned into a full fury of a sandstorm, a full-blown assault. We ducked down, but some of my paintings swirled into the storm. It seemed as the whole surface of the desert was rising in obedience to some upthrusting force from beneath. The spray of dancing sand grains climbed over us till it stroke our faces. The sky was shut out, the universe was filled with hurtling, pelting and stinging torment.....It was as though some great monsters of fabled size and unearthly power were puffing out these hurtling blasts of sand upon us. The sound was as if a giant hand drawing the rough fingers in a regular rhythm across the tightly stretched silk. I gripped on hard. Slowly, the sand storm calmed, but all my paintings were blown away. I really wanted to give up, but Shu-wujing insisted and so we did. The shrinking of Zhi-bajie had proved how harsh the journey was as we came closer to the West.

After about two years, one day, Zhu-bajie found something peculiar buried under the sand when he was searching for food. As we carefully opened the brown, pale book, where everything was written in Pali but the words on the cover resembled "Legend", we were in awe because the paintings were all the ones I did throughout the journey. My heart pounded. Did I successfully search for the "Legend of Art"? Was I dreaming? The next moment, I blacked out. The fuzzy image of Xuanzang appeared and he said, "Well done, my dear. You have found the "Legend of Art". Come back and I'll tell you more."

Zhu-bajie agreed to meet my master together and so the three of us journeyed back home. Maybe I am the legend? Maybe Xuanzang wanted me to search for my true-self- the legend. Undeniably, learning to persevere and to tackle all the challenges to reach success is a valuable asset.



## Journey to the West

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau, Mak, Anson – 13

The blustery winter air and pattering rain could be heard inside Alona's small apartment. Her hands reached the window, feeling its smooth surface, before turning around to face her grandmother.

'Come on, *abuelita*. Can't we play Monsters again?'

Her grandmother Esme smiled warily, holding tight to the arms of her rocking chair. 'No, *nieta*. *Estoy cansado*. Why not play by yourself?'

Alona sat beside the rocking chair. 'I'm bored. Can you tell a story, perhaps?'

Esme nodded. Alona loved her grandmother's stories.

'This story isn't about you, isn't it?' Alona said hopefully.

Her grandma hesitated, staring into the distance, before replying, 'No. Of course not.'

She took a deep breath. 'There was this girl... She wasn't a good child. She was too imaginative, too wild. She saw things nobody could see – mystical animals, mysterious creatures... She came from a wealthy family, however. Which was how she was led to her great adventure to the West...

'She was on holiday in the Gobi Desert. A place filled up with sand, you see –'

'Yes, I know, my teacher told me.' Alona said, irritated.

'Don't disturb me. Now, in Gobi desert...'

'The girl met two kids there... Altani and Arik. Two kids, no older than the girl herself. She met them by accident. But if she never met them... things would've changed completely.'

'What happened?' Alona asked.

Esme sighed. 'Go to sleep. It's a story for another day.' She waved her hand dismissively.

As Alona drifted to sleep that night, she could hear voices.

'Wait!' She could hear a boy's voice, raspy and urgent. He was running towards her in full speed, as if he was trying to stop her.

'Why are you going so fast?' He asked, panting. He grabbed her arm. She could feel something weird about his touch, like there was energy inside his fingers.

Alona spoke, but it wasn't her voice. It was deeper and she sounded older. 'I don't know. There's something out there... waiting for me. I can feel it.'

The boy turned around and glanced worriedly at another girl. They looked alike. Probably siblings.

'Esmeralda... you do know that you're crossing the same path Xuanzang had many years ago?' The girl said cautiously.

Alona – no, Esmeralda, nodded. She walked down the path of endless sand dunes. Why? Well... she wasn't certain. But she knew there was something somewhere, waiting in the sands of the Gobi desert.

Closer. She was getting closer. Invisible forces were pulling her, dragging her, making her go farther and farther. She couldn't feel her swollen feet. She couldn't feel the strong breezes against her cheeks, as if warning her not to come. She could feel herself burning up, though, and she halted to a stop.

'Esme!' The girl exclaimed, a mix between shock and confusion. By now, she knew she was there. As she took a deep breath, Esmeralda struck the sandy ground with her hands. A burst of power exploded within her, forming a sinkhole on the floor. A scroll popped out in the same time, landing right into Esme's hands.

'It's the...' The boy clamped his mouth, eyes widening. 'She's the... but she's just a child...'

Esme snapped out of her trance. She gasped for breath, grabbing the air, like she was finding something to support her.

'Stop!' A man's voice. Esme could see his cloaked figure advancing. He seemed to appear out of nowhere, and judged by the tone of his voice, Esme knew he wanted something from her.

'My children... done a good job, finally.' The man laughed, showing his uneven tarnished teeth. 'Altani, go get her.'

The girl slowly stepped towards Esme, looking ashamed. She went to grab Esme, but she had regained energy. She immediately leaped up, backing away.

