

# Newsletter

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## SILLY BILLY ANGUS PENG

Mr. Wise was a retired professor and a genius investor with reputation and a lot of money. It was his intelligence that made him the role model among students, while it was his successful investment which gave him the thought to put his teaching career into an end. Mr. Wise had a keen observation on almost every investment since

he had been teaching Economics in a well-known college for years. His motto was "The worst investment one can ever make is breakeven." That is, he wasn't used to losing money in any investment. What's more, he tended to take advantage of anything if it's possible to do so. Rich as Mr. Wise was, he didn't live a high-level life. For example, he had the habit of buying groceries which were off-season, because everything that wasn't in-season was cheaper. Ridiculous as it seemed, that's how Mr. Wise took advantage of the supermarket. After all, it all made perfect sense in his state of mind. Besides, all of his furniture was second-handed. His pet dog, Chubby, was adopted from a pet shop, which was technically second-handed. The most expensive decision he had ever made was to buy a mansion and move to a place where many millionaires lived.

"What a nice community, don't you think so?" said Mrs. Wise. "It is, my dear, it's the most expensive community in this area; can't go wrong with the price we spent on it," replied Mr. Wise. It has been two months since he retired from school and moved to a whole new place in pursuit of a tranquil and better life. Everything seems perfect, normal, and a bit expensive.

It's 7:30 in the morning. Mr. Wise took a stroll, which was an exercise free of charge and no equipment needed. By the time he walked through a street, he saw a little boy surrounded by a group of teenagers at the corner of the street. Suddenly, these teenagers all burst into laughter and left. "Silly Billy! Silly Billy!" they walked away and said. The little boy said nothing but with a grin on his face. "Hmmm...that's strange. Judging by his outfit, he must be from other community." Mr. Wise said to himself. Thirty minutes later Mr. Wise arrived home, and he spent the rest of day playing Sudoku. "Where should I put these numbers?" Filling out number one to nine in a certain manner was the rule of Sudoku. Tired of making investments, Mr. Wise thought of Sudoku as the most suitable pastime related to his interest.

It's 7:30 in the morning. "I must be crazy if I didn't take a walk in such a good weather," said Mr. Wise. Then he took a walk. Again, the same people surrounded the same person at the same place. "Dat one." "You sure? You sure? You can't change it once you've made your choice!" This time, Mr. Wise got a little closer to see what's going on. Two coins, 25 cents and 5 cents, were put in front of the boy. Although 25 cents was more valuable, its size was smaller than 5

cents. Unfortunately, it seemed that the boy judged everything by its size; he instantly chose the bigger one. Teenagers giggled, chuckled, and left. "Silly Billy! Haha! The nickname suits him best!" they said. "Poor little guy! That's why people say little kids are naïve and innocent. Guess he isn't old enough to take advantage of others." Mr. Wise thought to himself and left. In the evening, Mr. Wise told Mrs. Wise about what he had seen in the morning. "How did he know that?" said Mrs. Wise, "He's just a kid." "That just didn't make sense, right? Someone's going to give you one thing for nothing. Always make sure you choose the one which is more valuable between the two." Mr. Wise wasn't the only person who saw the boy and his "dumb choice," and he's not the only one who had the same logic—the more valuable, the better.

It's 7:30 in the morning. Mr. Wise was expecting what would be put in front of that silly little kid and what his choice was. As he walked on the same path to the corner of the street, a shiny little piece of gold and a ten-dollar bill were put in front of the boy. Awfully, Silly Billy chose to have the ten-dollar bill while Mr. Wise is wondering when was last time he saw a pure gold nugget. "Oh no! It's too late!" Mr. Wise tried to give the kid a lesson, hoping he could let the kid understand the well-known logic, so that the kid could make the "right decision" next time. "Hey! Kid! What you have done just didn't make sense at all. You can't always choose the one that looks bigger! Let me put it this way. Eyes could mislead your decision. For example, a big chunk of meat and a truffle are put on the table. Which will you choose? Although meat looks a lot bigger, the prize of a truffle can buy you plenty of meat. What you gonna do next time is to choose the smaller one from those teenagers, and I bet you can take advantage of them." The boy kept silent for a second and replied in a confident tone. "Sir, I know my choice doesn't seem sensible to you grown-ups. If I choose the right one, will they come to test me the following day? Every time they come to me, they bring something more valuable than the previous day. All I need to do is patiently wait for those stupid teenagers. It's been two months since I made the first "wrong decision," and I'm glad I can pretend to be as silly as they think I am. So far, I received pretty much everything I need. Look, it is your eyes that mislead your thought. I am young, but I am not silly." The boy left happily.

"Oh, I didn't see that coming." Mr. Wise was stunned and speechless.



R-CYCLING BY ANDY HUANG

Random chance we ran into.  
Ego mixed then crushed down. Lion’s tail twisted to  
Acutely tried angle.  
Triangular commitment, passion, and Intimacy with which man do struggle.  
Of the patience, of the pain,  
No  
Surrender  
Harsh friction mingles.  
I do feel  
Pins and needles.  
Relish mental jewels reboot.  
Each mode mutually does root.  
Leda’s swanlings toot,  
A pair of Twins, Joy and Woe, caressed the lute,  
Tremendous feathers flock off  
In a bridge arch,  
Onward bride kites ecstasies above.  
Not  
Superior  
Husband clasps lace gloves, say  
I do with  
Peace and love.



Willy opens the wooden window.  
After the windy heavy rain,  
He looks up the sky in a depressed mood.

That night, little lonely Willy couldn’t help but tremble.  
Just like a furious man,  
Scary storm brought thunder and flood.

Jenny giggling played the seesaw;  
Images of her jumping braids remain.  
She shared with him tasty Chinese food.

There is a smiling rainbow.  
To others this scene may be plain,  
Only will it make Willy recall his childhood.

Bon! Don! Owl!  
Fear! Even sunshine could not reclaim  
Until Jenny’s invitation warmed his blue blood.

Eat it and then leave the terrifying shadow  
Look! How colorful seven colors has lain.  
Please have a good mood.

