

## My Queries

*Sha Tin College, Ko, Mary-Anne - 12*

**A**pparently, someone staked their claim upon your head and broke open your very first burden, and poured you out like the water which gushed out of the rock standing at Horeb, channelled by an ancient power which summoned from two knocks it did come forth.

Did you ever believe in the power of being carved by another power, a force not of this planet? I know not whether to be subjected to mankind's thoughts— for foolish indeed they may be, but a paradox. As man consists not of one, nor an entire army uttering the same declaration of loyalty towards the country which they serve, but an intangible mass of various different forms. But just because you have earned my sympathies, which I guard very well, and my trust, should that mean that what my soul has been laid upon has been indented into yours?

From what I have withdrawn from, you took in.

Yet, you were scorned, which was an utterly wronged stance. For that would have made a fire-breathing dragon scorned, that would have made the sea-creatures which lay below scorned, that would have made everything else scorned.

What made you different?

Perhaps the fact that the fate of destiny never cried out from below, and instead came from above. But you weren't born to be destined to join in the ranks of the Gods, a foolish monkey, and nothing more but a monkey— that's what they said.

And, I suppose, when you have lived an entire life in contrast, in vivid black and white, and being the contrast... Was that how you felt? Crushed, shattered, broken to the point of no repair, yet being the leader, the ruler of a colony of your kind... Did you conceal your true motifs, or did you hide it behind the unfairness of the situation and took advantage of it by locking yourself in the midnight dark?

I have to say, I envy you for having stayed in peace, having the sense of privacy which one like I has always longed for, in that silence. But there wasn't yourself to find, was there? It was what you could unleash that you had to find, it was what you had to seek for within yourself.

But were you, for a moment, emotionally bounded. Hurting to see the truth, but it came unto full display, did it not? For even after you thought you found it, those who scorned you pulled you back to the ground, and the burden from which you were birthed from was once again placed upon your head.

I wonder if there can be any correlation between history, stories, and one's personal life. But history and stories are far from sincerity, for wouldn't it be shameful to sacrifice your dignity to the judgement of those who could potentially scorn you?

But, you had your army to pull you back onto your feet and to motivate you. You were always over those who were under you, yet you were under those who were over you. Perhaps, that is the fine line which draws us apart. For you were never under those who were over you, and under those who were over those who were over you. You've never felt the need to retreat to what's buried deep inside your heart, which nobody can ever see or ever know of, nor have you shed those silent tears. Have you?

Or did those agonies return after your burden shut you into its dark womb once again, waiting for the day when it would birth you? Did pain only ever lay inside your heart, with its walls clenching and unclenching, your memories bittersweet— those impossible dreams reaching out to knock your soul. Once, twice... Until all the sadness locked within rushes out, like those standing before that rock which Moses tapped twice with his staff? But they feasted upon that precious source— those who scorned you, those unforgiving memories. Did anyone truly free you after that? You were freed, but were you freed from yourself? I imagine, I desperately cling onto the hopes that someone can save one from the wolves chasing from within, and by the shoulders they shall grab me and pull me out of the nightmare. Shivering in their arms, waiting for the pain to reside, until it's gone.

But can it be? Maybe... For at some point, reality can claim back what hopes and dreams have taken, and down into reality— like how you fell from the sky, and for a moment stayed under those who were over you, and above everything else that stood over you— and no one else can save you from the monsters within except...

Did you find inner peace at the end? I know that the man whom you followed found the answer, but did you? The thing about this mess which we know as humanity, our own separate ways we must go. And that is what pulls nightmares out of their homes, leaving victims shivering at the dead of night— worming its way into this war-torn heart, killing these hopes and dreams.

Far from interested indeed am I, about what adventures did await you. For those emotions are much more tender, much more destructive, much more hopeful. For what you saw through your eyes wasn't the story that has been a saga, passed down from generation unto generation. It wasn't a story of friendship. It had hatred, jealousy, calamity, tiresome journeys, fear, anger... but no one knows that, do they? They see the best parts of you which you have put forth, but never the worst of the being which cultivates even beings like you.

But you're the only aspect of this which I have singled out, for since I met this broken version of you, thoughts have emerged... and from it, so much has yet to be drawn out... It's all such a paradox, which you are perched just atop, omniscient to the true intent behind mankind's words... Dear friend, I understand.

# Journey to the West

*Sha Tin College, Wong, Clement – 11*

**W**e all know about the journey to the west, but have we wondered what happened after that?

One particular day, the five travellers who journeyed to the west had a small re-union. The White Dragon decided to visit his family in heaven accompanied by Sandy and Pigsy. They were more than happy to tag along, knowing the Jade Emperor would have a large feast awaiting for their arrival. The Monk and the Monkey King however decided they would once again venture to the world of men to help the ones in need.

The Monk and the Monkey King helped numerous people. Feeling proud and humble of their accomplishments, they decided it was time to return to heaven. While passing by a particularly large mountain, in the distance, they spotted a cottage. There was a small figure appearing to burying something. Without hesitation, they paced slowly towards what appeared to be a young boy. Weeping in deep sorrow over a dead lady's body, presumably his mother. As they approached the boy, he hastily into a hut and slammed the door shut.

The Monk and the Monkey King walked to the door at the house. Just as they were about to knock, the boy rushed out, holding a rake, pointing at them. He was relieved when he saw them and said his apologies. The two travellers asked for his name and story when the boy sat down in front of them in the meadows. The boy was named Zane and he had just lost his mother. He had lived without a father in this cottage, his mother always told his stories about how his father resided in a mysterious island that floated amongst the mists. As he spoke, a jade medallion tucked in his shirt began to glow. Reaching into his pocket, he turned the emerald green mineral over, showing the inscription to the travellers. 'The Jade of Nature and Life' there was also a riddle written on it. He was told that if he could solve it, it would guide him to his father. However, little did they know, someone was already waiting for them to begin their journey.

High up in the mountains hidden by blankets of thick mist was a snake hissing frantically. Fuxi was no ordinary snake. It was a nine headed snake. The snake had nine individual daunting heads, linked together in one giant body, skin so thick that no electric shock could hurt them. Fuxi was idle in his den freely testing its own special skills on a freshly caught mountain goat. It spat venom, roared flames and finally, strangled its prey to death. Nearby, on the other side of the wall lived the most sinister evil villain in the world. The villain, seated on a throne, was not as cruel and as fearsome as you think, he is a very knowledgeable person. Being educated in a royal family, he was a descendant of the royal house of villainy. He hated to be evil and wished to be accepted by the Gods from heaven but was always rejected for the cruel ways his family treated them before. Years later after giving up upon the request for the Gods he turned evil. He was locked away in a palace where his parents taught him the arts of becoming a masterful trickster. He recruited a snake from the land of the dead, hidden miles beneath the Earth's crust. Now, Hiro and Fuxi wait patiently for Zane's arrival.

Still oblivious to what lies ahead, the Monk, Monkey King and Zane began on their journey. Whilst passing through the forest, the Monk had one of his unique visions. From time to time, he would receive these warnings, he then solemnly spoke, "We will meet people who are unpleasant. The child must be escorted by the Army of Heaven," the Monk immediately collapsed to the floor in the forest and fainted. The young boy, had a reaction so quick that lightning couldn't beat him in a race of speed, catching him before he got hurt. He rested the Monk's head on a bamboo pillow and put the cloak onto him as a blanket. Upon requesting to examine the jade, Zane rested under a tree half awake, half asleep. The monkey mumbled words while inspecting the magnificent green translucent mineral. When he saw what the inscription actually read, he muttered under his breath just loud enough for Zane to hear, "The King of Nature and Life." The Monkey King stood underneath a tall willow tree in wonder.

Zane sat in awe under the tree listening to the Monkey King's story one that was told amongst the Gods. "There were two pieces made by the Jade Emperor. They were both given to a friend of his, rumours said

that this man had a wife, he kept one piece to himself gave the other to his wife. Not long after, he reluctantly had to leave her side, due to the great war. The woman was then lost forever. The Jade it self glows with the touch of its owner, also powers and using his abilities. He was natural, after a short practice session. Zane managed to wake the Monk through sending pulses through his nervous system.

Once and for all, the Monk decided to take Zane to heaven. Upon their arrival they informed the servants of the Jade Emperor about the boy and his jade, they led them into the throne room where the Emperor sat waiting for them. The Jade Emperor, informed them of the long gruesome journey they were about to embrace upon, he then off with a few escorts from the army of heaven. Zane wished everything was just a dream and hoped that his mother would wake him up as if it was all a nightmare. But it wasn't. In order to arrive they had to cross an extremely steep mountain, filled with unknown danger, nobody had survived a trip hiking up this very mountain.

Not long after, Zane, the adventurers and the army of heaven began their journey up said daunting mountain. The path that would eventually lead to the rainbow archway and Zane's father. However, little did they know down beneath the steep mountain lived Hiro and his snake. Hiro, one day sitting in his lair sensed the presence of the radiating jade. Something that had a unique aura. Curious and greedy; he wanted whatever artifact it was for himself.

Just as the group arrived at the rainbow archway, Hiro appeared, gatekeeping the path ahead.. A battle erupted immediately. Sitting idle in a corner, the Monk focused, concentrating hard to gaze into the future. The Monkey King took out his Golden Staff, enlarging it to a thick and enormous state. The Golden Staff fell towards Hiro, with a flash, the Golden Staff fell back. The Monkey King turned it into to a thinner pole and held it in his hands. With a smash, he caused everyone to fly up except for the Monk and Zane. Now in the moonlight, it was clear enough to see Fuxi. The long snake slithered across the rocky floor and hissed at the escorts, spraying venom into their eyes and made a shield around Hiro.

The Monkey King charged with all his might with the Golden Staff in his hand, he hit Fuxi at the same time venom was sprayed onto himself. The pair fell to the ground and passed out. Everyone just stood there. Looking over the two figures. Tears streamed down everyone's eyes forming a river down the mountain. Hiro stood in front of The Monk and shook his hand. The Monk stared into Hiro's eyes and could tell that all the years of being evil has been washed away by his tears. For the first time, the sun rose up upon this mountain. Using the power of the jade, Zane saved the lying pair.

They stepped onto the rainbow bridge and arrived at Zane's long lost home. In the distance, they saw a castle on top of the hill and headed towards there. Streets were dirty and depressing, however, every step Zane took, the nature of life and happiness begun. The sun was hugging them, and when they arrived at the palace doors, they were in awe. The moat was stinking like spoiled egg, the castle had stains and the guards were droopy. The palace moat bridge was lowered down and as Zane walked every step, the smell of spoiled egg faded, instead a sweet honey scent could be sensed. A guard escorted them to the throne room. On the throne was a man, closing a photo book and printed in the middle of the book was 'Zane'.

Welcoming his visitors, the king examined Zane from head to toe. As he went down, he saw a glowing jade, he stood there and stared at the Jade. Tears streamed down his face. He hugged Zane. He has found his lost son. After a while of talking, Zane finally believed the mysterious man was his dad. His dad gave him a jade as a present and hung it around his neck. The jades blended into each other glowing like a star. As Zane and his father shared what has happened during the previous years, the travelers left to heaven leaving Zane and his father in everlasting happiness.

# Journey to the West

*Shanghai American School—Pudong Middle School, Lou, Nelson – 12*

The red light peered into the cave, illuminating the red letters of the notebook. Bound in red leather, cracked with age, and barely held together with stitching, the faint scent of wood lifted off pages that were graced with sacred words. Calligraphy, barely visible on the inside cover, revealed the name Wukong, one of the legendary celestials. The first page began in the middle of a sentence, suggesting that pages were missing. I opened the book and glided my fingers across the pages, fearful my grip would crush the paper.

... *not fun.*

In the beginning there was nothing. Earthlings believed I burst out of a boulder. I was different, a small toddler only disguised in cocoa brown fur. Looking at my hirsute coat, I squealed delightfully. Soon, other animals joined me in a wild cacophony. The deep groans of frogs syncing with the high pitched chirps of grasshoppers appealed to my ears. I was happy.

Something piqued my interest; a structure towered over the grasslands. The appearance suggested it could connect to the sky. The object featured dozens of extremities reaching for handouts. Mossy pines darkened the path. Every tree glowed virescent hues, a biological halo that introduced me to a soothing happiness I longed for. The roots extended for miles, creating a bumpy texture on the grassland. Stroking the stump, I caressed the wrinkled, serrated strips of brown. Intrigue. My legs tensed. I could feel them urging me to climb; it was my destiny.

Energy flowed through me, muscles pumping with adrenaline. I ascended, gasping for air. From above the grassland was just a green blanket swaying with the gentle breeze. Suddenly my grip slipped on a measly twig and snapped unexpectedly; I toppled backwards screaming. I swung my arms in circles to grab on, but instead a branch sliced my palm; blood drizzled like rain as my feet slammed into the wood ripping chunks of fur. My coat was dyed crimson red. Soon the grassland came darting toward me at light speed. I closed my eyes, covered my face, and whispered a prayer. I expected darkness, but... I was dangling in midair, arms flailing and legs hanging. Was I flying? No.

I had a long furry muscle wrapped around a branch. Rocking back and forth, testing it's abilities, I discovered I possessed the ultimate gadget. A tail. I swung between branches with fluidity, and soared with ease. In the distance, my vision spied an orchard. I dashed through the jungle like a ninja. Within seconds, I was drenched in sweat but the refreshing breeze relinquished my frantic thoughts. The sweet aroma wafted through the air as I sniffed greedily, and my stomach was growling in pain. Earthlings were picking off peaches one by one, and filled baskets and baskets. If I don't act fast, there will be none.

Scrambling lightning fast, I leap toward the grassland, tumbling on impact. *Heh! Earthling gymnasts were no match for my agility.* Then, I arrived face to face to an Earthling. His eyes bulged in terror screaming. I stuck out my tongue and made a high pitched chattering noise before swinging away. *Pop!* The peach shone vivaciously in a fiery blend of red and yellow with a tinge of pink. Wet and crisp as I bit into it, it broke between my teeth with a soft crunch, letting the juices run down my chin satisfying my thirst. The lingering pop drifted around, filling my heart with pleasure. Icy sweetness filled my mouth, all fell still, as if a wave of content had floated past. I kept on chewing, devouring all until there was only a decimated core. Then went to get another. Soon, overflowing barrels of cores lulled me to sleep.

I woke up drowsily in the middle of cobbled streets, as the houses swayed vibrantly portraying a warped look, like the inside of a fun house. After only several staggering paces, I doubled over, vomit splashing on the stones and spraying my cleansed fur.

I wake up to the odor of fumes seeping into my nose. My body fought for control only restrained from metallic chains bounded to a tree. I screech for help, but no reply arrives.

Instead, an elderly villager limped toward me, leaning on a thin chipped off cane. He had a fringe of grey-hair around his moulding scalp and with each movement there was a creak of bones, and synced with the shrieks of pain. He had a wizened face, decorated with wrinkles and a hunched back like a camel.

Then, he croaks, "We're going to sacrifice you," as other cackles from the villagers join.

In this heat I'm actually shaking. The canopy of green are now lifeless sticks of charcoal. The smoldering fire licked the bottom of the post, showering blazing sparks at me, as plumes of black grey smoke, wound itself around the post like a hungry serpent, devouring everything. My mind clouded, as I held the manacles over the greedy flames; vanished to shreds of nothing. *Now!* I rushed out as I bounced around in pain. The heat stung me but I still sprinted for safety.

*STOP!*

*Don't let him escape!*

*We shall burn him!*

I can't feel my rapid breathing but I can feel the oxygen flooding my lungs. A mob of furious men holding weapons trail my tracks. Instantly, I took a sharp turn right into the protection of the wilderness. My eyes drift up to the night sky, as I hear the raging villagers' voices drift off into the misty air.

My feet sink into cold mushy grass as a tickling chill runs up my back as I shiver uncontrollably. I need fire. *Seconds ago, shrieking at the sight of flames, now seeking for them.* Suddenly, I stumble down a steep hill, and a bubbly atmosphere engulfs down away from the shining moonlight. I can't hear the symphony of wind whistles and the chitter-chatters from the wilderness. My hair rises like seaweed upwards, rippling in the currents. I sink faster and panic hammers against my ribs. Gagging for air, I try screaming for help. When I can no longer hold my breath the cold water rushes in, and all illusions of survival vanish.

I wake up only to realize I'm with others. Soon, excitement spreads through as they start muttering wildly in excitement.

"DoctorK. he's awake!" a hirsute child exclaimed.

"Wonderful, a near drowner. So, where do you live?" asked a monkey in a calm voice. He wore a crisp coat, and aged spectacles covered his eyes.

"I don't understand..." I replied honestly.

"What?" the doctor questioned curiously.

"I am a stray monkey and I need shelter" I begged with wide eyes of sadness. It was as if rejection would crumple my life, and it would.

He offers a hand, "How about a tour around the city?," as I grasp gratefully.

I perch on the highest peak as I gaze curiously around. The scenery was incredible. My mind whirled through a series of passageways as we dissolved into a dark alley. A glimpse explained everything. DoctorK. stumbled around and sweat flooded his coat. The streets wound over a hill like a carelessly discarded belt, grey and cracked with age. Buildings tower over the dim road, but this was no rural district. The absence of light demonstrated the scarcity of monkeys.

Finally, I choke out, "What is this?"

"Our monkey king died recently," he choked out while holding tears back, "died honorably."

My eyes watered, but nothing was said.

"This is our respect to the King. Soon we'll find another one."

"How?"

"Whoever leaps over the sacred chasm will bequeath his position. There's a silky gold shroud preserving the king's carcass. However, failure..."

I reached out and squeezed his hand tightly.

"I'm going".

"No you can't, it's too dangerous. Not mentioning the medical condition you're in."

"I'm in charge of my own choices."

I sprint on the stony pathway, and charge up my momentum. When the sole of my feet connects, it kicks off aggressively. A strong gush sends my fur fluttering when I'm at maximum altitude. However, a stitch tears apart as blood gurgles out like a faucet. I plummet downwards, and try floating upward by swinging my arms. I clench my teeth tightly, and manage to latch onto a pebble on the cliff. Forcing myself upwards, my grip loosens and I topple backwards lifelessly.

I close my eyes.

I expected heaven but there was only a chasm. My tail. It curls up around a twig as I spin ludicrously around, unleashing incredible momentum, I fly upwards over the ledge.

The cave smelled ancient and along the sides were obscure Characters engraved into the wall as they blinked weakly. I tiptoed to the grave as if any noise will disturb his peaceful slumber. It was an extravagant case embroidered with vibrant colors, resembling a bold personality.

I dropped down as I whisper, "I am honored."

I was the monkey king.

"Not bad, Wukong," I teased.

# The Story of the Three Adventurers

*Shanghai Singapore Internatinoal School, Hegde, Sathvik – 12*

The peaceful quiet of the night gave no indication to the actual mood of the townsfolk. After decades of cruelty and mistreatment of the people by the Emperor, they had had enough. Plows and hoes were exchanged for weapons of warfare and farmlands were cleared to make way for barracks. A meeting had been arranged in the middle of the night, and the townsfolk started for the town hall. Their chief, a wise old man, was nearing his nineties and wanted to give a final speech on his dream that he had the night before. The details were unknown, but the dream was apparently of great significance. The butcher, a man named Grim, was, well, grim. He was the first to arrive and did not look too happy about being rudely awakened in the middle of the night for some meeting. As the others began filtering in, the chief finally arrived. He wasted no time with pleasantries and promptly started. “As many of you may know, I had a dream last night. I saw the monk Xuanzang, the one who is getting the Buddhist scriptures, in grave trouble. We are the only ones who can help him and it is crucial that no one else gets word of this. They will surely kill the monk and end all hope for peace in this land. We need three people who are willing to go and sacrifice their lives if need be.” He coughed a bit then continued, “We have already decided on who will go on this quest. Liu, Ming and Sun, get ready to leave at the break of dawn. You have no time to spare.” The crowd started chattering as they cleared out of the hall. This was the most exciting news they had heard in decades and it gave them a light in these times of darkness.

Before we continue, I will have to introduce you to our adventurers. Liu was a rather brash young man who fancied himself as the greatest swordsman of the neighboring towns. He had little wits about him and was inclined to making rather moronic decisions. Ming, the one who had wits but no courage or skill in arms, was the exact opposite of Liu. Where Liu was brash, Ming was humble and cautious. The last member of this adventuring trio is Sun. The one word that would describe him is average. Average intelligence, average strength and average speed. These heroes do have their flaws, but heroism can come out of the foulest creature, as long as they do the right thing at the right place at the right time. But I am keeping you from the story, so let’s continue. They gathered their gear and sat down to discuss the quest and have a bit of wine. “Ah, my friends, let’s enjoy this last moment of peace before we go on our quest,” said Liu, “After all, we may never make it.” As he said this, lightning flashed in the distance, as though it were confirming his statement. Rain drops started pattering against the roof of their dwelling, forming a sonorous tune. Ming asked timidly, “Maybe we should go see the chief and have him give us more details about our quest. I mean we....” He was interrupted midsentence by Liu, who said ignoring Ming’s words, “Instead of sitting down here and drinking, we should go save the monk! We will save some time this way and we can come back here a little bit earlier.” Sun, who finally spoke up exclaimed, “That’s a brilliant idea!” Ming stuttered nervously, “But we don’t know where we are g... – “That’s it! You will not be speaking another word unless you wish to be bound in a rag!” said Liu. “But...,” Ming protested to no effect, as he was swiftly silenced with a foul rag in his mouth. “On we go!” shouted Sun with excitement distorting his voice, “We shall be back before we know it!”

Stupidity sometimes overrules prudence and common sense, yet some good can come out of those deeds and take your opponent by surprise. As the trio hiked up the trail leading beyond the town, a shadowy figure could be seen trailing them from a distance. The figure would disappear as soon as someone looked behind and none of them noticed him. As soon as the quest had begun, their enemies had mobilized and taken up positions. They were ordered to shadow and harass the adventurers and then imprison them along with Xuanzang, which would kill two birds with one stone. Xuanzang was hidden away and when the three came, he would reveal himself. So, this particular night, the adventures were supposed to be attacked and have all their gear stolen, which would leave them demoralized and weak. As the sun crept over the far horizon, the adventurers could go no further and plopped down in a deserted clearing, setting up camp. They had just realized that they did not know where they were going and would have to head back. Ming was right all along. Perhaps intelligence is really important. Maybe we should all be intelligent rather than being strong and brawny.

They all sat down in front of the bonfire they had made, already in a depressed state. Life has its ups and downs but we should all learn to face them. They will come back to bite you, when you most need luck. They had all decided to head back and get directions before continuing on the quest. But first, they decided to make the most out of the situation to rest and explore the area. Ming lay down to rest while the other two explored, heading their separate ways.

Liu breathed in the fine earthy smell and sighed in pleasure. Even though he pretended to be big and manly in front of the others, he in fact was a softie at heart. He thought about the dream he had a few days before the quest. He was quite disturbed by it, as it showed a world filled with metal sticks which spit out metal pellets and different colored monsters belching out black smoke with people trapped in them. Then, he had suddenly awakened in a bed with a book in his hand titled in strange letters. But he still recognized the name. It read "A Journey to the West: The New Edition." Liu stumbled, a sudden pain in his side jerking him out of his thoughts. As his vision faded, he heard two screams of desperation and pain from his friends. He gasped, as images from his dream became clearer and clearer. For once in his life, he realized something on his own, but that didn't help. No one would believe him and nobody was there anyway. He dropped unconscious on the ground as the shadowy figures picked him up and threw him on a horse. Two other horses emerged from the forest and all three rode away to the horizon, where they awaited certain death, or so they thought.

Robert gasped and woke up with his unfinished new edition of The Journey to the West. He ran to his desk and grabbed his pencil then wrote on a fresh sheet of paper, "They woke up, bound in smelly rags in the darkness. In front of them was a monk, not just any monk but the great monk Xuanzang. They knew now that they had failed already and now, the world would never be the same again."

I suppose now that there must be a lesson to be learned. I think that lesson will have to be this. "Prepare and think through what you are doing before taking action." Also, even though they made mistakes, they somehow did the right thing. Xuanzang was in fact the villain, with the chief being his henchman. The shadowy figures were trying to help all along and they succeeded. So, there is another lesson, "Innocents are always caught in the crossfire of the warring powers." I should have mentioned the chief's loyalties in the beginning but that would ruin this story that I am stuck in. Liu and Sun would tell me to shut up anyway.



# My Family

Shanghai Singapore Internatinoal School, Joshi, Rahil –12

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## **M**y Family For the HONG KONG writing competition

### Chapter1

#### THE BOAT TRIP

“Jack, did you pack your bag yet?” mom said, “yes mom yes you asked like the 100<sup>th</sup> time mom!” I said. Me and my dad my mom and my little brother were going to a boat trip today. we rented a Cezzna 126 (a boat). The Cezzna 126 was an 8 piston diesel boat. It was quite fast when I went in the Cezzna 126 with my grandpa. My mom and dad and my brother were really excited to go for a boat trip but I was like “okay” when my dad told me that we were going for this trip. I had showed no enthusiasm what so ever. “come on jack”, “it is time to go.” mom shouted, I replied “coming”. Then I walked down slowly.

We Sat in the taxi and we went to the sea port. when we reached the sea port we all went aboard the Cezzna 126. Our friend who works in the boat rental company lend this wonderful boat to us. My mom and little brother took all the food and luggage and the cool box inside the cabin. And dad went up to the sailing wheel to start the Cezzna 126. And I went to the tip of the ship and looked at the beautiful view. Then dad started to sail toward the north–east.

It only been a day and I am already bored I had nothing to do, I had like five books in my bag and each book had at least 30 pages, and guess what I read them all one by one, one after other and finished all of them. To me it felt like already 10 days have passed. So I took my computer and started to type stories. Then when we all sat and ate dinner on the fold out table inside the cabin.

### Chapter 2

#### THE WREAKAGE

After our lunch my mom and my brother went to sleep and I went to my father, who was sailing the boat. We both were quiet and were staring at the black starry sky. Then my father said “jack want to try?”. I replied “okay”

Then I took control of the boat and steered it for a few minutes, then I said “here dad, take control.” Father said “go get some sleep.” Then I went inside and took my phone and opened offline maps. I was shocked! We were moving to the north–west! I ran up to my father who was finding something and not looking at where the ship is going, but it was too late .....

We were speeding to an island and then when I reached the last step to my father the ship crashed. Then !!BLACKOUT!! I could not hear, smell, or feel..... The next thing I know was that I was covered up with a lot of sand I moved and furiously shook all the sand out of my clothes, I

immediately took out my phone, unfortunately I could not turn my phone on. Then I went to the wreckage, Then I went inside the cabin, I saw my father. I ran to him. He was happy as if he had saw his favorite thing. Then he said that mother and my little brother is dead. That moment I felt so called, 'internally dead'.

My father took everything that was left in the boat and I took my bag and stuffed everything I could find.

### Chapter 3 THE DEATH

We then we walked around the island to find some sticks then a big shadow came into sight but we thought it was just some trees but when we got closer that shadow leaped on my father then ripped his arm off then he said, "run jack run", "remember that you are my most loving child" at that moment when he finished his sentence that beast ripped his head off and smashed my father's body into smithereens. I ran as fast as I could, I looked back but the beast was not coming for me it was just looking at my father's head.

I went as far as I could. I sat down on the sand and gazed at the blue sky thinking of my dad, my friends in my school, my mom, my brother and my life till now, thinking of what might happen, will I die? will i die without a purpose in life? That question...that question was ringing loud in my brain. That pain. that pain.....that pain .... which I never felt like that at any point of life. Not even once.... that pain..... only me, left in here, even for a day I feel like I am the only person in the universe, only, ONLY

That pain...

### Chapter 4 THE TRAGIC KILL

I stood up and said to myself, "I have to be strong, I have to survive, I am the person, the chosen one". I took everything out of my bag then I found a little pocket knife, some clothes some paper and food. Then I started to think about the what should I do, I took everything and went out to gather some sticks, I took some sticks and made a so called "mini cottage", then the beast came in my mind, I immediately took a stick and sharpened on one end, two nights passed and not a single attack for that beast, I felt like there was no use sitting here, I had to go to a tall place and use the sticks and clothes to make a flag to signal flying by planes. I walked and walked until I saw a shadow, it was growing slowly..." I froze and thought about the shadow when my father died, I took my sharpened stick and swung it behind me. the stick went right in the beast's eye, right through, it growled quietly and died, I pulled my stick out and continued walking, 'I was scared' but still it was a tragic kill...

I continued walking and saw blue and a red light in a distance and I ran towards it, I stopped as I saw some more shadows, I rolled up my sleeves and looked at the beast's eye and swung it upon him he fell, dead. I knew there were more somewhere so I took my stick and and kept walking, paying attention to every single moment.

I kept walking to the blue and red light and.....

### Chapter 5 THE PORTALS

I walked and walked until I could see the too 'portals' I stared at both of them one blue and one red, "I thought that blue will be calm and red will be harsh and full of chaos" then I went to the calm one blue, I went in and I appeared in a dry land, I turned back but the portal was gone. disappeared ...gone..., I walked and walked I figured that I don't have my bag anymore I only had the sharpened stick .

I walked with the pain, I walked.....

More portals. This time three portals one blue red and green, I went to red one .... i passed out I fainted I saw only old memories..

Chapter 6

THE MIRACLE

I woke up in a car with my mom patting me and my little brother fiddling with my bag my father in the front drinking sprite. Suddenly, everything was okay, I was puzzled. but I still felt the pain.... the pain

## New Journey to the West

*Shanghai Singapore Internatinoal School, Panda, Anouska – 12*

Esther Martinez took her horse (Champion) to the village stables. She gave him fresh new carrots to feed on. Champion seemed to be enjoying all the tasty delights until a piercing scream filled the stables. Esther whirled around, her hand full of carrots feeding Champion. It was Aunt Martha. “How dare you bring a horse in here!” aunt Martha bellowed. Esther widened her eyes and stared at her. “I just bought a horse, Aunt Martha. It’s not like I’ve committed a crime, is it?” Esther clasped a hand over her mouth. “Out of here. NOW.” The sternness in her voice made Esther flinch. She ran out of the stables and into her little house. Esther went into her room, surprised to see a package on her bed. It was beautifully wrapped with flowery print paper. Esther looked back and forth in her room, to see if this was anyone’s. She took little silent steps to her bed, as if she was stealing something. Esther clambered onto her bed and took the parcel in her lap.

She ran her hands through the silky surface of the paper. Esther tried to feel what was inside the package. It seemed like a book of some sort to her. Esther opened the package immediately. Books are what she always wanted. As soon as she opened the book, a strong feeling engulfed her from head to toe. The book was filled with empty parchments. The papers were wrinkled and old. They had a tinge of yellowish-like color at the brim. There wasn’t a single piece of writing on it. This puzzled Esther. Esther looked in the package if there was anything else. There was. A feather quill along with jet black ink in a fancy bottle. Esther touched the feather quill. The feather looked like an eagle’s feather.

Then something clicked in her mind. Maybe she was supposed to write on the book. She uncorked the inkbottle and took a nip of it using her quill. At last, she wrote ‘Hello, my name is Esther’ on the paper. The ink went through the paper. Had she been imagining? Esther shook her head in disbelief. She flipped the page and saw there was writing on it. It said, ‘Hello, Esther. I am Variel. Ask me anything and I’ll answer’. Again, using the quill, she wrote: ‘My father went to fight in the Chinese war. Is he still alive?’ Variel took time to answer. After some time, writing appeared. ‘Yes, I think.’ Esther squealed. ‘How could I bring him back’ Esther scribbled. Once more, writing appeared. ‘I cannot give you all the answers to life, child. But I must ask you, has anyone told you anything about you being a descendant?’ Esther was taken aback for a moment. ‘You are the descendant of the greatest hero ever born in Chinese history. Of course, I am talking about Xuan Zhang’ Esther stared at the book in bewilderment. ‘Wasn’t he a monk?’ Esther wrote, ink splattered on her hands since she was writing so fast. ‘Yes he was. But surprisingly, his noble blood runs in your veins.’ Esther looked at her arms.

‘So what do I have to do to get my father back?’ Esther wrote, furiously. ‘Xuan Zhang wanted you to re-establish the Journey to the West. After your dad was done with the war, *they* took him. Rescue your father and re-establish the Journey to the West.’ Variel concluded. Esther skimmed across the lines that Variel wrote. ‘What do you mean by ‘re-establish’?’ Esther scribbled. ‘As they say in the myths, Xuan Zhang went to Buddha temples to get Buddhist scriptures from temples in India, right?’ Esther nodded. ‘Your task is to go to China, meet your tutors there, who’ll teach you necessary skills you need. Then conduct the journey to the western borders of India and reach the Ha-man temple. There collect the scriptures and return to Persia with your father.’ Esther squirmed in her bed. This was going to take so long. Maybe years. After all, she was just twelve. How was she going to go to China? ‘Take your horse and take this book along with you. The route for you is in this book. Pack some food with you and escape at night. That’s all I can help you with.’

Esther woke up. It was 11:30 pm. She slipped on her shoes and jacket. She went to the stable and opened the barn doors and took Champion out. She took out the map that Variel had given to her and with that she left the house.

As Esther was riding on Champion, she saw outline of snow at the edge of the horizon. She gazed at the snow, confused. Snow? India had snow? The whole land was covered with snow and there were barely any people around. Finally she reached this town near the west and asked for directions to the Ha-Man temple.

“Just a little further from here. Go straight and turn left.” The lady said. Esther thanked her and left. It took Esther about 30 min to reach the temple. Esther expected the temple to be eye-catching, exotic and beautiful. But it was very different from that. The temple was possibly the gloomiest thing there. The temple of Buddha is supposed to emit peace. It emitted the darkest feeling Esther felt. It reminded her of her saddest memories and she felt like she would never be cheerful again. Esther shuddered. Even Champion wouldn’t go any closer to the temple. Dark clouds quilted over the temple. Esther got off Champion and headed towards the temple. As soon as she entered, the door shut close. She’d been expecting that. “Dad? Are you in here?” Esther whispered. “Who’s that? Is that you, pumpkin?” A frail voice asked. Esther’s heart pounded. “Dad! It’s me! Esther!” Esther said, heading towards the noise. Just then Esther heard buzzing. Esther whirled around and saw two rolls of parchment. But they were gleaming. Gleaming gold. Intrigued, Esther crept towards them and gave it the slightest touch.

Writing appeared on the scrolls. Esther couldn’t make out much of the writing but one bit was in Persian alphabet. It said, ‘Buddha’. Esther gasped. “So this must be Buddha’s scripture!” Esther muttered as she pocketed them. “Well done, Esther! Now hand it over here.” A voice said from behind. Esther turned around to see 4 men surrounding her. Esther glared at them. “No. I won’t.” Esther said, trying to sound brave, although the other part of her screamed, *Run!* “You are Xuan Zhang’s descendant, aren’t you? How you remind me of him..” The first man spoke, his voice in pure contempt. “Where’s father?” Esther asked, her voice shaking. “There he is.” Esther looked around to see a man, gagged and withered on the floor. *Her father.* Esther ran and hugged him, struggling to untie him. “I’ll make this simple for you, Martinez. Give me the scriptures and I’ll let your father go.” The man said, softly, his voice as dangerous as ever.

“Never” Esther said through gritted teeth and kicked him in the face. He fell and got up. He growled and did a duck and roll. Esther hit his shoulder and he turned around. The other guys used weapons to charge. Esther was ducking and fighting Kung Fu like never before. Believe it or not, Esther was a warrior. She’d gotten a bloody nose and a couple of minor broken bones. But that didn’t stop Esther Martinez to beat the goodie out of those guys. Soon, all the guys were moaning and groaning on the floor. Esther spat on the floor and hugged her dad. “Dad, dad, are you ok?” Esther asked as tears welled up in her eyes. “Yeah I’m fine pumpkin. I am so proud to call you my daughter.” Robert said as Esther smiled. “Yeah dad its been—“ Esther felt a searing pain in her head. Her hands touched the back of her head and she felt something oozing out. Blood. Esther fell to the floor, her hands claspings, and her brain in pain. The last thing she remembered was shouting, fighting and blackness covering her eyes like a blanket...

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Esther woke up. Rubbing her temples, Esther looked around. She was in some sort of hospital. Esther tried to focus on her vision. “Esther! Thank goodness you’re all right! You’ve no idea how worried I’ve been!” Robert said, as he kissed her forehead. Esther smiled and held his hand. “Dad.. What happened to the scriptures? Are you all right? Is it delivered to China or not?” Esther asked, her mind fuzzy from the previous events. Robert raised his hands. “Calm child, everything is alright. The scriptures have been given to Variel and the monks. The goons have been captured.” Robert said as he smiled. Esther took a breath. After all these years, Esther was finally allowed to relax.

# A Change

*Sing Yin Secondary School, Ma, Kwan Cheuk – 17*

The year was 2030. Bill, an environmental scientist, was analyzing some data he had just collected from his machines.

“No! no! no! This cannot be happening!” he exclaimed.

“Everything is wrong! Why has no one noticed it?”

His yelling brought Sam, his lab assistant and good friend, a genetically modified monkey that had escaped from a laboratory, and who somehow had met Bill. Sam’s natural curiosity towards science had made him a good assistant to Bill.

“What’s wrong, doctor?” the curious monkey asked.

“Look at this data!” Bill exclaimed.

Sam took a glance and he couldn’t believe what he was saw! All the data pointed to the planet being uninhabitable for human beings in the near future!

“How long do you think we still have professor?”

“I don’t have the exact figures, but it’s around 25 years.”

“What can we do?”

“I don’t know, Sam, I really don’t. My experiences haven’t prepared me for this.”

“Do you think we can go and make people aware of this?”

“That seems the only way. I can’t think of any other options.”

3 months later, they were doing an interview on TV.

“How does Sweden feel?” asked the interviewer, dressed in a purple suit, with a bright smile and white teeth.

“It feels pretty nice here! The weather’s a little bit on the cold side though!” Bill stopped mid-sentence and chuckled, “But really, it’s very good here. The waste reduction is done well, and you can see it too, just look at the sky, its blue! To me that’s a really rare sight. I don’t know how long it has been since I’ve seen a blue sky! It must be years!” Bill replied.

“So you became really famous from #ThisTimeItsReal tag on social media. What got you started? It seems like you just came from nowhere!”

“Well, just look at this,” Bill points to the screen behind him, showing the data he had collected. “This is the reason why I never thought I would see this, but everyone, this planet we live on, our HOME, is dying. You probably have heard it many times now, but this time it’s real. We really have less than 30 years before our Earth is completely uninhabitable, and by this I mean the temperature is going to be either too high or too low, with no in between. But if we act now, we can make a change, and make a difference before it’s too late.”

“But it’s alright here, you guys have done your part, so on the behalf of the human race, thank you for your work!” He was met with loud applause from the crowd.

“Well I think that’s it for the interview! Thank you all for turning in today. Good night Sweden!”

Bill and Sam were walking back to their van, it had been their home since the day they left home. It was a small, white van and the paint had fallen off in a few places, and needed some repair. There was a lot inside, including two beds, Bill’s equipment and computers so they could raise awareness online too. The Internet was a powerful tool, allowing their message to go vital. The whole van was powered with solar panels so no oil was needed. The familiar sight of the van calmed Bill.

“That was really tiring. Being under the spotlight isn’t really for me.” Bill confessed.

“I don’t know if I can do this or not, Sam. How do we get people more aware when they’re already aware?”

“I don’t know Bill, but we have to keep going on, it’s not like we’ve—“

“—why should I care?” asked a mysterious person suddenly blocking the way.

“Who are you?” Sam asked the man.

He was a handsome young man, beaming with confidence, with a slight bit arrogance. He was wearing a white suit which fitted him really nicely.

“Name’s Jacob.” he answered.

“Why should I care about the environment? It’s not like my actions alone caused all the problems for everyone! It doesn’t make a difference, so why should I care?” he again asked.

“Hey! Aren’t you the guy with the biggest car collection in Europe? I saw you on TV!” Sam replied.

“Yup, that’s me. Did you like my collection?” Jacob answered proudly.

“No! They all run on gas and release carbon monoxide. They’re harmful to the environment, I’m sorry to say and cars running on fossil fuels are now obsolete.”

“Hey, don’t you say that about my collection!” Jacob replied angrily.

“They are only cars. It’s not like others don’t have cars that run on fuel. Why do I have to stop? I don’t care!” he yelled.

“But you should.” replied another man standing in the parking lot.

“Name’s Ben, before you ask. I’m a scientist, and the data I have can prove that Bill is correct. We really do have less than 25 years left, so we have to act now.”

“You got the same results too? Why didn’t you publish it!” Bill asked.

“I was ..... too afraid. I didn’t know what problems I could’ve caused if I published them, I told myself that actions have consequences, but after seeing you on the stage live, I told myself that I have to do something too. So I’m asking, can I join you?” Ben replied.

“Of course! We could always use more help.” Sam replied.

“Thank you, now back to the point, why should you care? Well, we don’t have much time left, every little bit of help matters. Imagine if everyone did their part and started caring about the environment. One person’s effort won’t do much, but what about two people, three, or, more? If everyone did their part, we could save the planet!” explained Ben.

“.....Well, I never thought about it like that.” Jacob replied and walking away slowly, defeated.

“So, where do I spend the night?” Ben asked.

The two really didn’t know the answer. The van was barely big enough for two people, and three people was just asking too much. As it was, they were forced to take turns sleeping in the driver’s seat.

They began their journey, and became more popular. One year has passed and their message still hadn’t spread far. They had to go worldwide and get more coverage, and travel to other countries. However, they didn’t have much finance, the donations they got online was only barely enough to keep them driving around Europe, and they were out of ideas.

One day, when the team was eating lunch, a sports car rolled up. The sound of the engine was so loud, it made the van look like a lawnmower in comparison. The driver had a familiar face.

Jacob walked up to the three men.

“Look, I’ve really thought about it since last time we met, and I really have to say. I’m sorry and I think you’re right! I really should’ve done something, I was such a fool!”

“I’ve heard that you wanted to go further than just Europe. Is that right?” he asked.

“Yes, but we just don’t have the money for it! Our website keeps getting taken down for some reason, I think the big corporations aren’t happy with our work.” Bill said.

Jacob looked guilty.

“It was probably my dad.” He confessed.

“I really thought about what you said last time, so I started to try being more environmentally friendly and stop driving around for fun, I started to follow you guys on social media too, just so I can see what you guys were up to, but my dad found out. He’s the CEO of Power Oil. He keeps going on rants at home saying that you guys were the reason that sales have been dropping. He got some hackers to take down your website, I got into a huge argument with him telling him that it’s not a good thing to do, and I got kicked out, so here I’m now,” he explained.

“How terrible!” Ben exclaimed.

“Yeah, I know. You guys want to fly? I can get a plane for you, I’m the son of the CEO of Power Oil after all.”

The group boarded the plane prepared by Jacob, The three could now finally have a good night’s sleep on the luxurious bed on the plane.

The group arrives at the West of China. The sky was still blue, the team met the local tribes and farmers there who were poor, so they saved all their resources and tried to reuse them as often as they could. The team helped them to install some solar panels so that they could get electricity easily.

“I’ve never thought that some people still live in this environment in 2025! I thought it was history. Shouldn’t the government help these people?” Jacob asked.

“I agree, but sadly it seems like they didn’t get the help they needed.” Ben replied.

The team went on their journey. The farmers knew the importance of saving resources, but they did it not to protect the environment, but to protect themselves. Water and electricity were scarce so they saved as much as they could in order to survive out there. The money they made from farming was barely enough for food education wasn’t a choice for them.

As they continued on their journey to the east, they found that the sky was becoming greyer, the air smelt like burnt rubber and dust was everywhere. The van was covered in dust after just 10 minutes.

“Man, this isn’t good.” Sam said sadly.

“That means we can do more! Cheer up.” Bill said. He took a deep breath.

“That’s what I hope.” he quickly added.

As they were going around, trying to get people’s attention, they observed that everyone was too busy looking at their phones, however, they saw more men in suits standing around, looking at them. Whenever they were out, they felt like they were being followed but they didn’t pay much attention to it. One day, they got a text, and it was both simple and threatening.

“Stop now or you will pay.”

There was no number, no profile, just a simple text, but it was already enough to make them worried.

“Should we keep going?”

“I don’t want to know the price.” Jacob said.

“We have to do this, we are in too deep now. We have passed the point of no return, so we have to keep going, even if we have to die for it. It’s not like we have years ahead of us,” Bill said.

Their work finally influenced some to make a change, but the main source of the pollution, the factories, did not go away. Even if the people demonstrated, and some even begged, the police always showed up to force them away. They call it “riots”, and used force, sometimes it was even lethal force. Dozens have died for the cause and the future seems bleak.

But there’s no giving up.

They have to go on.



# What You Truly Need To Ascend To Heaven

*St Margarets Co-Educational Secondary and Primary School, Ansari, Rafi – 13*

**I**t was a clement day as a small group of travellers, four to be exact, passed the summit of a mountain. The Summit of the Mountain that they had passed by was inhabited by some kind of heavenly lord, watching and listening to the four.

However, this troupe was nothing like other parties. There was a Pig, more fit to be called an Orc as it stood on its own two legs. One of the two humans, would have been fit to be called a warlock but barely lacked the intimidating qualities. He carried quite a lot of baggage, as a merchant or peddler would.

The other human took up a simple religious robe, the robe was decorated with few light-coloured jewels. His attire made him look not grander than a Bishop but definitely not worse than a monk. His hierarchy may had been on the upper part of the system as his steed was a rare and gallant white stallion.

The final part of the group was a monkey. It was the Monkey God who sought retribution from the Jade Emperor and the higher gods as he used to pull pranks frequently in heaven, causing him to go into his lower state, that of an ape. The Monkey God lost its divine gold fur for regular, filthy brown one. He could still stand and talk like the Orc he was with.

“Ugh, we're almost there, aren't we? From Buddhism to Christianity, Islam, Shinto, Hinduism, The Norse and Greek. We've been everywhere! Just how long does Mr.Jade want me to stay in this lower land?” The Monkey God was still uncouth and belittled the lower races, especially those on Earth. The Jade Emperor had promised that he would be welcomed once he embraced religion. They had been around the globe, worshipped several gods, but to no avail.

The religious man taking the pilgrimage replied in his usual calm and delicate voice, “You need to tone down on your ego, Monkey.” The Monkey clicked his tongue, he wasn't a fan of the boy's tone, he undervalued all those that spoke without strength. Such views of Monkey had given him names such as ‘Simpleton’.

“Your mother is waiting for you at home, you should go see her before all else. Unlike the other animal here, your humbleness and devotion is far more than enough for ascension.” The friar showed a magical hologram of a human, being raised to far heaven.

“Heard that, you primitive beast? Show your loyalty to the world, and then you too, shall rise again!”, all three exclaimed in unison.

## **Trials and Tribulations**

*St Margarets Co-Educational Secondary and Primary School, Ma, Yinma – 13*

**C**louds billowed over the great desert. The stars shone faintly in the night sky, illuminating each speck of sand as if they were diamonds, glimmering under the crude leather shoes. Xuanzang panted silently as he walked, wiping a drop of sweat from his forehead, thinking solemnly about his trip ahead. The Journey to the West was not an easy one.

Things were difficult in the desert. Xuanzang's rations were low, and he desperately needed to find a water source. As the antlions crawled slowly around Xuanzang's feet, he took a bite out of his second-last loaf of bread. As a monk, he would not, and probably could not, hunt for the animals of the desert, but it would not matter by then; the cold, unforgiving desert night was freezing and had driven many of them to sleep. Xuanzang lay on the soft sand, trying hard to resist the desire for water. He could not afford to waste any more, and he had to rise at first light to locate a spring or an oasis. Besides, the vultures would not hesitate to drive their claws into anything seemingly dead. Armed with nothing with a walking stick, Xuanzang feared constantly for his life.

The moon shimmered in the expanse of sky above Xuanzang. A gentle breeze had blown away the clouds, and the wind passed gently on his face. The smell of moisture filled the air as a drizzle fell over the tundra. Smiling slightly, Xuanzang got up and rummaged through his leather sack for a container. Suddenly, a leaf emerged from the sand. Xuanzang's eyes shone with excitement. Not only did the rain signify water, the vegetation of the desert would also thrive in the rare occurrences. After collecting an abundance of rations, Xuanzang returned to the now moist sand, his heart filled with happiness and trust.

The Journey to the West was not an easy one, but one filled with surprises, there for one who tries.

## Determination overcomes strife

*St Margarets Co-Educational Secondary and Primary School, Mak, Chloe – 13*

The journey to the West was a tough one – to read the ancient scrolls and achieve a new learning, a brighter perspective, a stronger path to follow; there was no doubt. This task was set for a mortal with a true heart and a strong belief and will. Gods of China assembled in the golden halls of the Jade Palace to search for the worthiest man to walk the harsh roads to seek the precious scrolls of Buddhism teaching. The bright, strong light burst from the Buddha's holy mirror, illuminating the peaceful heavens, flitting around as if they were spotlights on a stage, searching for the next 'candidate'.

The light fell on a modest temple near the mountainside, showing a young monk in plain clothes sound asleep. Hushed whispers spread across the hall, signs of confusion, opposition and concerned voices rose from the crowd. The Buddha solemnly raised his hand, and silence fell across the hall once more. "He has a true heart and a strong will. He is no warrior, but even the strongest men should carry a good heart and mind to be fully strong. He has faith in us, as I would have faith in his actions. We shall provide him guidance in his journey we gods cannot go on. Do not underestimate such simple qualities he has."

Xuanzang struggled across the weak wooden bridge, reaching the cliffs of the second highest mountain he should come across in his journey to the west. He did not dare rest, sunset was a few hours away and the originally brightened sky was dimming to a splash of light blue. Collecting rations and water from the plants and well he was directed to by his monkey companion, he joined the group at the base of the bridge and set back to their camp. The group was finally in a lighter mood this evening, having endured the harsh desert with scorching sand and freezing nights fearing for their lives and supplies.

They almost gave up one night in the desert, being agitated and frustrated on all the restrictions and rations. Xuanzang has argued fiercely that the gods have been supporting them since the beginning, and after they have faced high cliffs, vast oceans and monster attacks, they were so close and would not give up on the journey.

His words touched his companions and the gods that once doubted him. The journey to the West may not be an easy one, but with a fierce heart and mind and a strong spirit with faith, it could also be turned into a successful one.

# New Journeys to the West

*St Margarets Co-Educational Secondary and Primary School, Rubio, Karylle – 13*

I open my eyes to the sight of dark and gloom. I look at the window and begin to contemplate my life. The sky filled with smoke and haze to a city that was once blooming. All my hopes and desires are nothing but statements hidden beneath dust.

I secluded myself as no one seems to understand the girl who is so anomalous that the peephole can't seem to examine her correctly.

The sound of failure was too much for me to bear; my tears smell like petrichor as I bite the dust.

The lush cedar trees were waving at me, temples with vibrant colours were adorned with intricate designs, the smell of champak was sharp yet dainty.

I was certain that I was ready to redeem myself, and that would come with a cost.

With barely any change in my hand, a crimson figure with a willow frame caught my attention, it crept and whispered in my ear, its voice as eerie as a creaky door, inviting guilt.

I refuse to believe such lies and refrained from its words.

The smell of incense was fragrant and powerful that it could be traced across the Indian Ocean.

The mosque was distraught yet robust, so peculiar.

As I looked deeper into the inscriptions, they were familiar and started messing with me. Rage was engulfed in me. How could something so beautiful could be so haunting?

I open my eyes to the sight of dark and gloom. I look at the window and begin to contemplate my life. The sky filled with smoke and haze to a city that was once blooming. All my hopes and desires are nothing but statements hidden beneath dust.

I secluded myself as no one seems to understand the girl who is so anomalous that the peephole can't seem to examine her correctly.

The sound of failure was too much for me to bear,  
but I blew away the cobwebs.

# In The House of The White Bone Demon

*St Margarets Co-Educational Secondary and Primary School, Tsang, Julia – 13*

“I’ve said it once, and I’ll say it again!” Chun-kit half whispered, half screamed at his three friends.  
“*Miss Bai is a demon!*”

The four children – Chun-kit, Xiaolan, Connor, and Kashiko – were of different nationalities, but they

had one thing in common: bad luck seemed to follow them everywhere. It wasn’t until a month ago that they had been added to a mysterious chat group by an unknown person who informed them that they were the reincarnations of the four main characters of the famous novel, *Journey to the West* – the Monkey King, Tang Xuanzang, Pigsy, and Friar Sand – and to undo the karma that had caused their bad luck, they would have to reach a mysterious place in western China – the “West Mountain”. Of course, none of them believed a thing they were told, but they were so desperate to shake off their bad luck that they had met up one day and began their journey to the west.

They had passed by many places on their way and met many people, but Miss Bai – who had offered them food and lodging for some time up until now – had been the nicest. At least, that was what everyone thought, except Chun-kit, who insisted that she was a demon in disguise.

“She’s a *shapeshifter*, for God’s sake!” Chun-kit replied angrily as Xiaolan argued for the fifth time that day that what he had claimed was impossible. “I don’t know why you can’t see it. She’s fooling all of you with her disguise – and she wants to *eat* you, Xiaolan!”

“Someone who makes such great food can’t be a demon,” Connor said through a mouthful of chicken that Miss Bai had prepared for them.

Kashiko, who hadn’t said a word up until now, suddenly spoke. “Chun-kit, I think you might just be tired. We’ve been walking for days before we reached this place.”

“Tiredness does make the brain think strange thoughts,” Xiaolan agreed. She didn’t know it, but she was the cleverest of the group – and her friends secretly admired her for her ability to keep a cool head and a logical mindset even in the face of danger. “It’s getting late. What we should do is go to bed a while later – get plenty of rest – and set off for West Mountain first thing in the morning. We shouldn’t worry about Miss Bai that much – ”

“She’ll get us in our sleep!” Chun-kit yelled indignantly, having trouble keeping his voice down. “I bet she’s just *waiting* now for the perfect moment to – ”

The door to the room creaked softly and a rather tall woman dressed in white from head to toe entered. Seeing the surprised expressions on the children’s faces, she smiled and said, “I’m sorry if I scared you, children, I was just in the other room preparing some food and thought I heard someone shouting. Is everything alright?”

Chun-kit opened his mouth, but Connor cut him off. “Of course, everything’s fine, but Chun-kit here’s gone mad. He thinks you’re going to eat us or something, but of course, anyone knows a lady as kind as you wouldn’t so much as kill a fly, right?”

But to everyone’s horror, a disturbingly sinister smile started to spread on Miss Bai’s face.

“Your friend does have quite an imagination,” she said, eyeing Chun-kit. “But, unfortunately, he’s not wrong.”

The last thing everyone heard before the lights dimmed and an overwhelming dizziness overcame them was Xiaolan’s high-pitched scream.

When they finally came to, they were in the same place they had been before it happened – Miss Bai’s cozy, tidy living room. But now that they knew what she really was and Xiaolan was missing, nobody felt like lounging around anymore. The first one to spring into action was Chun-kit. “I *told* you! Thanks a lot for not listening to me – now Xiaolan could be *dead!*” He picked up a cushion from the couch and threw it across the room in frustration. “Seriously, ‘there’s no way she isn’t a demon’...what a load of nonsense...”

“THAT’S IT!” Kashiko shot up, her voice seemingly too loud for her usual, quiet self. “I know you don’t believe all that stuff about us being the reincarnations of the *Journey to the West* characters – but think about it. If we *are* their reborn selves, Miss Bai must be the White Bone Demon (everyone shuddered at the name) – and Chun-kit must be the reincarnation of the Monkey King, because in the

story, he was the only one who was able to see through her disguise! Oh, and...” Her tone turned grave. “In the story, the White Bone Demon kidnapped the monk Xuanzang because his flesh was said to grant immortality... if Miss Bai took Xiaolan, then she must be Xuanzang’s reincarnation...” “So she *is* going to eat her!” Chun-kit’s voice was shaking with worry. “If we don’t find her, who knows what’s going to happen? But where could she *be*?”

“In the story,” Kashiko replied instantly, “the White Bone Demon took Xuanzang to her lair, a creepy, dank cave – ”

“Sounds like my granny’s basement,” Connor butted in.

“The basement! She must have taken Xiaolan down there!” Before his friends could agree, Chun-kit made a beeline for the stairs, running so fast that Kashiko and Connor could barely keep up with him. When they reached the basement, though, nobody felt like running anymore. It was so dark that anything was hardly visible, and they could hear the eerie dripping of water in the distance.

“Remember, this is hardly creepy compared to the cave in the story, which was said to contain piles of human bones,” Kashiko reminded them.

“Thanks a lot, that’s very reassuring,” Connor replied sarcastically, but it was obvious that he was trembling violently out of fear.

They all stopped abruptly when two bright red flames materialized out of the darkness. Upon closer look, however, they turned out to be the malicious, glowing eyes of Miss Bai – in the form of the White Bone Demon.

“I seem to have underestimated you kids’ intelligence,” she sneered in a voice completely unlike the sweet one she had when she had first met them. “But I’ll bet that it’s not enough to beat this test. That’s right – to defeat me, and save your friend, we’ll have to play a little game.” She waved her hand, and three large boxes appeared, floating in the air. But none of the children seemed to be in the mood to play.

“Where’d you hide Xiaolan?” Chun-kit demanded angrily.

“I trusted you,” Connor whimpered.

Kashiko was mumbling to herself. “Three boxes... in the story, the Monkey King attacked the Demon three times before she was finally defeated, and this must not be any different...”

“Two of these boxes contain weapons, which I will use on you – ” she seemed pleased at the look of terror on their faces – “if you unfortunately happen to choose them. One contains your friend, who – ” Chun-kit cut her off. “She’s not in any of them. I know it.”

“The Monkey King’s Fiery Golden Eyes,” Kashiko whispered in awe. “They can see through any disguise!”

Miss Bai narrowed her eyes at him, though she appeared to be averting his gaze. “Of course she is. And if you don’t hurry, she might just die of suffocation.” Her lips formed into a sly smile.

“*Not if you die first!*” In a sudden motion, Chun-kit reached for one of the boxes and forced it open. In it was a long, gold-tipped staff (“The Monkey King’s Golden Staff!” Kashiko gasped in amazement), which he immediately swung at Miss Bai, who dodged it by millimeters; Chun-kit wasted no time and proceeded to strike her with the staff again, and it was a hair’s breadth away from hitting her head when –

“*DON’T KILL HER!*”

Xiaolan came running out of nowhere, surprising everyone for a split second. It wasn’t long before Miss Bai realized what had happened and lunged at her – and immediately fell back in pain. A radiant, golden light seemed to be emitting from Xiaolan, whose eyes were closed, mouth moving rapidly as she chanted something under her breath –

“Xuanzang was a Buddhist monk – he knew a lot of demon-repelling sutras in the story!” Kashiko exclaimed. Sure enough, the White Bone Demon seemed to be fading into nothingness as Xiaolan continued reciting the sutra – but when she finally disappeared, the basement evaporated into nothingness along with her.

“You guys were *amazing* back there,” Connor beamed, when they had finally recovered from the shock of what had happened.

“Maybe we *are* the reincarnations of the characters,” Xiaolan mused. “Our powers must be awakening.”

“Wonder what kind of cool powers I’ll have, then?” Connor wondered aloud. “Maybe,” he eyed Chun-kit, “I’ll have awesome X-ray vision like you.”

“Judging from how much you love food, you must be Pigsy’s reincarnation,” Kashiko giggled. “Yeah, of *course* you’ll have *super-cool* powers.”

Connor looked beyond disappointed.

# You are just an animal

*St Margarets Co-Educational Secondary and Primary School, Wu, Edison – 13*

**T**hroughout the story of the monkey king, there have been many excerpts, little details of great significance, that have been left out of this legendary tale. Today I will present one of these instances. Vital to the understanding of the literature itself.

After the monkey king beat the Red Boy and saved his master, The Tang Priest, their group decided to camp north in a steep plateau next to Brokeback mountain where they will meet their next foe, the 3 headed fish spirit.

The Tang Priest sent monkey to fetch some holy water, which he obeyed readily. And he set off from the very edge of the cliff to the waterfall. Monkey was walking in the forest connecting to the spring when he sensed a disturbance. The hustle of wind gives it away. He wasn't alone. Monkey whipped out his Iron Cudgel from his ear and pointed it at the direction of the mist. Amongst the trees and the ferns stood a shadow of a hand. Monkey was alert, ready to strike at the shadow at any moment when it cleared, revealing a rock shaped like a hand. Essentially this could all be in monkey's head, as he was feeling a bit unwell after clashing with the red boy, who had several mind tricks up his sleeve, but monkey was sure that he didn't imagine it. On the stone was an ancient scripture carved by the Tian Tan Buddha "A man's greatest power is his humility, his greatest weakness his pride."

Monkey smirked at the rock, thinking that it was only a road block and cracked it with a devastating blow from his Iron Cudgel.

Then his head split open in pain as the stone turned into flesh and the hand connected to an arm, and then a body. The Tian Tan Buddha was standing before monkey. He muttered enchantments as monkey twisted and turned in pain, and after he finished, he said to him "The principle of a man's personality is the way in which he acts."

"Well you're just an animal."

# Wukong's Adventure

*St Mark's School, Lo, Max 15*

Once upon a time, there was a small village in China. A rock was located near the entrance of the village. The villagers who needed to go out must walk past the rock.

One day, when a villager was going out to the market, he found some smoke came out from the rock. He felt so scared; therefore, he gathered other villagers to see what had happened.

Soon, many villagers were gathering around the rock. Some of them said the rock was going to explode, some mentioned that it was a bad sign suggesting that the village would soon be destroyed.

The Master of the village told the villagers to stop talking. He walked near to the rock to observe it. Everybody held their breath and waited for the Master to speak.

Suddenly, the rock started to burn and a dazzlingly ray of bright light was radiating from it. The villagers all ran back to their own houses.

They had heard nothing but silence, they decided to go back to the entrance again. They were horrified to see that the rock was not there anymore, instead there was only a monkey. Many villagers tried to touch the monkey, but when they touched it, they were shot miles back. Everyone was startled.

The Master of the village said, 'we shouldn't touch it. We don't even know what this is. Maybe we should try to communicate with it first.'

One of the villagers said, 'Master, you're right. But this is a monkey, how can we communicate with him?'

The monkey said, 'oh, you're wrong. Even though I am a monkey, I can still communicate with humans like you. Let me introduce myself first, I am WuKong. And for anything other than this, I am sorry to say that I don't recall a thing.'

After that, the Master of the village had a meeting with the villagers. They decided to allow WuKong to stay in the village but he needed to work, or else, he would be kicked out from the village. WuKong accepted this offer.

On the next day, Wukong settled down in an empty house. He started to think of the things as he tried so hard to remember his past, but his head kept aching.

Before he knew, he fell asleep.

In the dream, he saw a pig, an old man, and also a young man. They were all dining together. Wukong could hardly remember that they said they were going to find something together.

Wukong was so curious: was that just a dream, or was that related to his unknown past? He decided to leave here to find something which might relate to himself. Wukong told the villagers that he would leave. The villagers sent him their best wishes and gave him some food and necessity for his journey.

After saying thank you to the Master, Wukong finally started his journey.