'So you lied?' Esmeralda demanded.

'Arik...' The man's tone was dangerously soft, warning Esme. The boy marched over to Esme, and Esme took a brief look at the dirty scroll in her hands. She thought of the tales about the journey to the West...

and the folk stories on how XuanZang had left a magical scroll behind. A couple of minutes ago, she would've dismissed it as nonsense, but she wasn't sure about it now.

She knew what she had to do.

She spread her arms. She felt surges of power under her skin, begging to be released. A wave of pure electricity appeared, blasting straight at the hooded man.

'Altani! Arik! Now!' The two kids jumped into action, somehow creating a shield protecting the man. As swift as they defended, the two children started attacking Esme.

Too much, she cried internally. I can't. She was too weak and tired. She wanted to collapse to the floor, she wanted sleep.

She opened the scroll, taking a breath.

'Akkosa!' She called out, reading from her scroll. Altani and Arik struggled as invisible forces pushed and pulled them, making them lose their balance. Esme hurriedly fled. She was fading. She knew it. She was going to disappear.

BANG! Esme fell and a sharp pain seeped into her left leg. It made her feel numb, and she dropped her scroll. She grabbed her leg, trying to reach that wretched piece of paper, but she couldn't even move. Too late. Too... late...

'Pamussati!' She screamed, one last time, before a sandstorm erupted. It blocked her view of Altani and Arik and the man in the hood. Please, she hoped, then she disappeared.

Alona woke up, heart pounding. Her breath was jagged, but she was sure it was all a dream.

What happened to the scroll? And the kids? The man? She had so many questions. She thought of what grandma had told her the day before. Her grandmother, who was dozing on the rocking chair, seemed to have a smile on her face. Alona shut her eyes, trying to relive what had happened in the dream. Was her grandma...?

She took quick, quiet steps to her grandma, and lifted up the tip of her pants. A scar was there, small and nearly gone... but it was there. Alona smiled.

The door creaked open. Alona's mother peeked in. 'Alona? You awake yet? I've got good news!'

Alona put a finger in front of her lips, pointing to her grandmother.

'What?' She murmured.

'We're going on vacation to Gobi desert.'

## Journeys to the West

*Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau, Shi, Sennett – 13*

Once upon a time, there was a courteous and noble monk called Xuan Zang, also known as Tripitaka. He was chosen on a journey to retrieve a set of Buddhist scriptures back to China. On his trip, he was accompanied by three powerful supernatural beings, Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing.

But one day on their long journey, Tripitaka started to get very sick and ill. Now the whole journey had to be delayed. Tripitaka's disciples were very worried and didn't know what to do, at that moment, Kwan Yin descended from the heavens and told Sun Wukong about a magical herb that can heal even death, but he must work to retrieve it. Kwan Yin disabled Sun Wukong's powers since he had to prove his sincerity to the journey. If he successfully comes back with the healing herb, he would get his powers back and they would resume the journey. Noticing how almost everybody was in distress, Sun Wukong hurries and went on the journey to the fabled "Echo Valley" to find the mythical herb that could save Xuan Zang, accompanied by his good pal, the White Dragon Horse.

On the dreadful journey to Echo Valley, Sun Wukong and the White Dragon Horse were trapped in a horrible storm. The rain was shooting down at them from all sides, the wind almost knocking them off their feet, and occasionally booming thunder was heard and lighting cracked in the distance. Suddenly, one of the horse's hooves got caught in a vine, and together, the drenched Sun Wukong and the White Dragon Horse was falling into a huge hole. Down and down they went, Sun Wukong's screams were getting smaller and smaller, as the last sliver of light escaped from his vision.

Sun Wukong blinked. He slowly awakened to the White Dragon Horse's warm tongue on his face, as if begging for him to wake up. "How am I not dead?" He murmured, "Oh right, I'm invincible! Haha!" The mischievous monkey hopped up looked around and realized that a bed of flowers had coated their fall. Was this Echo Valley? He breathed a sigh of frustration when he saw that the White Dragon Horse was struggling to stand up. His hooves were hurt. *Crack.* Sun Wukong snapped his head upwards towards the tree, just in time to see a floating, white figure disappearing behind the top of the tree, the figure's hair almost covering its whole body. Sun Wukong was too unnerved to investigate, so he turned his attention to the White Dragon Horse sore hooves instead. Sun Wukong looked around and found some fruits and some water from a nearby water stream and fed it to the White Dragon Horse. Praying for the horse's quick recovery.

While walking back to where they fell from, Sun Wukong spotted a frail old man sitting under a tree. Sun Wukong approached him, "Hello, Mister! Can I help you?" The old man replied, "Hello, I am extremely hungry, is there any food you could spare?" Taking pity on the old man who was too weak to climb up a tree to retrieve the fruits, Sun Wukong gave him all the remaining fruits and water he gathered from just now. The old man thanked Sun Wukong and said, "To repay your kindness, go and look under the white poplar tree, and you will be rewarded with something valuable."