RAINBOW  
ZORA TSAI

GRAY ANN TSENG

Chilly as it should be in winter, a boy was on his way back home. He took the crowded but longer route today. He hated cold weathers, but the big street distracted him from the coldness. He took out his hat and put it on.

With some drizzle sprinkling from the sky, the moisture attached on the clothes and permeated in. A woman was standing in front of the bakery in the street corner. The glass of the bakery was foggy. The temperature was not extremely low, but the wetness made her shiver a little. She was waiting for her fiancé. The boy that just passed gave her some future images of her boy. Will he be as tall as the boy? Will he hate coldness just like his mother? Will he has iron grey eyes just like the boy? After few years, she divorced though and died alone having no children.

The boy turned left on the bakery corner. He surrounded his face with a scarf. Just after he threw one end of the scarf to his back, he saw a cardboard box. He drew out his hands from the pockets and lifted the lid. It was a kitten. Grey, grey kitten. He saw her color very familiar but contemplated for no answer.

The drizzle didn’t cease. The kitten trembled, deep in sleep. The boy covered her with his scarf and carried the box home.

The man across the street saw all this. He knew what was inside and who put the box there but didn’t want to be involved. The boy looked tough but had a kind heart. The man dragged on his cigarette. He had a kind heart, too, in that age. But things always change, and so did his kindness.

Nobody’s at home, so the boy arranged his meal and poured some milk in the bowl for the kitten. He then observed the little creature. Its eyes were also grey,

like a grey mirror, but not the kind of blurred, foggy grey mirror. They were clear. Maybe the kitten was too young that its grey eyes were not occupied.

His room was typically quiet. But today, some meow, meow echoed in the boy’s room.

The boy’s mother came home. She found the kitten along the meow. She didn’t look what was inside the box. She didn’t care at all since it could not be a robot cat after all. She didn’t care at all for she was so worn out that day. She had to make dozens of calls to make arrangements of the sudden dinner appointment to let her boss have a family reunion. The boss’s daughter liked a surprise which was only a surprise that was always not well-prepared. And the preparation part always fell on her.

She had to take care of her boss’s family. She had to take care of her own family. She had to look after other one’s daughter. She had to look after her own son. Why would she need to keep a kitten? She was furious. So she shouted, telling her son that he had to “put it back.”

The door was slammed behind. The drizzle remained still. The boy wrapped up his nose and mouth with a scarf. He didn’t predict that things would go like that. He was sorry, but didn’t know to whom to apologize. From the chink between the two cardboards, he could see that she was asleep. He walked in the street again. Not far from the spot earlier, he chose to put it on the dry stairs of the bakery’s back door. The baker family are nice people. The little creature should live through the night. He should have a nice family, too, but maybe not tonight. He went back home alone.

It was his first time to truly like a small animal whole-hearted. His mother liked animal, too, in his memory. But when did she change? He didn’t know.

The sky grew darker, not grey at all. The night went through just like other nights.

The next day, the air was colder. The icy needle-like drizzle lasted for a whole night until dawn. The boy’s mother passed by a street corner and noticed a cardboard box. It was roughly the same size as the one her son brought back last night. She was somehow afraid. She crouched down and lifted the covering cardboard. There was a kitten inside, too.

An old couple passing behind took a glance at the box, the content. They just lost their cat, Ashe, several days ago. Tears suddenly filled the old lady’s eyes after she saw the kitten and turned her eyes away. Well, such a pity. The old man thought that if Ashe didn’t get sick, they might have passed by this street block a day earlier and saved this kitten, according to their routine after his retirement. The old man was a banker. He liked Corgis more than cats, actually. But his wife insisted, so the pet thing settled.

Ashe was weak in its last moments, so they wanted to keep it company. They were saturated in sorrow these days. The old lady cried whenever she saw a cat. Her old husband was considering about adopting a funny Corgi to make her laugh again.

Staring at the kitten, the mother tried to confirm whether it was the kitten last night, but in vain. She was furious. She didn’t pay attention. She didn’t think of that in this kind of cold day, a kitten could die.

The kitten had no breath already, curling up and squeezing itself into a corner. Oh, what a poor little thing. The mother sighed. She remembered that once she found a kitten in her twelve. She was not allowed to own it and had to “put it back” at the end. The kitten was also grey, beautifully grey.

Still wrapped in the drapery of autumn melancholy, Morley felt mentally listless at the sound of alarm, reminding her that the preparation of breakfast should be started. “French toast and pan-fried bacon, again?” Morley whispered to herself in a tilting head and carelessly juggled an egg between two palms like a depressed clown who had run out of any creativity, presenting skilled, yet the same old trick to the anticipated audience.

“Mommy, is Monday a day to celebrate Prince Alex’s good deeds?” In his daddy’s fluffy sleepcoat, Tommy mumbled in a feeble voice with eyelids slightly opened. Morley didn’t know how to give a plausible answer to cover the truth that actually she didn’t know what to prepare except for French toast, turning around and squinted at her 7-year-old son in a smiley manner, backing to her work immediately.

Without any response except for a faint arc lingering on mother’s canthus, Tommy teetered through the dining room, then set his bottom on the wooden stool heavily as if he were an innocent fish which couldn’t resist against the string of the tantalizing aroma but could only accept the fact of being waken up from the dreamy ocean waves.

Despite of the tempting disturb, Tommy was content at the sight of mother’s slim figure mingling in the mist of sweetish smell, knowing that she had gradually recovered from some unspoken grief.

There was no surprise to Tommy’s curious speculation, for Morley always weaved fascinating bedside stories, in which the male character emanating with valor and charm was exactly Prince Alex. In order to add more dimensions to Prince Alex and make Tommy’s childhood hero more tangible with humanity, Morley created a special unit, called “Trivialities of Prince Alex,” into Tommy’s favorite bedside series.

More than often, Tommy preferred listening to those insignificant details to continuing story’s further development. It seemed that Tommy was absorbed in collecting small fragments and piecing them together into a mosaic as a tribute to his Prince Alex.

Sometimes, Tommy could be inquisitive, acting like a detective who seemed to need one more clue so that the perplexed puzzle could be resolved straight away.

