

Fiction

Group 3



Worlds Confined

St. Clare's Girls' School, Ng, Ka Sin Joyce – 13

“The mortal world is a dangerous place, somewhere with no laws, absolute anarchy or corrupt leadership. It’s only when the humans die, do they face the consequences. There are endless lines of just people awaiting judgment, for an attempt at lessening their eventual punishment. Kings with heavy crowns or half the population of the planet.

Humans have an endless supply of love and affection; we have noticed. Detached from the living of a life slowly fills one’s heart with everything but that. It’s a felony, to stoop down to the level of humans; to learn the live; to love. We have a job, a purpose—to serve.”

Great Judge Pao was an immortal, an all-powerful being, in charge of the laws and justice, the daily ins and outs of the dimension he resides in that disrupt the thinly spread peace, burnt bread and butter. Sentencing with an iron fist. It was a mighty job, with the danger of a thousand gazes watching his every move. Working somewhere only the dead may enter quite literally.

And Pao had done a wronging. His fault, really. Should’ve checked the fine print. Humans were delicate things, all skin and bone.

So, demoted to becoming a measly messenger between mortals and immortals, ridiculed in his own blood and soul-soaked court. The implied threat hung around his neck, a yoke he has to carry. All he can do is be compliant; be good and Pao won’t suffer any more consequences.

And of course, he doesn’t.

There’s an earthy thrum in the air that Pao feels; a trickle of laughter—like the stream of water—from a hut and the silent wake of dawn. He doesn’t want to leave.

Why does it matter that a lower ranking gets to learn about his craft? How could Pao somehow, with a band of pathetic humans at his side, create an army strong enough to overthrow even just one god?

A simple mission; a final test, and he doesn’t, can’t bring himself to do it. A guillotine stays clean, free from blood. Attachment to a subject, to a person—a mortal is lethal. The grief could kill you when it dies. When the rope gets cut in two and a crown falls from the king’s head.

But then, love is a stronger word than hate, than law. A ghastly thing. Tangible when in great numbers, like ants on a mission to destroy the thick walls people put up.

So simple, a mere concept the gods invented, once and never again. It’s like an entirely new universe is created out of nothing but dust mites, a floor, and a finger.

What good could punishment bring, if the criminal and his human had another world at their side?

Creature

The woman is in his every waking thought, while sat at his desk wasting away, all Pao could think was her soft skin and coy smile. It should be illegal—already was—how enamored Pao was with her. Any chance at a moment of freedom spent above the ground. The Great Judge acting like a high school girl, with an obsession with crimes.

They are close, a hair’s-breadth away from finding him, and Pao knows it. He just knows it. The creak of a floorboard, a soft footfall and a shriek from a sword being pulled from its home.

A whistle. A bowstring pulled taut. Then, a clatter. A matchstick struck.

“Come out, little bird.”

A giggle.

They were playing with him, Pao realizes. Like cats and a mouse. The couch he is hiding behind is just a moment's pause from a grand reveal of his hole. Should he really just hide away, a little rat scratching away in the walls?

He peeps out, a pair of tired eyes following a head of ruffled dark hair slowly emerging from the depths of the charred cloth.

Hands held together, kissed gently. There's a star in the sky that was for them.

"If you want to be a hero, you would have to die like one—fight to the death." The masked god leers from the center of his room. "Thought you would know, Great Judge." Again, Pao's title, mocked.

"And you know nothing about it." It's a hiss, soft and snake-like.

The immortal pauses, turns in his direction. "So, you speak, Judge." It grins, showing shining teeth and a knife from its pocket. Feral. "Been a long while, hasn't it?" A laugh, carefree as ever as it slips out of a void. It stings, a jagged scar rips through something vital.

"Sensitive, aren't you? In such a weak body. First time for everything, huh."

Pao clenches his fists. Unclenches them.

Perhaps this should've been the moment where Pao rises and strikes, through the haze of pain and anger, a fitting end to an immortal sitting duck. But he doesn't, doesn't hold the bravery in his heart to attempt a murder, where it should've been a piece of a lion now turned into one of a rabbit.

Perhaps, it would be Pao's fault, when the god easily picks him up and he is caught, bound like a bird with clipped wings. A fish in a bucket.

And, perhaps, it was right.

A world burns.

Create

A cheer ran through the crowd, long and powerful, snaking between the rafters of the grand hall and onto the waiting hands of the groom. He smiles, a ray of sunshine amongst the holy light of the window. Beside him is his wife, his own personal light, Lady Zhang.

Pao misses the simple day of frolicking in the never-ending fields of corn, when a beaming face would turn to him, like a sunflower to a sun and smile, all for him; one to bottle up in a jar to bathe in.

He rattles the bars of his new house and sighs.

"I hate you so much," Pao would say sometimes, grinning after Zhang suddenly appears to scare him.

And Zhang would always reply. "Love you too."

There's a tiny bit of him, a small evil part that keeps growing; like a parasite, a disease, regrets running away and stealing another heart.

The gods show him memories he'd prefer stored deep in an eternal pit of fire and a live broadcast into his lover's life without him, picking up the pieces and fixing the roof.

"Don't look for me when I'm gone." Pao had confided once during an unprompted outing to his court office. "Waste of time, I'll be too far away for you to reach me." He refuses to elaborate, for her sanity.

There was a pool of blood on the floor, and that was the very moment, when Pao understood the life he had built for himself would disappear in an instant. A silent warning.

A knock on the cage leads to Pao cowering in a corner, the floor gently swaying, one with the sea. A small wisp of the acrid scent of hell wafts through the air. He savors the last of the tranquility before it shatters into glass and is swept away, the destruction of a little world he created. Pao's ready to face the music.

Curse

“...and I want every last detail, why did ya do it?”

Pao doesn't answer. The speaker's shadow looms over his tiny body. He squeezes his eyes tighter. The still slowly tracing shapes under his eyelids, creeping into an open wound.

“Ya tryin' to change history, bud? Like your predecessor?” The voice inquires, harsh and brash like the lights around him. A chatter of voices loud.

When he doesn't reply, it moves away and tries to murmur to the other gods. Every time its lips chafe together creates a rough sound, “Man's just had the scare of his life and ya'll ain't helpin'.”

And the silence became a chasm, louder than before.

This time, when the judge speaks, Pao is ready. He tells stories in broken whispers, a language no one else could understand, wanted to understand. Nothing can be done. A creeping mistake entangling his hair and thoughts. A familiar *bang* resonates around the courtroom, the hammer lands back on the pad, Pao can imagine easily.

“Defendant is silent, prov'n guilty. Punishment is based on the official handbook: Chapter three, article thirty—sev'n.”

A quiet hush swept through, like a tidal wave. Suffocating.

A rustle of pages, a flurry of .

Pao feels fear.

—

“One day; you'll find your world won't turn,

As everything around us seems to burn.

But you don't need to be scared,

I'll take care of you, trust in me.”

—

He's transported to a clearing, with a wall of vines climbing up a stone wall and a quaint house at the horizon. Lights spills from the windows, warm and welcoming. Pao knows it goes on forever, an illusion from his happiest time just an inch to the left. He screams; lets it all out.

A world is created.

Crimson

St. Clare's Girls' School, Yeong, Xi Jamie – 14

A slender figure stood near the fireplace, pacing around as he turned over the coffee stained pages of a new book.

On his mission to Daxingji with other archeologists, he had found a broken, wooden arrow with a blood red fletching in the legendary Judge Pao's tomb. He examined it with interest before it was escorted to a museum. It was delicately made for a weapon a thousand years ago, and Judge Pao's biography mentioned nothing about archery.

He described the meticulous structure to his wife, a writer.

"An arrow?" Her eyes twinkled. "Thank you for the inspiration."

He looked at her, bemused. She then spent a few days in her study to complete a book. Her husband was the first to read it as he traced the firm edges of the book, undaunted by paper cut.

"The weather is often not unpleasant enough to comment much about, but a heavy fall of snow graced the palace grounds in an early December morning, as if foreboding a tragedy that followed the birth of the crown prince."

– year 1030 –

The dashing Bao Zheng stood next to the Queen, who was drawing figures in the snow.

"Are you not cold?" Bao Zheng asked, slightly bent over.

"Not at all. Look, it's a horse." She pointed at her 'masterpiece' in the snow, beaming.

"It looks real." He complimented with sincerity.

"Thank you." The Queen responded, as she traced her fingers in the snow.

All of a sudden, as if she was reminded of something, the Queen stood up quickly. She brushed the snow off her fingertips and excused herself to have tea with her friends.

Bao Zheng watched the young Queen, who was smirking mischievously, hurry into the palace. He shook off the unsettling feeling in his chest, and returned to the Emperor's palace.

– The Queen's Palace –

The Queen signaled for her servant to come forward. The servant frowned, immediately understanding what the Queen meant.

"Your majesty, please rethink your decision. I'm weary of someone discovering your plan." The servant said timidly as she poured tea into the fine china teacups.

The Queen slammed her fist into the table, spilling the hot tea the servant had just prepared. Bit by bit, it dripped onto her dress, causing the servant to drop the teapot. The Queen sat, furious and uncaring of the room in shambles.

"I did not ask for your opinion." The Queen commanded coldly. "Now wear it. And don't forget to conceal your face. Think of your daughter before you try to rebel against me."

– in the woods –

The Queen paced around the entrance of the woods, the anticipation on her face was apparent. She was dressed in a commoner's clothes.

A lean figure appeared swiftly. As the figure came closer, his handsome features became clearer and sharper. He was dressed in pine green, blending into the forest. He gripped a bow in one hand, smiling at the queen. She gestured for him to take the lead and followed him into the forest.

After a while, they reached their old spot at the tree line, where he gave her secret archery lessons. They sat on the ground, there was a safe distance between them, catching their breaths as they reminisced about their past.

"We need to stop." The assassin suddenly said sternly.

"Stop what?" The Queen challenged, swallowing the lump in her throat.

"This." He gestured to himself, her and the bow. "This cannot go on for any longer."

"It can." The Queen's voice was firm.

"What will become of us if the Emperor finds out? I cannot allow you to be harmed."

"So you're a coward." She stated plainly.

"I'm supposed to be your protector, and I will protect you." His grip tightened around the bow in his hand.

"You are my escape, Xiang Wei." the Queen attempted to resonate, "You taught me archery, you taught me love, you gave me the strength to fight for myself."

A pause followed her words.

"No, your majesty," He said under his breath, "there is no fight for us to participate in, we had already lost the moment we began. And this," He pointed at the sky, "is fate."

"I'm the Queen of Song. The power I hold in my hands," Her lip trembled, "can make the stars align."

"Yet you are so powerless right now." He stated quietly and caught the Queen staring at him in disbelief and hurt.

"Powerful or not, I would do anything for you." The Queen said shakily, swallowing her pride. "You bring me happiness."

"You will find happiness after me." Xiang Wei replied forcefully.

"There is no happiness if you're gone." The Queen choked on her words.

Grey clouds formed above them. Xiang Wei handed the Queen a wooden arrow, his stare never left her for a second, as if capturing her beauty with every bit of borrowed time. The Queen scrutinized the arrow warily.

"Why?" The Queen asked, a crease appeared between her eyebrows.

"To remember me by." He said with neither impatience nor warmth. He flashed her a last glance that lingered on her glistening eyes, before stepping off the precipice. The Queen's cries of terror faded abruptly as Xiang Wei was swallowed by the cold, raging waves.

— Year 1050 —

Judge Pao strolled behind the crown prince, who was invested in a book. The botanical garden was usually quiet and peaceful. This time, Judge Pao had invited the crown prince to visit the Queen's palace together, but the crown prince was preoccupied by literature and declined.

"The Queen had missed your visits." Judge Pao laughed lightheartedly. He had watched the crown prince grow up into a talented young man. However, as he grew older, Judge Pao started noticing a striking resemblance

between the prince and the infamous assassin, Xiang Wei. Rumors spread among the palace maids, and words reached the ears of the Emperor, who was infuriated. Judge Pao was sent to shame and banish the Queen, and so he headed towards the Queen's palace after bowing goodbye to the crown prince.

The Queen sat without a hint of emotion on her face as Judge Pao arrived. She had been awaiting the trial for her sins for 20 years, and she knew what they had prepared for her. She stared at her old friend with pity, as she spoke.

"My political marriage was an arrangement to benefit my father. I was simply a pawn in his game, and my husband despised me for my father's greed. My husband would avoid me and disgrace my family name. To escape from the palace's customs and rules, I learnt archery from Xiang Wei, and our clandestine meetings became frequent."

Judge Pao could hear the bitterness in her voice. He continued the story, "Xiang Wei proceeded to leave you with a child, the crown prince of Song. Most presume Xiang Wei is dead after twenty years."

"I kept the arrow he gifted me, Bao Zheng." She smiled and reached for a box under her bed base. The arrow was kept in good condition.

"This arrow," The Queen said firmly, "will pierce through my heart tonight." She had accepted death's invitation.

Judge Pao was fast to break the arrow in half.

"Your majesty, come with me, there is a rural village where you will never be recognized. You can live under a new name and identity." Judge Pao pleaded. "The Emperor's men are near."

"I have no reason to live and withstand humiliation." The Queen stared at the broken arrow.

"Do it for the sake of the crown prince. Don't bring him shame." Judge Pao begged, and that convinced the Queen, who got up to her feet reluctantly. Judge Pao led the Queen into a modest carriage through the back door of the palace. The carriage horses sprinted into the stygian forest, a rustle of leaves were what's left of the carriage's trail.

The carriage travelled through the forest like lightning. Judge Pao stared into the rain, awaiting for a stranger's arrival.

The carriage violently came to a stop, matching the raindrops' heavy thunder as each drop clashed with the roof of the carriage. The forest smelt of a fresh, earthy scent, cleansing everything in the forest. Their pain, regret, sins, were all met with an epiphany.

An arrow shot through the carriage doors, missing the Queen's neck by an inch. The Queen turned fearfully to look at the weapon. It was a wooden arrow, its fletching a burning red.

The Reincarnation of China's Greatest Detective

St. Joseph's College, Li, Ho Kiu Coleman – 14

Bao Zheng, or otherwise known as Judge Pao, one of China's most popular detectives, was screaming as his soul was locked in chains in the Underworld. Every soul he met in his time in the Underworld was kind and pure, but failed to defend themselves against the evils of human nature. Pao's eyes grew bloodshot and bulging, although his time was up, he couldn't let the human race succumb to something as pathetic as greed, lust, envy and more. After witnessing so many cruel deaths of kind-hearted people, the flame in his eyes grew larger and larger. White light shot out of Bao Zheng's eyes and as this white light was consuming his soul, he could only feel pain. He heard legends that people who are worthy get the chance of reincarnation, but those were just myths. Was this the king of the Underworld's doing? Then, a giant man wearing golden robes appeared in front of Pao—it was Yanluo Wang, the god of the Underworld, known for his harsh but fair judgment. A deep voice came out of the deity's mouth and He bellowed into Pao's ears, "Fire, that flame in your eyes! You're different from any other mortal I have met before, I trust you to save the human race from greed, and hence, I will give you a second chance." Pao felt his eyelids grow heavier and heavier as he collapsed on the floor.

When he woke up, he was on the street. Did the harsh god of the Underworld really give him a second chance at life? This was too good to be true! He could now finish the quest he had once started in his past life—to punish all the evil people on Earth. He quickly went to a detective agency to apply for a detective job. Due to his prior experience, he passed the interview with flying colors and got accepted. He looked into the mirror and saw a handsome man with chestnut brown hair and large black eyes staring at him. Did he possess this guy? Suddenly, a bald person with a dark skin tone with his left hand holding a gun entered the room, "Oi mate! We got a case! I'm Chuck, your future partner, and I found someone who's able to give a hefty sum if we investigate a rich old fart's death! Hopefully we'll get the money. We'll start investigating in 3 days." He tossed Pao a report and left.

In the next two days, he read a few books that gave Pao a general idea of how modern technology works. Despite his disappointment in mankind for being blinded by greed, he was still quite proud of his race when it came to being innovative with their creations. He looked at the report Chuck left him, "The wife of Count Bill has been poisoned and found dead in her study. The Count claimed that it was a suicide but this claim remains unconfirmed." Once he got a grasp on the general situation, he called Chuck over and they went to the Count's mansion.

A plump short man greeted the duo, "Good morning detectives, I want you to help solve this case of my wife's suicide. Please prove that this was a suicide, as those police keep saying it's a murder to try and earn more money! My wife's death is nothing to bargain about. If you succeed, I will be eternally grateful for your help." He tried to keep a calm demeanor but Pao heard a hint of despair in his voice. "Well, my wife and I were actually quite into the field of inventing. She was normally unmotivated and on the verge of suicide, but she was so close to a breakthrough to invent a machine and was extremely excited the day before her death as she got a brilliant idea, but then something went wrong with her invention and she went mad. I don't know what went wrong but after that, she died. I guess her invention failed and she thought she had no other reasons to live."

Then, three young men that looked like triplets ran out and introduced themselves as Sebastian, Oscar and Wilbert. "Explain what you saw at the scene of your mother's death in detail," Pao instructed them.

"Mom was so close to getting a breakthrough on her project. Dad prepared a meal for her to celebrate and then she went back to her study. I followed her inside but then she started getting mad and kicked me out, then I came to see her after a while and she was dead, and the water cup beside her had some powder in it," Sebastian replied.

The group then went to the kitchen and Pao asked the head chef, "Did the Count cook the meal? And what ingredients did he buy?" "He bought flour, some chicken, sauce, and oil."

They finally went to the victim's room. On her table there was a calculator and a cup with white powder in it, just like how Sebastian described. On the calculator it said "7718". Hmm, extremely suspicious. It might just be a calculation, but Pao quickly took note of that.

"This is not a suicide," Pao said gently. "This is a murder."

Everyone was shocked, everything Pao said and wanted to investigate was so random, and now if it was not a suicide, it... must be a murder! But how? His wife must have seen the white powder before she drank from the cup, how can someone possibly fall for that?

"The murder weapon is not from the cup. It was just a trick to make you believe that it was a suicide, is that right, Count Bill?"

Count Bill's face suddenly paled while everyone else was utterly confused. Did they hear that right? Did he just accuse the noble as the murderer?

"Count Bill, you tried to fool everyone into thinking that the white powder was poisonous, right? But the truth is you put poison into the dish your wife was eating, and tried to shift our attention on the cup, while the powder in the cup is just flour. Hmm?" Pao smirked. The atmosphere changed from confusion to rage. How could the noble do something like this, killing his own family? For what?

"Y- You have no proof! What do you mean I killed her? Why would I kill my beloved wife?"

"Obviously the most logical thing to do when your wife got a better project than you- envy- you envy her success, don't you?"

"Damn it! Damn it! Damn It! I hired you as detectives! You amateurs don't even have the proof to prove your nonsense!"

"What does 7718 on the calculator mean, Count Bill? Flip the numbers upside down and when it's on the calculator, it spells out B-I-L-L, or more accurately, Bill!"

"Just a bunch of random calculations that happen to look like my name! How can you blame me for this?"

"I don't think roasted chicken needs any flour, Count Bill. You bought that and placed it in her cup after she died so you could fake this as a suicide, is that right?"

His sons were shocked, "Dad, how can you do something like that?" A slight smirk appeared on Bill's face as he pulled out a pistol! Pao was the only one who looked calm at the moment.

"All of you shut up about this case or I will pull the trigger!" The sons' pale skin was even paler after this, their own dad was threatening them with a gun? What was wrong with him?

"Why is my wife the only one who succeeds? I spent years and years on creating a great invention, and now she's the one who succeeds! It's not fair!"

Everyone turned to Pao, why was he so calm? He didn't have any expression on his face, and calmly said, "Judging by your position, you and Chuck hold a gun in a completely different way, and Chuck being a professional investigator, I deduce you have probably never used a gun before. He slapped the noble's gun off the ground in a flash. He picked it up and his eyes gleamed as the noble was shaking in his boots.

“Jealousy always gets the best of us, doesn’t it?” Bang! The noble was now a corpse lying on the ground.

Of course, this was just one of the many adventures Judge Pao would go through in his new life, and I assure you he would wipe out every single murderer on Earth!

The Bronze Coin

St. Joseph's College, Li, Lok Wang Gerald – 14

“For your crime of petty thievery, by the power vested in me as a judge, I sentence you to a beating and to pay remittance to the victim. “Judge Pao’s voice, loud and clear, rang out from his seat. The convict sighed in resignation, and the observers murmured in agreement that the verdict was fair. Thus, the crowd dissipated, and as the night crept silently over the day, he strolled on the stone paved road back to his house.

The house was eerily silent, with the stench of death hanging in the still air. The crescent moon faint glow reflected on the courtyard pool, the water glowing almost warmly. Judge Pao crossed the courtyard, and stared into the pool. As he expected, the reflection in the water twisted into the shape of a wretched bat. With a sigh, he touched his forehead, and it glowed as bright as the moon above. Mist arose from the pool, and a wretched, clawed hand erupted from the pool like fire from a blaze, spreading its palm to beckon Judge Pao on. He steadied himself, then sat in the beast’s claw. With a great roar, the palm closed, morphing into a cage, and dragged him below the pool.

The crimson walls and fiery pillars of hell greeted him as he descended through the passageway between King Yama’s realm and the mortal realm, sinners screaming just barely concealed by the seams of this infernal court.

As the ground rushed towards him, the memories of his first summon to hell floated to the forefront of his thoughts. His career as a censor had already taken off, being widely known for his judiciousness and shrewdness. On that day, to celebrate his one hundredth case, he bought some Baiju to toast with his friend. Drowning himself in his cups, he had only maintained enough of his wits to know when to retire, and excused himself, leaving just at the stroke of midnight. Tumbling through the dim streets so inebriated that it was either his judicial work or luck that he had even managed to return home in one piece. With all strength leaving his bones, he had fallen near the pool, deciding that the soft moist grass beside the pool being an adequate replacement for the bed. As consciousness faded from him, a rumble jolted him awake, and he had barely stood up when the hand he would come to know so well stormed out of the water, moonlight bouncing off him to make him seem ever more threatening. His attempt to flee had been halted before he knew it, and the hand had pulled him down, paying no heed to his horrified screaming.

It was much easier after many such nightly falls, such a great fall barely perturbing him. He pressed his crescent mark, and the ground welcomed him softly. The palace of King Yama revealed itself to him, in its stygian beauty. Its onyx walls contrasting the great golden door which led him to the court of Yama.

The courtyard was filled with endless souls, waiting for their verdict. Those that would be judged as benevolent would be granted an afterlife of bliss, but woe betide those wretched souls who grievously broken the laws of the gods. Though pity for them he had aplenty, justice must be done. As he marched solemnly through the endless queues for judgement, the souls of the dead

The souls, startled by the scent of his life, stared at him, then hastily genuflecting, likely to earn his favour for eternal blessings. He ignored them, preferring not to give them false hope. He had once sentenced his uncle for a beating, refusing his plea of familial ties to reduce the penalties.

Inside the courtroom itself, his assistants awaited, as always ever impatient. The court dimmed, and the din of the restless crowd began.

Glancing at the tally of the souls judged, he realised that he was almost finished. At last, the last person to pass that day stepped forward. She was wrinkled old woman, with crow’s feet around her eyes and a silver mane that fell from her mane.

Living up to the name

St. Joseph's College, Wong, Hi Nam Zachary – 14

I gazed at the mid-day sun, its blinding glow fading into streaks which dissolved into the ever-pristine sky it was silhouetted upon. The sun's piercing rays cast beads of sweat on my forehead which trickled down my body, just like the memories of the city running through my mind. A twinge of sadness formed inside me as I stared at the sun for what could be the last time.

Shaking myself from my trance, I forced myself to continue on my perilous journey. The inevitable end was drawing near as I advanced closer and closer to the Great Hall. Moving my feet seemed to take the force of shifting mountains, and with every step I took it only got worse, along with the anxiety gnawing away at my insides.

Each step blended into the other as I slowly made my way towards my fate. Eventually, I reached the gate I had long dreaded. Approaching the gloomy structure, I could hear passers gasping in hushed voices,

“Is he really going in there?!”

”Doomed...”

“Well, there another one goes...”

The dark atmosphere that seemed to surround the gate, its looming and intimidating appearance and its eerie feeling that it planted onto passers-by, was sure to leave an unforgettable mark. Not that I had time to forget, anyways. Leaning on the gate was a sentry, who was on the verge of dozing off probably as few ever came close to it. I lightly tapped him on his shoulder, and he bounced awake.

“You... are here for... that... I suppose?” he asked cautiously.

“That is correct,” I gloomily answered.

“Your number please.”

“308.”

He produced a clipboard and scanned through the pages. Suddenly, he stopped, face darkening, and he sighed, shaking his head.

“I see this is not a joke... Well then, good luck in the afterlife.”

I was ushered into the Great Hall. The interior was larger than anything I had ever seen, everything inside neatly polished and seemingly shining. Golden pillars of light appeared to extend as far as the eye could see, and carved on the door were a pair of shining dragons whose gaze seemed to cut into my soul. Rows and rows of people lined the side of the Hall, all of them staring and pointing at me while conversing in hushed voices. The atmosphere seemed to radiate a supernatural golden glow, endlessly blending with the dazzling background. Golden rays of light shone from the distant ceiling that seemed to focus on – could it be – Judge Pao?! I had never seen him before, but I had heard enough to know that he was a renowned hero who sought justice and fought evil.

Maybe I stood a chance?

“Okay, okay, SILENCE! The trial is about to begin!” he bellowed, his voice resonating through the chamber and instantly silencing those in the court. “We are gathered here for the second assessment of the recent murder, as I'm sure you all know. The outcome is pretty much set, as per the conclusion we came to last time, but this time we are accompanied by the suspect, to hear his last words before he gets– “

He did not finish his sentence, instead gesturing to a sturdy man wielding an axe nearby.

“Or, in the unlikely event that he manages to convince us that he is in fact innocent, he shall walk out as a free man.”

~

I wanted to rush forward and scream ‘YES I AM INNOCENT!’, but was restrained by two guards firmly grabbing my hands.

“You will get your say later,” said one of them. “Not like he is going to stand a chance anyways,” the other said, chuckling. I tried to punch the second guard, but they constrained me with unbelievable strength. My infuriated face only made them laugh harder.

Judge Pao’s booming voice cut off their laughter.

~

“For all newcomers, the situation is as follows: On the 9th of January, that is, five days ago, our victim was brutally murdered. All clues and evidence we have discovered seems to point in the same direction. There was only one single person seen near the vicinity during that period of time, and we have discovered his belongings at the site of the crime as well.”

Cries of “Then why have you not executed him yet?!” could be heard from the audience.

“I know, you want to get this over with, in fact, so do I, but we must respect the suspect and the procedures stated in the law. Anyways, let us see what he has to sa—“

~

Judge Pao glanced over at my direction, and almost got a heart attack as I landed an uppercut on one of the guards restraining me.

“Well, this one’s certainly dead,” I could hear him muttering to himself as I was hauled over by four guards, all the while triumphantly punching the air.

~

“So, what do you have to say for yourself?” Judge Pao asked, cautiously standing a good distance away from me.

“Well, first off, I am innocent, and uh, secondly, uhm.... WELL I AM INNOCENT PLEASE DO NOT KILL ME,” I pleaded.

Judge Pao rolled his eyes.

“WAIT I KNOW! You guy, uh, told me yesterday you found my scissors there right? I, uh, lost them three days before it happened. I think the person who ACTUALLY did it stole them from me and uh, used them to look like I did it,” I desperately told him.

“And who might this person be?” Judge Pao asked.

“Not sure, but I think the only person who has a grudge against me is...” I whispered the name in his ear.

“Gyult huh... Would not be surprised it was him.” Judge Pao put his hand onto his chin and stared forward thoughtfully. “Hmm, seeing as you do seem innocent from my experience, ahem, albeit violent, I will investigate this further.” He ordered Gyult be brought over.

Not long after, several guards returned with Gyult in tow. He was confidently smiling, and when he saw me he could not help but to widen the smile. I caught his gaze, and looked down, silently praying for the

truth to surface. However, Gyult's smile faltered slightly when he noticed Judge Pao. He quickly regained his posture, though, and loudly asked,

"Here to ask me for proof? You could not have found a better person!"

A slight smirk formed on Judge Pao's face as he noticed the cocky smile that Gyult wore.

Licking his lips, Pao answered, "Oh, we are seeking proof, yes. Now let us not waste any more time. I want you both to answer this question: What weapon did the murderer use?"

Hearing this, I realized Judge Pao's intent, and could finally relax, a slight smile curling on my lips. Gyult did not, however, and he could not help but to burst out,

"Scissors! Scissors! His scissors, in fact!" he said, directing a finger at me.

"I think my answer is irrelevant, Judge," I said, finally lifting my head and returning the smile that Gyult had on his face.

"That is correct. I know who to execute now," Judge Pao confidently said, making some eye gestures towards the guards next to him.

"No need to thank me for my assistance, now if you do not mind, I am going to take my leave as I have important things to do," Gyult said as he impatiently walked to the exit.

Only to be lifted up in the air by the same man with an axe from before.

"Well the problem here is, Gyult, you are the one who is going to die here," said Judge Pao patiently.

"Wha— No— How?" Gyult's eyes widened and his expression swiftly changed to that of terror as he took in what Judge Pao said.

"Your answer was all I needed. Even if you somehow saw the scissors, there was no way you could have identified it as his. Well, unless—" Judge Pao's smirk grew wider and he continued, "— you are the one who set up the entire thing."

Leaving his final screams resonating in the Great Hall behind, I stepped outside. The sun was shining as it was, causing sweat to fall from my forehead. I relished it this time, however. I had finally seen the light of day, just like the truth of the murder case, together, in a perfect ending.

The Story of Judge Pao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Chan, Hoi Tik – 13

It all started in a horrible morning.

When Judge Pao woke up, he could sense that something was entering the sky. He quickly rushed out and shouted, 'Help! Somebody please help...' A strong light quickly shone on Judge Pao's face and it quickly teleported to the aliens' spaceship. He shouted out, 'Who are you and why am I here?' The aliens quickly answered, 'Our boss needs your wisdom to take control of the Earth. If we succeed, Elon Musk will put Endgame on stage in real life!' 'What's Endgame?' 'It means slashing the Universe's population in half. Darn!'

The aliens chopped out a bit of Judge Pao's backbone. Judge Pao passed out and saw Mr. Beast. He said to Mr. Beast, 'Beast, I need your help. The aliens are using my wisdom to control the Earth. They want to cut the universe's population in half!' Mr. Beast answered, 'That's not cool. We're gonna stop them now before it's too late.' 'But now, I've passed out. I'm seeing you in my illusion. We're not in the reality...' said Pao. Soon, Elon Musk cut the population in half and Judge Pao died because of excessive bleeding.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Chau, Daisy Ying On – 14

“Please help us, Officer Tang. You’re our only hope. This case has been unsolved for so long!” said Abigail while tugging on his clothing. Echoes of her desperate cries could be heard in the hallway, but only silence endured. The officer dusted off his jacket and walked off without saying a word.

Disheartened and desperate, Abigail walked back to her worn down house and silently wept, “Why. Why are the police not doing anything!” The sound of lightning pierced through the walls of her building, while she pondered about people who could help her. She screams loudly, “This horrendous car crash has been unsolved for 15 years, yet the police force who claims to bring justice wouldn’t even do anything! How I wish the legend, Pao Zheng, was still alive. Pao never failed to bring justice to the weak and was never susceptible to bribery. He really was a benevolent and honest person, he’s the only person that is able and willing to help me!”

Abigail sobbed uncontrollably until a beam of light illuminated through her windows. The bright light was so blinding that Abigail couldn’t even pry her eyes open. Suddenly, Abigail felt a tap on her shoulder. Thinking she was just hallucinating, she ignored it. She felt something moving behind her, so she decided to turn around. A gasp can be heard as the distinctive face of Pao stood before her with a wholesome smile. “Is that you? Am I dreaming?” Abigail says while trembling. Pao smiled and said, “No, you’re not. I am really here to bring justice and closure to you.” Abigail was speechless, she couldn’t believe that one of the most respected and honourable historical figures was standing in front of her. “I’ve seen how corrupted this world has become. Government officials are like clay, they’re so easily manipulated. Your cries and pleas have been ignored for so many years, it must’ve been very difficult for you. In order for me to help you, I would like you to tell me what happened on that unfortunate day,” Pao said.

Abigail sat on the couch as she recounted what happened on that tragic day. She said while holding back her tears, “Fifteen years ago, on a stormy night, my husband, William, was driving back home from work. Earlier, he had called me excitedly to tell me how his hard work had finally paid off as he was going to be promoted the following month. We had always lived in poverty, and life was very difficult for us. His promotion was great news and I thought this would be the beginning of a new phase in our lives. I waited at home for William to arrive, but hours passed and I grew frantic with worry. At 3:00 am, I received an urgent call from the hospital telling me that my husband was in critical condition and might not make it out alive. I rushed to the hospital with tears streaming down my face. I sat next to the hospital bed, hoping that William would be alright. As I sat next to him, memories of our past rushed through my mind. Then, a long and ear-piercing bleep sounded from the heartbeat monitor. I frantically screamed for the doctors to save him, but no one could. That was when my happiness ended, my one true love, gone. I asked the police what had happened during the incident, but they wouldn’t tell me anything! Please, Judge Pao, I beg you, there must be something you can do to give me some answers!”

Judge Pao nodded and touched his crescent moon shaped birthmark. Legend says that when Pao touches his birthmark, he can see exactly what happened in a case and bring justice to the victim. He saw the exact moment when a big, expensive black car ran a red light and smashed into William's car. It turned out that the driver of the other car was a millionaire called Xavier Yeung. The truth behind this tragic affair is that Xavier was drunk when he crashed his car onto William's. The reason why the police didn't do anything is because Xavier bribed the head of the police department, Officer Tang and told his officers to stop all investigations in return for a large sum of money.

When Abigail heard what had happened to her husband on that night, she was angry about the police department and was shocked that they would do such a thing. “How can we possibly find evidence to prove that Officer Tang had received bribes from Xavier?” asked Abigail. “I have a plan,” Pao said with a smirk. “Most people don’t know this, but my birthmark has a lot of special abilities. When I rub it in a circular motion, I can manipulate people’s dreams. Tonight, I will try to scare Xavier into confessing his wrongdoings. If my plan works out, he should go to the police station and report all his past misconduct,” Pao said.

At night, Pao touched his crescent shaped birthmark and manipulated Xavier's dream. Pao turned into a ghost-like figure and whispered into his ears "I know what you did 15 years ago. You bribed the chief police officer and told him to stop all investigations on the car crash that killed William Wong. Have you ever thought about the victim's family? Abigail, his wife, lives her life with unanswered questions about the death of her beloved. Are you not disgusted by your own actions? I'm sure you live with guilt every day because each night you have difficulty falling asleep. This is your chance to confess and finally sleep in peace and undisturbed by guilt."

Xavier woke up with a cold sweat, sobbing, "I didn't mean it, I swear! I just didn't want to be put in jail and slander my reputation! Please, what have I done?" He sat and reflected on the last 15 years. While he has been living every day as if nothing had happened, the victim's family has been chasing for answers. He thought about whether he should confess everything to the police or just leave it be and live with guilt forever. By confessing, he would feel more relieved, and it would finally bring closure to Abigail's family. However, if he doesn't, he could just go on with his life and live with iniquity forever.

He decided to go on a night walk to help clear his mind. As he walked by the familiar roads of Hong Kong, he saw a lovely family holding hands while chatting about their day. He stared at them for a second and thought to himself, "I destroyed a perfect family and made Abigail search and beg for answers that she would never find. How awful am I?" Since he had a guilty conscience, he slowly walked towards the police station while he said goodbye to his own freedom.

After Xavier confessed to all his crimes, both he and Officer Tang were sentenced to jail. Officer Tang was infuriated with Xavier and screamed across the courtroom, "How dare you! We made a deal!" Xavier didn't say a single word and looked down as he was taken away by the court security. Abigail's face lit up as she saw the people who wronged her disappear into the shadows.

Finally, justice has been served and her questions have been answered. She gratefully said, "Judge Pao! Oh, the almighty Judge! You have once again helped us, the underprivileged, with your talents. How can I ever thank you enough?" "Don't worry Abigail, I did what I was supposed to do. I'm glad I finally brought justice to you, I hope that you can live your life to the fullest now," Pao said with a smile on his face.

Once again, Pao Zheng — the prefect of Kaifeng, Justice Pao — has solved the unsolvable.

The Unknown Murderer

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Cheung, Chin Fung – 13

Once upon a time, there was a wise man called Judge Pao. He helped many innocent people and solved many cases. Many Chinese believe that he is the Yama of Department of Hell.

On a rainy and stormy day, a poor Indian spirit popped up in front of Judge Pao while he was taking a bath. He freaked out and asked the spirit, 'Who are you?' The spirit said that he was from India but his family had migrated from India to China because of war. They migrated to a broke village and got bullied by other villagers because of their skin colour and language.

Judge Pao asked him, 'How did you die?' He replied, 'I had been bullied by the villagers for years, and one day they came in front of my house and threw rocks towards me. The rocks broke the window and hit me. I wasn't hurt until a guy rushed in and stabbed me with a sharp knife. I lost count on the number of times he had stabbed me. I didn't see his face as it was covered by a mask.'

Judge Pao decided to go to the village and judge the case by himself. He poured oil around the village and threatened the villagers that if they didn't hand over the murderer of the Indian case, he would burn the village immediately. The villagers were startled and pushed the murderer out. Of course, it was just an extreme way Judge Pao hired to find the murderer out. He wouldn't burn the village nor the murderer. He sent the murderer to life sentence at the end. The Indian finally died with relief and peace.

Christmas Tales of Judge Pao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Eze, Chinwe Lynn – 14

There are many tales of the famous judge, Justice Pao. But one I bet you've never heard of is this one.

"Judge Pao, a crusading figure with a passion to fight crime and clean up the land, lives a double life, dispensing justice as a human during the day and working as the immortal Yama, a supernatural judge sorting out affairs in the afterlife of a Department of Hell known as "the Infernal Bureaucracy", when the night comes." There was a hum of interest, and the sound of some papers rustling. The brown-haired man Chris clicked his tongue. "Pao," he paused and looked up from the papers he had been reading from. "They're onto you."

I let out a sigh. "Don't be ridiculous, Chris. It's a silly tale. There's one in every culture," I reply, without looking up from the pile of paperwork. "Their story is far from the truth." Though, they were right about the immortal part. Although we can die in real life, we continue to live on here, working for eternity.

I can't remember exactly when I first got here, only that one night, after a day just like any other day, I went to bed and woke up with many foreign faces watching me. Their features looked odd to say the least, and they all spoke different languages. They explained that this was a gift to some people, and that it will be a job for the rest of our lives. Don't ask me how we understood each other, because none of us knows. It's the power of Christmas, they'd say. It was definitely a lot to take in at first, but I got used to it over time and have been working here during the night ever since.

"Don't you guys think we should be focusing on our work, rather than discussing weird conspiracy theories," Beatris, who, unfortunately, is also immortal, nagged at us.

"I have so much work left, it's killing me," a voice in the background interrupted. I couldn't recognize who it was from. There's way too many of us for me to be able to keep track.

"Maybe if you started earlier, you wouldn't be struggling right now." Even without looking, I could see Beatris rolling her eyes saying that.

"Exactly, there's better things to do than spending your time looking at pictures of men with receding hairlines." Chris always likes to add backhanded comments.

"Shut up, you were the one who made me insecure in the first place," the unknown voice replied. The silence now made the background noise even more evident. Sounds of machines whirring and clicking, cutting and folding of papers, and occasional crashes which I learnt, if not paired with screaming, were totally normal.

Some of you may be curious about what my job is. Well, I make lists. I sort out the priorities and make lists for everything. Errands, materials, delivery dates, everything. It sounds way easier than being a judge, but I can assure you it's not. I don't mean to brag, but these lists are basically the glue that is fighting to hold the whole production together, and that's not even the hardest part of my job.

The hardest part of my job is judging the naughty and nice lists. Why? It's the process of judging every little soul in the world who still has faith in a man weighing 120 kg that flies around the world with reindeers (who, by the way, does not exist) as to whether they're good or bad, then writing all their names down, is a physically and mentally painful process.

Some cases are simple and straightforward. For example, screeching with a volume that can rupture the eardrums of anyone in a 10 metre radius at a mall is in the category of naughty. Putting a pullback toy car while it's moving on your sister's head, effectively pulling out a chunk of her hair is in the category of naughty. Submitting your homework on time and not being late is in the category of nice. But what do you do when you come across a kid who is neither good nor bad. For instance, the kid that cursed at people but also ate their mom's terrible cooking without throwing up. What about the kid who threw a frisbee at their friend's head, but helped in beach cleaning volunteering works.

Nice or naughty. In my whole life of being a judge, this is the question that has haunted me every day.

After having gone through hours of painful deliberation, I find my vision going darker and my hearing starts to fade. I wake up in my usual bed in my sleeping robes feeling, and possibly looking, like I had been through hell and back, which made me come to a realisation of why the people would say I work in the department of hell during the night. However, now that I think about it, it does seem to be an accurate description. I sigh and bury my face in my hands. I don't even celebrate Christmas.

The Quest of the Kingpin

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Ho, Ka Yat – 14

Seated on an armchair in his office, he looked through countless sheets of documents related to a drug trafficking mob, reading them closely word for word. He knew that all those cases had been misjudged. Innocent people had been imprisoned, perpetrators let loose. The magistrates handling those cases were all connected to one, single official.

He was glad that he had come to Hong Kong to fix everything once and for all.

Not long after he passed away, he became the impartial spirit of Hell. He looked through a crystal ball where his grandchildren lived and saw a divisive society, the local courts failing and corrupted. Drug trafficking was prominent and the police could do nothing to stop the drug rings from expanding. "Something just felt inequitable," he thought. He knew that the city, where his grandchildren lived, was on the brink of destruction. He rose from Hell and trekked through jungles and mountains to present-day Hong Kong to see what he could do to help, while there was hope that he could salvage the legal system from the verge of death, and perhaps the people of Hong Kong could live a better life.

The sitting judges of the Supreme Court were heading towards the atrium for a meeting. They were dressed in long black gowns, all of them except for one.

The man alone in the crowd was dressed in a *Daopao*, and *he meant business*. He was subpoenaed by the president to sit for the Supreme Court. He was the legendary Judge Pao.

The judges knew that *he* was the man who could think of solutions to end the corrupt regime. Recalling what he had seen in his office previously, a plausible answer to the crisis instantly popped into his head — that *one* official who handled the judiciary's assets was the person to blame. That official gave magistrates of the tribunals money in exchange for releasing many drug trafficking criminals and villainous gangsters.

Back in the day, Pao was a magistrate. He was famed for fighting corruption and punishing dishonest government officials. He felt a strange sense of *déjà vu* since he had dealt with several similar incidents in the past. He knew what to do to bring the culprits to justice, so he went back to his office once again to gather evidence and found where the magistrates worked. The problem was how he could hunt for *that* official.

Pao went to the Central District Court. The magistrates knew he was coming for them, so they attempted to escape by flocking to the basement. But what they didn't know was Pao had been trailing them while the magistrates were running for their lives and had studied the layout of the building before coming to prosecute them. Soon, Pao found them and showed them the evidence.

"You guys are under arrest! How dare you go against the oath of justice," said Pao.

The magistrates couldn't help but confess to their crimes as they knew they wouldn't get out of this mess. "Well I guess this is the first step of finding that felonious official," Pao applauded himself. "I'm lucky that I'm still quite fit!"

Pao recalled how he questioned criminals back then when he was an investigating censor and encouraged them to confess their crimes. Even before the *Reid Method* was developed, which is an effective technique to extract information from suspects, had been developed in the 1950s, he already knew how to intimidate culprits, telling them that there had been enough evidence to prove them guilty and threatening them that not confessing to their crimes may result in a heavier sentence.

Without further ado, he escorted the magistrates into a room and applied his idiosyncratic approach to interrogate them. He questioned each of them and they all pushed the blame on a single government official but failed to disclose his whereabouts. That villainous person was Zhao, a clerk in the judiciary. Pao knew that his greatest enemy, the mastermind behind the plot, wouldn't be easy to defeat.

After a little more digging, Pao found that the culprit had always been working in the Central District Court building, but he couldn't find Zhao anywhere during last time's sweep. Pao looked up the CCTV and figured out that he worked in an enclosed office located near the basement. To catch the culprit, he secretly disguised himself as a clerk in that office and saw what he could find. To his surprise, Zhao wasn't even alert at any time and Pao ordered the police to prosecute him the day after.

And that was it! Zhao was imprisoned and the case was solved. It wasn't as complex as Pao had thought. He thought that his work ended there.

Up till *now*.

The gang expanded their network of members. Even after they knew that Zhao was brought behind bars, they continued to stage massive demonstrations and disruptions despite being under scrutiny by the authorities and suppression from the police. Pao realised that the *actual* mastermind who organised these illicit activities and behind this massive plot had not been arrested. He was on a quest once again to find the real perpetrator. He needed to make it *fast*, as the city couldn't afford to continue deteriorating.

The panel of Supreme Court Judges once again held a meeting to discuss how they could end the crisis. He sat and listened, and just *thought* about all the possible suspects who were behind all of this mess. He noticed that one of the judges was acting particularly odd. She seemed to be discreetly speaking over the phone with a headset. She didn't care about the Chief Justice's speech and kept *banging* on her laptop's keyboard. Her face looked exasperated and in grief.

Pao knew it was her. *She* was a newly elected judge and *she* must've infiltrated into the courts to overturn fair rulings.

But this was merely a feeling. Pao needed concrete evidence to prove his theory. He learnt fast back in school and he recalled what he had learned over the course of several months in the modern world. The ultimate skill — hacking.

He hacked into the judge's computer and saw what he had suspected he would find. There were innumerable documents relating to the cases in which district courts had overturned rulings and drug trafficking schemes. Now there was enough evidence to prove her guilty.

Pao immediately reported his findings to the Chief Justice and notified the police. The force found where the gang was located and soon enough, they arrested the mastermind of the plot.

"I shall continue to expand the network of my gang! Judge Pao shall *never* stop me!"

Despite her words, the gang had ceased its operations and the drug traffickers were brought to justice. Judge Pao was relieved that everything in the city slowly returned to normal and shone magnificently as the IFC it had always been.

He had finally finished his mission to remove the corrupt regime and arrest the perpetrators. The courts were upholding justice once again, but there was still one particularly peculiar case — something that he still couldn't figure out — he decided to leave to the Hong Kong courts to resolve. He travelled to the nearest entry point of the Yangtze River and let his body slowly drift back to his grave, while his soul sank back into Hell, ready to be summoned for his next assignment to deliver justice.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Kwong, Leann – 14

Much of the moon's beauty lies in the way it remains deeply mysterious while shining a light on that which surrounds us, serving as a guiding light in the darkness while leaving the potential for growth and whatever else we might do with it in our hands. With a simple yet elegant look, Judge Pao stands as a passionate crusader. As the moon crescent forms on his forehead, it curves into the symbol of brightness and purity, echoing the Chinese idiom 'the bright moon hung high in the sky'. This distinct feature characterises his righteousness and uprightness. He is the moonlight. He shines where there is darkness. Whether in reality or in literature, the moon on his forehead always stays a slender crescent and shows great status on justice.

Time and time again, Judge Pao proved himself to be intelligent and worthy of the honour regarded towards his cultural symbol of justice. The renowned trial, "Trial of the Rock" exemplified this clearly. The case began with Pao confronting a sad boy who was robbed during his nap. Unconventionally, Pao decided to interrogate the rock the boy napped on and, turns out, the interrogation was only a trick to divert everyone's attention. Then, Pao ordered everyone to drop a coin in a basin of water as a result of their rudeness in response to his interrogation and the thief was identified since he dropped an oily coin into the basin, suggesting that it was stolen from the boy who sold oily food. Pao's intelligence impressed the public and earned him the respect and appreciation of his people.

His good-natured and sympathetic character shaped him into the legend he is today and his legacy will ablaze for as long as we know. He was impartial and fearless, standing up for the weak and powerless while making sure that justice was served. He lived up to his name of being honest and impartial, using his power and influence virtuously and displaying high moral standards.

He is the white diamond gleam on the dark side of their dynasty and a pathway that leads up to the stars. His dear guards close to his heart form the five stars, Zhan Zhao, Wang Chao, Zhang Long, Zhou Hu. With a profession in fighting crime and battling misdeeds, his beloved ones give him hope and affection and show him the warmth side of the world. Always staying faithfully by his side, they displayed their loyalty and integrity, as well as flaunting their ever present taciturnity and friendship. They cooperate well on their occupations and have solved countless cases together. He was also a bright son, refusing and postponing his career to take care of his parents and staying by their side until their passing, he also followed all the traditional mourning rituals before leaving to pursue his career a decade later.

So, Judge Pao's legend taught us to live righteously and unapologetically so as to not be burdened with sorrow and regret. Let us all be the moon to and for ourselves and gleam brightly for those who care for us and those we cherish. For the rest, can be left for future historians to figure and wonder.

And so, should we, for what romantic tales does the crescent hide behind the righteousness of the moon? The moon has long been associated with love and union. What if, when night falls, instead of transforming into an immortal judge for the afterlife, he too, the greatest judge of Chinese history, falls deep in humanity's biggest lure?

On a very typical day of Pao's job, he interrogated suspects as usual. However, he was feeling troubled as this case involved many people, most of whom were highly influential. He knew he had to do something quickly but to his disappointment his interviews were not providing him any helpful leads. Tired and disappointed, he buried himself in heavy court files. It wasn't long after when he heard a knock on the door followed by Zhan's announcement that a young single mother had arrived to help with the investigation. Pao ordered impatiently that Zhan proceed with the procedures and leave him alone, but Zhan insisted that Pao interview the women. Pao tidied himself and proceeded to welcome a familiar face. Pao greeted her and she introduced herself as Li Hua, the ex-wife of the main suspect. After a long afternoon of intense discussions, they agreed to put the heavy-duty tasks down and take a break. During their afternoon tea, their chats ranged from astronomy to music to cooking to family, above and beyond the moon. Pao enjoyed listening to the experiences Hua had and Hua adored listening to Pao's cases. They were both surprised to learn of all their shared interests and were impressed by each other's knowledge.

They both tacitly agreed that Hua's ex-husband was the culprit behind the whole bribery and with Pao's intelligence and Hua's connections, they swiftly arranged a trap. Soon enough, Hua's ex-husband was lured into the courthouse, thinking he was there to report his stolen gold. However, back at his house, Hua fooled the guards and sneaked in to steal the unedited versions of the corrupted documents. They were one step away from success. Pao, on the other hand, was stalling for time with Hua's ex-husband. But to their surprise, their plan was exposed by Hua's brother-in-law, who was rushing to Hua's ex-husband house. Judge Pao was displeased by Hua's ex-husband's calmness. He had just ordered that he was to be put into a cell, he shouldn't have been this calm, Pao thought to himself. Aggravated, he started interrogating him. Pao's professional skills and his recklessness showed great differences and Pao soon realised their plan was unveiled and that Hua was out under danger. Pao rushed through to the scene subconsciously, with his guards following. When they arrived, the scene of Hua being held by a knife revealed before Pao's eyes. Pao was desperate, but he managed to put together a plan. He took a candle and threw it across the room, causing the light to go out. In darkness, his guards fled to arrest the armed person and Pao rushed to Hua's side. As the light flickered on, all the suspects were arrested while Hua was left unharmed. Pao wrapped Hua in his arms before making sure she was uninjured. The ambiance shifted dramatically as Hua remained wrapped in Pao's warm embrace.

They had finally collected enough evidence against the Wang's and proceeded to court filings. Hua couldn't help but to feel proud of Pao. Closing the case, Pao let out a long breath, and remembered all the memories he created with Hua. He cherished her and decided to thank her efforts with action.

Pao helped her into a small boat on the side of the river. They shared wine and grapes under the glistening moonlight as the boat softly rocked them along the waters. Intoxicated by intimacy, they lit lily lanterns, laying a bed of fiery passion on the riverbank. The idyllic scene of a bright crescent moon bouncing light on the light crescent on Pao's forehead will forever be carved into their hearts.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Lam, Tze Ngo Jane – 14

The full moon in the dark sky appeared more brightly, the light of the moon shining through the window on the man's face. The man was lying on his oversized bed, sleeping deeply. Suddenly, a black shadow blocked the soft light, the light shone on the knife that holds onto the shadow's hand, and the knife was glaring. The shadow walked slowly to the man's bed, standing beside it, and plunged the knife into the man's heart without any hesitation. The blood started to expand on his clothes, making a beautiful pattern. The shadow took out its long finger and slowly put it underneath his nose, checking if he was dead. The shadow smiled creepily, bent near the man's ear, and whispered 'You deserved it.' Then the shadow left the room without looking back.

'Judge Pao! Judge Pao!' the man that worked in the yamen, calling anxiously, ran to Judge Pao's room. Judge Pao was sitting on his chair, drinking his tea leisurely, talking slowly to the worker, 'What happened that made you run like a mess to me.' The worker answered worriedly, 'Family Tong's one and only son had died!' Family Tong was one of the richest families in the Song Dynasty, and that's why the worker was so anxious. Judge Pao stood up and said 'Calm down little boy, take me to the crime scene.'

The worker brought Judge Pao in front of Tong's mansion. The worker knocked on the door, and then an old man came out and looked at Judge Pao surprisingly. Judge Pao said 'I am Judge Pao, to help Master Tong solve the case.' The old man understood his words, and then took him and his worker to the crime scene. They arrived at the son's room. Master Tong was comforting his wife they both seem sad, and then master Tong looked at Judge Pao his eyes were like telling Judge Pao to find the truth about his son. Judge Pao nodded and walked to his son's bed, checking his cause of death. Judge Pao put on his gloves, checked anything on his clothes, and then he opened his mouth, smelling any chemicals in his mouth or he had drunk. After he had checked the cause of death, he took off his gloves and carefully observe the surrounding of the room. 'Although your son's valuables are gone, but the windows have closed no trace of being broken in this room. Also, he died on his bed the murder killed him when he was sleeping at night, and the incident must be at night. So, the murder must be inside these three suspects.' He said to master Tong. 'The murder weapon is a knife in the kitchen, so the female chef is one of the suspects.' 'Second, the murder must grasp the victim's daily itinerary. So, this old man that brought us to the crime scene must be the housekeeper, this strong man that stood beside master Tong, telling him the current situation must be the bodyguard of Tong's son. They are the suspects that murdered Mr Tong's son.' Judge Pao explained an inference clearly. 'The murder must be between you three!' He pointed at them.

Judge Pao told them to sit down and introduced themselves and explained their timeline yesterday. The housekeeper was called Li Yun, sixty-four years old. He said 'After master's family had eaten their dinner at eight, then I went back to my room and ate dinner at eight-fifteen. After I finished my dinner at half past nine, I put the dishes and bowls I used in the kitchen sink. At ten, I went back to my room and bath and slept at half past ten.' The female chef was called Ru Xin, twenty-five years old. She said 'After cooking dinner at six-forty, I deliver the dishes at seven to the Tong family. I cleaned up the table and bowls, then brought the bowls and dishes to the kitchen for washing at nine. At ten, I started to wash uncle Li's bowls and dishes and finished at ten-fifteen. At half-past ten, after working I went bath and slept.' The bodyguard of Tong's son is called Liang Yun, thirty-three years old. He said 'After eating dinner with Tong's family at eight, I accompany him back to his room at eight-fifteen. Then I went back to my room, bath at half past eight, slept at nine-fifteen.' Judge Pao after hearing their timeline, walked to their rooms and investigate, asking other workers in the mansion about their relationship with Tong's son.

After investigating, their reasons for murdering Tong's son surfaced. Li Yun' reason was Tong's son wanted to find another housekeeper to replace his position. He would lose his job and didn't have the source of funds for supporting his terminally ill wife. Ru Xin's reason was Tong's son complained the food she cooked tasted bad, and threw the food at her, being a chef, the food she cooked was the most important thing, and they would not accept such that insult. Liang Yun's reason was Tong's son needed Liang Yun to serve him and always vent his unhappiness to him. He was only his bodyguard, not his outlet.

Judge Pao organized the things he observed and the information he heard. He smiles confidently, and said 'I know who is the murder that kill master Tong's son!' Everyone looked at Judge Pao he said 'A person that has a strong killing intent, knows about his eating habits. That's you chef, Ru Xin!' Ru Xin respond to him with a provocative smile and said 'Do you have any evidence?' Judge replied 'You first put Rhodiola in his tea to let him sleep. Rhodiola was a flower that could let people sleep deeply. If you put the right portion in his tea, it could make him sleep deeply after 2 hours. Tong's son had a habit, he would drink one cup of tea before eating. He drank the tea at seven after two hours at nine, he would sleep deeply. Then when you finished putting the bowls in the kitchen, you could go to his room and kill him. I checked the dining room was beside the kitchen you should not go for one hour. You used this time to kill Tong's son, am I right?' Ru Xin showed a flustered look, then she calmed down immediately, said 'Where is your evidence then?' Judge Pao kept on explaining, 'When you were killing the victim you don't want your clothes covered in blood. So you use a basket and insert the knife in the bottom of the basket. When you kill him you just plunged the knife into his heart but did not make his blood everywhere. The evidence is the basket that held the chicken. You thought that the chicken's blood would cover the victim's blood, but look at the victim's clothes, there's a circle drawn by blood dots which surrounded the lethal position, which perfectly matches the basket edge. This is the evidence you wanted.' Ru Xin knelt in despair, crying bitterly her eyes full of hatred and disgust, and said 'He didn't only insult my dishes, but also my mother's!' Everyone looked surprised, but not Judge Pao he said 'He complained about your mother's cooking skills and dishes to let master Tong change to another chef. Your mother lost her job and broke her economic source. She had no money to support her family, and then she suicides. I found the photo of your mother with master Tong's family in your room. You drew a big cross on Tong's son's face. I also found a journal that your mother had written, the days in Tong's family were harsh for your mother. But did you see the last page of this dairy, 'I hope my daughter will become a fabulous chef in the future!' Ru Xian stood up and said thank you to Judge Pao with her tears. Judge Pao again solved another crime and returned the truth to the victim.

The Morning

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Law, Yu Ching Megrez – 12

Pounding in my ears, I wake to the beating of my own heart. The crescent moon is still up at this hour but dawn is sneaking in. The entire capital of Kaifeng should still be asleep, a momentous day lies ahead.

My veins are boiling to right the wrong. I feel rage against crime and a passion for justice. I uphold my position as County Magistrate for our nation. It is my honour to serve and strive for a fair society. Every citizen is equal in front of the law, and yet, my flesh is also boiling with remorse. To do the right thing on this day would be hurting those closest to me.

The pounding of my pulse escalates. Caught in this agony, it was a sleepless night. The crescent moon shines through the walls. I brush my trembling fingers against the birthmark on my forehead, it bears a similar outline and my faith in righteousness.

As Judge Pao, it is my responsibility to do what is just. As son Zheng, it is my duty to be loyal to the family and to reciprocate their love. Father and mother could afford to send me to school, but it was not without hardship. Wu, my sister-in-law devoted so much of herself to care for me as if I was her own child. Memories from those days in Hefei are still vivid.

I must appear calm and collected at the hearing soon shortly after dawn. The verdict of the case will be read out today. I go through all relevant papers for one final time. It is my duty to listen, investigate, interrogate, judge and sentence accordingly. I must be impartial, even when it means looking into the eyes of my family and reading out the dire consequences of breaking the law.

This is tough for me. I clench my fists, I bear the heartache. I recite Confucius's teachings of filial piety. I have my greatest respect for Wu who is like a mother to me. It will be hurtful for her to witness the sentencing of her only son, my nephew, Mian. To prosecute him is a betrayal of our ties, but his actions must be punished.

Mian put self-interest above moral values. The evidence is clear. He used his official title to offer favours in return for generous amounts of money. Such bribery is a very serious offence. As the authority of justice for our people of the Song dynasty, I must carry out my job without bias. Members of the imperial family, government officials and the privileged are subject to the same judgement as the poor, the illiterates and the commoners.

In the black robe of golden embroidery that speaks my rank, Mian's sentence will be read out. Before the staff and audience are about to arrive, I walk into the silent courtroom. There lay my three knives. Emperor Renzong has entrusted me with them. The dog's head guillotine, the tiger's head guillotine and the dragon's head guillotine rest on each of their sturdy stands. It is one of those blades that will be used during the prosecution today.

Decisions to use guillotines are never taken lightly. Corruption is a serious crime, so convicted criminals must be punished. Mian must be punished for his wrongdoing. I shall not fail as County Magistrate for our people, but I have failed as his uncle. My heart is broken. Was I absent when he was still young and in need of guidance? Had I kept myself unavailable for him when he had doubts? Did I not sense trouble in his path and gave warnings?

Greed is within human nature, and so is honesty. Mian has put himself through the same learnings as I did to become a Jinxi. It is not an easy path to study and thoroughly understand the vast literature and wisdom that came before us. After all those years of study and achievements, why has he deviated onto a dishonest path? Should I have set a stronger and better example for him? Could this outcome have been avoided?

Early sunrise gradually reaches the entrance, the still courtroom feels ready for our day. The cold stone of porch and pillars, painted wood furniture, and the polished bronze armament are familiar sights. The agony and despair in me are not.

I return to my office behind and put on the black futou gauze hat. With it worn on my head, I shall speak and serve as a civil official for a fair society. That is clear to me. There is no dilemma because I am the judge and I represent justice. It is the early 11th century, our empire is strong, and I am part of its well-developed judiciary system.

The pounding of drums grows louder and louder now. Our court recorders, jury, guards, the victims, the criminal, their families, and members of the public fill the space, I can hear. The solemn pounding grows, and that is a signal for all to bow for my entrance. I tidy my thoughts and my attire and put emotions aside. Courage guides my footsteps into the courtroom once again.

A New Tale of Judge Pao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Lee, Sum Yau Sharon – 13

One day I daydreamed about him and the story began.

Judge Pao said, “Wow, what happened? Where am I?” I replied, “Oh wow, are you Judge Pao? Nice to meet you. It’s now 2022!” He exclaimed, “2022! I went to 2022! Everything here is so modern and beautiful!”

Then I brought him to another place and we saw a poor man sitting on a cardboard with very little clothes. Judge Pao said, “Umm...can you help this poor person, Amy? I feel he is a bit sad and poor!” I said, “Ok, I’ll give him \$100!” Judge Pao whispered, “Wow, I never thought that people would have that much money to give out!”

After that, I took him around and he was so excited and surprised all the time. When I was dreaming happily, suddenly my mom said, “Hey Amy, don’t daydream. You still have so much homework to do!” I replied, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, of course, I know!”

Then I started to think, “It will be very interesting to meet Judge Pao although I don’t really know if he really exists! But I think if he really exists, he will help us people more.”

Another chance?

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Leung, Kiu Fung – 14

On a rainy winter evening, under the streetlights, young men in raincoats and hats hurry home through the howling wind, grumbling under their breath while old folks cower under umbrellas on their way to their cosy homes where their families and dogs and flat-screen TVs await them.

“I’m going back now. Don’t find me anymore,” the man said.

“I can’t promise you that. Maybe the world needs you again,” his partner replied.

The bid his partner goodbye and left in his car.

Back to his house he returned. He looked around for a place to sleep, but it was impossible, not with the mountains of paperwork scattered all around his shack. Instead, he had chosen to leave his house once again to evade work.

Off he went to the bar. He sat down and asked for a Gin Fizz. The bartender hurriedly made him the drink because he could tell that the man in front of him was in a bad mood.

He chugged his drink in one go, wanting to drown all his worries, when suddenly his phone rang. He groaned, annoyed and helpless, but still picked up the phone.

“Pao!” The voice on the other side of the call barked.

“Not again...I’ll be there asap,”

The drink was left unfinished when he left, along with the money for the drink sitting on the table.

Pao didn't waste time taking public transportation, he opted to sprint there. When he arrived, he was wet, soaked wet. He stopped to catch his breath when a car hit him.

BANG

Pao’s eyes saw stars, no, a galaxy.

“Oh my god! Where did he go?”

“I don’t know!”

That was all he could hear, then everything faded to black.

“Pao, the best judge, the best man on the court, the hero of the dynasty, welcome back.”

He was woken up by a mysterious voice.

“Who?” Pao questioned, but no one responded.

He looked around, trying to find the robotic voice to no avail. Strangely, everything seemed familiar to him. From the bed, the desk, the chair, the smell, to the atmosphere in this room.

Was this a prank?

He was startled by the noises outside the room he was in. Frankly, nothing could prepare him for what he was about to see. Everyone was wearing either Shen or Chang Pao. He himself was wearing the court costume of the era, a Chaofu. He looked at the calendar, and his eyes widened when he realised that today was the first day he had gone to court.

He had time travelled? His mouth was left hanging open, but he calmed himself down right after. No wonder he had a sense of déjà vu. If today was the first day, then it must be the 'Ubon case'. He sighed internally. This is not a great start.

"Judge Pao, it's almost your turn,"

This must be a gift from God. I will change my life, and my destiny.

The gavel hit the wooden sound block. Court began.

"Without further ado, tell me what happened," Pao asked.

"Greetings Judge Pao. My name is Zhang Bie Gu. I am a citizen who sells torches for living. Today I went to the Zhao family who fired the kiln pot to ask for the firewood money owed four years ago. The gatehouse was changed and it seems like they have become rich, and they do not have any more kilns, so they returned the money,"

This is going the same as before. Perfect.

"Before I returned back home, I saw there were pots left over from the previous kiln in the yard, so I selected a dark black basin and brought it home,"

Others were very confused about what he was saying, thinking that he was only wasting Pao's time, so the guards were told to escort and punish him for wasting Pao's time. Pao quickly stopped them and let Zhang finish his speech.

"But not long after, the kiln started to speak. It claims that he's an unjust soul, and was originally a silk merchant who stayed at Zhao's house at night. Unfortunately, Zhao's family was aiming for his wealth, and so killed him for his money. Zhao and his wife were afraid of being discovered, so they incinerated the merchant's flesh and blood and burned them into a black basin."

This is exactly what happened in the past. Thank God.

"He told me all this in hopes that I can redress his grievances on his behalf, so that his soul could go to reincarnation with peace of mind."

"Understood. Give me the kiln," Pao requested.

People around the venue were all very confused as to the reason why Pao was asking for the kiln. People started to speak in low voices. Some even started to question and doubt the ability of Judge Pao, whether he was capable of handling this case. Pao ignored them, speaking in an unwavering voice.

"Soul, do you hear me?" Pao asked

"This man has gone crazy," others were shocked. "What is he doing?"

The voices of doubt started to increase. Those who worked for Pao were baffled. What was our boss doing?

"How can you speak to me?" the kiln said.

It actually spoke. Everyone was stunned into silence. No one in the room could believe it, and yet they had to, because they all heard it, not just Pao.

“I will explain that later. Now, tell me what exactly happened,”

Though Pao knew everything, he still needed to ask for some specific information, just in case he forgot something. After the interrogation, he called for the guards.

“Pass down the order, bring me Zhao and his wife.” Pao commanded.

Not long after, the guards brought Zhao and his wife with their hands tied with rope.

“Kneel,” Pao demanded.

They did.

“4 years ago, on the same day as today, did both of you kill the merchant who asked for a place to stay?”