Sun Wukong thanked the old man and was on his way with Dapple by his side. When they reached the white poplar tree, Sun Wukong discovered a golden box filled with expensive and sparkling jewelry! At this moment, a sudden blow of wind sends an eagle's nest from the tree to come toppling down. Without hesitation, Sun Wukong immediately chose to save the eagle eggs instead of the priceless jewelry. Wukong climbs up the tree and delivers the eggs to safety. Before leaving he heard the old man's warning again, "Sun Wukong, you have to be careful in Echo Valley or something terrible might happen!"

The truth is, the old man was actually the Gold Star of Venus in disguise. He wanted to test Sun Wukong, whether he would rather have jewelry or save the lives of an eagle mother's children. The Gold Star of Venus was moved by Sun Wukong's choice, and have decided to do his best to help Wukong and his companion return to Tripitaka and the others safely with the magical herb. After the eagle's nest fiasco,

Sun Wukong retrieved some more fruits and water and was once again on his way to find the magical herb for Xuan Zang. Suddenly, Sun Wukong and the White Dragon Horse heard a cackle of laughter as the white figure floated down and revealed herself. "I am the White Bone Spirit, and it's such a wonderful thing you're here, Sun Wukong." With a snap of her fingers, skeletal hands reached from the soil and wrapped around Sun Wukong's ankles, keeping him a prisoner of the White Bone Spirit. "What do you want? I'm kind of in a hurry here." Sun Wukong asked as he casually shakes off the bone hands, thanks to his incredible strength.

"Well you see," the White Bone Spirit began, irritated but patient "I want to become immortal, but the only way I can do that is to eat Xuan Zang. But you have to help me get rid of those two disciples of his, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing, or I'll just kill you, darling."

"Yeah right, as if you'll be able to kill me, I'm immortal, guess that's too bad, isn't it, *darling?*" Sun Wukong grinned. The White Bone Spirit's eyes filled with fury, as she revealed her true monstrous self. In one moment, her fury had caused a fire. Red hot flames licked at Wu Kong as he yelped in pain and leaped away. Using his magical staff, Wukong whacked the Bone Spirit in the head and momentarily shocked her, then the White Dragon Horse came to the rescue! It transformed back into a dragon and started breathing fire on the White Bone Spirit even more as she wailed in pain. Slowly, without escape, all that remained of her was just a pile of ashes. The Gold Star of Venus then appeared and greeted Sun Wukong. "Hello, Wukong! I have found a way to retrieve the herb to cure Tripitaka! Follow me into the Cave of Wonders, and you have to help me find the gemstone that is the quietest. Then the antidote and herb will appear."

Sun Wukong arrived at the mouth of the cave and ventured inside. The moment he stepped in, gemstones scattered and they started saying things like "Pick me! Pick me!" but the monkey stepped over all these gemstones, knowing that they aren't the ones that he was looking for. At the end of the Cave of Wonders, Sun Wukong had almost given up hope, until he saw a quiet rock sitting by itself in a shadowy corner of the cave. He picked it up and handed it to the Gold Star of Venus. "Will this do? It's not a sparkly gemstone, but it was definitely the quietest." The Gold Star of Venus placed the rock inside an elixir bowl, and after a few sparks of light, all that remained was the magical herb. "Well done Sun Wukong, you have done it again!" The Gold Star of Venus praised. "Thank you so much, but how are we going to get back to the surface now? I can't exactly fly back up there without my powers." Sun Wukong asked. Right at this moment, they heard the cry of an eagle. It was the mother of the eggs Sun Wukong saved!

"And there's your ride back to the surface! I think the eagle mother would like to thank you both for your kindness." The Gold Star of Venus used his magical powers and turned the Eagle Mother into an enormous bird. Sun Wukong and The White Dragon Horse climbed on to it as they took off towards the surface.

After Sun Wukong and the White Dragon Horse reached the surface, Sun Wukong immediately returned and healed Tripitaka with the magical herb. Kwan Yin appeared suddenly, congratulating Sun Wukong on fulfilling his quest, then granted Wukong his powers back. "Aw, yeah!" Wukong said while jumping 5 miles up into the air, overjoyed to have his powers back.

## The Battle of Nalandians

*Po Leung Kuk Ngan Po Ling College, Lam, Kani Lon Hei –11*

After several years of adventure, Xuanzang and Wukong finally reached Nalanda, the Promised Land that they were dreaming to find.

They immediately entered the heart of the place, but things turned out to be unexpectedly strange. The whole Nalanda looked lifeless, and there was only dust rolling and wind moaning, complaining the loneliness of this dark sacred land. Strange symbols were etched on the walls of the temples and the ground. The sutras that described Nalanda were hugely different from what the dual were seeing then. They were bewildered and perplexed by such scenery.