One night, Tommy popped out the question. “What Prince Alex likes to eat for breakfast?” The first image flashed into Morley’s mind was French toast.

For Morley, French toast was a cuisine reminiscent of her dead husband. At first, it’s a treatment for her grief; gradually, it became a reminder of her sorrow. It was strange that a cuisine could reflect contradictory feelings time after time.

After Tommy finished the breakfast, he automatically put the plates in the sink, flushing them at once. Even from behind in silhouette, Morley contently smiled to herself while picturing Tommy become somebody dependable.

Since Morley needed to be fully concentrated on her

seemed to be a premature understanding embedded in Tommy’s young mind about the importance of being independent. Tommy never let Morley down or made her worried.

“Mommy, I am going to school. You don’t need to pick me up today.” Tommy said to Morley at speed, hastily putting on his coat and rushing out the flat. Sipping black coffee in front of the window with mind gazing out for a moment, Morley hadn’t got a chance to kiss on her son’s forehead. She watched her son closing the door in a hurry. Morley did feel guilty sometimes for she couldn’t be attentive to every aspect of Tommy’s life; the only thing she could afford is a house to live and those fictional bedside stories. So, she dedicated herself to the book illustration every day, detaching herself from secular trifles and enclosing into the ground where nobody was allowed to trespass. However, what Morley feared the most is the seasonal symptom within her weak mind. The sickness would drench her spine, making the four limbs flabby and consuming her whole brain. Her dead husband, Alexander was the one who aroused the sickness. What made her illness worse was the commission to a children’s book Morley had been working on. The storyline of the book is about a bunny’s journey to find a refuge after a forest fire took his families’ lives away. When the story evolved into a point where the bunny started to build a house himself, Morley couldn’t resume for those colors of a house had been erased from her mind. For the whole afternoon, Morley hadn’t got any progress on the work. Instead, she spent most time observing the smoke of cigarette drifting in the air with no direction and no purpose. She did envy the smoke because it came without responsibility and vanish without guilt.

Morley closed her eyes, imaging herself float with the smoke and dreaming of disappearing just for a while. As Morley was about to evaporate with the smoke, a patch of warm sunlight came across her face, softly whispering to her “Wake up. Wake up.” With struggle inside, Morley couldn’t fight the tenderness of sunlight tickling her again and again any longer. She slowly opened her eyes.

A scene that a little girl happily flied up and down on a swing immediately came into her sight through the window; a young lady blissfully stood behind the little girl, pushing her with love and care. A beautiful curve of the biggest smile was carved into the blue sky; a big surge of sensation overwhelmed Morley’s gradually numb mind.

“Maybe, it’s time.” Morley nodded to herself, deciding to go out for some stimulation. And what excited Morley the most was that she could surprise Tommy by an unexpected visit.

By the time Morley reached at Tommy’s school, the classes hadn’t been dismissed. Roaming about in the central garden surrounded by classrooms at each face, Morley found that the atmosphere was serene; only intermittent bursts of laughter were heard.

Morley got a bit of curiosity. The more she listened, the more she became familiar with the voice.

### SAUCY JACKY JANET CHEN

Jeering at the ignorance of the City Of Fog,

A tragedy echoing down centuries was coming on the stage named the Whitechapel.

Carving bleats of ruined scapegoats, scarlet blooming flowers dropped to the ground.

Kidding, it's just kidding, my Dear Boss.

Taking away the safe harbors of babies in the heavy smog,

How came Canonical Five had been chosen to be crumpled?

Everything had been done but no one had been found.

Red, no, it's written with black ink, From Hell.

In 1888 East End of London, liking a big dark bog,

Probably he is a butcher, a surgeon, or even a noble?

Police were bustling about with hardship, only to be fooled around.

"Evidently, it seems to be a woman, a midwife," said Holmes.

Remaining as an eternal mystery, the secret of Jacky made us agog.

“Was that Tommy’s voice?” Morley was distracted, following the string of voice carefully.

After searching aimlessly, Morley stopped.

Through the foggy surface on the door’s window, she saw a boy energetically wave his two arms. He seemed like portraying someone eagerly with his whole body; it could be a warrior or something alike.

“Madam, can I help you?” a soft voice broke into Morley’s contemplation on the boy’s performance.

“Oh, no... well, sorry. I am just waiting for my son.” Morley was a little bit embarrassed for she didn’t want to be thought as a weird person.

“Um...I do recognize you. You are the clever boy, Tommy’s, mother, right?” The woman dressed in orange suit, and her face beamed with enthusiasm; Morley thought she must be the teacher.

“Yes, I am...Um, excuse me for asking, what are the class having? Children seem so excited.” Morley said with a sense of relief.

“Well, those kids are just fantastic. We organize a storytelling session each week, and every kid prepared so much. Actually, Tommy is today’s storyteller. Didn’t he tell you?” the teacher asked with wide open eyes; she seemed perplexed.

“Oh, he did. It’s my fault for being occupied with some trivial things,” responded Morley with a tinge of guilt because she really didn’t remember anything about the “story” thing.

“I am sure he did. He’s a wonderful child and every kid loves him telling the story of Prince Alex. Look how gallant he is on the stage.” The teacher pointed to the boy on the stage.

“Yes, his Prince Alex.” Following the direction, Morley whispered with a light smile.

Bell ringed, it brought both Morley and the teacher into reality.

“Mommy, what are you doing here? I told you I can walk home by myself,” said Tommy with surprise as well as a sense of joy.

“Tommy, you’ve done a great job!” Morley kneeled down, holding her son’s cheeks.

“You know what, besides from French toast, I recently discover there is some other food that Prince Alex likes to eat!” Morley said in a fascinating voice.

“Really? Tell me!” Tommy screamed out, hopping around.

“Always obsessed with Prince Alex, hum? Let’s buy the ingredient first,” said Morley, and then she stood up, holding Tommy’s hand tightly and walked out the classroom.

Not long after, the image of Morley and Tommy dissolved into a crowd of pupils.

“How lovely!” said the teacher; she tenderly stroke her pregnant belly in a maternal appreciation.

