



Winning Entries

Terracotta

Carmel Pak U Secondary School, Tse, Mei Ying Gabrielle - 16

1.

Cee had always said she had a terracotta heart.

“Terracotta.” She folded up her flimsy sleeves and raised her eyebrows at me challengingly. “Baked earth.”

She deftly stepped over to the other side of the bench, her eyes never leaving my face.

“I know my Latin,” I protested half-heartedly. “You underestimate my prowess.”

“Perhaps, but you don’t know your pottery.”

Her hands were working on the soft clay, carving sloping dunes into the terrain. Time and time again she would lift her gaze to a slight tilt, then studiously bow her head and continue working in silence. At times, her fingers flew about so lightly that I thought her mind must be wandering; but there was a certain serenity in her countenance that parted her from the flighty impressionists, who must have splashed bits and blobs of paint here, and there, and perhaps there, too; with careless, wanton abandon. Cee’s hand was gentle and her movements composed. They reminded me of a Japanese print my mother had bought in my childhood, one of gentle summer rain falling upon the paper-thin wings of a peony butterfly.

“Terracotta is a medium unto itself,” Cee said, “It’s been inseparable from us for millennia. Porcelain, stained glass; we’d called them high art, but terracotta...” The fetus yawned in her hands, and upwards Cee palmed, melding it into something more recognizable. “Terracotta forms the basis of life. From birth to death, we are surrounded by our earth.” She looked at me meaningfully. “Our terracotta.”

As if by magic, the clay rose to a hilt. Cee pushed it back down in a soft reprimand. The clay was taking the form of a flowerpot, with delicate ridges, a singsong curve, and a wide, dependable bottom.

“Terracotta is soft; but it lasts, you know. The Warriors in Xi’an are testament to that.” She ran a finger around the pot’s rim, lulling away the dents. “It’s something you can hold on to.” The flowerpot sat complacently on its seat, awaiting its anointing.

“I’ll leave it out to dry in a bit,” she said, tugging her sleeves down. They hung upon her arms loosely, airily; as if woven of some effervescent matter.

“It’s raining out there.”

She shrugged and her pale shoulders rose and fell with a weak heave.

“It doesn’t matter. I’ve got a shed.”

2.

Sure enough, she had begun another terracotta project. I arrived to see her pale dress stained with clay and her feet planted firmly apart with all the concrete conviction of a hero's statue. She was staring intently at her paper birds, a flock of colossal, white daubs; frozen mid-flight on her ceiling. A mounted lamp shone on their sightless eyes. Lined on the ground side by side were waist-height terracotta figures, their faces blurred by scalpels and picks.

"I really ought to finish my plate first," she said, "but oh, well."

"What's got you again?"

I saw a stack of portraits flung haphazardly on her table. While sifting through the pile, I saw a familiar face.

I scrutinized myself: My hands were stuffed bashfully into the pockets of a coat I recognized from my art school days; a long outdated style, worn at the nape and cuffs. My gaze was lost and softly startled; like a child caught daydreaming in class. Cee had chosen to do me in mellow pencils.

Oh, hello, I seemed to be saying. Is that you?

"Hey, who's this handsome kid?" I called. "Do you have his number?"

Cee tore her eyes away from her monsters and rolled them at me. "If you don't shut up, I'll unearth your old sketches and give them to my dealer."

"Go on, I have to say I approve. Constance Chan, shaking up the art world."

"You're ridiculous." She picked up my portrait and smoothed out a crease in the corner with a half-smile. "You're up next," she said. "Maybe I'm gonna give you a double chin."

I looked again at the clay figures on the ground, one lined up against another like rows of graven teeth. "You're making me into a sculpture?" I asked, oddly touched. I knelt down and saw one man I recognized as Cee's banker. His eyes were iris-less and blank of emotion, and he, like all the other men, was decked in full armor. The figure was stiff from head to toe in an unnerving way. I felt ice trickle down my back, and I shuddered.

"Cee?"

But Cee had glided into the other side of the room without my knowing, gripping a mustachioed clay head tightly in her hand. The lamp burned her sleek black hair into a fiery halo and painted her lips stark pale against her skin; her skin, glowing as if oiled. The shadows on the clay were mutinous. There was a drumming air of expectancy in the air, as if something was going to happen, any second now – something dark, something throbbing, something nameless but exciting –

She looked at me, and in an instant, the spell broke.

"I'm going to fix the brow." She walked past me and lifted a scalpel off its hook. Sitting nonchalantly on the floor, towered by all her creation; she pecked on the figure's nose swiftly, without any unnecessary force or hardness.

The lamp illuminated the artist with a chaste glow. Her dress rustled softly as she moved, as if it was made of feathers. She began to hum a springy tune.

3.

She paid me a visit a few days later with the familiar pot ensconced in the crook of her elbow. Her hair was done up in an orchestric twist, loose strands rapidly cascading to the small of her back.

"Hey," she said, "it's for you. I've got no space for it anymore."

"I don't grow plants," I replied, but I was already reaching for it. Solemnly, as if laying down a foundation stone, she placed it into my arms. The flowerpot bore a respectable weight

against my chest, heavy with stolid, monastic contentment. I quickly put it down.

As she turned towards the door, her tinsels made a cacophony of sunspots on my walls. She took a final glance at the pot. It had taken quarters on my floor, looking as well-situated as if it had been residing there for the better part of a century.

“Then maybe you ought to start.”

For a moment, I caught her eyes; and underneath the loose, powdery blush; I saw a hollow in her cheeks that I had not seen for a long time.

She turned away in a single moment. “Wait!” I interrupted, too sharply; “Constance!”

I paused, and I weighed over each word in my dry throat, measuring their momentum. “Take care of yourself, alright?”

“Haven’t I always?”

She flung me a little wisp of a smile. I heard her footsteps float down the staircase, then gently, noiselessly fuse with the outside throng. She always left as light-footedly as she came, I thought; like a breeze, or an apparition. I could imagine her gracile frame flitting delicately in the din of the streets, slipping in and out of formless windows and doors.

A ghost, I decided, but one I would be singularly delighted to be haunted by.

4.

I viewed my immortalization with curiosity.

“So now I’m a warrior.” I stooped and gazed keenly into my eyes. “Which war am I fighting in?”

“Make your pick,” she said lightly. “The one against artificial intelligence, or the one against the Khan?”

“That’s hardly historical,” I replied impishly. “With me in any war, my side would win a glorious victory. It just wouldn’t be fair.”

She laughed, and her hands trembled along with her throat, nearly scraping the nose off a clay head. My terracotta figure guarded her stonily. “Hey,” she said, frowning at her sculpture,

“Should I give him thicker eyebrows, or thinner ones?”

“Depends,” I said. “Who’s that?”

She shrugged. “He’s the guy who walks his dog down my street every Saturday.”

“No idea who he is,” I replied cheerily. “Why do you need him, anyway?”

