



Winning Entries

Siege

Carmel Pak U Secondary School, Tse, Gabrielle – 17

*Let night and death on the border of darkness,
Launch the thousandth siege of eternity;
As we plunge whirling down, Heaven beneath;
Into the maelstrom of your limbs.
– Yu Guangzhong, The Double Bed, 1966*

1930, Year Geng Wu.

Someone was already at the balcony. She was attempting to light a cigarette, but each of her ill-fated matches managed only a brief flare before the wind snuffed them away.

I approached and proffered a lighter. “Need a light?”

“Thank you,” she said without meeting my eyes; and she cast away the dead match in her hand impetuously. The tip of her cigarette burned bright sulfur.

“Couldn’t let a girl like you be covered in soot,” I said. “What’s your name?”

She inhaled a deep breath of smoke and turned aside.

“Shame,” I said.

I looked down the balcony and saw Shanghai’s nighthawks, illuminated by their Mid-Autumn lamps, flickering like the figures on a revolving lantern. Here, and gone; here, and gone again...The mahjong players in the adjoining rooms let out a raucous whoop.

She rested her elbows on the mahogany balustrade and gazed listlessly at the full moon. The smoke engulfed her like a shawl.

“Happy Mid-Autumn Festival,” I said quietly. Her cigarette had burned out. She drew out another match from her purse languidly; and this time, it went ablaze.

She was there again the next evening, her short hair coiffed into rakish curls that gleamed in the night. I strode towards her with my lighter in hand, and she accepted the gift of fire

with an almost pious bow towards the flame.

“Thanks, Mister,” she said. Her Shanghainese was low and languorous. “Sorry I didn’t talk much yesterday, I was dying for a smoke. You know how it is, right?”

“Of course,” I replied. I hadn’t smoked in years.

She half-raised her cigarette to accede. I leant against the balustrade to watch the women in their silk cheongsams float below like butterflies; their arms entwined, feet astride, and their cheeks pink with mulled wine.

“You’re not from these parts,” she said. It was a statement, not a question.

“What gave me away?”

She remained silent, pressing her lips into a smile.

“I’d like to show you my favourite place here,” she said again, and it was an order, not an invitation.

So I buttoned up my overcoat and followed her down the endless stairs, my heavy feet after her light ones.

She led me to a tree of cuckoos lamenting mournfully by a lake.

“How beautiful,” I murmured. The presence of the moon and water called for quietude; and yet, a boatman was chanting afar as the cuckoos tolled their knell, their songs joyful, tuneless, and disconnected through the night...

She blew out a soft strand of smoke. Only the yellow tip of the flame lit the darkness, like a burning chiaroscuro.

1931, Year Xin Wei.

It marked the beginning of a little whirlwind that never made its way into the history books. She took me to the local markets with her sun-coloured parasol in hand, where the streets were filled with sweetmeats, lute music, and the fragrance of florida-water. Somebody urged her to buy handkerchiefs folded into rhododendrons; and someone else lifted a wicker of snow-pears that glistened as if carved from jade to our eyes. The crowd cried in radiant malice as two tomcats fought on the hot earth, each of their fast, taut steps like a barbarian’s dance. A pigtailed child was peddling caged doves by the ring, looking diffident.

“Who do you think will win?” she asked under her breath. Her palms were curved as if in prayer. She was cupping the folded handkerchief.

“It’s just a matter of time,” I whispered, and she smiled wryly. Her heels sang on the rough cobblestones like copper coins as we walked away. A woman in a silk kimono glided past us, a comb in her long hair, and a certain sangfroid in her dark eyes.

Under the archive’s lamplight we read of demise, within the embossed scrolls about courtesans who drowned in satins, and their emperors who drowned in wine. They eyed us impassively from within their paper prisons. There were also odes to flowers and elegies to fowls, to which she pointed –

“Ah, a cuckoo bird!”

And it was a cuckoo bird indeed, which was brought to life in the barest of strokes. A waterfall plunged behind it, alongside a few lines of ineluctable prose.

“It’s crying,” I whispered in her ear, almost afraid the bird might hear and take flight. “Yes.” She ran a finger across its eloquent eyes. “They are said to weep blood in trying times.”

Very gently, she folded the scroll shut and tied it up with its faded chrome ribbon, ending a narrative that had been woven across millennia.

On quiet nights, when the darkness had no borders, she would bring me to the lake. The cuckoo birds would sing their sorrowful songs to the lone fisherman, and she would smoke her perfumed cigarettes wordlessly. I’d crane my neck to search their infinite eyes for a glimpse of red, but the only colour I could ever see was in the flickering flame by my side. The moon would shine, uninterrupted.

Her cryptic remark escaped me until she asked one evening in my arms, “Don’t you know we’re on the brink of war? It’s on the papers, every day.” She was toying with a crumpled handkerchief, twisting it round and round between her fingers. “They’re all about war, war, war.”

“There’s always war,” I said quietly, encircling my arms around her waist, pressing my lips onto her hair. “Wherever you are, wherever you go. You can’t run.”

The breeze sighed and stirred the linen curtains gently. Outside the window, the people flickered like moths; here, and gone, here, and gone again; but their footsteps had hastened into a stride. The thoughtless were still playing mahjong, their impetuous laughter a key sharper than yesterday.

“Stay with me,” she said, her voice hard and fragile all at once; and I obeyed.

I found her at dawn leaning halfway out the window, cigarette in hand, hair tousled into a nest. Her face was basked in light, softened by the dawn’s tender touch. In another life, I thought, we could have been angels. There would be nothing beneath us but sky.

“Awake so early?”

She shook her head and murmured, “Just one last time before the siege.”

Below us, the peddlers of Shanghai had begun their aubades:

“Pears! Mandarins! Fruits of the season! Come buy your pears! Mandarins! Fruits of the season! Fruits of the season – Fruits of the season –”

1932, Year Ren Shen.

We awoke to the sound of bombs.

With an abject cry, she pulled apart the curtains. There was smoke, smoke everywhere, piercing screams, someone shouting something foreign, guttural; and then she turned towards me with bright tears staining her face –

“They’re bombing us,” she said hoarsely. “*They’re bombing us –*”

I tried to say hush now, hush...Her trembling fingers fumbled on the nightstand, searching for their solace.

It would not light.

She pressed the switch frantically. Still it would not light. A spark came to life, but it was short-lived, dying like the insurgents at daybreak.

For a moment she was quiet. Then she drew dry, heaving sobs, and her tears fell as ceaselessly as the enemy fire.

The cuckoos' laments came to my ears note by note. People were shouting in harsh tongues everywhere, strange syllables jutting from their teeth like broken jades. The radio crackled with so many half-garbled commands that I prayed someone would just blast it into fragments.

It was so close to New Year.

"We must go on," she said to no one.

But who was left? I thought disorientedly. The dead were cast away on the streets like used matches, their pale bodies ridden with starbursts of bullets.

The smoke wafting in through the window smelt of burned flesh and singed hair. It wrapped around her, around us. Was the moon bloodied as well, and the stars in the sky? As red as the stains in a rhododendron?

She clutched me tightly as I kissed her; wondering if tomorrow would leave smoldering embers in place of familiar streets, wondering if there was world enough, and time.

Someone was already at the balcony. She was attempting to light a cigarette, but each of her matches managed only a brief flare before the wind snuffed them away.

The city below flickered like a revolving lantern. My love was shawled by a smoke, it suffocated her every breath –

I approached. "Need a light?"

The grey parted. She smiled and drew out another match from her purse. This time, it went ablaze.

The next morning, she had done her hair again into their rakish, resolute curls. She was holding a stout bottle of alcohol in one hand, and bedlinen torn firmly into stark white strips in the other.

"I'm dying for a smoke," she said, looking straight into my eyes. "Are you coming?"

I knew I should have reasoned with her. I should have grabbed her and told her urgently that life was short, fate was unfeeling, and that there was nothing, nothing we could have possibly done to re-erect the crumpled standards on the trampled streets. But I stood and seized my coat from the stand, as she held my hand in hers so tightly –

So we opened the door, and welcomed in the war.

Fin.

Reimagining History

German Swiss International School, Lai, Arista – 15

“I’m an artist, not a miracle worker,” I pointed out sharply. My companion only chuckled to himself. “I’m not expecting that from you. I just need you to imagine what you see; bring it to life.”

“Why?” I asked. It hadn’t been in the job description. All I had known was that a historian had offered me money to commission a few pencil sketches—as of now, I was still in the dark about his intentions. The young man beside me let out a melancholy sigh, more nostalgic than a man of thirty years could sound.

“This building we’ll visit... it’s over a hundred years old. Can you believe it? All that history just bulldozed away. Gone forever. It took a century for it to become what it is now, and after one signature from the authorities a small stitch in the fabric of humanity’s history is going to be lost.”

He spoke as if the building were an ancestor and he the last man of the bloodline—an infertile one at that. I couldn’t sympathise. There was a reason I had gone into fine art instead of architecture. Buildings just didn’t hold much appeal, they were all bricks and mortar, really—their only difference being the way in which these were married.

The man seemed to be in no hurry to speak again, and we lapsed into silence. He glanced around as he walked, soaking in the surroundings, more like a tourist than a native of this quiet cultural quarter of Shanghai. I adjusted my stack of drawing paper and my backpack full of supplies.

“Here we are,” my temporary employer halted, gesturing enthusiastically at a fading pagoda, something straight out of a movie. The external walls, once white, were now a rather grim shade of dun. I fumbled for the pencils in my bag, and sketched a rough outline of the structure—the graceful curves of the roofs separating each floor; the rectangular windows with their now barely discernible engravings; the wooden tiles that had long lost their red coating. I didn’t, however, include the bright banner that wrapped the top two floors of the pagoda with its garish text announcing the realty developer, the jackhammer of fate.

“Shall we?”

The ground floor of the building had high ceilings and a massive entrance hall. I immediately felt small in contrast to the grandeur of its design. Each footfall echoed throughout the expanse of the opened area, resounding eerily within the maze of corridors. Sound travelled quickly here: most of the doors between rooms were carved geometrically such that there were more holes than wood.