In this waiting room, there were some startling light and a conservative nurse on the right side. On the opposite of this room, there was a weak patient, John, waiting on the tin chair. Same as the room’s atmosphere, there was only coldness in John’s heart. “Mr. Banks? Mr. Banks? Doctor Marshall will see you now.” the nurse said harshly but with no emotion on her face.

In the doctor’s office, the light was so warm that John started to relax himself. It came from lamps and a little frosted window. The office itself was full of old wood furniture and books. Moreover, there was also some kind of magical aroma filled in this room, offering a cozy atmosphere “How are you feeling, Mr. Banks?” said by the doctor. “I feel puffy, blotchy. I never seem to have very much energy. I get these little sore throats. I just don’t feel good.” John touched his neck and spoke nervously. “Then, how is your writing career? Have you kept working on your masterpiece?” “No, I just don’t feel right. My disease makes me dizzy, it almost drives me crazy. After suffering from it, the disease I even don’t know, my muse had just disappeared. Wait!! You know what’s wrong with me, right?” “Yes. I’ve gotten the results of your tests.” “I’ve got cancer, right?” John interrupted the doctors’ words seriously. “No.” “Is there something wrong with my blood or urine or...” “No, they’re fine. But there is something. There’s a black fog of tissue running right down the center of your brain. It’s very rare. It will spread at a regular rate. It’s very destructive. It’s called brain cloud.” “So what should I do? Is there any cure or treatment? That’s the disease that has makes me feel so uncomfortable! I knew it!” “Mr. Banks, it is so ironic that this disease won’t let you feel any pain. I am sorry to tell you that it is incurable. However, I believe you suffer from a

hypochondriac that causes so many syndromes. No matter how, you still have few months to live. I wish the news had been better.”

In the grave yard, lots of people came to attend the funeral. It is a shiny afternoon. With sorrow and fear, John also attended the funeral. It is the funeral of his good friend, also a respectable writer. They had been debating different types of writing or having deep talks to inspire each other. Once, they were young and passionate about the future with no fear for everything. However, the writer suffered from the incurable disease. Just like John, this writer was also a hypochondriac, tired of life and his writing career. So ironic was it. The writer didn’t die of any disease. He just committed suicide in his own apartment because he thought he was trapped in this dark valley. For John, attending this funeral seemed to be attending his own funeral. The participants are all in deep sorrow. As his best friend, John was going to pronounce his eulogy to the dead. “In the end, what are we trying to cherish? Who would be left alone by ourselves when we are under the ground? The dust will cover the entire universe, and I lie in my grave alone, shivering on this land. The destiny now comes to me, a dark morass trapping me, where I scream with all my might, so I turn and drift into the endless fog until there is nothing, and my soul still remains.” After the eulogy, participants started to come near the coffin to pay their final tribute. John also lined up to say farewell to his best friend. He was trapped in this moment. No matter how bright the sunshine was, it could not lighten up John’s heart. All of a sudden, he found out that the one lying in the coffin was he, lying with no expression but sorrow. He was stunned and kneeled down on the ground desperately. “This is it, the end.” After murmuring in his mind, he fainted and

fell in the coffin.

Waking up from his desk with hangover, John found out that he was holding a knife. He could not figure whether it was a dream or the reality, feeling confused about all the surroundings. He started to remember the dream. It was so real that he wondered what would actually happen if he did commit suicide, wondering if it was the route to the salvation, or the dead end of purchasing his dream. He was struggling about writing his own novel, his masterpiece. However, due to the incurable disease, there was no time left for him to complete his work. Nodding for an hour, he found his stomach rumbling. Therefore, he went out for lunch. He bought a sandwich and some coffee and then walked to the park. The weather was exactly the same as the one of his dream. The woods and the flowers were waving smoothly. The whole scenery was peaceful, just like Monet’s garden. He sat on the bench and viewed how the nature worked. The sun shined on his face; the breeze soothed his pain; the sound of the universe echoed in his brain. In that moment, he stopped all his frustration and depression. The time stopped slipping away. All of a sudden, he got the muse of his own story and wrote on the sandwich paper right away. “A heartfelt writer needs to collect the fretwork of his memories. Everything he earns was his reserve. To cherish, he needs to struggle for getting out of the cocoon, exploring all kinds of beauty and melancholy. Therefore, he will realize how magnificent the universe works, how gorgeous the cherry blossoms, and how crucial the death comes. After collecting these pieces, the memory will finally erupt in his words. At last, there is no end of his story. And the great words will not perish.”



WINDOW

ELLIE TSENG

2014/11/08

Today’s Timmy’s birthday. As all the birthdays before, I bought his favorite chocolate cake from the Bakehouse this morning. Ever since he was little, he would always remind me of buying him his favorite cake the day before his birthday. I remembered it was his tenth birthday. To surprise him, I pretended that I totally forgot to buy the cake; “Oh my dear, I’m so sorry, I will buy the cake tomorrow.” I said and tried to sound like really sorry. “Mommy, it’s okay; I don’t need the cake, I just want daddy and you sing the birthday song for me.” He hooked his shivering lips to the shape of a crescent moon, but the sparkling tears almost brimmed over his eyes and clearly reflected his disappointment.

Timmy was such a sweet kid that he even said he was fine when Mark and I told him that we were getting a divorce. It’s a cold winter night, I told him the sudden change in an even colder way, “Timmy, daddy and I are getting a divorce. You are not a child anymore; do you understand what I mean?” I totally forgot how cruel my words were to a twelve-year-old child. He turned his back to me without answering; the moment was frozen, after deadly seconds, he turned, and softly said “Don’t worry, mommy; we will all be fine.” I cried out like I would never stop.

That is Timmy. He was the kindest liar.

I look out the French window of Timmy’s room, the stars, the moon and the sky. Timmy liked leaning against the window and looking outside, as if he was the prisoner who was eager for freedom of this concrete house. Timmy seldom talked to me after I married Peter, but he always smiled at me whenever I called him. He always did. Sitting on the ice-cold floor, I called his name, but nobody answered, my sorrowful sound echoing across this empty room, the sound become more and more squawky, close to pierce my heart.

