



Creative Writing
Fiction
Group 3

The Case of the Dry Cloth

CCC Fong Yum Wah Secondary School, Chan, Lok Yiu Yoyo – 14

Long before our time, there was a mighty hero. He was similar, yet different from the heroes we know nowadays. That man was the famous Judge Pao. He is very well known for a lot of his cases that have gone worldwide. As a judge, he was renowned for his fairness in deciphering murder cases and justice against guilty criminals. But how do we see this hero's story? Let's go back in time to really understand one of his stories.

It's 1057, Judge Pao had just been appointed as the magistrate of the capital city of Bian which is now known as Kaifeng. As Judge Pao was just finishing up organising his many files, there was suddenly a report on a mysterious death case at a bar. And so, he immediately heads off to the scene to investigate.

Once Judge Pao had arrived at the location, his coroner had already finished up the autopsy for the case. He went up to the coroner and asked him about the situation. 'Sir, here is the report.' the coroner said as he handed the report papers to Judge Pao.

Judge Pao took a glance at the report, 'The victim has died of natural causes. There were only slight bruises on the victim's face and does not seem like the victim was attacked, the bruises are considered natural.'

After giving it a read, Judge Pao became suspicious of the bruises mentioned, and so he asked his coroner if the body was still at the crime scene. Then his coroner led him to see the body that was covered by a piece of cloth. The coroner lifted up the cloth and Judge Pao took a closer look at the victim's face.

It was indeed strange, there were only bruises around the victim's cheeks. No other parts of the body were injured, Judge Pao turned to his coroner and questioned if there were any traces of poisoning inside the victim, and well the answer was a no. It was quite a puzzle. Then all of the sudden, the coroner mentioned 'Sir, I have forgotten to let you know, I am able to take you to the lady who has reported the case. Would you like me to?' Judge Pao stood up and requested his coroner to take him to the lady.

The lady was by the river near the scene, she looked quite frightened by the situation. Judge Pao walked up to her and stated why was he there, and then the lady allowed him to ask questions about the case. Apparently, the lady was near the crime scene when it happened, she had also known the victim as well. She had mentioned that she was washing her clothes by the river when it happened, so she didn't know about the victim's death until quite some time had passed and she only ever came with the victim because he pressured her into coming. She also stated that the victim said he would be back in ten minutes but he never returned. Only then did she go and check on the victim and found his corpse on the ground.

Judge Pao had learned new information indeed. He then asked the lady if she knew anyone from the bar. She answered since she was not a regular there, she did not know any workers or people there.

The next day, Judge Pao went to the crime scene again to look more into the case. He personally poked at every corner, keeping a keen eye on everything around him. He was very serious about this case. As he looked around, he learned more about the place and could even imagine what it usually looks like. After a while of searching, he found something behind the counter. It was a dry cloth. It wasn't anything special from the look of it, however, Judge Pao knew that this cloth definitely was related to the case in some way. While he was investigating, his coroner turned up at the scene with another person next to him. 'Good day, sir, I have bought a man. He is a worker at this place.'

The man walked up to Judge Pao and greeted him 'Good morning, sir. I am the main worker around this place! I have heard that there has been a death here that happened not too long ago.' Judge Pao introduced himself and also confirmed the situation and asked the worker if he could ask him some questions regarding the case. After asking him some questions, he learned that the victim was a frequent customer and was close with the worker and the manager of the area. Eventually, after some time, Judge Pao could finally connect some dots together.

He discussed his theory with his coroner, that there's a possibility the killer had used the dry cloth at the scene to kill the victim. And he remembered yesterday the worker told him that there were barely any customers at the time, Judge Pao immediately came to a conclusion. He demanded his guards and coroner go and arrest the worker.

Shortly after, he went to see the worker. After a lot of probing, the worker finally gave up on his act and confessed. That night he and the manager were planning to kill the victim because he owed them a huge debt, which he refused to pay. They were fed up with him and had this plan for a while. So, the manager killed the victim by first punching him to knock him out and proceed to suffocate him to death with the dry cloth, leaving barely any choking signs behind.

In the end, both the manager and the worker were arrested and faced execution shortly afterward, and the case had been solved once and for all. Indeed, evil never prevails and the truth finally comes out.

Who? Whom?

CCC Fong Yum Wah Secondary School, Cheung, Yat Hong Garson – 15

It was during the summer holidays, the time of the year when most people take a breather and let their hair down. Though there were relaxing moments, there were still lots of accidents happening and crimes taking place, as well!

One of them was a murder of a teenager who had gone out with some friends to explore an abandoned house.

It had been a normal day for Judge Pao, working on some criminal cases, when he suddenly found this peculiar case that sparked his interest. Although it was a cold case, he thought to himself that the victim's parents must be suffering and in great pain as the murderer was still out there somewhere. It was the righteous thing to solve this case properly. Thus, Judge Pao accepted the case and set about trying to find the murderer himself.

The next day, Judge Pao met with five witnesses who were also the suspects in the case, as they were the friends who the murdered teenager was last seen with. The five witnesses were named Timmy, Jason, Cedric, Eric, and Leo. They showed a videotape as evidence in their defence.

The video showed five of them plus the murdered teenager named Patrick. According to the events of the video, the teenagers took refuge in an abandoned museum for shelter from a blazing storm. During the search for a viable place to rest, the six of them split up and searched different parts of the building. Minutes later, they re-gathered only to find out that Patrick hadn't returned. Upon tracing his steps, they found the motionless corpse of Patrick inside a room at the far end of the museum's right wing, with no traces of blood on his body. The videotape ends abruptly with screams but it also showed that there was an open window in the room which led out to a grassy field and the passageway to a gate.

After the videotape ended, each of the lawyers started to defend their clients. The first lawyer stated that it was probably an outsider who entered Patrick's room through the window and escaped from there too. So, none of the five suspects were at fault.

The second lawyer stated that Jason was the murderer because Jason had been a floor above where Patrick was, and he had hatred towards Patrick for always, he felt, trolling and bullying him. Jason was also a member of the rock climbing club, so it would have been easy enough for Jason to climb down a floor to open the window and commit the crime.

The third lawyer disagreed with the second lawyer because Patrick could notice the window near him so it wouldn't be possible for Jason to come in and attack Patrick.

But one thing which was odd was in the later minutes of the videotape which had some parts cut out before the ending.

With there being too many unanswered questions and a big mysterious hole in the flow of the events concerning the case, Judge Pao let the proceedings continue on for another day. He secretly used the time he had after the investigation to visit the place where the murder took place and check the site by himself. He was not only a judge, but he also had the mind of a stellar detective.

Judge Pao entered the museum with the videotape to see if it matched what the videotape showed.

First, he followed Jason's pathway which was a floor up, and it was the furthest to Patrick by foot with all the stairs. But if Jason used the window upstairs to climb down, it would still have made a lot of noise. Also, the room in which Patrick's body lay had a lock so the window needed to be opened from the inside which the videotape didn't show.

Next, he followed Timmy, Eric and Leo's footsteps and listened to their conversation. The trio's best friends were on the far left side. They were opposite where Patrick's body lay and at quite a distance, so Judge Pao ruled them out as the murderers.

At last, as Judge Pao followed all their steps, there was one person who was in the lobby who was closest to Patrick. Judge Pao replayed the video where he was standing and he soon discovered who the missing person was – the cameraman recording it.

From the plate where the videotape was cropped to the next scene, the cameraman was the first person who showed up in the lobby which led Judge Pao to suspect the cameraman himself.

Now back to the courtroom with the five suspects. Judge Pao personally asked them about the seventh member and who it was. This sent shivers down their spines.

They eventually admitted that it was Jason's little brother who had been with them too, however they had not wanted to mention him because he was too young to go to jail.

Jason admitted that his little brother killed Patrick because his little brother had seen how annoyed Jason was with Patrick's bullying and because Jason often let his little brother watch violent shows and these led his little brother to do his violent act. No one ever expected the little brother to be capable of such a crime!

Afterwards Judge Pao decided to sentence them all to jail for four years for perjury. Jason's little brother was also sent to jail in the end but for only three years because he was a minor and did not understand the severity of his actions.

Later on, Judge Pao shared the news with the victim's parents. Although things didn't end on a good note, at least the victim's parents received closure.

Judge Pao, China's Famous Hero

CCC Fong Yun Wah Secondary School, Yip, Sau Faung Elli – 13

Every night, a random village is always attacked by an unknown organization. The soldiers of the village didn't stand a chance. One night the King's soldiers came to investigate the latest burnt down village and found a calling card from the mafia.



Creative Writing Fiction

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The King was very worried. He was worried that this mysterious organization would strike the capital, so he called in Judge Pao to help him identify and get rid of the nightly attackers.

The King said to Judge Pao:

“Mr. Pao, you shall help me get rid of this mysterious organization. If you can do so successfully, you will be handsomely rewarded. If required, I shall allow you to have full authority over my army. I hope you won’t disappoint me.”

‘Yes, my Liege,’ replied Judge Pao.

However, Judge Pao didn’t do it for the money he did it for the people. Around five thousand people have died from the attacks. That is unforgivable. I will judge him myself in the living world and in the underworld, he thought.

After the King made Judge Pao the leader of the investigation, Judge Pao asked some of the survivors of the attacks for any clues at all. He got some interesting information. Then he had a meeting with the King and the councilmen.

‘We have some info about the unknown organization,’ said Judge Pao. The councilmen were whispering among themselves.

‘SILENCE!’ yelled the King.

‘Thank you!’ continued the Judge. ‘Now we know the name of the organization and the leader’s name. His name to Argo Natsome or as the survivors called him “The Great Death” and the unknown organization is called The Violent Thieves. They always attack at night and only target rich villages. Soon they will attack the capital.’

The King and the councilmen gasped. And the King asked,
‘Well, Mr. Pao, is there any way we could counterattack them?’

‘Yes, my Liege, there is! I want to place troops near Okuyia Village so that’s why I would like to borrow some troops to help me,’ replied Judge Pao.

The King said, ‘Very well, I hereby grant you full authority of the army.’

‘Thank you, my Liege,’ said Judge Pao.

Judge Pao and his men waited outside Okuyia Village until night, then they observed a lot of men wearing black armor and red helmets. One of the villagers screamed ‘RUN! THE BARBARIAN THIEVES ARE HERE!’

When Judge Pao sent his men to counterattack The Violent Thieves, Argo Natsome, their leader, said ‘Well, well, well! Look what we have here, a hero? Now that’s rare! Most people would run away when facing me! He addressed Judge Pao. ‘Tell me what your goal is?’ he asked.

‘My goal is to protect the people here from you,’ said Judge Pao.

‘Enough talking. Let’s dance,’ said Argo Natsome sarcastically.

Argo slashed his sword at Judge Pao, but the Judge managed to block it. Then Judge Pao slashed back at Argo wounding him badly.

Argo yelled to his men, ‘RETREAT NOW! RETREAT!’
Then looking at the Judge he said, ‘We will meet again Mr…….’

‘Judge Pao’ said Judge Pao.

‘Well, Mr. Judge Pao, we will meet again,’ the defiant Argo repeated.

The villagers cheered for Judge Pao and his men. Then Judge Pao asked the mayor a few questions.

‘I would like to ask why The Violent Thieves wanted to attack your village?’

The mayor sighed and replied, ‘It’s because we have a sword that is passed down from generations and it can enhance one’s physical strength. I think you are worthy of wielding the sword.’

‘Thank you, mayor,’ said Judge Pao.

After Judge Pao's first encounter with Argo Natsome, Judge Pao stopped Argo Natsome no less than ten more times without once losing to him. Argo was furious.

He yelled, 'HOW DOES THIS NOBODY KEEP STOPPING MY PLANS?!'

One of his comrades replied, 'Sir, we don't know why but we're sure someone must have leaked information of our intentions or else how would Judge Pao know when to repel our attacks.'

'Oh, is that so, huh? "He" must have leaked it,' said Argo Natsome to himself.

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The next day when Judge Pao was strolling through the streets, he heard someone scream. Judge Pao quickly ran to where the scream was coming from and saw Argo beating up a child while screaming 'I won't repeat it again. DID YOU LEAK THE INFORMATION?'

'N-no brother,' replied the child.

Then Judge Pao kicked Argo Natsome in the chest saving the boy from another punch. 'Do you not know how to respect your own kin, Argo?' he asked of Argo.

Then Argo ran away.

After that, the Judge treated the boy's wound and asked him 'Are you alright, kid? What is your name?'

'M-my name is Ren Natsome,' said the boy.

'Would you like to assist me to defeat Argo Natsome?' asked Judge Pao.

'Sure, Mr. Judge Pao,' said Ren.

After Judge Pao trained Ren in the art of swordsmanship, Ren became Judge Pao's right-hand man. He was able to reveal some information to his new mentor. With this information the Judge addressed his men; 'Men... We will be planning a raid on The Violent Thieves.'

Everyone gasped except Judge Pao, 'We will commence the operation at night. Make sure you are prepared as much as possible. Am I clear?' asked Judge Pao.

'SIR, YES SIR!' yelled Judge Pao's Men.

Judge Pao and his men were marching toward the base of The Violent Thieves but Argo somehow knew of a possibility of a raid from Judge Pao, so he had stationed his men outside in preparation. Judge Pao and Ren went to find Argo Natsome for one last battle.

'I knew that you would come here, Judge Pao, with your "traitor",' said Argo.

Then Argo leaped in front of Ren to try to kill him with a slash of his sword, but Ren blocked it and Judge Pao ran in to attack Argo. The Judge managed to land a hit on him and Ren took advantage of the injured Argo to deal the final blow.

'Well you might have defeated me but you will not beat my men,' said Argo weakly.

'I beg to differ Mr. Natsome,' said the King. 'Judge Pao, I would like you to judge Argo right here right now.'

'Very well, my Liege,' replied the victorious Judge. Then, looking at Argo he said. 'I, Judge Pao, hereby sentence you to death for causing an uproar over the past few months.'

Then with a swift strike of his blade to Argo's neck the raid was over. After that Judge Pao went into the underworld to judge him.

Nowadays, we see the Judge's descendants in Hong Kong winning an award for having a world-class legal system and one of the planet's best corruption-fighting operations.

Judge Pao would be proud of him!

Judge Pao: The Case of the Gruesome Ceremony

Evangel College, Lam, Hong Li Connie – 13

Life is like a black-and-white photograph. Despite its name, it's never truly 'black-and-white', instead, shades of grey. While it's seemingly easy to judge someone, we should understand humans are complex creatures.

Horrible people can do good things, and in the same way, kind souls may become corrupted.

After a long and treacherous battle between Song and a neighbouring nation, Song had won. To celebrate this victory, the emperor hosted a party.

Judge Pao was chatting with Zhan, when suddenly, they heard multiple cries of agony. Immediately, Judge Pao and Zhan rushed through the crowds of bewildered attendees, as a dreadful feeling washed over them.

Arriving at the source of the screams, awaited a horrifying sight. Multiple government officials were unconscious, blood leaking from their noses and mouths. While the surviving officials were frozen in terror, mouth agape in a silent scream.

“Arrest those men!” echoed a voice behind Judge Pao and Zhan. Instantly, soldiers apprehended the remaining officials. They made no attempt to struggle, for the trauma and despair had consumed them.

A crowd gathered behind the door, too stunned to speak. Zhan decided to take charge and began inspecting all of the paralyzed officials, checking for their pulses. Yet they warranted the same response, a sigh followed by a shake of his head.

The next few days were a blur, as Judge Pao didn’t participate in the investigation. On the 9th day, he received a report of the findings from Gongsun:

According to the accounts, the officials were peacefully chatting when one complained about chest pain, followed by nose-bleeding shortly after. Other officials experienced the same symptoms, their conditions became worse and worse. In the end, they were all shouting in pain and throwing up blood, until they died.

A high dosage of arsenic was found in their systems, but a sabotaged wine supply was ruled out, as everyone else consumed the same wine. No other injuries were found. Due to the high concentration of arsenic, doctors ruled the poisoning must’ve occurred within the span of the party.

As for the arrested officials, no poison was in their body and they’re the main suspects, as only they seemed to have the opportunity. Although, motives and other factors are currently unknown. If the criminal worked alone, or if the officials worked together is also unknown.

Official Lui claimed nobody, except for the dancers, a servant, and a few close friends entered the room. Everyone was slightly drunk, however. So he might’ve missed details.

A dancer, Lady Chou said they were preoccupied with entertainment, so nobody noticed anything suspicious. But they remained sober.

The servant, Lady Lai, assured she cleaned the cups extra carefully. Although she had entered multiple times to bring new cups of wine, others confirmed she hadn’t done anything suspicious.

The brother of a deceased official explained a heated argument had broken out between a few members. He couldn’t remember many details, but recalled something about money.

Judge Pao was rather bewildered. The report seemed to contain a lot of evidence, but not much could be concluded. Although the argument piqued his interest, it’d be difficult to pry information from the people involved, as they were either confused, unwilling, or dead.

Despite these circumstances, Judge Pao knew he had a duty to serve the people, which meant resolving this massacre.

Every suspect was put on trial, but they all had the same results.

“All evidence presented is circumstantial, and does not prove the defendant’s guilt directly. I request for this case to be extended for one more trial!”

This went on for a while, Judge Pao was exasperated. As each day passed, and as each time he had to extend the trial, the masses became more hysteric and paranoid. He swirled his tea around, taking a sip, before realizing something. He slammed the cup on the table, stood up and raised his arm.

“Bring me to the scene of the crime! We cannot waste any more time!”

Arriving there, it looked as disheveled as ever. There was a broken vase on the floor, the tables were flipped, and a lot of spilled wine.

"I request a toxicology test."

"What do you mean? We've already checked for poison in everyone's body, and the wine certainly couldn't have been poisoned!" Gongsun exclaimed.

Judge Pao stayed silent, picking up a discarded cup, giving him a confident expression.

Gongsun had the cups in his possession, and was about to step out the door, before Judge Pao stopped him.

"Before you go, test for poison on the exterior and interior of the cups."

Not long, Gongsun came back with a report.

"As per your request, two tests were done on each cup. The interior part of the cup had a higher concentration of arsenic. Though, it wouldn't be enough for death," he explained.

Judge Pao began to have hope, he stated, "I believe that the poison originated somewhere else. If my theory is correct, then we've already found the culprit."

"Good day, what brings you here?" Lady Lai was in the kitchen, cleaning the counters.

"Let's not dawdle. Lady Lai, are you familiar with arsenic?" Judge Pao didn't break eye-contact.

She hesitated, stopping in her tracks, before resuming to the task at hand. "Isn't that the poison that killed all those officials? What a gruesome sight it was..."

Judge Pao continued, "Precisely correct. Though, I have to wonder, how were you so certain I was talking about that case?"

Lady Lai continued to clean the counters, but didn't break eye-contact with Judge Pao either.

"Judge Pao, I'm certain you understand how widespread that incident is. Plus, you were asking me about arsenic. I simply assumed you were alluding to it." Lady Lai gave a somewhat curt response.

"Indeed. However, how did you know they died of arsenic?"

"Arsenic poisoning is common. Considering the symptoms aligned, wouldn't it be normal to think those victims suffered from it?"

Judge Pao closed his eyes and nodded. Lady Lai made solid arguments. But he wasn't finished.

"A test was done on the cups. There was arsenic there too."

Both of her hands were in her pockets. "The wine supply was poisoned, it'd be normal to find arsenic there too."

Judge Pao's expression grew dark. "The wine supply couldn't have been poisoned, or else everyone else would've died."

Lady Lai fidgeted with her pockets. "Why are you telling me all this? I told you I cleaned the cups carefully!"

"Exactly. Now, what's that in your pockets?"

Zhan immediately gripped her wrist. She tried to fight back, but accidentally dropped something from her pockets in the process.

On the floor, laid a rag.

"Allow me to request another toxicology test."

But before Zhan could pick up the rag from the floor, Lady Lai blurted out, “Wait! I’ll talk.”

She explained how the victims had conspired with neighbouring countries. They’d offer money in exchange for the officials’ help in sabotaging and giving personal information about Song. The countries would purposefully lose to Song, for the officials to have more time infiltrating the government from the inside.

She found out, after her husband, a general at that time, told her. He overheard this and knew he had to intervene. He tried to convince the officials to stop, but they got enraged and framed him for treason, silencing him forever.

“I had no choice! They murdered my husband! Plus, I couldn’t let my country fall just because of fools’ greed.”

Judge Pao was sympathetic, but didn’t back down. “I understand your motives. But you must understand, you also committed a heinous act. Instead of reporting this all to us, people of the law you can put your trust in, you took things into your own hands.”

“Do you realize the effects of your actions? If you got away with it, innocent people would’ve been executed in your place.”

“The victims also had families. Families that had to suffer through grief, because of what you did. I can offer you sympathy, but not forgiveness. All in the eyes of justice.”

Lady Lai wiped her tears with her sleeve, and offered a pitiful smile.

“I understand. Truly, I wouldn’t have been able to live with the guilt of my actions, and I knew I had to confess sooner or later. So thank you, Judge Pao, for revealing my sins before they consumed me fully.”

“I proclaim my guilt. For that, I accept the divine punishment of execution,” she whispered with shallow breaths, bowing down to Judge Pao.

New Tale of Judge Pao

Evangel College, Tsang, Hei Yin Daniel – 13

The year is 1012, an urgent message sent by a governor of a border province reached the ears of judge Pao. The governor, whose name was Zheng He, stated in the message that the Liao Dynasty has been having unusual military movements around the border. What he found even more disturbing was that he recently received an order from an anonymous official, ordering him to reveal nothing of this to any other officials, and to take no action concerning the Liao Dynasty’s movements. He expressed his fears that this might be a forgery, though the order was marked with an

official seal, there were no previous accounts of officials giving orders through anonymity, and the whole thing seemed a bit dubious to him.

Upon receiving the message, Judge Pao went through the records of the transportation of orders from the capital to the border provinces, and found that there was only 1 official who has enough authority to mark his orders with an official seal has recently sent orders or messages towards the concerned regions. Then, using his power as a censor, ordered an investigation of the concerned official, Liao Ran.

Several days later, the investigators found out another interesting connection between Liao Ran and the border provinces. A cartful of 'unspecified cargo' was transported from one of the north-most provinces straight towards Liao Ran's estate near the capital. Judge Pao, finally having a lead after a prolonged period of quietness, planned his course of action carefully, determined not to lose this lead. After some time pondering alone, he ordered an information update on Liao Ran's whereabouts, and discovered that he would be staying in his estate for the next few days.

Afterwards, Judge Pao decided to pay Liao Ran an unscheduled visit and arrived at his estate with a few soldiers, in case an arrest was needed to be made. Upon his arrival, he was immediately ushered into the estate by a servant, where he was personally greeted by Liao Ran. They were walking in an uncomfortable silence when Liao Ran inquired, "Your honour, to what do I owe the pleasure of your visit?"

"The investigation on hand is going on poorly," Judge Pao replied, "I thought it would be insightful for me to meet with the concerned official." "As a matter of fact, I'd like to ask if you are doing well on finance nowadays?"

Liao replied hesitantly, "Your honour, I —"

"If memory serves, you sold quite a number of your properties and estates in recent years." Judge Pao interrupted, "This is one of the last few you own, isn't it?"

Liao said, "You are correct, but I don't think—"

"That this has anything to do with the investigation?" Judge Pao asked sternly, "Your finances are poor over these few years and that makes you subject to possibilities of bribery, especially when you just received some 'unspecified cargo' from the border provinces."

Liao replied carefully, "It is true that I have received 'unspecified cargo', namely some legally obtained money from my land rents that some farmers have recently paid me. If you are uncertain about my possession of these lands, feel free to check it up in the imperial records."

"While it is true that you own these lands," Judge Pao confirmed, "The last recorded collection of rent is just half a year ago, are you telling me that you are collecting more rent from the farmers than you actually should?"

Desperate to repair his blunder, Liao exclaimed, "But your honour! I didn't —"

"Enough, arrest him and have him detained until a sentence could be passed." Judge Pao said.

After detaining Liao Ran, Judge Pao returned to his office and consulted Bao Shou, his assistant. While the over collected rents have been found in Ran's 'unspecified cargo', the soldiers have also found heaps of gold and jewellery alongside it. "Therefore," Judge Pao said to Bao Shou, "I suspect that he was bribed by the Liao Dynasty to cover up their military movements in the region."

Bao Shou considered that for a moment, and said, "That is very likely, but if the Liao dynasty have to resort to bribery of high-ranking officials to cover this up, then I suspect this is much larger than a mere hit and run attack, or defending the border, this might very well be a full fledged invasion."

"That is of course likely," Judge Pao agreed, "but his majesty would not act on this based on mere guesswork."

"But we already have the evidence, if governor Zhang He would travel here to the capital and provide testimony to the military movements and the order he received. Since the classified parchment bears an official seal, Liao Ran was the only person with enough authority to mark his orders with them. This would surely convince his majesty to act swiftly and decisively."

"I have already tried to summon the governor, but his staff said that he has taken ill recently, and the doctor thinks he is unsuitable for travel." Judge Pao replied with a sigh.

"There must be some other way to prove this." Bao Shou insisted.

"Of course there is." Judge Pao declared, "if we could get Liao Ran to admit the Liao Dynasty's bribery, then we have proof that they are trying to cover something up in the border provinces. But he won't admit to treason easily."

Later that evening, Judge Pao visited the prison, meeting with Liao Ran. When he arrived in Liao Ran's cell, he said, "Liao Ran, other from the crime you have already been convicted of, you have also accepted bribery from the Liao Dynasty, have you not?"

"Do you have any proof, your honour?" Liao Ran sneered in disdain, "You have convicted me of the overcollection of rent, my remaining lands and estates are taken by the government, and now you expect me to admit treason?" "A crime that I didn't commit," he added hurriedly.

"If I were you, I would think carefully before refusing to confess," Judge Pao remarked.

"Are you trying to intimidate me?" Liao Ran asked, "I've heard all the rumours, that you become the Yama of hell at night, sorting out the affairs of the afterlife." "If you are trying to intimidate me with this, then I suggest you reconsider your tactics, I won't fall for any of this." Liao Ran declared.

"Again, I urge you to reconsider carefully." Judge Pao stated. "About me becoming the Yama of hell though, I suppose you will find out if it is true or not soon if you continue with this course of action."

Liao Ran suddenly tensed, he asked with a note of caution, "What do you mean by this?"

"So you haven't thought about this possibility already?" Judge Pao asked, feigning surprise. "When the Liao Dynasty invades us, this will be the final piece of evidence that proves you of treason." "The governor of the border provinces has ignored your order and contacted me. You were the only recorded official high ranking enough to have your orders bearing an official seal, but the governor has taken ill and wasn't able to come to provide testimony." Judge Pao explained, "If the Liao Dynasty attacks soon, then you would be convicted of treason. If the Liao Dynasty attacks later, then the governor would recover from his illness and prove you of treason. Either way, I am certain you know the consequences of high treason against his majesty and the dynasty."

Liao Ran faltered suddenly, "And if I were to admit it," he stuttered, "and his majesty would send his forces there prior to the imminent invasion." "I could be spared?"

"Perhaps, I cannot ensure anything, but maybe his majesty would be magnanimous and spare you. Or perhaps I will, once you pass away." Judge Pao added menacingly.

Liao Ran considered this and fell silent. "You don't have to decide right now." Judge Pao said, "but remember that your window of opportunity is closing." With that said, he left.

In the end, Liao Ran, fearing for his life, admitted his treason and was spared of execution, although he would have to spend his remaining years in prison. Judge Pao received a commendation for his actions, and a promotion to the rank of imperial censor. The Liao invasion was prevented, their forces along the border crushed by a surprise attack, the Liao Emperor apologised frantically for their ambitions, paying tribute to the Song Dynasty to stop the Song from counter-attacking them, and ensured that they will never attempt an invasion ever again. The Song Dynasty then entered a period of peace with the Liao Dynasty, with the people of the border provinces living in harmony with the Liao people.

Judge Pao: Origin

G.T. (Ellen Yeung) College, O, Emma – 14

Where there is bad, there is good. Where there is despair, there is hope. Where there are low hills with white skies and a sleepy village, there is a battlefield of bloodshed with even the moon drenched in red.

In a land where mortals have relied on the gods since the beginning of time, the gods for the sake of survival, for the sake of their people. They bury each other in mountains and seal them beneath the ocean's depths, when they had danced and drank together once upon a time.

For Pao, there is only one rule; kill or be killed. The blood of his enemies stays unwashed on his clawed hands. The aura of vengeful spirits plague his body as it bends but never breaks, because he is the God of War, and he will not stand for transgression and let the other see another sunrise.

His people look up to him as a holy figure, a deity who can do no wrong. There are already ballads and poems of his victories, songs that play like gentle lullabies on lyres in contrast to the demonic symphony he dances with his enemies.

He thinks of this as he stares down at the trembling god in his hands. He is a minor god, a gentle one that holds no bow or sword. He leapt from land to land in favour of peace, taking his dwindling number of followers with him until there was but a speck of dust as their home.

It doesn't matter to Pao. How could his people ever mourn for someone so weak?

The god doesn't snivel or tremble. He only grips the hem of Pao's cloak, sewed in gold by his people.

"I only ask you to spare my followers," The god pleads, desperation clinging onto his every word, "It's the least I can do." He doesn't beg for mercy, because why would he? In this world, death is not where the game ends.

Pao sneers, but mortals are so fragile and could break before he squeezed them between his palms. "If it keeps you from coming back as a vengeful spirit." He relents, though a traitorous whisper says he will eventually.

The god breaks into a grateful smile, and speaks, not unkindly, "You should worry about your friends. They're on the west side of the ruins."

Pao resists the urge to ask the god to elaborate before he brings his sword down with a piercing crack. The god's head flies, its severed neck spraying blood, before his body collapses on itself. Pao turns to his soldiers, his eyes blank and void. "You heard him."

The soldiers salute before they rush to aid the wailing followers of the former god, and just as silent and quick as a wisp of a wind, Pao is gone.

"Lord Pao!"

A distorted voice greets him the moment his feet land on the sacred grounds of the west ruins. Next, there is a spear in his face, and he dodges with grace as he slams the figure onto the ground.

Another set of voices shriek for his name, but when the fallen figure looks up, Pao feels the breath knocked out from his lungs. "Xiang?"

The soldiers, bloody and bruised, some even dismembered, call for their Lord's attention. "Lord Pao, she is not Lord Xiang anymore!"

"The corruption! It— It got to her!"

Of course Pao knew, but he becomes still and breathless as the Goddess of Justice heaves herself up. Gone was a face of beauty and kind smiles, there was instead a cracked face with ink black stains. An eye had been gouged out, and her only untorn arm holds a bloody spear. From the blood of *their people*.

"Lord Pao," The goddess laughs, and even Pao cannot deny the insanity creeping into her voice, "Come to play!"

Sword meets spear with a deafening clang, and its shockwave knocks everyone down. Pao grits his teeth, his eyes widening and a foreign feeling sweeping him off his feet. “Xiang!” He says, despite himself, “Come back to me!”

“Xiang? Who’s Xiang?” Xi – *Not-Xiang* taunts, and Pao seethes at the corruption using her beautiful voice to sing-song, even as the corpses of their soldiers lie at their feet.

“You are Xiang!” Pao tries, “You are the Goddess of Justice, she who favours righteousness above all else! She who likes picnics with children, she who likes dancing beneath the moonlight, she who wishes for nothing but peace!”

Not-Xiang falters, and for a moment, her eyes seem to gloss over with a sheen of tears. The moment is gone in a flash, and her spear meets the end of his sword again. Her lips are twisted into a nasty scowl.

“Children are flesh for us to consume, and the moon hurts my eyes.” Her voice distorts to a set of overlapped voices, merged into a being that Pao can no longer pity. Pao knew, then and there, that even Xiang would be a lost cause.

Pao closes his eyes as he leaps across the field of bloody men with Not-Xiang. He hears her overlapped deranged giggles the way her hair flows with the wind. If he closes them, the moon is a ballroom chandelier, the guests are his people, and he is dancing with her, with nothing but time.

Xiang laughs like bell chimes on a warm afternoon, and Pao lets her go as she twirls across the ballroom and back into his arms. If he closes his eyes, he sees her bright and mischievous grin trying to get him to trip, but he is nothing but not a suave god, so he dips her instead. The dance comes to an end.

The crowd cheers, and his men nearly cry. When he opens his eyes, his sword is driven onto her chest. Xiang’s mouth is brimmed with blood spilling onto her chin, but her eyes are closed as she finally knows peace.

Pao says nothing as the figure disintegrates into the air. His voice is strained for the first time as he booms, “The goddess that fought side by side with us has fallen. will uphold justice in her stead. My voice will be the ultimate judgement and the everlasting law.”

Everyone obeys, because even they say nothing when the god’s eyes are stained with tears. No one questions why he named his land Xiang Gang. No one asked why, after the dust had settled and the war was over, he took over the Infernal Bureaucracy.

For there is only one story to tell; to tell of a god who had love and justice in his heart from beginning to end, and how he conquered the corruption that thrums in evil god’s veins – though it is curious as to why he held festivals specifically when the night is dark.

Does such an insignificant thing matter, though? When the Immortal Yama rules above everyone else, who carries justice both day and night? No one speaks up against the clearly disguised human who saves and the judge who sits with hell flame that dances between his palms.

Because, even as the ballads and poems and songs cheer for his name, they will never know of the thousands of corpses lying beneath sealed caves and deep soil. Because where there is good, there is bad, and it is something Judge Pao will carry for the rest of his immortal days.

The Tales of Judge Pao

Good Hope School, Yung, Audrey – 12

In one of the few surviving portraits, Judge Pao is depicted in possession of a ratty, old quill, neatly tucked into the breast pocket of his ceremonial robes. It was rumoured that whenever the judge had a particularly vexing

decision to make, he would take the quill out and look at it. People had debated for years what the significance of the quill might be o but they never came close to guessing the truth. It is said that the quill has been passed down through all the successive generations of Baos and now, on this 1001st anniversary of his passing, this story shall finally be told...

In an underground archive below the beloved magistrate of the town's office, a young boy looked around curiously. The young boy's name was Bao and would later become the famous Judge Pao of legend. Bao was working in the local magistrate's archive making records with a quill and parchment when he saw something strange in the corner of the room. As he crept closer, he froze like a statue, both in shock and disbelief. Was that a child's hand he saw or was his mind just playing tricks on him? As he crept closer, afraid if he made a sound it would disappear, he saw a black wisp in the shape of a shaggy dog take on the features of a young boy, and come out of the mysterious hole with many dead children in it. Some of the children's features were at peace, others with fear etched into their faces forever.

"Hello Bao, leader of justice and fair ruler. I have come to beseech you for your help. Twelve times has the quill risen, twelve times it has fallen and struck."

At this, a young girl, who didn't even look eight years old, came out of one of the bodies in the shape of a black, graceful hare, saying gravely,

"Pure lives have been taken, wicked lies have been told. Find us in the motherless home. As long as there is light in your eyes, honour shall prevail."

After the young girl had spoken, a boy around Bao's age came out, this time in the shape of a majestic stag, "Avenge us on the night of the full moon, and a new age of justice shall bloom."

And with that, the trio disappeared back into the hole. Bao shook with fear and ran up the steps that led out of the archives and into the sunlight, where there would be no ghosts and no bodies. Little did he know, he had dropped his quill into the hole with the bodies while he was escaping. It would take a while before he could take some courage and go into the underground archives again.

Bao ran to the police station in town where he found a policeman who directed him to a detective. In those days, policemen were just normal townsfolk who knew martial arts while detectives were people who were abnormally observant. Bao chose to go to a detective.

As there was only one underground archive in the entire town, no elaboration was needed. The detective asked, "What did the deceased face look like? Age? Clothes?"

Bao replied shakely, "The deceased is male, around 10 years old. He has a rather round, chubby face but he has rather bright eyes..."

At this, the detective stopped him and asked why the deceased would have bright eyes if he was already dead. Bao replied rather flusteredly,

"It...it was a ghost, detective."

As soon as the detective heard these words, he remembered a sweet boy whom he had rescued as a baby, but had died at the young age of seven 10 years ago. Now, the boy's body finally appeared in the underground archives? It was too suspicious not to investigate.

"I will get back to you at a later date Bao. Meet me here in a week's time. If you wish to find me, my name is Shang."

The detective rushed out the door. In no time at all, the detective arrived at an old shabby orphanage which has weathered the storms of life for decades. The detective knocked at the door three times before the cranky old matron appeared. Shang did a double take. The matron had not aged well over the years since he had last seen her...

“Hello Detective Shang. Pleasure to see you again after all these years. Has the magistrate finally approved the request to repair the building? Or is it another amateur case you’ve been asked to take on?” The matron said with a shark’s smile.

“I’m going to have to look at the records, Kisha. It’s not an amateur case, for your information. I have a gut feeling that this one is bigger than we realise.”

Half an hour later, the detective found 20 files of suspicious adoptions of children. All of these children had been taken away by a dubious figure and no one had investigated! There was one thing in common about all the children. They were between the ages of 5 and 9. Shang knew that these children were the most gullible and trusting people came easily to them...