He didn't know where he should go to so that he went into a forest. The forest was so smoky that he could hardly see the road. Abruptly, he fell into a deep hole.

He screamed, he shouted, he yelled. But nobody heard him. He felt so hungry, then he remembered the food given by those villagers. After he had eaten the food, he felt his eyelid becoming heavier and heavier.



He had the same dream again. The same place, the same conversation with the same people.

When he woke up, he saw that he was in a house.

The house in the dream.

He couldn't believe what he saw so that he kept rubbing his eyes.

At this moment, the pig he saw in the dream came into the house and said, 'Oh, Wukong. You're finally awake!'

Wukong didn't know who he was. Therefore, he got up and shouted at him, 'Who are you? Don't get any closer!'

The pig said, 'Seems you lost parts of your memory, let me help you to recall them after Xuanzang and Sha Wujing. By the way, in case you don't remember, I am Bajie.'

As Xuanzang and Wujing came back, Bajie said, 'Now it's time to recall your memory, Wukong.'

Wukong felt so curious but he followed the instructions of Bajie.

Wukong dreamt again but it was a different one. He saw himself with Bajie, Xuanzang, and Wujing going to many places and fighting against many monsters. Finally, Wukong remembered everything which had happened in the past.

They were having a journey to the west to get the Buddhist sacred texts— Sutra.

Unfortunately, Wukong was being imprecated in a fight, which was why he lost all the memories and was sealed under a rock.

Bajie asked, 'So. Are you ready to go on the adventure again?' Wukong replied exhilaratingly, 'Sure!'

After they had packed the stuff they needed, they started their journey again.

They had walked into a misty forest. They kept walking to the west side with the help of the compass. Unexpectedly, the guiding principle started to turn around again and again. They were lost.

Xuanzang said, 'Stop moving, I can feel something.'

As soon as he finished his last word, a monster screamed loudly, said, 'Ha—ha you guys won't be able to escape this forest.' Xuanzang shouted, 'Come out, Monster. Let's have a fight.' The monster said, 'Oh, you are so confident about yourselves. Great, I appreciate your confidence.'

Then, they saw a shadow coming out from the mist. The monster was as tall as a tree, it was much bigger than an elephant. It was just far scarier than what you can imagine. Xuanzang said, 'Run! We can't beat it!'

Although they ran really fast, the monster still stayed so close with them.

Luckily, they saw a cave with a small entrance that the monster couldn't go into it. After entering the cave, Xuanzang asked Bajie and Wujing to check whether there was any food inside the cave.

When Wukong was getting ready to go with them, Xuanzang told him to stay.

Xuanzang said, 'Wukong, you are now too weak to attack the monster that we might meet in the future. Here is a guidebook, follow the instructions. After you have practiced all the 72 Maneuver, a flying cloud will come here and take you to where we are. Just believe in yourself, then you will be able to do it.'

Wukong knew he didn't have a choice, he must practice all the maneuver as soon as possible to protect Xuanzang and other people again. Practice after practice, a flying cloud finally emerged outside the cave. He also found that he had regained the strength that he used to have. Now on the cloud, Wukong led the rest of them to continue their journey.

After a long way, they finally arrived at their final destination, the West Mountain.

Xuanzuan told Bajie and Wujing to mainly protect Wukong so that he could attack those monsters more easily and effectively.

On the way to the top of the mountain, they fought with many monsters but Wukong defeated them very easily. After a tough journey, they finally arrived at the mountaintop but they were surprised to find no monsters or evil beings. They entered a cave which was keeping the one thing they were looking for: the Buddhist sacred texts— Sutra.

Until the moment they opened the wood box to find the Sutra in it, everything was just so tranquil. Too tranquil which made them feel strange. As they opened the box, a group of monsters attacked them from the back. The number of monsters were too large and their speed was too fast.

Xuanzang, Bajie, and Wujing were being caught by the monsters, when Wukong wanted to follow the monsters, Xuanzuan shouted, 'No, Wukong. It's not the correct decision to follow us. Just get the Sutra in the box first, it is much more important than us.'

Wukong's memories and the journey the few of them had experienced together flooded his mind. He knew he couldn't leave his partners at risk.

He ran towards the monster, and said, 'Hey you filthy monster, leave them alone.'

The monster was attracted by him, then they threw Xuanzang, Bajie, and Wujing to the ground and ran towards him.

Wukong used the skills he had practiced before, but a number of monsters were really big that he could hardly attack all of them.

He decided to give up, but Xuanzang's came to his mind – *'Just believe in yourself, then you will be able to do it.'*

The fire in his heart started to burn again, one after the other, he fought off the monsters he saw.

At last, Wukong successfully defeated all monsters and all of them were safe. Rarely as it seemed, Xuanzang gave a big hug to Wukong to show his gratitude. Wukong knew that sometimes strength may not be the most important – the valor is.

Never lose faith, even if you're not strong enough, you can still win the battle with your valor.

# A Journey to the West

*St Paul's Convent School, Chan, Andrea Hoi Ching – 13*

## ***2007 ; Roseate Kindergarten, Hong Kong***

“**Y**ou look lonely. Let's be friends.” the five-year-old held out his chubby hand for the blonde haired girl in front of them.

The blonde blatantly rejected him, but the thick-skinned boy refused to accept rejection — he took her pinky and shook it with his.

He announced, “We'll be friends forever and ever, Maia Dawn. Tomorrow, same time, same place. Be there or be square.”

Maia remembered her mom's advice, telling her to be more “open”, and reluctantly agreed.

Luca was over the moon, and his eyes sparkled like the stars.

Maia gazed into those pools of melting chocolate; she was officially trapped in those mesmerizing eyes.

Both of them didn't know that this childish “proposal would affect their lives

## ***27<sup>th</sup> February, 2018 ; Luca's balcony, Hong Kong***

“Happy 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, Mi.” Luca spoke softly, taking out a perfectly iced cake.

“Mmm, passionfruit.” Maia muttered with her mouth full, spilling some crumbs on Luca.

“Yes, Mi. I made it by myself.” Luca said proudly, waiting for Maia to praise him.

But, Maia looked at her battered watch, and rushed away with the cake in her hands; she had class in fifteen minutes.

“She'll praise me tomorrow.” Luca thought.

## ***28<sup>th</sup> February, 2018; Hong Kong International Airport***

“Yes, Luca, I'll take care of myself in England.” Maia beamed in excitement; she had been dreaming of the mesmerizing Big Ben, the crowded Piccadilly Circus and meeting One Direction on the chilly streets since last night.

Luca's eyes were narrowed and his brows were frowned, as he was rather worried about Maia — she was too dependent on other people, and the whole fee scholarship from Cambridge University was too good to be true.

Maia glanced at her battered watch, and squealed “I'll FaceTime you every night, Luca. Bye!” while skipping to the Departure Zone, with a large smile that showed her pearly whites.

Luca felt as if something was missing as he watched Maia's back disappear into the crowds. Perhaps he was a teensy bit missing his bratty friend.

## ***7<sup>th</sup> March, 2018 ; Luca's apartment ; Hong Kong***

Luca was deep in thought, walking to and fro in his bedroom. It has been a whole week, and Maia has not contacted him nor her foster parents. They were all worried sick about Maia, as she does not make a promise that she does not keep.

“Ring.....” The telephone rung noisily, and Luca grabbed the phone immediately. “Maia?” He inquired.

“No, it's Mrs Dawn, Luca.” Maia's foster mom, Elyse muttered softly.

“Have they found Maia, Mrs Dawn?” Luca spoke anxiously.

Elyse Dawn sobbed hysterically on the phone, and hiccupped. “They've found her body—hiccup—inside the—hiccup—Cambridge University—hiccup—'s library. She was murdered.”

Luca dropped the phone. His best friend was dead. Gone. Flashbacks of Maia and him appeared in his head, making him clutch his nose in pain. He screamed in agony, “Maia, you could have stayed in Hong Kong with me and your parents. Why did you go to the West? Is it because of One Direction, Big Ben or Piccadilly Circus? Tell me!”

*8<sup>th</sup> March, 2018 ; Luca's apartment ; Hong Kong*

Looking at the mirror, Luca could barely recognize the man in the mirror. A man covered with wrinkles, messy hair and bloodshot eyes with fury stared back at him.

Luca packed his suitcase, and hid a sharp, shiny knife in his bag.

He was going to the West.

A smirk hung on his cracked lips, Luca muttered dangerously " I'm going to avenge your death, Maia. Save a place for me in heaven."

# A Puppet to Glory

*St Paul's Convent School, Chan, April – 12*

**J**ustice will prevail in the end.  
Karma is kind.

*Everyone was born to serve a purpose for the greater good. Unless, of course, your name is the White Bone Demon.*

I don't look back. I don't stop running when my chest tightens and my lungs seem to fill up with fire. I only stop running when I trip and fall on the cold, hard ground. Then, I get up, breathing heavily, and run some more.

I don't stop until I reach my 'lair', a small cave atop a lonesome hill. I enter, and collapse on the worn-down armchair that I never bothered to mend.

Stupid monkey. Stupid, cursed, wretched little monkey. Why did Xuanzang the monk have to have such a good bodyguard?

But I can't give up. I need the flesh of that monk, as badly as he needs...whatever those scriptures are called. I don't care.

My parents are the King and Queen of the demons, creatures of the night, bringers of destruction and misery. Our divine nature is literally bloodlust. We feed on flesh and gore, we hunt humans or one another for sport.

I once knew I was different. I was not a mindless brute, I was rational. I reasoned things out. I was different, but not anymore. Now, all I am is a savage, indifferent from the rest.

My first act of treason was caring for a wounded robin I found in the park.

That was back when I was six. Father told me to leave it be, but I refused. I could not bear to see it in agony. I treated his wounds and kept him for about a month. That is, until one of my brothers gutted it like a fish.

My second act of betrayal was not reporting a break-in, and not murdering the culprit.

I really don't know why travellers are so obsessed with my cave. Sure, I do keep my grandfather's dagger inside it, but that's the only thing that's actually worth any money at all, because last I checked, no one will buy an old, broken carpet on eBay.

Anyway, some archaeologist broke in, claiming that my modest little cave was the Lost Temple of Pu-Zao the goddess, and that I was keeping the priceless Goblet of Gidiar for myself. His friends came later to apologise and tell me that he was drunk. I accepted their apology, and offered them some tea, which I should have poisoned, according to Father.

The final blow was refusing to steal.

Once again, I do not know why my cave is so fascinating. I deliberately left rotting pig intestines outside it to ward off others. But people still came in.

A god paid me a visit. He gave me a huge bouquet of roses to 'block out the bad smell', but both him and I know otherwise. He flirted. He said that I was cute when I was angry. By the gods, I was thirteen, and I was completely disinterested in dating someone. Plus, he was a god, and gods tended to have more wives than you can count.

When he left, he left behind a short staff. I knew the staff was the source of his power, with it, I could gain powers way beyond my imagination. I could be powerful if I used it. But I didn't. I think my morals told me to return the staff, and I went all the way up to the heavenly kingdom to return it.

When Father found out, he was livid. "Think of all the power!"

I did, but it didn't matter. Mother started ignoring me because I could have made her immortal and eternally beautiful. And Father was worse. He'd found out that his precious, priceless little princess was a rebel. And boy, was he mad. He just didn't believe that a demon could be so full of morals.

That day was the worst day of my life. That was the day he whipped me.

If you tell me to recount, I can tell the whole story, in full and merciless detail, how badly the beating stung. But it's of little importance now.

I realised to impress my parents, I had to ditch my morals and forget anything about the world being fair. I had to get them something more valuable than the staff. And so I sought the flesh of the monk Xuanzang, whose flesh can give immortality and eternal youth.

Xuan is a clueless ike, accompanied by a naïve pig, Clueless Ike 2.0, and that Monkey King who's evidently bananas (excuse my satire), on a quest to find...I forgot what those scriptures were called.

I tried two times to kidnap Xuan. First, I transformed into a village girl and offered the four poisoned fruits. The Monkey saw through my trick, and almost killed me with that staff of his. I barely escaped with my life.

Just now, I have tried a second time. I transformed into an old lady, claiming to be the mother of the girl I was. I'm not a good liar, I didn't train like my brothers and sisters. I think it was obvious that I was lying.

And yet again, I almost got killed by that wretched monkey. I ran and left behind a corpse, to here, my lair, my cave, my lone source of comfort.

I stand up, ditch my disguise, and walk into the cracked mirror in the corner. I look, but flinch and turn away almost immediately.

I look...fierce. I don't recognise myself anymore. The dark bags under my eyes have started to show under the thick layer of makeup I applied. Nothing hides my anger and frustration. I look deathly pale, and even though demons are supposed to be pale, I look like I could just fade into the wall that I hastily painted white. My hair is out of the elaborate bun I put it in, and is flying all over my face, my neck, my shoulders.

People used to tell me that my eyes shone, but I can't find the familiar glint in my eyes any more. My eyes are like stones, jaded, dull, unpolished, utter black.

Is this me? Because this isn't me. I am not a monster.

Or rather, I was not a monster. But I am as good as one now.

I was a sweet and innocent little demon. As pleasant as someone can get. A demon-child who tried to save a robin, protected small animals, and fainted at the sight of blood. And now?

I am a monster. I am sin. I am trying to kill a man simply because he is magical.

I can't control this. I can't change even if I wanted to. I will kill him. I will deceive that monk, and mangle him with my bare hands. I will make that monkey into a marionette and give it to my little sister.

I, the White Bone Demon, will accept the monster that I am, and embrace it with open arms. And no one can stop me from this kill, because no one can beat my determination.

Let him kill me. Let all this madness end silently and peacefully.

There's nothing left. I loved and was loved by no one, no one will miss me when I go. Let him try to break me, because there's nothing left to break. I honestly thought I could do it, but of course, I was wrong. I'm a failure. A wimp, a coward and a nobody. I accomplished nothing but mistakes. No one will remember me. No one would give a damn if I died. No one.

The Monkey King raises his staff. "If you've got last words, you might as well say them now."

"I love no one, I have no one to bid farewell to. Father, curse you. I hope you die a long and painful death. You too, Monkey King."

The Monkey smirks. "Good."

Small comfort rushes through me as he brings the staff smashing down on my head. This is over. This is finally over. After years of fighting, this is what I want...right?

There's silence, only broken by my ragged breathing. Then, everything melts together and fades into nothingness.

Peace and calmness is all I register, aside from a small, echoing ring in my ears, and my heart, oh my heart, making blood surge through my veins slower and slower with every breath I take.

Hello, tranquility, my old friend. It's been so long.

*Justice will prevail in the end.*

*Karma is kind.*

*Everyone was born to serve a purpose for the greater good.*

# Xiwang Forest

*St Paul's Convent School, Gamboa, Diana -12*

I couldn't remember the last time I left the office at the time. Each day was the day before and the day after was the day before. Each moment of my life was comprised of 3 main routines: eat, work and sleep. The years, months and days meshed into one blurry memory and the clearest image I could make out of the severe mediocrity of my previous life was one event: the tram ride.

★

"Goodbye," I whispered softly to my small apartment. The warm luminosity from the outside illuminated the living room, painting it with darkness and brightness. I enjoyed days like this as my floor didn't usually catch the daylight as pleasingly. My thin hands flicked the switch upwards and the apartment darkened as the sunlight faded away. As I was following the dwindled green of the pavement of the 21st floor corridor, I heard a faint sound of drops of water dripping which serenaded me like a mother's song until the rusty elevator reached my floor. I felt camouflaged as my grey outfit and jacket matched with the elevator's old metal stains and corners. I exited my congregated apartment complex, clutching onto my black suitcase and waited next to the long tram stop in front of the building. It was particularly urbanised with establishments, convenience stores, markets and other types of buildings. The street bricks were a faded colour of maroon and in between the cracks were usually leftover ashes of used cigarettes, small pieces of plastic and paper as well as rough dirt. I concentrated on documenting my surroundings until I saw the tram's rickety rectangular form in the distance. I hopped onto the tram and greeted the old driver before ascending to the top part. The tram always passed by Xiwang forest and the trees would change their colours depending on what season it was. Sometimes, pastel flowers would sprout on the foot of the towering trees and blend in with the grass like a Claude Monet painting. The trees rustled and greeted me as my tram swiftly flowed through its path to my destination. The number of trees dwindled and what was left were the fallen leaves and green bushes. I reached my mountainous office building which loomed over anyone as if it were watching every step of each person entering the building.

It was professional. It was clean. It was polished. It was cold. It was hard. I got onto the elevator and stared straight. I went to my cubicle and worked. After that, I worked. I worked until it was 10 o'clock. It was 10 o'clock. I got onto the elevator and descended. I left the establishment.

As I traipsed along the sidewalk, the building's luminescent lights guided my path to the tram stop. Darkness swallowed the rest of the world as the moonlight shone on the tram tracks. The soft rustle of the trees kept me company for a while until the tram's lights disturbed the area's solemn peace. Soon, the tram replaced the stillness with a rupture of noise and brightness. I quickly boarded the rickety tram and went up the top floor. Xiwang forest looked more alluring during the deep hours of the night when the radiance of the moon hit the area just right. My preference of dusk over dawn was derived from how the forest showed itself to me. The odd calmness of the sea of trees washed over me as I admired the view. The flow of the silhouette of trees suddenly halted.

"Hello?" I whispered against the windy air. I gathered my pace as I approached the driver's seat and found a scrawny wrinkly Buddhist monk ready to depart.

"Hello? Excuse me, we haven't reached the terminus yet. I have to get home."

"I've already reached my destination, young woman."

My face grimaced into a look of perplexion and confusion. The monk's left foot had already touched the soil next to the tracks.

"Sorry? I just have to get home. This is the only tram available tonight."

"Follow the tracks. You'll find your way to your destination," the monk murmured sagaciously.

"But I—"

The monk's shadow had already ran into the forest, leaving me alone along the tracks.

"Hey! I need some help could you please let me know if there's any other way!" I shouted into the forest as I attempted to catch up to him. The dead leaves beneath me were crushed and caught the long stature of his shadow quite well. Each step tore my withered flat shoes and the sleeves of my grey jacket were attempting to catch up to the rest of my body. Every breath of my dry pants rang through my ears as I listened to the strong wind push against them. It was a deafening experience. The blackness of the night sky was slowly engulfing the area and the silhouette was steadily consumed by the shadows of the forest.



“Hello? Please help! I’m lost. Don’t leave me, please!” I desperately shouted into the darkness. Nothing. There was nothing. No response. No light. No anything. I was alone. I was scared. I would shout, but nothing happened. I was left there to die and meet my own demise. This is it.

As I stood in the middle of the emptiness, I saw a white flash in the distance. The light at the end of the tunnel. *Is this how people die?* I asked myself. I saw a small figure approach my exhausted stature. It soon looked like several small figures coming towards me.

“Hello?” I bellowed.

“Hello,” a powerful voice responded back. I looked up to see the same Buddhist monk sat on top of a horse, looking as divine as a God himself. Behind him was an oversized monkey and a standing pig.

*Is this a dream?* I think to myself.

“No, it is not. Travelling with only 2 members will not suffice for our trip. Care to join us?” the Buddhist monk suggested.

“No. no. no. no. I’ve got to get home,” I replied sullenly.

“What do you have to attend to? Work? I’ve seen you walk sulkily every tram fare. You’ve reached the point of no return in your life,” he states wisely.

I think deeply about my decision and decided on what’s right.

★

I boarded the tram and continued admiring the view of Xiwang forest. The leaves have fallen and thin branches have covered the ground and painted a collage of organic life. I descended from the old tram’s second floor and approached the rusty seat by the side.

“Ready?” he said with a smile.

“Ready.” I said with determination.

# The Pilgrimage

St Paul's Convent School, Kumar, Kareena Kayla Ordonez – 12

“No mortal has ever survived.”  
“I would rather die going to the West than live by staying in the East,” the monk said.  
“You can't possibly be thinking about undertaking an overland expedition. Not with the ban against foreign travels issued by Emperor Taizong himself.”

“I need better translations,” the monk lifted a scroll of paper. “what they mean.”

“You mean to tell me that you are leaving the Jingtu Temple to obtain Buddhist scriptures because Guanyin commanded you to do so in your dream?”

“Yes, and I'm leaving tonight.” the monk said firmly.

The Sun descended between the mountains of Wuwei. Xuanzang looked down at the semi-deserted land of ruins and howling wind, waiting for the lit household candles and lanterns to be blown out. When it was dark, he fled into the shadows of the Silk Road.

It had been days since the monk set off for his quest. He soon came across a thick mist, blocking his path. He was about to turn around and head back home when he saw a faint glimmering light through the fog. Curious, he stepped into the haze and followed the light. It led him to a luminous mountain. As he approached the mountain, he heard a chant from underneath: *Five hundred years, Buddha interferes, only a pilgrim can save me from here.* “Who's there?” Xuanzang called, but was met with silence. Suddenly, the ground began to shake, carvings appeared on the soil. *I'll make you a deal, and to you I shall kneel, but only if you redeem the golden seal.* Having read this, Xuanzang hesitated for he had nothing but a walking staff but decided to climb up anyways. The air was thin when he reach the top. A golden seal sat on the mountain's cap. Cautiously, Xuangzang walked towards it, reaching out for the seal. The plateau started to tremble as soon as he touch the seal. Stones and rocks began to fall into the ravine and he began to tremble himself. Cracks appeared from one side to another on the plateau ground. He looked up to the tip of the mountain and noticed it starting to fracture in half. A flash of light bolted from the mountain into the sky. The momentum of the light was so powerful, it knocked him unconscious.

The debris started to settle and Xuanzang began to regain his consiousnes. He struggled to adjust to the light but saw a silhouette of a figure twice his size facing him. “Where am I? And who,” he blinked his eyes a few times. “What are you?” A disembodied voice answered him. “You are in the Mount Huaguo, the land of flowers and fruits” As soon as the words were said, the fractured mountain restructured itself into a beautiful landscape. Flowers sprouted from the soil, and vibrant-coloured fruits grew on branches. A waterfall appeared from a gap in the mountain, flowing into the lake below. “And I am Sun Wukong. The Monkey King, the Keeper of Horses and the Great Sage Equal to Heaven.” Sun Wukong looked like he expected some sort of recognition from Xuanzang. But the monk stood there, with a shocked expression on his face, debating whether or not he should run away or kill the creature. But before he could make up mind, Sun Wukong said, “I have been banished underneath the mountain for the last five hundred years. And only a mortal is able to free me. You, brave and young pilgrim, have released me from my prison.” *Prison? Only bad guys get trapped in prison. Did I release a fugitive? Or worse, a demon?* Xuanzang thought to himself. “And to express my gratitude, I will offer you anything you wish to desire.” Upon hearing this, Xuanzang reconsidered and said, “You will be my disciple to my pilgrimage to India.” The monkey agreed and the two set off for the journey to the West.

On their way, Xuanzang couldn't help but ask a few questions that lingered in his head. “If you don't mind my asking, why exactly were you banished?” “Half a century ago, I became guardian of the heavenly peach garden. The peaches bestow immortality to those who eat them. Since I was undefeatable at that time, I was greedy and ate all the peaches.” He continued. “The Buddha intervened and trapped me beneath the mountain.” “Is that who gave you that metal ring?” Xuanzang asked, pointing to his head. “No, it was placed around my head by the Goddess of Mercey, Guanyin,” he explained. As he said that, the clouds formed some writing in the sky. “Om Rim Jim, Om Rim Jim,” Xuanzang read. As he said the chant, the metal ring around Sun Wukong's head began to tighten. He saw the monkey trying to resist the discomfort. When the ring resumed to its original size, the monkey told Xuanzang, “By chanting, you are able to tighten the ring whenever you must chastise me if I am violent or out of control.”

After a few hours later, the pair realized that they were running short of food. The bodhisattva, Guanyin appeared. "Go to the village in the west region. You will go to the house of a man surnamed "Gao" where you will find a creature of half-human, half-pig monstrosity. Then you will go further to Flowing Sands River where you will find a spirit. You two are to defeat both of them." When they arrived at the village, they talked to the patriarch. "Three years ago, a good-looking man showed up asking for my

youngest daughter's hand in marriage. I agreed, but the man turned out to be a shape shifting pig demon instead," the patriarch confirmed. "Even though the pig demon is a hardworking man, he is not attractive and possessive. All I really want is my daughter back, and for the demon to not be affiliated with me or his family anymore." So they came up with a plan. Sun Wukong rescued the patriarch's daughter and shape-shifted to look like her while waiting for the demon to return. When the demon returned, Sun Wukong revealed himself and defeated the pig. The pig was commissioned by Guanyin to join them on their pilgrimage. There was a long period of silence but the pig broke it by saying, "I'm Zhu Bajie, by the way," he sighed. "Oh, how I wish being immortal, and Marshall of the Heavenly Canopy." "What happened?" Xuanzang asked. "I was banished to the mortal world after a failed attempt of seducing Chang'e, the Moon Goddess."

When they arrived at Flowing Sands River, they realized that they were unable to fight the river spirit underwater. At first, Zhu Bajie attempted to lure the demon out of the water. But when that failed, they called upon the merciful Guanyin to intercede on their behalf. She called the river spirit Sha Wujing and revealed that she had previously enlisted him as Xuanzang's third disciple. Xuanzang and his disciples set foot in an eerie forest whereupon things immediately went wrong. Zhu Bajie went missing looking for food and Sun Wukong went looking for him. Xuanzang entered a pagoda to light incense and pray but woke up a sleeping demon and got captured and tied up. He saw a young lady walking towards him. "Hello? Who's there?" His voice echoed. "I am the demon's wife, he kidnapped me." "Can you help me?" the monk asked. "I will help you in exchange for you delivering the news of my whereabouts to my family in the West," she replied. She gave Xuanzang a letter and convinced her husband to leave the disciples alone so that they could continue westward. Soon they came across the kingdom where the young maiden was stolen from. They deliver the letter to the king, who asked for volunteers to save his daughter. Both Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie set off to save the princess, leaving Xuanzang. A few moments later, the same demon Xuanzang encountered in the forest appeared in the king's court. He transformed himself into an attractive man and spun a story. "Your Grandness, before I married your daughter, I saw a shape-shifting tiger threatening the princess." He proceeded. "So I saved her. I married her because she never told me she was a princess." Suddenly, he pointed to Xuanzang and created an illusion around him to make him look like the tiger monster. With this, the king locked up Xuanzang and his disciples.

The four of them were imprisoned, hopeless, trapped. They did what the only thing they could do: Meditate. They sat in a circle with their eyes lightly closed. They began chanting and reciting prayers. Their souls were transported to the heavens, where they received enlightenment. Sha Wujing became an arhat, which gave him a higher level of exultation than Zhu Bajie who was relegated to cleaning every altar for eternity. Xuanzang and Sun Wukong were granted buddhahood. The scriptures appeared in front of them, slowly dissolving back to the East.

# New Journeys To The West

*St Paul's Convent School, Lai, Ching Ue – 13*

*L*aws of the incantation of the golden hoop

1. You shall be trapped in the golden hoop for the rest of your life unless you have found the desired soul to be worn on before the hoop is wholly rusted.
2. The desired soul would bring you back to the time before its last reincarnation to free you
3. You must finish an extra mission assigned to you on the back of your left hand after you have returned to your original form or else you would be trapped in the hoop again until the next reincarnation of the desired soul.
4. No feelings are allowed to be attached to any version of the desired soul, reincarnation or not.
5. May the odds be ever in your favor.

“What’s left to live for?”

Payne pondered on the same question as Xia did so every night when she used to lie in bed all alone, except that this time, he was tottering beside the ramshackle hillside. It must have been the utter feeling of being forsaken that kept him stumbling. Tiptoeing along the edges, he could almost sentimentalize the merriment of collapsing. *Or was it mere rue that he had sensed?*

Nevertheless, he let it happen for there was no more vigilance left in the fragile soul of his.

At the crack of the sun’s rays between the clouds, his twin’s hoop fell from his pocket in the cold air, slipping itself into the bare wrist of the poor boy as the colliding bodies entered some sort of pirouette, where the surroundings were no longer black and white but rather tintured with blushes of radiant. Swirling into wherever fate is bringing her, she could never be so sure about it – *it’s hope*.

“Haven’t seen you in a while, old friend.” The money king’s voice echoed through the lonely woods of Tianzhu.

Her wings fluttered in sparkles like a dove in liberty, she knew she was no longer a faerie ambushed in a silly hoop.

“I did it! Wukong, I did it! I freed myself from the golden hoop!” Sporadically, Xia the faerie did wonder about the number of phases she had been stuck inside the golden hoop tightening herself every time Tang Sanzang murmurs that torturous spell to Wukong. Or perhaps she should put it in the way ‘pretend to tighten’ as she never really wished to torture such a good friend of hers.

“The boy.....” Wukong stared at the awkward body lying like a doll at an awkward angle, for no one really knew if poor Payne still breathed at all after these traumas he had been through from the moment he jumped, he still hadn’t woken up.

“Is your reincarnated self indeed.” Xia finished his sentence.

Payne jolted up all of a sudden. “Is this heaven or hell?” He shrieked at the sight of the emerging monkey.

“What a pleasure to meet you, Payne.” The monkey shook Payne’s sweaty hands with his furry one, ignoring what he had just said fervently. I’m Wukong.” Gesturing at the faerie, the monkey added, “And this is Xia. Welcome to your past.”

Payne stood paralyzed and spellbound. The boy’s concern was not on the monkey’s particularly queer choice of diction such as “your past”, nor did he think about how he managed to get to the undefined universe. But the name Xia had replayed itself for the billionth time inside his throbbing head like a cliché love song. Leaving aside the fact that this was one for a twin who had lost the other half like a butterfly’s incompleteness without one single wing. *Oh, for who could envisage the angst*, he thought to himself. For a moment, Payne wished that he could just pass out.

“I’m not your sister. It’s just pure coincidence that I’m sharing the same name with her, though I must admit I do know her.” She brushed her maroon locks aside, breaking the tension.

“Explanation is needed, as I expected.” The monkey looked at his companion.

Payne frowned at the two, for in his past sixteen years, he had never been in a more bizarre conversation with total strangers who didn’t even resemble human beings.

“So basically, you are the reincarnated version of him,” Xia pointed over at the monkey, who was apparently crossing his arms a bit impatiently. “I am on a mission to find his reincarnated self so as to break myself free from the golden hoop I used to be trapped in. The Subhuti sent me to the future, where I

landed right on your sister's hands. She told me everything you know, and I'm terribly sorry for what happened. Turns out I also saved a life today just in time. I guess it's the last thing I could ever do for her."

"I don't see the necessity of me thanking you when I would prefer to be dead. Goodbye, now that you've freed yourself." Payne cooed, folding up his arms frantically.

"You can't go back to the future. Not until I have finished my last mission." Xia grabbed Payne by the arms.

"I can guarantee that you would not regret it." The faerie added. She knew wholeheartedly that it was a selfish thing to say, still, the lies managed to slip out of her biting lips effortlessly. "White lies" as humans called them, she said to herself, "an innocent lie". Yet when was ever a lie innocent enough to not be labeled as a lie?

She was conscious of the fact that the truth carved into the flesh on her hand was going to be unbearable and she had taken the path to avoid it, which was not the best idea to say the least.

"Shifu he.....he" A shadow of Bajie the pig grew as he sprinted towards the monkey.

"What is it?" Wukong clenched his jaws hard.

"He died! Right behind the bushes when I woke up!" Bajie's eyes refused to hold back the tiny drops of grief as they streamed down his cheeks.

Without a word, Wukong stormed off in hurried steps to the repulsive smell of the decayed flesh with a stoic expression. Tang Sanzang's eyes were accusing yet blank, with lips matching a shade of blue where the oasis was undoubtedly stiff. Xia gasped at the sight as if her life had just turned into a horror story ever since she escaped. It must have, for Payne gulped with a mien of dread and panic all the same.

Because mayhem strikes the trio before they could even get hold of what had been going on.

Xia, as in Payne's twin sister, arose from the sanguine fluid's crimson, her body covered by it drenching from the dagger in her palms.

"Why are you here?" Payne whimpered at the unwanted twin, his rage burning hot like a dragon's mouth alongside with choking tears.

"Face your fears, coward." The Xia smirked with a twitch so malicious everyone shivered at her words.

"Payne, go away! It's not your sister! It's only the White Bone Demon in disguise!" Wukong had seen it through the disguise.

"Payne, run for your own good!"

His eyes did see reality, his ears did hear the words, his brain did get hold of everything shown before him. Without a slight hint of hesitation, Payne galloped towards the monster as he snatched the dagger from her. With all the might he had left in him, Payne sliced a lethal into the monster's chest. *Every single piece of fragment in his heart broke free for they were no longer shattered into pieces – facing them healed him by connecting the deceived smithereens back together into completeness.*

"Clang!" The dagger dropped out of Payne's hands. The monster was gone.

"Payne!" Wukong and Xia the faerie rushed towards him.

"I think it's time for me to go back," he breathed.

"There's one thing you should know." The faerie stopped dead for a moment as she inhaled deeply, "I know you would never forgive me, Payne. On the day Xia committed suicide, I saved her – for the sake of her body so that I could live in it when I break free from the golden hoop." Regret washed over her like the long slow waves on a shallow beach. Each wave was icy cold and sent shivers down her spine. How she longed to go back and take a different path, but now that was impossible. There was no way back. There was no way to make it right. *The remorse would eat at her for the rest of her life.* She envied the pebbles, hard and lifeless, unable to feel the torments of life. What was more to that, he knew it, too.

"Xia, it's alright." Payne swallowed back the tears that came out of nowhere, "meeting you two helped me learn to accept the reality rather than running away from it."

"And for the last mission, it was not defeating the White Bone Demon. I had to kill either one of you for the same souls could never collide for more than a day."

"Kill me." Wukong and Payne both stared.

"You have to go back. And I have my journey to continue." Wukong cut Payne in first.

"Look after yourself Payne, and see you in your next reincarnation." Her last breath turned into a sheer combination of gases in the air.

“What’s left to live for?”

“The possibility of having everything you can have in life is worth living for,” Payne said to the teenage girl no older than sixteen as she was initiated to climb back down from the edge. “You’ll never know if you don’t live once to taste the tinctures in life. Who knows, you even get an unexpected journey to the west.” Payne took a glance at the golden hoop chained to his wrist. The corners of his eyes crinkled.

# New Journeys to the West

*St Paul's Convent School, Li, Charmaine – 12*

Once upon a time, there was a monkey called Sun Wukong. He is the leader of all monkeys in China. One day, he left and met three friends— Xuanzang (Buddhist monk), Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing.

They are going to the west to obtain the Buddhist sacred test.

After finishing their task, they all went back to their hometown. Sun Wukong as the leader of the monkey, he went back to his friends and family. After a year of happy life, he is being caught. He then travelled to a city he doesn't know.

He met Xuanzang in this strange city—Hong Kong. He finally found that he is being caught and thought he probably had some mission to do to help the world. After greeting, he knew his job, to help Xuanzang to find the best Buddhist in the world.

They first went to one of the Buddhist temple in Hong Kong, Ten Thousand Buddhist Temple. They needed to take train and changed bus to there. With the help of technology and Hong Kongers, they eventually went to this temple.

They went into the temple with greeting, but seemed all the monk were scared. They didn't think that a monkey can walked by itself and one monk is near its side. When they heard they came from Song dynasty, they were more frightened and one even faint on the ground.

Xuanzang and Sun Wukong were puzzled. After a while, the most powerful monk invited them to go into his room. The monk told them about the history of the temple. However, they wanted to know more about the date, they asked the monk about the time.

The monk told them as usual, 2017, 18<sup>th</sup> October. Sun Wukong took away what the monk is watching, and read along the paper. He screamed out with surprised, look like something unusual happened. Xuanzang knew what he wanted to say already, and told him that they came to Hong Kong because of an airplane that made them be into this new city.

The monk only told them, if they want to get back to Song dynasty, they must ride a car called 'The Holy world', or else they must found a girl monk in Asia. Before doing this, they needed a passport and money.

With the help of the monk, they made a passport and ID card, so they can go onto the airplane. Also, they found a 300 feet room in Sha Tin for them two live, they can work in any place now.

They found a job in an office in Central, that they needed to type some works for the boss in this company. It seemed that it is only a dream, when they woke up, they will be back to their house and become a normal people again.

The first day to go for work, they had been late, and made a lot of mistakes. They had so much pressure and needed to walk all over the office for connecting colleague, sometimes they were from other department. When the time is up, they still need to stay in the office to do more work.

After a month, they finally can get their award, money, for working in the office. They could buy food and ready to went to India, to find the only girl monk in the world. Although their hearts were already in India to find the monk, they didn't have enough money to go on a trip in this world.

One year than past, they knew more about the office and became the most hard—working colleague. They can receive ten thousand dollars per person as their reward. They had already saved almost seventy thousand dollars for going to India. But a bad new came into their ears, the girl monk had already died, they need to wait next girl monk. This may take them more than fifty to one hundred year.

When they thought they could not go back to Song Dynasty, a happy news for them was told on the television. One old car called 'The Holy world' will sold at one hundred million US dollars, and it will only sell to people really need. Since this car had a private driver that could went through all the time, so many historical archaeologist want to have this car.

But, none of the people could get the car. People even use two thousand million to bought this car, but the driver said he would went away if these people got this car. On the other side of the earth., Xuanzang and Sun Wukong drank to much wine, and they forgot to go to work today.

Both of them went to the office at noon, but they were still sleepy and had heavy headache. They got wrong document to different officers and even wanted to kiss one of the office lady. They looked like different people.

Because of that, the headmaster of the office had told them not to come to work again. They did even not what had happen. They were still sad and wanted to drink more. When the next day came, they finally knew what had happened.

They did not have work, did not have enough money, did not know the car was for sale. Because of their life, they went to Hong Kong and had a new life. They had themselves and even wanted to commit suicide, and wrote a letter to their parents in Song dynasty. Before they died, they first watched the television.

They found that their dream car 'The Holy World' was sold. They were happy but they did not have enough money, they can only just bought two air tickets to US. They studied English hard in the last three month so they could talk to the person who sold the car.

With the help of their teacher, they could talk to American fluently in English. They were near their dream- to go back to their own dynasty. They will be more respectful their parents and treasure their relationships with their family and friends.

After six months, they finally went on the airplane to America. Both of them were excited. In Hong Kong, they always watch the news about 'The Holy World'. They did not think they will be the right one, just hoped that the driver could take them back to Song dynasty free.

After twelve hours in the airplane, they finally went to America. They took a taxi to their hotel. They had use apps to find the most cheapest hotel in America, but it must be clean and no one will steal their things. They asked one of the hotel staff for the location of the car. They found that the car was in the next city, which they could ride the bus provided by the hotel, or rode the train, but it cost five dollars, while the bus is free.

After a night, they decided to take the bus to there, although it will take them more than two hours. They needed to prepare their lunch, so they could eat on the bus. People in the hotel wanted the car had already queued up since last night. Luckily, they found that they were the last two one to go on the bus.

They got down when they saw the car. Since they were near the door, they could jump down from the bus. When they went into the car park, the driver seem very happy, looked like that he found the people who can rive.

The seller seem very frightened. Since when he sold the car, no one he wanted to drive, also, they looked they do not have enough money to buy it. They went to the seller, and told them they do not have money, can they borrow the car to go back to Song dynasty.

At first, the seller did not want sell it to them, since he used ninety million to buy this car. But after hearing their story in Hong Kong, and knew that they was taken to Hong Kong because of a flight. The seller was very pleased that they could live in this technology world for almost two years, since he was also come from the second world war. Finally, Xuanzang and Sun Wukong take the car and went back to Song dynasty.

After this trip in Hong Kong, they became thankful to all things. They need to work hard so that they could buy a bag of rice. Now, they could still grow by themselves, but not working in front of the computer or iPad. Also, they found that people were nice in Song dynasty and willing to help, Hong Kongers were very busy and will not care others except in some special situation. They treasured their family and friends and always thankful to them. They also wanted to thank the monk met in Hong Kong, found that a monk that could have two strangers that came from Song dynasty. Although they could go online in the future world, they still enjoy the life in farm.



## New Journeys to the West

*St Paul's Convent School, Sandhu, Gursharan – 12*

A long time ago an elderly couple had no children. The wife was so sad that she started working like a robot working relentlessly not even stopping for a break. The husband seeing his wife's behaviour became worried. He loved his wife very much and could not see her in so much pain. One of his friends who was Chinese told him to pray to Buddha. This was not an easy task as he would have to meditate for a long period of time. But the husband would do anything to bring happiness to his house. He soon started his meditation and as his friend had said Buddha appeared to him, "I am happy with devotion and faith in me. I am so happy that I am willing to give you your greatest desire but with your desire there shall be consequences..." said the great Buddha. "Oh Buddha, you are the greatest please bear me a son so that my wife will forget her sorrow and my house may be filled with joy" replied the husband. "You shall have a son and he will be a believer in me, he will have a thirst of adventure and knowledge. He would be as mischievous as a monkey but as wise as an owl. His thirst will bring him great danger. It's time for me to leave" said the Great Buddha and with this he left. When the husband went back to his wife, the wife was happy for the first time in many years. She was going to have a child.

They had a handsome son whom they named Xuanzang, the father was very rich so he could send Xuanzang to the Fujian priests to teach him some basic knowledge about spiritual fulfilment, he was very intelligent even the priests couldn't find the answers to his questions. Weeks turned into months and months turned into years Xuanzang grew into a devoted young monk. He grew old and one of the priests found out that he was the promised child that Buddha had promised his ancestors, who would be the protector of the sacred red dragon stone whose price could never be defined because it was one of a kind and very rare and the person who would find it would be immortal. One night in the priests' sleep he dreamed of Buddha. "I want to take Xuanzang's test. If he is capable of being the protector of the sacred red dragon. I want you to tell him the way to Nandali he'll find the sacred school of the wise" said the great Buddha. The next day the priest went to the house Xuanzang's Father to get their permission. "Your son is very talented. He should go to the university in India" said the priest. "Why? Should we send him so far can't you teach him" replied Xuanzang's Father. "He will become a monk and can work as the head priest and even end up working for the emperor." "Well than he can go." But what they didn't know that Xuanzang had heard everything he didn't want to work for the emperor, he wanted to devote his to Buddhism. The priest went to see Xuanzang. "I have talked to your parents and they have decided to send you to a school in India" the priest said. "I don't want to go to a school so that I can have gain some knowledge that would make me a head priest. I want to gain knowledge so that I can help all the children of my country to receive education" said Xuanzang. "I understand your determination and your reasons. And this is what a monk has to do. But you don't have to be a head priest. I just wanted you to receive the right knowledge that you earn because you are very talented and everyone can see that. But going to this school is no easy thing you have to pass many tests and kill the lava king. Killing the lava King is going to be the ticket to admission to the legendary school. But before you descend for your journey there is a clue our ancestors have left us and the clue is your goal is as cold as the heart of the deceased and yet as hot as the molten lava that lies beneath the Earth. Also there is going to be someone watching you the moment you descend for your journey. You are going to meet a lot of people choose wisely" and with that the priest walked away.

Xuanzang was now all alone going to India he had taken the blessings of his parents. He walked by the sea thinking of the riddle. Then it came to him that the ocean was hot near volcanoes and cold near the poles. His next clue was in the ocean. He tried to walk into the ocean but to know avail. The ocean was not letting him swim in it. There was something stopping him. He found a stone and threw it into the water and then steps appeared on the surface of the sea. He walked the steps and he noticed that the steps were sinking he ran and he reached a desert it was weird that in the middle of the sea there was a desert. He was tired and decided to take a nap he woke up and found himself neck deep buried in sand. Near him a giant rock broke which looked like a monkey. He fainted. He woke up and near there was sitting a half monkey half human creature. He looked at the creature and the creature looked at him. The half monkey looking human said thank you master for releasing me I had been in that rock for millions of years with my monkeys. I am the monkey king the great Buddha had punished me to stay in that rock until my master would come and save me. I had killed an innocent kangaroo who was giving birth. And now I am your

servant and so are my monkeys what can we do for you? “ I am going to the school of the wise and I do not anyone with me you are free and so are your monkeys” replied Xuanzang. He left without listening to the monkey king. He again came to the Sea, sitting next to the Sea was a boat. He climbed up the boat and rowed, the Sea looked endless he rowed and eventually got tired, he was starving luckily there were mangoes in the boat he ate them and went to sleep. He woke up and noticed he wasn't on Sea and he was tied up and some giants were carrying him. He heard deep voices and he was thrown on to the ground he was untied and in front of me there was a big giant sitting in front of him. “We are tired of eating cucumbers now you have come and we can taste meat it has been such a long time since I tasted the flesh of humans and drank the warm blood of humans”said the giant. “Please have mercy oh king”said Xuanzang. “Fetch my knife and bring the friar and pig tonight I shall have a feast”said the king. Xuanzang saw a young man and a thin pig. The giant raised his knife and was going to strike when his head fell behind him the monkey king was holding a big knife angrily. “No one harms my master understand?”the monkey was saying. The giants that had bought Xuanzang in fell to their knee and said please spare us. “We'll spare you but you must promise us you will never lay a finger on any being” said Xuanzang and with that he left. He left the cave of the giant than came the ocean the monkey king had a flying boat with that they flew to the next island. The Island of the lava king. They were walking when suddenly the ground began to shake and a creature who didn't have any flesh whose skin was pure fire. He looked down and bowed to their astonishment. The monkey was preparing to attack. “I am your servant for your holy steps of wisdom have walked on my land of fire all my sins have gone for I have seen with my eyes the one Buddha has chosen. It is you who I shall give my heart the sacred red dragon to you as I know it shall be safe with you” said the creature “who are you? And what are you saying me the chosen one?” said Xuanzang. “Yes. Long ago when Buddha was alive he had known my father the than Lava king. He had given my dad the sacred red dragon and told him to give it to the chosen one whose footsteps will wake me and I am the Lava King”said the lava king. They reached to the school in India. The monk there looked at Xuanzang and told him he could study in the school because he had killed the lava king but the lava king was standing right next to them. “What are you saying the lava king is alive master”said Xuanzang. “Killing does not mean to kill the body it means to to kill the soul of badness. You have killed badness in the lava king and the thus fulfilled the requirement”said the priest.

Xuanzang left the school after many year he taught the children of China an when he was about to die he hid in a cave with the sacred red dragon and was never seen again. It is said he is still protecting the red dragon.

# The Prolonged Journey

*St Paul's Convent School, Sarkar, Manjori – 12*

**F**ar away in an alp, there existed a monastery named the Thunderclap Monastery. It wasn't any conventional monastery, it was home to the Omniscient Buddha!

The Buddha sought for a believer from the Land of the East to come to the Western Continent, in order to retrieve the True Scriptures, the scriptures that were powerful enough to redeem the most sinful of sinners, these scriptures were named 'Tripitaka'. Bodhisattva Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy, volunteered to assist someone to accomplish the task. That someone was Xuan Zang.

Tragically, Xuan Zang was the son of a young scholar, who was murdered by a ferryman. His mother would have committed suicide if she weren't pregnant with him. Immediately after Xuan Zang was born, he was tied up to a plank of a boat with a blood-written message and was pushed into the river. Fortunately, the abbot of a temple spotted him and learned his tragic story through the letter. The abbot decided to adopt him and raise him as a monk. Growing up, Xuan Zang was unacquainted with his parentage. However at the age of 18, he encountered his mother, and devised plans to avenge his father's murder. Upon knowing that the murderer was executed on the spot of murder, they noticed a body floating up the stream. It was Xuan Zang's father! He happened to be rescued by the Dragon King of the River. His family was ultimately reunited.

However, the overwhelming circumstances didn't cease Xuan Zang's devotion to Buddhism. Instead of moving back home, he was inclined to his religion and chose to be a monk.

The news of this unconventional act of Xuan Zang's dispersed all over China, it even came to Emperor Tang Taizong's attention. Upon receiving the news, Tang Taizong dispatched three of his men to assign Xuan Zang to participate in the Grand Mass. Guanyin eavesdropped their conversation and considered recruiting Xuan Zang for the pilgrimage.

Nonetheless, a pilgrim to the West independently, is virtually not worth considering. The Buddha wouldn't entrust Bodhisattva Guanyin with such a vital role on his quest, if she actually left Xuan Zang alone with a countless number of lurking demons. Fortunately, she flew over the exact way Xuan Zang would have to take to India with her disciple, Moksa, to scrutinise the potential perils. The rivers, mountains and lands were in unfavourable conditions, with masses of demons. Therefore, she manipulated four demons to join forces with her beforehand. These legendary demons were Yulong, Zhu Bajie, Sha Wujing and Sun Wukong.

Throughout the course of the Grand Mass, Guanyin was observing Xuan Zang. Guanyin finally used the chance to openly recruit him when he was approaching the Emperor. Being recruited for such a paramount operation, was undoubtedly a golden opportunity for Xuan Zang, which embarked the Journey to the West.

Now that the morally justified monk was recruited, the first priority of this operation would be assembling all the members together. After escaping a demon's den with the help of a god called the Gold Star of Venus, Xuan Zang firstly encountered the Five Phases Mountain, the mountain where the Monkey King, Sun Wukong was trapped under for 500 years by the Buddha himself. Xuan Zang had to scale the mountain to take off the seal placed on top, so that Sun Wukong could completely disintegrate the mountain from inside to finally leave. Sun Wukong was an immortal, but impulsive, foolhardy and mischievous monkey who was notorious for not following the heaven's rules, which is why the Buddha trapped him there to practice penance for 500 years in the first place. Guanyin simply manipulating him was surely not going to inhibit him from deserting

Xuan Zang for long. Well, Sun Wukong recklessly did abandon Xuan Zang in a huff because he was told that he couldn't slaughter anyone. But Guanyin knew who she was up against. She impersonated an old woman and gave Xuan Zang some lavish clothing and a hat for Sun Wukong, and suggested him to recite a mantra she taught him.

Meanwhile, Sun Wukong was luxuriating at a tea party with the Dragon King of the River. The Dragon King recommended him to return to Xuan Zang, rather than abandoning enlightenment over a single argument. Reconsidering what the Dragon King said, Sun Wukong zipped back westwards, blowing past Guanyin in the process, who'd flown over in order to convince him of that very course of action. It didn't take long until Sun Wukong landed in front of Xuan Zang, who offered him the clothing. Sun Wukong, always an enthusiast for a new wardrobe, threw them on. He was rather less thrilled to find out that the hat was a curse, and when Xuan Zang recited the mantra that Guanyin taught him, it shrank and gave Sun Wukong a splitting headache! Of course, it wouldn't be much of a cursed artifact if Wukong could remove it, so it was also spot-welded to his head. After Sun Wukong furiously tried to escape the hat by any means necessary, he eventually resigns himself to the fact that he wouldn't be able to get up to his usual hijinks anymore.

So the dynamic duo continued on westwards, with the balance of power slightly more even this time. It didn't take long until they arrived at a tranquil, calm stream that happened to be the home of an enormous dragon!

After the Dragon gobbled down Xuan Zang's horse, Wukong and the Dragon battled it out for a while, until the Dragon fled to the river bottom refusing to come out. At that point, Wukong was fuming! However, the local mountain spirits informed him that this Dragon, Yulong, is under orders by Guanyin to join them on their pilgrimage. Meanwhile, Xuan Zang was hiding behind a boulder, being guarded by Heavenly Spirits. One of the Heavenly Spirits decided to go summon Guanyin. Upon arrival, Guanyin got the Dragon to turn into a horse, to substitute the one he'd just snacked on. Prior to leaving, Guanyin handed Wukong three 'get-out-of-danger leaves', as a way to apologise for the cursed hat. Everything had been resolved to everyone's satisfaction, so the trio continued on their merry way to the West.

On the way, they found themselves facing new perils, for the mountains are home to masses of greedy and murderous demons, and these three heroes had a very long way left to go. So after facing all that, the trio finally found themselves walking down a wide lane in a rural village, where they stumbled across a queer-looking young gentleman. Sun Wukong, impulsively grabbed that random stranger's collar and forced him to involuntarily reveal his identity and what he was doing! Xuan Zang opposed to what he was doing, as it was the most illogical way to behave.

The boy, who's name was originally Gao Cai eventually spilled that something was actually amiss, and the village wasn't quite as idyllic as it looks. A while ago, a repulsive and unattractive pig demon impersonated an attractive man and married a maiden from Gao Cai's extended family, but after the marriage, he inadvertently shape-shifted back to his original form. Therefore, his father-in-law, objected rather strenuously to having such a hideous monster as a son-in-law. So he'd sent Gao Cai out to send someone to exorcise the demon, which had so far been unsuccessful!

Sun Wukong then stepped forward to exorcise the demon, as he apparently happened to be distinctively skilled at tasks like this. Without further wasting any time, they entered the village and spoke to the patriarch, who further confirmed that everything Gao Cai said was authentic. Although the pig demon was very diligent and productive, he was pretty possessive. All the patriarch genuinely desired was for the demon to not be affiliated to his family in any aspect.

In the process of ideally murdering the pig demon, Wukong had to impersonate the patriarch's daughter. Soon enough the demon returned, and while battling, Sun Wukong found out that the demon was actually a member in the court of heaven, but got transformed into a demon and kicked out after he seduced the Moon Goddess, Chang'e. It transpired soon enough that the pig demon was the selfsame pig demon, Zhu Bajie, who was enlisted by Guanyin to help them with the pilgrimage. Xuan Zang was overwhelmed to have another disciple to help him out!

This embarked the beginning of the most unfavourable segment of their pilgrim, where the demons actually proved to be fatal despite the powerful Sun Wukong being around, as well as a further addition to the group, Sha Wujing. With numerous irrational decisions being made by everyone in the group, along with mere disputes that even led to the disunion of their team, everyone had their own regrets! However, with a great deal of assistance coming over from Heaven, and a prolonged ordeal of two entire decades, the Dynamic Five ultimately arrived at the Thunderclap Monastery to retrieve the Tripitaka from the Omniscient Buddha.

# A Peculiar Island

*St Paul's Convent School, Shrestha, Nitika – 12*

Where am I? I can't open my eyes because of this burning sensation. "Jade?", a voice calls my name. I try to open my eyes and see Jade. "Oh Tanya!", Jade says hugging me. "Jade! What happened? Where are we?", I ask feeling scared. "Don't you remember? Our plane crashed a while ago into this island. You, me and other three people have survived this crash.", she says, giving me the shocking news of my life. "What? Other people died?", I say, feeling myself tearing up. I looked around and saw three people walking towards me. "Is she okay?", a girl asks. "She is. She's just a bit shaken up. Just give her some time.", Jade tells them. I look at Jade in confusion. "Tanya, meet Nicole, Kyle and Liam. They are the other three survivors I told you about.", Jade tells me. I give them a weak smile and they give me back the same. I feel so weak that I can't talk. "Jade, I feel really cold by the strong gust of wind coming through.", I say rubbing my shoulders.

It is starting to get dark and colder. I have no idea how we're going to get through a night like this. Kyle just ignited a fire for us so that we'll feel warm. I am so hungry and cold that I don't think any of us can get sleep tonight or ever. Right now, we're all sitting by the fire. "Aren't you guys hungry?", I ask breaking the awkward silence. "We are but we've got nothing to eat.", Liam said. "Have you guys thought about how we're going to get out of this isolated island?", Nicole asks. "I have but I have no idea how we're going to survive in this island.", I say. "We have to find a way out of here. We obviously can't stay here forever!", Kyle says with his hand up in the air. "How about we all try to get some rest and talk tomorrow about getting out of here?", Jade finally speaks and yawns. "How do you expect us to sleep? We have nothing comfortable to sleep on!", I say in frustration. "I think I saw some leaves which we could sleep on for the night. Let me and Kyle get it for you guys.", Liam said. After a while, Liam and Kyle gave all of us a huge leave which is big enough for my body. Later we all slept on it. I can't sleep because this was not something I expected. Today wasn't supposed to go like this.

\*2 days earlier\*

"I can't believe we're actually going to Bali, Jade.", I say with excitement. "Believe it, Tanya! We planned this for a year and saved up our money for this. It'll be worth it, I promise.", Jade says proudly. "Can't believe we are free from college projects for a few months!", I say happily. "I know! There were so many deadlines"— Suddenly the plane starts to shake. "What's happening?", she says with a worried expression. "I don't know!", I shout. Suddenly, the pilot made an announcement "We seem to be having serious turbulence. Passengers, please fasten your seat belts and remain seated in your seats. Please stay calm as we are handling this. Thank you for your attention." The plane was starting to have some serious turbulence and everyone was fearing for their life. I felt the plane going down. With a trembling voice the captain abruptly made an announcement "I am very sorry to say this, but... we are going to crash. May God be with us." And I blacked out.

\*2 days after\*

Liam suggested the most annoying thing of all time, hunting for animals. I agree that we all are starving since last night but why do all of us have to go hunting? Can't Liam and Kyle go hunting? I'm not saying this because they're boys but because they're stronger than me, Nicole and Jade. Right now, we're going through a forest-like place and I'm getting really annoyed with flies flying over my nose. "Tanya, do you mind keeping up your pace?", Kyle asks. "Oh, I'm sorry that I'm a slow walker and I didn't sign up for this hunting party.", I say in an annoyed tone. "Look Tanya, can you try to help us out here?", Liam asks. "Fine. What are we killing anyways?", I ask curiously. "Let's just keep searching for something to kill and eat." Jade says looking out for animals. We walk a little more. Suddenly, the bushes started to rustle. "Did you hear that?", Nicole asks looking scared. "I'm right next to you", I say. "Stay behind me and Liam.", Kyle tells me, Nicole and Jade. Kyle and Liam get their sharp broken tree branches ready to kill.

Out of the blue, a figure as red as a fiery demon with fangs dripping with poison charged at us! "RUN!", shouts Kyle. We all start running as fast as we could. I look back as I was running and see the creature running after us. Liam aims his sharp tree branch towards the creature to hurt it and succeeds! Liam hurts the creature by stabbing his tree branch on the creature's leg. It slowed the creature down and gave us time to

find a place to hide. Kyle led us to a cave and we ran inside. “ W-What w-was t-t-that?”, I say panting hard. “ I have no idea. Where did it come from?”, Jade asks. “ We have to get off this island. It’s getting dark. I think we should spend the night here since it’s not safe for us to go out right now.”, We all agree and Liam ignites a fire for us. None of us can sleep knowing that there’s a creature running around the island freely. We didn’t eat anything today as well. How will we survive? Will we even make it alive ? Could we possibly...?

The next morning, we head out to the shore and plan out what we should do to get out of the island. “ I think we should start off by collecting as many stones as we can. We will use those stones and place them on the sand to form the word “ HELP”. It needs to be very big so we need to collect a lot of stones. Kyle and Nicole, you guys are responsible for collecting as many stones as you two can. Me, Tanya and Jade will be responsible for collecting tree branches so we can build a huge bonfire so that it catches any passing helicopters or boats. Are you guys in?”, Liam asked anxiously. We all agreed with Liam since he’s the smartest in the group and had learnt about survival tactics in college. We all got to work. After an hour or so, we had collected enough stones and tree branches.

“ All right. Nicole and I will get started in forming the word “ HELP”. You guys can start off by arranging the tree branches and igniting a fire. If you need help, we’re right here!” , Kyle said sprinting. Kyle and Nicole didn’t take long to finish their job since it was an easy task. They came to help us place the branches accurately while Liam was trying to ignite a fire. “ Guys, I think we should finish this before the it gets dark. We don’t want to face the creature again. Now, do we?”, I said. I’d only seen in movies, they would make it look so easy to ignite a fire in wild life but at that moment, seeing Liam work so hard just to get a spark of fire made me realise it wasn’t that easy at all. After a long time, Liam was finally able to produce a flame of fire. The bonfire was lit. Now, we just had to wait to be rescued. “ Do you think anyone is going to notice us here?”, I ask curiously. “ Don’t worry Tanya. Someone will definitely notice us.”, Jade said in a comforting tone.

After a while, we saw something in the sky, a helicopter! “ HERE! HERE!” , we all scream out loud. The helicopter started to notice us and flew down to the island. A man came out of the helicopter. “ How long have you guys been here?”, he asked. “ We’ve been here for days after our plane crashed here. We are the only survivors of the crash.”, Liam says. Later, the man takes us to his helicopter and flies us. Apparently, the island wasn’t that far away from Bali. The man flew us to Bali and to a hospital. We all were checked-up by the doctors and told us to rest. We had been given food by the hospital under the doctor’s supervision.

These couple of days I spent in the island with my best friend and three strangers who I will never forget has taught me to not lose hope when things don’t go as planned. Although my experience was not comfortable, it was a life lesson that I will never forget.

# New Journeys to the West

*St Paul's Convent School, Wong, Cherry – 12*

After last time adventure to the west, the three brothers, Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie, Shā Wùjìng, and Master Tang learnt a lot of cooking skills to cook different kinds of special traditional food. And this time, the three brothers decided to take their master, Master Tang, to Hong Kong and all the way to Tibet, via Sichuan again to try out different food and learn different cultures.

They took a private jet all the way to Hong Kong as Master Tang didn't like to sit in a crowded airplane with many noises. After 7 hours and 30 minutes' flight, they finally arrived in Hong Kong. They were amazed by the Hong Kong airport's fabulous design. "Hey, Master Tang... why are the people looking at us with curious faces, are we too handsome? Well you don't need to answer I know it!" Sun Wukong said Master Tang loudly and proudly. Master Tang immediately covered his mouth and said in a low voice, "You idiot, it is not because we are handsome, it is because of our cloths, I think, as you see the people here wear fashion, fancy cloths. Come on, don't talk too much and let's fetch a cab and go to somewhere that we can buy some trendy cloths." Well, they were really amazed by the traffic and also the fashion designs in Hong Kong.

Zhu Bajie got a cab and they told the driver to take them to the best hotel to check in first. And the driver took them to Tsim Sha Tsui and asked them, "do you want to shop around your hotel? I have some recommendations for you to shop for nice cloths. You can go to this shop and that shop." The driver told them the shop names and point to them.while talking happily, they arrived at Tsim Sha Tsui and they thanked the driver. They went in a delicate hotel and asked for four rooms. Later, the three brothers and their Master took the driver's advices and went to shops. The four people were like a crazy shopaholic. They totally spent 11,932 dollars just to buy cloths. Master Tang immediately changed to a black suit with leather shoes; Sun Wukong changed into a cute monkey cloth; Zhu Bajie change into a t-shirt with trousers, which the tee seemed to be almost broken since he is so fat and his tummy is being seen; Shā Wùjìng wore a sports wear with black addius sports shoes. They walked out professionally and like a superstar.

The people on the road are very shocked and looked at them with shocked faces. Zhu Bajie was very scared of their looks and he hid behind Shā Wùjìng, and Sun Wukong teased Zhu Bajie, "You are such a baby. Don't be afraid, we are man."

After the tiring shopping day, they went back to their hotel and have a peaceful sleep. The next day, they took a train in the Hung Hom train station to Sichuan. As they need to get to Sichuan in order to go back to Tibet. On their way to Sichuan, Master Tang read books for a while, and slept all the way to Sichuan; Sun Wukong practiced his martial arts on the train and it scared the other passages; Zhu Bajie continuously eat and sleep; Shā Wùjìng just watch the scenery and draw glasses on Master Tang's and Zhu Bajie's faces and he slept quietly.