Timmy is not here. Timmy will never be here.

The hands of the clock point to the twelve, Timmy’s birthday is over; the cake is still in the fridge, nobody will light up the candles and sing the birthday song.

Just like what Peter said “Timmy has left us forever, brace up!” I told myself again and again, but I just can’t forget. I can’t let him go; I want him to stay at least in my memory.

I 2014/11/09

It has been one year after Timmy left us. I remember how happy I was when Timmy said he wanted to stay with me on his birthday. It was the first time he chose me instead of Linda. I went to Costco to buy all his favorite food, rented a DVD which is horror movie; Timmy loved it. However, he didn’t come on time. And

then the phone rang, it’s Linda; I was numb when I heard her tremulous voice. I had no expectation that there was a possibility for the tragedy to happen. The police said Timmy was drowned; when he was discovered by some students, he was already dead. Wearing the white sweater and blue jeans, with his favorite camera, Timmy floated on the pond in his senior high school. Nobody knows how Timmy died; they said maybe it is a suicide because there’s no evidence for murder. However, I cannot believe that. Timmy is the bravest boy; he won’t do that to hurt Linda and me.

Today I cleaned out Timmy’s stuff from his room. I could not help but cry. Inside the drawer of the desk, I found a box of pictures. Looking the pictures he took, I felt the pain was unbearable. I could imagine how he smiled behind the camera; I could hear the snap sound of the camera. When I sank in the memories, a series of pictures of the different places in his school drew my attention. No person was in the picture. Timmy took the pictures in the parking garage, the top floor, the staircase and the pond where he was drowned. I get a weird feeling to see those pictures. Those pictures are like summoning me to solve the mystery of them. Though I put them aside, I still kept thinking about them. I have to talk with Linda.

This morning, I had a quarrel with Peter again.

“When will you brace up and stop thinking about Timmy? You cannot just do nothing but cry like a mad woman every day. Timmy is dead” Peter said in an angry tone. “I know Timmy is dead; I don’t need you to remind me of that every day! Can you just shut up and go to school?” I hate him to say that like Timmy’s death has nothing to do with him. “Timmy is died in your school. He is YOUR student and YOUR step son. How can you act like nothing has happened? If you think this kind of life is not what you signed up for, we can divorce, I don’t care!” I shouted, then ran into Timmy’s room and slammed the door. Peter came close to the door and softly said “My dear, I’m sorry for making you think of me like that. I love Timmy. I love you. I love you…….”

“THOSE ARE THE ONLY THING I WANT TO KEEP..”

Peter left; I lay on the floor, and looked through the French window, I felt my head was so dizzy that I had illusion that there was a woman looking at me behind the French window of the same floor of the opposite building. I closed my eyes and opened again; it was not an illusion. The woman did look at me with a strange smile which is more like a scoff. When I stood up to take a better look at her, she closed the curtains. Her smile makes me feel creepy, like a nightmare bothering me all day until Mark called me in the evening.

“Linda, I’ve found something strange.” Mark said seriously, but I cannot concentrate to what he said; my mind is occupied by the woman. “What is it?” I answered mindlessly. I kept looking at the French window of the opposite building. “I found some strange pictures in Timmy’s room of my house…….” when Mark was talking, I saw the light in the opposite building was turned on, the woman’s shadow was reflected on the curtain; however, she was not alone. I saw a man’s shadow; he hugged the woman. Then they were kissing, I hope I can open the curtain too see what they look like. “Are you listening?” Mark asked me. “Mark, maybe we can meet each other next week, I think Peter will come home soon, I haven’t cooked the dinner yet…….” “Okay, I will call you next week…….” Mark said. After I hung up the phone, the man and the woman disappeared from the window. I felt so mad at Mark, what an inappropriate time he called. When I was thinking about that, the doorbell rang; Peter came home. I had no energy to cook him the dinner; all I wanted to do was looking at the French window of the opposite floor.

To my surprise, Linda has no interested in the pictures. Maybe she was just too tired to think about that. Today I went to Timmy’s school; I tried to find the place where he took the picture. Like a detective, I walked around and observed; however, I found nothing. Looking at the senior high students laugh and study in the classroom, my tears began pouring out of my eyes. I miss Timmy, but what I should do is not trumping up a mystery for myself and taking those pictures hanging around. As a father, I cannot ignore everything as the evidence to prove that Timmy’ death was not a suicide. It’s time to face it, and let Timmy go.

I walked to the pond where took away Timmy’s life. I still felt horrible when I stood there; the imagined scene of Timmy’s death made me cry silently. Suddenly, someone patted my back, it’s Peter. It’s strange to see him face to face after Timmy’s funeral. Before I said a word, he comforted me first. “I also come here when I miss him. I own him a lot. I haven’t

become a good father as you, but he left first. He was such a thoughtful and decent kid...very decent....Every time I think about him; I felt terrible. It’s also hard for me to believe he would leave us in this way, but you know; we had to believe and move on our life……” He sounded like there are some fish bones stuck in his throat, and his tears sparkled like the pond. I never think about Peter’s feelings. He is also painful like Linda and I. Linda changes a lot after Timmy’s death, so Peter had to tolerate with all those changes. I never think about that. After a deep breath, he gave me his handkerchief, though he was also crying.

Mark came to my house yesterday. He said both of us should stop abandoning ourselves in the sorrow. It’s no use for us to cry and do nothing. Timmy left us, and that’s the truth. No one can change it. Hearing Mark say that, I felt like somebody splashed a bucket of freezing water from the top of my head. Because those words are from Mark, Timmy’s dad, who felt the same pain as I did.

Mark is right; he is always right.

Mark was never at home after Timmy’s born. I always wanted him to spend more time with us, but he didn’t do so. On Timmy’s twelve-year-old birthday, my disappointment to him exploded. It’s raining outside, in the restaurant every family were sharing their happiness, but Timmy and I were just endlessly waiting Mark; I hoped he could come for us, at least for our kid. Timmy and I desperately looked out the window of the restaurant until the waitress came and said they were going to close. At that time, Mark finally showed up, I ran out of the restaurant and slammed in his face; then I cried and sat on the ground like a child. I could not even differentiate whether it is the rain or the tear dropped on my face. As usual, we had a quarrel; however, that is the first time we shouted to each other in front of Timmy. Timmy witnessed all of this; but the days after, he just pretended he knew nothing of that day.