A week later, Detective Shang and Bao met up at the station. They both shared their findings. Bao had been snooping around and had found out tidbits of information from local townspeople. According to multiple sources, the magistrate had been around as long as they could remember and the magistrate was still as young and healthy as a bull! There had to be some witchcraft at work! Detective Shang went and brought a large piece of paper into the room. They listed all the facts they had learned and started connecting the cases together. The fact that the children went missing around the same time the magistrate said he found a new family also fit into the fact that a suspicious figure appeared in town. The motherless home should mean an orphanage as all the children in it had no parents or relatives willing to take them in. The quill in question was a quill that was probably used by the dubious figure to kill or make children go missing. Considering the fact that the magistrate always disappeared around the time the dubious figure appeared made it plausible that they were the same person. As they went on, it started making more sense. The magistrate had been around since forever, and whenever he started looking old or had wrinkles, a child disappeared. In the days leading up to the murders, he was always seen twirling a ratty, old quill that otherwise never appeared in public. As their evidence mounted more and more, Detective Shang gathered everyone there in the station and told them everything, except the extent of the involvement of Bao. They rushed to wear bamboo hats and metal plates of armour covering as many vulnerable points as they could.

Detective Shang told the others to circle the perimeter of the magistrate’s house. Many townspeople had roused at the commotion and now stood outside the circle of detectives and policemen. He told them to wait and if he and Bao had not come back outside in 15 minutes, they were to go in and use any means necessary to subdue the magistrate. He and Bao crept in quietly and Bao immediately led him to the entrance of the underground archives. As they approached the entrance, treating it like a feral creature, they heard a soft chanting coming from the dark depths of the hole. As they descended into the hole, they heard someone chanting in a deep voice, which the detective recognised as the magistrate’s voice. Now there was no doubt in their minds that it was the magistrate who killed the children. But how did the quill fit in? Just as they rounded the corner, they were faced with a horrendous sight. The magistrate was bent over yet another child, gagged and bound, and there was a thick book on a side table to the left of him. Bao gasped in horror and the detective melted into the shadows.

“So you’ve found me, my boy! You see, I am the person who mastered the 4 scrolls of Master Bai, the 6 scrolls of Tai Chi and the delicate art of transferring youth. If you help me, my boy, you shall be seen as a hero of the town who saved the magistrate from an assassin and will have a never-ending life.”

The magistrate proposed with an award winning smile, confident Bao would accept. Then Bao saw the quill the magistrate was using, then sneakily glanced at the quill he saw in the pit in the corner of the room. He thought to himself:

Oh! The magistrate mixed up the quill I dropped and the one he owns that has killed so many innocent children! Apparently, the detective noticed it too and started inching towards the pit. Bao kept talking to distract the magistrate.

“If I accept, what do I get out of it?”

Bao requested as if considering it. The magistrate then went on a rant of all the things Bao would get, a medal in his honour, a large house, multiple servants etc. All the while, Detective Shang was inching towards the pit. Just as he reached the pit, the magistrate turned around and the detective leapt towards the magistrate, wrestling him to the

ground and utilising the element of surprise, gave Bao time to grab the quill. The magistrates' eyes widened in horror and disbelief! He shouted angrily,

“Release me! I am your leader, you shall listen to my commands...”

Bao raised the quill he held, threatening to break it, and commanded the magistrate to follow him. The magistrate trembled in fear for his life, yet the detective still had to wrestle the unwilling magistrate up the steps and sat him in a chair, tying him up and making him confess to the people of the town. Many wept and shook their hands in anger, baying for the magistrate's death. Bao raised the quill and as it fell in one vicious stroke, the magistrate exploded into dust. In the light, he thought he saw the three children and countless others, dressed in white and bowing to him. From that day on, Bao became the Judge Pao we all know so well, becoming a figure for justice.

Judge Pao solves unexpected crime

HKMA David Li Kwok Po College, Thapa Magar, Subani – 12

19th February, 1059

I, Judge Pao, got abandoned by my foolish father, believing I was cursed for being hideous. Luckily, I was saved by my sister in law. My wicked father probably can't believe now I am one of the greatest detectives. I, till this day, am still grateful to be alive because of my sister in law.

I have uncovered numerous cases and fought crimes over the years. A week ago, I encountered a very puzzling case that took me 2 days to solve. I must say this was one of the most intense cases to discover. This all started on the 13th of February, I was walking around my neighborhood in Hefei. I decided to stop by a friend's place for a cup of green tea to freshen up my mood. His name is Jiang. He told me that he had another fight with his wife and it was the fourth time that week. They truly loved each other but were planning to get a divorce since they always had different opinions on things. Once we finished chatting, I left and started helping around in town. I met my other friend Wang, who was also helping around the town. He also knew about Jiang's problems, but Wang didn't seem to care that they were soon to divorce. He said that maybe it's for the best for them. Then we continued with what we were doing.

While I was sweeping the spring leaves that had fallen from the blossom tree, I saw two kids fighting for who could get the last piece of dumpling they were eating. As much as I hate arguments, I approached them and cut the dumpling in half. They were really impressed. Before I could say bye to the kids, I heard a loud scream coming from the other side of the neighborhood. I called out for my friend Wang to go see what had happened but he was nowhere to be seen or heard. So I went there myself. Just then I realized that Jiang was the one who screamed! I hurried up to him to see that there were a bunch of people gathering around his house. I told everyone to move aside and when I went up to him, I saw his wife's wounded body with her neck cut in half, parts of her body missing on the ground covered with her blood. He was horrified and tearing up.

I asked him what happened and he told me that he was in his farm collecting vegetables and he came out to see his wife's dead body right in front of the door. What was more suspicious was that he didn't hear his wife scream, or else he would have rushed over. It was like the dead body was there for a while before Jiang noticed. When I was trying to find some evidence, Wang suddenly barged in and came up to us. He screamed when he saw the dead body on the ground and asked us what happened. We told him what had happened and weirdly it was like he wasn't even shocked or didn't even care, but I didn't think much of it since his personality is a bit off from the start. I told everyone who had crowded around to go back and I continued investigating, but I still couldn't find much evidence that I was expecting to find. I had a bit of suspicion on Jiang but the ones who were with him in the farm proved that he didn't kill her. Some of the neighbors that lived nearby Jiang's house had already called the dieners to collect his wife's dead body.

Wang said that he needed to go home because he had a "family emergency". I was still concerned why he didn't seem to care about how this mysterious crime had happened and who the criminal was. "This criminal is surely good at clearing evidence," I thought to myself. I planned to stay overnight with Jiang so he can feel comforted. I asked if Wang wanted to come over but he refused aggressively. When it was around 8 p.m. Jiang was still traumatized from the incident he encountered. He begged me to find the criminal and told me whoever killed his wife should be executed and should live long in hell. Then it was 11 p.m. Instead of sleeping I tried to plan out the scene that happened. "Maybe the criminal could've broken in from the farm to the back door of the house and went out the front door where the criminal killed his wife." I thought to myself over and over again. After all the thinking, I finally fell asleep.

The next morning, I went outside to start the second day of my investigation. I looked around for some evidence again, then I noticed a knife scratch on the front door. I decided to go around Jiang's neighborhood to ask the neighbors some questions. I asked if they saw any suspicious activity around Jiang's house or if they saw someone break in, most of them said no but one in particular said that they saw someone near the farm when Jiang and his other neighbors were working, "I assumed it was one of Jiang's friends, so I didn't think much about it. Now I feel very bad for Jiang," the witness said. So my prediction was right, the criminal did break in from the farm and into the house. When I was about to go back to Jiang's house to find more evidence, Wang appeared and asked to help with the investigation. I agreed because for once he wanted to help, though still it was weird how he suddenly wanted to help.

We went back to Jiang's place and into the farm. I looked around and around, until I saw a strand of hair, it was short and black. Then I had my first clue, this criminal was a man. Wang then said he had to go because he remembered he had to do something important, he looked worried before he left. I thought that maybe he did have some family problems so he was in a rush. I took the strand of hair and put it in my pouch. I decided to go around the neighborhood again and go into everyone's house in search of any evidence and suspicious items. Around noon, I decided to also investigate Wang's house. I knocked on the door multiple times, but there was no answer. Before I

could knock again, the two kids who fought from yesterday rushed to me. They were crying and told me that their mother had been killed. I immediately rushed over to the house and saw their mother lying down on the floor unconscious. This murder case was the same as what happened to Jiang's wife, her neck was in half and parts of her body were missing—it was a horrific scene. The kids were extremely shocked and I told them to go to her other relatives who were standing outside, also shocked. "Why? Why did this murderer attack my child? This person should be imprisoned for life, or even executed!" The woman's mother cried. "Now this case has gone too far." I thought to myself, then I realized the same scratch mark of a knife was on their door as I saw before on Jiang's door. I was confirmed that it was the same murderer who killed Jiang's wife. Then Wang came to the scene, he asked if it was the same murderer who killed the women, I said yes but, how did he know so fast? I thought maybe he realized the same killing technique that happened to Jiang's wife.

I asked the two kids what happened and what they saw before their mother was killed. They told me that they didn't hear their mom scream or anyone who broke in. While they were still talking, I noticed a string tied up on a tree, that string was how the murderer got in and escaped. I looked over to the other side of the tree and saw that there were footprints on the floor. I followed the footprints, it then got washed by a puddle. "The murderer must've washed his shoes so he could escape." I thought. I turned around to see most of the people following me including the guards but I didn't see Wang, as if he had just disappeared in thin air. Then I realized the footprint had led me near Wang's neighborhood, now I had suspicions on Wang. I decided to go to his house again, but this time I barged the door open, and what I saw was horrifying. There, on the table, parts of Jiang's wife and the women's body parts were in a jar. Jiang and the woman's mother were disgusted and ragged. Jiang attacked Wang but I stopped him and demanded Wang for an explanation.

All this time he said he had family problems were lies. He admitted that 2 days ago, he wanted to seduce Jiang's wife because he had a crazy obsession with her. He confessed his love to Jiang's wife but of course she refused because she would never cheat on Jiang with another person. Wang acted like he didn't care but the next day, he broke into Jiang's house and crept up to Jiang's wife, he covered her mouth tightly and killed her. Then he realized what he had done was horrible but didn't regret it so he quickly cleaned up everything, leaving her body on the ground and escaped from the farm. Then he did the same thing to the kid's mother. I was absolutely sickened by Wang's actions, his face had no regrets but he was unhappy. I told everyone to back out and told the guards to take him away to the government. Jiang shouted at Wang and asked why he would do that to him. Wang smirked and so he was brought to the government and charged. And now he's going to face execution and beheaded. Never have I thought a close friend of Jiang and mine would do something so horrifying. This case I have solved will forever be in my head—not in a good way.

New Tales of Judge Pao

HKMA David Li Kwok Po College, Tong, Ashlyn – 12

Judge Pao was a well-known detective and everyone in different Chinese towns had come to find him personally so he could solve their mysteries.

Yes, there are other smart, high-class detectives, yet Pao was the best of all. He always managed to see all the hints as if he could smell that something was off.

There was a case that over a dozen other famous Chinese detectives had looked into, however, they couldn't wrap their heads around it. Pao was found and hired to investigate the case.

A wealthy man by the name of Sir Wu had just been robbed two weeks ago, his jade bracelet which was an heirloom of his family was stolen along with other priceless items by a faceless thief on one of his late-night walks that day. The problem was that the thief did an excellent job, and nobody could tell their identity.

Fingerprint finding wasn't discovered in that period of ancient China, thus leading to nobody witnessing knowing the identity of the faceless thief. All apart from one. A witness, Mr Lao mentioned a few clues which were quite crucial in solving the crime. "I remember clearly that night, I was looking out the window when I saw a man with silver hair—hair in a similar shade as Cheung's, was putting on a disguise, a bag with holes for sight. Their back was facing my window, giving them no clue that I was watching their every move. I am sure that I am therefore correct, the thief who had stolen from Sir Wu was Cheung, as I had lit all of the candles I placed in the living room of my house, clearly illuminating the room, and giving me a clear view of the outside world."

The issue was, Cheung, the man with silver hair who Lao had mentioned, denied the thievery, and claimed that there had to be a mistake. Cheung was a noble working for the then government, and he was purely loyal. He was the type of person who you could tell would never steal or commit a terrible crime, as he had gentle eyes with a constant twinkle and an ever-lasting soft smile. Greedy was simply not a word to describe the man.

But Lao had all the proof and arrows directed to Cheung, and there was nothing to deny it. Over a dozen detectives had looked into the case and had called Cheung guilty of a crime he never committed. Having said that, Sir Wu was sure he was stolen from, and Lao was sure the thief was Cheung.

It seemed too... perfect. There was a suspicious aroma around the whole case that was hard to deny. Cheung was a hardworking, cheerful worker and there was no wrong he would ever do. Yet he was the guilty one here. Even peasants gossiping about the crime knew Cheung was innocent. A kind soul like him would never rob a man.

Moreover, Sir Wu had mentioned that the robber stood around the height of his forehead, and was a tad bit shorter than Wu himself. Cheung was at least a head taller than Sir Wu, which was a crucial point to his innocence.

Soon after, the case was handed over to Judge Pao, as nobody else would have understood this difficult situation.

The first person Pao questioned was Lao. He gave the same story he had told several other detectives before, hoping Pao would believe him. Pao didn't. And he instantly labelled Lao as guilty.

Why?

Well, it's quite simple. It was night when the robbery had happened, so it must be dark outside. Lao mentioned how the room he had been in at that moment was bright and the lights of the room would've reflected on the glass he looked out of, showing more of his reflection than the crime scene. Plus, the crime didn't happen outside of his house, how would he be able to see the whole thing just by looking out of his living room?

Witnesses had seen Cheung that night out of town, visiting his friend and had just returned the next morning, and he wasn't even in the city of the crime that day.

Lao was arrested soon, and the truth was pried out. He was the one who had stolen the priceless items from Sir Wu and had them kept in his house. He had a high-paying job in the government and was afraid that if the truth was told, he'd be fired. And he was. Moreover, Lao was jealous of Cheung, so Cheung was the person he blamed for the robbery.

Judge Pao received tons of praise from Cheung and his family, and Sir Wu gave him one of the valuables he had lost as a token of gratitude.

Blazing Fire

Hong Kong Adventist Academy, Kang, Xiao Xuan David – 14

The summer moon tonight was incredibly, eerily silent. On other nights it was filled with the noises of crows and the rattling of leaves, but tonight it felt like there was not a single living soul. A few minutes before midnight, before the guards were about to switch shifts, three men dressed in thin, white cloaks approached the walls

of the Imperial Palace. They asked some strange questions. Then, one of them pulled out a silver blade with the words “Death will come soon” engraved on it. The sword was made with fine silver and a hilt of bronze, glistening under the silvery moonlight. They were going to fight.

The panic amongst the guards finally broke the silence. “Everyone, arm yourselves and go!” came the general’s commanding voice. The soldiers rushed to the gates, attempting to catch the unwanted visitors. They marched through the palace gates, aiming to surround the men. However, they were already gone. Tired and empty-handed, the soldiers returned to the palace, sweat trickling down their necks. However, soon, they would realize this was the least of their worries. You see, the danger was never coming from outside; it came from within. For a very brief period of time, the castle had been left unguarded. This allowed the fourth man to slip under the radar.

Jiang’s heart began to beat rapidly. He glanced around the palace corridors, his narrow eyes locked around his surroundings. “Time is limited,” he stressed as he opted to burn her palace down. He set a box of matches on fire, methodically kindling firewood as the fire danced around the inside of the walls. With the walls now set ablaze and the flames crackling, he swiftly left the scene, becoming one with the shadow.

The fire was first noticed by the unusual smoke that came from the Empress’ Palace. Messengers reported the incident to the Emperor while the guards attempted to slow the fire with buckets of water.

The fire, hungry for oxygen, started devouring the fragile wood. It swept across the ceilings and overwhelmed the walls. Desperate attempts were made to slow the spread of the fire. After a long and hard-fought battle, the fire disappeared, bringing down most of the palace and leaving ashes in its place. This was not a welcome sight to the emperor, who immediately summoned Judge Pao to the scene.

The sounds of the chariots signified that Judge Pao was here. Judge Pao slowly examined the surroundings, often kneeling to study the ashes left behind by the fire. He slowly looked around, leaving every stone turned and performing regular searches around the crime scene. His eagle-like eyes were tense and focused, and he seemed deep in thought, questioning the guards and looking for contradictions. “Someone must have intentionally plotted to burn the palace down. The only way a fire can spread so quickly is if the culprit used things like firewood or oil in addition to the fire,” he concluded.

“We must ensure that such an event never happens again.” Turning to the servant, he said: “Go and summon all the architects in the city and tell them to rebuild the palace again. Add more soldiers to guard the imperial palace as well.” The Empress was permitted to live with the emperor for now.

The following day, Judge Pao gained permission from the emperor to send a decree out to everyone within the palaces, ordering them to evacuate their palaces immediately. Soldiers were sent into the palaces, looking for any evidence. Another group of soldiers started investigating and interrogating the servants.

Judge Pao paced back and forth in his room. Things felt unusual: If someone wanted to harm the Queen, why would they use fire? Wouldn’t the Queen just be able to escape?

What was the motivation behind this?

After a few weeks of investigation, it seemed like the evidence would never come up. As the Emperor pondered this, the head guard came up to him and said: “Your majesty, we have some information on the case.” Upon hearing this, the emperor’s eyes lit up. “Go ahead, say it.” The guard explained how he had been interrogating Concubine Tian’s servants. He brought servant Xin, who confessed that she burned down the palace.

Knowing this, the emperor immediately raised from his seat. He wanted to arrest concubine Tian immediately. Judge Pao, however, seemed to be suspicious. “We can’t confirm that concubine Tian would’ve done it. Only one of the servants admitted to this, which is not enough evidence to conclude anything. For all we know, she could’ve been bribed by someone to lie.”

Guards were placed in her palace with the decree to search for anomalies. Although the Emperor was partially convinced and agreed not to arrest her, he was still suspicious. “I will give you a week to prove otherwise. If you cannot do so, we will arrest Concubine Tian.”

Judge Pao knew it wasn’t concubine Tian, but he didn’t have any conclusive evidence. In the following days, he was often seen alone in his room, pacing back and forth and pondering the case.

“Sir, we could not find anything in Concubine Tian’s palace. What should we do next?” came the voice of the servants.

While the Emperor was deep in thought, Judge Pao came, accompanied by the distant sounds of the horses. After being granted permission, Judge Pao slowly walked in. He sighed, saying, “Your Majesty, the Empress intentionally burned down her palace.”

The emperor, confused, asked Judge Pao to give conclusive evidence. Judge Pao replied: “Your Majesty. I was suspicious of why most of the valuable parts of the palace survived and how the Empress appeared calm when she heard the news.” Then, he gestured to his servant, who brought a leaflet forward: “Your Majesty, here is a list of all exports and imports within the palace.” “The Empress was the only one who asked for firewood, which was an odd request since we use coal in the courts for warmth. As for concubine Tian’s servants, they were bribed by her to sabotage the fame that concubine Tian had,” Judge Pao concluded.

This was a shocking statement. The emperor, with a frown, addressed the uncomfortable Empress, “Is this something you admit to doing?” With the Empress unable to defend herself, she was sentenced to be grounded inside her palace for two years as punishment. Judge Pao had once again solved the case.

New Tales of Judge Pao

Man Kwan Pak Kau College, Chan, Yan Lam Priscilla – 14

1005, Shenxian

Blood was splattered all over the ground as endless kicks to the ribs of a fragile woman enraged the cruel collector even more. The old, white walls with small cracks in between were splashed with a bright scarlet shade. In the room of such a dreadful scene were two kids in a wooden, shabby wardrobe, hiding from the infuriated man from a higher class. Several tears rolled down Pao Zheng’s cheek as his hand covered his three-year-old sister’s eyes.

Zheng gritted his teeth, witnessing his mother who was struggling to breathe with one hand placed on her rib through the small crack of the wardrobe. Using his other hand, Zheng pulled his sister into a tighter embrace. Having lost her job, Pao's mother has been struggling to get a few bucks into her wrinkled hands creased by hard labour. Pao ever imagined his mother would lose her life to debt, a burden she had to carry all by herself despite knowing it would take losing her limbs to rid debt from her life, her family's life especially. He projected his mother's wounds onto his sister as he looked at her, the bitterness consuming his heart and the burning rage emanating from his skin, gripping his hand.

"I'll definitely protect you, my little sister" promised Zheng, with an indestructible determination in his eyes, knowing this was all he could do. In order to not lose his sister, like how he lost his mother at that moment.

Many years later, a ping from a lift follows a group of men walking down the hall toward the door that leads to the Great Court. "Are you ready for your next case?" Pao's assistant asked as they reached the door. "Justice will be served," replied Pao.

They assemble to their positions as a dishevelled appearance is taken in. The woman shuffled nervously, fingers twiddling with each other. "What case have you brought to me, miss?" questioned the fair judge.

The woman, unable to meet the judge's eyes, faced the floor, wondering whether she was going to mention it or not. After what seemed like a long time, she stood firm, telling Judge Pao what she saw that day. ".....official Chen met with this woman. And under the moonlight, I saw two dots on her wrist. As she was facing official Chen, a cutlass thrown from the left side stabbed the general commander's back."

"And where were you when you were witnessing this scene?"

"I was in Chenxiu, near the Love Triangle Fountain,"

Hearing the light pattering on the carriage ceiling, Judge Pao stroked his stubby black beard with a frown on his face as he thought of what the woman said.

The gates of his mansion slowly opened, and a familiar figure started running towards him as he stepped out of the carriage. "Brother!" shouted Nian, hugging her older brother.

She took a step back, ready to bombard her brother with questions. She glanced up at her brother, expecting a cheerful expression. Pao furrowed his eyebrows along with a frown. He walked to the door and took his coat. "Go to your room and sleep okay? I got something to check," he said while walking to the stables. Nian watched Pao in confusion as Pao got on his horse, galloping into the night.

Pao got off, tying his horse to a nearby pole. He stopped by a store when he made his way to the Love Triangle Fountain. It looked strange and had a red glow around it, almost as if it was luring him in. With uncertainty stirring in his heart, he pushed the door, walking in with caution. "Hello? Is the owner here?"

Silence replied back as he walked up the freaking stairs. Up there was one big room.

A few crystal balls sat on empty shelves he had never seen before. The light bulb stirring with fireflies flashed a bit, the glow petering out slowly. He looked around then his eyes met another pair. He winced, looking into the eyes that were staring back intently.

The woman had a very untidy appearance and her eyes looked dead and emotionless. But she looked a little bit too familiar. "Are you the miss who came to the court today?" he asked, astonished.

"Very just yet much more just" she croaked.

All of a sudden, dust began to gather in the form of a storm, picking up speed every second. Pao covered his eyes, not being able to make out anything.

After a few seconds, none but silence accompanied him. Pao opened his eyes, looking around. There was nothing in plain sight except for bushes and trees. The place where the store used to be was empty, a few burrows and rats ran along like the store was never there. Bewildered, he walked along the path to the crime scene where the murder of official Chen took place.

He crouched down, looking for clues. This was quite new to him as he only needed to give his decree But never did he have to investigate and solve a case. The person who threw the cutlass was still unknown. If he needed to get this case over with, he needed to get evidence. He got up, defeated as he found nothing. Immersed in his thoughts, he did not look ahead.

"Ouch!" he exclaimed, tripping a rock. Glancing down, his eyebrows rose a bit as something caught his eye. It was a hairpin, he quickly picked it up and shoved it in his pocket.

Walking to his horse, he thought about the woman he met a while ago. He was sure she was the woman who went to court that day. He found it strange because the woman acted differently in the store like she was possessed.

“Give me case 378, please”

“Sure, Mr. Pao.”

Suddenly, a figure appeared.

“What are you doing here, in the evidence room, Zheng?”

“Greetings your highness, I just needed to check something.”

“Oh do carry on with your work, also, have you found a suitor for your sister yet?”

“Yes, your highness”, Pao replied, keeping his head down.

Unbeknown to Pao, the prince’s eyebrow twitched a bit, clenching his fist. He left immediately, without a word. He dismissed the thought, digging through the piles of evidence. In a bag, was a small weapon. He put on his gloves, looking at every part, careful to not miss anything. There he saw two letters engraved on the hilt of the cutlass. Then, everything clicked for him. Now, he needed to head home to confirm something. Although deep inside, he hoped he was wrong.

He closed the door shut with a bad feeling he couldn’t shake off. He pushed open his sister’s door and found her sound asleep. A crow flew to a tree near his sister’s room as he spotted two dots on her wrist.

Pao rang a bell in his office, calling for the butler.

“Send this letter to the prince”

“Yes, my lord.” the butler replied, leaving the room.

“Zheng, why did you ask me to come to your office, should I take this as disrespect?!” the prince said angrily.

“Your highness, please don't take this the wrong way but I have something important to discuss with you and my sister”.

The prince’s expression softened when he noticed Nian in the office.

“Well, fire away,” the prince said, his eyes still on Nian.

“Sister, I found your hairpin,” Pao said while taking the hairpin he picked up at the crime scene.

“Oh thank you, brother”.

“The witness said the woman had two dots on her wrist. Your Highness, you have the letters P.N. engraved on your cutlass right?” Pao continued on.

The prince nodded slowly.

“Then you both took part in official Chen’s murder, please just don’t do it again, I’ll just cover it up” Pao sighed.

“Brother, thank you!” Nian said with relieved tears in her eyes.

The door moved a little bit.

Pao clutched his head tightly, having a big headache . The bustling noises of people on the street gradually turned to angry shouts and chants, causing the throbs to intensify. He stood up , wondering what was going on. Stumbling, he fell onto the ground, his vision slowly turning black.

“ He’s awake! Doctor!Doctor!Please check on him!”

He blinked a few times, confused.

“ He’s fine now but he needs a lot of rest .” the doctor said after a brief check on him.

Everyone understood and left the room one by one.

“Wait! Where’s my sister?” he asked, grabbing onto a maid’s hand.

It dawned on Pao.

“ Nian, it’s been years since I’ve failed to keep my promise to you. Now that you’re not here, there’s no need to spare mercy.” Pao said, his voice breaking off.

Kneeling in front of the graveyard, was a man who concealed his heartbroken self by being a just man. That was how he was recorded in history, while everyone forgot he even had a sister.

New Tales of Judge Pao

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Chan, Charlotte – 12

With a scrape and a clang, the massive mahogany doors were heaved apart as the delicate lilac and peach shades of dawn gave way to the brilliant sunlight that bathed the sky in golden light. Inside, there was a large chamber with a low, wooden table carved with intricate patterns of birds and flowers. Behind that table was a man, a man with a long beard, a long, blue robe and a face that was both stern and compassionate at the same time. He was no other

than Judge Pao himself. In the day, throngs of people came to him, some to seek his help and advice, others to seek justice for themselves and others around him. At night, Judge Pao served as a source of justice for the wronged souls. He assessed claims of innocence or guilt just like how he gave advice – with impartiality, mercy and wisdom.

One day, a nearby town – Li-Jien was set abuzz with a case of theft. Not because thefts were uncommon, but because of the unusual nature of that particular theft. A family heirloom was stolen. Curiously, it was kept out of sentiment, not value. The victim was perplexed. The local officers were perplexed. So, Judge Pao was asked to help out.

“I will need the entire story. I will need all of the facts.” said Judge Pao, striding into the room. “What and who was burgled?” Fumbling, an officer took out a piece of paper.

“Zhang Xiangman, the magistrate of the town. A year ago, a jade pendant was stolen. Its value was approximately three taels of silver. There are a multitude of other thefts, but that one is different.”

“How so?” Judge Pao prompted.

The officer hesitated slightly, and said “Well – the pendant was locked away in a strong, bronze safe. Yet, the thief took his time to break it, while all the time in a room nearby was a wooden box with a lock extremely simple to pick, filled with gold bangles, jade hairpins and pearl earrings and such of the mistress. The value of all those combined would be at least twenty-one taels, maybe more. There was even a set of ivory mah-jong tiles in a box on the same table as the safe.”

Judge Pao nodded. “Less time, less value...” Judge Pao thought for a moment. “This Zhang Xiangman – he must be rich, then?”

“One would expect so. He is a high-ranking official. Of course there have been rumours...but then one can hardly trust rumours, can you?” The official gave a small, dismissive laugh.

“Hmm.” Judge Pao paused in thought. “I would like you to prepare a horse. I shall visit the victim.” “Yes, your Honour. Of course, your Honour.” murmured the officer, bowing submissively, going outside to prepare a carriage.

Meanwhile, Judge Pao paced up and down the chamber, muttering to himself. “Nothing else taken...could the thief have thought there was something valuable inside? No...he would have taken the other jewellery too...Why should the thief take the object most sentimentally valued rather than the object that would fetch the highest price on the market. A strange case...”

“Your carriage, your Honour,” announced the officer, reappearing on the steps to lead him down. Stepping into the carriage, Judge Pao asked “Where did the theft occur?” The official blinked multiple times. “Well – um – it disappeared near the market at the city centre. You can’t miss it – it has an emerald green roof.” Judge Pao contemplated the information for a moment and called out to the coachman, “Take me to the market at the city centre.” With the crack of a whip and the spirited whinnying of four sturdy horses, they were gone.

“Your Honour,” Zhang Xiangman was saying as Judge Pao swept in. “I am –” Judge Pao stopped him with a wave of his hand. “I would like a description of your missing pendant and to look at the room where the pendant was kept.” “But naturally. Shenyi, prepare some Longjing tea and bring it to the peony room. Bring me the mistress’s lacquer box.” The servant girl bowed and hurried out of the room.

Minutes later, Judge Pao was being served tea in a low, large chamber with panels of wood carved with delicate peonies. In the middle was a large table, on which was a beautiful lacquer box and a set of ivory mah-jong tiles, which appeared to be well thumbed. Selecting a jade pendant from a box, Zhang Xiangman placed it carefully on the table. “This,” he proclaimed, “belongs to my wife. It is of a very simple design – there are practically no carvings on it. It is very similar to the stolen pendant, with one difference – the stolen pendant was made of white jade – beautiful, but less expensive.” “This pendant was kept in this lacquer box, I suppose?” Judge Pao remarked. “Yes, and as you can see, there is only a simple lock on the box.” Xiangman replied.

“Who discovered the theft?” Judge Pao questioned, sternly.

“Shenyi – the servant girl you saw just now. She was dusting the rooms.” Xiangman replied readily.

“In that case, I should like to interrogate the servants, primarily Shenyi.” Judge Pao said, tersely. Xiangman frowned, very slightly irritated.

“I assure you they are all quite above suspicion. They are extremely faithful and have been serving us for at least five years.” he said, slightly stiffly.

“Nevertheless,” Judge Pao said in a placating tone, “the interrogations will prove to be most fruitful, I am sure.” Reluctantly, Xiangman left the room.

“Your name is Shenyi and you have been working for the master for three years. Is that correct?” Judge Pao asked. “Yes, your Honour.” Shenyi murmured deferentially. Asking her a series of questions, Judge Pao established what she said she knew. She had been cleaning the residence that day. She had finished cleaning the master’s rooms and the mistress’s rooms and was starting to clean the guest rooms and studies when she had discovered the theft. The theft happened in one of the master’s study rooms. She had opened the door and discovered the missing safe. The master had been away on trade business and the mistress had been visiting her relatives. She had not seen anything out of the ordinary. After seeing the theft, she had reported it to the master’s second secretary. There were about fifty servants in the residence, mostly household servants who did the cooking and cleaning as well as some personal maids and secretaries of the mistress and the master. Judge Pao noted these points down, and dismissed Shenyi. He repeated his questions with a few more servants. Then, he sat down once more, deep in contemplation. He selected the jade pendant from the box and examined it, fingering it gently. A startled look flitted onto his face. He brushed a hand over the mah-jong tiles, and frowned in thought. Then, he went out

Dressed in a plain linen robe, Judge Pao stopped at several points around town – the local tavern, the markets, the casino, various shady shops on the outskirts of the city – inquiring about Zhang Xiangman and his servants.

Some time later, he arrived back at Zhang Xiangman’s house and within a few minutes he was once again in the peony room, sipping delicately from a cup of tea. He reclined in his seat, his eyes inscrutable.

“You’ve been gambling, Xiangman.” Judge Pao said. “You’ve been gambling, and you’re in debt. You took the jewellery to a discreet jeweller who made detailed copies of them. The family heirloom you took away with you, but before you could replace it with a copy, Shenyi discovered the theft. The mah-jong tiles, the local rumours...not very subtle. You didn’t sell the jewellery publicly, because you knew that would cause a scandal.” Xiangman’s pupils were dilated, and his breathing came out in short, fast bursts.

“I do not know how other judges would treat an official,” mused Judge Pao, “but I do know that to me, a person, whether peasant or prince, should be punished like all others. Officers!”

Judge Pao did not judge others’ innocence or guilt by their wealth or social status, but rather by facts. Like many legal systems around the globe, Judge Pao thought that crimes were crimes, and independent of whether the perpetrator was influential or not.

Judge Pao may be dead, but his spirit and legacy, that of impartiality, still lives on.

New Tales of Judge Pao

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Chiu, Moses – 11

There was once a great detective named Ye Xiang. He was the greatest detective ever known to mankind, having caught over 500 criminals, and foiling 453 schemes. But one day, he found a plot so wicked and so deceptive, that it might just spell his doom...

“Come back, you thief!” Xiang sprinted through the alleys of Efirano, brushing back civilians staring at his dastardly chase with awe. He swiftly caught up with the criminal and tripped him, sending the man tumbling onto the cement. He took his cable wire— always handy for such situations— and tied the man’s wrists, pulling him up his feet.

“You, sir, are under arrest for the crime of shoplifting. Anything you say can be used against you,” Xiang said.

“Dammit! I worked for a long time trying to get that money, you know!” The criminal protested.

“The more you protest, the more you will be punished,” reprimanded Xiang.

Xiang sat down on his desk and sighed heavily. The thieves had been increasing in number by the day, and soon it would be too much for himself. He frowned. The attempts were too similar, too organised, too... coordinated. Were they attempts... linked together in some way? The more he thought, the more reasonable it seemed. Why, after all, would there be ten thievery attempts on the same store in just one month? He stood up, his genius beginning to form a link. The IRIS organisation had been growing quieter, and they had barely done anything for 7 months already, save for the time they defeated a small group of thieves. What if, he thought, what if the attacks were coordinated by IRIS? The prisons were packed with them, and if they planned to fill it and then force them to build some new ones, which would weaken them significantly, then launch a full-scale attack, he wasn’t sure if the town could handle it. No one could if such attacks were coordinated by IRIS itself. They were masters at strategy. They could defeat a force of 1000 soldiers with half that size. But then, a little spark began to form in his mind. An insane idea which would practically be suicide. Which was precisely why he set it in motion.

Because if one man could destroy a town, why couldn’t he?

The base of IRIS was in a remote location in a mountain, guarded by numerous soldiers and snipers. Xiang, burdened by the absolute madness of his plan, jumped behind a small wall. He peeked around the corner and saw just one guard, looking in the opposite direction. A perfect target. He crouched and slowly crept toward the unsuspecting gunman. With a clean muffling around his mouth, he snapped his neck and hid the body in some nearby bushes. He shook his head. He wanted to minimise the killing he did, or IRIS might notice and start giving the base some actual security, which would jeopardise his dreams of future IRIS base takeovers. With a deft dart, he ducked into the base and began his quest for the IRIS plans. As he smugly smirked and began walking, a camera rotated away, withholding all the information that it would need.

A snap sounded out from the technician’s neck as Xiang’s hands twisted, then hid his body under the desk. Xiang sighed. He wasn’t happy about killing, but he had to if he wanted to save his city. He shook his head. No time for such thoughts. He opened the desk and stole the documents with ease. He smiled, for his theory was right. His happy mood, however, quickly dampened as that he realized there was no proper way to stop their plot. He slumped onto a chair. Unless... Could he somehow stop every thief with bait? And what better bait than the bank? A wicked grin spread across his face, and he began step two of his ridiculous plan.

“So, I hear you’ll be going out of town for a week or so?”

“Yeah, I need some rest.”

“I hear you, buddy. Thieves have been nuts since May, absolute chaos.”

Xiang stepped onto his boat and waved farewell to his good friend Zhang, laughing internally at his plan. It was simple: pretend to leave, then catch all the thieves at the bank. It would work perfectly as long as they went for it. After driving his boat away for a minute or so, he turned it around and piloted it back toward the mainland, hiding his boat in a forest, then putting on his prepared disguise, then driving a car to the bank. He was ready for the next stage. As nighttime approached, he saw some of the thieves start to crawl toward the bank, determined to steal the money. He chuckled, then silenced it. His cable wires were ready, and he quickly leaped into the fray.

He wielded his knife like the professional he was and tied up five in a matter of seconds. Soon, they were all incapacitated and he most of them were all groaning on the floor. He told them, "What, you thought I would ever abandon Efurano to the likes of you?" He laughed. "That, my friends, is what I call betrayal. I would never do such an act of duplicity." They moaned and pleaded, but he wouldn't hear it. He, in his mind, now deserved a little bit of peace and quiet.

"Yes, commissioner, these thieves were hired by IRIS. There are about 150 of them, so be careful, they might try and, say, slip out of your grasp. So just keep an eye out, and you'll be alright." Xiang explained to the sergeant how the thieves did their job and how to look out for future exploitations and attempts on the Treasury of Efurano and the bank. The sergeant nodded.

"Got it, I'll be able to prevent this scum from doing anything like last time." Xiang gave his thanks and left, walking back to his apartment.

"Oh, yeah, what are we going to do about that killer?" the sergeant asked.

"What killer?"

"You know, the one who killed the campers in the trailer."

"No, I don't. What was his name?"

"What was it again? Oh yeah, Vex."

Xiang's blood ran cold.

His nemesis had returned.

And from the looks of it, he was back for revenge.

Mr Pao

Po Leung Kuk Tong Nai Kan Junior Secondary College, Lee, Lok Lok – 13

"Mr. Pao, we have a client for you."

Pao rolled his eyes regardless of whether the person on the phone could see it or not, "Again? How incompetent are you people, this is the fifth time you called me this week."