She frowned. “You can never be sure, you know.” She kneaded his brow with more force than her slender hands must be able to muster. “It’s better to be safe.”

She picked the head up and kissed its clammy cheek.

“What can I say,” she said, her voice fey, “I have a terracotta heart.”

5.

I had a dream that night.

I dreamt that I had wings, weak, flimsy, diaphanous butterfly wings. In my muddled state, I could somehow still recall that ancient tale -- maybe I’m the butterfly dreaming that he’s a man, I thought to myself, incoherently amused; or maybe I’m the boy dreaming he’s a baron. I fluttered carelessly through shapeless blocks, searching for a knife’s slice of color.

Then I saw her. My Cee, as stark white as the first fall of snow, her taut dove’s wings stretched paper thin.

“I can’t fly,” she cried. She was perched upon a rickety assemblage of yellowing paper and clay spears. With every blow of the wind, her frame swayed precariously. Her twisted hands were clenching the edges of the tower, clenching so tightly that her knuckles were blotted with

ribbony white and red. "I can't use my wings!"

"You have to let go!" I shouted. She shook her head fiercely. In desperation, I rushed towards her, but it was too late; the pillar was crumbling before my eyes. I stretched out my arms, and she flailed helplessly; her arms raised in a pieta towards the sky –

I dived down, but she had already been swallowed whole by the earth. Instead of meeting shards of terracotta, my hands were pricked by stiff, arched feathers, each barb as sharp as a needle of steel. My palms began to bleed.

From the good earth, shot upwards an impenetrable maze of clay briars.

6.

"Why don't you grow plants?" she asked me one day. Her voice seemed to reverberate in the room, along with the lingering notes of the mazurka she was humming. She was roosted atop a high chair, picking apart a small clay hand; and I was charcoaling in a sketch. I had presently sensed a misshapeness in my figure that would not rub away, and as the seconds ticked by, the harder a feeling of unease tugged at my heart, and yet I could not find any reason or cause for it.

"Oh, I don't know," I answered vaguely. "I guess I never inherited my mother's green thumb."

She laid the figure down on the table as tenderly as a mother putting her child to bed; and rested her head on her hand, allowing her angled chin to jut into her palms. Her endless eyes bore into mine. Suddenly, an irrational fear arose within me that her pale, thin wrists would snap under the dull weight of her skull.

"You have plastic flowers, though," she remarked.

I had some garish plastic carnations, all propped up stiffly in the highest rack of my cupboard. They observed the world from their lonely balcony pridefully, with the air of vain, long-forgotten ladies at a ball.

"It's different," I said, "they won't wilt. Just like your paper birds that won't..." I paused for a moment, trying to come up with a plausible reason for bird mortality. "...Freeze."

"Birds don't freeze." Her lips were quirked into an almost imperceptible smile. "They fly to warmer places in the winter."

She smoothed over the clay palm and said contemplatively, "I wonder if the Emperor could ever have guessed how shattered his men are. It would come as an awful shock for him, I bet."

"Insane conquerors aren't exactly known for their remarkable foresight."

She gave the hand a firm pat. "You'll see."

I made no reply and continued shading in my sketch. It was of a nameless model, her face lifted up, up, up towards the heavens. Maybe if I shift her weight to the left foot....

"Do you wonder what it's like? To fear nothing?" she asked all of a sudden, quite casually.

Her hand was entwined tightly with the false one, each cool finger pressed firm against the warm, sweating clay.

"Constance," I began cautiously, putting down my charcoal. This hasn't happened in a while, I thought, this isn't happening again.

"Constance, you know I can't lose you, right?"

"But you will," she answered placidly. "I am human, made to decay." She packed up her tools in her bag and zipped it shut. "You will lose me one day."

"But I," she continued, "Won't lose you."

7.

She hardly came out of her quarters any longer, instead ever cocooned in the four walls of her studio. Every time I visited, she was aloft on the edge of a white ladder, her entire body arching to reach the hanging branches of terracotta on her ceiling. Ample, lusty branches; that had fingers, elbows, nostrils, and knobby eyes.

Once, I walked up to her and placed a hand on her cheek. It was bloodless. She absently swatted my hand away and murmured something underneath her breath.

“You are cold,” I said, “Let me get you a coat.”

She looked perturbed, and said she was impervious to the draft.

8.

I entered her home and found her sitting cross-legged on the floor, surrounded by clay figurines. Overhead, the giant bird sculptures were hanging. Their beaks were mutely gaped open, their wings starched apart, and they swayed grotesquely with aching creaks, despite the utter lack of wind. The air was coagulated, hot and still.

“Nüwa and her little men,” I said. I knelt down to her height, and she half-smiled at me, her eyes glazed over.

“Look at my work,” she whispered raspily.

“Your lips are dry.”

“Look.”

The clay figurines each had their own faces, as she had promised. I could faintly recognize a few, the baker, the man who walked his dog, me, me, me... Hundreds and hundreds of warriors, replete with quivers, bows, and spears.

“I made it,” she said. “I made my little army.”

For a moment I felt like I was intruding in some kind of forbidden rite, crudely stepping into a circle into which I was uninvited. Their glib faces seemed to meld together, fuse, and slide apart, beckoning closer, closer, come closer; and Cee sat in the midst of it all serenely, with the calm and decorum of a high priestess. Her face had a pale sheen to it now, an unearthly glow. Her cheeks seemed to be carved with the weight of ancient, heavy marble.

“I have completed,” she said.

I no longer felt she was talking to me.

She closed her eyes.

“Now I can return to bed.”

There was a smothering scent of wax in the room. Suddenly gripped by a wave of nausea, I lurched to my feet. My ears began to ring. Cee made no movement to stop me. Unsteadily, I stumbled backwards, freeing myself from the grip of the circle, away from whatever devilish spell was taking possession of the room.

I fell blindly out of the apartment. Through the slit of the door, I could see Cee’s thin back, still ramrod straight and apostolic. I could form no complete thought. The door swung shut, and I was left standing foolishly, almost toppling over in the bleak winter air. That was the last I saw of Cee.

9.

I never attended. I admit it was cowardly, utterly cowardly of me; but I could not brave the act of facing her family and friends once again. Hanged herself, they said. I never saw the

scene, but there will always be an imprint burned into my mind, of Cee swinging soundlessly among her flightless, snow-white birds, her pale hands limp and still. Her silent figures filling up every square inch of the room; an ever-expanding silence; in her palms, in her fingers, filling in all the empty hollows of her mind...

One nondescript evening, I was once again at my table, working on my projects. I felt wearier than I had ever felt before. It was a warm, quiet night; and there was a chorus of cicadas humming outside my window. The summer wind rustled the leaves, paper, and cotton curtains with the playfulness of a child.