“How is this possible? Yijing has described nothing like this. This must not be Nalanda!” Wukong exclaimed. “This place must be protected by the mist of the gods to keep out outlanders. I shall pray and ask them to let us see the path ahead...” Xuanzang muttered and started to kneel. When Wukong saw this, he said “Master, no! Now is not the time for such things. I can't see through this magic, but I suspect there are dark workings in this. We must be alert.”

They scouted the land for citizens that needed their help. While Wukong was looking around, he noticed that there was a dark cave cleaved between two boulders. As Wukong reached out to touch it, a screeching sound snarled behind their ears, like nails scraping against a chalkboard. “Surprise, foolish mortals!” Wukong was the first one to counter, whirled around to meet the speaker. He waved his golden cudgel wildly, hitting nothing but air. Soon, Xuanzang and Wukong were covered with sacks, ropes binding tightly around their necks. They let out muffled yells, protesting to be released from their unseen attackers. Cold hands grabbed, not grabbed, but rather wrapped around them like a snake entangling their prey, squeezing their arms till they were numb, and forced them to walk. After a while, the attackers hit them in the back and they were dumped unceremoniously into a freezing, slimy river.

Struggling free towards the banks, both found out they were ambushed by a bizarre group of snake-like creatures. They were nothing they've ever confronted before, and these creatures standing in front of them were horrific, beyond their wildest nightmares. These creatures formed a semi-circle around them, but as soon as they saw them, they let out a feral roar of a lion and they attacked, moving so quickly that they seemed invisible.

“Who are you, and what do you want?” Wukong demanded as he waved his cudgel wildly, trying in desperation to fend off his aggressive attackers. By his side, Xuanzang wrapped his calloused fingers with one hand around his prayer beads, raising his Ichigo sword in his other hand, causing it to gleam with strange light, though sunlight would have never broken through the fog of this place. Eyes filled with wariness and steeled with killing calm, Xuanzang ever so softly muttered an ancient language which no one could decipher. To their sheer consternation, a streak of lightning came in flashing hot white light towards the duo, crackling with energy, rampaging its way through the air. Xuanzang dropped to the ground like a stone the moment he saw the lightning, but Wukong, who was still occupied with his winning attackers, barely avoided it and got an ugly sear across his face, with the wound streaking from his forehead to one of his eyes and blood dripping down. Howling in pain, he collapsed to the ground, momentarily blinded. But a second was all they need. Just as the creatures moved for the killing blow, another cry, somewhat sounded like a war cry, maybe from hundreds of people or so, echoed nearby. Then, miraculously, faster than a blink of the eye, their attacks stopped. The wind howled once more. The only signs of the last battle were the deep trenches in the earth, cut deep by the swords of their enemy, an unearthly reminder of the battle left in their wake.

Wukong was still reeling from the sudden silence of his attackers and dazed from his injury, but he put up his sword and screamed: “Stay back!” His yell brought up tense silence for a few seconds, but suddenly, two dazzling auras appeared in front of Wukong's nose. He swatted the light like a fly, but as his eyes slowly adjusted to the light, he saw two elf-like creatures in front of him, as their pale complexion, almond-shaped eyes with slitted pupils and pointed ears gave their identity away. “Efrits— the apprentices of Guanyin.” Xuanzang automatically recited. Such knowledge has been drilled into his mind since he was young. Their movements seemed to flow like liquid, an uncanny cat-like grace unique to their kind. Even as they stepped forward, they never made a sound. In unison, they spoke “The Lady of the Lily has sent us to look for the two of you,” Wukong and Xuanzang stared at the Efrits in amazement and shock, for both of them could not believe in their luck to ever hope that an all-mighty goddess would extend a hand and assist them.

Still shocked, they remained motionless as Efrits spoke, “The foes you meet soon have taken over Guanyin’s Temple in the cave, and you have to release it from their evil grasp...” The Efrits then swiftly blew sliver power from their palms and knocked them out cold.

While Xuanzang and Wukong struggled back to consciousness, both were chilled to realize that a sharp knife, a very sharp one in fact, was held to each of their throats. Were the Efrits villains after all? Had they been tricked? Questions bubbled up and clustered in their minds. But as the light slowly seeped into their eyelids and they regained their vision again, standing in front of them was something so outrageous that it didn’t even seem to be possible to exist. Glowing black auras were undulating and pulsating in front of Xuanzang and Wukong, as if they were going to burst into millions of tiny specks of dust and lash out to send them to their graves. The humongous snakes hissed and sprayed acid, as they crept out of the sleeves of their heavy, ragged cloaks, jagged spikes lining their long, smooth bodies, slithering towards the black auras. A snake, in particular, stood by Xuanzang and Wukong’s side, and it had two tails, each one holding a sharp dagger to both their throats. “Oh look, Tweedledum and Tweedledee are awake.” Sneered the snake beside them. It had the same voice as the one who spoke in the earlier attack. Wukong thrashed against his bonds and thundered, “Free us, demons! You have no right to capture the King of Monkeys, a sage equal to the heavens!” “Demons?” The snakes burst into hissing chorus of laughter, “No, even they bow in my wisdom. We are the Jorrif, here to bring your kind down. We shall conquer the Earth when we are finished with you. But you!” the hideous hisses trembled with undeniable anger, “you two destroyed my beautiful plans and allies, like the white bone demon, and your life would be the perfect compensation!” Thirsty for vengeance, the alien-snake beside them strikes his first blow, both tails moving to slit their throats open to the bone. But lighting flashed, like the last fight they had, and so many things happened at once.