"Ahem, trust me, this time it is truly an important case, we need your help."

That is what you said the last four times, Pao thought bitterly, but he just gritted his teeth and said, "Send me the files."

"Great! We thank you again for your cooperation, Mr. Pao!" *This man sounds entirely too cheery!*

Pao watched as his breath fanned out into small clouds of white mist as he slowly exhaled, his shoes tapping silently as he walked, his client was a 44-year-old, male, named Noah Wyh, lived a rather ordinary life in Whitehill. He took a job as a school teacher. The Wyh family was a loving one, supposedly. Whatever made it all the odds on November 14th, 2000, Noah Wyh committed homicide on Adam Taylor, a little boy aged 6. When he was discovered, the body had been completely unrecognizable, and the autopsy had shown he had been tortured repeatedly before he was ultimately immolated alive.

Pao shifted his briefcase onto his elbow, pulling out his gloves from his pocket and slipping them on each hand, *however gruesome that was, all the evidence so far just pointed to Noah Wyh being the murderer. Fingerprints belonging to Wyh were all over the crime scene, and even some pieces of his clothes and hair, it truly wasn't looking very good for Mr. Wyh.* Pao closed his eyes, gripping his briefcase back into his hand, tapping his finger rhythmically against the handle of it as he walked and said, "*Ah, but my intuition tells me it is not as simple as it seems.*" Pao's eyes opened slowly, a small brick house stood in front of him, a purple flowerbed stood in each of the window stills, if he were not mistaken they were *Tradescantia pallida*. "*Great, I'm here.*"

A haggard woman looking older than she was, worry with weariness on face though tied in a brown neat ponytail, somehow looked messy after a breakdown. "How may I help you?" In the corner of his eye, Pao could see the child squeeze in through the door's gap.

"Good afternoon! Mrs. Wyh, I am Judge Pao, a lawyer you hired from the Infernal Bureaucracy of the Department of Hell, if you do not recognize me, my other name is Immortal Yama, perhaps that may sound more familiar. I'm here to discuss about your husband, Noah Wyh."

"I'd not want to sound like I'm begging or that I'm biased, but my husband really did nothing wrong. He wasn't even in Whitehill when the murder took place...."

Please, help my husband!" Pao hummed understandingly, setting his teacup down gently.

Mrs. Wyn panted slightly after her monologue, a rude "Blegh!" could be heard behind her, followed by a mop of white hair disappearing behind the couch.

"I already know your name, what I wanna know is how you can see me." The boy cut off with an annoyed eye-roll.

"If you paid any attention to what I said, I am from the Department of Hell, people there can see the afterlife." His voice tinged on the edge of annoyance. The boy's eyes widened, eyes glittering in the shade, astonishment dancing in his eyes, a big smile stretching across his face as he tilted his head and asked, "Really?" In the distance, the familiar screech of a car on the road drifted past, turning his head, sure enough, it was a cab.

"Yes, really, now if you want revenge, come with me."

Then he strode in hurried steps towards the cab, behind him, he could hear the boy grumbling at him,

"Wait, you old man!"

Pao open the door to the cab, and they both stepped in.

"St Hector Graveyard"

The boy looked at him questioningly the moment he said that azure eyes blinking owlshly, Pao shook his head slightly, lifting his hand up and gently taping his ear, *not now, just listen.*

"Mr, I'm a detective from the Infernal Bureaucracy of the Department of Hell," he took out his card and briefly flashed it to the driver, "I'm investigating the case of Adam Taylor, are you familiar with the name of Noah Wyh?"

The man's eyes widened briefly at the mention of the Department of Hell but then shrugged, "Ah, I don't actually know the Taylor that well but Noah, ah, Noah yes. Actually, I am the one who drove him on the day the murder happened," Pao raised his eyebrow in curiosity, and the boy leaned forwards in interest, "Did he say anything? Or act differently?"

The traffic light turned red and the cab stopped, the driver swiveled around, shock written all over his face.

"Yes, actually!"

"Where did you drive him to?" The boy looked out the window, no longer paying attention,

"That's funny. It is St. Hector Dinner....."

"Thanks for telling me."

It always seemed to be colder in a graveyard, a gust of cold wind made him pull his coat tighter around, the gravel crunched soundlessly beneath his soles though leaving footprints.

"What are we doing here?" The boy questioned.

Pao hummed, "We are here to perform an exorcism, and you are to be my assistant."

"To find the one who murdered Adam Taylor of course. And you are to be my assistant because you are Adam Taylor." He said in the flattest tone he could manage.

The boy's steps faltered, "You knew? Wait what if you could find the murderer the whole time then why didn't you?" Pao reigned in the twitching of his eyes and said,

" Well, I didn't know that the soul of Adam Taylor was still around so obviously I had to do things the old fashion way, a soul needs to be in contact with the body before any rituals can begin, if not then the body is just a husk, of no use except for a few useless things."

He stopped at a small grave that read, Adam Taylor in flowing words, a sweet scent caught his nose, it belonged to some freshly picked flowers laid spread out all over the gravestone. "Offered items can be touched by being of the dead, don't be shy and take yours, it won't affect the physical world." Pao explained while taking out some multi-colored powder, in the corner of his eye, he could see Adam hurriedly pulling three poppies out as if they might disappear, sticking it into his braid, the red a stark contrast to his white hair, pouring the white powder into a small circle, carrying on with the other colors, red, blue, purple, black in the center.

"Adam, it's done, just put your hand in the center," Pao called out softly.

Adam hesitated, then he placed his hand in the center of the circle his hand was tiny compared to the circle , "Adam, this might be a bit.....scary, but I need you to describe the person who murdered you, out loud if you want. If you cannot do it just describe to me what was the most distinct memory of the man" Pao tried to sound soothing, and perhaps it worked as Adam started to speak, "Th.....that man was... he was scary, he had yellow dots for eyes, sometimes when he opened his mouth, it would be a furnace instead, hot like one too, that's how I was....." Killed, they both knew the unspoken word, "but, sometimes his face....melted, it was—"

" Like wax," Adam stared in confusion, but Pao carried on, "His clothes always seem to change, fade, blur yet not." Adam's eyes widened, " How?" Pao shook his head. Pao grinned wickedly, " Great, you can see it. To answer your inquiry, it's a spirt line."

"Immortal Yama, we meet again!" A gnarled voice rasped out. The angels face was melting off, the waxy like substance flowing seamlessly to form into Adam's burned face and the face of the murderer appeared gradually. Cool wind carried away the rotten scent. Pao tapped Adam's shoulder and picked him up in his arms, walking out of the grave. The boy turned in his arms and clutched his shirt tightly, burying his head into Pao's chest, and let out a muffled, "Don't wanna, gonna stay here forever."

Pao laughed, embarrassed yet happy at what the boy said, he in turn replied, " Then stay forever."

In the end, the case was concluded after a long session in court, Noah Wyh was pardoned and the Taylor family held in peace, though Pao could see that they were still grief-stricken.

Adam surprisingly didn't part with physical world and chose to stay with Pao, when he expressed his confusion at that, Adam merely shrugged and said, 'Who gonna look after an old man like you if I don't stay?'

Wisdom from the past

Chris Pao, an outstanding policeman in the 21st century in Hong Kong, is also the main character of this story. As the one who has to solve strange and complex cases, especially in this era of well-developed technology, Chris has not only rich knowledge of science and proficient skills, but also abundant experience in using modern technology.

Besides technology, Chris's best 'helper' is his unique detective brain. He may have benefited from his "DNA" from his great ancestor, Judge Pao, Pao Cheng, a famed judge who solved a lot of complex cases and made great achievements in the Song dynasty.

Since he could read, Chris has already cultivated a strong interest in being a detective. Although he did accomplish his dream, he always regrets that he can't do as well as those eminent detectives who solved cases without the help of advanced technology. Chris wants to know how those great detectives did that.

One day, while he was hanging out along the street, he saw a big temple. This was not the first time for Chris to walk along the street. He was very familiar with those buildings along the street, but he had never seen the temple before. To satisfy his growing curiosity, Chris decided to walk into the temple. Before he entered the temple, he was shocked by the words on the plaque, 'Pao Gong Temple'. Being the offspring of Pao Gong, Chris has to worship Pao Gong yearly. Therefore, he knows all the Pao Gong Temples in Hong Kong and is familiar with all of them, but not this one.

There was nothing alive in the temple, except Chris and an old man. Although the surroundings there were lifeless, the statue with a moon figure on it was lifelike, making Chris know that it was a statue of his great ancestor. When Chris's eyes were caught by the statue placed in the middle of the hall, the old man came beside him and asked, "Would you like to show your esteem to him? He's such a great man! You can just burn some incense sticks for him."

While Chris was showing his esteem, he was wondering how Judge Pao could solve those complex cases without advanced technology in the past. Suddenly, a dazzling sharp light flashed, and Chris heard a strong clap of thunder outside. Chris looked out through the window, he saw a red fulmination. The old man let out a piercing scream, "Again?!" Chris felt a strong dizziness and fainted.

When Chris resumed his consciousness and opened his eyes, what he could see was neither the statue nor the old man in the temple. He was in a quaint room decorated in Song dynasty style!

Chris couldn't believe what he had seen, and the first thing he could think of was he had had time travel. He also inquired himself whether it was a dream until he saw the extraordinary view outside the window – all people outside were wearing traditional Song clothes.

Nothing could shock Chris now, but the man who got into the room. His dark skin and the moon figure on his forehead really shocked Chris. These characteristics may mean nothing to others, but to Chris, he knew that the man was his ancestor, Judge Pao. And he realized he was at Kaifeng, the Chinese capital during the Northern Song dynasty. While Chris was still trying to figure out what had happened, Pao Cheng said, "I am Pao Cheng, the prefecture here in Kaifeng. This morning, I found you fainted in a forest while investigating a case, so I took you back to my mansion. And excuse me, may I know where you come from? I am not interrogating you. I am just being curious because of your special clothes."

Luckily, Chris was able to pull away from the shock quickly because of his rich experience in criminal investigation. He could handle Pao Cheng's question well, and wouldn't cause him to doubt his identity. He answered, "I come from a far western region. I have a friend living in a nearby village. I was on my way to visit him but I had used up my food, so I fainted in the forest. I am a detective."

"I don't know why, but you are approachable for me. By the way, what is a detective?" Pao Cheng replied.

As a policeman, Chris was curious about every case, especially cases that a great judge investigated, so Chris replied, "A detective is someone similar to your assistants who collect evidence and help you investigate cases. May I know what you are investigating? I can probably help you."

“Oh, definitely! Let me tell you what this case is about. There was a red fulmination nearby a month ago. It could have been just a simple natural phenomenon, but after that, strange things happened in Kaifeng. Since then, many things have disappeared – some food, dogs and even a man!” Pao Cheng said.

“Red fulmination?! It must be the same as what I saw at the temple. The chance I could get back may be linked to it,” Chris pondered.

“Although we haven’t figured out why they disappeared, we’ve found some of them and I got some more clues. All those items belong to the same person called James. I couldn’t return them to James because he disappeared too! From James’ parents, I have learnt that James had gone to the forest where I saw you. But I’m not sure whether he is still in the forest as we have been searching for a long time,” Pao Cheng said.

During their search, an old man stopped them from doing their job. He requested Pao Cheng to help him find his property. Although it was just a simple lost-and-found case and those items were retrieved smoothly, it interrupted their search. When they picked up the original case, Chris asked, “Although it’s good to help others, we are more eager to find where James was. Should we have wasted time on this insignificant case?”

Pao Cheng replied, “This may have ‘wasted’ some time, but it’s the same as finding James, helping the old man is my duty. As the prefecture here, I should take on what I should and must do. I also enjoy the process of solving cases. I find the smiling face of the old man most rewarding. Your life rhythm has gone too fast. Don’t just focus on the result but also the process.” Chris had to admit that he hadn’t even noticed the old man’s smile.

Being a busy police officer, Chris was just solving big cases and do what he “must” do but not the small cases that he “should” care about. While he was recalling his memories, Pao Cheng said, “Helping others will also get some unexpected results. That isn’t just helping others, but also yourself. The old man has told me he heard some strange sound near the forest. This is a new and important clue for us. Let’s see what is going on there.”

Chris and Pao Cheng arrived at the forest. Pao Cheng could smell something burnt and hear some indistinct sound, but Chris couldn’t. Without equipment, he couldn’t detect those vague signals. Following the smell and sound, Pao Cheng led the team to go deep in the forest where they saw some dead plants, burnt by the lightning, and nearby, an injured man moaning. According to the drawing given by his parents, he was James. This gave Pao Cheng a shock, while Chris was having a double shock because James was the old man he had met in the temple, although he looked a bit younger!

Before Chris started asking James questions, a red lightning appeared. When Chris got his soul back, he could see James, but not Pao Cheng. They were also not in the forest, but in the temple. James explained to Chris – he came from the Northern Song dynasty, and he was hit by the lightning one day. He couldn’t go back to Song and stayed in the 21st century expecting some special days when the lightning comes. “I am very sorry to have implicated you in this case but I think you may learn a lot and know more about your ancestor.”

“Yes, what I can’t do but he could is enjoying the process while investigating a case. I always focus more on the result rather than the process, but it is exactly what a police officer’s duty is – solving the case and give the victim an explanation. Maybe, I shouldn’t care too much about the size of cases. Ultimately, I want to help people,” Chris said to himself. While he was reflecting, another lightning struck. When he looked up, James and the temple disappeared. He was standing on the street, hearing birds chirping, wind blowing, and passers-by murmuring. His five senses became a lot more sensitive and they could be the new ‘helpers’, assisting him in solving cases.

Judge Pao Missing Messi

It was dark outside, but a lot brighter than usual. It seemed as if the city had millions of tiny lamps on, each one flickering with the same image on it. That night was December 18, 2022. Half of the world was watching the 2022 FIFA World cup final between France and Argentina. I was one of them, sitting in front of the TV, holding my breath, watching the live broadcast.

Boom! Boom! – it was from the fans' huge loud drums.

“Messi! Messi! Go, go...” – it was my loud crazy shouts.

I wished I was at Qatar at that moment. I wished Argentina could win. I wished Messi could accomplish his dream tonight. But for myself, I wished I wouldn't be the only Chinese kid in my school. I wished I could grow taller. I wished people would stop bullying me. I wished, oh, I wished so many many things.

Finally, after 2 hours of play, the game went into a penalty shootout. My heart jumped to my throat. I didn't dare even look. After what felt like hours, I heard the crowd cheering. I peeked a glance. Yes! Argentina won!

“Yes! Yes!” I was jumping up and down in delight!

It was already past midnight, yet I was still staring wide-eyed at the TV screen, waiting for the awards ceremony.

“Messi! Messi” The audience had gone wild and the stadium was boiling like water.

On the TV, I saw Messi walk slowly up to the World Cup trophy like two friends meeting each other after many years. The whole world was waiting for Messi, the greatest soccer player, to raise the trophy.

Just as Messi's hand was about to touch the trophy, a blinding light crossed the stadium and Messi vanished. Only the gold trophy sat alone on the table. The whole stadium was as quiet as a deserted wasteland.

“What happened?” I jumped off my chair and ran to the TV to check. My face was almost touching the screen. In an instant the screen went black. I pounded on the TV but it was no use.

I still couldn't believe what I saw. *It's just a glitch* I told myself, and got on bed.

The next morning after breakfast, I turned on my computer and all the shocking news was about Messi disappearing. No one knew where he had gone.

“OMG! How could this happen? Messi's my favorite soccer player!” I almost started crying, but suddenly, I heard a tiny voice, “Hmm... this is really a mystery. Biggest one yet maybe.” A shiver trickles down my spine. Sweat drips from my forehead. I was alone in my room, so who was talking?

“Who are you?” I asked in a timid voice.

“I am your friend.”

I follow the sound and realized that the voice was coming from my bookshelf, the Judge Pao series that my grandpa gave to me 2 years ago, at my 10th birthday. This was my favorite book and I loved Judge Pao's stories. He was so good at solving cases and so fair that it made me want to be a detective or a judge when I grew up.

“But how could a book speak?” I asked myself and cautiously pulled out one of the books. I opened the book tentatively. An image of Judge Pao was smiling at me and the crescent on his forehead was shining brightly.

“Dear Judge Pao, was it you talking to me?” I asked. Instantly I thought I was going crazy. How could this painting be talking?

“Smart boy, yes it's me,” Judge Pao said, shifting in his frame, “you really can be a detective when you grow up.” Judge Pao slowly climbed out of his photo and jumped onto the floor. “Ahh, these muscles are kind of sore now, but I'll be fine.”

I stared at him in amazement. “Judge Pao, how did you come back? You lived in the Song Dynasty!”

“Haha, I am the original Judge Pao. This book you own is the very first book about me. I didn't really die, you see. My body was transferred into the book when your great-great-great-great grandpa wrote it. People had just thought I died! But he put a curse on the book too. Oh yes, he knew I lived on in the book. He said that I could only be freed when a smart and curious boy received this book. But that's not all. I could only leave when there was

a great mystery to be solved.” Judge Pao wiggled his fingers and lifted my computer. “Anyway, what’s this? Never had them in my time?”

Just then I realized how behind Judge Pao was on technology. For all I knew, he lived a thousand years ago. I tried explaining modern innovations to him, but it didn’t work out that well.

“Oh, my head is going to explode with these crazy ‘innovations’ as you say!” Judge Pao shouted, “I don’t need to know about computers or mobile phones or television or any of that nonsense! Just tell me what happened.”

“You know what soccer is?” I asked, and pointed to the giant Messi poster in my bedroom.

“Soco? Socka? What are you blabbing about? Just explain it!” I sighed and fell back onto my soft bed. And so, I told Judge Pao about soccer, and Messi, and what had happened that night. I learned that Judge Pao was listening very carefully.

“Get up you lazy kid!” Judge Pao frowned, “Detectives don’t sleep when they get evidence! They find suspects, get clues, and solve the case faster than others! Let’s go!”

I moaned and got up. Judge Pao grabbed my arm and heaved me up. “So, get some paper and write a list of suspects down!” I got my notepad and pen. “What is that thing? You don’t use the brushes?” Judge Pao examined the paper and pen. “Interesting stuff! Humans have improved quite a lot I see! No more chitter chatter! We must get started.”

I suggested all of the 31 countries that lost the world cup could be suspects and Judge Pao told me to write the name of every single country! “Good detectives are detailed!” he told me.

“But there’s a problem,” I said, “It couldn’t have been them! After they lose, they have to go home. So only France is there!”

“Good catch,” Judge Pao said, “so it’s just France now. But that doesn’t mean it was them.”

“True. That flash of light didn’t seem like anything a human could do. But what other people, or things could have done that?”

Judge Pao thought and said, “People from far off in the universe? What do you call them?”

“Aliens” I cried, “Aliens must have done it! First, most teams have gone home. Second, no human could have done that! But how are we going to catch them?”

“I can fly you know! This crescent on my forehead allows me to go down into the ground and fly into the air!”

“Oh really? I thought you were only able to go down”, I cried, “but there is no oxygen in space, you will die!”

“Never fear! I can do anything!” With that, Judge Pao disappeared into a mist of smoke. I sat down on my bed. I really wondered if he would ever return.

In the evening, Judge Pao was back. “Yes! My friends from Heaven flew up into space and checked all the planet in the umm... solar system. The one that went to Jupiter said he found Messi with a bunch of aliens. I sent all of them to fetch Messi back. I told them to send him back to Qatar.”

“Really?” I asked him skeptically.

“Of course, you have to trust me!” Judge Pao patted my shoulder, “You should go to bed now. It has been a long day. Ahh... I should go too.”

“Where are you going to? Back to your book? Why can’t you stay?”

“Remember that your great-great-great-great grandpa said that I could only come out when there was a great mystery to be solved? Well, I need to go back to that book and I will be there waiting for the next mystery comes. Bye for now!”

“No wait...” but I was too late. Judge Pao had jumped back into his frame and the picture was as still as ever.

The next morning when I got up and checked the news and there was Messi, standing with the World Cup trophy. He was slightly smiling in the photo, as if he was saying, “Thanks for finding me and making my dream come true.”

I turned around and looked at my book about Judge Pao. The photo was just like I had left it last night, as still as if it had been there for thousands of years. I smiled and said, “thank you Judge Pao. You really are the world’s best detective. I look forward to working with you again!”

Judge Pao in the Middle World

Welcome to the underworld, normal at first sight, but at a second glance you will see people without heads walking around in suits, or instead just people without a select few of the vital body parts. The details are too grotesque, but the idea is simple. A small city decorated with small stores and neon plates, is where a Judge decides if someone goes to heaven or not. Now, in the middle of that city lies a courtroom, full of people whose stomachs are churning, even if they don't have a stomach, worrying about the fact that they might be banished to eternal fire, or instead "live" in harmony in heaven. But in the middle of a court, stands a figure of great masculinity. He is the god of, well, the middle of heaven and hell. In his life before, he was one of great power and intelligence, but also kind and loyal. In his life before his desire for justice and love for the people was significant, everybody knew him and worshipped him, he was even compared to a deity! And that will stay with him to his death and be carried on even after. He is the one holding a moon on his forehead. He is Judge Pao.

Now, a family of three slowly eats noodles in a small roadside restaurant and a shimmering sign saying, "Last Noodles" because not a lot can go there twice, and they must be weighed to live on in peace or chaos. But back to the family of three. The child's name is Alex, his mom is Chen, and his dad is Yang. As confused as Alex is with his wobbling chopsticks, he asks, "mum, where even are we?" Chen also asks, "hey Yang, where are we? All I remember was...light." Suddenly, a large figure strides in with confident footsteps and says, "Just the usual for me." Then proceeds to sit down and observe the family of three. But when his eyes stops on the dad, he wrinkles his eyes. Still, he explains, "This is the place where the judgment of whether one goes to heaven, or the exact opposite. I can see what your family went through, and even if I'm truly sorry and full of pity for what happened, choices must be made." Hearing that, Yang purses his lips while Alex and Chen are completely fine. And then the figure introduces himself, "I am Judge Pao, the decider of the rest of your afterlives, and the beacon of justice, report to the courtroom after you guys finish."

As Judge Pao walks slowly back to the court after finishing his noodles, contemplating, "It would be nice if there is a little someone that could stay with me and keep me company." The two huge doors with neon dragon heads show a hologram saying access granted after Judge Pao put his access card on the forehead as he walks into the room with the portals that he sends people in after judgment, not knowing that Alex and his mom are watching. As he sits on a chair, ever so comfortable, strategizing and planning how to take on the next case, he hears a noise in the trash cans in the alley behind the room. As he walks out, Alex and his mom hear the noise and quickly find refuge in a trash storage bin thinking that Judge Pao caught them spying, and Judge Pao is still getting closer. As the footsteps stop right beside the trash bin, they closed their eyes, scared to be caught, and holds their breath. Suddenly, they hear a *swoosh* and a loud and menacing "WHO'S THERE!"

Alex slowly opens his eyes, and what he sees is, darkness, nothing. He realizes, "Judge Pao must've opened the trash cans next to them! Wonderful!" Meanwhile, Judge Pao looks in confusion as the garbage storage goes "Meow!" He looks in astonishment as he sees a small kitten missing a leg shivering in the garbage can. He realizes that the missing leg must be purposefully done, as he hugs the kitten back to the court to treat its injury and to investigate who could've done such a bad deed. As Judge Pao walks back into the room, Alex and his mom slowly creep out of the trash can, covered in garbage and carrying a stench, but otherwise full of relief to not have been caught.

As they are about to leave, Alex spots something in the other trash bin. It's a card, the one that Judge Pao used to get to the portals. Alex's mom quickly reacted saying that if we go to heaven we can live in peace forever, but we must bring your dad with us. As they walk back to the noodle store and call Yang, Judge Pao works on the cat case, when suddenly a hologram case pops out and shows Yang's past life. As Judge Pao reads on, he gets more and more interested. Yang killed three high schoolers as a cop and didn't go to jail for it. However, all the highschoolers were drug dealers and murdered the other cops with him, but then how did his family die? Maybe because of an issue with the family of the three high schoolers? No, now that he thinks of it there should be a fourth highschooler there that wanted revenge. As he keeps researching, he later finds out that a bomb was set in Yang's home that sent them here.

As he is researching the case of the cat, he also build a bionic leg that looks positively wonderful, and he decides to wait until the person that tormented the poor kitten to death dies and send him all the way down without any pity, for any animal in this world deserves respect, let alone has the right not to be tortured like so. As Alex and his family arrive at the door and are deciding whether to open the door or not, Judge Pao realizes that he has lost his access card and proceeds to go into the alleyway to find it because he thought, "Must've lost it in the garbage bin, dam." The sudden footsteps that are loud and the familiar large shadow is immediately visible Alex, so he quietly yet hurriedly whispers, "Mum we must go, mum! We really must go! Now!" His dad says in a determined tone, "you guys go first, at least I can delay him for a while, hopefully long enough a while." Chen nervously shakes the door open with the access card and pulls Alex into the room with the heaven portal, looking back at Yang with reluctance when Yang yells, "GO! JUST GO!" As Judge Pao breaks out of Yang's cling and tries to reach out to Alex and his mom but fails. He looks at Yang with utmost anger and yells, "DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE DONE!! You

were already bad enough above and you pull this stunt in front of ME!?!” As Yang closes his eyes in peace and says, “Punish me however you want, but don’t take my family back.” Judge Pao bellows furiously, “DO YOU THINK THAT I WILL LISTEN TO YOU!! My judgment is finished, and my decision has been made. Go to sleep now, and everything will be done.” Yang replies calmly, “as bad as it may be, I respect you and your choice, and I wish you a good night.” As he slowly leaves and walks towards a small motel, he decides that no matter what the choice is, he has done some things right, and some things wrong, all he can do now, is respect Judge Pao’s choice, and go to sleep.

Judge Pao now has grown rather attached to the small kitten and decides to keep it with him as a friend to fix his loneliness. As he slowly pets the little kitten, he feels as happy as he could ever be, with a friend, and still the protector of justice and the decider of the afterlife.

Yang wakes up on his wooden bed, preparing himself for fire, lava, and red. He opens his eyes to see, a blue sky? White clouds? Green grass? And what looks to be two figures running towards him. He appears to be strangled and trapped by a small figure. As he cleared his eyes, ready to see the devil, the only devil he sees is Alex, and Chen is standing by the side, sporting a golden halo above her head and small feathered wings. All he could’ve ever asked for in his life.

Judge Pao Tale

Have you ever wondered why Judge Pao can solve any case? There is actually a reason. Let me share a story with you about Judge Pao.

When Judge Pao was born, the sunshine pierced through the clouds and right on Judge Pao as the sun turned into the shape of an eye. There was a sign of an eye on the forehead of Judge Pao shining and then disappeared. Judge Pao's parents saw that and believed that their child was given a special power from the gods and will become a powerful man. They kept that in secret and tried their best to influence and make him a fair, intelligent and incorruptible man in the future.

As Judge Pao grew, he discovered that if he concentrated on one point, he can look through that object and if he do that on living thing, he could read others mind. With that special power, he could become rich but he used it for the right way, for justice.

When Judge Pao was old enough to work, he went for the test and became the Judge of a small town — Tian Chang Town. On the first day of working, there was a strange case. A farmer's cow's tongue was cut. Without the tongue, the cow will die soon but according to the Song's law, killing a cow is illegal. Scared and angry, the farmer asked Judge Pao to help and solve his situation.

Judge Pao went the farmer's house to check at the cow and around the farmer. He made his eyes to focus and scanned the house. When the farmer's neighbour, Liu, came out to work, Judge Pao read his mind and found that he cut the cow's tongue. Without proof, Judge Pao could not sentence him to death. Trying hard to find a way, a sound came into his ears, "Try to use this way....."

Judge Pao told the farmer to kill the cow and promised he will not be punished while he posted poster to urge people to report for illegal things done by others. Three days later, Liu came to report the farmer killing the cow. Judge Pao immediately ordered others to capture Liu. Liu shouted, "I am innocent! What did I do? Let me go!"

"You cut the tongue of the farmer's cow, didn't you?!" Judge Pao said as he stared at Liu. Judge Pao's eyes were like sharp knives, piercing into Liu's body and also like eagles' eyes, penetrating everything around.

Shivering, Liu asked bogusly, "What did I do? I am innocent!"

"Why will you report to the farmer when he killed the cow when the cow will die after 3 days without a tongue? Everyone knows that a cow can't survive through 3 days after its tongue was cut so you definitely knew it! It can't be a coincidence!" Judge Pao answered angrily when Liu was lying.

"I...I... I am wrong. Sorry" Liu confessed and was sent to jail.

Judge Pao continued to solve cases as his jobs became higher. Even with power, Judge Pao never used them for bad uses. He was so poor that when he died, there wasn't any money for burying him! He is definitely a great judge and his tales will last forever!

Judge Pao and Two Incidents

In 999, a boy named Judge Pao was born in China, Hefei. The child was better at reading and finding things than others. His parents recognized his abilities early on and helped him experience and learn a lot for Judge Pao. So, he became a wiser and smarter child than most scholars at the early age of 13 thanks to his parents. One day, Judge Pao was sitting in his room reading as usual, and his mother opened the door and said, "Hey, I'll go to the market with my father for a while, keep your house safe." "Yes, mom." This was the last conversation between Judge Pao and his parents. That day, his father and mother were attacked and killed by bandits who appeared at the marketplace. So, he was left alone in a day. He did not go out, drink, or eat for a week. A week later, a monk came to his house. Then the monk asked Judge Pao for something to eat. The good man gave food to the monk. The monk was surprised to see the face of the child giving him dumplings, because his face was so gaunt at Judge Pao. The monk looked at him and asked what had happened. Then Judge Pao told the monk in tears what had happened as if water was pouring from a pot. Upon hearing his story, the monk asked him, who was sad, "Wouldn't you come to the temple with me and live together?" When he heard that, Judge Pao looked at the ground and said, "I will." The monk asked him to bring his luggage out. He entered his room and brought out some clothes and his mother and father's belongings. That is how Judge Pao got a fresh start.

It has already been a week since Judge Pao lived with a monk. In that week, he learned the rules of Buddhism from the great monk who brought him. For example, I learned how to bow and how to spend the day. As usual, he was sitting next to the great monk and bowing in front of the statue of Buddha. But at that time, the oldest monk among the young monks came running and said in an urgent voice. "Big monk, I am in trouble! A big wild boar is running wild in the yard in front of the largest temple." Upon hearing that, the eldest monk hurried out and shouted to the monks inside the temple. "Run away, everyone, now!" After saying that, the eldest monk said to Judge Pao, running to the warehouse behind the temple with the other monks to get a big stick. "You should evacuate into the temple, too." But Judge Pao did not listen to him and went to the place where the boar was. The yard where the wild boar was running was in chaos. Surprised by his enormous size, Judge Pao was about to return to the temple when he saw something strange in his eyes. It was a yellow leaf attached to the skin of a boar. He wanted to take a closer look at the leaves attached to the skin of a wild boar, but he could not see what the leaves were because the eldest monk and other monks drove the wild boar away with sticks. That night, the temple was enveloped in silence, because it was the first time such a big wild boar had run wild in the yard, although other wild boars usually roamed the yard briefly. Judge Pao told the monks when they were all talking about wild boars. "Everyone, I know why the boar ran wild in the yard, I didn't see it closely, but there were yellow leaves on the boar's skin. I think it's like a poisonous leaf." After his words were over, the eldest monk was angry, asking why he was around the boar when it was dangerous, but he praised him for doing well to solve the question about it. So, Judge Pao ended the first case without incident.

After the work, the monks ran to Judge Pao and asked him to solve it if something was unanswered or suspicious. Every time he did that, he solved the cases with all his might. That is how he got the nickname detective in the temple.

As he was solving the cases that the monks inquired about today, the eldest monk approached him and said, "Isn't it hard for you here, Judge Pao?" replied Judge Pao. "No, I'm not tired. I am happy with this life right now." "Really? That is fine. I am afraid you are having a challenging time. Tell me if you have any concerns. I will listen carefully," said the great monk in a warm voice.

That day, because the temple was noisy, because the big spoiler disappeared. All members came back to find him. But they did not see his big spoiler. When everyone is getting nervous. "This is the second case of me! I will solve this case." Judge Pao said. He asked him to the room with a big spoiler. "Sir, where did you go to the market today?" "I went to the market today, but I certainly went to the market. But after I went to the market, I heard that Judge Pa said, Judge Pa said. "How long did you come back in the market?" "Well...Maybe 40 minutes." The Smith said. "That's how much is it disappeared between 40 minutes; how much is it? Judge Pao. "I'm probably going to do apple size." She said a sad voice. "Oh! Then, there is a dog in front yard. Because the dog asked a lot of things, and hide the hole under his house. I'll find it soon." Judge Pa opened the door with bright voice. Five minutes later, he ran into a big smile on the hand. "Also, you solved the case, he said he saw his big spoiler.

After the case was settled, the eldest monk became fonder of Judge Pao. So, he showed his ability and made everyone believe and like him.

The Tales of Judge Pao

Sherlock Holmes, Batman, Detective Pikachu. They all have one thing in common. They all use their knowledge and wit to solve their cases and mysteries. They are all very skilled. But only one rivals all of them. And that person is Judge Pao. Or more accurately known as Bao Zheng.

A person with a passion of fighting crime and cleaning up the land. He lived more than 1000 years ago from today. Before any other justice fighter alive. His name might be remarkably similar. As he has inspired many books and films. Many of the justice fighters do not exist, but this hero was very much alive. This is the story of Judge Pao.

Bao Zheng was the son of a peasant in China. Although he was born in poverty his parents were optimistic for him. As he did good in his school, and started reading at the age of five. And as he read, he was inspired by Confucian of benevolent governance and the stories of officials in history made him thrive.

At the youthful age of 28, he had qualified into the highest rank of Imperial Scholar, The Jinshi. But at the time his parents were struggling and to frail to look after themselves. So, he had to push back his ambitions and take of them, which he did until his late thirties. This, however, very luckily did not affect his career at all. People in China respected young men who sacrificed years of work to help their parents.

And so, he was then accepted into the government and became a high ranking official. And Bao Zheng showed his skill and fearlessness to the world. He was an uncompromising judge, fearlessly castigating imperial families. He hated corruption. One of the reasons of his fame was his courage in lecturing those who did things that were stupid and illogical. And that included the emperor as well. The emperor who could have instantly have him executed but his courage stood up.

In 1250, Japan declared war on China. And they were sending spies all over China. There were rumors of spies but their location was never confirmed. Until one day, the emperor received news of the spies in a nearby hideout in the woods. So, he immediately sent troops to take them out. But Bao already knew it was a trap. So, he warned the emperor to make the troops retreat. But the emperor was tired of his actions in bossing the him around. He ignored Bao and sent the troops anyway. But he would regret that decision.

The troops arrived at the hideout with their weapons ready to attack at any moment. But all they saw was a hut made from wood and hay. The troops slowly marched over, opening the wooden door. Then suddenly the hut has exploded. It was rigged to explode at any time. And it had wiped out most of the troop while the rest being seriously injured. And Bao had scolded the emperor saying he should have listened to him. But the emperor had enough. He thought that Bao was too arrogant. But he could not kill him since he could be a valuable asset. So, he locked Bao in a metal prison with white robes.

And Bao was disappointed. He was disappointed in the emperor for being so selfish. And he could not do anything since he was locked up. But what he did not know was that his freedom was coming sooner than expected. It had only been 3 days later. Bao was doing better in prison than he had expected. It was not half bad. He had just been patient and meditating until he was free. But obviously peace does not last so long. The emperor had declared war on Japan. As he wanted revenge for the damage they had done to their land. And he has sent almost all their ships to fight the war.

And Bao already knew that they would lose. And as expected they did. All of China's ships had fallen, except for ten. And the emperor was in panic. China was about to fall if he did not make a decision soon. So the emperor only had one plan and one plan only. He freed Bao and begged him to save them from Japan. And Bao didn't have a choice. This was his home. So, he had to defend it. But with only 10 ships. And with Japan having almost a 100. The chances of them winning was near impossible.

It was the day that Japan would try to invade China again. And Bao readied. The remaining men, prepared for what could be the biggest fight they would ever be a part of. And they departed with 10 ships made of solid wood and metal. All armed with canons ready to fire. As they neared the border of China and Japan. They could see the crowded ships that Japan had. They were all armed and ready to crush China's remaining ships. And Bao seeing this horde of ships. He had begun to lose hope. And as they became nearer and nearer, Japan began to fire. The sound cracking sounds of canons breaking through the air could be heard from a mile away.

As the canons blew past and men looking for cover. All China could do was defend. As Japan kept firing and coming closer. But Bao could not show fear. Before they had departed. Bao knew that Japan would attack. So, he had ordered one of the builders. To build a ship that was ahead of its time. A ship that could crush through other ships

with no sweat. It was called the Turtle ship, which was Bao's backup plan. The Turtle ship had 2 levels: the bottom layer for the rows and the top for the canons. The ship was layered in spikes so that troops cannot penetrate through it by hand.

And it had a giant Chinese dragon head at the front. Where the biggest canon would fire. As Japan's ships got closer. The Turtle ship would come to China's aid. And it would ram into Japan's ship, obliterating them into pieces. But they only had one turtle ship, so they had to be careful. As the Turtle ship destroyed Japan's ships, some had gotten closer to China's ships. But Bao had to wait for the right timing. As Japan's ships got closer, One of the Generals in the ship shouted, "What is he doing! We must fire at ONCE!"

But Bao did not give the order yet. He waited until Japan got closer, and closer and then Bao ordered the ships to turn sideways. So, that the canons were aiming to the front. And Bao shouted as loud as he could, "FIRE!"