My foot bumped into something on the ground. Looking down, I saw the flowerpot. It still carried with it an air of quiet companionship, looking as if it had been waiting patiently for me all along, all along. I caressed it softly with my fingers, a hot rush of pity coursing into my heart: The aimless little ridges, the wide bottom, every detail suddenly seemed so fragile, so vain, and lovable; and for a second I was unable to put it down, despite it weighing heavier every passing second –

In them I would grow peonies, light and musical; with all the ephemeral beauty of a butterfly.

The Warrior of Qin

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Chu, Priscilla Lorraine - 8

“The Terracotta Warriors were made by Emperor Qin, the first emperor of China, to protect the Emperor in his afterlife...” I read from the plaque next to the display of figures inside the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor.

“Cool!” I exclaimed. My parents smiled at my enthusiasm and patted me on my head. I turned around, examining the exhibition. I looked at a warrior with an angry face. I thought I saw him blink. But when I looked at him again, he looked like he had not moved at all.

My brain was filled with questions when I was glancing around the exhibitions. Suddenly, I could not find my parents anywhere. They were gone!

I walked around, hoping to find them. They must be somewhere nearby! Then, I sensed a shadow following me. I turned around instantly, but no one was there. How strange...

I searched from here to there, but my parents were nowhere to be found. My heart was pounding like a beating drum and blood was roaring in my ears. I heard footsteps closing in to me but they were not my parents’. I forced back a scream and ran for my life.

Literally.

I kept running and turned my head around to make sure I had escaped the mysterious stalker. Just before I thought I was off the hook, I slammed into a wall. It was a dead end and I was cornered.

The mysterious figure stepped out of the shadows. **IT WAS A LIVING TERRACOTTA WARRIOR!**

I screamed my head off as I was so scared. I stood there frozen in fear.

“Please don’t hurt me, Mr. Warrior!” I whimpered. “I didn’t do anything! I’m just an innocent child! I mean no harm!”

“No, Sire! You are mistaken! I only want to help you!” he said in his booming voice.

“What?!” I breathed heavily. “What are you talking about?”

“Sire, I escaped from the captivity suffered by my poor brothers and have been protecting them and the Emperor’s tomb ever since. I hid in the dark to avoid attention, but today I had the urge to come out.”

“And why is that?” I asked curiously.

“I sensed the presence of Emperor Qin, but when I followed my senses, it was not my lord, but you, Sire!” **YOU** must be a descendent of my Lord Qin!”

I gasped, dumbfounded. I suddenly realised the connection because my mother’s maiden name was indeed...

“I am overwhelmed,” he sobbed. “I never thought I would see my master’s blood again. I am your humble servant and I will do anything for you. Please give me your orders and I shall follow them immediately!”

“Please bring me back to my parents?” He nodded and we set off.

We finally found my parents and it was time to go.

“Good--” I looked around but he was nowhere to be seen. “Goodbye, Mr. Warrior. I’ll miss you!”

The Terracotta Conspiracy

German Swiss International School Primary, Cheng, Edgar - 10

Taking place in January 14th, 2019

“These runes were carved thousands of years ago,” murmured Gordon, running his fingers over the inscriptions of Chinese characters.

“What do they say?” inquired Alice, his best friend, impatiently. Her short brown hair was damp from crouching in the intense heat for so long.

They were huddled in the corner of Qin Shi Huang’s tomb. The first ever humans to explore the area, they were part of an excavation group called OREO: the Organisation Regarding Excavation Operations.

“It was extremely kind of them to let us in first,” remarked Alice as Gordon struggled to translate the runes.

“You can say that again,” Gordon replied, not turning around, as he translated the runes. “I mean, the first people to ever enter Emperor Qin’s tomb! We could find out...the secret.”

They exchanged a furtive look, and simultaneously glanced around, making sure no one was watching them, even though there clearly was no one there except them.

Ever since OREO had gotten involved with the Terracotta Warriors three years ago, Gordon and Alice had been suspecting a conspiracy. The mysterious disappearances, the numerous lost files and encrypted messages found on various peoples’ desks, it seemed almost like a rebellion of sorts... acting inside their own company... almost like someone didn’t want them to find out something. A secret.

Patrick Iminoes, Daniel Tedium, Stanley Lawnose, all of them acting so...secretive..

Light brown eyes, light brown hair, light brown skin. They all possessed that. And they all came from Chinese heritage, even though some of their names weren’t Chinese-like at all.

“Got it!” exclaimed Gordon. “The runes say: The army, cursed to sleep for thousands of years, until their time to wake appears. They will rise again and declare war that rages from land to land and from shore to shore. The rebels, blinded by death, will assist...however, their futures are shrouded with mist. Destined to die, doomed to fail, the rest of the world cannot prevail... hmmm. This must be the recount of the Battle of Julu. But what’s this about

thousands of years?”

“The Battle of Julu...” Alice mused.

“Yeah.” Gordon answered as he stood up, stretching his stiff bones out.

“But why would the emperor write that on his tomb wall?” Alice pressed, also standing up.

“Dunno. Beats me,” replied Gordon, stepping towards the entrance of the tomb.

Their colleagues, as expected, besieged them with questions. Luckily, Gordon seemed to be in the mood for talking, leaving Alice free to ponder.

Those...inscriptions. They couldn't have been about the Battle of Julu. They had been written in future tense. Almost like a foreshadowing...

Was this...?

“Really?!” a worker yelled right next to Alice, making her jump.

Sighing in exhaustion, she trudged upstairs to her office, where she could think (and maybe nap) in peace.

This is a dream, Alice realized with a jolt as her footsteps echoed against the cold pavement.

Qin Shi Huang's tomb loomed above her, towers rising high, emitting an aura of ominous fear. Silver fog wrapped around her body until her knees knocked with cold and she couldn't breathe right. Without knowing what she was doing, Alice stumbled forward... into the tomb.

The silver mist snaked by her, leading her on and on, against her will. Her feet moved, not under her control. No! Alice tried to scream, but it didn't work. Her tongue was frozen to an unresponsive lump of muscle.

Deeper and deeper she went into the tomb. All the way...to Qin Shi Huang's, the emperor's, coffin.

‘They will rise again and declare war...’ hissed a snake-like voice.

Alice's arm floated instinctively towards the coffin. Her vision slid out of focus and the room seemed to swell, oscillating like a mirage.

She watched in horror as her fingers grasped the lid of the ancient, eroded coffin and ... pulled.

The lid fell to the floor with a clatter. But none of that mattered as Alice stared in horror inside the coffin.

A terracotta soldier lay inside. And he began to sit up, hardened clay bending as easily as cotton. His joints cracking with the pressure of being...asleep...for-

The army cursed to sleep for three thousand years--

And then, as Alice stared on, terrified, as the statue gripped the bottom of his chin.

And pulled his face right off!

Alice gaped at the same alert eyes, the same fierce expression, the same face that had accompanied her into the tomb earlier.