“No!”, both of them denied.

“Guards, please separate them, and only bring Zhao’s wife to me,”

Though the guards were confused, they still followed his command.

“I ask you one last time; did you kill the merchant?”

“...No,” Zhao’s wife mumbled

Pao could see the fear and the hesitation, he knew that she did.

The couple had acted and spoke in the same way. Nothing had changed.

“Insolent! Tell us the truth or else you will be prosecuted severely. If you want to reduce the punishment, tell us everything,” Pao threatened Zhao’s wife. Without hesitation, Zhao’s wife spilled everything.

“Understood. Now bring me Zhao,” Pao ordered.

The guards were all surprised by Pao’s ability, no one was ever going to doubt him again.

“Zhao, did you kill the merchant?”

“No, I was in bed the whole time. I didn’t kill the merchant,”

Although his words were spoken with conviction, everyone saw through his facade.

“We have asked your wife and she told us everything. Since you have lied to me, one more punishment is added,”

Before deciding on the punishment, he thought back on what he did wrong in the past.

He had used the wrong punishment and killed Zhao and his wife.

“Drag them out and have them flogged for 20 times.”

“No please! Judge Pao, do have mercy on us! We admit that we have committed terrible acts and deceived you!” Both of them begged.

Pao kept his face impassive, waving his hand to call for the guards.

“No!”

They thrashed and kicked against the guards’ holds until the doors closed shut behind them, blocking off the sounds of their agonised screams.

Right after the punishment, Pao checked Zhao and his wife if they were still alive. Good, they were. Pao had successfully set a new history.

Pao wrote a report and sent it to his boss. The boss was satisfied with his good work and promoted him.

Last time I killed the couple. This time I didn’t make the same mistake again and I didn’t get fired by my boss. That is not going to happen again. Thank you, god, for giving me another chance.

“Sorry to break it to you, but I am not god,”

“Wait, who are you? And why is your voice in my head?”

“I am the best system in the world, and you were chosen to change this world. Of course, I will be assisting you on your journey. Congratulations on your first successful case, you will receive a newbie gift and 10 points that you can add on your properties panel.”

“What?...”

“Project ‘New Tales of Judge Pao’ will now commence,”

Well, that was anticlimactic. At least he could look forward to the future with this system.

“Alright, system.” He huffed exasperatedly.

And off they go to save the world with a flash of golden light.

Judge Pao and the Stolen Horse

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Luk, Yuen Ching Charis – 14

We all know Judge Pao, the detective that was famous back in the Song Dynasty. He was known for indicting corrupt officials and reprimanding imperial families. He brought justice everywhere he went in China, but what if he still existed in the 21st century? I will now tell you a tale about Judge Pao and the Stolen Horse.

The story begins in the late 2010s in Hefei. Judge Pao was sitting peacefully in his palace, enjoying his afternoon tea when one of his assistants came up to him. "Judge Pao, there seems to be a new case for you to solve." He handed the document over to Judge Pao, bowing respectfully then leaving the room. Immediately, he sat at his desk, carefully reading through the case file and analysing the situation that was brought upon his hands. He also took notes in his little notebook that he brings with him everywhere in case he forgets some crucial information. After a few hours, he put down his pen and looked through his window, it was already past midnight. He closed up the file along with the notebook and went to bed.

The sound of birds chirping outside his balcony woke him up, acting as an alarm to get his day started. He got up and started to prepare to head to Tianjin to investigate the case of the stolen horse. By the time he arrived, it was almost noon. He rang the doorbell and the door opened to the maiden. "Greetings Judge Pao, I am Songmei. Please come in." He bowed with gratitude and followed Songmei to the living room where they talked about the current situation. "So, I assume you've read the file about my horse, right?" Judge Pao nodded, then pulled out his notebook from his pocket, "Could you give me some more details about what happened that night?" Songmei paused for a second, thinking about the night the incident happened. She took a deep breath and began, "Well, I run a cotton trading business and my horse is how I travel to different places and store the products I have for trading. On Saturday, I went to the city to do some trading. I usually set up my horse near the fountain which is located in the centre of the city. After, I went to a restaurant to go buy something, leaving my horse unattended. When I came back, she was gone, nowhere to be found. All of my products are gone, I will have no income.. Judge Pao, can you please help me find the person who is behind all this?" Judge Pao reassured her, "With all that I have to offer for you, miss. Don't you worry."

The next day, he goes to the city to investigate near the fountain and the restaurant Songmei went to. He began his investigation by asking the locals and the shopkeeper if they had seen somebody with a horse. They all didn't provide him with any information so he went around the area looking for certain clues that might help him progress onto the investigation. He was looking at the area near the fountain when he spotted some faint hoof prints in the ground. He then started to follow the hoof prints and ended up in a narrow alleyway which led to a broken-down warehouse. He cautiously walked towards the warehouse and entered inside, making sure to create no sound whatsoever. Then, he heard the voice of a man. He quickly hid behind a pillar to eavesdrop. "We have been eyeing her for a long time now and we've finally captured this beautiful thing." Dark chuckles filled the room as another man spoke up, "Can't wait to give this to Mr. Pei, we're going to make so much money." He heard a tug and a groan. He got curious and decided to take a little peak to see what that sound came from. He saw the shadow of a horse on the ground. He knew immediately that these men were going to give Songmei's horse to Mr. Pei to earn money. He took out his notebook and started sketching the appearances and clothing of the men, some special characteristics of each of them. Suddenly, one of the men said, "Gentlemen, let's go grab some drinks to celebrate, shall we?" They all agreed and left, leaving Songmei's horse in the warehouse. Now is the perfect time to bring it back to her. Judge Pao quickly went to the horse to see if it's okay and to check if Songmei's products were still there. Relieved, they are still there. He then safely brought the horse back to Songmei's house.

The day after, Judge Pao and Songmei went to the government office to report this incident. Judge Pao showed his notebook to the government officials and they assured Songmei that they will take care of this case. It was found out that Mr. Pei is a rich man that lives in Tianjin and wanted Songmei's horse to sell it to the black market along with the products to earn money. Mr. Pei and the men were sentenced to 12 years in prison for attempting black market business. Judge Pao had successfully solved another case and brought justice to Songmei, he then went back to Hefei with joy. I wonder what other case he will solve next?

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Mak, Ho Nam – 14

Judge Pao is a noble person. Known for his incorruptibility and justice, was called 'Bao QingTian' by later generations. He never treats others discriminately. He told everybody what is person-first terminology from all of his life.

When he was 28 years old, he met his future wife Dong in the county court. At that time, he was interrogating a thief who stole things and trespassed into other's houses. Judge Pao saw a curvy girl with a pair of stunning eyes and extremely long legs. He fell in love with her at the first second. So, he talked to the girl after the trial. The girl told Pao that her family used to be the richest clan in the whole town. But the thief stole many of their ingots. For the punishment of the thief, Pao decided to lock him into the jail for 5 years and he also forced the thief to hand over all the ingots he stole.

Pao helped Dong to solve the problem of the thief. She was totally obsessed with him. However, she was quite introvert. Pao realized her feelings. Pao asked her out on a date. Once, during their date, someone on the street pushed Dong coarsely and intentionally. Pao seriously reproached that guy. That guy apologized and ran away immediately. Pao gave a sense of security to Dong. Although it was very trivial, it was a memorable experience for both of them.

After a few dates, they have been through different things. Their relationship became stauncher and stauncher. So they got married. Pao was responsible for earning money while Dong was responsible for taking care of the whole family. However, everything changed when Pao was 30 years old. Dong was pregnant. 10 months ago, everyone was celebrating the coming of the baby. Taking care of her supremely circumspect and attentive. She gave birth to twins, but both children were stillborn. Dong became extremely distraught. She didn't talk to anybody. She didn't eat anything. But just shut herself in the room.

Few months passed, and Dong still couldn't accept the death of her two babies. She took a hemp rope and hung it in the middle of the room. She wrote one suicide note, which mainly expressed her devastation and emotional breakdown. She committed suicide. One of the maids found Dong when she was ready to deliver food to her. The maid first said, 'Omg, what is going on.' She was absolutely frightened. Everybody was so shocked. They can't even imagine how much Dong suffered. Pao came back home and comforted everybody. Although he looked tough, he missed Dong a lot.

Time heals all wounds, Pao came over from the death of Dong and he started his new life...

The New Tale of Judge Bao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Oh, Jia Wei Vian – 12

Judge Bao, also known as Bao Zheng Tian, was a famous detective from Ancient China. He was known as the most just, but also cruel person. People who have seen his distinctive long beard in person have said that seeing him would make them tremble with fear. As a detective, he has solved many different and difficult mysteries, and this story describes one of his famous ones.

Receiving cases from the people of China was not rare for the great detective, but receiving one from the Emperor was something unique. Judge Bao opened the scroll containing the Emperor's complaint and read it out aloud.

"Dear Mr Bao, it was rumoured that one of the Emperor's favourite performers has disappeared for a few weeks now. The band and her family haven't heard from her for a long period. The Emperor has stated that if you find the performer, he will award you generously, as well as pardon all of your crimes, including the unauthorised killings that you have carried out."

"The performer's name is Yi Yang. She is a part of a troupe called 'The Angels of the Sun', and both her home and troupe harbour in the North of China, in a town closest to the Great Wall. The leader of the troupe who goes by the name of Miss Tai, has already been notified of your impending visit. The Emperor hopes this information will serve you well in solving this mystery.

The Emperor's advisor."

"A missing performer? I see. It is best if I get to the town in the early morning. I should pack up now.", Judge Bao thought to himself, while carefully planning out his route for his trip. He decided to stay in town for a few days, as a missing person case normally takes a long time to solve.

The next day, he woke up before the sun rose and rode the train to the city where the performer was last seen. Upon arriving in this rural town, Judge Bao was greeted by a woman, who was no other than Miss Tai. She politely introduced herself and invited him into her house for a cup of tea. The house she lived in was quite large, as it also included the troupe's practice room. After settling down, she said to Judge Bao, "Yi Yang was an astounding performer. Every time she danced, it looked like she was an angel. I remember when she was young, her parents would bring her to watch street performers dance."

"As her parents were poor, they couldn't afford to send her to a dance school. If only more people knew how well that young girl danced! I ended up naming this troupe after her. Now when the Emperor wanted to reward her with gold, she ends up going missing. I feel bad for her and her family.", said Miss Tai.

When Judge Bao looked at her face, there were tears forming in her eyes. He asked, "What happened before she went missing?"

"As I have said before, the Emperor offered her money, but Yi Yang was always a humble and selfless girl, and ended up trying to draft a letter to the Emperor to decline the offer and request that it rather be sent to the poor. Unfortunately, the letter was never sent and it is still in my possession. Let me show it to you." Miss Tai said before leaving the room and then returning with a piece of paper.

Judge Bao carefully took hold the paper and read the contents. The words were slightly shaky but the more he read, the more he was convinced that Miss Tai was being honest. Yi Yang wrote about her past and her wishes, but the only thing he was curious about was the handwriting. "Yi Yang and her parents never received an

education, in fact, they never wrote a single word in their lives.”, said Miss Tai. “So, her family never learnt how to write?” Judge Bao murmured. Miss Tai nodded her head, and said, “I could take you to her house, but they don’t know anything about Yi Yang and her disappearance.” “I see, well then, may you lead me to her house? I have a few questions I would like to ask them.” Judge Bao replied as he nodded, stood up, picked up his belongings and prepared to leave.

They soon arrived at a tiny old shack. Judge Bao knocked on the glass door slightly, before the owners of the house opened the door and saw his face. They were in incredible shock; it was the famous Judge Bao right in front of them! “Greetings! Uh... Miss Tai and... Judge Bao, if we are correct. I am the mother of Yi Yang and this is her father. Come in, it is very chilly out there. Aha...” A woman who opened the door standing next to a man stuttered.

When they went into the house, it was very messy and crowded. There were books and items of clothing scattered on the ground, and a few young children were running and playing in this cramped space. The man and the woman managed to find a few chairs and some cold tea. Judge Bao declined the offer but asked them, “Did you notice anything bizarre about your daughter before she went missing?” They repeated what Miss Tai described earlier and how the Emperor was offering her money.

Judge Bao requested if he was allowed to have a quick look around the house. They agreed but seemed reluctant as if they were trying to hide something. Without further hesitation, he began to explore the house carefully. The search around the house was tiring, but after an hour or two, he managed to find something he thought was important; a single piece of paper, filled with messy words.

After an attempt to read it thoroughly, Judge Bao said, “It seemed like she had committed suicide out of stress and guilt, but didn’t want anyone to know about it, other than her parents. Plus, she wanted the money to be transferred back to her family. That was why no one knew where she went.” “So, is the investigation over...?” Yi Yang’s mother inquired. “I will have to book a few tickets to the centre of China because I will have to escort the three of you to stand charge in front of the Emperor. Don’t worry, I just have to tell him what happened to your daughter.”, said Judge Bao.

A week later, the family of Yi Yang, Miss Tai and Judge Bao gathered in the Emperor’s hall. “Judge Bao Zheng Tian, please provide your evidence.” The Emperor’s voice boomed loudly in the hall.

Judge Bao handed over the suicide note and said, “I found this letter suspected to be written by Yi Yang, but I believe that this is not the case.” At this point, the jury was whispering left and right, not sure what to think of this scandalous piece of information. “You see, Yi Yang’s family never received an education, which means they never knew how to write. Yi Yang was only fortunate to be taught by Miss Tai, but her family could only read and copy the words from books. That is how they wrote the letter themselves. I have compared both this letter and the letter Yi Yang wanted to send to the Emperor. The ink used in her suicide letter was more watered down and the handwriting is not the same as her handwritten one. The books randomly placed down in their house plus their poor background proves my point. In the letter, Yi Yang said that she wants to transfer the money back to her family, but in her handwritten letter unfortunately that was not sent, she wanted to give the money to the poor as she was a humble and selfless girl.”

Loudly Judge Bao pronounced, “I Judge Bao therefore provide evidence that effectively proves that Yi Yang’s parents have murdered their own child.”

Yi Yang’s body was soon found on the other side of the Great Wall and it was soon buried in a traditional way. The country was soon back to its tranquil self and Judge Bao gained further recognition and respect due to this case – Judge Bao and the Missing Angel.

The Secret of the Crescent Moon

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Sin, Chiu Ching – 13

Many years ago, there was a man called Bao Zheng, also known as Judge Pao or Bao Qingtian. It was another normal day, just when he put on his futou hat and was getting ready to work, someone knocked on his door. A boy showed up and cried, “Sir, you’re the best judge in town. Please help my mother, I beg you.”

“Kid, what happened? Come in and tell me.” Judge Pao let the boy in his house. “My mother and I were at home, and the soldiers suddenly burst into the door. My mother, she’s accused of killing some man in the market, but she didn’t! She’s innocent! She did not do that! But now the judge is going to give her the death penalty, please do not let that happen...” the boy exclaimed.

“I see, who’s the judge of the case?”

“It’s Judge Wong,” the boy told him.

“I’ll help you. Come with me. What’s your name?” Judge Pao asked.

“My name is Chan Zhengfei. You can call me Fei,” the boy said.

Judge Pao brought Fei to Judge Wong’s office. “Judge Pao! How surprised to see you, what wind blows you here?” Judge Wong who was sitting on a chair said.

“Well, as you know about the case of a woman killing a man in the market, which you had been investigating. May I know what information you have got?” Judge Pao questioned.

“Oh, ha! What a curious man you are! But I think it’s best if you stay out of it.” Judge Wong said it half threateningly.

“I wish I could. However, this young man next to me claimed his mother did nothing, so how could I ever not care about j-u-s-t-i-c-e-?” Judge Pao said.

“Alright, alright. Sure I did investigate it. The woman, Chan Juan, killed the man Cheung Feng two days ago because she owed the man money, then she got scared that the man would go after her, that’s why she killed him. There you go, justice,” Judge Wong said with a laugh.

“Right...such an interesting case, but to help this young man Fie,” Judge Pao looked and smiled at him to assure him he would find out the truth, “I’m gonna look into it again if you don’t mind.” Judge Pao voiced. In the Jail, Judge Pao found Chan Juan to do the interrogation.

“Chan Juan. Ma’am, where were you on the night of the day Cheung Feng got killed?”

“I was at home.” Juan tried to speak with her soft voice. She looked miserable, her eyes could barely open, her hair got messy as if it was a bunch of grass.

“Do you have an alibi?”

“No.”

“Ma’am, I hope you know I’m here to help you, so if you think of anyone who might have killed Cheung Feng, please tell me.” Judge Pao said.

“What’s the point? No matter what I say, no one will believe me! In their eyes, I’m only a poor old woman, who is scared of men and owes people money.” Juan said desperately.

“Then what about your son? He’s young, and you’re his only family. He cares for you and he needs you, so don’t you lose hope.” Judge Pao said. Afterwards he left.

At night, in his sleep, he travelled to the underworld, where he was in charge of the “Court of Yanluo”. In the middle of the dark enormous hall, there was a chair in the middle, which was his seat. Next to both sides of the chair, there were two huge creatures, which were about the height of a door, with heads of foxes and muscular bodies with blue skins.

“Bring in the next soul.” Judge Pao ordered.

A soul flew in, “Where am I? Am I in hell?”

“Well, hello. You’re not exactly in hell, if you didn’t do anything wrong in this life. What’s your name?” Judge Pao explained.

“I’m Cheung Feng.”

“I see. Let me look at the life you have lived.” Judge Pao said and used his crescent moon on his forehead as a vision to see those soul’s lives they had.

In the vision, Judge Pao saw Feng. Growing up, he was a good kid who treated his parents well and other people politely. However, he changed. He became more aggressive, rude, and unapproachable. On his last day, he suicided because of guilt.

“Wow, what a life. I can tell you were trying to change, but it’s not worth it to kill yourself. Since you didn’t make huge mistakes like killing someone or treating your parents terribly, you won’t receive punishment from this hell. You’re free to go to another court to be judged.” Judge Pao said.

At day time, Judge Pao went to Cheung Feng’s house and found evidence, a rope. He proved that Feng suicided, and justice for Chan Juan. Little did everyone know how another case was solved easily.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Sun, Priscilla Grace Dela Fuente – 14

Majestic maroon doors open as Judge Pao orders the next case to be brought forth. The defendant remorsefully walks inside with hands clasped together as if he were praying to his god. The prosecutor glares at the defendant, trying to maintain his calmness. A case has been brought forward. An unconscionable, heartless servant has stolen pieces of jewellery that were not only intrinsically valuable, but also sentimental to the master, the victim of the incident.

“P—please,” the servant pleaded, “Have mercy! My name is Tung and never in my life have I stolen!” “Silence in my court, please.” Judge Pao ordered. The room fell silent. A tear rolled down Tung’s cheek, swiftly dropping down to the glistening wooden floors. “Tell me, Master Zhou, why are you two here today?” asked Judge Pao. “This abominable servant of mine has stolen from my jewellery case! Even worse, he chose to steal the golden ornament that I had just bought. He then proceeded to sell it at the pawn shop the morning after. I have lost a considerable amount of money trying to get it back!” Master Zhou lamented.

As always, in every case, Detective Chiu had been sent to investigate the crime scene. The room looked regal and almost spotless. However, he was still able to find some piece of evidence. Some fingerprints have been left on a luxurious, glass box. The fingerprints matched the servant’s fingerprints and the loose thread matched the colour description of servant attire.

The trial continued the next day. “At what time did the robbery take place?” asks the servant's attorney. “Around half past 6 i think,” answers Master Zhou, “I had just come home after a wedding,” “And who’s wedding?” asks the attorney. “My little sister, Tai’s wedding. Before the robbery, the ornament stayed in my pristine jewellery box.” Master Zhou claims. “Where was the wedding?” “Lankao,” Detective Chiu enters the room and presents a scroll and evidence to the master’s attorney.

Tai and Zhou were raised with a silver spoon in their mouths. They grew up in a spacious house and a prosperous farm. Due to the fact that Zhou was a boy, their parents often favoured Zhou. They disfavoured Tai so much that they would even make her work on the farm if she acted out. Feeling like she had had enough, Tai decided to flee from her home after being told that she would be sent to a finishing school to re—learn the Three Obediences and Four Virtues. Zhou understood her frustration and wished her the best of luck. She was pleased her brother had sent her a letter, asking her to visit.

Zhou had asked her to be his alibi. “What am I even supposed to say to him?” asked Tai. “Tell him that I came to your wedding,” Said Zhou. “Wedding? What wedding? I’ve never had one!” Exclaimed Tai. Zhou pulls out documents that he had faked for her. “Let’s say, you got married on the 20th day of the 12th month, to a man named Zhen Ching,” “Wait a minute! I never even agreed to this. Why do I even have to fake that I had a wedding? WHO IS ZHEN CHING?” Tai said, trying to shake some sense into her brother. “Zhen Ching is a man who also needs to fake his documents. Don’t worry, I have taken care of everything. You will also be paid a big sum.” Zhou says, trying to reassure her.

“Yes, he has come to my wedding. On the 20th day of the 12th month,” Tai confidently said. “What happened at the wedding?” asked the servant’s attorney. “Shoot! I wasn’t told what I should answer for this question!” Tai thought. “We had a normal wedding with family members at Zhen Ching’s house.” Tai said, starting to doubt if she should have agreed to get herself involved.

As time went by, the servant, Tung, started getting more and more anxious. He desperately wanted to prove to Judge Pao that he had never done the crime but he didn’t know how. While doing his daily errands, people started sneering and staring at him. “That’s the dirty thief!” He often heard. At one point, he couldn’t take it anymore. He put down his heavy pails of water and his carrying pole. He went to a secluded area in the deep forest to clear his mind. He sat down under his favourite tree. Suddenly, he had a great epiphany. He knew that Zhou was a cruel man and that he always caused unnecessary trouble for the servants. He remembered all the times that Tung would exploit his servants by making them do extra work and sometimes, not even paying

them. He could prove that Zhou was cruel and sadistic. “My scar! That can help prove that I am innocent!” exclaimed Tung. He also had a large scar he had acquired when doing dangerous work for Zhou.

“This is all the evidence that we have found against Tung. The scene shows brown thread from servant clothes and fingerprints that match Tung’s fingerprints. You cannot deny that he has done it,” says Master Zhou’s attorney. “I have a feeling that the servant is innocent. This may sound silly but despite the fact that all the evidence shows otherwise, I don’t think he has done anything wrong,” says Judge Pao. “But how?” “You’ll see.”

The day has come for Tung’s testimony. “I may not have any direct evidence that I have not done the crime but one thing I can tell you is that Zhou has been very exploitative with his servants,” “Objection! irrelevant,” interrupts the master’s attorney. “Overruled!” says Judge Pao. “I am the only one that Master Zhou has asked me to do dangerous work. He has also exploited other workers by overworking them and sometimes not even paying them,” Tung explains. “What kind of dangerous work? Do you even have any sort of proof for even one time he did it?” asked the master’s attorney. “I have this scar on my arm after Master Zhou has forced me to retrieve his silver coin that he dropped on a busy road.” Tung confessed. He was always embarrassed to show his scar as it was extremely large and prominent. But this time, he had great courage. Everybody in court was so shocked that they could not hold in their hysterical gasps. The scar looked as if his skin had gotten caught between a wheel. No one could erase the scarring image from their mind. It was clear that Tung could not afford to go to the doctor as the scar had not healed even though the accident happened a year ago. Master Zhou’s attorney could not figure out a way to defend Zhou anymore and was speechless. Remembering the evidence, he was still up for the challenge. “What is this supposed to say? It doesn’t prove that you haven’t done the crime. Also, we have evidence that you have done it,” Master Zhou’s attorney said defensively. The Master’s attorney showed him the evidence.

It was at that moment that Judge Pao remembered a case that he had seen in the afterlife between a monkey spirit and a man spirit. The monkey spirit was granted great freedom in the afterlife due to having close relations to man. Many started to take advantage of their freedom and stole from the deceased people, even the good ones. One time, it got so out of control to the point that all humans in the afterlife had their belongings and familial offerings either stolen, or destroyed. The people in the afterlife brought it to the attention of the God of Justice and Judge Pao. After the trial ended, monkey spirits were only allowed to steal from mortal and deserving people at six in the afternoon. This improved the situation tremendously. From then on, six would be known as the dark hour.

Tai had requested to privately see Judge Pao after realising that she was helping an abuser. “There’s something I need to tell you.” Said Tai. “Go on, tell me.” Said Judge Pao. “The wedding never happened. He faked all the documents. I am not married and he was doing something else, using the fake marriage as a cover-up.” Tai confessed.

Judge Pao thought that there was a possibility that a monkey spirit entered Master Zhou’s mansion. Now that he had gotten the information that the wedding was fake and that he was exploiting his workers, particularly Tung, Judge Pao started to ask more questions. Why did he fake the wedding event? Who really did the robbery?

More information started to come in that Tung also worked at a printing station for town announcements by night time. A servant by day, a worker by night. This meant that he would be working with a lot of transfer paper and ink. It may be how the fingerprints were acquired. Detective Chiu also got sample threads from Tung’s servant clothing and they did not match. The thread was a lot more durable and less susceptible to be broken compared to the sample from Tung’s clothing. All the evidence could be traced back to Master Zhou. The true thief. A thief of human rights to the servants and a thief of time to Judge Pao. But most of all, a thief to his future. He was sent to jail for 25 years without probation for exploiting his workers and framing an innocent person. He was also required to give compensation fees to all of his servants.

Tung was overjoyed that he won the case. With the compensation money he acquired, he was able to afford healthcare. After his arm fully healed, he built a small house in the forest and lived peacefully by his favourite tree.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Tang, Tsz Sun – 14

It was still daylight in Per Hey City. Skies were supposed to be as blue as the seas of The Maldives. Soft, clear clouds were supposed to hover around the sky as if a man was sitting on a yellow duck floatie hovering around in his own pool, letting the summer heat get the most of him. But it wasn't the case.

The sundial struck one, it was Judge Pao's lunchtime.

"Did you make my favourite spring roll with no lettuce? You know I love those," Judge Pao shouted from his office to his assistant outside the courtyard.

"Yes of course! Come outside and get it. I got an errand to run," said his assistant.

When Judge Pao stepped out of his office to the courtyard, he noticed something. The sky was grey. As he looked up again, he saw a void. A void that was sucking all the white clouds and turning them into grey ones. It was sucking all the colours from the sky. In a blink of an eye, the whole city turned black and white, just like how televisions were in the 1940s. Thunder and lightning were summoned by the void. The entire city was plunged into darkness.

Judge Pao started to feel a magnetic attraction toward the void. The attraction got stronger and stronger, pulling him upwards. Judge Pao gripped onto a pillar from the courtyard, but the force was just too strong. He was sucked into pure darkness.

"Detective Evan, are you alright?" a voice whispered into Judge Pao's ears.

A ray of illuminating light shined on Judge Pao's dark brown eyes, making him squint.

"Did you just call me Evan?" Judge Pao looked around as he realised that he wasn't in his courtyard but in an unfamiliar environment. He knew something was wrong. All he remembered was a dark void pulling him upwards. Then, it was darkness.

"Yeah? Are you too stressed from work? I get it. When I'm stressed, I tend to forget things such as my name, too!" a man with messy blonde hair in a leather jacket tapped him on the shoulder.

Judge Pao stared at the man puzzled. He was confused about how he even got there in the first place.

"Why was I called Evan? Who is this unknown man?" Judge Pao mumbled to himself, as he tried to process what happened.

"Who are you again?" Judge Pao asked the man, while staring into his pair of hazelnut eyes.

"Oh, I'm Tate, your assistant from the LAPD,"

"LAPD? What's that?" Judge Pao was baffled, he had never heard of such a confusing word.

"You're so funny! But fine, I'll play along. LAPD stands for Los Angeles Police Department." Tate smiled as he stood up and handed a yellow file to Judge Pao.

"Are you ready for a new case, detective?" said Tate.

Judge Pao hesitantly said yes. He stood up from what seemed to be a soft cushion-like structure then proceeded to follow Tate to the lift, which led them to a car park. The awful smell of gasoline made Judge Pao nauseous.

“Yes, the distinctive scent that assaults your nostrils every time. I can’t believe I still haven’t gotten used to it. Haha!” said Tate, while mocking Judge Pao’s disgusted expressions.

“What’s this?” said Judge Pao, pointing at a car.

“It’s a car. I guess I’m still playing along in your silly little drama,” said Tate.

“Get in. Let’s go to our crime scene,” Tate proceeded.

For the entire car ride, Judge Pao was staring out the window. He was flabbergasted by the view outside the car. He thought the car was flying and the view outside the car was just his imagination. Tall buildings and ‘moving boxes’ on the streets were enough for him to question his existence.

“How could this be possible? Did I just time travel into another universe, or am I in heaven?” Those thoughts kept Judge Pao busy.

“We’re here,” said Tate. “Time to solve some real crime,” Tate continued while closing the car door behind Judge Pao.

“Looks like it’s a murder case. There’s a body there, let’s go take a look,” whispered Tate.

As they got nearer to the body, the more distorted everything got. The footsteps. The chattering. Judge Pao’s ears started to ring.

“Detective, are you OK? Do you need to take a break?” said Tate while patting Judge Pao’s back.

“I’m fine,” Judge Pao replied. He had never experienced something like this before. He felt that same strange force that pulled him into the void when he was walking toward the body.

Was that just a coincidence?

Judge Pao was shaken up. “That black and gold cloak, that distinctive boat-shaped hat, and that identical moon-shaped birthmark,” said Judge Pao as his eyes widened. What he saw was inconceivable.

“Victim’s name and age are unidentified. But all we know is that this guy is sure good at cosplaying. Look, he’s cosplaying as the infamous Judge Pao. His makeup prosthetics sure made it even more realistic,” said a police officer to Tate.

“How is this even possible?”

“I know right, he doesn’t even look like he belongs in this century!” exclaimed Tate.

“Tate, I know this might sound crazy to you, but I’m actually Judge Pao. I’m not Evan,” said Judge Pao, grabbing his finger and pointing it at the dead body.

Judge Pao continued, “This is me. I don’t know how, but I woke up in this body because of the void I saw in the courtyard.”

“Your imagination never fails to make me laugh, detective,” said Tate.

Judge Pao paced back and forth the crime scene, thinking this was all just a casual fever dream he would normally have when he was too tired from work. He wanted to get back. He couldn’t handle this anymore. Not only that, but he had had enough. He looked at Tate, and he came across a bizarre, far-fetched theory.

“Once the mystery of my own death is solved, I can summon the void again and go back home,” said Judge Pao, mumbling to himself.

Judge Pao then returned to the crime scene of the dead body and asked Tate for the information he had about the victim.

“The victim was last seen with his friends eating at this restaurant,” said Tate, pointing at a restaurant across the street.

“Witnesses said that the victim and his friends were drinking whiskey. They seemed to be having a nice, genuine conversation with no signs of conflicts at all. After thoroughly examining the body, the cause of death is poison. At first, we thought that the whiskey they were drinking was poisoned, but after considering the fact that the victim only had one cup while his friends had three, we realised we hit a dead end. Do you have any thoughts?” said Tate.

Judge Pao saw how vexed Tate was, so he decided to go to the restaurant and start investigating. Judge Pao sat down in the restaurant and carefully observed each and every order that the customer ordered. He found out that the bottles of whiskey were always served with a large bucket of ice. Suddenly, it clicked.

Judge Pao rushed into the kitchen and pinned the chef down to the floor. “You know what you did,” said Judge Pao.

“What did I do? I’m innocent!” said the chef, while struggling.

A loud gunshot was fired. “LAPD! Put your hands in the air, or we will shoot now!”

Judge Pao then pulled a tiny bag of illicit drugs from the chef’s pocket, proving him guilty.

“Great job in catching a killer that quickly, you sure are detective Evan,” said Tate.

“I guess I’m detective Evan after all,” chuckled Judge Pao.

All of a sudden, that strange force was back. The force that he had been feeling all day long. Did that mean the void was back? Judge Pao looked up as white clouds started disappearing into the void. Thunder and lightning started striking the city of LA. The city of LA was plunged into darkness. The force that had been pulling Judge Pao got stronger and stronger. In a blink of an eye, he was yet again sucked into a soulless and endless void.

“Judge Pao, do you need some rest?” said his assistant.

“Where am I?” asked Judge Pao, still half-conscious.

“You’re in the courtyard. There are still a bunch of cases you need to solve,” the assistant replied.

“OK, then I should start getting my work done now,” said Judge Pao, squinting his eyes as he had just woken up.

Had it all just been a fever dream? Was this all just his imagination the whole time? Was that void just an escape from reality?

Oh well, it’s all in the past now. Shrugging, he returned to his work.

I'm a Struggling Lawyer and Judge Pao Just Crashed Into my Office?!

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Tsang, Tsam Yin Herena – 14

"Alright, Ms Kwok. If you could just tell us what happened, we will make sure you aren't convicted."

Ms Kwok shifted nervously, fidgeting with her scabbed hands. Her eyes occasionally darted somewhere. I followed her gaze to the intimidating figure in the room.

"Please feel free to pretend this gentleman doesn't exist," I said with a serene smile to reassure her.

"Insolent! I am Judge Pao, the best judge in history, the figure of justice! I call for respect..."

My smile only became more strained as I listened to his ramblings. Soon, his booming voice faded out as I wondered how I ended up in this situation...

It was just the day before when I had been stressing out over a particularly important case.

BANG!

A loud crash resounded in the room, sending my paperwork flying everywhere.

"No! My files! How will I become a renowned lawyer and pay my bills when my very important papers are lost?"

"Insolent! Who dares play a prank on me? You will be punished severely for offending this one, the famous Judge Pao, the epitome of justice!"

The papers settled and revealed a dark-skinned man with a crescent moon on his forehead, a beard and a moustache. Most importantly, he was wearing a Chaofu.

Is this guy just a devoted cosplayer or an old man with a few screws loose?

I awkwardly shuffled to help him up, carefully avoiding the documents scattered around.

"You, tell me where I am," he ordered. His authoritative aura pressed down on my chest so hard I could barely breathe.

"Uh, my workplace?" I managed to squeak out with considerable effort.

He paced around, muttering something unintelligible under his breath.

Seeing as he seemed to be quite distressed, I cautiously offered, "Uh, do you need help getting back to the elderly home, uncle?"

Suddenly, the man's eyebrows which were scrunched in concentration shot up in disbelief. He then pointed at the calendar and shouted "2022?"

My god. Not only has this uncle gone senile, he's also hard of hearing. Now there will be no reasoning with him.

"Yes," I affirmed absent-mindedly.

"Where do you live, uncle? I'm happy to drop you off there," I repeated and was ignored once again.

“I time-travelled? Whoever you are, I command you to send me back right this instant or justice shall be served!”

“Look, uncle. I don’t know how you got into my office but would you please leave?” I struggled to reign in my irritation and it seeped into my voice. The deadline was fast approaching, and I didn’t have time to waste roleplaying.

“How dare y—“

“Leave,” I cut him off with a stern voice. “or I will call security to escort you.”

“Wait! You can’t just do that!” He grasped the hem of my t-shirt, desperation evident in his tone.

Perhaps in that split moment, I felt a tinge of pity for the uncle.

I heaved a long sigh. I was too tired for this. “If you’re really Judge Pao, then prove it.”

After hours of Pao recalling all his noble deeds and endless amounts of research to confirm that he was saying the truth and not just improvising on the spot (I doubt he could memorise the whole Wikipedia page of Judge Pao), he somehow managed to convince me he was the real deal, though I still had some doubts.

“I would’ve never imagined Judge Pao being this obnoxious. Ugh, and now my case won’t be finished by this week,” I lamented.

The vein above Pao’s eyebrow twitched. “How about this? You help me go back and I help you with your job,” he proposed with a smile that didn’t reach his eyes.

“Hm? I didn’t know your abilities include debate too. I thought you just judged people.”

“Hmph, to be a good judge, you have to be well-versed in debate as well,” he huffed and crossed his arms.

“Can I decide after you demonstrate your skills?” I smirked.

Oh how I regretted even considering his proposal.

On the way to the clothing store (because I couldn’t have him walking around in ancient Chinese clothing), Pao gaped and marvelled at every little thing he saw like a little kid, asking millions of questions. Everyone was staring at him like he had gone cuckoo. I’d never felt that much second-hand embarrassment in my life. Realising I had to teach Pao about the way of life in modern society, I dragged him back home, sat him down and it was a pain. From slang to technology to clothing. There was so much to be taught. I vowed to myself that day to never ever do everything for money.

I snapped back to reality. Ms Kwok’s glistening eyes were puffy and her cracked lips were wobbling. She was clearly overwhelmed. Her gaunt face and frail trembling body all screamed that there was something more going on behind the scenes.

Pao seemed to also catch on. He coughed to break the tension and spoke in a softer voice.

“It would be best if you told us the truth.”

She took a deep breath and began relaying her story. Ms Kwok was a victim of domestic abuse. Her husband had been threatening the lives of her kids, her side of the family and her for about five years. On the day of the incident, her husband was beating her son when Ms Kwok snuck up on him with a crowbar in hand. She bashed her husband’s head repeatedly until he died of blood loss.

Ms Kwok wrapped her arms tightly around herself. Tears streamed down her face. Chanting to herself a mantra “I’m sorry... It’s all my fault...” She wept in her hands.

I subtly glanced at the frowning Pao and back at the lady. I handed her a tissue and excused myself to talk with Pao.

Shutting the door behind us, I broke the silence, “What’s wrong, Pao?”

“Is this what the modern world has come to, defending the guilty?”

“What do you mean?” I snapped. “She’s not entirely at fault here. She’s a victim too!”

Pao shot back, “Well, I don’t see how killing your husband is something a victim would do.”

“Her kid’s life was in danger! What else could she have done?”

“Murder. Is. Immoral.”

I gripped my fists so hard, my nails dug into the skin, but I was so angry I hardly felt anything but fury. My lips were harshly bitten into with my teeth, leaving a bitter taste in my mouth.

“Morals. Justice! You always go on and on about all those things! Have you ever thought that maybe life isn’t just in black and white?”

That seemed to stun Pao into silence but he quickly lashed out again.

“You—“

“Justice is the principle that people receive what they deserve! Who are you to decide what Ms Kwok deserves?” I interrupted, eyes blazing with indignation.

“With your two eyes and ears covered, how do you expect to become a good judge, when your pride hinders you from seeing the broader view? When victims can be made to suffer like that?”

I took a deep shuddering breath and whispered. “Do those who are deemed guilty not deserve a voice?...”

In my head played flashbacks of my mother as she said her last goodbye, as she was taken to the room where she will draw her last breath, and it was all because she accidentally murdered my abusive father to protect me. Before I realised, my face was wet with tears.

Pao had his mouth flapping open like a fish, at a loss for words. I turned around and left.

“Wait!”

Ignoring Pao’s panicked call, I continued down the hallway.

When I stepped out of the bathroom, Pao was waiting beside the door.

“Can I help you?” I remarked sarcastically.

“I... want to apologise for what happened just now.”

What. Was Judge Pao bowing his head down to me? My jaw practically dropped. To be fair, he did look like a sad child, his gaze downcasted. Considering he was quite a prideful person, he must feel very guilty. Maybe he could change for the better.

“I realised I’d been looking through a black and white filter all of this time. How short-sighted I’d been. I reflected on my past actions and perhaps things would’ve been better if I had admitted that both parties were in some way ‘wrong’, although to varying degrees.”

“So, what is your verdict, Judge Pao?”

“We should speak up for Ms Kwok.” Pao determinedly said.

My lips stretched into a beaming smile. “That’s what I thought.”

I had to admit, Judge Pao was not kidding when he claimed he was good at debate. With all his points, we destroyed the prosecutor, won the case and earned easy money. Maybe accepting his deal wouldn’t be so bad after all.

Clapping my hands, I said, “Alright, you’ve passed the test.”

I extended my hand and shook Pao’s.

“What are you doing?” Pao asked, confused.

“That’s a handshake,” I replied dryly.

“I guess I still have much to learn. About the modern world and morality,” he grumbled.

Chuckling, I responded, “I look forward to working with you, Judge Pao.”

The Growth of Pao ¾ Symbol of Justice

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Tsang, Yuet Tung – 12

Each generation needs its own heroes. They represent the hopes and dreams of a society. For us, it is Hero Pao.

Pao was born in Hong Kong and his birth was very magical. Pao's father dreamed of a red egg falling into his wife's body. When he woke up his wife, he told her that she had got a baby. However, the baby was not born until ten years later. When Baby Pao was born, he was in black skin. His family first thought he was a monster, and must not allow him to stay in their family. They wanted to throw the baby away. However, Baby Pao's father and mother wouldn't let them do it. At last, Baby Pao's uncle stole the baby when everyone was sleeping and took him to a mountain near their house in Tai Mo Shan. On the way to the peak, Baby Pao's uncle saw a wild pig coming to attack him. He was afraid so he ran away immediately, but he had left Baby Pao in the mountain. After Baby Pao's father knew that his brother had left the baby in the mountain, he decided to go and find him. When he arrived at the peak, he found Baby Pao and a bag next to a big tree, and a flock of birds surrounding the baby to keep him warm. Baby Pao was not hurt. His father brought him home.

Several years later, Pao became a child. His brother was afraid that he would finally grow up and claim the family's property, so he mocked Pao and locked him into his room. Accidentally, in the darkness, Pao bumped into the wall. His forehead was hurt and a scar was left in the middle. The scar burnt and made Pao insightful.

After having the insightful scar on his forehead, Pao became supernatural. When there was an injustice, the moon-like insightful scar would bring him back to the past and show him how the injustice happened. Pao found this wonderful and decided to make good use of his power. He started to study seriously. When he finally finished his studies, he became a judge who shared many vision and mission with people in Hong Kong. When he saw something unfair, he would stop it and try to solve the problem.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Tse, Sum Yuet – 14

Judge Pao has earned his title as Bao Qingtian, a name that marks his role in bringing justice to the people through his many famous cases. He was best known for defending the poor and commoners against the corrupted government. Judge Pao was honest and righteous, a role model towards all people to show that all wrong-doings would be punished. Whether it was Judge Pao's uncle or powerful families, he had brought every crime to justice. Having heard case after case of him drawing lines between black and white, Judge Pao had come to realise that justice was not as easy as it seemed.

Judge Pao had decided to settle into retirement a year ago, moving into a small village with his family. He quite enjoyed the peace this village brought him. The village was far from the busy capital he used to work in, which was perfect for him to take a break from all the hassle.

In this village, Judge Pao and his family were welcomed with open arms. Originally, they had no intention of living there, but the care they'd received captivated their hearts into building their next home here. They were quickly acquainted with the villagers and moved in after a month of staying in the village. People here were genuine and hardworking. They all trusted each other. For once, Judge Pao didn't have to second-guess anyone. Bribery, theft and crimes simply didn't exist in this village. At least, that's what he thought.

July was right around the corner, and the scorching heat outside had discouraged the villagers from their usual intense outdoor activities. Instead, they decided to organize their warehouse. The warehouse was located in the centre of the village, where the villagers' blood, sweat, and tears were stored. It was the first year that Judge Pao was here to witness this time of the year when everyone was gathered in the warehouse to count and move the crops, which would then be transported to the market in exchange for their well-deserved paychecks.

The warehouse was significant, tracing back to the days when the village was first built. Judge Pao followed the crowd along the mud-traced path into the warehouse. The villagers unlocked the rusted chains that kept their crops safe. The wide wooden doors flung open, revealing the dim lights that hung over the tin roof that was loosely laid upon the structure. Footsteps around Judge Pao quickened, the workers held onto the white cloth that covered the crops. They gripped onto each corner to pull away the covers and grunted as they fell back against the ground. A loud gasp was heard as the workers lifted it, and the piece of cloth fell along with the villagers' smiles. There were no signs of crops, no freshly harvested wheat, no potatoes, no barley. The rack was as empty as it could be.

There was visible confusion on Judge Pao's face, he quietly examined the empty rack that sat upon him. Empty shelves, villagers panicking, chaos driving the village into a mess. It could only mean one thing. The crops were missing, and Judge Pao was sure someone had stolen them. Not only that but sold it all before the warehouse would be checked again.

Judge Pao had promised to leave his job behind, he swore he was done with crimes and corrupting people. Judge Pao had done incredible things. He stood up for the poor, people who were so helpless that they have given up on trying. He helped them get back on their feet and brought them justice. He even had the guts to punish the most powerful families, gathering evidence bit by bit, along with the help of many scared and innocent people. He had done what he knows best, being the Judge Pao that could always make things right.

Today, standing here in this empty warehouse, he saw the panic and fear in the people's eyes, their shaky voices as they begged for his help. How could he ever say no to justice? After all, he saw himself in them. The child who once grew up as what the people called peasants. They looked down on him, never sparing him any sympathy. He worked his way up here just so he could finally bring justice to those who truly needed his help. This was his chance.

Judge Pao collected his thoughts as he paced back and forth in his bedroom. The culprit was quickwitted and smart. This surely wasn't planned in a day. This person, whoever it might be, had been waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike and left without a trace. How could they have transported everything in such a short time? Where would they have hidden the money? Judge Pao's trail of thoughts circled. It led him back to staring blankly at the ceiling. He had no idea where to start.

A gentle knock disrupted his thoughts. Then, there was another knock, then rapid banging. Hurried footsteps marched outside his door. Judge Pao opened the door, it was the chief of the village. He was a middle-aged man, who was voted to take over the position of the village chief after the former chief, his father, had passed away. His brows furrowed as he clamped his hands together, fidgeting with his loose sleeves. "Judge Pao! I am more than thankful to hear that you are willing to take on this case. As the chief of this village, I am responsible to take care of my people... I was just wondering if you had any leads on the culprit?" The chief sounded out of breath. No doubt was he stressed, the whole village was too.

"Chief, it is only my job to do so. I haven't yet found any clues, but I would like to know if anyone would be leaving the village soon." Judge Pao knew that the thief would have to leave soon, with all the money they had gotten off the stolen crops, there was no way they would stay in this village any longer.

"Actually, yes." The chief stood still as he searched for the right words to say. "There is a villager, he informed me about his move a month ago. He should be leaving tonight." The chief answered.

"Tonight?" Judge Pao asked. "Yes, that's right." The chief confirmed. There is no better way than to get away with this by escaping tonight. It has to be him.

Judge Pao took off towards the village gate. He had to stop the villager no matter what. As expected, the villager soon showed up with a wooden cart behind him. The cart was fully covered, but the golden spark under the cotton bag confirmed Judge Pao's suspicions. Bingo. There were coins. Bags and bags of coins. Judge Pao had found the thief, it was indeed the villager who had planned to escape tonight.

The man was caught off guard, his incoherent words gave his panic away. It didn't take long for the man to admit to his crimes. It was almost too easy, too simple for a crime to be solved just like that. A single man who took all the blame. He told Judge Pao everything, from start to finish, his plan and how he executed it. Judge Pao frowned, this didn't sit right with him. It felt like he was listening to this man read out a script.

Judge Pao searched the cart, five bags of coins. The warehouse was huge, and those crops would have cost a lot more. Anything more than five bags of coins. He listened to the man as he confessed, he was sure now that there was more to it. Who could have had the connections to sell all the crops? Who could have planned it so well that would lead Judge Pao to this villager would take all the blame? "Yes, he is leaving tonight." Leaving tonight... Judge Pao's thoughts brought him back to his conversation with the chief. It was the chief who had told him about this villager, leading him here to stop him. So that Judge Pao could "solve" the crime by catching him.

The chief.

As if an idea sparked in his head, he raced to the chief's hut and barged in without notice. Sure enough, there were bags and bags of coins. He was right, the chief had planned it all. The chief panicked not because he was worried for his people, but because Judge Pao had decided to solve this case. It all made sense now, the villager was only part of his plan.

Judge Pao watched as the chief's face fell into deep horror. He pleaded, "Judge Pao! It is not what it seems like." Judge Pao glanced at the man and cuffed him to the ground without a second thought. The chief was not getting away with this.

Once again, Judge Pao had solved the unsolvable.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Yap, Kang Rong – 14

After working as a judge for decades, Pao eventually passed away because of ageing. Just two days before his death, he had his last trial day. Here comes a criminal. His name is Siu Ming, he was sued for theft and received a death sentence from Pao due to the strict law at that time.

Pao eventually went to Naihe bridge (Chinese people believed that the bridge is the entrance of the underworld that connects to the main world) and surprisingly he met Siu Ming. Both of them sat down beside the bridge and started to chat. "I didn't expect you to die at the same time as me!" said Pao. "Yeah, what a coincidence," replied Ming. Siu Ming started to introduce himself. "I was born in a middle-low class family, my parents were no longer able to support my college fees so I've decided to steal other people's properties. And I was caught by the night guards so I ended up like this..." (Siu Ming started to sobber) "I shouldn't do this, It's not worth it!" Yelled Siu Ming as he threw a rock into the river.

Siu Ming calmed down after a few seconds and crossed the bridge with Pao. In the judgement room, Pao was sent to Heaven because of his great contribution to society. When it was Siu Ming's turn, the judge hesitated. At first, the judge wanted to send him to Hell. After Pao's plead, the judge decided to send him to heaven as Siu Ming did a lot of good deeds when he was alive. At that moment, Pao and Siu Ming were separated in Heaven due to their difference in their social positions.

After Pao settled down in Heaven, Yu Huang Emperor (the Chinese god of everything, basically the god of the gods) offered him a job to be a judge at the end of the Naihe bridge. "If you can work there for one hundred years," said Yu Huang Emperor, "you will become a god and work for me to settle world affairs." Pao agreed without any hesitation. Actually, Yu Huang Emperor's intention was to test Pao that is he really qualified to work with him as a god. Yu Huang Emperor started to observe Pao when he was a baby.

One hundred years quickly passed. One day after Pao finished his work, Yu Huang Emperor invited Pao for a drink. Yu Huang Emperor first expressed how astonished he was to see Pao keep his promise. "You're a loyal, responsible and wise person. Pack your things and from tomorrow onwards, you will be working with me." Pao thanked Yu Huang Emperor with full gratitude.

However, things didn't go as planned. One day, Pao encountered an evil soul. The evil soul had done so many bad things when he was alive, so many that even Judge Pao immediately sent him to hell without hesitation. Consequently, the soul became angry and tried to kill Pao with his invisible venom gun. Luckily the guards protected and escorted Pao from the court to avoid any unnecessary juries.

After this dreadful incident, Pao went to talk to Yu Huang Emperor. "Hey, I promised to work with you just for my 'living'. I didn't expect to work under such a dangerous situation!" yelled Pao. "Calm down, it's just an accident. Evil souls should not be allowed to enter the court. I promise, this will be the first and last time. Please forgive me!" cried Yu Huang Emperor. In order to compensate Pao, Yu Huang Emperor even bought him the best Maotai (a type of Chinese liquor) and gave him a week off. Ever since that incident happened, Pao will always bring a helmet to the court. Bringing him the title of "Helmet Pao".

Twenty years later, Pao was promoted to the God of Justice because of his hardworking attitude. His job is to help the Vengeful ghosts to find the reason for their death and to prove that they are not guilty if they were accused of being guilty during their past life. Until now, Pao and his soldiers (from heaven) are still helping the Vengeful ghosts and at the same time protecting the world with justice in order to keep us safe.

The Abandoned Child

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Yim, Wing Ki – 12

Judge Pao recently received a case in which a young maid called Daisy sued her mother Alma and Mrs. Wong.

One day, Daisy overheard Alma and Mrs. Wong's conversation. She heard that she was Mrs. Wong's daughter while Mrs. Wong's son was Alma's son. That meant her real parents were Master Wong and Mrs. Wong. She was very shocked, so she rushed to the bedroom to confront Alma and Mrs. Wong, but they kept lying. So, Daisy filed the case and hoped Judge Pao could give her a justice.

Judge Pao ordered Alma, Mrs. Wong, Daisy and Mrs. Wong's son, John to the court. He asked Mrs. Wong and Alma about John and Daisy's identity, but they continued to lie, so Judge Pao ordered his worker to draw blood from under their skin to do a blood relation test. When Mrs. Wong heard this, she was very scared, and decided to tell Judge Pao all the truth.

Alma and Mrs. Wong changed their children's identity due to their selfishness. Mrs. Wong wanted to have a son more than a daughter, so when she knew she was going to give birth to a baby girl, she was very unhappy and angry. When she found that one of her maids had a newborn son, she exchanged her daughter for him. The reason why Alma took the deal was that Mrs. Wong promised she would ensure her son a prosperous and happy life, provided that Alma would take care of Daisy.

Judge Pao gave Mrs. Wong two choices. The first one was that Mrs. Wong should raise Daisy up as Daisy was her biological daughter. The second one was that Mrs. Wong should give Daisy a large sum of money, a big house and liberate her from being a maid. Judge Pao also gave Mrs. Wong three days to consider.

Judge Pao was really a great person. There is a lot for us to learn from him. He helped a lot of people to fight for justice. Some even said that he was like the god Hades after his death. This shows he is respected by many including myself. I really admire him.

The New Tale of Judge Bao

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Yuen, Cheuk Lam Mavis – 12

Once upon a time, there was a judge named Judge Pao. He was known as the greatest judge in Ancient China's history. There have been many stories involving Judge Pao and this one starts on a rainy morning in the Soong emperor's palace.

"Judge Pao, may I request your help with this case? The empress's antique tea set was stolen last night!" said a king. Judge Pao replied, "Sure! Every case is a pleasure for me to solve. Your highness, please describe anything suspicious that you may have witnessed?" "How about we go to the crime scene, as this would be easier" replied the king. As the king led Judge Pao to the crime scene, Judge Pao realised that some of the king's servants were whispering to each other, and that there were wet, muddy footprints leading to an open window. "Huh, suspicious.", thought Judge Pao. He then kept searching for anything "weird". The king asked Judge Pao if he could stay for a few days to try and solve this case. Judge Pao agreed and continued to observe his surroundings and explore the palace.

While searching the palace, Judge Pao found a pair of shoes which had the same pattern as the muddy footprints beside the window. He asked the king who owned the pair of shoes. The king looked a bit nervous and answered Judge Pao, "They are mine, what's... what's wrong?" Judge Pao nodded and said, "Ok, I just wanted to ask, as I may have found something special in this pair of shoes, may I take a look?" The king then replied nervously, "W...why? Just a look? please be careful." Judge Pao proceeded to find some mud under the shoes.

Judge Pao felt strange because of the king's odd behaviour and the way he acted while discussing the pair of shoes. When the king left the palace to take an afternoon walk, Judge Pao followed him secretly to see where he was going. He needed to be very careful since a few servants were protecting the king. As Judge Pao followed him, he discovered that the king brought the shoes out and was telling his servants to help him clean them thoroughly. "Keep an eye on Judge Pao and don't let him touch my things without my permission." He ordered his servants.

Judge Pao realised that he had "fallen" into the trap of the king.

He quickly went back to the palace and packed his things to leave. The servants stopped him and asked where he was going. "I'm sorry, I forgot that I had an important thing to do, I'll be right back as soon as possible." he said, while running away immediately.

He knew the servants would contact the king very soon so he escaped as fast as he could but unfortunately, he was too late. The King caught him running away and he asked Judge Pao what was happening and why he was in such a hurry. Judge Pao thought it was time to say something important so he asked, "Why did you make a fake crime scene and call me to investigate? What is the purpose of this?" The king smirked and said, "You don't even have any evidence to prove what you are saying. How dare you say that to me. I'm the most powerful King in China."

Judge Pao replied, "I have evidence! Firstly, I'm certain that you made those footprints because the day before you called me to investigate this case, it was a sunny day, it didn't rain but the footprints were wet and muddy. This shows that the footprints were made before you came to ask for my help. Further to this, whenever I asked you questions about the shoes, you were very nervous. I heard what you said to your servants this afternoon too. This evidence can already prove that you created this crime scene."

The King was shocked by Judge Pao's judgements, he didn't know what to say.

All of a sudden, he took out a sharp sword and pointed the sword at Judge Pao. He shouted, "It's all because of you! My son wanted to be a judge for a long time but because you are always in the spotlight, my son doesn't have any chances to solve any cases. He is my only and beloved son! I'm powerful! I have the power to kill you once and for all!" At this moment, the king's son ran out and became to shout out. "Stop! Please stop Dad! You are wrong, Judge Pao has always been my favourite judge. You misunderstand him, please don't harm him!"

The king dropped his sword and remained speechless.

After he heard his son's words, he came to realise the truth and realised all the wrongdoing he had committed. He deeply regretted and apologised to Judge Pao. He promised he would not attempt anything similar again and hoped that Judge Pao would forgive him. Judge Pao was very understanding towards the king because Judge Pao also had a family.

Judge Pao even offered the king's son an apprenticeship to learn from him. The King and his son were truly thankful, and this act of kindness made Judge Pao even more famous than he already was.

Adventure

St. Mary's Canossian College, Chai, Tsz Ying Chloe – 12

And so our adventure continues. The bank was indeed empty, except there was messy paperwork. We parted our ways to search for clues. I ventured into the secretary rooms and found nothing but a bunch of paperwork and a note. A note that read the message '9 2399 691444 251521' which was weird. It couldn't be a phone number, so what else could this message be. Then, I brought the notes back to Judge Pao.

'Allow me to share my findings. The room that holds all citizens' bank records was a complete chaos. All drawers were opened, an obvious sign of robbery. The floor has clear and new marks of shoes, showing two men were in there before. Then, I went to check the door, only to find a drop of blood; they might have got into a conflict and fought. Leaving a person to leave before the robber did. I brought the samples of the blood for further investigation. How about you Andrea, what have you found?' Judge Pao said in monotone. There was a minute of silence before I continued. The deduction made by Judge Pao was impressive! He was like Sherlock Holmes! 'Oh, I found nothing but the note. There were a bunch of numbers. It couldn't be a phone number.' I share my thoughts. 'Judge Pao, maybe we can check the security camera!' Visible confusion was on Judge Pao's face. Oh yes! Oh how could I forget there was no security camera back in the early days. 'It is a camera that records images in or outside a building or at a public place.' I explained. Judge Pao nodded as acknowledgement, 'It is indeed a good idea, but the police would hardly oblige to our request, considering them telling us to back off from disturbing their matter.' We sighed in disappointment; at least we have found a few important threads.

Suddenly, I was reminded that all banks possess a bank book, recording all citizens' names on the book. We could check for any missing records and find them for more information! I quickly told Judge Pao my idea and executed it immediately. There actually had a missing person's file. The person was Tom Hann. I took out my phone to search for more information about the person. To our surprise, this person was known as an accomplice with the recent crime activities. 'Wait a minute, he looks quite familiar, isn't he the police we have talked to earlier.' Judge Pao said. I widened my eyes, he was not a police officer, he was in disguise. It was crystal clear we needed to find and consult the 'police'.

We went back to the place where we had talked to the man. Luckily, the man was still here, obviously doing his 'duties'. 'Officer, may I ask about the case's progress?' Judge Pao asked with a fake smile. The 'police' sighed and said, 'How many times must I say this again, no interference from our business, now please leave.' I rolled my eyes at the horrible acting of the man. 'Are you sure about that, Tom Hann?' I asked. The man's face quickly darkened and smirked, it was terrifying. 'It seems that it is inevitable and the truth will be discovered one day. I will tell you the truth and the plot behind it all, I can't hold a grudge about it anymore. The robber you have saw earlier, was my friend, Bob Ham He was reported and on the run for murder and robbery. I was there as a witness and he threatened me not to tell anyone about it. I was absolutely frightened and so I complied with his order. He even went as far as forcing me to be his accomplice, to help with his crime and getaway. That explains why I'm in a police suit. Bob is currently in another bank, the one closest to this. I surrender and I won't run away. I will also plead guilty to the judges.' Now the truth was crystal clear, I would have been delighted, but I felt otherwise. It was a mixed feeling of anger and pity. Anger for the horrible things Bob did to Tom but also pity for Tom's current situation. He was supposed to be innocent, and yet he got caught with this series of unfortunate events. 'I'm sorry, Tom. I know you're in the clear but you still helped this wretched man with his crime. Hence, I must put you and Bob behind bars. I must stop this horrible crime once and for all!' Judge Pao said strictly.

Later on, with the help of Tom, we arrested the two criminals successfully and we went to the court, as a witness of the whole crime. Then, Judge Pao went and sat on the judge's seat, 'We shall start the execution in no time, fellow witnesses in court, which way of execution should I use? Decapitation? Hanging? Or slow slicing?' Judge Pao announced loudly. Everyone in the courtroom was in shock, including me. 'Get back here, Judge Pao! You're not the judge and there won't be any execution! That made you look like a psychopath!' I said half whispering. It was quite embarrassing, everyone was shooting weird glances at Judge Pao. They must've thought

he was a cosplayer huh. Then the real judge said 'This is ridiculous but let this go on this one. Now, let us rise and start the trial.'

When Judge Pao and I got back home, there was paper on the desk 'It seems like you have learnt a meaningful lesson and made a new friend. You have also helped Judge Pao to solve the complicated case. My intention is to send Judge Pao to end this series of unfortunate events in the metal land. You all did so well. Congratulations! Here is a spell for Judge Pao to go back to Ancient China. "One must leave after their desires have been fulfilled." There is no need to know who I am.' I completely forgot about helping Judge Pao to go back to Ancient China! I felt a sudden sadness take over me. 'What's wrong Andrea?' Judge Pao asked calmly. 'It's time for you to go back, Judge Pao, back to Ancient China! I have learnt so much from you, your wits, bravery and your pursuit and yearning for justice! I had a really great time solving the case with you and I will surely miss that. You are an amazing friend and I will never ever forget about you.' I answered without realizing tears started to escape, i couldn't stop crying. I immediately went into Judge Pao's embrace, 'Same to you too, Andrea. I, too, had an amazing time with you. It will no doubt leave a memorable mark in my life, one that I will never forget. Perhaps, sometimes, in your sleep, you might find yourself in Ancient China and see me.' Judge Pao said softly while smiling radiantly. Then, I read out the spell and a dark green aura surrounded Jude Pao, just how he came here! In a split second, Judge Pao was gone and I already missed him.

I went to sleep as usual, I closed the book of 'The Great Judge Pao' and went to sleep. In my dream, I found myself traveling back in time, back to Ancient China....

One Good Turn Deserves Another

St. Mary's Canossian College, Chiu, Sam Yee Carina – 12

Thousands of medias have interviewed the award-winning detective – Diana Smith. They asked her everything, ranging from her personal life to her inspirations. However, her answer is always the same – she always tells them this story...

1998, HKSAR, China

Caressing her blonde hair with her slim fingers, Diana let out a depressed sigh. Known as being the most popular and beautiful girl in the whole school, Diana's smile was always visible and bright, until a terrible nightmare caught her over and over again. The poor girl's face turned pale like a ghost, with dark bags under her bloodshot eyes. You might ask — why'd a nightmare cause so much a problem? In fact, that's not a normal nightmare...

Judge Pao was currently the Infernal Bureaucracy in Hell and worked as a judge sorting out the affairs of the afterlife. He was humming a tune after conquering a case again when his old colleague found him.

'Hey man, do you want to have a trip to the Earth? I mean, I have a chance for one person to go up there, but I'm busy...'

'Save it for me.'

Judge Pao eagerly stepped into the glittering hole. In the twinkling of an eye, he landed into a temple with a loud 'thud'. The walls of the temple were moist and a little cold. Pao shuddered because of the unnerving darkness and the icy-cold environment. Step by step, he got out of the temple and found some footsteps behind him. He became alerted instantly. Glancing left and right, he finally found a small, shivering body near the door of the temple. He moved his heavy body towards the tiny body slowly but steadily. He suddenly saw the girl whose hair was wavy and blonde, and her eyes were a beautiful hazel. It was so puffy that you felt she couldn't see anything. Tears were streaming steadily down her rosy cheeks. The girl got alarmed by his presence and pranced up.

'Hi, I am Judge Pao. May I ask where am I?'

'Hong Kong. And I beg your pardon, you said you are Judge Pao?'

'Yes, may I help you?'

'To be honest, this has happened for a while. I always saw a mysterious man floating on my ceiling at night. He is always leaning closer and closer to me, but when I scream, he disappears, as if nothing had happened.'

'How does he look?'

'Cold, white, and very sharp teeth.'

'It sounds bewildering...may I have the pleasure to help you investigate it, please?'

'Wait what...you can? Thank you so much...my parents just ignored me as usual. They are doing those important work again.'

Diana led Judge Pao to her huge mansion and Judge Pao stayed there searching for things about vampires. Judge Pao poured his heart and soul into investigating. Throughout his long, dull, but comprehensive investigation, he not only realized that what Diana had suffered was absolutely rare, but also understood the reason that the vampire had attacked her. He had soared through the Internet, found one record which had similar events happening – but it was written by a mad woman who lived in the 18th century – and her handwriting was simply amazing that Pao barely made out what she wrote. The creepy point was Diana and the mad woman both had ignorant parents. Of course, Pao thought, those cranky parents would never notice their daughters disappearing even if the vampire kidnapped them. Then, he searched for popular ways to kill vampires, even if he was already an expert (in a controlled setting, obviously).

That night, Judge Pao dodged under Diana's bed, shifting ever so slightly to make himself comfortable. The creature came into Diana's room through the tightly closed window, when Judge Pao took a glimpse of the

pale young man. He was ready to kill it, but Pao suddenly recognized him. He was the most dangerous prisoner in the whole hell! The dark brows and blood-red lips were unmistakable. Judge Pao knew a crucifix wouldn't kill it, so he silently left through the trap door under the bed.

Judge Pao tried his very best to ignore those blood-curdling screams, and locked himself in his investigation room. Taking a deep breath to calm himself, Pao understood that the vampire must not exist in the world ever again – it had killed too many people to be counted. The vampire itself had been to hell five times already, but managed to escape from the hell-jail every single time. As a firm judge, Pao had obviously tried to kill his soul in hell, and those unsuccessful attempts hadn't made him hopeless. He promised himself he would bring the Vampire back to hell and wouldn't let him hurt anyone anymore.

It was finally that spine-chilling night. Again, the creature came into Diana's room through the tightly closed window, and Judge Pao hid in his usual spot. The vampire seemed to notice something. He sniffed and turned around. Diana's heart skipped a beat as he glared toward the direction where Pao was dodging. The vampire turned again. The room suddenly dropped to an eerie silence. Swiftly, the vampire kicked Diana harshly. Diana grunted and was visibly shivering in both terror and pain. His body was a million cubes of ice. It's the vampire that first broke the silence.

'Judge Pao, my long-time friend...' he hissed silkily.

'Oh, oh, oh, why's our dearest Judge Pao being a coward today? Wow, your lips are even shaking! What'd happened over you, my dearest friend?' The vampire mocked. Pao was breathing heavily by this point. Even Diana was suspecting something.

'Tsk, ts, ts. How shameful, my friend?'

'May...be you ca...an sp...eak in a be...tter way.' Judge Pao stuttered.

The vampire snarled at Judge Pao's response. In the blink of an eye, he grabbed Pao's upper arm forcefully and began to suck his neck. Soon, Judge Pao closed his eyes. His breath was steady, too steady, to be honest — to the point of not a beat of his heart could be heard. The vampire, on the other hand, let out a contented sigh. Diana stole a glance at the vampire and gulped in horror. The vampire kicked away Pao's body without an effort. He inched toward Diana, as Diana let out a shaky breath.

'Don't hurt me...ple...ase, I beg you!' she let out a wail.