An uproar sounded from outside the cave as hundreds of people, probably the citizens of Nalanda pelted in, uttering “For Nalanda!”

At the same time, Wukong broke from his bonds and began sawing ferociously Xuanzang’s ropes. Then came the Efrits, twangs of bows and arrows falling amongst the Jorrif, who broke their ranks, hiss-shrieking in surprise. The Barefoot Immortal had grown in size, as the god’s stamping feet made thunderous sounds. Chaos took rein, and everyone was scattering under the Barefoot Immortal’s feet.

A slash of the Ichigo sword could not be heard over the roar of the oncoming crowd or the sound of bows drawn or the screams of the dying. With a single stroke Xuanzang sliced off the head of the only snake that talked to them, the leader of the Jorrif as it seems, which cartwheeled high into the air, each drop of its purple blood gleaming in the lighting still pulsating in the air, and all the Jorrif’s mouth were open in a scream of fury and agony as they too, were dispersed into dust in the howling wind gusting in from the cave entrance.

The sun rose steadily outside the cave, streaming in life and light from the dark cave’s entrance, driving away the gloom and doom. Cheers rose as victory was claimed, as the cave was cleansed of the evil. “Mission accomplished.” Wukong snarked as he swaggered like a strutting stallion. towards the cave entrance.

Nothingx that they haven’t done before.

## A Random Story Changed

*Po Leung Kuk Ngan Po Ling College, Tiu, Wallace Chung Wang – 12*

The Monkey King and his group of four reached a mountain. As Tripiaka, a monk as well as the leader of the group, is rather hungry, so the Monkey King found a peach tree and went on a short journey to get some peaches from it.

As the rest of the group waited for him to come back, a young woman, holding a vase of food came to them. It was rather unfortunate that they didn't know it was a skeleton demon, waiting to hunt their lives. Pigsy, who was half pig, half human, greedy as usual, decided to ask 'What 's that in the vase?' 'Food, obviously.' The young woman/demon replied a bit rudely, ' For your partner monk.' Tripiaka, being the polite monk he is, said 'No worries. Our friend is up there on a mountain getting some peaches. Ignoring the fact that the food was not for his, Pigsy instantly tried to dig in, just as Monkey King went to them with the peaches. Using his powers, he immediately saw that the young woman was a demon. Shouting 'Watch out! That's a demon!', he bashed the demon swiftly with the Ruyi Jingu Bang. The cunning demon, still after them, used a spell to get away, leaving a decoy of the woman's body for them to look at. Tripiaka looked at the dead body as fearful as a sinner in front of God, shouted at Monkey King 'Master, that's actually a demon. See what's that in the vase of, ahem, food?' Tripiaka looked in the vase. In it was a bunch of putrid frogs and toads, alive, jumping around.

However, Pigsy, probably mad about the lost meal (he's willing to eat anything, after all.) Decided to say ' Master, actually come to think of it, don't you think Monkey could've tricked you with this just not to get punished?' Tripiaka, considering about this, decided to punished Monkey King by... that's what he was thinking about. Monkey King was about to counter Pigsy when an old woman came, shouting 'Oh help! A random Monkey just killed my daughter!'

If you've heard about the story, you should know that it was that demon... again.

Anyways, Monkey King shouted 'DIE, FOUL BEAST! (Despite the fact that it was a demon)' and bashed into the old woman with his bang. The demon evaded the attack swiftly, letting the bang hit air. Shouting in fury, Monkey King swung the bang to the right, which the demon ducked. Monkey King did a flurry of attacks, which the demon swiftly dodged. Monkey King tore down some of his hair in frustration, which all turned into smaller replicas of himself. They all surrounded the demon. However, the demon spun quickly, hitting all the clones and Monkey King, who crashed into his comrades. The demon, approaching to the group, was about to deal the finishing blow when Monkey King managed to kick it right in the stomach. The demon, using the same trick as last time, went away, leaving a corpse of the old woman.

Tripiaka, finally enraged to the point of unable to control himself, shouted to Monkey King 'How dare you kill not one, but two people? Not only that, do you how horribly acted during that fight. Narrowly winning against an OLD WOMAN? You're way too weak to help me. Now go and never come back.' Even after Monkey King's protestations, he was determined to kick Monkey King out of his party.

So Monkey King left, sadder than ever. He went back to his homeland, and never came back until Tripiaka was in real trouble again.

Moral? Never trust a pig.