When they arrived to Sichuan, they left the train and get their shopping things. The people in Sichuan whispered to each other and laughed out loudly. Master Tang, Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie don't know what is happening. When Sun Wukong looked at both Master Tang, Zhu Bajie and he laughed also. Sh Shā Wùjìng then burst out laughing. Sun Wukong took out a mirror and gave Master Tang and Zhu Bajie take a look. When both of them wanted to scold Shā Wùjìng, he and Sun Wukong was then nowhere to be seen.

They called a cab and they went to the monasteries where the monks live in and visited the monks there. They decided to stay and explore the city. The next day, they woke up and they went to the market nearby. They bought a lot of things. Master Tang bought some ingredients to make delicious food for his three brothers and also the monks in Tibet; Sun Wukong bought some fruits for the others to eat; Zhu Bajie bought and ate the dumplings that he has bought for the others and had nothing to eat, poor pig; Shā



Wùjìng bought some traditional clothes for all of them and Zhu Bajie's cloth is XXXXL which was tailor-made for him due to his fatness. Master Tang learnt to make some tasty foods in Sichuan and he was very eager to make them in Tibet and let the others try his cooking skills.

After a day of shopping, they were all exhausted. And Master Tang made some nice soup and a festive dinner for all of them. They were all full and slept soundly in each room. They woke up at around 11:00a.m. and they all panicked as they needed to arrive at the train station at 11:30a.m. and they were still in the monastery. Luckily, the cabs were quick and they were able to be at the train station on time, but just as they need to go up on the train, Master Tang had disappeared all of a sudden. During the 2 hours, Master Tang came up with a mischievous idea, he woke up after all his brothers were sleeping. He use a lipstick that he bought from the train station early, and he drew cartoons on Shā Wùjìng's face and he then helped him moist Shā's lips with that lipstick as he saw that it was a bit dry. He later took his seat and continued to sleep, pretend that nothing happened.

When he woke up 30 minutes later, he saw a clueless Shā Wùjìng and his two disciples laughing loudly and attracted the other passengers on the train come and looked at them. The other also started to laugh hard and some even cried out due to entertainment. Shā Wùjìng went to the bathroom and he looked into the mirror and couldn't believe his eyes. He saw himself was all in red looked as if he had blood on his face. When he went out of the train, he saw all the people left and he saw all of them were boarded. And he was forced to leave the train. The monks from Tibet heard about Master Tang and his beloved disciples were back and they all went to the train station to welcome him. Then they saw one of his disciples was missing. As they were about to find him, he went out of the train. Th others immediately laughed till they rolled on the floor. He was very furious, and he took a cab on his own and went back to his OWN monastery and took out a pack of wet tissues and he wiped out the marks that were on his face.

Later, Master Tang felt very sorrowful and he decided to do something when he reached the monastery he went directly to Shā Wùjìng. He knocked on Shā's door and went in quietly, and he found Shā's eyes are fluffed and red. And his voice is cracked, probably, he had cried before. Master Tang was so sorry and he apologized to Wùjìng, hoping he would be forgiven. Luckily, Wùjìng was generous and he forgave Master Tang, which didn't make Master Tang very sorrowful, instead they were both very happy and they talked all day long. On the other side at the same time, Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie were showing their souvenirs to the others, and they are comparing among themselves, later it turned out into a fight. Master Tang saw it and persuaded them not to fight as it might cause danger to others and one self. Luckily they listened to him and dint cause too much danger.

The next day, to celebrate their arrival back to Tibet, Master Tang made a huge amount of Sichuan and Hong Kong special food that he learnt from the two places. The monks and his disciples thought that it was the most best-tasting food that they had before in their life. Master Tang was pleased that his masterpiece was appreciated by the others. He made more and he took them to the market near the monastery and he sold them all in just an hour as the people there hadn't taste any food that was so delicious. The business was very good and his disciples decided to learn how to make it and help him with his successful business.

Master Tang was very pleased to see his disciples that they had grown up a lot after this adventure. Sun Wukong thought it was a fabulous experience to have another advetnure. Zhu Bajie had no feelings towards this adventure, he just wished to have something to eat and to followed his respectful Master Tang and going to anyway is fine. Shā Wùjìng is an adventurous and emotional person and he hoped to go to other places next time and also don't make fun of him.

This is a very good experience for all of them, Master Tang can learn many other different kinds of cooking skills and the three disciples can learn to be mature and treasure their brothers. All of them were looking forward to another adventure.

# New Journey to the West

*St Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Chan, Madeleine – 12*

One school day, Noah and John were having History lesson. The teacher taught them a lot of things about the story “Journey to the west”. She said, “It may be true! Suddenly, Noah and James have a bright idea and they want to go and find the answer. Is it true?”

After school, Noah asked, “Should we go and find the answer? It looks interesting, James? What do you think?” James said, “I will never go with you, you don’t look like safe... maybe let’s find someone who is interested in “Journey to the west” too!” Noah whispered, “Actually you don’t look like safe too...” After a few minutes, he said, “I know!! Jacob and your sister, Mia! Let’s go home and plan the journey!” said Noah.

They planned everything and ready to go! But Mia said, “Should we plan more first? That’s too dangerous!” Jacob then said, “Adventure is like that! Let’s go by this door!” By the way, Noah has a magic door which can go everywhere, James has a telescope which can see things no matter how far, Jacob has a table mat which can turn out food and Mia... she has none.

“Take us to the place where the “Journey to the west” take place please!” said Noah. Just then, the door opened, they went to have their interesting adventure!

The first question has come, where should they go? They were in an unknown city and no instructions from anyone, what should they do? Jacob said, “Oh gosh! Where should we go? Hey James, I remember you got a telescope right? Use it and see where should we go!” James said, “Oh yeah, I almost forget it!” Mia said, “Stop it! Take it out faster!”. James took it out and looked through the telescope, it pointed out that they should go to a kingdom to find the king there, that kingdom has served the main characters in “Journey to the west” before and they should ask for a place to sleep in the nearness temple as it was already evening now, they were all very tired! And Jacob took out his magic table mat and started to eat! He was so lucky to have this kind of treasure! Mia was really jealous because she has none!

When they went to the temple, the imperial guard asked them to figure out some general questions first, and they can sleep one night there and have a little present! Mia came forward and said, “Let me try, I’m good at solving”. Not surprisingly, Mia solved it all correctly. The imperial guard said, “Here you are, miss, your present! Mia screamed, and shouted, “What! An apple! An apple only!?” James said, “Calm down Mia, it’s a magical apple! There is only one magical apple in this world, it’s special and useful, it can treat different kind of sicknesses, right?” The guard said, “Yep, but that’s only have 1 day left to eat that, because it has been stayed in our temple for too long!” But they didn’t regard as a matter and go to rest.

The next day, Noah said, “Guys, its time to wake up!” And then, all of them woke up and have their adventure again! James took out his telescope and saw where is the kingdom. After a few paths, they saw a river and a turtle, without a think, Noah rushed to the turtle and asked, “Dear Mr. Turtle, we are having an adventure to the Kingdom over there, would you like to take us to the other side of the river?” “Sure, but please help me to ask the king, how long can I live?” said the turtle. “Okay we can!” said Mia. After the river, they finally saw the kingdom! They quickly ran into the kingdom and begged to see the king. When they saw the king, the king was heavily sick and looked ill. Mia remember that she got a magic apple from the guard that could save any sickness, it might help the king. But time was limited, the day was nearly end! So, four of them immediately put the apple into the king’s mouth and the magic thing happened! The king was recovered after that and he told the whole story to them, that’s true!

“Boom!”, Noah used his magical door to come back to 21<sup>st</sup> century. The History teacher asked, “Did you guys search information about the Journey to the west?” Noah and James both said, “We are well-known of the story now!”

“Wait, I think we forgot something... but I can't remember that...”, Noah said. James replied, “If you can't remember that means it isn't anything very important, focus on the lesson!”  
(Turtle point of view)

“It has been a month! How long do they need to ask? Why no one can remember this such easy question?” said the Turtle.

# New Journey to the West

*St. Margaret's Co-educational English Secondary and Primary School, Choi, Penelope – 12*

One day in the 21st century, in the lands of Heaven, with minds filled with curiosity, Xuan Zang, Sun Wukong, Pigsy and Sha Wujing met Buddha at the Lei Yin Temple for a significant announcement. “ Good afternoon, my friends. I’ve asked you to come in order to notify you all for your next mission on Earth. It is now year 2020 on Earth and technology is being used widely to enhance people’s lives, however some problems are still not solved in some specific countries and cities such as the environmental problems in Hong Kong and the poverty situation in India. Thus, you four will travel from Hong Kong to India and during your New Journey to the West, you must try your best to find solutions to the major issues that I just mentioned, understand ?” “Amitabha, yes, we understand, ” the four replied faithfully and in a second, they have arrived in Hong Kong.

“ What a humongous change on Earth after a thousand years ! ” Sa Wujing exclaimed unbelievably. “ No wonder why the city is so contaminated, it is all because of the copious number factories and transports that are producing air pollution, the light banners that are producing light pollution and the constructions that are producing noise pollution !!! ” the red-faced Sun Wukong roared. Pigsy patted on Wukong’s shoulder and said, “ Calm down, brother. Look at this poster which is about the fireworks shows at Disneyland every night. ” “ Amitabha, nowadays, people in modern cities only know the importance of entertainment but have they ever thought of the contamination that it has caused to the environment? We must teach them how to rescue the Earth. ” Xuan Zang sighed disappointedly. The other three agreed and after their discussion, they arrived at Disneyland at eight that night.

Just when the fireworks show was about to start, Wukong leapt from the crowd and with a somersault, flew to the top of the castle and raised his voice, “ Stop the fireworks ! ” Then, there were a few seconds of dead silence among the crowd as if the Earth has stopped revolving. Xuan Zang, Pigsy and Sha Wujing walked slowly and tranquilly out from the crowd. After introducing themselves, using a magic spell, Pigsy turned a piece of white cloud into a television which played a video of how Hong Kong as a fish village turned into an international and industrialised metropolis. “ As you have seen, Hong Kong was once a beautiful and natural fish village but why would it become one of the world cities with the most pollution? It is because that you all had misuse energy and technology, e.g. arranging the fireworks shows, which contaminates our environment and harm our health. Thus, why not cancel these events and get rid of your bad daily habits of wasting energy and together as a team save our home? ” The crowd burst out applauding to the speech and starting from the next day, all fireworks shows in Hong Kong have been cancelled and the government and green groups adopted a number of green policies, such as regulations of light banners and energy use monitoring ordinances, which influenced a lot of neighbouring cities and countries of Hong Kong, e.g. Beijing, Shanghai and Japan positively through imitation.

After completing their first mission, the master and apprentices set off to India to continue their New Journey to the West optimistically.

The cities of Mumbai and Hong Kong are as different as night and day, although they are both commercial and economic main hubs of their countries, however Hong Kong is facing environmental pollution while Mumbai is suffering from poverty.

When the four reached their destination, all of a sudden, a gang of masked men attacked the them and wanted to rob their possessions. After a few rounds of “ combats ”, the gangsters abandoned their weapons and surrendered, imploring for their forgiveness. The agitated Wukong growled deafeningly, “ Why did you guys steal things when you knew that it is illegal ? ” “ Sorry, we didn’t meant to be thieves, but as the gap between the rich and the poor is too wide, our money is insufficient for affording our families’ basic and daily needs, ” one of the men said with his head down. “ Amitabha, we feel miserable about your encounters indeed, ” Xuan Zang commiserate the gang and gave them a grey pocket, “ Here are some seeds

for you all, I wish that you'd all work hard and try to make use of them wisely in order to run your own farms in the future and co-operate with each other to earn sufficient income for improving your quality of life. " " Thank you so much, we will all put great effort to enhance our lives, " they happen to coincide saying the identical thing merrily. After the men left, the four friends decided to stay for a month before going back to Heaven, so as to experience Indian cultural customs, not knowing that something nasty and unwelcoming awaits them.

After a month, on the day which the four friends planned to return to Heaven, they accidentally fell into a trap and were captured by four masked man and after introducing themselves, the four knew that they are Hong Kong and Indian manufacturing factory owners. One of the masked owners smirked with a cigarette in his mouth, " Hello, my new slaves, you must be wondering why did we brought you to this unpleasant warehouse. Well, recently, you four had encouraged the Hong Kong government to strengthen the monitoring policies of factories and the poor in India to develop their agricultural business which adversely affect our factories such as receiving penalties and adding on to the number of competitors in our businesses. Thus, if you want to be released from here, two of you must use spells to hypnotise the two governments to ban those policies and the businesses of the poor. Or else, ....hehehehe! " After discussing for a few minutes alone, it was confirmed that Sun Wukong and Pigsy would be in charge of the hypnosis. In order to avoid being caught, the capturers threw the two into a enormous bag and transported them to the Government headquarters to ensure that they don't know the warehouse's location.

In that afternoon, Wukong and Pigsy met two masked factory owners in a car park and show them a newspaper and its headline wrote, " HONG KONG AND INDIAN GOVERNMENTS CANCELLED NEW MONITORING POLICIES AND BANNED NEW BUSINESSES OF THE POOR ". The two capturers snickered and wanted to grab the newspaper, but Pigsy stopped them and said calmly, " If you want to give this newspaper to your boss then you'd need to command him to set my master and brother free. " The two nod and phoned their boss to let the two out. After ten minutes, one masked man together with Xuan Zang and Sha Wujing arrived. " Now, give me that newspaper, " one of the two men snatched it fiercely from Wukong's hands and departed with the other man in their car. " What did you do to hypnotise the governments ? " Wujing asked while untying himself with the help of Pigsy. " We printed a fake newspaper and attached a teeny-tiny GPS follower on it. Then, we contacted the Hong Kong and Indian police to tell them about the plan. Thus, they can apply the GPS information into use and arrest the four kidnapers. " " Amazing idea, Wukong. Thank goodness that you didn't contribute in such a colossal and evil conspiracy. " Xuan Zang said, relieved about his previous worries. The next day, the four read the newspaper and was informed that the four villainous capturers were arrested and Wukong looked up to the blissful and cloudless sky, the Sun was sitting there shining and grinning, joining the celebration of the four merry friends.

In the modern 21<sup>st</sup> century world, there are many global problems waiting for us to deal with, such as abuse of energy sources resulting in ecological pollution and poverty leading to rises in the number of crimes. Some people may only stand in their own views and disregard the necessities and opinions of the others which may cause negative influences towards everybody. In contrast, if everyone work hard together as a team and try their best to discover resolutions towards various awful worldwide situations diligently, I am sure that we will absolutely succeed one day in the future.

# New Journey to the West

*St. Margaret's Co-educational English Secondary and Primary School, Eng, Elysse – 12*

**S**un WuKong, also known as the monkey king, had many struggles throughout his adventure. Luckily, he had his weapon stick to protect himself and fight with others in case they thought he was a monster. He can do cool moves and things that no human can do.

Thinking, this sounds like Journey to the West, which also makes me think about this journey....

Winnie and her family went to the airport to get their flight to Vancouver.

Winnie enjoyed the flight very much as she watched many movies of her favourite. She also enjoyed the meals and the Haegan Dazs ice cream. She didn't really sleep much so she was fatigued when she got to Vancouver.

When they arrived, it was stormy, the clouds were as black as a werewolf and the lightning were shinier than 10 lights lighting up together!! They took a taxi to their hotel and it took them around an hour due to the traffic on the highway.

After arriving the room, Winnie put down her bag on the floor and went on the bed to sleep as it was midnight in Hong Kong.

'I'm too tired to move anymore', said Winnie while yawning. Then she fell asleep.

The next day, she woke up at 3 in the morning!! Her mom told her it is because she has jet lag as the time in Hong Kong and Vancouver are different.

She got out of bed and started getting ready for the day. Today her parents decided to bring her to watch a movie about Journey to the West and visit a zoo.

She brought her binoculars, camera and some food and drinks. She was so excited that she was ready in 15 minutes.

While waiting for her parents to wake up, she read a brochure about the zoo and also looked at the map so she was 100% ready for the trip.

When her parents woke up, she rushed her parents to get ready so she has more time to stay at the zoo and enjoy nature. Her parents knew how excited she was so they also quickly got ready.

Accidentally, Winnie fell asleep while reading the brochure. Her dad, Jack, was ready the second she fell asleep. He tried to wake her up but she started snoring, so he and her mom, Ophelia, pulled her out of bed, took her bag and carried her down to the rental car they rent.

Winnie woke up during the car ride. She suddenly panicked and asked her parents, "Did you take my backpack and binoculars?". Ophelia shakes her head and said, "I took your backpack but I didn't see your binoculars in it...".

"Why didn't you take it? It was right next to my backpack! Now it's useless to go to the zoo without binoculars as I can't learn anything about them unless I can see them clearly!", Winnie said.

Jack said, "Sorry, my daughter, we didn't see it, but I can borrow mine to you as long as I adjust the strap to fit your neck."

"Ugh.. Fine.. I wanted to go to the zoo to learn and have fun, but now you ruined it. It's at least better that you have spare ones for me.." Winnie said in an angry voice.

She looked out the window and enjoyed the view the rest of the trip.

When they arrived the zoo, Winnie stormed out of the car once the car came to a complete stop and paid the zoo entry fee with the money that her parents provided her.

After, she went to the farthest end of the zoo and secretly hid for awhile, so that her parents won't find her there. She then continued reading the brochure. After a few minutes, her parents started calling her through her mobile phone.

Luckily, her phone was on silent mode, because her parents recognised her phone's ringtone. She immediately ended the call and heard the announcement, "Winnie Johnstons, please proceed to the customer service hotline desk to find your parents. Thank you."

She also heard security guards shouting her name, "Winnie Johnstons!!" She went into a farther end because she wasn't at the end of the walkway.

She was happy to see a door. Once she passed it, she locked it and put some heavy brooms leaning against the door.

She was panting as she ran to the end of the walkway. When she got there, she took a drink of water. She then saw a secret pathway and she headed towards it.

She saw Disneyworld!! It was a bit tiny as it was hidden and not a lot of people know how to get there. She quickly locked the connecting door and ran there and played for an hour or two as there weren't many people playing and riding the rides.

Looking at her phone, she saw some missed calls. When she looked carefully, there was 769 missed calls!! She almost fainted by staring at the number. She put away her phone and heard her stomach rumbling.

While looking for some food in her bag, she found her mom's wallet. It must've dropped in there by mistake. In the wallet, she found a credit card, debit card and some cash.

Since she couldn't find any food in her bag besides some Nerds candy, so she went to a restaurant called "Chef Courtney's Fish and Chips" and got fish and chips for lunch. "It was deeeelicious", she said proudly. She paid for the meal with the credit card and left the park with the secret entrance through the restaurant back to the car.

Unfortunately for her parents, she was already 17 years old and she has a driving license and she also has spare keys for their car and she drove it back to the hotel.

Fortunately for her parents, they could track where and when Ophelia's credit card was last used and the last use was to pay for the parking at the zoo parking lot. Which also means that she has driven the car somewhere.

They also installed a camera and GPS and connected it to Jack's phone, which also means that he can see where the car is.

When they saw the GPS arrive the hotel, they were relieved as long as their daughter was safe.

As they were relieved, they took a taxi back to the hotel and found Winnie sleeping on the bed and covered her with a blanket along with a kiss.

# Journey to the West

*St. Margaret's Co-educational English Secondary and Primary School, Ho, Matthew – 12*

**Journey to the West:** A Short Story on What Happened Before the Journey (set in modern time)

31/12/2004

Friday

**H**ello new diary friend! I'm going to be writing a lot in you soon, since my new semester of magic school is starting in a few days! Let's hope this year won't be as bland as the last.

I almost forgot, I should probably introduce myself to you. My name's Xuan Yu Kong, but people tend to call me Monkey King. I don't really fancy any of the names since both of them sound uncomfortable to me, but i can't really think of any other name for myself; but i can think of a name for *you*, dear friend. I'll name you... Diary. That sounds like a nice name.

Anyway, i've got to celebrate the New Year with my monkey neighbourhood now. See you tomorrow!

Monkey King

1/1/2005

Saturday

Happy new year dear friend! The little festival my fellow monkeys put up was nice. Now I've got to revise for school. Bye for now!

Monkey

4/1/2005

Tuesday

The school committee added a couple of "interesting" subjects; Human Knowledge (everybody in the school is a monster or animal), Meddling with Magic, Arithmancy and other subjects I'm not certain of in addition to the millions of subjects we already have. Terrifying, it sure is.

Aside from that, there's still some actually *interesting* news; rumor has it that there's a legendary monk named Xuanzang who's in search for 3 disciples to accompany him on his journey to India in order to recover ancient sacred texts from the gods; now I'm not a big fan of religion, but it's also rumored that there's a reward for accompanying him. Nobody knows *what* this reward is, but it seems like something worth going through near-death experiences and long hardships. Now that's something I'd want to do.

But I should probably consider the huge workload of school I've got on my hands.

Your Best Friend

6/1/2005

Thursday

Apparently the rumor has spread like wildfire; all the students in our school (and I believe the whole world at this point) know about this Xuanzang rumor. It's been the hottest topic to talk and debate about; yet nobody is willing to be his disciple, the only thing they *are* willing to do is talk about *who* would *want* to be his disciple. I sure do, but i can't confess to anyone, else the next hot topic would be "Monkey King.. of Stupidity".

However, 2 of my friends, "The Friar" and Zhu Ba Jie (preferably known as "pig") are surprisingly also up to the task. Coincidence or not, I doubt us 9th graders like us would even be able to do such a difficult task. Xuanzang might not even be real! But if school goes terribly wrong, I might ask them to leave school and set out to find this Xuanzang man. Anyway, onto more annoying school work.



Your Good Pal

P.S. you can see that I'm not really sure what to write as my name. I guess I'll settle with Monkey.

**10/1/2005**

**Monday**

I've got many things to complete at school. I won't write frequently, hope you're okay with that.

Monkey

**30/1/2005**

**Sunday**

I've finally got a bit of time to write. There's been so much work to do, so many assignments to complete and so many tests to revise for recently; I'm not sure if I'll have time to write in this diary anymore. I'm not even sure if I'll be able to survive!

Hmm.. ditching school would be nice at this point.

Monkey

**2/2/2005**

**Wednesday**

I've been trying to evade school for the past 2 days; i really need a break from it. It's only been a month and I'm already breaking the school rules to give myself some needed rest.

I watched some news, and Xuanzang's story is apparently real; he'll be leaving to India soon, and it's announced he'll need the 3 disciples as soon as possible, as he needs to get the sacred texts before it's too late.

I better hurry if I really want to do this.

Monkey

**3/2/2005**

**Thursday**

The school caught me. I'm on the brink of being expelled. After all, the school's pretty strict on rule, especially the one i broke.

And it gets worse; I'm doing terrible in almost all my subjects, and i've failed a massive amount of tests. I can't cope with all of this, it's just too hard. I'm not certain if i can continue school for another week at this rate. At least i have you, so i can vent out some of feelings. Thanks for being with me.

It's about time I go and find this guy. I'll keep attending classes for as long as I can.

A Frustrated Monkey

**18/2/2005**

**Friday**

Well, I've made my choice. I'm leaving for a greater good. I've asked Pig and Friar to come with me, and they've also decided to come along with me, since the thought of "education" makes all of our faces flinch.

I'm sorry that I've disappointed you. I haven't even written much in you, and now I'm already making such a big change in life. I really hope you can forgive me for writing more spells and math equations in you than talking about my life.

I'm going to train up my magic tricks for a while so i be a worthy disciple of Xuanzang. Don't worry, Pig and Friar will be with me.

Thanks for everything.

Monkey

**2/3/2005**

**Wednesday**

We're leaving now. Hope this journey will be worth our exhaustion; perhaps this journey will teach us more important things in life than my school does.

If you're wondering when I'll be back, I'm afraid I can't answer you. Yet. The trip might take weeks, months, years, perhaps even a decade or two.

If you're also wondering what'll happen to me, Pig and Friar, or what we'll do, then..

*All we can do is hope somebody will write about our long Journey to the West.*

I'm out of pages to write on. Once again, thanks for everything. Take care.

*Your Dearest Friend,  
Monkey*

# New Journey to the West

*St. Margaret's Co-educational English Secondary and Primary School, Johnson, Isabel – 13*

There was a boy named Miles. Ever since he was a child, Miles knew he had traits that were uncommon among his peers. When he was in kindergarten, he was able to do acrobatics usually people were not able to do perhaps for their whole lives. The other thing he was able to do that was quite unorthodox, but kind of disgusting was that he was able to gleek. Gleeking is an action of two strings of saliva spraying out of your mouth. This usually happens when someone yawns and it only happens a few times in your lifetime, but Miles could do it whenever he wanted.

His best friends consisted of Shannon, Rebecca, and Mary. They were all very close and had been friends all throughout their lives. They all had strange quirks to them but never told each other since the topic never came up. But that was a long, long time ago. And since then they had gotten closer than ever. They never thought this would be relevant to their lives, but boy were they wrong.

At this point, Miles and his friends were in their senior year of high school. They were considered the “the outcasts”. But they mostly stuck with their own clique, and nobody really interrupted them, or talked to them. They weren’t popular, but they weren’t unpopular and it didn’t bother them in the slightest. All of them were very involved in dungeons and dragons, comics, and live action role-playing in which they would embody their characters from dungeons and dragons.

One Tuesday after school, they were taking a stroll outside of their school and they stumbled across a thrift store. Thrift stores were a sacred part of their group, as almost all of their game equipment was purchased in thrift stores scattered across their hometown, Richmond Virginia. As they walked in, they felt a mysterious aura fill their nostrils and through their minds. “We’ll meet by the gumball machine in 15 minutes.” Said Miles. They all split their paths and set on a road to finding some hidden gems. As it turns out they all ended up finding some parts of their characters. Miles had found a long staff for his wizard costume. Since Shannon was the dungeon master, she found a dice tower that could be used during the endless hours of their campaigns. Rebecca was a Rogue and had bought a cloak. Lastly, Mary had bought himself a sword for his paladin character.

They’d role-play at the abandoned train station. They had found a room which they assumed to be the control room. Except this time, the door to the room was glowing as if it was the gateway to heaven. “Uhhh, is someone in there?” Mary asked, you could hear the tremble in his voice as he questioned the rest quietly. As they opened the creaky old door, they felt as if they were coming out of a cinema, but ten times as powerful. The light eventually dimmed and they walked into a green, vibrant forest. It was overwhelming beautiful. They looked at each other in shock. Confusion written all over their faces. As they stood there in shock, a band of goblins approached them. They couldn’t believe their eyes! They had all their weapons ready and didn’t know what to do except take charge and Fight the creatures. The goblins were easy to beat since they were a level one monster for battle. “Woah, to s this real life? “asked Shannon. The rest of them cold only nod in agreement. They wandered theforsy and came across a group of trodgolytes eating by a fire. They couldn’t understand what they were saying since they spoke common and elvish mostly. A cart caught their attention at the opposite side of the space. Inside, there were 2 half elvish creatures. “I think we should go help them.” Whispered Rebecca. They did their special handshake a PhD set out to unlock the rangers from the cart. Miles casted a sleep spell on the monsters so they could sneak past them with no hesitation. “Thank you for saving us noble sirs and madams.” They eventually became friends. The rangers were Darylle, and her brother, Donell. They were on a quest to find Darylle’s son who had been captured by trodgolytes. Darylle mentioned a prize for them after they find her son. So the clique agreed to do it.

In order to find her son, they would have to navigate the forest, which wouldn’t be difficult since they’re rangers. And find a dungeon of trodgolytes where her son was being held. After a day or two of hiking through the mountain range, they had found a pile that leaded to the dungeon. So when they went in it, the familiar smell of trodgolyte dung struck their senses. “Oh my gosh, that’s so disgusting!” Exclaimed Rebecca, like the diva she was. As they went in there wasn’t anyone, but as they looked around, they saw some skeletons on the prison cell beds. There were almost certain that they were the undead. So, Miles casted a fire bolt cantrip, which took out one of the sleeping Skeletons. The other was decapitated by Mary. Just as they thought this was getting easy, some goblins were in the rooms to decide their fate. “Well, well, well, what do we have here?” The chief goblin chuckled as he said it. Miles had no choice but to cast a ice

knife spell on him and take him out. There were still 3 goblins in the passageway, so they all came together and fought them off. One by one. They reached for the second door and saw a big chest full of treasures and gold pieces inside! This was now considered their prize. They checked the door on the left and followed the dark alleyway to a row of prison cells in which, they found Darylle's son. "Son! We've been searching for you for days." His mother managed to stutter out. They smiled at the heart warming moment and realized. They didn't want to go back to the real world. All they wanted to have a lifelong full of adventures.

## New Journey to the West

*St. Margaret's Co-educational English Secondary and Primary School, Ko, Natalie – 12*

At the end of the Journey to the West, Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie, Sha Wujing and Xuanzang became gods. They got all what they wanted as gods, and were satisfied with their life. However, Zhu Bajie wasn't content. No matter how much he ate, he still had an empty feeling inside of him. After thinking for a long while, he had realized what the problem was. He wanted to make food himself.

Zhu Bajie's stubby legs immediately took off running, finding his old travel buddies to accompany him on his new journey to the west. He had made up his mind to travel across the continents and collect cooking ingredients, and make the ultimate dish that he had dreamt of.

After a few hours, Zhu Bajie managed to gather everyone inside a room. "Why are we here again?" Sun Wukong asks, scratching his head while yawning. Zhu Bajie suddenly slammed his fists onto the table, causing the half asleep Sha Wujing jolt up in shock. "I want to create the best dish ever to exist." As soon as he finished speaking, Xuanzang immediately stood up from his seat. "I've got better things to do, you can deal with this by yourself." He spoke as he walked to the exit. "Please stay!" Zhu Bajie exclaimed. "Xuanzang, it's free food!" Sun Wukong added. "Well, it's not really free since we have to make it ourselves." said Sha Wujing. Sun Wukong gave him a glare. "Just go with it." "Fine, fine." Xuanzang said as he sat back down. "I'm getting a bigger proportion." He added. The day quickly went by as they discussed their plans on where to get their necessary ingredients.

The next day, they had already begun their journey. As they were walking, Zhu Bajie filled everyone in about what they're making. "Behold!" He bellowed, as he stretched his arms out. "We're making lobster curry!" "Wait. That's the only reason why we're travelling so far?" Sha Wujing questioned. Zhu Bajie nodded slowly. "You're kidding me..." Sha Wujing spoke as he puts his face in his hands, letting out a long sigh. "You could've just made it in the kitchen!" He added, questioning himself why he even agreed to come with him. "You see, if we do it in a mortal way, we can experience the tension and much more!" Zhu Bajie explained as he skipped his way beside Xuanzang, who was reading while walking.

"So according to this Google thing—" Sun Wukong started speaking. "How did you get the wifi thing you need?" Zhu Bajie interrupted. "Now as I was saying," He continued, ignoring Bajie, "the best lobsters you can find in the world is in Scarborough, Maine, the best rice fields are at Vietnam and the best curry chef is currently living in Britain, called... uh... Olive Jam." "We can go to Vietnam first, it's the closest." Xuanzang suggested. (Jamie Oliver to be precise, they cannot read English that well.)

The four of them travelled on Sun Wukong's Somersault Cloud, straight to Vietnam. When they landed in the rice field, they could feel the grass swaying next to their ankles. "Everyone, let's start working!" As soon as they started picking the rice, a young woman appeared. "What are you doing?" She asked. Everyone stopped in their tracks as Sun Wukong glanced at the girl, only to leave his eyes smoking. Without a word, he pulled out his Ruyi Bang and pointed it threateningly at the girl. Xuanzang glared at him as a shriek of pain came from Sun Wukong while he grabbed his headband. Xuanzang was muttering the special chant under his breath, causing it to tighten. "How many—" Before he could finish his sentence, the headband tightened even more. Sha Wujing interrupted Xuanzang: "Xuanzang, please let him do it. How many times did you forbid him to hit a lady, and then you end up tied up inside a pot?" Xuanzang stopped in his tracks and remembered. A lot of times. He sighed and allowed Sun Wukong to do what he needed to. The woman backed up slowly, turning into a phoenix. Sun Wukong then said a word that made Xuanzang tighten his headband. After they collected the rice, they put it inside their sacks.

"What if we split up and go to get the lobster and the curry chef?" Sun Wukong asked. "We're not / kidnapping/ the curry chef, we're just asking them for advice about cooking curry and maybe taking some back." Zhu Bajie corrected him. "I think it's a great idea." Xuanzang spoke. "Then who's pairing with who?" Sha Wujing questioned. After a long discussion, they've decided that Sun Wukong is going with Xuanzang to get the lobster, and Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing will get Olive Jam.

Sun Wukong pulled out a strand of his short baby blonde hair as it became a clone of himself. "He can take you to Britain with his cloud." He spoke, as his clone leapt onto a Somersault cloud. "Master, let's go." The real one leapt onto a Somersault as well, pulling onto the cloud Xuanzang as well.

As they traveled in the sky, Sun Wukong noticed a golden light following behind them but was soon blinded by the clouds. He decided to stay on guard.

When they arrived at Scarborough, it was already dark. They entered the lobster store as they swallowed chewed light blue gum that Sha Wujing gave them, which was a translation gum. There was only one lobster left in the shop, and it looked fresh.

What they didn't know was that the Phoenix spirit has gone inside the lobster, awaiting for them to cook them.

They went back to Vietnam to meet back up with Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing, who has a pot of hot curry with them. "Did you get Olive Jam to make the curry?" "We asked if we could make it alongside with him but we almost set fire to his kitchen so he just made a pot for us." Sha Wujing explained. "I see." Sun Wukong responded.

They "borrowed" a kitchen from one of the citizens inside Vietnam and put the pot of curry onto the stove. Zhu Bajie was watching the fire for the curry, Sha Wujing and Xuanzang was cooking the rice, mostly trying to figure out how to use a rice cooker, leaving Sun Wukong to deal with the lobster.

Sun Wukong stared deeply at the lobster's eyes, since he was suspicious how a lobster that was left in a store was so fresh. To his surprise, his eyes went smoking. The lobster suddenly grew large in size, breaking the roof of the kitchen, leaving the building in rumbles. Sha Wujing has safely taken Xuanzang outside, and Zhu Bajie managed to escape, almost crushed by a debris.

The lobster then turned back into its original size, as a golden light flew out of its mouth, which then transformed into a young maiden with blonde hair tied up into a messy bun, wearing a Chinese traditional cloak. She held a spear, pointing it at Sun Wukong. He on the other hand, has his Ruyi Bang out, pointing at her head. They both swung their weapons at each other, blocking and attacking each other. They fought for a long time until another god intervened, Guan Yin. She subdued the Phoenix spirit and took her in but before she left, she turned to face Zhu Bajie. "Bajie, I forbid you to ever cook again." A look of horror fell onto his face, as Guan Yin spread the holy water down, causing the amount of debris to return back to normal.

In the end, Zhu Bajie learnt that he was never going to fulfill his wish of being able to make lobster curry, no matter how hard he tried.

# New Journey to the West

*St. Margaret's Co-educational English Secondary and Primary School, Kwok, Harmoni – 12*

“Come on! Try to beat me!” Princess Iron Fan challenged the apprentices of Buddhist monk Xuanzang, Sun Wukong (Monkey King), Sha Wujing (Friar Sand) and Zhu Bajie (Talking Pig) at the Flaming Mountain. When they ran forwards to fight with her, she waved her iron fan fiercely to make strong wind. All of them were blown away up high...

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“Master, Sha Wujing, Bajie, Wake up! Are you all alright?” Wukong tried to wake everyone up. “Oh! Every building is so tall here! Where did the wind bring us to?” Xuanzang felt very confused. Wukong lengthened his Monkey King Bar to observe the surrounding. “Master, we are trapped in a forest with buildings. It must be the magic spell of the devil!” They decided to explore everywhere and find the way to the west.

“Look! There is a sign with Sheung Shui. Be careful, everyone! It seems no one are human being here. They all wear in a strange way. They walk as quick as a cheetah and look as busy as working bees without caring the others. Wukong, check with your fiery golden eyes,” said Sha Wujing. The people knocked them while they passed by and some even used the suitcases to roll on their feet. Bajie was going to curse and hit the rude person with his iron rake. She was a beautiful lady so he changed his attitude at once. “Hello, pretty! I am Bajie. Let’s have a drink together...” However, the lady was very scared and screamed, “Oh my god!! A ghost! A pig that could walk with 2 legs and talk!!” More and more people gathered around them and took video with their mobile phones. “We must escape before they capture us into that small stuff!” Wukong fetched his fellows to go onto his cloud somersault and left the crowd immediately.

“The people here are more terrible than any banshee or Demons we have met before!” “How can we leave this ghostly place?” “They have magic spell!” “No matter what, we must protect Master to the west” “I am starving...” “All of you, please calm down,” said Xuanzang. “Wukong, could you please go to Guanyin or Tathagatha Buddha and ask for help?” “Yes, Master!” He found Sheng Mun Reservoir were full of monkeys and he decided to land there. “My fellow monkeys! I am your Monkey King! Please protect my Master and my fellows away from the demons here.” They settled at the Reservoir area for the time being.

Wukong spotted a big Guanyin statue at Repulse Bay. “When did Guanyin move to the ground? Anyway, it is more convenience for me.” Guanyin welcomed him with a warm grin. “Wukong, now it is 2017 and you are now in Hong Kong. People here badly-behaved and selfish. If you can find someone who is willing to read you a book called “Tale to the West”, you could go back to your world. Perhaps you could start from a school...” Guanyin vanished then.

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Wukong followed Guanyin’s advice and went to a secondary school. To avoid being too standing out in the school, he transformed himself to a fly. He noticed some unpleasant things, such as unenthusiastic in learning, bully and drug abuse. He couldn’t bear seeing those scenes and felt helpless. He decided to report what he saw to his master first. Xuanzang felt very sorry to the youth after listening to details in the school. He regarded students should treasure the chance to study, care about friendship and their own health. After night, he had a lot of questions in his mind. “Would it be possible to find a kind person to read us the book while the people here are so horrifying? What is the book “Tales to the West? Is it even more important than Buddhist scripture in the West?”

The next day, Wukong and Sha Wujing went to the school again together. “Bajie, you stay here to protect Master! I will bring the ones to read us the book!” They dressed up as the students with the smart school uniform. Wukong used his magic power to make everyone supposed they were the students there. “hi, do you know the Tales to the West?” “Who won’t know this book?” replied a boy with thick glasses. Wukong was full of hopes. “Really? How wonderful! Could you bring the book and read to me after school?” “Are you kidding? Would you help me finishing all the homework? I won’t waste time with you while I have a lot of private tutoring till late every day.” Wukong and Sha Wujing didn’t give up easily. They kept asking different students. “No way! I need to play online games!” “I have to learn harp and Spanish.” “Sorry, I need to prepare for the Olympic Maths competition and swimming training” Sha

Wujing couldn't believe his ears. "The students here are so busy! Now I understand why some of them they might have behaviour issues". Wukong disagreed with the excuses to misbehave. However, they had no time to argue about that. They must have their mission done first. "Why don't you go to the library by yourself? There are some copies of Tales of the West. None of them have been borrowed while we like playing with mobile games instead of reading." A girl talked to them while her eyes were still focus on her mobile phone. "Thank you!" Wukong and Wujing ran to the library immediately.

The school library had a lot of books and they had no idea how to search Tales to the West. A tall lady in a blue dress went to them and asked them gently, "kids, which book are you looking for? Do you forget the Dewey Classification I have taught in class?" After explaining everything to the lady, she recommended herself to read Tales to the West to them. "Thank you very much! Msssss..." "I am Ms Au. Anyway, could you wait till the school finishes?" "Certainly! I am going to bring Master and Bajie here now."

★ ★ ★

Everyone arrived the school library. "Sorry for keeping you guys waiting. It is my honour to meet the characters in the Tales to the West and help you going back to your home!" "Ms Au, you are very beautiful and kind! I would like to have a date ...." "Wukong hit Bajie's back to stop his naughty behaviour. "Ms Au, please start reading the book for us."

They felt amazed and astonished to hear all about their adventure and journey to the West, Lair of Spider spirits, Women's kingdom, White Bone Demon, Lotus Flower cave and so on. When Ms Au was reading the section about how they fight with Princess Iron Fan, there was a force attracting them into the book... Ms Au was left alone in the library.

★ ★ ★

In front of Wukong, Wujing, Bajie and Xuanzang, it was Princess Iron Fan. They could feel the heat of the Flaming Mountain once again. They all knew it won't be an easy battle. Nevertheless, after being in the modern Hong Kong, they had more confidence that they could beat every demon and solve all the difficulties and collect the Buddhist scripture in the West after all. If they could find a kind person like Ms Au in the horrible 21<sup>st</sup> century, no demons couldn't be beaten! "Everyone, do not lose the hopes or faiths to the future!"



# New Journey to the West

*St. Margaret's Co-educational English Secondary and Primary School, Wong, Mitchell – 13*

1400 years ago, there was a young monk called Wu who wanted to travel to the west not like anyone in his own place did before. But he was just a monk in a temple who wasn't allowed to go anywhere or explore, so he just kept on dreaming and dreaming: Is the west a heaven? Or is our place just the only place in the world?

After years of dreaming, he couldn't hold his curiosity to travel across the world, so he decided to leave his place and go exploring. But the elders in the temple all objected his request to leave, because in the Buddhist rules, monks were not allowed to go outside unless they are doing things for the temple. So, the elders decided to lock Wu up in his own room and did not let him go away. But the elders have forgotten one thing: The windows. Since the windows were not locked, Wu decided to pack his clothes, foods and necessities, then climbed out the window and ran as fast as he could as he was running for his life.

After he had run a long distance away from the temple, his heart was beating so fast he couldn't stand it and fainted away. But then a monkey nearby saw him and told the others, so the group of monkeys took him to their monkey emperor called Kong. Once Wu woke up, he was frightened by the amount of monkeys beside him and got his stick waving against the monkeys. Then, Kong came as he heard the noise made by the monkeys and asked him why was he here, so Wu said: 'I ... am a monk from a nearby temple ... and I am going to the west and explore like nobody did before.' Then, Kong had a talk with him and decided to go with him since he wanted to get famous after the exploration. So, Kong and Wu left the monkey's place and headed for the west. After they arrived a nearby lake, a God called Sha popped out from the water and shouted 'I am the God of this lake! You shall not pass unless you have beaten me in a fight!', then Kong picked up a branch and fought with Sha. After a series of chaos between the two of them, Sha finally felt tired from all of the fighting and gave up and said: 'You have won fair and square. You shall pass the lake by the help of my powers.' Then, the lake's water suddenly split by two leaving a path on the lake bed just like Moses did, and the both of them were amused by his powers, and convinced Sha to go to the west with them. But Sha refused for a long time, but the two of them convinced him for a long long time, so Sha finally agreed to go with them. Along the way, they also met a talking Pig who wanted to discover food from the west and went with them.

In their journey, they faced a lot of problems when passing through countries and districts. One time, when they were trying to get through the mountains of Iran, there was a dark and lonely forest that hides a wide varieties of monsters, such as lion headed snakes, bird like wolves and spider humans. But they all killed the monsters and the villagers nearby praised them and invited them to a grand feast. But the Greedy Pig was greedy and he ate the whole village's food supply, so they were banned from that village and continued their journey.

The next day, they went across the plains of turkey, they were spotted by a group of Muslim hunters, and they were firing arrows towards them because of their religion against pigs, so the pig was raged and his face turned all red, and killed all the hunters with a farmer's axe next to him. But Wu was disappointed and angry because of the pig's acts, so he told him to stand still for 5 hours so he never killed anyone but monsters again.

After that, they walked through the terrains of Europe and was chased by an army of knights in armor, because of their thoughts against sorcerers, witches and wizards, so Wu and others ran, but the pig was too slow, therefore he got killed behind and was eaten in a celebration feast in the army.

But finally, they have stole a ship in a nearby harbour and set sail across the sea. After waves of storms and wind, they shipwrecked on a stone in shallow water, but Sha had superpowers, so they finally got to the west safely. They discovered the lands of the west, and became famous for centuries for travelling across the world, which also inspired other explorers to travel around the world. So, they made a great discovery for the world, and was remembered for their brave acts.

The End.

## New Journey to the West

*St. Margaret's Co-educational English Secondary and Primary School, Yeung, Christine – 13*

“Master, this way, let’s go in.” The monkey at the front, named Monkey King, lead a white horse to a town gate. A bald man with a red cassock sat on the back of the horse. He had a “Vairocana” on his head, which was shaped like a crown. It represented the powers of Buddhism. The master and his four apprentices, the Monkey King, a pig-headed man named Pigsy, another monk named Sandy and the prince of the deep seas which was turned into the horse, passed through the red-painted gate. The gate was one of the many that were set into a great wall of bricks firmly built up around the town inside.

The quietness of the town made all five creatures a little bit uneasy. No shadows could be found in the streets. Stalls filled with food and toys but without people stood in the bazaar. Windows and doors were tightly shut, along with sharp-looking crows standing on the window sills. Everything looked dark gray under the cloudy sky.

“Where did everybody go? I wouldn't come to this place if it wasn't on our way to the West. I'm hungry.” Pigsy murmured.

“Keep your mouth shut Pigsy, we will find ways out of here.” Monkey King talked back. The monk interrupted them and asked them to find a place to stay for one night. Monkey King flew off to a building with letters “Sweet Inn” carved on the sign dangling from a stick above the building’s door. He tried to open the door with its handle but failed; it was locked. Monkey King smashed open the wooden door and jumped in, looked around, confirmed the space safe, then invited the monk and his group in. There were still hot dishes and burning candles on the wooden dining tables, but not a person was to be found.

Pigsy could not hold his hunger, so he rushed to a table and stuffed his face into a bowl of soup. Monkey King brought a plate of lettuce to his master and he himself found some peaches left on the table. The horse was taken to the stable by Sandy and fed hay. Everybody decided to settle down in this creepy town for just one night only.

The sun sank below the horizon, and everything turned dark. The creatures went upstairs, with Monkey King staying in the same room with his master protecting him, and the rest in another room. Pigsy dozed off immediately after he laid on the hay bed. Monkey King was affected by the days of long walks and small fights too, so he jumped up and hung himself with his tail on the poles supporting the ceiling. His eyes closed.

A doorbell rang which disrupted Sandy’s sleep. He leaped to the door, angry at his interfered sleep. An old lady stood at the door, holding an oil lamp in one hand and a broomstick in the other hand.

“Would you like some room cleanup?” The old lad smiled widely. Sandy felt weird to have a lady do his room cleanup at midnight. He refused to let the lady in but the lady pushed through the door. She went to a corner of the room and started sweeping the floor, having her back facing Sandy. Sandy started persuading the old lady to leave the room when suddenly she turned around, jump into the air and dashed towards Sandy. Sandy noticed a change on her face – an obvious change. She turned into a creature with visible flesh dangling on her face and her eyeballs popping out. Her lower jaws hung loosely on her head and above the jaws where the place her mouth was once at, sharp rusty teeth appeared. Tentacles that looked like an octopus’ reached out from her dress and grabbed towards Sandy’s neck.

Sandy summoned his stick-like weapon with a new-moon-shaped blade at the end as fast as he could and nailed that tentacle to the ground with the blade.

“MONSTER!” As Sandy yelled, Pigsy and the horse woke up. Monkey King was there already from the room beside as he leaned on the doorframe with his hands crossed in front of his chest.

“I knew it, there couldn't be anything good in this dark place.” Monkey King smiled and pulled his weapon – a hard stick that could enlarge and shrink flexibly – out of his ears. He leaped as one of the tentacles fell towards him. At that split-second, he pounded his stick downwards and tore that tentacle into two halves.

The monster moaned in pain and started to enforce its attacks. Tentacles grew larger as they filled the whole room, wriggling and 鞭打ing the floor, leaving no space for the other three to stand.

“I just wanted to eat Tangseng’s meat so I can live forever, is it that hard?” The monster complained.

“Don't you ever think of that! Our master isn't there for you to eat!” Monkey King replied as he signaled the other three people to jump into the air to avoid the attacks. They raised their weapons together and pressed it down on the monster's head hard. The horse turned into a white dragon – which was his original appearance – and soared through the monster's body. A large mass of dust was lifted as the monster broke into pieces of bones and hit the ground. Thousands of strands of white smoke bursted out, going out of the windows, leaving the bones behind.

The monk came, holding a melon-shaped bottle in his hand. He yelled “UP!” To get the bones into the bottle. “It won't come out to do evil things again. It'll be digested by the bottle.” He took the bottle back into his bottle, “let's move on.”

The five walked out of the inn and were surrounded by townspeople who appeared out of nowhere.

“You set us free!” One of the ladies yelled.

An old man with a walking stick walked slowly through the crowd towards the monk and his group. “Heroes, greetings. I am the mayor of this town and I am here to thank you. Yesterday a gust of black wind blew to our town, sucking everybody inside. There was a skeleton which swallowed people and turned them into his own flesh, blood and organs. You killed the skeleton and released all of us from its body. Please accept our gift as a reward to saving our lives,” as he presented a small bag made of silk and fabric to the five, “these are life-saving kits which would turn into an object you really really need at emergency. Just open the bag and yell the object's name for three times.”

The monk accepted the gifts politely, and said goodbye to the whole town.

“Let's continue our journey to the West.” As they flung their baggage to their backs and left the town, towards the West.

# Barrage In The Hallucination

*St. Mary's Canossian College, Cheung, Sharon -12*

**V**enus looked back and screamed. Two terrifying monsters stared at her with their empty sockets. They had no skin and their blood was dripping. Venus ran as fast as she could, away from this place, away from the two monsters. But there wasn't any end and the monsters were getting closer and closer...

"Don't chase after me! Help..." shouted Venus as she sat up from her bed, awoke.

"Are you having the same nightmare again? Don't worry, it's just a dream..." whispered Sandy, her mother, who ran in with Sun, the father immediately when she heard Venus scream. But even she couldn't convince herself. "Sleep well, honey," she kissed Venus's forehead and left, worried.

...

The next day after sending Venus to school, Sandy wandered around the street thinking about her daughter again. Suddenly, she bumped into a nun. She felt that this nun could help her miserable daughter.

"You got to help my daughter..." she knelt on the ground, begging.

The nun looked surprise, but she led Sandy into a temple. She asked her to provide the birth information of Venus and her problem, and said, "Venus is quite special. Two Dream Demons realized this and would interrupt her sleep until she was exhausted so as to extract her soul in order to get eternity."

"You need to go to Daxingshan Temple which is located in Xian. There is the real 'The Goddess of Mercy'. She is regarded as the goodness of compassion and goodness. She may help your daughter to get rid of the demons and also figure out who your daughter actually is."

"Your job is to protect her. However, she already has three arahants to protect her – and you need to figure them out by yourselves."

"You cannot tell Venus about your action; otherwise the Demons may know your plan and they may do everything to jeopardize the life of Venus," concluded the nun.

Although Sandy didn't quite understand what the nun had said, she said thanks and went back home.

...

After arranging everything, Sun's family fled to Xian. Upon arrival, the two Demons seemed to know their plan and started to influence Venus more intensively. At one moment, Venus was as active as quicksilver, hugging and greeting everyone in the airport; at the other moment, she was as silent as the grave.

"Venus is very abnormal, she slept so early!" whispered Sandy.

"I guessed the demons hypnotized her," said Sun. "But the nightmare will soon be over."

At 4 o'clock in the evening when everyone was asleep, the two demons wanted to kidnap Sun as he was the backbone of the family. Unfortunately, Sun was too strong and had no dream, the demons couldn't enter his mind to affect him. They then changed the target to Shela, the sister. Luckily, Shela slept as deep as a pig and was very pure. The demons could not control her either. Finally, they chose Sandy...

Sandy was a sensational person. She was worried about her family, especially Venus. This gave the demons a chance. One of the demons entered to the dream of Venus while the other entered the dream of Sandy.

*"Mum! Where are you?" cried Venus.*

*"I am here," shouted Sandy.*

*"Nnnnnnooo gooooooooo...foooooo...eesttternalll..."*

*They didn't need to look to see whom the voice belonged to.*

*"Run!!!"*

Sun was woken up by the shouts. He found that Sandy was trembling and broke out into a sweat. He looked into Venus and she was shivering and mumbling. He then turned to Shela, mercifully she was snoring as usual.

"Sandy, wake up!" shouted Sun. But there was no feedback from Sandy.



*Cool! She flew towards the demons and chopped off one of their legs. Yummy!*

*But still she didn't get any advantages as the demons always created hurricanes, earthquakes, and blew sand into her eyes. She was frustrated and tired while the demons acted like they had endless power. All of a sudden, one of the demons tugged in the air really hard. Venus was wondering what it was doing when all her sharpest teeth got tugged out. She howled in pain and misery.*

*What she couldn't imagine was, then, a pack of wolves came out. They howled in union, and all of them lunged towards the demons. She was watching in great satisfaction that the organs, pieces, and blood of the demons were all over the place when she fainted.*

"Ahooh!" howled Venus. She opened her eyes and found everyone looking at her. Then they cheered together.

"Yeah!"

Sun's family thanked the monks cordially. Then they prepared for the return from the west. Everything seemed to be normal.

That night, Venus looked at the round moon and remembered how the pack of wolves had helped her. She suddenly had the strange urge to join them. She waved it out of her mind.

"Ahooh!" Venus opened her yellow eyes in the midnight. She looked out of windows until she saw her friends. She ripped her clothes and joined the pack. She looked back. ***Goodbye, mortals. I am finally what I ought to be.***

# The Treasure

*St. Mary's Canossian College, Fung, Ingrid – 13*

It was a normal day in Cross Camp. Emily, Christy, Caroline and Jake were having a little walk around the campsite to seek adventures around the campsite.

Emily is a sweet girl who has a pure heart and always persuades people to do things the right way, though she is a little naive. Christy is a very smart girl who gets an A plus in almost every subject, except for physical education. She is smart, but not very nice. Caroline is the most athletic girl everyone has ever seen. She can master every sport she gets her hands on, archery, basketball, volleyball, etc. She is also the strongest of them four, so she is kind of the mean one of the gang too. But deep down, she is a scary cat. Last but not least, Jake. Jake is not as clever or strong as the three girls. His interpretation of "exercise" is watching a football game while eating chips. Jake is lazy and careless. He always gets tripped over even when the thing is right in front of him.

As they were walking, little by little, they walked into the forest and they stopped in front of a tree. On the tree, someone carved an arrow pointing down and wrote the word "dig" beside the arrow. So they went back to their bunks and grabbed their shovels. Then they ran to meet each other back at the tree. They dug and dug, until they hit something. It was a suitcase. Inside the suitcase, there were three ordinary-looking items. Along with the items, there was also a map with rules written at the back. "It's a treasure map. There is something written at the back." said Christy.

"First rule, no arguments. Second rule, WE rather than I (work together). Third rule, give everyone a chance. Fourth rule, return everything BACK to the suitcase and bury the suitcase where you found it. The final rule, once you break any rule above, the treasures you found will all disappear." Jake read loudly, making sure that everyone in the group could hear him.

"Let's see what these items are." said Christy excitedly. She picked up a burger in the suitcase and wondered why it was there. Then, she threw it onto the ground and the burger exploded.

"Christy! Why did you do that?" Caroline yelled. Christy shrugged, as if she didn't care. But deep down, she cared a lot about what the others thought about her.

Emily put a rope in her backpack and Caroline put a sword in hers.

"When will we start our journey?" said Jake, while eating chips. "Ew! Gross! Don't talk while you're eating. By the way, we'll start at midnight." Caroline said with a disgusted face.

They packed their backpacks and left for their journey at midnight. Christy was reading the map while Jake held up the torch for her. The others were holding their torches, seeking their way through.

"According to the map, we need to go to the West, to the abandoned warehouse where no one lives." said Christy.

"The abandoned warehouse that says whoever gets in will never get out of it! Don't tell me you are talking about that warehouse!" replied Jake.

"Oh, is little Jake scared? Come on! You're a boy, don't be such a wimp. Let's go." teased Jake while the others laughed along.

They arrived in front of the warehouse and they stopped. "Danger. Do not come in." read Emily.

"Then are we supposed to go in?" asked Jake. The others scoffed at him and entered the warehouse. Jake ran and tried to keep up with them. They tiptoed to try to avoid activating any booby traps set in the warehouse. Caroline pushed Jake to the front of the line, but accidentally made him trip and pulled down a lever which activated all the dangers. However, the gang did not have a clue what was going to happen to them. They thought they had just pulled a useless lever.

As the four of them were walking through the hallways, an arrow was shot through, nearly killing Emily. They immediately turned back and saw the skeletons with bows in their hands and a bundle full of arrows strapped behind their backs. Emily said, "Maybe they're friendly." However, the skeletons' faces were filled with anger, probably because the four had interrupted their "sleep". One of the former suddenly pointed at them. "Get them!"

"They don't look so friendly to me!" yelled Jake. After he finished his sentence, hundreds of archer skeletons aimed their arrows against all of them. Emily took an item from her backpack, which was a glowing rope. Caroline took the rope and threw it towards one of the skeleton's head and tried to rip it off. But the skeleton used his sword and cut the rope in half. Christy shouted, "Run!" They ran and ran and stopped before a door that read "the door of doom". The skeletons escaped immediately when they saw the door.

The door spoke, "Children, please complete your task. If you fail to complete it in time, all of you will turn into statues of stone. If you succeed, all of you can go and take your treasure and leave safely. Your task is to go inside the room together and solve the riddle while fighting against the beast." The door opened, waiting for the teenagers to go into the room of doom. They hugged together, deciding who should go in first.

"Jake, why don't you go in first?" stuttered Caroline.

"I thought the "mighty Caroline" isn't afraid of anything!" mocked Jake without any hesitation.

"Let's just go in together." Emily suggested.

They all stepped in the room at the same time. A hideous monster! They glared at each other and thought of a plan. Emily and Christy would go and solve the riddle while Caroline and Jake would confront the monster. 'What creature has four legs in the morning, two in the afternoon and three legs at night?' read the riddle.

"I saw this riddle before, but what's the answer?" said Christy. Meanwhile, Caroline took a sword from her backpack jumped onto the beast and yelled while Jake was completely frozen there completely with his mouth open wide.

All of a sudden, Emily screamed, "I got it! It's a human! A human crawls with four legs when we are a baby. Then we walk with two legs when we grow up and when we get older, we have three legs because we need a crutch to help us walk!" After Christy heard Emily's answer, she nodded in agreement and quickly ran to type the word "human".

The door opened and said, "Emily and Christy, you're free to go. You can either choose to go through this door and get out of this awful place or stay here and defeat the beast."

"We're staying with our friends!" yelled Emily and Christy. The monster screeched when Caroline stabbed her sword through the monster's heart while the other three screamed because it was disgusting to watch. The door opened and they saw the treasures with labels of their names. For Caroline, a pair of shoes that could make her feel like walking in the air. For Jake, a bag of unlimited sweets. For Christy, a book to search any information. Last but not least, for Emily...

"Book of secrets." read Emily. She opened it. "It's empty." said Emily in disappointment. She went and met the others. The book chimed when Emily saw Jake. She opened the book, and a message appeared: "I'm very hungry right now." She chuckled softly. Apparently, this book revealed the secrets of the person Emily talked to.

After they all received their treasures, they ran back to the forest. "Let's put this sword back in the suitcase." said Christy.

"No way, this sword is awesome! I have never had a real sword before." argued Caroline.

"Quit arguing! Or our treasures will be all gone!" realised their treasures began to fade away, Caroline groaned, "Fine!"

Out of the blue, "you never have a real sword is maybe because it's illegal to have it!" said Jake. The girls sighed and they returned the suitcase to where it used to be. Quickly, they ran back to their bunks and got a long sleep. The next day, the four of them were all very tired. One of their campers asked if they had an adventure the previous night. They just smiled and walked away.

Twenty years later, four teenagers walked into the forest and saw an arrow pointing down. Beside the arrow it wrote the word "dig"...



## Win at the Starting Line

*St. Mary's Canossian College, Hung, Charmaine – 14*

In the blink of an eye, Xuanzang, Monkey King, Pigsy, Friar Sand and Yulong returned to the Buddha in Tang. The golden sunlight poured on them, which was the commendation of their achievement. The soothing breezes drifted by, bringing their memories back the beginning of their journey, and they started to tell their story...

Eight years ago, the Buddha in Tang asked Xuanzang to travel to India and take the Buddhist sutras of "transcendence and persuasion for good will" back to the East. Accompanied by Monkey King, Pigsy, Friar Sand and Yulong the white horse, Xuanzang passed the border of Tang and reached a desert.

Hours later, heat and fatigue permeated their entire bodies thoroughly. Looking out at the boundless sky, Pigsy suddenly burst out,

"Look! A huge dish is flying in the sky! It's absolutely extraordinary! Perhaps the Gautama Buddha sent us a dish of water and food to help us?"

"Poor Pigsy! Your mind must be totally eroded by hunger that you are seeing things!" exclaimed Friar Sand.

Monkey King squinted his eyes, staring under the blazing sun. "Wait... Pigsy is right. There's really a giant dish coming closer to us! It may be a monster!" He turned to Xuanzang and said, "Master, I'll ride my Jin Dou Cloud and go and have a look!"

Monkey King landed on the rim of the flying dish. Within the rim, there was a dome with windows surrounding it. He looked through a window and was totally awestruck. Three children inside did not look like monsters, but were in the strangest costumes he had ever seen: fit, straight clothes and trousers, unlike those loose and creased ones that he was wearing. That was not enough. There were monster-looking machines with many surfaces that emitted light and even changed what was shown on them automatically. Monkey King knocked on the window hard. A boy noticed him and opened the door for him.

The boy seemed to beam with delight, "See who has come!" The other two kids came over. "Hi Monkey King! So glad to meet you here! I'm David. Welcome to our UFO! Oh yes, why are you alone? Where are Xuanzang, Pigsy and Friar Sand?"

"Hmm... Why do you know us?" Monkey King got suspicious.

"Of course I know you! We are from A.D. 2100!"

"What's that?"

"Well, we're actually students from 1400 years later than when we are now. Our teachers assigned us on a field trip to Tang Dynasty through time travel for a history research and we've just been exploring around. Want to travel with us to A.D. 2100? No worries. We're not monsters! We're Hong Kong people. Erm... I bet you don't know where it is, but we're all Chinese like you!" replied another child, Jane.

"I see... I'd like to bring along my master and companions. Would you mind taking them with us as well?"

"Not at all!"

So the UFO moved on until they spotted the three people below and landed on the desert.

Monkey King jumped out of the UFO and motioned to his master and companions. “Hey! They’re Chinese from the future! Believe it or not, we can travel to the future and have some fun with them!”

“Well, but we need to continue our journey to India. This is our mission,” said Xuanzang.

“No worries! We can help you get there fast and conveniently without walking for years. Besides, it’s important to broaden your horizons! Our teacher always says, ‘People that travel far know much’,” persuaded David.

The four of them agreed to travel to Hong Kong, together with the horse. They sat on a separate chair, fastened their seat belts, and the UFO set off...