'Oh, and why shouldn't I? You pathetic, beautiful girl. You know better than to involve anyone else in...'

'Please...'

Diana yelped as she felt a mighty hand grab her chin violently. She sobbed silently, knowing her life wouldn't last any longer. She gasped for one more breath of the sweet air as she shut her eyes, accepting her fate.

'Bang!' The noise startled Diana as she opened her eyes. Her chin felt so cold, yet so sore, but the vampire just fell on the ground! His body was disappearing. It transformed into a gust of dust and vanished all on its own. Diana shook her head in confusion, perplexed. What had just happened? She didn't even have time to think of them before she blacked out.

Diana slept and slept, until a sudden growl from her stomach woke her back up. As she opened her eyes, she noticed her parents staring at her. But instead of asking her how she felt, they just walked out of the room and told her doctor that she had woken up. Then it's a 'bang' from the front door. Diana sighed, 'Nothing has changed, after all.' She even doubted that it was all just a dream. But when she noticed the purple bruise on her chin, she realized that they were real. The questions that were swirling around her mind returned, this time vigorous and strong. She dashed to Judge Pao's 'researching table' and saw a Sherlock Holmes lying on the table. Out of curiosity, she flipped to the page which was folded.

Sherlock Holmes jumped into the river together with his enemy, and were dead ever after. Another mark was in the front: Dr. Watson found medicine to kill vampires, but it was also poisonous for humans, too. First, mix... Diana's eyes were basketball-sized by this point. There was only one possibility — Judge Pao sacrificed himself to save her life. He made the medicine and drank it before the vampire sucked his blood, and when the blood cycles around the vampire, it would also be dead. That explained everything — why was Judge Pao so weak, why did he always ask her out of his 'research centre' before...Diana bit her lip, trying her best to dominate her tears.

Every single time after telling the story, Diana's tears just flow like an endless waterfall. And she always ends her interview with this statement — 'Thank you, Judge Pao, for everything.'

Although no one knows whether the story is true, she is a hero, a role model, and a true inspiration to many people.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Co-educational College, Cao, Catherine – 13

7thDecember

Dear Diary,

So many things have been going on recently. Father finally got his sewing machine working at the shop. We got our first bucket of gold—well, technically it was just bronze and metal coins, but it worth so much for my family of six.

“Women simply do not have much priorities. It’s like we shouldn’t even exist except for helping men with the housework. But don’t be mistaken: I love your dad as much as every child of mine,” this was the quote mother gave us every day, to remind us that we need to study harder to make money and work for our own family when we grow up.

As the oldest and also the wisest in our family, I need to help father with his store management. It was quite interesting as I am able to see the world outside: camels of different countries came to our town to trade for luxuries and goods; people shouting at one another to lower the prices down; the shop next door fixes wood furniture and constructing materials and the one in front of us was the book store, where people surround that place every time to hear what the book-reader got to say. We often knew the neighbour-hoods of the whole street so we could travel around and help each other.

After a quick snack from mother at lunch, I worked at the new bundle of cloth that had travelled from foreign countries to here. It was satisfying to watch the sailors roar at a loud, deep voice for the ship to turn heads. People on the bridges, as I noticed, would come over and poke their heads out of windows and doors to see this scene. But it was also stressful to think that I was going to work with dad on all this pile of arriving cloth.

The afternoon clock struck five as I finally let go of the sewing machine. But my work had not finished. I covered up myself out of my father’s sight and took off with a bundle on my back, which was full of freshly baked donuts from the baker’s. I made a deal with the owner of the bakery that if I sold all the donuts they gave me, in return they would gave me half the profit by letting me work in their shop as a co-worker, but the job was really mouth-watering as I don’t need to do anything. Just to act like a teenager that was guarding the doors, to check if people paid their stuff at the shop or not. This job means I could balance father’s financial stress. I can prove to my family that I am capable of doing what I want to do!

Five past fifteen. This was the time when a huge crowd flows into the streets looking for food. I seized the chance perfectly as I went up to each and called, “hey! Wanna try cheap, mouth-watering donuts? Come and I will show you your satisfactory price!” This method attracted a lot of people because of the smell of the donuts and the price, which they can call each by themselves.

As my last donut got its owner, it was already half past six. I laid down on the side of the street where there was a gigantic stone for people to rest. I closed my eyes for a quick nap.

When I stretched my arms and woke, it was already nighttime. My hand went automatically for my bundle, but I can’t feel it. With my heart skipping a beat, I looked around all my surroundings. There was no sign of a bucket or money in my sight. I almost screamed in despair. I sat back down on the cold hard stone, feeling helpless.

Suddenly, a huge cheer broke the dead night. I jumped to my feet and rushed towards the noise. It was a crowd surrounding something. I squeezed my thin body through the gaps of people and found myself staring right into a huge man’s face. A face that was so dark that I didn’t even realize it came from a human on first sight. It completely blended with the black sky. A bright symbol of the moon shined on the man’s forehead. His eyes were fearful and somehow, kind looking. “Judge Pao, my shop just got robbed. What can I do?”

“Justice Pao, please help me with my cow. It got stabbed just now. It still have some breath coming.”

“Vet! Go with this gentleman. His cow is injured. We need to check out the bleeding. For your shop, young man, is there any broken windows or objects or things that make you feel weird? Check the things out and report it to me.” Judge Pao spoke in a booming voice. The crowd cheered loudly as though the cases had been solved already.

“Hello young lady, I see a kind of disturbance in your face. What is your case, if I can help you with anything?” I froze for a second or so before realizing Judge Pao was speaking to me. After all, I had made my way to the centre of attention.

“My bundle was missing. Someone must’ve stolen it. I got money inside it. It was very precious to me.” My nose became sore and my tears started to squeeze on the edge of my eyelids.

“Interesting case. What did you sell in your bundle?” Judge Pao lowered his voice down a bit.

“Some donuts from the baker’s sir. I helped them sell their donuts but now the money’s missing. Oh I’m so mad at myself right now...” my voice died away as Judge Pao spoke again. “Can someone fetch me some water here?”

Everyone was confused and couldn’t figure out what Judge Pao was going to do as he set up a water bucket in front of me. “I wish everyone to show your sympathy and gave this poor girl a kind help by dropping one coin each into this bucket of water. I will go first.” Justice Pao took a shiny bronze coin and flipped it into the bucket with a thump. Instantly, people started rushing towards me and did the same thing as Judge Pao. More and more coins started to fill the bucket until the flip of a coin into the water. I noticed some oil floating on the surface of the bucket as the metal coin dropped to the bottom.

“Thank you, everyone, for your kind support to this poor girl! Now we know who the culprit is,” announced Judge Pao. People whispered in the crowd vividly as the guards grabbed a man by the arm, carried to face Justice Pao, who suddenly became stern.

“Are you the thief that stole this girl’s money?” roared Judge Pao.

“Y...yes, yes sir.” I cannot see the culprit’s face, but I knew he was over-whelmed by the majesty of Judge Pao that he had no choice but to admit his crime.

Of course, the thief gave me back all my hard work and I gave them to the owner of the bakery. They were touched by my diligence that they immediately accepted me. I told my parents about this at dinner excitedly. Although mother was a little worried that I could not handle my studies, I made a promise to her that if I am able to work in real life, studying hard would not be difficult to achieve. Thinking back, Judge Pao was really smart. He could use the observation of oil to detect the mischievous ones, because he realized that selling donuts would also make the money slippery. He also guessed that the thief would definitely come back for the bustling and hustling nearby. I suppose this is the biggest reason why I need to keep striving for excellence: to be a useful person in society and use my knowledge to help those in need, just like Judge Pao.

Submission Title

St. Paul's Co-educational College, Pui Sze, Au – 13

She was gone. No one could find her. Can people vanish in mid-air? We were on board, everyone had been searching, but she...is simply found nowhere.

It all began on a typical day. The wealthiest woman in the neighborhood held a boat party and her friends were invited, including Pao Qing Ting.

"Madeline, Victor, long time no see!" There stepped a woman, in her fine red cheongsam which was embroidered with exquisite gold silk, and a man in a classic robe beside her, holding her hand. The deck of the boat was filled with laughter, until then...

Peering at the cabinet mirror, Judge Pao was wiping off the lather gingerly from his freshly shaved face until his razor abruptly clattered into the sink by a rattle of loud bangs on his front door. As soon as the door was answered, a podgy middle-aged man, dressed in a silky embroidered robe appeared, breathing heavily and looking incredibly distraught.

Pao, struck by the unexpected disruption on a glorious morning, straightened up stiffly.

"What in the world is going on?" Pao questioned sharply.

"My wife is gone. She isn't in bed when I entered the cabin, neither the deck." wailed Victor with his face all scrunched up.

Solemnly, Pao trailed along the frantic-looking husband to look for the wife. Soon, the news spread out among the whole boat, and people on the boat started looking for the missing wife. However, she was gone, as if disappearing throughout the night. After hours of searching, a friend of Victor, Warren rushed out to the deck and said,

"Mrs...Mrs Madeline, she's lying dead in the room beside the deck!"

Immediately, Pao followed him to the room. He spotted some charcoal, then started examining the body. The skin of the dead body was cherry-red, meaning, she was died of charcoal burning. Beside the wife was a handwritten testament, with no doubt, everyone thought it was a suicide, except Pao. He said,

"According to rigor mortis, the body was lying on its back with limbs raised, defying gravity. It is now 9:00am. Regarding to the body's temperature, she should be dead 12 hours before. The handwriting doesn't seem to be Madeline's, and there isn't any lighter found, meaning it's not just a tragic suicide, yet a devious suicide."

With the pledge of Mr. Victor, Pao agreed to help crack the crime, and started his investigation by having a talk with all the suspects —everyone could be one.

First, he talked to Cecelia, Madeline's best friend. She muttered,

"I heard about Madeline...I can't believe it's true."

"I am so sorry about that. What were you doing last night?"

"Madeline and I walked awhile on the deck, then went to bed early as we decided to watch the sunrise on the deck on the next morning. This morning, I couldn't see her, so I thought she was just too tired. Soon, I heard from Mr. Victor that she's gone."

"*The deck?*" thought Pao.

"Did you see anyone on the deck?" questioned Pao.

“Yes, I think I saw Madeline’s maid. She was walking along the deck, holding a huge bag. It was probably the laundry.”

“And do you recall Madeline having any enemies on the boat?”

“We are all her friends, but if you must say, she argued with her maid a few months ago as she stole her diamond necklace.”

“Thank you, Miss Cecelia.”

Next, was Madeline’s maid’s cabin. She looked rather anxious and a bit frightened about the abrupt visit.

“Hello, we are here to investigate Madeline Yeung’s death. May I please have your full name?”

“Rosalina Tin,” she said

“Will you tell me what you did last night?”

Rosalina reflected a bit.

“Last night, Mr. Victor asked me to do the laundry, then bring the charcoal into his room for Madame Madeline to warm herself. I didn’t see her, so I went back to my cabin. Madame knew how to handle the coal herself.”

“Did you go anywhere this morning?”

“Yes, sir. I went out to the deck for a walk. I couldn’t fall asleep under the waves.”

Puzzled, Pao thought, *“I’ve heard two stories: one said Madeline went to bed early, one said she didn’t go back to the cabin. Who’s telling the truth?”*

Next, Pao went to Mr. Victor’s cabin. To his surprise, no one was there. He entered the bright room and started inspecting. Indeed, this time, like the maid said, there was a burner in the corner filled with chunks of coal remains. He touched the bed gingerly, and there was warmth. This meant that somebody slept there last night, or could it just be the sun? His sight was led to the windows. There, he saw 8 holes, paralleling the corners. Bewildered, Mr. Victor suddenly came back into the cabin.

“Have you found the killer yet? How can I help?” said Victor in a worried manner. He blurted out a thousand questions all at a time before Pao could catch a word.

“Sadly, no. I haven’t finished investigating. I would like to have a talk with you.” The husband looked rather unwilling.

“That’s my wife, how would I ever kill her? Do you still have to make me a suspect?”

“I am sorry, Mr. Victor, but I still must talk to you to prove your innocence. Where were you last night?”

“Last night, I asked my maid to bring Madeline some charcoal as she caught a cold easily before going to my friend Warren’s cabin, and I went back to my cabin during midnight once to check on my wife. Then, I went back to his cabin, and we stayed up all night together.”

“Do you recall Madeline having any enemies?”

“No, I am 100% sure.” the husband said, without even thinking. To prove the alibi of Mr. Victor, Pao went to Warren’s cabin.

“How may I help you, your majesty?”

“I am investigating the death of Madeline Yeung. May I ask if you were with Mr. Victor last night?”

“Yes,” he replied, “We were together last night.”

“Are you sure you two didn’t separate?”

“In the middle of the night, Victor said he would go and check out Madeline. Then, he came back in about 20 minutes, if precisely.” Warren answered.

“Why didn’t anyone check that room, but you?” Pao questioned.

“This is my boat and that is a special room I made for the pilots to have a rest, no one should’ve known about that on this boat except me.”

“And where are the pilots?”

“The two couples love peace, so I decided to control the boat myself.”

Pao was looking around when he noticed two wooden boards with again, 8 parallel holes on it.

“Where did you get those boards?” he asked abruptly.

“Victor offered me them for me last night to do some carving. He knows that I love doing that and said he have already finished using them.”

Organizing his thoughts, Pao walked back into his own cabin. He thought to himself, *“Either the maid or Cecelia has to be lying. According to what the three said, the wife should have gone to bed. So, the maid is suspicious, she walked past the deck, hence burnt charcoals. At the same time, the husband*

got the wooden boards originally, and there were holes, meaning he must have blocked the windows on purpose, then tried to remove proof.” Now, seems like the crime ended up with two suspects, and is time to find out the truth.

“Rosalina Tin and Victor Kai”, said Judge Pao authoritatively. “Is over, the truth’s out. You two have done everything. You two first blocked the windows with wooden boards. After checking she’s dead, you gave away the boards to remove the proof. This morning, Ms. Rosalina, I believe you carried a bag with the dead body inside, rather than just taking a walk.” The two’s faces flushed, left speechless.

Rosalina paused, then said with a little smile, “You were just too clever, cautious and capable for us. Would you like to hear about it from the beginning?”

“If you care to tell me Mademoiselle.”

“It was all very simple really. You guessed everything correct, just that Victor and I loved each other. It was all a trick, we just want to inherit Madeline’s money, and get married together. I messed up and admitted everything! Sorry Victor.”

He looked up at her quickly. “It’s alright. A fool’s game, and we’ve lost.”

“Love can be a frightening thing,” Pao shivered, thinking about the tragedy love stories.

Soon, the body was brought ashore, and everyone mourns for the gruesome death of the once Madeline Kai, the glamorous, rich, successful, prestigious Madeline Yeung.

Reading the newspaper, the Bei Song Dynasty Emperor demanded, “Ask Pao Qing Tian to come see me, I’ll grant him his place as the kingdom’s judge.” After all, Pao was still investigating crime cases, yet with the title of the world-known, resourceful Judge Pao.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Chan, Abby – 12

I sat down on my chair, flipping through my book of investigations. I was worn out, but I still had to continue with my case on a thirty-year old fugitive who kept on trying to bribe me. I yawned, and suddenly, exhaustion hit me like a truck. I tried to stay awake, but slowly I dozed off...

I drowsily sat up, rubbing my eyes. I saw a room with a big black rectangle that talked and I was sleeping on a long, soft chair. "Where—where am I? I must be hallucinating!" I got off the chair, and looked into the mirror. I was a fit man in his mid-forties! Then I looked at the calendar. My eyes nearly popped out of their sockets. I was in the 21st century! How had I travelled through time? I walked through the living room, and saw a table filled with gold, and a note that read, "For your future understanding. Enjoy, Judge Pao!" Strange. I wandered into a hall filled with books, and took some files from the shelves. Flipping through them, I saw that I was still Judge Pao, but I was infamous for taking up bribes! Assassins, and thieves, they had all been marked innocent because of me! Now that I had taken up this man's body, I was determined to change this fact.

Just then, a man in his mid-forties barged into my house. "Judge Pao! I need your help!" he said frantically. "Calm down, young man. What's your name, and how can I help you?" I asked. "My name is Li, and my dad was killed this morning. I was coming home from work when I saw my brother stab him with a knife! You see, my father's rich, so my brother killed him for his fortune!" he cried. "Where did this happen, and can I have information on you and your brother?" I inquired. "It happened in my house, and you can find our information there." He said and burst into tears. "Oh, don't cry, Li. It will be fine." I assured him.

The next day, before I set off for Li's house, I chose a detective called Zhin Qiu (Zhin) to come with me. I had chosen him because, I believe I had never chosen him before, as he believed in justice for everyone. He was quite surprised that I had chosen him. When we arrived at the house, we put on plastic gloves and put plastic bags over our shoes. Li was not there, so Zhin knocked on the door, and holding up his search permit, he told the helpers to let us in. We started looking for clues in the living room. Just when I thought there was nothing, Zhin sniffed the dining table and whispered, "I smell sleeping powder." He opened the cupboard, and sure enough, he found a bottle of sleeping powder. He took out a plastic bag, pocketed it and we continued investigating. There nothing much in the living room but we found something very suspicious in Li's brother's bedroom. There were no plants in the bedroom, yet there was soil on his table. Seeing this, I quietly made my way to the garden. I didn't see anything suspicious but as I was about to leave, I saw a bunch of freshly dug pansies. Curious, I knelt down and dug at that spot. After digging for a while, I saw a glint of metal! A knife! Aha! I thought. This may be the weapon Li's brother used to kill his father! I quickly put the knife into a plastic bag, when Zhin yelled from the kitchen. Going back into the house, Zhin asked me about the knife. I explained about the pansies in the garden and he then told me he found a tape recorder too. Then, we interviewed the helper. We asked her where she was and what she was doing between 3 to 6pm yesterday, and she told us that Li had told her to buy some milk at 4pm. She returned at 6pm and found Li's dad's corpse on the ground. However, she mentioned that there was something peculiar with his posture. His finger was pointing towards a locked drawer. We hurried to the drawer and tried to open it, but it was locked. Then, Zhin took a paper clip and started picking the lock. The drawer slid out, and I eagerly reached into it. There was nothing but a paper of Li's dad's will. I started to read it, but then was left confused, because it clearly stated that all of his fortune would be left with Li's brother. However, on the will that I had received, it said that the fortune was to be split into two for Li's brother and Li. After collecting all this newfound information, we returned home to piece the clues together.

Late at night, Zhin and I returned to the house for a secret search. While we were searching the garden, we suddenly heard a faint banging noise. "Hush," I whispered. I tiptoed to the area where I heard the noise, and felt a piece of hollow ground under my feet. Feeling for any trapdoors on the ground, my shirt caught onto a metal handle. Eagerly, I yanked the trapdoor open and made my way down with Zhin. It was a basement! There was a bed, and enough food to feed a person for weeks. Then, I saw a shadow. I ran towards it and saw that it was Li's brother! I caught him by his shirt and said, "What are you doing here? You're a murder suspect!" Zhin slipped

handcuffs on his wrists and we took him back to the police station. We held an interrogation, but he kept on claiming he was innocent.

Two days later, we were at court. “I believe that Li Huen Wang, our defendant, is guilty of murdering Li Chen Wu, the father of both plaintiff and defendant. We also have a witness, which is our plaintiff.” The prosecutor claimed. Li nodded in agreement. “I do not agree with your point, as I believe that Li is the killer. I have solid evidence, which is a knife with his fingerprints on it.” Zhin announced, holding up the knife. “This piece of evidence was found under a batch of freshly dug pansies. Soil was falsely planted in Li Huen Wang’s bedroom, most likely by the plaintiff, to lead us away from the true fugitive. Sleeping powder was found in the milk the victim had drunk. The body was found pointing towards a locked drawer, which contained the original will where the father stated that the will would be left to Li’s brother. I also have a tape recorder of the victim announcing his knowing of the plaintiff’s plans to kill him for his fortune.” Zhin continued, and slipped the tape recorder into the player. Everyone in the courtroom was astonished at the turn of events. I announced, “Well, it seems that the true villain of this case is not the defendant, but rather the plaintiff of this case. So, as long as there are no objections, I have decided that this case will be adjourned until further advice,” Li was in horror, and his brother looked immensely relieved.

After the court session, as I was leaving, Li approached me and with a wicked glint in his eyes, he said, “Judge Pao, here I have a million dollars! Accept it, and mark me as innocent in the next court session!” At this moment, Zhin approached me and warily said, “Judge Pao, you promised to not take up this kind of bribery anymore.” I solemnly said, “Keep your money. Justice is served to ones who deserve it, and letting you off scot-free would not be very fair of me.” Li looked like he wanted to throw a fit, but there was nothing he could do to keep him out of jail now. “Please have mercy on me! I don’t want to serve time in jail!” he sobbed, falling to his knees. “I’m sorry, but the truth is not to be denied. I hope you will not make this mistake again in the future.” I replied gravely, leaving him.

One week later at court, Li was sentenced to life imprisonment for the crime of patricide, and his brother declared innocent. Justice was served, and I grew very popular. I was now known as the Judge who went from unfair to just. I was very happy in my new life, and settled down in the 21st century.

After a long day at work, I flopped onto the sofa and read a magazine, Slowly, my eyes began to droop...

I sat up, wondering why the alarm clock hadn’t rung yet, when I saw my oh so familiar desk. I was back in the past! Was it all just a dream?

Who was Judge Pao?

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Choi, Eunis – 12

Judge Pao, known today as the Chinese Sherlock Holmes, with countless movies, books and operas written about his life. But just who was he? Let's find out.

Let's start with the facts. Judge Pao went by many names, but the most accurate one is probably Bao Zheng. He was born into poverty during the Song dynasty. He started learning to read at five, and did well at school. He went on to become a Jinshi at the age of 28, a comparatively low age. However, he postponed his career till his late thirties to take care of his parents. He then was accepted into the government, and became a high ranking official. He was said to be an uncompromising judge who delivered justice to all wrongdoers regardless of class and relation, and hated corruption. This led to him being given the honorific title of Bao Qingtian, signifying a person who brings justice.

Now, let's look at the more famous stories about him. One of the most famous stories about Bao Zheng is "The Case of the Black Basin", about the ghost of a murdered man possessing a basin created by his murderer. The ghost eventually testified against the murderer and told Judge Bao everything, and he was arrested and executed. Another famous story was "Civet Cat Exchanged for Crown Prince". In the story, the Emperor's consort's son was swapped for a dead civet cat by a eunuch and a jealous consort. Judge Bao disguised himself as Yama, lord of Hell to frighten the eunuch and get his confession.

As you can see from these stories, some contain supernatural elements and therefore are partly true at best. However, these stories are still interesting, and have interesting morals, and we should definitely read them, as we can learn much from them.

The Descendant of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Chong, Hebe Ching Hei – 13

Judge Pao was a legendary detective who lived long before Sherlock Holmes and modern detectives. Wherever he went, he'd solve every single crime that was presented to him with wisdom. In fact, he was so intelligent that stories from Sherlock Holmes are based on the cases he solved. Judge Pao died after living a long and fruitful life, but his bloodline didn't end there. His descendants are currently residing in Hong Kong, where they are known by all the locals. The cases the Paos solved were brain teasers for many, but to them, it was just another easy case thanks to their intelligence inherited from Judge Pao.

Despite having solved countless difficult cases, there was a single case that the Paos racked their brains over for a whole decade – the cold case of the jewelry store.

Fast forward to the year 2019, when little Paisley Pao was finally old enough to start working the family business of solving crimes, she decided to take a crack at the unsolved murder case. In fact, the only lead the police had was a ghost. Residents nearby had heard a gunshot and the security alarm going off inside the old jewelry store, but when the police arrived, the perp seemed to have vanished into thin air! They swabbed the crime scene thoroughly, but not a trace of DNA was found. The police interviewed the witnesses, but all they could remember was a mysterious black shadow, for the perp's face was completely concealed with a hoodie, a black mask and dark shades. Some boldly claimed that the perp must be a man, considering how fast he fled the scene of the crime. The security cameras were conveniently broken at the time of the crime, and the only person at the crime scene was the jewelry store owner who laid on the floor, unconscious, with a bullet wound right to the middle of his forehead. There was no doubt that he was dead, cutting off the ends to the only legitimate clue.

Seeing Paisley looking through that particular case file, her brother, Patrick, laughed snootily: 'No one in the family had been able to solve that case, let alone you, a little girl!' His teasing, however, only made Paisley even more determined to solve this case. Frustrated by constantly being undermined by her family, this was her only chance to prove them wrong.

The witnesses' contact information were all documented on the file, and Paisley decided to interview them for herself. She didn't get anything new, except annoyed witnesses who were irritated by how unprofessional the little girl seemed to be.

'What if it had been an inside job?' thought Paisley. She went to the jewelry store, which seemed to have overcome their loss and was running business normally. The jewelry store, like the Paos' detective gig, had been passed down from generation to generation. Paisley interviewed the man sitting behind the counter. The man, whose name was Daniel, seemed to think Paisley was a joke. After some convincing by Paisley's wit, Daniel begrudgingly told Paisley that the dead jeweler was his father, Donald, a honest-to-goodness man who didn't have any enemies whatsoever, except a competing business with the jewelry store across the street. Aha! That was a lead! Paisley was buzzing with excitement at this point. However, just in case her gut feeling was right that this brutal murder was an inside job, she cautiously asked Daniel if he had any brothers. 'Yeah,' Daniel replied dismissively, 'he's coming home from his business trip tomorrow. You can do your silly little interview then.'

Paisley got home in time for lunch, then decided to set off to the jewelry store across the street afterwards. She bragged about her process at the dining table, only to get laughed at. Apparently, her brothers had already interrogated Daniel, his brother and the other jewelry store and got nothing. No one, really, had high hopes for her whatsoever. Paisley was used to all the belittling because she was the only girl in the family. But that didn't stop her from continuing sleuthing.

With a heavy sigh, she went to visit the other jewelry store. She was greeted warmly with hot cocoa and cookies. Paisley sat down on some comfortable chairs and interviewed the owner of the store. 'Yeah, we did have a

rivalry with Donald, but we would never try to eliminate other businesses! We like to play fair. We were also really good friends with his daughter, Darcy. She would come over to our store against her father's will and vent about how unfair he had been treating her, compared to her two brothers. That kid is so smart, she helps us finish the crossword puzzles in our newspapers. Our son, Sergeant Ethan also runs marathons with her, so why would we murder her dad and ruin our friendship?' explained the owner. Ignoring the vaunt about how their son was a police sergeant, Paisley thanked them for the hospitality and went back home.

That night, Paisley tried to sleep, but couldn't. She was so determined to solve this case and prove herself once and for all. She thought of all the stories her parents told her about her ancestor, Judge Pao. He had solved all his cases with ease, and didn't seem to struggle at all. He was the coolest detective of all time and was Paisley's role model. Paisley smiled herself to sleep, seeing how smart her idol is, fighting crime left and right.

At breakfast, her brothers made fun of her even more for attempting the unsolvable case. 'That's it!' exclaimed Paisley, standing up for herself, 'I will solve this case. And when I do, I'll rub it in your guys' faces. Just because I'm a girl doesn't mean I'm incapable of doing things you can, if not better!' Unfortunately, this just made the boys laugh even harder.

That's when it hit her.

Darcy! Donald's estranged daughter! She matches the profile of the perp; clearly, all those years of running marathons with Ethan gave her the speed of a cheetah. *But where could she possibly have gained access to a gun?* Then, the gears in Paisley's brain shifted again. Ethan, being a police sergeant, probably had access to the police armoury! And a smart girl like Darcy surely wouldn't have any problem removing all evidence from the jewelry store. Paisley had underestimated Darcy the same way her brothers underestimated her. She left the dining table in a hurry and ran as fast as she could to the jewelry store to confirm her hunch.

When she got there, she was completely out of breath. She definitely needed to train with Darcy once she got out of prison. When Daniel saw her, he said, 'Ah! The wannabe detective! I'll go get my brother.' 'No need,' said Paisley, catching her breath, 'Why don't you go grab me your sister?' 'Darcy?' asked Daniel, confused. Paisley nodded firmly. Daniel went to the back and got his sister, who was looking all confused. 'Here, I'll give you a scenario, and you tell me if it sounds familiar,' said Paisley. She explained how Darcy had committed the intricate crime, and Daniel shook his head in disbelief. 'No... Darcy couldn't have possibly done it. I mean, look at her! She's a girl! How could she have possibly pulled off something that complicated and well-planned?'

Right as the last word left his tongue, Paisley and Daniel were met with a furious Darcy.

'See, it's you and Dad thinking too little of me that set me off! Well, guess what? I did murder him! I've had it up to here with your comments about weak little girls.' yelled Darcy, her face all red from anger.

That week, Paisley was the talk of the town. Paisley's brothers were all dumbfounded when they found out she had solved the case that no one else had been able to. They apologized to her sheepishly and came to an agreement to never belittle Paisley, or any other girl for that matter. Paisley was now treated as an equal, like was supposed to at the very beginning, after totally nailing her first ever case. A cold case that has not been solved in over a decade.

Looking down on them from heaven, Judge Pao smiled at the sight of his descendants continuing his legacy of solving crimes and doing as good of a job as he had.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Chong, Sonja – 12

It was common for Judge Pao, the famous hero in China, to receive a whole stack of letters during his check on the mailbox every morning. He was opening the mailbox one day when he, from the pile of white envelopes, noticed a particularly odd-looking sheet of paper with a big red 'Urgent!' and lines of ugly handwriting underneath. He muttered gruffly, hoping that it was not another scam, but he need not to worry as he soon realized what was going on. His face turned pale. Princess Snow White from the Snowy Kingdom had been poisoned.

Quickly, Judge Pao finished off the cold vegetables and his last cup of green tea. Then he began to spin around and chant a magic spell (he was born supernatural) which brought him straight to the Snowy Kingdom. He ended up sitting in front of the back door of the seven dwarfs' house, while the miserable dwarfs were all mourning for poor Snow White. Judge Pao walked towards them and said, "Greetings fellow dwarfs. I am Judge Pao from the Song Dynasty..."

Before he could finish his sentence, the dwarfs excitedly yelled, "Oh it is such a pleasure to meet you Judge Pao! We've heard about you from the elves, the giants, and the fairies, and we all know that you've solved many cases before! Remember the murder in that horrible wedding?"

Judge Pao smiled. After all, it is not everyday when you meet a bunch of huge fans. Still, Judge Pao replied, "Well thank you for your support. However, I must return back to my main point. I am here to study Snow White's case."

The white moustaches on the dwarfs drooped down. "Sigh... our dearest Snow White. We miss her so much! And we don't have a single clue as to how we can wake her up!"

Even Grumpy, the grumpiest of them all, sobbed, "She even used to cook pumpkin soup for us and tell us bedtime stories every night."

Another dwarf mentioned, "She fainted after eating this apple in the grass. An old lady gave it to her."

This was an enormous clue to Judge Pao, causing him to become suddenly intrigued about that very apple. He observed that after some ants came to eat it, they immediately turned white and stopped moving on the ground as if they were dead. He also noticed that the apple released quite a unique smell. Bashful, a very adorable dwarf, commented, "I've smelt this weird aroma in the king's and queen's castle before! I was collecting coal for the castle's royal fireplace (yes, they even have a royal fireplace), when I felt that smell in my nose as I was passing through the royal garden. It made me want to puke so I left swiftly." This raised Judge Pao's curiosity, so he decided to search the castle for the queer chemical next and attempt to figure out the cause of Snow White's faint.

As he entered the castle, the king greeted him with the warmest and loveliest hug he could offer. Judge Pao briefly stated that he wanted to examine the royal garden, so the king let him in. Just outside that mysterious garden, Judge Pao could already smell the acrid odour. For safety, he wore a set of protective gloves and masks. As soon as he went into that unordinary place, he could see a great cloud of pink smoke, which he could tell by the scent was the hazardous stench. Judge Pao noticed that the smoke was coming from a pointy, purple plant at the corner, right inside the queen's planting area. To make matters more surprising, Judge Pao discovered lots of syringes and fruits beside the plant, and a dark figure chanting some magical spells. It was the queen! And her face looked absolutely horrifying! She had a wart on her chin, a wrinkly face with lots of scars, and sharp teeth pointing in all sorts of directions. Nobody would ever think that the seemingly elegant queen was a wicked witch!

The witch cruelly cackled, “How nice to meet you, ‘world–wide famous’ excellent Judge Po.”

“It’s Pao.”

“Po!”

“Pao! How would I not recognize my own name?”

“Whatever. Since you discovered my little charming secret, I’m going to destroy you and your trivial companions back at that tiny cottage with just the wave of my wand! Citizens will since then complain, ‘Such a fool Judge Po is!’ and they’ll realize how powerful I am and obey every single one of my instructions! The whole world will stand under my complete control...”

While the arrogant witch continued to bicker about how amazing she was, Judge Pao grabbed a heavy wooden bucket and tossed it on to her head. “BANG!” The evil witch fainted and dropped onto the ground.

Judge Pao ran to the witch’s bedroom and saw a green and shiny mirror, in which appeared a spooky, mystifying face, somewhat like a ghost. When it saw Judge Pao, it pulled a frown and said, “You’re not the queen. Who are you?”

Judge Pao thought this must be the witch’s loyal assistant and scolded, “You won’t need to know my name to answer this question. Did the witch poison Snow White?”

The mirror refused to answer. “Why should I answer a stranger?”

So, Judge Pao carried the witch into the room, who was tied up to a long metal pole by a string of strong rope. The witch muffled, “You may think I’ve been beaten, but I still have my wand!”

He replied, “You do not, as I have broken your wand to half and thrown it into the toilet. Now the wand should be in a better place in the world.” After the mirror realized what Judge Pao did to its owner, it had no choice but to nervously tremble the truth out...

“Yes. It is true that Snow White was poisoned by the witch. She was jealous of all the attention Snow White had had, so she wanted to kill her by giving her an apple full of poisonous liquid extracted fresh from the garden. However, Snow White only ended up fainting, so the witch wanted to inject more of that deadly substance into another fruit, which is why she was in the garden.”

Judge Pao was suspicious. “Is this all she has done?”

“Of course not. Many, many years ago, there was another queen, who was the real mother of Snow White. She was much more gorgeous and loving, and everybody loved her. There were also rumours about a crazy witch, desiring for beauty, fame, and power, dreaming to take over the kingdom by being the queen. They never thought the rumours were real, until one day when the witch poisoned the ex–queen just like how she did to Snow White. She did not bother to murder the king though, as after the queen’s death, the guards’ attention all shifted to protecting the king and it was way too difficult to attack him. Hence, she simply became the step–queen. She had always asked me who the fairest of the land was, and I had always answered it was her. That is until one day when Snow White turned eighteen. She asked the same question, but I said it was Snow White, as my identity as a magic mirror does not allow me to tell lies. Thus, the witch wanted to get her hands on Snow White since then.”

After listening to the story, Judge Pao felt both furiously and pity. Since the witch had almost murdered twice, he thought it was impossible for her wickedness to change and it was meaningless for her to stay in this world. Therefore, he sentenced the witch to death, ending the era of being ruled under an evil queen. Everyone else was happy and the world was peaceful ever after. Until now, people still discuss and admire the magnificence of Judge Pao solving this puzzling case.

Judge Pao: Origin of the Moon Mark

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Chu, Chloe – 12

More than 900 years ago, 3 July 1029

Judge Pao had just finished celebrating his 30th birthday with his family and was getting ready for a good night of rest when he saw something out of the corner of his eye. A wall that is opposite his bedroom door was glowing faintly. Judge Pao rubbed his eyes thinking it was just a figment of his imagination. It didn't stop. Curious, he slowly walked towards the wall and as he came closer, the glow became brighter. It was as if the wall wanted Pao to go near it. He touched the wall with his shaky hands and after a blink of an eye, he was no longer standing in that same corridor with wooden flooring.

3 July 2022

Judge Pao stood in the middle of a busy street. It seemed that no one had noticed him although he stuck out like a sore thumb. People were going about their day, nobody paying attention to this strange man with a weird sense of fashion. Pao looked around bewildered, trying to find clues as to where he was and what year it is. He had arrived in this place with only a pendant on his hand that has a blue crystal in it that he had no memory of owning. There were tall buildings with some 'rectangular boxes' on it, there were people 'trapped' inside promoting products. Judge Pao was surprised to find out he understood what the lady in the advertisement was saying in Chinese. He thought 'I must somewhere in China'. He asked people on the street for the year and they all told him 2022 but they looked at him with judging stares and raised eyebrows thinking that this man must have lost his marbles.

Judge Pao finally decided to find somewhere to spend the night. He wandered around and found a building with a sign saying 'library' that looked quite ideal. Inside, there was only a teenage girl considering the late hour. She was reading a book titled 'Famous Chinese Historical Figures'. Judge Pao cautiously approached her. The girl looked up from her book in shock. "But you must be Judge Pao!" she exclaimed. Pao told her about his current predicament. The girl who introduced herself as Lina offered to help him go back in time. She offered him to stay at her apartment with her family, who was kind enough to let a stranger with an 'awfully familiar face' to stay.

The following week, Judge Pao and Lina tried everything that could possibly help to get him back. Wishing, tapping walls, imagining the corridor of his house, but nothing worked.

One day, it was Lina's birthday party. There were 'round floating ovals', also known as balloons all around the apartment. There was also a face paint station. To take Pao's mind off everything, Lina offered to do a small face paint drawing for him. She decided to draw a small crescent moon on his forehead just like the ones she has seen in so many movies and books.

At night, Pao started to feel homesick, he fidgeted with his pendant, coincidentally tapping on it in a rhythmic pattern. Suddenly, a voice spoke to him, seemingly from the pendant, 'To my descendants, I found this magic pendant many years ago, I had set the pendant to activate as a magic portal to the future of whoever found this. You will automatically travel back in a few days upon arrival.'

Something tells me whoever found this secret. I left behind is going to be great and well-known someday'.

The next morning or at least Judge Pao thought it was, he opened his eyes and found himself once again standing in the corridor of his home. It was like nothing had changed during his trip to the future.

3 July 1029

Judge Pao had thought everything was back to normal and it was all a dream, that was until his wife, Lady Zhang, called from the bedroom, "Honey, come! It's time to sleep!". He walked into the bedroom still in a daze. Lady Zhang took one look at him and asked "What happened to your forehead?"

Apparently, the trip to 2022 wasn't just a dream or Judge Pao's imagination, because one thing did remain as a souvenir, that was is crescent moon mark on his forehead.

Olden Tales of Judge Pao, the Incorruptible Judge

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Hon, Angel – 12

A bright silver crescent moon that shines through the darkness of corruption.

The immortal Yama of the underworld, incarnated in the mortal realm.

“And this, is the temple of the legendary judge Bao,” said our tour guide, as we stepped into the traditionally decorated room. A gilded bronze statue sat in the center, surrounded by murals depicting the cases of judge pao. Draped with official robes, it towered solemnly over us, its glare intimidating. “They say if you point your finger at the stone inscription, it’ll reveal your evildoings by turning your finger black. Now, who wants to give it a try?” There was a flurry of movement as we all shoved our hands into our pockets. I wasn’t convinced that a simple inscription could do all that, yet couldn’t bring myself to look, much less point in the direction of the carving. I realized that although Judge Pao has already left the world for a long time, the awe and veneration he inspired outlasted him for generations and generations, even to the present day.

The tour guide had shared some famous cases of Judge Pao with us during the tour, including ‘Judge Pao interrogates a rock’ and ‘Civet Cat Exchanged for Crown Prince’, filled with interest, I booted up my laptop and dug out as many cases of Judge Pao as I could possibly find, and there started my journey along the life of Judge Pao, the incorruptible Judge of China.

Judge Pao, or by his most exact name, Bao Zheng, was born into a relatively bourgeois family in Hefei, Anhui, in 999. His father was a scholar and civil servant, therefore high hopes were placed in Bao. He was a hardworking and intelligent boy, reading at the young age of five and doing well in his education. Though his parents could afford to send him to school, Bao Zheng also experienced hardships endured by the working class, allowing him to understand their grievances. Bao’s mother even had to trek up mountains, collecting stacks of bulky firewood before giving birth to him. At the age of 29, he qualified as a Jinshi in the imperial examination, the highest-ranking attainable position that many would spend their entire lives trying to achieve. With that, he was set to start ruling as a magistrate of Jianchang.

However, his career came to a screeching halt. Since his parents were too frail to live on their own, Bao withdrew from his duties to care for them. During that time, Liu Yun, the magistrate of Luzhou at the time, visited him often. Liu Yun was a fair-minded and capable official, who had a talent for poetry and a passion to abolish evil from the land. He greatly influenced Bao with his loyalty to the throne and his love for the people. After his parents’ passing, Bao observed the proper mourning rites for both of them. Fortunately for Bao, not only did the people not reject him for his delay in attending to his duties, they were even impressed with his decision to sacrifice years of his life to care for his parents, and offered Bao a position as magistrate of Tianchang. There, he quickly built a reputation as an adept judge who was immune to corruption.

In 1040, Bao was promoted to the prefect of Duanzhou, a city in the south famous for its high-quality ink slabs. While working there, he discovered that previous prefects would collect several dozens of times more than the required amount from manufacturers, just to keep the outstanding ones for themselves and bribe influential officers. Bao put a stop to this by ordering the manufacturers to only produce the required number of ink slabs. When he finally left Duanzhou in 1043, the residents gave him an ink slab as a souvenir, but Bao even went to lengths of throwing it into the river when he boarded his boat to not take a single slab from the city.

Bao was named an investigating censor in 1044 when he got back to the capital. In two years, time, he wrote 13 memoranda to the Emperor Renzong of Song, reporting flaws in multiple areas such as the military, taxation, the examination system, governmental dishonesty, and incompetence, all while avoiding punishments from corrupt officers calling for his execution.

Bao was appointed the prefect of Kaifeng in 1057. Though he held the position for merely one year, he reformed several administrative laws, including one that would allow citizens to directly issue complaints to city administrators without having to go through the scrutiny of the city clerks, who were believed to be corrupt. During this time, he gained much fame but lived a life of modesty like a commoner. Apart from his intolerance

for corruption and crime, he was also famous for his sternness. People would say that his smile was "Rarer than clear waters in the Yellow River". It was also around this time when Bao earned the name "bao of the clear skies".

Bao had two daughters and a son with Lady Dong, one of his two wives. His son, Bao Yi died at the relatively young age of 20 in 1053 as a government officer. Astonishingly, when a maid of Bao Zheng, Lady Sun became pregnant, Bao Yi's wife, Lady Cui sent money and clothing to her, and when the son was born, even took in the boy and fostered him in her home. The year after, she took the boy to her father-in-law and the boy's biological Father, Bao Zheng. Bao Zheng and his wife were overjoyed and named their new son Bao Shou. Lady Cui was greatly praised for her dedication to the protection of the family's bloodline.

Judge Pao passed away in Kaifeng in 1062. The cause of death is unknown, but it is suspected that Judge Pao was poisoned during his illness to the end of his life. In Song Shi chapter 316, he wrote: '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 shares not my values is not my descendant,' as a last note to be left to his descendants. Bao was buried in Daxingji, Hefei, with lady Dong being interred beside him when she died in 1068.

During and after his lifetime, Bao's fame grew with each case he tackled. His cases were retold and popularised by Chinese opera plays and Pingshu readings. They were also rewritten in the form of gong'an, and as their popularity grew, authors started writing greatly fictionalized tales featuring judge Pao as the protagonist. Recently, TV adaptations have also been created featuring the cases of judge Pao, such as the series 'Justice Bao' Though Judge Pao is long gone, his memory and deeds remain recorded in time for future generations to marvel at, and follow the example he set for all of us.

Bao Zheng was a truly legendary judge in Chinese history, fair, just, honest, and upright. To this day, it is safe to say that the legend of Judge Pao will never die, as new tales of him continue to be written by the young writers of Hong Kong.

The Price of Justice

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Hung, Valerie – 12

A horse-drawn carriage bumped along the rocky roads of Shenxian.

Inside the carriage, sitting with his back straight as a board was Judge Pao Zheng. His steely and focused eyes usually gave you no way into his thoughts, but today was different. A tiny sliver of horror shone through his eyes.

I nearly killed my nephew today.

He had been raised by his sister-in-law, Wu, so he had been particularly close to his nephew. Today he had nearly destroyed all those fond memories with a guillotine decorated with a tiger's head. It was ironic, to be honest, considering he had been sent on this path by his nephew's mother. He still remembered the day like it was yesterday. He had just turned six and had seen his first case in court. The final decision of the judge had shocked everyone in town. The suspect (they called him a suspect, despite dozens of people witnessing him commit the crime) had been let off scot-free. No one was pleased by this outcome but who were they to protest? The judge's word was law and they risked time in prison by fighting against it.

'Sister-mother,' he had whined outside the court, 'He should've gone to jail!'

'Quiet, Zheng,' hushed his sister-in-law, glancing nervously at the man of topic as if Pao was risking his neck by talking about the trial.

'Why didn't he go to jail?'

Wu hurried him towards the direction of home.

'We'll discuss this later.'

'But why—'

Wu bent down till they were face to face with each other and placed her hands on his shoulders. 'Zheng,' she said 'Bribery. Corruption. Ever heard these two words?' 'No?'

Wu sighed exasperatedly.

'Forget it. Just.. promise me something.'

'What is it?'

'Promise me that when you grow up, you will not be swayed by money or power. Lead a life of righteousness.'

Pao's eyes gleamed.

'I promise,' he said breathlessly.

He hadn't really understood what Wu had meant back then. The words had just enticed him. But when he did, he only felt more determined to fulfil the promise he had made. He remembered endless nights of beating the books and a proud Wu looking over his shoulder. To him, being righteous was not enough. He had to make a difference, and the only way to do that was to become a judge. He remembered the pride he had felt when he was appointed magistrate, then prefect, and finally a judge. His time to shine had come.

He had put his all into being a good one. They called him the 'Iron-Faced Judge' and he had been rather merciless, he supposed. He had never hesitated, never wavered to slam his gavel down to condemn the wrong-doers. Until today, that is.

His nephew had come in struggling against his binds. He never stopped, not even when he was chained to a table roughly. 'Charlatan!'

'Execute him!'

He had been accused of bribery and malfeasance—one of the worst crimes that could be committed. The people were determined that justice would be served.

Pao knew what he had to do. The people wanted revenge and it was his duty to execute Pao Mian. But behind the cries for blood, behind the insults, he heard his nephew's desperate pleas for help. The condemned always cried for mercy in front of him, but he had always ignored them. But this time he balked at the thought of executing his nephew.

What was wrong with him? He had ignored bribes, brushed off empty promises, and here he was, shrinking away from the prospect of a rightful execution because of one futile beg from his nephew. As he faltered, the outcry grew. There was so much at risk right now. If he let Mian escape punishment, his reputation would be ruined. He could see it, the people shouting at him, calling him names like traitor and fake, mocking his claims of being an honourable judge.

But what he couldn't see was his nephew.

His head without his
official's hat. His body
without a head.

Thoughts clouded his already aching head, yet the shouts of the people and his nephew still rang out loud and clear. The people had noticed his hesitation and were whispering among themselves, having hushed conversations about whether the judge would condemn Mian or not.

His nephew, on the other hand, didn't bother to hide his feelings. As Judge Pao struggled between justice and family, Mian thrashed wildly. When a guard tried to restrain him, he screamed.

'Uncle!'

Uncle. The word cleared a few clouds. A good uncle would let Mian go. But that would give Mian an unfair advantage. And justice applies to all, family or not. Yes, he must give his nephew the same sentence he would give to others who committed the same crime.

The death sentence, whispered his inner judge's voice. Pao wanted so badly to banish that voice but managed to stop himself before his heart and brain started warring against each other again. He lifted his gavel.

It was all a bit anticlimactic, to be honest, considering the chaos issued before. The court immediately quieted down when they saw his raised gavel. Mian ceased his pleas and the struggling noises that had been coming from his direction stopped. Pao didn't dare look at his nephew. He knew it would break him to see the desperation and hope in Mian's eyes, and he needed to get this done with.

The gavel shook as it descended at the pace of a sloth. He could change his verdict, he supposed, but he was determined not to let family soften his sense of justice. I'm sorry, Mian.

The gavel was now milliseconds away from slamming into the wood. Pao raised his eyes and prepared himself to speak—

The doors of the court slammed open.

A man rushed in, drenched in sweat.

‘I have information that can affect the outcome of this case,’ he managed between pants.

Pao nearly collapsed from relief.

The rest was a bit of a blur. The criminal who had framed Mian was executed a few days prior his arrest and Mian was given a comparatively lighter sentence (by another judge, thank Shangti) for accepting a few bribes. All was well.

Well, not for Pao.

In the heat of the moment, he had ordered a carriage heading to his hometown.

Which was why he was here, sitting in a carriage speeding past the marvellous countryside, traumatised, conflicted and alone.

In the past, righteousness came easily to him. When Pao gave trials, he would only focus on the criminal’s crime and swiftly deliver the sentence that best suited it. But after this experience, he looked back, into all the criminals’ cases and backgrounds, and he saw more behind the story. Justice was a crucial part of society, but it had taken so many lives. Which was more important?

Justice or life?

The carriage halted to a stop abruptly and he hurtled forwards, bumping his head on the seat opposite him. The driver had apparently heard the quite loud bump (and the curse that followed) as he rushed towards the passenger door and jerked it open. ‘Sir, are you okay?’

‘I’m fine,’ snapped Pao, rubbing his sore head and feeling irritated that his train of thought had been disturbed.

‘Do you need a doctor or —‘

‘I said I’m fine.’

‘My deepest apologies sir. I didn’t mean to hurt you.’ Pao ignored him and stepped out of the carriage.

‘Well,’ said the driver, giving an awkward wave which matched his tone, ‘welcome back to Shengxian.’ Pao gazed around the town and felt like he was walking down memory lane. The trees, the houses, everything was exactly as he remembered. He stopped in front of the courthouse. This was where a unrighteous judge had condemned innocents and let the wrong-doers go. This was where many lives were lost because of injustice. He forced himself into to keep walking and stopped again in front of a house. It was neither grand nor fancy, and its owner was a woman around 20 years older than Pao. She had been walking around the garden when Pao stepped in front of her gate. She dropped her fan when she saw Judge Pao. ‘Zheng,’ croaked the woman.

‘Wu.’

The two stared at each other for what seemed like a millennia in silence.

‘Welcome home.’

As he approached her, Pao thought of the promise he had made to her so many years ago. A promise to be the face of justice. The road there had been hard.

Still, a world without justice would be a much worse one. A corrupted one filled with deceit and evil. He knew as a judge, he would be given tough choices, stuck at crossroads, and he would expected to put justice first over human lives.

But it was a price he was willing to pay.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Kwok, Alina – 12

It was a normal day for Judge Pao. He got up, got dressed and went to the courthouse. Whilst he was doing paperwork, he came across a case that no one dared to solve. It was a murder case in Jihui Village, the taboo village. No government official dared to solve this haunted case. It was a huge omen of bad luck for a huge crime, such as murder, to happen in a cursed village such as this. The government locked up the village and forbade any civilians to come in and out of the village, for fear of the bad luck spreading. He rubbed his temple and sighed, "How come I haven't seen this case? One such as important as this must be investigated!"

In the presence of the Emperor, he knelt and bowed. "Long live his eminence, may his highness live longer than a million years." "Be on one's feet." Emperor Renzong ordered. "What brings you here Judge Pao?"

"I have come to ask your majesty's permission to go and solve the murder case of Jihui Village with my bodyguard and secretary."

"Why on Earth would you want to go investigate? The village is haunted and there are rumors about an evil spirit being the culprit. You will be cursed with bad luck when the evil spirit finds you!"

"Your highness, some events believed to be bad omens may reveal to be misunderstandings instead. For justice and truth, I will go to the place many of your brave men dare not to go. For the sake of justice, may your eminence grant me authorization to go to Jihui village?"

Upon hearing Judge Pao's words of wisdom, Emperor Renzong allowed Judge Pao to go investigate, but not before giving him an imperial seal and charms to ward off evil.

Once they got to the village, they discovered that the village was eerily quiet. There wasn't a single soul. They walked through the village to the inn noticing all the frightened people peeking out from the windows of the cottages. Gongsun, Judge Pao's secretary, then remarked, "Shall we go to the scene of murder, Justice Pao?" Suddenly, two people flung open their window and pleaded them to come inside. The bodyguard, Zhan Zhao, was wary of the two people, and demanded their identity.

"I am the victim's mother, Li Yu. My precious daughter, Li Fengmian, was gruesomely murdered! Please, help me find the murderer!" The woman pleaded.

The man joined in, "Please, Justice Pao! Please help us find out who murdered our beautiful daughter!"

"Take us to your daughter." Judge Pao's team followed the grieving couple to the daughter's tomb. "My dear Feng Mian is here. Please treat her carefully." The mother wailed and returned to her cottage.

Judge Pao examined the body carefully, there was traces of oleander poison from Feng Mian's intestines. Otherwise, there was no traces of harmful substances anywhere else. The victim seemed to have died from poisoning 2 months ago. "That's it for today," Judge Pao sighed. As they walked back to the inn, Judge Pao saw a trail of colourful flowers. Upon further inspection, he discovered they were oleanders. 'Turns out we still have more to do.'

As Judge Pao's team ventured along the flower path, they were careful to avoid making contact with the oleanders with their bare skin. They discovered a house at the end of the path and a man raking leaves. As Pao held up a seal, he commanded, "I am Judge Pao and bear the imperial seal. Everyone in this housing will be questioned immediately." The man bowed and said, "I am Chen Haoyu, the youngest son of this house. Welcome to our house." As they walked in, an angry voice suddenly boomed, "Haoyu, you are done raking the leaves? How come I see leaves still outside? No dinner for you, you worthless brat!" An older man stomped out from another room and came face to face with Judge Pao.

"Haoyu! What blasphemy is this? Welcoming an unknown stranger into my house? This is new even for you, you stupid child!"

"I am Judge Pao. I have come to investigate the Jihui Village murder case. All personnel in this house are to be interrogated," quipped Judge Pao, holding up the imperial seal.

The man quivered and knelt on his down. "I—I am terribly sorry Justice Pao, I didn't recognise you. This peasant here did not mean to offend you." He looked up. "This boy should have caused you a lot of trouble didn't he? Why didn't my other son guide you?"

"There is no need to trouble your other son. I would like to start my interrogation now."

Judge Pao and Gongsun Ce walked into a study room with the father.

"What is your name?"

"Chen JunFeng"

"When did you plant the flower trail?"

"My son Haoyu planted them about 3 months ago"

This went on and on until Judge Pao declared to see the other son, Chen Yulong.

"When did Haoyu plant the flower trail?"

"3 months ago."

"What is yours and Haoyu's relationship with your father?"

Yulong stopped.

"May I receive another question?"

"No."

Yulong sighed, "My relationship with him is fine. On the other hand, Haoyu has a complicated relationship with him. Haoyu does not possess any talents our father sees as useful talents. He had a fiancée before, Li Fengmian. However, she died 2 months ago. Now, our father views Haoyu as worthless and he is cursed! But I swear that Haoyu has nothing to do with the case!"

"Very well, tell Haoyu to come in."

As Haoyu sat down, Judge Pao asked, "When did you plant the flower trail?"

"3 months ago."

"Why did you plant them?"

"They looked beautiful."

"Did your fiancée die not too long ago?"

"Yes, she did."

"That is all, you may go."

Judge Pao wrote down his observations. Apparently, the mother of the Chen household died due to an illness. Chen Haoyu planted the oleanders 3 months ago and Li Fengmian was Haoyu's fiancé. Based on Haoyu's reaction to Fengmian's death, he couldn't have been the one who killed her.

The next morning, someone tried to poison Pao. Judge Pao detected a whiff of oleander from his morning tea and decided to test it for poison. He found crushed oleander seeds at the bottom of his tea. Pao concluded that the person who murdered Fengmian was also the same person who attempted to murder him. When he was

leaving, he found gloves with a strong oleander scent in Haoyu's room. He confronted Haoyu about the poisoning.

While Judge Pao held up the scented gloves, he stated, "Chen Haoyu, you are the culprit."

Haoyu stared at Judge Pao. He could not deny it since the evidence was right before his eyes.

"Please, Judge Pao! Here my reasoning!"

Curious about the commotion, Chen Junfeng heard what Judge Pao said. He walked in and slapped Haoyu.

"Haoyu you despicable child! Is it not enough that you caused the death of your mother? Now you cause the death of another woman! You waste air when you're alive and waste land when you're dead! Even talking to you gives me bad luck!"

"That's it! I won't stand you harassing me anymore! You keep saying that I bring you bad luck! Why won't you just kill me! Keep saying that I caused Mother's death! Keep saying that I am worthless and useless, what have I done to deserve all of this?"

As Chen Haoyu laughed in pain, tears spilled from his eyes. Who are they to be able to understand what he was feeling? They are the blessed, they won't ever feel pain like he does. Chen Haoyu grabbed a jug of wine and doused it all in one gulp. He passes out. Judge Pao sniffs the jug and is immediately hit with the strong reek of oleander. He immediately calls his assistant and tries to pour out the poison from Haoyu's mouth. The local physician comes and a miracle is performed. Haoyu is alive once again despite being heavily poisoned by the wine.

"Turns out Fate truly won't let you die, Haoyu."

"Judge...I'm sorry. Turns out I really am useless..."

"No, Haoyu. You can never believe that you are worthless. Although you have committed grave sins, don't ever think that you deserve to suffer. There are still people that care about you, like your brother, the locals, and even me. Haoyu, you are in the wrong, but no matter how grave the crime, everyone can have a redemption. Isn't that right?"

"Yes, Justice...thank you."

"Continue living and make me proud."

"The Start of a New Generation with New Adventures"

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Kwong, Tsz Tung Edna – 14

Far away from the heart of the city, near the flowing streams and the rolling hills, there was a well-known temple called the Temple of Justice. People went out of their way to visit this secluded temple, for it commemorated China's most well-loved judge throughout the generations – Judge Pao. One beautiful July morning, Jasmine Pao, one of his grandchildren, decided to pay a visit to this temple. That day was when her life changed forever.

Jasmine stepped into the entrance carefully and looked around warily. "Hello? Is anyone here?" Her voice echoed, bouncing off the walls. No one answered. Nevertheless, Jasmine kept walking with her head up high as she gazed at the elaborate statues and paintings that decorated the grand hall. Suddenly, a gust of strong wind whirled around her...

"Jasmine... Jasmine..." The wind murmured.

She instantly turned around, but there was no one to be found.

"Is someone here?" she stammered, "what is going on?" At that moment, as if a horror movie was happening before her very eyes, the statues moved and started talking, bursting into clamour.

"Fung Xi, why are you frightening the poor girl?"

"Exactly, are you certain she is the granddaughter of Judge Pao?"

"I am certain! Well, at least she looks like him."

"Why – How –" Jasmine exclaimed, her eyes growing wide and alarmed at the sight in front of her.

"See, you scared the girl!"

"I don't care. The spirit world needs her now!"

"Child, are you the granddaughter of Judge Pao?" One of the statues turned its head and spoke to her. The chatter instantly died down. All statues swung their gazes at Jasmine, waiting for her answer.

"Yes, but how—" She was cut off as the statue flicked its fingers, and sent her falling into a hole, engulfing her in darkness.

"She's awake! She's alive! Thank the underworld gods!" A voice rang through Jasmine's head. Groaning, she slowly opened her eyes and saw a man peering excitedly over her head.

"Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Li Xing, the dignified Judge Pao's secretary, and you have been summoned to the Realm of the Afterlife to carry out a mission that cannot be delayed any longer."

"Where is my grandfather? Can't he do it instead?"

"Unfortunately, he is away on a mission and is unable to contact anyone at the moment. What you'll have to do is retrieve the Book of the Afterlife from a rather... angry spirit. Due to some misunderstandings, she has stolen it. However, without the book, the stability and foundation of the Realm of the Afterlife will be at serious risk. Are you up for the job?"

Jasmine pondered in silence. It would be an interesting experience, and she might never have the chance to do it again. On the other hand, having to deal with an angry spirit didn't seem like the best idea. As she recalled in the tales she'd read before, spirits were never easy to handle, especially ones that were out of control.

"So, what is your answer? Will you do it?" The secretary implored, his eyes getting increasingly desperate by the second.

"Yes. I will try to retrieve the book to the best of my abilities."

"Splendid! Now, what you need to know about the Realm..."

So off Jasmine went with the fresh knowledge about the Realm of the Afterlife, a map in her hand, and magical tools to assist her along the way. After days and nights of following the map and figuring out the clues that the angry spirit had left behind, she finally arrived at a cave that was tucked deep in the woods. She carefully tiptoed into the cave, terrified of what would await her. As she followed the path in the cave, the torches on both sides of the walls lit themselves with a fiery red blaze, as if alerting the spirit of her arrival.

A sharp voice suddenly rang out, startling Jasmine hugely.

"Who are you, and why have you arrived, mortal?" A woman wearing a long, white dress floated towards Jasmine and glared harshly at her, with words burrowing into Jasmine like sharp flicks of a knife, and her hands grasping tightly at the Book of the Afterlife. "I know what you want. And no, I will never return this book. If I should suffer for killing a person that had betrayed me greatly, then the Realm should suffer along with me! I was perfectly justified for what I'd done, yet they still punished me!" The spirit wailed, the fires on the torches burning even stronger.

Jasmine racked her brains on what to do, drawing up timelines of endless possibilities. Should she take a run for it? Should she try to distract the spirit with cheap tricks? No... Jasmine knew what had to be done. Not with force, not with magic, but with communication and understanding. Jasmine took a deep breath, nervous that she would anger the spirit further. However, she mustered up her courage and spoke to the spirit. At first, the spirit was clearly vexed. But slowly, as if the heavens decided to perform a miracle, the spirit was touched by Jasmine's empathy towards her. Finally, after much persuasion, the spirit willingly turned herself in to the Court of the Afterlife for a trial and returned the book to Jasmine.

"I have returned with the Book of the Afterlife — Grandfather Pao?" Jasmine exclaimed, shaken at the sight of her ancestor standing before her with his secretary. "How have you done this task, my dear?" Jasmine chuckled at his question and said, "Well, to be completely honest, all she needed was someone who would listen and understand her perspective. That's how I did it." Judge Pao nodded. "Excellently executed, my grandchild. You've certainly inherited our family's sense of justice. Now, your parents are getting rather worried about you. I better send you home now."

"But wait, grandfather! Will I be able to see you... or possibly help you again?" Jasmine asked hesitantly, not sure whether her grandfather would be pleased with the idea. "Certainly, dear. You will be seeing more of me in the future." Judge Pao's expression remained stoic, but his eyes gleamed with a sliver of mischief. With a flick of his fingers, Jasmine returned to the Temple of Justice. "Well, this has certainly been a thrilling day," she murmured as she left the temple, as the sun breathed her last breath. She would definitely be coming here more often.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Lam, Charlotte Adelaide – 12

Chapter 1 – Alfred's reminder

"Master Wayne. I thought it would be in your keen interest to know that your old friend is back to the City; meanwhile Commissioner Gordon and a number of his deputies were injured quite badly fighting in the line of duty last night. It won't be sometime before any of them could resume active duty in the police department." said Alfred, in his ever so calm and gentle composure regardless how dire the circumstances he was facing.

"The Joker and his gang of delinquents never get tired of messing with Gotham, don't they, Alfred? I know where you are getting at. But I must honor the pact that Gordon and I had made and I am no longer in the position to restore the balance." said Bruce Wayne in a low voice, looking at the wavy meadows from the windows of his century old American grand mansion, countless scars from past injuries could be seen on his forearm while swirling a crystal glass of scotch.

"Ever since your retreat from the line of fire, Commissioner Gordon has become a symbol of justice to Gotham. With him lying in bed, with all due respect, sir, Gotham needs you more than ever. God knows how many buildings will be set on fire and innocent lives lost tonight." replied Alfred austere, trying his best to put across his worries to the once young master whom he has served for years. "You know most of our equipment were destroyed in our fight with Bane, including those on wheels and in the air. All R&D came to a halt. You know that Alfred, and Lucius should know better." Bruce raised his voice, apparently struggling in his own thoughts and suppressing his anger. "I love Gotham. It's a city where people work hard to realize their dreams. There will never be a moment that I wish to see the city fail and crumble to its feet." said Alfred, eyes looking at the old tricycle tread marks on the old cedar floor of the corridor.

"Don't get emotional on me, Alfred. You know my days being a vigilante are numbered." said Bruce. "If you haven't quite forgotten, my young master, those were the words of your late father, Thomas Wayne." replied Alfred, who nodded his head full of strands of grey hair and gently turned away.

Chapter 2 – Lucius

Days felt like weeks. Gotham was swarmed in mayhem. Without Commissioner Gordon and his deputies on duty, Gotham back pedaled into the times when corrupt politicians and greedy capitalists made the call. Bruce became impatient and the words of his late father began looping in his mind. He decided to visit Lucius Fox, the Head of R&D of the Wayne Enterprise. For years and without the knowledge of the board of directors, Lucius has been at the forefront of research and development of artillery and cyber technology advancement.

"What can I do for you Mr. Wayne? I hope you're not here to talk about my retirement package." said Lucius candidly.

"What have been keeping you busy these days, Lucius? I'm seeing some sort of a new toy being tested over there," said Bruce.

"That Mr. Wayne, is a tele-transporter which I call the Coach, an old hypothetical concept now put into actual test runs. I heard about what happened to Commissioner Gordon and the city is in urgent need to instill confidence in its people. Now, before you and I engage in a debate of any kind, I wish to let you know that I've managed to reach out to someone whom you may feel intrigued to meet with." said Lucius assertively while Bruce takes a seat on Lucius' desk.

"I have successfully travelled back in time via the Coach to Song Dynasty of Ancient China, and got into touch with the Dark Knight of the old times in the Orient." Lucius continued. "And who would that be, Lucius? Why would I want to meet him?" asked Bruce curiously while flipping through the project schematics drawings scattered on Lucius' desk.

"A judge much revered by the people for his noble conscience and relentless fight against injustice and corruption; and feared by criminals and immortals alike for his determination to lay on harsh punishment, which can be quite unpleasant at times", answered Lucius. "That sounds like someone sharing my DNA." joked Bruce.

Bruce was very interested to meeting Judge Pao. Not because he felt Gotham needed his help to fight the Joker, but he felt that this righteous judge from ancient China reminded him of his mentor, Ra's al Ghul, whom he had defeated. "I shall return with Judge Pao in about an hour's time." said Lucius before he leaped into the Coach. "You're always so confident, Lucius. What makes you so sure that he would come to Gotham?" asked Bruce as the humming noise from the Coach began to get louder. "No worries Mr. Wayne. He's already waiting," assured Lucius as he looked back at Bruce with a smile.

Chapter 3 – When heroes meet

The Coach began humming again and lightnings could be seen flashing inside the chamber as soon as the digital timer jumps to 00:57:59. The Coach was vibrating violently and the chamber was filled with mist. Bruce tried peeking through the small glass panel on the 8-inch thick polycarbonate steel door. He could vividly see some movements. The humming noise from the turbine engine began to subside. Lucius' voice came through the intercom console, though statically breaking, "Judge Pao... and... I shall exit...the Coach...now." The red LED lamp above the steel door began blinking. The door slowly opened and the chamber decompressed with a noticeable hiss. Bruce took a few steps back, arms crossed in his tall stature, waiting to meet someone who shares the same morals as his.