And so, all the 10 ships had started firing straight into the ships of Japan, and they all crumbled and exploded. As hundreds of men died. Bao looked into Japan's exploding ships, one had gotten too close. And had shot a canon straight into the ship that Bao was in. And at that moment the Turtle ship caught up and rammed into the last ship of Japan. But Bao's ship had exploded. And Bao was nowhere to be found.

And on that day, he was known to have defeated the entirety of Japan's 100 ships, with only 10 ships to himself. This was the story of Judge Pao.

What Happened to Nastia?

It was an ordinary day. Everyone needed to go to school as usual. The only unusual matter is how one of the students were missing. No one heard from her. The girl was called Nastia. Nastia never skipped a day of school, and everyone knows it because, she is always talking non-stop. Even when the teachers tell her to settle down to her seat, she would always have something. Everyone knew that something was wrong because, when the teacher came in, she looked like she just saw a ghost. All the bright colours from our teacher's face have been drained out. Then she gave us the horrifying news. She told us how Nastia told her mother that she was going out to the roof to get some fresh air, so she walked out of her house and walked up the cold empty stairwell. When she was up on the roof, she fell off the edge. She fell until she reached the floor with a loud "boom." Me and my friends were horrified. First, we thought that she might have done it on purpose, but we were confused because, Nastia was always so happy and joyful. It does not really make any sense why she would just end her life so easily. So, me and my friends decided to investigate.

"Judge Pao", my friends called me. My real name is Bao Zheng, but everyone calls me Judge Pao since I love solving crimes. Solving crimes and mysteries is not easy, so I solve them with my friends. We are a group with 6 people. I am the oldest, and the youngest member in our group is called Larissa, Larissa Everdeen. Larissa is very smart but, she is also strict. Whenever we do something wrong, she will tell us but, if we realise that she also did something wrong and we tell her, she will get very offended. The other four people in the group are Jessie Finch, Sammy Baggins, Denise Smith, and Max Jackson.

For the first couple of days, me and my friends had no idea why Nastia would have ended her life, but after 3 days without any ideas, we started to think, what if there was another reason. She may have slipped off the edge, but then Larissa gave us a wild but logical answer. Larissa said, "what if someone pushed her off." we were all stunned, but it was possible, but "how do we know who was the one who did it?" asked Jessie. "We will have to start with a suspect." said Denise, "but who should we start with?" asked Sammy. No one answered Sammy since all of them also did not know who their first suspect be. They all thought long and hard until I finally decided to tell everyone that the first suspect should be Nastia's mother, since she was the only person who knew that Nastia was going to go to the roof, but the information which keeps us still confused is the fact that Nastia and her mother has a very close relationship, so it does not really make sense on why she would do something so cruel and evil to her own daughter that she has cared for and loved deeply.

Our second suspect was our teacher, Ms. Caroline. Ms. Caroline is one of our suspects since she was there when she witnessed the scene of the tragic death. Then our last suspect is the quiet student in our class. His name is Seth. Seth is very quiet, and he always sits in the back of the class. He always tries to avoid the teacher from calling him to answer a question. Seth has always had something against Nastia. It is hard to notice since he is always so quiet, but whenever Nastia says something very loudly, a mysterious dark aroma consumes the light in Seths body and it makes us feel like there is something which Seth has against Nastia, and coincidentally, the day of the tragic incident, Seth was absent from school. "But Seth is always so quiet," said Max. "Even if he is quiet, that does not mean he cannot be a psycho who should be in a psych ward," said Larissa. Even though we were all not sure about Seth, we kept him as one of our suspects. We all went home after discussing a little more about this case of Nastia.

It is now the next day, which is a Saturday. My group of friends and I decided to visit the scene where Nastia fell. We saw nothing remarkably interesting which could help us with our investigation, but on the roof something small, but noticeable. It was a small but heavy golden watch. My eyes widened and i started to tremble when I saw it. My friends saw me standing still, but my legs shaking uncontrollably, they walked over and asked what was wrong. I was so shocked that I could not even say a single word out of my mouth, so I pointed. The only thing that I was able to do was point. I pointed at the golden watch and looked at my friends, when they turned their heads, and until their faces turning as pale as a ghost. We quickly called the police men the come up to the roof.

At first the police men thought that we were just joking, but we explained that there was something that may help solve the mystery. They finally came and first they just took a long, then they said that they would bring it down to the station, and explained how we had to come with them since we were the ones who found it. When we arrived at the station, we had to sit for what felt like forever, but finally after an eternity, the police men called us to enter a room, where he was going to talk to us. He first asked us some basic questions, for example, how old we were and our name, but then, he asked if we knew who the golden watch belonged to and we quietly but clearly said one name, one name which we thought we would not say, Seth. It was Seth all along. The quiet student who sat at the back, who always looked unhappy when Nastia was talking. The person who committed the crime was Seth.

It has been a couple of days since the incident. Seth has been arrested and sentenced to life in prison. Everything went slowly going back to normal.

Until...

“No! No baba! No please don’t! No.....” An anxious and desperate voice in the jaws of death was shouting in his dreams, a man in his 60s with a crescent on his forehead woke up as he reached to get his zhangziou futou hat placed on a dark black rocking table along his bed with his long hairy white coloured beard sat on his lap touching his knees. He grabs the hat and places it on his forehead. He is the great Judge Bao of China!

He gets up from his bed, opens the door and enters the hall. Looking slight into the picture of a young and handsome man wearing a strong metallic armour over his red suit. From inside of the frame he was gazing into his father’s eyes, his eyes were as dark and warm as chocolate with a gentle benevolent smile on his face. Judge Bao stretched his hand to pat him with endearment as he brinks his forehead and eyes as he stares at his beloved son Bao Yi, full of affection as a drop of tears dropped from his eyes. After some time he exhales with long contentment as he moves away his hand and slowly walks away from the picture and sits on an old rocking chair with his arms folded, head rested on the back of the chair and his eyes closed as he starts moving back and forth on his rocking chair.

As he moves back and forth he hears a tender and warm voice call out “Baba, your awake so early in the morning? Is everything alright?” A young beautiful woman wearing a long pink skirt under a long matching Chang Ao with wide sleeves stands in front of him. She was very skinny and had pink cheeks and red lips as red as a cherry blossom. She always wore a gentle smile on her face and a pearl necklace over her neck.

Bao Zheng opens his eyes instantly retorting to the voice “No my dear, I had a nightmare again. It was just more hair raising this time. I couldn’t sleep at all. I guess I’ll have to suffer the consequences of my wrong doings, but what’s even more painful is the unbelievable truth that he abandoned us. That you completely lost all your happiness when your husband passed away, and it’s all because of me. Please forgive me, my dear child!” Cried Bao Zheng.

“No baba! It’s not like you think, you didn’t do anything wrong! None of this was because of you, please don’t hurt me more by apologising.” She tried convincing him.

“I’m sorry my dear child, I’m getting old yet I’m still not able to forget all those bitterness in the past. I’m awaiting the day when I too join my son.” Bao Zheng said as he took a long breath.

“So is this it? Is this all of the great Justice Bao? I always regarded you as my father, you are the only relation I have after the death of my husband. But you too want to abandon me? Why baba? Why? Why should only those who choose the righteous path suffer? Don’t those who make people cry and weep just for happiness ever be taught a lesson? You are called justice bao, you are now the symbol for justice in china, you served justice to thousands of families, but your own family is suffering injustice. Why don’t you raise your voice? Why don’t you give me justice? Why? I want to know why! Tell me baba! Tell me why!” Cried Lady Cui.

“I’m sorry my child. Please forgive me! You have always been a righteous daughter for me, but I could not help as a father when you were to loose your family. As you said being Justice Bao I failed to serve you justice. I killed your husband for his wrong doings but, but I never thought of its impact on you and your life, I wanted to make sure you don’t suffer the consequences of his wrongdoings alone through your whole life. I’m sorry, all of this is my mistake! Please forgive me my dear! Please forgive me! Judge Bao cried as he confessed the truth of his son.

“You? You killed my husband? You killed your own son? For what? For what did you ever do this? And you never told me! You’ve been lying to me for all these days! I only thought of you as a father nothing more than that, but you killed my husband! You separated him from me! But why? Why’d you do such a thing? Tell me why?” Questioned lady Cui.

“Because he chose the wrong path! He slaughtered an innocent man just for his own greed.” Bao Zheng started to narrate an untold tale of the truth, the story began twenty years ago when the emperor started to pick boys above the age of fifteen to train for his imperial armies. As you know his lion-hearted son Bao Yi made friends with a very skilful, knowledgeable as well as young and good looking man his name was Li Jingyi. He was not from a very wealthy family, yet he always tried to push through every struggle and prove to everyone that he is capable of anything. Bao Yi and Li Jingyi were bosom buddies, but an unexpected test awaited their relationship. The both of them were equally strong and astute so it was always difficult to decide who was the best. After their raining Li Jingyi

was put in charge of the army defences in the north of China and Bao Yi was to stay in the capital and protect the emperor. After five long years they were brought back together when the emperor was in need of prioritised safety, Li Yingyi was transferred to the capital Beijing again. Bao Yi was delighted to welcome his friend back home, the two were on cloud nine. They started working unitedly once again.

After a few weeks their jobs became highly competitive, only one had to be chosen to replace the head of army forces of China after the death of the head commander. It was a blot from blue when Bao Yi decided to kill his friend for his greed and advantage. “I saw him stab Li Yingyi’s chest as he fell to the ground with a whole river of blood flowing down to the ground. Bao Yi slowly kneeled down with his hands stained by his dear friend’s blood. His majesty was with me during the event, he and I discussed as we concluded that the only punishment suitable for this situation would be to kill him right there and make this truth be hidden for ever so that people continue to respect me as a government official and also to serve justice to Li Yingyi, because A LIFE IS ONLY EQUAL TO ANOTHER LIFE. I had to kill my beloved son with these bloody hands. As a judge I knew I was right but as a father my soul was full of tears and unbearable pain for killing my own son as he begged for mercy.” Judge Bao stopped as he started to weep so did lady Cui as she sat n the ground. The room was filled with sorrow and a sense of loss.

A few moments later Lady Cui stood up and holding both her hands and making them touch each other in a way of conveying regards to her father in-law. “Thank you baba, thank you so much. You made sure I don’t carry the blame for my husband’s wrongdoings, but I questioned you so badly. I’m so sorry, please forgive me! Please!” Cried Lady Cui.

“You don’t need to be forgiven my dear, you did nothing wrong. You aren’t to be blamed for nothing. Any of my descendants who commits bribery as an official shall not be allowed back home nor buried in the family burial site. He who doesn’t share my values is not my descendant. That is why I burned my son after he died without bringing him back home. And now I shall peacefully rest. Forever as I reviled the truth.” Judge bao uttered his last words as he inhaled and exhaled deeply to let go of his breath forever. He truly is a great hero and judge he does deserve to be the symbol of justice. Now I put down my burden of carry the truth as a family secret passed on from generations to generations and finally tell the world an untold story about a very well-known character in ancient Chinese stories, Judge Bao. The untold story of Judge Bao.

The Past and Now

It was a hot summer evening. I woke up in the middle of a path way, there were a lot of people who walked by ignoring me. The clothing they were wearing was very unusual. They had these things in their hands too. It looked like a brick but with numbers on it. They were holding them up to their ears and talking to it like it was talking back.

Without worrying about all of this weirdness I got up because people were unusually looking at me. I did not know anything, where I was, why everything is so different and what are these things they have in their hands, so I asked them.

“What is that thing in your hand and what year am I in?”

They looked at me like I was an idiot, but in reality, I was a judge. My name is Bao Zheng. I worked for justice, I fiercely looked into corrupt officials and found the truth. I helped many people and stopped so much corruption. Now I’m here, no one cares about me. Where has all my glory gone.

When I came back to now some man was looking at me but this time, I didn’t like it. “What are you looking at, I am the mighty bao Zheng, also known as judge pao”, I said angrily.

“Wow, nice costume” he said with a laugh.

I was so mad ready to slap him but I kept my calm and remembered who I was.

I started walking and suddenly this piece of paper flew into my face. I shrugged it off but something caught my eye. I saw a date. I was in 1997. That is seven hundred years! How am I still alive for this long? Not knowing what to do or say I kept walking. It was cold and I didn’t have a house at this time. After walking for ages, I felt tired and hungry, the sun had already set.

Right before I was about to stop walking and settle under a bridge, I saw something shine. It was only a few meters away so I went to see what it was. As I was getting close the shine started to look like a really big person. It was a statue and it was in a temple which looked exactly like when I was awake and working for the people. The statue look like me. The hat and clothing were very similar. I saw a rock; it had my name on it. This is my grave. This is who I was. People still appreciated me. They knew and remembered what I have done. Thank you

A portal to the sky had been formed. Bao Zheng floated across. There was a huge burst of light, resting as an immortal. The Sherlock Holmes of China had done his duty many years ago changing China forever.

An Act of Kindness

It had been a long, long day for Judge Pao, after several court trials with people of all sorts. His bed was uncannily inviting, and he found himself drifting off to sleep, only to wake up a second later.

Instead of his moonlit room, he looked around to see dreary, dull surroundings. Tall, monstrous skyscrapers loomed over him, as he looked up at grey clouds, completely clueless. His traditional Chinese robes were the only pop of colour to be seen in miles. People were dressed in unconventional robes, with not a smile to be seen. He tried to ask someone where he was, but the only answers he got were confused looks of disgust. Finally, he heard a word, 'Lon - don', and all of a sudden he was fluent in the art of the British English.

It was 1887, and the homeless population far surpassed the one of the rich. Sadness and misery would dance through crowds, wiping the smiles off of their faces with their lace handkerchiefs. Commonality had financial issues, relationship issues, and would forget to believe in the good.

London was infamously filthy. Not only the people's attitudes, but the environment as well. The air was sharp and choking, with sooty residue forming the grey clouds. Factory fumes were inhaled like our daily dose of oxygen, setting people up for major illnesses. The Thames river would be thick with human sewage and turned a musty, brown shade. The first thing you'd notice the moment you stepped out onto the street would be the mud that lined the carriages, but of course, that wouldn't necessarily be mud. Rather than the sweet, romantic smell of rain, you would smell the urine that soaked the streets.

Judge Pao saw the miserable state of this could - be - great city, and blamed it all on the people, and the little faith they had in each other. He swore to instil hope into this society through believing in the good, and just needed the right inspiration. "The society needs a person, real or fictional, to believe in. Someone like me."

"Come and buy specially made locks from Sher!" Turning around, he saw a man yelling on top of his lungs, standing behind a stall on the side of the road. "Perfect, affordable homes for everyone on sale!" Another man was screaming from the other side of the road. All sound blocked out, and Judge Pao's eyes opened wide. "That's it! Sherlock holmes!" Suddenly, the sun shined, and the judge thanked his stars he stumbled upon this mysterious land.

He imagined a man, just like these foreigners. He would be 6 feet tall, but he would be so lean that he would seem even taller. He would have a gaunt figure, made even gaunter by his billowing grey cloak. He would have a thin eager face, with a long thin back, and slender fingers. His hair would be black, with heavy tufted brows, with a hawk - like nose. His steady grey eyes, sharp and piercing, would have the universe locked inside. He would be described as a calculating machine, with something particularly inhuman about him. He had rather an egotistical trait, one of being annoyed with people of less intelligence than himself. He was a detective, and believed that detection should be an exact science, and should be treated with nonemotional mannerisms. To have a partner or not would be the people's choice.

He was very proud of himself, considering what he had done for these poor people. Now he just needed a way to execute this master plan. He looked up at a sign telling him where on earth he was. 221b Baker Street. He tried talking to all the people that passed by, trying to sell his idea, but was ignored. He was just about to give up, when he mustered all his courage, and tapped a passing man on the shoulder. The man turned, and said; "Yes?" Little did he know, he would be one of the most succesful writers in history.

Judge Pao smiled, and sold his idea. The man, who introduced himself as Arthur, listened patiently. He kept glancing at his watch, as he had an appointment to get to, but out of pure respect and kindness, he listened with all his ears open. As Judge Pao went on, Arthur's eyes began to widen, and he wrote everything down in his little notebook he carried everywhere. This was absolute genius. When the judge finished, Arthur exclaimed; "Blimey! That was ruddy marvelous, the way your mind works!", clapping the flushed Judge on the back. "I must be on my way now, lad, that was wonderful!" Arthur went on, making his way to the other side of the street.

Judge Pao, still dazed, at the kindness of a stranger, felt a warm glow inside, touched by Arthur's big heart. No one had bothered to stand and listen to him, but this man. He wished silently, "I wish Arthur becomes succesful, and gets rewarded for what he did." Just as those words left his mouth, he was back in his bed, back home.

Judge Pao awoke to a sunlit room, and took a deep breath, smelling the clean air, and the familiar smell of home. He had a strange dream, in a colourless land, and he could speak an absurd language. “No matter,” he thought in his native language, “it was all a dream, now, who’s in court today?”

It was now 1887, and Arthur had become a famous author of the bestselling books about the infamous detective, Sherlock Holmes, and his sidekick, Watson. His first short story, A Study in Scarlet, was immensely successful. This just showed, that a small act of kindness could lead to something much bigger. Arthur Conan Doyle was a well known name in the households of London. This was just the beginning, Sherlock Holmes would become a legend for centuries to come, and would continue to gain fame long after Arthur’s death. In 1902, Arthur would be knighted, for work in South Africa.

If there’s one thing to be learned from this tale, is that, a little kindness goes a long way. If you just stop to pause, and listen, you never know what could happen.

84 Letters

The clock strikes midnight. Judge Pao is awake, watching the rest of the village slowly drown into the depths of their dreams. With nothing but a candle whose flame is about to go out on his bedside, he waits to be taken to a fantasy just a world away. Rewind an hour back and Judge Pao is reading letters sent from all around the city, with too much to handle. Lighting a candle and placing it on his wooden desk, he begins to count how many letters were put in his makeshift mailbox over two days, and after counting, he finds 84 letters gathered in a pile now sitting on his bed. Although they all look the same, one letter in particular caught Judge Pao's eye. He separates it from the other letters and places it in a drawer. His candle was about to go out, so he might as well wait until the next day.

It's morning. The rooster already crowed four times, and Judge Pao is finally fully awake. Eager for another mystery, he rips the wax off and pulls out the paper, ripping the paper in the process. Blank. He rips another piece, with the same outcome. Soon, a pile of blank papers replace the once valuable 84 letters. He ripped some letters yesterday. They had writing. Some were even stamped with a special wax reserved for authorities. He wasn't certain, but pretty sure that someone had swapped the letters. To be fair, it was easy to take letters from his makeshift mailbox. It did have a latch, but looked more like a crate with an opening large enough for any grown man to stick his hand in and take it out with ease.

He saw about thirty people come towards the mailbox yesterday. If all the letters were blank, it had to have been the last person. But with his aging memory, he could barely remember what any of them looked like, much less who they could have been. He just never assumed anybody would take his precious letters. After all, this has been practiced for years, if not decades by this point. Why would anybody want to steal now?

Judge Pao grabs an unripped piece of paper from his pile. He pulls out his brush and ink, picking out the oldest brush and a barely wet ink pad. He draws out every suspect from his memory, and finishes the drawings with a man dressed in silk, who looked as if he was headed towards the town square afterwards. Without any hesitation, he knew who it was. It was Merchant Wu.

Merchant Wu was a high-profile merchant, respectably the most successful one in town. He specialized in trading porcelain and tea leaves. Although they held separate jobs, Judge Pao had always sensed some sort of dislike from the merchant. Judge Pao has always just ignored him and his arrogant comments when passing by his house, though he didn't have any idea what that had to do with his letters. They were used to solve crime, after all. Merchant Wu was just another man travelling the Silk Road and occasionally returning to provide his family with the goods he traded for.

For the first time in what seemed like forever, Judge Pao leaves his house. He closes the takes his mailbox into his house, closes the windows, then locks the bulky door. He is headed towards the town square. Passing the stalls selling fruits and vegetables, he finally reaches the neighborhood reserved for the wealthy. House 13, House 14, House 15... Judge Pao was looking for House 27. He remembered the address from a year ago, when merchant Wu left a burglary report letter in his mailbox.

House 27. There it was, a house that was more decorated than the ones beside it. It made House 26 and 28 look like peasant houses. Through a small opening in a window, he notices a pile of letters. His pile of letters. Not wanting to disturb those inside, he reaches his hand in and grabs half the letters in the first try. On the second try, he grabs the other half. Taking a shortcut through the woods and back to his house, he makes it back to his house undetected, with his letters. He thought it would be a good idea to replace Merchant Wu's stolen pile with the blank papers he gave Judge Pao. They were ripped though, so in the end he decides to just take the letters and not return anything.

The next morning, the rooster barely crowed once before Judge Pao was at his desk solving the mystery. Why did merchant Wu steal the letters, and what would he do with them? He thinks of different theories all the way until noon. He sees a thin wooden strip slid under his door. Picking it up, he sees that it reads "A new detective in town, Detective Wu. Meet in town square tomorrow on the roosters fourth crow." So that's what the letter robbery was for! Merchant Wu wanted to be a detective. From what is seems though, he wasn't just trying to be any detective. He was trying to replace Judge Pao. He decides to go to the town square the next day.

When Judge Pao arrives the next day, a crowd has already formed. He manages to somehow spot merchant Wu in the crowd, and he stacks some wooden boxes on top of each other to stand out. He starts his speech. It's about how

he has noticed an increased amount of crime and wishes to help fight it. In the hour he gave this speech, this was all Judge Pao heard. He could only think about this because three years ago, he had said these exact words in a speech. He decides to go home before merchant Wu's speech ends, and do some investigation. Merchant Wu has the most successful trading career in the entire town, and probably even the state. Why would he suddenly want to change profession now? It can't be out of pure will to help the people, considering his greed and narcissism.

Contacting some old friends in the trading industry, Judge Pao manages to get answers just three weeks later. It turns out the demand for both porcelain and tea leaves have plummeted, leaving merchant Wu with just a tenth of his previous earnings, and he heard that detectives make a heavy load of money. Although Judge Pao didn't have any evidence to prove merchant Wu was just being a detective for the money, much less get him charged for it, what he did have was some witnesses that claimed to have seen the merchant steal the letters.

Because of both Judge Pao and merchant Wu's social status, this case was taken to the high court. There wasn't anyone other than Merchant Wu's own family who would testify for him, not even those who showed up to the town square to support him and any family member would vouch for their own relative. This led the court to almost instantly rule in Judge Pao's favor, and put Merchant Wu behind bars for a month. Outside the courthouse, a celebration starts. There are cheers and drinks, for China's most legendary detective, Judge Pao.

New Tales of Judge Pao

There was a serial killer free in hongkong...killed 4 people in 6 days, every victim had a missing organ, murderer identity unknown, but left a note on a piece of card with a short paragraph every time in the scene about where he's doing his last move...

It was another windy night, two black shadows standing under a dock one taller and looks tougher, and the other tall and skinny. It was Judge Pao.

Judge Pao was standing next to his assistant, a 21 year-old young man named Wen Ling, followed Judge Pao for 6 years and always admired him.

Judge Pao wasn't looking like he usually does, brushed hair and always a cigarette in the left pocket of his blue navy coat; he was looking tired, to be exact, he hasn't been sleeping well for 5 days since the murderer started killing. He knows whoever is out there is smart. Genius in fact, but not a genius used his talents in the right place.

"Is he going to show up this time?" Wen ling looked at Judge Pao and questioned.

"He showed up last time. We have a brief guess on who he is, we have to check out who he is right now, right here. He can't be free for long." Judge Pao picked out the card with the clue from the last murder scene and read it aloud:

*"Midnight 3 awaits to be seen,
When the bell rings twice,
Meet me at the waters,
But only 2 at a time.
He will be rest in peace,
Joining the rivers nice and ease."*

There was a local huge electrical bell in the restaurant owned by wen ling, Judge Pao's assistant, they've already made sure the bell wouldn't do anything itself only if someone hacked in the system.

They were standing on the beach with the wind for about 30 minutes, and wen ling got tired:

"Why don't we go inside my restaurant for a rest? He's gotta do something to my bell first."

"Wen Ling, just be patient, it's only 31 minutes after 3 am, he's going to show up!"

"Whatever, you could do the job hero, I'm getting some drink in there." Wen ling pointed at the restaurant right there next to the palm tree.

"Come on! You got like 50 guards hiding near the shadows, what you worried about man?" Wen Ling turned around and started walking.

"Fine fine, you got me. BUT if it's because of you we lost him you're getting fired." Judge Pao finally decided to join wen ling as in taking a tiny break of drinking some homemade apple juice from only slept one hour per day.

They were sitting in front of each other on a soft, warm sofa and a rectangular glass table in the middle. "What if we actually lose him?"

Judge Pao asked and then took a gulp of the apple juice while staring at wen ling.

"No, we won't. Just drinking apple juices isn't gonna scare him away."

"You know, I always wondered why is he like a god, seems like he can see everything, knowing what we'd be doing for the next step?"

"Well you said he was a genius but standing on the dark side right?"

"I guess he is then, but I'm going to get him."

"Oh, no you won't." Wen Ling stopped drinking and looked at him in the eyes.

"Wha—"

Before Judge Pao could react,

Dong—Dong—

The bell rang and interrupted judge pao's sentence.

Judge pao immediately turned behind to look at the large plastic bell behind him, and then—all he could see and feel was pitch black and pain in the back of his head.

When he finally opened his eyes, he was all tied up and his mouth got taped too, he was on a plastic chair, in a dark, endlessness large room with only a small tiny bulb on top of him as the light source, when judge pao was still trying to remember what happened before all this, a person walked in front of him, It was the face he was the most familiar with for 6 years, Wen Ling.

Judge pao's eyes couldn't show how much betrayal he felt at the moment...all the happy moments vanished in this moment. He realized that why the murderer was a genius, why he was like god, and why could he predict every step they would be doing next. It was all because of the 'god' was always behind him, behind him for 6 years. But why?

"I know what you're thinking, why? Why would I do this?"

Wen Ling started slowly walking around him...

"Well, to be frank, I had enough of this world, and there's nothing that can cure me. So, I've decided to become god instead of praying to him. And you, Pao, are my last move." He stopped walking at the last sentence and knelt down to look at the anger and sadness in judge pao's face even with a taped mouth.

"I'll do it quick, don't worry." A smile appeared on Wen Ling's face, and then suddenly he took out a surgery knife in his right pocket of his coat, when he was planning to poke straight into judge pao's chest, judge pao closed his eyes and was about to except the truth, because the person in front is the person who cared and supported him the most in the past 6 years, and also the person who wants to end his life.

But then, a swift figure knocked Wen Ling aside and punched him! The huge noise made judge pao open his eyes and saw what was happening, shock and surprise on who saved his life, it was chief Feng Hao who worked in the restaurant! Feng Hao reacted quickly and cut off the ropes around judge pao and dragged him towards the door, shutting it afterwards when they all got out.

It all happened to fast Judge Pao didn't even have time to take a breath, but he didn't wait until the demon was awake again, he called for backup and tied Wen Ling on a sofa in his restaurant.

Watch behind your back, it might be the devil! JUDGE PAO SAVED THE DAY AGAIN!

New Tales of Judge Pao

Judge Pao was a well-known judge in ancient China. He was working on a case which a man was killed. The wife of this man claimed that his husband was killed by the son of the local officer. The local officer was very powerful and had strong connections to the local mafia in those days. He has been doing all his ways trying to stop Judge Pao to help that poor woman. First, he tried to corrupted Judge Pao by offering him lots of gold. However, Judge Pao was not attracted and insisted to help the woman as he believed everybody has the same right and whoever committed to crime had to be punished. After being rejected by Judge Pao, then this local officer demanded the local mafia who he has been paying lots of gold to this group of mafias to threatened Judge Pao. Again, Judge Pao was not affected by all these and he believed what he thought is right. This made local officer very angry so he decided to hire this group of mafias to kill Judge Pao.

Judge Pao walked around the crime scene to check any evidence left by the murderer. Suddenly one group of people with face covered up trying to attacked him. He got hit by one of the attackers from the back of his head. He started to feel dizzy and finally lost his consciousness.

Without knowing how long, Judge Pao woke up and he realized he was in a dark room that he couldn't see anything and he started to be scared. He started to search around and using his hands to feel and trying to figure his way out. Suddenly he touched on something which was protruding from the smooth surface that he could feel. He heard a sound "click", then suddenly everything brightened up. He was blinded by this light and he has not used to the light after being a while in the dark. He tried to cover up his eyes with his hand. Slowly he moved away his hand and started to observe the surrounding. He has no idea what was the thing that he has touched with the sound "click" that enable him to see around. He looked around at those things he had never seen before. It took him a long time to see several pictures which were in a wooden frame that hang on kind of wall which was not made by grass as where he used to live. He was so amazed by those drawing on the picture as it looked so real and those people in the picture looked so genuine except these people in strange costumes.

While he is observing the drawing on the wall, suddenly he heard a sound and the door opened. It was the young man in the picture that walked in. The young man was also surprise to see someone in the room. He walked toward him and asked, "Who are you?" Judge Pao replied, "I am Judge Pao. Where am I?" Then he followed by next questions as he got so many questions that he couldn't waited for the young man to answer.

The young man looked very surprised when he heard Judge Pao introduced himself and he started to laugh, "I am working on my thesis about Judge Pao but it doesn't mean that I am interested in a movie", said the young man. "I have no clues how you ended up in my room with your Judge Pao costume on", young man continued. "By the way, you look like ancient Judge Pao. Where did you get your costume from?" "This is not dress up, I am who I am, I am Judge Pao and this is not ancient, I am living today!", shouted Judge Pao and he got insulted by the reply of the young man. Young man looked very upset and was angry. "Come on! We are living in year 2023 and today is not Halloween, please don't fool me with your stupid jokes and costume!", young man shouted back. "I have no idea what are you talking about. I am Judge Pao from China and I don't understand at all what you have said", Judge Pao started to get confuse and lost. "Where am I? Am I in heaven? Everything looks so strange and the way you talked, the way you dressed and the way you act are totally different from mine", Judge Pao lost his calmness and his voice started to trembling. Young man started to realize this is not a joke, he could sense that the man in front of him started to shiver and he can sense that the man was nervous.

"I am Jack, I take history as my major and now I am writing a thesis about Judge Pao", said young man in a gentle way. He continued, "I am not sure how you have ended in my room but today is Jan 25th of 2023, so Judge Pao was an history figure to us as he lived in ancient time long time ago before I was born". Judge Pao got so shocked with Jack replied, he started to soliloquize and keep on asking to Jack, "You sure I'm not in heaven? You sure I was dead?" Jack looked at Judge Pao and thought that he has lost his mind. "I am sure this is not heaven, this is the world I was living. Since I am alive so I assume you are alive as well", replied Jack. "Then why am I here?" Asked Judge Pao. "I have no clue", replied Jack.

Suddenly Jack realized there was a moon mark on the forehead of Judge Pao. Jack knew that the real Judge Pao has a moon shape birthmark on his forehead. This birthmark cannot be copied or imitated. Jack tried to wash off the moon mark on Judge Pao's forehead but it did not work. Jack started to be convinced and believed that this man in front of him could be Judge Pao. Judge Pao started to share to Jack what happened to him before this. Jack was convinced that Judge Pao has traveled from ancient time to modern world. Jake decided to take Judge Pao to the

court to listen and visited the Law Museum because he wanted to let judge Pao know the laws for modern world and they all wants to discuss and learned from both ancient days and the modern days in order to improve the rules.

One day Jack dragged Judge Pao to the court to understand how modern world's justice system worked. On the way to the court, suddenly a dog ran to Judge Pao and he tried to run away from the dog by crossing the street without checking whether if it was safe to cross. "Bang!" a loud sound followed by Jack screaming, "Judge Pao! Judge Pao! Someone please call the ambulance!". Then Judge Pao heard nothing and again he lost his consciousness.

"He was dead, so what should we do now?", a man covered with a mask asked. "Should we bury him?", another man with mask asked. This was what Judge Pao heard after he woke up. Slowly he opened up his eyes, he saw few men covered with face mask talking and discussing about how to fix his dead body. These men obviously wearing ancient costume, and those were the men that hit him at the back of his head in ancient time. He checked on his own costume and realized he was back to his time. He got excited and recalled he was attacked by these few men and this was why he traveled to modern world. Through the car accident in modern world now he was back to ancient time. He was still alive, he just travelled from ancient time to modern world and now he was back after hit by the car. Quietly he crawled behind these men and slowly he run away from these men. He knew these men was sent by the local officer who was trying to stop him from investigating the murder case and his son is the murderer. He has learned a lot in modern world and enough to solve this case and put the son of the officer to jail.

Judge Pao continue to do good and helping poor people after he was back to his world. The experience in modern world has helped his investigation skill and better solving crime cases and improved justice system in ancient time. The experience in modern world would be a forever secret to himself and this secret would keep him striving to be a good judge no matter what challenges he faced. He was happy for what happened to him but the only regret was that he has never said goodbye to Jack and he really missed him from time to time.

The Vampire's Tomb

It is a fine day; the sun is shining brightly in the sky, and Pao is walking along the street, enjoying the beautiful weather. He walked halfway and saw a sachet shop. The shop is very popular, the sachets are exquisitely made, and the spices can also attract people. Many line up out of the shop everyday. The shop owner's wife died early, he was called Zhangyuan. He has a daughter called Meixiang, she is extremely beautiful and he loves her very much.

He entered the shop and saw Meixiang standing at the counter smiling. While he was selecting which sachet to buy, Meixiang came up to him with a smile.

"Such a rare visitor! Do you need any help, Lord Pao?" Said the Seller.

"Good afternoon, Miss Meixiang, my daughter is about to turn 16, I would like to give her a sachet. Can you give me some advice?" Said Pao.

She picked up a sachet without hesitation. A few days later, when Pao sat on the fauteuil with his eyes closed, a soldier rushed in

"Lord Pao, Zhangyuan asked to see you."

"For what?"

"Panbu, the betrothed husband of Meixiang died at a river yesterday. I want to ask you to find out the truth."

"I will do my best to find the truth and catch the murderer." A few minutes later, they came to the accident scene. According to the soldier and Zhangyuan, Panbu died by falling from the bridge, near the bridge they're almost no people. Until a fisherman came and saw his dead body, then he told Zhangyuan. As they went closer to the bridge, they stopped talking. The dead body has been moved to the store. His face black, soaked like an adult, only his clothes can tell them that he is Panbu.

"Why there's a strange smell in the air? Is that sachet?" Said Pao.

He plucked up his brows. "That...that maybe the smell of the sachet I gave to Zhangyuan's daughter. Did Panbu's daughter murder him?"

"Panbu is a good man" said Zhangyuan, "He loves my daughter very much."

"I know that's terrible, but we should put away the sadness and find the murderer. I'm sorry for what happened to Panbu." Pao said as he walked under the bridge.

When Pao was sitting in the palanquin, he closed his eyes and started thinking about this case. After one hour, they arrived at Zhangyuan's house. Pao went in and let the servant find Meixiang immediately. A few minutes later, she came to him. Her face white, and she looks very pale.

"Miss Meixiang, I'm sorry for what has happened, but I need you too tell me everything you know."

"Well..." Meixiang's voice was trembling "We went to the bridge the day before yesterday, we discussed about our wedding. I gave the sachet back to Panbu. We...we had differences during the course of discussion and had an argument. I pushed him away and left angrily."

"So, you pushed him and he didn't stand firm, then he dropped into the river. Am I right?" Pao looked at her sternly.

"No...No! I didn't kill him! He was alive before I left..."

"She didn't kill him!" Zhangyuan shouted, "My daughter will never kill anyone! You should not distrust my daughter!"

"I'm just asking her if my guess is correct, don't be so cross, I apologize for what I said before." Pao said calmly. "I'm sorry, but I hope you can understand that a father doesn't want his daughter to get hurt. 'Fine, then you should have a rest, I will come here tomorrow.'"

"Thank you Lord Pao, let me send you out." Zhangyuan said.

While Pao turned around and began to walk out, he suddenly saw a smile on Zhangyuan's face, but he didn't say anything.

On his way back, he gave an order to a soldier

"Go to the scene of the crime, and find the sachet."

Then he closed his eyes, "I suppose the murderer is Meixiang, she has the chance and the motive to kill Panbu. She was there and after arguing, he dropped into the river and died. This can't be a coincidence. But why was Zhangyuan's behavior so strange? Why smile? If I'm not mistaken, he seemed so excited when I talked to his daughter? There must be something I missed."

The next day morning, the soldier came in. "Lord Pao, found that sachet, it was in Panbu's sleeve. There is poison in the sachet."

"What kind of poison?" Pao increased spoke louder. "It's a poison that can make people hallucinate." When people smell it up close, they will be poisoning and behavior strangely or do things that are out of their control."
"Quickly! Let's go to Meixiang's house!"

A few minutes later, Pao's carriage arrived at Meixiang's house. He ran into the house as soon as possible.

"Let Meixiang came to see me, Now!" Pao shouted.

Seconds later, Meixiang came.

"What's wrong Lord Pao? Did you find the murderer? Then who is he? Not my daughter, right?" Zhangyuan said in an exciting voice.

"Yes, that's not your daughter, that's you!" Pao said.

"Me?! You must be joking. Why would I want to kill him? And how?"

"Well, then can you tell me what you were you doing at the time your daughter went out?"

"I stayed at home."

"Who can prove that your words are true?" Said Pao.

"I... I don't know." Zhangyuan's voice is getting quieter and quieter.

"You knew that Meixiang will go out to see Panbu that day, and you gave her a sachet with poison in it." Pao said. "I gave her the sachet, but how can you be sure that I was the one who put the poison in the sachet, not my daughter?"