## Journey to Hope

*Renaissance College Hong Kong, Ho, Minhee – 11*

A gunshot. The deafening *boom*, the feeling of dread as the bullet spun towards its target. A rip as it tore through skin. A *crack* as it shattered the skull. It took a moment for the pain to seep in. Then a high-pitched, barbaric scream, exploding agony, and spilling blood.

A heavy *thud*.

Another life lost. Another one dead.

Then silence. Nothing. The nothingness of life moving on, of time continuing.

Later, words would be spoken. Words that hurt. Words that wounded. Floating chunks of despair. Horror, violence, darkness. A crying mother. A weeping sister. A desperate father.

Infinite gunshots.

Bones cracked. Skin tore. Blood dripped. A hailstorm of bullets. Each shot brought pain, death, and more darkness.

*Boom.*

*Thud.*

*Silence.*

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The cold bit Scimmia's bare flesh, covering her skin with goosebumps. The snow swirled around her, blocking her vision. Blindly, she staggered forward, trying to follow the sound of Monje's footsteps.

"When can we stop walking?" Piggy whined, groaning with each step he took. Piggy's real name was Hen Pang, but because of his portly figure, Piggy soon became his nickname.

"Stop complaining, Pig," Scimmia snapped, shooting Piggy a glare.

"It's not like you're so skinny!" Piggy retorted.

"At least I'm skinnier than you!"

Piggy was about to speak, but was interrupted.

"Stop bickering!" Monje snapped, turning around to scowl at both Scimmia and Piggy.

"Why is this stupid journey so hard?" Piggy moaned, switching the subject.

"Stop whining, you fat boar!" Scimmia barked.

Piggy pouted, his fat lips jutting out.

"Stop sulking!" Scimmia reprimanded. But secretly, she had to agree with Piggy. The journey *was* hard. It was long, dangerous, and difficult.

The snow was blinding, and many times, the group had to stop travelling, to wait for it to clear. Shootings and air raids were extremely common, and they were constantly having to find shelters to avoid being shot or bombed. They were also running out of supplies. It was the thieves. They were constantly taking the group's money and food, leaving them struggling for survival.

Piggy continued to groan. "How long do we have to walk?"

"Suck it up, hog!" Scimmia said.

But after a couple more minutes of Piggy's complaining, the trio decided to stop for the night.

Scimmia, Piggy, and Monje were all from the Tang Dynasty. The Tang Dynasty had been battling for decades, in fact, they were the cause for World War Three. The Tang people were angry. They wanted change.

But gradually, as the war bore on, the Tang people became weary of fighting. Too many deaths. Too much pain. Too much loss. It wasn't worth it.

Finally, after years of deliberation, the Tang King had decided to offer a peace treaty to the other country, and end the War. He had chosen three people to deliver the treaty: Scimmia, Monje, and Piggy.

Comment [1]: Too much death



With his incredible laziness and annoying nature, it was a mystery why the King had chosen Piggy. After breaking into the Tang Palace to try and steal food, Piggy was thrown into jail for ten years. If he completed the journey, he would be pardoned from the crime, and finally be released. Piggy hated jail. It had bad food, and that was enough to make Piggy desperate to gain forgiveness, which was why he had accepted the King's deal.

Monje was orderly, prudent, and kind. The King had promised Monje that if he completed the journey successfully, he could be the next heir to the throne.

Scimmia was snarky, sassy, and arrogant. However, despite these negative traits, she was somehow liked by almost everybody. She, like Piggy, was a criminal. A long time ago, she had been the King's secretary, but after being caught trying to steal the King's crown, she was fired. Completing the journey was the consequence of her crime.

The group had been travelling for years, and still had many more miles to go. Their job was to travel to Westopia and deliver the peace treaty to the Westopia King. If the Westopia King signed the treaty, the war would end. If he didn't, the War would continue, the Tang King too proud to accept defeat. The fighting would go on forever, until humanity destroyed itself – until not a single person was left alive.

That was why the Treaty had to be signed.

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Years passed.

The journey was hard. It was cold, the travellers were running out of money, and they were in constant fear of being shot or bombed.

It was difficult and dangerous. It seemed impossible. But somehow, one day, they reached Westopia.

They had heard that Westopia was beautiful – bright and happy.

But Westopia was the exact opposite.

Like any other place in World War Three, signs of battle covered Westopia. Most of the houses were broken and damaged – bombed. The air was filled with screaming and sobbing. It was dark and dull – there was no laughter. Faces were empty of smiles. Humanity had drowned all the joy and beauty of the world. Why are humans so evil? *When* had they turned so evil?

The travellers entered the palace.

Even the palace had been darkened by the war. Sadness lingered in the vast corridors. The rooms were filled with despair. The King looked weary, and much too old for his age.

Yet, when he studied the treaty, he did not hesitate to answer.

"No," he said. The travellers looked at him in disbelief. After seeing all the damage the war had done, they had expected the King to say yes.