With a bump, they opened their eyes finding themselves had just been unconscious. They did not know how long it had been but the views outside had been changed to a prosperous city.

“Welcome to Hong Kong!” shouted David. “Let’s get out of the UFO and walk around this modern, high-tech city!”

As the seven of them stepped out of the UFO, they were all open-mouthed and their eyes were busy looking around. They had no idea what “modern” or “high-tech” was, but in their dictionaries, they basically described whatever they had never seen, such as those automatic cars, neon lights, animated billboards, skyscrapers, etc.

Their sights were all caught by a catchy animated billboard, which said “*WIN AT THE STARTING LINE— Whizzkid Education*”.

Monkey King looked puzzled and pointed at the billboard, “What does it mean by ‘win at the starting line’?”

“Oh, it means to let children learn as early as possible so that they can become more competitive. For example, most learning centres here pre-teach us the school’s syllabus,” replied a child called Joe.

“But why do the students need to learn the same thing twice? Can’t they just learn it at school?” asked Friar Sand.

“By then, the others will have learnt it and the ones who haven’t will fall behind! It’ll put them at a disadvantage, especially in external competitions, which usually require knowledge beyond their levels!”

Right then, there were two children wearing large backpacks being shoved by their parents into a car. “C’mon! You two are late for the class again!”

“See? Today’s just Saturday, a holiday, but these children are still going to classes.”

“Poor them! It’s just seven o’clock a.m. now and they’re even late! The classes are so early! If I were them, I wouldn’t be able to stand it. I’m even feeling sleepy right now!” yawned Pigsy.

“Well, we have all got used to it since the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. You know, adults too always attend refresher courses after working. Maybe you should also enrich yourselves by attending some courses here,” suggested Jane.

“Will they take long? I think it’s time for us to continue our journey to India, or else it’ll be delayed.” Xuanzang started to get worried.

“As I know, you are expected to spend around 16 years before returning to Tang, but by taking the UFO, it’ll only take less than one minute to reach India! So you can feel free to stay here for years and learn more in different aspects. The Buddha will be happy with that. You can share your experiences with the emperor and you’ll be so much appreciated. You can even organize courses to teach the people in Tang what you have learnt here so that they can become more educated, making Tang more prosperous, while you can probably earn some living too!”

“Amitābha! It sounds good. Thank you.”

“But wait...” David put on a headset with optical head-mounted display, and spoke ‘Buddhist sutras’ into the mic. “You can actually find thousands of Buddhist sutras on the internet. Put this headset on and you’ll see it. You can ‘scroll’ down for more sutras or ‘click’ in for more details with your finger movement in the air.”

“Oh dear! I want to try it too! That’s so convenient and we don’t need to bother to go to such a distant place for the sutras!” exclaimed Pigsy.

The abundant information about Buddhism made Xuanzang over the moon but as he scrolled in the air, another concern emerged from his mind, “How can I be sure that these are the original, true sutras that follow the Buddhist ideas?”

“Then you can join some courses about Buddhism! There are many choices but you have to apply for a job first so that you can earn enough money for the courses!”

“Amitābha! Very good indeed! Thank you so much for your help!”

After that, Xuanzang, Monkey King, Pigsy and Friar Sand applied for jobs, attended many courses including those about Buddhism, Cantonese, English, etc. Together, they read plenty of books, toured around Hong Kong and learned to live a modern life of quick pace for three years. Still, Xuanzang decided to pursue further studies in India, as he had learnt a saying, “It is better to travel far than to read voluminously.” After all, India was the origin of Buddhism and what he could experience there would be the most orthodox.

Again, the four of them got on the UFO with Yulong, setting off to India. With their knowledge gained in Hong Kong, they were qualified to study at Nalanda, a university there, and could even skip two grades.

“Now we’ve returned to you, after living in such a competitive city,” Xuanzang handed in the sutras to the Buddha.

“What have you learnt?” asked the Buddha.

“To win at the starting line. That’s why we only took eight years to complete the task.”

“And that’s why you haven’t acquired the sutras of ‘transcendence and persuasion for good will’ I want—you need another eight years to truly experience the meaning of ‘life’.”

The sunlight dimmed. With the “loss” of their achievement, the four of them suddenly found out that they had long forgotten about the goal of the journey and the lessons that they should have learnt ...

# The Young Voyagers

*St. Mary's Canossian College, Kwong, Athena – 13*

“It’s time, I should go,” said Shelly with both anxiousness and excitement.  
*A week ago...*

Shelly was doing homework in her room. “Why is there so much homework in form1 for an intelligent student like me in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century?” Shelly threw her pen away hard. It kept on rolling towards a small closet that had been neglected for years. “Now even my pen rolled under that dirty closet.” Just as she bended down to take back her pen; she discovered a mysterious looking thing. It is a pillar of black iron banded with a gold ring.

“Isn’t that the Ruyi Jingu Bang?” Shelly was a fan of the book “Journey to the West” and had read this book for more than a thousand times. Curiously, Shelly ran to her mother with the bang, “Mum! Look what I found in the closet! What is this? How come it looks so similar to Sun Wukong’s weapon?” Shelly’s mother hesitated for a while and replied, “Yes, it is. It seems like it’s time to tell you the truth. I was told by my grandparents that I am a descendant of Sun Wukong so you are too. This object should be great token.” “Oh! I can’t believe it! Sun Wukong is so nimble. It’s such an honor to be his descendant!” Shelly screamed with joy. She dashed to the computer and made a video call to his uncle who is a physicist. “Uncle, may I borrow something from you?” she asked.

*Now...*

“It’s time, I should go,” said Shelly with both anxiousness and excitement. In a glimpse of light, Shelly arrived at a strange place. Within her sight was a small village. People were wearing simple beige colored clothes made from wool. Shelly uses the GPS map on her phone. “Let’s see, I am in Dunhuang, China and this is Yang Guan Village.” She noticed a strange boy about her age dressed like her. He was wearing a jumpsuit and a smart watch too.

Curiously, Shelly approached him. “Hey! Who are you?” The boy looked at Shelly from head to toe, and replied, “Well... I guess you must be Shelly, the descendant of Sun Wukong, right? I am Benjamin, descendant of Zhu Bajie. So I suppose you know our mission?” “What mission?” Shelly replied shockingly. Benjamin said, “I thought you were told about it. We need to find our ascendants and help them to finish their journey. Don’t you know?” “Of course I know, silly. Okay, let’s travel together, you will surely need some help,” Benjamin looked annoyed but he still walked with Shelly.

They walked for hours until they saw their ascendants in distance. “I got this! Look at that short hairy creature with heart-shaped face. He must be the monkey king. He looked confident and smart with his snobbish eyes.” Shelly started jumping up and down. “That plump creature must be your ascendant, Zhu Bajie. Both of you have a broad nose and a round face, so silly looking!” Shelly laughed at her partner. Anxiously, they approached Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie. “Hello! We are your descendants. I am Shelly, the descendant of you, Wukong. And this is Benjamin, the descendant of Zhu Bajie,” said Shelly. Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie shared a surprising glance, and looked at the strangers in confusion. “Oh no! They didn’t understand what we said,” said Benjamin. “Stop freaking out! We can use Scan Speak Translate on our phones to help us.” Therefore, Shelly explained their background in details with the app. “Please let us join your journey, we would be very helpful with the high-tech gadgets,” Benjamin added. After listening to them, Sun Wukong said, “We are impressed with your story and your gadgets. I’m sure that Xuanzang wouldn’t mind you joining us. He is by the riverside.” The four of them approached Xuanzang, who was drinking water from the river. Again, Shelly and Benjamin activate Scan Speak Translate. Xuanzang’s eyes focused on their phones. “Wow! You are welcome to join our journey if you follow my instructions,” The two visitors nodded willingly and joined the journey.

The new group of five kept on walking for days. Shelly and Benjamin started to feel bored. They listened to music on their iPods as they reached a huge maze made of trees. “Stick together and pay attention to the routes,” Xanzang reminded the fellows. However, the teenagers didn’t pay attention to Xuanzang and focused on their iPads. They walked with their heads down. Later, Shelly bumped into the end of the maze.

*Where am I? Where are the others?* She wondered. She thought for a while and took out her phone to use the GPS map. She found her companies quickly. *I can do anything with high-tech gadgets.* Shelly thought.

The group continued walking toward Tianzhu. “Shelly and Benjamin, you must follow my instruction or you would get lost!” Xuanzang was disappointed at the new comers. Later, they reached an oasis. “Let’s take some rest here for the night before we climb the Dark Demon to reach our destination,” Xuanzang pointed at a mountain a mile away. After the ascendants were asleep, Shelly said, “Come on! Let’s explore around.” “I don’t think it’s a good idea to walk away,” Benjamin replied. “Don’t worry timid boy. I can solve any problem,” Shelly exclaimed as she looked around, “Look at all these beautiful trees with green leaves. Oh! There are some rare plants near the pond too.” After a while, they tried to make their way back but couldn’t see their ascendants at all. “It’s all your fault, Benjamin!” said Shelly. “Stop panicking, we’ve got this,” Benjamin replied. “Of course I understand that keeping calm is important. Let’s see what can be used now,” said Shelly, “What about laser guns to light up the surrounding and GPS map to locate our position and our ascendants’,” Soon, they reached their ascendants again. “With my ability and these high-tech gadgets, we can do anything,” Shelly said proudly.

Later, the sun rose and their journey continued. Again, Shelly and Benjamin were bored so they played with laser guns as they reached the caves in Dark Mountain. “The Dark Demon, black in color and frightened of light lives here. Shh...” Xuanzang reminded the fellows. Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie tiptoed along the way. However, Shelly and Benjamin were too engaged in playing and talking to each other that they ignored Xuanzang’s instruction. “This place is so funny. All the plants are black!” said Shelly. “Yes! But I can’t see very clearly without any lamps,” said Benjamin curiously. Just as they looked around this strange place, they heard a roar, “Who disturbed me?”

“Oh no! The light of the laser guns must have wakened the Dark Demon. Run away quickly!” said Xuanzang anxiously. Shelly and Benjamin turned around; a black monster with huge body was chasing them. The monster that was as tall as the mountain extended its long legs to catch the five intruders. They ran with all their might. Unfortunately, the monster grabbed them with its big claws instantly. They struggled in the tight claws of the Dark Demon. Moments later, they were being thrown down. “Ha! This is your consequence for disturbing my sweet 10000-year sleep. I will lock you up in my dungeon and eat you tonight. Frying may be a nice way to cook you guys, don’t you think?” barked the demon. With an evil smile, it stormed out of the cave.

“He has gone, now let’s brainstorm some ways to escape,” said Xuanzang. She took out her gun. Beep! “Oh no! It has run out of battery! And so are the other gadgets! We will die without them!” “Stop freaking out fellow! Let’s clear up our mind. Then, we can chant the Sutra,” said Xuanzang. The others followed Xuanzang’s instruction and the room fell into complete silence. “I can’t do that!” Shelly shouted. “Remember, nothing can be finished successfully without your patience,” Xuanzang reminded her. A few hours past and the five of them purified their mind finally. Xuanzang said, “Alright. Let’s recite the Buddhist scripture together. With the power of the five of us, I’m sure that we can escape.” Indeed, they chanted the Sutra got the power to leave the mountain successfully.

Soon, they arrived at Tianzhu. “Fellows, we have arrived at our destination. Let’s get the Buddhist sacred texts,” said Xuanzang. Surprisingly, they found a strange scroll along with the text.

*Shelly and Benjamin,*

*Congratulations! You have accomplished your mission. Remember what you have learnt during this journey. For you, the journey to the west is to something Wonderful, Encouraging, Simple, and something treasurable.*

*Secretary of Ministry of Culture*

“I will surely treasure the memories from this journey. Hey! Would you three like to visit the 22<sup>nd</sup> century? We can start a new journey!” said Shelly.

Later, the five of them boarded the time machine, ready to travel to the 22<sup>nd</sup> century. Yet another journey in life has just started...

# The Water of Purity

*St. Mary's Canossian College, Leung, Yana – 13*

**“X**uan Zang, Sun Wu Kong, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing. Today, the Heavens are celebrating your success in retrieving the holy Mahayana Buddhist scriptures. Hence, you all shall be rewarded.” The king of the Heavens took out a small vial of water and poured it into a porcelain bowl. “This is the Water of Purity, which shall be used in the future to save mankind from destruction. Keep it safe and hidden, so no one will use it until the time is ripe.” The four nodded. “Hey guys, I think I know where to put it. Remember the ...”

One thousand years later, the Earth became ill. Droughts, rainstorms, hails and flooding happened daily. There was a horrible plague; nobody was well enough to get out of bed.

On the edge of the Earth, there was still one patch of healthy green grass. There, people were searching for a cure for this terrible plague. When a piece of brownish paper slid out from an aged book, a spark of fire ignited.

*“The Water of Purity can be found at the altar of the Four. Travel west and you shall see the sparkle of water. One drop of water has the power to cleanse billions of miles of unclean Earth. Beware of the illusion and the dragon protector of the altar.”*

Altsoba read out loud to her three companions. With a high intellect and a level head, Altsoba was chosen to be the leader of this quest. She felt that the weight of the world had been put on her shoulders since she knew they could not fail the mission.

Gunner, whose name meant ‘bold warrior’ had a bulky figure and eyes that sparkled with mischief and mirth. A joker, Altsoba mused.

Peros, fat, pudgy. He would be just a burden, except for his enthusiasm which was filled to the brim.

Dillan, a quiet-looking person, was fiddling with his fingers. Good, at least he knows the dangers and risks of the quest, Altsoba thought.

So the group ventured west for days. They had arrived at a desert, which seemed to have no end and their supplies of food and water were alarmingly low.

“Oh, is that an apple tree? I’ve been starving for so long. Come on!”

Peros and Gunner sped toward nowhere. Perhaps the heat and fatigue had taken a toll on them. Altsoba glanced at Dillan who shrugged and followed them in tow.

“Airheads...” Altsoba sighed and looked at where they were heading. The sand seemed to be moving and shifting.

Wait, moving and shifting sand? An alarm bell in her head began ringing so furiously that she barely reacted quick enough.

“Hey, look out! It’s quicksand!” She screamed.

Gunner froze, Dillan looked at the sand in fright. Peros, round as a ball, could not stop in time and rolled right into the quicksand and began sinking at a horrendous rate.

“Damn it, why are you so careless? Gunner, fetch the tent and remove one of its poles. Dillan, try to find a place where we can stand closest to Peros. Peros, stop thrashing around, you’ll only sink.” Altsoba shouted commandingly.

“It’s safe to stand here.” Dillan pointed as Altsoba rushed to the spot with the long tent pole. By then, Peros’ head was barely peeking out of the sand.

“Peros, reach out your hand!”

No movement.

“Peros, reach out your hand!”

A hand suddenly shot out and grabbed the end of the long pole. Altsoba and Dillan pulled and tugged until Peros was thrown out of the quicksand. The four questers lay on the sand, exhausted. The illusion, they all thought.

“Can I please keep the pole?”

After the incident, every member seemed to be more alert and they soon found a way out of the desert. However, they could not afford to relax as the plague must have moved closer to their homes.

“Wow, this is a big burnt field!” Gunner exclaimed. The ground was hot as if it were burning itself. There was a stench of blood and smoke and it was becoming heavier and heavier.

“Shh...” Altsoba did not know why she felt that there was a need to keep quiet but stilled hushed him. Dillan also looked uncomfortable with the blanketing silence. “I think we should stay quiet until we have left the field. I think something is watching us.” Dillan said.

Unfortunately, it was too late. A pair of icy blue eyes snapped open and a roar was heard in the distance. Before they could even react, the monstrous creature was already blocking their way. The creature had sinewy arms and legs, its skin was royal blue in colour, with yellow adorning the tip of its wings. It was the dragon protector of the altar!

“Finally, a fight! I’ve been waiting for this since our quest started. You guys go ahead and find the Water of Purity. I’ll stay here to distract the dragon.” Gunner grabbed onto his pole so hard that his knuckles turned white.

“Nonsense! I’m not leaving any of you behind.” Altsoba refused, although she was shaking like a leaf.

“Don’t worry. I’ll stay with Gunner. I know I haven’t been able to contribute much in this quest, but I’m sure I’m juicy enough to distract the dragon for a while!” Peros smiled, for once, looking serious.

“Let’s go. We have to believe in them.” Dillan tugged at Altsoba’s sleeve. Altsoba was now regretting she had called Peros a burden all the time. Nobody is worthless on this quest. Tears already pooling in her eyes, she nodded and headed once again, towards west.

Stepping out of the burnt fields, Altsoba and Dillan saw a cave sitting just a few feet away. Suddenly, they spotted a sparkle of blue. The Water of Purity must be there! With renewed spirit, they rushed towards the cave. Inside the cave stood a beautifully carved altar and a blue-coloured porcelain bowl with Chinese drawing sat on top of it. Transparent, glittering water was filled to the brim of the bowl. It was the cure for the Earth’s illness! Dillan lifted the bowl carefully off the altar. “We need to show this to Gunner and Peros!”

“Oh no, Gunner and Peros!”

Submerged in their joy of finding the Water of Purity, they had forgotten their two companions were in grave danger. Each step was like walking in thick mud. They rushed to the scene and feared to see what had happened to them.

A guttural, bloodcurdling scream was heard in the distance. Peros was lying on the ground, covered with blood as the dragon mercilessly tore its claws across his stomach. Gunner lay unconscious to one side, his tent pole crooked and steaming.

“No, no, no...” Altsoba rushed toward Peros waving her arms frantically. “Shoo! You heartless beast!” The dragon, wearing a smirk, seemed to be satisfied with the trouble it caused and left in a flap of wings. Just then, a sound of shattering glass was heard. Dillan in his shock, had loosened his grip on the porcelain bowl and every drop of water sank into the soil.

Everything was lost! Without even realizing, tears flowed out of Altsoba’s eyes and she began sobbing, something she been continuously doing on this quest. Then, a shaking hand reached up and brushed the tears off her cheek, “Leave...no hope...dragon returns.” Peros tried to smile but grimaced instead. “Please, don’t die...” Dillan dropped to his knees. It was all over.

Lost in their thoughts, they had not realized that a patch of grass had crawled out of the burnt field. Then, another and another patch of grass appeared. Soon, the whole ashen field had transformed into a lush, green grassland! Flowers of different colours danced in the grass and the treetops were even touching the infinite sky. The silence was soon broken, birds sang and chirped, bees buzzed and hummed. Suddenly, the grass near where Peros lay grew long like vines and wrapped themselves around Peros’s stomach.

“What’s going on?” Altsoba murmured.

When the grass unfurled from Peros’s stomach, there were no signs of claw marks or blood left!

“The Water of Purity must have cleansed the entire Earth!” Dillan exclaimed.

“Since Peros was covered in mud and dirt, the Water of Purity must have thought that he was also a piece of unclean Earth!” Altsoba said, crying tears of joy.

“To think I’d have a heroic death, now I’m being referred to mud...” Peros muttered with a laugh.

“Humph, at least you got all the attention. They didn’t even look at me.” Gunner, harrumphed.

And so, the four young questers returned home, each with a content smile in their face.

*“Remember the Iron Fan Princess fiasco? Let’s put it in her cave!”*

*“Sun Wu Kong, do you really think it’ll be a good idea to put it there? You knew we took days walking through the desert and the burning ground to get there.” Tang Zang questioned. “Oh, well, we got through in the end anyway...”*



# The Explorers

*St. Mary's Canossian College, Wong, Rachel – 13*

Once upon a time, a beautiful kingdom once was there, looking at the ocean. Until one day... Noodb, an evil leader of a treasure hunting team, Dominators, wanted to take away the treasure maps and the secret recipe from two famous explorers, Haunter and Hans that could make people much more strong. He set a plan and attacks the kingdom. Everything in the kingdom was destroyed by Noodb's well-trained warriors. Even those two experienced explorers wouldn't bother to fight them and were captured by them.

In the campsite that the villagers had built for the people that needed help, four boys were there, guarding the campsite.

Stompy was a charming, strong and intelligent boy but he was quite naughty sometimes.

Next to him was a kind-hearted, loyal, brave and smart boy, Furo, 'What should we do? Haunter and Hans are missing! We can't get enough resources without them.'

Stompy, 'Clam down. We will find them when we have clues. Those traitors should be punished!'

Just then, Storm, a stubborn boy who always follows behind Stompy shouted, 'Hey guys! Look! I found a journal in Haunter's house. I thought it may be helpful so I brought it here.'

'Nice work, Storm. We better check it out.', said Stompy, 'Hmm... Looks like Haunter has drawn a desert to leave us a clue. I think they went to the west desert as I saw them retreated to the west.'

'Yeah and I will come too!' shouted Thanos, a selfish, arrogant, cruel and fussy boy, 'I will be famous if I really found them and brought them back.'

'First of all, is us and second of all, you are not going to get them by yourself! Come on, we are going to take Scar the dog with us too.' said Furo.

They then began to back their things and geared up with diamond armour, diamond swords, bows and arrows.

'Hope this will go well...' whispered Storm.

The adventure started.

However, it didn't go well actually. When the four boys went out to the woods, they had to face the first challenge, Zombies.

'Erm... Guys, should we go back? I don't want to be here!' cried Storm.

After a few struggle, they finally decided to went inside the forest. It was dark and hardly saw each other. Stompy lighted up a torch to see where they were going. All of a sudden, a zombie jumped out of nowhere and tried to eat Thanos.

'Help! Help me!', screamed Thanos.

Furo stabbed his sword right through the zombie and saved Thanos.

Stompy joked, 'Thanos is a coward. Thanos is a coward...'

Although they were fighting zombies through the road in the forest, they still laughed at Stompy's joke and soon found themselves out of the dark forest.

Stompy, Furo, Storm, Thanos and Scar walked to the mountains and started to climb. When they reach the top, they saw loads of towers and a small wooden bridge.

Storm whispered, 'I don't think it is a good idea to cross the bridge. If we got shot, we would definitely going to fall to our death!'

'Well, let's hope for the best!', claimed Furo.

They slowly and quietly cross the bridge. However, when Stompy stepped onto the bridge, skeletons started shooting from the towers. They decided to use TNT to blow up every towers there had.

As there were a lot of towers and skeletons, they took a week to clear out all of them and during that progress, Scar sniffed out a stone called kryptonite. It had the power of reviving people and making everything back to life, but no one had ever found out how to lighten the stone. Finally, they got rid of every tower there had and crossed the bridge.

They crossed over the mountain and set up a tent. They settled down and hunted down some food as they were low on food and health. Little did they knew, the area was belonged to a kind of creature called, creeper. Creepers blew themselves up to deal serious damage on people. It was just like suicide but for their own kind to survive. When the night fell, Stompy, Storm, Furo, Thanos and Scar rested.

In the meantime, a creeper just sneaked right outside the tent and blew the tent up. They screamed in horror and took their own weapons clumsily. Scar was usually brave enough to fight monsters but this time he just hid and didn't want to fight creepers. Luckily, no more creepers sneaked up on them and they set up some trap just in case.

When they built back up the tent, Scar was there thinking about his past... He remembered when he was one weeks old he had a cat friend named Chris.

One day, they were playing in the field when suddenly a creeper was behind Scar and was about to blow up. Chris pushed Scar away and sacrificed himself. Scar never forgot that moment when his best friend had died for him and from that day on Scar did his best to save others, just like Chris.

'Scar...Scar...Are you alright?', asked Stompy.

Scar was back to the present and shook his head like there was nothing happened.

Storm suggested, 'Maybe we need to get a cat, I know that creepers hate cats.'

'Finally, the first time you have said something clever.', said Thanos, 'But I will be the one taming a cat.'

After a few days, they managed to tame a cat and was ready to go out to continue their journey to the west.

'It really did work!' said Furo, 'Every creepers saw Oliver the cat and was scared away!'

Scar was silence during the walking as he looked at Oliver from a far distance. He hated Oliver as he saw the reflection of Chris.

Sooner, they saw a portal that leads to a dimension.

'Looks like Noodb has made a mistake of not shutting down the portal.', laughed Stompy.

They went into the portal and soon found out they were in the middle of groups of endermen and shulkers. They were much more deadly than zombies, skeletons and creepers.

Endermen could teleport everywhere and were hard to hit them. Shulkers levitate people. It was very dangerous if they were outside, they will die by falling. They found out that they were on a abandon pirate ship. They fought hardly.

Oliver saved Scar when he was about to die. Scar started to change his mind about Oliver. They sprinted forward and soon found out that the dimension was not the right place to find Haunter and Hans. They found out another portal that lead them back to the original world.

'Whao...Looks like they took the long way around.', yelled Furo.

They all agreed. As soon as they jumped into the portal, they were right in front of the two famous explorers. They were trapped in a cage made out of steel in the middle of the west desert.

Hans whispered, 'Don't speak loudly. They will notice! Now give us a pickaxe and get us out here.'

Storm handed the pickaxe but not for long, Noodb was there, standing right behind the four boys and the two pets.

'Are you doing something, little ones?' asked Noodb evilly, 'Seize them!'

They immediately started a fight. Of course the four boys couldn't fight the well-trained warrior. Scar saw that a soldier was about to hit Oliver with his sword and Scar rushed in and saved Oliver.

Scar thought he was going to die and started thinking, 'I finally can join Chris. He will be very happy when he knows I have saved my friend's life, just like what he did to me...'

Meanwhile, Stompy was hit and fell right in front of the cage.

Haunter said, 'Here, take this and try it. It will help you!'

Stompy drank the potion and instantly turned into a huge, muscular boy. He just used a hand to swipe the warriors and they were all fainted as there was a lot of damage taken by the large hands.

Noodb said, 'You think you can beat me? Never! I will become the strongest person in this world!'

Then, he drank a potion and was as tall as 80 floor building. He was bigger than Stompy.

When Stompy and Noodb were having a fight, Thanos said, 'He is too big! We must stop him!'

Hans suggested, 'We should keep throwing the potion at Noodb and maybe he can't handle so much pressure. We may win this battle if the plan works.'

'Well,guess we need to find out!' shouted Haunter.

They started to throw every potions they had. After an awful battle, Noodb can't handle so much pressure and he turned back to the original size.

Noodb was so angry and he yelled, 'I will come back one day and rip you guys off piece by piece!'

He soon rode his horse and ran away.

Stompy was back to his normal size and he found out that Scar has sacrificed himself for Oliver the cat.

Stompy and the others cried but the kryptonite that attached to Scar's collar suddenly light up and started to rise. A few moments later, it disappeared. Scar soon slowly woke up. He was revived by the kryptonite. They were excited when everyone was back together.

The four boys soon lead the two explorers back to the campsite and started to rebuild the fallen kingdom. After a few years, the people finished rebuilding the kingdom. Storm, Stompy, Furo, Thanos, Oliver and Scar join with Haunter and Hans and became the most famous exploring team that the world has ever had.

# New Journeys to the West

*St. Paul's Co-educational College, Fong, Tin Long - 14*

**Y**es, we did have a great time in heaven, we really did. But the good times only lasted for a few years, thanks to that naughty monkey. It was all his fault. He just suddenly went to the Buddha and asked him if he could go and have a trip back to the mortal world.

What now? All four of us are back to the mortal world, heading to the West once again. It's not the worst thing, the Buddha didn't let the White Dragon Horse come with us. How can I even finish the journey without a horse?

We are standing where the Daming Palace should be, all of us looked around, but only some ruins similar to the Palace were found. I told Wukong to do a somersault cloud and look around the area, he comes back and says, "I believe the Tang Dynasty has ended." He acts like he doesn't even care, I am so furious that I shout at him, "How dare you say that? Let me do the tightening-crown spell!"

"Master, I think we should search around before making a decision," Wujing comforts me. That's why I like Wujing, his words are always reasonable. We don't even know what this place is. I once heard Wukong said, "One day in heaven, one year on earth." I shouldn't have treated his words as nonsense, maybe that is true, we are in the future.

Every step we take, our hearts pound. However, this may only refer to Wujing and me, Bajie and Wukong are still acting playfully. They keep asking people around us about where we are, but the passers-by seem to be scared by their ugly faces. At last, somebody answers us, but the language they use is different from ours. I believe it is a mixture of Chinese and English, even though we pay attention to what they are saying, we can't comprehend their words.

Then we try to read the words on the boards around us, some words which are similar to ours are written on them, but the words are a bit simplified. Wukong reads out the words, "In AD 907, Zhu Wen deposed Emperor Ai of Tang and established the Later Liang afterwards." I now believe the Tang Dynasty had ended, forever.

The four of us kneel down and weep buckets. What had happened over these years? We should have helped our own country to fight against threats! What have we done? Enjoying our lives in heaven? My heart is filled with guilt.

But I know, if we don't continue our journey, we can never get back to heaven. I pat their shoulders, telling them to leave and head towards the West.

Then off we go.

We can't find the road we used to walk. But luckily, just when we are wandering, a ragged beggar, who is sitting on the street, yells using Chinese, "I'm blind, can anyone give me some money for medical care?" I walk to him and put a few coins into the pot beside him. He thanks me with a wide smile on his face.

Wukong suddenly takes his pot away silently. The beggar reacts quickly and shouts, "You monkey, don't you dare steal my money!" "Aren't you blind?" asked Wujing. "You guys don't understand, all beggars on this street are lying. We just want to make a living," answered the beggar.

How can people in this modern world lie just for money? This totally contradicts what I believe in! I want to leave the beggar, but he seems to be the only one who can help us. So, I ask him, "Do you know how we can get to the Vulture Peak?"

"You're kidding me, the Vulture Peak? You guys are from the fiction, Journey to the West?"

"Yes, we are heading for the West. I'm Xuanzang, these are my apprentices, Wukong, Bajie and Wujing."

"Am I dreaming? Give me all you are having with you, they are worth a fortune!"

"What do you mean?"

"You guys are from Tang Dynasty, from over a thousand years ago, so things you are holding are all antiques! Thank God! Come to my house, I must welcome you all hospitably."

"Master, did you remember about the White Bone Spirit? Wukong, check if he is a ghost," says Wujing.

I am scared, if he is really a spirit who wants to eat me, do there exist other ghosts like him in this modern world? Am I in danger? I can't stop worrying until Wukong confirms, "Nope, he is just a dishonest beggar." I immediately feel a sense of relief.

We follow the beggar and he leads us to get into a small vehicle, which he calls a "taxi". This vehicle keeps shaking when it is moving, along with the smell of fuel, we nearly vomit. I keep reading the Buddhist scriptures aloud, and all of us luckily go through the whole journey without vomiting. He gives the driver some coins and we finally get out of the "taxi".

We enter a place where is dirty and smelly, we can see poor people like the beggar living in cramped houses. This place is a slum. I feel great sympathy for all these people, why isn't the Buddha helping them? The beggar invites us into his house and says, "Please come in and make yourselves at home, do try the tea I just brewed." He's so friendly, I start to like him. Bajie suddenly holds the whole pot of tea and pours it into his mouth. I regret letting him be my apprentice, he's so impolite. But I don't have time to scold him, we need to concentrate on our mission. I ask, "About going to the Vulture Peak..." "I can help you if you give me your belongings, deal?" the beggar interrupts. "Deal!" Wukong dumps his bag on the table, the rest of us stare at him. "Why are you guys looking at me like that? Don't you want to go back to heaven?" We put our bags there, just hope this beggar is trustworthy.

Then we stay in his house, waiting for him to arrange our trip. A group of children comes into the house, both boys and girls. Wujing shouted at the girls, "Girls, get back to your homes! You should be helping your mothers with housework!" "My mother is working in the factory. How can I help her?" one of the girls replies. "What? Women can go out to work?" I am too shocked. "Of course! You guys are so weird, let's go away," another girl who seems to be the leader says, bringing the others to leave the house.

Women should stay at home, but females in this modern world can work, play and even become a leader above males. What's happening! This world is full of sinners, they don't even follow the customs set a long time ago. I think we must leave this world as soon as possible.

A month has passed, the beggar finally comes back. At first sight, I can barely recognise him, he looks a lot cleaner. He yells, "My guests, please come out!"

We go out and get into another "taxi", but this one is totally different, it is shinier and looks luxurious. It is weird, he was a beggar, but now he seems to be so wealthy. "Thanks for giving me your sacks. Do you believe it, they are worth millions of dollars! I'm now a millionaire!" he says joyfully. "We are going to the airport, boarding my private plane! I'm so excited!" "We are going to the Vulture Peak, right?" I ask doubtfully. "Of course, just in a few hours," the beggar answers.

I don't quite trust him personally, but my apprentices seem to be relaxed, they do trust him. I think I should just wait for what will happen next.

We get to the airport. We can see many enormous planes. I want to refuse to board our plane, the Buddha will scold us for not completing the whole journey ourselves. But that's the only way we can get to the Vulture Peak, right? So, I tell myself not to worry that much.

The flight has been quite steady until after about four hours, the plane keeps shaking. When I look up, I can see the Buddha, calling us back to heaven. We arise and we are back in heaven again.

"Welcome back. What have you learnt? Should we follow our customs or believe in things modern people believe in, technologies, money and gender equality?" the Buddha asks.

"I don't have an answer. I don't have any answers," I say.

"Me too. I still can't figure it out. You now know why I'm not helping the modern people in the mortal world, right?"

## New Journeys to the West

*St. Paul's Co-educational College, Lam, Justin - 14*

A bell tolled in the distance as the rays of the rising sun bathed the hill in golden light. A young monk stood before a shrine, head bowed.

“I will finish what you started, Master Xuanzang,” he said, face set with determination. He shouldered his bag and walked out of the pagoda, casting one last look at the tomb of the legendary monk.

Zhizhou was a fourth-generation monk in Xuanzang's temple. He had been personally instructed by Emperor Xuanzong of Tang to bring precious texts back from the West, and he didn't intend to fail. First, he needed allies, and he knew exactly where to find them.

~

A bedraggled monk was led into the throne room, ushered in by monkeys in armor. The situation would be funny if it weren't for the massive axes in their hands. A broad-shouldered monkey with golden fur stood in the center of the room, his back facing Zhizhou.

“You wished to see me? Why are you here?” the Monkey King asked, though it sounded like an order. The very words seemed to penetrate Zhizhou's being, wresting the answer from his mouth.

“I am Zhizhou. I'm here to ask you to join me in a new pilgrimage to the West,” Zhizhou said, his voice shaking in apprehension. “The documents could provide new insights into stopping the mounting chaos in our empire.”

Sun Wukong turned, eyes shining like molten gold. Zhizhou stepped back a little. “The Tang dynasty is beyond help now, young one. No amount of magic or Buddhist texts can save it.”

Zhizhou blinked in confusion. “I thought you went on the first Journey to the West! I thought you would –”

Wukong laughed hollowly. “Help? Decades of watching a nation fall to ruin can turn the most starry-eyed idealist into a cynic. Xuanzang is long gone. You will never save the dynasty. Take a leaf from my book and stay out of this. There's no point in risking your life for nothing.”

Zhizhou left without a word. As he trudged down the mountain, even the birdsong around him sounded mocking and cruel.

~

The Gao village was run-down and dilapidated, the result of years of neglect. The distant sound of pots smashing could be heard. Zhizhou made his way towards the house at the far end of the road. He pushed the rotting wooden door open, ducking as a wine pot nearly decapitated him.

“Who is it?” An anthropomorphic pig stood up, swaying drunkenly, his speech slurred. “Who dares to disturb me?”

Zhizhou chose his words carefully. “Master Zhu Bajie, I am Zhizhou. I'm here to ask for your help in a journey to the West –” He stepped aside, narrowly avoiding another pot. “I will not be bothered with earthly matters!” Bajie squealed in anger. “I have earned the right to relax! You are trespassing!”

Zhizhou lost his temper. "I thought you were supposed to be a deity!" he yelled, face red from shouting. "Instead, I see a pig that has no aim in life other than getting drunk! The fate of our dynasty hangs in the balance, and all you can do is indulge yourself. Very well. I will make the journey myself. You can stay here and wallow."

Zhu Bajie watched in a stunned silence as Zhizhou strode away into the distance. He stumbled back into his house, tripping and falling flat on his face. For the first time in many years, he picked up his rake.

~

Zhizhou stood at the bank of a raging river, leaning back a little as the spray stung his skin. He was deliberating on what to do next. The river was too deep to swim across, and in any case, he would be washed away. It stretched for many kilometers, and there was no bridge. He stamped his foot in frustration. He was starting to wonder if Sun Wukong was actually right. After all, I am just a young monk, he told himself.

The murky water boiled suddenly, surging up the riverbanks. Zhizhou retreated to safety as the river parted, revealing a monstrous demon. A grisly necklace of skulls circled his neck, and a formidable-looking spade was clasped in the demon's hand.

"What brings you here, young traveler?" the demon asked. He sounded kindly and sympathetic, entirely out of phase with his appearance.

Somehow, Zhizhou mustered the courage to answer, recounting the events of the past months. The demon laughed, shaking his head in amusement.

"What's the matter?" Zhizhou asked out of curiosity, despite himself.

The demon grinned. "As luck would have it, I may be one of the most qualified people to help you with your mission. I am Sha Wujing, the third disciple of Master Xuanzang. Where do we start, young Master Zhizhou?"

Zhizhou was taken aback by Wujing's generosity. He stuttered for a few seconds before managing to reply. "You... you want to help?"

"Of course! Why wouldn't I?" He seemed genuinely puzzled.

"It's... it's just that Wukong and Bajie both rejected my pleas for help," Zhizhou said. Hope flared in his heart. Here was someone who was willing to aid him.

Before he could continue, Wujing tensed. "Something's wrong. The birds have stopped singing."

"That would be because of me," a deep voice boomed. Standing on the other side of the river was a gargantuan white bull, its eyes glowing like embers. Around its hooves, the grass smoldered and shriveled.

"Run, Zhizhou!" Wujing yelled. "Run! It's the Bull Demon King! I'll hold him off!"

Zhizhou turned to flee, but the bull took a running jump, leaping over the river effortlessly. It changed form in mid-air, landing in front of him as a horned warrior in elaborate black armor, which was ragged and torn in several places. Zhizhou's heart skipped a beat. The demon sauntered over to him and gestured. Black cords whipped around him, sending him crashing to the ground.

"It's been a long time since we last met, Wujing!" the demon called, his jovial tone contrasting with the murderous glint in his eyes. "I thought I'd start with the weakest link in the chain."

Wujing raised his spade and charged, but was knocked back with a sword thrust. The demon left a deep wound in his shoulder and kicked him down.

"Once, I could have taken on the armies of heaven! Now, I'm reduced to attacking river spirits, and my painful imprisonment in the Celestial Palace was all because of your little team."

His speech was cut short when a two-hundred-pound pig crashed on top of him. Zhu Bajie straightened up, pinning the demon down with his rake.

“Sorry it took so long,” he said. “I got dragged into a fight along the way.”

The Bull Demon King snarled in rage and rose, backhanding Bajie and sending him stumbling away. Wujing struggled to his feet, hefting his spade. Though the two fought valiantly, they were no match for the demon king. Wujing was quickly dealt with when he got stomped into the earth, creating a meter-deep crater. Bajie swung his rake, but the demon turned back into a bull and rammed him into the side of the hill.

“You’re out of practice. You’re even weaker than the last time we fought, which really is saying something,” the bull mocked.

He changed back into human form, lightly resting his sword against Bajie’s throat. He threw his head back and laughed, a mirthless sound that sent shivers down Zhizhou’s spine. Before he could move, however, the demon was carried backwards into a thorn bush on the tip of an extending staff. Sun Wukong was holding the other end, eyes blazing brighter than ever before.

“Is it too late to join the party?” Wukong asked, his staff shortening to normal proportions.

The Bull Demon King roared in defiance, rushing forward with swords extended. He never reached Wukong. The monkey casually poked him with the staff, knocking him down, then again and again as the demon tried to get to his feet.

“It’s over. Surrender now, and I’ll spare you the pain.” Wukong said, contempt evident in his voice.

“You’re a fool if you think you have won,” the Bull Demon King said, his tone taking on an ominous certainty. “As the dynasty descends into chaos, forgotten evils will rise against the mortal world and heavens alike, and you will be powerless against them. The Age of Demons is coming. You cannot avert it.”

Sun Wukong raised his staff to strike, but the demon vanished into black smoke, which drifted away on the wind. Zhizhou’s bindings dissolved into thin air. Wukong helped him up, beaming broadly.

“Thanks,” he gasped, rubbing his back. “I owe you.”

“Don’t mention it. I’m indebted to you. You opened my eyes to my folly. It’s been a while since I saw someone with the kind of faith you possess.”

They smiled at each other.

~

Four figures could be seen heading off into the sunset, carrying the hopes of the Tang dynasty with them.



# New Journey to the West

*St. Paul's College, Chan, Cheuk Long Julian – 14*

## Chapter 1 A Call from the Empress

**T**hanks to young monk Xuanzang from China, monkey king Sun Wukong, pig demon Zhu Bajie and sand demon Shu Wajing, the Buddhist scriptures were brought back to China. Wukong invited Bajie to live with him in the Mountains of Flowers and Fruits. They loved it, but soon got bored.

“I’m starving!” moaned Bajie one day.

Wukong made a face and replied, “You’ve eaten everything in the mountain and you’re still hungry?”

“I’m not hungry for food but for adventure!” Bajie exclaimed.

Wukong sighed, “Why don’t you go around to look for some...”

“Bajie! Wukong! Master Xuanzang needs you two!” came a familiar voice from behind.

They jumped, and saw Wajing waving at them.

“What happened? Is master kidnapped?” Wukong asked frantically.

Wajing shook his head and said, “No, he said the empress wants us to go on a secret mission.”

Bajie heard nothing but the word ‘empress’. “An empress! Is she beautiful?”

“Forget about it, you fool!” Wukong said hotly, “Don’t ever think of being an emperor!”

Bajie shrugged and they set off to the palace.

## Chapter 2 Mission Possible!

Xuanzang had been waiting for the three to arrive at the palace. In front of him stood an old woman wearing a golden suit, with a crown on her head.

“It’s an honour to meet you four,” she said kindly, “I am the empress of China. My name is Wu Zetian... what’s with that frown?”

Indeed, Bajie looked glum when he realized that the empress wasn’t a beautiful young girl. Wukong glared at him.

“Alright, let’s get down to business,” she said, “Yesterday a messenger told me that the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, is still alive.”

Xuanzang looked dumbstruck. “Still alive? But seriously, your majesty...” he began.

The empress continued, “He is locked up in a place called Sindhu. You must save him and take him back here. I would like to meet him. Remember, this is an extremely important mission.”

“Yes, your majesty!” the team bowed.

“This is probably a mission impossible,” Wukong mumbled with excitement, “Or should I say, a mission possible?”

### Chapter 3 The Mysterious Beasts

Everyone packed up their things.

“Perhaps we should bring the scrolls with us,” Baji suggested, holding the scriptures they got from Sidhu, “It may come in handy.”

“Take it if you want to, but it isn’t edible,” Wukong joked sarcastically.

His ally ignored him. Then he stared in confusion. “That’s strange,” he said, “What is this?”

“What?” asked Wukong, looking at the scriptures. He then froze. There was a picture of a beast with a head and body of a lion, another head of a goat, and a tail of a snake. Wajing saw it, too.

“Probably some sort of tricks,” he said, trying not to worry.

“Hey, guys! Time to go!” called Xuanzang.

### Chapter 4 Welcome to Greece

The journey was smooth. No demons pounced at them, and Xuanzang no longer had to worry. They walked for miles and grew exhausted.

“Hey, look! It’s a city!” Baji cried happily, pointing at a crowd of people under the hill.

Even Xuanzang was delighted to see it. Wukong jumped down to take a closer look. The people’s attire was strange as every wore white robes.

“Excuse me,” Wukong said to a woman, “Can you tell me what place this is?” Seeing him, she screamed in fright, and the citizens spoke in a strange language Wukong had never heard before.

“They’re so rude!” he said to himself, “Have they ever seen a monkey before?”

“I guess they’re not afraid of you,” said Wajing, who came down to join his friend.

There was a loud rumbling noise. Xuanzang and the others turned around, finding themselves face to face with a woman with the body of a snake, accompanied by the lion Baji seen in the scriptures! Wukong sprang into action. He took out his iron rod, whacking both demons violently. Unfortunately, the monkey king was no match for them. The woman dodged, grabbing Xuanzang and Baji and vanished.

Wukong was about to chase her when the goddess Guanyin called out to him, “Wukong! I’ve got something to tell you!”

Wukong desperately said, “Sorry, but there’s no time for talking. Those demons captured my master and I must save him!”

“You’re now in a country called Greece,” Guanyin said, “The clothes people wore are togas. The woman whom you fought is Echidna, Greek mother of monsters. Her lion is known as a chimera.”

Wukong nodded, “So how can I defeat her?”

Guanyin replied, “You must find the Pegasus, a winged horse, and kill the chimera from the sky. Also, here are some language pills,” she said, giving Wukong a gourd, “Have your friends take one each and you will be able to speak in different languages.”

Wukong did as told. He took a pill, and asked people about the existence of Pegasus. He finally found it on a hill and took out a piece of rope Guanyin gave him and managed to ride to the cave Echidna lived. The chimera saw him and roared wildly. Wukong pulled out a strand of hair which turned into a gang of monkeys blocking the cave door and defended Xuanzang. Wajing hit the monster on the chest. Wukong shot arrows and beat the double-headed monster. Echidna, who wanted to taste some flesh of the monk, couldn't stand an army of monkeys and retreated. Everyone was safe and sound.

#### Chapter 5 The Killer Cockatrice

Everybody in the city of Rome, Greece, was delighted that the four got rid of their greatest nightmare. Even the king of Greece invited them to a feast. Both Wukong and Baji ate loads of grapes.

“Can you do us a favour?” the king piped up.

Xuanzang replied, “Sure, why not?”

Therefore, the king asked them to get rid of the cockatrice, a monster born when a rooster lie an egg, near the city. Anyone who looked into its eyes would die immediately.

Baji protested, “If you can't look at the demon, how can you locate it? Unless you're also a cockatrice, then you can kill it by letting it look into your eyes.”

“You're rude,” Wukong snapped, conking Baji on the head with his rod. Just then, his mind clicked, “Wait, I have a plan!”

“What plan?” asked Xuanzang.

“I guess that the only way to destroy the cockatrice is to let it see its own eyes,” said the monkey, “Why don't I change into a mirror and let it see its own reflection.”

“What a splendid idea!” Xuanzang replied.

After the feast, the team searched the whole place and finally found it. Wukong changed himself into a mirror. Xuanzang, Baji and Wajing hid behind him. The cockatrice approached Wukong, staring at its reflection with its huge, beady eyes. Then, with a loud shriek, the monster died.

The other three came out from behind. Baji looked agitated.

“Congratulations, brother!” he cried, “You're a hero!”

Even Xuanzang looked satisfied. “I'm really proud of you, my young friend,” he said, patting Wukong on the shoulder.

When the team went back to the Greek palace and were welcomed by the king again. Obviously, another feast was held.

“I forgot to ask,” said the king, “What brings you here?”

“We're on a mission... OH NO!!” Xuanzang exclaimed abruptly, “We've forgotten about it!”

Xuanzang told the king about China and how they got lost. The king gave them some food and drink and they left peacefully.

#### Chapter 6 Sinister Plot Revealed!

Xuanzang, Wukong, Baji and Wajing were back on track. The next day, the team decided to rest in the forest when another demon sprang out of nowhere, grabbing them away.

Wukong woke up in darkness, next to him stood the demon who captured him, and...

“Ox King! Iron Fan Princess!” Wukong looked alarmed, “Save us, please!”

“Now, now,” the Ox King had a sinister smile on his face, “I guess you have met our new friend, Madame Medusa. Wife of Poseidon, the Greek sea god.” He pointed to the demon with hair like snakes. She bowed.

Wukong yelled, “Stop talking gibberish and save us!”

“We’re haven’t forgiven you since you’ve beaten us at the Mountain of Fire,” he sneered, “That mission was a prank. I secretly ordered a servant to disguise as the empress.”

Xuanzang was struck by lightning. “So Siddhartha...”

“SIDHARTHA IS THE BUDDHA HIMSELF, YOU FOOLS!!” roared the mad bull, “Thus, your empress is in my hands.” Medusa pulled out the tied up woman from underneath.

At first, when Baji heard that the empress was an impostor, he found signs of hope. Sadly, the real one was also old, and he could not hide his disappointment.

Ox King continued, “I must give you all some stress. Therefore I ordered Greek monsters to kill you, but not many, just to let you forget about protecting your master, Wukong.

“So you drew the chimera in the scrolls,” Wukong said.

“Correction, my wife did,” the bull replied, “But we didn’t take them directly so you may have some fun.”

Wajing stared, “So your targets are the Buddhist scriptures...”

“And a piece of flesh from your master,” the ox laughed maniacally, “Now, hand them both in, or I’ll tear your homes apart.”

“What do you want the scrolls for?” said Xuanzang.

“To rule the Buddhists,” Baji said, “That way the couple would be free!”

“If that happens, turn me in,” said the monk, “It’s better than having innocent people killed.”

The Ox King untied the ropes of the team when Wukong pounced and conked him on the head.

“Wicked beast!” he blurted out, “I shouldn’t have ever met you.”

Medusa tried to face Wukong and turn him into stone.

“Watch out, brother!” cried Baji. He bravely shoved her face into the bull instead. He turned into stone.

Guanyin suddenly approached Wukong and said, “Let me deal with them!”

And so, the Ox King is dead. Medusa would be punished by the Greek gods, the others went back to China safely.

Wukong and Baji went back to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruits, deciding that they should lead a normal life.

# New Journey To the West

*St. Paul's College, Chan, Man Kit – 14*

The world was all normal when a disaster suddenly broke out. Almost all people in the street became zombies. Perhaps the world was becoming abnormal gradually, but we didn't notice it...

"The train is going to stop for some time since there were some kinds of accidents at next stations. Please stay in the train calmly." the driver of the train said. I wasn't worried about whether I would be late to school since it was just 6.47 a.m. while I am at Chai Wan Station. However, I could feel an unspeakable atmosphere. The train is almost empty, but all seats should be occupied normally. The sunlight was shining through the windows, but it was also no one outside on streets.

Suddenly, I noticed there were three of my classmates also at the train. They were Toby, Alfred, and also Ben. Suddenly, Ben turned on the FM radio without noticing us. I almost wanted to scold him but a man spoke in the FM radio. "Get to the St. Paul's College as soon as possible." the man said. Not talking about the above announcement, I was also troubled by the horrible quality of the speaker of the radio. "Why did the man told the people to get to St. Paul's College?" Alfred questioned about. Toby and I agreed and I seemed to find something strange in my mind. However, Ben said there were nothing to be worried about. "We are like having the New Journey To the West. But it is the west of Hong Kong Island." Ben said. At this time, the train started to move. As we could not do anything, we could just agree to Ben and continued with our "New Journey to the west".

The train stopped at every station. Strangely, there weren't any people at every station. "How could this happen?" I asked them. I didn't mention things clearly but all of them knew what I was talking about. Besides, I also smell a strong disinfection at every station. "Maybe there were a typhoon coming to Hong Kong and all people stayed indoor." Ben suddenly told us his useless predictions. "Wait a moment" I suddenly had a strange guess "All the people stayed indoor....They are still sleeping.....Or they can't get outdoor because of the environment outside...." Toby and Alfred were of course clever enough to understand what I had just said. Immediately, Alfred continued "they can't get outdoor because they are not having the same body structures as us. They may no longer be human. Let me call them zombies. That's why the man told us to get to St. Paul's College as soon as possible. A disaster may have broken out. Anyone walked to the MTR stations through shopping malls?" Toby also spoke "No, I didn't. Besides, I just noticed a strange smell of disinfection at every station. Each platform on the way was at indoor. That means there might be zombies there before we arrived. As it had to be cleaned, our train stopped for a few minutes. But why were the people cleaning? Does this mean all was still in the control of our government, or some organisations are watching us?" Nobody could answer Toby's question. Both me and Alfred were having a lot of questions in our brain. "Let's just continue with our "New Journey To the West. We had no choices." Toby said.

When we arrived at the station, Alfred immediately found some words written by red paint, which was "you guys are so clever...Impressive.....Have a good time...." Suddenly, I heard a small girl singing softly.....I shook my head but I found Toby, Alfred and Ben disappeared. I walked up one floor and searched for them. However, my effort was in vain. I started to think whether it was all my hallucination about their existence on the way to HKU station. I was rushing around when I suddenly fell onto the ground. Suddenly, I found that I was still at the place seeing the red paint and all my classmates were next to me. However, they seemed to be hypnotized. After a second, I realised what had happened. It was all because of the soft singing by the little girl. Immediately, I woke them up and explained to them. We searched for the girl making such sound but there seemed to have no people other than us. Finally, we find a speaker at the escalator playing such voice. However, it was ineffective to us this time.

Since we didn't want to stay in such places, we immediately took the escalator and left HKU station. We were all grateful to see sunshine and breathed the fresh air again though it was extremely strange for the street to be so quiet. It was just 8.02 a.m. when we arrived at our school. "Will there be any zombies in our school?" I asked. "Normally there wouldn't be. It was just like the case of Chai Wan station."

Suddenly, all of us received a message "Get to the rooftop of St. Paul's College". "There are four rooftops in St. Paul's College. Which should we go?" Toby asked. "Perhaps we should go to one which is the highest." Alfred said. "Each of us can go to one of them." Ben suggested. At last, we followed Ben's suggestion. When I arrived at one of the rooftops, a new whatsapp group was opened by an unknown person. He typed some words "If anyone among Toby, Alfred, Jeffrey jumped down, all the zombies will be turned back to human. If no one jumped down within 2 minutes, one of you guys will die from a poisoned gas and no one will be turned back to human. How are you choosing?"

"Where is Ben?" Alfred questioned in whatsapp. Actually, I was clear where Ben was at this moment. In fact, Ben must be working for some unknown organisations and he made this all. When hearing the announcement of a man, the quality of the radio was horrible so that I couldn't recognize Ben. Also, it was actually Ben to turn the FM radio on. In conclusion, it was clear that it was Ben who led us here.

Time was passing away. I decided to jump down from the rooftop and I was ready to experience death. Surprisingly, there was a mat used to save people jumping down to suicide. "Well done!" Ben came to ask about whether I wanted to join the organisation. Of course, I refused at once. Then, I fainted.

When I woke up, I found myself in a hospital. I immediately asked Toby and Alfred what had happened at last. However, they replied me that they didn't know what I was talking about. At this time, the doctor came in and said that I fainted because I haven't taken in any food for too long time. Although no one remembered I knew that what I had experienced must be true. Looking at the shining sun, I smiled.

# New Journey to the West

*St. Paul's College, Chan, Wye Ho Ethan – 14*

**R**ight when he was about to save the earth from total destruction, Captain Smith felt the thud of a heavy object against the back of his skull. As he slipped into unconsciousness, he saw a vague yet familiar silhouette standing over him...

It's 2032. The Earth has been brought to the brink of its doom by the ravage of extreme earthquakes. Desperate to save the rapidly dying world, what's left of the Chinese government has sent out the two most capable secret agents in the China, Captain Smith and Agent Gizmo on a last-gasp mission to find the cause of the earthquakes, as a last resort and the world's last hope of salvation.

Having already searched all over the world with little success, the duo have traced the cause of the earthquakes to the westernmost point of Europe, Cabo da Roca, on the small island of Pico.

Arriving at Pico, having endured an exhausting journey from southeast China, the first thing they saw was the medieval castle on a cliff. Sharing a knowing glance, they decided to search the castle first. This was the point of their whole mission, their whole journey has led up to this point, having worked so hard and traveled around the world from the far east to this secluded island of Pico. Who could have known the answer had been hidden at the westernmost point of Europe? The only thing the pair knew was that they could not afford any mistakes.

So, the duo found themselves staring down a deep, dark tunnel which is supposed to lead to the castle cellar. With only Gizmo's flashlight guiding them, they headed down. As they went deeper down the slope, the musty, damp stone walls seemed to spawn shadows that lurked around in the dark, flickering just out of the captain's vision. "My stomach is in knots, Gizmo," said Smith cautiously, "this better be it, I have a bad feeling about this." "Trust me, I know it's gonna be here, everything will be alright soon," replied Gizmo. Yet Captain Smith couldn't shake an aching suspicion that something was about to go terribly wrong.

At one point, the duo realised they were long past the level that should have been the cellar, instead the slope of the tunnel stretched way down into island earth, maybe even down into the seabed. They continued to march down. At last they reached the end of the tunnel, leading straight into a huge, cavern-like chamber. And in the middle, with torches surrounding its perimeter, in all its glory stood the monstrous machine. As the pair marveled at the sinister yet miraculous machine, all the light in the chamber seemed to funnel towards its center, where metallic roots branched out and extended deep into the Earth's core, its powerful engine pumping, sending vibrations down every root. Captain Smith gazed in shock at the mechanical beast, "Who could have built such a monstrosity? This can produce enough power to level continents! Gizmo, disarm it now, it may create another seismic shift any moment!" But there was no reply. "Gizmo?" And it was at then that the blow came which knocked Captain Smith out cold.

As Captain Smith began to regain consciousness, he found himself tied down, sitting on the ground and staring into a pair of sunken eyes filled with menace – the familiar eyes of Agent Gizmo... "Why? Gizmo, how could you?!" Captain Smith's pleas were responded by a burst of Gizmo's maniacal laughter, "Oh how the mighty have fallen! You have been stealing my thunder for too long, dear respected Captain of the Beijing Intelligence Alpha Team. It's time for the world to meet the genius who had been the brains of your heroic deeds in your legendary missions all along." The Captain strained

Against his bonds with all his might, the veins in his neck bulging with adrenaline, but to no avail. "What's wrong Captain Smith? Can't break free? Don't you remember the training that you gave me? You never understood how unappreciated I was, how people had looked down on the runty, weak assistant of the incredible Captain Smith. Nobody knew that I was the genius behind your deeds, nobody! All because of you hogging all the glory, wanting everyone to know how great you are. And now, Gizmo will become a household name, a name spoken with fear, because Gizmo will now be known as the vanquisher of Captain Smith, and the man who brought Doomsday!" "No!" Captain Smith begged weakly, "deactivate your machine, Gizmo, stop this madness! As your Captain, I was wrong to undermine your talents and to take all the credit. Go through with this plan, and you only prove yourself to be a petty, pathetic being. Please, Gizmo, prove yourself a better man than I, do not mistake cruelty for greatness. Be the hero you have longed to be! Do—" At that moment, the whole chamber shook and the piece of the cavern above the Captain's head collapsed, and with that Captain Smith drew his last breath.

Hmmm, it appears that the destruction process has begun again, soon Africa will be consumed by my beautiful creation, Gizmo thought to himself, I have to leave this cursed place before my darling demolishes the whole castle. However, as he lowered his finger towards the final activation button, Smith's last words rung in his head. "You know better than that old fool Gizmo, you shall achieve greatness, just press that button and be done with it!" Gizmo said to himself. But he hesitated yet again when he was on the verge of completing his master plan. He looked back at the rocks that had collapsed upon Smith. No, he had to prove that he was better than Smith, the whole world has to know that he was the greater one of the two. Gizmo no longer cared about how much effort he had put into his plan, it would be all for nothing if the world still recognised Captain Smith as a hero, Gizmo deserves to be called a hero, not Smith, Gizmo! And with a swipe across the control panel, Gizmo deactivated the machine. The castle shook lightly and stopped, for a brief moment, silence filled the cavern.

Unfortunately, that moment fluttered by, the chamber rumbled yet again and with a crack, the whole castle crumbled to rubble, Gizmo found himself buried by an avalanche of stones. As he started to drift into eternal slumber, and as he stared into emptiness, Gizmo felt something he hadn't felt for a long while... pride.



# New Journey to the West

*St. Paul's College, Kwong, Ho To – 14*

Once upon a time, there was a very playful and mischievous monkey that always played tricks on other monkeys. However, he was very brave and loved to help others too. For these reasons, his inhabitant made him the King. He was also very handsome with golden fur that made him special and different. He was very energetic with muscular build. Wukong governed the monkey kingdom, which was near an old temple where the monks lived. This temple was a place of worship for many people who brought offerings to the God, such as cakes, meat, fruits and many others.

One day, Wukong entered the temple and was tempted. He saw many delicious fruits being offered. He wanted to get a bunch of bananas for his fellow monkeys. Unluckily, Tripitaka, the monk saw him. Instead of getting angry, he asked Wukong to listen to some good teachings and they became friends. The monkey adored the monks and called him Teacher. The monk told him to accompany him on his journey to India by ship because of a very important mission and he needed someone strong enough to protect him. As the Monkey King wanted to become popular around the world, he agreed.

At dawn, the monk and Wukong went to the pier. He helped with the monk's luggage. All the people were staring at them and whispering, "Why is a monkey with the monk and following him?" The real reason was that the monk was told to travel alone, but was allowed to bring a pet. By chance, the monk knew that Wukong had supernatural powers. All the passengers were on board and there were around one hundred people with different cultures and nationality inside the cabin. The ship started to sail. The view of the wide blue ocean was very nice. There were all sorts of water transport on the sea, from small boats, turbojets, to ferries moving back and forth. Later, when they reached the middle of the Ocean where only the huge ships can survive and continue to sail, there were tranquillity and peacefulness all around. They found freedom and independence. The only sound disturbing them were the splashing waves and screams of seagulls. Everybody smelt the unique smell of the sea brought by the wind and if you accidentally licked your lips, it would taste bitter.

When the Sun went down, the atmosphere and ambience started to change. It became totally dark. The moon and stars should appear but a storm came instead. Powerful winds started to blow which hindered the ship from sailing. The ship had to stop for a while until the storm subsided or when the wind became calm. Nobody could go out to bring down the anchor of the ship as it was too dark. All the passengers and the ship captain and crew members became worried. To everyone surprise, the monkey was able to do it.

After the storm, they were all very happy. At last, dinner was served. Not knowing there were pirates on board and their dishes were added some potion, almost all of the passengers got stomach upset and rushed to the washroom. Everybody was exhausted. Suddenly, one of the pirates fired a gun. "Bang," shouted the pirates, "We are pirates! All passengers now take out all your valuables, money, jewellery and all precious items and put them into the bag. Don't resist or I will shoot!" Two more pirates brought out two big white sacks, opened them and ordered everybody to move quickly and put the valuables inside. The passengers were so frightened that they had no choice but to obey.

The Monkey King brought up a plan and told the monk to cooperate with him. He climbed up secretly on to the top where the luggage was being kept. With one hand holding the metal bar, he swung his body up into the air and with the other hand, he snatched the gun from the pirates. Swiftly, he took out his magic wand and beat the pirates until they were defeated. Everybody was very cooperative and bravely helped. They tied up all the pirates and shouted for joy as everyone was safe. They thanked the monkey for being so brave and intelligent. One of them apologized for underestimating him, the passenger said, "Although you are a monkey, you are indeed very clever." Then, he took out a bunch of bananas from her bag and gave to Wukong. After two weeks of the voyage, they were able to arrive in India safely.

The captain reported the incident to the local Police Authority and the pirates were put in jail. With full coverage from different news reporters, who interviewed the captain, telling them "The Monkey King" saved the passengers from danger. The reporters took a lot of pictures and the news was widely spread across the country.