“I’m a historian,” my companion suddenly spoke up, restating what I already knew. “But I have no idea what this building was used for. That’s why I need you.” He absentmindedly swiped a hand over a mahogany chest that stood on the side. Dust billowed in the air, forming a smokescreen. There was a stool beside, perching on a moth-eaten rug, once red, I think—I imagined that a family would have once sat there to put on and take off their shoes. The children would have bounded back home, yelling out to parents and lining up their little slippers neatly under the chest. The parents would have used the drawers to store trinkets or keys.

“Capture this home in its former glory. Help me protest the felling of these pieces of our culture before it ebbs away with each passing day. Show me the significance of each room over the years. We can’t save this building, but we can try to raise awareness for this cause.”

I roughed out a sketch of the entrance hall, adding vibrant colours and new shine to long-faded, worn furniture. I drew the peeling yellow wallpaper as bright and white, with calligraphy serving as a pattern. In my mind’s eye, the place became a warm home instead of a shell of a once-majestic pagoda.

Following my train of thought and the comforting scratch of pencil on paper, I made my way to the other side of the hall. A divider separated the two rooms, which fascinated me. It looked relatively new: a delicate piece of silk embroidered with flowers and birds, encased in glass. Pushing it away, I discovered the dining room.

The historian followed me, running his fingers over the divider’s scratched glass in wonder. “It looks new, doesn’t it?” he mused to himself. Meanwhile, I contemplated the circular table with interest. Around the table were nine chairs. I pondered the number’s significance. A sketch was slipped from my arms, disrupting my concentration. “Hmm. Very nice. So you think that it used to be a family house when it was first built.”

I blinked at the man beside me, thinking it rude of him to interrupt my work. He didn’t notice my indignation. “This is good, this is good,” he muttered, “yes, we will make our way through the house and discover all the purposes it has served. Through art.”

Tuning out his mumblings, I curiously inspected the dragon designs on the backs of the chairs, sketching them for later reference. They looked imperial, but whether they were Chinese or Japanese, I couldn’t tell yet.

“Look at this!” I pressed my lips together after yet another interruption from my companion. He was grinning and pointing at a small brown protrusion on the wall. I peered closer to find that it was actually a rusted metal hook. “I wonder what a family would have hung here?”

I hummed in acknowledgement, mulling over the dragon carving. I knew I had seen it before somewhere. “This room looks adapted. Not as familial,” I observed. It was minimalistic, the only other furniture apart from the table being a low glass tea table in the corner. “Almost...official.”

The man suddenly straightened up, and before I could blink, another piece of paper from my arms had been snatched away. He stared pensively down at my dragon sketch with a furrowed brow, tracing the outline with his finger repeatedly. Suddenly, his eyes shot to

mine. “No wonder it looked so familiar! It’s the same as the ones on the Nine-Dragon Wall in the Forbidden City. And the nine chairs...!”

That made sense. I could picture this room as a meeting place for government officials to discuss strategies or imperial matters over cups of oolong tea, constantly watched over by a likeness of the Emperor. Perhaps the family home had been seized by the government to be used as a Shanghai office about one or two decades into its life. The location of the building was close enough to the city centre to be convenient, yet far enough to be unaffected by the plebeian hustle.

“Let’s see what we can find on other floors.”

The second floor was revealing, as if whoever had used the pagoda after the government had ignored the ground floor and just fashioned the next one to suit their uses. The interior design differed entirely from traditional Chinese. Wooden doors exchanged for the intimidation of metal, with large locks. The air smelt heavier too, as if this floor had been abandoned a long time, consciously avoided by generations of inhabitants. I thought briefly on whether or not to follow their discretion.

“Curious, very curious indeed,” the historian remarked, reminding me to breathe. “Shall we try investigating one of these...rooms?”

I realised immediately why he had hesitated to put a name to the unforgiving single walkway, along which the doors stood to attention like uniformed soldiers. The vision bore a startling resemblance to the rooms in mental asylums, and a shiver touched my spine. I trailed hesitantly as my companion jostled the padlocks on each door until he found one that was rusted enough to give way. The door creaked horribly on its hinges in protest against our combined pushing. I gripped my pencil tighter, glad that it was sharp enough to act as a weapon. What dangers lay beyond, I didn’t know. What a thin graphite pencil could protect me from, I also didn’t know.

“Oh. Wow.” His voice held a slight tremor, but I wasn’t sure whether it was in awe or fear. Gingerly, I allowed myself to soak in the sight of the room. To say it was bare would be generous. There were no decorations in sight. On the ceiling was a lightbulb, cracked open with age, now just a filament carcass. In the middle of the room was a single metal chair—this intrigued me this intrigued me: unusual for twentieth century furniture. The room had an unsettling atmosphere, seeming impossibly colder. My skin crawled; I felt ghostly fingers brushing my arms.

“Are you sure that we should be here?” I asked weakly. The man beckoned me closer to a corner of the room, where he was peering intently at something. It was a broken piece of chain, I could tell, and it seemed to disappear into the floor. There was some rust on the greying links.

“This floor was actually walled off before, but I asked for it to be opened. See this,” he encouraged, dangling a length of rusted chain in front of my face. I gave it a suspicious whiff. It smelled of iron, and I remarked as such. However, the historian shook his head indignantly. “Not just iron. Blood.” He gestured to the walls, which were stained with copper. “Blood, everywhere.”

I suddenly noticed a lack of ventilation in this room: no windows nor vents, even less glamorous than a prison cell. Blood, chains, a metal chair. My imagination added two uniformed men armed with instruments of torture and questions; a writhing victim in the

cold chair struggling against cuffed hands and shackled ankles. I quickly drew my vision out and shoved it almost violently at my employer, who nodded in approval, signalling for us to exit the room. It seemed I wasn't the only one who wanted to move on.

"An interrogation room," he broke the silence as we proceeded to another place that he had marked down for our visit. "Perhaps used by the Japanese during the 1930s, while they occupied provinces in the second Sino-Japanese War." He seemed pleased at our discovery. "You've been most helpful, I'm glad I decided to bring an artist along."

This man was too outspoken for my sensibilities, and I had elected to stay quiet around him very early on in our professional partnership, but I made an exception this time. "I don't understand why you chose me for this job. I told you that I specify in drawing still life—I illustrate what's there, not what's missing."

There was a twinkle of mischief in his eye as he looked back at me. "That's exactly why you are perfect for this. You see, this house is a jigsaw puzzle of its past usages, just as we embody the experiences in our lives. Some bits may be missing now, however you see past that and piece the whole building together through illustrating its different parts; it is because you refuse to see things in anything other than their whole form that your perspective is crucial."

Another floor, and to describe what I saw in two words: hastily refurbished. It all looked thrown together in a hurry to serve a temporary purpose, and then, so used, had been vacated.

There were cots without mattresses, wooden crates, in rows of five and columns of three. The walls seemed to have been repainted white, but not very professionally—the yellow wallpaper underneath showed through the peeling white curls. Clean and neat and tidy, my guess was that this room had been a dormitory, or shelter. But there wasn't enough indication of which.

Taking a page from my companion's book, I smoothed my palms over one wall, reaching high and pacing along its length, paying attention to each nook and cranny. I was hoping for a clue, no matter how small, that could show me more about this room so that I could reimagine it more accurately. Just then, I saw something black out of the corner of my eye. My fingers brushed a shaving of paint, and I scratched at it with my nails, peeling it back to reveal the wallpaper underneath.

"Wait! You're tarnishing a historical relic!" the owner of the reprimanding voice appeared at my side, but despite his words, I could sense his curiosity. I peeled and scabbled until, finally, six characters were revealed to us.

"Lin shi yun fu zhen suo," I read. "Temporary clinic for pregnant women."

The historian grunted in thought. "Possibly used during World War Two or the Chinese civil war, circa mid-1940s." I felt a sinking feeling in my stomach as I surveyed the drab clinic with little more than narrow cots for comfort. Makeshift it may have been, but it must clearly have lacked supplies with the army taking first priority. This put wartime thinking into perspective—the home front and civilians, including women and children, were frequently ignored to sustain the armed forces.

And then I started to understand why Andrew was so passionate about this pagoda's influence on culture and its historical importance. Standing here, uncovering the layers of the walls, I felt like I was stepping in the shadows of people who had once walked these floors lifetimes ago; I felt connected with my ancestors of old Shanghai through touching the walls

that had sheltered them, and being in a room where children of my grandparents' generation had been brought into the world.

Buildings were long-lasting reminders of civilisation. Through the changing of hands, renovations, appropriations and commissions, the pagoda had prospered and suffered variously, surviving to tell its story. But now, it was set to be razed to the ground. Even the pillars of society must fall.

Just as we headed to the next flight of stairs, Andrew turned to face me. He pushed the blueprints of the pagoda into my hands. "If we're going to be partners, then...maybe you should choose where we explore next. One final destination."

I smiled gratefully, appreciating the gesture. He fiddled with his hands as if uncomfortable with handing over control of our venture to me. Surveying the map, I focussed on a square space in the middle. "Let's go there," I suggested.

"Good choice, the feng shui garden. You might find it a little...wild."

Indeed, it was. The garden was small, but open to natural sunlight. Typical, believed to bring luck as well as make a home more welcoming, there was an artificial pond in the middle with a wooden footbridge stretching over its narrow width. Smooth and shining rocks lined either side of a cobblestone path, leading over the bridge to a miniature stone likeness of a temple. Once, this garden could have been a serene, idyllic refuge from life's complications. Decades later, the flowering shrubs and leafy plants that scattered over the rest of the space had grown larger and freer, denser and wilder, so that the garden looked more like a parody of a forest. Still, it retained its charm, and I grew to like its naturalism, finding myself drawing the garden for what it looked like now. The pagoda, in a sense the exoskeleton of the garden shielding it from the harsh world, had withered, yet the garden had flourished over the years of disuse. It was almost a metaphor for how the living inhabitants of the pagoda had grown in its protection. Like a mother hen watching her chicks leave the roost, people had come and gone, abandoning the building that had given them a home and allowing it to degrade.

"It's beautiful," I stated, feeling self-conscious at my inability to express all my inner thoughts without slipping into what my brother called the 'artist's ramblings'.

"This looks rather expensive, don't you think?" Andrew mused. "Owned by someone important."