Stepping out in big strides from the chamber was someone in a long black outfit with a golden dragon embroidered on the front. Judge Pao was much taller than Bruce expected. His skin was dark and a yellow crescent could be spotted on his forehead. The sheer presence of his towering height and brawny body build could be imminently felt inside the lab. "It's no wonder why the bad eggs and even the immortals fear you. I am Bruce, welcome to my world." said Bruce, his head tilted up at a perceptible angle in an attempt to exchange eye contact. Judge Pao looked around the room. He looked serious and focused, righteous and restrained. "I am Pao Zheng, Prefect of Kaifeng, loyal servant to my Emperor Renzong." Judge Pao said, humbly introducing himself to the knight of Gotham in a low, rather raspy but authoritative tone.

"I learned a little about you, Judge Pao. Gotham's police force is incapacitated and corruption is spreading like a virus. I can't do this alone, not without someone like Commissioner Gordon." said Bruce.

"There isn't much difference between you and I," said Judge Pao, he continued "...except, I was a little less fortunate. I know how it's like to be poor, and the injustice brought upon the poor because of corruption. I was born to hate corruption. Those who do bad deeds, I spare no second chances."

"It sounds like you have found your match, Mr. Wayne." said Lucius, he continued "I may have the right kind of gears for you both."

"That won't be necessary, Mr. Fox. If you'd known me better, my strength fares stronger than my instincts." said Judge Pao. Bruce and Lucius looked at each other and nodded in agreement.

Chapter 4 – Dawn or Dusk

The Joker and his gang of delinquents stormed into a prison, freeing countless of high risk category criminals from their cells. The facility was terrorized in immense chaos and the wardens were completely overrun. While the gang was setting fire everywhere, a senior member of the gang in a clown mask and rifle over his shoulder, walked near the Joker and whispered "Sir, Batman is back on the streets. And there is someone else...."

The Joker, with a painted face and sporting long curly coloured hair, turned around and questioned with a vicious smile, "....and who is this 'someone else'?"

"They said he is from the underworld, laying merciless judgment on a number of those big guns in the government we bribed. Most of them vanished overnight; some of them, executed...." answered the gang member shakily.

The Joker, who prided himself as the only sworn nemesis of Batman, began inserting shiny bullets into the cylinder of his long, silver pistol then said: "I am never a fan of the supernatural. Let them come and have the streets know this: *The game has begun.*" The joker stepped on a cigarette butt with his worn leather shoes, put on his lime blazer and casually walked out of the prison in a hysterical guffaw.

The Dark Secret of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Lam, Ching Hei Hayley – 12

There are always legends, tales and stories about various Gods, immortals and heroes. Maybe you have heard lots of them, such as the legend of Chang Ngo from a Chinese fair who stole an immortal's medicine and flew to the moon. And you must be familiar with Greek Myths, Jupiter, Apollo, Poseidon...Before you tell me your answer, let me tell you a tale about an honourable and upright Chinese official – Judge Pao.

Pao was born in China's Song Dynasty (999–1062). He had dark skin with a crescent mark on his forehead. He was known for his justice. However, in this tale, Judge Pao wasn't such a fair and justice official initially.

Everyone has a dark side. In the daytime, people are optimistic, polite, patient and help one another, but in the dark, they are all vicious – all their actions and conducts are just a cover of their nefarious hearts, they are just PRETENDING. You may think I'm just joking. Let me tell you how Judge Pao, the upright judge became an icon of justice in Chinese history.

"You dared to take away my power, and the time of my revenge will come.....Hahaha....." the Old God of Evilness shouted before he faded....

Millions of years ago, before the existence of human beings, animals and plants, there were Gods in the universe. Pao was the weakest God in the Imperial Mountains (a mysterious place where all Gods lived). He was the God of Peace and Justice, without much power. Although other Gods always played tricks and teased him, he never got furious but forgave them. However, do you think he doesn't really have an evil mind, a black desire in his heart? When the Gods were all asleep in the middle of the night, he went to the library of knowledge and search for multifarious ways to become the most powerful God in the universe. One day, he went to the library as usual, and he found a strange book that he had never seen before. He picked it up and read it in one sitting. Then, he whispered to himself with a wicked smile, "I will be the most powerful and invincible God in the world!"

The book was about the darkest magic in the world. Anyone who owned it would become the most invincible God. However, it was forbidden to be touched since it had caused wars between all the Gods of the Imperial Mountains. The book had disappeared for a long period of time.

To get the power and control the darkest magic, you need to collect the Seven Deadly Sins in the universe and murder the most rightful and powerful God (The Sun God). Although Pao knew this was an evil act, he was determined to do it. He wanted nothing but power. His avaricious heart revealed....

In the next following days, he came out with a plan to murder the Sun God. He planned to use spells to summon the souls of the Seven Dead Gods to fight against the Sun God on his birthday which was three days later. He thought this was a great idea since he could murder the Sun God and pretend to be innocent at the same time.

On Sun God's birthday, Pao followed his evil plot. He summoned the souls of the dead Gods successfully. He kept inspiring their resentment against the Sun God and persuading them to trade with him. "On Sun God's birthday, you shall murder him and I will give you the power of resurrecting yourselves when I become the most invincible God!!" Pao said. In the world of Gods, getting freedom and being powerful were the most eager things for all Gods. Therefore, the dead souls promised him immediately.

At the time when the party was over and all the guests had left, Sun God went to the House of Memories (a place where everyone's memories were filled) to carry out his duty. His responsibility was to destroy painful, sorrowful, unwanted memories and bring peace, brightness and happiness to all the Gods. He was finding memories which were distressing, full of darkness, sorrow and pain. He gently held a bubble-formed memory and looked inside. It was about a memory of a war between the God of the Sea and the Goddess of the Moon.

The war destroyed the Fairyland of the mysterious underworld. Sun God saw it and tried to use his power to turn it into dust. However, when he was concentrating on controlling his power, the souls attacked him and killed him. Pao hid behind the doors of the house and grinned wickedly.

He laughed, “Haha! Now the only thing that I need to do is to collect the Seven Deadly Sins in the world...”

In the next few weeks, he tried hard to find where the Seven Deadly Sins were. Until one day, he discovered that the Seven Deadly Sins were transformed from the souls of the Seven Dead Gods which were the ones that Pao had traded with. Between justice and power, he had already chosen to be a villainous Devil. He decided to kill the seven souls as well...

Pao went to a forbidden place called the Deadly Graveyard of the Devil. He opened the tomb of the Devil and took a ring off his fingers. In a legend, the ring was said to be able to control the army of skulls. Pao was excited and wore the ring...

Suddenly, the ring was surrounded by clouds of black smoke. The black smoke quickly flowed into the sky like a tornado and covered the whole bright sky. A storm was formed, and lightning transferred its energy to the ring. Pao was shocked because he saw an army of skulls. They kneeled before him and shouted, “My Lord, you’re finally back! We’ve waited for you for three thousand years. Now it’s time for our revenge!” Pao was in a daze for a few seconds before he recovered. He announced, “My soldiers, pick up your weapons and fight against the Seven Dead Souls!” An invincible army was formed, Pao summoned the souls again and told them, “It’s time to keep my promise.” The souls thought that Pao would really give the power of resurrecting themselves to them. However, Pao yelled, “Kill them all!” The skulls started to attack them and all of them were killed. Their body faded away, and seven different colors of power turned into one black-colored power...

In an instant, a strong lightning stroke Pao, strong power filled his body and when he opened his eyes, he had already become the most powerful devil, the God of evilness.

After a week, Pao arrived in the Imperial Mountains with his mighty army. All the Gods were shocked and frightened except the new ruler—the Sea God who was very brave and calm. A war between Pao, the God of Evilness and the Sea God had started. With the mighty army and the most powerful and darkest magic, the Sea God lost the battle.

Unexpectedly, a bright light shone from the sky, Pao was unable to move and was beaten instantly! All the Gods looked up in the sky and they saw their past ruler, the Sun God! Then, all the Gods kneeled and said, “Our King has come back!” The Sun God smiled at them without answering, he put his attention on Pao and said, “God of Peace and Justice or God of Evilness, will you surrender?” Pao answered, “I won’t surrender!” Then, the Sun God said, “Take Pao to the Eighteen Floors of Hell to stand trial.” All the Gods cast a spell and Pao was tied up with a big rope. He tried to struggle but failed as he had already used up all of his power when he was beaten by the Sun God. After a few seconds, he heard all the Gods shout, “Teleport!”

When Pao opened his eyes again, he had already found himself in hell. The King of Hell, Yama sat before him, with two guards standing right and left respectively. He found himself being tied with six chains from different positions and he was standing in the centre of a demonic circle. There were tongues of fire and all kinds of devils around him. He lost all his power and he wasn’t the God of Evilness anymore. Yama said, “This was a place for punishment, according to your evil sins, you need to bear the pain and sorrow of the eighteen floors of hell. You can never get out of here, unless the black desires in your heart have disappeared...”

Eight thousand years later, Pao was set free and reincarnated. At this time, human beings had already appeared. He was born in a Chinese village... In his new life, he was famous for being a justice judge and he solved many critical cases and was transformed from an evil God to an honorable, upright Chinese official — Judge Pao.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Lam, Colette – 12

Do you like detective stories? If you do then you're at the right place. Heard of the famous detective Sherlock Holmes? Well, today I will be introducing you to the well-known detective. The one and only Pao Xiao Er who is the descendent of Pao Qing Tian! One of Pao Xiao Er's famously solved crime puzzle, 'Money and Love'.

It was one winter night in 2002. A man came out from a restaurant to take a cigarette. When he clicked on the lighter, there were footsteps too, Judge Pao, the nickname of Pao Xiao Er, passed by as he was about to go home, but he didn't think much about it. As he was walking, he heard a soft gravelly voice from the alley, he looked at the alley and saw a man stabbed and fell to the floor, all of a sudden some wearing black hoodies and masks came out from the dark and rushed to the man and dragged him to a van nearby, Judge Pao saw the face of the victim as the moonlight was shining at the same spot. After the van left, Judge Pao hurried to a police station, as soon as he got into the building, he found a police officer and told him everything that happened just now, the police immediately called his team to go to track down the van and go to the crime scene, but there wasn't even a blood drop left which made Judge Pao confused, the police were suspicious if Judge Pao was telling the truth or not, but still, the police continued their investigation, they went to the restaurant and gave the description of the victim to the manager, as Judge Pao was inspecting the three suspects which have the similar appearance to the victim, the first one, Judge Pao passed by, the second one passed, but when he came to the third suspect, Judge Pao stopped, he was the man, the victim he saw! Judge Pao was shocked and asked for his name, the man smiled and said, 'Lee Man Xie, nice to meet you, sir.' Judge Pao immediately told the officer right after they left the inspection room, the officer didn't trust him though, after all, how would it be possible for a man who was dead to be alive and standing right in front of them? The police officer told Judge Pao that they had decided to put a stop to this investigation. Judge Pao was suddenly on his own.

Judge Pao decided to find out who was Lee Man Xie first, he thought for a while, good manners and a black suit and glasses perhaps he was a wealthy man. After a few days, he then took off to the rich residential area, he asked people if they knew who Lee Man Xie was, and most of the residents there all know him, Mr Lee was a successful businessman and a kind-hearted person. Judge Pao asked for the location of his place and decided to question Mr Lee. When Judge Pao arrived, he went into Mr Lee's mansion with the title of an investigation. When he was led to Mr Lee's office there were fancy lights, and lots of certificates: Mr Jack Lee, the best businessman, eco-friendly 12 million dollars investment, best plastic surgeon he then kept on reading, to Mrs Mary Lee, 'Sir, we're here this is the office of Mr Lee' the maid said, Judge Pao thanked the maid and went into the office. Judge Pao asked what Mr Lee did last night and he said that he ate with his wife and went back home, nothing special. However, Judge Pao still believed that something fishy was going on, he wanted to find evidence to discover what had happened. Judge Pao decided to ask the maid if she thinks Mr Lee is acting strangely lately, the maid said everything, just as Judge Pao was about to take his leave the maid said, 'Oh right, if I remembered correctly Mr Lee had a small burnt mark on his hand, but I didn't see it these few days, perhaps he had a surgery, I am not sure?.' Judge Pao thanked the maid and left the mansion, I need more evidence, Judge Pao thought... Just then, a man wearing a black suit also came out from the mansion, Judge Pao asked who he was and the man said he is a businessman and works with Mr Lee, Judge Pao asked if he noticed anything strange about Mr Lee these few days. The man thought for a second and replied, 'Mr Lee, ah right, Mr Lee used to smoke during our conversations, but he didn't smoke these few days. Perhaps he is making a change for his wife?' With that being said the man left. Judge Pao was more sure that something fishy was going on. Since then, he decided to follow Mr Lee.

After a month of following Mr Lee, Judge Pao finally got some evidence. One day, Judge Pao saw Mr Lee coming out of the mansion in a hurry and continued following him. Mr Lee didn't go to a fancy restaurant or make deals with the businessman like usual. Instead, he went to an old disused factory where an old woman was talking to him, Judge Pao walked up closer to them so he could hear clearly what they were talking about.

' My dear, you need to stop this nonsense instantly, what if the people find out that you aren't the real Mr Lee? You would be in grave danger!' the old woman said.

' No! Mom, look at me now, I married the woman I truly love and I have money! I am rich! They won't notice! I'll just say that I would retire and the money Jack had made is enough for me and Mary to live the rest of our lives.' 'Mr Lee' said.

Judge Pao was astounded.

Judge Pao went to the police station and told them what had happened. With doubt, police came to assist in the investigation. The old woman hesitated, but then told them the ins and outs of the situation.

'The current Mr Lee is not the real Mr Lee... He is my son, John. You see, Mary and John were childhood sweethearts. They were deeply in love until Jack used his power and forced Mary to be with him. Which made John and Mary separated. About half a year ago, John and Mary met by chance at a grocery store. They talked for a while and John knew that Mary wasn't having a nice life because Mr Lee had been treating her poorly and hurting her. After talking and secretly meeting out, they were madly in love. That's why they had decided on this plan.' After hearing what the old woman said, the police immediately called his teammates and arrested Jack and Mary. Both of them were punished by law and put behind the bars.

However, nobody knows where the real Mr Lee is...

The Era of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Lau, Hoi Yan Cynthia – 12

The tales of judge Pao is a collection of glorious, passionate stories, his being the preeminent embodiment of justice in ancient China, the pure, astute, incorruptible judge who tells innocent from evil. But his era is long gone, his time vast, faraway, distant... a history. Some honour him, stating that his existence is part of the Chinese culture, an irreplaceable element in tradition, but most have not heard of his name, nor the great lengths he went to restore moral justice to his community. His legacy is like a tiny flame – almost extinguished by the intangible passing of time, yet is still waiting – waiting for somebody to reignite that flame and fuel the blazing fire within.

Oliver looked back at his house one last time. He was positive that it would be the last time he heard the way that doorbell rings, or the way the windchimes on his window frame created melodious tunes every time a sweet breeze brushed against it. He had not taken his parent's separation very well. It was not a sudden decision in their case, it was preceded by nights of fighting and yelling and the shattering of each other's belongings that led Oliver's parents to this point. As Oliver bade goodbye to the United States, to the country he grew up in, he stepped into the foreign country of China. His mother's homeland.

It had been a month since Oliver had moved to Hefei, Anhui, and it was time for him to start school in this new city. Hefei is a developed city, with infrastructures so tall that it shoots up like arrows and skewers through the clouds. Oliver does not know his way around the city, nor does he speak its language, so he resolved to being a tiny, almost invisible speck of dust in the dense population of Hefei, lost and intimidated by the changes in his life.

It was a Monday when Oliver's teacher assigned a project on an aspect of Chinese culture. It was Chinese Culture week, and the students were expected to present their findings, laid out in utmost detail by the end of the week. Oliver knew nothing about Chinese culture – he was too busy dealing with his own problems to explore the intricate and highly historical Chinese traditions. Besides, he already had the perfect solution to this project – he had extensive knowledge about the tales of Judge Pao. In the rare nights of tranquility back in The States, when Oliver's father wasn't home yet, His mother would tell him story after story of the mighty Judge Pao, and how his fierce and unwavering attitude brought equity to the people. He wasn't afraid of authority, nor did he disregard the poor; he criticized the offenders all the same regardless of their background. Nothing stood in the way of Judge Pao's pursuit of justice.

The next day rolled around, and Oliver begrudgingly trudged to school, fidgeting with his ridiculously heavy school bag. It was early in the morning, and most students were still blissfully asleep in the comfort of their beds. Oliver did not have that privilege of picture-perfect slow mornings with slivers of sunlight slowly illuminating the sky, covering the land with its crisp and golden gauze of light. Sulking, Oliver turned into a corner, the edge of his eyes catching bright colors splattered on the walls of his school, with canisters of paint discarded on the ground, staining it with splatters of red and blue. As Oliver stepped closer to identify the culprits of this act of vandalism, his eyes went wide with paralyzing horror. Through the blurry side profiles of the vandals, it was apparent to Oliver that they were his classmates, talking and laughing over the clattering of paint canisters. Unsure of how to react, Oliver did the only thing he could think of. He turned, walked away, and didn't look back.

As Oliver sat quietly in class, his mind quickly drifted away from the teacher's lecture. He thought about what he had seen that morning, the ruthlessness of his classmate's actions still echoing in his head. He was quickly faced with a dilemma – on one hand, Oliver had just arrived in this foreign environment and could not afford to be an outcast in his new school, but on the other hand, it was really unlike him to endorse these types of behaviour. Oliver sighed and rested his head in his hands. He wished, now more than ever, that the universe would give him a sign and show him what to do.

That night, Oliver tossed and turned in bed. He couldn't sleep – the events of the day still weighed heavily on his mind. He reminisced about his childhood, when bedtime stories about Judge Pao's legacy were a great source

of comfort for him, getting him through his sleepless nights. As hours passed and Oliver eventually caved to exhaustion, he dreamt about Judge Pao and his pursuit to justice. Oliver wondered, then, if that was the sign he was looking for.

Dreams are strange things, and it is hard to believe that the elaborate actions and spaces in them are merely figments of human imagination.

1298 – the era of Judge Pao

Royals, they were called. Royals, who expertly utilized religion, dynastic family ties and control of peripheries to maintain authority, who imposed just enough threats and exercised just enough violence to ensure bands of loyal subjects at their service and flocks of fearful citizens at their feet. But perhaps the ruling system didn't use to be so corrupted, perhaps their predecessor was truly worthy of leadership, with years of evolution damaging the royal bloodline, leaving only egoistic, conceited, entitled descendants. But none of that mattered, because the ruling class still held highest power, and whoever dared oppose would face serious consequences.

Yes, indeed, these elites had their own unique method of ruling. They knew how to keep everything in line and to strategically ensure loyalty, even if it meant exploiting their citizens with utmost brutality. For one, the monarchy endorsed slave-trading initiatives enthusiastically, victimizing many of their own people all for the increase in domestic sources, claiming it would benefit the empire socio-politically.

This particular group of royals though, were the biggest problem in the region. Being directly related to the ultimate ruler in the Song Dynasty, they had blood ties with the Emperor Renzong himself. There were no boundaries to the evil they inflicted on the people – threats of terrorism were ensued when the working class failed to provide the unreasonable amount of "protection fee" that the royals demanded for.

Judge Pao saw this injustice and seethed with rage. He knew he had to do something. And so he asked his men to bring in the royals to convict them of their wrongdoing, despite fully knowing the consequences of this untimely arrest. It was a time of social unrest, where rumours of opposition against the ruling class spread like wildfire. Convicting the royals at a time like this would give Emperor Renzong a chance to point fingers, accusing Judge Pao of leading the rebellion.

As most would agree, Judge Pao stepped onto a path that would only end in misery. He brought the royals before him and loudly proclaimed their offences. As the royals finally received the retribution they deserved, Judge Pao understood his work there was completed. Emperor Renzong ordered Judge Pao executed, leaving him no room for retaliation. Now a fugitive in his own country, Judge Pao fled and settled in a distant, rural town, where he continued to bring justice to the community. When he eventually passed at the ripe old age of 1052, he was fulfilled, knowing that he committed to justice his whole life.

The continuous buzzing of Oliver's alarm drew him out of his slumber. As he got ready for school, he made up his mind on what to do. He strode through the school walls sprayed with graffiti and walked into his classroom, where his homeroom teacher was aggressively locating the culprits of the vandalism from before. Oliver raised his hand, mustered up all the courage he had and declared his discovery. The vandals were punished and peace was restored. Just like Judge Pao, Oliver understood that school life from then on wouldn't be easy, with him outing his classmates in the very first week of school.

However, knowing that he stuck to his moral values and belief in justice, Oliver established a certain respect for himself. Class began and people shuffled to their seats when the teacher announced the start of Chinese Culture presentations. Oliver's turn arrived and he walked to the front of the class, nervous but eager as he started to speak.

"Judge Pao is the preeminent embodiment of justice in ancient China, an inspiring historical figure who always does what is right, even when the world tells him otherwise..."

Judge Pao and Coroner Liu

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Law, Sophia – 13

The corpse was lying on the bed, the discoloration of the victim's veins indicating that he had likely passed away several hours prior to Bao Zheng's and my arrival at the scene. I carefully examined the body, looking for signs of foul play, but there were none. "There are no visible physical injuries," I remarked to Bao. He tilted his head in acknowledgement and turned to the victim's widow. "Lady Zhao, I offer you my deepest condolences. My subordinate, Coroner Liu, has already performed an autopsy and confirmed that your husband died of natural causes. We shall excuse ourselves and allow you to mourn in peace." The woman nodded and discreetly brought up a hand to dab at the corner of her eye. Having concluded our business there, Bao and I left through the courtyard of the siheyuan.

After some idle chatter and a series of friendly goodbyes, we parted and went our separate ways. By the time I returned home, my wife, Lady Xia, was setting the dinner table. As we sat down to supper, she asked me about my day. Sighing in response, I regaled her with the tale of the case Bao and I had been investigating that afternoon, and she listened with rapt attention as I bemoaned the tragic fate of the victim and his widow. "Poor Lady Zhao! What will become of her now? A widow, with no living relatives or children. How unfortunate that her husband passed away, and yet I could not identify the cause of his death—he had not been suffering from any medical condition before his passing." After several years of marriage, my wife had grown accustomed to my nightly conversations with her about the cases I encountered at work, and would lend a patient ear, occasionally offering her own opinion.

As I spoke, a contemplative expression passed over my wife's delicate features, concern tugging at the corners of her eyes. "Did you examine his skull? I have heard that it is possible for a murderer to force long steel nails into the brain, thus leaving no other visible trace on the body of the victim. Oh, how I pity Lady Zhao! She must be overcome with grief."

The next day, I mentioned my wife's words to Bao Zheng, and he accompanied me to the village mortuary. Upon closer inspection, I saw the rusted head of a nail, nestled in the victim's thick hair. Staring at the corpse in horror, I wordlessly pointed it out to my companion. A deep frown settled upon Bao's face; then, he whipped around and ordered the servants to prepare a carriage to take us to the victim's house. Naturally, I followed along, still in disbelief. My wife's suspicions had been right: the man had been murdered with a long steel nail, driven through his skull. But by whom?

Bao was uncharacteristically silent during the carriage ride. For most of the journey, he stared out of the window, seemingly deep in thought. When we arrived at the residence, the maid at the door attempted to prevent us from entering, stating that Lady Zhao was exhausted from the events of the previous day and not to disturb her in her grief. I hesitated, but Bao never faltered in the act of dispensing justice, and he barged into the sitting room despite the servant's protests. Upon his entry, Lady Zhao set down her sewing and stood to greet us. For a brief moment I saw a flash of panic in her eyes, but it was replaced so quickly by weary misery that I thought I had imagined it.

Bao certainly spared no time beating around the bush. "Lady Zhao, who do you suspect could have murdered your husband? Did he have any notable enemies that you know of? Anybody who held a grudge against him? A political rival? Or, perhaps," he paused, "someone close to him who committed betrayal?"

Lady Zhao reeled back as if she had been slapped. "I do not know what you speak of," she replied carefully. "Did you not tell me yesterday that my husband had died of natural causes?"

Bao began to pace around the room. "You see, Lady Zhao, something very unusual has occurred. Last night, your husband's ghost rose from his corpse and told Coroner Liu and I that he had been murdered by someone whom he had loved deeply. I was wondering if you would be able to decipher his ominous words." As he spoke, Bao's dark, piercing eyes seemed to bore a hole into Lady Zhao's forehead, as if he could see through her skull and read the thoughts in her head.

Lady Zhao appeared stricken with terror at Bao's words. Her voice trembled as she whispered feebly, "My...my husband has told you that he was betrayed...murdered by someone close to him?"

"Yes. He also informed us that if we were unable to bring the culprit to justice, he would haunt the person who betrayed him for the rest of their lives."

At this, Lady Zhao broke down into tears. "Oh, lord...I confess! I confess! May the gods forgive me, for I did not know what I was doing!" She sobbed into her handkerchief, hastily wiping at her blotchy cheeks and reddened eyes. Afterwards, Lady Zhao complied quietly with the proceedings of her arrest, and her full confession of adultery and mariticide was recorded and given to Bao for safekeeping.

Following the resolution of such a gruelling case, Bao treated me out to a celebratory dinner at a local tavern. As I eagerly slurped down my noodles, Bao abruptly asked, "Coroner Liu, what do you think of your wife?" I paused chewing for a moment and considered the question. "My wife? I suppose she is quite a kind and thoughtful person. She is a wonderful listener. Truly, I could not have asked for a better spouse. Why do you ask?"

Bao hummed. "I was quite impressed by her intuition. Without her tip, we would not have thought to look for the nail in the victim's skull. She is certainly a clever woman." Between mouthfuls of food, I expressed my agreement. "Well, you know what they say about a woman's intuition. Must be their natural instincts." Bao continued, "I would quite like to meet your wife sometime and properly express my gratitude to her. Would you mind if I visited your home tonight?" Shrugging, I thought nothing of it and agreed.

Upon realizing that I had brought a guest with me, my wife busied herself with making tea in the kitchen, laying out the fine china she reserved only for visitors. She re-emerged a few moments later and curtsied as she proffered a teacup to Bao, which he accepted gratefully. "Thank you for your hospitality, Lady Xia." Bao began, "I won't take up too much of your time. I merely dropped by to thank you for tipping us off on the nail in the victim's skull. I was awed by your remarkable intelligence. How did you know?" My wife smiles politely. "I just had a gut feeling."

The conversation shifts in other directions, until it eventually lands on the subject of Xia and I. "Your husband thinks very highly of you, Lady Xia," says Bao, "He would not stop telling me about what a great listener you are." She lowers her head, smiling shyly. Bao continues, "If you don't mind me asking, how long have you been married? You two seem to be perfectly suited for one another. I assume it takes quite a few decades of marriage to reach that level of compatibility."

"Actually, Liu and I have only been married for a little less than five years." Xia hesitates. "He was my second husband. We married two years after my first husband passed away of natural causes." Bao nods in understanding, and we move on to more pleasant topics. Soon, Bao excuses himself and returns home, while my wife and I retire to bed as well.

Unbeknownst to Coroner Liu, Bao Zheng later ordered his guards to go to the cemetery and unearth Lady Xia's first husband's coffin. Upon close inspection of the corpse, Bao noticed the rusted head of a nail, embedded in the man's skull.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Lettice, Olivia – 12

Greetings, I'm Lee. It's so nice for you to be reading this, and I hope that through my story you can understand some of the things that commoners in China are treated. I was born into a family of farmers in the Song Dynasty of China. I lived with my parents on our farm, I never received any education and I farm every day. Although life on a farm is always tiring, being with my parents make me much happier. So I lived a happy life until one day, something happened that completely changed my life. Let to me tell you what happened.

So the day started off as usual, with all of us waking up at sunrise and getting ready to go out on the fields to tend to our crops. I was at one of the corners of the field and was watering the lettuce. When all of a sudden, I heard neighing and the sound of horseshoes on dirt. I turned around to see General Wong, his son and two soldiers riding their horses towards me. General Wong is the owner of most of the land in this area, and he never gets involved in 'commoner's business', and the only time I had seen him was when he rented this land to my family. They stopped in front of me, destroying a lot of my hard-earned crops. 'Go get your parents, boy. Make it quick.' General Wong ordered me. I instantly obliged and ran off to look for my parents. I found them sowing new seeds into the ground for our supplies next year. I told them about the situation, and their faces visibly paled as they eyed each other nervously. We quickly ran back to where General Wong was. Once the General saw my parents, his eyes narrowed and his men immediately grabbed my parents and dragged them in front of him. I was terrified, I didn't know what to do or what was going on. I silently stared and observed the scene from the side. General Wong calmly stared at my parents, and quietly said, "Are you going to confess what you have done, or do I need to say it in front of your son while you stand here pretending to be innocent?" My father looking confused and terrified, said, "General Wong, I don't understand what is going on. My family has not caused any disturbances and we have been paying our taxes. I don't know what you are talking about sir." General Wong suspiciously eyed him, and said, "Recently, my food supply was raided by some incompetent fools. I questioned everyone who lives in the other farms in this area, and they told me that it was you and your wife. I will be merciful only this once. Tell me where my food is, and I will let you live." "I...I'm sorry, General, but I still don't know what you are talking about. We have not crossed over to the other farms, much less your home. I'm afraid I have no idea what food you are talking about sir." General Wong rolled his eyes and looked at his men, then he ordered for my parents to be arrested. "We'll see if you're really innocent." Then, looking at me, he said, "Boy, I hope you won't become rotten thieves like these parents of yours." I trembled under his gaze, "Yes, of course, General." He scoffed, got on his horse and they all left, leaving me alone on the field. Once they left, I started crying. I was always told that men don't cry, but I was afraid of what General Wong would do to my parents. Sadly there was nothing I could do about it. I returned to the crops, working as hard as I could, since I would be working alone without my parents for a period of time. When sunset came along, I returned home, cooked myself dinner and then fell asleep.

In the morning, a messenger came to the fields, looking for me. My eyes lit up, hoping that he would bring me good news. The messenger told me that General Wong had decided to declare for my parents to be put to death. I stared at the messenger, hoping that he was just kidding, when suddenly his eyes softened and he told me that the king did not permit an execution until my parents were put on trial, and that the King had arranged the great judge Pao to judge this trial. I was scared about this Judge Pao, because I thought he was one of those Judges who's opinion could easily be changed with money, and since General Wong was a very rich man, he could probably win the Judge over. The messenger, however, told me not to worry at all. Apparently he was a very fair judge who couldn't be bribed or threatened and he always heard both sides of the story, no matter what. I breathed a sigh of relief. Then I asked the messenger what time the trial was going to be held. He told me that it would start the next day at sunrise.

The next day, I got up early and went to the courthouse. I was sitting in my tidiest clothes and was the only person who wasn't a posh or rich person, but I didn't care. I only cared about my parents. I watched from the stands as my parents came into the room with chains on their hands and feet, shuffling nervously as they came in front of the judge. Judge Pao looked like a kind elderly man, and he comfortingly looked at my parents, like there was nothing to worry about (For the time being). Then, the trial started. I watched as General Wong

approached the Judge's table and stated his situation. He told the Judge that he was recently stolen from, and that all the neighboring farmers had said that it was my parents who stole his food. Then, it was time for my parents to argue their case. My father stepped up and addressed the Judge. He told the Judge, "Sir, I know that I may be a poor farmer, and I do not have much, but I would never dare to do such a crime. I have raised my son to be an honest and hardworking person, and I would never go against the rules I have taught him on how to act as a person. He is sitting in these stands today and I hope he would know deep inside that neither I or my wife would do this. I learned that the crime happened after sundown, and every night my family has a habit of sleeping once the sky gets dark. I cannot see in the dark and neither can my wife. If we cannot see, how did we cross through four farms and get to General Wong's home just to steal some food, even though my family grows food ourselves. We have enough food to live and pay taxes, there is no more food that we need. My father returned to where he was standing after giving the Judge a low bow.

Judge Pao started questioning other people, such as General Wong's family and other farmers who lived in the area. At the end of the day, Judge Pao had come to his final decision. He stood up from his chair and walked to the middle of the room. He looked around the room and everyone quieted down. The Judge cleared his throat, and said, "I have reached a decision. Everyone, lend me your ears and listen to me please. Today was quite an eventful day. Thank you everyone who had helped me find out the culprit of the mighty General Wong's case. I listened to many people's stories and through careful calculations have discovered who you are. Everyone has a different side to the story, but first, allow me to announce, maybe to some of your dissatisfaction, that Mr and Mrs Lee are innocent!" I was overjoyed. I ran to my parents as they were released from their chains. I hugged them for as long as I could, but I surprisingly could hold back my tears. I could hear some nobles grumbling about how Judge Pao should have just declared them as guilty. Then, we turned around and listened to Judge Pao again. "I have thought about this for quite some time, but the real thief is Wong! The son of General Wong." Everyone gasped and looked at Wong's embarrassed face. "Wong decided to steal his father's rations so he could have more food for himself, and bribed the other neighbors to blame the deed on the Lee's."

At the end, Wong was punished by his father, but my parents ended up safe and sound at home. I deeply thanked Judge Pao for his fair judgement towards my family. Now, we just live our normal lives on the fields again, thanks to Pao.

Peeling the Onion

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Leung, Nga Jacqueline – 12

"I'm not guilty!" Tsui Chi Lam pleads to Judge Pao. "The evidence is clear. You need not say anything else. You are sentenced to the death penalty," announced Judge Pao.

One tranquil morning, Mr. Tsui was strolling in his garden — the Yi Yuan Garden. Suddenly, his son, Chi Lam ran towards him with the enthusiasm of a child holding a red packet on Chinese New Year, "Father! I found an acupuncturist to help you with your asthma! He will be coming later this afternoon! He will meet you in your chamber when the sun shines at a forty-five-degree angle reflecting a yin-yang symbol onto the garden."

"Good afternoon Mr. Tsui", said Yue, the acupuncturist. Mr. Tsui nodded and laid down on the acupuncturist's table with his head on the cylindrical pillow. Yue got to work. One needle, two needles, and three needles, with pin-point perfect accuracy, Yue placed the needles Chi Lam provided into Mr. Tsui's back and face. Little did Yue know...

Within 3 hours, Mr. Tsui dropped dead at the dinner table, while Chi Lam was going to the toilet. The minute he came back, Chi Lam just burst into tears without questioning what happened to Mr. Tsui. Although Mrs. Tsui was shocked by the sudden passing of her husband, she could feel that something was wrong. Besides having asthma, her husband had been completely healthy. To add insult to injury, her eyes twitched when she saw her son crying. Somehow she felt that he looked ingenuine, there was some sinister plot behind her husband's death.

The next day, Mr. Tsui's body was sent off to the coroner to determine his cause of death. It was determined as a natural death. Mrs. Tsui felt uneasy about this, so she decided to bring the case to Judge Pao, who was the favourite of affluent families to solve family drama, to seek justice.

In order to thoroughly investigate the case, Judge Pao called Mrs. Tsui to share the timeline of events. He called upon the possible suspects who may have murdered Mr. Tsui, including a servant, the chef and the acupuncturist, Yue.

"I was helping wash the clothes from the previous night in the river the whole day!" said the servant. Indeed, she was correct, as there was a grand event last night, and the family wore lots of different outfits for the event. Hence, it did take her some time to finish this task.

Meanwhile, during the interrogation, the chef explained he was on holiday for the whole week, and Mrs. Tsui cooked the meal that day. Judge Pao determined he was innocent since he was spotted at the lake having a picnic with his friends 5 minutes before Mr. Tsui passed away. Next was the acupuncturist. "I only used the needles to help Mr. Tsui relieve his asthmatic condition. The procedure was conducted under the watchful eye of Mrs. Tsui; I used the same technique as I used when I treated the Emperor and Empress." "Are you sure?" asked Judge Pao. "Well...Now that I think about it...The only difference is that Chi Lam insisted I use the needles provided by the family, but that shouldn't impact the therapy," replied the acupuncturist.

Now it was time to interview the widowed Mrs. Tsui. She walked into the room with swollen red eyes and tried to catch her breath between her sobs, "I...didn't...do...anything...I...was...cooking...dinner...ask Qibi Li...my handmaid. She...was assisting...me with...the dinner...His last meal..." and then Mrs. Tsui fainted in front of Judge Pao. Qibi Li rushed to her employer to assist her to her chambers to rest. Finally, it was time to interview the last suspect, the deceased's son Chi Lam. He walked in the courtroom with a handkerchief in one hand wiping off the tears that constantly rolled down from his eyes. "My beloved father is dead...Why are you questioning me...When should you be responsible for finding the culprit?!" With that, he ran out of the courtroom. "Hmm..." muttered Judge Pao. Judge Pao with a frown on his face announced to the audience waiting for the verdict in the courtroom, "I hereby announce Tsui Chi Lam as the culprit for murdering his father."

The courtroom instantly erupted in shock.

“Please settle down. I will explain why.” Judge Pao continued, “To begin with, the reactions of Chi Lam, and the others were significantly different, leading me to believe that Chi Lam has something to do with this case. Despite the fact that his eyes were swollen and he was crying, the tears didn’t begin to roll down until he wiped his eyes with the handkerchief. From the minute he walked in, I could already smell the strong scent of onion, which did not make sense as food is banned in the courtroom. Hence, I strongly believe that onion juice has been soaked in Chi Lam’s handkerchief.”

The audience nodded their heads in agreement.

“Besides, I had my assistant test the platter that the acupuncture needles were placed on. There were traces of cyanide on the platter that could have been easily retrieved from almonds. To back this theory, my investigation team has also found a large amount of almonds stored in a rice bag at the very back of the kitchen. Indeed, this still does not reveal that Chi Lam is the culprit...” At this point, silence filled the courtroom. Judge Pao continued, “Moreover, the only fingerprints dusted from the platter were an exact match with Chi Lam’s fingerprints. Since there were no other fingerprints found, this makes me deduce that the only person in contact with the platter prior to the incident was Chi Lam. Owing to the fact that Chi Lam insisted on using the needles he provided, it has come to my conclusion that he prepared the needles with a coating of cyanide prior to the therapy session. The coroner also noted that there were trace amounts of cyanide in Mr. Tsui’s bloodstream.

Therefore, Chi Lam is the culprit.

This case is closed. Court adjourned.”

The Mystery of the Flower

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Li, Sun Valerie – 12

'Ah!' A shriek was let out into the air. The moon was shining through a lattice of leaves, inclusion with a dark shadow, the shadow passed through a barely visible black trail and a pair of bloody hands was seen under the moonlight.....

"Such a lovely day! Looks like it is a peaceful day today!" said Bao Gong, who had just woken up from bed, getting ready to start a new day.

"Report, Judge Pao, an axe man has just sounded the drum!" a servant suddenly rushed in and spoke.

"Yikes! Don't scare me next time, bring him to me," Bao Gong replied with shock.

The axe man looked rather terrified. His hands were trembling, and he babbled "Mm! A man...in the forest!"

"What did you just say? What...what man, what forest?" Gong asked anxiously.

"The Begonia...Begonia flowers...." the man spluttered.

In a blink of an eye, a piece of wood came out of nowhere and went straight through the man's heart.

The servants of Bao Gong immediately kneeled to check on his body. "He's dead!" the servants cried.

Bao Gong was confused, "The Begonia flower.... wood," He then approached the dead body and took the piece of wood that was covered with blood out of the body. He noticed the man was holding a Begonia flower. He took a close look at the flower thoroughly and ordered "Water! Now!" After a while, something odd happened, and the clear water turned bright red —the real colour of the Begonia flower was revealed. "Pack your bags, we are going to the city of Lu..."

After days of travelling, they finally arrived at the city of Lu. When they arrived, it was already quite late, and they had nowhere to stay. Suddenly, a farmer passed by.

Bao Gong immediately asked, "Excuse me sir, we are here to do trading, but we got lost in the woods, do you mind letting us stay for a night at your house?" The farmer hesitated at first but then generously agreed and led them to his home. As they were walking, they passed by a place full of Begonia trees and heard some strange sound, Bao Gong knew that the truth of the Begonia flower will come to light soon and he questioned the farmer, "The Begonia flowers here are beautiful! They looked like red rubies shining under the moonlight, but why are there strange sounds?"

"Ummm... I am not sure about it. Don't gossip!" the farmer said with anger.

The next day, Bao Gong and his servants woke up early to search for clues.

"This Begonia forest is too big. There is no way for us to find clues!" said one of the servants. Bao Gong didn't answer him, instead, he picked one of the fallen branches on the ground and stick the branch into the soil. The sunlight then shone on the branch and a shadow pointed to the 'right road' for them. They followed where the shadow pointed, and they were petrified of what they see. A woman with bright-coloured clothes has been killed and was hung onto one of the Begonia trees!

"Seems this is the truth....." said Bao Gong, and he told his plan to his servants.

“Oh, so you are born in the year of the rabbit, well I’m born in the year of the dragon, I like dragons very much when I was small, I always imagine I am a dragon flying everywhere to help everyone including plants!” said a man enthusiastically!

“Oh really? By the way, I need to water the Begonia trees now, come with me!” said the farmer with a smirk...and in his back is a piece of wood...“Hope you will enjoy your afterlife with my beautiful Begonia flowers!” after saying, he took up the wood and wanted to stab on the servant.

“Hahaha, looks like this case is finally solved!” a voice said.

“Who are you?” the farmer said frantically.

“Judge Pao,” Bao Gong replied confidently.’

“Arrest him now!” Bao Gong ordered.

“Looks like he is the murderer of this case” “Oh, I know, luckily Judge Pao caught him!”

“Silence!” said Judge Pao.

“Now, say who you are and why did you need to do such a thing,” Judge Pao questioned the murderer.

“Ha...ha...hahahahaha, Judge Pao, looks like you are much smarter than what I have thought, why don’t you say, hahahaha” answered the murderer.

“How dare you! Never mind, let me tell you what horrible things you have done... You, Zhang Tong, murderer of the Begonia flower case. Your story starts from 5 years ago, at that time, you loved Begonia flowers a lot, but sadly, your wife, Cheung Tsing, has accidentally broke one of your begonia flower branches. Since then, you were so mad at her, and decided to do your first murder...” said Bao Gong with fear, he never saw any criminal being such arrogant.

“How did you know that? I never told you that I had a wife.” asked Tong frantically.

“Well, it’s because I saw a photo next to a calendar and compared to the women we found in the forest, I’m sure that that must be your wife!” answered Judge Pao.

Tong looked scared, ‘How could he find her, I hid her inside my beautiful begonia forest, how co...come...’, he thought.

“Sure, you are confused, how I found your wife inside that big forest, but thanks to your wife’s heart blood, if not because of her help, I may not solve this case such fast. I found out that the place where her blood flows across will become wet and the plants there would bloom much better than the others also other dead bodies are also killed as there is a piece of wood stabbed hardly into their hearts, plus we found that you had a sequence of the time when killing. By using the plan of a sundial. I discovered after the first murder of your wife, you then found out that another’s heart blood could make the begonia flower bloom better. You then started to invite people to your begonia forest and toured them around, even if they loved your begonia flowers or not, you chose to kill them and this slowly become one of your hobbies in order to irrigate your flowers better, is this correct, Zhang Tong?” answered Judge Pao.

“I thought my secret will never be found but looks like you found it... Yes! Cheung Tsing and the others should be killed, they loved the begonia flowers, so I’m sure they are willing to sacrifice themselves for the

flowers and for the ones who didn't like my flowers or destroyed them, they had the best reason to be killed since they didn't protect and loved such a precious type of flower!" said Zhang Tong emotionally.

"Wake up! Those are only flowers Zhang Tong!" shouted Judge Pao.

"Since, you killed four lives, you are sentenced to death! Ready the dog lever-style guillotine!" ordered Judge Pao. After saying, he drop the wood representing death and Zhang Tong was executed.

"It's just flowers, why did he do such things..." said one of the servants after Zhang Tong was executed.

"His love and passion in begonia flowers is correct but it is too over, if he could control himself, sure that this murder won't have happened, it's a sad story but this is what he deserves..." answered Bao Gong.

Remorse

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Lok, Audrie – 13

My head landed with a sickening thud and rolled across the ground, painting blood stains everywhere on the cobblestones. As the blade of the guillotine came down, I looked at Judge Pao one last time with wrath. His face was unreadable. Then everything went black.

I opened my eyes to see the Underworld. I shouldn't have opened them at all. The Underworld was a dark, dreary plane of dry earth, lit only by the fires of Hell, not to mention the heat was unbearable. I gulped; was I going to stay here forever? In all four directions, there was nothing to see, just the land stretching out for miles. I felt hopeless.

Suddenly I heard desolate cries from somewhere in the far distance. I turned around to see a poor soul weeping. As she cried, her tears fell to the earth and black dahlias sprung up around her. Eventually the flowers trapped her in a cage of their leaves and her sobs could no longer be heard. It was a sad sight but beautiful too. Led by curiosity, I ran to the cage. As I approached, the ground grew increasingly wet, as if her tears were spreading.

But I found I could not reach her. An invisible force separated us. The flowers were just steps away, and my curiosity expanded with each passing second. Was this punishment for my acts when I was living, tempted but to never reach? How kind of the gods.

My anger took over me and a tear of anger slipped out against my will. It fell to the soil and poison ivy began growing around me. Trying to rip the vines apart, I accidentally caught my ankle in a vine. It pulled me into the ground, coiling deathly around my body as it did. In the last moment before I disappeared fully, I gave up. I felt despair and emptiness.

"Your fate awaits," the vines whispered in a raspy voice. It must've been in my head, but it felt so real.

★

"You."

I was in a dungeon. It was freezing cold, and all my clothes had been removed. The humiliation. Worst of all, Judge Pao stood before me, shrouded with mystery. His cloak covered his face, and I wondered what he was hiding. But I knew it was him. I had felt this very same aura before, but something felt different this time, more powerful, and foreign. Judge Pao was a deity, I realised.

"Jin," he boomed. "Don't you feel remorse for all you have done? Shame for all the lives you have ruined?"

I gritted my teeth and shook my head. It was right. It was revenge.

"I don't want you to suffer," he continued. "I want you to learn. This was not the way. I understand the way you feel—"

The empathy sounded more like sympathy. That was it. My blood started to boil, and, in my rage, I screamed "You will never understand! You don't even know what happened! How could you; your life was infinitely better than mine. You went to school! You became a Jinshi! How would you know?" I was so bitter, and the next moment happened before I could process: I struck him across the face.

My hand burned from the touch, the skin was raw and blistering. The touch of a god. "Violence is never the answer," said Pao. I didn't care.

I punched him in the stomach, and he groaned from the pain. Executing a high kick at his head, I dragged him out of the door's way. I yelled in agony as I walked through the door; my whole body was blistering by now.

I saw a hole in the ceiling, letting bright light flood into the dark dungeon. It was almost too bright to be real. But I took my chance and climbed through it, hoping that I would end up where I wanted to.

★

A candle was melting in its holder. In its dim light, I saw a pyramid of scrolls, piled precariously on top of each other. My eyes focused on the background and saw the red pillars and small statues of imperial guardian lions. This was no doubt that this was that pretentious judge's office. Why did fate want us together so much? It's as if Pao was haunting me.

I should be the one to haunt him. I was the dead one. The invisible ghost that could leave no trails.

I walked over to his precious little pile of parchment and knocked them all off the table, scattering them across the room. Then I poured his ink on the floor. But something caught my attention. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a scroll with my name on it, 'Jin', edges slightly creased from the fall. It was sealed with a ribbon, not like the others. I feverishly opened it, wondering frantically what evidence was in there to send me to welcome Death. In my past life, I was always clever enough to make sure nothing could be traced back to me.

And yet here it all was, laid out in front of me. My plans for stealing from the government officials and committing grand larceny. How I managed to sneak into their houses and silently knock out the guards even on a night when you could hear a pin drop. The exact amounts I stole from each person, recorded carefully in a chart. How did he find all this, I thought incredulously. And at the very top of the parchment, I saw the name of a place. My hometown. I was shocked. No living person knew where I was from; I hadn't told a soul since I was eight. Even my own neighbours didn't know me then.

I decided to pay this town a visit, returning to my home as the shadow of the man I once was. Before I left, I tipped the candle onto the floor covered with evidence.

★

My town was much crueller than I remembered. Even as a boy, I thought the town was full of nasty people, always calling me names and bullying me because of my poverty. I only ever had one good memory here. But now it was even worse. On every street, the windows were all boarded up and no one was outside. Like the people were afraid. Or ashamed. Every now and then I heard voices talking about me, saying my name with such embarrassment. Word must have gotten to them about my crimes.

The town was so miserable. Was it my fault?

Was I feeling sorry? For the fact that I had put a mark of shame on their lives?

And not just theirs.

I kept telling myself I was right. But the fact that I was telling myself this made me wonder if I actually believed it.

★

"Revenge is never the way." Pao stood in front of me again.

We were in a cloud of white. There was nothing to distract me from his words, and somewhere deep in my heart, I knew he was right. Seeing my town again ripped open a wound that I had poured salt on. And now it could properly heal.

He continued. “The officials that you stole from were the bullies of your past. You hoped that it would make things even for all the hard times they put you through before. They now have family however, and all you did was ruin the future of their children, not to mention other families in your town are filled with shame now.

“You were the cause of what you never wanted another child to go through. The poverty, the suffering. Now they feel terrible for their parents, much like how you felt for your mother. Before she died from a landslide, collecting wood for your fire.”

My tears were flowing, and my body shook with the weight of my sobs and grief. And my remorse.

“You were only eight, my dear child. Only eight. You did not deserve that. And every night you would cry yourself to sleep singing the song that your mother sang for you once.”

“How— how do you know all this?” I sobbed.

“Bitterness leaves many visible scars,” he answered simply. And he took his hood off. “I was only born human like you. You and I are similar. My parents had to work hard for me too. However, we chose to use our wisdom for different things. Don’t be tempted by revenge, by evil. Use your gifts for good. To help the children in the same position as you were once in.

“But in your next life Jin.”

I understood. My wound had healed. I felt remorse. I felt everything I could’ve felt if I wasn’t so consumed by cold revenge, all in the last moments of my life, my afterlife.

But I will have another one.

I was reborn. But this time, with everything I was missing before.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Mui, Yan Yan Annabelle – 12

Chapter 1: A Fire at Sweet Boutique

“FIRE!” Chaos was happening on the street. The once—charming boutique ‘Sweet Boutique’ was glowing orange with flames, and a dark cloud of smoke choked pedestrians walking along the street. People were running out of the shop in a panic, and the co-owner of the boutique, Kassidy was making sure everyone got out safely, and calling the fire department at the same time. Alyssa, the co-owner who just came back from errands, shrieked “What happened?”. “I have no idea! Some curtains just randomly burst into flames!” Kassidy replied. “The cops and the fire department should be here soon,” Kassidy said.

The fire department finally arrived and put out the fire. “I’m sorry, girls,” the chief said. “All your clothes are burnt. We think it’s an accident from the candles you lit”. “No chance,” Kassidy said. “We have had candles lit ever since we opened the shop two years ago.” The department left right after, which made Kassidy furious. “Ugh, how can he say that the cause was the candles?” She grumbled. “Let’s just gather money to pay for the burnt—down shop,” Alyssa said.

Chapter 2: Sabotage on the Runway

A few days later, Kassidy had a modelling gig. She was killing it until she walked to the centre of the stage when she suddenly slipped! Alyssa nearly fell out of her chair in shock.

Alyssa immediately ran backstage to check on Kassidy. She was with some staff, holding her ripped skirt and screaming, “Oh my gosh, couldn’t you have checked if the floor was dry? They are going to kill me! I ripped the dress!” “Woah, Kass, chill,” Alyssa rushed over to Kassidy, saying “It’s ok. I’m sure they’d understand.” “My reputation is ruined!” Kassidy wailed dramatically.

Chapter 3: Murder at La Grand Hotel

Later that week, Kassidy and Alyssa and several other models were at a hotel for a beauty pageant. Kassidy was working out at the gym while Alyssa was binge-eating at the buffet— she gets anxious before big competitions like this. A blonde walked up to her and snarked. “Oh my gosh, this year’s competitors seem like they’ve never heard of pageants before.” “What makes you think I’ve never heard of a pageant?” Alyssa asked the girl. “I mean, you’re literally pigging out on all this food,” the girl laughed while grabbing a fry from Alyssa’s plate.

When they went out of their room the next morning, they found police officers outside the door of the room next door. “What’s going on?” She asked a girl in floral PJs. “Omg, you won’t believe this, but Adelaide died in her sleep!!” Kassidy gasped, “You’re kidding.”

“Who is that man?” Alyssa asked, peering into the door. “I guess he’s the detective?” the girl answered. He stood out like a sore thumb with his Chinese-style robe and weird box-like hat. On his forehead was a crescent moon, and he had a long, pointy beard that had turned white with age. He didn’t say anything, he just walked around the room taking notes.

“Kassidy, I overheard that Adelaide got the wrong food tray. Her meal had nuts in it, which you and Adelaide are both allergic to,” Alyssa whispered to Kassidy. “She was allergic to the nuts in her ice cream. She must’ve thought it was mint ice cream, but it was pistachio! I guess they labelled the food wrongly,” interrupted a girl.

Because of Adelaide’s death, the pageant was cancelled. Kassidy and Alyssa were called into an empty hotel room for questioning, where Judge Pao was sitting on the couch. “Your room is right next to Adelaide’s. Did you talk to Adelaide last night, and did you know about her nut allergy?” “Alyssa and I were in our room the entire night,” Kassidy replied. “I think only the hotel staff knew, because we had to fill out a form,” Alyssa added. “Adelaide checks her food carefully like me, so I think it’s kind of obvious she’s allergic to

some food. We just didn't know what it was. I'm allergic to nuts too." Kassidy explained. Judge Pao's eyes widened. "Kassidy, what did you order for dinner?" he curiously asked. "I ordered mac and cheese with mint ice cream, but the ice cream colour seemed a bit off so I didn't eat it," Kassidy responded. Judge Pao silently paused, then said the girls could leave.

Afterwards, Judge Pao and Bob, the policeman assigned to work with him, checked the CCTV footage. It showed the maid taking the cart from the kitchen directly up to the third floor. The food was delivered on trays, and the maid put the trays on little tables outside the girls' room. Someone walked over to the table next to Adelaide and Kassidy's room, but it was too blurry to see who it was. The person, wearing a light-coloured hoodie with sandals, fiddled with the food, but left and went downstairs, holding a bowl and pieces of paper. "Oh, the quality of the cameras are terrible!" Bob groaned. "Be quiet, I can't concentrate," Judge Pao ordered sternly.

A few hours of interviews later, Bob and Judge Pao still couldn't find any clues, so they thought about how the murder might be associated with Kassidy rather than Adelaide. After retaining Kassidy for further questioning, Judge Pao asked "How many pageants or modelling gigs have you done?". "Oh gosh, I don't know! I've started my career ever since my mom made me do commercials as a kid" Kassidy answered. "Hmm. Has anything strange happened to you recently?" Judge Pao asked. Kassidy began, complaining about a host of pointless oddities and Judge Pao nearly fell asleep when he heard something that piqued his curiosity. "...oh, and I nearly died at a modelling gig! Ugh, the staff didn't mop the runway carefully enough, and I slipped! I'm still traumatised!" Kassidy said dramatically. Judge Pao sat up straight. "Where and when did you do the gig? Who was the organiser?"

Chapter 4: Sabotage Revealed

A while later, Judge Pao arrived at the place where Kassidy did the gig. He asked to speak with the janitor in charge of the runway maintenance. "Kassidy said she slipped on soapy water, right?". "Sir, it wasn't my fault! The mop bucket was in the corner, then I had to take care of something else, and when the gig started, the bucket somehow spilt all over the stage! I think someone wanted to sabotage the models!" the janitor said.

Judge Pao then remembered overhearing Kassidy and Alyssa discussing their burnt-down shop. "I should go investigate that to see if I can find any clues," he thought. He went back to the hotel and asked the suspects if they knew anything. Most of them joyfully recalled Kassidy slipping down the runway, but only a few seemed to know about Kassidy and Alyssa's burnt-down boutique.

Chapter 5: Something Sour at Sweet Boutique

Upon a thorough investigation of the room candles in Sweet Boutique, Judge Pao discovered that one candle was hollowed out and filled with kerosene. It was placed further back on the ledge than the others. He tried dusting the charred table and candle and took some fingerprint samples. Above the candles was a straw decorative piece. Judge Pao realised the fire must have begun with the candle igniting the decorative piece. After having the fingerprints analysed, it was determined that they belonged to both Roxanne, Kassidy's old friend who was also competing in the pageant, and Alyssa.

He arrived back at the hotel later that evening. "After some investigation, I found that your boutique burning down, you slipping at the modelling gig, and the murder of Adelaide are related. Bob, could you ask the hotel for the form about the allergies?" Judge Pao asked. As Bob walked out of the room, Kassidy said, "Judge Pao? I have some security footage from Sweet Boutique. I'm sure you can find out who is the culprit by looking at it."

Kassidy retrieved the security footage on the day of the fire. They fast-forwarded the recording up to a point where there was a person with long blonde hair who had walked into the boutique and discreetly replaced the candle. "Wait, isn't this Roxanne?" Kassidy exclaimed. "I don't get it. Why would she burn down the boutique or attempt to kill Kassidy?" Alyssa wondered. "And how did she know about your allergy?" Then, Bob rushed into the room. "I couldn't get the allergy forms! The manager said they were stolen!" Bob exclaimed. Judge Pao snapped his fingers. "That's it! Roxanne must've grabbed the forms to know about your allergies to murder you! Bob, please bring Roxanne into the room for questioning," Judge Pao told Bob.

Presenting the evidence made Roxanne reveal her intentions immediately. “Alright, fine! I did all of it! It’s not fair! Kassidy keeps on getting gigs and awards for her modelling! So when I found out she was competing in this pageant, I decided to eliminate her! It was supposed to all happen to Kassidy!” She confessed. Roxanne was taken into police custody. Kassidy and Alyssa thanked Judge Pao for solving the case and rebuilt the boutique with their savings.

An Unusually Different World

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Rai, Ayanna – 13

“Ouch! That hurt really badly...”

“Where are we now?”

“How would I know? We should never have taken the pill Lady Traguire gave us!”

“Who are those people? Why are they here?”

Rephane and Nathan came back to full consciousness in a few minutes, but where are they? This isn't the Land of Magic – where are the carriages and castles? Instead, there are funny little containers, running around in wheels with people in them... and why do the creatures here look so funny? Where are their witch hats and fairy wings? Why are their pets so small and tiny?

“Are those...pets?” asked Nathan cautiously.

“I've never seen them, but I've learnt about them in school. Apparently, they're called 'dogs' replied Raphane, although he sounded quite unsure.

Raphane Emerson is the royal princess of the Land of Magic. She is only 134 years old, which is considered young where she is from. Her idol was the famous Lady Traguire, who was well known for protecting the Land of Magic during the infamous Black Magic War.

Nathan Donatheu is a famous witch, known for his intelligence in potions and spells. He is 138 years old, just a bit older than Raphane. They'd been friends since they were 92 and they met through a wizard hat designing competition.

“Where are we? This looks like such a weird place!” exclaimed Raphane, and she is right. “Apparently, this is something called the 'human world' I think? I'm not sure though” answered Nathan. “Why would Lady Traguire send us here?” questioned Raphane. She is quite disappointed that someone she idolised would punish her to be sent to the human world.

“Those 'humans' look so weird. They don't have anything magical or anything!” grumbled Raphane. “Well obviously, because they're not like us. Why are they looking at us so weirdly?” whispered Nathan. “Probably because we look so different compared to them,” mumbled Raphane.

A little girl came up to them while holding an older girl's hand. “Look Maggie! I told you fairies and witches were real!” she said confidently with a smile. “Mhm sure. They are totally not humans dressed up, but you can believe what you want Mandy.” said the other girl, trying not to roll her eyes.

Raphane and Nathan waved to the little girl and she screamed with joy. They thought the girl was cute, but they still felt a bit uncomfortable because they were not used to this kind of treatment. To avoid the awkwardness, they left while waving to the little girl.

“There has to be a way to get out of here!” exclaimed Raphane, “I want to go home!”, with tears streaming from her eyes.

“Look at that Raphane! There's a poster with the word 'detective' in bold. I think that can help us!”

They knew how to read addresses, so they went to the address written on the poster and knocked on the door. Even though they were scared they might get tricked again just like what Lady Traguire did to them, they still decided to trust this poster.

Ding dong!

“Who is it now, so early in the morning? I haven’t even finished my morning tea yet!” snapped Judge Pao, while rolling his eyes. He has been in a bit of a bad mood today as he hadn’t finished reading his newspaper yet, and there is already a client.

“I mean at least you can help someone even if it’s early,” replied Lingyi, Judge Pao’s close friend. Lingyi always tried to cheer him up from his grumpy mood.

“And get paid,” answered Judge Pao.

“And get paid...” responded Lingyi.

Lingyi opened the door and Nathan and Raphane entered Judge Pao’s place. It was quite small compared to Raphane’s magnificent castle.

“Cosplayers?” whispered Judge Pao to Lingyi. “I’m not sure, but their costumes are pretty cool, I guess,” Lingyi whispered back to him. “And you are?” asked Judge Pao to Nathan and Raphane.

“I am Princess Raphane Emerson and this is my friend Nathan Donatheu from the Land of Magic. We are supposed to be mythical creatures like fairies and witches and wizards and elves and gnomes...you know what I mean, but for some reason. We are here instead of our actual world,” Raphane explained, “we think we came here after we drank Lady Traguire’s potion”.

“I’m sorry, but is this a joke?” asked Lingyi, just to be sure.

“Why would we joke about a situation like this? We want to go back to our world please,” said Nathan, angrily.

“Nevermind...” said Lingyi, “sorry if I offended you.”

“It was rude, but it’s fine,” said Raphane.

Judge Pao was confused, but this just meant a new mystery for him.

“How much are you willing to pay?” Judge Pao questioned.

“We have to pay to go back to our world?” asked Nathan.

“Yeah, because it will take my time and effort,” said Judge Pao, a bit confused since it was common sense that you have to pay to hire a detective.

“Fine, 500 gold coins,” said Raphane. She took out her wand and waved it around and gave Jude Pao 500 gold coins in his hands.

“Woah...Thank you! I’ll do my best!” said Judge Pao. This was the highest he had ever been offered. He smiled from ear to ear looking at the gold coins. “For now, you can stay here at my home,” added Judge Pao, still shocked with the amount he just got paid.

“Thank you!” answered Raphane and Nathan. They were excited to return back.

Judge Pao decided to do some research to find out what the “Land of Magic” actually was. He was a big fan of the cartoon “The Land of Magic” when he was younger, but he never knew it was actually real. Meanwhile, Lingyi helped Raphane and Nathan to know more about the human world.

Judge Pao went to world-famous libraries, interviewed different people who believed in witchcraft and even rewatched the entire “The Land of Magic” series. He went to the Library of Bauhinia and found thousands of books related to witchcraft, but most of them were quite useless. His next idea was to interview the Demure sisters, who were ‘famous’ in the ‘witchcraft community’. They told him that Raphane and Nathan had entered a different dimension with the power of the ‘Eternal Force’, which Judge Pao himself found quite confusing. He traveled to many different countries trying to find the answer, but all the ‘witches’ he found were usually talking about the same ‘Eternal Force’. It was found out that the ‘Eternal Force’ was something that was perpetual, so that meant Raphane and Nathan were stuck on Earth forever.

However, a few days later, Judge Pao came across an article that was on how to go back to the Land of Magic.

The article read that he had to find a so-called human witch named Lycia, who apparently lived in a “witch cave”. It sounded quite fake, but he couldn’t really find another way. He took Raphane, Nathan and Lingyi

along with him to find Lycia. Judge Pao was quite scared, thinking that Lycia could be a scammer, but he still went to her.

They reached Lycia's cave. Judge Pao had already explained everything to Lycia beforehand. The first thing Lycia did was to make a potion. Except, it was actually a sleeping drug.

Judge Pao and Lingyi fell asleep almost immediately while Raphane and Nathan were alright. Lycia started laughing and Raphane and Nathan were quite confused, but they thought it was just part of the spell.

In a few seconds, Lycia turned into Lady Traguire.

"Lady Traguire?!" exclaimed Nathan, "Why are you here?"

"You've finally decided to go back?" she said.

"We never wanted to go back here in the first place!" said Raphane angrily.

"I've had enough!" yelled Lady Traguire, "even though you are one of the most privileged kids ever to exist, you kids are always complaining! Not everyone can come to Earth!"

"Still, we never asked to be here!" shouted Raphane.

Lady Traguire used her wand to choke Raphane, when Judge Pao conveniently woke up. Using a stick to slap Lady Traguire, his quick wit and strength stopped the spell from coming to full power.

Raphane grabbed Lady Traguire's wand and Nathan went through her book of spells. He quickly found one which could help them return back home. With a flick of her wand, Raphane conjured a portal, and entered quickly before the tiny sliver closed again.

New Tales of Judge Pao

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Tung, Wong Hoi Elly – 14

It was Monday morning, and my boss slapped my week's assignment down on my desk with a thud. It was a huge folder filled with newspaper clippings, some of them raggedy, yellowing, and over one hundred years old. "Elly, we used to write about Judge Pao all the time. Everyone knew of his reputation for justice and righteousness. Why has it been so long since we last published something about him? People nowadays are so slimy and corrupt – let's give them someone to admire and emulate."

My boss then gave me the address of Y.K., one of Pao's descendants, telling me to go find him and ask him for a new story about Judge Pao that would impress people. I then set off on a long journey, and all the way the trees and flowers in the woods greet me with a smile. Out of a sudden, a red spot stood out of the green. I pushed the leaves aside; it was a red building with heavy overhanging roofs. It was Y.K.'s house. The Chinese cultural style of the house has definitely astounded me, and it even reminded me of the architecture that I had seen on television which was said to be Judge Pao's living place!

Upon arrival, YK opens the door welcomingly. Behind him is an alluring Chinese-style home, with a large portrait of Judge Pao hanging on the wall. As I walked closer to it, I found that he was looking serious and stern, as if it was showing disapproval of me.

After taking a look at the surroundings and taking some photos for my boss, YK told me to have a seat on the sofa beside him. "Let's start today's interview," I started, "So, is this house passed on to you by your ancestor, Judge Pao?" Nodding his head, he replied a yes. "Do you have anything that your great-great grandfather Judge Pao left you and have never been published?" Y.K. hesitated for a moment, went to the room at the end of the aisle, and returned with a rusty rosewood box. "No one has ever touched this box before. It is said that Judge Pao made it himself, and gave orders not to open it except in times of desperate need." Somehow, we felt the moment was right. Cleaning off the dust, Y.K. began to unlock the box carefully. Inside was an old rusty book which was yellowish in colour. Carefully, we opened the book and turned it over page by page. Each page contained records of the many cases Judge Pao had solved, including the names of the criminals, the clues they had inadvertently left behind for Judge Pao to find, and the punishments that he had dealt out.

My eyes were dancing happily with all the pictures I have got for my boss. "Boss must be proud of me," I thought to myself. All of a sudden, a light shone from the book, so bright that we could barely see. We shielded our eyes and closed them for a few seconds, until the flash dimmed and died out. When it seemed safe, we opened our eyes again, only to find ourselves somewhere truly bizarre.