Lastly, when they returned from the journey, the Monkey King and the monk were warmly welcomed by the president when they stepped off the ship and. All in all, Wukong really became very popular.

# New Journey To The West

*St. Paul's College, Lee, Jasper Yee Jing – 14*

26 Dec 1655

**H**urrah! Today I finally received permission from King Ferdy and the Queen to set sail for Asia. And why wouldn't they, seeing as how I always bring back exquisite treasures from my voyages. But since this is the first time anyone will be sailing westwards, I guess they do have to be more careful. Alas, I am tremendously confident that my crew and I can complete the journey and find a quicker route to reach China before the Dutch do. Must hurry to prepare now, can't let those old tulip-heads beat me!

1 Jan 1656

It has been a busy day. We set off this morning from the port of Castile, with a total crew of 34 people. Most of them are experienced sailors whom I had worked with before. There is, however, a new cabin boy by the name of Jared, a first-timer who is already showing some enthusiasm for the high seas. Aside from my flagship, the Marco Polo, the court was nice enough to provide two other vessels, the Endeavour and the Resolute, both state-of-the-art lightweights. The weather is fine, the water is crystal clear and everything looks promising.

29 Jan 1656

Things are taking a turn for the worse. The sea is starting to become rough and there seems to be a storm brewing on the horizon. Several of my sailors are feeling a bit under the weather (no pun intended), and I'm just praying no one will come down with scurvy. Can't write more, must go help the crew clear the masts.

3 Feb 1656

Quite a disaster we've got on our hands. A violent hurricane (one of the strongest I'd ever seen) struck us two days ago, damaging the Resolute severely. Our ships are just barely able to sail, let alone go fast. If we sustain any more damage, we may sink and never return home. Also, Jared has officially become the most seasick person I have ever seen in my life. He is now staying only in his cabin all day, vomiting constantly to the rapid rocking of the waves. However, as we are on an uncharted route, I know not of anyplace where we could dock and make repairs. So we have to press on. The sooner we reach Asia, the sooner poor Jared will be able to plant his feet on solid ground again.

6 Feb 1656

Turns out the storm did more damage than was initially thought. The ships' onboard compasses are all fried, and no one had no idea where we were headed. Fortunately, I had brought along a starchart from The Royal Astronomical Court. They produced the best starcharts in all of Europe, and I always took one with me on my voyages just in case. I quickly told the sailors to identify Polaris, the bright Northern Star, and adjust our current course so as to keep moving west. Some of the sailors had never even seen a starchart before! Really, what do they teach in sailors' school nowadays?

26 Feb 1656

Two months have passed since the start of the journey, and still there's no sight of land. If we don't reach China within another month, it will mean that travelling eastwards is still the better option and our voyage will have all but failed. I do hope that's not the case. On the bright side, the sea is calm once more and Jared appears to have recovered from his sickness. I often see him running around the ship, learning all he can from sailors' of different posts. Soon he will be ready to help his fellow crew members. Hmm...speaking of which, I might need some help myself. Perhaps I will call in Old Tom to discuss altering our current course.

14 Mar 1656

Land ahoy! It was Jared who first spotted the peninsula this morning, and now we are comfortably docked and resting on its shores. I haven't seen any local folk yet, but we will surely meet some Chinese as we move further inland. Meanwhile, I'll just focus on relaxing after the long trip, and enjoying the spectacular scenery. Man, they really have nice forests here, the kind with lots of tall, lush green trees and plenty of exotic animals. I look forward to exploring more during our stay.

20 Mar 1656

So much has happened this past week. During the night, as we were sleeping in our camp, they struck. Darting out of the thick forest like shadows, the lithe figures ambushed and bound us up. The next thing I knew, we were in some sort of village and a crowd of people surrounded us. I could just barely crane my neck and see that the villagers were not, as I had expected them to be, Chinese. They looked more like Africans, with a darker complexion and tribal clothing. Their chief stepped out and looked at us for several minutes, then spoke to another man in their native language. We were thrown in a sort of dungeon where we spent the rest of the night. In that time, I thought of a brilliant plan to get us out of this mess. Obviously it would be very hard to communicate with the locals, but if there was one language that everyone around the world understood, it was money. Or more precisely, gold. The next morning I asked the chief, with a great deal of painstaking gesturing, whether I could send young Jared back to my ship to get something. He nodded in agreement and I told Jared to fetch the cartel of gold on the Marco Polo that we had been planning to trade with the Chinese. After Jared came back, I told the chief, once again mostly with gestures, that if he were to let us go, we would return and bring back large amounts of gold as repayment for his mercy. The chief seemed to understand what I was saying and left, presumably to discuss with the other elders of the tribe. Finally, they set us free and even allowed us to exchange some of our gold for their local spices and plants. The Queen will surely love them. As a last favor, I asked if they could help us repair our damaged ships and surprisingly, they agreed. Such nice people, once you got to know them. Now we are back on the ships and heading home. This morning, Old Tom told me that by his estimations, we had not reached China or even any remote part of Asia, but that we had discovered an entirely new continent altogether. Imagine that! A completely new land! The folks back at home will surely be overjoyed, as am I.

18 Jul 1656

Splendid news! It was all smooth sailing back home, and we arrived safely with the exotic goods. The Queen, as I had expected, loved the new kinds of flowers and plants, and after I had recollected the events of my journey, she even asked King Ferdy to give me a knighthood for 'courageous exploration of the unknown'. Also, the royal court has agreed to sponsor, along with the gold for the natives, my second trip to the Indies, as the continent is now called, the reason of which I know not. We are leaving next month, and Jared has once again signed up for the voyage, though this time preferably with some sea-sickness pills. Best of all, besides knighting me, the King and Queen have also given me authority over the Indian territories in the name of the Spanish throne. Hmm... Sir Christopher Columbus, 1st Governor of the Indies. It does have quite a nice ring to it, doesn't it?

# A New Journey to the West

*St. Paul's College, Ng, Truman Toby -14*

“**H**ey guys! We have to get on the boat right now! Or else, it will depart without us!’ A pig was shouting at the top of his voice to his fellow officers on the shore of the Shanghai Pier. He was a rotund and senile pig with a pink skin, squinty eyes and a gigantic mouth. He was wearing a black Qing government officer suit with the red character ‘Qing’ printed right in the centre to show others his country. However, the suit did not fit him as it was far too small. Just then, Li Hongzhang, who was carried on a sedan chair by a gorilla and a bear, came strolling in slowly towards the pig. The gorilla, bear and pig were all under the Qing government and servants of Li, a senior officer of the government, during this trip to the United Kingdom.

They had a mission to accomplish on this voyage. However, as they did not want to leak the plan to the public, they announced to the strong powers and the citizens that they were going to Great Britain to observe and assimilate the policies, constitution and military and to learn from them to strengthen the Qing Dynasty. However, their real plan was to steal a secret manuscript on ruling a country from Great Britain. A spy that they had sent to work in England reported back to Emperor Guangxu that the reason that England could become the empire on which the sun never sets was that they had this book called ‘Secrets to Rule an Empire Successfully’. This book was an ancient book which had been passed on in the monarchy family ever since 1604, when James I came into place. It teaches the kings and queens how to use their power correctly. When Emperor Guangxu heard about the book of wonder, he decided that he had to have a glimpse at it. Therefore, he ordered Li to steal it and bring it back to China.

Li and his three servants successfully got on the ship, which was called Elizabeth. It was a grand, gigantic vessel which also had cannons for defence. When the four of them saw the weapons, they were all astounded. They came to realise why they had lost the Opium Wars against Great Britain. This made them even determined to get their hands on the book, as it could strengthen their country.

Two months passed and they arrived in Bombay, a big port under the rule of England. The four of them decided that it was time for them to relax, so they got onto the shore for some browsing and shopping in the markets. Suddenly, they saw a drunk English soldier, shouting and kicking things while strolling through the aisles of the market. The gorilla, who was the best fighter in China, was very dissatisfied with the soldier’s deeds, so he went out to fight him. The people around him tried to stop him but he just stormed out and challenged the giant. However, in the fight between David and Goliath, David lost this time. The soldier fought his best and defeated the gorilla convincingly. After the incident, the four of the King officials noticed how weak they were. The gorilla, who was one of the best in China, could not even win an ordinary soldier who was drunk in English territory. The gorilla felt really ashamed and was adamant to improve his fighting skills.

As they got back on the ship with the gorilla black and blue all over, they set off for their next stopover point—Abyssinia. Three months passed again, and they sailed in serenity across the Indian Ocean. When they were about to approach Abyssinia, a few pirates barged onto the boat and pointed their spears at the passengers aboard. They then demanded them to hand over all the valuables to them. When the pirate pointed his weapon at Li, the loyal gorilla and the faithful pig defended their master from him. The bear tried to sweep the spear away and the pig attempted to punch the intruder on the belly. However, it was all in vain, only to make the pirate even more agitated. He poked a hole in each of the servants’ belly and they fell to the floor, with a tiny blood fountain bursting out of their wounds. Suddenly, an English troop marched onto the boat and surrounded the trespassers. The pirates endeavoured to fight, but the English soldiers were just too strong for them to cope with. At last, they were all arrested. One pirate abruptly pulled out a deck of \$100000 banknotes and gave it to the General. Li understood that the pirates were bribing the troop in order to be released. He was already dreaming about what he would buy with such a large amount of money if he were the General, but a booming “No” from the Englishman pulled him back to reality. He was utterly shocked with the General’s answer. He was puzzled why someone would give up the chance of getting such a large sum of money. Then, he realised that he had been doing the wrong thing all the while. He had been affected by the corruptive manner of all the Qing officials. He himself had become too greedy and money-oriented. Therefore, he decided that he would break his habits once he got back to China.

After their short but eventful stop at Abyssinia, they headed to their destination --- Dover. Li, the bear, the pig and the gorilla were all filled with ecstasy, as they could finally leave the boring sea they had spent on for nearly nine months. As soon as they arrived, they travelled on the speedy steam trains, and arrived in London a week later. It was the first time they had ever travelled by train, and Li at last came to know that trains not only make transportation much faster and more convenient, but also they do not create damage to the land or the ancestors' graves, which was what they believed in China.

The four of them reached the Buckingham Palace and was warmly welcomed by the King of Great Britain. He introduced different people in the monarchy and the government to Li. He took him to see the military parade and Li found out that the Qing troops were just unable to compete with the English troops, no matter on the discipline or the grandeur. He was amazed at the efficiency of the government's work as well. Also, the King kept on doing his work when Li was looking around in the palace. His files were piled up, nearly as tall as a building. In China, this situation was just impossible, as Emperor Guangxu was quite lazy usually. All of a sudden, he saw a book on the King's desk which titled 'Secrets to Rule an Empire Successfully'. It was the book the Emperor told him to take back to China! He strolled slowly towards the table, and pretended that nothing was happening. Despite being able to get hold of the book, he had already decided not to return to China as he perceived that it would perish one day. He even had a thought that he might start a revolution himself. He slowly closed onto the table, and once the manuscript got into hand distance, he reached out steadily. As he touched the cover of it, he was elated! He grabbed the book and unhurriedly, put it into his own coat. The King was oblivious to what had happened, and when he asked Li if he could do anything for him, Li requested a mansion, which the King blissfully agreed as a gesture of courtesy and good will.

When he arrived at his new home, he decided to dig a hole and bury the manuscript in a secret place. After a while, Li's wish to rebel was soon forgotten by all of them. Li and the three animals lived with contentment for a long time, until all of them passed away.

30 years later, Mr Suen Shan came to live here in his teacher's house while studying overseas. One day, he was helping the gardeners plant when all of a sudden, he dug up the manuscript. He read it meticulously and was truly inspired by the thoughts in the book. Thus, he decided to return to China, and started a new series of revolutionary events, which totally changed the Chinese history.

# New Journey To The West

*St. Paul's College, Yau, Lok Hei – 14*

An adolescent named Xiao Xuan is the only child of a rich family. His father is the Chief Executive Officer of an international company. The family lives in a big and luxurious house. Apart from numerous bedrooms, the house is also equipped with a swimming pool, a music studio, an elevator, a game room and a gymnasium. Xiao Xuan is well served by tens of maids in the house. He also has a driver who drives him to school and anywhere he wants to go. He takes these things for granted and fully believes that he well deserves all these. However, he changed his thoughts entirely after participating in the overseas exchange programme.

Xiao Xuan's best schoolmates highly recommended him to join the exchange programme to the Western part of China during the summer holiday. He read a book named "Journey to the West" before attending the programme. He loved the book very much and was fond of every scene that the Monkey King fought with the monsters to protect Xuanzang, despite the fact that he always wondered why Xuanzang went for such a toilsome trip. Wishing to have an exciting experience similar to Xuanzang's, Xiao Xuan looked forward to the date of the exchange programme. Shortly afterwards, the programme commenced and the students set off to the Western part of China. Xiao Xuan was thrilled and excited about visiting the western China. After walking and hiking for all day long, the students finally settled in a piece of flat land on a mountain. They stayed overnight and slept there. The environment was quiet and peaceful and the students were astonished by the thousands of stars in the sky. However, there was one student who stayed alone in the tent and kept blaming why he had to join the trip. Not surprisingly, he was "Xiao Xuan". He was extremely tired and suffered from a burnout since he seldom needed to walk for such a long distance and hence he was the first student who fell asleep.

The weather was brilliant with a clear blue sky on the second day of the programme. After walking again for a long time, the students arrived at the dilapidated premises. It was extremely messy in the premises but they could all vaguely hear some sound of children. When they walked near a room, the sound became louder and louder. Xiao Xuan saw some children, shabbily dressed, sitting in front of a blackboard and a man who seemed to be a teacher was talking to the children. When the children inside found that Xiao Xuan and other students visited the school, they were exhilarated and screamed. When Xiao Xuan noticed that it was actually a school for the village children, he was shocked and could hardly imagine how the students attended lessons in such an unpleasant place. Under the exchange programme, all students were arranged to have a few days' homestay with the local students and their families. That's a nightmare for Xiao Xuan to stay in such a humbly furnished and primitive place. He gradually found the programme not as exciting and thrilling as he had imagined and he believed that he had made a wrong choice of joining the programme. The local student whom Xiao Xuan stayed with was called Tom, an energetic and a filial boy. Xiao Xuan followed Tom home after school. When arriving at Tom's home, Xiao Xuan thought that he could finally take a rest after an exhausting day, but he wondered how Tom went to school by himself every day without the help of a driver. As Tom lived in a rural village, he had to walk for an hour to school and then another hour back home after school every day. There were neither computers, television nor toys in Tom's home. Xiao Xuan could hardly imagine such a boring life without all sorts of entertainment. Tom had a large family with six younger siblings. Xiao Xuan was annoyed with the noises of the young children and the crowded living environment. He took pity on Tom for the need to share things and his living space with the his siblings.

It was another brand new day, also a school holiday. The whole family, including Xiao Xuan went hunting and harvesting some vegetation for dinner. Tom and Xiao Xuan, with the other children, arrived at their big farmland. Tom and Xiao Xuan then started to harvest and picked vegetation for the meal. While Xiao Xuan was picking the crops, the young children ran around and overthrew the basket of Xiao Xuan accidentally. Xiao Xuan was exasperated and wanted to scold them. At that time, Tom helped to pick up the basket and apologized for the children's playful behavior. Xiao Xuan felt shameful of his impulsiveness and was grateful for Tom's help. After Xiao Xuan and Tom finished the harvesting work, they went home.

After dinner, a younger brother of Tom took out a piece of string and pulled it apart. Another brother put his hands into the string and flipped, the string then formed an odd, but beautiful pattern. The six siblings enjoyed a great time in playing just a piece of string. Xiao Xuan did not understand why they were contented with playing with just a string. Not until one of the brothers invited him to play did he entirely change his mind. Xiao Xuan first could not even grab the string, but after the guidance and instruction provided by the siblings, he finally could make a lot of patterns by using the string and they were all unique. Without the swimming pool and other facilities in the house, Xiao Xuan still enjoyed and was satisfied. Xiao Xuan started not to think that the siblings were not noisy “monsters”, but good companions instead. Xiao Xuan enjoyed the time that they played and dined together afterwards. On the top of the sky they looked at the flickering stars, allowing him to see such a spectacular landscape in the cities. And from then on, he treasured every time that he spends with Tom’s family, as he knows this is the last night with them.

Time flies and it was time for Xiao Xuan to leave Tom’s home. He missed everything and it was really hard for him to say goodbye as it marked the end of the programme. After he went back to home, the first thing he did was not watching TV or playing video games, but to sit down and review the whole trip. Although he thought that the trip was exhausting and tiring, the experiences were precious and valuable. He thanked the whole family for giving him such a memorable experiences in the western part in China and he loved this programme so much. And by now, he finally realised why Xuanzang wanted to go for such tiresome trip, this was because of the invaluable experiences and the precious journey.

## New Journeys to the West

*St. Paul's Convent School, Chan, Bui Ka Amber – 14*

**H**astily he endeavoured to wash his face of the weariness it felt, for he had not slept the entire night. Sometimes he questioned his life choices, but he knew he needed to finish his paperwork for the meeting later on today as the head of the student council. Implanting the idea that he was irresponsible in his fellow committee's heads was the last thing he wanted to keep up his already seemingly unflattering reputation.

“Why is this happening to me?” He groaned, pressing his face against the water in the sink. He felt as if he was about to pass out from fatigue, but he could not afford to sleep when he still had pending work to sort out. He looked up in the mirror to face his drenched hair, moaning about the unease of wet locks of hair sticking to his skin.

He proceeded to stare at his image, tired eyes glaring into his reflection's. “I don't like you, you know that?”

No response.

He heaved a laugh as he turned away. “Oh, why do I bother with you? You do nothing but waste your life away—”

“Hey, don't say that!”

His cloudy mind took a moment to register the voice that sounded interchangeable to his own, yet so foreign. Did it come from where he thought it came from? So he sought the mirror for an answer. His mirrored self had fawn hair and gold eyes, something that he should not had. He also did not appear human, which was also something he was not.

“Oh, go away, I don't need this right now, I—”

“Wow, I can't believe this! Are you me? But, that can't be! You're so... Bitter!”

Sighing, he turned away from the mirror, rubbing at his temples. He obviously lacked sleep to the point that he was acting delusional. Yes, that was it. He just needed to get back to his desk and he could escape from this.

“Hey, don't go, this is really important!”

“I don't see how talking to an imaginary monkey can be of more importance than finishing my work on time.”

“You said you were wasting your time away, weren't you? Well, helping me— you with this, will be nothing but beneficial for you.”

Lamenting over how pitiful he seemed, he turned to face his outlandish reflection, face scrunched up in annoyance. “Go on and let me be.”

His visage twisted even further when the monkey guffawed, his chortles grinding at his nerves. He pinched the bridge of his nose, muttering about foolish primates as he drained the sink of the lukewarm water it held.

“Man!” The monkey wiped a tear away. “I can't remember the last time I spoke so formally. Not even between me and Xuanzang.”

“It's Xuanzang and I, has anyone ever taught you proper grammar?”



“Sorry I guess, English isn't really my first language. I wonder why you aren't Chinese.”

*Chinese? Why would I be Chinese?* He pondered, but decided to not voice his query to lose more of his precious time. “Now, you were talking about my aid?”

The monkey put his hand at his chin, fingers rubbing at it, before grabbing onto his staff, swinging it around and letting it penetrate the mirrored world, poking at the teen's chest. “Do you want to do something productive with your life?”

He would never admit to anyone that he almost screeched in a falsetto voice and was greatly taken aback. Never. Poking at the staff, he recoiled. It felt immensely hot, and he did not like the ominous feeling that was radiating from it and blossoming in his heart for some reason.

Out of the blue, everything around him shifted, and he found himself in a desert. Then he blinked. And yelled.

“What is this sorcery, monkey!?” He fumed, stomping about in circles. Suddenly, a giant tiger fell just an inch or two in front of him, causing him to really yelp in a falsetto voice.

“You're going to journey to the west! Go you!”

“I *live* in the west! Don't mock me with your feigned perkiness and hogwash!”

“Welcome! If you win these challenges, you get to retrieve a holy sutra from Leiyin Temple without having to journey to the west yourself!”

“This is ludicrous! Let me get back to my paperwork—”

“Good luck, the next Sun Wukong!”

With that, the tiger snapped towards him, ripping his sleeve off with a ferocious roar, causing his heart to drop to where his stomach was, and his blood to freeze. For a moment, he was too stunned to move, but his feet carried him off as quick as lightning when it struck again, leaving a carmine streak on his arm, with more of it gushing out generously.

With his heart beating as expeditiously as a race car moved, his mind fought for ideas. What was it that the voice called him? The next Wukong? He had read the translated version of the novel “Journey to the West” with him as a character, but the fact that what the voice said sounded like a riddle vexed him. He did not have time to be irritated, however, prevailing was the key. When he gained another scratch, he gave a frightened cry, trying to run faster.

“Hint. Wukong is confident and chivalrous. He faces everything head on.”

*Faces everything head on.* He got the message instantly and turned around, punching at its jaw, hoping he would have dislocated it. The tiger dissipated into thin air, leaving him alone on the sand, wheezing for air.

“Wow, I'm stupendous!” He praised himself, a lopsided grin overtaking his face.

“At least you have your unfaltering pride in common with Wukong.”

“I'll take this as a compliment, thank you—”

He failed to complete his sentence before a dragon descended from the sky— *why does the sky look like it's been stampeded by unicorns!?* *This all is ridiculous!*— and started swirling about him. He gulped, mulling over plausible ways of it devouring him and his mind going into flight mode, apprehensive of what was to come.

*Perhaps another challenge for me to act like Wukong?* He contemplated, ignoring the dragon, after deducting that it wouldn't harm him for a while. *To focus on the present instead of overthinking? To improvise without doubting?*

“I would appreciate it if you gave me valuable advice now, voice.” He sighed, staring at the dragon without apparent fear any longer, rather than just idling there with an annoyed guise. When no response was given, he decided to take matters into his own hands, kicking the dragon without hesitating. *Present, no doubt.*

He was gobsnacked when it once again morphed into nothingness about him, but the surprise quickly turned into a smug feeling as he gave a little beam at his success.

Sadly (comically), the next challenge was anything but he expected.

His eyes locked onto a pair of sea blue orbs that he did not like. Their owner was a schoolmate who loved to mock him, and he was standing in front of him with a smirk on his countenance, which he frankly wanted to murder him for. Nodding to himself with the corners of his lips twitching up as well, his eyes gleamed as his clenched fists collided with the other's face, knocking him to the sand with his form curled up in agony. He presumed the body to turn into nothing as well, but to his shock, it did not.

“Loyalty is indispensable for a holder of a holy sutra. You are not loyal.”

“Why does that count!? He's not my friend! I don't need to be loyal to him!” He argued, not noting how a blinding light was enveloping him.

“Is he not?” The voice seemed to tease and fade away, before getting replaced by another much more exasperating voice booming in his right ear as he slowly drifted back to reality.

A voice that loved to patronise him.

“Oh, my friend, you're finally up! I thought you were dead!” His schoolmate feigned fright, pulling a dramatic expression.

“What— I thought *you* were dead!” He gasped, pointing at him accusingly.

“You were asleep for the whole meeting. You dreamt of me dying? Whatever, I'm too beautiful to die. I'm going to tell you the most important part, *president*, because you're too foolish to comprehend anything.” His neighbour said lightly, a playful sparkle in his sea blue eyes.

“I was right to punch you in my sleep.”

“We're going to India, my dear. To China first, then we journey to the west from there. I don't know about the budget, but it's up to you to veto—”

Needless to say, the rest of the committee was petrified when he let out a scream in a falsetto voice.

# New Journeys to the West

*St. Paul's Convent School, Wong, Cherie – 15*

After last time adventure to the west, the three brothers, Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie, Shā Wùjìng, and Master Tang learnt a lot of cooking skills to cook different kinds of special traditional food. And this time, the three brothers decided to take their master, Master Tang, to Hong Kong and all the way to Tibet, via Sichuan again to try out different food and learn different cultures.

They took a private jet all the way to Hong Kong as Master Tang didn't like to sit in a crowded airplane with many noises. After 7 hours and 30 minutes' flight, they finally arrived in Hong Kong. They were amazed by the Hong Kong airport's fabulous design. "Hey, Master Tang... why are the people looking at us with curious faces, are we too handsome? Well you don't need to answer I know it!" Sun Wukong said Master Tang loudly and proudly. Master Tang immediately covered his mouth and said in a low voice, "You idiot, it is not because we are handsome, it is because of our cloths, I think, as you see the people here wear fashion, fancy cloths. Come on, don't talk too much and let's fetch a cab and go to somewhere that we can buy some trendy cloths." Well, they were really amazed by the traffic and also the fashion designs in Hong Kong.

Zhu Bajie got a cab and they told the driver to take them to the best hotel to check in first. And the driver took them to Tsim Sha Tsui and asked them, "do you want to shop around your hotel? I have some recommendations for you to shop for nice cloths. You can go to this shop and that shop." The driver told them the shop names and point to them.while talking happily, they arrived at Tsim Sha Tsui and they thanked the driver. They went in a delicate hotel and asked for four rooms. Later, the three brothers and their Master took the driver's advices and went to shops. The four people were like a crazy shopaholic. They totally spent 11,932 dollars just to buy cloths. Master Tang immediately changed to a black suit with leather shoes; Sun Wukong changed into a cute monkey cloth; Zhu Bajie change into a t-shirt with trousers, which the tee seemed to be almost broken since he is so fat and his tummy is being seen; Shā Wùjìng wore a sports wear with black addius sports shoes. They walked out professionally and like a superstar.

The people on the road are very shocked and looked at them with shocked faces. Zhu Bajie was very scared of their looks and he hid behind Shā Wùjìng, and Sun Wukong teased Zhu Bajie, "You are such a baby. Don't be afraid, we are man."

After the tiring shopping day, they went back to their hotel and have a peaceful sleep. The next day, they took a train in the Hung Hom train station to Sichuan. As they need to get to Sichuan in order to go back to Tibet. On their way to Sichuan, Master Tang read books for a while, and slept all the way to Sichuan; Sun Wukong practiced his martial arts on the train and it scared the other passages; Zhu Bajie continuously eat and sleep; Shā Wùjìng just watch the scenery and draw glasses on Master Tang's and Zhu Bajie's faces and he slept quietly.

When they arrived to Sichuan, they left the train and get their shopping things. The people in Sichuan whispered to each other and laughed out loudly. Master Tang, Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie don't know what is happening. When Sun Wukong looked at both Master Tang, Zhu Bajie and he laughed also. Sh Shā Wùjìng then burst out laughing. Sun Wukong took out a mirror and gave Master Tang and Zhu Bajie take a look. When both of them wanted to scold Shā Wùjìng, he and Sun Wukong was then nowhere to be seen.

They called a cab and they went to the monasteries where the monks live in and visited the monks there. They decided to stay and explore the city. The next day, they woke up and they went to the market nearby. They bought a lot of things. Master Tang bought some ingredients to make delicious food for his three brothers and also the monks in Tibet; Sun Wukong bought some fruits for the others to eat; Zhu Bajie bought and ate the dumplings that he has bought for the others and had nothing to eat, poor pig; Shā Wùjìng bought some traditional clothes for all of them and Zhu Bajie's cloth is XXXXL which was tailor-made for him due to his fatness. Master Tang learnt to make some tasty foods in Sichuan and he was very eager to make them in Tibet and let the others try his cooking skills.

After a day of shopping, they were all exhausted. And Master Tang made some nice soup and a festive dinner for all of them. They were all full and slept soundly in each room. They woke up at around 11:00a.m. and they all panicked as they needed to arrive at the train station at 11:30a.m. and they were still in the monastery. Luckily, the cabs were quick and they were able to be at the train station on time, but just as they need to go up on the train, Master Tang had disappeared all of a sudden. During the 2 hours, Master Tang came up with a mischievous idea, he woke up after all his brothers were sleeping. He use a lipstick that he bought from the train station early, and he drew cartoons on Shā Wùjìng's face and he then helped him moist Shā's lips with that lipstick as he saw that it was a bit dry. He later took his seat and continued to sleep, pretend that nothing happened.

When he woke up 30 minutes later, he saw a clueless Shā Wùjìng and his two disciples laughing loudly and attracted the other passengers on the train come and looked at them. The other also started to laugh hard and some even cried out due to entertainment. Shā Wùjìng went to the bathroom and he looked into the mirror and couldn't believe his eyes. He saw himself was all in red looked as if he had blood on his face. When he went out of the train, he saw all the people left and he saw all of them were boarded. And he was forced to leave the train. The monks from Tibet heard about Master Tang and his beloved disciples were back and they all went to the train station to welcome him. Then they saw one of his disciples was missing. As they were about to find him, he went out of the train. Th others immediately laughed till they rolled on the floor. He was very furious, and he took a cab on his own and went back to his OWN monastery and took out a pack of wet tissues and he wiped out the marks that were on his face.

Later, Master Tang felt very sorrowful and he decided to do something when he reached the monastery he went directly to Shā Wùjìng. He knocked on Shā's door and went in quietly, and he found Shā's eyes are fluffed and red. And his voice is cracked, probably, he had cried before. Master Tang was so sorry and he apologized to Wùjìng, hoping he would be forgiven. Luckily, Wùjìng was generous and he forgave Master Tang, which didn't make Master Tang very sorrowful, instead they were both very happy and they talked all day long. On the other side at the same time, Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie were showing their souvenirs to the others, and they are comparing among themselves, later it turned out into a fight. Master Tang saw it and persuaded them not to fight as it might cause danger to others and one self. Luckily they listened to him and dint cause too much danger.

The next day, to celebrate their arrival back to Tibet, Master Tang made a huge amount of Sichuan and Hong Kong special food that he learnt from the two places. The monks and his disciples thought that it was the most best-tasting food that they had before in their life. Master Tang was pleased that his masterpiece was appreciated by the others. He made more and he took them to the market near the monastery and he sold them all in just an hour as the people there hadn't taste any food that was so delicious. The business was very good and his disciples decided to learn how to make it and help him with his successful business.

Master Tang was very pleased to see his disciples that they had grown up a lot after this adventure. Sun Wukong thought it was a fabulous experience to have another advetnure. Zhu Bajie had no feelings towards this adventure, he just wished to have something to eat and to followed his respectful Master Tang and going to anyway is fine. Shā Wùjìng is an adventurous and emotional person and he hoped to go to other places next time and also don't make fun of him.

This is a very good experience for all of them, Master Tang can learn many other different kinds of cooking skills and the three disciples can learn to be mature and treasure their brothers. All of them were looking forward to another adventure.

# Scriptures of Happiness

*St. Paul's Convent School, Cheung, Ka Yu Katrina – 15*

There are many things for one to do, to accomplish in life. For some, it might be as big as to become a world leader, and for some, it might be as little as to be able to buy an 800 feet apartment in a congested city. Though greatly rewarding as happiness is, it silently slips past our sights as we edge our way through the troubles of life, and happiness seems to be more and more of but a luxury to us.

How can we find happiness amidst the rolling waves?

I had been pointlessly strolling on one of the many crowded streets of India for the past week, desperately trying to find inspiration for an upcoming photography exhibition. As a photographer for a luxury magazine, I could not find anything here which piqued my interest; at every corner I turned, I only saw crowds large like sewer rats flocking to food; in every direction, I only saw cars behind cars. As if to cover their plainness, many colourful billboards were put across buildings, but none seemed attractive to my eyes.

How can India be happy under such poor conditions?

The noise of shouting salesmen and honking cars faded away as I walked into a relatively quieter street. I breathed in deeply, wanting to keep the rare tranquillity to myself. Sadly, the moment was cut short by a rough yell. My breathing was also cut short as stone fists were thrown at me. I fell to the ground. Air left my lungs. I tried to fight back, only to become more vulnerable to their attacks. My vision began to leave me. The world turned dark, turned black, like void.

When I opened my eyes again, night had already fallen. Above me was a ceiling I could not recognise; had I been kidnapped? I was not tied up so—

“Ah, you’re awake! Ma almost thought you’d die with all those wounds.” A voice disrupted my thoughts. “I saw you all bloody on the street as I was driving home, so I took you here. Can’t leave someone injured on the street, y’know?” He continued in an ebullient tone. How could he be so happy looking at an injured stranger?

I tried to sit up but winced in agony.

“Don’t try to move too much or your wounds might worsen, at least that’s what Ma said. Rest up for the night ‘kay?”

The door creaked, signalling his leave and me falling into a dreamless slumber.

After I woke up with a clearer mind, it did not take long for me to realise all my belongings were stolen away when I blacked out.

Oh no.

My passport.

I was stuck there.

Stranded.

Worried was not enough to describe my emotions, my mind or my heart. It felt like I was being thrown into a dark hole of despair with no way of getting out.

“Hey! I brought—” The man I saw yesterday came into the room with a tray of dark brownish liquid in a bowl. I frantically grabbed his shoulders, causing some of the liquid to spill.

“Lost my passport! What can I do?” I was so shocked that I could not form coherent sentences.

“We can...contact the embassy! You came here legally, right?” He half-heartedly joked.

That’s right, the embassy! How could I forget! I calmed myself down (I tried my hardest) and took in my surroundings. The window frames and doorframes were adorned with traditional Indian patterns mainly of red, white and green on beige walls. The room was not big but spacious enough for a bed that fits for two, which I was sitting on. A rusty iron fan was nostalgically hanging on the beige ceiling. It was easy to tell that the owner of the house was not the lucky ones among the wealthy. The Indian man in white sherwani, who was now sitting on the ground, had dark combed back hair and a Tilaka on his forehead.

I switched my attention to the bowl of rather *nasty looking* liquid and raised my brow.

“Ma’s homemade herbal tea. Good for your wounds! Though it doesn’t seem like you need it.” He smiled brightly.

I hesitantly drank the bitter liquid while he was rambling on. It was mostly useless information. I learnt that his name was Sahil, and that apparently his whole family, which was “absolutely huge”, lived here as well. One thing I did not understand was that why the thieves did not snatch my camera as well.

The following day, he led me to the embassy. Being told that I needed to wait at least a month, I sighed in frustration. I had to stay here for at least a whole month. I felt sour. On the other hand, Sahil appeared to be more enthusiastic than I was. That's better than a year he said. I only shrugged in response.

Walking out of the embassy I saw the sight before I slipped into oblivion, just before losing all my...possessions. I sighed again.

As we neared the bus station in front of the embassy, an old-schooled bus with roughly forty seats stopped by. Two thick yellow horizontal lines surrounded the upper and bottom window frames; its wheels were a shade darker than beige because of the dirt that had stuck on through the years. The waiting line was surprisingly short (compared to the amount of people on the street), so we were able to get seated by one of the dusty opened windows. It was not until the bus was nearly full that I realised the actual length of the queue a second ago; a woman limped on. By impulse, I offered her my seat, which was repaid by a bright smile and crinkled eyes.

Her smile felt warm like a fireplace in merciless winter, radiating heat for freezing children. My heart felt bouncy. How could such a simple action from me elicit such a strong, empowering emotion in someone else? Drawn to the peculiar matter, I unconsciously picked up my camera to capture the moment.

Click, snap.

She giggled, causing a smile to creep on my face as well.

The bus swam slowly through the sea of vehicles and people as I questioned the situation myself. Back home, even if I offered my seat to others, they would act in a nonchalant manner. What was in my insignificant action that evoked this happiness?

Despite the almost-two-hour long traffic jam, Sahil and the woman chatted away merrily in a language I did not understand (probably Indian, I told myself). It was already well into the evening when we arrived; the sky was painted in an alluring palette of yellow, orange and blue which I could not help but admire. Life in the city meant tall buildings blocking your sight, making this scene of the seemingly endless open sky more special.

Click, snap.

The (wonderful, if I may add) smell of foreign dishes flooded my nose as I entered the lively house. Adults were either chatting or helping to make dinner while children were running and chasing around, all enjoying their time together. The jubilant atmosphere did not fade but rather heightened as we ate with someone occasionally offering me various foods to try. I felt welcomed. I felt... *at home*. Seeing my whole family at the same table back home was near impossible, someone would always say they have work, or that they have plans already. It always felt distant, so different from how it felt with this family I barely met.

Click, snap.

Days flew by. My long awaited day of returning home came. Yet, I could feel the reluctance in my heart. Memories of the past month occupied my mind, many of them sweeter than bitter. Maybe it was because this "mishap" changed the way I see things, a simpler way to see life and the challenges thrown at us, an easier way to let happiness into our lives. That is, to be self-contented, to be happy with what we have instead of seeking that short-lived joy we find in obtaining something we do not have.

Happiness is all around us if we allow it to be.

I always thought of this abrupt adventure as my own silly version of Journey to the West; but instead of scriptures about Buddhism, I found the Indian philosophy of being self-content.

A scripture of happiness.

# New Journeys to the West

*St. Paul's Convent School, Javelera, Villanueva Roberta Kay – 14*

**1** 400 years ago, I witnessed the most magnificent event. As a time traveller, I have seen a lot of events. One of the most remarkable ones is the one I like to call “The Journey to the West”.

I changed forms in different periods to suit the environment back then. In this period, I am an old monk named Chen, who has been serving the monastery for 30 years.

I was eating breakfast at the time when one of the waitresses, Biyu, screamed out the name of her son, Xuanzang. He was a young monk, planning to venture out on his own from China to India. Of course, his mother said no.

“Do you know how dangerous that is? What if you starve on your way there? What if you get killed? You’re only 22 years old! Why would you decide to do that?” His mother panicked while I chuckled. Mothers will always be mothers. He sighed, “Mother, the monastery wanted to send me there to study other religions as well, so that I will be more exposed to understanding other people and to finding peace between battling religions.”

“Oh dear, no,” his mother shook her head. “There will never be peace.” But Xuanzang disagreed. “Mother, there is peace in everything.” She started to panic even more, knowing she wouldn’t be able to convince him into not going. “I will go and talk to Master Da Cheng,” her son said calmly. “So that I may seek advice for this journey.”

I followed him back to the monastery as I remembered I would have a meditation session with the new students. He turned around suddenly and bowed deeply. “Young one, I know you are anxious about this journey. Come, I will accompany you to Master Da Cheng, and propose to go with you,” I suggested.

We went to the monastery and went straight to Master Da Cheng’s quarter. I knocked slightly on the door before entering. “Good afternoon, Master Da Cheng,” both Xuanzang and I bowed deeply, he bowed in return. “I would like to propose to go with Chen on his trip to India for his studies,” I explained. “His mother is worried for his well-being.”

“Of course,” he chuckled. “Go at once with the boy,” he smiled. Xuanzang and I bowed deeply before going to our own quarter to pray and pack before leaving that day. “May you both have peace and learn more on this journey to the West,” said Master Da Cheung. All three of us bowed as a sign of respect and left for our journey.

He sprinted to his mother’s workplace before we left, where he was greeted with a hug and a few tears. “Be careful my son,” she whispered to him, crying. “Thank you Master Chen,” she clasped hands as a sign of thanks before seeing us off.

We got on some horses and placed our baggage in the wagon behind us. We started off our journey with praying Duo Luo Pu Sa, the Buddhist goddess of liberation and success, for guidance on this trip and success in India. “Caishen, I also pray to you that my mother will prosper in her work,” I heard Xuanzang mutter.

Days into the journey, we went along the path to India safely until we discovered that one day, one third of our remaining food was missing. “Master Chen, I do not remember eating almost half of our packed meals,” he told me. I agreed with him. Then suddenly, we saw a monkey with its own wagon, carrying that portion of our food. “Hey!” Xuanzang yelled. “That’s our food!” He got off his horse and ran after the Monkey at a lightning speed.

Then, I heard a man’s voice call out. “Hanuman! Give the food back to the poor boy!” I only noticed then that the Monkey was blue and then I suddenly felt the wagon get heavy. It was like something jumped on it.

“Woah, Varaha!” The man yelled again, taking the pig or boar from the wagon. “I do apologise for their behaviour,” the man said worriedly. “I hope we didn’t trouble you.” He was speaking in English, which I didn’t really understand. “Me no know English,” I tried saying. “Oh I’m sorry,” he switched to Chinese. “I’m Frank, I had been studying in a Chinese monastery for 5 years but I’m from England. I am Christian but I study multiple beliefs.”

“My student and I are from China,” I told him. “We’re on our way to India.” “Us too! That’s where Hanuman and Varaha live! Hanuman is the Monkey and Varaha is the pig. I, myself, want to go to India to preach the Christian belief.” “That is a very noble thing to do, Frank,” I said. Then, we headed to India together.

Days later, we encountered a quiet part of the desert. It was too quiet for my liking. Then we were suddenly ambushed. The robbers took most of our supplies and ran away, but suddenly, Varaha and Hanuman were gone in a flash of light and came back, carrying our supplies. “Are you two magical?” Xuanzang asked. “Isn’t it obvious young monk?” Varaha asked. Xuanzang widened his eyes in shock, not expecting him to speak. Both Frank and I weren’t really shocked, we’ve heard of miracles as we both have studied multiple beliefs.

We encountered many difficulties throughout our journey but Varaha and Hanuman have always been able to save us from the situations. One thing I was speculating about, was that we never ran out of food. I remember only packing enough for 2 or 3 months.

When we got to India, both Hanuman and Varaha disappeared. We expected them to come back, but they never did. One monk of the Hinduism belief met us in front of a temple where we would learn. “Who is that friar?” He asked. “He is Frank, he’s a Christian and he would like to learn the Buddhist belief.” The monk violently shook his head and sent Frank away to prison. “He didn’t do anything wrong!” Xuanzang cried. “Is having a different religion a crime now?” The monk angrily explained the situation to Xuanzang. “Christians and Buddhists do not get along, boy,” he yelled. “They have always corrected our religion!” He went on about how bad Christians are. Then, he left us to settle in our respective rooms. “Xuanzang, the world is a cruel place,” I explained softly. “They do not accept certain religions in certain areas. Like here, in India, they do not accept Christians, like the example you have seen. Please, do not question their methods further.” He nodded sadly.

The next day, we attended their classes. “Hanuman is the Monkey god,” the monk continued to explain Hanuman. Only then did I realise, Hanuman was the Monkey with us. “Varaha on the other hand is a form of a god in a pig or boar.” The two animals were with us on the trip, it explains everything now!

“Teacher,” Xuanzang asked. “Sun Wukang is also a Monkey god in Chinese Buddhism, does it mean Hanuman is also Sun Wukang?” The monk’s face turned red. “I don’t know why you continue to question Hinduism! Every lesson you asked is that the same in Chinese Buddhism? It is all wrong! Your religion is all wrong!”

Xuanzang stood up calmly, “Teacher, I apologise for my curiosity. But I believe no belief is wrong, I’m only trying to understand more of my belief through yours. Frank was also trying to understand more of your belief through his, that is why he came to India. I believe all religions have their differences but I also believe that we should not be correcting the other religion, but understand it through our own. Our gods all have one thing in common. They wish for the world to be a beautiful place for their people. They do that by creating love and peace between religions, so that one may understand the other through love and compassion and resolve to peace for all eternity.”

“My boy,” The monk said, smiling. “You have the purest mind of all, I respect you because of your speech and being. I will release your friend from prison and try to understand him, like my god Vishnu would like me to. Thank you my boy, for opening up my mind and heart to others who are not of my religion.”

When we left class that day, I patted Xuanzang’s head in approval. “You learnt well my boy,” I smiled. “I learnt from the best teacher,” he replied, smiling as well. “Thank you Master Chen.”



## New Journeys to the West

*St. Paul's Convent School, Kawasaki, Yurika – 13*

“**W**hat am I doing here” Sun Wukong said to himself, “What am I, the great Sun Wukong doing, sprawled out on the ground?” He tried to recall what happened, to no avail. For the great Buddha had erased almost all his memories. He only remembered his name but he still retained his awful personality. Quite unfortunate, in my opinion...

Who am I, you may ask? I am Xuanzang, a monk and the narrator of this tale. I am an acquaintance of this monkey. If you do not want to read about confusion, heartache, pain, sadness, I advise you to stop reading, immediately. For this story may not end well...

As the monkey started to come to his senses, he started to panic. He did not know where he was and long he was unconscious. No matter how hard he thought, he could not remember. His mind was as blank as papyrus.

Suddenly, he heard people counting down numbers loudly. He scurried to find the place where the noise came from. “Three! Two! One! Happy New Year!” the people screamed and at that very moment, enormous fire-balls were shot at the sky and it exploded. The monkey had no idea what this potentially dangerous object was, so he hid himself behind a tree and whimpered. “What are you doing?” a voice asked. The monkey raised his head and he saw, an extremely chubby man snacking on dried bacon. The monkey quickly recovered and casually asked this man what the fire-balls were and where he was.

“Those fire-balls? You mean fireworks? Also, what do you mean? How do you not know where you are? You’re in Times Square! It’s 2018!” the man replied. The monkey was listening intently until he heard “2018”. What. How. The last time that he checked, it was still 1318. How did 700 years pass while he was unconscious? Then he realised and thought, “Of course! What was I thinking? That sort of phenomenon would happen to me only!” Then, it dawned to him... even if he had a horrible personality and hardly any friends, he still had a strong sense of belonging to somewhere, something or someone. The ignorant monkey did not know that this experience was a punishment from Buddha and the thing he had a strong sense of belonging to, his Somersault Cloud was not his anymore and returned back to where it came from. He did not know that all things that he kept close to his heart were gone, as punishment for his reckless and selfish deeds. He had close to nothing left in this new mysterious world.

Wukong racked his brains and tried to remember his old life. The chubby man decided to sit next to him and observe this curious monkey-looking man that seemed so confused. As for the monkey, he was mighty confused.

Suddenly, he heard a voice. Buddha’s voice. He didn’t know how he knew but he knew. The voice said, “Find the cavern that you have been exiled to and repent your sins. After you have done so, your memory will return. Repent your sins once more... Preserve and you will be rewarded. Go back to the cavern in no-man’s land in South China. You will know the way the moment you step foot in Chinese soil.”

The voice trailed off... and left the monkey perplexed. However, he understood that he had to go to China, South China to repent and become a decent person again, or a decent monkey, to be exact.

He decided to depart immediately. However, he soon realised he had no resources nor money. The monkey realised that the man was still next to him and asked, “Did you hear that?” The chubby man looked at him, puzzled. “Yes,” he thought to himself. He then inquired how he could get to South China as soon as possible. The man answered, “I don’t know much about geography but China is basically on the other side of the globe!” This left the monkey flabbergasted for he had never travelled farther than the Middle East. He plopped himself down on the grass and interrogated the chubby man about how he could get to China. He soon found out that what he needed was a flying metal bird, an aeroplane and money. A lot of the things the chubby man said did not make sense to the monkey. However, the man explained to the monkey

as patiently as a mother to her child for he wanted a companion, a friend. The monkey used the advantage that the chubby man was of high value (and was quite clueless, in his opinion) and asked the lonely man if he could borrow money to buy a plane ticket to South China. The man hastily agreed on one condition, he had to come with Wukong. Wukong agreed with the intent of asking the man for more money along the journey. The two took off from America to go to South China.

After hours of lounging and discovering new items to be fascinated with, Wukong could figure out to use a telephone, WiFi and learnt all the singers and their songs that Adam liked. They finally reached China! When he got off the airplane, he put his two furry feet on the ground, he instantly felt a memory, a pulsation. His eyes turned from green to gold. He led Adam to the map stuck on the wall and pointed to a rural island in South China. "This is where I have to go," he said.

They finally found themselves in the McDonald's at the airport, exhausted and desperate. They could not have come all the way here to find nothing! Yet, they could not find a person that could take them there. Adam had no sense of direction and the monkey wanted to give up and was thinking of shortcuts, despite Buddha's warning. Fortunately for him, Adam sensed this and gave him support. He assured Wukong that he could and would find someone who would be willing to go and show him the way to the cavern. The moment he said that an enormous man came and slammed his hand on the McDonald's table. "I know the way and I can show you, for the right price." the man said. Adam refused but the monkey said, "How much do you want?" However, Wukong was downright desperate and, after all, the money was not his. After what seemed like a glaring contest, Adam gave in. They paid the man, Suki, and began their journey.

It took them 3 days before they finally made it. Instead of feeling joy for finding the deserted island, they felt exhausted. However, Adam gritted his teeth and all three of them began to climb and trek the hill to the cavern. As they were climbing, all three men were thinking of different things... Suki was thinking of his riches and Adam of food. As for Wukong, he was thinking of what Buddha said to him. What did he do that he deserved such a cruel punishment? A sudden misery overtook him and he felt a strong wave of homesickness. A tear slid off his nose as he climbed tirelessly up the hill to the place that was his prison. Finally, he reached his destination. The cavern. The sun had started to set and the cavern looked terrifyingly beautiful.

The moment Wukong looked at it, he recoiled like the cavern was toxic. He, as well as his friends, didn't know why he reacted this way. As his friends began to make a tent outside of the cavern, Wukong had conflicting emotions. Should he give up and run away? Should he follow Buddha's will? He finally decided that he would follow Buddha and be his faithful servant. He didn't know what his past mistakes were, but he wanted to learn from them. As the clock or as Adam's watch stroke 12, Wukong entered the cavern, his heart and mind set and prayed and repented.

He did so for 7 days. His friends waited for seven days until one day, Adam and Suki woke up to thunder. As their eyes adjusted to the light, they saw Wukong crouching and praying, glowing from the inside. Wukong said, "I am very thankful to you all. In a few years' time, I will be set free. Buddha told me so. I was sent to the 21st century as I was not repenting, even after years of punishment. Now I know. When I am set free, I will find a way to return to this time, this new world. Do not forget me, my friends". Adam and Suki sobbed and said their goodbyes knowing that they were not saying goodbye for the last time. They knew in their hearts that the clever monkey would find a loophole, find a way to come back to them because he was cunning. That was the one thing that didn't change.

# My own Journey to the West

*St. Paul's Convent School, Lee, Jenny – 15*

It was pitch black, not even the moon lit my pathway. I was running bare foot in the darkness, digging my soles into the soft grainy sand. My breath came in short sharp bursts matching my steps. My feet were digged into the shifting sand, covering the hardened earth. I was half running, scrambling over unseen obstacles. I was alert with all my senses coming into play, as I ran straight through the darkness, simply relying on my sixth sense that instinctively kicked in. My heart beat loudly in my ears as the sweat oozed from every pore. My instincts told me that I had not much further to go and I will be safe, and everyone will be saved. I couldn't stop, I told myself, I am almost there, keep going, keep going..

I am just an ordinary fourteenth years old teenager, just like no others, living my ordinary life. Just maybe one thing that is not quite ordinary. I have been dreaming every night since three years old, but the dreams are not just the ordinary ones, they are the ones that foresee the future. I could not believe it at first, but the dreams have not gone wrong even once, it has proven to me so many times that I could not deny the fact such as dreaming of what kind of trouble I would run into the next day. Apart from that, my one and only hobby is reading and my favourite book of all times is Journey to the West. I am fascinated by how a young monk along with the Monkey King, a friar and a talking pig goes on a multi-year journey from China across the southwestern mountain to India.

On a usual Saturday morning, I am woken up suddenly, soaked with sweat. The dream I have the night before is how Hong Kong would be like in one day and it is more than horrifying, not only is the buildings all destroyed, the air is also impregnated with the smell of dead bodies, the city I see is no more than a landfill. I get to know that it is all due to a bomb hidden in a part in Hong Kong. However, the dream seems to me to have a hidden message inside, there is a voice telling me that "You are the chosen one. Hong Kong is about to die and its fate is in your hands. Go on with your friends to the Journey to the West and remove the bomb before the midnight of today. It will be challenging as you are going to see things that are out of your imagination. You need to gather two things in order to remove the bomb successfully. Good Luck!" " I am woken up with disbelief, confuse and fear. I am unable to believe what has just happened, and I am still breathing heavily. The whole thing seems like a joke, but it is so real to me that I could not explain it. As unreal as it seems, I immediately call my three best friends to go on this crazy ride with me.

"What? It is not April Fool's Day yet." Jack said, the timid one, after listening to my dream.

"Yes, and it does not have any proof or evidence, what you are saying is not convincing." said Noah, the radical one, as expected.

"Wait, what are you all talking about?" Henry asked, who is busy finding for snacks, and obviously the not-so-smart one.

"Have my dreams go wrong for once? Please trust me, only you all could help me." I answered them sincerely.

The three of them looked at each other, nodded their heads unwillingly and we have no idea what is ahead of us.

I have no idea where to start, how could I found a basketball-like bomb in a city with such hectic traffic and mountains of people everywhere. Everyone of us is thinking our best, except Henry only maybe whose mind is fill with food only. Suddenly, the voice gets into my head again, "You are the chosen one...Journey to the West". I pause for a while, and I finally understand that we need to go on a journey to the west which means that the bomb would be hidden in the west of the city. The first of the challenge list is ticked and we are on our way.

As expected, this journey would not be that easy. I have never believed in demons, ghosts or anything superstitious but as the four of us are strolling across the street in Central, out of nowhere, a genie appeared and challenged us to answer three questions. Noah is clearly up for this and with a genius mind like his it is finished like a piece of cake. We are awarded the first item – the key. As we continue to find our way, we are given a second test which is a senses test. Henry, surprisingly has really sensitive senses which blows us all away. We are then awarded the second item – the map. We were given a map to locate where the bomb is.

While I am having a hard time, trying to solve this confusing puzzle, Jack comes up to offer help. It appears that he is very good at map-reading. With his help, we could identify that the location would be the top of the peak.

Looking at the peak, it seems like a deadly monster to me. "How could I possibly do this" This question keeps on floating in my mind and brings me back to what happened a couple of years ago. My dad used to be a sports lover, and especially fond of hiking. When I was young, he loved explore the different places of Hong Kong with me, we would go on mysterious journeys and tackle unknown challenges with no fear. On my sixth birthday, my whole family went hiking together at the Peak, and planned to have a small picnic as a celebration. While walking up to the Peak, I was so excited that day as I felt as if I am fueled with energy and I kept running around. Unfortunately, I accidently slipped and was left hanging on the edge of the trail. My father ran to me at the first instinct and tried to pull me up. However, I was tied to a tree branch that I could not move. When my father tried to detach me from the branch, he was tripped over by the rock in front of him and fell off the cliff. I saw each and every single second of how this happened and when I look down I am petrified. Although at last luckily I was saved, I suffer in such guilt and misery that it changed the person whom I used to be. Since then, I have been so scared of heights and I could not even go near mountains. And now, the fate of my friends and Hong Kong are in my hands.

It is raining and my surrounding is filled with darkness. I close my eyes, take a deep breath, and I set off running higher and steeper, every step taking breath from my lungs. My limbs aches as my lungs wants to explode as the pain of running so hard has overwhelmed me. "Keep going, you are almost there" is the only thought in my mind at that time. I grit my teeth with determination as I dug my feet deeper into the moving slope, knowing that my knees were bleeding, I focus on my climb as it becomes more and more challenging to conquer. Looking at my watch, I understand that I am racing against the clock and I do not have much time left so I speed up. I go against face to face with my biggest fear and I successfully reached the top. I see a ticking bomb that is counting down. I grab the three magic items gained in the three previous challenges and said "Journey to the West succeeded". All of a sudden, the bomb just disappears and my atmosphere has gone back to complete silent. Looking down at Hong Kong from the Peak, the astonishing night view of Hong Kong evokes a great sense of accomplishment and I feel relieved.

"You made it, I cannot believe this." said Jack.

We hugged each other so tightly that I could hardly breath. But, looking at my friends, I finally understand why we are all chosen – Jack being the timid Monkey King, Henry being the talking pig, Noah being the radical friar and me being the young monk going on a small scale journey to the west, with everyone having their strength and weaknesses, proving that teamwork makes the dream work. My own Journey to the West – not as dangerous but has a deep meaning to me.

# New Journeys to the West

*St. Paul's Convent School, Leung, King Sze Casey – 14*

The shabby, overpriced motel was right next to the rowdy market, and that was where we were staying. I stalked upstairs to our room confidently, pretending to be the son of a young noble; that was the role we agreed on before we entered the city.

I bolted the door and checked the windows for peeping intruders before turning towards bundle of blankets on the bed. “I scoured the palace area.”

The blankets immediately unfurled, uncovering a monkey and a pig underneath. “So it’s true?” The monkey asked, anxiousness flickering in his eyes.

I sighed in exhaustion. “Yes, Big Brother. They’re keeping Teacher in the dungeons.”

Big Brother growled, his fur prickling. “How *dare* those corrupt humans imprison Teacher for—”

“Oh, those officials can get away with anything they want, really.” The pig interjected, picking at the threadbare bedsheets absentmindedly. “With the might of the Emperor behind them, they can abuse their power however they wish.”

“But to arrest Teacher for ‘possession of dangerous literary articles’—” Big Brother exhaled, struggling to keep his temper in. “That’s despicable. The Scrolls will be given to us by the Buddha himself; if that’s considered dangerous I’ll give up my title as QiTian DaSheng. The officials want the Scrolls to satisfy their greed.”

“And we haven’t even received The Scrolls yet,” the pig finished. “Now, if you’re done talking, dear WuKong, I’m going back to sleep.”

Big Brother slapped the pig on his snout. “BaJie, do us a favour and shut your mouth.” Eyes clouded with worry, he turned to me. “It must be done tonight, Wujing. I don’t know what they’ll do to Teacher and I don’t trust them.”

I briefly shut my eyes. “Tonight.”

Second Brother groaned. “Must it really be tonight? There’s a lovely lady on floor two—”

A glare from Big Brother effectively silenced him. He shifted uneasily, muttering under his breath.

I met Big Brother’s eyes. His gaze was steely.

.....

We slipped out of the motel into the night. The previously bustling streets were now rather quiet, everyone having retreated back to the safety of their cosy homes. Cities, at nighttime, were dangerous places in general, with thugs, robbers and escaped criminals lining the alleys. The night was a mafia overlord’s paradise; no self-respecting gentlemen would be willing to subject themselves to their terror.

Well, we were hardly self-respecting gentlemen anyway.

We blended into the shadows perfectly with our dark clothes, aided slightly by our demonic powers. We had made a rather large ruckus at the last place we visited, as Big Brother blew up half of the town during his battle with a demon. We reckoned we’d be singled out as troublemakers in the country sooner or later, and the cops would be tasked to take us in. We were not about to risk getting arrested on our rescue mission.

I led our small party, retracing the steps I took in the morning. The stone paved roads gave way to mud-splattered lanes, and I knew we were nearing our destination. I don’t know exactly why a governing official of the city would choose to reside in the outskirts of said city, instead of living in the government-provided house at the heart of the of the hubbub, though I suspect it to be the same reason why he had new jewelry on his body every other week and threw lavish banquets when he felt like it.

The plan was to distract the guards, break into the mansion, find Teacher and rescue him from the dungeons, and get out, preferably within half an hour. Second Brother would transform into a drunk man wandering the mansion grounds, hopefully attracting the attention of the guards as well. While the guards were off dealing with the faux threat, the real threat – Big Brother and I – would enter the mansion by climbing over the guard walls. From there, I would lead us to where the dungeons were supposed to be and find Teacher. Big Brother was in charge of breaking Teacher out of the dungeons. Then we would improvise a lot and escape.

It was a plan that could go terribly wrong – in other words, a plan perfect for our trio.

Second Brother set off first. Before long, loud yells and a lot of scuffling was heard, which Big Brother took as our cue to scale the walls. I nearly rolled my eyes at how useful the guards proved themselves to be – then and again, most of them were just doing their jobs for their paychecks.

We slipped into the mansion's courtyards. Keeping close to the wall, we tiptoed as fast as we could towards the dungeons. I kept my hand on the wall to feel for a bump – supposedly, that was where the entrance to the dungeons could be found. At least, according to those policemen patrolling the market earlier in the morning, whose conversation I had eavesdropped on.

After what seemed like eternity to my erratic heartbeat, my fingers finally found the bump. I allowed myself a tiny self-satisfied hiss as I reached out to the bump. Behind me, Big Brother was silently whooping.

With a tiny nudge, I pushed the bump back in. The dungeons were accessible by a trapdoor; all that was left to do was to get Teacher out and escape from the mansion. Victory was on the tips of our tongues. I could almost taste its sweetness. Our task was halfway done.

The handle of the trapdoor exposed itself with a slight grinding sound. I grabbed hold of it and pulled. The trapdoor swung upwards almost immediately, revealing a hole to the underground with ladder rungs installed on the sides. Big Brother dropped down the hole noiselessly. It was agreed that he would check whether the dungeons were unguarded.

His voice floated up the hole. "All clear."

I dropped down the hole. As my eyes adapted to the dim environment, I noticed rows upon rows of metal bars. I shook my head in disapproval. The governor was only a governor, nothing else. It would do him good to remember that he was not in charge of imprisoning 'suspicious persons'.

Big Brother, who had already stridden forward, knelt in front of a cell. "Teacher, we're here to get you out."

A soft voice replied, "WuKong, you needn't risk your safety. They were already about to release me."

A grin split on Big Brother's face, a true grin in a long time. "And I see you're still the same after jail, aren't you? What's life without a little risk?"

Teacher sighed with a resigned fondness. "Just get me out of here."

Big Brother gave a mock salute. "Yes sir!"

The breaking out was fairly easy (because, no matter how good the official's defenses were, they were no match for two powerful demons). The courtyard was silent as we emerged from the trapdoor. We had expected some kind of defense from the guards, but if they were not going to bother, we would not care either.

That is, until we heard the shouts.

"Get the pervert! Get the pervert!"

Pervert? But who would be so silly as to lust over women in the womanizing official's territory? Unless it was...

Second Brother's terrified wails quickly cleared my confusion. "*Da ge*, save me! Help me, *Shifu!* Anyone! Help!"

Oh.

Why was I not surprised.

Second Brother burst through the arch. Eyes blown wide, he grabbed Teacher's hand and continued to sprint to the exit of the mansion. Big Brother and I had no choice but to run after the two, but not without a lot of cursing from the King of the Monkeys.

The guards' target soon increased to the four of us. Just great. So much for a quiet escape.

But, I asked myself as I ran, wasn't this how it always was? We enter a town, we cause a racket, we get chased after by officials. It was admittedly bothersome, but that was how we travelled. How we 'rolled'.

Teacher may sigh, and Second Brother may whine, and Big Brother may moan and complain, but I suspect they all secretly enjoyed this.

Arguing over petty things, battling demons, having rows with the locals in numerous towns... that was what shaped us. Tang Seng and his four disciples were proud, reckless and arrogant. And we were proud of it.

This was just part of our Journey to the West.

## New Journeys to the West

*St. Paul's Convent School, Tai, Sze Yan Sherleen – 14*

*(It was year 2017. Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing were accompanying Xuanzang on his last mission in Hong Kong before reaching the Peak, where they could get the Book of Nature and save humans.)*

“Xuanzang, hurry up! This is our last stop. After getting past this barrier, we will be able to get the Book of Nature and save mankind!” Sun Wukong yelled as he did his famous seventy-two somersaults in a row. Zhu Bajie waddled behind him, huffing and puffing, while the kind-hearted Sha Wujing held Xuanzang by the arm and led him along the busy road.