Gordon smiled, and open his mouth to speak. The same silver mist drifted out of it and tucked him into its grey crevasses, hiding him from view. And then he said:

‘Blinded with death, the rebels shall assist...however, their futures are shrouded in mist.’

★ ★ ★

“Alice!” shouted Gordon, shaking her shoulders. “Alice!”

Alice woke with a start. “It can’t be!”

“Calm down, Alice. You were dreaming. Anyway, they found something inside of one of the terracotta soldiers that they’d never found before!”

“What?”

“Flakes of skin!”

The last puzzle piece went ka-chink!

“Gordon. Listen carefully.” Alice took a deep breath. “Don’t you understand those runes? It isn’t about just any army—it’s talking about the terracotta army! They’re...” Alice trailed off as she remembered Gordon, trapped inside that terracotta shell.

“Um, Alice, you’re--”

“Listen, Gordon. The terracotta soldiers had people imprisoned in them!”

“Alice--”

“They had people stand in rows and poured melted clay onto them!”

And after taking a deep breath, Alice said slowly, “Gordon...the terracotta soldiers...have the potential to become...”

“Alive.” Gordon finished.

“They’re rebelling. Patrick, Stanley, Daniel...they’re terracotta soldiers. It’s not just a coincidence.”

“I know. I knew everything all along.” Gordon scowled, which wasn’t like him. “I give up.”

“What? What do you mean?” Alice cried out in surprise.

And Gordon lifted his arm. At first, Alice couldn’t see anything wrong with it.

And then she saw the hand protruding out of the jacket sleeve. It was made of clay.

New Tales of the Terracotta Warriors

Dulwich College Beijing, Li, Kristen - 13

One, Two, Three. I count my heartbeat, echoing hollowly in the intimidating darkness.
I sit up.
Am I dead?

My heart is pulsing thunderously that my eardrums ache with each beat. I blink. As the pitch-blackness of my eyelids unveil, the caliginous pit materialize.

I squeezed up, and a bucketful of lurid sunlight flood down from the opening. I squinted, finding a young man with eccentric hairstyle and outfit, staring down at me, wide-eyed; clearly appalled as if he bumped into a ghost.

And it takes me a while to figure out that I'm the ghost he's staring at.

It was the winter of 220 BC. The constant warfare subsided as Qin Shi Huang conquered and unified the states, ruling as the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty.

My fingers went numb hours ago from the cold, yet there was no gusting wind roaring through the forest trees. All was tranquil, with an occasional squeak of our straw soles against the crumbling snowflakes. The sunlight poured down from the azure skyline, adding a twinkle of shimmer that lingers upon the snow.

"Pa, wait up!" I cried, "Your sack is splitting!"

"What?" Pa wheeled around and checked his sack. The cloth ripped from the middle and bamboo strips were showering down.

"Pa, what is all this about, us going to XiAn, tons of bamboo strips, and all the pills? The pills! Are you a Tao alchemist? Wait!" I pointed at a string of bamboo slips half shielded by the hand-sewn bags of medicines.

Pa rested his crutch onto the empty sacks and bent over to gather the pills. Then he fished

the bamboo strips from the pile and laid them on his lap.

Alchemy Volume II was engraved in gold ink on the strips, held together by painted leather strings.

“So you are a Taoist!”

Pa smiled, somehow feebly. He flattened the slips and plucked out a string of thinner, wooden strips.

On the dusted strips, the title reads Book of Songs in faded ink.

“It is an anthology of beautiful eulogies and hymns collected from ancient folk songs. It has thousands of treasured words gathered across—”

“The ones you recite all the time? They’re a—”

“Think we should get a move on, now.”

And that winter, when we moved to Xi’an, I was thirteen.

It was 213 BC. To avoid scholars’ criticism by comparing his reign with the past, Qin Shi Huang ordered most existing books to be burned, especially ones that recorded contents of history and non-legalist philosophies.

The Gong Yang Street was packed with people. Scuffles of soles and loud chatters filled the streets, sometimes made inaudible by distant horse yelps and tumbling carts on the dirt road. A cluster of women in their fifties wore cotton-padded coats with sewn daisies, leaning on a stall and gossiping. There was an elderly man with wrinkles settling in his deep-set eyes, wearing a bamboo hat and a strapped sandal, bargaining with a nearby stall-owner.

I tread down the avenue, eyes skipping from stall to stall. Pa recently became obsessed over alchemy, experimenting elixirs and shutting himself in the basement of our cramped, new place; I’d be starting work as an apprentice craftsman tomorrow in a workshop near the palace, crafting the clay figures of terracotta army to safeguard the emperor’s tomb.

I wandered to a nearby stall jammed with bamboo slips and ink bottles, picking up the front-most: The Classic of History. The shop owner was absent and the brushes that hung on the opening were layered with dust, with not a single customer around.

“Hey, young lad.” A bearded man nudged me with his bulged knuckles, “Is it your stall?”

“No—”

“Then dump the slips and clear out!”

I was startled; my back tensed.

“You’ll thank me for this, just leave—”

“But- why?”

“The officials are searching for the forbidden slips—”

So it’s real- I pursed my lips and scurried home to hide the Book of Songs.

It is the year 211 BC, and the construction of the terracotta army came to an end. The tomb was built at the foot of Mount Li, 30 kilometers away from Xi’an. And the secrets of the tomb were maintained, as most of the workmen were killed.

“Yo, workshop’s closin’ in 5 mins. Gotta leave early. See ya at the pit tonight.”

“Ok, bye”

I signed the last clay figure with a pointed rod and backed off several steps to admire the rows of terracotta warriors. The commander-in-chief rides on a chariot, his exquisite boots tucked tightly under the fluttering robes, with his age-battered fingers on his bushy beard; the young foot soldier clasps his spear tensely; his dry lip slightly parted but his pupils wide and fierce. But my favorite is the shortest archer in the front-most row. His robust palm held the bow firmly as he is ready to launch the arrow. His robe was drained with sweat and his body weary from the metal armor plates, and his eyes; his eyes were so real, so alive, gleaming as if,

as if...

The last streak of sunlight vanished from the windowsill and the last echo of a craftsman's sandals drifted away. The door creaked shut with a gust of bristling wind.

It's winter again. It had been three years already, since we first moved to Xi'An.

I blew the flickering candle that hangs in the doorway and started towards home.

"Oh, right..." I shook my boots off on the doorstep, "Gotta go to the pit at midnight."

Pa paused with his hands on his chin, "Why?"

"Uh- all the workers are ordered to be there- dunno- What's the matter, Pa?"

Pa was biting his lip, sweat was trickling down his cheeks. He frowned, and sighed grimly.

"Is it about the Book of Songs? They'd be searching our district tomorrow." I blurted out.

"What?" Pa sat up, "But you-"

"No, I was thinking since our house won't be safe anymore- I can hide in the pit- cause we know all the passage an'-"

Pa locked his lips.