We were in a gigantic and glamorous hall, large enough to fit in millions of people. There was a long line, and thousands or millions of people were queuing up. At the head of the line, sat a black and fat figure, with a crescent moon on his forehead and a judge's Zhanjiao Futou hat on his head. It was Judge Pao! I recognised him from the portrait I had seen at the entrance to YK's house. Just then, I observed that everyone in the queue had some words written on their back. Looking closely, I realized that it was the name of the crimes they committed. I slowly approached one of them, and tried to talk to them. But they didn't seem to be able to hear me at all. I walked to the front, where a criminal was kneeling before Judge Pao, and to my horror, he pulled off his own head, kneeling in apology! I was astounded – how could he still be talking and moving with his head chopped off like that? Looking to the back, I found that everyone in line had a scar on their neck, with deep dark blood stains; some of their heads were even dangling from their necks! I gasped in horror, with my face turning as pale as paper. I could barely even stay standing. Where was I? I was in a panic. Suddenly, a thought hit my head. I remembered that there was once a tale on the Department of Hell, where Judge Pao judges people in the afterlife! That's it! It was the Department of Hell, standing and looking at criminals who had been executed during life and were now waiting for Judge Pao's judgement on their afterlife! A sudden loud voice shocked me, "You are not regretful! Put him in the eighteenth hell! Let him be treated by Yama!" And an army of soldiers came and handcuffed him away, with the screaming and shouting gradually fading as he was being taken away. The judge's assistant, who was standing near us then rang the bell, with him shouting "Next!" so

loudly that we almost become deaf! We put our hands tightly on our ears, to cover the deafening noise of the bell and his voice.

When we were finally safe again, we looked around. The soft comfy sofa was right in front of us. We were back at Y.K.'s home again, YK and I stared at the book, then at each other, our eyes and mouths wide open in total shock.

“Did you...” he gasped?

“Were we just...” I whispered?

I turned my gaze to the portrait of Judge Pao on the wall; he was now smiling with a knowing grin.

The Day Before the Resurrection

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Vijayakumar, Tanisha – 13

"Yes, I vividly remember how last night went, I think Kylie was in her room as usual while Caroline and Kai were downstairs having dinner. Me? I was in my own room reading a book."

"Who is Kai?"

"Oh, that's Caroline's boyfriend."

The policeman nodded his head and was about to leave when he saw another young lady by the kitchen door, the maid. She looked rather uneasy.

"Could I steal some of your time to ask you some questions, ma'am?"

"Sure."

"Did you notice anything weird last night?"

"I did see Kylie walk into the kitchen right before dinner. I asked her if she wanted anything and she just said she wanted to get some snacks, so I'm not sure if that could mean anything. She was holding something in her hand."

"Very well, thank you. I shall be on my way out, let me know if you recall anything else."

"Thank you."

As soon as the policeman left, everyone went on with their own work. The policeman knew what had to be done, a detective was needed, but how to get one? They were already low on resources lately. He knew what needed to be done.

The day of resurrection ; 5 March 2023

Caroline's body was found near a graveyard. Strangely, on this very day, in that graveyard, the one and only Judge Pao was found exploring the area. How did he end up there? No, how is he even here? You can't help but think if Caroline's death had anything to do with this...

"Where am I? What is all this?"

Little did he know, a pair of eyes were following his every move.

In the dark night, Judge Pao set off, trying to find someone to get help from. He stumbled by a building with a very bright light coming from a room. He thought to himself, "Surely a candle couldn't burn that brightly."

Despite that, he decided to investigate the light to see if anyone was there to help him. He reached a door which read "Detective Kol". It also said "Do not disturb", but Judge Pao paid no mind to it and opened the door. He saw a young man sleeping on his desk. He marched up to the desk and smacked the young boy awake.

"WHO IS IT AND WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

"Young boy, I need your help."

"Who are you? I've never seen you before and why are you dressed like that? What help could you possibly want from me?"

"I'm Judge Pao. I need your help, I don't know how I ended up here."

"Wait, you're THE Judge Pao?? How is that even possible, didn't you exist like more than a thousand years ago?"

"What are you talking about?"

"We're in the year 2023 sir."

"What."

"Yeah.."

"That explains so much. What are these weird light emitting things? Anyways, I need help getting back, can you please help me?"

"I have a condition for you. If you help me on this current case I'm working on, I will help you get back."

"Case? What case?"

"This girl named Caroline died about two days ago. Her body was found somewhere nearby, actually. No one knows how she died, or when exactly she died. I was assigned to this case and to be honest, it's really complicated. A little help would be great!"

“Oh? Well, it has been a while since I've solved a case. Sure, I'll help you, but you need to teach me how to work these weird things.”

“Haha, sure.”

Turns out Kol's house was in the same building as his office. He let Judge Pao stay at his until they figured things out. They talked for about an hour before heading off to bed.

The next day

No doubt, Judge Pao was good at what he did, and he always wanted to serve justice. He found out that Kol was a small, aspiring detective who was working his way towards fame and this was one of his first cases. He was going to be the assistant to Judge Pao. Pao decided to examine Caroline's body first, so they went to see the post mortem results and see if there was any evidence left on her. They reached and they got what they needed.

Reports showed that Caroline died of poisoning. The police were still trying to find any other evidence from the scene of crime or on Caroline's body.

“It says here that Caroline's sister had gone into the kitchen the day before. Do you think she might have anything to do with this?”

“We mustn't jump to conclusions just yet, young boy. Let us go and ask Kylie some questions, then?”

“You can go on without me, I have some quick paperwork to do back in the office. You can ask her and let me know later!”

“But I don't know how anything here works—“

“You'll be fine! See you later Judge!”

“Sigh. Let's do this.”

And so, Judge Pao went to have a little chat with Kylie.

“Welcome! You must be the detective. Please, come in.”

“I need to see Kylie.”

“Oh, she should be in her room. Let me call her down.”

“Thank you.”

A few minutes later

“Ah, you must be Kylie. Please, sit down. I suppose you know what I'm here for.”

“Ask away.”

“What were you doing that night?”

“I stayed in my room as always. I did go downstairs to the kitchen to get some snacks.”

“I see, what was your relationship with Caroline like?”

“To be frank, I never really liked her that much. I've always been in her shadows since childhood. She's always been better than me. You could say it's almost like envy, but I've just learnt to live with it. I'm not the only one that is jealous. Mia, Caroline's best friend, she's always given me a very weird vibe. One thing for sure is that she was super jealous of Caroline because she got the boyfriend that Mia wanted.”

“Interesting, is there anything else to add on?”

“Oh yeah, I have a dependent personality disorder. I don't get what that has to do with anything but I thought it might be important.”

“Very well, thank you for your time Ms Kylie.”

“No problem!”

Judge Pao felt that something was off about Kylie. He told all this to Kol.

“Maybe instead of getting snacks she went to do something else?”

“That's very possible, but we also have Mia to worry about. Let's talk about it tomorrow.”

Two days after resurrection

“Hey Judge, I was thinking we could split up today, you could go meet Mia and I could check the records if the pharmacies around to see if there has been any suspicious purchase recently.”

“Sure.”

After 2 hours

“Got anything from Mia?”

“Mia just seems like a lost puppy, I wouldn’t worry too much about her. Found any records?”

“Actually, yes, from Kylie. It isn’t exactly suspicious. She had bought some fluoxetine for her DPD..except that she bought way more than what is usually prescribed.”

“This has to be it, but how do we prove that she’s the one who poisoned her?”

“Remember the maid said she saw her holding something in her hand? That’s our proof.”

“Now we take this to court.”

At court

“Kylie, all of the evidences prove that you did indeed murder Caroline. The defense has failed to prove its point, therefore Kylie is hereby sentenced to.....”

The doors opened and suddenly a policeman rushed to the judge.

“WAIT! It wasn’t Kylie! We found a mark on Caroline’s clothes. A ‘K’ signature and it doesn’t match Kylie’s signature so it can’t be her.”

He displayed the signature to everyone. Judge Pao had seen it somewhere, but where exactly? He thought long and hard then he finally remembered. That was Kol’s signature. His classic ‘K’ mark he has always left. But it couldn’t be him, could it?

He turned his head to face Kol, who was flashing a wide, sinister grin with an ‘I’m insane’ look on his face.

It was all planned.

Kylie then suddenly screamed “KAI!” and pointed right to Kol.

“THAT IS KAI’S SIGNATURE.”

“Oh no! Guess my identity has been revealed. What a shame...”

“Why, young boy. Just why.”

It was evident. Kol, or rather, Kai was clearly completely insane. With a grin that cunning, anything could happen. He started drawing something out from his bag but Judge Pao quickly put his hands behind his back and the police helped him. He then got put behind bars. Judge Pao felt himself floating for some reason. He didn’t come back to life for no reason. He fulfilled his purpose, to serve justice. Now that he had done that, he could return back to where he came from.

Guilty or Innocent

St. Stephen's College, Chan, Yat Lam Miles – 14

Everyone was facing the far end of the courtroom where a wooden table was. Behind the table, stood giant marble doors that were ornamented with a beautiful shimmering red. The doors creaked open and a man entered the room. He had dark skin and wore a black robe with a golden dragon on it. On his head, lay a black hat, a pearl is planted in the centre. He had a pair of big and lively eyes, wore a well-tended beard, and there was a unique mark on his forehead, one that looked like a half moon. The room suddenly became abnormally stiff, people were so quiet that you could hear the sound of the man's breath. He was Judge Pao, China's most famous and recognised judge. With such dignity, his presence dominated the room. Pao was determined to make a rational ruling. He – China's most significant judge – abides by the laws of justice with the strong belief that justice shall always be served.

“Good morning ladies and gentlemen, calling the case of the Emperor's Royal Court versus Leung Yat Ming.” Pao's majestic voice echoed within the hall, “are both sides ready?”

Two men standing in front of the crowd replied, “Yes”

Pao introduced, “the prosecutor representing His Majesty's Court, Yeung Hoi Tak, your opening statement please.”

One of the man – Yeung replied, “Your Honour, on the afternoon of 17th of November three days ago, businessman Chang Wai Shing's body was discovered on the suburbs of this county by passerby Lam Man Hong, who immediately contacted local authorities. Chang was identified as dead upon the arrival of the royal police. Cause of death is currently unknown since there were no fatal marks or wounds found on his body. The defendant Leung Yat Ming is suspected of killing Chang. He is Chang's neighbour and was observed behaving erratically upon receiving the news of Chang's death. After investigations, Leung's fingerprints were identified on Chang's clothing, he was therefore arrested and is currently charged with Chang's murder.”

Pao then commanded, “the defender of the defendant, Wong Chun Lok, your opening statement please.”

The other man in front – Wong replied, “Your Honour, the defendant denies any charges related to the murder of Chang.”

Pao raised his eyebrow, “does the defendant have anything else to add?”

Wong replied, “Nothing, your Honour.”

Strange, Pao thought. Of all the cases he had dealt with, the defendants – whether guilty or not – would make good use of their opening statements. He looked at the man behind Wong. The man was dressed in ragged blue robes which were covered with dirt, with his hands tied together behind his back. He was surrounded by two muscular guards. That was Leung, Pao thought. Leung made the choice to be concise, which was quite unsettling for Pao. But Pao was extremely sure that he was going to make the right judgement. He just needed more evidence. Justice must be served.

Pao said, “bring in our first witness.”

Yeung read, “Mr Au Tin Chi – Chang and Leung's neighbour.” He then questioned, “Mr Au, have you observed anything strange about Chang or Leung on the day of the murder?”

Au answered, “Everything was normal. Though it's worth mentioning that I saw Leung entering Chang's house at 10am.”

Pao chimed in, “what was the defendant doing at the victim’s house?”

Wong replied, “Your Honour, the defendant was visiting the victim.”

Pao signalled Yeung to continue. Yeung said, “Mr Au, what have you observed about Leung after the murder?”

Au answered, “when the royal police came to Chang’s house, we all went to the door to see what was happening. When they announced Chang’s death, Leung was suddenly twitching and squirming silently, this was very weird because Leung had only recently moved in and wasn’t that close to Chang.”

Pao asked, “why did the defendant behave that way?” Wong replied, “Your Honour, the defendant was merely alarmed by the news of his neighbour’s death.”

Yeung said, “this is everything the witness has to say. Thank you.”

Pao thought, I can’t make a judgement right now. I need more facts. “Bring in the fingerprint examiner.”

Yeung read, “Mr Hong Yau Shun – the forensic pathologist. Mr Hong, where have you identified Leung’s fingerprints?”

Hong answered, “they were identified everywhere on Chang’s clothing.”

Pao was getting impatient, “and why would the defendant’s fingerprints be identified everywhere on the victim’s clothing if the defendant had only gone for a drink?”

Leung looked at Wong apprehensively, who replied, “Your Honour, the defendant only patted the back of the victim as a gesture of comfort. It wasn’t a fatal move at all...”

“But why did the defendant have to pat the victim’s back?” Pao interrupted.

“Your Honour, the victim has recently experienced economic loss and as a result expressed his sadness towards the defendant during their meeting.”

And he gets away again! Pao shifted uneasily in his seat. If justice had to be served, he needed more time and evidence... “Court is adjourned until 10am tomorrow,” he declared before immediately retreating into his office behind the red doors. He could feel sweat dripping from his forehead. *What should he do now?* He was losing control of this case as time progressed. Out of all cases he had dealt with, he had made the right judgement, he had sent the wicked to jail or proved the innocence of an innocent man. But this one just doesn’t feel the same. Pao was very sure that Leung was guilty. He had no doubts. But could he be wrong? Pao was delving deep into his thoughts. He needed more facts.

That afternoon, Pao visited the Royal Judicial Library. He went straight to the criminal files section and browsed around for something. In the end, one file from the ‘C’ column caught his eye and he pulled it off the shelf. As he read through the file, he felt overwhelmed with astonishment. He had new evidence that was beyond his imagination.

The next morning, Judge Pao walked through the red doors again. This time, he was more confident and carried an even stronger voice, “court resumes, are both sides ready?”

Both Yeung and Wong replied, “yes!”

Pao stated, “what did the defendant and victim do in the victim’s house on the day of the murder?”

Wong quickly glanced at Leung, who nodded approvingly, before replying, “The defendant and victim drank and talked.”

Pao continued, “and what did the victim Chang have for a drink?”

Leung whispered to Wong, who answered, “tea, Your Honour.”

Pao was delighted, “the prosecutor may bring in the witness.”

Yeung introduced, “Mr Hong Yau Shun – forensic pathologist in charge of Chang’s body – is here again this morning with some news. Mr Hong, what is Chang’s cause of death?”

Hong responded, “liquid poisoning.”

“And was tea discovered in his system?”

“No.”

Pao was over the moon, “could the defendant please explain the contradiction?”

For once, Wong was speechless.

Pao stated, “I recently came across the criminal file of Chang Wai Shing. He was the suspect of the murder of Mrs Leung Yin Mei but his charges were all dropped due to insufficient evidence. May I ask the defendant himself, is Mrs Leung your wife?”

Leung was aghast, “yes.”

“You were certain that Chang was her killer so you moved near him and tried to get closer to him, so that you could get revenge for your wife. On the day of the murder, you did have a drink with Chang but you filled his cup with poison instead of tea. And after he died from drinking it, you carried him to the suburbs of this county to dispose of, which was why fingerprints were found nearly everywhere on his clothing. But you didn’t expect others to discover his body in the suburbs so you behaved strangely when his death was announced. Am I right?”

Tears spilled out of Leung’s eyes and rolled down his red cheeks, “that villain killed my wife! Justice wasn’t served so I made my own justice!”

Justice, thought Pao, *Leung was only trying to serve justice. But he had admitted to murder. And I must also serve justice.* “I hereby declare that Leung Yat Ming is guilty of murder and is sentenced to 30 years of imprisonment, starting immediately.”

Wong suddenly shouted, “Your Honour, the defendant committed murder, but he was doing that out of love! Please reconsider!”

Pao looked at Wong, bewildered, then looked at Leung. He was facing a dilemma. All these years, he had served justice. Yet he had never faced anything like this. “The defendant’s pleas are rejected. Murder is a crime. This can never be overruled. Case resolved!”

As Judge Pao walked through the red doors once again, he cannot help but feel empathy for Leung. He was also serving justice... But a judge abides by the rules of justice and no matter what, rules are rules, even if he regrets following them.

The Judge

St. Stephen's College, Chung, Tin Wai Esther – 14

On a street in Kai Feng, a sleepy, tired man, reached his hand to the door lock of the door below the wooden board engraving the words: Cheung's Restaurant. He stretched his arms and wandered off. But after just a second, a stroke of lightening pierced the dull dark sky, roared with a low rumble to a sudden, loud crack. The man halted. 'PING', a high, shrilled noise ran through the ground as the glass bottle the man was holding dropped, following a prolonged, shaky scream accompanied by ear-splitting squeaking sounds, echoing off the streets of Kaifeng...

'PONG PONG' the gong banged outside the Kaifeng Temple. A young, handsome, armed man hurried down the stairs and rushed through the gates. A pale, skin man then heaved into his sight. The skinny man leaped forward, looking like as if he was going to faint.

"Sir...I'm innocent...they falsely accused me,I'm innocent...help me..." He then collapsed.

The young man quickly placed his hand to the skinny man's hand, checking if he still had a pulse. Suddenly, a dour voice ran into his years, "Zhan Chao? What's the matter?" A strong man with a yellow moon scar on his head stood behind the young man.

The young man then turned around, "Judge Pao, a man who was ringing the gong collapsed..." Judge Pao leaped forward, and after a mere moment, he hesitated and exclaimed, "wait...isn't he Chef Cheung from Cheung's Restaurant?"

Zhan Chao and Chef Cheung exchanged looks and carried the skinny man into the Kaifeng temple hastily.

After an hour, the man finally woke up. " So you are accused of killing 30 people on the streets?" Pao asked.

Chef Cheung nodded, " I'm innocent, Judge Pao, but the government said the only clue they found at the time of murdering was my rat pets running maniacally all over the place...so they..."

Pao slowly nodded, as if he was thinking of something. "Let's go to the crime scene and investigate first, shall we?"

However, at the time they arrived at the crime scene, there was nothing, not even blood. Pao and Zhan Chao then waited behind the cobblestone wall near the crime scene for a whole week. But every night, only screaming and squeaking noises ran into their ears, while nothing appeared. Meanwhile, every morning, more and more dead bodies appeared on the streets, with blood and flesh scattered all over the walls and stinky smell lingering in the air.

"This is definitely something related to supernatural issues, but who would it be..." Judge Pao exhaled and scratched his head.

Suddenly, a familiar figure far away from the temple gates ran nearer and nearer, along with a voice shouting , "Judge, judge Pao! I think you should check out this!" It was Zhan Chao's voice! Pao cleared his mind and ran through the gate.

Zhan Chao lead Pao to the Cheung's restaurant and suddenly paused in front of the bushes behind the house.

"Huh?" Pao looked at Zhan Chao, rather confused.

But after just one second, Pao understood the situation. There was something behind the house, a place where the murderer came from. Pao and Zhan Chao exchanged sombre looks and their hands reached the bushes to make a way through.

It was a house. Behind the restaurant was an old, abandoned house that hadn't been used for the past 200 years. There was a rusty well and a little cabin with its bricks falling off. A cold, dull, shivering air surrounded the house, as if there were any ghosts there.

Pao used his fingers to swipe up one of the rusty dust lying on the floor, "so it was coming from here...bet the ghost scared those rats off when it came from here...through the bushes and to the back door of the restaurant..." he spoke as he strolled through the bushes again.

"Zhan Chao, prepare to set a trap using this", he handed a magical rope that seemed half invisible to Zhan Chao.

Zhan Chao hanged back, "Wait what...what is this?"

Pao smiled, "no worries, it is going to be useful, just do what I say."

Zhan Chao delayed for a minute, and got hold of the miraculous rope, while looking at Pao with bewilderment.

On another dreadful night, a gust of wind travelled through the bushes. A white, gloomy smoke hovered above the bushes as a space cleared out between the bushes. All of a sudden, the air froze, so did time. A black figure halted as its right leg was caught by a rope. It tried to struggle its way out of the rope, moving more furiously over time.

"Stop it. There's no way you can escape the invisible rope." Pao yelled as he and Zhan Chao charged their way out from behind the cobblestone wall.

"Who are you? Why do you have to kill hundreds of people? Did you ever feel guilty for what you have done?!" Zhan Chao hurtled towards the black shadow, and tried to grab the shadow.

But before he could land his hand on the shadow, Pao hauled Zhan Chao back, and glared at the shadow fiercely,

"You are busted. We are bringing you to a trail in the Infernal Bureaucracy."

The shadow exhaled and didn't mutter a single word.

Zhan Chao who was dragging the shadow along, followed Pao back on the way to Kaifeng temple.

"Wait...that... that isn't Kaifeng temple...?" Zhan Chao widened his mouth as he saw a purple temple made out of metal, unlike the red stone Kaifeng temple he usually sees."

Pao grinned, "since I used the invisible rope, it has automatically teleported us to hell. and this," as he pointed towards the temple, "is the Infernal Bureaucracy."

"Hell??? What...? You mean the real hell? Oh...oh my god! Hell does exists!" Zhan Chao enlarged his pupils. Pao finally couldn't hold back and bursted out laughing as he saw Zhan Chao's surprised face while he kept on marching up the stairs of the purple temple.

“So, you are the first emperor of Southern Song, Emperor Song, right?” Pao said calmly as he scanned across the black shadow’s body. Zhan Chao stood there, shocked, frozen as he heard Pao’s question.

“Yes, I am.” The shadow responded with no tone nor expression. The shadow then started to mutter,

“200 years ago, when I was still the emperor, my brother was ambitious, and greedy. One night, he used a hammer and hit my head from behind, and eventually, here I am, dead, while he suffered no punishment,” he gulped, then continued, “Vengeance was in my blood as the days gone by,” and raised his infuriated voice, “and I just felt like everyone should be punished for my death. None of them had ever appealed for justice for my case!”

Pao hit his table hard, followed with a loud ‘bang’. Everyone turned silent. Then Pao began to utter, “even if your brother was guilty, you shouldn’t seek revenge. Anger doesn’t change anything, it wouldn’t change the fact that you’re not an emperor anymore. In fact, by murdering people, you have only become a person worse than your brother, is it really worth it? Have you even thought about the feelings of the family and friends of the people you killed? “

The shadow paused and began to weep loudly.

Pao continued, “Emperor Song, you are now guilty of murdering 156 people on the streets, you will be sentenced to slavery, and forever be locked in hell.”

The shadow tilted its head down while two vicious guards came and dragged him towards the door on the left...

Since then, Kaifeng became peaceful again.

The Rose

St. Stephen's College, Ho, Hoi Lam Kylie – 14

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang! The rhythmic footsteps echoed through the empty hallway. Moonlight softly shone through the clouds and illuminated the garden. Guard Kim marched through the hallway. Then, he stopped as if he saw a ghost. He walked slowly to the garden, his sweat trickled to the ground soundlessly. A body was lying impeccably in a peaceful manner surrounded by bloomed roses. It was Lily, the Long's family maid. Her skin was pale as a ghost, her eyes were lifeless, purple veins showing through her delicate skin. She was wearing nothing but was holding a white rose.

"This is not an accident. It is a murder" said Kim. He ran, the leaves dancing as he ran to his Master's bedroom. He burst through the door. "MASTER..! I AM SORRY TO DISTURB YOU BUT LILY THE MAID IS DEAD!" shouted Kim who was trying to catch his breath.

Master jumped out of bed and put on his coat. He ordered guards to the garden. The sound of rushing footsteps immediately filled the house.

Judge Pao was working in his office. The sound of flipping books filled the quiet room. A sole candle lay on his desk. Boom! The door opened and the candle went out as the office doors were slammed open.

"What's the matter, Master Long? It's already late at night." asked Judge Pao.

"My..My...ma...id...is...mur...dared..!" said Master Long. Judge Pao rang a bell and four men came out. They were royal guards, Wang Chao, Ma Han, Zhang Long and Zhao Hu. Before Master Long notices them, the royal guards have dashed through the gates.

Judge Pao and the four royal guards searched the garden. The moon was covered by the clouds, the sky was dark and a cold breeze kept billowing. Guards standing around the garden kept people away while other maids were muttering. The royal guards searched, not giving up any clue. Judge Pao searched every room. But when he walked by the master's bedroom, he saw white roses. 'White roses?' thought Judge Pao.

A maid with eyes like the ocean walked by, and it seems like mysteries were hidden behind those ravishing eyes. She is Rose, another Long's family maid, a roommate and friend of the murdered maid.

"Rose, when was the last time you saw Lily?" questioned Judge Pao.

"Oh Judge Pao.... We were both ready for bed but then Lily said she was feeling unwell and went outside for a walk." said Rose whose eyes were filled with tears.

"Did she have conflicts with anyone lately?" said Judge Pao.

"Yes. Just last month, Lily was accused of stealing a ring from one of the maids. The ring was never found." answered Rose.

"Guard Kim, what kind of person was Lily?" questioned Judge Pao.

"She was the boss overseeing maids. She was never nice to anyone except the Master," said Kim.

"Master?" Judge Pao's eyes opened all of a sudden as if he saw a diamond.

"Oh. There are rumours that the Master was having an affair with Lily. I guess Lady Long's anger issue seemed to scare the master away," said Kim.

"Interesting..." Judge Pao smirked and left the garden.

The next morning , the body of Lily was placed on a table. Her skin seemed to be pale and liquid was trickling from her opening mouth. “ The girl was poisoned,” said the forensic examiner. “and pregnant.”

“Pregnant .Affair .Pregnant .Affair .” repeated judge Pao while he nodded his head.

Judge Pao and his guards rushed to the Long’s Family. “I demand to see Lady Long!” His voice raised louder as he spoke each word. Lady Long walked gracefully to the room and was confused by the arrival of Judge Pao.

“How is your relationship with your husband?”questioned Pao.

“How is this relevant to the case, Judge Pao? Thought you were better than this,” answered Lady Long sarcastically.

“It is,” said Pao.

“We are the role models for newly wed couples. How dare you doubt our relationship!” said Lady Long.

“I’m not hiding anything from now on, your husband had an affair with the maid. You knew about this so you killed her. Oh not to mention she is pregnant.”

Suddenly, Rose kneeled down and started crying. “Sir, it’s me. I killed her because I hated her.”

“Guards! Take these two ladys to the court at once!”

“Court!” shouted Judge Pao. Crowds of people were at the court, coming to see the chaos of the well–respected Long family.

Women whispered, men pointed, people yelled. The court was filled with noises of people.

“Silence !”yelled Pao. The crowd died down but the heat had not.

“Today, we are going to judge the case of the maid and the flower. Master Long you may now speak.”

“Yes, I was having an affair with Lily, the maid,” muttered Master Long.

The crowd gasped. “I cannot stand my wife and I had to find someone else. Lily was the one. I love my wife but...” said master Long.

“Bring the defendants!” shouted Judge Pao.

“Why would I murder a maid? I am well educated and kind. Please Judge Pao, tell me why.”

“Well then, explain the WHITE ROSES IN YOUR ROOM!”

“HAHAHA! I guess there is nothing to hide, I did kill Lily. She deserved it. I am just helping the gods to punish her. Isn’t it, judge Pao?” Lady Long smiled.

“You psychopath!” yelled someone from the crowd.

“Silence !”

“I am her boss anyways. knowing Rose put those drops of poison everyday in her food makes me feel closer to my victory. And at last I won!” Lady Long laughed hysterically.

“Lady Long and Rose, you are both arrested for murder!” Judge Pao slammed the wood to the table. “Sir, it was Lady Long who ordered me to do it! I AM INNOCENT!”cried Rose. “THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR YOU

TWO!" Yelled Pao.

Lady Long laughed non stop in the court. She was sentenced to life in prison . Rumour had it that she was a demon from hell. A demon whose skin is as red as fire, bright amber eyes like the sun, horns as sharp as knives. No one knows where her body was. Some say they saw her spirit in the mountains. But no one knows truth, nor can anyone find it.

Justice

St. Stephen's College, Liu, Zishuo Adam – 14

It was a peaceful day, nothing much was happening. Pao was going through his daily routine. Just the usual, like collecting firewood, helping his neighbors with their errands, and of course, studying for his future exam to become a Jinshi.

Pao had memories of when he was eating barely a meal a day. His family suffered financially, yet their landlord at the time had not even the tiniest shred of empathy. The tyrannical man was squeezing every drop of money from them even when he already had tons of wealth and tenants. An odd thing is that the landlord would never accept any foreign renters, proclaiming them as “unworthy”, quite unusual for a man as greedy as him.

Every time when Pao saw his parents’ grimace as the landlord knocked on their door, he pondered why they couldn’t just move out. Only later did he learn that there was a housing shortage, and that was the only reason why the landlord had been able to raise the rent to such an absurdity. Eventually, Pao’s family could no longer afford their rent. They thought about bringing this to court, hoping that such high rent was enough to be illegal. However, after noticing, the landlord requested that they deal with this without the court’s involvement, and he will pay a hefty compensation for them to never speak of this again. The family ended up accepting this, and everything was settled. He felt like something was wrong.

Not long after, Pao was able to throw the unpleasant memory to the back of his head for the time being and went shopping for his lunch. When he was on his way back from the marketplace. He saw a tiny dot enlarging quicker and quicker on the road in front of him. However, it was a little too late when he could finally recognize the figure rapidly approaching. A donkey was charging at him at an incredible speed and his life flashed before his eyes. Upon impact, Pao felt a sharp pain shooting through his body. The world faded into darkness.

Pao turned around, that’s when he noticed an old man sitting on a chair, observing him with eyes so sharp that can seemingly stab through his soul.

“Ah, a human, and a one with potential too. Not too common to be running around here after all those things that happened... Say, are you new here?”

Pao tried to run, for this man seemed like a complete psychopath, but he was unable to move an inch. He was dumbfounded at this point, from being struck by a sonic speed donkey, and now an old man can stop him from moving.

The old man continued, “I’ll take that as a yes. Here, have a seat, I’ll walk you through the situation here at hell.”

Pao didn’t even know how to answer anymore, his body moved on their own, putting him down on a chair besides the man.

“I’m sure you’re confused right now, so listen. You are in hell, you are dead, and I will help you return to the realm of humankind.”

“What?” Pao finally muttered, unable to process the information.

The old man replied, “Yes, young man, you have passed away. Originally there should’ve been a guide at your spawn point, but after all the mess we’ve been through, we’ve stopped accepting humans and instead just led them to heaven no matter their beliefs or actions.”

Pao was finally able to calm himself down, and asked, “But— How did I get here?”

“In fact, the only reason you survived is because I still garner respect and they dare not enter my house. However, I am unable to control the situation as I have no army, though I am powerful, I can’t just wipe out everyone to solve this.”

Pao was beginning to figure something out, and so he asked, “Right... And I assume you are...”

The old man smiled, “Indeed, it is as you have guessed. The only thing I can do is to wait for everyone’s rage to slowly drop and get all the humans out of here. Since you were never meant to be here, I’ll attempt to get you out of here with no harm. It is the least I can do, I am supposed to maintain justice and balance here after all.”

Pao asked, “Alright... What should I do to get myself out of here then?”

The old man said, “The plan is simple. We head over to the Bridge of Forgetfulness and you walk over, don’t worry, you aren’t reincarnating, there’s nobody to handle the reincarnation process anyways. We’re just using that as an exit. For now, you can rest here for a day or two, I’ll have to prepare some items.”

After a couple days, the two moved on and traversed the hellish landscape, many along the way stared at them. Some were full of respect, bowing before them, some had a hint of rage, but seemed too afraid to show it, and some were hidden within the darkness of alleyways, observing quietly. The duo soon arrived before The Bridge, which led to a path filled with fog and uncertainty.

“It’s been a short but pleasant walk, young man. You have potential, for you can see through what’s on the surface and understand my identity as the ruler of hell with only a brief conversation. I’m sure you can achieve great things, now go, back to where you belong,” the old man said.

It was logical for Pao to walk over without hesitation, run even. But something was making him hesitate, to think, to be concerned, and so he walked slowly, very slowly.

“SWOOSH”

“SPLAT”

Pao heard two consecutive sounds right behind him, as he turned, he saw a shimmering, giant stamp sitting on top of a body, a shattered dagger laying next to it.

“Don’t worry about that. Some humans really want me dead because of my power and my stance on the situation. Keep walking.”

Pao sensed the authoritative tone. He kept walking, but that lingering dread, uncertainty, and hesitation still had not left.

“SWOOSH”

“SPLAT”

“Ah, another o—”

“SWOOSH”

“SWOOSH”

“SWOOSH”

“SWOOSH”

“SWOOSH”

“SWOOSH”

When Pao turned around this time, the old man was lying on the floor, multiple daggers piercing his withering body. Around him stood a group of men. Of which one Pao recognized.

“Landlord!” Pao shouted, his voiced filled with rage and fear from what he had just witnessed.

The landlord looked at him, “Oh, is it one of my former tenants? Why, welcome to hell!”

Pao, almost shouting at this point, “You bastard! Why are you doing this?”

“Why, for justice of course! I’ve been wanting to kill the ruler of hell. It’s finally time to bring justice to this place!” The landlord said, with excitement leaking from his voice.

Justice. Pao thought. What is justice? It’s to not come up with a judgement without proof and truth. To Pao, justice now means to return karma to those who deserves it. To put forth a verdict that is free from all subjectiveness. And to not ignore what is wrong.

“No, you are wrong. Your reasoning and subsequently your actions have been proven to cause unwanted results. You need to stop.” Pao said, with courage.

The landlord snickered, “Oh yea right, what are you gonna do? Call the police? Revive the ‘Ruler of Hell’ and tell him to beat me up? Come on, stop being so naïve.”

“Ahem”

A cough came from the floor.

“Who said I was dead?”

The old man climbed up to his feet, shaking off a couple of daggers in the process.

“Did you really think mere mortals can defeat me with daggers forged with such poor skill and material? Stop being so naïve.”

The landlord’s jaw dropped.

With a wave of his hand, the landlord was bundled up with a big glowing rope and tied to a pole, all while being muffled by something that cannot be seen.

Pao said, “I wish to return to my own realm and maintain justice there. There aren’t so many wise emperors like you out there.”

The old man thought for a second, and then spoke, “How about I grant you the ability to return during the daytime, and traverse here during night? The best of both worlds, literally.”

And this, is how Judge Pao the Legend came into existence.

The Daze

St. Stephen's College, To, Tsz Yan Ivany – 14

It was a gloomy day, with murky skies and silent streets. What used to be filled with noise and chatter on the streets, merchants shouting over each and citizens gathering in circles to gossip about the latest news, turned into a near-empty space. People could hear their footsteps as they walked, and the wind's eerie noises whirled past their ears.

Detective Pao was anxiously gnawing on his *man tou* while he looked out his window. The newspaper in his hand, given by the Doctor — the gleeful and charming healer to everyone's illnesses — had the words: Fifth Missing Case? Bolded, with text underneath in smaller words: *no one truly knows where they've disappeared or how they're gone...is anyone going to be next?*

As soon as there was nothing but crumbs on his plate, he folded the newspaper he was holding, slipped it into his pocket and paced his way quickly to the outskirts of the town, hoping to find information— if there was any at all. Searching four out of five of the victim's houses, he huffed as he saw nothing: blood, footprints, unusual areas, none at all. But how could he give up? He was a detective, after all. And so, with a sigh, he stepped into the empty building which of the very last victim.

As Detective Pao was inspecting the scene, he took a brief look at the bedroom. The whole housing unit was incredibly tidy, but there was something that ticked the detective off. A corner of a shirt stuck out of the drawer, and as he opened it, he saw a an unfolded shirt and trousers. As he walked closer, he realized that the bed, although considered tidy, was wrinkled in the middle.

The detectives' heart thumped slightly quicker than usual, a bitter taste in his mouth. He quickly shook his head, closed his eyes and left the house in a hurry. It dawned on him that there was a small lead to the crime. All of the houses had almost the exact same things in common — it didn't matter if they were clean, dirty, came from a richer household or a relatively poorer one. They all had a pair of clothing items messily shoved into one of their drawers or a closet, though some were fairly tidier than the others. And all their beds had a wrinkle almost at the exact same spot.

Pao bit his lip, almost certain of what's to come. He knew what he would do next might make him faint. He made a rash decision — leaning in on the bed in front of him and sniffing the bedsheet briefly. He smelled a slightly-sweet scent, and he started feeling dizzy.

His brows furrowed as he was ever-the-more certain of his hypothesis. He opened the cabinet that had a set of untidy clothing, and he sniffed it once again. Bingo. The scent was on the clothing once again. A wave of dizziness came over his senses and he closed his eyes for a moment to calm down. The detective grasped at the little information left in his mind. It's been five nights, and five missing cases. The most predictable and foreseeable time the criminal strikes again would be...tonight.

As soon as the detective realized the urgency of the situation, he ran into his office, hoping that not another person would be harmed. But to do so, he must...find a willing sacrifice. Opening a file that contained all of the citizens basic information, he found the common phenomena of the five missing people. They were all young, some who just turned eighteen while others were around fifteen to seventeen, and there were both men and women. Upon a realisation that the kidnapper liked...minors, the detective wanted to puke.

The detective slammed the door of an apartment open with urgency

“Abigail, I have to talk to you.”

A 20 year old woman who was reading a leaflet on her couch looked up at Pao with a raised brow.

“You sound desperate, Pao. Is this about work?” She said, anxious for what’s to come.

Pao never asked for her help in professional matters. The detective explained everything with a hurry, knowing that the woman was capable of defending herself. She was the only person he could trust at the moment to do the job.

“*Please*, Abigail, I don’t want anyone to be hurt anymore,” he held Abigail’s arms and she felt the sweaty palms of his, “It won’t last long — I’ll protect you, I promise.” His eyes showed desperation as he spoke.

As she looked into his irises, all hesitation disappeared from her heart. He needed her help.

That night, she willingly took on the task for the sake of her friend whom she trusted with her life. Quite literally, this time.

Opening the door of her apartment, she purposefully left it unlocked, keeping a calm composure. She snuggled into the sheets of her guest bed, terrified of the little trap she and Detective Pao set together. The man she plotted with was in a secret and empty cabinet on the ceiling of her special guest room, who opted to bring only a pocket knife with him; spying equipment would be too risky.

A figure in the shadows slowly approached Abigail, who was facing the side of the bed opposite to the door. Trying not to make a sound, the detective peeked through the small gap between the cabinet and the ceiling. His eyes widened in fear when he witnessed how swift the man was lifting the blanket that covered the woman and covering her mouth with chloroform. With a devilish grin, he whispered into her ear, “Shh...” His heart thumped with fear. *Please don’t hurt her*, he thought.

Abigail continued to shut her eyes in fear. As she felt the breath of the kidnapper against the nape of her neck, she started trembling although already having anticipated such events happening. Her brain was in a haze and she felt dizzy. She wanted to run. To punch the kidnapper in the jaw. Her rational side stopped her, however. *For the sake of our town. Our people*, she thought, *I have to be calm*.

A loud, collective thump was what lifted her anxiety and allowed her to open her eyes. Detective Pao leaped from the cabinet onto the man, strangling him with his arms. The man managed to grab a sharp and thin knife from his pocket, almost stabbing the detective in the stomach.

Regaining her senses, Abigail crawled away from the fight, nervously looked around the room, trying to find something that could help the detective. Her eyes glinted and she rushed to grab something. Her eyes were brimmed with tears, afraid of what the kidnapper could do to her friend.

The detective had been in many fights. He was supposed to be experienced. Yet, with another person who he needed to protect, he didn’t know what to do other than to strangle the invader’s neck with a headlock. He had managed to knock the knife in his hand with a strong kick with his knee, but he didn’t know how much longer he could hold for. His grip on the kidnapper was loosening, and the invader was about to slip away from his grasp when—

Plunk.

A sharp red object zoomed across the detective’s eyes, hitting the temple of the other man. Eyes rolled, he dropped to the floor and the detective was quick to push him down a step further to make sure he was unconscious. He then picked up the item that was thrown, looking at it with amusement. “Really? The heel I gifted you?” He said in a teasing tone.

“I thought you gave it to me out of appreciation,” she scoffed playfully, “who knew it would help you five years later?” They laughed with each other, both secretly glad that all the drama was over. The detective realised they were still staying in a room with little to no light, and so he turned it on to find information on the man Abigail knocked unconscious.

“The...the Doctor?” He uttered in disbelief as he looked into the woman’s eyes, and she was as shocked as he was.

“He...was noble. An act. It was all an act...” Abigail replied with disappointment and shock. “Let’s...drag him out. I do not want to see him ever again.”

And so, now that they realised it was a member of their own town who caused chaos, they stomped over to the hospital The Doctor owned. With the key in one of the Doctor’s pockets, they opened the furthest room in the hospital and found the missing people. They were released, and so the tragedies of the young, missing people were over.

That day, Detective Pao had been reminded that people aren’t always what they appear to be — and that the friendly, lawfully good doctor in his town was psychotic.

Eternal Justice

St. Stephen's College, Ying, Chuk Chan – 14

In the Tang Dynasty, in a dimly lit room, pieces of crumpled up paper and a writing brush half-dried with ink, lay scattered on the mat, blown off by the gusting wind.

“Forgive?”, “Punish?”. These two words were scribbled haphazardly on a piece of paper repeatedly. On one of the pages, it wrote:

“Diary of Pao. Day 303. I yet again feel burdened by the weight of my heart. What makes a good judge? Lenient or fair?”

Thud! The guards had yanked her lice-filled hair, and threw her fragile body to the cold stone tile. Pao’s subordinate, Chao had to use all his might to shout over the crowd,” This woman is Wu De. A recidivist of thievery.”

The crowd booed upon the announcement of her name, and some were cursing her. Apparently, she wasn’t the most likeable person in the village, Pao thought.

“What crimes did Wong commit? Pao asked. Chao replied dutifully,

“Wong stole valuables from at least 20 houses...”

“She stole our last chicken, my family was already starving, my son was almost dead, Judge, you must execute her!” A man in rags bellowed from the stands.

Looking up from the ground, Wu De, wepted in despair, “I stole so that my family could survive, I did not mean to harm your son or anyone...but after stealing for some time, I couldn’t stop myself now when I stumbled upon valuables...please Judge Pao, have mercy on me...” seeing Pao’s knitted eyebrows, Chao whispered in his ear, “Wu De’s husband died early and she had to take care both of their parents and their daughter.”

Just then, the crowd rose in to a chant, “Punish her! Punish her!”

“Silence!” Pao shouted and banged the gavel onto the table.

“The case would continue tomorrow, I shall consider your request and do what is just,” however, a small voice in his heart rang, “maybe she deserves a second chance.”

Pao couldn’t sleep that night. He treaded in the garden. Did she really deserve execution? Or was the world to blame for her suffering? What would happen to her family? How would the crowd react if I gave her a lenient punishment? Pao hurled his thoughts into the glittery sky of the howling wind.

A lily blooming from the cracks of the garden’s wall caught his attention. How fortitudinous. Yet pitiful. He bent his body and plucked the lily from its roots. He began picking its petals out one by one while muttering his worries, “Forgive? Punish? Forgive?...”

The gusting wind suddenly grew stronger, puffing his long hair in all directions. The damp smell of water had filled the garden.

“I should head back inside.” Pao thought. What he did not notice was the lily shimmering in his hand. He took off in strides and then proceeded to run, his black coat fluttering behind him. Cackling clouds had formed behind his back, and they were closing upon him. Before he could turn back and observe, a bolt came down from the heavens and zapped him right in his forehead. Everything blacked out as he moved his lips to let out a scream.

Blinded. Pao was blinded the moment he tried to smack his eyes open. There was an unnatural light blazing through his pupils, and he tried to feel his whereabouts. Forcing his eyes open, he gradually adapted to the radiance. It had come from the ceiling, but it wasn't the sun. As he glanced around, he noticed himself sitting in a crowd of orderly arranged people. Pao had expected to be drowned in noise with this amount of people, but there was no sound except for the humming of an weird object in the ceiling.

"Court!" Pao heard someone shouted. People alongside him stood up simultaneously, and he, to avoid being left out, did too. One person draped in robes and in curly hair sauntered in and sat down in the highest chair. Only then, people relaxed back into their seats. This is a court, and they're judging a case! Pao came to realise. He caught scent of power radiating from the person sitting high up, and felt the pulsating respect amongst the crowd. Everything felt so familiar yet so distant.

He then noticed there were two people, also draped in robes sitting directly in front of the judge. They were each sitting on the opposite sides of the table respectively and Pao could sense the icicles between them. They started off with powerful speeches and appealing hand gestures, but Pao found it extremely difficult to keep up with the Cantonese dialect. He looked around, and his eyes locked on the handcuffed man in striped clothing and sitting behind bars.

His heart skipped a guilty beat, when he was struck by how much alike this man was with Wu De, both with eyes filled with melancholy. Hearing the word, "drug trafficking", Pao shifted his attention back to the now civilly arguing people. One of them was accusing the man, and the other defending him. Imagine, a defender provided for the victim despite who they were. From his knowledge, only royalties or the rich would have a defender, and the man sitting sulkily behind the bars was clearly neither one of them.

Pao heard the two civilly arguing, droning on and on, and see them display lists of evidence. The accused was obviously guilty. Now the prosecutor sat down, and the defence attorney was on the stage. The defence attorney went silent, then she turned to the man behind the bars, as all eyes in the court darted toward the same direction. The accused gingerly spoke into the speaker, and admitted transporting drugs without acknowledging what they truly were. "My mother has dementia, and all those I have to spend so much time taking care of her, while I have to earn money to pay for my child's school fee...I...", but he couldn't continue as he was drowned in a pool of tears, "I am so so sorry..." The defence attorney paused for a dramatic moment, and slowly walked towards the jury box, pleading with the man's impoverished background and that he wasn't the mastermind of the drug smuggling.

Her strategy certainly worked. Pao himself could feel urged to help this poor man. Seeing the success of her plea, the defence attorney smiled and strolled back to her seat proudly. Then, it was announced that the jury could exit court and discuss.

In a short time, it was unanimously decided that the accused was guilty. Pao felt his heartbeat quicken as he waited for the judge to deliberate the sentence.

"Mr. David Choi is guilty., However, we decide to give him four years of imprisonment due to special circumstances," the judge announced.

Pao let out a sigh of relief, and he scanned around the room to observe everyone's reactions. The judges sat solemnly, and the prosecution seemed a bit deflated; the defence attorney had a small smile on her face. Then Pao saw the defendant in tears, but he gave a somehow distorted smile. Puzzled, Pao tried to meet his gaze, and when he did, he could see the defendant's past spread out in his brain like a vision: the defendant indeed had an elderly mother with dementia, but he had taken all her allowances to gamble himself in underground casinos; he joined the drug dealing voluntarily, clearly knowing what his was doing and the money for the defence attorney was also stolen from his mother savings.

Pao felt rage growing in him. But before he could reveal the truth to others, he was zapped back into the garden. He steadied his breaths. Even with a perfect law system, people could still lie, he thought. If then, why should I be lenient to Wu De? She could also be lying. Being harsh is the rightest and won't go wrong anyway.

The next day, Pao announced solemnly, "Wu De shall be executed immediately, guilty of repeated thievery!" And the crowd burst into joyful cheers and praises of Pao. But Pao could not help questioning himself again as the execution was carried out, "What if she was speaking the truth then? Her family would not survive if she was dead." But this time a voice chided him, "You should not be lenient Pao, she would harm more people if we let her get away."

Pao met Wu De's gaze before her death, she was quiet as a lamb, but her eyes harboured nothing else but hatred. And those eyes would haunt Pao for many days to come.

Five years later, a young thief was brought upon Pao, and he immediately recognised Wu De's eyes on her. Some people say the apple don't fall from the tree. Or perhaps punishment wasn't the best solution.

The Ice Murderer

Stanford American School Hong Kong, Lu, Cheuk Yi Jacky – 13

I admit that Pao, a friend of mine, is a brilliant judge.

Five years ago, Pao came to Duan city for just 1 month. He was sitting in his armchair in his residence and doing his own job.

Ten minutes later, the servant came, “My dear Mr. Pao, there is a woman in the garden saying that her husband is dead, she wants you to help her.”

“My dear friend Jacky, it seems that we need to do something about it now,” my friend Pao said to me, “something fun is happening.”

“Sure.” I spoke.

She was Mrs. Lyu, the wife of Mr. Chen. They lived in the southern Duan in an enormous house. When we came to her house, it was locked and inside the house was very massive. I couldn’t even imagine what the room was like originally. Through the window, was a man lying on the floor, with a half–full cup of tea. It was already stale and cold. The door was firmly locked. So, Pao called three servants in Mr. Chen's house to open the door, and the door was opened.

When the door was opened, we saw a ferocious man lying in the massive room, and we knew that his body was twitching before he fainted. “He is already dead”, said Wong, one of the servants. The cleverest servant in Mr. Chen’s residence. He always prepared Mr. Chen’s tea.

They sent the unconscious Mr. Chen to the Wu Zuo Room (anatomy room) and waited for the report.

The report came in later, Mr. Chen was already dead when we saw him. Mr. Chen was killed by the caster, a kind of normal plant in Southern China, but it is also toxic. To kill an adult, what you only need is 10 mg of these.

It was the black tea, an ordinary beverage in China.

The most suspicious point was that he already had a cup of tea before drinking the second one, yet nothing had happened after his first cup of tea.

When Pao finished reading his report, he stood and said, “My dear fellow Jacky, it seems the case is very complex, we need to do a little investigation about that. Shall we do it together?”

“Of course!” said Jacky.

We were in the crime scene.

It was massive, perhaps he was struggling when he drank the caster tea, perhaps he did not die immediately when he drank the tea. It took a while for that to kick in.

The floor was massive too. The blank paper was just separated in the floor, in an abnormal way, so Pao said, “I think they are in an abnormal way, maybe the murderer wants to let us think that it is a clue, but it is not fooling me, the paper was a fake clue, despite showing us that he or she is a clever person.”

In front of the room was a desk, a luxurious one. It was very large too, the ink, the tea, the blood all mixed, and there was a black ink on the table, smelt like a rusty coin.

We also found a dozen blank papers, which meant he wanted to write something. Unfortunately, he was dead.

“Everything is blank, it means that he writes something the murderer does not want the others to know”, Pao furthered, “my dear Jacky, we can go now.”

“We can find more clues, can't we?”, asked Jacky.

"If we go now, we can find more clues," answered Pao.

Later, we found his wife.

"Does your husband have any habit when he was drinking tea?" said Pao.

"Yes, when he was drinking the tea, he was always adding some ice, because he likes his tea served cold."

"Who prepared that?"

"Huang."

"Did he have any competitors or enemies?"

"No"

Though she seems very calm, I can still recognize that she was panicked in her eyes.

"Sure?"

"Sure."

"If you do not tell me the truth, then we cannot help you!"

She hesitated for a moment, then she said, "There is a big enemy of he is the Huang, he has the same name as our servant, but he does not have a relationship with him."

Pao was nodding but stayed silent.

"Why does he just drink the black tea?"

"Because he thinks the black tea will let him feel relaxed and happy."

"But why will it let him feel happiness?"

"I do not know, but he didn't tell me by himself. Huang told me that."

"What else did he tell you?" Pao asked.

"He told me that my husband will be staying in the study room, he does not want anyone to disturb him." Mrs. Lyu answered.

Pao hesitated a little bit and laughed, "I know who the murderer is now, but I still need the evidence, good luck Mrs. Lyu."

We met Huang later.

He was a very clever man, he seemed very strong, and he was also a very outstanding young man. He was very loyal to Mr. Chen, he started serving him when he was 10 years old. When he was 15, his father died, but he only knew that when he was 30.

"As I know, you are the first one who discovered his body, correct?" Pao asked seriously.

"Yes, I was, when I discovered he had already died, I reported to Mrs. Lyu immediately, and she called you and Dr Jacky came to the crime scene." He answered calmly.

"Did you always prepare the ice?" Pao asked, I saw a little bit of alertness in his eyes.

"Yes, I did because he trusts me", he still answered.

"What did you do when he was locked in the room?"

"I was doing the housework, I was far away from the study room, everyone can improve it," he answered.

“My dear Mr. Huang, I think I know the answer now. Good luck! Bye!”

It was already 11 p.m. when we returned to the residence. I said, “I need to sleep now, I feel tired.”

“I still need to think, my friend. It will be a busy night for me.” He sat next to the stove and started to ponder.

Next morning when I got up, I saw he was still pondering.

“Good morning, Jacky. I think you have a good night, and I also have a good night too. I get the answer now, you can invite everyone to come to court, I will tell them the answer.”

When everyone came to the court, Pao started his reasoning, “I thought I’ve found the answer now. I’ve made an incredible plan, a triumph plan.

“And I think you are the murderer, Huang. You are the person who killed him.”

“Do you have the proof? How can I kill him? I have the alibi.” he answered, extraordinarily composed.

“Of course, I know. Your alibi was perfect, but I think I know how to fix this puzzle now.

“You always prepare the ice, right? You dig the ice as hollow first, and put some caster inside, because the caster has the same color as the water, so he will not find this poison, it is tricky, isn’t it?

“And then you went to the room to do the housework, until everyone knew that he was locked in the room, then you make a perfect alibi now. When he was drinking the tea, the ice started to melt, and when he drank the second cup of tea, the caster started to be exposed in the water and penetrate in the water, then he died, a perfect plan achieved.” Pao said, and stared at him

“But do you have any evidence?”

“Of course, I have. I think you still left some of the extra caster, right?”

He was stunned for a moment, and said, “Brilliant, but you can’t find them in my house, do you know why?”

“Why?”

“Because it is in my hand, Pao”, he suddenly drank that bottle of castor oil, though we were fast, but we still could not stop him. He started to bleed and fell. He died.

“But I still do not understand, why did he kill him?”

“Don’t you know? He is the son of Huang! Chen killed him 20 years later because he cannot work anymore, he was paralyzed, but Chen did not want to feed a paralyzed person, he kills him finally, I think he must discover that he is the son of Huang, so he killed him, but his son, was still young, so he feeds him and let him become his slave forever.”

“The envy, the hate, the money, all lead to this tragedy, isn’t it?” Pao said at the end.

Judge Pao and The Great Trial

Victoria Shanghai Academy (Secondary), Han, Annika – 13

Chapter 1: A sudden request

It was a late afternoon at the Zihan(梓涵 | Catalpa tree) temple, it was just the start of autumn at the land of Xiuyue (秀月 | Elegant Moon) Pao was enjoying lukewarm tea while admiring the newly grown Deciduous trees. They were as tall as the sky, and as the breeze floating in the air pressed against the tree leaves and branches causing them to bend to the opposite direction of the wind, all the fallen leaves started to fly down slowly dancing in circles like a ballerina till the rest are on the grass. Behind it, he faintly saw the gloaming sunset on the west side. Everything seemed perfect. The setting, and the mood, made him feel entirely relaxed and relieved. As Pao was about to take another sip of his tea, a distinct yell suddenly occurred across the hallway. “Xiansheng!”(先生 | Sir) the unknown voice got louder along with rushed footsteps, then it finally came to a halt. There stood an exhausted young male assistant holding a dignified-looking letter in his right hand. “Ah, Assistant Haoyu(浩宇 | Vast universe) is something the matter? You look like you just ran a marathon..” Pao said with a hint of concern and annoyance in his voice since Haoyu disturbed his peaceful moment. “Sorry Xiansheng, I do not mean to invade your private time but I have received an excruciating letter from an anonymous person it sounds serious and I think they require your professional help.” Haoyu finished. “Hand it over,” Pao demanded. As soon as the envelope was in his hands, he delicately peeled it open.

The letter said:

“To Judge Pao,”

“Hopefully this letter will reach you as soon as possible. We are in grave danger. And in need of your help.”

“We’ve gotten into some serious trouble. Our former leader Seraphina has falsely accused our current leader Atticus of a consequential crime.”

“This reason being, ever since we thought we lost Seraphina during “The Galad War,” she thought we’d left on purpose to her dying breath in replacement for someone who was considered suspicious at that time.”

“Ever since then, we’ve found a new leader to protect our kingdom. Seraphina came back.”

“Not only did she attempt to assassinate Atticus, but she also took away something very valuable and predominant artifact from our kingdom.”

“There isn’t time to explain what this artifact is and how immensely important it is and how Atticus is blamed for all of this in this letter.”

“If you accept our quest, please open the chest we provided and rub the lock 5 times.”

“P.S.: We must warn you. This is an extremely dangerous quest. So think before rubbing the chest..”

“—Anonymous writer.”

Judge Pao was speechless by what he just read. His mind was scattered full of thoughts, hundreds, no thousands of views going through his head. Pao kept re-reading a specific part of the letter stating “***So think before rubbing the chest..***” He wasn’t entirely sure whether to accept the expedition or not. After a long time, Pao finally decided to go assist them. “Where’s this chest this letter speaks of?” He said. “Oh my apologize Xiansheng.” Assistant Haoyu stuttered as he delicately served Pao the chest with both of his palms. Pao snatched the object, slowly he then gently and carefully rubbed the chest’s lock 5 times. Then it slowly opened a crack and beamed wide open with glowing light, then the entire room became nothing but scintillating luminescence.

Chapter 2: Straight into action

Soon after the luminescence had disappeared, Pao and Haoyu were now standing in a completely different world. It looked like a transcendental realm, something out of a dream. “Oh my! Judge Pao came!” An unknown voice suddenly occurred while Pao and Haoyu jumped a bit right where they stood. “Sorry..After that scintillating luminescence suddenly shined out of that chest and startled you guys..” A mysterious girl said as she appeared behind a tall pillar with a slight grin on her face. But that was short-lived her expression quickly changed into a more serious look, “Thank you for accepting our request on such short notice. But we must go to court right now! Come with me.” She stated. “Wait— we didn’t catch your name?” Haoyu questioned, “Tsk! There’s no time we have to go right now!” She said coldly, the two speechless with her answer. Not long after, the three figures were instantly in a different domain.

This domain was unique, in every corner, there were shards of glistening crystals in multiple shapes and sizes pointing at every possible direction within the area, various mirrors covering every single surface. Pao was truly mesmerized by the sight of this that seemed almost impossible to believe it was real. His hypnotized stare was soon broken off after multiple faces stared at the sight of him and the other two with Pao. “Is this the person you were talking about Cressida?” A young boy with dark purple hair said to the girl he met earlier. He turned to Pao and said “Hello sir, I am glad you’re able to make it just in time. The trial is just about to begin. I am Atticus the ruler of this kingdom. I’m sure you’re already aware of the so-call “crime” I was accused of—” “Sigh when are you guys ever gonna stop with this fake act” A monotone women’s voice interrupted him. Across them, there was a tall woman with extremely curly hair. It looked like she hasn’t slept in months. Pao almost felt bad for her till he then remembered she was the enemy and his thoughts of sympathy quickly flew away “Sigh. Would you **please. Stop. Seraphina..**” Cressida glanced a death stare towards her. “Ok, that’s enough you two.” Atticus stopped the two before things could get worse. Pao’s mind was suddenly empty, it was a blackout. But he heard someone’s voice. They said **“HA. Don’t make me laugh. You can drop the act you’re only hurting yourself..”** “What is this..? Is this someone’s thought? It sounds like Seraphina’s voice..” Pao stood there confused about the scenes that were happening in his mind. “So wait..question..what is the valuable artifact Seraphina stole?” Haoyu asked while staring at Cressida and Atticus while looking at the sent letter again.

“It’s called the Plurin life orb,” Atticus replied. ***“I—it contains all power of life and peace that is given in the entire universe. Atticus is the only one who can touch it, but somehow Seraphina got it in her hands. There’s a legend behind this ancient orb, if it’s spun around slowly 10 times it’ll shatter leaving the world in shambles...And making the person who spun it undefeatable.”*** He stuttered a bit but said it coldly. “She’s just doing this because she thought I and the others left her to die. How could she do such a thing” Cressida yelled. Soon the courtroom was filled with whispers and chatter about Seraphina’s possible plans. As all of this was happening, Pao couldn’t help but think about what Seraphina said earlier. ***“HA. Don’t make me laugh. You can drop the act you’re only hurting yourself..”*** As the chatter got louder and louder Pao suddenly yelled making the entire room silent. “Seraphina. What did you mean by it’s all an act?” Pao asked. All eyes were pointing right at Pao. “I don’t think I said that...At least not out loud..” Seraphina stuttered. “What?? How could you think of such a thing...” Haoyu looks at her with disgust. “Atticus is not to be trusted as it said in your letter.” Seraphina started. “What? How’d you know what it said....???” Cressida asked in confusion.

“...”

“...”

“It’s because..this entire realm..all of this drama was all just an act..”

Timeskip to Pao's Afterstory

Victoria Shanghai Academy (Secondary), Hui, Darda – 12

“Even exceptional family members of the imperial consorts in the past were never given a rank in the government, let alone a mediocre and untalented one. Your subject has seen, even during periods of bulging treasuries, the founders chose intelligent people to fulfil these jobs. How could this man be appointed given the current financial state being dreadful?” Judge Pao, a local politician, questioned the Emperor while pointing at Zhang Yaozuo.

Zhang Yaozuo glanced at the emperor and announced,

“I understand, I will resign from this position immediately.”

“That will not be necessary.” The Emperor stood from his lavish chair. “Commissioner Zhang, you will now be given the position of being a concurrent commissioner of four departments. This court is now adjourned.” Everyone in the courtroom gasped, together with Zhang Yaozuo himself.

Sprinting, Judge Pao followed the Emperor to his resting quarters, nudging the guards and every person in the surroundings out of the way.

“Your Highness, this feud has been going on too long. I do not wish to intrude but if you do not end this foolishness soon and demote Zhang, I will have no choice but to use violence to solve this situation.” Judge Pao declared with much confidence.

“Very well, you may go now.” The Emperor ushered him out with a gentle wave. Judge Pao stepped out reluctantly, anger building up inside him. He stormed out into the palace gardens, hoping to find comfort or just a place to rest. Right in the middle stood Concubine Zhang, the niece of Zhang Yaozuo.

“The sky looks beautiful tonight, doesn’t it?” Concubine Zhang sighed with a mesmerised tone.

“I’m so sorry, I have to do this.” Judge Pao took a vial of poisonous gas and released it in front of her, then he ran away. He hoped that her death would be a sign that injustice would always pay a price and only cause more problems.

He recorded what happened that night in his journals, and it was locked away for many years in his safe, passed down by generations.

The sunlight stirred Judge Pao, he woke with a moan and stretched his arms. He wondered if what happened last night was seen by anyone, he was indefinitely afraid. Then it dawned on him, he wasn’t in his bedroom. People around him wore plain clothes and had no hair accessories at all. People seemed to hop on boards on a box with wheels attached to the bottom. People walked and walked in multiple directions only to reach buildings as high as the sky. It was as if he was in a different time, world and place.

Judge Pao looked around with bewilderment and tapped on someone’s shoulder,

“Pardon me, what year is this?”

The person replied,

“2022.”

Meanwhile, Zhang Yaozuo woke up as well. The first thing he remembered was Judge Pao and his irritating personality, even though it was true that he got promoted because of the emperor’s relationship with his niece, Pao had no right to poke into his business.

“Ah. You’re finally awake.” A voice echoed through the hallways into the room.

“W—Who’s there?” Zhang Yaozuo jumped as if a ghost had passed through him, the voice continued,

“I know you long for revenge on Pao, what we have in common. So, bring him to me by sunset tomorrow.”

“Wait, so you’re saying you, a random dude from the streets, is Judge Pao, who died centuries ago? Yeah right, get a life!” The person laughed and Judge Pao sighed, this was the third person he turned to for assistance and no one seemed to believe him. He knew that it was slightly preposterous that a man from the eleventh century would be in the twenty-first century. *Well maybe not slightly, it was definitely impossible.*

“I suppose I’ll have to rely on the books for this.” He found the nearest person, asking for directions to the nearest book-storage house; he hoped a thousand years later it still existed.

“Do you mean a library? I’ll show you the way.”

Judge Pao followed the directions, two streets east, three streets south, two streets west but he seemed to have lost his way. But when he looked up, a ginormous white building stood in front of him, with a matching enormous sign that read ‘*Central Library*’.

It was endless, every floor, every shelf, every row seemed to go on and about and never stopped. He was dumbfounded.

“Um...excuse me sir but are you looking for anything?” The librarian asked Judge Pao as he stared at the library with admiration.

“Oh yes, I want to see if I could find any scrolls I could use related to time travelling.” Judge Pao explained, his sight still focused on the shelves.

“Scrolls? Erm, you could just use a computer for the archive?” Of course, Judge Pao was incredibly confused since he had never heard of a “computer” so he was quite perplexed as to how this would work out.

“I’m assuming you don’t know how to use a computer?”

Judge Pao nodded.

“A computer has many functions, but the one I suppose you require is a search engine, that would help you find any online resource you seek. Just move the small arrow on the screen using the keypad and type in the questions on the search bar using these keys on the computer.”

Judge Pao smiled at her and she left, while he tried to figure out how he could operate this machine. He struggled to press the keys. He meant to enter “*Time Machine*” but it came out as “*Tire Mine*”. Pictures of tires being mined showed up on the screen.

“God, when will I learn how to use this?” Judge Pao sighed in exasperation. He stayed at the library until nightfall, the sun drowning whilst the moon crawled up. He decided to rest outside of the building, only to find Zhang Yaozuo standing in front of him, with a rope and bat in his hands.

“Pao. Pleased to meet your acquaintance again.” Zhang smirked, while Pao thought of a plan. *This would be the only way.* He ran towards Zhang, snatching the bat from him and swung it atop his head, knocking him down unconscious.

The winds danced and the litter on the street followed. A canned drink smacked Pao in the face, the breeze pushing him with a fierce shove, after that ambush from Zhang, Pao tried his best to hide, in an isolated alley, the only companions made of dead cockroaches and smushed cigarettes. He pushed himself against the wall to get up, his legs sore from his escape. He groaned, *when was he going to go back to his time?*

Judge Pao strolled out of the passage, and into the busy roads once again. It wasn't much time until he encountered the magnificent building again. He even learnt how to use an elevator...

He felt as if someone was following him.

"How's the progress? You know what will happen if you don't manage to follow the task." The voice rang in Zhang's ears.

"I'm working on it. I'll get him to you by sundown." Zhang huffed with annoyance. Anna offered him so much money it was difficult to resist.

Judge Pao was a brilliant student once and never stopped. He became professional at using the computer, and within an hour he found out the person who sent him from his time was Anna Pao the Second, his descendant. The next thing he knew, it was pitch black.

Pao opened his eyes, he was on a building rooftop, with nothing but himself and pebbles lying on the floor. His hands were tied and so were his legs. Luckily, he had been through so many similar situations he always had a pocket knife hidden beneath his sleeve and sliced the ropes with ease. *Was this the best Zhang could do...?*

"Not so fast." The voice spoke and Pao turned towards it, he faced the woman.

"You're Anna, I presume?" Pao raised an eyebrow,

"Yes, as you already know, I am one of your descendants," Anna spoke with confidence,

"I always had a knack for solving puzzles, and when I came across the possibility of your stories, I couldn't resist, I always idolised you, the only pure person, until I found out that even the person who seeks only justice MURDERED AN INNOCENT CONCUBINE!" She felt cold sweat raining down her cheeks.