"That's simple. Did you forget that Meixiang is not interested in sachets? It's impossible for her to know which ingredient can be made into poison."

A drop of sweat ran down his head. "it's finished. He has found the real truth." Zhangyuan thought. Suddenly, he jumped up and ran as quickly as possible, but it didn't work, the soldiers caught him back.

"Alright, I will tell you everything." Meixiang said, "One night, about a month ago, I passed Meixiang's room, and I heard her discussing with Panbu."

“If we got his shop, our life will become better, we can own all his wealth.’ Panbu stated. We must kill him now! I can change his sachet shop into our own shop!”

“I understood everything. MY daughter was going to kill me, just because she want his wealth right now. That day, I heard that Meixiang was going to meet Panbu at the bridge. He knew that Panbu sent a sachet to her before, so he let her take a sachet with her and gave it back to Panbu. Actually, that sachet isn’t the one Panbu gave Meixiang, it was a sachet with poison in it.

‘So you killed Panbu to save your life?’ Pao said to Zhangyuan.

“Yes. If I didn’t kill him, he would kill me.”

Now, Zhangyuan knew that he can’t deny what he had done, so his voice calmed down.

“All right, although you were trying to protect yourself, it still can't change the fact that you are a murderer. Maybe they'll lessen your sentence because you wanted to protect yourself. I will try to help you.”

“Thank you, Lord Pao.” A soldier came up to take him away.

“Tell my daughter that I still love her.”

Pao went to Meixiang’s room and told her everything.

“Your father said that he loves you.’ Pao said gently, and he went out. Meixiang kept her head down and did not speak, but her tears fell down like pearls. A few days later, the sachet shop was sold to another person, and Meixiang left Kaifeng. When Pao passed by the empty shop, he remembered the the story that occurred when he went by to buy sachets and stopped.

The Extraordinary Ability of Judge Pao

SKH Tang Shiu Kin Secondary School, Ng, Dick Hei – 14

Over a lengthy millennium, Pao is believed to be a competent judge with fairness and justice, having solved various problems related to everything, and that's why he has won such fame for being righteous.

One day in a small village, a man was sauntering back home, taking a bag full of food and clothes. On his way home, he found a large puddle on the ground, but the nearest water source was still five miles from his

village. However, he was exhausted from 12-hour work, so he overlooked it and just walked away. 'Honey, I'm back,' he spoke to the dark room at his home. There was no reply. 'Maybe she has gone to sleep already,' he mumbled to himself. 'Dad, Mum has...has vanished. I can't...can't find...her,' his daughter whimpered with tears. 'What! Where are you, darling?' he screamed frantically and rushed to find his wife in his village. He looked for her in all places possible—all the roads, deserted houses, stores and other places, trying his very best to find her. Despite his persistence, there was still no sign of his wife. Then, he asked his sister who lived in the same village to help look after his daughter, so that he could take a horse ride to report this to the Infernal Bureaucracy, which was situated in the capital of the Song Dynasty.

After the five-day-long journey, the man arrived at the capital. Enquiring many passers-by, he could eventually reach the Infernal Bureaucracy. Having walked into the building, he reported his circumstances to the guard. For a while, a man with decent clothing came out of the building. 'I am Judge Pao, the judge of the

Infernal Bureaucracy. How can I help you, sir?' Pao said. The man knelt down and begged profusely, 'Mr Pao, I

am Mr Chan and you have to help me. My wife has vanished and is still lost.' Pao guaranteed to help him and called him to follow him into the building. At that moment, there was a black shadow escaping from the corner of the street. This caught Pao's attention but he had no time to find out who it was because he had to keep his promise to help Mr. Chan.

After Mr Chan had calmed down for half an hour, Pao started to ask him about the incident. He told Pao that he had searched his village thoroughly but failed to find his wife. Pao had a glance at the tears running down Chan's cheeks, showing his sadness. 'That's odd. How can a woman disappear leaving no signs?' Pao wondered. All of a sudden, Mr Chan gazed up at Pao, wiped his tears and uttered, 'Your say "signs".' 'Yeah.'

'Oh, I remember seeing a large puddle on my way to home. Is this useful for this case?'

'But how is the puddle relevant to your missing wife?'

Judge Pao then recommended Mr. Chan stay at one of the cheapest hostels nearby and told Mr Chan to see him the following day. 'This is the most mysterious case that I have ever handled,' Pao said to himself.

The next day, Mr Chan checked out and rushed to see Judge Pao in no time after getting up from bed, hoping to hear some good news. 'Oh, Mr Chan, you are very early,' said Judge Pao. 'Let me introduce the man standing next to me. He is Mr Li, and he will help us to solve this case.' 'Hello Mr Chan, I am Mr Pao's assistant,' said

Mr Pao with a smiling face. But Mr Chan asked in a worrying voice, 'Mr Pao, how is it going? Does the case have any breakthroughs?' To his surprise, Judge Pao just told Mr Chan to bring him to Chan's village without saying anything, followed by Mr Li and his armed men. 'But...' sobbed Mr Chan. 'Mr Pao has already had his own plan. Let's follow what he orders,' replied Mr Li. Mr Chan could do nothing but lead Mr Chan to his village.

On their way to Mr Chan's village, Mr Chan asked Judge Pao whether he could leave the Infernal Bureaucracy for investigation, and he just replied that he had already been granted the Emperor's permission.

After about five days, they found themselves in Mr Chan's village. While Mr Chan was leading them to his home, Judge Pao stopped to kneel down, examining something special on the ground. 'Mr Pao, what has caught your attention?' enquired Mr Chan. 'Hm... Mr Chan, is this the puddle you have mentioned before?' uttered Judge Pao, pointing to a large puddle of water on the ground.

'Yeah, but the size seems to have shrunk. Maybe some of the water had evaporated due to the hot weather here.'

'Is your village always being heated by the blazing sun?'

'Not really, but these weeks are the hottest and we have to bring water from a river five miles from here. It's that far.'

'That means such a large amount of water shouldn't be poured over and wasted on the ground normally, right?'

'Absolutely! All of our villagers cherish and conserve all the water we possess.'

'There must be outsiders entering and leaving, and they have also kidnapped your wife.'

After a while, Mr Chan and others finally reached his home, seeing a lady cooking food. When she saw Mr

Chan, she dashed to tell him that his daughter had also been caught two days before. 'I have tried to take her back, but then one of the gang members shoved me and I hit my head on the chair behind. Just a moment, they

escaped as quickly as an arrow from a bow,' Chan's sister cried miserably. All of a sudden, Mr Chan fell to

the floor in despair, causing a 'bump' crashing sound.

Judge Pao inquired, 'Miss Chan, then did those kidnappers leave any signs when leaving in a rush?'

'Um...' pondered Miss Chan anxiously. 'Ah! I do remember that one of the gang members have dropped a small thing.' She then handed that thing over to Pao's hand with both hands. 'Oh, it is a wooden card representing each job position of the officers. Let me see. Ah, this should belong to one of the ministers from the taxation department' Judge Pao exclaimed with a sign of hope.

'But Mr Pao, how is this related to the puddle you have seen?' wondered Mr Chan.

Judge Pao replied with certainty. 'Recently, the officers from the taxation department have been given more than five hundred soldiers from the military department in order to speed up collecting taxes throughout the whole country. From this, I can infer that the cart carrying your wife contained water for the soldiers to drink, and did you discover a big stone placed on that road? When the cart was passing over it, it was tilted by that stone, resulting in the water buckets to tip over and pour some water out of the cart. However, why did that minister from the taxation department need to kidnap your wife and daughter?'

At that moment, Mr Chan uttered the truth honestly.

Two months ago, Mr Chan and his family had been suffering from the greatest financial problems that he had ever encountered. One day, Mr Cheng, minister from the taxation department, had called upon Mr Chan from his shabby house to pay his taxes. However, Mr Chan didn't have any money left, so he begged Mr Cheng to let him pay the taxes later. To his surprise, he promised Mr Chan readily without hesitation. This had made Mr Chan doubt the honesty of Mr Cheng's words, but he didn't think much of it at that time.

'Oh, I am now able to put all the pieces together to form a large puzzle. Now, we have to act quick,' called Judge Pao. Mr Li, his assistant, ordered all his armed men to find Mr Cheng.

After one day, Mr Cheng, with both hands tied at his back was brought to see Judge Pao together with his soldiers. Fortunately, Mr Li's men also found Chan's wife and daughter safe and unhurt. Three of the Chan's family hugged together tightly and smiled with tears. What a touching reunion!

'Mr Pao, how dare you hinder my well-organised plan!' Mr Cheng blamed.

'Couldn't you see what you have done? You have separated a family. How can you not have a sense of guilt?'shouted Mr Pao.

'I have my own choice!'scolded Mr Cheng.

'I also have the choice to keep you imprisoned and make you reflect on your wrongdoings!' After that, Mr Cheng and his soldiers were sent to the Infernal Bureaucracy for trial. 'Thank you, Judge Pao!'exclaimed Mr Chan.

After this incident, news of Judge Pao's righteousness and bravery spread through the nation.

Judge Pao: The Revival

Tai Kwong Hilary College, Kidd, Ammon – 14

Hello. My name is Mark. Mark Stevens. Recently I had experienced quite the terrifying experience of coming face to face with a person I believe was Judge Pao. Now don't get me wrong, I don't believe in gods or immortals, but this man possessed some sort of power that has never been seen before. Let me explain...

Not long ago, on the 1st of September everyone in grade 9 was surprised with a new teacher. He went by the name of Mr. Bao. The classroom was, as usual, a chaotic mess. There were a ton of girls in the corner, all chattering and texting, while groups of boys ran around the classroom, punching and throwing things. Normal. Then, a tall man with a dark demeanour entered the classroom. I'm not even joking— his eyes gleamed red and felt like they pierced through your soul when you looked inside them. He gleaned the classroom, as if observing the brand new, inexplicable ecosystem he had just been exposed to. He quietly walked towards the teacher's desk in the centre of the room, unnoticed by most, but not me.

He then slammed the books he was carrying into the desk, resulting with a colossal thump. The entire class quieted down, and stared intensely at the new teacher who had just entered. His eyes slanted, as if disgusted with our class, which is a totally acceptable reaction. 9D is the worst of the worst, one of the most annoying and loud classes in the entire school. We had caused 4 teachers to quit and already lost 12 students to expulsion.

Then he spoke, his deep voice sending shivers down my spine. "I am your new teacher. You may address me as Mr. Bao."

Silence resounded around the room for 5 seconds, then most of the students stopped caring and went back to their normal, noisy selves. But I had my eyes trained on the teacher. He commanded an air of mystery.

He took three deep breaths, and closed his eyes. While wearing a mask, it was hard to discern his features. He was wearing a strange scholar's hat, and had a strange, curved scar on his brow. He opened his eyes and suddenly punched the wall. I expected an 'Ow!' but what happened was... nothing? Or that was what I thought. It was like the wall just lagged. It was completely fine one second, then exploded with fissures and cracks, spraying dust and chalky bits of wall all over the floor. The strangest thing was that there was barely any sound. The cracks just spread and spread, all over the room, grabbing the attention of everyone. The girls started screaming, while the boys stood in shock at the snaking fractures slithering across the ceiling. Then the teacher, who's hand was still embedded in the wall, retracted his hand, and with that, the cracks slowly began fading away.

This time, I was sure, the class would not resume the frenzied chatter that was erupting from the mouths of the students.

"Are most of you without perception? Do you all not notice that someone has entered the room? And if they have, should you not respect them, as they are your elder?" he enquired. His booming voice sent jitters around the entire room, and then one idiot student had the audacity to say, "Shut up bro, just be a good boy and wait for your paycheck."

Well, that had done it. He extended his hand outwards in a flash, as if to force choke someone, like in a movie. Nothing happened. Snickers popped up from around the room, and that idiotic student decided to laugh as well, when he suddenly found out he couldn't breathe. A blast of wind entered the room, whipping around the teacher's suit— wait. It was a red robe lined with gold, like from ancient Chinese times. The robes flapped in the wind, as that student, who I knew as Josh, crumpled to the floor, clutching at his throat. His face turned red, then started emitting a shade of purple before the teacher receded his outstretched hand. Josh gasped, free of whatever held him down, and promptly slumped to the floor, trying to inhale as much air as he could.

The class backed away into the corners, now a blank open space in the desk area, where I and two other students perched worriedly on our seats.

"You all WILL respect your teachers from now on. They are the guide to your futures and our hopes for the continuation of humanity. I judge those from the richest of the rich to the poorest of the poor. I have seen all cases and need not one second to judge you all. Do you understand? If I see any more disrespect or unwilling fools who

step up to be condescending, I will judge them in hell, and let me tell you one thing. It will not. Be. Pretty. Now sit down!”

He shouted with absolute authority. Everyone filled in their seats, terrified. Desks creaked and old chairs squeaked. Everyone, wide-eyed, held their breath with anticipation for what would happen next. You could cut the tension in the air with a knife. Mr. Bao stared down at all of us, and I shuddered when his eyes passed over mine. His chest then puffed outwards, and some black, red eyed spirit flew out of his mouth, slowly taking the Chinese clothes and hat away until what was left was Mr. Pao Yue, leaning against the board for support. The black spirit shot towards the window, and dissipated into the wind.

Sound seemed to return and pour into the room. The constant buzzing of the broken projector, and the noise and chatter of the street outside. The only difference was the wide eyed, shaken expressions of the students. Mr. Yue shook, and woke up from his forced sleep. What happened? I checked my phone. Only a minute had passed, yet it felt like an hour. Mr. Yue looked around, astounded to see that the class was actually quiet. It hadn't been like this... ever. He sat down shakily in his chair, regained himself, and went on to teach the class about his ancestor, Judge Pao.

“He was considered a judge in the daytime, and a yama part of a department of hell, known as the infernal bureaucracy...”

Mr. Yue continued to lecture, like nothing happened. Had he even noticed what happened? He had just... it was too confusing to take a hold of at that time. Most of my classmates thought they were hallucinating. But one thing was for completely sure. Everyone had changed. There was no more craziness in the class. Everything was different, for the better.

The Greeting Waves

The Chinese Foundation Secondary School, Chu, Ho Wang – 13

0: The Book left Behind

Birds were twitting near the round window. The warm sunlight, which was split into 4 quarter circles, shined into the room. The old man just lay on his wooden bed, said nothing. I stood up from my chair and touched the old man's body. He didn't move. I sighed and wanted to leave the room, but suddenly a harsh, deep voice called me, "Don't go." I sat down by his bed and asked him what his need was. He sighed and took out his notebook(#), then whispered weakly, "Burn it after you read it. Don't let anyone see it."

I looked at the cover page of the crumbled, lilac book. There were some tearing marks clearly to be seen but was stuck with glue. Someone had been trying to demolish the book, but then regretted it and tried to recover it. The were neat words written on the cover page, 'How are you?', which made a great contrast with the untidy cover.

I wanted to ask the old man about the notebook but this time I couldn't hear anything from him anymore. I put my fingers in front of his nose, and I can't feel the breaths of life. 'Here lies judge Pao Zheng.', I said this sorrowfully when I covered the old man's eyes. I looked outside the window. The warm sunlight now seemed disturbing. I couldn't enjoy the scene, since I know that I have one last thing to do for judge Pao.

1: "How are you?"

After reporting judge Pau's death, I quitted my job and moved to a house in the countryside of Kaifeng. The house is quite small, with only a simple wooden bed, a small desk and a chair. I put the book on the table, and flipped the book to the first page, scanning through the words for the first time...

'Zheng Pao

11th November 1057

The day is weird for me. This is the first time that I have this kind of thoughts. I must defeat him no matter what cost will take.

Today I put on my red coat and entered the hall. It's another regular day in my judging hall in Kaifeng. I sat on the chair and put down my documents. Assistant officer reported the cases as usual. But then, a shrill voice stroke through the grey sky. I got up and ran out of the hall, followed by two guards.

Passing through the two oak trees and through the door, I went out of the main door, and saw a man lying on the ground, making strange noises which seemed to be laughing and crying at the same time. The man had a face without any flaws on it, and he was wearing rough and filthy clothes. Fear dragged the crowd away from the man.

I stepped forward, and leaned towards the man, who was rolling on the ground. Suddenly, he got up and asked me seriously with a deep voice,

"How are you?"

I was shocked. I don't know what he meant.

Then he smiled and said, "Never mind, judge Pao. But let us play a little game, should we? You know Ho, the famous big eater in Kaifeng, right? If he eats one more food, you will see what he ate these days and a lot of red. He's going into a restaurant, judge Pao. The clock is ticking..."

I ran to the restaurant as quickly as I could. The guards are clearing the area, as I rushed into the dining area and grabbed the hands of the chubby man. I relieved for a second but the I saw him swallowed something down his throat. Fear and desperation came to my mind, and I shouted at the guards, "Run!"

I stepped back and covered my ears. I counted: 1,2,3...

But the expected explosion full of blood didn't come. I opened my eyes and saw Ho was sneezing and bleeding through his ears and nose, and the fluids are all over the place. When the guards approached him, he fainted away. I turned my head to track the strange man again, but all I get is a shriek laughter, echoed in the air.

This evening, the poor eater went into an eternal rest. Before he closed his eyes, I finally got an important name, of the man who challenged justice straight in the head, Siu Yang Bu.'

I closed the book. Yes, I remember that incident. Judge Pao was in a bad mood for that whole night. This is a case that Judge Pao would not like to be recorded or being said again, because the society will be in chaos if everybody knows that justice can be easily challenged.

I turned to the next page, and it's another diary, but this time the appearance of the words were more disordered. I wanted to read but the sun went down at that moment. I sighed, closed the book and went to sleep.

2. Where the Waves met the Paves

'Zheng Pao

13th November 1057

AM I RIGHT? IS JUSTICE WHAT IT IS? DOES COLD AND FAIR REALLY SAVE SOMEONE?

This is the first time that I am questioned on this matter seriously.

I couldn't concentrate on my work these days, so I had a sick leave today, and I walk along the road outside the hall, and soon, I arrived at the edge of the road. Stepping ough the fields of golden wheat, I felt sand of the riverbank of the Ching Shui River under my feet. There, I found a male corpse, under the hot sun, with terrible wounds on his neck, which seemed to have experienced a serious chokehold. There were footmarks throughout the wheat field, to the main road. The footprints are deeper towards the tip of the foot. Clearly, the murderer or the witness must had been walking towards the main road.

But then I shouted towards the riverbank, "I know you are there, Siu!"

A slender man came out from the fields, holding a knife with a yellow tip, charged towards me, I stepped right, and the knife whooshed right next to my neck. After he missed his attack, he took his knife backhand and stabbed towards my arm...///'

Strangely, the rest of the diary had been torn off. The only thing left was the blank back page. Suddenly, A deep voice reminded me in my mind, 'Burn it after you read it.'

I quickly lit a fire and put the notebook in the fire. The book was burning while something appeared on the back page,

'During dawn, the willow opens and greets the waves.'

Judge Pao's Story

The Chinese Foundation Secondary School, Ho, Sin To Enki – 13

Have you heard of Judge Pao? In mainstream Chinese mythology, he is often portrayed wearing a judge's hat and a crescent moon on his forehead. The full name of judge Pao is Pao QingTian, also known as Pao Zheng and Pao Gong. He was a Chinese politician during the reign of Emperor Renzong in China's Song Dynasty. During the years of his civil service, Pao frequently demonstrated a huge honesty and uprightness, with actions such as sentencing his own uncle, accusing an uncle of Emperor Renzong's favorite second wife and punishing powerful families. His appointment from 1057 to 1058 as the prefect of Song's capital Kaifeng, where he inaugurated a number of changes to better hear the grievances of the people, made him become famous. After working as a judge for many years, he gained the honorific title Justice Pao due to his ability to defend peasants and commoners against corruption or injustice.

Pao was born into a scholar family in Luzhou. Pao's family was in the middle class, his father was a scholar and an official, while his grandfather was a commoner. He was not very rich in his childhood. As Pao grew up among low working classes, he understood well people's hardships, hated corruption and strongly desired for justice.

When he was 29 years old, Pao passed the highest-level imperial examination. Pao was appointed as magistrate, but he deferred embarking on his official career for a decade in order to care for his elderly parents and faithfully observe proper mourning rites after their deaths. He was very caring. During the time Pao looked after his parents at home, Liu Yun, Magistrate of Luzhou, usually visits Pao. Pao and Liu got along well, so Pao was greatly influenced by Liu Yun in respect of the love for people.

Pao solved a lot of famous cases, such as The Case of Executing Chen Shimei. Chen had two children with wife Qin, when he left them behind in his hometown for the Imperial examination in the capital. A few years later, a famine forced Qin and her children to move to the capital, where they learned what happened to Chen. Qin finally found a way to meet Chen and begged him to help their own children. Desperately, Qin brought her case to Pao, who tricked Chen to the court to have him arrested. The imperial family intervened with threats, but Pao executed him nonetheless. Pao solved the case in an effective way. He saw through that Chen was lying while his subordinates thought that Chen was right. The only thing was he worked very hard about solving this case. He solved this case in a clever way, and finally killed Chen.

Pao today is honored as the cultural symbol of justice and fairness in Chinese society. He was greatly fictionalized in Wuxia stories and has appeared in a variety of different literary and dramatic mediums, and enjoyed sustained popularity. Some Chinese provinces later treated Judge Pao as the God of Justice, equating him to the war god Guan Gong. He is the greatest judge forever! Nobody will forget his care, his clever mind, and his hard-working spirit.

Murder at the Antique Shop

The Chinese Foundation Secondary School, Kwong, Wai Kei Jasmine – 12

At midnight, the long clock hand on a grandfather clock struck the number twelve. A man in silk gowns rose to his feet as he brushed away some dust from the top of the clock with his hand. Dozens of antiques stood before him. The man exited his shop and crept into the shadows behind his antique shop. The silvery moonlight cast eerie shadows around the trembling man. He slipped silently between the magnificent buildings; peering out from behind his antique shop, he jumped at the sound of a high-pitched scream and a knife falling on stone, and blood splattered from where a shadow stood silhouetted against a building. The man froze in fear for a moment before turning away. Throwing a quick glimpse over his shoulder, he saw the shadow facing him. The man was petrified. He stood rigidly and let out a scream of pure horror before sprinting away.

Bao Zheng sat behind his desk, reading a huge scroll of paper of a murder a few nights ago. As he was frowning thoughtfully, the doors suddenly burst open. It was his messenger, Wong Wing. He carried a letter in his hand. "Greetings, Bao." He panted for a while before handing Bao the letter. "I have brought you this letter. They said it's important. I will not disturb you now." He nodded and exited the study.

Bao Zheng let out a gusty sigh before he took his letter opener and ran the silver blade of the knife under the flap of paper. He took the delicate piece of paper out, and began to read it:

Dear Mr. Bao Zheng,

Please meet me at Li's Old Shop tomorrow at dawn. This is very important. You must come.

Bao frowned skeptically at the words. There was no name or date on the letter. The words betrayed the fact that it was written by a shaky hand. Bao called out to his assistant, Chen Lai, "Chen, get ready to go to Li's Old Shop tomorrow." Chen tilted his head curiously, "Are we buying antiques?" "No. You'll see." Bao replied half-heartedly, his mind still on the letter.

Dew sparkled on the grass as Bao and Chen walked in the pale dawn light. "We'll hitch a ride to get there." Bao suggested. Chen nodded as they got on a carriage. A while later, an antique shop appeared in front of the carriage. The windows were cracked; an old wooden door looked like it was going to fall down any moment. The words "Li's Old Shop" painted above the door was faint and peeling.

They walked in the shop cautiously. The inside of the shop was rather dusty. Ancient chairs, tables and other old things sat around the shop. Next to the checkout counter was a golden grandfather clock. "I knew you would come." A voice made both men jump. "Who are you?" Chen asked suspiciously. "I'm sorry, I haven't introduced myself." The man had a squeaky voice. He was a short man who wore smooth silk gowns. "I am Li Ming, the owner of this shop." Li Ming gave a little bow and went on, "I have crucial information that I know you need."

Bao gave a tiny nod at Chen to signal him to start taking notes. "Tell me more about it." Bao leaned forward. Li Ming was fidgeting around as he described what he had seen, "That night, I went out to get some fresh air. Then all of a sudden, I heard a scream. Then the sound of a knife falling on the ground. I saw some blood and a hooded figure." "Thank you." Bao nodded his head.

The next day, Bao and Chen went to investigate the crime scene. The dead body was a middle-aged woman. "She was stabbed by a knife. With the information Mr. Li gave us, I think we can find a way to know the truth." Chen observed, scratching his chin. Two sets of footprints were laid out on the muddy path, leading towards the woods. Bao beckoned Chen to come with him as they trekked beside the footprints. Bao kneeled down to examine the footprints, "Whoever they were, they were definitely in a hurry." Bao got to his feet and continued, "It might have been more than two people plotting this all along. And Mr. Li only told us that he saw one person." "Bao, I don't think there is more than one person plotting this."

Bao shook his head at Chen. "Look at both sets of footprints. This one belongs to a person who ran as they put more weight on the tip of their foot. This mark in the mud shows that someone must have had a knife because this stab on the ground is made by a knife. And there's some blood beside the mark. It's possible that someone was hurt, it means he's probably telling only half of what he's seen. We should go question him again." Bao shot a defiant look at Chen, telling him not to argue.

"I swear know nothing about this!" Li Ming protested, his voice high and squeaky. "Did you see anyone in the woods?" Bao asked. "I...I don't know." Li Ming mumbled, not meeting any of their gazes. "I want to see your shoes." Bao stared into Li Ming's beady eyes. Reluctantly, he took off his shoes with trembling hands and thrust them towards Bao. Bao examined the shoes, and questioned Li Ming, "How explain the mud under your shoes?" Li Ming fidgeted around, clearly making an effort to stay calm. Bao glared at him accusingly, while Li Ming gulped and struggled to find words. "Well...I s-stepped in a puddle..." Bao opened his mouth to speak but was interrupted by a shrill wail, "He is not part of this! I *know* he would never do such thing!" A young girl skidded to a halt beside Li and glared coldly at Bao and Chen.

"Who are you?" Chen asked the girl, throwing a quick glimpse at Bao. "I am Li Lam, daughter of Li Ming. He would never kill mommy! I will find her murderer and kill him myself!" "No, you can't. It's too dangerous. I don't want to lose you too." Li Ming gazed at her sorrowfully. But Bao thought he could detect regret flash through his eyes. "Please let us question your father first. We won't make any false accusations."

"Mr. Li, this is your last chance to confess if you did anything. If you don't confess now, the consequences may be more serious." Li Ming closed his eyes as a tear rolled down his face. He sighed, "Fine. I confess. A few days before the murder, someone forced me to kill someone. He said that if I refused, he would kill me and my daughter. But little did I know, the victim was my wife. I was so scared at that moment instinct just told me to run away. He chased after me and...and..." Li Ming was shaking all over as if he was reliving all of the night's events. Beads of sweat appeared on his forehead. "Go on." Bao urged, anticipation rising in his chest. Li Ming took a deep breath and continued, "He caught up with me, and cut my arm with his knife, saying that I was a traitor. Fortunately, he let me live. I was relieved and afraid at the same time. Days later, he sent a letter to you, Bao. It was all part of the plot to kill you. But somehow, something went wrong because on the day you came, you were alive. I feel guilty for agreeing to this. I feel terribly sorry."

"But who threatened you?" Li Lam queried, pressing against him consolingly. "I believe his name was...Wong Wing." Li Ming answered, wiping sweat off with his sleeve. "No...it can't be...Wong Wing is my messenger. He's worked for me for so many years! Now I understand it was all part of his plot to earn my trust. Don't worry, Mr. Li, we won't punish you this time. No one can imagine how it was like to be in your shoes. Thank you." Li Ming blinked at him gratefully and they said their farewells.

"Now that Wong Wing is dead, I hope peace shall stay here long." Bao rocked in his chair, sighing. "But now I can't even trust anyone. Most importantly, can I trust you?" Chen looked astonished by the question. He responded, his voice ringing out loud and clear, "Of course. I am loyal to you and always." Bao dipped his head in deep acceptance of his assistant's words, knowing his hard-working assistant would never betray him.

Cold Blooded Murderer

Wellington College International Shanghai, Alfayate Goni, Arancha – 10

The clock struck midnight. A tense breath filled my chest. The door handle turned slowly, the crunching of metal echoing down the dim corridor. My heart dropped as I realized that there was no other way out of the deserted mansion. I had no choice; it was live or die.

Not having a second to waste, I scrambled behind the creaking door, a knot forming in my stomach. –BANG– the door slammed opened, millions of policemen flooding in. As they examined the blood splattered corridor, I clutched my necklace, the only memory I had from my parents. They stormed through the quaking corridor, that led to an everlasting salon. An old leather sofa was shoved in the middle, stains embedding the worn-out fabric. Expensive fragments of gold balanced on corner tables; their sleek color rusted by time. In the distance, a double sized TV stretched its way beside the windows, a coat of dust layering on top. The officers started to stroll throughout the room, their x3 machine guns well held in their hands. Ceiling to floor windows expanded through one tip of the room to the other, making the officers' figures glint upon the moonlight.

Traumatized, I tried to remain calm, picking up the pace. If I didn't move, who knows how much time it would take till someone discovered me? Carefully, I ran my fingers along the wall, leading myself to the nearest room possible. Then out of pitch darkness, my probing fingers felt a doorknob. With the last of my strengths, I swung the door open, slamming it shut after me. My eyes tried adapting to the dimness of the bathroom, because nothing but a few chinks of light were able to leak in through the sides of the door. I scrambled into the shower, which had some damp curtains hanging on. A sink rested on the tattered walls, on its clear breaking point. Dripping sounds from the tap broke the deadly silence, water racing down. Corroded stained tiles littered the ground, where rat feet scuttled past. I pinched my nose, resisting the smell of sewage raising up from the pipes. Suddenly, I heard some footsteps approaching.

The taste of danger soured into the bathroom, along with a fierce policeman. He carried his gun aggressively, examining the room disapprovingly. A medallion hung around his neck proudly, shining amongst the dull furniture. It read –John Rogers –. As I took a step back crouching, I realized that my silver pendant was no longer on my chest but slipping off the metal bar. Next thing I knew, the necklace went crashing down, shattering into a million pieces on the bathtub floor. I watched in horror as an ear-piercing noise filled the room. The man aimed his gun directly at the curtains, which were thankfully not transparent. The officer gripped the gun fiercely, warily taking a few steps back ... –BANG! – he shot the gun, the bullet flying across the room.

I ducked, making the bullet shatter onto the window behind me instead. Not bothering to reconsider my options, I squeezed through the broken glass window, releasing myself outside. I hit the solid ground with a thud. Fresh air plunged onto my face, which I was grateful for. I scrambled onto my feet, but what came after, that left me petrified. Uncountable police cars drove straight at me, officers barking out commands, shouting their heads off uncontrollably. A piece of glass bit my leg, a puddle of blood forming around me. I staggered up with my leg throbbing in pain, hopping forwards as fast as my body permitted me. When I ran out of their view, I started thinking; "I haven't become a villain to get chased after some random policemen, but to give Judge Pao a taste of his own medicine for assassinating my parents in the court." The thought that he was still alive gave me more reasons to wish I was still holding the pendant.

After minutes which seemed like hours of walking, I stepped to halt. A black Jaguar XJ40 screeched in front of me. It was an Eighties model, heavy since it was armor-plated. The front door pushed open, revealing a humongous man towering upon me. He was over-weight, with a beard dangling down his chin, a black hat covered his mysterious face. The man appeared to be around 60 or so, wrinkles stretched around his serious face. His voice was deep yet clear: "Come with me, you have a lot to catch up on." He gestured towards the car. I hesitated, was I going to trust

a stranger that had offered me onto his car? But again, it was like a coupon out of this hot mess. In the distance, sirens raged, police cars getting closer and closer. “Your parents would be proud of you for making the right decision,” he insisted. My eyes widened. How did he know about my parents? He knew something and I was not waiting crossed arms to know. I went in slowly, taking a last peek outside before getting shut behind the bulletproof windows. The car’s engine rumbled and vanished into thin air. “By the way”, said the man settling in the plush leather seat, “I’m Judge Pao”

Minutes after I got in, a bullet fired, the car stopped, and Pao Zheng no longer existed.

To be continued...

Revenge

Wellington College International Shanghai, Al'ayate Goni, Nora – 10

The house was empty. You could hear the mice squeaking. You could hear the water dripping. You could even hear a pin drop. You could feel the cold wind howling through the rooms. Suddenly, there was a BANG! Followed by BANG BANG BANG! Then, there was a loud THUD, and the noise ended. I ran to where the sound had come from, my heart beating one thousand beats every second. But there was no one. There was only silence. Then, I noticed the window was opened. I quickly poked my head out but what came after left me petrified. I heard a familiar voice behind me, but when I turned around – the door slammed shut. I was locked in.

I tried the handle several times, checking if I had missed something that could help me out. But I had no luck. I checked under the bed, in the bathroom, until I saw something in the closet. It was covered with a thin blanket. My fingers trembled as I reached out to uncover the object, my heart dropped when I saw it. It was just a wasted, old, rusty notebook. I opened it to see what surprise would come next, but it was a diary of a man called *Bao Zheng*.

After minutes of thinking which seemed like hours, I remembered the diary of that man I found earlier and thought, there might be something that could help me in there! I ran to see if there was anything in there but all I found were numbers and calculations. I figured that if I was going to do something, my only choice was to jump out of the window. Waiting in a locked room all on my own wouldn't help me escape from this mysterious place. Thoughts whirled inside my head as to why I had been locked in. Had I done something wrong? Was someone trying to get revenge on me? I looked down the window and saw that it was only few meters high, and that wouldn't be a problem for most people, but I had always been scared of heights when I was little, though through my life of detective I had learned to push that fear away, so I built up all my courage and as I was about to jump, I forgot about the diary, so I ran back and took it with me so I could do some research when I got out of this place.

1 month later ...

CHAPTER 2

I was in my studio that day. The moon had set, the lampposts were lit, the tree leaves were rustling. I was on my way out to get some fresh air when I heard a noise round the corner. I was intrigued, curious, mystified. I carefully walked down the alley without making noise, trying not to attract too much attention. Behind a small cottage was a tall man, chubby, he had a beard and a tiny crescent moon on his forehead, he appeared at the age of 50 or so. I took a few steps back, thanking myself he hadn't seen me, when I heard a voice.

"Excuse me young lady, may I help you?"

At that moment I kept on walking because I thought he wasn't talking to me, I kept on walking as if it was a normal, ordinary day. But once more.

"Sorry, do you need help?"

That left me no choice but to answer him.

I turned around, a flash of fear shivered down my spine.

"Yes, I'm okay." I took the chance to ask him, now that I was speaking to the stranger, "Oh, and, do I know you? I don't recognize you."

The man answered immediately, but also politely and softly. "My mistake, I don't think we have met. My name is Bao Zheng. I am also known as Judge Pao."

CHAPTER 3

Suddenly, a flash came to me, it was the same name I found on the diary in that house a month ago! I remembered reading in that diary that he went on missions and solved mysteries just like I did. I held on to that thought in my mind for a few seconds and reminded myself to think back on that later on.

Focusing back on what was happening I asked curiously: “Why are you here?”

He answered, his voice sounded worried and nervous. “My helpers have told me there has been a – a case near this place, a murder. They have told me a teenage girl has been caught here, they say she has been a professional criminal all her life. And that her parents were executed, so she is seeking *revenge*. I want to find out everything that happened and get to the end of it.”

My heart stopped for a second. It had been long since my detective life. This was almost new to me. But most important of all, there had been a murder, most probably around where I live, and I hadn't heard about it until now. Yet there was one detective solving this mystery, and *I* was also going to solve it. I looked at him straight in the eye, and with all my guts, and said:

“I have been a professional detective my whole life.” I paused for air, and continued, “I would like us to work on this mission together.”

CHAPTER 4

He froze for a few seconds, I could tell he was thinking about it. If I were to be in that situation, it would definitely not be easy. His mouth moved, but no words came out, until he said: “Ok, I accept.” I was definitely not expecting that answer.

Inside I was jumping up and down, but one part of me was worried because; who knew what it would be like working with him, a *stranger*.

He continued: “But on one condition, you must consult EVERYTHING you do or decide with *me*. Everything.”

I agreed immediately, and we discussed the mission in my house living room. After hours of discussion, he finally left. And I was finally all on my own. My arms fell, my eyes were closing, I could barely even move my mouth of all that talking. I tucked into bed and awaited for a long day tomorrow.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. I was hearing knocking on my door at 5:00am in the morning. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. And again. I got out of bed and walked to my door. When I opened it, my heart almost jumped out of my body. It was Bao Zheng. I should've imagined it before. The reason I almost fainted was because my hair looked very close to a tornado, and to make it worse I was in my nightgown. I asked embarrassingly: “Good mor–orning Judge P–p–pao. What are you d–doing here?”.

He answered as politely as he could and told me to meet him in his office at 1:15 in the afternoon after lunch. After washing my face and putting my clothes on, I got ready, and took everything I needed for the mission.

When I had arrived, my eyes fell upon a humongous, golden mansion, something that looked like a palace. I was greeted by two fully–armored guards, guarding the immense gold–plated metal doors. As I advanced a few steps forward, I was stopped by one of the guards:

“Oi! You there! Who are you?”

Before I could answer, a loud, booming voice echoed out of the doors and a tall man stepped outside.

“王伟! (Wang Wei) She is my guest. Let her inside. She will be joining me on my mission. Or should I say *our* mission.”