Monje stepped forwards. "But your Majesty. The war is terrible. It has damaged Westopia, and its people. Please, think again."

But the King shook his head. "No," he repeated. "Go home, and tell the Tang King what I have said. I do not accept the Treaty. The war will continue. It must! We've sacrificed so much. We will *not* give up."

The travellers protested. "Please," Scimmia begged. "It doesn't matter what you have sacrificed. You should stop the war before you sacrifice more than you already have! I came here thinking Westopia was beautiful, but all I see are broken faces."

"Fine!" the King barked, startling the group. "I will think about it, if you are so stubborn. But my answer will not change. Return the next day, and I will give you my reply."

Solemnly, the group left, leaving the Westopia King with the Treaty.

“At least we tried,” Scimmia said quietly.

Piggy nodded. “The journey was actually kind of fun, you know. Scimmia, you’re not too bad. It’s kind of fun arguing with you. I’ll miss it,” he admitted. “You know, we should all stay friends after the journey.”

“I think this journey changed us. It made us wiser and stronger. Even if we fail, I won’t regret this.” Monje said thoughtfully.

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The night passed, and morning came quickly. After waking, the travellers immediately went to the Palace to hear the King’s reply.

They were surprised to find a whole line of people already waiting outside.

“Why are they lining up?” Piggy asked one of the guards.

“To list all the people who are missing. They’re just dreaming. The missing people will never come back. They’re dead,” the guard replied bitterly.

The group said nothing. There was nothing to say. Silently, they let the guard escort them to the King.

They found him in the throne room. He held the Peace Treaty with trembling hands. “You were right,” he said. “This morning, I remembered what you said. I remembered the past — of how wonderful Westopia was, of how peaceful my realm had been.” Quietly, he laughed. “And then I looked out the window, and saw a line of people coming to give me a list of the dead. I saw a dark sky, and dark faces. You are right. The war is damaging us. It’s making us evil.”

He handed the Peace Treaty back to the group.

It was signed.

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The travellers returned to the Tang Dynasty, and gave the Peace Treaty, now signed, to the Tang King. They each received their rewards, along with money, and other treasures.

The travellers had returned late at night. Almost immediately, they went to sleep.

The next morning, when Scimmia woke up, her room was bright. She peered out of the window, and saw ... a blue sky and a sun.

It had been years since she had seen a blue sky. All of the nuclear battles in World War Three had made the sky grey and dull. Darkness had blanketed the world, like a black cloud that refused to leave. Yet, here it was, back again. A blue sky. A sun.

Outside, there was laughter.

There were faces filled with smiles.

There were tears, but a different kind — tears of joy.

Words were spoken. Words that were lovely. Words that healed the wounds that had been made.

Love and hope filled the air.

The Journey to Peace had finally ended.

## New Journeys to the West

*Renaissance College Hong Kong, Ying, Zoe – 12*

After a long day of work at the other side of the bank, Peony's father wanted nothing more than to wrap his daughter in his arms. As he stepped onto the gently rocking boat, the sun beating down on his back, he gave a hard thrust with the bamboo pole and slowly floated down the river. He caught sight of a single peony, floating quietly in the water. Peony's father was captivated, exhilarated, invigorated. Forgetting he was still in the boat, he stretched out his arm as far as he could and made a lunge for the flower.

The boat rolled over. As he fell into the ice-cold water with a splash, his eyes fixed onto the riverbank. He only wanted to see his daughter, to hug her, to laugh with her one more time. But there was only the old banyan tree.

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A lone boatman watched the entire scene from a distance. He tucked in his sails and swooped towards the overturned boat, bobbing in the water, and searched for any passengers on-board. There were none. Everything went still for a moment, and then the boatman yelled, "Man overboard!"

The people on both sides of the river heard him.

"Who is it?"

"Who fell in?"

Peony pushed her way to the front of the crowd. When she saw the single flower that was her namesake, she knew.

"Pa!" she cried, standing dangerously near the edge of the bank. Someone caught her and held her tightly, but she tried to break free, waving her arms madly in the air. "Pa! Pa...!" she screamed again.

A couple of women carried her away from the water and towards the Building, not wanting her to see any more. They dried her eyes and patted her back, but icy teardrops kept forming, running down her face in fast-flowing rivulets like the river that had taken her father.

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They huddled over her bed in the middle of the night, applying cool towels to her red-cheeked face while she slept. One felt her forehead.

"It's burning hot,"

Peony felt so cold, but she was also burning with heat. The fever raged for a whole week. When it finally went back down to normal, Peony's big doe eyes bulged out in her thin face, but otherwise she seemed well. Then they realised that she had turned mute.

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They didn't know what to do with this child. They had brought her games and toys, but every time she just shook her head and looked down. She spent most of her time outside, staring at the peony fields in the distance, on the other side of the river.

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She was once again staring at the river when her sharp eyes spotted a small object, a peony floating on top of it, meandering slowly towards her. A gift, perhaps, from her father in heaven?