"I'll be totally fine, Pa-"

"I suppose- it's not a bad idea; Uh-fetch the book and I'll get you some soup-"

"I'm not-"

"You must be hungry, hurry up!"

I hurriedly grabbed The Book of Songs under the loose dirt pile from our backyard, grudgingly swallowed the soup, and set off to the pit with my heart pulsing rigorously.

"Wait,"

"What, Pa?"

Pa shook his head sluggishly and gulped, "And don't go through the slips. Not yet. Not today. Later-"

"What do you mean?"

Pa narrowed his eyes to the wooden slips in my palm and waved goodbye, his age stricken cheeks smeared with tears.

"What-"

But my voice was drowned in the raging gust.

I sneaked away from the official's inspection, clutching the wooden slips under my robe. The tunnels were dimly lit with swaying oil-lamps. I turned the corners and entered the depth of the pit. I counted the rows so that I won't be lost in the maze of clay figures, until I bumped into the archer. My archer.

I hastily chipped away one of his legs, and squeezed the roll of slips in his hollow torso. I then tugged his leg back and hastened towards the exit.

Just as I made a dash for opening, the clay ceiling started to crack. There were pieces raining down the tunnel with splinters pulverizing the clay entrance. With a grating screech, the ceiling plummeted.

And I caught a last glimpse of the glowering stars from the cracks before the hallway collapsed.

Upon my instinct, I stand up, ignoring the ache in my forehead. As I come to the realization that the collapsed tunnels had been rebuilt, I spot my archer. The intense pigments fade away, revealing spots of grayish clay; the polished bow is missing from the archer's clasped finger. I peel my eyes off its grazed boots, and hurriedly wriggle out the untouched Book of Songs.

Just as I roll out the wooden slips, a stringed stone fall on my lap. I scrutinized the rough surface, finding rows of minuscule, engraved character.

My Dearest Liqi,

It will be my greatest relief that you found this, after how many millennium I do not know, since I'd be long dead before you wake up. You might be wondering why you are still alive after all these years, and I felt I owe you an explanation.

Very well. I knew dangers would besiege you once you're deep underground, whether it is the emperor's scheme or the fatal mercury, so I gave you the only elixir of life I managed to make. (In the soup) It was meant for the emperor.

Anyways, I hope the world you'll live from now on is one blessed with felicity and freedom, and the forbidden poems can be cherished and read by all. I am just the past, dear; go ahead and embrace the wonders of the present.

Good luck,

Pa

The Terracotta Warriors' visit to Jamaica

Korean International Springboard Programme, Wai, Kaden - 10

Shi Shi and Liang are two Chinese students studying in a Jamaican Primary School. They are currently in sixth grade and they have been living in Kingston for six years.

One day, a big T-rex named Mor'du tried to kill the President of Jamaica. It was now up to Shi Shi and Liang to save the Jamaicans.

The next day, they flew to Xi'an city to speak to Dong Shi and Justin, the leaders of the Terracotta army. All the warriors agreed to help stop the beast. That night, they all took a plane to Jamaica. The warriors saw Mor'du eating slides in the park. They quickly shot one hundred arrows at the heart of the beast. Mor'du fell over and died.

The people living in Jamaica were happy and thanked the Terracotta Warriors, Shi Shi and Liang for saving their country.

Digging the Terracotta Warriors

Korean International Springboard Programme, Lee, Joshua - 15

As an archeologist I was famous and was called ‘Joshua the genius’. One day while I had tea with mom I received a phone call from the people in the History Museum. The man sounded excited. Some farmers had found something while digging a well in mainland China, I felt excited too. I jumped on a plane to Xian. When I arrived at the dig site I could not believe my eyes. There in the mud was a statue the like of which I had never seen before. Could this be the Army of the First Emperor? Unfortunately the people in the village all wanted a part of the discovery. They tried to dig up the soil and get the warriors for themselves. Every night I stood watch with a group of other archeologists defending the Warriors who were guarding the Emperor. We were the archeologist army. Eventually the government understood what an important thing this was and sent their own army. Who would have thought that there were 8000 warriors hiding underground?

Mysteries of the Terracotta Warriors

Kau Yan School, Gittings, Mark - 8

It's been more than 40 years since some Chinese farmers discovered the Terracotta Warriors. In that time, teams of archaeologists and scientists from all over the world have spent thousands of hours studying this amazing discovery. But despite all their hard work, there are still lots of mysteries which they haven't been able to solve.

One mystery is why the Terracotta Warriors were made more than 2,200 years ago. We think that the First Emperor of China called Qin Shi Huang, who is buried in a tomb a mile away from the Terracotta Warriors, believed in life after death, so he wanted an army to protect him in his afterlife. But we have no proof of this.

Another mystery is why no two out of the approximately 8,000 warriors are exactly the same. From a distance, they look similar. But when you study them closely, there are little differences in their faces and ears. We think that the emperor ordered the workers to copy from an army of real warriors, which would explain why they are all different from each other. But again, we have no proof of this.

Yet another mystery is the way the warriors were painted. Over the past 2,200 years, much of the paint has faded from the warriors. This makes life even more difficult for the archaeologists and scientists trying to solve this mystery. Some paint still remains and, while most warriors have pink faces, there is one strange warrior with a green face. Some experts believe this warrior was painted green by mistake. Other experts think the green face was designed to frighten enemies away. But yet again, we have no proof of this.

Still another mystery is why one of the pits is empty. Unlike the other three pits, pit number four doesn't have anything in it. Some people think that the emperor planned to bury criminals in this pit. But no bones have been found, so this mystery is still unsolved.

Scientists have succeeded in solving some mysteries. For example, they recently used laser technology to reveal the binding material used to stop the paint from falling off the warriors. That is an important discovery because it will make it much easier to restore the warriors. Maybe in the future, the scientists and archaeologists will succeed in solving some other of the other mysteries as well.

But the biggest mystery of all is what is hidden inside the nearby tomb of Qin Shi Huang, which has still not been opened after thousands of years. According to a famous historian named Sima Quan, the tomb contains a wonderful underground kingdom. But his writings also warn that the tomb is protected by crossbow booby traps and 100 rivers of poisonous mercury. No one knows whether this is really true or not. So until they excavate the tomb, this biggest mystery of all will remain unsolved.

Terracotta Warriors On the March

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Ho, Pak Fung Julius - 11

The army has been silent for more than 2,200 years. Now, after forty years of enduring excavation, a buried army of around 7,500 Terracotta soldiers and horses that startle the whole world has surfaced.

An Extraordinary Discovery - WHEN and WHERE was the Army Discovered?
It was just an ordinary day in March, 1974. Three farmers plodded across a field in northeastern Xi'an, a large city and capital of Shanxi Province in central China. Once known as Chang'an (literally means 'Eternal Peace'), it marks the Silk Road's eastern end and was home to the Qin dynasty's ruling house.