"Like something a high-class villa would have," I added with a laugh. "Another government official?" I thought hard about the Chinese history that I had learned years ago in secondary. "Seems a bit much for Communist Party officials, though, given their mentality about equality."

Andrew shrugged. "Agreed, but when the Party first came into power, it is quite likely that since Shanghai is an important city and the new government needed to win over support from the right people, they could overlook the glamour of this house when assigning it to an ally."

I made a mental note to myself to research more into the multi-faceted history of my city. Maybe then would I fully understand Andrew's boundless passion for a seemingly dull, forsaken building. Maybe then would I be able to appreciate how influential past events were with regards to shaping my present.

“May I look?” Andrew hovered over my shoulder as I flipped through the drawings. He sighed, however this time it was a sigh of longing rather than nostalgia. Looking back at the pagoda before us, I shared his frustration. History. So long to establish, so fast to erase. One century to build, one day to destroy.

I offered the historian a reassuring smile. “I’ll get these back to you later.” He frowned in confusion. “I want to finish these properly, paint and canvas and all, so you can compare a photo of the pagoda now to its change over time. No extra fees.”

Andrew seemed to understand my deeper sentiment, a new light—hope—blooming in his eyes. “Thank you.”

I had always illustrated what was there, not what was missing. But even if the pagoda was lost, it would stay alive in my memory; it would stay alive in the stories of those who lived in it; it would stay alive as a part of Shanghai’s journey through a hundred years of history.

Murder in Old Shanghai

Dulwich College Beijing, Wu, Julinna – 8

In the early twentieth century, Shanghai was known as the Paris of the east and New York of the west.

After the Opium War, foreigners took over places such as the International Concession and the French Concession. The glamorous Concessions were filled with grand buildings with neon lights that glowed at night. The bustling streets were filled by chattering children and shopkeepers who would yell “Hey! You! Come and buy the best food you’ve ever tasted before!” However, even in such legendary places, danger lurks around in the shadows...

In a quiet street stood a few western-style houses with huge iron gates. One of them was Dr. Steven’s clinic. On a windy day an old man came to see Dr. Steven. It was Mr. Li, a wealthy but very sick man. He had a cancer which Dr. Steven had been trying to cure for months. It was on this day that Mr. Li went to Dr. Steven’s office for a check-up.

But Mr. Li never came back from the clinic that day... Mrs. Li got really anxious and called the police. Everyone thought that Dr. Steven had murdered Mr. Li but after days of endless searching, the police had no evidence and therefore called Sherlock Holmes.

Sherlock arrived in a flash and was briefed on the whole case. He went straight to the clinic and started searching. At the beginning, Dr. Steven denied any connection with Mr. Li’s disappearance. But Sherlock – being Sherlock – kept searching.

At long last he found some vital information – it was the sign out book, which every patient needs to sign before leaving. There was no signature on it for that day. Sherlock showed it to Dr. Steven and he gasped. Dr. Steven gave in and explained to Sherlock the whole thing from top to bottom.

Mr. Li was dying. The only cure Dr. Steven could find was a medicine that only works on rats. So, the only solution Dr. Steven could come up with, was to turn Mr. Li into a rat and then cure his cancer while he was in the ratty form!

As requested, Dr. Steven described what happened that day in great detail: Mr. Li was asked to lay down in the transformation machine built by Dr. Steven. Dr. Steven closed the door that creaked loudly and pressed a red button. Green lights fizzed and whizzed around and Mr. Li squirmed in agony. His nails became rough and curved; his skin grew pale with long, spiky fur; a tail slithered out from his bottom; his nose was replaced with a crooked snout; tangled whiskers popped from around his russet nose and he shrank until he was as small as an apple. Mr. Li had been transformed into a RAT!

Finally, Mr. Li was cured and was transformed back to his human form. He was sent home to rest and all was well.

Next morning, Sherlock was walking on the busy street of The Bund, wondering what mystery he would have to solve next...

The New Tales of Old Shanghai

Dulwich College Shanghai, Lin, Jingkai – 10

The sun baked down on my bare dry skin. My sandals scraped against the hard stone pathways of Old Shanghai. Sweat trickled down my neck, and I let it run down my spine. The sound of construction reached my ears: the clinging of metal against metal, the shouting of workers, and the faint rustling of leaves in the distance. The handles of the rickshaw were rough against the skin of my palms. The baby was whimpering. I peered back at my passengers: a woman clinging on to her baby, her left hand lifting to brush off the loose hairs wandering into her sight. I limped on, the rhythm of the wheels a steady beat in my ears. A bird flew overhead, and I waded into the river of people in the bustling market.

I stopped at our destination, and at that moment caught a glimpse of a dark figure at a modest, brightly-lit stall. He muscled his way to the front of the queue, shouting “Give me a job!” People shot him dirty looks, filthy looks. The shopkeeper reeled from the horrid smell.

He was scrawny and undernourished, most likely a street-dog, orphaned from birth.

“You want a job?” The shopkeeper asked.

“I work hard,” the boy replied.

“I suppose you could take some of my sweet potatoes, and sell them on the corner there.”

The shopkeeper handed him sweet potatoes in a sack. The boy swung them behind his back, and with a quiet word of thanks, went in the corner, calling out his sales.

Suddenly, something stirred at the back of my mind, a mere memory: another young orphan, standing on the streets without a job, struggling to find food. It was hard for that boy to make it in the world, and that little boy, was—me, Don. This adolescent was a mirror image of my younger self.

Every day as I carried passengers past him, I watched him call out his sales: “Sweet potatoes for sale, sweet potatoes for sale!” The sweet potatoes flew from his hands like dusty ravens, to everyone: to small toddlers just growing their teeth, to old grandmas with teeth about to fall out. But one day, that familiar voice was missing. In the corner of the marketplace, I saw him conversing with two vaguely familiar men. Then it hit me: they were the leaders of the Green Gang: Huang Jinrong and Zhang XiaoLin.

Summoning all my courage, I took a deep breath and a few steps forward. Join, Green Gang, You're in, were the fragments I heard, and they were enough to make me shiver. Becoming a sweet potato vendor clearly didn't sate this young adolescent's thirst. I shuffled forward until I was facing the two gang members.

"I want to join, too", I muttered. I was going to make sure this adolescent wasn't harmed.

"Rickshaw drivers are always useful," they replied. "We need to beat the White Russians in the opium trade, and you can gather information about the Shanghai ports where they are shipping it in."

That night, I lay down on the hard mattress of my bed, my back aching, my hands numb from work. I lay awake though, tossing and turning with anxiety for the boy-and for myself. What would become of us? As the sun rose, I drifted into a dream.

I woke up in my dream to find the sun glaring through the small square window in my room. The hands of the clock swiveled to 9. I quickly changed and left for my new job – carrying passengers and listening into their conversations.

I gathered little information, just some news about more opium at the ports. I headed to the Paramount, where I met Du outside and told him about the incoming shipment. Du regarded the information with a nod of his head. "Wait here," he said, as he pushed open the doors. Bright jazz music and the clinking sounds of glasses slipped out onto the street. I peered in and saw some white Russians, doubling over with laughter, pointing at Du. He stood up, glaring, and walked back out, his head held high.

"Don," he said, approaching me, "I want you to take those mangy, filthy brats to their homes tonight. I have a plan."

When the White Russians strolled out, I walked up to them, my rickshaw behind me. They daintily stepped in. As I pulled them home, many eyes followed the queer sight: a plain, old rickshaw driver, pulling two beautifully dressed former aristocrats.

Suddenly, there was a yell, and men began to run at us from all directions, out from bushes and dropping from trees. They stalked us, creating a ring around us. There was nowhere to run. We were cornered. I dropped the rickshaw and the Russians tumbled to the ground. But in my heart, something stirred – was it pity, again? The men rushed forward.

"Stop!" A voice rang through the commotion.

Shopkeepers walked out of their shops. Waiters walked out of restaurants. All of them stared at the commotion. I stood there, defiant.

"Will you show no mercy, will you stand there and watch your fellow human beings beaten by merciless cruel men?" I cried to everyone around me.

Members of the Green Gang dropped their clubs. Their gazes were filled with understanding, and some walked away. Tears of relief and remorse formed in my eyes and rolled down my cheeks.

Why had I ever joined the Green Gang? You did it for him, the soft tender voice replied inside my head, to care for a young boy. But then, the angry voice inside me said: the Green Gang poisoned the soul of an innocent youth.

At that moment, however, I heard footsteps behind me. I turned.

"Thank you," his voice was trembling. "You're right after all. I, Du Yuesheng, will devote the rest of my life to bringing peace to Shanghai."

And that is when I woke from my dream, the tears still rolling down my face.

The Fall of Small Swords

Dulwich College Shanghai, Cheng, Jerry – 12

1855 September 26 6:00am Yu Garden, Shanghai

Liu Lichuan stared at the sunrise in the east. He could already see the large dust cloud created by the gathering army. He had always feared this day would come. He set down the notebook that he just finished writing on.

A man entered the room and reported that recon had spotted a force of about 8,000 soldiers assembled inside the French concession and that there was no news from the sailors. “Oh well,” Liu muttered. Nothing that he wasn’t expecting. He told the man to muster the forces and took out his opium pipe. The familiar calm swept over him.

He was proud of the Small Swords that he created. He created a country within Shanghai where there were no taxes, so the people were not robbed of their money. The city looked so much happier now. He created currency and trade. Given enough time, his little bubble might have grown into something bigger with the rest of the Taiping Tianguo rebellion.

He put his opium pipe in his coat and walked into one of the yards at Yu Garden. An old servant in his red uniform saluted at him. “Hong, you should go somewhere else. The imperial forces are coming,” Liu said. He went to the stables where a stable boy was caring for his horse. “You too lad, go somewhere else and hide. The army is coming.”

Liu steered his horse into the courtyard. It was a beautiful place with a small pond with lotus inside. On the side there were carefully pruned flowers. It was a place where he would come to relax and smoke some opium. He realized how much he would miss the place. He observed the panic. Everyone in Yu Garden seemed to be rushing as far as possible. He didn’t blame them. If they were caught by the imperial forces near Yu Garden and identified, they would be punished.

He left the Garden to join the small group that had been gathered. There were about 1,000, at most. All of them had faces grim with determination. He took out his revolver and that was the signal. They started marching towards their ‘barricade’ which was near the border between Chinese Shanghai and the French concession.