The guard took a few steps back, embarrassed, and the enormous, heavy, metal doors swung open, revealing a sophisticated yet profuse mansion full of famous paintings and poems. Thriving plants neatly placed on tables. But then I told myself to wake up and focus back on the mission.

On my way to the meeting room, I noticed stairs that curled around endlessly until the highest floor. Once we entered the meeting room and had settled down, he reached for his cup of coffee and took a big gulp and swallowed it down. He offered me a cup of coffee, but I shook my head and reminded myself to not let anything distract me.

I excused myself to the bathroom and walked out. Once I entered the bathroom, I reached out for the soap and reluctantly saw multiple glass bottles with fancy-looking words carved into them. I looked closer and saw that one of them read '*POISON*' on it. I quickly grabbed it and looked from side to side, the window was opened, which was **very** strange. I reluctantly looked outside and saw a young girl sliding down the walls of the palace. My heart stopped. Could that have been the girl that murdered the anonymous person to seek revenge?

To be continued ...

Gunpowder

Wellington College International Shanghai, Alpert, Evan – 10

The blade glinted in the moonlight. A soft trickle of red ran through the leaves and soaked into the cold earth. All was silent beside the bleak house. Until the feet pounded through the forest and disappeared into the darkness.

I woke up in bed. Chan, my trusty and loyal assistant was waiting with a cup of hot tea. The sun was shining, round as a drum. The day had started. I took the cup of tea and walked outside my house, where I heard the sounds of vendors shouting. I walked down the street, only to find a man shouting is lungs out! I ask, "What is wrong?" He lowers his tone and says, "My wife has been murdered!"

I hurried over to an alleyway where I began to question him. Suddenly, an arrow flew like a bird through his back, passing through his stomach! More of these deadly birds streaked through the alley. I sprinted through the alleyway, turned around and saw a faint glimpse of a short beard before the attacker disappeared through the narrow roads.

I soon set my detective sights on this mysterious character. Killing a husband and wife is no small matter. Heading back to the palace, I had to tell the Emperor. When I got to the palace though, it was empty. Red banners hung beside an unseated throne. Suddenly, the nerves in my spine trembled. I ran out, but was stopped by a strange etching on the wall. '天鹅'. That was the name of a clan that had been long forgotten. I had to figure out who was behind this, and that was my first clue.

I gathered Chan and explained everything to him. Then we went out scouting for clues. Not long afterward, we found something. A metal wing that had the numbers 2 30 carved into it. 天鹅 means swan, and it was a swan's wing. It was thin and light, so I took it carefully back to my home and left it with Chan. It was almost noon, and the sun was shining its brightest, so I headed to the dining hall and ate lunch.

"Sir! Sir!" I heard Chan shout just after I finished lunch. I hurried over to Chan, who had big news. "Master Pao! The wing was swept a good distance by the wind when you were gone!" I thought about this for a while, then suddenly a thought struck me like an arrow. We could use this wing as a wind vane! Everything became clear now.

Chan marveled at my idea. But first, we had to put a hole in the wing. After a while, Chan came back with a thin iron bar and sore feet. We soon got to work, and soon hammered out a decent hole in the bottom. Then we waited. And waited. And waited. Finally, the time came. It was 2:28, and I expected we had to put the wing on a pole at 2:30. We attached the wing, and when our sundial showed 2:30, a gust of wind blew the wing! The point of the wing pointed east. "Looks like that's where we are heading," said Chan.

East led to a forest, and snakes slithered beneath our feet as we trekked through it. I took a thirsty gulp of water, and continued on. It was the next day, and we had spent yesterday afternoon gathering resources for the trip. I came to an area that seemed suspicious. There were no birds in the trees above, and insects scuttled away from our feet. I kicked at some rocks, and noticed something strange. One of the rocks didn't budge. I called Chan to come see this. He saw the rock, and tried to press on it. Unexpectedly, it sank into the ground! I heard a rumbling in the distance, and the ground started to shake! An uneasy feeling washed over me. I took a step back, right in time to see the great behemoth rise out of the ground. A 10x10 meter stone entrance draped with vines stood before me! All activated by a little rock. I stood befuddled by Chan, who felt the same way.

I congratulated Chan, and we headed on into the darkness. A few flights of pitch-black stairs, then we ran into a hallway dimly lit with torches. This hallway led straight onward twenty meters and a crudely carved intersection made it split into three different paths. We reached the intersection, and then I heard several sets of running footsteps. Chan and I dashed to a corner in the corridor, just as the guards passed us. We carried on, and moved left. This was a bad idea. As I sneaked down the middle of the hallway, the walls beside me collapsed and spikes shot out of the walls, missing me by an inch! I sprinted back to Chan, and decided to turn right. This led to a creaky, old unlocked door. I opened it carefully and came upon a massive room. It was deserted, and sacks of potatoes, cloth and furniture lay on old racks in the walls, going up all the way to the ceiling, where small windows lined the top of the walls. It was a storage room.

However, it was not.

I gazed around the room for a while, and then I thought I saw a glimpse of a black mask behind a sack. Brown eyes beneath cheaply made cloth. Then twenty of these figures, dressed in black suddenly leaped from the shelves onto us! Chan and I were surrounded, but then Chan hurled a sack at an advancing group of these so-called “ninjas” and took half of them out. Then the rest of them attacked all at once. A flying kick nearly destroyed my private part, but I caught the leg in time and hurled him at another person like a bowling ball. More people flew at me, and one shaved the hair off my leg with a sword. Then I heard a hissing sound from below us.

Gunpowder.

I dived to a sack near me for cover, but it was too late. The whole ground below me gave way, and me, Chan and five other people hit a rock floor with a ‘Thump’ and a few cries of “Ouch!” I scrambled to my feet, and found myself face-to-face with an armada of men. They scampered out down a hallway, and I chased after them. I ran and ran, then I remembered something.

Chan.

I sprinted back down the hallway, but it was too late. Chan’s head lay by its body, and the remaining “ninjas” were scurrying down another hallway. Anger boiled up inside me. I considered my options. Three hallways lay before me. One the armada had gone through, the other the mysterious people dressed in black had gone through and the last was unexplored.

I decided to go through the unexplored tunnel-like hallway, as the others could lead to danger. Adrenaline flew through my veins, boosting my strength and will as I ran through the hallway. I took a right turn at an intersection, and remembered something. The gunpowder. I could use it to blast open something if I needed to. I ran back to the room, and heard shouting.

“There has been a breach in the perimeter! Get backup!”

All of a sudden, I was a target. I heard footsteps in every direction. I gathered the gunpowder, and put it in my rucksack. I sprinted back down the hallway, to find people blocking every exit! I grabbed a torch from the wall and waved it around menacingly. I ran to the right corridor, and then the people there attacked. I threw gunpowder in the sack on them, then threw the torch at my enemies, who burst into flames before my eyes! I pushed past the screaming people, and ran on. I came to a metal door bolted shut. There were people running to me from behind. I had no choice. I lit the remaining gunpowder, and covered my ears.

“BOOM!” was the sound of the gunpowder, before the door caved in. A banner depicting the words ‘天鹅’ hung on a wall beside me. The Emperor was tied up in a chair, and a man with a short beard stood by him. “The killer!” I exclaimed. He drew his sword, and I drew mine. We battled until the backups came. I had driven the killer into a corner, and then I pierced him in the chest. “Ha!” I shouted, and turned and killed the backups. I cut the Emperor free, and took him by his hand. “Come, my Emperor, we need to go! A weak groan came from behind us as we were about to leave. We turned around, and the killer spoke to us. “The 天鹅 will return...” he groaned, and then he slumped to the ground, dead. Then the Emperor and I ran home.

Judge Pao Meets Aliens

Wellington College International Shanghai, Chow, Javier – 11

The house lay empty as its owner, Zhang, was away at work.

The house lay as quiet as a grave until something strange happened. There was a loud THUMP! in the attic like something had landed there. As it turns out, something had landed there. Little figures, 20 cm tall, wearing what looked like camouflage suits, appeared out of a strange device in the attic, armed with otherworldly weapons and with wings.

They were sent on a mission to mind control the owner of the house, using a potion. They had quietly floated down into other rooms, looking for the kitchen. When one finally found the kitchen, they sent a message to their comrades, saying "I found the kitchen." The other comrades floated down to the kitchen, immediately shuffling through drawers in search of food.

When they found it, they poured many drops of a colourless liquid onto the food at lightning speed. They finished the work very quickly, and retreated back to the attic and began traveling through the strange device back to their home world, leaving one troop to guard the attic. In the home world, the troops called on all members needed to develop and function a town and experienced scientists and one trained assassin.

When they all came, they immediately sprung into action, building a tiny, functioning village where the people can live, all in the attic of a house. Before Zhang came home, the leader gave the warning to seal the trapdoor with a sticky, gel-like liquid. When he came home, it was time for dinner. The house was spotlessly clean as always, and everything was in place. When he finished preparing dinner, he ate it and it tasted much better than before.

This is odd, said his subconscious but his conscious self took no notice of the warning. While he was eating, he felt like he had voices in his head and he felt like he would do anything for the voice. What he didn't realize, was that the voice was actually coming from his attic, projected from psychic powers that can mess with peoples minds.

Within seconds, the poor human was being in total control of the creature with the voice."Hhheellppp mmmmeeee", the voice said in whispering tones. Zhang was being controlled by the voice and has to follow all of the voice's orders. But to him, the voice sound like a flute, singing to him.

The voice said again, "yyyyoooouuu ccaannn aaacccttt lliikkee yyoooouurrr sssseellfff aaa bbbiiittt."

Then, the little figures went down to meet Zhang. They were the ones to hypnotize him. They started doing a process to train Zhang to use their weapons so he could use them to outwit whoever is in the way of the operations. So, he was training using the weapons that the "voice" supplied to them. Once he mastered them, they started planning a way to steal money from the government and leave them with no money. However, they could not collect enough data to effectively rob the Song Dynasty. So, they had to use other methods. They started printing fake money to fool the authorities and hide these counterfeit money in certain places to make money less valuable. They were also trying to cause inflation by raising demand and lowering supply. They had an innocent looking printer installed in the attic, which is disguised as a antique stamp but can actually print out money.

When they finished building the "chair", they were thinking of how to crash the economy of the Song Dynasty. They thought long and hard until they thought of a great idea to destroy its economy. They would just stop the products produced from reaching other countries, therefore stopping the Song Dynasty's foreign trade! So first, their plan was to establish several bases so the alien species could infiltrate important trade routes to disrupt the flow of goods there. They would have to establish these bases underground, so as not to arouse suspicion along the trade routes. They started by looking at a map of the Song Dynasty's major trade routes and then they started setting up the secret bases where the trade routes were. Zhang was also asked to murder some important generals to further throw the country into chaos when the friendly trading partners of the song got furious that there were no goods coming through to their countries.

They then begun making preparations for the things they were about to do. They started by launching deep-burrowing submarines, which had a drill or scooper in front of the submarine, to clear the dirt away. Each one was also equipped with multiple smart missiles, to sink boats and ships in maritime trade and combat. They would also have mini submersibles to ferry supplies from Zhang's home to the submarine, also using the deep burrowing drill.

When they reached the ocean, they used long ranged radio waves in case they needed to. Now, all they need to do is to wait for ships to come so they can sink them.

As if on cue, just then, a fleet of ships close to the pack of submarines sailed past, making them an easy target. When they sailed past the submarines, they fired the missiles at them. It was an astounding success, sinking all the ships and their crews. They then took their designated position on the open sea. What they didn't know was the ships were sailing to Korea, but they didn't really care where the ships were sailing to, only it was some merchant ships and some warships. After that, they sped away from the incident.

Back in the capital, Judge Pao was informed immediately of the incident, by Korea, who had not been happy when the shipment of goods had never arrived. Judge Pao immediately began investigating the incident, searching for how the ships vanished without a trace. Meanwhile, the aliens had implanted some of their task force in the government buildings so they can spy on all their conversations and discussions, especially about their actions. They did this by sneaking in at the dead of night and setting up bases there over time, using mufflers to block the sound of building bases directly in the walls /roof /ground of the government buildings. When judge Pao just started raised the concern at the meeting, suddenly a messenger told him that there was another missing fleet, this time the report coming from Southeast Asia, asking where did the promised goods go as they had not found a single trace of the ship in the seas.

The members of the meeting were discussing if there was a connection between these disappearances. They, of course had found none and they just decided to have some ships patrol the seas close to main shipping routes. The aliens heard all of this, so they decided to sink all the patrol ships before the sped away from land. They did this because first, they would never be caught and second, they would think one of the members of the meeting was responsible for the sinking of the merchant ships. Meanwhile, Zhang was monitoring and distributing the counterfeit money, he was slowly slipping away from the grip of the aliens spell.

He now routinely started preforming orders wrong, and although their tactics were working, they had started to become less efficient as the spell has weakened. When they sunk the patrol ships, judge Pao, as usual was immediately informed of the incident

Audrey

Wellington College International Shanghai, Chung, Iris – 10

Chapter One

Audrey Campbell stood at the doorway, breathing heavily, her heart filled with horror. A body. A body on the floor, a terrifying mass of blood and flesh. Kate's body. Audrey broke down, tears flowing down like a river, the coldness from her sister's hands seeping into her heart. She wanted to scream at the sky, scream so the whole planet could feel her misery, scream at whoever made this cruel, unequal world. Why was it Kate, her beloved sister who had died? Why couldn't she join her as well?

And then Audrey stood up again, the anger and pain in her heart replaced by something else: desire for revenge. She would slaughter whoever killed Kate. She would bring them the same heartbreak they had brought her. She would bring a vicious storm of vengeance upon those inhumane slaughterers.

"I will avenge you a thousand times. The oceans will run red with the blood of your murderers. I will not rest, or eat, or stop until I have given them a taste of their own medicine." She whispered furiously, vowing to herself that she would honor her promise, even if she had to face death herself, even if she had to travel to the darkest trenches, even if she had to massacre a million innocent citizens. But in a world of evil magic that could bind her to her oath forever, Audrey knew that it was dangerous to utter these words.

Nevertheless, she didn't care.

Chapter 2

"I told you, I'm looking for someone who can solve mysteries, preferably one of the best!" Audrey sighed, exasperated. She'd flown to Scotland Yard, hoping for someone who could work out who had assassinated her sister. The results weren't exactly promising. Instead of high-class detectives, she'd found a group of old men selling hotdogs. Yes, they were delicious, but they weren't what she was looking for.

"If you American dudes wanna find 'solv mys', whatever that is, you're looking in the wrong place." An old man grumbled. "Now run along. You don't wanna upset a poor old man with hearing problems, do you?"

"I said mysteries," Audrey shouted in his ear, rolling her eyes.

"Ah, mysteries? Then go to Judge Pao. He lives in China and is probably who you're looking for."

She smiled sinisterly. "And where is he exactly?"

"Shanghai, Huai Ren District, Bian Tai Road, Building 5. I believe that is where he is."

"That means I have no use for you now." Audrey replied coldly. She raised her hand and a dagger appeared, weaving around the men and killing them. "Can't have you spilling my secrets, eh?"

She walked briskly away. Somehow, she was reduced to a shell of her former self and no longer cared about hurting innocents. All she felt was a desperate, sick desire for vengeance.

Chapter 3

"So you killed dozens of innocent people to get here, just for one person. Looks like you're the murderer." Judge Pao grumbled, glaring at Audrey. She'd come to China, hoping for help, but Judge Pao seemed to be more interested in who she killed.

"Who cares? If you want to execute me, execute me. But help." She told him, showing no ripple of emotion.

"Luckily for you, I'm a nice person, so I'll let you off with a fine and a warning. A large fine, and definitely a large warning, but I'm willing to help."

“Sure. Thanks.” She plastered a sweet, innocent smile across her face. “I have an... um... mental health issue which makes me unaware of things my body does sometimes, like killing.”

Of course, Judge Pao wasn't happy to be in the company of someone insane, but still he didn't look away. She was grateful for that. Smiling and doing her best to look normal, she took out a thick stack of papers and handed them to Judge Pao. “They include all the details of the murder, the address, photos, reports and my own suspicions. Hopefully you'll be able to work out the murderers. I didn't come here for nothing. Work out the murderers for me... please.” Her voice broke as she reminisced her sister's death all over again.

“Alright. Now settle down in a hotel and we'll work it out for you. It'll take us a few months, but I'm sure you're glad to wait.” His voice filled with sympathy, remembering that Audrey was only a teenager and that losing her only sister would have been a painful blow to the heart.

Chapter 4

Ten months of living a life of uncertainty later, Audrey stumbled back into Judge Pao's courtroom. “Have you worked it out?”

“Have you heard of the Cobra?” he asked, nearly bouncing around with happiness and the exhilaration of solving a mystery.

“Of course! Who doesn't? They're a thousand-year-old group of terrorists who hack, murder and steal. All the famous massacres in history are linked to them. They've killed thousands but no one knows where they live. You think they killed Kate? Then we have no chance of winning.” Her shoulders slumped again as she sighed in exasperation.

“But the good news is that apart from finding out the murderers, we've also found out where they live!” Judge Pao pumped his fist, eyes shining. “They live in a cave in Los Angeles. We've even booked an airplane that'll take us there!”

Don't trust him... He'll betray you, just like everyone else...

Yes, kill him, kill him...

You can't get your revenge from him...

So, kill him...

Audrey tried to shake away these thoughts, but instead of going away, they troubled her mind even more. “Why should I trust you?”

“Because... I'm your best chance?”

Audrey wished he didn't say something logical like that. “Fine. But it's your fault if we die.”

Chapter 5

“Is... is this the place?” Audrey shivered. They stood at the mouth of the cave, wrapped in blankets, but still it was like living in a refrigerator. “I didn't think Los Angeles would be this cold in the summer.”

“It's their magic. They're trying to keep us out, but honestly they can do much worse.” replied Judge Pao. He squeezed into the dark, endless, void-like cave and disappeared.

“Here comes the worst.” Audrey closed her eyes, dreading what she would see, and crawled inside.

The cave was much better than they expected. In fact, it was almost comfy; mattresses piled high with blankets and pillows were lit by a diamond chandelier, and plates of food were set invitingly on a grand marble table. “Where are they?” she asked, expecting someone to jump out, pin her to the floor and threaten to kill her.

“Perhaps, we are here, waiting, waiting for someone foolish enough to come here.”

Next thing she knew, Audrey, Judge Pao and the police they had brought were assaulted by a group of men in black. Yelping, she kicked and punched with all her strength, as her anger mirrored her actions, forming daggers from the air that stabbed and slashed the terrorists. The battle went much better than they predicted. The Cobra's, she realized, strength wasn't their battle skill, but their stealth and secret location.

Audrey watched as the last of the terrorists ceased to exist and cheered in celebration. Smiling, she pushed over to Judge Pao. Her smile suddenly melted. She couldn't see him anywhere. She searched through the bodies, hoping he was there, alive. She stopped when she saw him. He lay on the floor, dead.

"What... Judge Pao's dead... Judge Pao's dead!" Audrey gasped. She looked at the bodies underneath him. The police.

They had all been killed.

"No... no! This wasn't supposed to happen!" And then as she hunted frantically for someone alive, Audrey noticed something even more disturbing.

She stared down at the face of her sister Kate.

Chapter 6

Her mother... gods, she saw her mother, and a younger version of herself... they both had curly black hair and proud black eyes... she'd always hated her looks because she was the splitting image of her mother... her mother, her cruel, cruel mother...

No, she was here in the cave, staring down at her sister's dead body...

"Oh, you think I tortured you? You don't care? Then what if I torture your sister? Then will you care?" A scream ran from her former self as Mother slashed at Kate with the knife she always held threateningly

Audrey shook, a river of tears beginning to form on her pale cheeks...

"Now go! Get out of my house! Both of you!"

"Kate.. why... why are you here? You're... you're a terrorist? Why did you fake your own death? Tell me! Are you alive? Please be alive! You need to live, to accompany me! Please be alive!"

And she felt a jolt of pain, of sadness that seemed to control her. She found a dagger in the dark crevices of the cave and raised it over her heart...

Audrey Campbell never opened her eyes again.

Please Forgive Me

Wellington College International Shanghai, Hemmerle, Esther – 12

The prisoner sat in the corner of his cell in despair. Everything had been taken away from him so suddenly; what he once had was all gone. He opened the crumpled piece of paper and gave it a last longing look. With his eyes, he traced the shape of his wife and his son, so joyful on the sketch. He wondered how they were now.

But it was not him, he promised, it was not him. Nothing could be done now, he slowly let the truth engulf him.

His thoughts were interrupted as several guards marched in. The guards dragged him out of his cell. He looked at the world around him and said his last farewells to Earth.

One week earlier...

Wang knocked on Lin's door. He was still waiting for an answer. While waiting, he noticed his friend's house was weakly built. The wood which wrapped the house was loose and a couple of planks were swinging against the house. The layer of dirt below the wood was starting to appear. It was unevenly spread and the small house looked as if it could barely fit two people. He couldn't believe Lin was living here with his whole family. He looked up and noticed the rooftop of his house was filled with cracks. He heard the raindrops dripping into the house.

A few minutes later, Lin welcomed Wang in.

"Lin's attitude was as positive and enthusiastic as always", muttered Wang, "it's almost as if he didn't mind living in such a poor little house."

"Long time no see!" exclaimed Lin.

"Yes, long time no see, we need to catch up." Wang replied.

This started off their conversation and one hour later they were all eagerly buzzing about their lives and experiences. They chatted for another half an hour when Lin embarrassedly explained his difficult situation to Wang.

"You see, I'm short of money and I really need help. Our house's rooftop is broken and each time a rainstorm comes by, my home gets flooded," explained Lin, "and my mom's medical health gets worse when that happens and—"

Wang cut him right there and asked, "What's wrong with your mom?"

"Well, she has some sort of disease, that's all I know," replied Lin.

Wang froze on spot, last time she saw Lin's mother, she was all well and healthy. Her energy almost made her seem as if she was in her early twenties.

"Ok, don't worry I will lend you some money but I don't have enough to make you and your mom live a reasonably good life. You might need to find a way to earn more money."

After all, Wang cared for Lin's mom nearly like his own mother. Wang's mother passed away a couple years after he was born, and he was raised by his father. He had often come to find Lin to play, and Lin's mother always took great care of him.

"Thank you so much," said Lin while embracing his best friend. He thought for a second then continued, "The problem is, I don't think anyone would be happy to accept me, an unintellectual person to work for them. How am I going to earn the money?"

Wang thought for a minute then unpleasantly cleared his throat and said, "Perhaps you could steal some money from rich people who unfairly gained wealth?"

"Yes! You are a genius!" answered Lin. But this gave Wang an uneasy feeling, he sensed something mysterious about his friend's attitude.

After a small chat, they planned to meet each other the next morning outside Lin's house to find the rich and steal their wealth.

The next day...

Wang was surrounded by the milky white snow. Every time he inhaled, a chilly prickle entered his lungs and every time he exhaled, he watched as the fog escaped from his mouth. Everywhere he turned were naked trees and bright red rooftops covered in powder white snow.

“What a beautiful scenery!” he gasped.

He then turned his attention to the snowflakes. He watched as a snowflake gracefully danced in the air until it came to a halt. He looked up and saw the beautiful blue sky that covered the world above.

He woke himself from the daydream and turned his full attention back to the task. He was here for a mission, and he had to complete it.

Half an hour earlier, Lin had given Wang the instructions to walk around the place, with the aim of finding a wealthy family and plotting them on a map he was given. Wang had already wasted 20 minutes admiring the beauty around him and he wasn’t planning to waste more.

Soon after, Lin found a couple of rich wealthy men, then scribbled a green dot on the map. He ran to Wang who was not far behind, and they shared their findings. Wang and Lin went back home and decided to come back here at 12pm.

The clock was ticking slowly in Wang’s house. He climbed himself off his bed and his mind wasn’t clear. His body was sore and heavy, dark bags were forming below his eyes. He slowly walked to their rendezvous spot. He saw Lin sleepily sitting on a bench to his right. They united together and were ready to embark on the daring, exciting adventure...

They had taken all the gold they were able to take with them and ran out. They set the place on fire to not leave any traces behind that could give a clue to the police or detectives.

The next morning...

“Where— where are we?” Wang muttered, still drowning in a pool of unconsciousness, not wanting to let go his sweet dreams of saving Lin’s mother.

The metallic smell of bars pierced through Wang’s nose, and he snapped back to reality. A metal structure was enclosed around him, and he looked down at himself.... Chained! In bars!

“What in the world!” Wang bawled in confusion and anger, as he threw his hands around frantically like a drunken sailor and howled in fury.

“Now look who it is. Isn’t it the daring thief who stole all the gold and stacks of money from my friend’s uncle’s family... Honestly, try to not leave footprints all over the ground,” a familiar voice hollered over and echoed across the room. “I immediately knew it was you, as I saw your unique shoe size’s trace all over the snow, nobody in this town would’ve worn such big shoes.”

“Judge Pao! Please. I beg you, I really beg you.... Let me out of here! I am really innocent, well not exactly, but I did this to save my friend Lin’s, mother! Please! I’ll give everything I took back!” Wang felt tears swelling up in his eyes, sweat trickling down his back, heart beating fast and loud like a drum...

The room fell silent. Candles flickered and danced upon the hallow walls with awkwardness, above their heads. Wang silently prayed to the gods above him, begging, praying, hoping for their forgiveness. But no. Instead, he was answered with a frosty ‘No.’

“No!” Absolutely not! You shall be punished for your faulty actions, how dare you steal!” Judge Pao’s voice rang as clear as a bell through the hallways, the hairs on Wang’s back stood up in fear.

“You will be executed soon. Prepare.”

“Judge Pao. What about Lin? He deserves to be punished too.” Wang pleaded in guiltiness and sorrow.

“Me? Oh no, Judge Pao, not me, Wang did it all, he stole the money, and in fact, he even forced me into the plot when I was so determined to stay clear.” A voice I knew innocently whispered next to Judge Pao.

“Lin! You betrayed me! No, I beg you not to do this. We both have families that need our support, and if I die, I choose to die with my partner in crime.”

“Sorry Wang, but it’s not my fault that you dragged me into all this mess,” he then looked respectfully to Judge Pao. “He may be in shock and anger, but believe me your honor, I am speaking the truth.” He slyly spoke, and Wang watched in horror as Judge Pao nodded his head and trudged away...

Wang sat there, bewildered, outraged from the betrayal of his best friend, and more scared and regretful for everything he had done and his death. He thought of his family, his beloved dearest family. “Please forgive me” he said to himself. And he sat there, lonely, and he whimpered. Tears flooded his eyes, he shrieked in despair, as saliva dripped out of his mouth. He couldn’t tell the difference by then, and he drowned in unconsciousness...

In the Shadows

Wellington College International Shanghai, Hu, Annie – 11

Caerwyn Echethier cocked her head. Perched on a roof, she watched the carriage roll by. Feywal Astaseul. A courtesan, from what she'd gathered from one day squatting on roof tops, observing everything her target was doing. She slid down the red tile roof when the carriage was out of earshot and trudged back to the Keep.

Back in the Assassin's Keep, Caerwyn stalked up the endless, winding stairs leading to her room. After a whole day of running on rooftops, she wanted a long sleep. But apparently someone else had other plans for her. Dalemon Fantir was sitting on one of her exquisite chairs. He raised an eyebrow.

"You've been having fun for the whole day and you didn't tell me?"

"I wouldn't exactly call squatting on rooftops 'fun', but if it pisses you off, then I suppose it was worth it," she replies, leaning against the door and crossing her arms.

His eyes twinkled. "I really mean that much to you?"

She smiles sweetly. "Of course, you mean *everything* to me," she said, voice dripping with sarcasm.

His grin fades.

"How are you getting on with your mission?"

"You're not here just to ask me about my mission, are you?"

A bitter smile. "No."

He looks her in the eye.

"I'm here to ask you to do something for me. And for yourself."

"And what exactly am I supposed to do?"

"I want a pair of Craetis dragons."

She was on her way towards a chair, but when she heard this she tripped. Dragons had been hunted to almost extinction. A common Jade dragon would be almost impossible to find, much less a fire-breathing Craetis dragon. Caerwyn righted herself and regained her posture.

"Why do you want them? And more importantly, how am I supposed to get them?"

"I have been informed that your target has two Craetis dragon eggs in his treasure room. It will make traveling so much easier."

"So that's why you want me to kill him," she mused.

"Yes." He said quietly.

Caerwyn shrugged. "Better sooner than later."

So she ended up crouching in Feywal Astaseul's garden. Listening to conversations between servants, watching where they were going, figuring out the entire plan of the house and where the treasure room was. Laborious, tough work. Which takes a long, long time. By the time she returned to her luxurious, warm room and collapsed onto her silky bed, it was already past midnight. She tossed and turned until she finally fell asleep.

When she awoke, she was soaked in sticky blood. An ear-splitting scream erupted out of her mouth. She scrambled out of her parents bed and looked at her parents, throats slit from ear to ear. She fell to the ground and sobbed uncontrollably. Lady Cantaline swept in and, holding her hands tightly, ushered her out of the back door.

"Quick," she hissed, pushing Raelynn forcefully out the door. "Run for your life. Don't let them catch you!" Then she turned and disappeared into the castle again. Raelynn started to shout after her, but thought better of it, since Lady Cantaline would not do that if it was under normal circumstances.

Tears still flowing from her eyes, Raelynn ran as fast as her legs could carry her. She stopped at the edge of the Loihi river. Water splashed onto her bare feet, and she flinched at the cold. There was a terrified, high-pitched scream. Raelynn refused to think about who that might have been. Footsteps sounded behind her and she looked to find a beautiful man smiling coldly at her. She sensed a dark presence inside him, and shuddered. Her fire shied away from it. And when it reached for her...

She sat up, gasping. Sweat beaded her brow. When she realized she was safe in her room, she released the breath she had been holding. She looked at the time. It was just past dawn. Time to go.

Armed to the teeth, Caerwyn stalked out of the Assassin's Keep. She snuck into the house by slipping in and out of sewers. As soon as she was in, based on a day of spying, she silently walked to the treasure room. Not surprisingly, there were multiple guards on either side of the door. She dispatched them with a few flicks of her jewel-encrusted blade. Then she frowned. Shouldn't his guards be at least a bit more well-trained if they guard the most important things in his house except his life? She had better be more cautious. When she cracked open the door, she saw piles of shining gold, glimmering silver, and valuable diamonds. She saw priceless scrolls and books of every kind. But there. Sitting on top of a mount of gold. There was a pair of eggs. One was black and the other was white. They curved smoothly and had blue veins running along the surface. Both shimmered and shined like any piece of jewelry. She wanted to rush up that mountain of treasure and grab the eggs. The dragon eggs. But training kept her at the edge of the room. So she waited. Waited until there was silence. Waited. Waited for....that. That scuffling of boots. There were other people in that room.

A man emerged from the shadows. "She gone. You think she was after the gold?"

Another man emerged. "No. I think she was after the eggs."

Confused, the first man asked, "Why didn't she go for them then?"

"Because," Caerwyn snarled as she walked out of the shadows, "if I hadn't waited, then I wouldn't have known you were there, would I?"

The men's faces had paled. They opened their mouths to shout, but froze at the look in her eyes. She grinned wickedly, evil incarnate. Caerwyn flipped her sword in her hand.

"I think I will enjoy this very much," she said as she stalked towards them.

Clutching the dragon eggs in her hand, she crouched in the bushes as a female voice shouted, "The eggs! The eggs!"

"What happened? What happened to the eggs?" A man in a night robe demanded.

"They've been stolen, Master Astaseul!" Feywal Astaseul, then.

"Wh—" The sentence was cut off as blood spurted from his neck, courtesy of the dagger Caerwyn had flung out from her hiding place. He collapsed on the ground, dead.

She slipped out of the bushes as shouts filled the air and chaos erupted.

Mission complete.

A Chilling Crescent Moon

Wellington College International Shanghai, Lau, Lucy – 11

The criminal sat outside, accepting her destiny and regretting her ridiculous actions. The woman's hands were tied up with chains, looking like a savage.

The rain was deafening.

The executioner was looking at her with eagerness, sharpening his knife. The sinful murderer took one last look at her husband and daughter with desolation.

SLASH!

One day earlier...

Kaifeng, a peaceful and an amiable place for people to stay, has more than 4100 years of history. The market was busy and full of arguments for the prices of the goods. The delicate and flamboyant fan was lying adjacently to the precious and luxurious necklace. A young woman picked up the necklace, and asked for a discount with an arrogant look. The market men groaned with frustration, "FINE! I'll give it to you for five pieces of gold!". The customer nodded with satisfaction and left humming merrily. The cloying scent of handmade 'tangren' were chains trapping and engulfing everyone, causing people to rush to the little corner shop purchasing the sugary treat. Along the harmonious village, back in the mountains, stood the mighty castle of the emperor Zhang. A devastating 'accident' ruined the merriment.

"Dead! She's dead!" called the servant who was trembling, pointing at the rotten corpse. A chubby man with dark skin rushed inside the depressed place, pushing the chaotic crowd out of his way. That was the mighty Judge Pao, a fair and famous detective with a crescent moon on his forehead. The unpleasant metallic stench of the blood overwhelmed the well known investigator and the confused people. Judge Pao realised that this was definitely not just an accident, it was an intentional murder. "Lock the doors!" yelled judge Pao. "Everyone here is a suspect!" Judge Pao ordered his servants to carry the cadaver to the court and demanded in a monstrous way that no one in the room should leave until the mystery solved.

As soon as the corpse arrived the court, judge Pao started observing it immediately. The victim was unusually beautiful; she was a perfect fragile creation of the gods. Her lips were covered with a vicious violet color, her skin was as pale as paper. Her white dress was ripped, and her hair was beautiful and brunette. Judge Pao spotted a piece of an elegant rosy purple flower resting beside the body, he tucked it into his pocket. Judge Pao realised that the innocent woman had been poisoned. He gathered the suspects and quickly narrowed down the area of the murderer, and was eventually left with two people. Ling and her emperor husband, Zhang. "Alibis? Anyone?" Demanded Judge Pao in a fairly strict tone. The two suspects nodded weakly and uncertainly.

"Good, explain yourselves now."

"I was at the back garden, your majesty. Watering the flowers. I knew the victim, she's called Lan. She was my best friend, a loyal friend, why would anyone do that such a sinister thing?" Cried Ling, wiping her tears with her silk handkerchief.

"Sir, I was on my way to the nurse. I twisted my ankle last night and it was hurting very badly." Explained Zhang who was filled with confidence.

"You weren't..." muttered Ling, "You were dating Lan."

"No! I wasn't!" The smile on Zhang's face vanished and changed into an impression of great fear.

"Yes! You connived with her to have a clandestine meeting!"

"Stop arguing, I need more evidence to find out who's the killer." Stated judge Pao, touching his beard with judgement, his eyebrows locked together with confusion, "I need more clues, hurry up!"

Soon, judge Pao's assistant Pan brought a muddy bandage.

"We discovered this beside the crime scene, it is the same type of bandage that Zhang has," said Pan with certainty.

Everyone in the room gasped with amazement, Zhang was a noble emperor, and he was an honourable man. Why would he do that? When the guards were fiddling with alacrity to take Zhang to the dungeon, judge Pao roared with authority, "Silence! The murderer isn't him!" The crescent on his head seemed to flash, as he took the piece of purple petal of flower out of his ruby red robe pocket, "This was found in the crime scene also! I found this in the crime scene, it's probably the weapon that the killer uses. This kind of flower is called "Venom", it is known as one of the deadliest flowers, just one petal and your heart will stop beating as quick as lightning. Mrs. Ling, as you said, you were in the garden. So, you are the only possible person to put the poisonous petal in Lan's breakfast."

Ling's eyes flashed with guiltiness, she kneeled down and covered her face, "Yes, it was me. I killed her."

"But why?" demanded Judge Pao.

"I founded out that my husband was cheating on me with her! I just love my husband and didn't want my daughter to live with her, I couldn't control myself!" screamed Ling, "My beloved husband told me that he was heading to the clinic to cure his ankle, but he was actually having a secret date with my best friend. I thought, if she wasn't alive anymore, Zhang will love me again. So, I sneaked into the kitchen today and slipped a piece of "Venom" into her breakfast."

"Sir, but I'm a bit confused. Why is Zhang's bandage lying down there then?" Clarified Pan.

"I tried to blame him, because I can't stand him betraying me, I took Zhang's bandage and dropped it in the crime scene, trying to make it look like the killer accidentally left it there..." Ling laughed ironically to herself.

"Unfortunately, that was indeed the wrong thing to do, seize her! Case closed!" Ordered Judge Pao, sitting down on his throne, the crescent moon on his head beaming with blinding light.

Zhang was holding Ling's hands with misery and regret, and Ling will be executed tomorrow. Tears of sorrow flushed through everyone. The couple had been separated, and it's time for Judge Pao to solve another case. Even in modern days, whenever anyone can see a crescent moon, we still can remember judge Pao, an illuminated star in the vast galaxy of history.

A Fallen Baby

Wellington College International Shanghai, Leiser, Maisie – 12

Calvin tapped his foot on the cold ground of St. Richards Hospital.

“ Mr. Tan? “ Calvin looked up and walked toward the doorway where the nurse was standing. Her name tag said Marisa and she had a bandage on the side of her head.

“ What’s with the— er “ Calvin started then stopped he didn’t want to offend the nurse but the nurse had cause the signal.

“ Oh this? “ she pointed to her temple.