"Calm down. That night, I never murdered anyone, the diary you read was forged by Concubine Zhang, who also attempted to murder me, she was about to release a vial of the toxic gas but failed and only killed herself. I did not report this because I didn't see the reason to. You see, nobody is ever only pure, even the good can sin, and vice versa. There is no good and bad, only in between." Pao finished.

Eventually, Pao was transferred back in time and they disclosed the truth, what really happened, the verity.

Judge Pao and the Rule of Law

Victoria Shanghai Academy (Secondary), Leung, Hin Ching – 11

Long, long ago in China, the place was a mess. People were falsely blamed and corruption happened very often, where rich Chinese would pay thousands and thousands of dollars to unfair and greedy judges to escape from their punishment for their crimes. It was a place of dishonesty and inequality.

Justice Pao, however, was very different. He was a wise and fearless man who strongly believed in justice and honesty. He believed that no one, not even the king was above the law. He did not care if you offered him a large amount of money, or even if you were royalty. He still dished out the punishment he believed they deserved. When there was a wrong to right, he would never stand by and ignore it. With a heart of gold, Justice Pao did everything he could to help others. One particular case he dealt with included a civet cat which was put in place of a crowned prince.

At that time, Emperor Zhenzong had no children. He told his concubines whoever gave birth to a boy would be crowned queen and her child, the prince. Ten months later, concubine Li Chen was first to give birth to a baby boy. Concubine Liu De was burning with jealousy and had evil thoughts. For the sake of her own future, she wanted to frame Li despite their friendship. She wanted to be queen instead. The newborn prince was replaced by a skinned civet cat, and then Concubine Liu decided to keep Concubine Li's newborn child for herself. Emperor Zhenzong was shaken with shock when he came to visit the newborn prince. He thought Concubine Li had given birth to a monster, so he threw her into prison. As Concubine Liu had planned, Concubine Liu 'gave birth' to a prince a few days later, and she was soon known as Empress Liu, and 'her son' was crowned as prince. Liu even ordered her assistant, Guo Huai, to make Li blind so she could not see her son.

Seven years later, Prince Zhao Zhen accidentally entered a prison while playing, and met his biological mother Li, even though he had no idea she was his real mother. He later told his mother Liu about his adventure in the prison. Liu was horrified when she found out he met his real mother and decided to kill Li. At that time, Guo Huai, who had suggested to swap the crowned prince, offered to burn the prison, killing Li inside the prison. Fortunately, Li was rescued by loyal knights and escaped from the prison. A man even sacrificed himself for Li in the fire, pretending to be her and was burned to death so that Liu thought that all of her troubles were gone and didn't have to worry about Li anymore.

Eighteen years later, Justice Pao learned of the incident, brought Li back to Beijing, and began to secretly investigate this incident. Justice Pao tried telling the king, Zhao Zhen that his father's concubine were their biological parents, but he didn't believe what Justice Pao said, nor could he accept that the Empress Dowager Liu, who had been filial to him for more than ten years, turned out to be an enemy who wanted to kill his biological mother, so he reprimanded Justice Pao and sent him out of the palace.

However, Zhao Zhen later thought about it and believed that it was impossible for Pao Zheng, who had such a high reputation, would lie to him or tell him something that isn't true, and he couldn't help but start to become suspicious, so he decided to visit Liu's palace at night, and tested the mother's reaction and attitude while they talked about childhood memories. He noticed that her mother found it hard and difficult to explain and was always trying to change the subject. After finding that her queen mother's reaction was unusual, he thought about it thoroughly and at the end decided to let Justice Pao investigate the case. In the end, Liu was desperate and committed suicide by hanging, and Guo Huai was beheaded by Justice Pao even though they had been great friends as Guo Huai had once saved Pao's life. Zhao Zhen welcomed his mother back to the palace and honoured her as the queen mother. Empress Li ordered Pao Zheng to beat her unfilial son Zhao Zhen. Justice Pao asked Zhao Zhen to take off the dragon robe and beat the dragon robe as a punishment.

Today, Justice Pao, also known as Bao Zheng, is honoured as the cultural symbol of justice in Chinese society. He brought peace to his home country and managed to clean up the corruption. In fact, many books and movies have been inspired by this legendary supernatural judge with a passion for solving crime and bringing peace and fairness to the world. Even though Justice Pao lived more than a thousand years ago, China still remembers him and all the good things he had done.

Black and White

Victoria Shanghai Academy (Secondary), Sze, Kristen – 12

The loud stomps of the villagers disappear into the distance, in contrast to the soft pitter-patter of the girl's own bare feet going in the opposite direction. She's caked in dirt and grime from head to toe, but makes no move to wipe any of it off. In the dark of the night, it's an advantage worth the discomfort.

She arrives at an abandoned structure that's been reduced to piles of rubble over the years, barely identifiable as anything other than a trash dump. A long blade slides out from beneath her skirt, and the corners of her mouth raise slightly. "Come out, come out, wherever you are," she sings. It's clear that she is enjoying the suspense.

Labored breaths can be heard from behind a decrepit wall, breaths that quiet almost immediately. But it's too late for the man. The girl's blade has already found its way to his neck, a hair's breadth away from causing a fatal injury.

"Where is Wen Hua?" Her tone is sharp and unforgiving.

"I... I don't know who you're talking about." He feels a cool pressure on his neck. She isn't going to give him another chance. "He's going somewhere very far away, somewhere you'll never reach, and you'll never be able to bring him in. You're good, Qian Qian, but Wen Hua is better. You'll never arrest—"

"Useless," she spits. Qian Qian removes her bloody blade and wipes it on the man's clothes.....

He isn't the first to perish by her blade. On her way here, others who have bothered her, distracted her, or prevented her from reaching her goal have all fallen victim to her graceful yet vicious blade dance. Those nobodies were simply challenges on her journey, obstacles to stand in her way of achieving true justice. And challenges are meant to be overcome. She will stop at nothing to do her job.

— — —

The emperor's lips touch the goblet and he takes a sip of his wine. Immediately, he drops, body limp and lifeless. He is face down in his food and blue spreads quickly through his veins, turning his flesh a sickly green shade. By now, everyone else around the table is standing in shock, a mixture of anger, fear, and sorrow flashing across their faces. Someone just murdered the emperor.

Accusations are thrown all around the room and everything descends into pure chaos. It's so outrageous that he can't stand it. Emerging from the shadows, Wen Hua steps out. In a clear and controlled voice, he says, "I poisoned the emperor. He has been unjustly ruling for long enough. When has anything been done to help the villages that are less well-off? You people spend and spend, waste and waste, as if nothing has any value, when my hometown struggles to feed everyone. The emperor had it coming."

— — —

She stares at the slack body of the emperor, lime green as far as the eye could see. Her body was shaking violently and her hands were curled into fists on both sides of her body. She inches closer to the body. Breathing shakily, she whispers, "Justice shall prevail. I, Qian Qian, swear on my life."

— — —

In the deserted village, he makes his mistake in being too comfortable and letting his guard down. It's the opening Qian Qian needed to confront Wen Hua and detain him.

"Come back and face the consequences of your actions instead of running away like a coward! You must face your trial for the murder of the emperor!" Qian Qian inches closer to Wen Hua, pointing her blade right at his heart.

He looks smug, with his head cocked and hands in the air. As if he's won. "Alright, then. Let's see how Judge Pao punishes a *murderer*, shall we? *I just wonder which one I'm talking about.*"

— — —

Wen Hua is kneeling in the middle of the courtroom, arms and hands chained together, lest he attempts to escape. Guards line the walls, deadly knives strapped to their waists. Qian Qian lingers in a corner, shoulders tense.

"Wen Hua, what do you plead?" Judge Pao's voice is stern and set.

A smirk grows on Wen Hua's face. "I plead innocent."

Judge Pao is unphased. "This vial belongs to you and contains the poison you used on the emperor. There are also over ten witnesses who saw and heard you confess your crime, yet you still plead innocent?" In his hand is the small glass vial that Wen Hua left behind.

The guards force Wen Hua further down on his knees. Anyone else would be shaking, terrified of being caught, but not him. In fact, he seems to relish in the attention. "You killed the emperor! You're evil!" An onlooker can't stop himself from yelling out.

"Oh, how naive. You think the world is black and white, but it isn't. Let me ask you this: what constitutes evil? Profound immorality? Morals are subjective. Different people justify different actions in different ways. I poisoned the emperor because I believe that we need a better one on the throne." Qian Qian smirks, knowing that his confession is enough to send him away. *Permanently*. He sees this, and turns to face her before continuing. "What could objectively be called *evil*? The act of killing another? Then, with that logic, are you not evil as well? The act of taking a life is equally evil, regardless of the circumstances in which it occurs. Just a little food for thought." His face conveys a message: *What makes you good, self-proclaimed hero?*

"*You are only to speak when you are addressed.*" Judge Pao says, voice booming around the courtroom. Mumbled apologies can be heard.

Judge Pao's advisor whispers in his ear and they have a hushed conversation, no doubt discussing what consequences Wen Hua should receive.

"Wen Hua, you are sentenced to death for the murder of the emperor. Bring out the dog guillotine!"

Qian Qian's shoulders drop and she releases her tight grip on her dress. *Justice will be served*. She watches in disturbing silence as Wen Hua is forced under the large blade of the guillotine, but her eyes are sparkling with glee. Almost as if she's... relishing the moment. A nauseating squelch can be heard as Wen Hua's head rolls to the ground, a sadistic smile on his face, eyes wide open.

She's not paying attention to anyone else, not until she hears herself being addressed.

The guards take hold of her arms and bring her to the middle of the room, pushing her down on her knees. She's right in front of Judge Pao.

"Qian Qian, what do you plead?"

Her face instantly becomes an unreadable mask. She had overcome challenges to bring a criminal to justice. A criminal who murdered the emperor. Her intentions were always good, and she had cut down everything and everyone blocking her path to her objective.

She hears quiet snuffles nearby. Even in her confused state, Qian Qian's eyes flick around the room, instinctively trying to discern its source. There, below the great plaque gifted by the emperor hanging on the beam of the Kai Feng court, she sees a small boy with red and puffy eyes clinging onto the ragged corners of an old woman's

sleeve. The boy has a runny nose and can't stop himself from sniffing, and the old woman looks exhausted. They look familiar somehow, but she can't quite place her finger on it.

"Useless," she spits. Qian Qian removes her bloody blade and wipes it on the man's clothes. In the corner of the room is an old woman, hugging a boy within her aged and ragged robe. "Papa.." the boy mumbles.

At this, something stirs in her heart. The dam she's built comes crashing down, releasing a flood of guilt and remorse. Her stone-cold heart warms, until there's a raging fire, a fire so strong that it's painful. She can barely bear the weight of it all on her shoulders.

"Just and honorable" the great plaque reads. The three words repeat again and again, echoing in Qian Qian's mind. Images flash through her thoughts: of her blade work, of blood and gore, of bodies falling limp to the ground. And in the background, there are quiet sobs. Sobs that she has ignored for so long in the name of justice.

Her justice.

And Qian Qian finally understands. No matter what her intentions were, she is just as bad as Wen Hua. It's ironic, really.

She looks up at Judge Pao, stroking his beard, with a bittersweet smile on her face. There's a certain melancholy as she gazes longingly at the guillotine on the ground. No words are needed. She has made her resolve, to carry out her final justice.

As she wanders towards the guillotine, there's only one thought in her mind: *The world isn't painted in black and white.*

Bao Zheng Cleverly Investigates the Red Ripper

Victoria Shanghai Academy (Secondary), Sze, Liam – 12

Bao Zheng sat, tired. The eunuch sat across the table from him. “This man is a menace to our society. He has committed not one, not two, not nine, but FOURTEEN murders. And, they were all cannibalised.” He slouched downwards. Bao’s father, a detective, had died recently and so Bao was held to the same expectations, despite him not being a detective by profession. The eunuch said, “If you catch this man, the public will have peace of mind.” Bao murmured an affirmation half-heartedly and loped out of the room.

The sun shone high in the air. His uncle hopped off the horse and smiled at Bao. “Hey, Bao! How did the meeting with the eunuch go?” Bao looked at his uncle. Uncle smiled sadly. “The Red Ripper case isn’t going that well, isn’t it?” Bao nodded. Uncle then looked at Bao. “Bao, I know you’ve been ordered by the emperor to execute the Ripper personally. It won’t be easy, but I trust you will be able to make the right choice and make your family proud.”

Just then, a man ran up to the duo. “Hey, Bao!” Bao looked at him and lit up. “Comrade Ji Ka!” Ji Ka smiled. “No need for the formalities, friend.” Bao and Ji Ka walked off, talking about their lives as Uncle watched.

“How’s the wife, Ka?” Bao asked.

“Divorced.”

“How’s the children?”

“Dead.”

“Oh, right.” said Bao. The kids had been cannibalised a few weeks earlier, Bao noted to himself. That, in turn, was the reason for Ji Ka’s recent divorce. Ka grimaced, but Bao thought he saw a strange light in the man’s eyes.

“Well, about the case...” Ka said, clearly wanting more information. Bao nodded. “The Ripper is still at large. We don’t even know his name.” Ka grinned. “Well, I think I might know his name. You see, he carelessly left on the floor a piece of paper with his name on it, and I can tell it to you. But please keep my identity confidential.” Ka confided. “Okay,” Bao said.

“Tam Siwe.” said Ji Ka.

“Tam-Siw-e.” said Bao, scrawling it down. “Thank you, Ji Ka.”

“You’re welcome. And, tell me if you follow up on it.” said Ji Ka.

“Of course. I won’t let you down.” vowed Bao.

The next day, he walked to the census office at the edge of town. He showed his document to the eunuch that slouched in the receptionist’s chair, who nodded to go on. Bao walked towards the records room and searched, first for the Siwe family, then the Tam family, just in case. Nothing. Then, he investigated the villages in the countryside, who might’ve ducked the census. Still, nothing. He asked around, still hoping that Tam Siwe had any relation that would lead to the Red Ripper.

But then, he found a quaint little cottage with a small sign that said: Siu Property. Emboldened, he knocked on the door. “Hello?” said a man. “Good day, sir. I’m investigating a case, and I’m wondering if I could ask a few questions?” “Oh sure, sir.” blurted the man. Mr. Siu led Bao to his room.

“So, how can I help you?”

“Well, do you have a relative named Tam? Tam Siwe or Siu?”

“I don’t believe so.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Lies!” Bao kicked the chair he sat on over. Mr. Siu stood up, surprised. “What—”

He crumpled to the floor. “Medicines—my medicine.” he choked out, pointing to a small bowl of fluid sitting on a shelf. Instead of handing the bowl to Mr. Siu, Bao swept the bowl off the shelf, shattering it on the floor. Mr. Siu clutched his chest and heaved once, death rattling in his empty lungs. “What do liars do when they die? They lie still.” Bao remarked coldly. He walked out, disappointed, the distressed screams of the Siu family ringing in the air behind him.

Finally, he went to his uncle’s house. Uncle opened the door with a smile on his face. “Bao! Any leads on the Red Ripper?” Bao grimaced. “No.” Uncle smiled empathically. “Look, Bao. Anytime you need help, I’ll be there to help. I know it must be hard to cope, what with this case, and your parents’ untimely deaths...” His speech trailed off. Bao sat, deep in thought. Then, he got up, nodded at his uncle, and walked home.

Bao Zheng sat on his bed. He had thought and sat for hours now. A half-eaten bowl of porridge sat on the table, cold and still. The Siwe lead had gone nowhere. The Siu family had resulted in nothing but the first but certainly not the last death in his career, and the trail had gone cold.

“Tam Siwe...Tam Siwe...Tam Siwe...” Bao repeated the words. If Tam Siwe didn’t exist, then that meant that Ji had lied to him. But why? Tam Siwe was an unusual name, sure. But then what did it mean? Bao wrote the words down and looked at them again, trying to find a picture or a code. But then, in an instant, it came to him. He scrawled a note saying where he was going, threw it on the table, and set off.

Bao pushed Ji Ka’s door open and headed into the house. “Ka!” Ji Ka walked towards Bao. “What?”

Bao shoved a piece of paper in Ka’s face. “Tam Siwe—normally, it wouldn’t mean anything, but if it was a code? It was an ANAGRAM.”

“Tam Siwe. Anagram for ‘*It was me*’.”

Meanwhile, Uncle opened the door to Bao’s house. “Bao? I have advice...Bao?” Then, he saw the note. “Oh, no.”

Bao Zheng stood, defenceless against the Red Ripper. Ji Ka grabbed a sword off the wall and stalked towards Bao. Bao tried to turn around, trying to escape. Ji Ka blocked the door, but when he turned around, to run, to hide, all he saw was a table.

When Bao saw it, he resisted the urge to throw up. The table was full of entrails and organs. Congealed blood oozed off the edge of the table. Intestines formed a large circle around a messily prepared heart. Bao had a feeling that they weren’t from any animal.

Ji Ka nodded. “I heard a story about a census taker talking about the Siwe family. I’m sure it was you.” Ji Ka stepped closer, brandishing his sword toward Bao’s face.

Bao edged toward the table. “Look, Ka. Why don’t you tell me why you’re doing this? It doesn’t seem like something a rational person would do, right? It’s flying in the face of sanity and human sense!”

Ji Ka smiled shrewdly, raising his sword. “Well...”

At that moment, a loud bang could be heard, followed by a twang and visceral splatting. Blood went everywhere and chunks of flesh flew onto the walls. The sword flew away and speared the heart in the centre. Uncle stood behind the headless Ji Ka, his crossbow string still vibrating wildly.

“Uncle...” Bao said, shaken. “Hold it.” said Uncle, warning in his voice.

The headless Ji Ka, still standing there, wavered. Propelled by malice, he raised his— no, *its* hands up, as if being crucified. Then, it sank to its knees and toppled to the floor.

Just then, two armed guards marched into the room. An armoured eunuch moved towards the two. “Mr. Zheng, you are under arrest for the murder of Ji Ka...and the cannibalization of more than a dozen people!”

Two days later, a meeting was held. The emperor himself and a few eunuchs stood beside him. “Mr. Zheng, you are accused to be the murderer colloquially known as the Red Ripper. How do you plead?” intoned an eunuch.

“Sirs, I am not guilty. I will hold this belief until my end.” said Uncle.

After some banter, a recess was held and the emperor walked over to Bao. “Bao Zheng, a word.”

The emperor took Bao to a quiet corner. “Bao is alright.” said Bao gruffly.

“Bao, though there is a possibility that your Uncle is innocent, it doesn’t mean that it is the right choice. If he is released, then the public will live in fear. This cannot be allowed.” the emperor said. “Bao, there is also evidence that your uncle killed a man. Even though this amounts to manslaughter rather than homicide, it is still punishable by death. Bao, make the right choice.”

With a heavy heart, Bao nodded.

On the day of the execution, Bao put on black robes and walked up the Mountain of Execution. Each step brought memories of childhood and recent years. Each breath brought words. Some were long and loud, and some were short and kind.

All of them were about Uncle.

Soon, he got to the top. Uncle knelt at the chopping block, an executioner at the ready with his axe. The emperor stood at the cliffside.

“Bao, please...” Uncle croaked. He was in a state of utter resignation.

“Judge Bao.”

With the strike of an axe, Bao’s story ended and Judge Pao’s started.

The Missing Dogs

Victoria Shanghai Academy (Secondary), Wong, Hang – 13

It was 8:30 am. I had just arrived at Xiaolang Primary with my friend Vincent. He was being pulled on a small cart he had just built with dog drawings on it, powered by his dog Coin.

I should probably explain why we're so obsessed with dogs first. Xiaolang is the small town that we live in. It has one school, a small sports ground with a park, a few shops, literally 1 tiny hotel with a total of 5 guest rooms, and that's basically it, along with the town office, of course, where the library, the tiny swimming pool and a few other places are situated. The houses are quite nice, too, as they are small yet comfortable to live in.

There's a reason why even the king of England knows our town. Our dogs are amazing. It's a special breed that's been a part of Xiaolang's history for 5 centuries. More specifically, 569 years. They are light brown, small yet extremely cute, and if that's not enough they have the longest lifespan of any dog breed in the world and they're kind and loyal to their owners.

This is why literally everyone in Xiaolang has at least one dog. I have a dog, called Doge. Grandma Chiang, our neighbour, has 43, which she walks every morning in the local park. 2 of them are 25 years old, and are apparently the oldest dogs on the planet.

Yesterday was my 10th birthday. My birthday cake was, as usual, shaped like a dog. This form of food art is very new – it had been introduced to our town by the son of a German explorer who travelled thousands of miles around the world in search of China. We gave him a few of our prized dogs. I feel quite honoured.

“Pao! Pao!”

It was 5 am the next morning. It was a Saturday, so we didn't have school, and it was weird for Vincent to just randomly come to my house at such an early time.

His continued shouting shook me out of my thoughts.

“Coin is missing! And Vicky's 5 dogs too!”

I looked frantically around my room, barely able to see anything under the early morning light.

“Doge!”

“Doge!”

I saw the silhouette of something near my window. Doge!

I leapt towards him, only to realise it was an excessively obese pigeon eating bird food on the windowsill that Grandma Chiang must have sprinkled during her daily bird feedings. It flew away in panic upon taking one look at me, not necessarily quickly or gracefully either.

I sprinted to the living room, and found my dad was already sitting at the table. “All the dogs in Xiaolang have been missing. Even Grandma Chiang's 23 dogs.”

I froze. My mind couldn't comprehend what had happened last night – who would do this to the world's most prized dogs?

As I thought about it for another 10 minutes, I came to the conclusion that some would.

The next day, the news spread to the entire country, and it was the subject of everyone's conversations. The sad mood was especially prevalent in Xiaolang. I asked my dad about this situation and he told me that it's just our town.

Just us.

They echoed in my head for a long time.

A month later, I was sitting in art class, drawing my dog Doge. None of us had heard from the Emperor yet, according to the detective. He had been tirelessly investigating for an entire month and meanwhile the Emperor had apparently boarded a ship to nearby Africa, to meet the king of Mali, for some bizarre reason.

Out of the windows of my art class, a big, old grey cart trundled through the streets, powered by a donkey. It made a loud clomp-clomp sound, similar to that of a horse – it was so unbelievably loud for a wooden cart that we all crowded at the windows to check it out. The cart was owned by the police, and 5 big, muscular guards sat on the sides of the cart, staring at us like we were criminals about to rob a bank. One of them whispered something to the driver, who looked slightly worried and sped up the cart.

In the next week, I saw at least 15 of them trundle along our school, all towards the one road that leads to the city. Where the Emperor's palace was located.

One night, I was at home, collecting all thoughts on paper and observing them in detail. Suddenly, I heard a quiet but visibly distressed yelp. He looked outside his window – I saw nothing but another one of those police carts, with 5 clearly awake and focused guards watching from every angle.

Another visibly distressed yelp.

I leaped out my window and landed in my garden. I got a match and lit a big wooden box. Before the fire could reach my hand, I threw it towards the open road, ahead of where the cart was. As the guards scrambled towards it, I silently jumped on the cart, then whispered to the driver: "They're coming! Go faster!"

The donkey, frightened by the burning wooden box, galloped faster than a horse.

2 hours later, I was in the city, already past midnight. I saw a big warehouse illuminated with the soft orange glow of hundreds of candles burning to illuminate whatever was inside.

A small wooden door opened. The cart trundled in, and I saw brooms, water buckets, and... dog fur. A lot of dog fur. Moreover, I heard barking from the warehouse. I jumped from the cart, into a small room. I shut the door with a satisfying thud. This quality could only be from the Emperor. I found a small hole in the wall and peeked through.

The warehouse was huge – the entire thing was made of wood, and it could literally fit half of our school. But then I saw them. I saw dogs. A lot of dogs. Xiaolang's dogs, including Doge and Coin. In my relief and panic, I managed to spot the two adorable dogs – they were in a crate. It was labelled Crate No. 1 – Africa.

Xiaolang's dogs were getting kidnapped and sent around the world.

Mine was about to be sent to Africa.

And this is no ordinary warehouse – this is the Emperor's warehouse.

The emperor did all of this.

I found a very long rope, tons and tons of dog fur, and boxes and boxes of cleaning equipment, which contained one tiny can of superglue. I dumped all of the equipment on the floor, and I glued the dog fur onto the boxes. Then, I glued the boxes together and fit myself into it. I looked like a giant dog monster at this point.

Through the small hole in the wall, I saw that all the boxes of dogs were connected by one big rope. I just had to get hold of the end, and that's it.

I took a few deep breaths, then I dashed out. I made a few barking sounds, and in the dimly lit warehouse, all the workers, clearly not paid enough by the Emperor, dropped all of their dog-catching tools and dashed out of the warehouse in horror. I grabbed the end of the rope and tied it to a cart. I then grabbed the worker with the least amount of stamina and offered him a dog if he would drive the cart for me. He agreed. With a loud “hee-haw”, the warehouse was left empty.

The next day, there was only one thing on the headlines: The case of the missing dogs was finally solved. It turned out that the Emperor wanted to profit a huge sum from them, selling them to the royals of other countries. This case had even spread to other countries as well, only making our town even more famous.

The next morning, angry mobs showed up to the Palace and within an hour had left the Emperor without a job and in jail.

Oh, and Doge and Coin were returned to us. You can only imagine our faces when we saw them for the first time in over a month. Grandma Chiang’s 23 dogs had all been returned to her. And 2 of them actually produced 5 new puppies each. They were given to me for solving this incredible mystery.

Fast forward 10 years, and I was appointed as the head judge of the highest court in China by Judge Astley, the highest-ranking judge in the country.

That’s when I became Judge Pao.

Past—Life Judgements

Ying Wa College, Cheung, Ka Wing Benedict – 13

Past=Life Judgements

There was not a single drop of blood. Yet, he was dead. The body was dissected clean, and the skin lost colour.

White. White as paper.

A figure paced in the bushes.

No. This has to be the work of Hell.

But everything is logical!

Seriously, this couldn't happen. There had to be blood.

Infernal Bureaucracy

“This *must* be the doings of Hell! Quit shouting!” That was Judge Plymouth, screaming.

“But Mr. Chan...”

“He has done something *very* wrong!”

“How...”

“He was brutally killed by Hell! Judge Pao, did you not recite *the Infernal Order, Book IV, Involving Hell, Chapter 1, Page 101, Paragraph 29*? It says that ‘Hell may punish people with wrongdoings. The brutality of the punishment is positively related to the intensity of the wrongdoing.’”

“I object. Everything has its reasons. As always, I refuse to follow the Infernal Order entirely. This has always been my principle in judging. Beliefs are for babies. Go adventure in the real world!”

Judge Plymouth, furious, rammed the door and walked out.

“THINK AGAIN!”

1023, Month of the Tiger, day twelve.

Once the doorbell sang its melody, Mr. Chan immediately proceeded to the door, only to see a cleaner carrying a bucket of liquid.

“I suppose you have come for the cleaning?”

“Yes.”

“I only require cleaning on the ground floor. Do you remember that remark I made when I booked your cleaning?”

“Yes, madam, I do.”

“I want the cleaning to be complete before dusk. Is that clear?”

“Yes. I am aware of that.”

“I will leave the work to you now.”

“Money first, product later.”

Coins clinked as they dropped onto the slightly corroded hands of the cleaner. He found difficulty hiding his smile.

1023, Month of the Tiger, day ten.

“This substance cleans really well...” Rafe was smiling to himself. He has finally succeeded after a month’s work.

Beakers and test tubes spread across the table. There was an enthralling pink, a mesmerising light blue, and another patch of light green. But this boring, colourless solution seemed to be the star of the day.

If this is a success, I will never need to stay in this foul laboratory!

Activating all his senses, he began working. Hard.

Now I just need to make this work properly.

1023, Month of the Tiger, day fourteen. Infernal Bureaucracy.

“You have exactly one day,” Judge Plymouth was saying. “If you don’t get convincing proof, Mr. Chan will be sent to Hell. No matter what.”

“Fine. I’d like to see *you* sent to Hell,” Judge Pao rolled his eyes mischievously.

“I’d like to see that!” Judge Plymouth left the Inferno Hall.

2023, January 13. Sir Y.K. Pao Library.

Yet another day at the library.

Sir Y.K. Pao walked out of the lift. Upon reaching the window seats on the sixth floor, he sat down and admired the magnificent scenery. The mountains were green, and the water was clear. But the buildings – *boring concrete*. He put his heavy pack on the table. His laptop slipped out of it automatically.

Without thinking, Sir Y. K. Pao turned the laptop on. The figure on the wallpaper was the unmistakable image of Judge Pao.

1023, Month of the Tiger, day eleven.

A scientist could never rest when there was so much money to be made.

Rafe poured all his solution into a large bucket.

After tomorrow, the solution will start to get popular.

Rafe turned the lid tight.

And that means only one thing. Money.

Money was like parasites. They controlled your thoughts and your actions. You wanted to break free?

Perhaps I should improve the solution so that it gets popular faster?

No. It never works.

No. Money is WAY more important.

All Rafe could do was wait.

Until the parasites strike.

2023, January 13. Sir Y.K. Pao Library.

Sir Y.K. Pao has always found the background image to be interesting. Judge Pao was sitting on a mat. He looked extremely serious with a poker face. The posture never changed; the hands never moved. The body never quivered; the eyes never blinked...?

Wait. They did!

Nothing happened.

Did they?

Sir Y.K. Pao waited for another five seconds.

It's just my eyes playing a joke on me.

Another five seconds passed.

Tick.

Tock.

They blinked again!

The hands moved!

Wait! What is he holding?

Slowly moving the laptop mouse, he clicked the white seam outside Judge Pao's hands. The cardboard dropped. A photo appeared on the computer screen.

A dead person dissected clean. No sign of blood. White colour of flesh. Just like paper. Bones dissolved. Probably one part of somebody's hand. Something very acidic.

He hopped up and maneuvered to the nearest chemistry bookshelf. He must have carried a jetpack – he almost crashed onto the shelf. Quickly scanning the words, he took out a book named *Hydrofluoric Acid*. And he began flipping through the pages rapidly.

1023, Month of the Tiger, day twelve. Mr. Chan's house.

The sun was setting. But Rafe ignored that.

Perhaps Mr. Chan will give me extra tips if I clean the first floor too.

He took the flight of stairs and proceeded onto the first floor. It was full of dusty antiques.

Yes. This will work.

And he began cleaning in turbo for the rest of the day. Using the solution.

“I’m done!” Rafe shouted as he casually left the house. He decided to stay in the garden and wait.

The tips!

But Mr. Chan never appeared.

1023, Month of the Tiger, day fourteen. Inferno Hall

As Judge Plymouth left, Judge Pao began inspecting the decoration in the Inferno Hall. He locked his eyes onto one picture which depicted Judge Pao's younger self. He recalled his father's words:

‘This picture will summon someone a millennium later to help. Be wise because the power can be used once only.’

Judge Pao felt like it. He felt a force pulling him closer to the picture. The two pairs of eyes met, and the magic started to work.

1023, Month of the Tiger, day thirteen. Mr. Chan's house?

The house disappeared into thin air.

The antiques were all gone.

The body remained.

Dissected.

White.

White as paper.

2023, January 13. Sir Y.K. Pao Library.

Sir Y.K. Pao was called awake from the book by the voice of Judge Pao.

“Seriously, I need help on this. Quick. Anyone out there?”

Sir Y.K. Pao began explaining.

“Hydrofluoric acid is corrosive. It destroys wood, stone and human flesh easily. It takes away the colour of the flesh...”

Talking to Judge Pao 1000 years ago is impossible. This is magic.

1023, Month of the Tiger, day fifteen. Infernal Bureaucracy

“Judge Pao, you believe that Mr. Chan has not died because of Hell’s work. How do you defend your stance?” Judge Plymouth shouted in front of all the other judges.

“The reason for Mr. Chan’s death can be fully explained using chemistry. The one to blame is Rafe, the cleaner.” Judge Pao began lecturing the judges on hydrofluoric acid. It was like one of those lectures you hear in universities nowadays.

“Judge Pao, thanks for your explanation. I think we all agree with his hypothesis. Also, may I ask about the moon-shaped scar on your face?”

Judge Pao felt for his forehead.

“Oh, right. I tested the liquid on the dissected body.”

Gardening Detective Squad: The First Case

Ying Wa College, Lam, Yick – 14

In this world, 90% of the global population has a mystic deity called a guardian spirit. Guardian spirits are like a more direct window to the soul. It reflects on your biggest strength. The spirits are like a conduit of power that people can draw strength from to perform incredible feats of power, from gaining super strength to manipulating the elements. People only start to manifest their spirits when they are 6 years old. As for me however, I never got a chance.

“I’m sorry miss, but it appears that your daughter is spiritless.” Spiritless, it has always been a cruel word to those who never got a guardian spirit. I never got a spirit. In fact, the doctor said I’ll probably manifest one once I’m older, but that never happened to me. I didn’t want the false hope to take control of my life, so I delved into crime mystery, and it became a major part of my life.

“Colombina, you better get up this instant! Didn’t you forget that we’re moving our home? I seriously need help with packing the stuff!” I woke to the sound of my mom calling to me as the rays of the sun touched my face like a warm gentle kiss. “Mom, I’m up!” I yelled sleepily.

The morning consisted mainly of packing and travelling to our new home, which was in a village close to the city so I didn’t have to walk too far to my original school, Cordelia Secondary. Or so I thought. “Honey, we’re enrolling you into a new school because your original school was too far.” “WHAT?”

The next day, I went to my new school, Allison High. Allison High was a rural school, but the atmosphere was warm and inviting, but from my experience reading crime cases, “never believe what is on the surface.”

“Students, today is the start of Club Week, where everyone has to join a club or start one! We’ll be handing out leaflets to you to see what clubs are on offer and how to create a club!” My homeroom teacher announced.

“Sorry, you’re spiritless.”

“Sorry. You don’t possess a guardian spirit.”

“Sorry, but our club isn’t for expert baristas like you. You just made the Mona Lisa on a cup of coffee!”

I mentally grumbled to myself. How would I be able to join a club if I keep getting rejected from being spiritless and being overqualified? As I walked past the doors of the ball games club, it hit me. Why didn’t I choose a club that I have little to no experience in? As I went through my mental checklist that I made long ago to practise my mind, I realised I could join the Archeology Club, Poem Club and the Gardening Club. I decided to check out the three clubs later on.

I was immediately rejected from the Archeology Club for being spiritless. The Poem Club serenaded me with Shakespearean-style sonnets that I could barely understand. The Gardening Club was the right choice for me. “Welcome to the Gardening Club!” A short, but kind woman welcomed me. “We specialise in growing different plants! If you’re not afraid of getting dirty, then you can join us and grow your own crops!” “Sure, I’ll join!” I replied.

According to Murphy’s Law, “Anything that can go wrong will go wrong.” On my first day of gardening, I found something strange. The left of the field was thriving extremely well, but the right side of the field had nothing but dying crops. It was as if Death itself had decided to walk past and take a rest there. “Don’t worry, it has always been like this.” An average person wearing short pants and a shirt walked up to me. “I’m Tristan, by the way. I’ve been a member of the gardening club for 3 years. You can ask me literally anything here; I know them all!” “Oh thanks,” I replied as I shook his hand. “If both of you are done with introductions and having your lovey-dovey moment, you’d better get moving and start planting tomatoes,” a grumpy voice said next to us. “Aww, Daniel, don’t be so grouchy, can’t you see that they’re red from head-to-toes?” Another airy voice retorted next to Tristan. “Gabrielle I swear to your damn guardian spirit, if you crack another pun the next thing that’s getting cracked will be your arms.” Daniel threatened. “Fine. Hmph!” Gabrielle grumbled. “Daniel is true though, we’re planning to plant tomatoes this season because it’s a rather easy crop seeing that you’re our new member in the club,” Tristan reasoned. “Sure, why not, but you’ll have to teach me because I know nothing about gardening!” I exclaimed.

After the first meeting, The tomatoes on the right side of the field were growing quite successfully, but the ones on the left side of the field were growing badly. “Hey, Gabrielle, the tomatoes here are looking really weird,” I told Gabrielle as I pointed to a tomato plant on the right side of the field whose tomatoes were rotting from the bottom side. “Oh Colombina, no worries. The right side of the field has always been like this for some reason. The tomatoes are suffering from blossom end rotting, which occurs from calcium deficiency.” Gabrielle explained to me. When she got to the point of calcium deficiency, my instincts kicked in and I started analysing, a habit I started when I read crime stories. “Wait, but the left side of the field is growing well! Could there be a calcium deposit there?” I asked Gabrielle. “Well, that is a great idea, and we haven’t tried that yet since we never got to that conclusion,” Daniel replied on Gabrielle’s behalf.

In the end, after a lot of plant related puns and some arguments, we agreed to dig up the soil after we had harvested the tomatoes. We need to plough the soil too anyway.

After we harvested the tomatoes, we dug our way into the earth. After a few minutes of digging, we hit something hard. Nervously, we slowly uncovered the soil to find a huge sack under a lot of bones. As we opened the huge sack which revealed stacks of gold bars, a yellow haired girl rushed down and yelled at us to stop. We didn’t stop and kept dragging the sack out. The girl then used her guardian spirit to attack us. She shot blood red strands that were sticky and burned when it hit us. Tristan tried his best to use his powers to defend us as we bought time for the police to come. At that fleeting moment, a huge sense of desire to vanquish injustice filled my heart like a flash flood. I swiped my hand out of instinct and a huge calligraphy brush drew a line which blocked the attack. Just then I thought I was safe, Ms Aragon, our chemistry teacher, stepped in and summoned different acids and fired it at us, corroding the soil, which released a foul scent. I swiped my hand, which made the brush draw small circles which successfully trapped the chemicals.

Luckily, before they could do any more damage, the police came and arrested the two quickly. After a quick interrogation and filing some eyewitness reports, Mr. Candeez was arrested for embezzling, tax evasion and tax fraud and Mrs. Aragon and the girl were arrested for assisting Mr Candeez.

As we walked out of the police station, victorious but exhausted, a loud voice echoed around us. “Thank you for helping close a serious case of embezzlement, tax evasion and tax fraud. I Judge Pao deem you, Colombina, worthy of becoming my incarnation for your efforts in solving this case. ”

~

It was a cool autumn day when Colombina returned to Allison High for a new school year with Tristan, Daniel and Gabrielle, who played such a major role in the investigations they obtained scholarships to attend the same prestigious school as Colombina. As the teacher started introductions and took attendance, Colombina could hear whispers of “Village girl” “Poor” surrounding her and her friends. It was much better than being called spiritless, and this time I had friends to be with.

“Oh my gosh, look at that!” A female student screamed as she saw what was happening outside the window. Some curious students who looked out of the window also screamed in fear. To see a better view of what was going on, I leaned my head out of the window, and found a machine crew digging up soil, and in that soil, was another skeleton.

“You could say this humerus situation puts us back into action,” Gabrielle smirked at the scene.

“Well, Gardening Detective Squad, let’s go! ” Tristan laughed.

Judge Pao Verdict

YK Pao Middle School, Auyeung, Kamille – 14

The woman is responsible for her death. Her death is because of her own mistakes. There is a rule written down about crossing the river: when people crossed the river, the soldier in charge of guarding the bridge must shoot him/her dead. The woman was shot after she tried to cross the river by the soldier.

The woman has broken the laws and crossed the river, it is right for her to be killed. As we all know from the passage, the woman has decided to cross the river herself, no one has ordered her or forced her to cross the river, going across the bridge was her own will. We also know that the soldier has warned her about the laws of crossing the river, the woman is aware of the fact that she would be killed if she crossed the river. It is totally her mistake that she crossed the river even when she knew that it is breaking the laws. It was the soldier's job to shoot the woman, the soldier was given orders to shoot whoever crosses the river, so it is very reasonable for the woman to be killed because of what she has done. The woman is to blame for her death.

The woman has also betrayed her husband. Her husband gone away for three months and she took a lover who lived on the other side of the river. She wasn't loyal to her husband. This is the main reason why she would cross the bridge. By betraying her husband, she could stay with her lover, but because of staying with her lover she couldn't get back to the other side of the river when new laws are added. It is already very deceitful of her to betray her husband while he is gone, and she chose to cross the river which people aren't allowed to cross anymore so she broke the laws. It is her mistake that she would choose to go to the other side of the river to meet her lover, which caused her to have to cross the bridge to go back to where she lived before and break the laws, so she was killed at last.

Because of these reasons, it is the woman's responsibility for her death, she should receive a punishment for breaking the laws of not crossing the river. Since, the woman has died already, the punishment should be given to her lover. Her lover should pay \$50 as a punishment.

Judge Pao Verdict

YK Pao Middle School, Chen, Chloe – 14

Now I think woman and boatman should be responsible for her death since their behaviors are all illegal.

To begin with, woman should be responsible for herself. At the beginning of this event, it's woman who goes across the river to get a new lover. She betrayed her husband. Then, when she hears that her husband was coming, she wants to go back to prevent being discovered by her husband that she had a new lover. Then, why doesn't soldier be responsible to her? The soldier has already warned her that she was against the rule now, but she still wanted to get across the river. There is no fault of soldier, since he just followed the rule. As a matter of fact, it's woman's fault and responsibility. The reason why I make the judge like that is because she was against the law. The woman still wanted to get to the other side of the river although she has already known the rule there. This behavior is illegal. The law here is the standard to judge, to punish people and to identify who is responsible. The law is inviolable, absolute and always right. Everything or everyone here that against the law should be punished. Therefore, woman herself should be responsible for the event. I think every brilliant person can understand this.

In addition, the boatman should also be responsible for the event, since he was against the law, too. In the event, he wanted to get money from the woman, and he has let woman be on the boat and wanted to help her to get to the other side of the river. Then, the woman got killed, but he was still alive. Then, is he sinful or not? From essence, the boatman wanted to go across the river, and this action is illegal. In this event, the soldier has said that people who tried to go across the river would be killed. The boatman also wanted, too. His purpose was to get 100 dollars from the woman. So, he planned to row across the river. We don't need to know that whether he had some ineffable difficulties, like paying the tuition or covering the living expenses, these aren't the reasons that he did something against the law. As a matter of fact, the boatman is sinful as well.

To sum up, the woman and the boatman is sinful. However, the woman has already been punished and killed. She has paid for her behavior. Therefore, there won't be other punishment. What's the punishment of the boatman? Then, for the boatman, due to his action that he wanted to go across the river, too, he will be killed according to the law there.

Judge Pao Verdict

YK Pao Middle School, Du, Amy – 14

In the past few days, time passed like a vanishing flame, a woman has been shot by one of our soldiers, who's doing his duty as a guard because she tried to cross the blocked bridge. I am sure you've all heard about this pity, confusing and complex case already, some of you might be just as confused as the ant in a puzzle. I am standing here today to announce that I will now be responsible for this case, and under the present circumstance, I accuse the woman of being fully responsible for this case's consequence.

First of all, the woman is absolutely guilty of cheating on her husband with a lover. During the war, the woman's husband went away for three months. Of course, this leads to all conflicts, like a poison snake, but who doesn't have their own job and other work to do in addition to staying at home? What happened then was the woman went across the bridge and found a lover, and cheated on her husband. People are not robots, they need money, from the action this woman took after her husband left, we can see that it is wrong to cheat on your own husband in the first place, this is a definitely wrong, embarrassing, and unbelievable choice. If she never chose to cross the bridge and do something against a woman's ethics, such as cheating on her husband and sneaking behind his back as untrustworthy as a fox. All of what happened afterward wouldn't have happened, and she won't have to die. Therefore, we can see she shall be most responsible for her action and what happened afterward.

Secondly, it was the woman who insists that she needs to cross the bridge to get home, so she could see her husband, it is totally her problem. After the soldier had made a clear warning to the woman that if she dare to cross the bridge, he would have to shoot her on duty. But despite this alert, the woman still chose to cross the bridge. We can see from this that she rather took the risk, and therefore, this stupid, ignorant and naive decision made her lose her life and ended up dead. How is this not a good reason why she is responsible? There are plenty of ways to get across the bridge, and as I said, if she never had the thought to cross the bridge and find a lover, she would never have to put herself in this situation.

To conclude my final trial, according to all evidence above, I accuse the woman to be fully responsible for this case, her death is caused by her own action and death shall be her punishment. Under this circumstance, the judgment to the living should be made, the lover is responsible for committing immorality actions along with the woman, therefore, shall receive a penalty at last, and that is all of the punishments I will give out at this moment.

New Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Fan, Youhan – 12

(The Song Dynasty, 1008 AD)

“There he is!” a boy whispered, making a cunning face.

Immediately, three other boys gathered around, and all of them made a wide and mean smile when they saw the little child at the front. Suddenly, they rushed forward, dragged the child back, and pushed him down. One of the boys punched him in the face, and laughed, “Ha, you deserve this! We’ll see whether you still dare tell the teacher on us ever again, Pao!” Then, the rain of the eight fists of the four bigger boys fell on the eight-years old boy. Covered in mud and his blood, Pao’s weak defense was totally useless. Then, one of the bullies dragged him to a well, grabbed his head, and hit it hard on the bricks. The four bullies then laughed and walked away.

When the bullies were out of sight, Pao sat up. He looked at his reflection in the well water and saw that there is a wound on his head, which shaped like a moon. You cannot stop me from telling on you, he thought. Then, he slowly walked home.

And on the midnight of this day, Pao’s wound shined.

Suddenly, he woke up. However, he wasn’t on his bed. He was already dressed and standing in front of a door of a gigantic palace. The sky was absolutely dark. Many older boys were next to him, their eyes and mouths were wide opened, and were all looking at and asking each other why they were here. Everyone seemed confused, except for the soldiers who stood at their side, each holding a torch. Then, Pao discovered that every single boy here had a moon sign on their forehead. He then noticed that there were 101 boys in total.

After about half an hour of chaos, a man walked out of the palace. He wore a luxurious yellow robe, with dragons and phoenix drawn on it. Pao shook, and he realized that that’s the emperor of their country. Stretching out his arm, the emperor announced, “Good evening, boys, I am your emperor. There’re a hundred of you in total, and you’re the most talented ten years old boys from the whole kingdom. (Did the emperor left me out? Pao thought) I asked the gods to transfer you here so that you know you’re invited to watch my ceremony of my birthday tomorrow. And yes, my relationship with the gods is quite good, which means that a part of my plan for the ceremony, is to burn a thousand children at your age for the sacrifice toward the gods!”

Instantly, the boys exploded. Everyone, including Pao, was shouting to the emperor about the cruelty and injustice of this sacrifice. Pao could see the fire of fury inside everyone’s eyes. But the emperor ignored them, and shouted, “Silence! Anyone who dare stand against my plan will get beheaded!”

Once this order was sent out, most of the boys went quiet. But knowing that there’ll be a permanent consequence, two boys still walked to the front, and one of them cried, “You’re crazy! Don’t you care about your people? Think about how much pain will the children and their family suffer!” The second boy yelled simultaneously, and Pao could only hear phrases like “ridiculous and cold-blooded plan”.

The emperor hmphed, and said, “Looks like someone don’t prefer obeying my warning. Guards, off with their head!” Two guards grabbed the boys’ shoulders. Terror spread across the boys’ face, and their legs shivered when they were brought away. Soon, everyone heard two horrifying shrieks, and a sound of slicing meat, which turned their faces as white as snow. They trembled and broke out in a cold sweat.

Fear and despair swallowed Pao. He was never afraid to support the side of justice. Then, however, he thought that maybe the emperor will listen to him if he talks in a respectful and calm way. Failure means death, Pao told himself. But he might be able to rescue a thousand children if he tries. Therefore, he raised his head, and said, “My emperor, I understand that your birthday’s very important to you and should be ceremoniously celebrated, but I suggest you to...”

Before he could finish his sentence, the emperor roared in fury. "Enough!", he wrathfully said and gave a vigorous wave of his arm. A guard came and seized Pao. Then, he was brought away, and heard the emperor shouted, "Who dares to do so again!" at his back. Pao didn't show fear, though, as he already knew that he might fail.

After a while of walking, Pao was brought to a vacant lot. Surprisingly, he saw the two other boy that were brought away earlier, confused. Nobody was there to kill them, but instead, there stood a beautiful woman with blond hair and blue eyes and wearing a weird toga.

The woman asked the guard, "Anyone else?"

"No, I suppose", the guard responded, then pointed at Pao and said, "And I think this is the one."

"Him?", the women seemed surprised when she saw Pao. "Did you mark him?"

"No, and I think Luna didn't either.", said the guard.

"Hmm... All right, tell Pluto to clean up and gather everyone." The woman said.

Suddenly, the guard's feet lift up, and he float back toward the palace with an incredible speed. Soon, he came back, followed by a group of weird looking adults. Once everyone came near, the woman said to the three boys, "Greetings, children, I'm Minerva, and we're the Roman gods."

A man stepped out next. He said, "And I'm Jupiter, the king of us. Let me tell the story about us. Rome have been a great empire before, and it ruled the land at your west, named "Europe". We're the gods of the religion they believe in, named polytheism. However, they have abandoned us, and put their faith into Christianity. Our power therefore decreases. We tried to find another country nearby to make them believe in our religion, but they're in a period named Middle Ages, and were always fighting with each other, so we decided to give up on them, including Rome, which was far weaker than before.

"Therefore, I want to use my prophecy to find another place to go, because the unknown countries far away might be interacting with the Europeans. And surprisingly, I found out that 200 years later, a man named Marco Polo went to the east and said that there're two kingdoms, China and India. There might also be other countries around, but we must find a suitable one to plant in our religion. Therefore, I asked my son, Mercury," Jupiter pointed at the guard that brought Pao here, "to go and reconnaissance them."

Next, Mercury said, "I went and saw that the countries' either too religious for other religions or not civilized. The best choice's China, but it's surrounded by barbarians that have strong military forces. So, I came back and told the others that it needs great ministers to support it, or we'd fail. My father asked me and a goddess Luna to find a hundred most talented ten years old to be candidates. We leave a moon sign on them and use our power to transfer them here tonight for selection."

Then, Minerva looked at Pao's wound on his forehead and said, "But you... I think this is a wound that perfectly meets the shape, so you're accidentally transferred here. What a coincidence! Anyways, we prepared a test for you all, and that is the thing you have just experienced. My uncle Pluto acts the emperor, and we act the guards. We made up the shrieks of the two boys to frighten the others. A good minister must stand against injustice no matter what the consequence is, so you three," Minerva looked at the boys and said, "passed it. The others' memories of tonight were wiped out and sent back to their homes."

So, the whole thing is a trick of unknown foreign gods, Pao thought. Jupiter then said, "You three can all choose to be ministers in the future. We'd change your destiny, but still make you forget about tonight. When you become the minister, you'll make your people believe in our religion, while we use our power to support you. Being a minister can be dangerous and hard, so would any of you volunteer?"

The other two boys hesitated and rejected. However, Pao said, "I'm Pao, and I'd try. My father is also a minister and always told me that working for the citizens is an honor."

“Great! Hope that this would benefit both you and us.”, Jupiter said, “Minerva and Justitia, give him power.” The two goddesses put their hand on Pao’s forehead, and gave him the power of wisdom, courage, and justice. Finally, Jupiter announced, “Starting from today, your name is Judge Pao!” Then, Judge Pao was sent back to his bed.

New Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Gao, Peter – 12

One clear and cloudless day, Judge Pao was strolling along a street in a large, prosperous city. There were people all about him, feet pounding on pavement stones, voices shouting and chattering. There was the banging sound of the chopping knife of the butcher against the board, the loud, insistent bartering sound of the richly clothed merchants, and the rustic tones of countryfolk mixed with the grunts and lows of animals. Strolling from house to house and store to store, he appreciated the liveliness of the place and observed the people there with his keen, dark eyes, and evaluated them with his wise, righteous mind.

Walking past all these stores, he came to a mill, where a person was lamenting his misfortune. He asked with concern in his penetrating eyes, “What are you worrying about?”

He replied with a groan and slam of his hands, covered in flour, “Someone has stolen all my savings, which I kept in a box next to me in the mill. I only just looked at it, leaning against a table, thinking what food I will be able to buy tomorrow. Alas! Alas!” And he started to weep.

Judge Pao was deeply moved, and he stirred immediately to action. He said with a glitter in his eyes, “The culprit is the table! We must ask money from the people around and offer it to the table to get your money back.” Then he raised the cry, for he was well known in these parts, for the people to give money to appease the table. “This is some devilry, but I can help you, miller,” he said.

By then, a large crowd had gathered. The people were astounded and stared with goggling eyes at him. Some started to whisper. “Old Pao has finally lost his wits.” “Alas, Judge Pao has gone mad with age.” Still, Judge Pao was unperturbed by their reactions and stared them in the face, then scorned them for their selfishness and lack of empathy. And so, they all gave a coin to him. He dipped each coin in a bowl of water, as if to purify them. As a person dressed in cotton neared him and grudgingly handed him a coin and he dipped it in the water, he shouted, “Capture this man! He has stolen the miller’s money.”

The man put up a struggle, but in the end yielded the chest to Judge Pao. Now the people were even more astounded, and after hastily apologizing for their assumption, demanded an explanation. He explained, “The table devilry was just a ruse for putting the coins in water. When I saw the flour rising from the coin of the thief, I knew it was the miller’s.”

And thus did Judge Pao solve his case.

New Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Gu, Axxon – 11

Prelude

In the darkest night, a storm was brewing and the rain lurking, the night thieves came hunting the bank again. The police played video games, the security slept and as such there was no defence against the thieves known as *Bregs* from the Department Of Hell. In lead of someone suspicious, someone malicious... A *YAMA*! He stood in front and led the *Bregs* into the bank.

"2 tons, I want more!" The Yama screaming and taking gold was the last security footage seen worldwide. This is what happens sometimes on an island called *Dystopia*. An tiny island right located in the pacific ocean.

Chapter 1: The one and only Judge Pao

The day after the heist, the news spread everywhere about the *Bregs* stealing things, again. The Yama was nowhere to be found, and the *Bregs* were all hidden like molecules in the air. The police and the military searched everywhere on the island. Underground, caves, forests... There was neither a shadow of the *Bregs*, nor one bar of stolen gold. The crowd urged the police to find the Yama, and the children cried, but the police and military had nothing to say. When the city needed help most, a man stepped out of the huge crowd, marched onto a rock, and said, "I can find your enemies, I can retrieve your gold!"

"And you are?" One police officer asked.

"I am Judge Pao, the saviour of the day." The man answered confidently.

In a flash, Judge Pao flew into the sky, and declared, "Today, marks the day of a new hero in the city! ME! JUDGE PAO! I promise to bring back the stolen gold, and serve justice on the Yama and *Bregs*!"

Everyone cheered, they believed in Judge Pao, and they believed that he can do a good job bringing back the bad guys.

Judge Pao searched through forests, across snowfields and over mountains. There was still no sign of the gold. Until...

POW, BAM, SHAZAM!

His sixth sense tingled, because there was a dark shadow lurking beside him.

"Put your hands in the air, and turn around s-l-o-w-l-y." Judge Pao exclaimed.

MEOOWW!

It was just a cute cuddly cat looking for food inside a trash can. But wait. Why is the collar on her neck beeping and shining a red light? Is that...

"Here kitty kitty, come get this yummy piece of bread!" Judge Pao said as he took out his sandwich from his lunch bag.

The cat walked slowly towards Judge Pao. The surrounding was quiet, there was no sound at all, except for crows crying.

The second the cat came beside Judge Pao, he smashed the poor creature square on the head and knocked it out, cold.

"If I am correct this is the *Bregs*' feline friend, I have seen this devil before!" Judge Pao thought.

Chapter 2: The discovery of the *Bregs*

The minx was held captive for questioning in Judge Pao's enormous mansion.

"Now, let me see here. If I can just hack into the collar, I might as well—" Judge Pao used his computer to do some algorithmic acrobatics, to see if he could retrieve any information, "Eureka! Now I can ask the little demon anything I want, and the collar will answer."

"Hello, I am kitty 2.0, you can interrogate me. Now, what would you like to ask me, my lord?" The kitty said.

"Who are the *Bregs*? Who is the Yama of the *Bregs*? And where are they?" Judge Pao was in a hurry.

"The *Bregs* are all responsible for the crimes and robbing the crimes. My Yama will kill you! I will tell you no more!" The kitty laughed.

The hero drifted into a daydream. His thoughts racing with the plot of revenge. A Yama? I wonder who would that be—Judge Pao wondered—A Yama must be powerful, he must be huge, and strong. I will need to prepare well to defeat that little brat.

At night, the *Bregs* started to move and steal things again. But this time, the Yama didn't come to the operation in the history museum. They want to trade artefacts for money.

Meanwhile in hell, a gnashing of teeth and the screeches of children were heard.

"You are guilty as charged, you should be turned into lava for your soul to corrupt." The Yama exclaimed.

A soul was taken into a pond of lava, while he was burned into nothingness.

The Yama just stood there, looking at multiple souls being burnt and hundreds more vanishing.

Chapter 3: The discovery of the identity (1)

Judge Pao searched everywhere for the *Bregs*. He searched in the forest, underground and even at schools. Until he found a moving painting on top of a mountain. As quick as lightning he was sucked inside this mysterious picture.

"Welcome to mushroom world. I am the king of the mushrooms", the "Mushroom Man" bellowed.

"Wait, H—how...I found a moving painting, and then I was sucked inside and then...What?!" Judge Pao cried with a pang of anxiety.

"Yes. That painting has been following you ever since you said that you thought you were a hero. And it took some pictures of you!" The mushroom man said smugly.

There were pictures of a Yama leading the *Bregs* stealing money, and scenes of a Yama leading the Department hell! But there were also pictures of Pao searching for the *Bregs* everywhere.

Judge Pao couldn't believe his eyes.

The mushroom man started to meditate. He imagined pictures in his mind all real—life things that Judge Pao actually did. After a long time, the Mushroom man knew the truth about Judge Pao.

"Let me tell you something straightforward. This is going to shock you, but it is the truth. You have two personalities. " The mushroom man told Judge Pao.

Night fell, and Judge Pao's hero personality slowly faded...

Chapter 4 The discovery of the identity (2)

"Roar!!! Why, why did you tell him about my identity? We were such a good family. Father, why would you betray me? I was dead, father. I chose this flesh for me to survive. Now you want to help this man get rid of me?" The Yama was furious.

"No, I am doing what is really right, what I should have done when you first latched on to Pao like a leech. You have disgraced our family by using your mystical powers for evil." The mushroom man said, disappointed.

Time passed, and the mushroom man disappeared into thin air.

Chapter 5: Separating the identities

In a heartbeat, the sun shone once again. Judge Pao remembered everything that happened before dusk yesterday and he wanted to find the mushroom man again to know more about his two identities.

He climbed back onto the mountain he found earlier and jumped into the moving painting. Without shock, the mushroom man was still waiting for Judge Pao to arrive.

"Keep speaking. What do you mean I have two identities?" Judge Pao asked.

"You have control over your own body, but you also carry my son's soul inside you," The mushroom explained, "My son's soul sneaked into your body, and tried to mold it after his own. But you were brave and tried to push him out. Unfortunately, you weren't resilient enough, and played second fiddle."

The Yama tried to make a deal with Pao, "Your soul would be in charge of this body when it is morning. And mine would be in charge when it is night. Together, we would be unsto—"

"Get your son out of here. I don't like him inside my body. Exorcise this evil spirit!" Judge Pao exclaimed anxiously.

"As you wish," The Mushroom King said, "I will send this man's soul back to where it should be."

The mushroom man started to wield spells, "Ooo, Bala, open up the door. In the name of the regal Mushroom, open up the door to banish this man's soul from Pao, and cast his soul be where it belongs. Make him pay for his sins, and all the havoc he has wreaked upon this dimension."

There was a flash that illuminated the cave at the top of the mountain. A soul came from inside Pao and settled on top of the Mushroom King. It was the Yama. A portal opened behind the Yama that clawed him inside with immense force.

The Yama's last words echoed through the room, "You will pay for this! I WILL BE BACK FOR YOU!!!!".

With the Yama in eternal damnation, Judge Pao's life improved. He explained that he would never steal from the city he loves. *Dystopia* is, after all, my home.

"Ah, Peace and quiet."

Judge Pao became the hero of the city... or so he thought.

Epilogue

"Our Yama is dead! And it is time for a new Yama to lead our *Bregs*. ME! I will lead us into victory." Chants came from inside the *Bregs*' base. They cheered happily.

A new Yama has risen...

The Truth of the Past

YK Pao Middle School, Hu, Amanda – 12

Long time ago, a hero called Judge Pao lived in a small village under the Reality Mountain. The villagers told Judge Pao to be very cautious and never go near the Dark Forest, “Despite the fact that the villagers tried to protect the forest, vicious species still occupied it, which supplied them lots of fresh oxygen and nutritious fruits.” said Mary, the baker, mysteriously “You never know what they are like, and they consider a human being a delicious meal!” One cool, windy day, Judge Pao’s friend, who was a hunter in the village, came home empty handed, but looked frightened, “it’s the Blast Unicorns! A whole lot of them, one dragged Jack right into the forest, nothing we can do, Alterf has gone to report this to the government!” From that time on, villagers became more and more anxious, and the symptom was infectious, eventually nobody dared to go near the Dark Forest anymore.

One chilly night, there was a knock on Emma’s door, a boy in a enormous coat stood there, “Hello,” said Judge Pao, “Why are you here?”

“I am Dany,” replied the boy, “I need a word with Judge Pao.”

“I am Judge Pao, come in and sit down.” “No thanks, every moment now is precious, I want to get going really quickly.” “Go on then!”

“The spirits of the Dark Forest have woken again, Judge Pao!” “What do you mean by that, Dany?” asked Judge Pao.

“A thousand years ago, when this village didn’t even exist, a man named Alder Ikles ruled this land. Then, another man called Trukes Mangal built several physical villages next to that land. Alder Ikles was a typical arrogant man and thought Trukes looked very suspicious, so he ordered Trukes to go away and build villages somewhere else. Trukes was a superstitious man, who believed that no people in the world would forbid others building villages beyond their own lands, so Alder’s order came to him as a shock. Trukes’s wife, Bella Jinxy, a clever lady, raised a suggestion, “We came from tropical areas. We can use pythons if they declared war!” Trukes was reminded and replied Alder’s letter “Even though your land is so spacious, you still want other’s land? Why can’t I even build villages BEYOND you land? I did not build it INSIDE it! Alder was furious after he read the letter, and announced war between them. After a ferocious fight between Trukes and Alder in the Dark Forest, Trukes contentiously let out a hundred atrocious pythons and finally defeated Alder. Trukes created a symbol with a serpent, a unicorn, a bat, and a three headed dragon, who were the creatures living in the Dark Forest and also the spirits of the forest. Although it still remains a mystery until now why they are the spirits of the forest, one thing is for sure – Only one person can control the spirits: He has to be chosen by all people in this village; He needs to find out the truth of the story between Trukes Mangal and Alder Ikles; He only has one chance. The poll result came out today, you have been chosen. Judge Pao, you have to go and find out the truth, because the spirits have woken again after having been asleep for nine hundred years.” Dany finished. Judge Pao’s mouth fell open, “But how can I complete this task, Dany?”

“You have to work that out by yourself, but I am allowed to give you a clue: When time comes and you need an idea, mutter a couplet which rhymes. By the way, this will help you too.” Dany said, handing Judge Pao a gracious sword made out of crystal.

“How’s that going to help me?” asked Judge Pao, bewildered.

“I’m afraid you’ll have to find out by yourself!” said Dany, “good luck, Judge Pao!” Dany smiled, and disappeared. Judge Pao stood there, frozen, of what he just heard. He made his mind to go. So he grabbed his traveling cloak, the sword, and a torch, then took a glance at the living room before he opened the door and walked into the night. Five minutes later, a piece of paper fell down to the ground, he smoothed it out and read: Dear Emma, I forgot to tell you that the place you are looking for is a mountain called Hillosenkitud, I hope you can complete this journey perfectly and quickly so that everything can be settled and returned to normal, I hope this letter can find you before you get too confused and I hope you are already going on the journey because it is very serious, we are all on your side. I also have to warn you not to accept any help from anyone because you have to complete this journey by yourself. Dany.

After ten days of long walk, Judge Pao reached the edge of the Arctic ocean. He was wondering to cross it or not when she remembered Dany's piece of clue. He thought hard for a couplet that rhymes and muttered "The smart, grey cat, is playing with the rat!" Suddenly, a piece of paper fell onto his hands, he read it out loud:

Hilloosenkitud is on the north side of the Earth, you are very close to your target right now.

Judge Pao whispered "Thank you, whoever that was!" and climbed into a boat and after a month, reached Hilloosenkitud. He clambered up and found an enormous dragon, guarding the doorway in a deep cave. This dragon looked unbeatable, and its power was multiplied by the fact that it could spit fire out of its mouth. Judge Pao thought hard for another lyrics that rhymes and chanted "The tea cup on the table, is playing with a cable!" Then another piece of paper fell into his hands, he read it quietly:

You must be conscious around this huge and pretentious dragon, but it has its weak spot: its heel. And because this dragon loves keeping good hygiene, it takes a bath every three hours in a continuous cycle.

Judge Pao applied to the instructions on the note, pulled out the sword, and waited for the dragon's bath time. Then he hid under the huge stone chair and waited patiently. When the dragon sat on the chair after it came back from the bath, he aimed at its heel position, took a deep breath, and sliced the sword through the obnoxious dragon's heel. It gave a malicious roar and fell to the ground.

Judge Pao pulled out the sword, tucked it inside his cloak and walked through the door way. Written on the walls were:

Trukes Mangal built villages in Alder Ikles's land and declared war with Alder Ikles, Trukes forced Alder into a deep hole full of pythons and left him there, Trukes passed out rumors of how Alder declared war and how his wife thought of a solution, but the truth was left, here, waiting for somebody to discover it. The spirits were not created by Trukes, it was created by Alder, the symbol should be a system that shows power, Alder would willingly have split the land between himself and Trukes, but Trukes wanted the land to himself. The truth will be passed out, the truth will be known, by everyone, lies might be believed, but not forever. Judge Pao stood there, transfixed of what she just saw: Alder Ikles was innocent. Just then, four animals glided into the room, a serpent, a unicorn, a bat, and a three headed dragon.

Judge Pao mounted the dragon and it took off, closely followed by the serpent, bat, and unicorn. Judge Pao wrote a letter to Dany: Dear Dany, I've found out the truth. Alder was innocent. Please spread this news. I am on my way back. Judge Pao.

He gave this paper to the bat, the bat took off. Five days later, they arrived back at his village. When Judge Pao was still riding in the air, he saw a crowd gathering in front of his house. When he came closer, it became clear that the crowd were composed by the villagers all wearing red clothes— the lucky color of the village. They were gratefully waiting for him there. Dany was there too, and he waved at Judge Pao and said, "Everyone knows the truth now, fantastic work!" Judge Pao smiled and waved back.

The Myth of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Hu, Justin – 11

Mr. Pao is frustrated.

He had asked his wife to give birth to a rather cute and white baby, but the result was instead vice versa—the baby looks like as if he is an adult, with dark face, long beard, and looked angry. His eyes are like a line and does not even cry when born. Mr. Pao's wife, a goddess now named Mrs. Pao, is also confused. They give him the name Qing Tian Pao, which means “green sky”, probably wishing him to make a better world.

From his birth to being a youth, Pao always had a heart like iron—he would say anything that he thought is right, not thinking if this would make people angry. He punishes people for being mischievous. For example, when this demigod was 10, he beaten up a child probably 8 for bullying an even smaller kid, about 4 or 5 years old.