Timmy saw everything, but he chose to stay behind the window; like he was stuck.

Mark said Timmy was not happy since I married Peter, but I never seriously thought about that. Because he was always smiling when I called him, I could not believe the sorrow was hiding behind that innocent smile. And Mark was right; Timmy was not happy; that’s why he chose to leave us.... I thought it’s time for me to stop thinking about the woman who lived in the opposite floor. She was just a normal woman who saw me crying and smiled at me. I transferred too much attention from Timmy’s death to the woman.

Mark also mentioned that he went to Timmy’s school and met Peter there. He returned Peter’s handkerchief to me and told me what Peter had said to him. It’s the first time I felt sorry for Peter. I was too selfish to stand in his shoes. Since Timmy was dead, I had ignored Peter and kept quarreling with him. I was a terrible wife. I woke up very early and prepared the breakfast for Peter today. He looked extremely happy, “what’s going on today? It’s quite unbelievable, my dear.” Seeing him as delightful as a little child who gets a candy, I answered him gently “Nothing, I just want to say I love you.” I take out his handkerchief which I had sprayed my perfume on it to him. We kissed for a long time, “I really don’t want to go to work now” he smiled, “You have to, my dear.”

To cook the dinner for Peter, I went to the supermarket in the afternoon. When I came back, I went to take the elevator. When the door of the elevator opened, I was shocked to see the creepy smile again. I was sure that was her because I will never forget the smile. The woman smiled at me again. I was too curious though I tried very hard to act calm; my finger tremulously touched the button. I imagined I push her to the wall of the elevator, but I

did not. When she went out the elevator, something dropped out from her bag.

It’s the handkerchief. I recognized the smell; it’s my perfume.

It’s time for me to brace up. I packed most of the Timmy’s stuff, and the garbage car will take those heartbreaking things away in two hours. I only left Timmy’s pictures. Those are the only thing I want to keep. I viewed those pictures, and the time with Timmy become vivid in my mind. I think Timmy will also feel happy for me. Of course, he will.

Three days before the tragedy happened, Timmy came to my house. He said something touching to me, “Dad, You know I never think it’s wrong for mom and you to get a divorce. I just want you two to be happy. I won’t let anything to break your heart. I’ve grown up, and I can protect you now.” Those sudden words made me feel so proud of my son. Yes, he’s grown up, my dear son. If the suicide is what he chose, we had to respect him. And now is the time for me to grow up, too.

I took out the lighter to burn the pictures which made me feel like a stupid detective. I cried but I had to do this. Suddenly, the bright light of the fire reflect the shocking truth to me. I look at the picture closer; I found that there was a window in each picture, and all of the windows reflected the image of two people. They were kissing. I recognized the man’s face. It’s Peter. My heart bumped quickly, I felt I cannot breathe anymore.

Linda had to know that. She had to know that!

It’s six thirty in the evening. Linda must be at home. I took up the phone to call her. But nobody answered. I got the answering machine. It’s Peter’s sound.

“This is Peter, if you are finding me; please call my smart phone number. Linda went abroad. She won’t be at home in these few days. If you are finding her, leave your message here.”

## FAREWELL CASSIE LIN

I’m who people call  
The Death  
You have been in the inferno for several  
Generations, yet you will  
Be fearful of seeing human die still

Don’t feel sad for this newly-arrived cold  
Body, over hundred years old  
It’s enough, for life, to hold  
Remember? The same words you have been told

The most frightening of death  
Is not the moment you stop your breath

But rather, it’s when  
There is no one who still  
Remembers your name in the brain  
Like water all being drained  
You are dead again

Truly  
Mentally

It’s now your turn Goodbye then.

*Why can't I remember anything?*

“All rise!” The sudden sound brought Patrick back to reality. He quickly stood up and saw Anna gave him a meaningful stare. George Randy, the judge for Patrick’s case, came in, sat down and said, “Be seated.” Patrick could tell that his lawyer looked painful.

*Just two days ago, I and my lawyer were arguing, “George Randy usually is in favor of rape victims!” Anna said. “But I’m innocent! I didn’t do it. I…” I screamed. “It doesn’t matter! Your best shot is to accept the plea. Going to court may do more harm than good. Listen to…” “No, I’m not guilty. I’ll fight to the last minute!” I answered, firm and cold.*

“Mr. Peterson?” Patrick was knocked back again. “Yes?” He instantly knew he made a mistake for asking because Charlie Rong, the state prosecutor, had a subtle evil smile on his face. The judge repeated after a sigh, “I asked you that, in this case, do you maintain your innocence?” With his lips trembling, he answered, “Yes, sir.” The judge pushed his glasses, “I see.” Patrick could see that Charlie’s eyes had a victorious flash, and his stomach turned a bit. The judge spoke again, “With the evidence I got, and no alibi for Mr. Peterson, I found there’s enough reason to proceed a trial.” Anna shook her head and gathered her files together. Suddenly,



Charlie stood and said, “Sir, may I ask to expedite the trial? I think there is enough to have a quick conviction.” Patrick heard his lawyer cursed, “What? That son of a bitch!”

“Granted!”

*Focus, focus and think harder, Patrick.*

The next morning, Patrick was discussing strategies with Anna. She’s holding a witness calling list from the state prosecutor, asking him why the DA chose to summon these particular people. “I cannot remember a bit from that night!” He yelled, with frustration. “I know, because you took too many sleeping pills.” “No, I didn’t. I’ve told you…” “You never took sleeping pills? But there’s trace in your body system, and one pill bottle in your bathroom when police searched your apartment. Why is that?” Patrick stared at Anna angrily, thinking why she didn’t believe him. Then, she spoke again, “Look, I’m just a public defender. You don’t want my help? Suit yourself. It won’t affect my life at all.” Patrick remained in silence for several seconds, and then said, “How am I going to help if you don’t even trust me?” “Trust you? Look at these files against you! How am I supposed to trust you when you don’t provide any proof of innocence?” Patrick opened his mouth. Then, Anna said, “Don’t say you don’t remember.” He closed it again and sat back.