They stood in their positions, behind the makeshift ‘barricade.’ The gates had been forced

open, but there was no movement or sound. “Maybe they’ve given up!” said the man next to him. Then a single crack and the man next to him fell to the ground, blood coming out of his neck.

The first group to enter were from the Qing imperial army. Those enemies were quickly killed with a rain of fire. But after them came group after group of French, British, and American soldiers. Each time the enemies would push to close. Because of this, he and his men would have to fall back and make a new ‘barricade.’ Each time he would lose some of his men.

On the fifth push, Liu and his men finally had a bit of success. But the ground was already littered with bodies: some with the blue uniform of the enemy, but most wearing the red uniform of his men. Together with the blood of the fallen, almost everything was red. The last few attempts to push back the enemy had made them fall back to Yu Garden. However when the fifth push came, a few shots from the Small Swords snipers and a volley from the Second and Third Squadron killed most of enemies in the push. Then his men jumped over the ‘barricade’ and with a bit of hand to hand combat broke the enemy formation. The enemies retreated.

The sun was already casting long shadows. Liu knew that if the fight carried on into the night, they could escape under the cover of darkness. Now he needed to stall the enemy as much as possible. Many men had already thrown away their rifles as they had no more ammunition. They would probably all be killed the next time the enemies attacked.

“What do you say Yang?” Liu asked one of his soldiers, “Should we stop fighting?”

“Well, we do have a few more shots left,” replied Yang hopefully.

“But we probably won’t survive another push.”

“The snipers still have a lo...”

The final push came. All the men fought bravely with their pistols and even Liu had to use his revolver. But eventually they were captured.

1855 September 26 6:00pm The French Concession, Shanghai

Gong stared west at Shanghai. “I, Gong Mujiu, the great Circuit Intendant of Shanghai forced out of his own home! What a disgrace!” Luckily he was going to get his revenge today! The French, British, and Americans finally agreed to help him take back Shanghai. Bill, a commander from the French concession handed him a telescope.

“Watch from afar.” he said. Gong peered into the telescope. He could see some of the rebels from Small Swords peeking over the top of a loose barricade made out of random household items such as tables and beds. He also spotted some gun barrels sticking out of the windows in the buildings surrounding the street. Then his blood boiled as he stared at Liu. Next to him, a man was saying something. Gong tried to read his lips to learn what he was saying, but the man fell to the ground dead, before he could figure it out.

Gong cheerfully watched as the Small Swords rebels were forced to retreat a bit every single time they were attacked. Soon they would be cornered and Liu would be captured. Then the good part...

He was pulled out of his daydream when the French commander told him that they had captured all survivors and identified the bodies.

He walked to the prisoners inspecting each one to see if Liu was there. But Liu wasn’t among them and was not among the dead either.

“Where is Liu?” he asked, barely able to suppress his anger.

“We are still searching for him,” replied the French commander.

2017 May 12 3:00pm Yu Garden, Shanghai

Bob Chen was one of the builders at Yu Garden repairing the damage from the flood. They spent the entire morning pumping out the water still inside Yu Garden. Miraculously most of Yu Garden was not damaged severely. Bob was double checking the east area for damage.

He passed a courtyard filled with flowers, which were probably once beautiful but had been killed by the flood. He stepped into a house next to the courtyard. There were rumors among the builders that this was where the legendary rebel Liu Lichuan had once lived during his takeover. He noticed a hole in the floor which was probably caused by the flood, but upon closer examination, it looked like it was man-made. Bob realized that this was probably a secret compartment with a trapdoor that was destroyed during the flood.

Inside the secret compartment there was a book. Sadly, most of the pages were damaged, so that it was impossible to read them. However some writing on the last page was legible but only in broken bits. *“The defeat of Small Swords seems imminent...I am proud of...I will be going back home where they will never find me. There I will restart Small Swords...Small Swords will live forever...”* Underneath the sentence there were two characters which read *“Liu Lichuan.”*

The Return of the Clawtooth Beast

Korean International Springboard, Wai, Kaden – 10

Jack and Alexandra were two children who lived in Shanghai. They studied at the Shanghai Language Learning School. At school they learned many languages such as English, Arabic, Maori, Tagalog and Portuguese. Their school was near the famous Shanghai Bund.

On September 29th, 2030, they were going home after 12 hours of learning Latin. As they were near the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, they suddenly felt the ground shake violently followed by a deep rumbling sound. They then saw a 200 feet tall beast with big teeth and sharp claws, trying to get to them. The King Beast had come back for revenge.

Back in 2028, Alexandra and Jack went on a journey to the Clawtooth Mountain, which was about an hour away from Shanghai. They heard that there were lots of emerald jewels there, and Alexandra loved emeralds. As they were hunting for these precious green jewels, they came across the King Beast. The beast was greedy and did not want to share any jewels with them. After a long fight, they pushed the beast off a cliff where red hot lava ran below. Alexandra and Jack thought the beast had died, so they took two emerald jewels and left Clawtooth Mountain for good.

Now back in Shanghai, Alexandra and Jack felt brave against the beast but they didn't have a plan, so they ran. When they reached the Oriental Pearl Tower they found their secret weapon, The Gravity Switch. There was a special way to turn it on. As the King Beast got closer to them, Jack shouted, "Solis! Solis!" which means sun in Latin. The Gravity Switch was officially turned on. The beast was then thrown up in the air and kept going until it ended up in the hot boiling sun.

Everyone cheered for Jack and Alexandra. After high fiving everyone by the bund, they went home to their Mom and Dad and shared their story.

The New Tales of Old Shanghai

King George V School, Sy, Bryan – 14

Last week, I went to Disneyland with my brother, Jared. We woke up early at 7 o'clock and took the MTR there. I was so excited for a fun day! Once we arrived, we had breakfast in a café. Afterwards, we went to see the Lion King show. I suggested to go on a roller coaster ride- Space Mountain, so we went to the queue and lined up for it. As we were waiting, we were both feeling very impatient because the queue was long and the weather was so hot! Finally it was my turn! I was excited, nervous and scared because I knew the ride would be scary and bumpy. We buckled up our seatbelts, and off we go!

In the dark Space Mountain, I could see thousands of stars and many planets. The ride was going very fast and it made me feel so dizzy. Suddenly, the planet- Uranus appeared in front of me, we then got sucked into a horrifying tunnel. It felt like we were going somewhere very far. The tunnel was going really fast! As we were free falling, I could see lots of colourful and shiny lights. We had no idea where we were going. We were both so terrified that we were screaming and crying at the same time. We were spinning in the tunnel and it felt like it was going on forever. I felt so woozy.

“Hey! Wake up Bryan!” cried Jared while he was tapping on my chest. I came back to consciousness. Everything around us looked unfamiliar and strange. I noticed that there was something different about the way people dressed. Women were wearing Chinese cheongsam, holding fans in their hands. Their hair was tied up as buns with beautiful flower hair pins. Some of them were wearing western dresses. On the other hand, men wore Hanfu – ancient Chinese clothing; western suits with suspenders and vintage circular glasses. It seemed like two worlds combined in one place, there was a mixture of westerners and Chinese people everywhere.

As we were walking along the streets, I could see rice stores and food stalls. There were tall western designed buildings with flags hanging outside of them. The Chinese temples were old and crowded, I could hear loud banging gong sounds. “Beepppp!” Someone honked at me from behind. It was a vintage car with big wheels behind me, so I got out of the way. I looked around and noticed that people were mostly travelling by trams and rickshaws!

Jared suggested, “Bryan! I’ve never been on a rickshaw before. Do you want to give it a try?” I immediately agreed, we then hailed one down and got on one. I decided to ask the guy who was pulling us on the rickshaw, “Where am I? What’s the date? Why am I here?” He replied, “Oh young man, you have no idea where you are, do you? We’re in the year of 1930 of Shanghai, also known as ‘The Paris of the East, New York of the West’. The reason why Shanghai got this name was because the city is divided between its European Western half and traditional Chinese half. The Europeans, British and Americans mainly used Shanghai as a platform for trade. Shanghai quickly became the main commercial centre of East Asia. Therefore, buildings like Shanghai club, Asia building and the HSBC building were constructed in British and American architectural style. Electricity and trams were then introduced due to the western influence. In terms of Art, Shanghai became home to three new art forms: Chinese cinema, Chinese popular music and Chinese animation. This makes Shanghai different and special compared to the rest of the cities in China!”

As we were passing along the crowded streets, we came across a Chinese opera stage where a female was performing with a loud voice. After a while, my eyes started to get heavy as I slowly fell asleep.

“The Space Mountain is now over. Everyone please carefully get off the carriage now. Thank you!” the staff announced. I opened my eyes and found myself back in the Space Mountain. It felt so unreal, as if it was a dream. I felt nervous, scared and fascinated by my experience in old Shanghai. I looked over to Jared, only to find that he was still sleeping. I tapped on his shoulder to wake him up. “Wow! That was definitely the craziest ride I have ever been on!” shouted Jared. We both looked at each other with such disbelief.

An Old Shanghai that is fading away...

Kau Yan School, Bunting, Clara – 8

If you are on a walk around Shanghai, you can see lots of old, western-style buildings which will make you think you're in the middle of a beautiful European city.

But Shanghai has not always been that way. In the south of the city, there is an area known as the Old City, which dates from as far back as the Song Dynasty (960-1279AD). City walls were built in the 16th century to stop Japanese pirates and other invaders from attacking the people who lived there, but the walls were knocked down in 1912.

When China lost in the Opium War in 1842, foreigners like the French and British occupied parts of Shanghai and built lots of European buildings, including schools, churches and hospitals, and they even had their own government, laws and police. These were known as foreign concessions.

But the Old City remained under Chinese control. To this day, there are still many old-fashioned Chinese houses built in the distinctive Shanghai "Shikumen" (stone gate) style, ancient temples and narrow little lanes called Longtang. Amid the Longtang, there are still neighbourhood shops such as tailors, barbers, fruit vendors, roast meat shops, tea shops and street peddlers selling all kinds of things. There are ancient houses where families have lived for generations. Living in an old house like this, every morning you might hear granny street peddlers calling out to sell their goods. You might even hear the happy shouts of little children playing outside and your neighbours playing chess or mah-jong.