He is also unafraid of anything. One day Mr. Pao take little Pao to heaven and let him watch in the sky under to where mortal lived. He is not frightened, though, but instead start giggling and asks his father to build a river to there and wants to play in the river.

Pao also shows a lot of talent in being a judge and proving someone's guilt or innocence. For instance, he heard that in Rome, a merchant needs to travel away, and to make his property (1000 golden coins) safe, he put them in a big box with olives on it. He then gives it to his friend to keep. 7 years later, when he came back, the 1000 coins are gone, and the olives are new. It's obvious that his friend had stolen the coins and put new olives on the top to hide it. But the merchant can't prove it, so did the court. Then Pao came in and check the new olives, then prove that the friend is guilty.

Day after day, Pao begins to grow up. He is more likely to become a judge, but the only way was to be in the mortal world. He is being trained to be not giving any side privilege, be fair with everyone. He slowly has the name Judge Pao, and people asks him to solve problems for them.

When Judge Pao was 30, he visits ancient China. He found out that numerous cases about people in the government secretly get as many money as they want by charging others. Pao, who is taught to fair and punish people who are wrong, steps in. After the test, he is now officially an official who is determined to get rid of the corruption. He works in courts that solve cases for people. He stays to be fair and square, and he had punished numerous people for being corrupt. Even though it is few, Pao did solve some cases of murder.

Judge Pao had just received an odd case where a mad woman hated her husband, and she killed him and then burned down their house to get rid of all the evidence. She explained that it is not her fault, and that she is cooking food whilst the house accidently burned and burned her husband to death. This confused Pao, since they did not have evidence that it is her fault that the man died.

Days later, Pao suddenly found a clue from looking at his pig being cooked whole. He found out that there are no grey ashes in the pig's mouth. Pao wondered and then recalled that the pig is being killed, *then* cooked. This gives Pao inspiration. The next day, he told the police to get the man's dead body and brought a pig up. They discovered that when the pig is killed then cooked, there are no ashes in its mouth. But the man's mouth is full of ash, which means he is not breathing when burned, so he must be burned alive. With the evidence, Judge Pao declared the women's guilt.

Pao has a face that almost has no expression—it almost never showed happiness or sadness. But despite this, Pao is always trying to help normal citizens and punish the corruption of the government. He gives most of his property to the others who are in need of help and participate in many normal work usually done by farmers. As his ages grew, he is more and more talented. And when he is 40, he received the case that might be the most difficult one in his whole life.

Judge Pao sat on his highchair in the big room, with a farmer, kneeling and crying all over his sleeves. He said, “Oh, please...Save my cow...Your highness, today I woke up, and found that my cow's tongue had been cut! Now it can't eat, it's dying in days!”

Judge Pao is very confused—why did the guy cut off the tongue? If he wants to be rich, shouldn't he steal the whole cow? If he wants to steal, why get the tongue? A cow tongue has no use at all! After thinking for minutes, he replied strange reply, "Go to your home and kill the cow. I promise the case would be solved and the guy who cut the tongue would be found."

After hearing this, the man is frightened, "No! As you know, your highness, killing a cow privately is against the law, and...and this is the only cow I had! Without it, how do I farm my land!"

But Pao just replied calmly, "Just do what I said; all responsibility is going to be on me."

So, the man did just as say.

The next day, the man is being called to the court again. But there was another man kneeling at Pao. He shouted, "Your highness! It is that man that killed the cow!"

The man standing was surprised—the man kneeling was his neighbor! He is scared, "No! Your highness, it is—"

"But why I heard that his cow had died from disease?" Pao said to the kneeling man suspiciously.

"No, your highness, his cow is just missing a tongue—"

"What a bold and obstinate citizen! How did you know his cow's tongue is cut?!" Shouted Pao.

Then, the man confesses his guilt. He told Pao that days earlier, the two men had a conflict, and he wants to make the other man go against the law by killing his own cow. Pao realized that cutting the tongue meant wishing him to be against the law, therefore causing this case.

Months later, the emperor heard of Pao's talent, and asks him to be the chancellor. Pao agreed, and this demigod is ready to have a new life as a prime minister.

The Lozenge Symbol

YK Pao Middle School, Jin, Kelly – 12

I am Judge Pao, and I am usually known for my outstanding ability to be a justice. I can easily say that all of my law cases have given suitable punishments to criminals. I once pledged to do anything to clean crime out of the world, and that's the goal I'm working for.

One night, A black, swirling orb told me in my dream that I have been chosen to be the justice for Afterlife. When I woke up, the key in my hand proved that the dream was true. Half of the key is painted white, with an elegant and fluffy wing carved onto the white area. The other half is black, and a dark wing with sharp edges was carved in the location that is symmetrical with the white wing. What makes the key unusual is that it doesn't have a dentate edge, the part that is used to unlock the lock and open the door. After observing the key, a keyhole appeared in front of my eyes. Curious about what might happen, I plugged the key into the keyhole.

I felt my body being squashed by an unknown force, and my lungs felt like they would be extruded out of my mouth. Fortunately, the feeling only lasted for a few seconds. Opening my eyes, I saw that I was standing on a translucent platform, and the clouds were half-visible under my feet. A booming voice appeared inside my ears, telling me that this place is like the court in the living world. My job is to listen to the crimes that the souls made in their living times and decide if the soul deserves to go to hell or purgatory, which is a place that gives souls a chance to purify and go to heaven.

The first soul that approached was a teenage boy. He has a bloody scar on his face, and his eyes are staring straight at me, giving me shivers. The boy's information sheet appeared on my desk. According to the data, this boy likes to kill cats, and over a hundred stray cats are dead because of this boy. The suggested punishment for the boy's crime was also listed in the information sheet, which is to send him to hell. In the Afterlife, every soul is treated equally, including the souls of animals. With that note in my mind, killing cats is equal to murdering people in Afterlife! I could make changes, to send him to purgatory, so that he may still have a chance of going to heaven. One side of my head was thinking that he was just a teenager, and his soul would probably be able to purify with time. Another side observed the boy's eyes and contended that the boy's eyes is filled with the urge to murder. After thought, I decided to be fair. Picking up my gavel, I announced that the boy would be sent to hell and bangs the gavel on the table. If I chose the other option, would it be fair for the animals?

As the boy trotted towards the door leading to hell, another soul of a man approached. On his information sheet, I found out that the man is a part of a cult. This cult kills children for ritual purposes, and this man helped the cult to kill more than ten children. The man has thick eyebrows, pale lips, and sunken cheeks. When my sight moved to the man's arm, I discovered a black lozenge symbol on the man's forearm. The symbol looks like a tattoo. With curiosity, I asked the man for the meaning of the lozenge symbol. The man glanced to his left, a hint that the following words he said would be lies. The man said: "The lozenge shape represents resilience". I nodded and noted the size and color of the lozenge symbol in my head. Something about the symbol makes me feel alert. Because of the killing records, I also sent the man to hell.

Afterward, I heard six low chimes from a bell. When the last chime ended, I opened my eyes. I was lying on my bed, and I felt rested. Was my journey to the Afterlife a dream? I can still remember clearly last night's event, including the strange lozenge symbol. I can't find any evidence to prove that the journey is a dream, nor can I prove that the journey is not. I decided to figure this out tonight.

Throwing this doubt to the back of my mind, I got ready and drove to the court. After a whole day of judging cases, I went home. When I walked past the corridor, I heard two detectives discussing a case. From their discussion, I heard that ten children went missing, and there are no clues that lead to the murderer. I felt like this was not a normal missing case. However, nobody can do anything with not a trace of evidence. I continued through the corridor with a trace of disappointment.

At midnight, I traveled to the Afterlife again. Today I saw many souls of children who didn't have any criminal records in their life. I sent them to heaven. When I met another child again, I asked about the reasons for her death. The girl said she was kidnapped and killed but didn't know who killed her. I guessed the murderer might have a propensity for violence, or the children are killed for ritual purposes. Kids are often kidnapped and sold for money or forced to beg for money on the street. Killing children would make no money for the murderer. I recalled my thoughts. I have an idea when my thought returned to ritual purposes. I glanced up at the girl and observed that there was a black spot on the girl's arm. I asked her to show me the spot, and when I looked more carefully, I knew I got the answer to the missing case.

There was a black, lozenge symbol on the girl's arm.

New Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Kim, Sophia – 11

A long time ago, there was a little boy born in a small and poor village called Pao. He grew up in a place with crime, and mischievous stealing, killing and fighting, within the decrepit walls of his village. Every day, Pao saw innocent people dreadfully getting killed, and devastated people heartbroken because of their loss of family and some committing to suicide. Every day, as everyone else did, he lived in fear.

One day, he went to school as usual. But before class started, a group of boys slowly approached him with an evil smile on their face. They worked together so skillfully, as if they did it many times before, and finally they pushed hard and locked Pao in a cabinet. It was a sudden darkness for Pao, but then he couldn't see even a glimpse of light from then on. He started to get nervous and cried. But no matter how heart breaking and loudly he cried, no one could hear him at all. He starts to get out of breath but calms himself. He waited miserably, hoping for someone to find him and let him out. But all he could hear was silence. He thought these moments were the last minutes of his life... Finally, Pao decided to try one last time, and as he pulled the door popped open within a second. He was astonished, and tears of happiness were in his eyes.

At that time, it was already midnight, usually when their village's murderers look for its prey...

The moon light illuminated a path for him as he walked on the unstable ground made of pebbles and stones. The chill breeze and the rustling trees made him feel like there was a companion next to him. But what he didn't know, was that there was another companion right behind him which locked his eyes on Pao as his prey for the night. Suddenly, the person behind Pao leaped toward him, he raised his sharp and bladed knife in the air and seemed like it was going to stab Pao in the heart any millisecond now. But the person seemed to see something, his eyes widened, and fainted. With all the chaos that happened that day, Pao hurriedly rushed home.

But when he got home, he didn't see his parents waiting for him, nor did he see them asleep, all he could see was an ocean of blood, and his dead parents with knives still stabbed in their hearts. Tears filled Pao's eyes; he was shocked. But he was too tired and fell asleep crying. In his dream appeared two transparent souls with silvery rays of light emanating from their bodies. The second he recognized it was his parents he couldn't resist anymore, tears uncontrollably rolled down on his cheeks. His parents said: "You are the person that is going to save the village, and make the world a fairer one, there is a mark on your forehead, it is powerful. A gift from the gods to you, the mark will be with you your whole life. Not only a gift, but more the fate, your mission." Then, before Pao could even open his mouth they disappeared.

The next morning, Pao decided to leave his village and start to fulfill his fate. The fact that his parents died and how other innocent people died, and just even how unfair things were happening, the anger build up his determined heart. To get revenge for his parents, and innocent people, and to make the world a more justice place. He packed the things that were only left in his house and went on. After he walked out of his village was the sea. He found some wood and build a raft and sailed on to the boundless ocean.

At start, there was light breeze pushing the for Pao, so he didn't need to do it himself. And the ocean waves were calm and peaceful. Pao thought that the whole journey would be like this, but clearly underestimated the difficulty level.

Suddenly, a big wind blew the raft and huge waves rolled toward Pao, he was panicking and his heart thumping like there was a giant walking on it. Another huge wave crashed on to Pao's face then he lost consciousness.

He slowly opened his heavy eyelids and saw the black sky with pieces of sparkles embellished on to the dark sky. He took a deep breath that he was still alive closed his eyes back on again. Now he was homeless, with not food, no water, no raft. He couldn't go anywhere, he didn't have anything, tears watered in his eyes, but no one knew. He

started to rethink things. Was it worth it? Then the picture of his parents getting killed suddenly appeared in his head, he clenched his fist and the determined flame inside his heart started burning again. The gods didn't want him to surrender to the challenges on this trip, they wanted him to try his hardest, even if he is on the edge of failing, then they will make sure that he succeeds.

That night, he thought for a long time.

The next morning, he explored the island and tried to find a way out. He found an old man walking with a cane. He asked the old man, where he was and how could he get out of this place. The old man didn't speak, he pointed to the wood pile next to him, and walked away. Pao was confused, but in his head, he heard a voice, it seemed like a god telling him that the old man was letting him use his wood. Pao was stunned but didn't have any choice so he took some wood, and made a raft.

After he finished building the raft he was about to go and wanted to thank the old man but couldn't find him anywhere.

Pao sailed for another two days with no food and no water. But finally he saw land. He went on land hungry and lost. Then he saw an old man, same one as he saw before. Pao asked the old man where is there to learn laws or a school. The old man told Pao that there was no school here and could learn laws nowhere here. Pao disappointedly walked away. Except, if he wanted to learn from him. So he did.

In a blink of an eyes, 20 years of time has passed, Pao now has learned all the laws and how to be fair, now he is on his trip to fulfill his destiny.

Judge Pao Verdict

YK Pao Middle School, Li, Ann – 13

Here is Judge Pao's final verdict. Today's case will entail a shooting during the civil war. In this case, the characters are as follows: soldier, woman, woman's husband, boatman, and woman's lover. One day, while the woman's husband is away, the woman crosses the bridge to see her lover. When she learned that his husband had returned, she attempted to cross the bridge, but a soldier warned her not to. She asked for help from the boatman and her lover, but no one did respond, so she attempted to cross the bridge and was shot by the soldier.

The woman disobeyed the soldier's orders. "I have orders that no one is allowed to cross the bridge. If you try to cross the bridge, I will shoot you," the soldier said. The woman had the opportunity to listen to the soldier, but she chose not to. In this quote, the soldier had warned the woman not to cross the bridge, but she did not listen to him. Based on the article, it is crystal clear that the woman tried to ask for help; no one helped, no one could help, and no one had the responsibility to help. All this leads to the Civil war, and it is inevitable that people may lack money at this memorable time.

Secondly, the woman going for his lover is also a transgression to his husband. "A woman lived with her husband beside a river...While he was away, the woman took a lover." As this is one of the existing pieces of evidence, the woman has a husband, but cheating in marriage is against the bottom line of human morality. We all know that civil war is a challenging time for every citizen, the civil war is inevitable. The fact that a woman betrays her husband to find a lover is entirely avoidable. The consequence for the woman to pay for her life is also appropriate. As a matter of fact, the soldier in the text is to carry out the task, and his task is to ensure that no one crosses the bridge. The woman continues to cross the bridge under the soldier's repeated warnings, so the soldier shoots her. Even if the soldier did not kill the woman, it puts him at high risk of death for not executing his superior's requirements. Therefore, the woman should be responsible for her behavior.

No one can predict what will happen in the very next second. People who live in this world should pay responsibility for their behavior. Every period zone has very different regulations and laws. Law is changing as time flies. In the period of civil war, there was no real justice but rules and authentic human life. People who transgress the regulations deserve punishment no matter who they are. Therefore, connected to the statements above, I believe that the death of a woman is self-inflicted.

The Beginning of the Legend of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Li, David – 11

Judge Pao woke up. He found himself dressed in his formal uniform, sleeping on the floor. Other workers worked busily around him. The manager comes in.

“Pao! How’s the work going?” The manager grumbles.

“Not very well.”

“Well, I suggest you be quicker, or there’ll be no reward.” The manager barked, then returned to his room and continued his sleep. He’s always a hard person, the kind that bellowed when you did something bad. Judge Pao has just arrived at the Quo house, not for a week and hated the noisy rooms. He continued working for three hours, then packed his things and left the house.

Pao strolled past the gate, and down to the road. He wanders on the road a bit, and then went to a bar. The light glowed, and Pao yawned. He’s a bit short on sleep, and the smell of alcohol made him sleep. A few minutes later, he was in the taxi, heading for his house.

The next day, the manager told Judge Pao to come to his room when he finished his duty. “I’ve got something special for you, Pao. I wish you can come.”

Judge Pao finished his work and strolled to the room. The manager’s room is clean, neat envelopes stacked in piles. At the desk, there sit two men, one merchant, and the manager. “Oh, here he is.” Said the manager in a kindly voice, “Pao, we want to talk about a mission. Sit.” Judge Pao sat down. “Abin,” the manager said to the merchant, “will you kindly explain the plan to me and Pao since we both don’t quite know the plan.” “Sure.” said the merchant named Abin.

“There’s a mission for you to complete, and you will bring your workers to the mission as well.” Said Abin, not forgetting to drink a cup of coffee, “we wanted to explore the grand seas of the Mediterranean, so we decided to let you take the job.”

“What’s the reward?” inquired the manager.

“The merchant council prepared to offer you one pound of gold.”

“I’m sorry, but we thugs value our lives just as you do, Abin.” the manager said coldly.

“Five pounds.”

“I think we should end this conversation. Sea travel? Well, it seems dangerous to me.”

“Ten.”

“Ten pounds of gold?” the manager asked, raising a brow. The merchant nodded. He doesn’t seem happy.

“Do you know, manager, that we just detected a signal,” the merchant said, “that shows us we have some great treasures under the sea, just under the Mediterranean, and will signal a great leap of mankind? I’m sure you will change your mind afterwards, regretting all the things you’ve done and the words you’ve said.”

“I’d probably disagree unless you can show some proof.” Said the manager. “And you’d better give me some, or I won’t finish your delicately prepared task.”

After minutes of convincing, the manager was fully convinced and prepared to set sail. They bought supplies and bought a ship. The council offered a crew, and by the next day, they were fully prepared, with a loaded ship ready to touch the sea.

“Well...Bye, farewell.” Even the not-speakative businessman, Quo, said goodbye to them. They glanced at the houses, then loosened their ship’s rope, pulled the anchor, and set sail.

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After a few days into the open sea, the storm started coming. They hungered and thirsted. A few days later, they started to dehydrate. Days they suffered from dehydration and hunger; for a few days, they even think they will die. Until one day, they finally see land. It was the kingdom of Carthage, and queen Dido and Aeneas. They greeted him with pleasure; in fact, they have never seen a foreigner on this shore before. Dido, therefore, celebrates, “O foreigners, guests, I shall be delighted. I shall take you to all grand places in the country and treat you as gods.” In days they celebrated, feasted, and told their story to the queen. Aeneas also told his story (the fall of Troy), so the queen commanded servants to record the stories, and cherished them as precious objects.

One day, Judge Pao asked the queen a question. “Do you know that there are some hidden treasures down the coast? If I could use some nets and tools from your kingdom, then we will give half of the treasure and you will build a more powerful kingdom and strong than ever.” The queen agreed. Judge Pao rushed to the manager’s room. He knocked, but no one answered. He knocked again.

“Hey, manager! I have a thing to tell you! It’s urgent!” Judge Pao shouted. A deep grumble answered the door.

“Why are you wakin’ me up like I’m not a human?” the manager sighed, then said, “what is the thing you want to tell me?”

Judge Pao took him to the ship, which is now loaded with a huge net. “This net will soon locate our treasure and get it up. We just need to check the map.” The manager agreed, and soon they’re operating the huge mechanism, with a map in their hands.

They located the treasure. “Okay, now we just need to get the treasure up the ship.” Judge Pao said gruffly. A few strong crew members loaded the huge net onto the ship and soon they were sailing back to Carthage, with a net in their ship.

The manager gave the queen the treasure. The queen gave them presents, said farewell, and a while after they were gone.

The return journey was safe. Judge Pao and his crew sailed, and the food didn’t run out. Soon they’re sailing through their harbor and parked at their ship lot.

Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Liu, Yitian – 12

Judge Pao was not pleased. He had lost his Judge's Pen. As with most things he lost, it was probably misplaced somewhere—and the person who misplaced it was probably him. You see, even the Yama of the Underworld can misplace things.

As the rules of the Underworld goes, it was mandatory to use this specialized pen to write, as the harsh condition of the Underworld makes any type of normal ink in a pen evaporate instantly once it makes contact with the air, making writing things on paper impossible. If anyone who was assigned a pen of this type lost it, then they would be evaporated and then condensed back into solid form repeatedly until eternity in a torturing chamber. The thought chilled Judge Pao to the core.

Fortunately, this was still six in the morning. He would have the entire morning, noon, afternoon, and dusk to find that idiot pen before he had to go down into the Underworld.

After he spend an hour searching through every nook and cranny he could have put the pen in, a thought materialized in his head: there was a large fortress that he was investigating, and the fortress was in the Nether. Yesterday he had went in to investigate, and he probably dropped the pen while he was at it.

The Nether is a hellish dimension that nobody dares to go. Underworld soldiers venture into it very occasionally, and they only do it in large numbers for protection. It can only be accessed with a portal—one that can only be made with specially treated obsidian, which is then set alight to generate the purple entrance to the inhospitable dimension.

Because a lot of criminal gangs like to set up HQ in the Nether, the Underworld has a portal to it. During the day, everyone in the Underworld is resting, so Judge Pao descends quietly into it. By not disturbing anyone he soundlessly creeps towards the towering purple portal, and silently slips into it.

His vision blurred and his ears popped. He had the sensation of being squeezed very tightly and then his senses came back again. What he saw haunts him even to this day.

The ground was a dark, blood red, with a clay-like texture. There were patches of dark brown sand everywhere. Blue fires erupted randomly from geysers, and there were lakes and waterfalls of red-hot lava. Pao could feel the heat coming from it. The skeleton of a dead Underworld soldier lies not far from where he stood. The skull was cracked, and something seemed to have taken a bit out of its femur bone. It was chilling to see even in this hot place.

It didn't take long for Judge Pao to see what could have killed that soldier. Cubes of dark brown substance with lava-red eyes hopped with an almost happy manner. Skeletons with black bones held spears fashioned out of stone, and they wore iron helmets. Smoking floating entities with yellow skin and black eyes threw fireballs. They had no torso, just a skull-like head and then a swirling mass of hot metal rods. They were known as "blazes" by the Underworld military because once a person was hit, they would become a blaze of fire.

He decided to go to the fortress first. Relying in pure memory, Pao stumbled his way through a bridge spanning between a lake of lava, hiked through patches of soul sand—a kind of sand that were made out of crystallized souls and slowed you down if you walked on it—evaded barrages of spears thrown by the skeletons, and approached the looming shadow of the fort. He opened the gates with a screech and was immediately met with a fist-sized fireball. Judge Pao dived out of the way, blindly threw the spear he picked up earlier, and miraculously the barrage of fireballs stopped. He had hit the forehead of a blaze and it killed the monster, leaving behind a faint wisp of smoke.

Having dealt with the monster Judge Pao continued through the winding corridors, going through each room, and looking for his golden pen. There was a sound of movement behind him, and he instinctively dodged into a nearby room. A pair of magma cubes hopped past, and only after five precious minutes did he dare to continue moving. After he went down a couple of floors, he emerged into a courtyard, and he realized he was not alone. A pile of black bones loomed over him, and with trepidation Judge Pao prodded it lightly. It roared furiously, standing up to its full height—revealing a skeletal three-headed dragon with poison-green eyes. The middle head spat a burst of purple acid towards Judge Pao, who promptly rolled to the side. The acid melted part of the floor, revealing an abyss beneath. After Judge Pao stood up, he tripped over a stick of sorts. He bit his tongue and felt at the thing that tripped him—his pen! By pure chance he had found it!

Now came the problem of surviving this place. He had no other plan besides not dying. He leapt across the crater of acid, dodged another burst of poison-green flames coming from the left head, and raced out of the fortress

just as the floor of the courtyard collapsed—but the dragon spread its leathery wings and flew up like a jet, continuing to attack the tiny little human that disturbed its hibernation. The right head spat out a vile salvo of worm-like parasites, and Judge Pao watched in horror as they borrowed right into an unfortunate magma cube and consumed it inside-out.

Judge Pao was paralysed with fear, and he stood still as the tentacles burst out of the dragon's back and in a strangulating manner, picked him up and threw him in the air towards the dragon's middle head.

The monstrous head opened its maw, showing two sets of jaws. As the first one opened, the second was going to shoot out with tremendous force at high speed and would cut Judge Pao in half.

This would be his fate if Pao did not stab the dragon in one of its eyes with the pen. As the dragon roared in pain, Judge Pao fell and landed on the left wing of the dragon, effectively using it to cushion his fall, and then sprinted full speed towards the now-in-sight portal. The dragon, seeing what he was doing, flew up and prepared to dive down and blast him, for once and for all.

Judge Pao dashed through the portal with the pen right on time as a barrage of bony, harpoon-like spikes nearly knocked his head off like a football. Underworld soldiers rush to close the portal and fend off the dragon, and Judge Pao rushes through the corridors to where he worked. By the time the work gongs are sounded, he is in the Yama's seat in the Great Court, where he will be hearing cases

The Story of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Lyu, Potter – 12

1000 years ago, before batman, iron man or any of these superheroes were invented by their authors, there lived a true hero with the qualities that were thought only to be possessed by gods. Legends and myths were told about him, about how he would apply the law even to the emperor and how he was the immortal Yama of the infernal bureaucracy. Are these true, I don't know, but all I know is that he is a great man capable of what could only be described as sremarkable powers.

Though I am no Judge Pao, I am one saved by him, writing to you about the legendary and humble life of Judge Pao. My great, great, great grandfather or something like that was a citizen of the Northern Song dynasty, and he passed the tale of Judge Pao along the family until it arrived to me. Now I'm going to tell you this legendary story of Judge Pao, so listen carefully.

Ming was a poor servant who worked at a baron's house, he had worked there for five years, but the baron was never any better to him than when he first arrived, the baron's son especially loved to torment him, sometimes insulting his mother, and sometimes throwing rocks at him when he was working. he has a mother that caught a disease and is dying quickly. Every day he returns to his humble cottage and saw his mother, he would feel guilt and sadness, but there was nothing that he could do. He has no money to buy medicine or find a doctor, all he could do is hope that his mother would get well one day. He tried to ask the baron for help, but the baron didn't help him, instead, he received a scolding from him. One day, as his mother's disease worsen, he goes to the baron's house in a desperate mood. When he was cleaning the house, he picked up a small piece of jewelry and thought, maybe I could steal it and sell it for money! But he then thought, his mother wouldn't want him to do that to save her, so he put it down. This was seen by the son of the baron, but he didn't tell his father, instead, a thought grew in his mind.

Footsteps sounded and the baron found that he was resting in the corner and yelled: "Get back to work!"

Ming rose with difficulty and went back to work. A few second later, a shriek from the baron's wife sounded around the room, the jade jewelry has been stolen!

The baron immediately went to see what has happened, his son said something in the his ears and then he came storming to Ming, with a slap on his face, he screeched: "Where have you taken it?"

"Is it for your mother? Yes, it must be for your mother, that old witch!"

Ming, heart thumping, immediately replied: "Sir, it wasn't me!"

The baron glared into Ming's eyes, and he thundered: "You dare to lie to me?"

"No, no, no, please, I didn't —" Ming pleaded.

The baron grabbed Ming's hand roughly and forced him to kneel, then, he said in a slow and angry voice: "You will get killed by this."

Ming felt his blood boil, and then fear, extreme fear. He said in a trembling voice: "Please sir, I didn't lie to you."

"Guards, take him away!" Ming was taken to a cell in a prison, the baron said: "You will go on court next week!"

Ming's hopes where extinguished, what could he do? He could do nothing other than pray that the judge is Pao.

After a week, the guards took him out, he yelled: "What are you doing, what's happening?"

The guards said nothing, and then, they arrived at the court. The blinding light of the court suddenly wounded his eyes, then, as he begins to see clearly, he looked first for the judge. And hope arrived— it is Judge Pao! The judge showed no sympathy to him, and no praise to the baron. He just sat there, looking at them. Then, with a booming voice, he announced the court to start. Then, Ming kneeled in front of him, and spoke: "Sir, I—"

Judge Pao silenced him, then said in an orderly manner: "Now, baron, you will speak first."

“This lowly servant stole my wife’s jewelry and lied to me; he should be executed!” The baron said with an arrogant voice.

“Now, it is your turn to speak.”

“Sir, I’m sure I didn’t steal that piece of jewelry.”

“You— How dare you!” yelled the baron.

Judge Pao said: “No interrupting here! Let him continue.”

I continued: “Then he locked me up in a cell for a week and I arrived here.”

Judge Pao said: “Baron, you say that the jewelry is stolen by him, but how can you prove it?”

“My son saw him pick up the jewelry and push it into his pockets!”

“I did pick it up, but I didn’t steal it!” Ming immediately replied

“Silence!”

“We will investigate this case, for now, Ming will stay with me, not you, baron!”

“But he’s my servant!”

“He will stay with me!” Judge Pao said in a clear and forceful voice.

Judge Pao sent men to Ming’s cottage. There, they found nothing but a dying old woman and some decrepit furniture. They found no money or jewelry whatsoever.”

Then, Judge Pao sent men to track the Baron and his family. They soon found out that the Baron’s son is always going out by himself sneakily, looking around to see if anyone is around, and then running out their manor. So, the men followed him around. He would first go to the pawn shop and trade some jewelry for money, then, he would go gamble with his friends. These so called “friends” were the most notorious gangsters in the area.

After knowing all these facts and the timetable of the baron’s son from his men, he called the baron to come and meet him at court. “The thief that you’ve been looking for is right there at the pawn shop now, he will go gamble with his friend next.” The Judge Pao said in a mysterious manner.

The baron excitedly ran to the pawn shop, and to his surprise, he found his son trading his family heirloom for money, he suppressed his anger and followed his son. He found out to his astonishment and horror that his son is gambling with the gangsters that he hated so much. The baron snuck up on his son and caught him by surprise. His son yelled in astonishment and then kneeled in front of the baron, crying, and saying: “Father, I’m sorry, please don’t hurt me!”

“You... You are a disgrace to me; you aren’t my son!”

“Father, no—”

The baron left his son, crying and screaming for him not to go.

The Baron returned to court and apologized to Ming, gave Ming money as compensation, and then stormed away. Ming thanked Judge Pao and walked home with hopes of curing his mother. Then, Judge Pao sent his guards to retrieve the baron’s son and execute him.

This event angered the emperor because the baron is his friend and brother, killing the baron’s son made the emperor furious. The emperor ordered Judge Pao to be killed, but nearly all the officials were against this, they called for mercy and said that Judge Pao did the right thing. Because of this, the emperor had to let this event go.

After his mother is cured, Ming followed Judge Pao on his way home, wanting to find out the truth about his savoir. he half expected that Pao would go in some kind of temple and disappear in it, possibly going to the realm of the dead. But no, all Ming saw was an old, tired man returning to a humble cottage and embracing his sons and wife.

This story is passed on by my ancestors, I am telling you this so that this story will never be forgotten, and Judge Pao's justice and courage will never be lost along the streams of history. So, you see, Judge Pao is no superhero or possess supernatural abilities, he is just a humble, courageous judge who dared to see the evil, and confront it.

New Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Ma, Cherrie – 12

In Virgil's *The Aeneid*, Aeneas shares many similarities with Judge Pao.

Once upon a time, in the Northern Song Dynasty, there was no famous detective Conan and no Sherlock Holmes, and there was no Pikachu in Pokémon. China's Anhui Province saw the appearance of a Pao QingTian judge. As a child, he studied hard from an early age. I am very interested in fairness and politics. As time passed, Pao QingTian became more and more powerful and successful. The Jin Shi exam is just like our current Ph.D. students. He became a judge as he had wished, but the next thing that would greet him was unknown. What Bao Qingtian must do to become a qualified judge.

On his first day at work, he encountered a difficult problem. This time at the opening of the court to discuss an assassin who wanted to go and murder a prince, who, due to the prince's defense, resulted in the assassin receiving serious injuries. Their parents were extremely upset and did not believe that their child was going to kill the prince of the royal family. Instead, they felt that the prince felt that his office could kill people who displeased him with impunity. Since there was no surveillance and no witnesses, it was very difficult for Pao. He went back and forth several times to the prince's house to find evidence, evidence but did not expect the room to be disposed of. There is no trace of dirt, which makes Pao suspicious, and he doesn't know what to do next. As things get more complicated, there are more crimes by the prince randomly killing people around by word of mouth. The whole city feels that the prince is a criminal, plus they are already dissatisfied with the emperor's rule, and begin to rebel, threatening Pao.

Pao dilemma, one side is the face of the big boss surname, and the other side is a million must not offend the royal family. He knows that this matter must require full evidence to solve the case because if he favors the royal family will be missing the hearts of the people caused by the boss's surname resistance. But if he favored the people, he would face dismissal and slander the royal family for killing the head. Coincidentally, that day the murder reappeared. Pao found that this time the prince had left a legacy. Then the people began to preach: "I told you, this royal family, and this prince, are no good!" Pao was not disturbed, and strangely enough, the always-clean scene of the incident showed extremely obvious evidence. Pao could not help but frown and continue to search the scene, but in addition to this seal, they still found nothing. The people identified the prince as the murderer. He raised his head, no more murderous footprints to follow.

As Pao understood the target of the killer, that is, the person who displeased the prince, Pao guessed in his heart, so he plans to wait at the home of the soon-to-be-murdered person. It was already late at night, and it was still raining when the killer showed up at the house of the person about to be murdered. The familiar scent of rosemary reached Pao's nose, and when he saw the murderer committing the crime, he hid in the victim's room to get more evidence. Suddenly the murderer jumped, and a violent wind blew toward Pao. Stinging Pao's cheeks felt a vague pain. The killer had already dismembered the victim before the eyes of the murdered person opened. The blood with a fishy smell in the bed left, 'drip, drip, drip' crimson blood snaking down Pao's head to the face. The last drop was on his clothes, and since there were several people on alert this time, everyone soon realized that another unfortunate child had been murdered. Immediately rushed over, the killer probably found exposed and fled through the window

Pao looked in the direction he was fleeing. He ran away from the mud in a panic. He ran in the killer's direction and picked up the dagger that the killer had dropped in his path. Pao tugged at the lining of his shirt as he rested and used the knife to make a deep cut and rub the murdered man's blood. The killer should not have known, and tomorrow is the day to test his suspicions. "Dong Dong Dong," the shrill sound of a gong came from not far away, and the people poured into the court like a sea wave. Men, women, and children expected the prince to make a fool of himself so that the royal family would have no words to oppress and govern them. Both the prince and the 'killer' sat quietly, unable to see the slightest flaw. This led to a heated discussion about the owner's surname. As soon as they got up, PAO made what they thought was the 'killer' address and showed his line to the people. "The 'killer' immediately resisted, shouting a rebuke to those who were ready to strip him." But his parents had to exterminate the royal family and ruthlessly strip him of his clothes.

The killer's line was visible, and clear bloodstains and knife cuts were displayed to those who came to join in the fun. Pao shook helplessly and shouted, "folks, it's not that I'm biased against the royal family. You look at this fellow, in this latest murder, I expected who his next murder was. So he lurked in the murdered man's house and quietly cut his line with a knife. Wanted to prove it, never thought it would be you!" The public made helpless tsk—tsk noises and various mocking voices came out at once. The killer just realized he had been discovered, turned his head, and tried to run, sophomoric. Helplessly, Pao took out the ring and dagger and showed them clearly to everyone. Then he said, "The words above are true, Pao Qingtian is truthful, will not deceive everyone, and must be fair!" The killer, full of evidence, bowed his head in shame. The people applauded and cheered one after another. In his heart, Pao also identified himself as the judge.

After that, Pao did not disappoint his supporters. Takes every case seriously. Doing things fairly and justly, as he promised, won the trust of the people. The fame grew and spread everywhere, no one admired Pao, and Pao became a role model for others, just like a childhood dream.

The First Case of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Ouyang, James – 11

Can anyone be proved innocent, if it be enough to have accused him?

—Flavius Claudius Julian

The night goes on. But only a small shadow creeps from street to street, road to road; what the figure is doing is unknown. Slowly, but without a single noise, the hooded figure creeps behind a palace. What a fabulous palace it was! As resplendent as it seemed, countless rare jewels were inlaid on the walls. The figure smiles contemptuously at the sight. His scrubby silhouette rested against the dimming sky. Creeeeak! Aeneas lay silently on the bed behind the door, not aware of the intruder coming in at all. There was his sword, sharp and ready to kill, gleaming under the moonlight. The figure carefully picked up the sword and staggered a few steps backward, escaping out the door.

It was a day just like any other. Bao Zheng, the son of a local Chinese farmer, was doing his daily chore of farming. Young Bao was in a fit of sulking after talking to his parents.

"Why can't I be a judge?"

Bao sighed in frustration. His parents, who were peasants themselves, wanted him to be one as well. They couldn't afford his luxurious dream of becoming a judge.

"Why not have a steady job and help our family in the field every day?"

Bao's parents replied by saying this to his repeated question. Unsatisfied, Bao decided to wander along the fields and lose all thought of this annoying matter. As he walks, a dark portal slowly forms beside his feet in the wheat field, but he takes no notice of it at all. Bao turns his head to look back at his house, which is now the size of a dot on the horizon.

"Oh no, I have to get back home to plough!"

At this thought, he started to run, but tripped on a rock and fell heavily onto the floor. Standing up, Bao discovers something weird in the wheat field. It seemed to be a dark hole without an end and was nearly two meters wide. What was in it? Curious, Bao reached out to touch it, and at once, the hole, as if a giant monster, sucked Bao into its stomach.

"Ahhhhhhh!"

Meanwhile, in Rome, the bustling commotion outside woke Aeneas. It occurred to him that someone had been in his room last night. After asking a couple of the citizens, he found out that a thief came into his palace at night. It was only then that he instinctively looked back at the wall, realizing that his sword was nowhere to be seen. Worried and full of rage, Aeneas' blood boiled as he stomped around the room. That sword was given to him by his mother Venus and meant more to him than anything. Not only this, but whoever possesses that sword has the power to summon all the gods when the Romans are in need of help. If it falls into the wrong hands, Rome could be destroyed.

"I will find who did this!"

Aeneas dashed to his friend Claudius, hoping that he could devise a plan to help him. Claudius was strenuously constructing a so-called time machine that could send people to the past or future, or summon people from those time periods in his shop.

"The start of this portal must be somewhere in ancient China!"

Claudius remarked as he wiped sweat and machine grease from his forehead.

"What?"

Aeneas was used to his fellow inventor jabbering nonsense every day, but nonetheless, he was still a smart inventor indeed. Abruptly, a man bounded out of the machine. Aeneas was startled by the sight, but Claudius remained calm. They both cast shocked glances at the man, who was wearing a long, flowing robe and had a dark brown face with a long beard.

"Who, or what, are you?"

uttered Aeneas, who was clearly not believing what he saw.

"Good morning, sir. I am Bao Zheng, son of my father."

The young man says, clearly confused as well.

"Told you he was sent here by the time machine."

Claudius whispered to Aeneas.

"Perhaps he could assist us in finding my sword?"

Aeneas says to Claudius.

"Could you help us solve a case, Mr. ,uh Bao?"

Claudius asks reluctantly.

"It's my pleasure, sir. I am fairly good at solving cases. But could you first tell me where I am?"

Bao's eyes shone as he heard the word "case." He loved solving cases more than ever, but he had never solved a real one before.

"That's great! This is Rome, my home."

Aeneas replies.

Delighted at this new help, Aeneas, without saying anything else, leads the other two to his palace.

"Rome, I've heard of it before."

Bao thought.

It turned out that Bao Zheng is actually a young farmer who came from ancient China, and was unexpectedly teleported to Rome. As they walked along the busy city streets, Bao's jaw dropped. He had never seen such a scene. Large concrete houses towered above them on both sides, and many people were selling and buying things in markets. The constant cacophony of shouting and bargaining was ear-splitting. The three soon arrived at Aeneas' palace, and Bao nearly fainted at the sight.

"The thief came in yesterday night and stole my sword, so it would be best if you, Mr. Bao, could help me get it. "

Aeneas explains. When there was no response, he looked at Bao, who was frozen like a statue, staring at Aeneas' palace.

Soon after, Bao simply looked at Aeneas' room. As quick as a bolt of lightning, he stood and concluded, scratching his chin.

"The thief must have stolen the sword without your notice, and the footprints show that the thief has already fled the palace."

"Reasonable."

Aeneas says.

"But what should we do now?"

"I would say find the thief, of course!"

Bao exclaimed, his voice filled with excitement.

"But how? "If you search in the city, it's like finding a needle in a haystack."

Bao felt that what he said was right, but he couldn't find a way to solve the case. Just then, he remembered something his dad told him when he was a little kid.

"Look out for details every time, son. They are the key to success."

Thinking of this, Bao began to scrupulously observe every corner in Aeneas' palace, not willing to let go of a single detail. Finally, he said confidently,

"The thief has pretended to escape, but has actually come back through the window after performing the theft." The piece of dust that has been wiped off the window sill is proof. The thief also covered his footprints with earth near the front floor.

"But that is not possible!"

Aeneas exclaimed. It was inconceivable.

"Why not? The window was opened, so it is most likely that the thief escaped through the door and went back in through the window. The piece of dust that has been wiped off on the window sill is solid proof. The thief also deliberately left his footprints near the front floor but covered the ones leading back to the window."

"Smart, very smart indeed."

Aeneas nods his head slightly.

"But who did it?"

"In my opinion, it must be someone in the palace itself. We should confirm this with witnesses."

As he said this, Bao Zheng strode outside and began questioning others that live nearby. They all replied that they didn't see anyone come out of the palace at that time.

"Very interesting."

"Does this mean it might be my servants, by any chance?"

"That's uncertain, but we should first find suspects."

After what seemed like a million years of investigation, Aeneas, at last, took three people with him to meet Bao Zheng: the chef, the guard, and Marcellus, a general.

"Why am I here? I have nothing to do with this!"
Marcellus roared in annoyance.

After hearing all three of their alibis, Pao laughed and pointed at Marcellus. The chef and guard all have people to prove their alibis, including him. However, no one mentioned what was stolen, but the military leader, during his justification, said, "I didn't steal the sword!"

He appears to have been dissatisfied with his position and requested a promotion several times, but was denied by Emperor Augustus. In the heat of the moment, he changed sides and decided to help the Greeks. The servant who provided the alibi was also a Greek soldier undercover, working with him to get the sword.

This was the first case ever solved by Judge Pao, although he was only called Bao Zheng at that time. It helped him learn how important details are, and prepared him for his future career. Bao Zheng also had the chance to see Rome, a beautiful country that later perished in 476 CE. Bao Qingtian, a fearless judge, is really a symbol of justice in my eyes. His legends will be passed down through many generations. We should all learn from Judge Pao, his bravery, great sense of justice, and of course, smart way of solving cases.

Judge Pao Verdict

YK Pao Middle School, Ren, Gabriel – 14

I believe that the person who is responsible for the woman's death is the woman herself. She caused her death by disobeying the rules and falling in love with another person. Her burden of death is also bigger than any other person in the story, and here is why.

Firstly, she disobeyed the soldier's rules. The soldier clearly said that "Stop. I have orders that no one must cross the bridge. If you try to cross the bridge, I will shoot you." She tried to cross the bridge to meet his husband, so she got shot. The boatmen are also very innocent, since he said that he needs 100 dollars for the women to cross the bridge. However, the women did not give him 100 dollars, so the boatmen refused to let her cross the river. The boatmen also heard the conversation that anyone who cross the bridge will get shot. He thought that he can cross the river and the river isn't the bridge, however, he thought again about the soldier's commands and thinks that the soldier's purpose is to stop anyone from going across the river. That is why he thinks that it would be a great risk of life for him to get anyone across the river, so he offered a big price.

Secondly, the soldier did nothing wrong. The story happened in Civil war, and there is a lot of fighting going on. If the person ordering commands is a general who has a higher rank than him, and the soldier refused to follow the commands, then the consequence might not only be about force retirement, but he has a chance to go into the military court. That is why the soldier don't dare letting anyone cross the river. The lover also did nothing wrong, and probably is the biggest victim inside the story. He and the women are lovers and what the lover thinks is that the women will only be loving him. However, the women's husband came back, and he didn't know anything about the women's husband. Suddenly, the women came and said that she will go and meet his husband while needing 100 dollars to cross the river. The lover was outraged, since he never knew anything about the women's husband. That is why he didn't give the women 100 dollars. The women's husband as well is a innocent person in the story. The setting of the story is in Civil war, meaning that lots of men are off to the war. From the story, we can see that the women and the husband lived together for a long time, and suddenly the husband needs to go off for 3 months. That is why we can make an articulation that the husband is going to war. After the war when the women's husband came back, his heart probably broke, since her wife fell in love with another stranger and the husband went to war is for the family. That is why her husband is also innocent.

Lastly, with everyone being innocent and not guilty, I believe that the women are the person who is responsible for the death, not only because she knew that she is going to die to the soldier, but also because everyone was doing their own work and the women is the only variable in the whole story. That is why the women is responsible for her death.

New Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Ren, Lotty – 11

Judge Pao is the most impartial judge in Chinese History. During his years in civil service, Pao consistently demonstrated extreme honesty and uprightness. He could sentence his own uncle without hesitation, as well as denounce an uncle of Emperor Renzong's favourite concubine and punishing powerful families.

One time, Judge Pao was trailing the newest case. *Shush!* The prosecutor stood up. "For god's sake, who else could it be! You are the only one who's jealous of my brother!" Immediately after, the defendant argued, "It's not me! I don't even know what you're talking about." Just when both sides are at a stalemate, someone exclaimed, breaking the deadlock.

"Out of the way!" "Master Pao, this lady said she's witnessed the murderer!"

Judge Pao quickly came to the soldiers. An old woman lies in the cart, her dress soaked by blood. A ferocious wound sits on her pale face.

"It's...not him. Not..." She mumbled in her trembling voice. "I... saw him..."

"Take it easy. Madam." Astonished, Judge Pao calmed the old lady down. "Someone call the ambulance!" The crowd looked at each other, all silent.

Suddenly, Judge Pao felt everything around him started to fade away. In the blink of an eye, he realized that he was floating above his tribunal! The people that sat beside him a minuet ago were now all under his feet, vague in shape.

Judge Pao was stunned. Just as he tried to figure out what just happened, the wind started to pick up, along with faint thunder. Abruptly, Judge Pao saw something floating down from up above. Judge Pao panicked. As it approaches, he could tell that it's a lady. Judge Pao had read a lot of old tales. He started recalling if he'd done anything that could have irritated the gods. The goddess landed in front of Judge Pao, smiling benevolently. She was followed by two other goddesses, all possessing extreme beauty. Judge Pao recognized them immediately:

The first goddess had black, coiled hair with an elaborate golden hairwear. Her eyes glim with benevolence, and her lips were scarlet red. Her clothes were inlaid with all kinds of jewelry, smelling of luxury and nobleness. This was the Western Queen.

The second girl was certainly a proper fairy. Her dress was a seamless heavenly robe. Every piece of cloth is made of the thread of clouds, flowing with light of the sun, moon and stars, and the colors of dusk and dawn. Her sleeves and dress sway as the wind drifts pass. She was known as the Weaver girl.

The last girl was the goddess of the moon. Chang'e has the appearance of a country and a city, with fair skin, cold and elegant temperament. She was a beauty which would obscure the moon and make flowers blush, make wild geese alight and fish dive down for shame. Her body glows faintly of the moonlight.

Judge Pao tried to calm himself down. The three goddesses came to him, smiling more gorgeously than ever.

"You're Judge Pao, right?" The first one to speak was the Western Queen.

"Yes, Ma'am." Judge Pao replied respectfully.

"The fairest judge in history?" The Weaver girl asked, eyes flickering with excitement.

"Thank you, Ma'am."

"You don't have to worry," Chang'e grinned. "You're not in trouble. We're here this time to ask you for help."

Judge Pao sighed of relief. "Of course. I would like to help you with anything you need, Ma'am."

The Western Queen smiled. She took out a massive peach. Judge Pao took a closer look, and there glitters a few words— “For the Beauty of Heaven” on the peach.

“This peach is from my peach garden in heaven,” The Western Queen told Judge Pao. It says it’s for the most beautiful goddess in heaven. The three of us couldn’t get it straight on this. Judge Pao, you are the best judge in Chinese history, no matter in heaven or Earth. We want you to choose the most beautiful goddess out of the three of us.”

The Western Queen stepped forward. “I am the goddess of nobleness and honor,” She announced. “I can provide you and your family supreme glory and the opportunity to become immortal.”

“I am the goddess of ingenuity!” The Weaver girl was not resigned to admit being inferior. “I can give you and your family unlimited luxury and resplendent garment.”

Last but not least, Chang’e finally spoke up. “I am the goddess of moon. I’m in charge of the waxing and waning of the moon. I guarantee your family’s happiness, peace and unity.”

“S...Sure, Ma’am.” Inspecting the three gorgeous goddesses one by one, Judge Pao was in a pickle. *To be fair in this incident is...literally impossible!* “I’ll...try my best.”

Suddenly, he heard the Western Queen whisper, “Pao, do you want all that honor and respect? Would you like to come to heaven and become a god?”

“Don’t listen to her,” The Weaver girl rolled her eyes disdainfully. “Choose me, Judge Pao, and take all that luxury!”

“He’s going to choose me!” Chang’e cried. “Judge Pao, don’t you believe that family is the most important thing?”

“Oh, shut up! Why will he choose you?”

“How do you know he’s going to choose you, then?”

“He’ll choose me!”

“Not you!”

“... ...”

Judge Pao covered his ears. His mind is now a mess, giving him an extreme headache. *Why are the goddesses so immature? None of them deserve that peach! Even humans know better than this...*

All of a sudden, a heavy thought strike his mind. The old lady! Is she still alive? Did anyone take her to medic? He peered through the clouds, and the scene in the course caught his eyes. The crowd was panicking about Judge Pao’s sudden disappearance, however nobody cared about the old lady at her last gasp. “What a bunch of bastards!” He muttered. Just then, a young shadow came into the course. “Julie?” It was Judge Pao’s sister, who helps him at the course every weekend. Julie was black, and her hair was always a mess. She always wears the same old shirt to the course. Julie spotted the old lady immediately. She came to her without hesitation. Judge Pao saw her frightened face, but she calmed herself down and started cleaning the blood in the cart and bandaging her wound.

Judge Pao was relieved. Suddenly, the heat of eagerness urged him to come to the goddesses, still arguing against each other.

“To be honest,” He cleared his throat. “None of you deserve to be honored as the most beautiful woman in heaven!”

The arguing stopped. The goddesses stared at him, shocked.

“Just now, I spectated what was happening down in my course. My sister, who was far uglier than you do, ma’am, saved an old woman’s life while everyone else ignored her presence. I suppose this is what people should do, right? To me, she deserves this peach more than any of you!”

“Even humans know better than you do. Beauty includes not only appearance, but also a gorgeous heart, I think you know this, ma’am. Personally, a beautiful goddess stands for benevolence, justice, intelligence, and kindness. However, ma’am, you’re behaving so immaturely! I suppose that goddesses should have been staying in heaven and fulfilling the requirements instead of arguing over a peach and a title, correct?”

Silence.

Judge Pao sighed.

“Shame on you.”

New Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Shen, Muhua – 12

I would like to compare Judge Pao to a better version of Aeneas. The reason is that Judge Pao has the trait of being a determined person and to be courageous, though they are more mentally than physically like the Aeneas. One trait Judge Pao is good at is that he does not forget what his heart contains which is to help people, always on his way to help more people, especially those who are poor. By not forgetting what he wants to do, or what he needs to do, at any given time. So he exceeds the qualities of Aeneas. Now, let the story begin.

I, Pao, is a very famous judge, and I have the ambition to help the poor defeat some of the evil and the rich. These evil and rich people using their power, and money to devastate the poor, making the poor people face Injustice and increasingly worse life qualities. It needs to change and I am embracing it. Before I became a great Judge serving on the top court in the Capital of Song, like every other judge, I started with low cases. Today, let me tell you about a strange and horrible case that I had to deal with when I was still in my youth.

Once upon a time, I was just starting my career, carefully examining, solving, and breaking all kinds of cases from morning till night in my small county court. Every day people come to report with strange, trivial cases. I have been racking my brain all days and was doing all I can to help the people who are innocent. One day, I was going to arrest a criminal suspect based on a tip from an informant. I gathered a few of my guards and sprinted to the address in the tip. When I looked up, it was a palace, richly decorated and colorful, very different from the usual dilapidated houses of criminals. Together, we kicked the door open and rushed in. Just then, two groups of men in black came running out of the darkness and surrounded us. "Surrender!" As they surrounded me and a few of my guards, we found ourselves roughly have anything to fight back.

There he is! I saw the criminal in the back of the crowd, with a bent-over nose, looking maliciously at me and my few terrorized guards, the face is just like how the peasant accused of been taken his livestock away leaving him no way to plant this spring. However, the criminal did not know one thing: I knew a kind and powerful man named Yaliu in the county. He was in charge of the county property, took good care of it, and was nice to the citizens inside. I was not startled and said furiously: "Hey! The guy with a black robe and a dangling nose! I came with the authority of this county or face your consequences immediately!" "Who cares about your authority or not? Everyone knows that I am the hidden and undefeated power hiding here!" "No, you are not." Says Yaliu, as he taking a big step forward. In an oppressing voice, he spoke: "We are here to arrest you. All of you will be viewed as accomplices if you don't lay down your weapons and go away immediately! You know what happens when you go against me, eh?" As soon as he spoke, almost everyone dropped their weapons and equipment, and ran for their lives. YaLiu smiled swiftly and went away, shook my hand and said: "No problem, now you can send him to jail for officially against the lawful authority. No more worries!" He walked away as if nothing could happen. Then, in accordance with the law, with the help of myself and some of my county guards, I sent the prisoner to court together, and at last he received the punishment he deserved. Now, all of us are safe again, and peace has returned to our county.

The second time, something else even stranger happened. Two young men are fighting each other in the court, both saying that they are doing it for justice, while they both stated each other for cutting down each other's pet. I was confused and not knowing what to do. One cat has its fur cut off and bones lost while the other's dotted cat still looks very fresh though dead. Because of that, I was confused not knowing who is the actual murderer and who is innocent. After long time of being a Judge&Detective I was almost sure that the first person was the actual cat killer. Everyone is puzzled but I wasn't. The reason is that it's not likely that someone is going able to kill an animal, cut down its bones and make no sounds—so as he speculates, the guy killed his pet at home, and fed the other's cat poison which makes it dead, using the two cats as a proof to the other person is murder to animals, hoping to send him some jail time so that he is able to get his revenge. "How smart case-solving"! Says everyone at once made an "ah~" while the case is solved once again. The slayer has to face guilt and give money to the other person for faking accuse and property lost. This is another one solved.

To this day, I still believe in the power of Justice and it will not be stopped by evil. I fought on and on for Justice, making it a requirement for me when I solve crimes, and keep doing it till this day. Nowadays, I have already solved numerous cases and am close to accomplishing the plan. Cheers to Justice!

The Legend of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Tang, Iris – 12

Rain fell heavily on the windows like bullets crashing, the wind howled like a ferocious monster but oblivious to all that was the famous detective Judge Pao. He was emersed in his own dream when suddenly, everything went black...

A young girl about 25 years old was curled up in the middle of a room. She was beautiful, wearing a pearl white laced dress and many golden bracelets. When she turned over, Judge Pao saw a blood red stain on her chest which blood still trickled down. The girl crawled over slowly and opened her mouth to speak, but no words came out. Instead, the girl wrote a note on a piece of paper and reached it out for Judge Pao to read. It was written out of her own flesh and looked like strange lines and a few dots. It must be written in another language, a language unspoken on the lands of China. Judge Pao shook his head and the girl, now standing, looked defeated. Then, signs of a new idea flashed over her face, and she spoke, in a low and hoarse voice

“I’m guessing you do understand English?”

“Yes, although it may be difficult for me to process since I haven’t used it since the mystery of the England Queen years ago

“Anyways, I’m here to ask you to trace my death back and let me achieve revenge over the enemies of mine. By the way, I’m Dido, the Queen of Carthage...before my death” the girl spoke in a voice full of hate.

“Through observing, I have found out that you may have committed suicide by stabbing a sword on your left chest. May I ask the reason you did that?” Judge Pao replied. A flash of anger slashed through Dido’s eyes, but she still tried to calm down and showed Judge Pao a painted picture of a young man. The picture was quite detailed and showed a man about 37 smiling proudly. He looked like a soldier, with arrows held on his hand and a bow on the walls behind him. Clearly, the man was quite wealthy since the walls were covered in golden wallpaper and beautiful paintings were sketched on the ceiling. Elegant carpets in the colors of blue and white were on the floor underneath beautiful torches and candle stands.

“This was the man who betrayed me, the man who broke my heart and left me alone. He came to my land and asked for warmth, food and resources to build his ships. I gave him all of this and even agreed to marry him, but he still left me alone and sailed away to achieve his so-called destiny.” Dido clenched her fist at the sight of this man.

“Strange case I’ve met, but an easy one. Do you know this man’s name, or maybe where he is from? Tell me the whole story, so I can solve it quicker.” Judge Pao answered.

“Well, one day, when I was ordering my citizens of Carthage to build the theaters and temples, many large ships drew up to the beach. Men wearing armor walked out looking for a place to stay. They did not show their leader Aeneas’s face at first, but when I showed no harm, this man came in view. He begged me for warmth, food, wood and I gave him all this. I even allowed the boats to be settled on the beach, when they were repairing it.”

“At night, I was sleeping when there was a sudden thought in my mind, I was in love with that man. I was madly in love, and nothing could stop me from marrying him. Except my vow to Sychaeus my dead husband to never marry again. So, I turned to my sister Anna for help and her advice was to forget about the vow and marry Aeneas, which I did in a cave when we went hunting.”

“But as days went on, Aeneas began to talk about a destiny that he had to fulfill, a fate as he called. He even said that Jupiter himself has asked him to leave my land and go to found Rome in Italy. Of course, I didn’t believe him until things got worse for me.”

“Aeneas tried to escape with his friends and ships one day, but they were caught by my servants. I asked him the reason, but he denied it, he just told me that he had to leave to go and found Rome. What kind of person is that! He lied at me and made me break my vow and everything! I thought he would regret it, but he left me alone.” Dido finished this story and turned to Judge Pao for explanation.

Judge Pao woke suddenly and sat up on his bed, his thoughts still on the poor woman Dido and Aeneas. He looked around at his surroundings but saw nothing of the black room and Dido. Was that just all a dream in his head? Or was Dido telling him something through his dream? He decided to list the suspects first and then wait for his dream tonight.

“Well, the first suspect of course is Aeneas, but what would be his motive?” Judge Pao spoke loudly to himself. After all, Aeneas wouldn’t know Dido since he just arrived on the island.

“Wait, I think there’s something fishy going around the time when Aeneas first arrived. How could Dido just fall in love with Aeneas after a few hours! Unless it was the plan of Aeneas? To make her fall in love and then betray her? But what could the motive possibly be! Judge Pao thought for a few hours silently but could not understand anything.

That night, when Dido crept into his brain again, Judge Pao was waiting for her. He casually cleared his throat and asked the most crucial question, if there were gods in Carthage’s belief system.

“Of course! We follow all the gods just like Romans. For example, Juno is the queen of gods and Jupiter is the king of gods. Simple!” Dido looked surprised at the question

“Then, do you have a god of love? Someone who makes people love each other?” Judge Pao asked again

“Yes, Cupid. Her makes people fall in love with each other. Why?” Dido replied

“Then I’ve done it, I’ve partly solved the case, what we need to do is to ask Cupid himself later on.” Judge Pao yawned and drifted into a deeper sleep

The next day, Judge Pao began to prepare for his travel to Mount. Olympus, he needed to ask the romantic god himself for evidence. Far away on the peaceful mountain of Olympus, gods wandered around spotting for visitors. Juno, the queen of gods sensed a blood never seen on this land and alerted the guards for extra protection.

From Juno’s eyes, Judge Pao was a middle-aged man wearing a black face mask and black cap. He looked somehow dangerous with his sharpened bow and spiky arrows. To them he was an intruder, a thief maybe, looking for valuables and jewels, diamonds from them.

Judge Pao reached the foot of the mountain and leaned against it to catch his breath. He, a 43-year-old man traveled for weeks, months until reaching this well-known mountain of the gods. Mount Olympus was silver under the streaks on golden sunlight, white snow was layered on the top like a blanket for the mountain. Since no one was in sight, Judge Pao shouted at the gods

“Beware, all gods, I am Judge Pao from the lands of China, here to seek revenge for a young girl named Dido in my dreams. I hear she is the queen of Carthage. She has told me the whole story and today, I come to ask the love god Cupid for evidence. May I, with no harm proceed inside the magnificent gates and see the beloved gods?

Juno and Jupiter looked at each other in confusion. The queen of Carthage seeking revenge? Asking Cupid for evidence? May that be Dido, the queen of Carthage which Juno sent Cupid to use the love potion on. Juno immediately realized where this was going and sealed the gates at once. If she was found out, she would be banished by the gods for messing up the planned-out life of mortals.

“We would not know anything about this girl and Cupid as well. You have found the wrong person to ask.” Juno cried loudly at Judge Pao

“Now Juno, let’s hear what this stranger has to say first. It might be even useful for us since I’ve heard rumors about a young girl’s death last Wednesday. Rumors are that the queen of Carthage committed suicide because of a soldier, a man. I am curious to know why. Let the man speak first.” Jupiter wanted to see if the rumors were true. Judge Pao stepped through the gates and vanished like a puff of smoke into the air...

Fireside Tales of Justice Bao

YK Pao Middle School, Tang, Olynn – 13

Once upon a time, dear child, when the moon was yet young, in a time when only the clouds wandering had seen, of ever-reigning chaos, there was born a baby. Fair-skinned he was, on his forehead there seemed to be a faint imprint of a sickle moon glowing, then vanished. In the land of Hefei, Anhui, on the banks of the Yangtse River long and ever flowing he was born, the great Judge Bao had thus descended upon the world.

Legends say his skin was dark, but I tell thee, that was not so. For from the clouds I have heard, Judge Bao's skin shone the color of moonlight, the moonlight glowing fair!

Thus, he grew up, a lord he became, though he immersed himself not in power, for his heart was true, and his justice was his crown. In the morning, when the sun rose shining into the sky stretching, and light first chased away the shadows dark he was the Justice of the World Above, and his gaze sharp pierces through even the most well-thought lies false. The people loved him, in a time of darkness he was Hope itself, the Kui Star reborn, he was the light in the shadows, a light so bright!

As the shades slowly crawled, enlarging until the lands were surrounded in gloom, and light was no more, he was Lord of the World Below. In his hand there held the power of life and death, on his right the ghost of the name Volatile, and on his left animal-like devils snarled. No spirit evil can pass through the underworld without him noticing, and those innocent and true need not fear, for 'tis Judge Bao, whose eyes see all!

There once was an emperor of the name Shinshu, his time of twilight, when the light dwindles, weak yet shining still. His brain was muddled, delving deep into mythologies and worshipping he abandoned his people, and ignored the eyes ever watchful, the eyes of the neighboring kingdoms, and his weakness was known throughout the terrains, weakness so shameful!

After Emperor Shinshu's wife passed 'twas said that two concubines of the names Liu and Li were found pregnant. You see, child, if either of them gave birth to a son first, a possibility there lies that they could be made into the next queen. O! Jealousy had eaten away at Lady Liu's heart, jealousy so terrible! Corrupted she was by the promise of power, and thus under the abominable drive she took away Lady Li's newborn son and replaced him with a leopard cat with its skin torn off.

Emperor Shinshu mistook the cat for the baby, and he exclaimed in his fury, "Fie, the concubine has given birth to an unnatural creature! Take the mother to the dungeons, and never let her see the light of day once more!"

Not long after the incident Lady Liu gave birth to a beautiful boy and thus became the new queen. The child newborn was to become the next emperor, but unfortunately perished six years later. Emperor Shinshu was devoid of a crown prince, and his line had thus broken.

Or perhaps not.

In his desperation, Shinshu ordered his brother's son be brought to him to raise as his own crown prince. Yet 'twas truly the true crown prince of Emperor Shinshu sent away so many years ago by the queen corrupted by jealousy and thirst for power. Fate cannot be meddled with easily, not by commoners, not, as things had turned out, by queen Liu, despite her valiant attempt.

One day, when the sun so bright shone upon the vast dome above, and not a cloud walked free; when the willows bow by the lake clear, and the green-fingered breeze brushed against the grass soft, the new crown prince saw Lady Li by chance. Tears of joy ran, for mother and son they truly were, and though never before had they seen each other, the tie of blood was too strong indeed to break.

Thus, they wept.

Yet the ever-watchful queen, the Lady Liu, found out, and fury washed upon her heart black. Sliver-tongued she was, and her words convinced the folly Emperor that Lady Li ought to be killed. Kind-hearted eunuchs who were to bring her the poison and death helped her escape, for the truth they knew deep within their hearts, that Lady Liu was false, and Lady Li innocent.

To the city of Chenzhou Lady Li was brought, and 'twas there she met her savior, Justice Bao. The justice was in the area distributing grain when he came upon the woeful Lady Li, a beggar without home, wandering.

"My lady, for what reason are you on the street pleading for money? Surely a lady as fine as you have a family to go back to and a loving husband who cares for you?" the judge inquired.

Lady Li looked up with tears in her black eyes dark, "O, my lord, I have been chased out of the emperor's palace, my life is in ruins, my son taken, I do not have a family that is whole, nor do I have a loving husband."

Judge Bao's own dark eyes piercing bore into the lady, "Perhaps you shall come with me to my humble abode, and we shall talk further about your predicament, my lady?"

"I shall be forever thankful for your kind deed, my lord."

So they went, and Lady Li poured everything forth to this kind gentleman, from the birth of her son 'till her banishment unfair from the king's hall she told him.

At length Judge Bao spoke, "Do not fear, my lady, I have a plan to bring you justice at last."

"Oh?" Lady Li was skeptical, and yet she listened intently as Judge Bao began.

"You see, I shall pretend to be your son, and thus I will be able to bring you into the Kaifeng City, where a meeting for you with your son can be arranged, who is currently the crown prince if I am not mistaken."

Thus, they embarked.

The journey to Kaifeng was long and harrowing, for transportation was indeed hard in ancient times, but at last they arrived at Kaifeng. By this time Shinshu was long dead, and the son of Lady Li became emperor and held power supreme over the empire vast, and his name was Emperor Injong.

Judge Bao brought Lady Li with him as he entered the palace built tall and shining to meet with the emperor almighty, and 'twas then that Lady Li first met her beloved son and spoke to truth to him, thus the evil plans of Lady Liu were brought out in the open.

A government official of the name Guo Wei assisted Judge Bao when he wished to expose the secret past to the whole kingdom boundless, and immediately thereafter the evil queen Lady Liu killed herself, knowing that her sinful deeds had been exposed, thus the good Lady Li was avenged.

O! Judge Bao was revered throughout the lands, though he owned not the divine eyes of Sun Wukong nor the Great Sword of Guan Gong cutting through enemies foul, and yet he possessed something far more powerful indeed, for his heart was true, and he feared not the wrath of the powerful. The moon represents his spirit eternal, pure and frank, and for that reason, my child, Judge Bao lived happily ever after to the end of his days.

Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Tjoeng, Audrey – 12

Everyone knew that Judge Pao is just not the right person to invite to a party. There seemed to be no sense of fun inside of him. When he was only five years old, there was a wedding celebrating the love of Pao's aunt and uncle. It went fine at first, however, when it came to throwing flowers on the floor, Pao... Did not understand the concept at all. He stared at the flowers in shock and later, picked every single petal from the floor, and put it back into the basket. People didn't think much of this scenario at first. But, they didn't know what was to come.