Xuanzang leapt up and choked as a car zoomed past him, leaving behind it a trail of fumes and dust. “Again! For the third time today...” He grumbled and fanned his face as a young boy with headphones pushed past him. “Children these days,” Sun Wukong shook his head, sighing, “We really have to get that Book as soon as possible.” Zhu Bajie looked sadly at the dust-filled streets, “It was alright for me to drink directly from the clear lakes back in the Zong Dynasty, but now you can’t find a single pool anywhere, let alone drinking the dirty, polluted water.” He wrinkled his nose as two men walked past, smoking their cigarettes and puffing out black, smelly smoke. Sha Wujing looked disgusted while Xuanzang look away, unable to bear the deterioration of modern people.

The small team of saviours started their mission a couple of years ago in Thailand, then went to the Philippines, Afganistan, and finally, Hong Kong. They had encountered different problems there, including people who live on drugs, corrupt governments, stealing and begging. They had worked as a team, solving each problem after racking their brains. Every time they solve a problem in the modern world, they receive a clue, which will lead them to the next stop, and eventually, the Book of Nature. The Book of Nature is a book with magical powers, which can wake humans up from this horrible dream of destroying the world. The small team is now at their last stop, and the barrier this time is a serious problem of students committing suicide in Hong Kong.

“Wukong, there!” Xuanzang exclaimed as he pointed to the roof of a building. A teenager was sitting along the edge with her legs dangling out, and she was swaying dangerously on the side. “Leave this to me!” Wukong said confidently, and with one huge leap, he was standing next to the girl. The girl yelped in surprise, nearly falling off the building. “Hey you!” Wukong growled at the girl. “Get off that edge, it’s dangerous.” The girl regarded him with astonishment, and chose to ignore him. “HEY YOU! I’m talking to you, get off that roof, you could get killed!” Wukong said gruffly. The girl rolled her eyes and refused to obey. Wukong was just about to reach out and grab the corner of her shirt when a voice yelled “Stop!”

Xuanzang had arrived at the rooftop along with Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing. “What happened?” He asked the girl gently. The girl was clearly puzzled at this sudden act of kindness. She burst into tears, “I can’t stand this anymore...” “What can’t you stand?” Zhu Bajie looked confused. “My grades have been dropping like a roller coaster, and my mom is nearly killing me for that...” She sobbed sadly, shaking her head, “I don’t deserve to live anymore. I’m just wasting the school’s resources, and my parents’ money too. I...should just jump off the building, and maybe I’ll lead a better life in heaven...” She looked like she was about to jump off the roof. “Wait,” Xuanzang stopped her, “Is that it?” The girl nodded. “That’s easy! Persuading people with charm is the only thing I never lose in.” He smiled. “Really?” The girl’s eyes were suddenly filled with hope.

The rest of the team had no idea what Xuanzang was thinking, but just let him lead the way. He stopped in front of the Educational Bureau Office and strode right in, ordering his assistants to wait outside. Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing paced outside frantically, waiting anxiously while waiting for Xuanzang.

“Hey you!” A voice shouted as Xuanzang walked in, “We are not welcoming visitors today.” A security guard blocked Xuanzang’s way. “Look here,” Xuanzang explained, “A lot of students are killing themselves just because of that terrible examination-based...” The guard rose an eyebrow and was about to shoo Xuanzang out of the building when an office door opened. “Let him in.” A man nodded to the guard, who shrugged and moved out of the way.

“How can I help you?” The Director of Educational Bureau, Mr Chan asked Xuanzang as he poured both of them a cup of tea.

“Erm, you see, I’m Xuanzang from Journey to the West...” Xuanzang started awkwardly.

“Yes, I could see,” Mr Chan laughed, indicating Xuanzang’s weird clothing, “Get straight to the point.”

With this invitation, Xuanzang started, “As you could see, the examination-oriented education system is giving children nowadays a lot of pressure. I might come from another century in another place, but I definitely watch the news. I learnt that 9 students commit suicide each day on average in 2017. It hurts to see these innocent children throw their precious lives away because they could not withstand the pressure, and even more lost their lives accidentally for they study too hard for such a long time without resting...”

“Mr Chan?” Xuanzang asked, surprised by the sudden outburst by the Director.

“I’m...I’m fine...” Mr Chan sobbed as he wiped his nose noisily, “It’s just that I’ve thought about what you just said, but I have no idea how to solve the problem.”

Mr Chan looked at Xuanzang hopefully, “Do you have an idea?”

“Of course I have!” Xuanzang said proudly, “It’s easy. Just abolish the examination-oriented education system in Hong Kong, and make sure non-academic achievements will be recognised and taken into account as well!”

Mr Chan’s eyes lit up in delight and hope, “Xuanzang!” He exclaimed, “You’re a genius, you’re a hero, you’re the saviour of Hong Kong students’ future!”

Xuanzang laughed, “Don’t thank me. Just go and make the new system work! Oh, and goodbye, my work here is done!”

Xuanzang appeared outside the Bureau, beaming around, “Done!” His three assistants looked at each other, puzzled, when a loud voice suddenly boomed from the huge television, “Director of Educational Bureau has made an astonishing decision—Hong Kong’s education system will no longer be only based on academic results, but non-academic achievements will be recognised as well to help solve the problem of students’ suicide due to heavy academic pressure...” Wukong, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing had their mouths hanging open, while Xuanzang looked triumphantly at them, and led them on the way to the Peak.

As soon as they arrived, a shimmering light blinded them. They scrambled around for cover as a small yet heavy book suddenly appeared. “Hey! What’s that...” Sun Wukong asked, when the book suddenly whacked Xuanzang on the head. Wukong screamed with laughter as the book fell onto the ground with a heavy thud. “That wasn’t funny.” Xuanzang mumbled as he rubbed his head.

“Let’s go check it out!” Zhu Bajie said to Sha Wujing. “Sure,” Wujing shrugged as he picked it up. He tried opening it, but failed as he fell into a coughing fit. “It’s...so...dusty...” He gasped for breath as dust flew all over the place. “Let me do it.” Wukong picked it up and used his super powers and sent all the dust flying. He took a closer look at it screamed in delight, “It’s the Book of Nature! It’s got all the solution for all kinds of problems in the world! Mankind is saved! The world is saved! The universe is saved!” They danced around in joy, celebrating their success.

After two days of enjoyment in Hong Kong, they set off again. This time with the Book of Nature to save the entire universe.



# New Journeys to the West

*St. Paul's Convent School, Tan, Kai Shuang Rachel – 15*

‘Mr. Anton Sun, please report to Mr. Harris Lee’s office immediately,’ the announcement cut through the noise in the office, where employees chattered. Anton grumbled to himself as he excused himself from the discussion the boys were having about last night’s football match. He stalked towards the office furthest from him, where a secretary, Melissa Guan, sat and smiled at him.

‘Mr. Lee will see you now.’

He entered the office cautiously; the last time he was called here he got told off for his work ethics. ‘Mr. Lee, you wanted to see me?’

‘Ah, Anton, just the man I wanted to see. Sit, I have something big for you.’

Anton gulped. ‘Yes?’

‘Mr. Elijah Tang has proposed that you go with him to India as an intern to our company’s branch there. There will be two other workers, Alva Sha and Dirk Chu, who will also go with you. But this is just between you and me,’ his tone lowered; Anton inched nearer as he beckoned him.

‘Elijah has a record for being too unaware of his environment and gets into trouble too easily. The board decided that they wanted a few more people to help Elijah out and keep him out of harm’s way. So, please do help keep my friend safe.’ Lee suddenly clasped Anton’s hand; he almost jumped out of his seat.

‘I will do my best, Mr. Lee.’

He chuckled. ‘How long have you been working here? Call me Harris. Now shoo, you’ll be leaving tomorrow morning. Take the day off and pack. Elijah will meet you at the airport and he’ll brief you there. Ta-ta!’

‘Goodbye, Mr. Lee,’ he nodded before exiting the glass office.

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‘I’m going to be sent to India, mom, take care.’

‘Yes, I love you too. I won’t get into trouble.’

‘I swear I won’t join a gang and whatnot—jeez mom, chill.’

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‘Shut up, John. It’s work; your stupid match can wait.’

‘Well I don’t know, maybe years.’

‘Ugh, just— fine, I’ll see. I’ll be back soon.’

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He dragged his sleeping body from bed and managed not to trip over his luggage as he groggily called a taxi. It was 3 in the morning, and he was still sleepy. It didn’t take long to get to the airport, since he lived nearby.

He stepped into the airport and the smell of fresh brewed coffee attacked his senses; he longed for it. He checked in. And then he looked around for the bunch of lost sheep he was to protect. There they were a few aisles away from him. Harris sent some files over yesterday and being the dutiful idiot he was, he went through them and studied the profiles of them. Alva Sha had curly long hair and a beard to match. Dirk Chu was a surly youngster with an annoyed (and annoying) expression permanently etched into his features. Elijah Tang was a pleasant man with a gentle smile and serious demeanor.

‘Good morning,’ Elijah first greeted him as he dragged himself over.

‘You work in a proper company, dress like it,’ Dirk’s nostrils flared.

‘Dirk,’ Alva reprimanded lightly. ‘I’m sorry, Anton.’ Alva tried, ‘It’s really early and Dirk has no intention to offend you. Nice hoodie by the way.’

His hoodie was a simple store-bought one, for 20%. ‘It’s alright. Not everyone is brought up the proper way.’

‘You!’

Anton only smirked, daring him to say anything else. Dirk silently fumed.

‘Boys, we’ll start briefing. We’re going to India. When we get to the airport, there’ll be someone to bring us to the firm and we will have to retrieve the set of documents called ‘the scrolls’. And we—’

‘Why the weird name?’ Anton couldn’t help interrupting.

‘The company,’ Elijah offered, as if it would explain anything. But the glint in his eyes suggested that if

Anton didn't shut up, something bad would happen. So Anton kept quiet.

'And we will go rest in the hotel, and find ways to bring the documents back. And after that, we'll return to the office once more to retrieve miscellaneous files, list which Harris sent to you last night.'

'Why don't we take the miscellaneous files along with the scrolls?' Dirk asked.

'Unless you want to haul big stacks of paper back to the hotel, increasing the chances of leaking highly confidential information about the firm and tiring yourself beyond, I guess,' Anton shot back at him. Dirk scowled.

'Thank you, Anton,' Elijah glared at him again. 'And with the miscellaneous files, we will depart the next day, ending this little journey to the west. Clear?'

'Yes,' the boys chorused. Anton felt dumb with the bunch of sheep.

'Great, now let the journey begin. May it be a pleasant one!' Elijah declared and the four marched towards the custom.

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(The journey was, by no means, pleasant; Anton reflected later.)

They arrived in the foreign airport, and got through the custom unscathed. Anton thanked the gods above. But that was when things started go downhill. When they got out of custom, they waited for an hour for the person that was supposed to pick them up. They never came. Elijah later called, and it turned out that there were complications and that person didn't go; no one was able to spare time to bring them over. They were 'on their own' (quote the apologetic secretary) now.

They managed to hail a cab after hours of waiting, only to find the driver unable to speak English at all. 'Elijah,' Anton gritted his teeth after quarrelling with the driver. 'Do you have the address?' Elijah scribbled something on his to-go notepad and passed it over. The driver frowned but finally nodded and they were now off.

Anton sighed to himself. Could the trip get even worse? He stepped foot in this country for barely 24 hours and he's already missing his flat and the joys of not being abroad. This is why he doesn't travel anymore.

The driver dropped them off in a lively but extremely crowded bazaar, and with a few strings of gibberish (Anton suspected it was curses, judging the fury upon the driver's face and disgusted looks of the passerby). The driver drove off with a rude gesture and they were now, officially, lost.

'Now what?' Dirk asked, defeated.

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'No, we want to get to 21<sup>st</sup> of this— what's it called again? can you help? No I mean, this, we are lost.' Anton tried with the burly man. He grunted before pushing past him, walking away. Anton growled to himself. Alva was patiently trying to get his message through, but judging the edge in his voice, he was going to lose it soon. Dirk was squinting at his phone, next to Elijah, who looked tired.

'Oi, why aren't you helping, Dirk?'

'I'm looking after the luggage,' he protested weakly.

Anton was about to claw his hair out, but he approached the man with an elaborate moustache and idle look on his face.

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Anton screamed as the four was being chased after by several angry looking men, carrying knives. 'How did you manage to anger someone so quickly?!' Dirk screamed. 'I don't know?' Anton cried. Alva was sweating bullets as he lugged Elijah, who didn't look concerned enough regarding the matter of life and death. 'Who do you think will give out first, us or them?' 'Less talking, more running, Elijah!'

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After managing to get rid of their pursuers, they found their luggage, at where they left them miraculously. Hungry, tired and losing hope, they strolled aimlessly on the streets. 'Do you think we'll die before we find anyone to bring us to the firm?' Elijah asked, face contorted from the heat.

'No, Elijah, we are not dying,' Anton muttered.

Every person on the street looked hostile and cool. (Despite the weather, he mused.) Dirk and Alva both looked exhausted. They all were, but if they gave up, in a few days, they'd end up dead, because places can be hostile that way.

‘Um, mister?’ Anton never turned around so quickly. ‘Yes?’ he asked, eager for anything the man could offer. ‘Your shirt is ripped from behind.’ Anton wanted to cry. ‘Yes, I know. Thank you for telling me.’ The man almost looked sympathetic, before walking away. And with that he re-joined the group.

‘Elijah?’ They all turned around, this time. A man in a turban stood behind them, smiling. ‘Ah, I’ve finally found you.’

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They managed to get to the firm and eventually got the scrolls. The man was called Raj and was who they were supposed to contact to get the scrolls. He was on his way to get some supplies from a store nearby when he found them. Things went the way they were supposed to be, to Anton’s great relief. The past two days went without further complications and he was on a plane back home in no time. What a journey to the west.

# The Unexpected Boon

*St. Paul's Convent School, Thiruvenkadam, Bindhiya – 13*

In the late 1960s, in a small but harmonious village, were many people of the Hindu tribes, living and praying religiously. Despite this peaceful impression, not all is what it seems.

He was one of the brightest and strictest priests, and was only in his early 20s. He was young, beloved and dedicated to his religion, which at that time was one of the most important elements of a Hindu life. All males have to be strong and commit their lives to Hinduism. Bakti Bankei was literally living his name, as in the Buddhist religion, Bakti symbolises obedience while Bankei represents the saying of 'ten thousand blessings'.

Being ultimately perfect in every way, you must have thought that his parents must be very satisfied with their faultless parenting skills and their ideal child's ethics, but no... they weren't contented with Bakti. 'Being enduring and adaptable is the key to pure moksha', they would say constantly.

Moksha is the ancient term which implies the meaning: 'to surrender and become one with God'. Unable to find a man-made way to obtain these two qualities, for the sake of his parents, Bakti performed tapas, a religious meditation, in which they meditate under the name of God, which they chant continuously to please the chosen God. What's special about tapas is that if the gods are delighted with your dedication (which could take years), they will come down to Mother Earth and grant one boon for the meditator. This boon will last for eternity.

As Bakti settled down and commenced praying, he felt his centre of attention taking over him. After a period of 4 months, something miraculous happened. The Almighty came down from the heavens and graced Bakti with his presence.

"Young devotee, you have surely pleased me with all your strength. Though still at youth, it impresses me that you have succeeded in grabbing my attention within a short period of time. Now I am inclined to fulfil any desire of your young self," said Lord Shiva, the ultimate God of Destroyer, who is said to be the easiest to receive a granted wish from.

Without hesitation, Bakti said, in a humble manner, "Dear O holy one, please fill me with endurance and the character to be adaptable."

Lord Shiva thought to himself and wondered, "Is this young man this foolish to ask for such a thing? I am absolutely definite that he did not think through his decision. Characteristics like being adaptable and enduring cannot be given, but need to be gained and developed. But I must not back out from my promise, I will fulfil his boon but not in the way he expects it to be..."

"Tathastu, so be it, my child" replied Lord Shiva, who vanished in a split second.

Bakti returned home with a hopeful heart, but as he was on his journey back to his village, he noticed that he wasn't feeling any different. "Was something supposed to happen? Will I know when I will receive the endurance and adaptability I was promised?" questioned Bakti to himself. "Maybe it'll come naturally..."

Weeks passed and unexpectedly, nothing struck Bakti. Nevertheless, his faith in the Lord's promise didn't falter.

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Another month had begun, and that could only mean one thing: a new challenge. It has been a tradition that a new challenge arises every early month and all priests aged over 19 are obliged to participate in representation for their respective families, so of course, the one and only Bakti Bankei HAD to get involved. He knew he was good at these competitions, but he definitely didn't want to get his hopes up as the context of the event was not revealed yet.

All who participated gathered at one of the most ancient temples in their village for the challenge briefing. An elderly, silver-haired priest climbed a few steps and reached a high platform. The temple became silent at the sight of the experienced priest.

“Hair Om dear fellow priests. We are gathered here because of one reason, and that's the holy challenge of the month. This month, the religious council is testing you all on your geography skills and independence. All participants need to obtain the long-lost ancient scriptures hidden away in the dark caverns in the West. All who compete will be given a prehistoric map which to be decoded using Sanskrit terms. The map will aid you in making your way to your destination. In the end, those who fail to find the missing scriptures in a matter of 6 months must retreat to accept defeat or rot in the mysterious land of the West. Your challenge awaits. Good luck, Hari Om.”

The assembly immediately rushed to commence their part of the challenge. Everyone wanted to complete the contest and bring pride to their families. Excitement spread through the Hindu committee and immediately, the competitors were seen bidding farewell to their beloved ones.

Bakti was one of those people. Once the map laid on his palms, he rushed off. After exiting the village boundaries, he could finally examine the given tools and head towards the right direction. He passed a river and sat down under a large evergreen tree. From what he could decipher, he had yet to travel further south-west. He was so occupied with his thoughts in strategically bracing himself from dangers, that he didn't even notice a strange shadow from above, blocking the sunlight which shone through the leaves.

“Oo oo ah ah!!” shrieked a monkey which jumped off the tree Bakti was residing under. Bakti was startled and went into a defence posture. The monkey and Bakti stared intently into each others' eyes, and that was when Bakti realised that his opponent was not an ordinary creature. He tried ignoring it and focused on his map, but the monkey would always pester him.

“Ok, you know what?! I'm just going to leave and start exploring,” he said in a frustrating tone.

As he was walking towards a long bridge, the monkey followed too. Wherever he went, the monkey was seen with him as well. At times when he reached a river or a large pit to cross over, the monkey would reach the other side first and wait patiently for his 'master'. On certain occasions, Bakti actually found the monkey amusing and intelligent as it would show him different ways to cross paths or when he needed food from trees, the monkey would assist him with getting food. He learnt to endure the monkey and finally named him Abi. By the first 2 months, they had gotten along pretty well.

Soon Bakti and his companion reached a small deserted ranch where they decided to recharge their batteries. After a while, Bakti woke up from his deep slumber and came to a realisation: his partner was missing! He tried looking for him around the farm, but nothing. He then saw a peculiar sight.

“Is-is that a boar h-he's talking to...?” muttered Bakti to himself.

From afar, Bakti saw a monkey communicating with a large, rough boar. They seemed to be in deep discussion.

Still in shock, Bakti noticed the monkey to be Abi, who was hurriedly rushing to his side. He looked so excited and was urging Bakti to continue travelling to the west. As they were preparing to leave, the same boar followed along.

“Ahh here we go again...” huffed Bakti.

Together, the trio were a perfect set. At times, Bakti did wonder how the huge wild pig could adapt to different places as they were on their exploration. Anyway, he was still thankful for having 2 companions now, the more the better for him!

At the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> month, they all realised they were very close to their destination. They were taking a night in, a shelter made of wood was just enough for them. As they were all sleeping and laying down from the exhausting journey, Bakti was having a dream which stirred him around and around.

“Lord Shiva, is that you?” asked Bakti greeting the lord in a respectful namaste.

“Yes it is I, child, I hope you have learnt something from your previous boon that I promised you.”

“Boon...? Ah yes, um when exactly will I be...those?”

Lord Shiva seemed disappointed at Bakti’s lack of attention.

“You fool! The monkey is your endurance and the pig is your adaptability which I have provided for you. Now make good use of it,” exclaimed the Lord who instantly vanished.

Bakti was baffled. He immediately woke up and saw his 2 partners wide awake, staring at him. He finally understood everything.

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At the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> month, everyone had returned except Bakti Bankei. Only the eldest priest knew the truth: that Bakti had obtained the missing scriptures and attained moksha. The legend of Bakti Bankei still lives on...

## New Journeys to the West

*St. Paul's Convent School, Tsui, Lok Shan Bridget – 14*

The sun was beginning to rise. The golden yellow sphere peeked through the mountains, its amber rays illuminating the slowly brightening Nalanda. A silvery mist draped over the sky that was slowly brightening to a pastel blue. Streaks of light pink and blazing orange tinted the sky, stroke overlapping stroke, weaving together a mesmerizing picture. I panted heavily, exhaling swirls of white mist as I took a last few steps. As I stood on the top of the mountain, the soft ethereal light of dawn washed over me as the cold wind whipped at my face, wreaking havoc with my hair, I realized I had already arrived. A small smile crept onto my face, swiftly becoming a full-blown grin. “You did it! You did it, Lynn.” I turned around to see the panting brown-eyed boy beside me, grinning as his bangs fell all over his sweat-covered forehead.

I looked down at the Nalanda University ruins from on top of the mountain. Brick stacked on brick, constructing the dusty, reddish-brown building. If you got in close, you would have seen the intricate detail carved on the stones. It seemed ancient, even dilapidated, but I could see, as if very before my own eyes, scenes of eager students, hanging onto the teachers’ every word, quenching their never-ending thirst for knowledge. A sense of hiraeth suddenly overwhelmed me. I knew, deep down, not even a school, I never even had a home to turn to.

My childhood wasn’t exactly normal for most people. I remembered being shunned to the side in the orphanage, all because of my mixed blood – meaning that I was only half Chinese. Being a half Chinese, others looked down on me, people who adopted looked past me, and orphans looked away from me. The only one that accepted me was an old woman, a story-teller in the orphanage. I can still recall her appearance, as if it is a photo printed in my mind. She had greying hair, always tied into a loose bun. Wrinkles and scars on her face spoke loudly of the adventurous stories she had in the West. Her black eyes always twinkled full of excitement and vigor.

She treated me as if I was her granddaughter, and indeed I called her ‘Nai Nai’. She used to tell me extraordinary spellbinding adventures of journeys to the West, about the magical encounters of Xuan Zang the monk, and also how she disregarded her family’s disapproval and started her very own wild adventures of the west to the Nalanda University in search of pure knowledge. At that time, I was the happiest.

Then it all changed. One day, she was gone. I was already eighteen, an adult, and I knew what that meant – she was never coming back again. But I remembered her words – “Lynn, failure isn’t the end of the world. Giving up is. Go and start your adventure, and you will learn, much more than embroidery and women’s work.” I was lost. Confused. So I chose to escape, and escaped into the mythical stories and enchanting places I’ve had always yearned to go. I started my own new journey to the West.

It wasn’t easy. To get to Nalanda, Xuanzang encountered all kinds of bizarre yet treacherous magical dangers. I found that it was just as hard, except excluding the magic. For countless days I trekked through tedious paths, mud lands, dry areas, and forests, slipping and sliding, falling innumerable times. I seemed to always wake up on the same day: I wake up in the morning, full of energy to start a new day. Then I would walk on the infinite dry and hard land until my feet hurt. Too tired to notice, I would accidentally step into a muddy pond, leaving my trousers wet. Walking through wet muddy lands, I would reach a point where I was too tired to walk, and sit down against a tree to rest. Thus the second, third, fourth and fifth day.

Just as I thought it couldn’t get worse, I encountered thieves. It was actually a good day where no grimy puddles blocked my way. I was walking through the forest when I found everything very quiet. Very, very quiet. In fact, too quiet. Everything seemed to be holding its’ breath. The wind even stopped. Cautiously, I took a little step forward and heard a twig break with a big snap. “Now, now, what would a pretty young girl like you be doing in a dirty forest here?” a rough, snide voice rang out behind me. I whirled around to see three sneering young men seemingly of about 20 years old, brandishing roughly hewn clubs. My originally fluttering heart began to beat thunderously in my chest. My hands full of sweat and slipping on my improvised makeshift weapon, a stick used for helping me walk after the slippery fiasco just the day before. They filled the gap between us in just a few large strides and before I could even react, everything was black.

I woke up in an unfamiliar village. After a whole lot of explaining, I found out that the villagers saved me just about when they were going to snatch my belongings and brought me back to their village. Which was good. And the bad news that always follows is that now I was off track. In other words, I had to use double the time to catch up. I was utterly exhausted by now. I never seemed to see the ending of the path, the rising of the sun, the boundary of my destination. I started to feel despair, and questioned my decision. Then I met him.

I met him on yet another day of torturous journeying. I stumbled across a campfire and he was taking a rest there. We were like-minded, and soon we became fast friends. He... is quite the optimist. He always told me, "No matter what you encounter, what you meet; no matter how many times you failed, how many times you feel everything is lost, if you don't give up, you will succeed." I was about to give up when he asked me, looking puzzled, "Then, what did you journey so long for?" it seemed to stir something within me. Images of painting Xuanzang's journey to the West with Nai Nai flashed before me. "Go, and start your adventure..." her words echoed again and again in my foggy mind. I heard a sweet, childish voice saying loudly what I promised her. "A new generation, a new journey..." I muttered. My heart picked up pace again. "Yes..." I breathed, "Yes! Thank you, thank you!" He supported me, stuck with me through thick and thin – when I was tired, he would encourage me; when I felt down, he would support me. Slowly, I picked up hope again, and I finally reached my destination.

Looking at the soft glowing rays of the sun which cast on the dusty ochre paths, I finally realized that no matter wherever I went, no matter how many journeys I embarked on, I was no longer lost, no longer homeless. Because wherever he was with me, I would be home. "Come on, you've been staring at the ruins for minutes now," gently, he took my hands, his chocolate brown eyes full of concern, scanning my face for any sign of something wrong. I turned to the brown-eyed boy beside me and smiled. "Come on, let's go."



# Detonation

*St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Chan, Kwan Yin Cheryl – 14*

‘**L**ook! It's Theodore again, all alone by himself! No friends, no happiness. That's the consequences of being selfish!’

Yes, this is me, Theodore. Not only was I selfish, I was also proud of myself, a bit too proud, that made me feel vain. And this, was why I never got out here.

Last year, I was still in Bridgestone University, studying for my Bachelor of Science. I was notorious for being selfish, as I never share nor do I lend a helping hand. I believed that success could be attained without anyone's help, too. I was self-centred and therefore. Nobody got along with me. So what? I thought. I never knew I was wrong, till I was being proved to it.

Few months ago, I was reading the famous novel ‘New Journeys to the West’ in the library of Bridgeston University when I received an unexpected mission.

It was an ‘ordinary’ day. I marched into the library and snatched a book from the shelves. People were chattering, more of like throwing words about my hideous look, my actions, and even my presence. So what? I thought. I will eventually probe them right. Soon, they will understand friends are useless, help is worthless, oneself is in fact the only reliable thing. With a flip, and a flap, I opened up the book entitled ‘New Journeys to the West’ to a random page and...wait, is this page shining? I wondered. Stop fooling yourself! You must be dreaming! Why would the page be luminous? But to my surprise, it was not imagination. On that page we're words like: here comes a mission, to you for completion. Yes you are chosen, among the most of trillions. Upon reading, I jumped up, overwhelmed, I rushed out of the library, and following the instructions written on he luminous page, I arrived home and packed my necessities. The safe which I put my valuables in was screwed to the wall, and it turned out to be a tunnel by the moment I ‘unlocked’ it. I stretched in my leg into the tunnel and, wow I didn't know the safe is this big, I wondered. Then suddenly, with s swirl and a twirl, the greenish-purple colour of the tunnel was he only thing I caught before I..collapsed.

Where am I? I wondered agitatedly. ‘Hello? Is anybody here? I cried out. By the next second I was horrified to death by the lurid appearance of a slimy slippery creature in green, around the height of a stool, with twinkling eyes, and a pair of thick red lips. ‘Hello! This is the West. Call me Slimy. I am the ambassador to your mission. You are the chosen one, and please listen to my instructions.’ It then continued its words in a rhyming pattern, one very similar to those on the lustrous page. It mentioned something like I had to solve a riddle on World History with only one chance and get back the ‘Book of History’, which was kept by the malicious artificial intelligence now. First I had to arrive at the wooden house on time, then I had to retrieve the Book, and I would then be able to find a tunnel in the house and return to reality. However, if I failed to reach the house on time, not only would the history of the entire universe be erased, as the Book would be destroyed by the robot, I would also be stuck here forever, as there would not be such thing as the ‘real world’ anymore. ‘Enough for the lecturing. Shouldn't I be going?’ I asked annoyedly. It continued, ‘Last paramount thing, stay on the rocky path in the whole time of travel. Only the rocky path can bring you...’ ‘What? Do you think I am an ignoramus? Man, I'm definitely not going to stay on the rocky path!’ ‘That's my best advice, and instructions too. However, since you are this rude, I should get going too.’ It wandered off, not even turning its head. Fine! Nobody needs help! Success is to be attained by oneself, help is nothing but futile!’ I reassured myself. Then instantaneously, I started off my journey for the challenge.

All alone I was given solely one path, the rocky one, which nearby tripped my over for multiple times. My knee was painful, my ankle was severely bruised, and my shoes were about to be torn apart. I conjectured about smooth paths of clear concrete. And just by the next second came an indelible scene. The stony path of hell was split into half, one remained gravelly, while the other was unwrinkled and glossy. ‘Oh my! I

screamed! 'Who needs advice? Stay on the rocky path when you have a smooth one? I don't think so! I make my way in, and I'll find my way out!' Promptly, without a second of hesitation, I dashed to the desirable path like an arrow and hurtled through it...

Yes, I rushed through my way, but I did not know it would be an interminable one. I set off with enthusiasm, then persistence, and buoyancy, but soon, it was altered to suspicion and anxiety. The path was longer than anyone would have expected. It was ceaseless and going beyond infinity. I dare not imagine how many days I was stuck there, but I was certain of one thing, that the path I had was way extensive than the rocky one, and that I would never get to the wooden house on time.

'Three thousand and one, three thousand and two, three thousand and...' Everything has been erased, and my eternal life lies in this world forever, counting pebbles every day. Nothing in the 'real world' exists anymore, things have been obliterated, things have vanished. Thanks to me. Guilt floods my entire life.

I have been proven wrong. The power of one may seem to be strong, but the adoption of advice is the true element, determine whether or not success can be obtained.

## Camisado

*St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Choi, Lok Yin -14*

Mari collapsed on the quickly chilling sand, exhausted. It had been days since she started lugging herself step by step through the harsh Gobi desert. Then she spent a good few hours figuring out how to set the flimsy tent up. With beginner's luck, she succeeded, but not before she wore herself out by tying knots she didn't even know existed. In her blind rage when she commenced her spontaneous trek, she hadn't packed much, save for the basic necessities. Water, non-perishables, a couple sets of clothes, a small dagger, and of course, the polyester shelter where she was going to rest for the night. The temperature was dropping rapidly, and Mari shivered in response. She wanted to be alert, but she knew if she didn't at least close her eyes, she would drop dead from fatigue sooner or later. She finally let her thoughts lull her into an uneasy, yet much needed, slumber.

Indeed, the desert and the clear skies were not a usual sight in the city where Mari resided, but she was growing tired of it. There was nothing but yellow sand for miles as she trudged along. Despite her increasing boredom from the repetitive landscape, she clasped her dagger tightly, her only defence and source of comfort from her insignificance and vulnerability out in the open. She had every right to be wary of the many invisible dangers lurking in the dunes. She had narrowly escaped death once, and she refused to come so close to the Reaper again before she completed her mission. Serpents were to be treated as venomous, no matter what.

By day 72, she was almost certain that she was going insane from the lack of human contact. So when she finally encountered a small settlement, her heart swelled. Unfortunately, she reached the nomadic huts in the dark of the night, and with shouts of "Thief! Thief!" she was forced to flee from the flaming arrows flying towards her.

Mari had lost count of time when she stumbled towards the Pakistani border that was getting nearer and nearer with every wobbly step. She hadn't allowed herself many breaks, in fear that it would be too late. She couldn't let her only chance slip away in front of her very eyes. With occasional help from travellers and locals, she was able to survive the gruelling weeks (months, maybe?) to India. All that was left to do was to sneak on a cross-country train, and she would be right where she wanted herself to be. Landour, Uttarakhand, India.

Safely hidden betwixt two shabby wooden crates, she relaxed at last. She gazed sadly at the worn photo in her wallet, a stray tear rolling down a bruised, wind-beaten cheek. "I'm almost there, Mama," she whispered, "I will avenge you."

The deafening horn jolted her awake. Her neck was stiff and her back ached from curling into such a contorted position. She recognized the lush, rolling mountains and immediately hopped off, silent as a phantom soul. No one would ever know she was there. She managed to climb over the wire fencing, but a guard caught sight of her suspicious movements.

"Oi! Who are you? Nobody is supposed to be here! State your identity at once!"

Mari ignored him. The guard called out to her once again before realising that she wasn't going to reply. Then, after a moment's hesitation, he began chasing after her rapidly retreating figure. His clumsy jog was no match for her agility. She led the guard onwards and faked a turn into an alley, then made a sharp right, leaping to grab onto a ledge before pulling herself up and on the roof, all within seconds. He could only stare slack-jawed at her disappearing silhouette, only the gleam of the blade by her side a fleeting piece of evidence that she wasn't a hallucination.

She quickly learned that travelling via rooftop was the fastest, stealthiest way to get around. She had perfected her precision and timing, and kept her time on the ground at a minimum, merely coming down to steal—"borrow" food from the market stalls. In her defense, she was going to pay them back when she had the money. In the meantime, she spent her time planning, observing, waiting...

Until one cloudy Saturday evening. Mari was dangling her legs over the edge of a building, well camouflaged from the townspeople, munching on a stale loaf of bread, when she stiffened. That man... She squinted; trying to make sure that was the exact man she was seeking. It was. Buano Adrigo. And he wasn't alone.

Mr. Adrigo, from what she had heard, was a man of above average social status, with friends, acquaintances and servants at his beck and call. In the quaint little town of Landour, he was regarded as royalty, even though he was only a wealthy traveller who just so happened to be passing by. Everyone saw him as the typical noble, witty gentleman with a taste for beautiful scenery, but Mari knew. She knew what he was really like. The charming tone and dashing exterior couldn't fool her. He was a monster.

Mari had been visiting her childhood home in the village when it happened. Her mother had been returning home after running an errand, and she had been going to the village gate to help her with the heavy bags. Just as Mari had reached the pillars, a scream had rung out. Mama. Mari had stuck her head out from behind the stone column like a coward, only to see her rock, her best friend, her dear mother come crashing down, crimson spilling from her stomach, while that sorry excuse for a man – Buano Adrigo – had loomed over the body, ranting about something that had sounded like “stolan airloom”. Adrigo hadn't known that someone had been watching him, but there had been. Mari had witnessed it all, and had sworn to seek revenge on the murderer, no matter the cost.

She cast her bread aside in a grimace of unspoken fury, brushing away the crumbs and extracting her trusty dagger from its sheath with a quiet yet assuring clang. The hilt fit in her palm perfectly, and she smirked, excited to wield the familiar blade again. Then she jumped off the building without any second thoughts.

It was easy; she had grown accustomed to leaping off as a quick shortcut. It was less of a hassle compared to having to climb all the way down. The trick was to curl up and roll upon hitting the ground. She stood up swiftly before blending into the crowd, stalking the man like a panther stalks its prey. The time of day favoured her situation; nightfall was upon them. She would be much more inconspicuous. She bumped into one of Adrigo's friends a little too harshly, who turned around, preparing to tell her off. She simply kept her hood up, mumbled a “sorry”, and vanished into the sea of people.

Suddenly, with a stroke of luck, she found Adrigo's side unguarded, and pounced at the chance to strike. Her dagger weaved its way through his robes, piercing the flesh underneath. It took a moment for him to register the attack, and he collapsed, clutching his abdomen with a grunt, his dying breaths. His companions, too, were stunned, but the first to recover instantly screamed for help, yelling “Guards! Guards!” frantically. Some heroic merchants answered the cry and promptly pinned Mari down, her dagger being knocked out of her grip in the process.

Then and there, her fate was clear. She knew before they sent her to be tried. She would be publicly hanged for her crime, a disgrace for all of eternity. Yet she understood that she had done no wrong; only that she did her mother justice. Even with her hands bound behind her back, she smiled softly. She has fulfilled her purpose. Her life had no more meaning. Silently, she allowed a teardrop to wet her cracked and busted lips. Relief washed through her. “I'm almost there, Mama,” she whispered, “I will accompany you.”

# Christopher Columbus and the Battle of the Yacumama

*St. Paul's Convent School (secondary section), Chong, Chloe – 13*

Three lone ships were sailing on the open sea, and aboard one a middle-aged man, sunlight reflecting off his semi-white hair.

"Are you even sure that this, 'Canaan on earth', really exists?" Christopher frowned at the childlike figure perched precariously on the prow.

Finn looked back at him, exasperation evident in his scrunched features. "Just trust me," grumbled the elf. "I've foreseen that you would succeed, boy. I'm three times older than you, just so you know,"

Christopher scowled at him. He had persuaded a couple of merchants, but even that took a lot of hard work and money. "It better exist, or else—"

"Well, I'll be stumped." He turned. Juan De la Cosa smirked at him, cigar in mouth, a mess of greasy hair framing his round face. He was fat for one in his early thirties, but he was cunning and sailed ships like nobody's business. "The infamous sea-merchant, would stoop so low ter attack a lad?"

Christopher rolled his eyes.

"Besides, why are we trusting 'is laddie, ter go on a journey ter the west anyway?" challenged the Captain. "Maybe he's one of 'em blast'd pirates, leadin' us towards 'em lairs,"

"Or he could be telling the truth that could lead us to great riches," countered Christopher.

"Yeh trust 'is midget?"

"I'll be kind this time, Master De la Cosa, and not take offence," clipped Finn, blue eyes flashing. "You insult me again, I shall take you to the pirates, and laugh as they disembowel you,"

"Ow frightenin'." The Captain laughed. "I know all pirate routes,"

Finn snorted.

"Finn," warned Christopher. He didn't want the three ships that he spent a fortune on hijacked.

"I'd watch my tongue, Master Finn," said a boy as he sauntered up front. His long, curly brown hair was tucked under a red bandanna tied pirate-style around his head. He wore nothing but loose breeches and a vest. "Master Columbus," He greeted, swinging a wooden stick around, watching it spin with boyish delight.

Christopher gave him a small smile. Edon was his servant, but he, as man and wolf, feared none, a survivor and a savage predator fused into one body. But he could not transform for more than one day. More than that, he'd lose his humanity.

"The *lob hombre* looks more like a pirate than I do,"

The shapeshifter looked mournfully at the stick, which clattered to the ground at Finn's words. "Stop calling me that," He pinched Finn's cheeks and picked him up, dangling him as they bickered. Then Edon dropped Finn, vexed by his stubbornness. He scrambled up the rigging instead, deciding to make himself comfortable in the crow's nest as a lookout.

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After three turns of an hourglass, blue skies clouded over, and grey storm clouds churned above. Waves battered relentlessly against the hull. Rain pelted the crew, icy droplets chilling their skin. Fierce wind clawed at their sails, as if trying to tear the ship apart.

"What is going on?" demanded Christopher, over the lashing of the rain against the deck.

"...*monster!*" screamed Edon, his eyes trained on something in the horizon.

"What?" yelled Christopher. "I can't hear you!"

Edon looked down, eyes glittering with indiscernible emotion. "*Monster.*"

Christopher elbowed his way over to the prow. It was a huge serpent, its scaly body writhing under the waves. It had a large snout and blood-red feathers streaking atop its head. When it opened its mouth to roar, he could hear was the sound of a thousand drums. Bits of bone and meat and cloth clung to its filthy maw.

"YA... CU... MA... MA..."

"Did the monster just say something?" shouted Edon.

"Secure the rigging!" shouted De la Cosa. "All hands shorten the sail!" But the terror-stricken crew heeded him not, staring aghast at the ghastly leviathan.

The Yacumama snaked over, its body cutting through water like a crocodile in the river. In a flash, it had curled itself around the *Maria* and lunged, snapping up six men, tossing them down its gullet, effectively scattering the crew.

Christopher had frozen in fear. It was only when the Yacumama had got him he realised it was too late. Finn screamed, as he'd tied himself to Christopher earlier. Christopher could make out Edon morphing in the chaos as he launched himself at it.

Christopher groaned in relief as Edon broke the fangs that were holding him in place and pried him out.

"*Master Columbus,*" rasped Edon as he set them onto the deck. "*Master Finn. Are you alright?*"

"No, thank you," Finn severed the rope that tied himself to Christopher. Together, they attacked the Yacumama, Edon raking his claws across its snout and Finn hacking at the chinks in its armour. Then another figure joined them, his Captain's cloak billowing behind him as he stabbed a yellow eye.

"Fer *Santa Maria!*" roared De la Cosa.

The Yacumama screeched in outrage, bucking violently until the three were thrown back on deck with a thud. The Yacumama glared at De la Cosa and opened its gaping jaws, clamping down on the quarter deck.

"Finn," shouted Christopher over the din of splintering wood, "Any ideas?"

Finn vaulted over a tentacle. "Fire!"

"There ain't no fire here out in the ocean!" snarled De la Cosa.

Edon shifted to human. "What do you use to light cigars?"

De la Cosa cursed and threw him his lighter, glaring spitefully. "Don't lose it!"

Edon caught it, shrugging. "At least I'd wean you off those awful cigars." Then he bounded off, leaving behind the spluttering Captain.

He pounced onto the Yacumama, shifting in mid-air. Fur rippled up his body and his jaw dislocated, lengthening into a furry muzzle. His clothes melded into his fur coat and his hands and feet became clawed paws. His bones cracked and grew to hold up his new frame. A tail sprouted from his rear as he tore into the Yacumama's snout.

Finn scooped up Edon's abandoned stick and picked his way through the debris, muttering under his breath and making the cane glow under his hands and magic hum in the air around him.

"Make it open its mouth!" shouted Edon as Finn landed upon his back.

Christopher took a few cautious steps forward, careful not to slip. He looked around, looking for something that might make the monster open its grisly jaws.

Then the plump figure of De la Cosa snagged his eyes.

Christopher looked at the man. "Come over, Master De la Cosa. I have an idea,"

The Captain walked forward warily. He gave a strangled shout as Christopher knocked his legs out from under him, and he clutched desperately at the splintered deck. Finally, the Yacumama opened its maw. Tentacles shot out and wrapped around De la Cosa's body as Christopher held him in place.

"Hurry, Edon!"

Edon shifted back to human, setting the glowing cane aflame and tossing it down the Yacumama's throat. Bluebell flames swirled up from the depths of its throat, and the stick itself had burst into a fiery explosion.

The Yacumama wailed, uncoiling itself from around the *Santa Maria*, retracting its tentacles from De la Cosa and the grotesque form submerged with a huge *fwoom* that drenched them all.

"Well," said Edon. "That was fun,"

"*Fun?*" cried De la Cosa, mopping blood from a gash on his arm. "*Fun?* You sank me ship, 'ya monster!" He heaved himself on deck like a fat salmon. "And you!" He pointed a shaking finger at Christopher. "'Ya fed me 'ter it!"

Christopher averted his eyes, slightly ashamed. "I apologise. I've done you a great wrong." De la Cosa scowled at him. "Oh, shut yer trap," He glared at Finn, who was wringing himself out. "You. Midget. Heal me."

"I'm an elf, *boy*, and four times older than *you*," Finn sneered at him. "If I were you, I'd ask me politely, if the great elf wizard can transport me to a ship that isn't sinking,"

"Or I could also take the dinghies," suggested Edon. "Oh look, here's one!"

Christopher grinned. "C'mon, lads," he said, "leave this sinking past behind and walk towards tomorrow,"

And so, they rowed back to the *Niña*, where they continued on their perilous Journey to the West.

*And the road goes ever on and on  
Down from the door where it began*

When they had finally touched the shore, they called it Asia. The name stuck for a bit, but Finn changed it later. It was, indeed, Canaan on Earth.

*Now far ahead the road has gone and I must follow if I can*

The travellers separated, one by one. Finn disappeared, melting into a tree as they set foot in the New World. Edon, freed from service, roamed the wilds as the grey wolf we know today. Captain Juan De la Cosa, though, never got his lighter back, but travelled the seas until he died a gruesome death.

*Where many paths and errands meet  
And wither then? I cannot say*

# There Is Something

*St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Chow, Cheuk Lam – 14*

In a world of advanced technology, people have gained all the knowledge from the internet. They were no longer there to learn, because they thought they had learnt all the things in the world, only they don't know there's one thing...

"Unknown— known as 'the mysterious and powerful thing', no one knows what it is, some said that, it existed in the ancient time..." Thomas Allen, a 16-year old British genius was reading aloud from the computer. "Umm... not interested."

"Ding! You have a notification from your mother: Dinner." The computer reminded him.

Thomas sighed.

At the same time in China, Wang Qian, a retired professor from an university finally found out where the 'Unknown' is after years of research, it was in a kingdom of a western island. To start the journey, he invited Thomas Allen through his online— school and an talking—ox, Casper from India, to be his assistants. Once Thomas found out he was chosen to join the mission, he felt so unlucky. What was better than staying at home and browsing the internet? Nonetheless, he did not have a choice, did he? On the contrary, Casper felt honoured that professor Wang chose him out of millions oxen. That's how the journey began.

To get the Unknown, they had to pass three extremely strenuous, challenging trials and they must not use any electrical appliances.

By day 34, "Professor, what is the meaning of addition again?"

"It's..."

"You're so stupid. Professor just told you, and you have forgotten already?" Thomas interrupted.

"Thomas, be polite, you should learn from Casper too." Professor scolded.

Thomas felt so wronged, yet Casper was glad that Wang has always supported him.

All of the sudden, a man who dressed like an angel appeared in front of them. They felt so amazed. "Wang Qian, Thomas Allen and Casper the Ox. I am an envoy from the western island. Looks like your trip went well, but not so far, now, it's time for your first trial. If you pass, you can continue, but if you fail, you must go back. Humans and animals, do NOT deserve our gift.", the envoy said solemnly. "Ready?", the envoy asked. They grinned, "I was born ready!"

It's like a Q&A competition. Most of the questions were answered by Thomas and Wang. Of course, one was a genius and the other one was a professor.

"Question 99, what is the 100th chemical symbol in the Periodic Table?", the envoy asked.

"That's easy. It's Fm.", Thomas answered confidently.

"Correct! Last question, have you ever notice that mothers of all children never show care to you? What do you think the actual reason is?", the envoy asked.

"Umm... they are busy?" Thomas guessed.

"It's Mother Nature?", even Casper tried.

"No, it must be lacking in something." Professor Wang claimed. After a few moments, the envoy saw that they were so frustrated to figure out the answer so he let them pass, but the deal was they must answer it when they got to the island. After a blink of an eye, he disappeared. Everything seemed like a dream to the three journalists, but indeed, they passed the first trial!

A month past, looked like the second trial didn't want to introduce itself yet. They missed their homes already. Every night, Professor Wang shared Chinese old stories about humanity, righteousness, courtesy to his young assistants. As time passed, they built up a bond.

By day 72, Wang, Thomas and Casper arrived a country, called Slothful Country. All the countrymen were extremely lazy and dull. They had been staying in Slothful Country for a week by now. Wang observed that Thomas acted strangely lately, but he absolutely had no idea what's going on.

One night, Thomas decided to escape. Yet he got caught by Wang immediately. After they got back to the apartment they rent, Thomas saw Wang's face was as bright as the curtain of the window.

"Thomas Benjamin Allen, I am so disappointed. Why did you do that? I've never ever thought that you would sell me down the river!"

Thomas had never seen Wang was as sick as a parrot. He had no choice but to tell him the truth. All things started on the third day they arrived Slothful Country. The king of the country, the Lazy King, invited



Thomas to his kingdom alone and tempted him to escape, to go back to his home which he had been away for two whole months. At first, he determinately refused. However at last he agreed.

"I'm sorry. I really miss my home. I haven't use my computer for months. I really wanted to use it."

Thomas apologised. Wang's heart softened.

Suddenly, Lazy King arrived with a much angrier look than Professor Wang. "How dare you spoil my plan? You little punk!" Shouted at Thomas. "Now, you have to pay for it!" The Lazy King smirked. He went berserk. Slothful Country was a trap! He took out his sword which fastened on his waist, and spurted to Thomas. Everything was like in a slow motion. Wang rushed in front of Thomas and extended his arms as a defence at the drop of a hat. The king couldn't respond so he accidentally spurted the incisive sword to Wang. Thomas watched the red blood of Wang spouted from his stomach, dyed his white shirt and splashed on Thomas's pale face. All of them were so shocked, Wang managed to gestured Thomas to come closer, and whispered in his ears, "Allen, I know it's not your fault. I forgive you. I... I am sorry I can't get the 'Unknown' with you two. P...please, you m...must get it...", Wang slowly closed his eyes, the hand which was originally grabbed on Thomas's wrist was now let go.

After recovering from all of these karma, they packed up and determined to finish Wang's last wish.

By day 121, 42days without Professor Wang. They had walked for a couple of hours, so they stopped and rested near a port.

"Thomas, l...look!" Casper stuttered, pointing at a majestic, classic and elegant building. It's just suddenly appeared. They went inside with their curiosity. Stepped inside, they were face-to-face to the envoy they met before, and another envoy.

"Congratulations! Thomas Allen and Casper the Ox. You have successfully passed the second trial." The envoy smiled. They were so suspicious, the envoy explained, "well, we were the one who set a trap to see if you were being tempted by the Lazy King. We didn't mean to kill Wang Qian nor Thomas. We apologise for the death of Wang.". The other envoy said, "now I'll ask you two a question as the last trial, what do you want to say to Professor Wang if he was here with us today? Let's start with Casper."

"Professor Wang, thank you for inviting me to join the journey. I am just an ox. I thought I would be a burden to you, but you always teach me patiently, I will never forget your teaching." Casper wiped a tear from his eye.

Thomas sighed. "Professor, I don't know how to describe my feeling to you, I know I was over-confident and always got into troubles, but you changed my life. You let me know that the world is not just about knowledge. These days without technology taught us much more on the internet. You're brave, intelligent and humble. I know you save me because you... Agh, I don't know how to describe it! The feeling is so strong, I have never felt it before..." he clenched his fist.

The envoy chuckled, "correct, Thomas. The feeling inside your heart is the thing we want you to spread out to the world." The another envoy handed a book to them. "What's this?" Casper asked. "It's a book which written hundreds years ago, it's a tool to record. The writer was afraid that one day people will forget this powerful thing just like nowadays. Open it." Answered the envoy, and there is only one sentence. They carefully read it and smiled satisfyingly. "And this is the answer of the last question in the first trial." The envoy grinned.

The mission is completed!

'Updated: LOVE, used to be a mysterious and powerful thing but now we considered it as a strong feeling of affection. It can be a love from a mother to her child, a boy to a girl, or even a man to his dog.'

"Honey, it's dinner time!"

"I'm coming, mom!" Thomas switched off his computer to enjoy the dinner which filled with his mother's love and effort.

Thomas's mother showed no care to Thomas before was because the lack of love. Human have lost the human nature because everyone were too obsessed with technology. However, through the three great journalists, they found love back!

In a world of advanced technology, people may still learnt from the internet, but there was something they can't learn is— love.

## New Journeys to the West

*St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Kuek, Kassie – 13*

Tang sat isolated in the extravagant room, a lemony silk curtain blocking his sight of the garden blooming with exotic flowers imported from the west. He glared at the curtain, willing his magical powers to open them for him. He sighed and looked around the room again, anticipating to see an article that may catch his eye. Nothing. Just bronze and copper figurines positioned all over the place. 'It's raining a lot today,' commented the dragon on the shelf.

'It has to stop soon,' said the dancing lady next to the dragon dramatically, 'otherwise I won't be able to dance outside with the peonies.' She faked a sob.

'Stop being melodramatic!' Tang furrowed his brows and told the miniature statue. The dancing lady turned and leveled a naughty stare at him. Just as she was about to retort, the infuriating curtain was flung open and as effervescent bouncy creature jumped on to the bed beside him.

'Monkey King!' he let out a jovial shout. He imagined his furry friend letting out a smirk and looking at him with a smug expression that said 'who else?' Tang loved his monkey. They were always able to have telepathic conversations and it understood him more than anyone else. No one believed the vibrant world they reside in, only the Monkey King recognized the colorful truth his words. Two uniformed servants walked in with their footsteps echoing around the vaguely empty room. Tang identified the towering one as his caretaker but the other one was a complete stranger. He pursed his lips disgustedly at the sight of Monkey King and Tang tightened his hold on it. The servant raised his chin in a deliberate effort to ignore the monkey while motioning for his caretaker to get Tang's chair. The caretaker caught Tang's eye and let out an exasperated breath. Tang promptly burst into giggles as they settled him into his chair. He was greeted with a pair of reluctant and judgmental eyes as his chair settled on the ground. He was no stranger to discriminatory glances and brushed it off with ease. They were typical people living mundane lives, they would never comprehend his vision of the world. Tang's eyes met a startling pair of inky orbs brought out by her pale face and shiny dark hair twisted into a half bun on top of her hair. She smiled shyly at him, as if unaware of the rumors that stuck to him like glue. His mouth went dry as he continued to gawk at her, his mind was running 100 miles per hour. Someone else to share the secrets of the world maybe? A cough snapped him out of his musings. Tang's father looked at him with distaste and continued his speech. Tang furrowed his brows and tried to make sense but all he heard was messed blurbs. His father raised a delicate brow at the end of his monologue and he nodded so quickly he almost snapped his neck off. The girl lowered her eyes respectfully and dipped her head in a way have been art. The man rose and shook his father's hand strongly with a satisfied glint in his eye. The girl stood up and gestured for him to follow. Tang's servants immediately carried the chair out and accompanied them for a short tour of the garden. During the entire walk, Tang tried to connect with her telepathically to no avail, though the way her eyes shone when smelling the chrysanthemums was enchanting and the genuine concern whenever she caught his eye made him feel special in a way no one ever made me feel before. Tang retired to his room after the walk, the Monkey King flung open the window and swung himself outside. It landed in a bush and it silenced himself once it heard the noises from the garden. '— see him? Does he really think anyone would actually like him? What an abomination!' The girl called Bai complained in a hushed voice to her handmaiden. The Monkey King swung himself back up and woke Tang. Tang sat up and blinked slowly at the sight of his friend, he just had the weirdest dream ever.

'Hey, buddy. What's up?' Tang asked the Monkey King, his eyes still glazed over from his sleep. 'That girl Bai? She's bad news!' he imagined it talking back, with a furrowed brow and concentrated expression. 'Really? That couldn't be such weird coincidence?' Tang wondered about his dream. Just then, Bai walked into the room with tears streaming face down her face like the Huanghe. She wept and said a lot of things, none Tang could decipher, and still, he reached down and patted her back gently. The words the Monkey King had cautioned him forgotten as if washed away by Bai's tears. The Monkey King hugged him unsubtly but he ignored it, frustrated that it was coming between him and Bai's private time. She pressed a kiss to his cheek daringly and turned away with a faint pink dusting on her cheeks. She stood up and walked towards the door, holding a gold bracelet in her hand. Tang felt that the trinket seemed vaguely familiar, without warning the Monkey King throttled her. She let out a scream that alerted the servants. His caretaker dashed

into the room to find the Monkey King pinning Bai to the ground, bracelet held firmly between his teeth. Bai was struggling while avoiding the monkey's sharp paws, afraid that they would scratch her face. As usual, no one believed him. He used mumblings and wild gestures to indicate the crimes of Bai. How could his father be so oblivious? Bai's father was eyeing an antique vase with an avaricious gaze the entire time. Tang felt ashamed that he hadn't figured it out the entire time. His father turned to look at Bai as if she was all the treasure in the world. But her once innocent big eyes were gone, replaced with a malicious glint that promised revenge as if the presence of all humanity had faded. They were getting married. That's what the Monkey King told him. Tang's mind was still in a state of complete shock he hasn't quite fathomed the idea yet. Judging by the looks Bai shot at him every time they crossed paths in the hallways. He didn't doubt that he'd be dead by the time they are married. 'You should run away!' the Monkey King suggested excitedly, 'you'd be free from her.' 'No, I can't do that. People don't even understand me. I can't even take care of myself.' Tang replied pessimistically, looking at the lemony curtain that once again blocked his view of the outside world. 'You know this is just a figment of your imagination, right?' the Monkey King smiled sadly. 'You are able to understand others.' Tang's eyes grew wide, 'what? No... You're real. They're real,' he gestured to the figurines on the shelf. 'T-t—this can't be no.' He trailed off. He imagined the Monkey King — imagined, that's the right word. He buried his hands in his hair and let his body fall back onto the soft bed.

That night, he climbed out of bed slowly, reaching for the cane leaning against his bed and gripping it lightly. The Monkey King swung into the room and landed next to Tang, its tail perked up in anticipation. They walked out of the hallway carefully, creaking floorboards broadcasting their presence. In the garden Tang sat down abruptly, heaving from the walking, he regretted it. The answer became quite clear when he stood again and reached the front door, with the help of Monkey King's tail, they unbarricaded the heavy oak doors and ventured into the unknown. Out there would be tales of bravery, betrayal and love. But those are stories for another time.

# Luna's Journey to the West

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Au, Courtney – 11*

“Monkey, are you serious?” I muttered. “Do we have to follow this monk guy everywhere?”  
“Yes, Luna, you will have to assist me for the trip,” answered Xuanzang. I groaned as I slowly hiked up as the horse galloped along the humid path.

Soon we reached a river. The water was polluted; it seemed as no one lived there. I looked around, and found two factories nearby. I stared at the lake in shock. What have they done to it? I thought to myself.

Then, the ground trembled. The fishes swam out of the way, and hid in between the cracks of a rock.

“RUN! LUNA!” Wukong yelled. I dashed to safety, where Xuanzang and Wukong were hiding. The floor rumbled again, and from the lake, a huge shadow leaped out of the river. It was a humongous dragon, with a deadly glare, and scaly skin, covered in slimy grease. I clung on to the rock, we were hiding behind, begging this demon-like dragon wouldn't kill me.

“Who. Disturbed. MY SLUMBER!!” The dragon boomed. I immediately panicked and tried my best to avoid his sight, but there was no escape. He had already spotted me.

“You, little girl, was it YOU?” He looked so mad, if looks could kill, he would have probably murdered me at this spot.

“Y-y-y-yes?” I stuttered.

“Why, you most DEFINITELY will PAY FOR THIS!” After letting out a humongous roar, the dragon gobbled up our horse in one gulp, and quickly flew off to the sky.

Mwahahaha! I killed your horse, which means I can kill you too!” The dragon laughed at us as we panicked and prayed for help. I also couldn't help but cringe a bit at the dragon's death threat, knowing the horse is a lot more helpless than us. All of a sudden, I felt a very faint glow around Xuanzang.

“Okay, Wukong, I said I didn't want you to fight monsters and stuff before, but FORGET ABOUT ALL THAT! Just help us out and get rid of this monster! Don't worry about me, I'm protected!” He cried to Wukong.

Wukong nodded and grinned cheekily at us. He leaped into the air to battle the ginormous dragon towering over us, barely hesitating. He swung his staff a few times at the dragon, then darted in the air right behind him and whacked him in the head. The dragon soon realized how powerful Sun Wukong actually was, and immediately dove right back into the river to protect itself.

“ARGH!!! HE GOT AWAY!!!” Wukong landed and stomped angrily on the ground.

What happened to him and his river? Why is he here? I had loads of questions to ask this dragon. I hesitated for a second, but still took this opportunity to ask him all I could. I crawled out to the river slowly.

“Um... Mr. Dragon?” I stuttered, hoping he wouldn't scare me again. Luckily, this time, he only poked his head out.

“What is it?” He asked, seeming very rude and impatient just by hearing his tone.

“How come... this river is so polluted? From all that I've read and heard about this river, nothing mentioned it being polluted?”

The Dragon looked miserably upon his beloved home. “You're right,” he answered, “It was never this polluted, not until some humans came near this place and managed to build two annoying-mud-whatsits nearby which made the river all gooey and sticky; the water used to be crystal clear...” He picked up a smashed can of soda. “Ew! And what's with all of this?”

“The 'annoying-mud-whatsits you were talking about are called 'factories'. They are pretty useful for humans, since it helps us to make different things,” I tried to explain, “but they aren't the most environmentally-friendly, which causes your home to be so disgusting. No offense.”

“True...” The dragon muttered, “So, since my river is such a mess – would you mind if I join you on your little journey?” So I can find a new place to live?

Wukong glared at the dragon after he asked that question while Xuanzang kindly welcomed him. “Sure thing! But you need to help us. Oh, and just one thing?”

“Yes?”

“Please turn into a horse,” Xuanzang warmly smiled at the dragon.

“Huh? Why? I’m perfectly fine in my dragon form!” The dragon flew in a few loops and circles. “See?”

Xuanzang chuckled, but it sounded fake. “No, it’s because you ate my horse, and now it’s your turn to replace it.”

The dragon looked at his stomach. “Oh…” He quickly transformed into a beautiful white horse with a shiny, golden mane. “Hold on tight everyone, especially you, young girl with your purple hair – sorry, what is your name again?”

“Luna,”

“Right, Luna,” He repeated, “Grab on, we’re about to take a huge leap!”

The dragon whom shapeshifted into a horse made a humongous leap over the polluted waters. As I watched the river beneath me, I hoped for this place to be restored to its original beauty.

With Wukong floating on a light cloud behind us, and Xuanzang sitting on the dragon–horse in front of me, we continued on our strange Journey to the West, to meet new allies and enemies.

# Anger Unleashed

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Chan, John – 11*

Ascending into heaven in a lift made out of solid gold, Sun Wukong dreamt of all the perks and benefits of living in Heaven. *I am going to be treated like royalty when they see my immense power! I will be crowned Monkey King: The Great Sage Equal to Heaven!* he thought. As the lift rose, Wukong imagined himself strewn lazily upon a silk-woven couch, graceful maidens fanning him with delicate peacock feathers from both sides. Peach lipstick painting the corners of his lips, Wukong's heart was content.

After an eternity lifting into the heavens, watching the world below him shrink to nothing, the lift suspended and the doors melted away. Twenty steps ahead stood an immense golden gate. Inscribed along the top were the words: 'The Gateway to Heaven'. From behind it, a dazzling light blinded Wukong. Shielding his eyes with his hairy palms, he marched towards the hinged barrier. With an almighty shove, the wickets flew off their hinges collapsing onto the ground. Wukong's eyes slowly adjusted to the brightness inside. He had entered the Palace of Heaven.

Seeing Wukong, the servants cocked their heads. Noticing their bewilderment, Wukong drew his cudgel, and the servants lost grip of the belongings which had been issued to them by their masters. Sounds of scampering feet and screams echoed throughout the hall. The Spirit of The Great White Planet Venus rushed inside. Surveying the chaos, he fixed his stern gaze upon Sun Wukong who was continuing to wreak havoc in the Entrance Hall.