The farmers chose a spot near a coppice of persimmon trees. Down they dug and suddenly, one of the farmers felt his shovel strike against something hard. It was a head of a real-looking clay man. The farmers have never seen anything like that before, nor have the archeologists who arrived and begun to dig out more and more pottery men. The army was then unearthed pit by pit, warrior by warrior until it had become a full life-size army of 7,500 Terracotta Warriors.

The Pursuit for Immortality - WHY was the Army Built?
Who was the Terracotta Warriors guarding?

One man - Qin Shihuang, the First Emperor of Qin. By 221 B.C., the ruler of the Qin kingdom had "eaten up" the other six Warring States and united China. According to a legend, the emperor ate powdered jade and drank mercury in the belief that they would prolong his life! I was shocked that the legendary First Emperor had acted so ridiculously! Just as flesh-and-blood troops had protected him during his lifetime, the Terracotta troops were believed to be an afterlife army to protect their ruler against any enemy for eternity.

The Silent Witness of Imperial Power - WHAT were Unearthed?
The Pits of the Terracotta Warriors consist of cavalry, infantry and chariots. Every figure differs in facial expressions and gestures, with clothing and hairstyle vary according to their military rankings. Interestingly, the eyes of the Terracotta Warriors depict a single eye-lid, which is believed to be a representation of the eyes of the Qin people!

Apart from the pottery soldiers, military experts were astounded by the exquisite bronze weaponry unearthed such as swords, spears, scimitars, billhooks, halberds, arrowheads and crossbows. Scientists discovered that the surfaces of the Qin swords were coated with an oxide film 10 microns thick which contained 2% chrome. How did the Qin people do it more than 2,200 years ago without the help of modern chrome oxidation technology? It is a pity that their secret 'recipe' did not survive and we can only admire the remarkable casting technique and artistic standards of the treasure, while leaving the scientists to unveil the mystery.

The Incredible Battle Formation - HOW was the Army Organized?
The battle formation of the army is thought to be a replica of the real one. Pit One is the largest and most impressive as around 6,000 Terracotta figures have been excavated. The

main part of the battle formation faced the east towards the ancient enemies of Qin State, indicating the characteristic of being alert and hostile. Infantry was the main attack force as evidenced by only 38 chariots in the formation.

Excavated in 1976, Pit Two stands about 20 meters north to Pit One and it consists of four units: the first unit contains rows of kneeling and standing archers; the second one is a chariot war array; the third unit consists of mixed forces with infantry, chariot and trooper standing in rectangular array; and the last one includes numerous troopers holding weapons. The four units together form a meticulous battle array.

Pit Three is the smallest one. There are only 68 terracotta figures, many of which are without heads. It is believed as the command post – there are only two chariots but they were made out of bronze, which means they were the best chariots!

The Terracotta Warriors are in a precise formation and stand in organized ranks. The organization of chariots, infantry and cavalry is simply unrivalled by any other military array at that time, which also signifies the martial spirit and military culture of the Qin kingdom.

The Road Ahead – Cultural Significance of Terracotta Warriors and Its Preservation

The Terracotta Warriors have fascinated the whole world with their artistic, cultural, and scientific importance. They are considered as one of the greatest archaeological discoveries in China and an eighth “Wonder of the World”. In 1987, the Qin Shihuang Mausoleum and the Terracotta Warriors were listed as World’s Cultural Heritage sites by UNESCO.

However, unless caution is taken, the ‘unbeatable’ army of Qin Shihuang will be in great danger. For instance, their excavation exposes them to corrosive elements that have been impenetrable to the figures for generations. Things that seem as benign as mold can have damaging effects, too.

Tourists can be as threatening as tomb robbers. They bring in trash, food and other sources of litter that are organically based. Bacteria may grow and could eventually impose detrimental effects on the figures. In my opinion, it is the responsibilities of both the Chinese government and visitors to conserve the Terracotta Warriors. Civic education regarding the preservation of the heritage is of utmost importance, not to mention the endeavor of the government to further enhance the technical and management skills of the officials in charge.

What the well-diggers stumbled upon accidentally has turned out to be the most incredible archaeological discovery of modern times. Qin Shihuang wanted immortality more than anything. With so many people visiting his burial site and army every day, in such a way, the emperor has lived on.

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Witness to the Eighth Wonder of the World

Clearwater Bay School, Li, Megan - 10

W elcome! To you we must look crazy, strange,
But we are calm, and vigilant and proud,
A mighty army of our Emperor Qin,
Prepared for battle to protect his tomb.
Reminders of the ancient army bold,
Who first united China long ago,
We've suffered many hardships underground,
And more, since we have seen the light of day.
Our clothing, vivid, colorful and bright,
Has faded. We've been burned and plundered, smashed,
Yet now restored, revived in dignity,
Strong, elegant, magnificent, 'most real,
Exquisite model of the ancient world,
A marvel to behold for modern eyes.

I, Yang Mulan Yong (杨木兰俑), general in the Emperor Qin-Shi-Huang's Terracotta Army, named the Eighth Wonder of the World, lived underground for 2,200 years.

I am a stoic soldier modeled after a real general, Yang Mulan, who farmed the land before becoming a fighter. As he protected the living Emperor Qin, I command 8000 subterranean soldiers defending him in the afterlife. Once I carried a bronze sword. My armor glistened with trappings of Chinese purple, peach, red, green, and black. However, within a day of being exposed to sunlight and air, the paint flaked away. An archeologist took my sword. A greater loss was my silk-paged diary with its decorated bamboo cover. I must trust my memory.

We all have single-lidded eyes. Otherwise, our facial expressions, ears, hairstyles, weapons and uniforms are distinct. Before disinterment, most of us had normal peach-colored faces, except a few archers with green faces. Normal soldiers stand between 175 and 190 centimeters tall. Commanders stand taller, about 200 centimeters.

Emperor Qin, whose name was Ying Zheng, was born into the Warring States in 260 BCE. At age 13 he ascended to the throne of Qin. By 221 BCE, he had united China.

When alive, I followed Emperor Qin through the battlefields until unification. I saw Emperor Qin's glorious victory as well as the overthrow of his dynasty.

The First Emperor achieved a great deal. He united seven kingdoms: Han, Wei, Zhao, Yan, Chu, Qi, Qin. With consolidated power, the ambitious emperor established centralized government and created unified writing script, currency, weights and measures. He connected portions of the Great Wall to protect the country from the Huns and created a national network of carriage roads. He vigorously promoted agriculture featuring irrigation systems, such as Dujiangyan, in addition to encouraging smelting and handicrafts.

Every bit of Emperor Qin's accomplishment came with its price. Unpopular and cruel, the First Emperor massacred enemies, sentenced millions to forced labor, burned books and buried scholars alive (焚书坑儒). He also imposed high taxation. Qin-Shi-Huang died at age 50. Due to its oppressive policies and flagrant disregard for tradition, the Qin Dynasty outlasted him only 4 years.