Dear Diary,

Literally, the most disgusting thing happened today. At my aunt and uncle's wedding, girls my age were randomly throwing flowers to the floor. WHAT WERE THEY THINKING? That is so weird! I despise even the petals themselves. There is so much dirt and a bunch of germs in it. Why do people not care about all the live bacteria that are living in there? Plus, since I couldn't bare having the floor so dirty, I had to clean it. Taking flower petals that already have germs that just landed on the floor and had been stepped on by a bunch of people????!!

Good night! I must wake up bright and early tomorrow so I could clean my room, and sanitize everything before homework.

Although life was tough for Pao's parents while Pao lived with them, they were quick to realize that Pao had a great talent for debate. The family did not think much of this at first. However, they were quick to realize that this specialty was not to be denied. There is much logic in all words spoken by little Pao, and the words he uses are so precise. When Pao was eight years old, his parents let him attend a debate class, but he wasn't able to make much process. The teacher suggested that Pao try to judge the debates, instead of debating. She said so because Pao always had his own reasons for saying each word. Therefore, Pao then went to a judging class.

Dear Diary,

I think today was great. Still saw all the disgusting scenes of gigantic bacteria running at me, but in other ways, there was nothing wrong. I went to debate, but obviously, I didn't do well. The teacher said I should go to try judging, and I think I was exceeding all expectations. Professors gave me looks of disbelief, and I really liked that. I think I may just become a judge in the future. The process just comes naturally to me, and without any effort at all, I could say complete paragraphs of explanation to my conclusion.

Good night!

In the words of Pao, "I only like it fair and square". That was quite evident if you ever spent a minute with Pao. Sharing pizza, he could only bare sitting at the table another second if the cuts were clean. Each person can only eat, and must finish the food that is cut for them. If there is an extra piece, leave it.

A long time later, while Pao is attending, of course, law school, his grades became exceedingly high, and even got a prize for the best grades in the entire school. Pao was known for passing expectations by a bunch of points at once. Except in physical education... His mind was too packed up with complex information to understand any concept not related to law.

Dear Diary,

Law is the most interesting thing on planet EARTH. There is so much that I haven't known before, and so much more unknown to any human being. I wish to graduate soon so that I could finally try something in the real world. Also, living away from mom and dad has been... Not bad. At least for right now, there is no time for me to care about what people think of me hating germs, or me being nerdy. There is already too much info coming to me, there's no more time for this... bye. I'm writing an essay. Good night to you.

Dear Diary,

I GOT ANOTHER PRIZE!!! THIS TIME IT'S FOR THE MOST IMPROVED PERSON IN LAW! I AM ABOUT TO GRADUATE FRESHMAN YEAR!!! Because of the "talent seen in" me, teachers say that I can learn ahead of everyone else, and I could go to the sophomore year later this semester after I finish an exam to test my understanding of the knowledge needed to jump forward a grade. GOOD NIGHT!

DEAR DIARY!

I GOT TO THE SOPHOMORE YEAR!!! I suddenly realized that there's not much explanation needed in this sentence. There is a possibility that I will actually go to court two weeks later to watch judges do their thing, and I could even talk about some of my own ideas, and they will take it into account!

Dear Diary,

At court, the most exciting thing happened! During the hearing, there was much discussion about what the final decision should be, and I asked a simple question. Why would he randomly go to the middle of the woods bringing barely any equipment? The judge's eyes widened a great amount and came to the final conclusion. I presented an important aspect of this whole hearing??? I couldn't believe it. I thought that my question would not be answered since professors at school are quite aggressive, and sometimes would not mind listening to questions if they think it is "not worth wasting time on". BYE BYE!!! GOOD NIGHT!!!

After this incident, professors allowed Pao to attend many more hearings, and it was a common thing for him to suggest important detail, and some judges even ask for the presence of Pao because of the information he could provide to the conclusion. After merely another year at law school, Pao was able to graduate with the highest level of achievement, and a principal's award.

After graduating, Pao went to the company he visited during his years of studying. For most of the hearings, there are more professional judges listening to his speeches compared to students he thought would attend. When Pao was able to make a great fortune, Pao even started his own company and did a great job. He educated many people he had watched in the years before, and earned much respect from the community.

Judge Pao: New Tales

YK Pao Middle School, Wang, Jason – 12

Aeneas and his men are drifting on the Mediterranean Sea, they just escaped from Troy and are heading towards Italy. However, a massive reef zone is lying in front of Aeneas' fleet. To get to Italy as fast as possible, Aeneas decided to risk it all and cross the reef zone. At first, the reefs were scattered, Aeneas' fleet successfully passed them all, but as they sail further, the reef zone suddenly became extremely dense, some rocks are even higher than the tallest ship in the fleet. The next moment, Aeneas' ship: The Cassandra, went face to face with a dagger shaped reef. The reef tore the prow away from the body of the ship, separating Aeneas and his crew. Aeneas realized that he had misunderstood fate and misguided himself and his fleet. "Abandon ship! Abandon ship! And jump on the nearest rock in your sight!"

Aeneas commanded his crew, when Aeneas is about to leap on a rock, the prow tilted, Aeneas suddenly lost his balance, he fell over to the other side of the ship, his head crashed on the deck and slipped into a coma.

He woke up finding himself on a huge reef, far away from the previous reef zone. He looked around, hoping to find his crew mates, but there was nothing; Aeneas is stranded in the middle of ocean. He realized that he could do nothing to help himself out of the situation, so he kneeled and began praying for gods' help.

After 3 hours of continuous praying, something finally happened. Aeneas sees a beam of golden light on the horizon. The light continued to expand until Aeneas finally sees what the object is; a Greek battleship that has a dolphin drawing on its sails. Aeneas put on his helmet, pulled out his creese, and fastened his shield on to his left arm, ready to fight for the last time of his life and pursue a glorious death. The battleship soon came close to the reef, a short but broad-shouldered, broad-chested muscular man hopped down the ship, followed by an old man wearing a robe and holding a bunch of thick scrolls. Aeneas was totally surprised. Is this the will of the gods? Or is it just a coincidence? Aeneas is concerned that there might be other Greek soldiers on the ship, he thinks that an old man and a "muscular dwarf" cannot defeat him, so there must be ambush on the ship. However, there were no other men on the ship. Aeneas now have no worries, so he began laughing at the short man: "Oh dear god, are you were one of those Spartan baby scouts? Look at your tiny armor and your massive shield and sword, oh, my mistake, I thought your dagger was a sword because it seems so big compared to you body size. Oh Jupiter! Forgive my disrespect, but this little dwarf is the funniest thing I've ever seen in my life! Oh, you even a drawing of a women on your gardebras? I bet she will never love you; we all know why! Hahahaha!"

Just after Aeneas finished his jeering, the short man immediately drew his sword out, and threw it in an unbelievably quick speed. Aeneas didn't even have time to react to the sudden attack, the sword perfectly hit his right pauldron. Aeneas was completely astonished, he stood there, staring at the sword. Meanwhile, the old man clapped and said: "Wonderful! My man!"

The short man took off his helmet: "First, don't you make fun of my body. Second, my name is Odysseus, and I am the king of Ithaca and I just returned from the Trojan War. Third, don't you ever make fun of me nor my wife or the love between us. And finally, I am here to have a duel with you, and you, are just an incomplete, disgusting Roman style replica of me."

The old man continued: "Um, maybe I haven't formally introduced myself, but I am a famous Greek Poet name Homer, not the fat Simpson guy, it's the poet. Now what I'm going to say is going to blow your mind; I am the creator of this fella here, he's the protagonist in my book: The Odyssey, and I gave him a fantastic epic adventure story and mission that he will fulfill after he chops your head off. But I am telling you that your creator, an unmoral, thick-skinned, bold faced, pathetic Roman cheeseball; Virgil, he stole my ideas from my Odysseus and my Iliad, and euphemistically called it referencing! He did all this just to lick a narcissistic, stupid Emperor's boots. You and Virgil deserve to die!"

Odysseus put back his helmet, drew his other sword, and dashed towards Aeneas. Aeneas quickly stood in battle position, just when their blades are about to touch, a dash of lime colored light shined on the reef, a man shaped object came down from the sky, and landed near Odysseus and Aeneas, still clashing their blades and shields. As the "thing" landed, the light circulating around the object starts to fade. As it goes thinner and thinner, a man wearing a dark imperial robe appeared; he is Judge Pao!

Judge Pao was totally surprised of the situation, he waved his arms and shouted: "Alright, both of you, stop what you're doing."

Odysseus and Aeneas froze at the same time, staring at Judge Pao. "I'm...I'm sorry, who are you? And how did...how did you come here?" asked Odysseus.

"And we don't understand your language." Aeneas said.

"Oh, my fault." Judge Pao pulled out an iPhone –2014 and opened Facebook audio translator.

"Already, let's get to the point. I am an envoy sent by Sakyamuni who came here all the way from the Northern Song Empire. I am here to stop you two from continuing your duel, since your nonsense battle will cause a huge hurricane that will eventually strike Northern Song and kill thousands of people. Therefore, gentlemen, please drop your weapons and save those innocent people!"

"Look, I do understand you, and I don't want those people to suffer and die. However, if I don't chop this guy's head off, he's going to destroy a whole city and kill even more people! He is also going to found an empire that will eventually rule this sea and cause millions of casualties, so please step aside, go back to wear you came from, and let us fight, or I might as well kill you if continue to interrupt us." Odysseus replied.

Odysseus and Aeneas continued their duel, Judge Pao could do nothing but to pray for Sakyamuni's help. The two men fought from noon to night, but it seems that Aeneas is on the dominant position; he is a demigod. Aeneas has the blessing of Venus: his mother, so that he can never feel tiredness, while Odysseus has no time to pray. Aeneas concentrated his power on one strike, and he destroyed Odysseus' shield. Odysseus is clearly, on the edge of death. If he makes another mistake, he will be sent to hell.

Suddenly, a daring idea came to Odysseus' mind. "Hey Homer, why don't you change my character settings! Like.....make me the son of Athena and Ares?" said Odysseus.

Homer immediately rolled out the first chapter of the Odyssey, he spitted on a few lines, and wiped them off, and rewrote Odysseus' character settings. The next second, Odysseus transformed into a tall, and fully armed Spartan warrior: he is now Odysseus: God of Deul. "Aha! I feel power!" He immediately took the dominant position and crushed Aeneas' armor and weapons.

"No fair! You cheated!" cried Aeneas, "Well, you started this! I'll cheat now!" Aeneas kneeled on the ground and faced towards Polaris. "Santa Claus, I summon thee!" A few moments later, an "Auwuuuu" sound echo through the clouds. Then, several reindeers ran out of the clouds, pulling a red sled in the sky: It's Santa! Santa and his reindeers slowly flew down from the sky. "Santa, gimme a decent weapon that can help me kill these foxy people!" Aeneas commanded.

"Hey, show some respect to the son of Neptune and Boron of Earth! Rude kids have bad gifts." cried Santa. He hopped on the gift, dug out a cylinder-shaped gift, threw it off the sled, and flew away.

Aeneas catches the gift, and unwrapped it, it's a lightsaber! With a huge grin on his face, Aeneas swung his lightsaber. However, he couldn't control the force of the lightsaber, so the saber flew out of his hands and dropped on the ground perfectly vertical. "You...You dropped a lightsaber perfectly vertical on the ground! It's going to destroy our world!" exclaimed Odysseus.

When the world is about to end, Judge Pao's prayers worked! Sakyamuni came down from the sky, pulled out the light saber from the ground, and blew Aeneas, Odysseus, and Homer away in different directions so that they'd never meet each other ever again.

Operation No. 47

YK Pao Middle School, Wang, Kevin – 13

“Committed to crime, Judge Pao has been captured and sentenced to 47 years due to his operation No. 47, when we found out that he was cooperating with a criminal organization responsible for a serial murder of 11 key conservational experts in different areas. People are still investigating their next victim.”

The broadcast stopped as Max said in a defiant voice, “the organization is definitely framing him because he already knew their location and they’re afraid he’ll track them down.”

He threw down the remote controller and stood before everyone, “we need to unite, students of YK Pao, and save our leader from the horrible prison while defeating the criminal organization. Our different groups need to work together and bring them down. Our plan is to bring Judge Pao out of the prison without anyone noticing, get the location from him and completely obliterate the organization from the pages of history.”

The different departments replied to him and ran off to do their part of the work. Max walked around inspecting the work done as a temporary leader, giving comments. He finally walked toward two identical students who were looking through a closet filled with multifarious costumes. Finally, they found an orange prison suit to put on.

From a box, Max took a syringe filled with a white, translucent liquid. “Bob, Bill, you’ll need to stay in contact with us. This syringe will get us your location and also contact you. Supplies you’ll need is this extra syringe used for making people faint. We can only help you so much, you’ll need to depend on yourselves in the prison, I’m afraid.”

He poked the tip of the syringe into both of their arms. “Okay, off you go, stay safe.”

They nodded, gave their thanks, and went through the door. Max monitored their progress through a big screen displaying their location, sounds around them, and their physical condition. Their dot ran farther and farther into the countryside, into a desolate place, away from any humans.

When the sky was already dark, Bob and Bill finally arrived at their destination. Through the inky darkness, you could just about make out two figures creeping toward the gate of the prison. As they drew nearer, so close to the prison guards that they could hear them breathing, they both kicked the guards in the shin and ran away from the gate. The guards yelped in pain, grabbed their batons, and chased them like a pack of hungry dogs. The guards grabbed their arms and pinned them behind their backs.

As Bob and Bill got pulled into the prison, past security, the guards looked at them, looking confused. One of the guards asked the other, “how did they get out of here, and we don’t have kids in the prison, right?”

The other was just about to answer when Bob stabbed each of them with a syringe, injecting the liquid inside the guard’s flesh. The two guards tumbled onto the ground in a heap, sound asleep, while the two of them safely went to the cell area, where the prisoners are kept.

“Pao Duo in the cell, over” Bob whispered, informing Max of their progress.

Bill was busy consulting the numbers on the cell doors, checking for the previously discovered No.125.

“Look out, guard on 11 o’clock,” Bill pulled Bob behind a wall. They waited without a word and after what seemed like a thousand years, the guard finally went patrolling elsewhere. Bob and Bill peeked out, checked that there was no one around, and crept back into the corridor.

At last, they found their leader in a dingy cell room. He was still as a statue, meditating on the bed. A vigorous yet dark light enveloped him, drawing both Bob’s and Bill’s eyes. All the light in the room seemed to be sucked into him.

Bob and Bill exchanged a worried look since Judge Pao is acting extra weirdly. As they stared at Judge Pao, their vision, all of a sudden, tunneled and compressed, flipped and rotated. Their vision finally settled, and they found themselves in a much darker place, a place darker than any other place they’d ever seen. A circle of candlelight flickered on, and they set their eyes on their leader on a golden throne.

“Ah, my students, you have finally come. I have waited for you in the prison for a long time. You two are the two luckiest souls on Earth. You got to see me in my most glorious form and see my realm long before you perish. Come here my friends, and let’s have a cup of tea.” Judge Pao the immortal Yama of the department of Hell said cheerfully.

“No offense, but we’re in a hurry to defeat the organization, so can you tell us their location, please,” Bob said hastily.

“Now, now, no need to hurry. I will tell you and it’s 5331 Yule Street, but...” Judge Pao said leisurely.

“Max, the place is 5331 Yule Street, over,” Bob quickly reported.

“But you’re not going anywhere, you’re gonna stay the night here,” Judge Pao continued.

“Wait, what?” Bill looked back toward what he thought was the cell door, where now stood the pillars of the stadium.

“Now let’s back up. We’re here just to get the location, not to discuss anything, okay? Can you get us back, please?” Bob still persisted in the idea of going back.

“I’m afraid you’re stuck here for now, so you might as well have a nice cup of tea with me in the meantime.” Judge Pao said and shrugged.

Bob ignored him, reporting the news to Max. In the control room, Max was about to tell them to come back and go after the organization, when he heard the news. He has no field agent, and he couldn’t send an inside agent out, so he decided to confront the enemy personally.

Having a couple of students as backup, Max set out to continue their leader’s Operation No.47. He called a taxi and gave the driver the address. After 45 minutes of waiting in the car, he finally arrived.

The place was marvelous. Row upon row of three-story villas loomed and marble doorsteps led to oak doors with brass knockers. As Max crept in, he was oblivious to the red light that went off, because the dazzling beauty of the luxurious surroundings attracted his eyes. After a while, he finally grew out of the daze and was about to see if the organization really lived here when he was snatched from behind. A piece of cloth covered his mouth, and he passed out.

He woke up bound in a chair with gold plating. Three burly men with gold chains on their necks stood before him.

“Little boy, how dare you interrupt us when we are having tea,” the person in the middle said in a raspy voice, “we would have a lot of fun torturing you, but we’ll wait and let you tell your story.”

The two sidekicks leered at Max and spit at his feet.

“Oh, I know all about you, you’re the organization responsible for the 11 murders,” Max said to them, but actually talking through the liquid injected into him so that people in the control room can notify the police and send a large number of reinforcements.

The three criminals were surprised that Max know who they are but quickly recovered.

“You’ve got nowhere to go, so you have quite a story to tell, unless...” the criminal picked up a knife.

Meanwhile, people were gathering outside the house as Max was drawing the criminals' attention. Crash! The people got here just in the nick of time before the criminals hurt Max. A dozen of people ambushed them and the strength in numbers finally outdid the criminals.

Judge Pao was released from prison and awarded a medal for teaching the students of YK Pao. This day is remembered from then on when a group of teenagers succeeded in capturing an organization of criminals.

New Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Wang, Raine – 11

Chapter 1: Judge Pao and His Hat

Once upon the time, there was a city called Carthage. It was ruled by a smart female, Dido. People in Carthage all respected their queen. She ruled her kingdom with fairness and kindness, well, some of her fairness came from another man in Carthage.

He is a strong man called Pao. Pao is really famous for how he helped people to solve conflicts and judge certain things, so everyone in Carthage called him judge Pao. Judge Pao has a long dense beard or hair (we can never know which is which because all was there all together) with a pretty red squared face under it. He always used his tiny but serious eyes to look at people, don't be afraid, he is actually kind from his heart, but I have to admit, he is pretty scary when you look him straight into the eye. Though, he always has a big black hat with big, long "wings" besides, they often shatter when he yells at criminals. He almost, never took them off, at least, nobody saw him without his black hat. The kids who live in Carthage invented a song about him and his hat, it sounds like this:

*Judge Pao with his hat,
Catches crime like a bat.
What a scary black face,
Can be seen anyplace
Where is conflict,
Where is him
Hat shatters,
Wings dangling,
But Judge Pao will be there,
In the courtroom on the time.
Never changes, never lie
Judge Pao is the guy!*

Anyways, have you readers read about the Aeneid? Well, I believe you all did. But in case you didn't, I will tell you what its about. Virgil created a myth where a hero called Aeneas led his men to find a new city called Rome. But he met all kinds of problems such as storms caused by Juno, not trusted by his men, crazy love-sick girls and more. But he has a goddess mother Venus who protected him all along, so eventually, he got to Rome and made his own strong country. You might wonder, what is Aeneas doing in a story of judge Pao? Well, you will find out later!

Oh, and I forgot to mention, judge pao has a superpower that was admired by everyone in Carthage which is that he can read minds. This made him really famous for a while, but it also helped him to solve conflicts between people because he knows what the bad guy thinks so there is almost no one who dares to be the thief in Carthage. It creates a peaceful, calm Carthage for a good long time, until one day...

Chapter 2

It was a normal day at first, birds sing loudly standing on thin branches. It echoed through the woods. Judge Pao woke frowning and muttered to himself, "Who is this, so loud in the morning?" Then, he saw a blue robin who landed on his window. He giggled loudly at his words and opened the window to the fresh air. The robin flew away

and fresh air zoomed into Judge Pao's room, sunlight splashes across the floor of Pao's room. He yawned and said smiling, "A fresh new day, hope everything is fine!"

But hopes are never the truth. Just as Pao was about to lay down for more sleep, he heard loud footsteps like a lot of people coming into Carthage. People in this city all heard the footsteps, so they all popped their head out of windows and doors to see what is happening. Some of them are only wearing their pajamas, others are brushing their teeth, some even have bread in their mouth. A straight line of soldiers marched into this quiet city. There are 3 soldiers in front of the troop, looks like the leaders. So, Judge Pao quickly get dressed and went out to ask one of the soldiers.

"Who are you? Where are you guys from?"

"Eh, we are Trojans, where are we?" A Red-haired boy answered looking at judge Pao curiously.

"Oh, here is Carthage."

The troop went away marching towards queen Dido's palace. Queen Dido also heard these noises, so she came out of her big castle to see what is happening.

"Oh, soldiers?" Queen Dido said with full confusion?

"Hello people, define who you are, and what you want from us?" She yelled with her strong voice to the soldiers.

Two soldiers came out, one said, "I'm Aeneas, and this is my son Ascanius," he replied as he patted Ascanius's back, "We are Trojans, and we are hungry and wet. We beg all your kindness to welcome me and my men to rest at your city for some days."

Queen Dido changed her face after she saw Ascanius which she never knows is not Ascanius himself, and said smiling, "Welcome to Carthage!" It was a strange and sweet sound that did not sound like the normal Dido. But nobody at the moment knows what has happen to their poor queen...

Judge Pao Verdict

YK Pao Middle School, Wen, Ima – 14

Everyone needs to take their own responsibility. There's not exactly right or wrong, but there is justice. The story which happened beside the bridge was popular. And the difficult relationship between each person was also a considerable decision to make, whether who needs to take the most responsibility? Take every aspect into consideration, I believe it's the women.

If the women didn't have a lover, then she will be fine. In the text, "while her husband was away, the women took a lover. "This dialogue tells us that when her husband went outside for three months, she loves on another man. Because of this, when her husband came back home, she realized that she needs to go back too. In fact, if she didn't take a lover, she will not be afraid and anxious about going back to the other side of the river, and she will not be shoot by the soldier. The women were entirely wrong, and she needs to take the responsibility because she was the person who first did the wrong thing which is having a lover, while her husband was still outside. After all, the women need to be responsible for herself. Thus, since the women betrayed her husband, so she's the one who make mistakes the most.

Second, the fault was not on the soldier, it's because the women didn't follow the rule. In the story, the soldier has reminded her that she cannot pass the river, if she passes then she will be shot by the soldier. However, the women didn't even think about this serious problem. She didn't care about this, so then she went to find the boatman and the boatman tell her that she needs to give him 100 dollars. The women went to find her lover, but her lover reject about giving her money. Since, the women were really exhausted about this, so she tries to pass the river, at last the soldier shoot her, and she died. Think about this, the soldier was just obeying his job. Prevent others from passing the river is the majority. So, he doesn't need to take the responsibility. Because the women didn't follow the instruction, so she was the one who trapped herself. Thus, this is another reason for this statement.

We need t think carefully before we make any decisions. The women taught us that never cross the line. There are many rules we need to follow in our life. We cannot randomly think that it's very easy to destroy other's instruction. Also, we should be the person who can adjust the right and wrong. In summary, the women was the person who should take the most responsibility on.

New Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Xu, Harry – 12

It was a cold wet night. Neptune, the god of the sea, was woken up halfway through his sleep. He came out only to find that there was a storm raging on right on top of his home, on the ocean floor. Oh dear, he thought. All the landscape and ocean plants were thrown out of place, and there was kelp all over the ocean surface! But that wasn't the worst. There were hysteric, long-lasting screams and shouts coming from afar, seducing him to check it out instantly. There, as he saw, buildings were broken, streets were flooded, and bodies were just floating about the overflowing water that was everywhere. He was angered straight away and was determined to uncover the culprit who committed such terrible crimes to the humans and to him.

Aeolus, Vulcan, and Mars were the first three names, and the only three names that struck him right away. "Aeolus," he muttered to himself, "Oh boy, Aeolus. It still stands like a sheet of flame in my memory. He had nearly, very nearly wrecked poor Aeneas on his way to Egypt on orders of Juno." Vulcan, on the other hand, is the god of volcanoes and he was the most suspected. Vulcan is one of the gods capable of starting a tsunami of that size, and there are only a handful of those people. Neptune also suspected Mars who often brought chaos to his uncle, but he reasoned, "I am not quite convinced that it could be him; this was way too bad to be a prank. He would have known that he will be disgraced of the name of the war god if he had done anything of the sort."

Neptune immediately summoned all three of them to his place. The three all acted as nothing happened and behaved as calmly as usual. Nothing seemed wrong.

Aeolus was the first to be questioned. He came up in front of Neptune. "I was at my own palace at the time, minding my own business and taking care of my own people. You can ask Juno to cross check my words." Neptune had refused to believe him. He was the one that nearly wrecked Aeneas in his ship a few weeks back, by following his sister Juno's orders. He disliked Juno and did not get along with her very well. But he had to ask. Juno had presented defense for Aeolus. Neptune was speechless – he couldn't prove that Aeolus had caused the storm, nor could he set him free just like this. He decided to continue questioning the next suspect, Vulcan.

Vulcan seemed very confused on the arrival when Neptune summoned all three of them. He was the one that appeared the most innocent. But, as Neptune knew, the tsunami was probably caused by a volcano erupting at the bottom of the sea, and Vulcan was the god of Volcanoes and fire. "I don't know what happened," Vulcan responded. "I was at Mount Etna when all this happened. I was taking down my ornaments for Christmas just now and I got summoned." This did not sound conclusive to Neptune, but he took it after some time.

Mars was the one that was most reluctant to come and cooperate. "I was, umm, at Rome at the time, talking to our mother Juno. She told me to clean up the house, and I did. And I did some work and helped around the house." This seemed true when Neptune just heard it, but as he kept thinking on, he found something odd. Juno couldn't have been at Aeolus' kingdom and Rome at the same time——One of them was lying!

"It must have been Aeolus. After all, I wasn't over with him when he tried to wreck Aeneas' boat. He must have been angry at me too. It must be Juno's problem."

But Aeolus came up and started arguing. "It obviously wasn't me; I was really at the kingdom at the time. Ask my people. Ask them. They are trustworthy." And so he did.

It turned out that Aeolus wasn't lying about staying in his kingdom. He had stayed in the kingdom for all the afternoon, as his men had said.

"Aha! So it must be Mars." Exclaimed Neptune.

Mars was obviously shaky the moment he came. He admitted that it was him doing that, but he refused to tell who was behind all this mischief. After a while, Neptune gave up asking Mars and started asking Juno about this.

Juno refused to believe this in the beginning. She argued that none of her children would do such thing. She admitted that she was with Aeolus for the entire afternoon. She did not see Mars for the entire day. But, no matter how Neptune tried to convince Juno, she refused to believe anything. It was not until Mars came over to her

everything that she finally accepted what happened. But, after all this, she still refused to solve the problems her son caused. Now, things started getting serious when Juno refused. Neptune leapt to his feet: “You’re not going anywhere today before you clean up this mess. This is terrible. Did you see that city over there? Bodies were floating everywhere. The entire city was a mess. You should do your share.” Juno also came to her feet: “Mars is not a kid any more, and I am only responsible for my own deeds. I only can take care of his mistakes when he is junior. Now that he is fully grown, I do not take responsibility for his mischief. He will be cleaning it up himself.” Neptune seemed to be annoyed by Juno’s response. He pulled out his sword and got in position. “I’ll have to do this fair. I will send a request to execute him if I must. It doesn’t matter whether he is my nephew.”

Juno seemed to be surprised by this decision. “You won’t,” Juno exclaims, “I would protect him, even if it’s the last thing I do! You’ll fight me first before you try and execute him!”

Juno took out her sword too. Her body was shaking with fury. Her brother was trying to execute her own son! What ridiculous thing for him to do. This was quite her first time having to fight her own brother. She took up her sword and swung it with her full might. It missed, with Juno flying into the distance. Just at that moment, an arrow flew past Neptune, skimming Neptune’s arm and taking a bit of his flesh. The arrow flew down towards the ground, but the flesh kept flying on. It flew over the heavens, flew over the oceans, flew over all the places in the world and landed on a pregnant woman in Anhui, China. The person gave birth to a small boy 10 months later – and that is the boy who would eventually become Judge Pao.

The Legend of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Xu, Huatao – 12

1

The wheels of a horse-driven carriage bump on the rocky ground of Capitoline Hill. After a few minutes, the wooden wheels screech to a stop. A tall man wearing a blue robe climbed off the horse and gently knocked the carriage door.

“Judge Pao, we have arrived.”

The door opened. Out stepped a man wearing a long black robe. He had a long mustache and a black face, with a crescent mark on his forehead. That mark made him recognizable anywhere.

“So, this is the famed Rome”

Judge Pao scanned the mass citadel of houses, bath places and temples. As far as the eye could see, towers and rooftops dotted the city of Rome itself. The villas and houses were tightly packed, and the mass maze of streets between them were too narrow for the carriage to pass through.

“From now on, we walk on foot.”

The tall man wearing a blue robe bowed deep, and led Judge Pao to the looming concrete walls of Rome.

2

They saw who they were looking for.

The person was a squat woman. She was wearing a raven black hat and in her arms was a white cat.

“That’s her”, said Judge Pao. The man wearing the blue robe took out a crumpled piece of paper. “It says in the letter ‘... find me at Tyre Street. I will be wearing a black hat and holding a cat.’ It’s her all right.”

Judge Pao nodded.

They slowly made their way towards the woman through the mob of people. When they got near arm’s reach, the woman looked up. After making sure that the person looking at her had a crescent on his forehead, she nodded silently and pointed. Judge Pao’s hawk-like eyes followed her finger. She was pointing to a run-down villa that looked abandoned for years.

Judge Pao nodded again. They made their way to the abandoned house.

3

“So. Can I confirm now the information you provided?”

They were sitting in a small room inside the abandoned villa. The room was only lit by a candle burning with a yellow flame. The squat woman was holding her cat.

“Yes, Judge Pao. My husband was murdered nine days ago. I found his body at 2 A.M. in the morning when I woke up. He was, with no doubt, killed by a knife.”

“Do you still have the knife, madame?”

“No. After I buried the body, the knife disappeared. I put it in my lockbox made of thick wooden planks! I don’t understand how it disappeared.”

Judge Pao thought for a while.

“Have you consulted the king?” asked Judge Pao.

“Not yet. King Aeneas has more important matters than a murder. He is still entangled in political arguments and peace treaties with the Latins.”

“I see.” Judge Pao turned to the man wearing the blue robe. “Tomorrow, we consult the king.”

The man wearing the blue robe nodded.

“Come, Lord Pao. I will show you to your rooms,” said the widow. “Please excuse me if the rooms are poor. This abandoned house is all I own.”

4

The next day, Judge Pao bid farewell to the widow.

He and his assistant, the man in the blue robe, walked towards the palace. On the way, they discussed the clues.

“2 A.M. I wonder! That’s our only clue. And now the knife’s gone. I cannot determine the knife’s owner!”

“Indeed, Lord Pao. King Aeneas is our only hope.”

After an hour, they reached the palace.

As soon as they reached the gates, two guards blocked their path.

“Who goes there?” asked one.

“Please excuse us, magnificent guard. We are only humble citizens to consult the king of a murder.”

“A murder? King Aeneas is far too important for a murder to – wait, are you...”

“Judge Pao?” asked the other guard.

“Indeed, I am,” said Judge Pao humbly.

“We have heard all about your stupendous ways of solving crime. The thief you captured by judging a rock? Brilliant!” said the first guard.

“You may pass,” agreed the second guard. “May the Fates be with you.”

Judge Pao bowed deep. They continued on their way.

5

“A murder, you say?”

King Aeneas nodded thoughtfully.

“The widow looked like a squat woman with a black hat. By any chances, great king, do you know her?”

“Sadly, no.” said Aeneas. “I have failed as a king to protect my citizens from harm. I cannot help you, Judge Pao. I am very sorry.”

“Please, king,” said Judge Pao. “Do you remember anything that may correlate to this crime?”

Aeneas sank in deep thought.

Suddenly, he remembered.

“Quite coincidentally, Judge, when I was on my way here to find this city, Rome, I had to journey through the underworld. While there, I was told by a wise spirit that... Well, I do not quite understand, but the spirit told me ‘The first murder that shall happen in your city shall be harm from the sea. Watch the Trawler.’”

“I see...”

Judge Pao nodded. “Thank you for your help, great king.”

“Good luck, wise Judge. May the Fates be with you.”

6

“Any clues?”

They were back in the abandoned villa.

“I think I know who the criminal is, assistant. A ‘Trawler’ means ‘Fisherman’. By a big probability, the criminal is a fisherman. Gather all people that live in a hundred-meter radius of the house. This case has come to an end.”

A few hours later...

“One of us is the murderer?”

A crowd of 50 people were gathered in front of the abandoned villa.

“Correct,” said Judge Pao. “I am not that clever to figure out the criminal, though. Do any of you have an idea?”

Silence.

“Perhaps if you all meet the victim’s wife, she will sense who is the criminal.”

Mumbling, the crowd entered the abandoned villa. Only one person in the crowd was smiling. There are no such things as a widow sensing a killer, he thought. Perhaps, I should play along.

He entered the house.

As soon as the crowd was in, a sound echoed out of the old corridor.

“Meow”

The widow's white cat was crouching in the corridor. Its green eyes were glowing in the dim lights. The cat was in the position to pounce, and the slit pupils were staring straight at one person.

Judge Pao was the first to react. He ran forward and caught the man.

"Playing Hide and Seek from me? I don't think so."

"Argh!" said the man. "What are you saying?"

"You", announced Judge Pao, "are the murderer."

The crowd gasped in sheer astonishment.

"The reason for that is simple," explained Judge Pao. "King Aeneas said that during his adventures before finding Rome, he journeyed into the underworld. A spirit warned him that the first murder will be caused from 'harm of the sea'. The spirit also mentioned about a 'trawler'. A trawler means a fisherman. And since this is the first murder since the finding of Rome, the criminal is a fisherman. The final clue is the cat. Cats are naturally attracted to anyone that has their food, namely, fish. And since the victim's wife has a cat, the cat must have known who the criminal was all along, even if the cat did not see the criminal. Another proof is the time. The dead body was discovered in 2 A.M. Since cats are nocturnal animals, the widow's cat must have smelled the criminal's fishy scent. Thus, I have sufficient proof to say that you are the murderer."

The fisherman bowed his head in shame.

"I am so sorry. Please forgive me. Please —"

With no sympathy, the fair Judge Pao bound the criminal with a rope.

"You can all go now," he told the others. Then, he pushed the fisherman out of the abandoned villa to be thrown in jail.

7

"Thank you so much. Justice is restored!"

"You are welcome," bowed Judge Pao. Two days have passed since Judge Pao solved the crime. The fisherman had been punished and is now in prison. Judge Pao and his assistant were standing beside their carriage. King Aeneas, some citizens, and the widow are bidding them farewell.

"Since the case is over, I shall now return back to where I came from, the faraway land of China."

"Goodbye, fair Judge," said the widow. "You will always be welcome here!"

"Farewell, Judge Pao," said King Aeneas. "Peace has come to Rome again."

With a heavy bow, Judge Pao stepped back into the carriage. The assistant in the blue robe climbed onto the horse, and together they galloped away.

Prologue of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Xu, Karen – 11

“Come on, Zheng, I’m quite sure that there are free 5 minutes when the guards change shifts.” A boy looked like 15 years old whispered, dragging another boy towards the South gate of Heaven, a tunnel the earth.

“Are you sure we could make it?”

The hauled boy, a little shorter than the one in front of him showed a surprisingly excitement on his face.

“I know you are eager to find out the murder purpose. Don’t worry, I’ll keep the secret. And... no one will know. WHERE! YOU! ARE!”

“Ho, no...AH...”

A desperate scream echoed in the air and then sank in the deep clouds. The taller man harshly pushed the short one down to the cliff without any hesitation, leaving a sly grin in the wind.

These two boys are currently the Heaven’s favorite because of their superior wisdom and incredible power of perception. The taller boy called Ming is the 3rd son of Celestial Emperor, King of Heaven. Ming was indeed smart. It only took him 5 years to finish other Child Gods’10–years courses. However, the record was soon broken by Zheng, the 5th son of Celestial Emperor. It was said that more than 20 phoenixes circled at the central square of Heaven Palace when he was born, which is an auspicious omen having never happened since 10 thousand years ago. When he was 10 years old, he had reached the same God level as Ming. It seemed that Zheng should have been more popular than Ming among the Gods, But not. Compared to Ming, Zheng’s appearance was inferior because of his skin as black as coal.

All the other Gods believed that either Ming or Zheng could get succession to the throne. However, it was dilemma to decide whom to pick as they both had equal supporters. Finally, Emperor gave out a test “I heard there are some crimes happening in Earth. As the government corruption, many innocent persons were wronged while the culprits were out there. Either of you making a right judgment in the case will be the winner and thus acquire the succession. But you cannot use any power of God.”

Ming and Zheng were taken to Earth through the South gate. Unconsciously, having been dressed as normal earth people, they appeared in courtroom where a judge caressed his side–whiskers and frowned behind a big table while a beautiful crying women pointed to a skinny man in the middle of the room.

“Your Honor, I am Mrs. Wen. This guy, called Ling is my shop’s fellow. He killed my husband and stole my money last night!”

“No, I am framed. I didn’t kill him!” the man quickly knelt on the ground, begging for mercy.

Zheng gave a look to Ming and stood out. “Your Honor, there are many people waiting outside for you to judge their case. For this case, my brother and I could help you find out the culprit if you don’t mind!”

An obvious relief appeared on the judge’s face. He pat the table and announced “That is great!”

Ming, Zheng, Mrs. Wen and the fellow returned to their house to check the crime scene followed by two stewards. In the front yard of Mr. Wen’s residence, an obese man was waiting for them. Two red–eye maids were hovering near the gate. They were led to the Mr. wen’s bedroom, but first passed the counting room where the lockers were all opened.

“I remembered you said Ling has stolen your gold.” Zheng halted, turning around and looking at Mrs. Wen.

“Yes, sir. I come back from my mother’s house, and found the money was gone. Ling is last one to leave the counting room last night.” Mrs. Wen explained quickly.

Ming took a glance around the room and spoke to Ling “Please let me examine your hand.” Ling deliberated for a while, his forehead crease in a deep frown. Then he shrugged and took out his hand. Both of hands had some stain of copper coins.

“Look, this is the evidence, my little brother. No further detection is needed. Ling must be the killer. He murdered his master for money.” Ming replied in confidence.

Ling shook his head emphatically and objected “I admitted I stole the money, but I didn’t kill Mr. Wen. My mother is sick, needing money for a doctor.”

Zheng said nothing and continued walking.

The steward opened Mr. Wen’s bedroom. It was hot in the small but high room, the pungent smell of some outlandish incense hung heavily in the air. Zheng’s eyes went once to the couch where the still figure of a strong man was stretch out with a knife inserted in the chest. He approached to check the body, no sign of struggle. The injury by the knife was the only hurt on his body.

“Who discovered the body first, you or the maid?” Zheng asked Mrs. Wen.

“I did, sir.” the maid replied. “I came here 7 o’clock in the morning and I saw him lying there with a knife in his crest, bleeding all over the ground. I rushed out and called the steward. Then the steward went to inform the Mrs. Wen.”

“Is Mrs. Wen not at home at that time?”

“Yes, I visited my mother 2 days ago and stayed there for one night because of the strong storm these two days. Then I got this sad news this morning and hurried back.” Mrs. Wen wiped her tears with sleeves.

Zheng stared at the ground for a while and said “Mrs Wen, could I take a look at your shoes?” Mrs. Wen felt a little confused but could not reject. Her shoes looked new and clean.

“Well, I have an answer.” Zheng said with a satisfied smile to his brother, “Mrs. Wen is the murderer, but the fellow Ling also should be punished for the theft.”

“Ha Hah, Zheng wins” Emperor, their father laughed in front of a mirror through which God could watch what happen in the earth. After seconds, Ming and Zheng had been taken back to Heaven. “Could you tell me why you got such a conclusion, Zheng?” Emperor asked his son.

“First, Mrs. Wen had not been at home for 2 days. How could she be so confirmed to say her husband was killed last night. Why not this early morning? Second, it is weird for a woman to care and check the counting room after getting the news her husband was killed. Third, Mr. Wen is much stronger than the skinny Ling. There should have been signs to fight back. It means Mr. Wen was not killed by knife but the poisonous smell in the room. Fourth, it has been raining two days. Mrs. Wen went outside but her shoes is too clean and no sign of wetness, because she has changed her old shoes that may have some stain of blood. I guess, Mrs. Wen actually came home last night and found the fellow was stealing the money. She thought it was a good chance to frame Ling and thus burned the poisonous incense in the room then leaving. But Father, why did you call me back so quickly? I still need to investigate the woman’s purpose.”

Zheng’s winning aroused Ming’s strong jealousy, finally, causing him to push Zheng down to the earth, making a terrible mistake. Zheng’s mother, Yun, Emperor’s 2nd wife had cried one week even though Ming had got a thunder beat punishment. Zheng couldn’t be taken back to Heaven as easily as before because this descent was out of the plan, and he’ll started his life as a baby in Earth.

“Darling, don’t be sad anymore. Our son has been 8 years old in Earth and reborn in a Pao’s family.” Emperor comforted his wife. “One day in Heaven is to equal one year in Earth. Zheng will come back home after 2 months. He is so brilliant that he would surely contribute to Earth and correct some corruption. This experience will make

him more qualified to the crown prince of Heaven. I know your worries. He is too kind and justice. Therefore, I have distributed two men Zhan Zhao and Gongsun Ce to protect and help him in Earth and also give him a “moon” symbol on his forehead so that no evil spirit could approach him.”

From then on, the tale of Judge Pao really begins.

New Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Xu, Kevin – 12

There is a popular saying that during Northern Song Dynasty in China, a boy called Pao Zheng descended from the Megrez to the mortal world according to the order from the Jade Emperor in the heaven. He suffered a lot during his childhood. Later, he became the famous Judge Pao to assist Emperor Renzong. Today, it is popular for Chinese people to call him the Chinese Sherlock Holmes because of his greatest rectitude and integrity.

Let's start from the beginning to tell new tales of Young Judge Pao. More than 1000 years ago, a shining star fell into a poor peasant's backyard and during that day, the wife of the peasant became pregnant. After 10 months, a boy was born in this family and he was called Pao Third because he was the third boy in the family. To their surprise, the boy's face was as dark as charcoal and there was a convex moon shaped birthmark on his forehead.

At that time, his dad was already 66 years old. He was really a January chick. "So ugly monster! We can't keep it. Send it away to the wild," his dad said. "Ok," the boy's elder sister-in-law replied. "Dad, let me do it." Then she carried the boy to her room and bathed him first, then she secretly raised the baby in her own room. In the large family, she pretended that she had sent the boy away. Except Pao Third's dark skin, he grew very healthy. Bao Third still couldn't speak well when he was 4 years old.

Time flew. One day was the father's 80th birthday. At that year, Bao Third was already 14. Many relatives came to celebrate birthday for the father. The old father sighed deeply: "If my third son is still alive, he also would celebrate birthday for me." The elder sister-in-law understood that her father missed his abandoned son. So, she said: "Dad, if he can come to congratulate your birthday, you can't harm him anymore." "Ok, if you know where he is, please bring him here. I surely cannot harm him as I feel regret that I didn't raise him up." So the sister-in-law ran back to her room and let Bao Third to wear a new shirt and brought him to the family birthday party. On the way, she told him this good news as his father accept to see him. When Bao Third stood in front of all the family members and guests, they all couldn't hide their disappointment on their faces. But since his father made promise, he couldn't change his mind. So, he said: "Bao Third, since you are now 14 years old, you should do your duty as a family member."

On the next day, his father said to him: "There is 3 acres of barren land waiting for cultivation. I let you have 3 days to complete it." Bao Third didn't do such work before. He didn't know how difficult it was. His sister-in-law told him to go first, and when she finished cooking the lunch for the family, she would go to help him also. Bao Third was very tall, but when he arrived, he found that the weeds were even higher than him. He cut the weeds for a while and felt very tired. He came to the edge of the land to have a nap for a while. He sighed and worried how to finish such heavy task within 3 days. He didn't know that his sigh helped him as there was a Chinese saying that when the immortal sighed, it could reach as far as heaven. This message had flew to Jade Emperor's ears. The Jade Emperor counted by using his own fingers, finding Bao Third was in trouble. So, he dispatched thousands of crows to cut and pile the weeds for him. Just after a while, piece by piece, all the weeds are cut and piled up by crows. When Bao Third woke up, he found that the lands were clean and weeds were piled neatly. Then he went home. He told his sister-in-law that the land was ready for planting and after lunch, they could carry the weeds back home. His sister-in-law did not believe his words, so she rushed to the land. She even couldn't believe her own eyes as the lands are clean as he said. She couldn't wait to tell this good news to her father-in-law. He was astonished since the work seemed impossible even for a very strong skilled man and his son was only a 14-year-old boy who was not familiar to the farming. He also ran to the land to verify it. It was exactly true. Then, his father let him to spread sesames on the land. This seemed very easy for the boy. It only took him a couple of hours to finish the planting. He felt very happy that he finally finished an important task from his father. But when he came back home, his father told him that his father made a confusion. He needed to collect all the sesames from the land and bring back. His sister-in-law tried to persuade his dad but she failed. So, Bao Third only can went to the field again. He collected the sesames piece by piece. His muscles ached and he felt exhausted. He sighed again and moved to the edge of the field to have a rest. He fell asleep within one minute because he was so tired. Jade Emperor received the message and knew Bao Third had problem again. So, he sent thousands of sparrows to help him this time. When he woke up, it was already at dusk. To his surprise, a bag of sesames was on the ground. He took it home and gave it to his dad.

Finally, his father accepted him from the bottom of his own heart. He realized that his son was not a normal mortal and he should have a great future. He started to love him and did not test him anymore. He also sent him to the local school. He gave him a new name Bao Zheng.

He studied very hard in school for more than 10 years and he was excellent at behavior and learning. According to the tradition, he was chosen to attend the palace examination in the capital of Song Dynasty. At that time, transportation was not convenient and his family was not rich, so he only could walk to the capital, today's Kaifeng city. There was an anecdote of him during his trip to the capital widely spread in the folks to praise his noble character also. It's said that it was a very hot noon time, he passed a watermelon field in the wild. There was nobody in the field and no villages nearby. He thought for a while, then he picked up a watermelon and smashed it open and started to eat the melon. It was the best thing for relieving the heat. Before he started the trip again, he got some copper coins from his bag and put them on the accessible place in the melon field.

After he attended the palace examination, he became the imperial scholar. Then, Bao was accepted into the government and became a high-ranking official during the reign of the Emperor Renzong. I believe his records, stories and tales as a brave and uncompromising judge are too numerous to count. He hated corruption and became a symbol of justice. People gave him a special title of Bao Qingtian since he brought justice to the people.

Judge Pao Verdict

YK Pao Middle School, Yuan, Lareina – 13

As the judge of this event, I believe with no prejudice, perfect justice and righteousness, that the woman as the most responsibility causing the death of herself.

Firstly, she initially went off to find her lover, which if she stayed on her side of the river this would never have happened. During this time of turbulence and chaos, a woman's duty is to take care of herself and take the responsibility of her and her husband's home. The most important role women played during the war was providing medical care for sick and wounded soldiers. Instead of providing aid for soldiers or volunteering to be a nurse that rescued the wounded and saved the dying, this woman searched for romance. In this circumstance, was the woman doing her duty? No. Moreover, as a wife, she is expected to serve her husband, preparing food, clothing and other personal needs. Again, was the woman taking responsibility of the marriage? No. If she didn't cross the bridge to find a lover, she would have stayed in her house. No affair. No refusal of boatman's help. No soldier shooting her. No fatality would exist in any sort of way. The woman had gotten bored of this marriage, then she should have a divorce instead having a relationship with someone when she was still married. Infidelity is a betrayal of trust, not only between spouse, but also to the society, to the world. It is morally wrong to cheat on your partner, no matter where he is, who he is, and what condition he is in.

Secondly, no other people had intention to do what they had done by their own will, expect for the woman. The lover didn't give the woman money, since the lover didn't want her to go, or he thought cheating on one's spouse was immoral and realized it after the relationship he had brought himself into. The boatman didn't have fault for asking 100 dollars as a fee for taking the woman across the river. There was a possibility that the boatman might die in this cross since the river had force. The boatman was only asking for benefit. The soldier was also innocent. Although he was the one pulling the trigger that ended the woman's life, he was only following directions, in contrast to what the woman had done. The soldier already warned beforehand that no one should cross the bridge, so the woman's death is not the soldier's fault.

For the above reasons, as the judge, I sentence the woman with a forever notorious name of being immoral and turning her back on her duties. Her head would be hung at the city center for everyone to see, the result of being immoral and with infidelity.

Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Zhang, Charlie – 12

In a large city, a wealthy household was robbed for jewelry by a group of thieves. The thieves seemed to have accidentally left behind a small notebook as they left. The next morning, the homeowner found the notebook and saw that it contained a list of names from some wealthy young men in the city, as well as notes such as "On a certain day, Person A had a banquet and discussed matters at a certain place," or "On another day, Person B, with his group of friends gathered to gamble", etc. The homeowner then submitted the notebook to the authorities and reported the case. The authorities then arrested all the people on the list provided by the notebook. Since they were all wealthy young men with unruly behavior, the authorities believed they had caught the right people. In reality, these young men doesn't have the slightest bit of wit or courage needed for stealing, they were just about doing their usual business – drinking, partying, and gambling, which were all observed by the thieves in secret. These pampered young men could not withstand the harsh punishment and confessed to the robbery. When asked about the whereabouts of the stolen gold, they fabricated a story about burying the in the Yellow Mountain. The authorities sent people to dig there, and indeed found some jewelry buried there.

So, with both eyewitness and physical evidence, the case was settled and awaiting sentencing. However, Judge Pao, a commander-in-chief is still unsettled about the case, although he could not find the reason off the top of his head at the moment. One day, after thinking for a long time, he remembered someone who kept patrolling outside, looking carefully inside when the case was being sorted out. However, he only came once during the case, and was never seen before or again. In order to check if this was an accident, Judge Pao again invited the boys for a talk, and just as expected, the man showed up again. Judge Pao sent people to find this person, and they brought him to Judge Pao.

Apparently, he was a normal citizen called Yun who was bribed by the thieves to listen closely as the case is sorted out. Once he gave the information of about the mountain to the thieves, they immediately rushed there and buried some fake treasure. Yun begged Judge Pao to let him go and promised that he will help them find the thieves for him. They set off together, in search of the thieves. Judge Pao sent people, along with Yun, disguised as allies with the thieves, then trapped them into a dead end, giving them no route to escape. Finally, they caught the thieves and brought them to Judge Pao.

The Tale of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Zhang, Iris – 11

Before there was Sherlock Holmes, before there was Hercule Poirot, before there was Detective Pikachu, and before there was Judge Pao, a brave and courageous figure, willing to fight any criminals in order to save his people and bring peace to the land. However, it would seem odd that one day he ended up on the coast of Libya with some Trojan guy named Aeneas.

“What?!” The judge yelled when he saw Aeneas and his men lying beside him. “What are these men doing on such an island? Are they dead or something?” Aeneas’s hands and feet triggered, startling Judge Pao. “Who are you; you don’t seem like one of the men on the ships?” Aeneas exclaimed. Judge Pao, very confused, replied to Aeneas, “What? Me? A man on your ship? Oh, no, no, no, I’m just traveling on my own, in search of another criminal, and then woosh! I’ve been sent here. And what are you doing here?” Aeneas signed, “Well, it’s a long story, but someone caused a storm and made half of our ships drown and washed us up to this island!” “Hmmm, let me see, it mustn’t be a human who caused this massive storm; oh, it must be a god or goddess to have such extreme power, but who is it? Is it Aeolus, the god of the winds?” Judge Pao exclaimed. Aeneas signed for the hundred-millionth time and explained, “You see, it is caused by a god named Aeolus (“Ahh, I thought so!” exclaimed Judge Pao), but what you don’t know, and you can’t infer, is that the origin of the storm is Juno, the queen of the gods. She hated the Trojans so much that she asked Aeolus to cause a storm, and the old bloke actually agreed for some reason.” Suddenly, thunder boomed and lightning flashed, and a voice, as loud as thunder, boomed, “Somebody calling my name? Oh, it’s you, you pathetic Trojans, and someone I don’t know. You seem lucky, though, to have survived the storm that I caused for you. However, half of your troop died, hahaha! But I want all of you gone! We shall fight for this!”

Juno’s eyes glowed with rage, and she yelled, “You’ve taken everything I have; now I’m going to take everything you have!” She raised her hand, about to perform another curse, but was then interrupted by Judge Pao, who exclaimed, “Why are you doing this? This is breaking justice and the peace of the land and could be counted as a crime!” Juno glared at Judge Pao with anger and screamed, “Well, you pathetic so-called detective, I’m doing it because I hate them so much! First, their pathetic Prince Paris didn’t choose me in a beauty contest; he chose that Venus instead. I mean, what’s so excellent about her? Why does everyone like her, with her innocent little face and eyes shining like diamonds in the mine? Second, oh, my favorite city, Carthage, is going to be destroyed by them. Indeed, you! You, so-called warrior, claim to be on your way to find a city called Rome that will destroy my beloved Carthage. Well, that’s not going to happen since you’re going to have to die under my curse and weapon soon! Finally, my dear daughter Hebe is going to be replaced as Jupiter’s cupbearer by a Trojan youth named Ganymede. Oh, my poor daughter, why are you being replaced by some Trojan youth?! Oh god, why am I talking about this to you, who got washed up on shore by luck? Now, I’m going to take everything you have—your men, companions, and wealth. I shall kill everyone of you, and then leave your bodies withering painfully on this arid, hot island!” Juno’s eyes glowered with the same kind of anger, and she pulled out her sword. She swung it with all her might, killing one of Aeneas’s men. She cackled like an evil witch and charged to the Trojans and Judge Pao.

Judge Pao is shocked by the sight of this and thought, “What a crazy goddess, breaking the rules of peace and justice, definitely not an easy criminal to catch. He raised his sword, which he had brought with him, and swung it with all his might, but Juno pushed him away. Juno cackled hysterically and screamed, “You think you could beat me, you pathetic peace and justice man!” Judge Pao stood up reluctantly and massaged the wound on his leg. Suddenly, he thought of a plan—a plan that would make him famous around the world. There’s a weakness that all goddesses have, and that is jealousy. Judge Pao thought about the story that Juno told him, about her being jealous of Venus, who got chosen as the most beautiful goddess. He has read about Venus in books and has a brief knowledge of her appearance. He used a rare yellow seaweed to make her long, wavy, yellow hair and mimicked his voice to make it sound more like hers. He mimicked Venus and then exclaimed, “Oh, Juno, you pathetic goddess! You know why Paris didn’t choose you in the beauty contest? Because you’re ugly and mean, and he liked my kindness and beautiful eyes!” Juno screamed with anger, while Judge Pao kept mimicking Venus. Eventually, Juno is consumed by anger and flees.

This simple plan made Judge Pao one of the most famous detectives in the world.

New Tales of Judge Pao

YK Pao Middle School, Zhang, Jennifer – 12

Everyone who saw Zheng thought that he was an adult stuck in a child's body.

True, young Pao Zheng would do chores voluntarily, turned in his homework punctually and never complained at all. True, he did not have a sundry amount of friends since everyone saw him as "the nerd", but he didn't care. True, he was at the top of his class, aced every test, and studied for so long that it was the only thing he did.

True, he loved his mother to bits, the nicest towards Zheng, and taught him to be equal and compassionate to everyone; whereas he loathed his father.

And yes, Zheng was always sympathetic pitied the hardships ordinary people had to go through.

He would spend every single bit of his money on gambling. Every single night, he would come back home at midnight and become the most insolent sloth ever.

"Cook me food, right this instant!" he would screech.

Zheng would get up and start cooking right that second. He had no choice. If he wanted to stay at the house with his mother, he had to do what his father stipulated.

However, one demoralizing event changed everything.

Just like always, Mrs Pao went to her sewing company and started working. Just like always, she came back and spent time with Zheng. Just like always, the two of them went to sleep. Just like always, they woke up at midnight to cook food for Mr Pao and went to sleep once again. Just like always, they woke up peacefully, ready for the new d---no, unlike always.

During breakfast, Mrs Pao received a letter indicating her to arrive at a mysterious place named Seil Court, or else threatened death. Mrs Pao's face turned completely pale after reading this letter.

"Don't worry, mother", Zheng reassured as he patted his mom's back. "I'll go with you! You did not do anything wrong!"

Soon, they arrived at the Court, and standing there was a man, blocking the entrance.

"Hi... My name is Mrs Pao Hua. Someone told me that I should come here."

The robust and hulking man was taller than two ordinary man. His eyes were filled with ruthlessness and coldness. His muscular arms started to flip his notebook, which looked so tiny in his hands.

"You are on my list, go in." he boomed in his low, deep voice.

The second they entered the courtroom, they felt a chilly gust of wind. Coldness chilled through their spines, foretelling something grim...

Zheng sat there, and silence enveloped the whole court. Everything became still and calm. In the sound-filled silence, everything was soundless, yet there was that tension-building, nerve-wracking breathing noise.

Bang! Abruptly, the door from the court slammed open and there came a stout and short man with grey hair and baggy eyes walking rapidly. On his shirt, was a label which read: Judge Seil. He hurried wobbly into the chair for the judge, and his eyes pinched into a small crack. Then, after what seemed like hours, he started to squeak in his tiny voice. "Mrs Pao, it has been recently reported that you have created a serious crime, murder."

Mrs Pao's face changed immediately as she stared in horror, flabbergasted by what she had just heard.

"No, I – I didn't do anything!" she stammered.

But Judge Seil didn't listen to her explanation at all. "Liar! How dare you confront me? Get this woman executed as soon as possible!"

Both Mrs Pao and Zheng's eyes widened as their jaws dropped. There was definitely something wrong.

But Mrs Pao was already started to be carried away by the guards and Zheng grabbed her shirt and didn't let go. "Mother!"

"No, darling, I know I didn't do anything wrong. But what can we do? You have to move on with your life! I know you can do this!" And just like that, she was carried away, while squirming like a worm.

Suddenly, a deafening yelling voice made Zheng leap. "Catch him!" shouted the judge. They started running after Zheng... He gathered speed and went into a sprint. Adrenaline surged through his veins, making him as fast as ever. Gut-wrenching, heart pumping— after several thrusts forward Zheng's legs became tired, but he still went on. A thin layer of sweat covered the nape of his neck as he ran further and further. Wind whooshed past him. His feet flew over stones and leaves as his shoes pounded heavily across the ground causing mud to splash up his leg. He darted, slid, sprinted past people and trees, gaining the momentum and speed with each push of his leg. Panting and gasping for breath, his knees trembled and sweat poured. His mind was frantic with thoughts. Heart pounding violently, Zheng zoomed to a street that led straight to his home, straight to his door, straight to his father...

"Where were you? Did you cook me food?" he shrieked, but Zheng just pushed him away and stormed off to his room. He didn't want to cause any trouble and just jumped on his wooden bed and hid his face in a pillow, and screamed with all of his might. He screamed to release his frustration, his sadness, his confusion, and how he missed his mother already. Today was just too much for this exhausted little boy, and so he slept in right away, unaware of his father leaving the door. He thought that his mother had died, and that he would never see her again.

The second day, Zheng woke up, expecting his father to be yelling orders at him. However, he was gone, and he had packed everything. There was no track of him, as if he never existed.

Just then, the idea struck him.

"I want to – no, I will become a judge one day. A fair one. One who would not say that someone is guilty without any proof. I will make humanity equal and would let no one suffer," he started promising himself this, and from that day on, everything changed.

He started to study 24 hours per day, reading books about law and equality as well as crime. He started to learn from other famous judges and became more successful throughout the years. He became unstoppable. No one could ever stop him. He worked for his goal, and he was not going to give up. Never. He was going to show his father, Dr. Seil, the world, that he could become one of the best judges ever in history.

Then, one day, when he turned 29, he received a letter saying that he had passed one of the most difficult tests, the imperial examination. Zheng was over the moon when he received an invitation for his first ever case. "Yes!" he exclaimed. "All these years, I have worked for this moment. This is all for you, mom!"

Surprisingly, this case was located at Seil Court. Zheng stood there, and sighed "this is where all of this started." And he stepped in. He was now Judge Pao Zheng. Just like before, a gust of wind welcomed, as if it was his home. But now, it wasn't a cold gust of wind. Judge Pao was not nervous or scared at all. Instead, he was exhilarated and confident of his own future, and he did not look at the past. Just what was ahead of him.

His mother.

Judge Pao couldn't believe what he saw. It was obvious that his mother had become paler and thinner over the years, and it just triggered him. He was sure that his mother recognized him and they grinned at each other and the case had commenced.

Judge Pao later found out that this case was about finding out that Judge Seil had lied about everything in the court where her mother was planned to be executed, and that he had taken sides with the other side just for the offered money. Judge Pao listened carefully to both sides, and didn't even take his mother's side right away. The

audience claimed that he was so equal and when he said that his mother's side won, everyone stood up immediately and started to clap with joy.

Immediately after the case, whether it was true or not, he ran straight to his mother, hugging her so tight that he thought he was never going to let go. His eyes started to water uncontrollably.

He then let go of his arms, his eyes filled with tears. "I'm so sorry... I thought you were executed. If I knew you were alive, I would've come!"

"Don't worry, dear," Mrs Pao answered. "I've seen now that you have become such a successful person. And I am so proud of you."

They then went into a never-ending hug. They were never going to be separated now, never.

And from that day on, the name Judge Pao spread around the world. Judge Pao, the judge who fought for equality, determination, and bravery. No criminal could slip through his fingers...

Judge Pao Verdict

YK Pao Middle School, Zhao, Jenny – 14

If I am Judge Pao...

I, in the name of Bao Zheng, am here to present the judgement of a special incident that happened during the Civil War in United States. People involved in this case includes: the woman—in other word the victim, the boatman, the soldier, the lover, and the woman's husband. The background of this case is that the woman's husband left the house and didn't return home in three months. The woman crosses the bridge from a side to another and take a lover. After days, the woman receives her husband's message that he will be back soon. The woman rushes home but is stopped by the soldier after she comes to the bridge. The soldier demands that no one must cross the bridge. The woman has no choice but crosses the bridge, and she is finally shot by the soldier. Now, to clarify, because the context isn't clearly addressed, the person that subsequently led to the victim's death is hard to determine. However, I will provide my interpretation of what I believe is the justice and convince you that the woman is most responsible in this case with two responses.

Firstly, I stand firm that it is the woman who chooses to cross the bridge, therefore she should be responsible for all her actions and its consequences because she should consider the alternatives of encountering accidents when she is away from home before she takes a lover.

Secondly, the action itself to cheat on somebody is wrong, and her husband could indeed charge her with a crime and execute a prosecution. Cheating behavior is also quite unforgivable because the woman betrays the person that she promises to stay with and devote love. Besides, the woman running back home after she notice her husband is returning infers that she still has feelings on him. On the other hand, the reason why the lover refuses to give money to help the woman cross the bridge may be that he feels frustrated and angry finding that the woman has a husband. Therefore, the woman cheats on both of her partner, and this is why she shouldn't beg for forgiveness and need to bear the consequences.

Overall, I strongly hold that the woman should be the most responsible person in this case since she, as an adult, is capable of taking the consequences, and she commits something both morally and juristically wrong. I genuinely hope that the mass and the court can adopt my judgement.

Judge Pao Verdict

YK Pao Middle School, Zhou, Michael – 13

As a judge, my purpose is to let the responsible people get their deserved punishment, and let the innocents clarify their accusations. After a long and careful pondering, I think the woman herself is the most responsible person for her own death. In order to make everyone accept my verdict, I shall first list two reasons to support it.

First, she was the one who insisted to cross the bridge even in the condition that the soldier already warned her she would be shot if she ever crosses the bridge. The exact words of the soldier were 'Stop. I have orders that no one must cross the bridge. If you try to cross the bridge, I will shoot you.' A moment later, she tried to cross the bridge, then the soldier shot her dead. You guys can see that the soldier wasn't trying to embarrass the woman intentionally through the words 'I have orders that no one must cross the bridge'. He was just doing his job, following the order, the thing that a soldier must do. What is more, the soldier wasn't directing against her alone. He already said that the order was for everyone. Then let's analyze the background of this event. It was during The Civil War in America. We could imagine that at that time, having orders like that was perfectly normal. For example, the intention of it that could be preventing enemies from crossing the bridge. Those orders happened all the time. We could not blame the soldier or the order itself for the death of the woman.

Second, if wasn't the woman for sneaking behind her husband's back and took a lover across the bridge, she would never need to hurry back across the bridge, and naturally she would not die. The original words from the story are "While her husband was away, the woman took a lover, who live across the bridge on the other side of the river." I have already told you guys that the background of this story was settled during the Civil War. Therefore, her husband must had gone to fight the war. The husband was doing this for the unity of the country, rather than abandon the woman. Therefore, it wasn't her husband's fault for leaving her, it was a man's duty, to protect his county. But what the woman did is that she took a lover while her husband was risking his life and fighting the war. It was disloyal and inexcusable. She should be punished for disloyalty in the first place.

To conclude, the woman can only blame herself for her own death. Because the following two reasons. First, the woman was already told the result of taking the action, but she insisted to do that. It was her own decision, therefore naturally she need to take the consequence of her own action. Second, the woman would not die if she didn't sneak behind her husband's back taking a new lover across the bridge. It was extremely disloyal and inexcusable in the first place. Because the two reasons above, the woman should be punished, but she already received her punishment before we have this verdict, she had already been killed. And this is the end of the entire case.

Judge Pao Verdict

YK Pao Middle School, Zhou, William – 13

I think the woman should be the most responsible for this case from the resources we know now.

Firstly, this is because she did the wrong thing at first. And she knows she did the wrong thing, but she still did it. So, she must take the consequences herself.

The article says, “While her husband was away, the woman took a lover, who lived across the bridge on the other side of the river,” and, “The woman heard her husband was coming home. She left her lover and tried to cross the bridge.”

This proves that the woman is cheating with a man behind her husband's back. While eager to be home before her husband returns. Cheating in marriage is wrong all the time. And the woman knows she is doing a particularly serious mistake. That's why she is so anxious and afraid when she knows her husband is coming back. Knowing but still making the mistake, doubly guilty. And if she doesn't cheat, nothing is going to happen. There's no way she'll be killed.

Secondly, she is trying to use more mistakes to cover her first mistake.

The article says, “The soldier said, ‘If you try to cross the bridge, I'll shoot you.’,” and afterwards, “The woman tried to cross the bridge. The soldier shot her dead.”

This proves that the soldier had warned her beforehand, she must not cross the bridge. Nevertheless, she ignored the warning and tried to force her way across the bridge. Because she is afraid to let her first mistake, cheating come to light. And so, the soldier is forced to shoot her. Even if she had already made a big mistake, she should not risk her life and make a bigger mistake to cover it up. This act is precisely the immediate, key reason for her death. If she listens to the soldier and stayed. The consequences would definitely be less than death. However, she still chose the wrong decision, through countless mistakes step by step to drive herself to death.

In the end, the woman definitely should be the most responsible one for this case. The evils we bring on ourselves are the hardest to bear. No matter what, she shouldn't be doing the wrong thing, cheating at first. And it's even more serious for her to use another mistake to cover up the previous one. I don't deserve to be a synonym for justice if I don't decide to let the woman be the most responsible one. Thank you.