I imagine I would have a lot of fun living in an old Shanghai neighbourhood. I would only need to open the doors and find children to play with and have a chat with the elderly shop owners in the Longtang, or stop for a little snack when I am tired. I could play with chicks wandering on the street and with my best friends, we could have such fun playing games like Mikado spiel, marbles, kicking balls, skipping with rubber bands and so on.

Sadly, Old Shanghai's traditional way of life is quickly fading away.

Property developers have been buying up valuable land, demolishing old houses and building tall, gleaming modern tower blocks to make loads of money. Imagine if I were one of those people suddenly forced out of my house in a Longtang, I would be quite devastated because I would miss playing with my friends, the sounds of peddlers calling and the cute little shops. It would not be so nice in a modern building, as I wouldn't bump into my neighbours much and maybe not even know them at all.

If I ever went back to my old neighbourhood and saw my house levelled and rubble everywhere, surrounded by advertisements for luxury apartments, I would feel rather sad. I wouldn't be able to live in the expensive high-rise blocks that were built over my old home, and I would probably have to move far away, where I would know no one.

The Diary of the Past

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Lam, Alistair – 12

The following are pages from the diary of my great great grandfather who lived and fought for the Old Shanghai...

It was in the 1950s. Poverty and famines were everywhere but the Imperial Qing government was unable or unwilling to help. Local officials just kept raising taxes to build their personal fortune. Peasant farmers from my own and surrounding villages were all starving. People around me were dying every day. I had had enough.

I decided to leave my hometown with a few friends to search for a better life. We travelled northward towards the end of the Huangpu River where we heard there was a big fishing port called Shanghai. We met many people like us along the way and we were all hoping to get a job in Shanghai to feed our families. We heard there were lots of opportunities in Shanghai because many foreigners had moved there after the Qing government lost the Opium War to their countries a few years earlier.

I was shocked to see so many foreigners when I arrived at Shanghai. They were big people coming from faraway places called Russia, Germany, France and America. With red hair and blue eyes, they looked very different from Chinese. Many of them seemed friendly but I could not speak their language.

Most of us had no idea what the Westerners did for a living – they called themselves “merchants” and worked in buildings with strange names such as “banks” and “trading houses”. They bought and sold goods like tea, silk, cotton – and opium.

These foreigners erected many big buildings in various styles along the banks of the Huangpu River and throughout the city. One of my favourites was the “Red Church” or the Holy Trinity Cathedral in the Huangpu District where people went in there on Sundays for some kind of “Christianity” service. I preferred going to worship at the City God Temple.

The foreign merchants built magnificent houses called mansions and garden estates in special areas in Shanghai known as “foreign concessions”. The local government had no control over those areas. At the beginning, locals were not allowed to live in those foreign concessions. However, the city got too crowded and foreign businessmen began to build houses and let them to the Chinese. They made a lot of money by doing that, so more houses were built. In particular, two- or three-story townhouses called *shikumens* that combined Western and Chinese architectural elements were built all over Shanghai to house the fast-growing population. Such construction boom provided plenty of jobs to both locals and migrant workers like me and my friends who were attracted to Shanghai to find work.

The foreigners introduced many new things and inspiration to Shanghai that changed the lives of the Chinese in the city. I had never come across lamps, telephones, electricity and cars before coming to Shanghai. They set up gigantic rooms called factories and hired a lot

of my friends to make things like rubber tyres. I was amazed by the advanced manufacturing technology such as reeling mills, yarn and flour making techniques that the foreign merchants imported into the city. Besides technology, they also brought cultural influence. Western fashion and music too had certainly shaped the lives of residents in Shanghai even though I could not understand them.

When my friends and I first arrived in Shanghai, the locals called us “refugees”. We, like most of the refugees and migrant workers, were Han people who disliked the incompetent Manchurian rulers and corrupted local officials. There were many of them in Shanghai. Being new to the city, we needed protection and there were many groups banded together to help each other out and to fight against the Qing government which became increasingly oppressive.

My friends and I decided to join one of the largest groups called the Small Swords Society to fight against the imperial authorities. We met regularly at Yu Yuan, an extensive Chinese garden near the City God Temple. When our Small Swords brothers in nearby cities revolted, we also took control of the city but left the foreign concessions alone. For seventeen months, the Small Swords Society ruled the city and we lived peacefully with the foreigners. In fact, a good number of foreigners, including many British and American sailors, helped us keep the Manchurians out. However, with the assistance of French soldiers, the imperial armies were able to recapture Shanghai. I lost a few Small Swords brothers during the fights. In the end, my friends and I had to flee and hide our involvement in the anti-Qing movement. However, we were proud of what we had tried to do – to make Shanghai a better place for all.

I was not a native of Shanghai and could not speak a word of Shanghainese when I first came here. Yet, it was such a unique, energetic and welcoming place that I would not hesitate to call it home.

New Tales of Old Shanghai – The Old Jazz Band at the Peace Hotel

St. Joseph's College, Wong, Lok Tung Joseph – 12

As far back in youth as I can recall, my father has always been an avid music lover, specifically he loved American music genres rock and roll, jazz and the blues. I remember him reminiscing to me years ago about an ensemble of Shanghainese musicians who played traditional American jazz at the Peace Hotel (和平飯店) located along the Shanghai Bund.

Upon being asked to write an open composition on “Old Shanghai”, something just clicked and I instantly knew how to approach the piece. I would conduct a “60 Minutes” style investigative report to uncover the real story behind this crew of merry old jazz musicians who played jazz sets at the Peace Hotel. There were so many questions to be answered, where would I begin? What was the historical significance of the Peace Hotel? How did the first members meet and consequently assemble together as a larger ensemble to play music at the Hotel? Why did they choose such an unlikely medium as American jazz? And what happened to them during the whole backdrop of almost 80 years of very turbulent Chinese history?

To find out how it all happened, join me in a time machine to go back to the 1920s. Arriving at the Paris of the Orient, 1920s Shanghai was flushed with money, new western music and political intrigue. It was a city that dazzled in opulence and fascinating imagination. The first eye-catching icon of the Peace Hotel was the portrait of Sir Victor Sassoon, a British aristocrat of Iraqi Jewish descent with a sprawling real estate empire in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Calcutta. Being the founder of the most chic hotel at the time, it was no coincidence that Sir Victor Sassoon was known for his passion for the high life and for throwing fabulous parties and flamboyant costume balls. And yes, it is the same family that gave us the name of Sassoon Road in Pokfulam, Hong Kong.

Standing in front of Peace Hotel and looking around, you would be amazed as it looked like a giraffe towering over the concrete jungle. Peace Hotel with ten storeys was the first high-rise building in the Eastern Hemisphere at the time. It was designed by architects Palmer and Turner. Construction began in 1926, and was completed in 1929. The hotel was truly a fusion of ancient and modern, Eastern and Western, and was built in the Gothic style of the Chicago School. Walking inside the hotel, you would certainly be awe-stricken by its grandeur, marveled by the distinctive copper-sheathed roof that rises 77 meters above ground and mesmerized by the white Italian marble floors. It was the most luxurious hotel in Asia and had welcomed distinguished guests from all over the world including heads of state, royalties, tycoons and gangsters. Look, the famous silent movie actor, Charlie Chaplin, was sipping his tea in the tearoom and the famous playwright, Noël Coward, was contemplating

the plot for his latest novel “Private Lives” at the bar.

Listen to that new jazz sound Sir Victor Sassoon brought to town. The hotel’s jazz band had been all the buzz in Shanghai’s party crowd. At first, Sassoon brought in jazz bands from the U.S. and the Philippines. Then even Chinese musicians from the conventional Wuhan Conservatory of Music got into the improvisational style of jazz. Jazz music continued to flourish in the 1930s and 1940s in old Shanghai. Look, it even captured the heart of the powerful Shanghai gangster, Du Yu Sheng (杜宇生), who developed a taste for jazz music, in between running his opium and prostitution rings.

Let’s fast forward to the turbulence of the 1940s, when Jazz music in Shanghai even survived the Japanese occupation. When the Japanese army approached, the foreign bands abandoned their gigs leaving the big hotels and dance venues no option but to hire the local Chinese jazz bands. The Shanghai jazz scene had survived the Japanese occupation, the Nationalists as well as the Communists. But eventually, all things came to an abrupt halt during the Cultural Revolution of 1965–1975. In this dark era, the Peace Hotel was used by Zhang Chunqiao (張春橋) of the infamous Gang of Four as the Shanghai Commune headquarters. Jazz was regarded as bourgeoisie and all the hotel ballrooms and dance halls in the city were closed for business. Music groups disbanded and were forced to find other jobs while others were forced to relocate to the countryside for manual labour.

Jazz riffs were once again dancing through the corridors of the Peace Hotel after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the Open Door Policy of Deng Xiaoping. 1980 was the year today’s jazz band started playing at the Peace Hotel. Despite its new phases of renovations, the steadfast band members remain as a lively musical ensemble.

In 2016, the Peace Hotel continues to operate as one of Shanghai’s premium hotels not just because of its historical and architectural interest, but our old friends—the Old Jazz Band. The current Old Jazz Band is made up of six veteran musicians whose average age is 82 and the youngest member is now 79. Each of the musicians has been playing jazz since the 1940s. Each of the members, like jazz itself, showcases individuality, creativity and spontaneity. In China, these qualities were viewed with skepticism for many years. Against all odds, these legendary jazz granddaddies have never lost their love for music. Through it all, the band plays on. They keep it alive and it, in turn, keeps them alive. Nowadays the Old Jazz Band has drawn a wide audience of locals, international travelers and celebrities. The Band also took part in various performances as part of China’s cultural diplomacy, playing for former US presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, Queen Elizabeth and numerous other heads of state. The lives and times of the Old Jazz Band musicians were also recently made into a documentary “As Time Goes By” by German filmmaker Uli Gaulke.

Today, Shanghai is known as the City of modern China. Seen through the window of its Pudong district, it features a cityscape like something out of a science fiction movie. The Peace Hotel is restoring its glamorous past that continues to fascinate imaginations—a time of adventure, entrepreneurship and dazzling style during the 1930s. This period is epitomized by the Peace Hotel with its famous address on the Bund.