But did she dare? She peeked nervously at the Building behind her, then crawled slowly towards the river. There was no landing, just a steep, grassy slope. She hesitated for a while. If she fell, would she end up the same way as her father? She shrugged to herself. She just wanted to see him again.

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Peony wasn't afraid any more. She was determined to get the object – she could see that it was actually a thick book. An encouragement to learn how to read, perhaps? She wound her hand around a thick vine and lowered herself down slowly.

A boat passed by underneath her. The boatman saw a young girl clinging like a gecko to a steep wall of dirt and grass, and he called out to her. Then, afraid it would startle her, he stopped, though he didn't stop worrying about her long after she had disappeared from sight.

Peony felt dizzy all of a sudden. The river seemed very deep and far below. Though she wanted to see her father, she didn't want to drown. Across the river, Peony could hear the sound of village men tilling the earth, ready for a new season's worth of planting. *Thwock. Thwock. Thwock.* The steady sound soothed her, made her feel better. She slowly opened her eyes and lowered herself down a little more.

The loud groan of a water buffalo broke her concentration. She jerked upwards slightly, and as she fell, her weight broke the already-strained vine. The earth under her feet loosened, and she scrambled around for a second before the ground fell away. Peony screamed, but no-one heard it.

Her foot caught on a small branch, and Peony flipped over, falling almost head-first into the water. Her hand crushed the peony on the book, her namesake. The book ended up next to Peony's head. She grabbed at it, hugging it, for of course she didn't know how to swim. The book, now weighed down, dragged her under the water and into the depths below.

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Peony was blind in the swirling waters around her. The river was deeper than she'd thought, but the sun shone down onto the water, causing it to be pleasantly warm, and Peony, somehow, began to relax. Suddenly, as if a curtain was lifted from her eyes, she could see she was in a deep and vast ocean, small fish swimming about her, and when she breathed the water felt like air in her lungs.

*Was this where my father went?* Twirling around in the clear, warm waters, she could see it was heaven. Ahead of her, she could see a massive palace, with great, swooping pagodas, high pillars and arches, just as she'd thought heaven would look like. A mighty dragon was emblazoned on its roof, coiled in a loop over and over on itself.

A high-pitched laugh came from her left. Peony turned her head. It was a small monkey, with a golden mane and age-old eyes, sitting atop a small, white cloud steed.

"Behold, the Monkey King of Flower Fruit Mountain!" said the monkey. "And who are you?" he said, pointing a long, slender finger.

Peony stayed silent.

"Peony? A *most lovely* name. And you can trust me, you know,"

Peony frowned. There was no point staying silent if the stranger could read her mind.

“How do you do,” she said stiffly, then decided it was simpler to stick to thoughts.

“Are you heading for the dragon palace? I am. It’s got many beautiful treasures.” the Monkey King said.

*What? This was not Heaven?*

“Ah. Heaven. I can bring you there, if you wish.”

And he plucked a small golden-brown ear hair and blew it gently. Puff! Before her was another Monkey King, standing beside him, identical to the first.

“Come with me,” said the clone, and he transformed into a gigantic, magnificent crane, his head grazing the top of the sea.

The Monkey King laughed and threw her onto the crane’s back. Peony just had enough time to grasp the crane’s feathers, and then they took off immediately.

They broke the tip of the ocean immediately with a huge thrust, and the crane’s wings started flapping, *one-two, one-two*. It reminded her of the men tilling the earth, before she fell into the water and this began. The air was cool and fresh and Peony shouted jubilantly.

“Save your breath,” said the crane. “We have a long way to go,”

So Peony chose to admire the scene instead. The land had faded fast already and was misty white below her. There was a cloud above her and she stretched her hand out to touch it, crying out as it came away wet.

“Don’t touch anything,” the crane said again. “You may fall.”

*As my father did.*

Where was her father?

The sky turned black around her as she and the crane barrelled out of the atmosphere, and she could see a barrier of clouds. As they broke through this cloud, the crane using his beak to pierce it, she became wet yet again and giggled.

“Shush,” said the crane. “We are at the gates of Eternity,”

And Peony shut up. She could feel her father inside, missing her the way she was him. Sliding down the sleek white-and-black feathers, she finally landed on soft cloud. It felt like air, nothing at all. And yet it could support her weight.

Tiptoeing forward, past the gate, she let her eyes close and her heart lead her to where she knew her father would be. Eternity was a beautiful place, but she stopped to look at none of it. After many hours (or maybe years – Eternity was infinitely large) she could sense that she was very close to her father. Opening her eyes, she saw a halo of golden light, and her father’s small form, blinking, his glasses wonky on his nose.

“Peony...?” her father whispered.

“It’s me, Pa.”

“Peony!”

She was swept into his arms and felt his firm embrace, his warm, soft hand behind her back and his face pressed against hers.

“I’ve missed you, Peony!”

“Me too, Pa.”