He survived many assassination attempts. Worried about rebellious enemies pursuing him into the afterlife, he dedicated immense effort into building The Terracotta Army. To his credit, Emperor Qin populated his magnificent tomb with clay attendants, rather than sacrificing living ones. It took at least 36 years and 720,000 laborers. Sima Qian wrote in Records of the Grand Historian (史记), 'A world with mountains made of gold, stars represented with pearls, and flowing rivers of mercury.'

The Terracotta Army is composed of several pits, thoughtfully designed. Three of these cover approximately 5 acres. Pit 1 is the largest, housing most of the warriors within 14,260 square meters. Pit 2, a grand L-shaped affair, accommodates 130 chariots, 150 cavalries and archers. Pit 3, the command center where I reside, is the smallest. Regular workers, government officials, musicians, acrobats and exotic animals in other pits completes tomb.

Our makers tiled the pits' floors so well that they withstood the desecration of the chambers. Mounds of earth supported roof planks. We terracotta warriors were made with powdered quartz, mica, and feldspar added to yellow dirt, resulting in durable reddish-brown clay. Craftsmen probably made us by clay coiling, rolling a long strip of clay one inch in diameter and shaping our various forms. Next they fired the clay in kilns, at approximately 1000 °C. Holes were left in the clay so that trapped heat would not explode us. After firing, craftsmen used egg white and lacquer to paint us.

We stand in ancient battle formation, facing outward. We can fend off attackers from all directions, but most of our army, half-smiling, faces east, with backs to the emperor, alert and slightly haughty. We are no longer at our best; the years have hurt us. Colorless and weaponless, some of us now lack a hand, arm, foot, or head. We resemble a real army but diviner because we face the future.

On March 29, 1974, one of my descendants, farmer Yang ZhiFa, while digging a well, discovered us in LinTong, approximately 1.6 kilometers east of the emperor's tomb at Mount Li. After that things happened quickly.

My fellow fighters and I generate money for the modern state. Admission to our exhibit costs 182 HK\$. Our battalions confront armies of tourists. Visitors admire our ancient Chinese wisdom and heritage, taking replicas of us home.

2,236 years ago, Emperor Qin prepared for an eternal life with the underground Terracotta Army, the Eighth Wonder of the World. Once I used my sword ruthlessly to conquer the known world for the emperor. My descendants, deeply embedded in the globalization process, skillfully conquer international markets with products and services. In less than 40 years, they have transformed China from the 17th to the 2nd largest economy of the world, lifting billions of people from poverty, a true modern wonder.

As you return home, please remember that we remain here, a symbol of China's past and

present greatness.

We terracotta fighters all can see,
Our emperor past, our China yet to be.
Before, as warriors brave we claimed our land;
An economic power, now we stand,
No matter what our future may behold,
Our land's defenders, loyal, staunch and bold.

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The Drugs of Immortality

Marymount Secondary School, Lowe, Zoe - 15

Grief, in Ancient China, was not considered proper unless made a public affair – deaths were mourned with wailing and crying, and announced with banners and lanterns. This was the way to show respect. And yet, the passing of Qin Shihuang, First August and Divine Emperor, was strictly kept a secret.

To be honest, the reasons for this were more or less purely political, and not very interesting (his primary advisor feared the announcement might trigger an uprising). That said, it may have been surprisingly apt, because in spite of everything, the First Emperor wasn't quite dead.

What does it mean to live forever? Biological immortality refers to the immortality of a bloodline – you exist forever in your children and grandchildren and great grandchildren. Religions present us with reincarnation, and salvation, both of which are ways that the soul lives on. In the First Emperor's time, a belief in the existence of a mortal body and two separate souls created a whole milieu of ideas about immortality. Most of the Ancient Chinese believed in a life after physical death as well, but unlike Christian salvation, this afterlife did not quite denote anything about ascension to a higher realm, nor anything about the person themselves. What's more important is that anyone, even the lowliest peasant, could enter that kind of afterlife. It wasn't enough for Qin Shihuang.

Before we get into his death, it's worth taking a moment to discuss what he actually spent his life doing, besides, of course, uniting all of what is roughly still known as China under his power. All things considered, it's plausible to say that never before had one person been so prolific a source of great conquests. One of the young emperor's first immense tasks was building his own tomb and mausoleum, which together spanned miles and were the effort of 700,000 men (more than enough to populate a 250 BC city).

But soon, even the notion that he would one day leave this earth left his mind. The Emperor set about connecting the waterways and building a great wall in the west, not caring if the construction of one great monument came at the suffering of thousands. Like many other early rulers of North China, he hunted for sport and had land cleared on an incredible

scale to make a 'supreme forest' and hunting grounds. He sucked the souls from his people, his animals, his land, as if he could use their vitality to sustain his own.

He looked upon his empire and decided that things would have to be different from before - and when I say different, I mean that he intended to make everything the same. He standardized weights and measures and coinage and roads; and when that was out of the way, he set about standardizing the minds of his people - every material that didn't adhere to his idea of strict legalism went up in flames. Says an imperial edict of 221 BC: 'When they are not uniform or are in doubt, make them uniform.'

With all this playing God you would think he intended to achieve immortality by ascending directly to the heavens and becoming a deity himself (in fact by all records he believed he was fit to be one). However, this too wasn't the kind of immortality he strived for. What the First Emperor wanted was eternal life in its most straightforward form - to extend his physical life on this earth as long as possible, to never grow old.

Constantly face to face with war and peril and assassination attempts, this was a seemingly impossible feat, but at least he was never without help. The court was perpetually orbited by people who were ready to offer their expertise on any subject at all, as long as you mentioned it in conjunction with money. In light of that, enter the recipe gentlemen. The Western equivalent of these notorious figures would have to be either alchemists, or (more fittingly) con men. China has never suffered a shortage of rumour and folklore, so the recipe gentlemen had plenty to work with. They fed the First Emperor an array of nuts, flowers, onions and badly crafted tall tales. Most of these had nice sounding explanations; for example, pine was recommended for its evergreen longevity. Somewhat oddly, an array of parasitic plants were popular as well (apparently their ability to grow from a dead host meant they could raise the fallen). Many of us have heard the story about a particularly audacious pair of recipe gentlemen who requested a thousand young men and women as well as a ludicrous amount of valuables, supposedly to attract the help of immortals with their purity. Then they made off with everything and never turned up again.

That said, for a man who had created an empire and then brought it to its knees before him, gold and silver, priceless jewels, and even a few thousand youth were expendable commodities. But eventually, the recipe gentlemen would exact the ultimate price. In 210 BC, he swallowed his final drugs of immortality - toxic mercury tablets. He was dead before he got back to the capital. He had never bothered with a will.

The Divine Emperor was irrevocably dead, it seemed. But it can't be said that he was dead and gone. In fact when his closest advisors and eunuchs made the call to hide his death, they kept up the charade for months. That's how strong his presence was.