Now in their seventies and eighties, the Old Jazz Band musicians have literally seen the world transformed around them. Through decades of political upheaval, this group of musicians has served as a living link to Shanghai’s jazz heydays. Closing my eyes at the writing desk, I can vaguely visualize socialites floating on the dancing floor in the plushy bar on the Ground Floor of Peace Hotel, immersing themselves in the melodies of “Moon River” and “As Time Goes By” played by the Old Jazz Band. This is the story of the oldest band in the world that will never lose faith and belief in their music.

I Remember You

Marymount Secondary School, Lowe, Zoe Grace – 16

The early decades of the 20th century were China's identity crisis. A barrage of influences, internal and external, let loose; side effects included: revolution, strife, bloody war. In the midst of it all, Shanghai was an island - not in that circumstances were any less turbulent, but in that it absorbed every influence in stride. It took many identities. People named it the Paris of the East, the New York of the West, and so on. By the 30s, Old Shanghai was in full bloom, bearing such fruits as finance, cinema, literature, animation, sea trade, uprising. Just like the Peach-Blossom-Grove in the old fable - blossoming, breathtaking and far-removed. A thousand nicknames and analogies were slung at Shanghai by the influential crowds that passed through it, and every one stuck. Eventually, politics and culture moved back north. The world withdrew from Old Shanghai. Did a real city exist under it all?

Things change, but Shanghai is still a name that everyone knows. A national tourism group urges prospective visitors to come see Old Shanghai's 'faded grandeur', trying for excitement but coming across with nostalgia. 'For this was the Bund, where the great trading houses and banks had their headquarters!' Elsewhere on the internet, a profile on Shanghai cinema admits that it has played no real part in China's recent resurgence in film, but giddily asserts that this is, after all, where 'the pictures started moving'. 'Faded grandeur' is perhaps not just a product of mistranslation, but a fairly good metaphor. It seems these days Old Shanghai is charming the way a curious old book is, enamouring the way a luxurious antique is. When the town itself is an artifact, what do you put in the museums?

To be fair, Old Shanghai hosted its share of historical milestones. It was a hotbed of the Xinhai Revolution. It was a meeting place for intellectuals and activists. Song Jiaoren, a founder of the Kuomintang had only just led the party to victory in the parliamentary elections when he was assassinated on a train station platform. The cinematic heroes of Shanghai did not stray far from the real ones - the protagonists of many a moving picture (be they gallant Communists or daring Nationalists) had died onscreen in pursuit of glory for their cause.

Surrounding provinces were ruled by warlords, the capital by politicians, Hong Kong and Macau by colonists, but Old Shanghai had a unique 'ruling class'. Chinese merchants, businessmen from Germany, bankers from the US and Britain, starving artists from Russia and more presided over the local scene. Other places produced tea, cotton and labour – Shanghai produced movies and poetry and a fair share of propaganda, to be candid. It's a struggle to make clear what exactly about the city made it such a haven unto itself. Perhaps it was some excess Hollywood fairy dust, perhaps just the detachedness of the 'Orphan Island'.

When you look at the collage of a city you see it has kept a memory of every guest. Now, it makes memories to go. Tour guides advise you to visit the inner city at night, when the buildings look like crystal palaces, and to tour the Bund at bustling midday, so that you can imagine how it was in the old days with all the compradors running around. A little illusion is what you need to spice up your trip. They tip you off on the most authentic architecture in the French Concession, so you can feel like you're strolling down a Parisian boulevard. What's the point of it all?

Old Shanghai is made of artifacts of another time, remnants of another place, political intrigue straight off of a film reel. Its oneness was an insulator. Many of the people who came were looking for something that didn't exist anywhere else. How much was real and how much was fake? The hordes of people who once called themselves Shanghai-dwellers, what do they say when they look back at it?

In the old story, when the main character left the Peach-Blossom-Grove, he was not to tell anyone of the idyllic paradise. As legend has it, he did anyways. He and others who had heard the tale spent years searching for it afterwards, but he never found it again. Soon, people stopped looking.

Upon closer assessment, the city's nicknames get a bit romantic. A street map of Manhattan is like metal grating, building block on building block. Haussmann's Paris is a barricade of stacked arrondissements. Shanghai streets make a grid as well, but not a perfect one – one under some sort of external pressure. Blocks lay at ever-so-slightly-oblique angles. No regional government or urban planner ever took the time pen out the streets of Shanghai. This was a city thrown together by a wave of influences coming at it from every direction. The French and British and American concessions are so dazzling up close, but from afar they are bamboo scaffolding, ready to buckle under pressure. The city is tired.

Everything who passed through Old Shanghai left something there and took something away. Of the many guests it has hosted, time has been the least gracious. Perhaps it cannot boast the connections it once had, but people don't simply look at the Old City and wonder, 'where?'. Artists and merchants and men of war from every corner of the world can close their eyes, conjure up visions of neon streets in the Bund, a glowing waterfront, and recall another time. That is what has set the city apart – that even with its, and even in its 'faded grandeur', countless people look back at it and say, 'I remember you.'

Building a Metropolis

Sha Tin College, Chan, Yi Lin Elin – 16

As the saying goes, “Rome wasn’t built in a day”. Building a successful and powerful city is not an easy task. Some of the most renowned cities in the world have endured a long history of hardship and difficulties before finally finding their foothold as a revered metropolis, just as New York is the city that never sleeps, Paris is the city of love, and Hong Kong is the city that never stops rushing. As history will tell, building a prosperous and long lasting city requires lots of different parts working as a whole, like a well oiled machine. Shanghai, the Paris of the East! Shanghai, the New York of the West! Shanghai, the most cosmopolitan city in the world, the fishing village on a mudflat that literally became a great metropolis overnight.

How is the metropolitan city evolving? Shanghai was merely a small fishing village up until 1842, after the first opium war when the British named Shanghai as one of the treaty ports that would be open to foreign trade. Under the administration of the British, French and American, Shanghai ceased to be the small fishing village it used to be and assumed its place as the leading business city in Asia with the best art, architecture and lifestyle for the rich. Despite the exploitation of lower-class Chinese for cheap labor, migrants from other parts of China were still attracted to the city. However, the glory days of Shanghai did not last long; the city weathered raids, invasions and the occupation of the Japanese in the 1930s and ‘40s. When World War II was at its height in 1943, most foreigners had fled the city, ending 101 years of Shanghai’s history as a treaty port. After WW2, fighting in China worsened during China’s three-year civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists. With the war ending in the Communist’s’ victory, the People’s Republic of China (“PRC”) was established. Most, if not any, remaining foreigners or middle to upper class Chinese businessmen fled the country.

As the Communist party took over, Shanghai’s exotic lifestyle fell into a deep slumber. Despite extreme famine and drought, reform and suppression, Shanghai remained the largest contributor of tax revenue to the central government in the decades that followed. Finally, in 1992, the 14th Party Congress endorsed the concept of a socialist market economy, reviving the economy, beauty and charm of Shanghai. Once again, Shanghai was redefined by the internationalism it had first achieved a century ago. Shanghai’s power was so recognizable that

in 1990, Deng Xiaoping – China’s leader at the time – chose Shanghai to rival Hong Kong by 2010. The Shanghai World Expo in 2010 elevated the city onto the global stage again.

Today, with a population of 24 million as of 2015, Shanghai represents only 1.8% of the total population in China and 0.07% of the nation’s land area. Yet, Shanghai contributes to 3.7% of the nation’s GDP, one-fifth of the country’s port cargo handling volume and one-eighth of national financial revenue. It is a global city with substantial influence in commerce, culture, finance, media, fashion, technology and transport. It is a major financial center and the busiest container port in the world.

Shanghai is an international financial center with Chinese characteristics. Starting from the first public display of electric lighting on the 26th of July 1882, the Bund has been one of the most noted landmarks of Shanghai. The Chinese literal translated name for the Bund means the “outer bank”, referring to the Huangpu River, because this part of the riverfront was located further downstream than the “inner bank” area adjacent to the old walled city of Shanghai. The Bund is the starting point of Shanghai’s concession as well as Shanghai’s development as a modern city.

The Bund stretches for one mile along the bank of the Huangpu River, to the west of this stretch of the road stand 52 buildings of various Western classical and modern styles, most of the buildings were first constructed before 1930s and have since hardly undergone any changes. Their architectural style is generally considered Eclecticism, with some buildings predominantly displaying Romanesque Revival, Gothic Revival, Renaissance Revival, Baroque Revival, Neo Classical or Beaux-Arts styles and Art Deco style. Most of the buildings along No. 1 to 33 of East Zhongshan Road are occupied by banks, with the remaining being commercial buildings housing national organizations, restaurants, clubs, shops, etc. The old Hong Kong & Shanghai bank building at No. 12 was once the most potent symbol of British financial might in the Far East. Nowadays, the Bund is not only a tourist attraction but also the centre of international finance, earning the fame of “Oriental Wall Street”.

The financial district has since extended across the river to Pudong. Along the riverside are modern buildings including the tallest skyscraper in China – Shanghai Tower, which is 632 m tall with 128 floors. It is currently the second tallest in the world. Most of the buildings along the river side are filled with banks, finance and insurance companies. The Shanghai Stock Exchange, the world’s 5th largest stock market by market capitalization at US\$3.5 trillion as of February 2016, is also located in Pudong. After its closure following the establishment of the PRC, the stock exchange was finally re-established on November 26, 1990 after a 41-year hiatus. However, unlike the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, it is still not entirely open to foreign investors due to tight capital account controls imposed by the mainland authorities. These decisions are subject to manipulation by the Central Government with little to no transparency.

Apart from the financial industry, Shanghai is also hailed as the centre of fashion in China. From Mao Suits to Victoria Beckham, the city is on track to becoming the Fashion Capital of the Orient.