"Leave the Heavens immediately, you wretched baboon!" Venus ordered furiously.

"I will not leave! I'm worthy of being a God! I am the Monkey King!" bellowed Wukong in return.

"Guards!" he commanded boldly. Clicking his fingers twice, a battalion of heavily armed warriors materialized in front of Venus. They pointed their weapons menacingly at Wukong but Wukong paid no attention.

"I'm not leaving until I become a god!" he announced indignantly.

His anger was as hot as a furnace stoked to its highest level. His pupils danced with burning flames. Teeth bared, he barked, growled and snarled furiously at the opposition. He pulled clumps of hairs from his tail with speeds as quick as lightning. "Grow!" he commanded in a loud voice that shook the lobby like an enormous clap of thunder. Hairs flew from the palms of his hands. Within seconds, an army of monkeys had appeared in front of him creating a troop between him and the armored guards.

The monkeys gripped golden cudgels and wore clothing similar to Wukong's. Forming a human barrier between Wukong and the armed sentries, the guards were clearly outnumbered: two thousand to a thousand. With a lazy flick of Wukong's fingers, the vicious monkeys advanced upon the guards, brandishing their weapons and screeching in warning. A fight broke out. One, two, three and crash! bang! wallop! Furious in their manner of war, the monkeys punched and pummeled the guards, pinning them to

the waxed floors of the hall. Oh the horror! Blood, guts, and all! With extreme force, the cudgels drove through their hearts and the protectors of Heaven shuddered in unison and collapsed on the floor.

The Spirit of Venus knew he needed to act fast. “Tell your troops to retreat at once, you impudent simian, or we will never let you join our ranks up in Heaven” he proffered quickly.

“Command the retreat of your army of clones, and I will have a discussion with the Lion, Ox, Eagle and Human, Supreme Emissaries of Heaven. If all goes well, you will be instilled with the title of The One and Only Monkey King, God of All Monkeys and Creatures.” “All this by taking a single bite of a godly peach. You will also be cleared of all charges done to Heaven.”

“Really?” gasped Wukong gaping at Venus. “Is—is it t—true? I’m going to be a God?”

“Yes you will. Allow me to talk to The Supreme Emissaries of Heaven in just a moment. You will have your title very soon.”

Wukong was excited as a child who had swallowed a gallon of Fanta.

“Spiffing! Extraordinary! Absolutely corking!” he cried out in excitement. “Make haste, make haste, make haste of your time. Go Lord Venus.”

“Yes, my liege, I’ll go to The Four Courts of Heaven immediately,” replied Venus clearly annoyed. He rolled his eyes. “But if you lose the trial, well, you’ll face harsh consequences” he muttered under his breath.

And, with a casual flick of his robes, he vanished into thin air.

# The Girls' Journey to the West

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Chan, Pui Pui – 14*

“Three, two, one! I’m coming!” Three girls were playing hide and seek in the park. The energetic girl Mollie, who always liked to wear a golden headband on her long hair, jumpily ran out from behind a tree and looked for her friends. Sandra, who had a pale blue bandana tied around her head, hid herself behind the fountain. “Here you are!” Mollie caught sight of Sandra’s turquoise dress. Sandra giggled “I wonder where Zoey is!” Together, they searched for Zoey, the slightly chubby girl who tied up her hair in two high ponytails. They looked in circles, Mollie jumping all the way, until they saw her walking from the food shop, holding three lemonades on a tray and gobbling up an ice cream at the same time. She mumbled with a mouth full of ice cream “I thought you would find me first!” Sandra saw that Zoey was having a hard time holding the tray, so she offered to help.

After they finished their drinks, the group of three headed towards Mollie’s home. When they arrived, Mollie was surprised to find a new book on her desk. This book was swathed in a thin layer of dust as if nobody had touched it for a long, long time. A shaft of sunlight from the window illuminated the book, flecks of silvery dust twirling down onto the cover like magical glitter. The book seemed to glow with enchantment. Mollie was awed by this strange book, and with trembling hands, picked it up. On the cover, in golden curlicue words, it said ‘Journey to the West’.

Mollie carefully opened the cover. Suddenly, she felt a strange sensation in her fingers. She dropped the book in shock. On the page that was open, there was an illustration of a beautiful island, and on the other page, the only words were ‘The adventure begins...’ A golden glow beamed out from the book on the floor. Mollie, Zoey and Sandra felt like they were falling in...

It seemed like an instant, yet it felt like forever. The group of three was falling down a hole, a gleaming golden hole with words on the side like book pages. One moment it felt like they were birds flying into a tunnel, then the next moment, there was a rush of refreshing breeze blowing at their faces. Every page they passed, there was a new sensation to be felt. They fell and fell, until yellow sand was seen at the bottom of the hole. As they landed, dazed, they heard the shouting of a million voices. “The king is back! The king is back!” Mollie looked around and realized that many monkeys were in a circle around them, chanting. Zoey thought aloud “Who is the king?”

Just then, an old voice silenced the crowd. “Don’t bother them, don’t bother them.” The circle of monkeys broke apart creating a path, and an old man walked in. Sandra asked “Who is the king?” The old man replied “Follow me.” Mollie looked at Zoey, who looked at Sandra. She nodded, and they followed the old man. They walked out of the circle of monkeys. The old man asked them “Do you know who you were in your former life?” They shook their heads. The old man led them to a pond, and said “This pond shows who you were. Look in.” Mollie looked in, finding herself looking at a monkey holding a stick. “The monkey king?” The old man nodded. Zoey looked next, and her reflection was a pig. Sandra joked “That explains your giant appetite!” Sandra’s own reflection was Sandy the river creature. They looked at the reflection of the old man. It was a monk that looked like him, but much younger.

Mollie exclaimed “That’s why the monkeys said the king was back!” The old monk explained “Many years ago, when we had finally got the prayer books, they were in a box with a key. However, on the way back, we dropped the key into the desert, so we could not open the box. Now, in the desert, an extremely self-admiring giant scorpion has decided to keep the key. The scorpion is wearing it as a necklace because the key has sparkling jewels in it. Girls, I need your help to find it to complete our job of finding the books.” The girls looked at each other. Finally, Mollie broke the silence. “Yes, we should find the key to finish our job that has been waiting for many years.”

Zoey asked “How do we go to the desert? It’s so far away!” The old monk considered for a moment, and answered “By magic, girls! Over a long time, I learned magic!” He drew a large circle on the ground with his wooden walking stick. Sparkling gold glimmers left a trail. “Step in!” He said.

It felt like staying still, but the girls knew that they were going very fast, because of the scenery whizzing past them. There were seas of golden wheat, emerald plains, viridian forests, and a sapphire lake.

“Stop here please!” Sandra said. The old monk asked “Why do we have to stop here?” Sandra replied “We need something to bargain with the scorpion for the key, and I am quite sure there are no pearls in the desert. By the way, this is pearl lake, famous for its giant amounts of pearls.” She ran to the



edge of the lake and leapt in, returning with an armful of iridescent shells. After opening all of the shells, a little mountain of pearls had formed in front of them. Zoey took a string and a needle. She made holes in the pearls, and strung them into a shimmering necklace.

“Are you ready to go to the desert?” The old monk asked. He drew another shimmering golden circle on the floor, and they stepped in. The scenery changed. The lake disappeared from view, and was replaced by grassy land, which gradually became sparser, until all they saw was rolling waves of golden yellow sand next to them.

The circle disappeared. Mollie asked “Where is the scorpion?” The old monk pointed at the tallest sand dune. “In there,” he explained. As they neared the giant sand dune, they heard sounds of singing. “I am pulchritudinous, I am beautiful!” The scorpion’s voice wasn’t really the best-sounding, but she knew how to sing.

Zoey saw a tiny scorpion. She asked “Do you know the giant scorpion with the key necklace?” With a surprisingly loud voice, the tiny scorpion said “She’s my owner. Why do you need to find her?” Mollie said “We have a pearl necklace to show her.” The tiny scorpion said “Wait here.” It climbed into the sand dune.

Inside the sand dune, the giant scorpion was looking at her reflection in a mirror. She had used liters of lipstick to make herself pink lips (scorpions didn’t already have pink lips), and was admiring herself. The key was on a ribbon on her neck, glistening.

The tiny scorpion knocked gently on a sandy wall, and the giant scorpion said “Come in, Spiky.” The tiny scorpion went in. The giant scorpion asked “Who is outside?” Spiky replied “Three girls and an elderly man. They have come with a pearl necklace.” The giant scorpion’s eyes twinkled. “I have never seen a pearl before!” She invited them in.

The group was shocked to see a scorpion the size of a horse. The scorpion asked “Can I see the pearl necklace?” Mollie took it out, but before she gave it, she told the giant scorpion “We have one condition though. Can we exchange the key for it while you keep the necklace?” The scorpion answered shocked “The key? But I’ve worn it for many years since I found it!” Zoey explained “We really need the key to open a box with important things inside. Can we please exchange the key for the pearl necklace?” The scorpion thought for a moment, and replied “You can borrow the key to open the box, while I wear the pearl necklace, and we can switch back afterwards.”

Mollie smiled as she handed the scorpion the pearl necklace. It glimmered. The scorpion gave her the key, and they waved bye to the scorpion as they stepped into the old monk’s glittering circle.

With a whoosh, they were back at the monkey island. The old monk wheeled out a locked box. Mollie pushed the key into the keyhole and turned it. The box opened into a lotus shape, revealing the books within.

A book fell out from the box. It was titled Journey to the West in gold, and it dropped open on a page of words. The girls felt like they were falling in again. They landed in Mollie’s room in a heap. The book lay open on the floor, with a picture of them and the old monk, as well as the scorpion wearing two necklaces. On the other side, the words THE END were written.

# New Journeys to the West

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Chen, Jason – 11*

“Ugh, are we there yet?” Sun Wukong asked grumpily.  
“No,” Xuanzang replied. “Where is Zhu Bajie?”  
“I haven’t seen him.” Sha Seng said calmly.

Right on cue, Zhu Bajie jumped out from a bush.

“Where were you?” Xuanzang asked angrily.

“Well, you know how I had a rake for a weapon?”

“Where is this going?” Xuanzang asked, suspicious.

“I got a weapon upgrade. Check it out!” Zhu Bajie held up a leaf blower. “Cool, right? I thought it’d be cool since my old weapon was also a tool for cleaning out leaves. It’s probably as effective.”

There was a minute of silence.

“I’m so disappointed in you—” Sha Seng sighed.

“—Says the monster who disintegrates if he touches water,” the pig retorted.

“Stop this childish talk! We are journeying to India, you understand? Not annoying your master to death. Capische?”

“Yeah, whatever,” they all murmured.

After a few hours of hiking up mountains, everyone got tired. The sun had begun to set, so they decided to rest on a mountain.

“Master?”

“Yes?”

“Could you take off this Ruyi Jingu band?” Sun Wukong pleaded.

“Why?”

“Well, ‘cause I want to look pretty... and this is the opposite of pretty, trust me.”

“Fine. Only until we leave India, okay?”

“Got it! I mean, got it, master!” The monkey king had stars in his eyes.

While Sha Seng was making a fire, Zhu Bajie was preparing to cook dinner, and Sun Wukong was busy picking flowers for his flower crown.

The night was peaceful. They only had a few more miles to get to India. Everyone fell asleep immediately. Well, almost everyone. Zhu Bajie was still finishing his dinner.

The next day, they arrived at the borders of India. A few Indians saw the group while they were on patrol.

“Hey, Xuanzang. Come right in!” a little girl exclaimed.

“I... don’t know you. How do you know my name?”

“... Um, lucky guess? Haha...” the girl laughed nervously.

The man beside her kicked her from behind.

“Well, we will gladly enter,” Sun Wukong interrupted.

The group carefully entered the place, when suddenly, “Wait! Those three need to put down their weapons! Sorry, but we are strict about these things.” A man shouted angrily.

Zhu Bajie shouted, “Never! We aren’t walking into new territory unguarded.”

“Then you can’t come in,” a girl said, crossing her arms..

“Well, there is an alternative,” the man shrugged, “if they are willing to stay in the dungeon while you come in, we will allow them to keep their weapons.

“Fine. but take good care of them. I won’t be long!” Xuanzang commanded.

The dungeon smelled horrible.

“Finally. Done!” Sun Wukong said as he braided the last flower in. “Behold, the flower crown!”

He took it and wore it on his head.

Suddenly, loud footsteps were heard. “Hey, it’s time for your shower.” An odd girl approached our cage, holding a jug of water. She twisted the cap open, and threw the water at us. The water was aimed at Sha Seng.

Sha Seng shrieked, as he could not touch water.

Sun Wukong jumped in to prevent water from getting to Sha Seng.

“Aw, come on! My flower crown is wet. That took literal hours!”

“Don’t worry about that now, there’s still water on Sha Seng!” Zhu Bajie cried.

It was too late.

Water got into his ears, and disintegrated them. Sha Seng had turned deaf. He couldn’t hear the odd girl’s loud cackle, sending shivers down Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie’s spine.

Sun Wukong sensed that this was no girl, but a monster. A demon, to be precise.

“Who are you?” Sun Wukong backed up, reaching for his weapon, to no avail.

The demon, didn’t reply. She stepped back, revealing her true form. A fox–human hybrid wielding a sword. She unlocked the cage doors that were locking the three prisoners in. Raising her weapon, she approached Sun Wukong – when suddenly, a loud noise was heard. People coming down the stairs. Startled, the demon dropped her weapon, and taking the opportunity, Sun Wukong snatched the weapon. He then quickly stabbed the demon, causing her to disintegrate. The dust slowly disappeared into the air.

In front of the three heroes, the group of people that welcomed them into the village were now standing before them, but now they looked a lot more sinister.

“**You killed her.**” The leader of the group said. “**Prepare for your death.**”

Sun Wukong gripped his weapon tightly, and narrowed his eyes. “Guys,” he whispered to Sha Seng and Zhu Bajie.

“Yeah?”

“I’ll hold them back. Try to escape and find Master Xuanzang.”

“Of course. You’re always the one fighting the bad guys.” Zhu Bajie said, rolling his eyes. Sha Seng couldn’t hear Sun Wukong, but he understood from his expression.

“Just go,” the Monkey King said, grimacing.

They slipped away, up the stairs, looking for Xuanzang.

“Who’s first?”

A wolf demon charged towards Sun Wukong, but he just grabbed its jaw and stabbed the sword in its eye.

Another demon flew forwards. A raven. It ravenously pecked at his arm, but he just grabbed the tail and yanked on it. With one swift stroke, the raven dropped to the ground.

A group of demons fled, frightened.

“**Ha. Cowards. I’ll show you a real challenge.**” The master cracked his knuckles, and stared deep into Sun Wukong eyes.

“**Can you guess what demon I am? A horse? A panda?**” He chuckled.

“**No. I am a lion. A merciless lion.**”

Right on cue, he turned into a massive, resentful lion. Sun Wukong charged forward as he pounced.

“Where is Master?” Zhu Bajie said. They had been roaming the whole place, searching for him. Houses, sheds... Xuanzang was nowhere to be found.

They ran into the forest, cracking branches and twigs. They could hear someone shouting.

“Master? Master!”

Xuanzang had been tied to a tree in the middle of the forest. Fumbling with the ropes, Sha Seng untied him from the tree.

“What happened to your ears?” Xuanzang asked.

“What?” Sha Seng shouted.

“He can’t hear you... No time to explain.”

Clash! Growl!

The fight was still going. No progress had been made.

“You’re gonna have to give up sometime,” Sun Wukong muttered.

“**Why are you not dead yet?**”

Xuanzang skulked down the stairs, slowly making his way to the lion.

He was right behind it, and then—

BAM!

The Ruyi Jingu band was placed onto the lion’s head. Xuanzang muttered a few curses, and the band began tightening.

“**Stop. Stop! S T O P!**” The lion’s clear words began to turn into screeches.

“Surrender.” Xuanzang commanded calmly.

“**No! I won’t... I can’t... FINE! Just STOP!**”

Grudgingly, he stopped, and released the band, letting it clatter on the ground.

“Let’s finish him off!” Sun Wukong exclaimed excitedly.

“No. Let’s not.” Xuanzang said, turning away, already heading up the stairs.

“What? What if he comes back? That wouldn’t be good!”

“Perhaps he would think better of it.” Xuanzang smirked.

Back at the exit, they turned to look back at the now empty area. Being tricked, they still had to journey to the real India.

“Well, then. That was... certainly something.” Zhu Bajie sighed in relief.

“Yeah... but you guys still haven’t told me about Sha Seng’s missing ears.” Xuanzang furrowed his brows.

“About that...” Sun Wukong laughed nervously. “We have a lot to explain.”

“Yes. Yes you do.”

# The Journey across the Tuna-verse

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Chou, Kate – 11*

3000 years in the future, mankind has destroyed the planet earth; global warming has melted all the ice caps; the North and South Poles have flooded. Earth today is seventy-one percent water. By 5018, the time period when this story takes place, it is already ninety-nine percent. Humans have had no choice but to evolve. We have all become more like fish because we have had to adapt to living in water. We have developed gills to breathe in water and fins to swim. People have stopped calling themselves “humans” and begun to call themselves “fish”, but the fish are still unhappy. Though their body was fish, their mind was still part human. The mind and the body just didn’t match!

During that time, in the South China Sea, there lived a monkfish named Xuanzang. Monk fishes were a religious race who spent all day searching for enlightenment. If you are enlightened, you find Aqua Nirvana, and you will have become as smart as the gods. You no longer feel pain or happiness. You are one with nature.

Xuanzang was the smartest monkfish in the ocean. He had read every book in the sea-library. One day, floating on the surface of the water, he found an old map that he had never seen before. Written on leather, the map had survived thousands of years in the water. The leather was cracked, and the details were hard to read. The map had a picture of a book on it: in the Mariana Trench, the deepest place in the ocean, nearby the country of Japan. He could clearly see that the book’s title was Nalanda. Nalanda, the name of human’s first university. Also, the name of the holy scroll, that legends say lets the mind find enlightenment. This would be the answer to help fish and humans become one.

As Xuanzang started his journey, on the first day, he met a Monkey Fish named Wukong. Wukong actually called himself the King of the Monkey Fish. Xuanzang had never heard of a Monkey Fish and asked him “Why do you call yourself that?” Wukong said, “Monkey fish were traditionally fishes who can jump out of the water.”

Xuanzang asked, “why would you want to jump out of the water?”

“To see what’s above us of course!” replied Wukong. “There are delicious insects I can eat. But also, just to see the blue sky, the cloud, the sun. At night you can jump out and see the moon!”

“And you are the King of the jumpers?” asked Xuanzang.

Wukong said, “I can jump the highest and the longest. I can stay out of water longer than anyone.”

Xuanzang thought the Monkey King would be useful. Wukong was very happy to join. He was a greedy fish, always wanting to be the best and do things no other fish could do. Finding the Nalanda would make him not just King of the Monkey Fish, but maybe King of all fish.

Xuanzang and the monkey fish were starving. They smelled some food across the ocean, so they swam there and found the burger chain, Poseidon King. Eating at the Poseidon King was was a pig fish called Pigsy, who loved to eat and was very fat. Pigsy also had a superior sense of smell, he could smell things a mile away.

Pigsy was at the front of the line. He said, “I can smell that the Big Fin burger is not fresh. Your seaweed was from two month ago. Your octopus fries are at least a day old. The only fresh thing you have on the menu is the Tunuggets, so I will order supersize Tunuggets with wasabi sauce and an order of squid ink milkshake.”

Xuanzang was very impressed by Pigsy’s performance. He thought they could definitely use a fish who could smell anything. He could smell if another fish was approaching them, if trouble was coming. Xuanzang reached out and grabbed the Tunuggets out of Pigsy’s hand to get his attention.

“Hey! Those are my Tnuuggets, I pay! I eat!” Pigsy yelled.

“Come with us on our adventure to find Nalanda, and you will not care about Poseidon King’s anymore” and he went on to explain their mission.

“I don’t care about enlightenment. I still haven’t been to every Poseidon Kings in this ocean. That’s my mission” said Pigsy slurping his squid ink milkshake.

“If you come with us, and we find Nalanda, the book will fulfill every one of your hunger needs! Nalanda will make you feel that you have the best food all the time.” Xuanzang said hoping to persuade Pigsy.

“And this adventure will also give him some exercise!” the Monkey whispered to Xuanzang.

“If I can feel like I am eating at Poseidon King all the time, I would be so happy. I will join you. Now give me back my Tunuggets” said Pigsy enthusiastically.

When they had finished eating, the three of them continued their long journey across the ocean, but none of them knew what was ahead of them...

# The Eternal Jade

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Chu, Dabria – 11*

## Prologue

**F**eet pounded the grey sidewalk, buildings stretched to the sky, grey clouds hung limply over the people shuffling along the streets.

A lady in high heels hurried through the crowds making her way to a taxi station when a stone dropped onto her shoulder and down into her hand. The stone glowed jade, instantly mesmerising her. She looked around and hesitated, then continued her way, smiling, with the stone grasped tightly in her hand.

## 23 hours, 50 mins and 48 seconds left

The Monkey King received a surprising call from his Master, Master ShiFu, who he had not met in 670,000 years, with a question about a missing jade. He rolled his eyes, annoyed; the Gods always get themselves in trouble. He dashed to his private jet and headed for Beijing where the old and forgotten Immortal Temple lay.

He arrived last. Pigsy, in his suit and baggy shorts had arrived first as he had just had a meeting with China's council in Tian Ming Centre; he is after all the Chief Executive of Hong Kong.

Sandy stood in a shady corner of the garden, trying out his latest invention, the H-Glasses (Huang Wei Glasses).

Master ShiFu was mediating in the middle of the temple, but turned and smiled at the Monkey King as he entered. Carefully, trying not to rumple his newly made tuxedo and mess up his gelled hair, Monkey King ambled towards his master and greeted him with a handshake.

Suddenly, a tremendously loud voice shook the air. "Monkey, Pigsy, Sandy and ShiFu, we have recruited you once again..." it announced.

"Yeah. Yeah. Just tell us what happened... wasting my time," the Monkey King muttered as he rolled his eyes. Master ShiFu glared at him.

"Monkey is right. We do not have time. In the next 48 hours we, the Gods, and you the immortals, may disappear and fade away. The Eternal Jade was accidentally dropped from the Heavens into the area of Hong Kong, and the hands of a woman named Canie Li. It has apparently kept her young and gorgeous for a few months already but that will have to stop. Do your jobs to protect us, brave warriors." The vehement voice vanished.

Sandy started his timer for 48 hours.

## 47 hours, 5 minutes and 60 seconds left

"Wow! I love this!" Pigsy exclaimed, wiggling on his leather seat. They were on Monkey's lavish jet enroute to Hong Kong.

Sandy agreed; he especially loved the \$9,500,503 caviar and \$3,312,767 bread – his H-Glasses had searched up the price.

Master ShiFu merely looked out the window, enjoying the luxury knowing that the hard times were coming.

**41 hours, 1 minutes and 57 seconds left**

Loud chattering and flashing cameras erupted as the Chief Executive Pigsy exits the plane along with zillionaire Monkey, world – famous technology genius Sandy and world peace philosopher, Master ShiFu.

The reporters began eagerly asking questions about why they were there, but as this was a private mission the band of warriors entered their car without speaking and drove away to Pigsy’s white-tiled, bodyguard-filled Chief Executive mansion.

**39 hours, 59 minutes and 32 seconds left**

Sandy cried, “I found Canie! All her personal information is on her Instagram and I just hacked into her phone using my glasses! She does look very young indeed, if she really is 50. And wow, she is really likes that jade. All her latest posts are about the it. She has over millions of followers online. Wow.” He continued to explain as the others listened intently.

He was interrupted by Pigsy asking, “How are we going to get the jade though?”

“I think we should talk her into cooperating,” Master ShiFu says while munching a banana. They all nodded in agreement; no one ever wanted to fight against Master ShiFu’s ideas.

**35 hours, 47 minutes and 2 seconds left**

Master ShiFu rang the bell at Ms Li’s apartment, when a girl about 17 years old opened the door and said, “Excuse me, but who are you?”

“We are here to help your mom’, Monkey explained.

“Wait, you’re Monkey King and Zhu Ping Si and the Sandy and Master ShiFu? Oh, I’m Ashley, please come in.” the girl gestured them in. They filed in slowly as the girl commented how her mother was only interested with clothes and looks these days.

As they sat down on a couch, they noted a woman, wearing a designer dress and far too much make up was already perched there, looking even younger than Ashley.

“So, what do you want?” the woman questioned rudely. Monkey looked aggravated and was about to shout when Master ShiFu interrupted.

“We want to help you.” He says calmly. “Monkey, Pigsy and Sandy, leave me to this.” They three nodded and stood up.

“Why don’t I take you around?” Ashley suggested. Pigsy, already bored, nodded enthusiastically as she led them to the kitchen.



“Well, Ms. Canie Lee, I would first like to compliment how great you are at polishing your nails. And now, perhaps you would consider giving me the very nice-looking jade around your neck for me to look at,” Master flattered her.

“Never!” Canie exclaimed, shocked, the flattery shrugged off immediately. “I would never, ever take it off. It gives me such youth and beauty,” she murmurs admiring her jade.

“Doesn’t it? It also grants eternal life. That is why I must have it back, or else the Heavens, the Gods themselves may not live much longer, and the world will collapse in chaos!” Master ShiFu slowly explained.

“Eternal life, huh?” Canie smiles smugly, “Well, I can’t give away eternal life.”

“Just 10 minutes without the Jade and all will be well. Please,” the Master begged.

“No, never”, laughed Ms. Canie. She then suddenly yelled, “NEVER WILL I GIVE IT TO YOU!” The commotion which erupted led Ashley and the three warriors to burst out of the kitchen. Ashley spluttered and tried to pull her mom away. Monkey, infuriated, jumped towards Canie and tried to grab the Jade. Canie screamed and hit out while Monkey dodged. Then Ashley was gone with Canie.

“Please go”, came Ashley’s voice from the bedroom, pleading. Master ShiFu nodded and the Big Four trudged out of the apartment.

### **19 hours, 32 minutes and 50 seconds left**

The four were back at the mansion pacing around. As Monkey had tried to snatch the Jade, they wouldn’t ever be thought of as peacemakers anymore. Tension filled the air and even Master ShiFu, who appeared calm almost everywhere, was munching on his bread nervously.

“We won’t just be failing the mission, we would be failing ourselves. We need that Jade to live...” Sandy trailed off, his mouth grew hard and his hands felt heavy, like the centuries they had lived through already. Exhausted, they all slumped on the couch, then fell sound asleep, their snoring deafening.

### **2 hours, 12 minutes and 37 seconds left**

“Hi.” A whispering sound came from the vents.

“What?” Monkey muttered, still half asleep.

A girl crept down hesitantly from the vent in the ceiling and held out the Jade in front of the Big Four. They all snapped to, and colour returned to their faces, all exhaustion gone.

“I got this from my mom while she was sleeping,” Ashley murmured.

“Wow, thanks. How did you get in?” Monkey asked.

“I hacked through the security system and climbed through the vents above”, Ashley explained. The Big Fours’ jaws dropped. Ashley smirked as Master ShiFu snatched the Jade held out.

“Well, thanks Ashley. We better get going guys. Bye!” Master ShiFu said, racing to the main entrance.

“Of course, bye.” Ashley said as Monkey called for a guard. He then galloped after Master ShiFu, screaming for the others to wait. Ashley smiled as she was escorted to the entrance.

## **Epilogue**

Monkey lay sprawled in his Jacuzzi, relieved and relaxed. All the stress from the last 48 hours had disappeared. They had successfully saved the Heavens, again.

“Sir, a letter.” A messenger came to him and said.

“Thank you.” Monkey said as he accepted and opened it. He began reading.

*Dear Mr. Monkey King,*

*This is Ashley from Hong Kong. I know that you are the Monkey King.*

*I want you to be aware that the real Master ShiFu is with me right now. My mom took his form while you were in the kitchen. Our illusion magic is very powerful. Even the fight wasn't real. Master ShiFu was trapped the whole time in the bedroom and the “Canie Li” is not as you think! If you want him back before we eat him for eternal life, then you must go back to India with your friends. Retrieve the secrets of the Gods for me, and I will return Master ShiFu.*

*If you fail, you will never see Master ShiFu again. A promise from a Spider Demon is always true.*

*Best Regards,*

*Ashley Li (Zhi Zhu Ai Shi)*

# New Journeys to the West

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Jiang, Sophia – 11*

**I**t was Buddha's idea. I never wanted to go on an adventure with a hairy monkey! I mean, don't get me wrong, I love adventures, just not with that guy! I just don't get it, Buddha says that monkey will protect me, but I don't need any protection! Does Buddha not understand how powerful I really am? I've had 10 years of training just to go on this trip! Now a monkey has to accompany me? I have to change this!

I felt anger rising in my chest as I clenched my fists and stormed into Buddha's bedroom. I scowled at the sight of him. He was facing the window, admiring the beautiful sunset.

"Well, well, well, who do we have here," Buddha declared. Before I could say anything, he interrupted, "Xuanzang, is this about the monkey?"

"Of course it is!" I snapped, "I've trained for 10 whole years just to go on this trip. I don't need some sort of protector! And besides, how will a monkey protect me?"

"You still have much to learn, as I like to say, I've taught you everything you know, but not everything I know." Buddha said while stroking his beard.

"This is outrageous! Buddha, you don't understand, this is my time to shine! Not the stupid monkey's!" I protested.

"Don't argue with your master, you have a lot to learn from the monkey. Go on the trip and you'll see."

Furious, I stormed out of the temple to get some fresh air.

"If Buddha doesn't believe me, I will have to prove myself worthy." I was determined.

Just as I was about to go and pack my stuff, I heard a rustle in the bushes. Curiosity buzzed in my head, so I decided to go take a look. Out of nowhere, I heard a loud neigh.

I could see the horns emerging from the leaves, a silhouette of a horse appeared, except it had a strange looking head. It looked as if it were half human and half horse. Suddenly, I saw a triangular mark on its stomach.

"Centaur!" I screamed. Immediately, I knew what was behind those thick leaves, my heart was pounding as I scrambled away from the bush.

The centaur charged at me. Terrified, I fell to the ground praying, "Oh, Buddha, I'm sorry for what I've said, please, please save me!" I could feel the hot breath of the centaur on my face. Saliva was dripping from his mouth eagerly. Just as he was about to devour me, a blue streak of light shot through the air, striking the monster in the stomach, on the triangular mark.

"Here! I'm here!" A hand waved in front of my face. I looked up, only to see a hairy monkey.

"How did you do that? Who are you? Where did you come from?" My head was spinning with questions.

"I am Sun Wukong, better known as the Monkey King. And you must be XuanZang." He replied with his sharp cheeky voice. "Now I know why Buddha insisted me on helping this noob during his trip." WuKong mumbled, not realising how loud he was. "He doesn't know anything! Not even the simplest spells!"

With a sudden change of tone, he looked at me with his fiery red eyes, "Well, you better be careful, you never know what's out there. Also, that was called a Barden Blast, it's one of the basic skills to slay centaurs. Has Buddha not taught you that yet?"

"Not really." I smiled embarrassedly. "Okay, we better head back to the temple now, or Buddha will be mad. You know how he is when he's mad." We both laughed.

"I agree, let's head back." The monkey king said with a smirk on his face, "Race you!"

We met back at the palace and headed to Buddha's room.

"I see you have become friends now." Buddha declared like always, "Oh, and I have just received great news! Two more people will be accompanying you guys on this trip!"

Our jaws hung open.

"One of them is a pig named Bajie, and the other one is a river monster named WuJing."

"Not again!" WuKong and I groaned in unison.

# New Journeys to the West

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Lau, Cheuk Yee Marsha – 13*

**D**uring the Tang dynasty, there was a monk called XuanZang. He was hated by his parents, so he got sent to be a monk. Because of the kindness from the Guanyin buddha, she gave him a golden stick and asked him to collect scriptures from the west.

The monkey king was an immortal and very powerful. Because of his mischievous, he caused trouble on the sky temple, and stole peaches. He got punished by the great buddha and locked him in a mountain. He was told by GuanYin buddha that his records would get erased if he helped a monk with this journey. Over five hundred years later, XuanZang walked passed the mountain and the monkey begged for his rescue. He agreed to save him as long as he followed him to the west. XuanZang became the monkey's mentor and the journey continued.

ShaZeng was a general in the sky temple, but got kicked out and sent to exile where he ate human for living. One day, the monk and the monkey passed the river. ShaZeng begged for their rescue and he joint the team. ShaZeng promised to show loyalty and protect everyone as best as he could.

ZhuBajie was a lazy pig that only liked beautiful girls and food. He was an officer in the sky temple, sent to exile because of his laziness. Guanyin buddha suggested him to beg XuanZang for forgiveness and promise to protect him. He soon joined the team.

White dragon horse was an officer in the sky temple. He burnt an expensive pearl so he almost got executed. The Guanyin buddha came on time to save him, telling him he would live if he helped XuanZang to the west. Guanyin buddha turned him into a strong white horse, and let XuanZang ride on his back. They continued the journey together.

As they walked, the hunger got to them, not only for the pig but to everyone, so they agreed to take a break before continuing the journey. They found a shaded spot in between mountains to rest, while ShaZeng seeked food. The sun didn't shine at them, and the cold breeze would occasionally blow to cool them down. Despite the relaxation, they didn't notice a dark cave. Inside the cave lived a monster. White skeleton monster was the only words to describe her, because nobody seen how she really looked like. She had the power to transform herself into human in disguise to trick her victims. She peeked into brightness and targeted on XuanZang. She learned that eating XuanZang's flesh would turn her into immortal, so she was determined.

"I have to get that meat, I have to become immortal!" shouted the monster, but she realised she couldn't be heard.

"What was that?" said the monkey quietly.

He was unsure about the noise, it could be anything. He thought ShaZeng was coming back with a hand full of food, so he got very excited.

"That monkey, that monkey," the monster thought to herself.

"He has a special eye that can see through anything and find anything. And that golden stick can beat anyone to death. XuanZang is lucky to have him to protect him, but he is no challenge."

XuanZang and the pig didn't notice anything, they were too focused at ShaZeng coming back. The monkey thought ShaZeng was taking too long, so he went to find him. The monster saw a perfect chance to kidnap XuanZang, so she transformed into a good looking little girl and walked up to the pig. The pig's day finally arrived, seeing ladies again. He got so distracted that he notice his mentor gone. The monster kidnapped XuanZang and pulled him back to her cave. He was screaming for the pig, but he was still daydreaming. By the time he woke up from his "dream", he panicked and yelled for help. The monkey came flying back.

"He.. He...He went into the cave!" The words stumbled out of the pig's mouth.

He was shaking from head to toe. They flew into the cave the pig pointed to. Deep inside the dark mysterious cave, there was XuanZang tied to a pole. The monkey saw the little girl and using his incredible eyes, he saw through the girl's soul and he knew she was in disguise, the girl was the white skeleton monster! He pulled out the shrunk golden stick from his ear, and expanded it to its normal size. He hit the monster hard, so did the pig. The fight lasted minutes, until the monster thought she couldn't last any longer, so she released a clone of her dead on the floor, while her invisible self flew away.

"How could this happen! I was so close, the monkey had to arrive at this time!" The monster was furious about the lost.

The pig was shocked by the win because he never remembered winning a fight, although the monkey probably did way more. They saved XuanZang out. His face was pale with fear and his body was still shaking. ShaZeng stood with a hand full of food, he looked very worried, but he felt relieved when he saw him safe with monkey and the pig.

They all thought the monster died, so this place should be safe after all, so they decided to stay a few nights before continuing their adventure. Little did they know, that wasn't the case. They saw an old lady walking towards them. Her back was hunched and her face was full of wrinkles. The old lady walked towards their direction.

"Should we help her?" asked the pig.

"Yes of course, we have to carry a kind and polite heart and help anyone in need." answered the monk in a caring voice.

The pig was the first one to approach the lady, the others followed behind. The lady spotted the monk and walked to him instead.

"Do you know where to get food?" asked the lady.

While the lady was saying her words, monkey immediately looked through her soul and recognised the monster. He was confused because he thought she was dead, but there was no time for confusion, saving his mentor was top priority. He pulled out his golden stick from his ear and smashed the old lady. The monster left the old lady dead on the floor while she escaped. XuanZang was so angry seeing a kind old lady dead on the floor.

"Did you not hear what I just said? How dare you hurt the innocent?" the monk scolded the monkey, the voice was different this time.

Before the monkey could explain, XuanZang cursed words. The pain grew larger and larger on his head where his head piece was, so he begged to stop, but the curse lasted what seemed forever for the monkey. The pain stopped, and the monkey explained to him that the old lady was the monster that kidnapped him, and he would never kill the innocents. The monk did not believe him because he also thought the monster was dead. Therefore, he kicked the monkey away and asked him to never come back. Without saying a word, the monkey stepped on a flying cloud and flew back home. He knew things would only get worse if he talked back. The others believed the monkey, but they didn't dare to say anything. Their journey did not continue much before another person approached them.

"How are you guys? I heard you guys are travellers to the west, I present you some food, good luck!" said the old man in a kind voice.

"We cannot trust you, you're probably the monster again, we will never receive your food. Our mentor has already went through enough trouble." shouted ShaZeng.

The old man dragged XuanZang into the cave again with great strength and tied him on a pole. In shock, ShaZeng yelled the monkey's name asking him to come. Within seconds, the monkey was happy enough to arrive. He knew the team would struggle without him so he was happy for everyone to notice. He knew what happened because he was watching with his supervision eyes, but still asked to sound normal.

"What happened this time?"

"He... is inside again!" shouted the pig.

There was zero hesitation before the monkey flew into the cave, ShaZeng and the pig took longer to get in because of the lack of energy from their shaky legs.

"You again! I thought you got kicked out by your mentor." said the old man, trying to be intimidating.

The monkey use his eyes, he could recognise the monster.

"I'm here to save my mentor, you monster!"

The pig and ShaZeng went in front to stop the monster. XuanZang started to believe it, but he didn't like what was happening. The monster couldn't continue, the monkey's stick was simply too strong for his limits, so once again she left the old man dead on the floor while she escaped. XuanZang was saved and they left the dangerous cave. The monkey showed him the lunch box the old man was carrying, it was full of poisonous leaves and worms. The monk finally believed the monkey, and he asked for forgiveness. Monkey forgave him and XuanZang agreed to keep him. The journey continued, more challenges were ahead of them.

# The Heaven's Secret

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Li, Gregory – 11*

The Monkey King rises from his throne and looks miles deep and miles high. From seconds to days, and from days to years, he gazes, century after century. One day, he finally makes a decision. A decision he will not be able to change, one he won't be able to undo. He has been planning for decades with one of his most loyal friends, Wayne. Wayne has written this poem to impress the Monkey King, who in turn was so awed by his friend's words that he posted it on an ornate column to show his gratitude and pride.

Mightier than you think,  
Faster than you wink.  
It's the Monkey King.

You can hear him,  
Up in heaven sim,  
Or is it real?

You must behold,  
'Cause when you're old,  
He'll get revenge!

The Monkey King retreats his gaze and snaps back into reality. He finds his forever-loyal Wayne waiting, motionless, beside him. He snatches a pin out of the hundred thousand lying on his complex multi-material desk. He spins it and flings it up high in the air. Bullseye, it lands on his ear. He levitates and starts to surge upwards into the clouds, over the fog, and into heaven. Heaven is what you imagine right now as being. It is always morphing into your thoughts, so I don't think I need to describe it. Just think, it is what you think it is.

He finally spots the scroll, the ancient and sacred one. The one that holds the secret, the promise never forgotten by the gods. Then... Boom! Crashing through the doors, the three-eyed monsters growl at the sight of intruders. "It's him again!" they think. This is bad news for them. They quickly retreat and go to call for backup. Soon enough, an army of them faces the two monkeys. Wayne shivers. They are his worst nightmare, but he knows he cannot abandon the Monkey King. He only has one choice, stay alive and watch. He slowly withdraws and clears a dozen meters. In an instant, The Monkey King duplicates himself. Like in a video game, his clones materialize pixel by pixel. It is an amazing sight to see, even Wayne, seeing it so many times, still loves the sensation.

The fight is violent, just think about infinite monkeys with large sticks that are unbreakable and made by gods, against an abundance of crazy monsters with three eyes and special weird god-like powers. It might actually be better not to think about it. It ends pretty much like after the doom of the world over and over again about 50 million times. Only The Monkey King survives along with the invincible palace. Even the monsters disappear from sight, vanishing into thin air, not one bit left. Wayne is still shocked and was paralyzed, but The Monkey King has not even broken a sweat.

The Monkey King reaches and hovers his hand over the scroll. It automatically spreads open. Pretty cool huh? Wayne barely glances at the text, he never thought Heaven's Secret would look this boring. He is rigid, staring off into the wilderness when The Monkey King glares at him. Wayne quickly turns his head and looks over the scroll with new interest. It states:

I declare that we will follow the rules we made together. We will be together and siblings forever, and vow to never fight and kill each other. We will share our rations equally no matter what they are. We will dine and forget humans forever. They are nasty and naughty and should be treated unfairly. If anyone of us disobeys one of these rules, he or she will be sent to the forever burning hell underground.

The Monkey King doesn't respond for a moment, as if stunned. Soon, he recovers and exchanges glances with Wayne. This is a big problem, and they need to fix it.

The next day, the main god Yoshi wakes up to get ready for the upcoming large festive feast. With his supernatural abilities, he senses something is wrong; the army of three-eyed monsters is gone, and he has to find the being behind all this.

The Monkey King starts to tell random mortals all of this secret information about the gods. They don't believe any of it. They say the gods are good and help humans. The Monkey King is even offended by a commoner and called a lunatic. He is furious but he can't do anything. Soon afterward, Yoshi comes and forces a meeting. The Monkey King is able to do limited things and is forced to agree. He has always tried to resist. Until now, he is still trying to avenge the gods' poor choices.

## New Journeys to the West

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Lo, Brandon – 13*

It was an evening in El Bayadh, and a man walked across the open fields. His name was Hagel, a poor shepherd in his 30s. He had finished a day out with his 6 sheep, who he loved greatly, as they were his only companions.

Every day, Hagel would bring the sheep out to the open fields where he would let them wander around, letting them eat all they want. Although he lived a stable life, having no particular threats, he was still determined to find out what life would be like if he were in better living conditions. He was interested in what he would be able to have if he was wealthier, and therefore took the risk of traveling to a new land for a better life.

After winter was gone and the temperature went back up, Hagel decided that it was about time that he set off. He headed off without any particular plan, given that he did not know how to read maps and didn't know the world well enough. All he could do was walk around and hope for the best.

It was starting to get dark, and Hagel thought it would be wise if he started to look for a place to stay overnight. He found a little shed, urged all his sheep in and went to sleep.

One day has passed. And another. Yet another.

A week has passed, and Hagel was already sick of walking hours and hours every day, and constantly sleeping without shelter didn't make his days any better. He had been keeping all his sheep together by tying them up by the tree with a few lengths of rope he found lying around, and he felt grateful that they were there. He felt like the luckiest man alive.

All of a sudden Hagel caught a glimpse of a town in the distance, abandoning his thoughts. The sheep seemed to see it too, and altogether they ran as fast as they could to the buildings in the distance.

He did eventually get there, and as he walked around the city, he caught a lot of attention, as you would expect because he did have 6 sheep tied to a rope following him, after all. The stench of dried sweat weeks old did not help, either. Eventually, he found an abandoned house he could stay in overnight. He hurried all his sheep inside and went to sleep. That was another day gone.

The next morning he woke up, ready to leave. He tied his sheep back together and took off to another day of traveling. Just as he was about to leave the village, he spotted a homeless man sitting on the sidewalk. He was curious, so started a conversation with the man. His name was Janco, and he had been homeless for as long as he could remember.

"What do you do during the day?" Hagel asked.

"Just sit around, maybe taking a nice stroll around town when I feel like it," Janco replied.

After getting to know each other a little bit, Hagel decided to take Janco on the journey with him, because maybe he would need a bit of help at some point. They spent another night in the shelter.

After checking that Hagel was asleep, Janco crept out of the shed and met up with his group of friends on the other side of the town, discussing an evil-sounding plan for Janco to gain Hagel's trust.

The next day, after a few minutes of walking, Hagel and Janco met a "gang". They were threatened that if everything they had was not given, they would be tortured and killed. All Hagel had with him were his sheep, which he didn't want to lose, but he was also sure that after he was killed, his sheep would be the next victims anyway. Janco, on the other hand, had nothing to lose, and suddenly lashed out and slapped a gang member in the face. The rest of the gang members close in on Janco, but he knocks them all unconscious, leaving Hagel in surprise. Hagel couldn't thank Janco enough, but Janco simply shrugged it off.

"Could've beat twice as many opponents just as easily," he said.

Now Hagel truly felt that Janco was no ordinary friend, but a trustworthy, helpful friend. He promised his new friend that he would get half of the goods he could receive.

Two months later, after trekking deserts, hiking mountains and eventually crossing the Strait of Gibraltar, they finally got to Madrid, the capital of Spain. All the wide buildings, all the cars, all the light coming out of windows. Everything was so different from Algeria, and the duo cruised around the streets, taking everything in. Eventually, a family kindly asked them if they needed help or if they were looking for anything, and they said they wanted to see someone who could give them a better life. The mom pointed towards a faraway but special looking building, saying it was the residence of the king. A mansion even when compared to the ordinary Spanish residence, Hagel and Janco couldn't imagine how the whole house belonged to one person and his family. As they walked up to the house, a pair of guards stopped them.



"What are you doing here?" a guard asked.

"We want to see the royal majesty, for we heard that he can bring us a better life," Janco replied in surprisingly fluent Spanish.

"We will escort you to his royal Majesty," the guard said.

Hagel stared at Janco, speechless and shocked at his sudden ability to speak Spanish. Again, Janco just shrugged it off and said he learned it when a Spaniard came to the town for a while and taught everyone the language.

Hagel trusted his friend and focused on studying his surroundings. There was an elegant water fountain in the middle of the driveway, a gravel path and everything else was either trees, flowers or grass. Hagel took deep breaths, enjoying the fresh air.

Two months of traveling and suffering, and they finally got to where they wanted to be: the king's palace. The door slowly opened, and a man stood in the doorway. He was in his mid-50s, with an average body shape and greying hair.

"How may I help you?" he asked politely.

"I have heard from someone that you can provide us with a better life," Janco replied.

"Come in, come in," The king welcomed the two travelers to enter the mansion. As they do, they were welcomed by so many things they have not seen before. Chandeliers, carpeted stairs, fancy mirrors, everything you would expect from a king's residence in a fairy tale.

The king led them into a room where he sat on one side of a glass table, while Hagel and Janco sat on the other. After briefly telling the king about their journey here, the king seems interested in their determination and courage to keep going on this long, harsh journey, and decided to give them a bag of money and a night of accommodation in the mansion. Hagel and Janco were very grateful, and Hagel gave Janco half of the money in the bag. He then took a further half of his own share and gave it to Janco, like he promised to.

At night, when Janco was sure Hagel was asleep, he crept into his room, took Hagel's money and left the mansion. When morning came, the king came to Hagel's room and was told by a red-faced Hagel that the money was gone and that Janco was no longer in his room. After a thorough check of the room, even the king became furious, and he sent a royal order for the capture of Janco. He then offered Hagel with the option of working for him, until he got the money back. Hagel gratefully accepts the offer again, and he spent a week in the king's mansion until eventually, Janco was caught, but the money has already been spent. Janco was sent to the royal prison, and all the money that was leftover was given back to the king. The king was disappointed that he didn't get all his money back, but he was still kind enough to provide Hagel with a place to live and more money, and he lived happily ever after.

Hagel currently lives in a place a hundred meters from the king's mansion, and his sheep are kept in a pen set up in his backyard. He now has enough money to pay for all his daily needs, but he still needs frequent help with how to live a modern life.

# Sha Wujing

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Lu, Stacey – 11*

Sha Wujing gasped, and the two shadowy figures turned. He did what came to his mind first: run.

Sha Wujing, or Sha, was a river monster, until Xuanzang, his master, came and turned him into human. His job is to protect Xuanzang along with two other magical creatures: Sun Wukong, a monkey, and Zhu Bajie, a pig. A few hours ago, they completed their journey to the West. Buddha gave them two weeks of holiday. They chose to explore China. Except, they were blown to different places. Smart enough, they told each other that if anyone was lost, they will meet at the center of the Country.

Sha landed in Beijing, the capital of China. He instantly knew that, because of the famous Great Wall of China. He started to climb it.

There were so many people at the Great Wall. Sha looked around. The people were either climbing or looking at the view except two suspicious looking people who wore black tights and shirts. They were mostly circling a woman with ruby earrings dangling at her ears, a pearl necklace around her neck, and a jade bracelet around her wrist. Sha narrowed his eyes, and followed them.

The two people walked into a door that said 'No visitors, staff only', and closed the door behind them. Sha ran to the door, and held it just before it closed. Then he put his ear to the door. One of them spoke.

"Look at what you've done, Belladonna," a male voice said.

"It's not all my fault," Belladonna said, "Look, Lerman, we still have a chance. I chose us because we could show Experemas Poius how trustable we are, so we might get a pay rise," said.

"Okay, I'll trust you this time, but if we fail again, then I won't work with you," Lerman said.

Sha kept listening, but dozens of questions bounced in his head. What was the plan? Who is Experemas Poius? Who are they?

"I will have to go soon. I've got a whole family waiting for me," a new voice said. There was silence. "Ha, you think we will let you go that quickly?" Belladonna snickered.

"What do I have to do?" The rich lady trembled.

"Well, first, you have to find whoever is here that is part of the Journey to the West, and go to Shanghai, Hong Kong and Guangzhou to fetch the rest of the group. Then you meet us here, with all four members and the dragon horse." Lerman chuckled. "Then our mission is completed."

Sha gasped. Then he ran. But the evil claws were quicker than he expected.

## Sun Wukong

Sun Wukong, or Sun, landed in Hong Kong. He glanced at the street food. *Wait, was that street food? Yes, Sun thought. Is that Egg Puffs? The famous street food of Hong Kong? Maybe I could steal one of those from a shop and run away quickly. The people couldn't catch me.*

He jumped around the streets, snatching as much food as he could. One of the shop owners shouted, "hey!" Then, started chasing him. But soon the shop owner gave up, and walked sulkily back to his shop. Sun sat on a branch, while the other people stood there and gawked at him. Sun flashed them a mischievous smile.

He hopped off the branch and strolled down the street aimlessly. Suddenly he remembered to meet his master and brothers in the center of China, which is... Oh no! He doesn't know where the center of China is. He has to get a map. But how? He needs money. How could he get money? Work. Why doesn't he just steal money? It's easy. All he needed to do was to snatch it and... No. Sun shook off the thought. He couldn't steal again. He needed to be good. Stealing food and troubling the owner was already too much. Being bad is the past. He continued to walk, focusing on his own thoughts. Then he bumped into someone.

The man helped him up, and looked at him and asked his name.

Sun didn't know how to answer, so he stammered the first thing that came into his mind, "Xueyou Hua."

The man frowned, then narrowed his eyes. Sun could feel the beads of sweat rolling down his forehead. But the man returned to normal.

He said, "Oh, never mind my reaction. I just never met a talking monkey before. I'm Luihan Wang. Nice to meet you. Let's see, you need a home..." After a few minutes of talking, he led Sun back to his limousine, where a driver was waiting.

When they arrived, a stunning house came into his view. There was a small fountain in front of the house, with bushes and flowers around it. Sun was marveled by the beauty, not wanting to believe it. But he went in.

Luihan offered everything he could. Food, drink, money, clothes, a room, a bed, some books, even a work table. Then he offered something that was the most Sun could ever ask: a job.

Everyday, Sun woke up early to prepare breakfast for Luihan, swept the floor, cleaned the house, did the laundry and ironed them. He did grocery shopping, and all other house chores. When Luihan came back from work he saw a spotlessly clean house and a yummy dinner. Luihan was very happy with Sun, he always paid him extra for Sun's good work.

One day, when Sun woke up, the house was so quiet. He found a note that said:

*Dear Xueyou Hua,*

*I went out for a very urgent errand. Continue to do your work and remember to brush the cupboard of the canned foods. I found some small bugs there. I will bring some souvenirs for you.*

*Luihan Wang*

Sun's hands trembled as he held the note, realizing this could be his last chance find master and his brothers. He went out and bought a map.

Meanwhile, Luihan was going to Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai to find the rest of the group of the Journey to the West. Luihan is actually Lerman. He was on the Great Wall, the one who agreed to partner up with Belladonna and work on the evil Who-Knows-What plan. The person who was working for Experemas Poius. But neither Sun nor Sha knew that. Before Sun figured out how to leave, Luihan opened the door and stepped in the house with those red evil eyes.

### Zhu Bajie

Zhu Bajie, or Zhu, landed in Guangzhou. When he landed, the sweet aroma of steamed dumpling floated into his nose. He sniffed the air. He followed the smell, and found himself in an elegant restaurant.

"Hello, what would be your order, sir?" A very beautiful lady asked.

Zhu was mesmerized by the beauty of this lady, and stammered, "Awwww, I don't have any money..."

The lady nodded, "It's okay, you can come into the royal suite, and we will prepare a meal for you."

Zhu's mouth hung open. Then he muttered, "Thank you so much, thank you so much."  
The lady nodded again, "It's my pleasure."

Zhu walked into the royal suite. He didn't notice the beautiful lady lock the doors behind him. He started wolfing down everything he saw in front of him. After he finished, the beautiful lady was staring at him like he was a tiny prey waiting to be caught.

"Well, now you finished your meal, you have gotten what you want. Now you have to pay me back. Not with money." She cackled.

Zhu's forehead started gathering raindrops of sweat. "What do you mean?" He babbled.

"You will come with me." The beautiful lady answered.

### Xuanzang

*Phew*, Xuanzang, or Xuan, thought.

Xuan and the dragon horse landed in Shanghai. Across the river, the Pearl TV Tower's lights in the bund shined against the bright sun. Xuan has always dreamed of visiting the Pearl TV Tower. The dragon horse galloped towards the Pearl TV Tower. Xuan smiled, and nodded in approval.

Xuan slid off his horse, and started wandering around the Pearl TV Tower. He looked around, until a bad feeling washed up his throat. His disciples.

In the Pearl TV Tower, the rich lady dragged Zhu into the secret room. Lerman and Belladonna were already waiting there.

"Now can I go home?" The rich lady asked.  
"Where is the dragon horse?" Lerman questioned.

The rich lady sighed. Suddenly, a loud bang startled everyone. Xuan stood at the door, scanning everyone. Lerman and Belladonna gasped, and the rich lady let out a sign of relief.

Xuan spotted Sun, Sha, and Zhu, bounded with ropes, and their faces lit up. Xuan pulled out the legendary Bronze Sword, and sliced open the ropes with a *ziiiiiip* (who knew?). Lerman and Belladonna burst out of the door, dragging the rich lady behind them.

Xuan quickly untied his disciples, gathered them together, and thanked Buddha for saving them from those evil scoundrels.

# Return of the Monkey

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Proctor, May – 13*

As Monkey sat on a cloud in the lightening dawn with his eyes closed, he felt a huge gust of wind cut through the stillness. It ruffled his coarse fur and made his ancient armour clink together lightly like wind chimes. Then his eyes fluttered open just in time to see a star shift in the sky and explode in a flash of blinding light. Something told him this was not right.

All of a sudden, an invisible force started to push him down and he desperately waved his arms, trying to get ahold of something. Grunting, he landed in the garden of Guan Yin, the Goddess of Compassion, with a thud. She looked down at Monkey with a frown, her lips pulled tightly together, her pristine white robes drifting around her. The silver tassels hanging off her headpiece were tinged a rosy gold in the dawn light. She said in a voice just above a whisper, “Did you see that star? I think that may be an omen about your old enemy, the White Bone Demon. She has risen again from her ashes, since you last defeated her. She is seeking to destroy the human world with her chemicals, to get revenge for something not even I know about.”

“Did you have to ruin my peaceful morning just to tell me that?” Monkey said impatiently as he brushed the dust off his armor. “Can’t I just relax now?”

“No.”

“Just let me go!” Monkey whined.

“Stay here, I’m not finished with you yet,” she said, a note of annoyance in her voice. “You must go down and stop her.”

“Why can’t you do it, you’re not even busy,” Monkey interrupted.

Then he jumped into the air and blasted away from the palace garden, screaming, “I’m not doing it,” as he flew to his home that sat atop a lone cloud in the clear blue sky.

Then, out of nowhere, a voice said, “Monkey, I will say it again, go down to earth and defeat the demon. Now!”

“Try and make me!” Monkey retorted.

Without warning, an invisible force pushed him off his small island of vegetation into the blue sky. He fell for what felt like an eternity, watching the sky turn from blue to orange, and then black, littered with thousands of stars.

Monkey saw the ground come into view, but it was strange because it was covered with so many pinpricks of light. Monkey’s feet then hit the ground. The ground was grey and rough like a poorly smoothed-out man-made rock. It stung Monkey’s feet. Around him glossy metal boxes on wheels with blinding white lights whizzed at a great speed, releasing horrible fumes as they moved, making Monkey cough. He looked up to the heavens trying to find the stars that would guide him, but Monkey only saw smog and light blending together to create a thick curtain between the mortal world and the heavens. Monkey started pacing around, cursing Guan Yin. Monkey didn’t know where he was, what time it was or where he was going. He also didn’t know where the White Bone Demon was, and he knew that Guan Yin wouldn’t let him return home before he defeated the monster.

Then a girl with jet black hair that hung straight down to her lower back and covered half her face and her left eye stopped him. She said quietly,

“Monkey come with me. I know who you seek in the mortal world,” and beckoned for him to follow her. Monkey sniffed the air around her. With his fire eyes he could see that she could shapeshift into a beautiful white butterfly with black wingtips, but then the image blurred up. “Come.” she said again, and Monkey followed the girl.

“You must be wondering how I know you. Thousands of years ago you helped my village defeat an evil monster...”

“Can you just tell me where I am exactly?” Monkey interrupted.

“You don’t know? You’re in Beijing, China.”

“How is this China? What happened to...”

“China has changed a lot, with modern industry.”

“Here we are,” the girl said as she stood in front of a glossy lit-up block.

“My apartment,” she said. She and Monkey entered a metallic box with glowing buttons that she pressed.

Suddenly, the box started rising upward.

“I do not understand this place at all,” Monkey said under his breath. After a few seconds a bell dinged, and the box’s doors opened up into the girl’s home.

“I know why you came down to the mortal world. It’s the White Bone Demon you’re looking for right?” the girl said as she turned around, but as she did so, Monkey caught a flash of silver. He saw that there were two small knives hanging from her belt. Each ivory handle was carved with a snake wrapping around it, its mouth wide open, exposing gleaming fangs made of diamonds. The snake’s eyes were studded with emeralds that gleamed in the fading light of the moon. The blades were a highly polished silver that glowed.

“This is strange,” Monkey thought, “How did I not notice that before!”

The girl said, “I can lead you to her tomorrow,” and walked away, her hair swishing behind her as she left the room.

Monkey fell into an uneasy sleep. “Wake up! Time to go.” the girl called. Monkey’s eyelids fluttered open, and he muttered, “Can I just sleep a bit more?”

“No. We have to go now,” she replied.

“Fine, let’s go.” Monkey replied groggily.

The street lamps were lit against a dark sky, fading from a midnight blue to a creamy lilac as the sun’s rays just started to shine over the horizon. The two walked in silence along the empty sidewalk. An icy wind blew in their faces and the girl’s jet black hair flew out behind her. Suddenly, a dense, eerie curtain of mist clouded around the two of them.

“Keep walking, we’re close.” the girl said softly. Then the mist cleared, revealing a tall smooth reflective building ending in a sharp spike.

“Where is that demon?” Monkey said with a vicious growl.

“This is her top secret lab facility. She runs one of biggest chemical corporations in China.”

Monkey was shocked. He didn’t know how she could recover from the lethal wounds he had inflicted upon her thousands of years ago. He thought she would be off in a cave somewhere in the treacherous, snow covered Himalayas, not the leader of a company. Perhaps the chemicals she made were the secret to regaining her strength. On the entrance to the building, there was a dark blue glass screen that seemed to be emitting a strange misty phosphorescent light. In one swift motion, the girl swept her hair behind her and placed her hand on the screen emitting the bizarre light.

“Access granted,” a robotic monotone voice spoke out of nowhere, as the hidden doors noiselessly slid open.

The lobby was entirely made out of a glossy, polished, reflective silver metal. They stepped into a metal box that immediately shot upwards taking them to the demon’s private office on the top floor. When they stepped out of the lift, the girl’s eyes started to glow a ghostly green, illuminating the room, revealing a hidden door. She knocked three times and said, “my lady, I have brought you that monkey.”

“Enter,” came the reply. Monkey was shocked, how did he not realise earlier that this girl worked for the demon? “I see now you finally have noticed that your ‘companion’ works for me. I sent her to bring you here, because I need a test subject for my newest chemical,” she sneered. Swearing, Monkey swung his staff at her, but the demon blocked it with a cloud of deep black opaque gas, and reappeared on the other side of the room. “That gas was a special new blend I invented,” she said. Then she nodded at the girl in the corner, who threw the two small daggers with snakes on the handles at Monkey. He ducked and they clattered to the floor behind him. In a flash, the carved snakes on the daggers came off the handles and transformed into huge stone colored snakes hissing and slithering around Monkey. Monkey swung his staff at the snakes and knocked them to the side, crushing the girl. As the demon charged at him, he grabbed a tiny clear glass bottle of white gas that was labeled with a row of strange numbers, letters and symbols that had been knocked to the floor and shoved it down the demon’s throat. After a matter of seconds, she and the building exploded into thousands of what looked like black and white shreds of paper. Monkey shot out of the glass roof of the building, causing all the tiny shreds of paper to scatter in the sky drifting down slowly. Relieved to finish his task, Monkey blasted up through the clouds into the dark sky towards home.

## A Sacrificial Death

*The International Schools Foundation Academy, Wong, Ariel – 11*

The following passage is from a translated, recently uncovered manuscript. It was written in Chinese, and found under strange circumstances. It was found at the bottom of the Mediterranean, yet still, unexpectedly, intact.

Long jump, pole vault... Possibly the easiest sports ever created for monkeys. But leaping into a monster, killing it? Possibly *not* the easiest activities ever created for monkeys.

Even as a monkey, jumping 50 feet into the air and landing on a moving target is not as easy as expected. But since I'm the Monkey King, *of course*, I successfully did it. That is, if you don't count the breaking of every bone in my left leg...

Breathlessly limping, I scrambled up the trunk of Makara. Barely audible over the sea monster's screeching, Xuanzang tried to call on the powers of the gods as a distraction. I honestly don't think I would need a distraction though. I'm agiler than any of the other gods, even as a mortal! Also, all I *really* needed to do was jump on a 40 feet tall sea monster's elephant trunk, and not on the seal tail that is sloshing around in the water uncontrollably. Right? Oh, and did I mention that the sea monster had teeth that were the size of actual swords? I wonder if someone was attempting to fight it but instead jabbed in two double-edged swords in the place of where Makara's teeth should be... I'd ask Ganga later.