Take a moment to understand how it would have been to be Qin Shihuang, the First Emperor of the whole of China. Having spent your whole life chasing power, and orchestrating things that were nearly beyond belief, would you really want to give up everything you'd done for something as meaningless as death? In recent years, psychologists and philosophers have been considering a new type of never-ending life - symbolic immortality. Confucianism (which, ironically, was strictly banned in the Qin Dynasty) once postulated that 'The superior man dislikes the thought of his name not being mentioned after his death.' Symbolic immortality is a very close manifestation of that idea - it's the avoidance of death by living on in acts and accomplishments that people will remember forever.

The Great Wall is world famous, but hardly anyone outside of China knows who began its construction; nobody has followed Qin Shihuang's written script since the Han Dynasty. And needless to say, the roads and canals he so painstakingly weaved across China have long

been demolished. His real legacy was unearthed in 1974, when some Shaanxi villagers were digging a new well. Instead of hitting water, they hit the Eighth Wonder of the World – the Terracotta Warriors.

So this was the grand mausoleum and army the Emperor of Qin created when he was still the King of Qin, at the tender age 13 and not yet knowing he would later change his mind about being a mere mortal. But if we're to believe in symbolic immortality, that means he had finally gotten back his legacy (and therefore his immortality) after all.

The First Emperor was, if not immortal, at least resurrected. And albeit by chance it was Terracotta Army which made it so. It's tempting to just leave it there and call it a happy ending, but for the sake of veracity we must be technical. If symbolic immortality is eternal life through our legacies and monuments, that begs the question – is the Terracotta Army really his legacy?

After a new heir was firmly in place and the death of Qin Shihuang was finally announced, the workmen who had meticulously crafted the Terracotta Warriors were buried alive inside with him. Nobody so intimate with the contents of the emperor's tomb could be allowed to live. For every stone cold, lifeless soldier in those catacombs, there was a real man whose life had been ripped away; all to provide Qin Shihuang with his Terracotta Warriors, his miniature tomb city, his resting place surrounded by gold and jade and rivers of mercury. It was their work, and their spirit that took the hit. The drugs of immortality that the emperor had indulged in for so long weren't mercury tablets or pine nuts, but the endless toil of his people. Consider it again – whose monument is the Terracotta Army?

You can unite an empire without gaining its respect; you can die and still remain in power. You can lose your immortality by mistake then get it back by chance, but not necessarily for yourself. The Terracotta Warriors each house a spirit of unmatched vitality and creativity. But in the end it is not the Divine Emperor who is alive among us today, but his army – the people of China.

A Legendary Empire

A.D.& F.D. of Pok Oi Hospital Mrs Cheng Yam On School, Chan, Sheung Kiu - 7

I heard about terracotta warriors from an article.
After that I believed it was really a miracle.
Emperor Qin started building them when he was thirteen.
He was the first emperor in China who was mean.

Craftsmen working day by day for the emperor
Millions of forced labours died in the wonder.
Making mortuary things night by night underground
Armies with horses and chariots were found.

Soldiers were in formation holding arrows.
Cavalries riding on horses and taking bows
Generals wearing cuirass looked so brave.
All are totally different buried in the grave.

No matter Emperor Qin did something wrong
He made his Kingdom absolutely strong.
Constructing a tomb with such an enormous scale
The history of terracotta warriors was an ancient tale.

New Tales of the Terracotta Warriors

German Swiss International School Primary, Wong, Michelle - 10

Terracotta warriors lie asleep
Dreaming away, in a slumber so deep

Guarding the tomb of Emperor Qin
Unopened and dangerous because of his sins

Are they alive, will they wake?
Or will they stay, for their Emperor's sake?

Have their weapons, their steeds, their spies
Ready for their first battle cries

Waiting for the day their master calls
Wars will start and enemies will fall

Beware the day the warriors rise
Away in the future the day surely lies

Frozen in Time

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Leong, Avellina - 13

We stood.
Our heads held high and fists clamped shut.
Our fingers curl tighter around our bronze halberds,
The air, stagnant and humid enveloped our skin,
Yet we can't complain,
Can't talk,
Can't think.

We focused.
Our thumping armor stuck to our skin like soot,
Our weary eyes seek the life that yearns for light,
The troops, discouraged and bitter,
Are tired of waiting,
Of staring,
Of hoping.

We remember.
Our armor was as bold and bright as the one's who made us,
Our eyes were vivid, unafraid, almost happy,
The creators, now erased and free,
Are finally content,
Finally peaceful,
Unlike their creations.

We now understand.
Our minds were never made to think,
Our eyes were never meant to see light,
The king, simply selfish,
Simply lonely,
Only wanted our lifeless company.

Living the Curse of the Terracotta Warriors

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Chan, Nicole - 15

I sit on a nearby rock and I watch baba(1) with six other farmers dig a well,
Happy as they work in the field, singing despite the drought.
The chipping sounds of the shovel ring out as baba digs through the dry stones and soil.
Looking at the clear blue sky, I slowly fall asleep.

“Ah!” a shriek from baba, wakes me from my nap.
I see the men jump back and look down at the freshly dug hole,
A cold chill sweeping up my spine,
As my baba raises an object on his shovel,
And I stare down to see lifeless clay eyes glaring into my soul.
I spring back in horror, as baba gasps, “Xie e!”(2)

With trembling hands, the men brush off the mud to reveal a head of clay.
Hushed whispers spread through the group,
“Zu zhou! Zu zhou!(3) We have unearthed a Buddha!”
My baba covers my face, but I can still feel the eyes burning into my heart.

Within a week, we are visited by very important people.
Men dressed in dark uniforms who ask many questions about the evil object.
“A terracotta warrior head,” they say, “a very ancient one.”
Shortly after, the shocking announcement comes.
We are to move from our land, from our home in Yang village
To a far away place, to a small, concrete three-room flat.
Instead of looking out to our beautiful rippling crops,
I now see high concrete apartment blocks and grey clouds.
Everything we love has been taken away from us.
Why have they thrown us off our own land, the land of our ancestors?
But I know the answer- the curse has already started.

Now I am an old man myself with a son of my own
yet the curse is still here after 42 years.
Built on our beloved piece of land where our family once lived,
is a museum, housing row upon row of terracotta warriors.
And in the little souvenir shop tucked in behind,
a very elderly man sits signing copies of “Qin Dynasty Terra-cotta Army of Dreams.”
His face is wrinkled from suffering and old age,
his eyes are haunted with disheartening memories.
Earning only a few dollars a day, he signs from morning till night,
Mr Zhifa Yang, my baba.

- (1) Father
- (2) Evil
- (3) Curse

The Warrior Life

Korean International Springboard Programme, Ching, Matthew - 14

Standing guard, waiting for a fight,
all through the day and through the night.
Beautiful colours fading away,
purples and pinks now turned to grey.
When will we fight for our Emperor and state?
Two thousand years is a long time to wait.