The Shanghai fashion story found its roots in 1843 when it was opened as a commercial port. It quickly became one of the first cities to be exposed to western thoughts and cultures, including fashion. It was the first city that dared to try something new. The iconic “Cheongsam / Qipao”, which remains the most recognized symbol of the Shanghai fashion scene, is a perfect example of “east meets west”. Modernized from the traditional Manchurian qipao, the new style contrasts sharply with its inspiration which was designed to intentionally

conceal the figure and be worn regardless of age. The Shanghai qipao went along well with the western overcoat and the scarf, portraying a unique East Asian modernity and epitomizing the boldness of the Shanghainese population. The Shanghainese styles have seen a recent revival of stylish party dresses and the fashion industry has been rapidly revitalized in the past decade. When China's first lady Peng Liyuan wore a cobalt blue qipao-style knee length dress during her visit to Spain in 2016, her attire was praised by international media for its elegance and dignified image. Her style has quickly become a fashion statement which is now widely followed by Chinese women across the country and even overseas.

Besides nurturing its own unique designs, Shanghai is the target of global luxury brands like Hermes and Louis Vuitton as well as affordable brands such as Zara and H&M. Shanghai Fashion Week, held in April and October, is a major semi-annual business and cultural event of national class hosted by the Shanghai Municipal Government. The event, where many renowned international designers present their latest work, has become a venue for designers targeting the Chinese market. However, the primary purpose is to showcase homegrown Chinese designers. If Michelle Obama has Jason Wu, Peng has mainland designer Ma Ke, who is the head of the Exception de Mixmind label! As a result, more and more Chinese designers are exploring the international fashion world.

Shanghai was the birthplace of Chinese cinema when motion pictures were introduced to China in 1896. The first Chinese film, *The Battle of Dingjunshan*, was made in November 1905. In 1909, Asia Film Company, which is China's first film company, was established in Shanghai as a joint venture between American businessman Benjamin Polaski, Chinese comprador Zhang Shichuan, and Chinese theatrical talent Zhen Zhengqiu. Shanghai's film industry went on to blossom during the early 1930s, generating Marilyn Monroe-like stars such as Zhou Xuan. Shanghai's film industry continued to develop into the bright star in the world film industry that it is today. Shanghai is no longer simply a film backdrop for foreign blockbuster movies; it has developed into an incubator for original content and a center for film shooting and post-production.

Furthermore, the Shanghai international film festival is gaining acclaim as one of the biggest film festivals in Asia. SIFF focuses on awards, markets, forums and film exhibitions, with the goal to build an international platform, and promote the development of the Chinese film industry as well as the exchange and cooperation between Chinese and foreign films. In recent years, with the growth of China's economic strength and the rise of its international status, Chinese films have attracted more and more attention from a global audience. SIFF, held in June annually, has become a great event for filmmakers worldwide, whose universal industry appeal and international influence on the world's multicultural film culture and development of the film industry have also been praised by people inside and outside the industry.

Have you ever wondered how everything you buy from China comes to your country? It is thanks to Shanghai's comprehensive infrastructure development. The Port of Shanghai, which covers the size of 470 football pitches and handles more than 736 million tonnes of cargo annually, is the busiest port in the world and will remain so with China's breakneck economic growth. Shanghai also has two international airports, something no other city in China can boast. Pudong International Airport handles 60% of flights, while the remaining 40% uses Hongqiao International Airport. As one of the main Chinese airline hubs, the city has opened connections with nearly two hundred cities, half domestic and half international. Direct flights connect the city with dozens of international air terminals, facilitating both business and leisure travel.

Yet, hardware alone is not enough. As the city continues to develop, the need for education, the ‘software’, increases correspondingly in the hope that the next generation will further Shanghai’s reputation as a leading international business center. Shanghai has more than 930 kindergartens, 1200 primary and 850 middle schools of which 32 are international schools. Over 760,000 middle schools students and 871,000 primary school students are taught by more than 140,000 teaching staff. Shanghai is a major center of higher education in China with over 30 universities and colleges, among them prestigious names such as Fudan University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Tongji University. Six universities in Shanghai were featured in the QS World University Ranking 2015/16, led by Fudan at 51st and Jiao Tong at 70th. Joint programs, such as the Fudan IMBA program with MIT Sloan School of Management launched in 1996, were created between the world’s top universities and Shanghai universities to give students a more global perspective. Representing the need for internationalism and the importance of introducing Shanghai to up-and-coming leaders, New York University opened a campus in Shanghai in the fall of 2013. The campus now offers a wide range of courses, from literature and art to engineering to business and more for 900 full time students and 125-150 semester study-away students.

As the standard of living in Shanghai improves, so too the quality of life. Being a city that never sleeps, Shanghai exudes liveliness that goes beyond its daytime activity. At night, the city’s clubs and bars are its heartbeat, positively pulsating with energy and buzzing with excitement. From the seediest watering holes to sophisticated lounge bars, Shanghai keeps the momentum going well into the night with some of the trendiest nightspots in Asia. Once you have experienced it yourself, you will understand why Shanghai is dubbed the city with the most colourful nightlife in China.

The scenery at night has to be seen and the Bund is a must. The ornate classical and modern buildings take on a new and exciting look as they are lit up by an abundance of coloured lights. The Oriental Pearl TV Tower and Jinmao Tower across the Huangpu River are a magical sight. During night-time, Huangpu River Cruise presents a wonderful opportunity to appreciate the nightlife on the Bund. Whether you are on a deluxe boat, an ancient dragon boat of Ming and Qing styles or even Shikumen style of old Shanghai, the sight will forever remain in your memories.

Walking westward along Nanjing East Road, you will quickly reach the famous Nanjing Road Pedestrian Street. The gaily illuminated shops are an exciting backdrop to the cheerful crowds who come here after dark to enjoy the carefree atmosphere, pick up a bargain or enjoy a tasty morel. Although most shops close at 10pm, tea houses open around the clock. Apart from enjoying a lone taste of tea, you can invite several friends to play cards or just chat. Xintiandi, an international gallery of fashion shops, themed restaurants, coffee houses and open-air bars in the distinctive Shikumen Buildings spotting architectural styles from both the east and west from the 1920s and 1930s, has also become a popular venue for young people to discuss work or talk about life.

Shanghai Disneyland, the latest addition to the megacity, further confirmed the significance of Shanghai as a tourist destination for locals and foreign visitors. The decision by Disney to build its fourth theme park outside of the US in Shanghai could only be viewed as a vote of confidence in the potential of the Chinese city in terms of consumption and reputation.

But how can Shanghai translate its success and prestige today into the driving force behind tomorrow? What challenges will await Shanghai? While the rapid economic growth of Shanghai in the last 35 years has provided the city with a strong base for further development, it has also created a lot of hidden problems, both social and economic, which the authorities

need to address. The list goes on: competitiveness nationally and globally, a worsening wealth gap, environmental degradation, large scale migration from the countryside into the city. Let's examine these from different perspectives.

The Chinese government has announced a clear goal for Shanghai to become an international financial center by 2020. Achievement of this very ambitious target depends on both the Chinese and global economy for the next three years. Shanghai still lags far behind global financial centres such as London, New York and Tokyo in its “soft” environment, such as financial innovation and products, rule of law, free capital flows and human capital. The extent of the internationalization of the renminbi will also play a critical role in positioning Shanghai as an international financial center.

The cost of living in Shanghai has surged, catching up with and even surpassing its global peers. To combat surging property prices, the government has implemented a series of countermeasures, including a 70% down payment requirement of second homes. For the masses, owning a property in Shanghai has become an impossible dream.

The fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee in 2015 put forward five development ideas of innovation, coordination, green development, opening-up and sharing. Sustainable growth, not at the expense of the environment, is the goal. Accordingly, Pudong will pursue an innovation-driven, more balanced and green economy. Innovation quality and efficiency will replace investment speed and scale. The community will also play a more active role in the process. Naturally, slower growth will be inevitable.

With Shanghai currently operating at its peak, what could be expected in the future? Although Shanghai is a key player in China's economy, it is important to remember that it is not the only player. At present, Shanghai faces competition all around, from not only China but also the rest of Asia. As a result of rising costs in Shanghai, some businesses may opt to move their non-mission critical functions to other lower-cost cities. Shenzhen, for example, is a formidable competitor. The recent linkage between the Shenzhen and Hong Kong Stock Exchanges will give companies, especially those in the tech sector, an incentive to list on the Shenzhen Exchange over the Shanghai Exchange. After all, Shenzhen is slowly becoming the Silicon Valley of China. More entrepreneurs may choose to build their business in Shenzhen to be closer to the technology hub. The Port of Yantian in Shenzhen is currently the third largest container port in the world by volume, just two places behind Shanghai. Korea is building a reputation as an up-and-coming fashion capital, rivaling the progress Shanghai has made. The US\$8 billion Qingdao Studio of tycoon Wang Jianlin promises to take the spotlight away from Shanghai. The recent One Belt, One Road initiative of the central government will begin to redirect attention and resources from the coastal region towards the inland and the west as Deng Xiaoping had intended when China began its economic reforms.

So how will Shanghai maintain its leading position in China as more versions of Shanghai show up on China's map? The rise and fall of cities throughout the history of human civilisation may suggest that there is no guaranteed formula for success. It will be up to the next generation of leaders to develop the vision and strategy necessary to take Shanghai to the next level. They will have to tackle urbanisation of a magnitude never seen before. They will have to seek out growth opportunities most suitable for the megacity. They will have to balance the growth with the preservation of the environment. Most of all, they will have to ensure that all citizens, rich or poor, reap the benefits of prosperity. Perhaps, instead of rivalling the up-and-coming cities around China, Shanghai should cooperate with these cities so that Shanghai may continue to grow with its glorious past and build a stable future with the rest of China.

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Wishing Tree in Old Shanghai

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Lai, Cheuk Kiu Cheryl Trinity – 7

I am just an aging plane tree* in Old Shanghai,
Over the decades I have my descendants far and wide.
Now I am sad to say goodbye.
My Shanghai, do you hear me cry?
All the best, Shanghai!

I was once a tiny seed brought to Shanghai in the Qing Dynasty,
I stroke my root in a garden overlooking the riverside of Yangtze.
Trading troops and ships from oversea,
Bringing people of many countries to trade and sightsee.
Here was once called the Pearl of the Sea.

What happened that no more admire but afire?
Burning opium ended with gunfire!
Shanghai was divided into concessions with all sorts of occupier,
Now my garden was invaded by a French sire.
My Shanghai was carved up for ceasefire.

Decade of prosperity brought thousands of western,
My garden was converted into a tavern,
A glass of chilled rosé poured for a French politician,
Laughter from a girl in cheongsam holding lantern.
Had my Old Shanghai been totally forgotten?