“ I got it falling down the stairs “

“ Ouch! “ said Calvin

“ Follow me “ the Nurse who said as she walked down the long corridor. While they walked down the hall the nurse whispered

“ He didn’t make it “. She stopped in front of a room labeled

“ Room 5 “. Just as he walked is a man with nurse scrubs and name card that said “ Dr. Pao “ Calvin could see that he had a silver necklace that had a gavel. The doctor and Calvin made eye contact for one moment until he was rushed down another hall. Just before he was moved down the hall he saw Dr. Pao give Marissa a glare. Calvin walked in and saw his wife sleeping. Calvin began to cry.

A while later, Calvin woke up in the room where his wife was now awake. Calvin gasped, “ hey honey “ Calvin said his wife smiled. About an hour later Calvin’s wife was in a wheelchair and Calvin was bring her back to their car. There were tear stains on Calvin’s wife’s face. Calvin adjusted her into the car and drove back to their home.

“ hey, take it easy okay “ said Calvin as they drove out the hospital. Calvin’s wife nodded. They got home at around 6 pm and ate dinner after they went upstairs and get ready for bed.

“ hey— “ Calvin’s wife started

“ yeah “ said Calvin.

“ okay so honestly I don’t know of I just imagined it but our baby, he – he did make it “ Calvin’s wife sobbed “ wait , what? What do you mean ? “

“ I mean, I saw him he was alive and he still is, that– that doctor took him “

The next morning, Calvin went to the hospital wanting to know who that mysterious doctor was. He walked up to the receptionist. She had brown hair and was sitting at the reception desk while typing something on her computer.

“ Hello “ Calvin said

“ Good morning, what can you help you with? “ said the receptionist

“ I’m looking for a Dr. Pao “ replied Calvin

“ Ahh, I know that name” She smiled

“ one second “

“ He’s actually a new doctor and he recently moved her but he has a very impressive resume. Ohh, here he is! “

Calvin almost leaned over to see the computer in curiosity.

“ Hmmm, Odd “ said the receptionist

“ What? “

“ It seems as though he isn’t in the system “

“ What? “

“ Hold on, I need to ask someone about this”

A minute went by and he waited for the receptionist.

Finally, after about five minutes she came back .

“ okay, so it seems that he actually quit this morning “ she said pitifully

“ what? I thought you said he was new “ Calvin was getting mad now and the receptionist could see it.

“ Yes, I know you are annoyed “

“ I’m not annoyed, I’m just...I’m just..I’m just worried “

The receptionist nodded and Calvin walked out

On the way home thoughts and worries swept all through Calvin mind

“ why did he quit?“

“ is my new born baby still alive? “

“ where is Dr. Pao now? “

When Calvin got home he told his life the news.

“ He’s out there, I know it, with our baby.”

Calvin wife started to cry again.

“ Hey, it’s okay we are gonna find our baby and we’re going to find Dr. Pao, I promise” Calvin said as he smiled. He wasn’t sure if was going to find Dr. Pao but he knew he was going to try, for his wife, for his baby, and for revenge.

Calvin’s wife smiled for the first time since coming to the hospital. Her eyes glittered every time she smiled but he also saw tear drops in the corners of her eyes.

“ I need to do this “ Calvin thought. He went downstairs and started working he looked up all he could about Dr. Pao. He found out that his whole name was Stan Pao and that he had many other jobs such as judge, mayor of a small town in New York, and blacksmith. He called to blacksmith place where Stan had worked. Calvin was now writing down every bit of evidence and clues he could find including the phone call.

3/12/22

First Entry

Call Between Toms Metals and Me

START

CT: “ Hi, Is this Toms Metals? “

TM: “ Indeed it is, what can I do for ya? “

CT: “ I called to ask you about a Stan Pao. Have you heard about him.”

TM: “ Hmm, yes I know who you talking about”

CT: “ oh great, so when did he work for you?”

TM: “ Did? What do you mean he still does! “

CT: “ What? “

TM: “ Sure, I mean you can come down tomorrow if you want”

CT: “ That would be great! “

TM: “ Alrighty, then see you tomorrow “

CT: “ See you then! “

END

Well, I must say he was giving off some mixed vibes. Such as when I brought up Stan he became sad and had a more solemn tone but he seemed eager to have me over to his shop. I need to be organized tomorrow asking the best questions to crack this case quick.

The next morning Calvin drove down to the metal shop he was surprised that it was so close he felt like he had never seen it he pulled up close to the shop as he could and hastily walked into to open shop. A large man with a long beard walked towards him

“ why, hello “ he said in a booming voice.

“ Hi “ said Calvin “ I— er wanted to talk to Stan. “

“ Ah yes he just clocked in he’s in the back, come along “ said Tom as he signaled for Calvin to follow him. Calvin followed him as his heart beated quicker and quicker.

“ Breathe, Breathe, Breathe “ Calvin whispered to him.

“ STAN! “ yelled out Tom.

“ Yup? “ called out Stan.

“ Got a feller that wants to talk to you “ Tom said

“ Alrighty! “ Stan had large boots a plaid shirt and jeans and most important his silver gavel necklace . Calvin stood in awe of the sight. He was standing in front of the man that might of killed his baby, the man that could’ve killed his wife and the man that has caused Calvin unbearable stress the past weeks.

“ You alright there fella? “ said Stan as he gazed at the astounded Calvin.

“ It—it was you! You have my baby you could’ve killed my wife! Where— where is my baby? “ Stan backed up from Calvin who looked demented but Calvin didn’t care all he wanted to see was his baby.

“ I don’t know what your talking about “

“ Yes you do! “ yelled Calvin. Stan sighed and turned around back through the door.

“ Look, I know what your wife saw and it wasn’t what it looked like”

“ Oh you mean you taking my baby away from me! “

“ Well yes, but I was doing it to save your baby not to steal it! “

“ What? “

“ Yes, now listen you know that nurse, Marissa? And you know that bump that was on her forehead? Well what ever story she had told you was wrong. She helped me with the delivery, very healthy baby by the way. Anyway, before the delivery I heard her talking to some other nurses. She said that they were going to test on the baby. I knew at that point I could give her the baby. So when the surgery was done and I saw her try to take the baby. So, I told her that I needed to give the baby some medicine and then put the baby in one of the closets. While I was exiting the closet Marissa was there. I hit her with some near by pole and that’s how she got the bump. I left the next

morning because I knew I couldn't work for a company like that. As for your baby..." Stan grabbed a baby carrier from underneath a counter and passed it to Calvin. Calvin was in awe. He started to cry.

"There, there" said Stan gently

The Prohibitive Price of Justice

Wellington College International Shanghai, Lin, Bumo – 10

It was a beautiful day outside. Fluffy white clouds floated past my window, a perfect breeze whooshing past. Birds chirped in the trees, while flowers bloomed in rainbow colors. The weather today was strange, I thought, considering it was the middle of winter, but I intended to make the most of it.

The universe, though, disagreed.

A loud banging on the door interrupted my blissful train of thoughts. I opened the door and found myself face to face with the expressionless stare of an emperor's guard, followed by the expressionless voice telling me to "stop staring and get my lazy self into the carriage."

A few seconds later, I found myself being ushered into a fancy carriage pulled by beautiful white horses. As we were whisked onto the busy streets, I found myself noticing the upcoming festival's preparations. We had to drive slowly; people bustled about everywhere and to crash would be a disaster. This gave me plenty of time to gaze out the window. I saw red lanterns everywhere, spelling out 'Happy New Year!' I saw new food stalls selling all sorts of dumplings, fragrant meat, colorful candies, cakes and cookies. My mouth watered as the assorted smells drifted in through the open window. I heard festive music, chatter, and the loud voices of street vendors waving around enticing treats that I could almost taste.

All too soon, it was over, and once again I was told to 'stop salivating and get out'. And so that's how I came to being escorted by an old man to a set of huge metal doors with beautiful, intricate carvings. Although I had never seen the emperor's palace before, the tall towers, flowing banners and royal colors could be part of nothing else. The whole place had an air of power, royalty and dignity, meaning that if you were to walk by me, you would see me scraping and bowing to anyone that looked of any power.

Finally, I saw a huge set of gold doors. Huge, imposing, majestic doors. When my escort lifted up the ornate door knocker and let it fall repeatedly, the deafening bang of metal against metal echoed and resonated through the corridors. Silence fell. Voices hushed. Footsteps ceased. It seemed like everyone was holding their breath as they waited for an answer.

The silence wormed its way into my head, making me cringe when the creak of hinges and the bang of metal against wall chased it away.

The door was thrown open, and a tall shadow fell over me. The shape of an emperor's personal bodyguard towered over me, blocking out the bright sunlight coming from the room. I was shoved into the blinding light. As I stumbled into the room, I noticed the sun wasn't actually that bright, but gold and silver objects and ornaments caught the light, glowing, shining and glittering, begging for my attention. A bowl of the ripest, most exotic fruit I had ever seen sat on a beautiful maple wooden desk. Books piled high in every corner of the room, filled up shelves and lay on sofas, all while somehow managing to look neat and tidy.

"These three folks here—" I jumped at the sound of the bodyguard's voice, at the same time noticing three grubby men sitting desolately on the floor. "—Are suspected for gravely injuring the emperor. Take a look at them." I took a tentative step forward to survey the scene before me.

The first of the grubby men was big and muscular, tanned skin sporting various weird and creepy tattoos. His black, disheveled and oily hair was done in long braids filled with beads and other unidentifiable small objects, a style that any barber would puke at the sight of.

The second of the grubby men was short and stout, his dirty brown clothes stretched thin over a large and round potbelly. His hair was a shade of dark brown and looked like a rat's nest, due to all the strands sticking out in every direction.

But as my eyes moved on to the third of the grubby men, I staggered backwards in shock; my *best friend* sitting in those muddy clothes, eyes looking anywhere but me. I couldn't help but glance at the bodyguard, hoping for an explanation.

The guard caught my glance, and, thinking I was done, pointed at the first of the grubby men and said, "Well? Tell us your story." And so, in a deep voice, the man began:

"I had just been let out of my prison cell and into the yard for a short break by my guard when we suddenly heard shouts and screams from inside the palace. My guard went to check what was happening and left me. It soon got boring and I decided to poke my head in for a look. I found the door and opened it a sliver, but someone saw me and thought I was the criminal and was looking back to see if anyone has saw me escape. They thought a criminal would have good reason to try to hurt the emperor, so they brought me here."

The next one, the potbelly one, began:

"I was out shopping when the news spread. I looked at the palace clock and realized I was going to miss the shuttle if I didn't hurry up, so I started running to the bus stop. I kept looking back at the tower for the clock, and I guess my captor thought I was looking back to see if anyone was following me after I ran from the crime."

I leaned closer when my best friend started speaking, wanting to catch every word, hoping one might save him from execution.

"I was in the palace delivering a message to a bottom-class servant when it happened. I saw the great doors being thrown open and a guard carrying the now fragile body of the emperor to the direction of the sickbay. I stuck my head into the emperor's room and got my hands in a pool of blood. I recoiled, disgusted. Someone saw the blood on my hands and suspected me. They thought I had realized the stream of people had followed to the sickbay and I was taking my chance to get out."

I could see a lot of loopholes in that last story, no matter how hard I tried to ignore them. First, no matter the circumstances, it's a well-known fact that you are *definitely* not allowed to poke your head into the emperor's room unless you have permission from the emperor himself. Second, bottom-class servants don't get the privilege of delivering messages. They have to go down to the gates and receive it themselves.

"Well?" said the bodyguard gruffly. "Who is likelier?"

I hesitated to reply. I had never told a lie, and I wasn't going to change that now, but still, it was my *best friend*. I decided to get it over with. It would give me a chance to talk to him.

It didn't turn out as expected. My friend was being uncharacteristically silent.

"Answer me!" Silence. I could hear the fly on the windowpane. The white-washed walls seemed to press ever closer, threatening to squash me flat. I sat on an uncomfortable hard-backed chair.

I heard the hands on the clock ticking away.

My friend's black hair was windswept, his eyes wild and unfocused. I leaned closer.

"You know lower-class servants don't have messengers. You know you're not allowed to go into the emperor's room. I know a lie when I see one. The other stories are perfectly likely. It must be you. What do have to say about that?"

A hoarse whisper answered me.

“My family has run out of money. We’ve been getting along by sitting on the streets like wild animals, begging for our lives. I...I thought that if I could break into the emperor’s room and steal a bit of gold, no one would notice.”

“Well, someone has noticed, apparently. And you are coming right along with me.”

I instinctively slipped into ruthless judge mode, forgetting that it was my best friend. A confession was a confession, and the emperor was the emperor. This kind of crime was unforgivable in the eyes of the citizens. If I let him go and people found out, I would be thrown in jail, executed along with my friend.

I marched my friend into the emperor’s room with a practiced air, as I had done many times before.

“Found anything?”

“Confession. Needed money.”

But as I watched my friend being pushed and pulled to the execution grounds, the reality of what I had just done came surging into me, and I collapsed onto the nearest chair. But later I still found myself standing next to a formidable man, watching, petrified, as they made my friend kneel, as the man raised a giant axe. A tear found its way down my face as the metal flashed, the thump sounded.

He was gone.

Gasp

Wellington College International Shanghai, Liu, Lindsey – 12

Intense breathing followed. I scrambled to sit up, thoughts roaming around the depth of my head, still traumatized. I dragged myself out of the swirling tornado of gory nightmares that was just about to engulf me. I opened my window, and was welcomed by countless stars, constellations that circled above my head, and the shimmering moon. Serene. As my consciousness began to abandon me, I heard a noise.

It was soft. Almost silent. But I heard it.

Foot prints could be heard as the mysterious figure whizzed past, and I could hear that they were trying their best to stay quiet. I cautiously slipped on my shoes, and I trudged towards the door. I swung it open.

Gasp.

Suddenly, every last drop of sleepiness was sucked out of me.

“Gong” the first bell signaling midnight boomed across the house. I saw small splats of blood laying fresh on the floor, I inhaled a sweet, metallic pungency that made me nauseous.

“Gong” the second bell rang in a deafening sound. Raw acrid air, a heavy and festering scent lingered across the room, it made me sick.

“Gong” the third bell sent ripples in the air. Uprturned bamboo chairs lay in all kinds of positions across the room, and big clots of blood formed together, which made the carpet gooey and warm.

Nine more “gongs” of the clock followed, it signalled midnight. I shrieked in horror as I was petrified and lost in my thoughts as they flooded into my brain like a river. Murder? My hands and legs loosened and almost collapsed when I saw the body.

My grandfather. My beloved, dearest, most loved grandfather. Just lying cold and lifeless on the floor. The normal peachy color has quickly drowned and all I saw is an icy, pale lake blue that had taken over. The tears in my eyes began to spill, and I whimpered out loud, choking on the air that I breathed. I sat there, frozen, just screeching in agony, for hours and hours long, as I sorrowfully bade farewell the memories that I cherished with him.

Two days later

I trudged with heavy steps towards the town market. The aromas of different foods engulfed me like a tidal wave; the scrumptious smell of fried dumplings always made me drool. The fruit section had such an exotic variety of fruits, bursting with many radiant, vibrant colours. Voices of all ages hollered around, however I felt like I was trapped in a void, separated from the bustling world, and only hearing the muffled noises of people advertising their products. The eye-catching lanterns flickered and twirled with the wind, illuminating the street, and that’s when I saw Liu Yue Hua hustle by.

‘Hey,’ I called out.

“ I’ve heard what happened. Are you feeling all right? Have you discovered who...” she muttered out, eyes avoiding me.

I sorrowfully shook my head.

“I might know who to look for. I also lost our friendship bracelet, I hope you’re not mad. Don’t worry, I’ll spend my time finding it, but this isn’t our main priority. Let’s solve your case first. You know there’s this famous detective, just living down the street, called Judge Pao. Why don’t we visit him and see if he can help?” she replied.

“Really?” I doubted the idea, but I simply had to find out.

When we entered the house, the suffocating smell of burned incense choked me. Shadows of flickering candles danced on the hallow walls, and painted a beautiful scene. Newspaper hung on the rusty walls, sitting there day by day, allowing dust to pile like a mountain on top.

“Excuse me are you Judge—” I half whispered.

“Who goes there?” He chanted out in a raspy, clear voice that echoed across the room.

“We need you to solve a case, please we’ll do anything you want. My grandpa died of a mysterious murder two nights ago, at midnight. We haven’t found the murderer yet; we need your help. Please.” I croaked in a shivering voice.

“Ahh, yes, indeed. I have heard about the murder that occurred a few days ago. I am interested, you know, so I will help.”

The following day

“Hmmm, yes, yes...” Judge Pao carefully scrutinized every corner, muttering to himself. He was at my house, in the living room, at the murder scene, finding out clues.

“Now what do we see here?” He steadily held up an object under a lamp.

Gasp.

It could not be. The object, was Liu Yue Hua’s apparently “lost” friendship bracelet with me. Upon the weaved bracelet, adorned the sunset colored honeysuckle flower that represented out everlasting friendship. A memory came back into my head...

Shivers ran down my spine as a vivid memory of my painful childhood slithered around my brain like a snake. Would my scars ever heal? And when I was there, deep down, suffering and trying so hard to struggle my way back up, a helping hand reached out. I saw a light, an angel, a friend that I could trust. Liu Yue Hua was there standing with me, and so, we swore to each other that we’d never let each other go, and forever keep our friendship. That’s why we braided our friendship bracelet together, and since her name meant “flower in June”, and my birthday is in June, we chose together a flower that symbolized happiness and eternal love. Honeysuckle bloomed in June.

But now, betrayal? Treachery? Murder? All from my beloved best friend. Why? Was she ever really true friends with me? As tears started welling in my eyes, my vision obscured, I collapsed. The pain was simply unbearable. I saw stars dance across my vision, and I snapped my eyes shut in torment. I groaned in agony, and bewildered by the information, I let go...

Three days later

I twitched my fingers. Judging by the amount of sunlight spilling in from the window, it was nearly noon. Noon? What happened?

A soft knock on my door, and I found myself walking there and opening it, but also very shocked at how weak and ill I felt. Judge Pao’s crinkly yet mysterious eyes surveyed my room. He looked guilty, but I don’t know why.

“So, Luo Hua Xin, I have something to tell you. Ever since you fainted, Liu Yue Hua has been beheaded in the town square...”

I felt sorrow and melancholy stir inside of me and something deep inside seemed to have died, perhaps the burning flame of our friendship, that melted into ash and diffused into smoke...

“However on day two when I went back to your house to check on you, I found your grandmother’s footprint. You told me she went to feed chickens that evening, and it was raining that night. Perhaps, I thought to myself, her shoes stepped on the mud and left a footprint of the patterns of her shoes indoors. But then, trails of blood could be seen at the pattern too... it matched exactly with her shoe size and pattern... that’s when I realized...”

The world I heard was muffled. Words were spoken unclear, but I knew exactly what Judge Pao was talking about. Grandma did it. I sank in the pool of thoughts. Of course, their marriage was forced and she loathed grandpa. My head was on fire, I bawled out swear words and curses, to the gods above and Judge Pao. The house shook up and down, almost like the gods were punishing, scolding me for my immaturity and horrid actions. But I simply didn't care. I could hear that my voice trembled in an unforgiving tune and true resentment.

"No. No. No! Judge pao, you will regret the decision , the careless and stupid decision you have made, the incompetence that you've demonstrated here. You will regret them for the rest of your days!" I grunted out, suffocating in torment each time I spoke, like small knives pierced through my throat and lungs.

"Not that you'll have much longer to live either!" I cried.

I drew out a small dagger from my emergency cupboard, and stabbed it straight into his heart. Blood oozed out and sprayed in all directions. I plugged it out, the knife glinting wickedly in the afternoon light, as chunks of hot flesh mixed with the blood still warm from the victim stains on, and it disgusted me, it revolted me.

I drawled indifferently: "Exactly what you deserve." As I slowly trudged away.

The Price of the Stage

Wellington College International Shanghai, Temporini, Lucrezia – 11

The nightmares flooded her dreams as the alarm clock pulled her back to reality which was no better than her dreams. She sluggishly dragged herself out of bed and looked around her room, her dark and damp room. If a stranger came in, they would immediately be able to understand how much she cared about it, no matter how simple and poor it might seem. She pulled her body to the bathroom and washed her face in the icy water. She lifted her head up and looked in the mirror. “Don’t worry” she said to herself “One day, the name Diana Odair will be as famous as Judge Pao”. She gave herself a tiny smile and then broke into tears. She could feel the anger and regret spread like fire through her body, feelings she couldn’t even explain to herself, let alone others.

As she waited for the bread for Judge Pao to finish baking, she picked up a book and went to her cozy corner in the back of the garage. She read her troubles away until the booming voice of Judge Pao snapped her awake. “Where are you useless thing! Bring me my breakfast, NOW!” “Yes sir” mumbled Diana. She walked up the stairs to his bedroom with a tray that must have weighed 10 kilos. She knocked on Judge Pao’s room and slowly opened the creaking door. The unimaginably large room filled with dust always made her sneeze. The old-fashioned wooden furniture had small carvings made from the most expensive wood Diana could find. It was a gigantic contrast to her room that only had one wardrobe and a bed and nothing else. She had asked him multiple times for some more furniture but the only furniture she gained was a bright purple bruise on her cheek. She went over to the switch and the crystal chandelier burst into fake flames. She walked over to her master and put the tray on his plush bed. He slowly sat up moaning “What took you so long?” He demanded “If you have been reading again, I swear I’ll burn all the books in this house! Do you understand?!” The young girl looked down at the aging and grumpy man “Yes sir.” She mumbled. “That’s what I like to hear, now LEAVE!” She sheepishly left the room and ran up the stairs to her room to hide the books again.

The phone rang through the house meaning only one thing. A new case to solve. She ran down the stairs as fast as she could and picked up the phone. After a short talk with the caller, she immediately dashed up to Judge Pao’s room knocked and quietly whispered “There is a new case for us. The bank manager, Festus Heavensbee, got kidnapped from the bank. They have asked us to track him down and rescue him.” Judge Pao blinked his eyes and turned his back to her “Sleep now, case later.” He mumbled. “Ok, well, I’ll meet you at the bank in three hours.” And with that she dashed out of his room.

She left the gigantic mansion and went to the nearest bus stop. After an hour, she finally pushed her way off that awful and crowded bus. She quickly walked to the bank and immediately started working. The room smelled of dry blood and a nauseating amount of perfume. The glass door and the windows were shattered. She thought that there weren’t any other clues and that she’d have to start working with what she had when she saw something fall in the corner. She slowly walked towards it and knelt down to check what it was. The damp wallpaper smelled of extremely strong rose perfume, as if it was to hide the scent of the blood. The sound of footsteps stopped her in her tracks before she could touch anything. She ducked behind the table just in time and listened to the two men who had just came in. “Come on let’s just grab him and go!” said the gigantic and extremely muscular one. “No, we already took him, the boss said to get everything in this bank and meet him at the car park.” said the second one, who in contrast to the first one was tiny and basically just skin and bones. “On second thought, maybe he did say that” replied the first one. He sighed angrily “Do you ever pay attention to anything?” The two men grabbed everything they could find dashed out in haste. After a good minute or two, Diana peeked out of the table leg. She found a black tracksuit and put it on. Her plan was simple, she’d tell the two men she also worked for “the boss” and get in the van with them. Then once she arrived there, she would disappear call the police and arrest them. She dashed out and found the two men loading their van with the items they collected. “What are you two doing?” Diana boomed in the most commanding voice she could muster up. “We don’t answer to girls,” bellowed the first one “especially weak ones. It’s the girls that answer us.” “Well then I guess you’ll fail, and the boss will fire you.” She whispered. The two men were startled by Diana knowing who the boss was. “How do you know the boss.” The second one said in a hushed and demanding tone. “I thought you be smart enough to understand.” Diana laughed “I work for him as well and he asked me to come and make sure that you two don’t mess up.” The two men gestured for her to get into the van and Diana tried to suppress her excitement as she jumped in.

After about two hours, they finally arrived at their destination. “We have arrived at our destination, the abandoned car park behind the town theatre.” The first man’s voice brought her back from her daydreams as they parked and quietly slipped out. The car park’s walls were full of graffiti, and they looked like they were going to crumble under their own weight. Then Diana remembered her plan and started running away before the second man called out to her and said “Where are you going young lady?” “I forgot to tell you that I don’t only work for your boss but also for some other ones. One of them just called me and” the first man interrupted her “Whatever it is you should go, run, go.” “Thank you” she whispered and with that she dashed out of the car park. She immediately picked up her phone and called the police. It took no time for the police to come. She quickly recapped everything that had happened and the police charged into the car park at full speed just as the two men came out of the boss’s office. They arrested them and Diana ran into the boss’s office to find Festus Heavensbee tied to a chair. She untied him and helped him up. “Thank you” snapped Festus. “Well, just doing my job.” Diana snapped back.

After their bitter conversation, Diana and Festus came out just to find the interviewers already finishing the interview with Judge Pao. They packed up and walked to the theatre where they, actually only Judge Pao, would receive a medal from the mayor. Behind the curtains, Diana put on her sparkly black dress that trailed behind her when she walked. It had been given to her by her brother on her 17th birthday and it was one of the only things that reminded her of her family.

“Please welcome to the stage Judge Pao and his apprentice Diana Odair.” The mayor voice happily rang through the theatre. The two came out and were welcomed by a warm round of applause. “Today we are here to congratulate Judge Pao for his amazing work and for solving 50 cases each year for 5 years in a row. That’s 250 cases in 5 years.” The crowd started cheering louder than ever but in Diana’s head the worst was happening. “Oh no, 250 cases, he said he would stop his career as soon as he hit it. That means I’ll lose my job and I’ll become a babysitter for him, and my story will end like that before it even starts.” The mayor gave Judge Pao his medal and asked, “Is there anything else that you would like to add Judge Pao?” he opened mouth to talk when “BANG!” Judge Pao collapsed on the floor and immediately Diana knew her story was far from over...

The Ultimate Murder

Wellington College International Shanghai, Tong Liu, Oscar – 11

One afternoon, Judge Pao went to a hotel called “Wotel”. He sat silently in the taxi thinking about Detective Zhao. What will he look like? Is he good at solving cases? On the way to Wotel, trees whooshed by and a beautiful scene of a lake came into Judge Pao’s eyes. “Oh my! What a beautiful lake!” he exclaimed.

He watched himself travel on the bridge and arrive at the door. He got off the taxi and looked up. The building was gargantuan and incredible! A wooden pole supported the miraculous building from sinking into the water. It seemed ancient but powerful.

Meanwhile, Detective Zhao is on the way to Wotel. He seemed so excited he can jump out of the window. He was eighteen. Only eighteen. An eighteen-year-old detective and he became famous because of one of the cases he solved. The Temple Murder. He found the blood on the ground and followed the trace to find other useful clues. This is why an eighteen-year-old was so famous. He have heard of Judge Pao and how smart he is. He decided to invite Judge Pao to come and relax for a week. Detective Zhao thought he wouldn’t agree but he did. This made Detective Zhao very excited. He arrived and met the hotel manager, Woem. He led Detective Zhao inside the hotel. He exclaimed about how incredible this is. They agreed to see each other while eating dinner. His room number was 2207.

That night, they sat on a square table opposite each other. They looked at each other with seriousness in their eyes. Suddenly, Judge Pao burst into laughter.

“It’s so funny looking at a kid!”

Detective Zhao stared at him. “Well, maybe not. Anyways, you know an app called Soltectives?” Judge Pao asked.

Detective Zhao shook his head. “Never heard of it. What? A mystery solving app?”

“Exactly!” He shouted. “I think we can have a battle on that app to see who has a faster brain.”

Detective Zhao nodded helplessly as if saying “Are you really the Judge Pao I know?” Judge Pao didn’t seem to notice. “Ok, let’s do it in my room after –”

“Ahhhhhhhhhh!” Before he finished his sentence finished, a scream came from second floor. Judge Pao became alerted. He and Detective Zhao ran upstairs to see a body lying on the ground. Everybody gasped...

Ten minutes later, police came and blocked the scene. Judge Pao tapped the policeman on the shoulder. “What are you doing?” the policeman shouted.

“I’m Judge Pao. Can I check the scene with Detective Zhao please?” Judge Pao pleaded.

“Oh my! It’s Judge Pao. Of course. Come in, come in!” the policeman blurted out.

They walked in. The disgusting smell of blood filled the whole room. Judge Pao’s gaze locked on the scratch on the wall. “It seems like they fought here while the murder. The murder weapon was taken by the murderer. Let’s check in everybody’s room and see if there is a knife like weapon.” Judge Pao commanded.

Detective Zhao came back and told Judge Pao some bad news. He, Judge Pao, was the main suspect. “What? Why! What did I do?” he roared.

“They found a knife with the murdered person’s blood. I know you didn’t kill him, right?” Detective Zhao looked at him.

Judge Pao wanted to say something but nothing was said. Detective Zhao looked disappointed. "I will prove that you are innocent!"

Detective Zhao looked around and knelt down at a table. Blood stains were on the table. He thought for a moment and walked away. He then stared at glove thrown in the bin. "This is probably the glove the murderer wore while killing him," he thought. He asked a police if he can take him to Judge Pao's room. He agreed. "Thanks" Detective Zhao said.

He studied the knife that was in the plastic bag. Blood stains were all over the blade. Detective Zhao shivered. He can't imagine if he was the one who got murdered.

"Umm. Officer? Do you know who has the hotel room's key?" he asked

"The hotel manager, Woem." the police officer answered.

"Thanks"

He told the police officer to get everyone to the hotel lobby. "Is there anymore evidence that you guys have?" Detective Zhao shouted.

"No" a policeman said.

"Ok, now I'm going to tell you guys who is the murderer!"

Everybody gasped. They started to talk.

"Quiet!" the officer shouted.

"The murderer killed the person by hitting his head onto the table." He pointed to the table with blood stains on it. The table just got moved to the lobby. "He fainted so the murderer stabbed him with the knife and put it in Judge Pao's room!"

"So the murderer is Judge Pao right?" people asked

"No! It's Woem! He has all the keys to the rooms so he opened Judge Pao's room and put it under his bed to make it seem like it's Judge Pao who killed him! There's a pair of gloves in the bin. Box of gloves is on the desk of Woem and no one can take them unless Woem agrees. Woem is very selfish and won't give anyone a glove. The glove in the bin is the same as the ones on the desk. Everything is pointing to you! Woem! Any last words?" Detective Zhao shouted and stamped on the floor as if saying "don't say anything or else..."

The police hand cuffed Woem and took him to the police station. Judge Pao thanked Detective Zhao for his help. "No problem! Next time we meet, maybe we can have a battle!" Detective Zhao said.

"Ok, I'm waiting!" Judge Pao said. "Now, I need to go! Bye!"

"Bye!"

Detective Zhao sighed and went back to his room. He jumped on his bed. "AHHHH!" He screamed.

A knife stabbed into his heart and he spat a lot blood out of his mouth. "What is this? Ah! Well, Goodbye world..." He fainted and died with blood all over his bed.

Judge Pao climbed out of his bed and looked at him. "Ha! You think you are very smart eh? Well, your life will end. Hahahahahahah!" He shouted like a maniac.

The Opium Den

Wellington College International Shanghai, Waldron, Abbey – 12

It is always a fascinating life with a friend such as Judge Pao. I have been involved in mysterious cases ever since I met him when I was sent to interview him by the paper as he'd become known for his inhuman skills to solve murders, mysteries and suchlike. His father was a judge in China, quite high up in the political circle when he met Judge Pao's mother, the daughter of a British salesman who refused to sell the most high profit good in China. Opium. Maybe it was his background, his character, or even his amazing ability to deduce that helped him through as a lawyer and placed him at the very top as Judge. We have had all sorts of brilliant adventures together, but one always stands out at the front as the most puzzling of them all.

Early one morning I knocked on the door of Judge Pao's study, surprised to hear two voices inside speaking Mandarin rapidly getting louder. Suddenly, the door was pushed open and a man, muttering in Mandarin, around 50 years old with coal black hair with white strands and a fiery complexion strode out. I raised an eyebrow at Judge Pao.

He glanced up and spoke: "Ah, Arthur you're here. Just the person I wanted to see," he tossed me a newspaper, "Read this."

I scanned through it, "A murder in Chinatown? A dead man's body found with red petals in his mouth?" I read in a questioning tone.

"Yes, look through my files if you please, and search Jixingpin."

"Jixingpin, 56, Tong Clan leader?" I read, glancing through his files.

"That's him. Meet me at Limehouse, 10 exact. Bring a handgun please, this is going to be dangerous work."

"Of course, sir. But may I ask who was the man who stormed out of the room a couple of minutes ago?"

"Ah. Of course. Wangfujin is the leader of the Chen Clan, and is suspected in the murder of Jixingpin. And what is quite interesting is these two clans are sworn enemies. Wangfujin came to me for help on this matter, as he is being accused by the Tong clan."

On arrival I climbed down from the cab and looked around for Judge Pao. He was already waiting.

"Ah, there you are Arthur, be ready as we will soon be going into Limehouse Chinatown. We will head to the Tong Clan first, then to Chen, afterwards perhaps somewhere else once I have confirmed my suspicions."

We walked in silence as we headed to the Tong Clan's building, and went to meet the new leader of the Tong Clan. He received us quite readily, and as he spoke to Judge Pao in perfect Mandarin, I stood there confused. Eventually Judge Pao turned around.

"Oh I'm very sorry, This is Shenwen, newly elected leader of the Tong Clan. Shenwen, meet Mr Conan-Doyle"

"Hello stranger, nice to meet you."

"Hello, nice to meet you too, sir." I replied.

Judge Pao and Shenwen continued talking in Mandarin. Shenwen was waving excitedly when Judge Pao turned around to face me.

"We will be allowed to observe the murder scene, Arthur, so come with me."

I followed him down the stairs and saw quite a disturbing sight. The man's eyes seem to have rolled backwards and his mouth open filled with red petals ... But there seemed to be no violence or blood. Judge Pao spoke some Mandarin to Shenwen then turned to me.

"This case may be more interesting than I thought...Hmmm..."

He bent down and searched the body, as if for some valuable object. Not long after, a cry of "Aha!" Startled me and I bent down to see what he was pointing at. A red and yellow mark of some sort, circling around the neck, was confusing to me as it was to Shenwen.

"What is this? And why is it so important?" I spoke in complete confusion.

"Ah, elementary, my dear Arthur." Replied Judge Pao, "We shall now go to the Chen clan to complete the investigation."

When we arrived at the Chen Clan building, and saw Wangfujin at his desk looking through papers and ordering people in different directions. He stood up and greeted us warmly.

"Hello, Conan-Doyle, I have heard much about you. And my old friend, Judge Pao."

He spoke in perfect English with the slightest Chinese accent. I could not conceal my surprise at this, and so Wangfujin turned to me with an amused smile on his face.

"I can see you are quite confused that I can speak English, never mind a near perfect accent?" he said with a slight twinkle in his eye "I have not been the leader of the Chen Clan for 30 odd years without learning how to communicate, eh?"

"That's enough messing with Arthur now, Wangfujin. We must get back to business."

"Ah yes," replied Wangfujin "The Tong Clan feel they have the right to accuse me of murdering Jixingpin, whilst on the contrary, I have done nothing of the sort."

"Hmmm... May I ask you a few questions? From our conversation earlier I know of your respectable relationship,"

"Yes, our clans were quite against each other but I quite admired his tactics, as likely vice-versa."

"Hmmm, second of all, where were you at 10 o'clock on Monday evening and did you wear a scarf?"

"I was visiting my mother on the other side of Chinatown, and I was not wearing a scarf."

"Lastly do you know someone called Futang?"

"Hmmm, the owner of the Red Muffler?"

"Yes," replied Judge Pao as he jumped out of his chair "we must get going now, thank you very much for your hospitality."

After being escorted to the door, we stepped out into the gloomy weather.

"Arthur, we shall now head to the Red Muffler."

"What is the Red Muffler?" I replied in confusion.

"You shall see when we get there, meanwhile please make sure your hand is close to your gun at all times."

We arrived at the Red Muffler and I saw strange people with bowls of metal pipes, some muttering, some seemed half dead as they lay in shadows apparently talking to their neighbors but then ignoring each other. Then it hit me. This was an opium den! But once again baffled by Judge Pao's strange ability to observe, what *were* we doing in an opium den?

"Stay here please, whilst I go and have a word with Futang." Said Judge Pao.

Soon, Judge Pao returned motioning me towards the exit. We stepped out of the dark and disturbing shadows onto the streets of Chinatown.

"Pray tell, what happened when you went upstairs?" I asked curiously.

"I asked the man some questions, one of which has now identified the murder, and a who wore a red and yellow scarf that night."

"What does that have to do with anything?" I cried in impatience

Judge Pao smiled, "Everything. Meet me tonight outside the Red Muffler at eleven thirty and bring the police."

We parted ways, and I met the police before heading home. Rested, I ate dinner then myself and the police made our way to the Red Muffler, met Judge Pao, and headed into the opium den. We headed upstairs to Futang's office and knocked on the door. He opened it with some surprise at our arrival.

"Welcome, welcome, what is it that you need?"

Judge Pao waited for him to sit down then said "Hello, Futang, I have come to arrest you for the murder of Jixingpin."

Futang's face turned white. "Where is your proof?"

"I questioned you if you had a red and yellow scarf, you replied you did not, despite the fact that it was hanging on your hatstand—you thought I was oblivious to— by the door. I found a piece of scarf at the murder scene that perfectly matches with a piece of your scarf that has gone missing. Not only that, your scarf is badly made. Dye came off and stained the victim's neck as you strangled him, leaving an unusual mark of red and yellow."

"That doesn't prove anything!" Cried Futang as he made haste get up.

"*Sit down.*" Replied Judge Pao in his authoritative voice. "You want more evidence? You being your arrogant self then stuffed some red poppies into his mouth. You know well as the owner of an opium den, that poppies are the opium flower."