*Focus.* I scolded myself. *Xuanzang is depending on you. Even if you don't want eternal revenge from Ganga. Hmm... I wonder if— FOCUS!*

Eventually, I clambered up onto Makara's head. Wishing that monsters with elephant heads don't cross their eyes, I glanced down at Xuanzang. He began chanting. I chanted along with him. Immediately, the sea started churning all around us. Drops of seafoam splattered on our faces, the scent of the ocean drifted into my nostrils, yet we could not afford to get distracted. The ocean raised, creating a whirlwind. In the middle of all the swirling, sat Xuanzang and me, continuously chanting. The ocean shifted and shifted, shaping objects and ideas that happened to be in my mind, reenacting scenes from my memory, imitating my closest friends.

*Now.* Xuanzang signaled to me calmly. The ocean is prepared to move to every one of my commands. He stared chillingly into my eyes. For the first time, I realized that he had mismatching eyes. One red as blood, the other gold as... Well, gold. Though this time, his eyes were filled with mist. I knew what he intended to do.

*No! Xuanzang! Don't do it! Don't transfer all your energy to me! It will drain you! You will... Well, die!* I screamed at him through the mind desperately.

He looked back at me, calm as ever, as if this wasn't a life or death situation. *You know you need all that energy to defeat Makara. You know that defeating Makara always involves a sacrifice. You know that. Don't argue, Hanuman. Let it be me.*

"Right. Don't argue." I gritted my teeth and muttered under my breath. "I'll find a way, *without arguing*, to keep you alive."

I had won a BGA (Best God Actor) Oscar award before, and it's too easy to fool Xuanzang, so I pretended to sulk as I shaped the ocean into Kharga, the legendary sword of Kali. That's when Xuanzang started sending me his energy. I can feel my heart beating faster, my left leg mending itself, my blood overflowing with adrenaline. I've never felt like this since I was born. I feel... I feel the mischief was coming back to me, returning to its birthplace. With all this energy, I can defeat anyone in single combat. With the control of the ocean, I can destroy the whole planet! With both, I can rule the world! All this power! And I can do anything, *anything*, with it! Tha— *No. That wasn't you. You were acting like a hypocrite who is overly enthusiastic about ruling the world with Michael Jackson dance moves. Quit it.* I guess all this time with a "very focused" companion helped me focus too.

Instead, I used all that energy to build a wall. To build a wall that stops other energy from coming in. Xuanzang realized what was going on, and forced harder. Yet the harder he pushed, the more energy I sacrifice for the wall. Unfortunately, none of us realized that, and none of us are willing to give in. We kept pushing. Until we realized. But it was too late. I'm drained of energy again. But this time, both of us are.

*You know that defeating Makara always involves a sacrifice.* I can't help it. I keep repeating what Xuanzang said as I drive the sword into Makara's forehead with my remaining strength, which isn't a lot. *You know that defeating Makara always involves a sacrifice.* I've decided that, even without energy, I'll still slay Makara. I need to protect humanity. *You know that defeating Makara always involves a sacrifice.*

Part of me wants to argue back and say that he was wrong, nobody needed to die, but part of me knew he's right. Like always. *Just like he said, there's no point arguing. I do know that defeating Makara always involves a sacrifice.* The deeper I drive the sword, the more Makara struggles against me. It bucks and kicks and swings and spins, but I still held on against all odds. *Defeating Makara always involves a sacrifice.* Suddenly, Makara stopped struggling. He seemed to settle down. He seemed to just lie down on the ocean floor. Forever. Relaxing on the seabed. Just when I drove the sword deep enough for it to puncture the brain, Makara jerked up abruptly and bucked with his remaining energy. *Defeating Makara always involves a sacrifice, even when you don't believe it's necessary.* I couldn't hold on any longer.

I let go.

I sank deeper,

deeper,

deeper.

Flowing calmly to the ocean floor.

Dead.

Finally.

After all those millennia of living... Finally dead.

Well, not necessarily *dead*. More similar to, *dying*. Am I right?

Drowning to the bottom of the ocean, slowly choking and running out of breath. Ahh! What a wonderful way to die. Gradually, you'll get accustomed to inhaling sea water, and possibly, even enjoy it! If you didn't catch that, it was *sarcasm*.

You know how people say their life flashes right before their eyes right before they die? Well... it doesn't exactly happen for me. Or maybe because I'm not born a mortal, I don't die a mortal death. Depressing, as how no one ever expected the great god of mischief, captain of the monkey army to pass away like *this*.

Oh, wow! Xuanzang is still shouting, trying to find me! I've expected him to give up already. I guess, learning focus from a monk, forces a monk to learn resilience and grit from me.

*Stop. It's no good*, I mentally assure him. *I've died to do a heroic deed and that's all I need. Hey! That rhymes by the way!*

"NO! This is life! And death! How can you still joke around, let alone think of rhymes in a situation like this?!" He shouted. "You've h-helped me s-s-so much... You d-don't d-deserve th-this! I'll-I'll make them p-pay!" His speech softened into a whisper. Tears streamed down his face as his knees buckled. He fell against the rails, his body wracked by sobs. He stared into the distance, the blood draining from his cheeks, the color fading from his eyes. He let out a wordless cry, awakening every soul in the heavens.

"That you would be dead..." His voice trailed away. He didn't think that it was possible to cry so much, reliving all he had been through in his mind.

*Xuanzang. Xuanzang.* I said, shaking him from his stupor. *No. Don't cry. At least I've slain Makara. And it's not life and death anymore, for I've chosen death. It'll only be a few minutes before my heart stops beating, my blood stops flowing, my lungs stop inhaling, my brain stops functioning, and my soul stops existing. I've been cast down as a mortal for a reason, Xuanzang. To aid you to success. Even if I die along the way, at least I've pleased the gods. Now go. Stay in Djibouti for another 2 days before sailing to Egypt. My spirit will aid you against the odds one last time. One last time, for you to finish your journey to the west.*

Xuanzang half-hiccuffed, half-sobbed, "V-very well. I-I trust you. You will be the best Monkey King there ever was."

As he sailed away, he stared at the spot I leaped, attacked, killed, and died. He would not look away. He would allow all the guilt, all the grief, all the anger, all the desolation to flow over him. He would accept fate. Just like I taught him to.



## New Journeys to the West

*United Christian College (Kowloon East), Chang, Yan Lam – 13*

A small town lied humbly across the idyllic landscape of China. An unadorned monastery can be seemed from the far western corner of the town centre. In the monastery there lived a group of missionaries of the same faith. Among the group were three young men, chatting quietly among themselves. They were Peter, John and Jacob. These three young missionaries were originally sent here by the Church Mission Society from the Church of England in the year 1850. They were faithful Christians who committed themselves to the spreading of the gospel, but the people in the town think otherwise – most town folks were skeptic of foreign religions, especially the ‘Boxers’.

The conflicting belief between the town and the missionaries has caused quite a stir. The Boxers always say that foreign monasteries and missionaries were ‘wolves in sheepskin’. “The Boxers said we are here to take their land.” said John. “It’s not easy to build trust with the town folks, especially when they are all suspicious of what we preach.” replied Peter. The young men paused for a moment, then Jacob started to speak, “Indeed, we must let everyone know of our belief clearly, we must help them to see this as a genuine religion, what the people need right now is proof, we must go to Israel and find evidences to prove our faith.”

Next day, the three young missionaries began their journey. They packed their belongings and travelled a long way across The Silk Road and many countries’ borders to the west. They walked day by day, and night by night, they have even crossed the whole continent. A month has passed and they have finally arrived at their destination. Upon their arrival, the group decided to take a day of rest and learn about the culture and tradition here. As the night approached, they started gathering information from the local taverns for their search of evidences here. Among there many conversations they had with the locals a news has caught their attention. It was a news about the folklore of the Evidence Scrolls. “We must find these scroll tomorrow.” said Jacob in a determined voice.

Early into the next day they embarked on a trip to a famous place in Israel called the Dead Sea. It was known as a traditional folklore that the Evidence Scrolls were hidden there. These Evidence Scrolls were written by prophets in the past who was inspired by God’s voice. There was a legendary talk even that the Evidence Scrolls is about Jesus himself, the miracles he performed, and every incredible thing he did when he had walked this Earth a long time ago. With the Evidence Scrolls, John, Peter and Jacob would be able to prove that Jesus existed to the people in the town.

The three young men drove their camels slowly towards the Dead Sea Mountain Range, even before the sun has risen, or the sky has awaken yet. After few hours of travelling, they finally arrived. They went into different Qumran Caves in search of the Scrolls, but there were too many caves and they were going to spend lots of time to search in each cave, so they prayed for directions and wisdom. Suddenly, there was a ram caught by its horns in a thicket and that got their attention. Peter said, “Perhaps this is a sign from God. Let’s go there and see.” The others agreed and they climbed into the cave and started to excavate. Shortly after that, they dug something hard, it was a box! They opened it immediately and what they found were a pile of parchments in local dialect.

The three of them were marveled in joy. But with the Evidence Scrolls in local dialect were not enough, since no one knows what it is talking about. So they planned to find the leaders of the Jewish Churches to help translate these parchments for them.

Meanwhile, a group of rebels in the mountain range heard from the taverns that Peter, John and Jacob came to Israel in search for the Evidence Scrolls. The rebels were worried that Peter, John and Jacob would find these Scrolls and take them away from the caves they occupied. This will surely make the rebels lose followers and possessions of wealth. So the rebels decided that they must obstructed Peter, John and Jacob from getting the Scrolls.

The next day, John, Peter and Jacob continued their journey. They went to Ephesus Church, Pergamum Church, Sardis Church, Philadelphia Church, Smyrna Church, Thyatira Church and Laodicea Church, to find leaders who can translate the Evidence Scrolls. John, Peter and Jacob went to those seven churches and told them about their situations and asked them if they could translate those scrolls for them. But none of the churchmen would like to offer them help, because those Evidence Scrolls were very important to them. The young missionaries don't know what to do, so they prayed to God for instructions and wisdom.

In a dream, the church leaders heard from a voice, "They were loyal Christians, they had done everything for me, you should believe them and let them borrow the translation copies." So the churchmen gave the translated scrolls to John, Peter and Jacob and said "We believed our God has spoken to us in a dream last night to instruct us to lead you the Scrolls. Here, you should keep this as a secret, because when the people know that the scrolls are gone – the most powerful and meaningful documents of the churches are gone, they would crumble in fear and lost faith in God, so you should not let anyone know about this." The young men were excited to hear of the news, but unfortunately, the rebels had also arrived outside the town walls of the churches, waiting for opportunity to abduct the missionaries.

John, Peter and Jacob took those seven translated Scrolls secretly and carefully from the churches' leaders. As they leave the town, suddenly they heard of a group of men armed with knives shouted loudly, "These three men have taken the Scrolls from our caves. We must capture them at once!" John, Peter and Jacob were shocked from seeing the situation they were in, they were tied from hands to knees without realizing what had just happened. The rebels were looking at the three men and smiling sinisterly. Peter wanted to say to the rebels that these Scrolls do not belong to them because they have asked the permission of the seven churchmen to borrow the Scrolls, but suddenly he remembered one of the churchmen said they need to keep it as a secret, so he swallowed his words.

The rebels took them to a cave in the Dead Sea Mountain Range and locked the three young men there. In the cell Peter, John and Jacob were very scared, but they kept praying because they believed God will help them. In the midnight of the day, an angel appeared, and the cell was filled with light, so brightly that all the rebels' guards have temporary lost vision. The angel tapped John, Peter and Jacob on their shoulders and their chains fell from their hands at once. Then, they followed the angel out. They passed through the rebels who were guarding the gates. Jacob stopped, turned around and said to Peter and Jacob, "God has sent his angel to save us, we shall finish the mission." So they were planning to go back and retrieve the copied Scrolls. But the angel said, "It is the actions that come from faith that brings people to God, not words or Scrolls. Human heart need no evident apart from act of love itself." Then the angel disappeared.

John, Peter and Jacob suddenly felt enlightened by the words and left Israel.

As they went back to the town in China, they pondered on the words of the angel and want to know exactly what it means. In this journey they have been through many difficulties, but because of this, John, Peter and Jacob saw how mighty God is and He will always listen to prayers. The three young men shared the story from their journey with the people in their town. Many town folks were amazed by their story and had become followers too. The missionaries in the monastery were excited to see the changes in the town folks, "Even though we did not bring back the Evidence Scrolls, we have something more powerful to prove our faith, come," said Jacob as he turned to Peter and John, "We still have the 'Boxers' to share our story with."

## New Journeys to the West

*United Christian College (Kowloon East), Ho, Kit Sum – 13*

In the year 630, the group consisting of James, Piggie King, Naughty Rex and the Talking Monkey had finally completed the journey in India and had returned back to China. The land was peaceful and there were no battles with strange monsters and demons. Upon their return, the group heard that James's mother has gotten a very serious sickness, James was hearing distress upon receiving the news. "Don't worry, James, I heard in the land of Nepal, you can find some 'Elixir of life', perhaps you can use it to cure your mother's illness", said the Naughty Rex. The group was told of a secret map with riddles. "Unlock it you will find a Google Earth. The password is on some trees. You only have three chances to unlock the password. Otherwise it will explode and vanish." said the Talking monkey. Since the group had travelled to India and they remembered some ways so they can go to Nepal more easily.

So they begin their second journey to the West. Before they embarked on their journey, they rested in a cave. They saw a treasure box which was glittering with radiance in front of their eyes! When they were hesitating whether to get it or not, the Talking Monkey grabbed it. He tried to open it but it was too hard to open! The Piggie King laughed at him and said, "You definitely can't open it, silly monkey!" Then the Talking Monkey's face turned red. He tried to open it again but he can't. In order not to let the Piggie King laugh at him again, he threw that treasure box on the floor! "Plink!" It broke! All treasures fell onto the ground! Suddenly, a genie came out from the treasure box. The genie dresses up in strange garments. He had a short hair, a pair of small eyes, a pair of big ears as same as the grown up elephant, a big mouth and some green lipstick! The genie has long hands and legs but he is short like a midget. He wore a pink skirt and a brown scarf, a yellow dress, a gold jacket and a pair of orange shoes.

They were frightened by him!

The genie introduced himself, "My name is Peter De Mary, you guys can call me Peter. I am a spirit trapped by an ancient sorcerer. He knows that James's mother got sick and they are finding the "Elixir of life". I am coming to help you to find it!" said the genie. "Thanks for your help!" replied James. "But we have not much time left. Let's go!" said Naughty Rex. They saw a tree outside the cave. The Talking Monkey said, "Let me climb onto the trees to find the password!" However, he didn't find anything. Everyone was a bit disappointed. The Piggie King yelled, "In order to rescue James's mother, we won't give up easily!" The others shouted in agreement, "Yes!" James felt very touched and he cried instantly. Then they have walked for a long time and searched in different locations, they have even climbed over many mountains. But still, they couldn't find any clue. They were tired. They needed to rest. Then, they lay on the floor covered with grass. They started discussing about the password, "So four numbers.....How can we know which four?" said Peter.

Then the Talking monkey kicked a tree next to him. Suddenly, the tree responded and a nymph came out from it. She smiled at them and said, "My name is Hayley. I know you are searching for the 'Elixir of life' to cure James's mother. I can help you to find the password of the map. But I will disappear when you have found out the password." "Thanks a lot!" said the group. "A four-numbered password? What did you see on those trees on the way here? How many leaves are there?" asked Hayley. "I'm not sure, maybe around 4500 trees?" Piggie King responded uncertainly. "Good try! But it is 4506." answered Peter. When they wanted to try the password, they couldn't find the map! James was lost too! At that moment, they heard a strange sound. So they followed this sound and they could see James was looking at the map crying! "Hey! What are you doing?" said the Piggie King. James cried, "I'm a loser. I couldn't think of the password.....If I can't go and find the 'Elixir of life' as soon as possible, my mother would....." James sobbed without being able to finish his sentence.

"Maybe I know the password, I think is 4506!" said the Talking Monkey, "Let's try it!" They input the password and suddenly they heard of a click! They have succeeded! Then, they quickly opened the Google Earth and found where they were. He found that they were in the City of the Orient! They had gone to the

East instead of the West! Because they were too focus on finding the password they have lost direction of where they were going! Now they decided to buy some horses and look at the Google Earth again in order to go to Nepal... The group continued on their way. Suddenly, they met some nobles who were also going to Nepal. Luckily, these nobles were very friendly, so they accompanied them. Those nobles were devoted pilgrims. They shared their religions with them. The group took these nobles to heart! They sang songs together and have meals together.

On the next day, when they were on the journey again, suddenly, a strong wind came rushing towards them in the same direction.....‘Bang!’ They were all twirled into the sky and lost consciousness. When the group woke up, they discovered that they were trapped at the center of the sea on a wooden boat! Unluckily, the boat was not very stable. The boat was shaking badly. Unable to balance themselves, they all fell into the sea! The Talking Monkey started screaming “HELP! I don’t know how to swim, HELP!” The Piggie king also yelled, “Help me!” “God of the noble Pilgrims, if you are real, please help us get out of this mess!” said James. After divine considerations, Peter was filled with powers, he summoned all his strength and bring the group to the shore.

“Thanks Peter! A genie is always handy in a situation like this! said naughty Rex. When James wanted to check where they were, he realised that the map had got wet and he couldn’t use it.....

After a week of drying the map, they finally were able to use it to find the direction again. Soon later, they have arrived in Nepal. However, Nepal was too big and they didn’t know where the ‘Elixir of life’ is. They were in despair and were about to collapse, “I want to die!” said the Talking Monkey. “Hey guys! Stay calm! We have an all-powerful genie that is Peter de Mary, nothing is impossible with him.” said Piggie King. The genie suggested that they should go to some clinics and pharmacies to ask about where the ‘Elixir of life’ is. But there were no clinics or pharmacies in Nepal!

“We won’t give up easily! Friends need to help each other when they are facing difficulties.” Naughty Rex said, “Yeah , you are correct!” said the others.

“We don’t have much time left ! Let’s continue our search,” said the Talking Monkey. On the way, they saw another cave again! They went into it and took a nap. When they woke up, the Talking Monkey yawned loudly. They could listen to a loud echo. They were curious about what was in inside..... They saw a flaming dragon in front of them! It appeared to be a very scary monster. The group panic!

“Take courage!” said Peter, this legendary monster is the keeper of the Elixir, if we defeat it we can acquire the potion to save James’ mother.” Then the others realized there is no time to panic. “Come and try to kill me! I doubt you are able to!” roared the flaming dragon. “Just take courage!” shouted Peter. James thought of the friendship he had received from the group and the sickness of her mother , suddenly a stream of strength filled his body. He drew the sword and defeated the dragon with the aid of the genie and the others. Afterwards, he got the ‘Elixir of life’! When they got back to China, their home, James’s mother was still alive! But her disease was much more serious! Then James gave her the ‘Elixir of life’ and his mother could finally cure her sickness.

# The Second Journey

West Island School, Eyunni, Gayathri – 12

## Chapter 1

I had always preferred night to day. Not for any specific reason. Maybe because I could look up at the sky, without the fear of burning my eyes with the blazing sun. Maybe because I could look up at my ceiling and find some life in the glow-in-the-dark stars I stuck up there. Maybe because I could hear silence, something which was quite rare in my area. Or because I could escape. Escape from reality and jump into a world of fantasy, where what I wanted was real and alive. Where I could escape from all the dark spirits like Jealousy and Hatred that lurked within our world, and go somewhere, far away, where the only existence was me and all of my thoughts. Even now, I still prefer the darkness. It protects me from the bright light, like a blanket covering one in the cold.

People have strange obsessions. Mine was an obsession with a story.

When I was younger, my grandmother would tell me a story most nights before I slept. These were stories that had been passed down generations; stories that are as old as time, or so I had been told. Stories that have become part of me, that I could hear again and again, but never get bored of, for each time I listened, I learned something new. I loved them all, but I had one favourite, ‘The Journey to the West’. For long, I loved the story with all my heart, but I never knew why. Infact, I found it strange being obsessed with a story. With time, I realised that it was more than just liking the plot, or being able to relate to the characters, I started being part of the story.

But on my ninth birthday, something strange happened, drawing me to the story even more. I remember vividly. Father was on a trip to my uncle’s place, so he left me a present near my bed. I remember how happy I was, not because of the present but because he had actually remembered my birthday. It was a gift from my father to me, and I opened it carefully. A part of me said that I should be happy with whatever I got, because I knew how busy he was. But another hoped that it was something different to the Red-tea and Green-tea sweets he usually gave me. I was pleasantly surprised and overjoyed when I saw the contents. Bubbling with excitement, I stared at them for a few, long seconds before carefully placing them in a small clay container near my window, something given to me by my grandmother many years ago, a place where I kept all that was special and important to me. Inside it, now sat four figurines; a monk, a monkey, a pig and a bull. All characters from my favourite story. My father must have overheard me speaking to my grandfather about how I loved those four characters, or perhaps seen me constantly gazing at them, shining majestically in their newly painted bodies. They were the newest addition to the shop, and I was the first child to receive them.

## Chapter 2

Everyday one realises things, but it is rare to have a life-changing realisation.

And that is exactly what happened. That is a lot for just one week; one tiring, busy week. I knew it meant something. Something beyond the meaning I had perceived it to be till now.

I was always taught that magic was not real, but sometimes, what we think is fantasy is actually real. That night, I had a dream. It was no surprise that my dream was about “The Journey to the West”. They had just finished their journey, and the story should have ended, but here, there was something that I hadn’t been told before. A new part of the story. The voices were draining out, but I was able to catch what they were saying. “Go find...” the Monk begun, “bring it back...”  
“...lost... destroyed...” the Bull said, his image slowly fading.  
“Beware.... jealousy.... regret...” I heard, not knowing who said it, though it might have been the Pig.  
“Go to the... west...”

The voices were talking to me!

At that moment, I must have woken up. My head was dizzy! Rubbing my eyes, I glanced at my clock and could barely make out that it was midnight. That was the one occasion where I preferred daylight, because the figurines coming to life scared me.

I always wished, for night to last forever, but this night, I wanted it to end.

My head was throbbing and beads of sweat formed on my forehead. My heart was pounding against my chest and my breathing became short and hard. I fell back onto my pillow, too scared to blink, let alone close my eyes. Yet they drooped down, threateningly. It took me a minute to come back to my senses. Were they really talking to me? I thought about it for a few seconds, before turning my gaze to the figurines. I stared at them and thought that I must be hallucinating, but the more I looked at them, the more real it seemed. The figurines were glowing, shining, sending a dim light across my room. There was no moonlight outside, and the neighbors had all turned off their lights. There were no streetlights on my street. It was magic. Pure magic. What was more, each figurine seemed to be talking to me, to my mind. If I looked at the Monk, a voice in my head would say, "Go find it and bring it back."

"Values are lost, heritage is destroyed." the Bull would say, as if finishing what he had wanted to say in my dream.

"Beware of the demons, jealousy, rage and regret." the Pig worded.

"Go to the West." the Monkey said, in a voice full of worry.

Like the missing puzzle-piece, they were finishing what they had said in my dream.

I woke up that morning with a sore back and neck, but most of all, a thirst for more information from the figurines.

As much as I tried to speak to the figurines in the morning, they wouldn't reply. It seemed like it was up to me now. At first, it didn't seem to make any sense at all, but the more I thought about it, the more sense it started to make. I realised what was happening. I realised what the problem was. It was a war, a fight, between the east and the west. It seemed hard to believe, but it was true.

When it comes to taking sides, I am usually neutral. However, this time, I was on the East's side.

It all seemed to make sense now. Globalisation. Modernisation. Words were flowing out of my mind like a river. The East and the West used to have their own ways of life, their own values, their own customs. But as the world started to grow, the west started to influence the whole world. The East tried to be more like the West. Unknowingly, it had begun a process, where it's own unique virtues and values were slowly being eaten up by the possessive and manipulating ways of the West. It was a group of people trying to be like another, who in their efforts and attempts, started to lose their identity and their personality; it was almost all gone.

The first Journey to the West was to bring back Buddhist scriptures from India, to the west of China. Now I had to go West, to bring back the East, to bring it back to its senses. I would have to propagate heritage, history, respect, truth, and everything that made us who we were. I was still troubled by the fact that I would have to beware the demons that would try to deter me, but I knew exactly how they would do it, and why. They were all part of one big demon, trying to eat me up, not physically, but eat up my spirit, transfer me to the dark side. Jealousy would make me feel that the West was better, but I knew, deep down, where nothing could harm me, that it wasn't. Rage would find what troubled me the most and bring it to me, such as not accomplishing a goal. It would light the fire of anger in my mind, like an obstacle in my way, or burn the hope in me. Regret would make me question everything. My aims, my steps, my intentions. It would be my largest obstacle, in the way of accomplishing my mission. But it wouldn't stop me. Passion, Hope and Commitment would save me. Each one with the strength of all the enemies put together.

"Oh, East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." they said. But I thought differently. Slowly, but surely, I planned *my* Journey to the West.

# Journeys to the West

*West Island School, Genee, Pascale – 11*

“Ready?” Chuyu asked, “As I’ll ever be” I replied nervously. I’m Meilin, Chuyu is my brother, I was fourteen, working age. Being born into the Zhu family meant I was part of the family business from a young age, bandits. It was a good living. That night our scouts had reported a big caravan travelling. I was put into the raid, since I was small for my age I was with the children crawling into the main caravan to get goods. We heard the signal and saw the band rushing towards the caravan.

In the chaos of fighting it seemed like they had a lot of soldiers. Close up, it was clear we were losing the fight. At that moment I could have escaped, but I didn’t, instead I dove right in. I remember ducking and dodging and eventually reaching the goods, but by that time it was too late. I heard voices coming towards me! I hid behind some sacks. People from the caravan came into view, there was a finely dressed woman and two guards, they didn’t seem to notice me. I breathed a sigh of relief only to realise Chuyu hadn’t had time to hide! They would definitely notice him crouching down next to spice sacks. I had to create a distraction so that Chuyu could escape, they were moving away from me. I got up and started to sprint towards the carriage door, only to be caught by the guards.

“Bandits!” the guard shouted “I can see that” the lady replied curtly. “Put her with the slaves and find her companions” she ordered. My heart was pounding in my ears, I was terrified. As they searched the carriage for Chuyu I prayed silently to the gods I had always disregarded. They were nearing his hiding place, there was no way he could escape, he jumped up and ran for the door. The guards quickly caught him, we were tied up and left there. I heard the shouts and screams of the fight outside, Chuyu whispered anxiously to me “Do you think they’ll kill us?” I saw he was terrified. I tried my best to comfort him “Don’t worry, we’ll just be put to work with the slaves, and once we get to the trade point everyone will be so busy we should have a chance to escape.” At that moment I knew that most of the things I said had a slim chance of actually happening but I also knew that if we didn’t escape, we would be slaves the rest of our lives. Finally, a guard came in. “You are to see Bingwen now”.

We were taken to an official looking carriage, inside, seated at a desk was an old man dressed in a royal blue advisor’s robe. He spoke “I am Bingwen, Madam Lien’s advisor, you must be the captured bandits. You have to work very hard for your food.” He started writing on some parchment, “you will be taking care of our horses.” and gestured for us to leave.

Outside it was pitch black and cold, Chuyu began to walk back towards the distant lights of the bandit’s camp “Don’t” I warned him “They have guards all around, it’s impossible to escape now”

When we stepped into range of the fire we saw it was not a big group, everybody stopped talking, after a minute or two of silence a woman spoke up “It seems we have new arrivals”. Everyone seemed to be looking us over. The woman gave us something to eat “I’m Lihwa, don’t worry they’ll warm up to you, for now get some rest”, I had so many questions, but she had gone.

We walked down with everyone else to eat. It seemed like there were one or two families, the rest seemed to be groups of people that weren’t related. Breakfast was gruel, after that came the work.

Soon we were allowed a rest, “Meilin” Chuyu nudged me, “Yes” I answered, “Can we try and talk to some of the kids?” Chuyu asked “Sure, but just be nice, we don’t want to get into a fight.” I told him. We walked over to where all the kids were sitting, “Hi” I said to them “I’m Meilin and my brother here is Chuyu” they looked at us then one boy who seemed to be the leader said to the rest of the group “They seem to be fairly hardworking, shall we accept them”, most of them nodded.

So it went, we stopped in nomad villages and bought goods, sold goods. One day when we had just passed another village Lihwa spoke to us and said "That was the last village until the tradepoint, soon all the goods will be sold. We will buy new goods and travel back to China. We will need to go through your bandit camp, think about it." And she was gone. I turned to Chuyu and asked "Do you still want to escape?". He nodded. I always knew he would want to, but things had been getting better. I just needed to convince him of it.

Over the next few days I worked on an escape plan with Chuyu because I knew he wanted it so badly, but I also worked on a plan of my own, to get him to like the caravan. We were so near, everyone had started preparing for the tradepoint. The women made straw baskets to sell. Bingwen rushed around trying to organise everyone. I knew it was all too easy to escape. A day before we were due to arrive I knew that I was close to getting Chuyu to want to stay. The kids and everyone seemed to accept us now. But it would be better with pay. That was my last try, asking Bingwen for salary. I talked to Chuyu first "Chuyu would you consider staying if we got paid a salary?" "Yes actually, life has been better here" Chuyu said. I was so relieved he agreed! I started explaining to him "We need to talk to Bingwen and show him that a salary is a good idea and we need to get the gang as well" Chuyu nodded " Alright you get the gang and I'll find Bingwen". We went off to do our jobs.

I soon found the gang and told them my plan, they agreed. We met Chuyu in front of Bingwen's carriage. As we walked in. Bingwen looked surprised to see us but calmly asked "What gives me the pleasure of your visit?" I replied in a polite tone "Bingwen sir we would like to ask for wages, we labour hard every day and unless you want all of us on strike I suggest you listen to what we have to say" he looked surprised, "very well" he said. I continued " You make a profit each year and for our pay we would like a 1% share." I could see Bingwen thinking hard. "That should be arrangeable" he didn't look very happy but I think he could see that finding new slaves would not be easy. He motioned for us to leave. We walked calmly until just outside the carriage door, then celebrated.

One day, we were nearing the point of our old bandit group. If we were raided again, we would suffer a big hit. It felt like we couldn't do anything but be anxious and gloomy. Then I had an idea, I talked to Chuyu and the gang. I had all their supports. Now it was time to make another request to Bingwen. This time I had to go alone.

I spoke to Bingwen "I have a plan to stop us from being raided by bandits" he perked up and asked me " explain" I told him about it and he agreed. I was so relieved but still this was not the hardest part.

When the sky had gone dark, I woke Chuyu, "It's time, let's go. It was pitch black. We walked right past the guards. We didn't stop, once we reached the head's tent we exhaled nervously, we didn't know if we would be killed, but we had to try. When we stepped in, I said "We're back, please hear us out." then the head spoke. "You may speak". I continued "We have joined the caravan you raided, and we decided we no longer want to live in fear of raids. So I have thought of a compromise, every year we shall pay you a tax, in return we expect safe passage. We will be in this area for three more days. Send a messenger and this years tax will be paid."

The next three days I tossed and turned waiting. When the message came on the very last day, it was the best moment of my life. I, Melin Zhu, had accomplished peace between the Zhu bandits and the Lien caravan.

So my first accomplishment has ended but I know, my journeys have only just begun.



## A Monk's Mistake

*West Island School, Green, Leia – 13*

**Yun nan province 2133 CE.**

*Days away from Yu Lin monastery:*

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“**N**o. I forbid it.”  
The Abbot hobbled ahead of the monk, his bare feet calloused and sore on the stone floor. Ming exhaled a labored breath and paced forward.

“Superior. Please, let me do this. I want to follow in His steps. I must see the world.”

He glanced up to the sky, grimacing as he lied. He was a lousy monk, always breaking the rules.

A sudden loud burst of laughter broke the cloud of silence that had started to gather. Ming turned to see the abbot chuckling, his wrinkles dancing foolishly on his forehead.

“Superior?” Ming questioned, puzzled by his amusement.

The laughter subsided. The Abbot looked away and clicked his tongue. His eyes soon met Ming’s again, “Fine. But travelling to India, Ming? Leaving your brothers and this monastery. It’s just not like you, that’s all. I wish you back in five years. Five years, Ming. One more thing. You are still young, so come back alive.”

Overjoyed, Ming clasped the Abbot’s hand.

“I shall be gone by mid-afternoon. Thank you Superior. Thank you.”

The Abbot winked and gestured for the young man to leave.

As he walked to his room, Ming cherished each step. The sensation of the cold, stone floor under his feet was one he would never forget – after all, this had been his home for 20 years. Kneeling down, Ming clumsily rolled up his sleeping mat with his long, bony fingers. He was giddy with excitement at the prospect of the adventure that lay in front of him. ‘*India.*’ He thought. The birthplace of the enlightened Buddha and Ming’s dreams. Ming gathered his sparse belongings, threw them into a woven sack and, with that, and that only, he left.

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*Days away from Yu Lin monastery:*

235

The hacking thwacks of Ming’s blunt blade slicing through the greenery, seemed to throb and echo in the still atmosphere. The vibrant colors of the jungle jumbled in his head and he collapsed into a nook of protruding roots, exhausted and weeping. His bald head shiny with salty moisture and his cheeks damp with tears, he sat there, soaking up the intense humidity. For the first time in a long time Ming felt a sliver of self-doubt and regret. He thought about the Abbot. *Five years, Ming.* At this rate his promise would be broken.

Ming closed his almond shaped eyes and rested his spine against the great tree, before starting to mutter prayers. A sudden rustle disturbed his murmurs. Opening one eye slowly, he perceived a flash of dull orange disappear into the green undergrowth. His breaths distorted as he lowered himself up with quivering hands, his pupils darting from different points as he tried to capture a glimpse of the beast. He backed up against the tree and he waited. Nothing came and nothing happened so the monk let the snapped twig,

indented from the pressure of his grip, slip from his sweaty hand. The stick landed with a pat in unison with the undeniable roar of a tiger. The striped animal jumped from out the jungle and crouched, admiring his prey. The monk's eyes widened in a combination of utter fear and shock. He knew there was one thing left to do. He spun past the tree and leapt over the fallen trunk in his path. The colorful cloths he was wearing flew behind him. The beast was gone. He inhaled and smoothed out his robe.

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### **Yun nan province 2113 CE**

Cries pierced the night air, as a mother carried her child through the dark. Blood dripped from deep gashes, painting the woman's face scarlet. A victim of an unhappy marriage in a village miles from her childhood home, she was accustomed to pain. She walked onward until they arrived at a worn building, the color of bad cream. The woman looked up and drew a long breath.

"Ming? My child, listen to me."

She stroked the soft outlines of the baby's face, as his eyes lit up at the sound of his mother's voice.

"I must leave you here, my darling. These are kind, good people. They will make you one of their own and comfort you. I need to," tears started to stream down her cheek, "I need to go. I love you baby boy."

Gently, she placed her straw basket on the doorstep, in it was the child. Kneeling down, she pressed her lips on Ming's forehead, marking it with blood.

"I love you."

She disappeared into the night.

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*Days away from Yu Lin monastery:*

439

Ming's sandals slapped the hardened ground, which was cracked from the unrelenting heat. The sun spun blurry blemishes in Ming's sight triggering a migraine, and a wobble in his steady steps. "*I'm done*" he thought,

"I'm done..."his voice was a whimper, caught up in the spontaneous desert wind. He halted, looked up, and lied down, his back burning against the hard skin of the earth. His eyes stayed open, refusing to blink, wanting to capture every last breathing moment. Ming inhaled and exhaled, his hands clasping the Indian dust.

"I am ready," He whispered to the sky.

"I am here."

...

*Days away from Yu lin monastery:*

441

The smell of smoke clouded Ming's nostrils as he awoke. Resting a shaking hand on his chest, he watched it move up and down with the rhythmic beat of his heart. A tear rolled down his sagging cheek.

"I am alive."

He laughed. Loudly. He laughed the loudest he ever had in his life. It was agony, but he did anyway.

"I AM ALIVE!"

Joy pushed up against his insides, but he was shocked into silence when his eyes suddenly met those of a woman, whose head was peeking into the tent in which Ming found himself enclosed. She was the color of burnt earth, her flesh little, her skin blemished and scarred. Her hair was a thick, dirty black and her eyes, her eyes were the rare color of amber, stricken and vivid. She was ugly, hideous even, but Ming looked at her and saw nothing but pure beauty. She hesitated, then crouched in, crawling with one hand and knees, with the other hand holding a clay bowl. She placed the bowl in front of Ming.

“Bhojan. *Food.*” She said.

Ming’s gaze did not lift from her as she made her way out of the tent.

Dazed, his thoughts stumbled upon each other. How had he arrived here? Had this strange woman dragged him from what felt like the middle of nowhere? He laid still, his lips ajar and his pupils shifting, the same thoughts shuffling through his head.

A wave of sanity finally fell over Ming, making him aware of his surroundings. Some sort of animal hide, held up by a trio of sticks, enclosed him. Pots, clay ones, and misshapen utensils decorated the clay earth floor which was partially covered with a woven rug. A very beautiful woven rug, Ming noted as his eyes finished scanning the small space enveloping him. Hunger drifted upon him and he remembered the food and the woman. “Food first,” he thought, “then the woman.”

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### **Yun nan province 2113 BC**

“Hush, boy.” The voice belonged to the hard, broken down hands of the stranger that held the child.

“What kind of a mother leaves their baby on a stranger’s doorstep?”

The voice was scratchy and quiet, almost a whisper. It belonged to another man.

“A stupid cow.” The baby carrier says. “That’s who.”

“Are we taking him to the Superior?”

“Of course.”

“Now?”

“No, not now! He’s asleep. The child will sleep in the stable.”

The monk holding the baby had an undesirable disposition, his lips permanently pursed and his mood forever sour. The scratchy voice belonged to a dim witted, but loyal young man.

“But I thought the stables were for horses.”

The baby holder rolled his eyes.

“Yes, horses and children of mothers who are STUPID COWS!”

...

*Days away from Yu lin monastery:*

441

Clouds drifted above, covering the sun. Turning his head, Ming squinted as he looked for the woman. Surrounding him was dried earth, stretching on and on, the occasional weed struggling out from its shallow cracks. He circled the tent with slow steps, and saw her, kneeling in front of some kind of pot. Exhaling, Ming walked towards her. He placed his hands together and gently bowed in her direction. A hesitant smile formed on her lips and she returned his bow.

Ming pointed to himself.

“Ming. I, Ming.”

Her mouth twitched.

“M–Ming.”

He nods.

She patted her chest.

“Aafreen.”

Holding out his hand Ming said,

“Aafreen.”

Grinning, she slipped her hand into his.

“Ming.”

# Conquering the Void of Fear

*West Island School, Huang, Vincent – 1 1*

I never expected my life to turn out like this.

I have always felt a significant connection to the temple— as if there were something more to these regular visits that I frequently paid to show my respect. Throughout my childhood, my parents have often read to me these bedtime stories of the high and mighty Buddha, the Monkey King and all those myths and legends. Reminiscing these ancient tales, which I admired as a child, I held my hands together and prayed, “nanmoamituofu...nanmoamituofu...”

Just as I finished praying, something seemed awfully peculiar. The birds surrounding the temple suddenly hushed in unison and the gentle breeze slowed to a stop. Uneasily, I held my breath. Squeezing my eyes shut, images of the Yao Guai monster started to flash in my head. This horrific creature began circling around me, trapping me and terrorizing me.

“It’s just my imagination,” I quivered under my breath, drawing myself back to reality and reassuring myself, forcing my eyelids to open. Suddenly, a ball of bright yellow light emitted rays filling the whole temple; this was when I knew exactly who had arrived.

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My journey had begun to travel west towards the mountains in search of answers. As I struggled up the steep rocky-ravine, *Why me? Why did Buddha choose me? What if I fail...* Whizzing through my head, these doubts made me nauseous. Next thing I knew, I’d walked straight into someone, or rather, something.

Panic-stricken, I slowly looked up. I saw someone who looked like a person and walked like a person, but at the same time possessed the features of a completely different species. His whole body was coated with a thick layer of auburn fur with his chest encased in iron armor. He was dressed both elegantly and traditionally, yet retaining a stern face ready for battle with one hand firmly gripping onto his long baton. Immediately, I knew who I had bumped into— the Monkey King.

“Greetings mortal,” the Monkey King growled deeply, breaking the awkward silence. “Why do you happen to be here?”

“I was sent here by the Buddha,” I bowed, “Your majesty, what are you doing on this mountain?”

“I’m here because I’m looking for my monkeys,” the Monkey King grumbled. “They’ve disappeared.”

As the Monkey King journeyed on, I followed him. He occasionally glanced back now and then, eyeing me suspiciously.

“Well,” I questioned him, “who took your monkeys?”

“I need to travel west from here,” the Monkey King ignored my question. “I need to go now— it is going to be night time soon.”

Starting to sink behind the mountains, the sun sucked in all the warmth left in the atmosphere along with it. I shivered. The Monkey King, noticing me, declared, “I’ll build us a fire, come near the fire and keep warm.” The Monkey King snapped his fingers, and a fire appeared. “You go to sleep first, I’ll keep the fire going.”

I was grateful for the warmth the Monkey King provided on this chilly night. He differed from the formidable Monkey King the stories had lead me to believe.

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Instantly, I sat up. The recurring image was haunting me once again.

Right before me, was my nightmare— in real life.

*Where's the Monkey King?* I looked up, floating down from the sky and landing in front of me, was the Monkey King.

I gawked at the Monkey King in awe. He'd not only saved my life, but endangered his own life for a complete stranger— me. He didn't even think twice about saving me. *Would I risk my life for a stranger?* Smiling at the Monkey King, I gave him a nod of appreciation.

"You're welcome," the Monkey King replied, and just for a second, I could almost see a twinkle in his eyes.

For days, I followed the Monkey King through valleys, across rivers and finally up a mountain. After hours of hiking, the Monkey King hissed hoarsely, "Shhh! Stop! Something doesn't seem right..." With his baton, the Monkey King slowly tapped the ground twice and gradually, an ominous cloud loomed over us. Even under the comfort and warmth of the cascading rays of light from the sun, I felt numb and feeble.

Trembling fearfully, I whispered inquisitively to the Monkey King, "What's happening?"

My enemy has set a trap," Waving his hands, the flame vanished. "We must move quickly. He'll send his henchmen after us."

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A mysterious cave caught the Monkey King's attention. As he peered into the depths of the eternal pitch-black abyss; the Monkey King halted.

The Monkey King was behaving differently. He was fidgeting around with his baton, trembling uncontrollably and sweat was beading on the strands of his fur. He was no longer the brave and authoritative Monkey King that I'd grown to look up to since I was little. His fear almost seemed to be debilitating his robust build.

"The B-Black Devil," the Monkey King stammered, "is n-near. It's has been my a-arch e-enemy... This monster is in p-p-possession of my monkeys. The only way to get them back is for me to f-face him a-alone. You cannot come with me anymore nor help me. I-I must go now..."

The Monkey King was palpitating with terror as he inched closer to the cave opening. Hesitating, he glanced back at me for reassurance, took a deep breath and seemed to have regained some confidence in himself.

Entering the cave, the Monkey King was engulfed into a sinister void. What felt like hours waiting for the Monkey King was spent with remorse, slowly nibbling away at what I had left of my conscience. *What if I never see him again?* I wished I could've been more useful to the Monkey King to help him face his fear, as he had helped me.

I couldn't let him go in by himself. I wouldn't.

I scampered to the opening and squinted into the dark abyss. The Monkey King was being hurled around, but no matter where my gaze fell, I couldn't identify who was doing it. That's when I remembered Buddha's wise words from the temple— *A bond between two friends is stronger than any dark force.*

Finally, it was crystal clear— the weapon I was to use to defeat the Black Devil was the power of friendship.

Without thinking twice, I reached out to the Monkey King and yelled, "Grab my hand!" The Monkey King didn't seem to hear me. This time, I screamed at the top of my lungs, "GRAB MY HAND!"

A furry hand brushed against my fingertips, and with all the strength I had left, I heaved him out from the darkness.

All of a sudden, I heard monkeys screeching and saw them one by one, in a tumultuous frenzy, leaping out of the cave.

Amidst the pack of monkeys, was the Monkey King! He was grinning with that distinct twinkle shining in his eyes. "It's over, my friend," he beamed. "We finally conquered the Black Devil— one of my greatest fears. It was the strength and spirit of my monkeys, but most importantly, you who gave me my grit and determination back. I'm so grateful for your help, companionship, and trust." The Monkey King looked more like himself. With his monkeys, he looked much stronger and more like the formidable Monkey King I have grown to know— except more warm and genial.

I realized that the returning of the monkeys didn't actually mean that much to me— it was the adventure of finding the monkeys that was my favorite part. Without the adventure, I would never have befriended the Monkey King.

A familiar voice boomed from behind me, "Well done, Yao Xu Wang. You've succeeded in completing this journey with great audacity." Turning around, I saw the one and only... Buddha. I wasn't standing with the Monkey King anymore, I was standing in Buddha's very own chambers. "Tell me, Yao Xu Wang, what did you learn on your journey?"

I thought about everything that happened in our journey— the Monkey King, the Yao Guai, the cave... Drawing myself together, I announced, "The Monkey King inspired me to help others, give them a chance and ultimately helped me face my fears of the horrid monster, the Yao Guai. Also, I've learned that the power of friendship is stronger than anything."

"I see, you've done a great job." Buddha praised. "So good in fact, I've decided to leave you a gift. I'm proud of you and we shall meet in the future."

Abruptly, I was in the temple again, and everything was as I left it. The birds were chirping, and the gentle breeze stroked my bare cheeks. Out of nowhere, a small rattling box appeared in front of me. Leaning down, I carefully lifted up the lid of the box. Out jumped a small monkey with thick auburn fur. Raising its head, I saw a small monkey with a twinkle in its curious, protuberant eyes. I knew— I was in for another adventure.

# A Journey of Self Discovery

*West Island School, Minglani, Rhea – 12*

**I** dentity. Identity is a very important part of you, it defines who you are and it differentiates you from others. Without identity, people would not be able to distinguish us. Identity could be your personality, where you are from or your family background. But, what if you move far away from your home land, looking for an adventure, would you still have your old identity, or would you have created a new identity?

I am a Singaporean Indian but interestingly my parents moved to Korea, even before I was born, looking for adventure and career advancement. We lived there for two years. I loved the freshly falling snow and the inquisitive adults and children who came to take pictures with me, it was as if they had never seen an Indian child before. A problem that my parents and I encountered was communicating in the language of that country. Since we did not know Korean, we could not talk to people, make friends or even ask for directions. Now that I look back, our stay in that country without knowing the language reminded me of a recent article I read in *The Guardian*, written by a girl called Xiaolu Guo, about her moving West from China to England.

When Xiaolu was leaving China, her parents thought that Great Britain was going to be “Greater than the United States”. However after she moved to England she found it very lonely, with no friends or family to turn to. She could not even speak proper English, let alone communicate with the people around her. She realized that the West wasn’t so grand, prosperous and glamorous as she imagined it to be. Initially she hated the place because lanes were dirty and smelled foul, the walls were covered with graffiti and there were stray dogs roaming around the streets. But after living there for a long time and persevering there instead of going home, she found that Britain was much better than China because there were many positive factors such as freedom of speech and expression, right of privacy and holding your personal political views. She worked hard to learn the language and integrate into the society and eventually she became a British citizen.

Xiaolu’s journey was similar to that of monk Xuanzang, who lived hundreds of years ago, and who went from China to India in search of knowledge from original Buddhist texts. He got robbed on his way from China to India, this must have resulted in him becoming very poor so he had to eat, live and experience life with the poor there. Everything there must have seemed very difficult as he didn’t know the language, also the ancient monastery and university he wanted to go to were far away from where he entered India. He must have thought that this was not the rich and beautiful India he had read about, but at the end, he got what he wanted. He worked very hard to learn a very difficult Indian language called Sanskrit and tried his best to make friends. He persevered and did not deviate from his goal of reaching the university and reading the holy scriptures of the Buddha and in the end he succeeded just like Xiaolu did.

Just as Xiaolu had a goal of going to a free country, and the monk’s goal was to achieve higher knowledge, similarly, my parents’ goal was to succeed in their corporate career and provide a safe and healthy upbringing for my sister and me. That’s why they persevered and did not return to India, although life in Korea was not very easy. Eventually they succeeded in migrating to Singapore, when I was three. I enjoyed living in Singapore, after all it was home. I made new friends from all over the world. I loved how diverse that country was, with over eight different religions, Singapore was sure to be the most accepting country in the world. It was good to walk down the streets and find people with the same race as me, unlike Korea where we stood out as foreigners, with teenage girls requesting to be photographed with the large eyed child and old ladies following us in the grocery store gushing about the cute baby (that was me!).

After three and a half years of living in Singapore, we moved to Hong Kong, again for the career advancement of my parents. We moved during the winter and I found Hong Kong really cold. It was the total opposite of Singaporean weather. Later I adapted to the cold and it was nice to experience all the four seasons. Soon, I could speak with a smattering of Mandarin, and Spanish as well. It was my mother tongue Hindi which eluded me. Several years later, I still stood in Hong Kong, confused. I was confused about my identity, where I was from and where I belonged. The adventure and career advancement goals had long since been fulfilled, and we led a very prosperous and settled life in Hong Kong, but in the process I had lost my cultural identity somewhere. “Who am I?” I often asked myself.



Searching on the internet, I found an author with a similar dilemma, Mishi Saran. She followed the trail of Xuanzang the monk, going to the places where he had gone in his journey to the West. Later, she wrote her memoirs "Chasing the Monk's Shadow: A Journey in the Footsteps of Xuanzang". It appeared that she was just like me, because she also grew up in many different countries and her friends were from different ethnicities. She learnt Chinese just like I did. When she lived in China, she heard about the monk Xuanzang and read his book. She was searching for her identity just like the monk, who was frustrated with his mundane life in China and craved for higher knowledge. He also must have craved to create an identity for himself in the sea of monks who all studied the same text in the monastery, where each monk was the same as another and there was no special value attached to higher intelligence or hard work. He must have craved for adventure and to get away from his boring and predictable life at the monastery. By travelling to the West, to India, he fulfilled all of these aspirations. In the process he also discovered himself, forged his identity and absorbed the original teachings of Buddha.

After reading his book, Mishi Saran thought that she might also be able to find her identity by following where Xuanzang went in search of his identity. Her quest took her to many countries and several Buddhist sites in now-vanished kingdoms, across the modern day countries like India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the end, the journey took her to India where she felt at home talking to local people in their language, learning about their lives and experiences. She could blend in there, wearing ethnic Indian clothes and eating local food. So towards the end of her journey, Mishi Saran learnt to accept herself and figured out that she was a third culture offspring, who spoke Chinese and lived in China but had an Indian ethnicity and cultural roots. Maybe this was what the monk Xuanzang must have also experienced, in India. He went through many hardships and he realized how strong his character was, and how much resilience he had, but eventually he had to return to his roots in China and share the knowledge that he had gained.

After spending seven years in Hong Kong, slowly, over time I have also realised and accepted my identity as a third culture child. After moving to Hong Kong, I started learning a classical Indian dance style called Kathak. It helped me to embrace my ethnicity, and I learnt to enjoy myself while performing Kathak in public wearing the traditional Indian costume. I also learned Hindi slowly, this was partly because I wanted to have a secret language to communicate with my parents while we were surrounded by people of different ethnicities in the MTR or a crowded market place. Knowing Hindi has also helped me to proactively communicate with other Indians living in Hong Kong or studying with me. Now instead of blending in, I am happy to stand out. While it took the monk several years to complete his journey of self-discovery by travelling to the West, I am happy that I have already fruitfully started my journey to know and embrace myself and my distinct identity.

## New Journeys to the West

*Yew Wah International Education School of Guangzhou, Huang. James – 14*

“Master Xuanzang, we’ve traveled for 3 days. Are you sure there will be a village in this desert for us to rest?”, asked the talking pig wearily. “Of course, Buddhist will help us all along.”, answered Monk Xuanzang. As he answered, a small village appeared in the desert. They could see the ruined village struggling in the sandstorms in the quiet wasteland. Only the dark smoke from the chimney could show that there were still people living in this village.

“Just wait outside the village, I will go and see if people are willing to give us a place to rest. Don’t follow me, you might scare them.”, Monk Xuanzang walked slowly into the village without hesitation. The rest of the crew stayed and waited. Monk Xuanzang hadn’t come back for one hour and the crew started worrying. Monkey King led the team into the village and found nothing but Monk Xuanzang’s kasaya left on the ground. They searched the whole village and asked the villagers, but the villagers either didn’t see Monk Xuanzang nor scared away. Monkey King used his forward ears and heard his master’s voice. “Master must’ve been around.” The sunlight faded and the moonlight shone. The three people found an empty stable and had a rest first.

When the moon hadn’t gone down and the scarlet sun just came up from the sand dune, Monkey King had already gone out for his master. After searching for hours, Monkey King found his master as usual. He saw his master was tied on a wooden post and knives were placed beside him. “Oh no, really? There are still people believe that eating Monk Xuanzang can let them live forever?” Monkey King jumped into the house from its ruined roof and tried to save his master. “Kill that monkey! Kill that beast!” cried the guards. Monkey King grabbed his golden cudgel and waved it towards them. “Stop it! Wukong! Don’t hurt innocent people!” shouted Monk Xuanzang. “No, master, they are evil people who tend to eat you!” Monkey King turned back as he slammed golden cudgel towards a guard’s face. “No matter who they are, we should treat them friendly and use our love and forgiveness to let them learn!” Monkey King didn’t listen. He used his golden cudgel killed two guards and took his master out.

The It was scorching outside. The sun was burning the ground, and all they could see were endless sand dunes and sands flying in the air. Pigsy and Friar were waiting in the stable and rushed towards their master after they saw him. “Don’t be proud of Monkey! He killed the villagers without hesitation!” “But they were trying to eat you! Master, you shouldn’t be so kind to the people who tried to hurt you!” “How dare you refute me! I don’t need you anymore! Go away! A murderer isn’t my apprentice.” “Master? Please? Remember last time you let me go and you were kidnapped by another monkey? I don’t want this happen again!” “Leave me or else I will use the spell!” “Master! No, please!” Monk Xuanzang spoke the spell and Monkey King immediately went crazy. He was rolling on the ground, shouting for stop, scratching his head just like if the spell was cutting him slice by slice. The friar and the talking pig came and begged their master to forgive the Monkey King. “Leave him alone! Do you want the spell as well?” , Monk Xuanzang stared them angrily.

“Alright, master, I will leave! Trust this or not, but I will never comeback. I didn’t kill any innocent people, but you blamed someone who was loyal and protecting you.” The Monkey King disappeared in the clouds and left the talking pig and friar to accompany Monk Xuanzang. “That’s great. Now we lose a main force. How can we move on and travel to the west!” grumbled the talking pig. “If the Monkey didn’t refute, we might still make it to west. How can we struggle to west with master’s kindness and our weapons which can’t use?” complained the friar.

Three people moved on while two of them had lost their confidence and faith and another one with strong will without any strength to protect himself. As usual, some robbers appeared and attacked the crew. And also as usual, nobody could actually fight against enemies without the Monkey King. The hero was gone

and left a unsecured treasure for people to rob. And soon people heard about the stories about the crew to the west. Monk Xuanzang was killed immediately after the robbers got him. The friar fought until he was killed under the knives and the talking pig ran away and never showed up again.

The story seemed a bit realistic and quick to the crowds. A novelist turned this story into a journey to the west while he remained one thing—the problems were always solved by the gods or the Monkey King. And the journey to the west always needs a hero.

# New Journey to the West

*Ying Wa College, Chueng, Jerry – 13*

## Prologue

“How many times have I told you not to steal things from the future, Wukong?” Master Tang was yelling at his apprentice, holding two Air pods and an iPhone X. His apprentice is the mischievous Monkey King Sun Wukong, who loves to cause mischief by using his magic powers. So far he had stolen a Sony OLED TV, a Bose loudspeaker, an iMac and a Nokia 3310. Also a Mini Cooper too. Master Tang calmed down and took out a golden metal headband and put it on Sun Wukong’s head. Wukong tried to run away but his headband tightened sharply and towed him back to Master Tang. Tang grinned and said, “From now on, you will listen to my command and protect me on my quest to get the prophecy! HA HA!” Wukong grimaced and spat on the floor. The headband tightened once again.

## Chapter 1

Wukong is staring at an ant. He was hesitating if he should squash it. He thought of the terrible pain he would suffer from and gave up. Just then, his master walked into the temple and told him that they would be going to get the prophecy with talking pig and a friar. He didn’t like this at first but soon got along he found out that the talking pig was once the general of the god’s army. Since he was too greedy, the gods punished him and turned him into a pig and sent him to live with humans. As for the friar his past remained a history. Master Tang was already packing up for the journey. Their destination is in India and they needed a lot of food and other stuff. Wukong only took his magic staff and waited for the others impatiently. However, Master Tang sat down and started reciting the gospel for a few hours while the other two companions sat down and chatted happily. Wukong finally got bored and joined in. They were friendly and quickly became good friends. They swore that they would protect Master Tang with their lives all the journey and never do anything to harm each other. It was late at night and Master Tang was still reciting gospel so they went to sleep.

The next morning, they were all packed up and was ready to go for the long journey ahead.

## Chapter 2

The Skeleton Demon looked at herself in the mirror. She was an evil shape shifter who desperately wanted to kill Master Tang and stop him from reaching India and get the prophecy. She knew that they were going to leave soon, so she had a plan.

Wukong was marching in front of the throng and they were full of spirit and could travel a long way in one go. Suddenly an old woman appeared and blocked their way. She sold apples and looked very poor. Although Wukong lived in China, he remembered reading a story called ‘Snow White’ in a bookshop from the future. He knew that old women who sold apples looking very poor is always the culprit of killing the main character. He used his magical eye and saw that the old woman was the Skeleton Demon! Well, it wasn’t really surprising for him and he took out a gun he had stolen from the future. He shot the old woman with it but there were no bullets. Skeleton Devil realized that her plan had a flaw. She disappeared immediately. Wukong was pleased of himself but Master Tang was literally exploding with anger while others exploded with laughter. The headband tightened immediately and Tang scolded him furiously. He felt accused but didn't dare to speak against Tang.

## Chapter 3

They carried on the journey and Wukong was still cursing under his breath sulkily. It was late already. They found a cheap hostel and stayed overnight there.

A few months had passed already. Their supply could only last them for a few more weeks but Wukong took care of that by using his powers to make more food. Friar made clothes for them since their old ones were worn out already, especially Wukong’s, since he always ran and jumped on trees. Master Tang was busy tidying his scrolls and maps. As for the Talking pig, he was too lazy and only sat by and watched them work. After dealing with their essential needs, they carried on, before arriving at a big cliff. They peered down and saw a big and terrifying Taotie. Taoties were meat eating monster that had horns and had a scream that can kill. They covered their ears immediately and Wukong took out his staff and fought with the monster. The monster slashed and tried to crush Wukong with his claws. Wukong’s staff turned into a sword and sliced opened the beast’s neck. The Taotie died immediately, redecorating the cliff with green blood. Master Tang threw up at the sight of it. With Wukong’s magic staff, he summoned Cloud Nine and flew over to the other side in a blink of an eye. He sent the cloud to his master and companions. They grinned at each other although the ride was really dizzy. They were quite glad to see each other again alive and well.

#### Chapter 4

A few more months passed and they were doing quite well. Again, the skeleton devil looked at the trio angrily in her magic mirror. The Taotie she had sent out disappointed her and failed to kill them and was killed by a stupid and pongy monkey. Wukong turned out to be cleverer than she had thought but it didn't really matter back then. She decided that she would take on them herself, with new skills and weapons, she was ready to defeat him.

The gang was walking along the path. Suddenly, a whirl of black cloud surrounded them. There was also an unmistakable cackle of the skeleton devil. She formed shape and started to attack Wukong. He was taken surprise but didn't show it. He quickly took out his magic staff and fought back to protect his master. The other two companions also joined in the battle to protect their dear master. Just as the skeleton devil's curse hit Master Tang, Wukong leaped in and blocked it for his master. However, he didn't lie on the floor and scream or react. He triumphantly tore open his jacket to reveal a bulletproof vest. Once a curse is broken, the devil will be perished forever. She immediately burst into flames and disappeared.

#### Epilogue

The gang finally arrived at India. They had met a throng of friendly monks who agreed to let Master Tang take the prophecy. Tang was awarded by the king and the other three went back to heaven. Although they were apart, they still wrote letters to each other and, well, lived on happily ever after.

## Journey to the West (China in the 800's)

*YMCA of Hong Kong Christian College., Kaur, Shruti – 12*

Once upon a time lived the lord of monkeys named Hanmanu. He was admired for his strength, scholarship, wisdom, humility and celibacy. He was immortal and invincible. Truly a monkey who was very passionate to help others around him.

One day, Hanmanu was yearning to alleviate, a nobleman Zang with unblended integrity. Hanmanu didn't know Zang but was willing to help him find his spouse. Hanmanu risked his life and began his Journey to the West. He continued to glide 800 miles from Xinjiang, China to reach Lake Balkash, Kazakstan in search of abducted Seta, consort of nobleman Zang.

On the way of Hanmanu, there was a rapture resort in the middle of the Lake Balkash. Hanmanu was invited to take some rest, but Hanmanu deined and said, "I cannot rest until my search is over. Seta needs my help to save her from the evil demon". He continued to glide across the lake.

The journey was definitely not easy. There were obstacles and problems on his way. This was not a easy Journey to the West.

On his way, he met the Mother of Snakes. She existed in the lake and created a hurdle for Hanmanu. She obstructed his way and threated to eat him. Hanmanu pleaded her and asked her to let him go. He pledged that after his search of Seta, he would return and readily enter her mouth for hunger. However, no leniency was showed by Mother of Snakes.

Hanmanu increased his body size. The Mother of Snakes opened her mouth widely awaiting for Hanmanu to enter her body to reduce her hunger. Promptly, Hanmanu became small and small and proceeded into her big, huge, wide mouth. However before the Mother of Snakes could close her mouth, he came back out. Then Hanmanu replied, "I went in your mouth but you did not consume me. So let me go now, the Mother of Snakes was pleased with Hanmanu's intelligence and wisdom. Therefore, she blessed him for success to discover Seta.

Hanmanu pursued his Journey. While gliding across the lake, Hanmanu observed something. He felt as some energy was dragging him in the Lake Balkash. (The Lake of Balkash is the largest lake in Asia and 15<sup>th</sup> largest lake in the world. It is approx 17000km long. It freezes in winter. Its depth is around 86 deep.)It was a demon called Cacodemon.

But Hanmanu dragged her down in deep lake and continued his journey and triumphed to discover the abducted princess, Seta by Cacodemon King, the demon.

With his super human power and strength he evoked terror in the hearts of powerful demons and evil people and slew many. Aligning ourselves with the forces of good, helping the weak, with self control, unconditional faith and total surrender. This story tells us that Hanmanu encountered serval obstacles and hurdle but kept moving forward on the path of success. He didn't give up and faced all the situations bravely. This story motivates us to never hesitate to pursue when our work and intention is noble.