Years of quarrels ended with the Civil War,
My motherland then entered into the dark era of the Gang of Four.
End of troubled era came the policy of open door,
Economy of my Old Shanghai started to soar.
Will my life be back to peace as before?

*Yet one day I woke up in a commotion,
I found myself chopped down to make way for transportation.
Though I had survived the wars, the greed and the invasion,
I could not survive human's selfish ambition.*

*The people dream to build the world's largest infrastructure,
The cost of which is the old culture and the beauty of nature.*

*Devastating and heartbreaking, I feel the pain is piercing,
Here I'm forever sleeping, and the old tales of Shanghai are fading.*

*Plane tree, *wutong shu*, a kind of roadside tree that the French planted in Shanghai French Concession.

New Tales of Old Shanghai

Kennedy School, Peckham, Lily Mei – 8

Through the window you see the modern glass city,
After all the stories, it is such a pity:
Old Shanghai has gone and this is the new,
Could there be, you wonder, any leftover clue
Of the lives that were lived and the places they went,
Of the fun that was had and the times that were spent?

Snow-white brides and dressed-up grooms,
Take photos for the banquet rooms.
Buzzing bikes and black-windowed cars,
Pass smart hotels and coffee bars.
Shoppers flock to good-luck malls
Next to old hutongs with crumbling walls.

The view from your window is endless towers,
Concrete instead of fragrant flowers.
Traffic-filled streets and a sunless sky,
Reflect in waters of the river flowing by.
People in a hurry with no time to waste,
A city that's living in constant haste.

The old woman stays still and speaks at last,
Telling her stories of the distant past.
Of a time that has been and will never return,
Of moments from which we may hope to learn.
Her eyes are fixed, her wrinkled face
Shines with the light of a hidden grace:

“Imagine yourself in that world like a dream,
A boat swirling down a dazzling stream.
You’d go to watch the horses race,
Your mother in her fine white lace.
The People’s Square was then a track,
Your father knew which horse to back.”

“New Year’s Eve was quite a ball,
With dancing in the music hall.
The twinkling lights and frozen streets,
Grand Bund facades and Christmas treats.
Crowds would gather by the river piers,
And the little boys forgot their tears.”

“On late Spring days Yu Gardens bloomed,
The city filled and business boomed.
You’d walk among the ancient stones,
Where the spirit of the past still roams.
Past quiet pavilions and tranquil ponds,
Under flowering branches like magic wands.”

“The city of music, of beautiful tunes,
Where a Russian princess ate sweet macaroons,
A girl from Beijing inspired pretty verse,
A French ballerina, an English nurse.
A city of colour, of flickering light,
Seen through a doorway even at midnight.”

“The bankers, the dancers, the poets and stars,
Who travelled the city in polished black cars.
The boats on the river, docking at dawn,
The villas that floated in perfect green lawns.
Street names have changed and buildings grown taller,
History has shrunk, old quarters grown smaller.”

“But the old is still there if you know how to look,
Stories not found in any guidebook.
Look through the smog at the sky you can’t see,
Imagine Old Shanghai as it used to be:
A place of excitement, with the bustle of trade,
Where dreams could be lost, but fortunes remade.”

“Listen for the sound of the city that has gone,
But left traces of its magical song.
The taste of the past from Shanghai kitchens,
The spicy smells of foreign fictions.
The touch of silk in a market stall,
Gold and jade, like a pirate’s haul.”

“The old and the new hold hands like good friends,
Ready for changes the future may send.
The world is a city, the city’s a world,
Where dreams are spun and stories are told.
These are my tales of an old Shanghai,
Memories of a time that has long gone by.”

The woman fell silent, a smile in her eyes,
Outside the window the sunset skies
Lit up the city with a golden glow.
The answer you’ve looked for you suddenly know:
The past is a river that will always flow,
Shanghai is a place you will never let go.

Biography: Shanghai

Dulwich College Shanghai, Tin, Chong Phelps – 12

This is a biography told by a man in a painting booth who watched life thrive by a canal day by day for his whole life: *The Life of Shanghai*:

My love is for thee,
I am in Shanghai,
As Long as...

However,
I am bankrupt,
Shanghai is the worst city that could possibly exist.
It is not true
That we are treated the same with the White Russians,
The truth is:

I am a failed painter who lives by a forever flowing canal in the hands of Shanghai,
And I refuse to believe that
Shanghai has grown up, developed and matured with diverse cultures,
I realize this may be a shock, but
The Paris of the east and the New York of the west
Is a lie
The French
The Americans
The Russians
The Spanish...
Shanghai was all built and renovated along with the foreigners.

In 30 years, I will tell the president that
I have my priorities straight because
Isolation
Is more important than
Internationalism

I tell you this:
From old to today, Shanghai was full of intrigue; it was a frontier city,
With crooks, opportunists, glamour girls, gangsters...
But this will not be true nowadays,
Shanghai will never accomplish internationalism and city development.
Experts tell me
Shanghai has no future, and will begin its industrial revolution in 2020
I do not conclude that
Shanghai is as valuable as a diamond, as international as the internet
In the future,
Shanghai will end like what they did to my canal; murky, grey and doomed.
No longer can it be said that
Shanghai is the fastest growing city, from marsh to skyscrapers
It will be evidence.
Big Ear Du and the Green Gang have reached their goals
It is foolish to presume that
I am privileged to watch such a great city mature and develop

I am telling the absolute truth.
Shanghai has failed me.
I could not say
Both Old Shanghai and Shanghai today are great cities.

NOW READ THE POEM FROM BOTTOM UP TO SEE WHAT IS THE TRUE
OPINIONS OF THE MAN ON DAYS HE IS NOT A VICTIM OF GANGASTERS

Two Depictions of the bund

Chinese International School Hangzhou, Shin, Ethan – 14

My brush washes the thin paper in Persian blue,
As Japanese warships sail into The Bund.
Countless soldiers dressed in a dull khaki brown disembark,
Their bayonets sharper than the pointy tip of my brush,
Their guns darker than the thickest ink.
I paint them in miniature strokes,
For there are too many of them to count.

My heart pounds as I depict a Japanese soldier
Holding the photograph of Emperor Hirohito above his head,
He tramples a golden statue of the Buddha into the dirt with his boots.
Splashing teal grey streaks onto to the upper half of the painting,
My brush outlines the bombed Shanghai Cathay Hotel,
Now as skeletal as the begging children beneath it.

I dab thick red circles amongst the crowd of people,
For a man is drenched in a pool of blood upon the ground.
A soldier stands there, in one hand, a flag of the rising sun,
In the other, a silver bayonet dripping with dark fluid.
His eyes are those of a viper, impatient for the next command to strike.
My fists clench as I yearn to draw The Bund as I know it,
With red dancing in the Chinese flag, not soaking the streets.

A fresh piece of paper stretches out on an easel before me.
My brush again washes the paper in Persian blue,
This time glorified by a series of glittering buildings,
Their reflections taller than the depths of The Bund,
As smooth as Nanjing silk, as lustrous as a pile of crystals.
Flares of magnificent gradients of light, azure blue and emerald green
Shower my pallet with a lively spectrum.

My brush creates a ripple of ecstatic colours,
Making shimmers upon the glimmering river of lights,
As I paint ferry taxis floating placidly
Carrying passengers from the Jinling to the Dongchang wharf.
The Shanghai and Oriental Pearl Towers gleam
Like rubies and sapphires, cascading light into the depths of darkness,
The two soar high where eagles cannot go.

This is the reemergence of Shanghai,
Saturating my paper with its effulgent glory.

The Old Cleaner

Sha Tin College, Ko, Hayley – 16

The concrete floor was devoid of litter,
But she swept at it anyways.
Back hunched and sunken eyes trained to the ground,
She swept her remaining days away.

Among the glamorous young women,
She was a wilting flower;
But nevertheless, the old cleaner blended seamlessly
Into the garden called the streets of Shanghai.

Young women walked past her,
Some holding dainty umbrellas,
Others with delicate silver pieces carefully perched in their hair.
But the most unforgettable one of all
Was the young lady with the light birthmark on her cheek.
Adorned in a single pearl necklace and her emerald green qipao,
She called for our attention.

The sky was dark but the streets were anything but.
Illuminated by the flashing signs and the fancy red lanterns,
Shanghai was alive at night.
The street was buzzing with noise and excitement,
And the old cleaner suspected that half the chatter were probably of the elegant lady
That had just passed by.

At a closer look, the old cleaner could see
The impossibly intricate flowers embroidered on the smooth green fabric,
And the little sequins that seemed to sparkle when the light hit her.
No one could keep their eyes away.

But as she watched the extravagant young lady glide past by her,
She couldn't help but feel a rush of bitterness;
The wrinkles on her forehead seemed to grow heavier,
The broom felt uncomfortable against her rough hands.

Wistfully, the old cleaner brushed her fingers against her sagging cheek,
Where a birthmark in the faint shape of a butterfly sat unchanged.
She smiles a rueful smile,
Because even a wilting flower was once a flower.

Colours of Shanghai

Korean International Springboard, Tang, Adrienne – 12

Colours of Shanghai are all around,
Up in the sky and on the ground.
Orange are the robes at the temple of Jade,
Grey is the pollution the factories have made.
Yellow is the mountain and the sea to the North,
Blue is my taxi as I bravely go forth.
Red is the pavilion, the Museum of China Art,
Greenland Shenhua captures fans hearts.
Pink is Disney's castle and steep spiral tower
White is the Magnolia, Shanghai's favourite flower.
Golden are the Eagles, the top baseball team,
Purple is the night sky just before I dream

A Taste of Shanghai

Korean International Springboard, Mak, Arthur – 14

Old Shanghai with its sugary cuisine,
Xiaolongbao served in every canteen
Stinky tofu the food of the street
Qibaogao when I want a tasty treat
Bankers flock to the Bund for their buns
Mapo doufu given to daughters and sons.
Late night street noodles sold from a cart
Creamy milk egg tarts are close to my heart
Hairy crab from the market in Tongchuan
Glutinous red jujubes known as Xin Tai Ran
Whatever you want, you can find it to eat,
In old Shanghai as long as it's sweet!