"He deserved to die. He was my good friend, and used to come here every night. One day I discovered he was using information he collected from me to make me bankrupt or worse. I had no choice but to kill him, and I could only hope that no one would bother to investigate the crime."

Futang was arrested and hanged soon after. But I will never forget this little adventure with Judge Pao in Limehouse Chinatown or his comments to me after, "My grandfathers would be satisfied with our justice to an opium seller."

The Mystery Man

Wellington College International Shanghai, Wang, Keller – 11

If you were to commit a crime what would it be? Robbery, theft, Arson, Battery? And would you get away with it? Well, most people wouldn't but this might be an exception. Hi, I'm Will, I might seem like an ordinary person living in an ordinary household, but truly I am not. You see, I used to live in America with my father. My mother died giving birth to me and my father then brought me to China in the city of Shusui, it was hard to adjust to the different lifestyle in China but it was even harder when my dad died to save me from some alley thieves. That moment I remember so distinctly, like a story encrypted into stone. My father told me to run to the police station and call the cops over, but it was too late. My father's body lay lifeless from the beating of the criminals. His last words 'Some people are not what they seem' I will never forget. That time I was only 8 years old, and it was hard to accept the cruel world.

It was a bright sunny day, I was buying food for myself when I heard a scream but no one around me seemed to care. I put down my groceries and sprinted to where the scream was located, I saw someone with a knife pinning another person to the ground. Without thinking, I ran towards the killer and pushed him over. He quickly ran away after realizing someone else was there but by that time, reinforcement had already had him cornered. I held my hand out to help the injured man stand up. He revealed himself to be Judge Pao, a famous detective and judge. Even though I was 11 years old, he still offered me to be his assistant detective because of the bravery I had shown even when facing a dangerous person. Excitedly, I agreed not knowing what it would lead up to.

Judge Pao brought me back to his office and said that there has been a serial killer roaming around in Shusui. And that we will track him down tomorrow after some rest. Judge Pao gave me a place to live temporarily, I put my things down and lay on my bed. Then I realized that my groceries are still on the ground somewhere in the market place. I quickly ran towards the market place, and to my surprise the groceries were still there. I picked them up and started walking back home. I never really took in the real details of Shusui, the tall wooden houses that surrounded me, the sun shining on the large wooden frames. I marvelled at the coloured marble and wood that covered the houses. The soft yellow light that shone through the paper windows. The monumental temple towering above everything, exerting dominance over every other building. The curved roof pointing aimlessly at the sky.

But at that moment I saw someone odd, something out of place. I ran to the building in front of me and grabbed the nearest stick near me. I stared at the curved design of the wood at the front of the building, yep...glue. I used my stick and opened the wood piece stuck on in the wooden frame. Horror filled my eyes when I saw a knife, a bloody knife.

I took the knife and sprinted to Judge Pao's office, but when I entered his office no one was there. Then I heard clapping coming from outside. I looked back and surprisingly I saw Judge Pao, "Congratulations, you have done well. You notice things normal people don't, the knife and blood were all a test to see if you are worthy of being my assistant and you passed. Now go have a rest we will need it tomorrow for the case" Relief poured over me when Judge Pao said that, I walked back home and crashed onto my bed and went to sleep. In my sleep I dreamed about my father and how he was beaten to death, and his last words, but a knock on the door quickly pulled me back to reality. I opened a door but no one was there, then I looked down and saw a note. It wrote, 'I know that you are Judge Pao new assistant detective, I know who killed your father. Come here to the market place park in the middle of the market on the bench right now. I'll be waiting... signed, a friend.'

When I arrived at the market, I immediately remembered this place, it was where my father used to take me to play when I was young. It's always the busiest place in Shusui. I walked up to the bench and it had another note. 'Some people are not what they seem' I was baffled by this note. But then I realised that it has to have something to do with the gold locket my father gave me before he has passed away. I ran home with the note and found the locket, I examined it closely. It's golden frame glistened in the soft light of the lamp, then I saw a reflection, I stared at it, then I saw it. There was light outlines that covered the back of the locket. I always thought that it was just scratches. But now that I looked closely, I realised that the outlines weren't just scratches, they were a picture of my dad and Judge Pao lightly etched onto the locket. And it was the same picture as the one the mysterious man gave me. I sat on the floor and ideas flowed through my head like a river of who this person might be. Then another bang on the door broke my train of thought. I opened the door and it was Judge Pao, he asked me why I didn't meet him in his office

to do the detective case. I didn't dare tell him the truth that I forgot about the case and followed a note instead so I just said that I overslept. I can tell that he was very disappointed but still he forgave me because it was only the first day and I couldn't thank him enough. He said that I'm probably just tired and to get a few days off, then he left.

But that night I couldn't sleep. My father's last words rang in my head until I couldn't take it anymore. I got myself up and walked back to the park and to my surprise there was a picture and another note. I turned over the picture and confusion filled me. On the picture there was my dad and someone else. He looked very familiar, then it hit me. It was a picture with Judge Pao and my dad. But why would they take a picture together... I opened the note and it said, 'Judge Pao and your father were best friends, they always solved the toughest criminal cases together but one day something happened, your father had found a lot of money on a case study. They decided to split the money between themselves but little did he know, Judge Pao was planning something else.' After I read this my heart almost skipped a beat, I couldn't believe what I just read. Did Judge Pao kill my father? Was Judge Pao the serial killer that roamed in this peaceful town? Was the knife I found real? Was everything from the moment I met him planned just so I will trust him... But still, who is this mysterious man and why does he know so much...

Forevermore

Wellington College International Shanghai, Ye, Jing Jing – 12

The clock hands of my mind spun rapidly like perverse windmills. Then they stopped. I opened my eyes and put one foot in front of the other on the steaming sand. It seemed like just seconds ago I had been in an ink-covered daze, shivering in the frosty library, crumpled under a pile of dusty manuscripts, scratching out my stories on swathes of parchment. Indeed, I had been a well-known author. I had been writing my latest book on the illustrious life of Judge Pao: a true, just, courageous and mighty figure in Chinese history. Although I had only been writing this book for less than a year, my brain had felt on the verge of exploding. Every day I would spend hours and hours – an eternity – planning and writing. Earlier that day, I had come across an abandoned calligraphy brush. From its appearance, I could already tell that it was abnormal. I mean, the ink was rainbow colored. While I was writing with it, the words suddenly began to buzz and change right there in front of my eyes, forming symbols that I couldn't read. The words sucked at my whole body, and I disappeared into thin air.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, the wind roared like a fierce lion and the fleeting, macaron colors of dusk began to fade away. The stormy desert sand smothered my face. There were thousands of voices ringing in my ears. The piercing sound of people shrieking for help. Then, I saw the blurry mirage of a figure; he was coming closer and closer and closer. His forehead scar was like the crescent moon that shimmers courageously before a thunderstorm. His unkempt black eyebrows frowned in puzzlement. His eyes flashed like lightening. I walked towards him and asked curiously, “Who are you?”

He answered while touching his long beard, “Ahhhhh, I am Judge Pao who is the immortal Yama of a Department of Hell. I have travelled from the Song dynasty to meet you. You are Judge Liu, my assistant that always gets things done. Where am I precisely?” My mouth was wide opened as no words poured out.

Suddenly, lightning struck as if there was an earthquake; the rumbling, dark clouds gathered in the sky as the sun was captured. The moon played hide and seek with her marshmallow enemies: the clouds. I felt the infernal malevolence of the earth as my curiosity turned to fear in my stomach. My voice echoed clearly as I begged, “Judge Pao, what is happening? Please save me!” No answer.

The atmosphere felt muggy as goosebumps appeared all over my arms and my heart pounded and thumped. Something suspicious was hovering in the sky. Its silver scales were glittering under the gloomy streetlights. Its teeth were titanic and razor sharp. Its eerie emerald, green eyes were fiercely scanning for prey. It breathed out fire and the bloody, scorching flames licked the sky.

A monster.

Judge Pao was expressionless: unmoved and unbroken. Then, at once, he moved. He thrust his arms into the sky and screamed. He screamed in notes and tones and mysterious sounds. He was incomprehensible but he was powerful, strong and God-like. In the sky, Wind, Fire and Water gathered at his command, ready to fight. The monster foresaw their moves. It stole away the breeze, the waves and the flames. The rivers were empty. The sky was still. The candles burnt no more. The desert that lay before his eyes was like nothing he'd ever seen before. The ground had cracked like a shattered vase and there was no life: no plants, no animals, nothing.

Desperately, other gods like Thunder and Lightning gathered together from near and far. They put all their miraculous powers into an enormous bolt that struck the wicked beast square in the chest. Like a dark vine, it tangled and curled around the monster's body, tightening with every twist and turn.

Judge Pao pounded his gavel and roared, “You are on trial! You filthy turn cloak traitor! Proceed to hell!”

The monster kneeled, “No, noooooo, this cant be. I am innocent regarding all accusations. Please save me!”

“Look at yourself, youre guilty and cunning. Judge Liu, please grab the Torch of Justice,” said Judge Pao in a rigorous way.

I stared into space and blinked blankly with a bewildered look. In the distance, a blast of fire lit the flambeau as darkness and fear rapidly encircled me.

Firstly, the flames told of his grand theft. I could see him creeping through the heat of the palace. The arched windows inset with the vivid stained glass reflected its dastardly shape. Up the grand, splendid staircase it crept, stepping ever closer to the enormous impenetrable safe that perched above. He carved a hole using sheer force and his unbreakable battle-axe. At that moment, like a flash of lightening, the eunuchs rushed in, screaming obscenities. With one look in monsters searing, yellow eyes, the eunuchs turned to stone: a gallery of panic, confusion and contorted horror. With his adversaries defeated, he violently stuffed the glittering, golden bullion into its bottomless pockets and disappeared into the inky darkness.

Flames flickered and the scene changed.

Judge Pao raise his voice and hollered: "Enough! Take him down Judge Liu, I have had enough. Monster, you will never be allowed to enter this immortal world." I cast a spell on him and he transformed before our eyes. He was, once again, only a man. His clothes were made out of fabric which was like an aged, filthy rug and he looked greasy, grimy and unwashed. His eyebrows cast a dark shadow over his warped face and he snarled, bearing his sharp yellow teeth for all to see. In his black eyes, there was no remorse, only rage and I shivered as I watched him fall into more endless black.

I only closed my eyes for second. When they opened, blurrily I saw my book and muttered: "Judge Pao, come back...." I rolled my eyes a couple of times and even rubbed them, trying to clear them as if they were misty windows covered in city grimy. I was back at the library. In that second, I soon realized that the monster was the afterlife of the thief. The sinners must deserve severe torture in hell for evermore. My calligraphy brush vanished into thin air as my peculiar heart-pounding had started. Will the monster want revenge? My breath shortened and my heartbeat soared again.

A Murder in Time

Wellington College International Shanghai, Zhang, Anlin – 11

The distant striking of an industrial clock announced the time as if the clock had woken up this station. Black, sleek suits dashed around in business like precision. Briefcases whooshed and swayed with speed. The distant sound of the metro scraping the tracks shrieked and whined as if in agony. Rhythmically the doors open and shut allowing people to pass through in unison. A flash of silver metro cards swiped down on the sensing area, allowing a rushed river of people into the station. Agnes rushed into the whirlwind of people, dressed in formal attire she soon blended in with the crowd.

As she exited the station, her shoes rapidly rapped on the polished, hard marble floor of a lawyer's office. Pushing with force she barged open the door, and stated in an elegant but meaningful voice "Where is room 201?". The growing crowd inside the waiting room stared in awe at this obtrusive young business woman. A wave of silence washed the room.

"Miss, please wait until your number is called." The receptionist called out for order.

Loosing some confidence in her voice Agnes spoke "I wish to see Mr Lardor."

"Very well, Miss please follow me." The receptionist spoke in an orderly manner.

Rows and rows of black soldier like doors stood pencil straight, standing out along the pristine white walls. Ornate wooden carvings embellished the walls, the sound of heels rapping against the white marble floor. A whirl of stairs sat at the end of a corridor polished as if it was a mirror in a mansion. They made their descent down the spiral staircase rhythmically. At the end of the staircase something in room 201 sat waiting as if it knew that its rightful owner was on its way...

As Agnes entered the room her head raised, her pin point chin directing way her body as she walked, flowing like silk when blown by a fan her hair swayed and swished, her ink black clothes tightened the atmosphere. A long table stood in the centre of the room, a dozen chairs lined the edge of the off white table. At the end of the table a bald man his head glinting in the bright white light, his muscular body positioned awkwardly, his eyes like bullets stared at Agnes as she strutted towards him.

"Well, well, we meet again Agnes Beaufort." Mr Lardor said in a wine rich tone, "Your late father, who has been dead in the late 48 hours has left a letter which is now in my possession..."

"Yes, I believe that letter encloses a large amount of money and my birth certificate." Agnes stated untouched and composed at the fact of her dead father.

"Would you like to read that letter?" Mr Lardor questioned.

"No, I am in a bit of a rush today, is it possible for you to tell me the key aspects of his will?"

"Very well Miss" Mr Lardor answered politely. "In his last wishes, he gives Miss Agnes Beaufort..."

"That's me." Agnes Interrupted

"Quiet," Mr Lardor demanded "20million dollars, his very own science lab in hope that she will use it and everything inside it and last but not least his late findings about your ancestry."

"My ancestry?" Agnes questioned. "Isn't that his ancestry as well?"

"You see Miss, when you were very small, your father adopted you from an orphanage down the road, terrified that he wouldn't have an heir. From his recent adventures, Mr Beaufort has discovered that you are a descendant from Judge Pao."

"Who?" Agnes inquired.

"Judge Pao Qing Tian." Mr Lardor replied. "Due to his newest discovery he has left you his time machine hoping you shall go back to the Song Dynasty and find him."

"NO WAY!"

"Miss, unfortunately you have not much choice." Mr Lardor stated "This is will is null and void"

"Null and void?"

"Yes. Null and void. If you do not accept, everything will be left to your uncle instead."

"Him?!" Shouted Agnes. She hated her uncle. "Fine. I'll do it"

Reluctantly, Agnes was hurried out of the room. Her face pale like the marble on the floor, eyebrows raised to full height and her eyes popped out above her black mask that she always wore. She looked aghast.

As soon as she arrived home her body relaxed, stripping off her heels, unbuttoning her suit and lowering her mask, she soon flopped on the sofa and sighed, "Wow". Her body sprawled upon her sofa relaxed physically, tensed

mentally, the cogs turned and whined inside her head. Questions ran laps around her brain circling and waiting to be answered. “How am I supposed to go to the Song Dynasty?” Agnes muttered under her breath, as if the whole room was listening to her whispers.

A glint in the corner of the room caught her eye, soldier like box of pure iron stood in the corner of her room. Scarlet flashlights added colour to this lucid box. Mist slowly poured out of the machine as the door slowly edged open. Creeeeeeaaaaak. As if Agnes was pulled out of her thoughts, her head span around only to see thick mist oozing out of the corner. Lights slowly blinking. She stood up. Like a moth attracted to a lamp she was lured in to the thick mist. SLAM! The door shut behind her. Whining and whirring, the cogs turned and twisted in agony, urging the machine to work. POOF! As if there was a vacuum in the room the machine disappeared...

The faint sound of horse hooves clicked on the dirt road. Squabbling like birds, merchants and traders quarreled over the littlest of things. The smell of spices tickled Agnes’s nose waking her up. Dumbfounded she sat on the floor staring astounded at her surroundings. Dust filling her eyes as the carriage past. She coughed, choked and sneezed. Rubbing the dust out of her eyes she focused on the dark gold palaces which blinked in the sunlight. Her memory flashed recalling the Chinese history lessons she had at school. The cogs in her head twisted into place. As if she remembered her eyes lit up.

Rising to her feet. Shaking. Regaining her balance she sped towards the gate of the palace, unaware of where she was going. Knowing she wouldn’t be able to block off 10 heavily armed guards. Managing to climb the cold stone walls. Her gangly body managed to slide down and easily touching the floor with a slight thud. Her eyes scanned her surroundings. Tip Toeing around the square yard, pre cautious on where she was stepping. Step by step, she peered around every corner. Cautiously. She scanned every door plaque. Stopping. Her eyes stared at this one, not believing what she saw.

“Judge Pao Qing Tian.” She said under her breath, making sure not to be heard. She stepped one step closer. Her hand braced. Knocked. Once. Twice. Three times. She retreated. Not thinking anyone would answer.

“Who’s There?” A thick accented voice came from the other side of the door. Agnes looked back. Footsteps echoed through the hallway, amplifying them as they approached the door. Butterflies slammed on the walls of Agnes’s stomach, tensing her whole body. The door swung open...

“Hello? Hello?” Judge Pao waved at Agnes, waiting for a reaction. Agnes blinked. Hard. Taking a moment to realize where she was.

“Hi...” Agnes stuttered “Where am I?”

Her eyes scrolled around the room. Taking in the gold embroidered furniture. Thick dust covered the carpet on the floor, encasing the mysterious pattern.

“Hello? Agnes...Beaufort...Pao?” Judge Pao read a piece of creased paper. Realizing what this piece of paper was Agnes snapped awake, snatching the piece of paper out of his hand.

“Where did you get this? How do you know who I am?” Agnes blurted out not necessarily conscious of what she was saying.

“Young lady, when you fainted this fell out of your pocket.” Judge Pao answered back “I see, from this letter...”

“Yes?” Agnes interrupted

“I presume. More like I see from this letter that your late father was murdered. And he wanted you to meet me.” Judge Pao stated with some level of power in his steady tone.

“Murdered?” Agnes asked astounded.

“Yes.”

“By who?”

“By whom.” Corrected Judge Pao

“How do you know that he was murdered?” Agnes asked desperate.

“Because I am a detective.”

“Any Ideas?” Questioned Agnes

“I have a few...”

Pressure on Judge Pao

Wellington College International Shanghai, Zheng, Donar – 12

It was raining, there were not very much people on the street. The Chinese lanterns were flickering because of the weather, and the floor was damp.

The man wearing a black suit entered the small alley at the very end of the street.

“Here are the things you want.” the man said, holding up a black box. “Where’s mine?”

“Right here.” said another man wearing a black Jacket in front of him, showing him a black box, a corner of a card in his pocket had revealed his name, James.

Just when the black suit man touched the box James is holding, BANG”!

He fell to the ground. James didn’t look panic at all, he snared and went away, holding two black boxes.

The rain becomes heavier.

Judge Pao was sitting on the chair, enjoying his afternoon tea: a cup of coffee and some chocolate chip cookies, which were his favourite. Judge Pao is a black skin Chinese man, and the most unique part of his face is that there is a crescent moon curved on his forehead. If you ask him what job does he have, he is going to reply: “I’m just a big fan of Sherlock Holmes, and I’m just following his footsteps.”

“Judge Pao, you’ve got a phone call.” here came Tiger Zhang.

Judge Pao nodded, looking unwilling to leave his favourite dessert. He grabbed his phone and answered the call.

“OK, I get it; I’ll come soon.”

He ended the call and told Tiger to prepare for a trip.

“Umm, where are you heading to, sir?” asked Tiger.

“America, there’s a case happening; they want me to go and help them solve it.” Judge Pao said calmly, tidying his hair.

“Being more accurate, four cases together, there are four serial homicides in 5 days.” Here came Dragon Zhao. He and Tiger are Judge Pao’s bodyguards. Although they had no kinship, they acted like brothers and had a tremendous tacit understanding.

After packing their luggage, they went to the airport to catch a plane. The flight was tranquil; everyone was doing their business, and no one was talking. Judge Pao fell asleep after a few moments.

The flight didn’t seem very long for Judge Pao, and they arrived in Chinatown immediately after landing.

The streets, which used to be flamboyant, looked lifeless, the Chinese lanterns were flickering, and all shops were closed. Chinatown looked haunted.

“So this is already the fifth murder in a row, and only in 6 days.” Leonard, the police who’s in charge of this crime, “So dangerous, huh?”

Judge Pao didn’t reply, frowning in puzzlement.

He looked at the body very carefully; a Chinese lantern was on the top of his head, looked like the person had died because of the lantern.

“The person who died was called James Abrim. He had an important job in the government. And the people who had been killed before him were employees that worked for the government too, while some were important and some were not.”

Judge Pao didn't seem to be listening. He put his hand on the body's hair, which was not very slippery; then he put his finger on the body's shirt's top, not wet. After a few more observations, Judge Pao finally spoke:

"This is not an accident; It is a murder!"

"But how? "Leonard was confused, "hadn't he just tripped over by accident and been hit by the lantern because of his misfortune?"

"No, absolutely wrong. It must have been broken if the lantern had hit the person's head. This means that the wax for the candle inside would spoil onto the body's head, but you see, his head is not slippery. Or maybe the wax had just landed on his shirt? But his shirt is not wet either. This evidence shows that this is not an accident. The man was murdered by poison!

Do you see the tiny hole in the man's neck? That's where the poison comes from. Arrow will be too large for this; what would be capable? A Chinese pipe that can blow out a poisonous needle, of course! And where is the best place to do it? The top of this Chinese hotel!" said Judge Pao very logically, and Leonard looked dumbfounded.

"I...impressive!" said Leonard, "I mean fabulous, m...magical!"

"No, it's just a little piece of cake. "said Judge Pao, looking very proud of himself.

"Dragon, take me back to the hotel." said Judge Pao; I think this case will take quite a while."

After leaving the crime scene, Judge Pao arrived at the hotel. It was not very new, and it did not look old either. The bed sheet was white, and it just seemed so comfortable for Judge Pao after the hard work.

"There must be something connected to all the people who died. "thought Judge Pao, lying on his bed. "Leonard had mentioned that they were all politicians, but there must be something else in common, some tiny details....."

"Dragon, go and find some information about the people who had died, and maybe check the American newspaper before, try to see if someone has a connection with all the victims. Tiger and I will go to each crime scene to see if the murderer has left any clue."

"My job is always so boring....." mumbled Dragon.

Judge Pao and Tiger arrived at the last crime scene; the victim was a politician. A week ago, he got much attention because of his marriage scandals. His similarities with James, a politician, but what else? WHAT ELSE..... Black hair! Maybe the scandals too!

"Tiger, call Dragon and ask him to check if James has affairs, too; we'll move to the next crime scene.

"commanded Judge Pao.

"OK"

At the next crime scene, the person who died also has black hair, but this time, not a politician, but a spy in America instead.

"The killing pattern is black hair, and people who had a quite high identity in America, the weapon used to kill them are the ones In Chinese, so the murderer must be a fan of Chinese weapons, and this may be because of some things that happened in his childhood." Judge Pao was summarizing all the clues they've got until now.

"Um, Judge Pao, look, there is some blood in his fingernails on this man's right hand! "said Tiger.

"Oh! This may be a vital clue! This means that the person who had died had a fight with the murderer, which means that there would be a scratch on the murderer's arm, but this still doesn't mean anything."

Ding Ding Ding! Judge Pao's phone was ringing; it was Dragon.

"Hello, Dragon; what have you found out?"

“There are some scandals about James too. Also, I found a newspaper saying this “a mean politician father and a nurse mother all died when he was 15. Finally, he became a large technology company CEO, the story of Mateo Zhong”. I think he is the one which you want to meet.”

After a while, Judge Pao and Tiger arrived at the hotel.

“Look, this is him.” said Dragon, showing Judge Pao a man’s picture on the computer, “Mateo Zhong. He had a Chinese politician father; when his dad was kicked out of the government, he became an alcoholic. He abused his son when he was in a bad mood, which gave Mateo a bad childhood.”

Just before Judge Pao wanted to speak, his phone rang again; this time, it was Leonard.

“Um, Judge Pao, sorry for interrupting you, but this guy called Mateo wants to meet you tomorrow. Don’t know why he wants you.”

“OK, thanks, Leonard.”

“Mateo? Is that the suspicious one?”

“Maybe, I don’t know. But serial killers are mostly very proud, and they want to get attention from others, so perhaps yes.”

Welcome, welcome,” said Mateo, and he was just the one in the picture that Dragon showed Judge Pao, “You’re Judge Pao, am I right? And you are from China.”

“Yes.”

“I believe you came here for the serial killing crime, right?”

“Yeah, how do you know these?”

“I’m quite a fan of Sherlock Holmes, and you’re a pretty famous detective, so I searched up a bit and found it. How’s it going?”

“Well, we know that the murderer is using Chinese weapons for killing....”

“You know, I like Chinese culture a lot, and I’ve got a place where stores a lot of Chinese weapons that I collect. Do you want to have a look?”

“Yeah, sure.”

While they were walking to the place, Judge Pao saw a scratch on Mateo’s arm, and suspicion of Judge Pao to him grew.

“Look, there are Chinese swords, arrows, and this, a traditional Chinese pipe, used to blow poisonous needles.

All the weapons are here, Judge Pao thought, but we need a piece of evidence to say that he is the murderer.

“Um, sorry, Mr. Zhong, if there is nothing essential, I would need to go because I’ve got some other things to do.”

Mateo seemed disappointed: “Yep, you can go.”

Judge Pao returned to his hotel: “His next prey would be Oscar Harriel, he is the politician who is living the nearest and he had black hair and scandals too, let the police guard him secretly and when Mateo comes, just catch him.”

“Yeah, OK,” said Dragon.

His deduction was correct. After two days, Mateo had been caught in Oscar's house.

"Judge Pao, you're the one who caught him so that you can do the execution," said Leonard.

Judge Pao looked into Mateo's eyes; he didn't look guilty or afraid. Instead, it's the expression of wanting to die. Judge Pao holds the gun, but his mind is unstable. Although he had killed people, the ones he killed were all the bad ones. After thinking for a few seconds, Judge Pao finally made his decision. He closed his eyes and pressed the trigger, the bullet going through Mateo's head, one of the hardest-solving crimes solved by Judge Pao.

What Lurks Beneath

Wellington College International Shanghai, Zhou, Angel – 10

Slipping into the darkness, he was cautious not to leave a fingerprint. Silently, he tiptoed to the white door. It was tightly shut. He smiled as the lock was teared away from its handles, and gently pushed the door open with a creak.

Sky Tan woke, yawning with sleepiness. Checking the clock, Sky felt something unusual. Wasn't her aunt always calling her up? Shoving the door with all her might, but she realizes it was locked. Sweat trickled down her brow. Her fingertips felt cold with dread, despite the hot summer.

Grabbing a pencil, Sky fixed it to the keyhole. Spinning it, the door bounced open. She peered out of the slim gap. Nobody. The confused girl stepped out with a chill down her spine. Her aunt was on the floor, a pool of dark blood beneath her. Red spots splattered on the white door; a razor-sharp knife dug deeply in her belly. Blood streamed out of her mouth. The girl stood stiff, and her thoughts seemed to freeze. Sky's mouth opened so widely, that it could fit eggs into Tears flowed from her eyes, and her back seemed to have a ghastly finger tracing down.

She knelt down, resting her shaking hand onto her aunt's chest. Nothing. No beats or any sign of life. The stench of corpse was drifting across the room, but Sky was so dismayed and startled that she never noticed it. She buried her face deeply in her aunt's chest and cried heavily. Sky's eyes were lit with a dark rage, fury and hatred. She stumbled away, smashing the door open, and stammered outside, with her eyes closed. She needed to swallow what has happened.

"Watch out, kid! Nearly tripped me!" A man with a broad chest shouted. Sky tumbled into him, with watering eyes "So...Sorry, I...I can't! You don't know...My life is gone forever, she's dead...can't live without her..." Finishing off her words, she stepped aside to let the man go. "Whoa kid, say that again please? You need help?" Sky turned away, refusing to talk any further. "Follow me. You definitely need my support." The man followed Sky with comfort.

"Yes, yes, my name is Judge Pao. So, your name is Sky?" The black-shirt man sat beside her, and she's still staring out into sky "Yes. This wasn't supposed to happen...I still don't understand." And she told the story of how she found her aunt dead. Grief and anguish rushed up her chest, making her breath quickening and beads of sweats forming. "Don't worry Sk—"Judge Pao's words were cut short as Sky wailed "No I can't! What I want to know now is who is the murderer...please..."Sky immediately led him towards her aunt's house.

Wrinkling their noses, as a foul-smelling stench floated in the sky. The two stepped on the stone stairs, then entered the enormous mansion. Crystal chandeliers reflected eye-piercing beams of light on the black walls. Judge Pao gasped as he saw the body. "Her belly, her stomach! Sky, I'm not going to put pressure on you, but I can tell you. This is a serious case. Your aunt's stomach disappeared! ."

Skys' eyes widened in horror. Terrified and panicked, she gripped the corner of Judge Pao's shirt. The sweat drenched the fabric. "The murderer has killed your aunt only for her organ. Recently, I have a case similar to this. A six-year-old boy's heart was taken. I promise you to solve this dark mystery. I know the pain you suffered." As he patted Sky on the back, though she felt the surge of gloom and despair swelling her heart. She gazed up with a firmness in eyes "Yes. Definitely. I want to uncover the sheet of sinister silk that looms us. I will be with you until the horror is chased away."

Knock knock. Knock knock. The wood door finally opened. An old woman with an arched back and wrinkles greeted them. "Yes, Judge Pao. Who is that...that girl? I thought you never had a daughter..."Judge Pao shook his head, then led Sky in. The wood house was extremely tiny, only a crammed sofa and a table with nails stuck out, and crooked at a strange angle. There was a detail that caught Sky's eye. A trail of lifeblood down the sofa. This must be the blood of the dead boy. She felt sadness for the old woman. How a joyful, carefree family. Now demolished by the killer—the serial killer.

"So this isn't you daughter. Oh, I see...poor little child. So, the murderer still isn't chased down" the grandmother signed.. Judge Pao squinted his eyes, signaling the woman not to press further. Sky thought back to the scene of her aunt's body She suddenly recalled a detail. There was a white corner sticking out from the door. Judge Pao raised his

eyebrows and muttered “Something wrong? r.” Sky shook her head and whispered in his ear softly “I think the killer accidentally left a note on the floor.”

The man and the girl knelt beside the body, as they read the note ‘Hazel Bay. One o’clock. Stomach in the black bag. Heart in the green luggage. ’Sky whipped her head to one side, considering the note thoughtfully. Judge Pao tapped her on the shoulder “It is actually ten o’clock now. I’ll head for the bay. But you’d better stay safe.” She argued “But I—” With no talk, Judge Pao thumped the door close.

Grunting in anger, Sky leaped out riding a dusty bicycle Memories came flooding into her mind. Her aunt was her only family, and always took her to the bay. But now it she became an orphan. Skipping down the seat, she took in greedily of what is in front of her. The bay was just as fascinating and stunning as before. Suddenly something caught her eye speedily. A green luggage and a black bag! She rushed over, not noticing the two men besides, Suddenly a hand thumped her mouth, and before Sky knew, the two men threw her into the white van, then drove away.

Terrified, Sky opened her eyes. The two men stared down with menace. They are in a dark shed, cobwebs dangling from each corner. The short man with the beard growled “Where is that man?” Puzzled, she stammered “What...I...Who?” The other man barked “Want to get out alive?! SPEAK OUT LOUD!” Sky dismissed the words and grunted “You have something to do with my aunt, right?” She pointed at them, her body wobbling in rage. The two men looked at each other, hesitated, then nodded. The tall, bald man snarled “Want to know about your aunt? Tell us where that detective is!” Sky replied coldly “No.”

And they locked up the door, leaving her alone.

The girl had never felt so desolate She looked in the corner and noticed a square frame. Picking it up and brushing off the dirt, a young woman came into view. Something was wrong about this picture. There was a green cane on the side, a bony finger holding it. Sky wondered to whom it belonged and why it was there. Daylight was streaming through. Sky searched her pockets, then took out the pencil that she used in the morning. Overwhelmed by sadness, she failed to open the door.

Meanwhile, Judge Pao was returning back to the mansion to tell Sky the news. “Sorry, Sky. Nothing—” Judge Pao then widened his eyes as the girl disappeared from the house. The detective realized that the girl was kidnapped! Judge Pao jumped into a nearby car, then drove it to match up the trail the van left. By good luck, the van never left the sandy road, so the car could easily follow.

The shed stood among the trees, scarcely visible. Judge Pao rushed over, with the pounding of his heart accelerating. He heard squeaks of alarm and bangs of door. Sky was locked there! He observed around and found a thin piece of brown metal. Plugging it into the keyhole, Judge Pao opened door and suddenly found Sky!

Noticing the green cane in the picture, Judge Pao gaped in bewilderment. His voice was shaken. “This...Sky, I could hardly believe this. I think the mask was uncovered.”

The old woman in the wood house was captured that night. She was the criminal. After the inquiry, Judge Pao found out that she gave money to two men, ordering them to kill neighborhoods randomly. And that killed boy isn’t her grandchild, instead, only a boy in the school nearby. She was jealous of other people’s happy life, and wanted to destroy it. Her whole family was killed by the invaders at war about ten years ago in a word, she became a murderer from a victim.

The green cane was the key to solve this crime. Judge Pao noticed the cane before in the woodhouse. The girl was known to be the woman’s only child, captured by their enemies.

But what about the organs? What is the purpose of them?

This isn’t what it seems. Something is lurking beneath all of these, not yet discovered...

A Revenge Murder

Wellington College International Shanghai, Zhu, Matthew – 11

It was a windy morning; the branches of a willow tree were beating. A tall broad-shouldered man with long thin eyes walked on the pavement to the court building. He was the famous Judge Pao, a detective who had solved many murder cases. He walked up the steps of the court to attend the daily meeting. A group of government officials had gathered in the court. He sat down in his chair. "Does he know?" They started to whisper. Judge Pao looked at them blankly. One of the officials stood up and said in a hurried voice, "The nephew of the emperor, Mr. Zhao, was murdered last night in his bedroom. He was poisoned. He asked for a bottle of wine and the new maid brought it up to him. The bottle of wine has no fingerprints on it other than Mr. Zhao's. We found poison in the leftover wine. He was dead about midnight. The last person who saw him alive was his eldest son. He was reading a book to Mr. Zhao. He left the room at about 10 o'clock. No one knows who the murderer is." Another man piped up and said, "But we know the suspects: his three sons or the new maid who lives in the house." Judge Pao asked, "What about the other servants? And how can you be so sure that no one could enter the house?" The first man answered, "The door was bolt locked and none of the other servants lived in the house last night." Judge Pao stood up, stroked his beard, and said slowly, "I would like to meet the suspects."

All the members of government left, except a man who knew Mr. Zhao and his family well. He then started. "There is the eldest son, Xing. He isn't the type to murder, but he is the only one to have the motivation. When his father is gone, he will inherit all the fortunes his father leaves him. Then there is the second son, Ling. He is good natured. Now, the youngest son Bing. He is a spoiled child, but he loves his father. I see no reason for him to murder his father. The maid is a new servant, I know nothing about her. But she gives me the impression that she was not a maid before." Judge Pao now felt ready to meet the possible suspects.

Xing was a 25-year-old man. Judge Pao asked a series of questions in a calm voice, "Did you hear any unusual sound last night? What were you doing? Can you tell me about your brothers and the maid?" "I didn't hear anything, I was sleeping. Well, my brother Bing, he likes father, but my brother Ling is an evil and horrible person. I wouldn't be surprised if he has killed people. For the maid, I know nothing about her except that she lives in the house."

Ling seemed quite different from what Xing had described. He was polite and friendly when Judge Pao interviewed him. "It serves him right. Father was bold, greedy, and selfish. He embezzled money that was meant for the troops protecting the borders. Xing is just like father. He looks innocent, but I know he has been longing for father's fortunes and status."

"What about Bing and the maid?" Asked Judge Pao.

"Bing? Father's pet? He is weak. He can't do anything like that. The maid? I don't know anything about her."

The interview with Bing supported what Ling said. "Well, I didn't do it. Ling's bedroom was next to mine. I was sure he stayed in his bedroom as the door squeaks when opened, which would wake me up. As for the maid, I don't know why she would want to kill father. She just came. Xing is more likely."

Finally, it was the maid's turn for the interview. The maid was in her 20's. Somehow her appearance and manners reminded Judge Pao of the three sons he just interviewed. She told him that Mr. Zhao asked her to stay in the house that night. After bringing the wine, she went straight to sleep, because she didn't want to disturb Xing's reading to Mr. Zhao.

The room of Mr. Zhao looked uninteresting at first sight, but clues started to appear upon further examination. When Judge Pao lifted the rug up, he found a piece of paper. Tiny writing was on the paper which read, "I know what you did to my father. I will revenge for Zhao Ping."

The room grew tense. Judge Pao continued, "When I found this piece of paper, I knew who the murderer was. Zhao Ping was the little brother of Mr. Zhao. The two of them were supposed to split their father's fortunes. But Zhao Ping died mysteriously. All the money went to Mr. Zhao. There were rumors that Mr. Zhao planned his brother's death so that he could get all the money. This is a revenge murder planned by a person connected to Zhao

Ping. Zhao Ping had one daughter, who is of the same age as the maid. When she entered the room just now, she reminded me of Mr. Zhao's sons. Now I know why. They are cousins. The maid planned the whole thing. She chose the right time to so that Xing was the suspect.

There was a silence in the room. People stared at the maid. The maid closed her eyes and said in a deep emotional voice which echoed in the room, "He ruined my life and my family. He is ruthless, cruel, cold-hearted, and merciless. He doesn't deserve to live, and if I had the chance, I would've had killed him a million times." With that, two guards took her away from the court. Judge Pao stood up and said in a relieved voice, "I guess now I can retire from this case." He walked out of the courthouse and stepped onto the pavement with swaying willow trees, where birds were singing.