The courtroom was filled with people. Patrick saw Hannah and her mother sitting next to the DA. Behind them, on the first roll of observers’ bench, was Hanna’s boyfriend, Angus Pickle. Patrick and Anna’s previous discussion had led to no end, so they had to sit here and listen to what the witnesses had to say. After everyone and the judge were seated, Charlie Rong started to call upon witnesses.

In the beginning, several tenants in his apartment, including the landlord, were called up to prove that Patrick went into the Moore’s apartment that night. Next, a forensic officer talked about the scene, that is, Patrick’s apartment. The officer presented pictures of the scene: a messy sofa, a liquor bottle, body fluid on the floor, and the sleeping pill bottle in the bathroom. Later, Patrick heard Charlie asked the officer, “So, from these clues, can you portrait the event happened that night?” He saw Anna stand up and object, but was overruled. The officer answered,

“It may be the defendant was drunk, and raped the helpless teenage girl, then got to the bathroom and accidentally took too many pills. Therefore, he woke up with no knowledge of what had happened that night.” Patrick didn’t believe the officer’s words; he knew he didn’t do it. Suddenly, a blurry memory started to came up.

*The weather was so cold. I quickly opened the apartment gate and went inside. Another bad day for my food truck business, I walked upstairs step by step exhaustedly. Then, a figure popped up in front of me, “Oh! Hi, Mr. Peterson. Bad day?” It’s my neighbor, Katelyn Moore’s daughter, Hannah. “Yeah, is it so obvious?” “Of course! Do you wanna come into my home for some cold ones and talk? Maybe I can help.” She answered. “Nah, I don’t think so… and you’re not old enough to drink, aren’t you?” I raised an eyebrow, wondering. “Comm’on, teenagers nowadays drink! Come on in! Come!” She tried to grab my hand. “Umm… I don’t think it’s a good idea.” Then I turned and walked toward my door, and… and… what had happened? Did I go in my home?*

“The prosecution calls upon Dr. Miller.” The DA’s sound interrupted his thinking. He looked up and saw a doctor stand on the stand to describe the examination she had done on Hannah. “Miss Hannah,” she said, “has the psychological condition which is consistent with that of a rape victim.” Then, the DA asked, “What kind of condition is that?” She answered, “Insecurity, unconfident, paranoia, these are common symptoms for rape victims.” “No further questions.” Charlie sat back to the plaintiff seat. It is the defendant’s turn to question the witness. Patrick saw his lawyer stand up, walk to the front of the doctor with a folder on her hands, then speak. “Doctor, are you sure she’d been raped?” “Absolutely!” The doctor answered confidently. “Then,” she opened the folder and present several documents, “please mind the highlighted part. Dr. Miller, why are there no laceration in her genital?” Patrick can see the doctor was surprised by the question. She paused a bit, and slowly, answered, “Mo… most rape cases do have lacerations in both… genitals, but in some… some particular cases… don’t.” She kept swallowing when speaking. *Why does she seem so nervous? Is she hiding something?* His lawyer’s voice interrupted his thought once more. “What makes these cases so ‘particular’?” “Umm… that is, when… both sides are turned on… then have sex… umm… in that case, there will be no laceration.” Just about the time, everything went on so fast that Patrick didn’t follow what had happened. He could recall Angus stood up and shouted, “You’re a monster! Go to hell!” And the judge yelled, “Bailiff! Take him out!” Next, he felt a hard blow on his head and he passed out.

*Wait! I think I remembered something! Huh?! Where am I? My head hurts so badly.*

He opened his eyes. Anna was sitting next to his bed reading something. She looked up and saw he was awake. “How’re you feeling?” She asked. “I’m fine.” He looked around and realized that he was in a hospital, “What happened?” He asked. “Hannah’s boyfriend, Angus, punched you.” She answered with distraction, still reading. “Now, listen, I’ve found some interesting things.” She handed over what she was reading. It was a folder full of photos. Patrick took it and shockingly found a lot of his image in the photos. “I asked my brother to disguise as a cable guy and

FOCUS, FOCUS AND  
THINK HARDER, PATRICK.

entered the Moore’s house. It was terrifying! There were your pictures all over their place, on the walls, in the yearbook, and even pictures on the table. Sorry I didn’t believe you in the first place.” He stared at her with disbelief, “Are you saying they did these on purpose?” “Yes, I’m afraid so. However, illegal evidence cannot be

presented in court, so there’s still no proof of your innocence. Even your landlord testified your presence in their house; I don’t know how I’m going to overturn your case. I have to find a way to let the police search the Moore’s.” Suddenly, Patrick screamed out, “Landlord!” He sat up strait, “That’s it! That’s what I remembered! Wait a moment.” He reached for his cellphone, scrolled through pages, and found the text message. “Look! The landlord asked me to attend his party at Plaza Hotel; it was the afternoon of that day. He could not be in the apartment building.”

Anna looked at the text, then had a flash in her eyes, “Right, this is great! I’ll contact the hotel and see what I can find. If he did lie, others might be lying too!” She looked excited for this new clue. Quickly, she collected her stuff, and then left the room.

Friday, the day for the next trail. *What a nice, sunny day!* Patrick thought to himself. *Hopefully I can be a freeman once again after today.*

*The cell door opened after a buzz sound, “I have terrific news!” Anna came in with excitement. She handed over a tablet to me, “Check on that! I think we finally get a chance to fight back!” I tapped on the “play” button. It was a surveillance footage from the Plaza Hotel, showing the landlord’s presence from afternoon to almost midnight on that day. After watching, I could feel that the heaviness in my stomach was gone. It was the very first time I felt... I felt, how to say that, relief?* “The defendant calls upon witness, Frank Grid.” Anna said after the judge had sat down. “Objection! The witness has been called but the defendant chose not to question him! Your honor.” Charlie yelled out immediately; it seemed like he was ambushed by Patrick and Anna’s move. Judge Randy thought for several seconds, and said, “I find no reason to excuse him from coming to the stand; the witness will come up. Overruled!” Patrick saw that Charlie quickly went through his documents, trying to figure out what they might have prepared for this questioning. “Mr. Grid, you said in this Tuesday’s trail that you’ve seen Mr. Peterson entered the Moor’s premises, correct?” Anna started asking. “Yes, I did.” “Are you sure?” “Yes, indeed I’m sure.”

The landlord answered with a snobby face, making Patrick wanted to punch him. “Then, tell me,” She turned on the television in court, “Is this person you?” She pointed at the face in the video. “I... I...” He sat there silently, staring at the screen. Charlie stood up strait again, “Objection!” he looked panicky too, but with a little despair. “Overruled! Mr. Grid has to answer this question.” Judge Randy said with an expression of amusement; the sudden turn seemed to trigger his interest. The landlord searched around the room, hoping someone would help, “I..., yes, that’s me...” He looked down. “Why did you lie? Don’t you know perjury is a felony?” He didn’t look up, and answered in a low voice, “Katelyn Moore paid me handsomely and asked me for help.” “You liar!” Katelyn stood up angrily, “You... I... I paid you 50 grand! And this is how you repay me? Huh!?” Everyone was shocked by this drama, and then the judge seemed to come back to his senses. “Bailiff! Took both of them away! Oh, and Hannah Moore too.” “What?” Hannah looked scared, “But....” Her mother turned to her, “You useless girl! Such a DISAPPOINTMENT!”

*I can’t really recall a vivid image of what happened next. I heard the judge said, “Mr. Peterson is hereby to be released, effected immediately!” A smack of the hammer of law. Anna came and gave me a hug, “Congratulations!” She said happily. The room was full of noises; everyone in the room was still discussing what had happened. Katelyn was still screaming, “Liar! Evil girl! All of you will PAY for this!” while she was dragged out of the room.*

*Wow, finally, finally....*

# A SNAIL WITH TWO SHELLS CHERYL YEH

I have two homes  
A snail bears two shells  
In which should I choose to dwell?

As two Polarises hang on the sky  
At the dreary and chilly night  
Once I lose the compass of life  
Floating on the sea  
Drifted by the wind  
On which is the brightest to rely?

As two sovereigns in a kingdom  
With hazy line of dominion  
While I’m sentenced to prison  
Ambiguous laws  
With subtle flaws  
Can someone hear the voice of victim?

Oh! My dear parents  
Individually you frame a sweet heaven  
For me, however  
Tears still fall in torrent

The so-called family’s heart  
Suddenly was torn apart  
While you signed on the sheet  
Home was meant to be discrete  
Once you built the garden  
That split in a moment  
Then a voice keeps asking  
In whom am I rooting?

I have two homes  
A snail bears two shells  
My destination is enslaved

# THE GOD’S BOY ALAN LIN

I was doomed to be silly  
Without regard.  
Once you blossomed fiercely  
In my heart,

Behind your beauty,  
How did you judge me?  
In all honesty,  
Was I the clown with no money?

Yes. I took dreams too easy  
Like they were already achieved  
Too flawlessly  
as they were supposed to be

The greater were the parties  
The clearer you were, no longer dim.  
Sunk in New York City, in fantasies  
I was drunk, but with my dream.

Whoever was the loser  
had already been picked  
Never ever would  
I figure I was the one who didn’t win

Then why light up  
My passion in the dark?  
Why calm down  
Soon after I was drowned?

A shot I appreciate  
Wound up the rest I cared  
In a good way

Soundly I was left in the past  
at last.

Being naïve  
Did I sin?  
“You want too much,  
Jay.” You said to me.

# VICTIM ABBY HSU

Fatty, silly, ugly  
These words he hears daily  
Each time when he comes in  
The loud, jeering laugh will begin

Everyone tends to be an outsider  
Rather than to be a defender  
But the victim’s demand  
Is that someone can give a hand

Every day he wakes up with tears  
All he wants to do is escape from that nightmare  
Even if he rejects again and again  
Much more pain he will gain

Founded on those bullies tired of the game  
He is finally released from that bad dream

Freedom, joy, safety  
These words he enjoys daily  
Forced him to be the gang

Bully, outsider, victim  
Like an unlimited circle

Each new victim comes out  
Makes me have a doubt  
So who is the real victim now?

# THE CLASS REUNION LUCIA HSU

Ando Makoto stands at the door, silently staring at his men carrying white clothing covering corps, one by one with stretchers, leaving a room with bloody stain and remains.

20 badly mutilated bodies.

"Inspector Ando, this is the paper of preliminary autopsy. The results show that victims' time of death are all around 18:30pm, according to the booking system, they reserved the room a month ago for their high school reunion from 18: 50 to 22:30. No one payed the bill therefore the waiter came in.....they called at 23:27. Yet we are still questioning the murderer, but it seems that he's somehow insane and we cannot know the motive..."

The policeman pauses at this moment, and peeps at Ando, hoping that he can show "the magic." According to the rumor, this young man can hold a high appointment as he did at his age because he can vividly imagine everything, past, present and future. Therefore, he can deduct what had happened in the crime scene, profile the criminal, and then solve the case.

However, to the policeman's disappointment, Ando just takes over the report then keeps silent. Ando does not look good with his pale face, dilated pupils and a thin layer of sweat; actually, he looks frightened.

Detective Gyoyo seems to have something to say, put he hesitates, Detective Gyoyo tabs on his shoulder to show some support, then he leaves with the other police.

Now there is no one else but Ando Makoto in the room, just Inspector Ando who was recently transferred to Gunma-ken county few days ago. Detective Gyoyo and other police leave without a word, but Ando knows what they were going to say, even the words they really want to express under the unspoken consolation.

Detective Gyoyo who has hold the appointment for years, known as "the good old man," surely wants to say, "It is normal to be afraid when your first case is about a room of corps and a crazy man as a killer. So it is fine to be afraid, you will get used to it." Indeed, although he is the first one who arrives at the crime scene, he does nothing else but stands trembling. Others must have thought that "the youngest genius inspector ever, so what? The cases he had solved must be nothing but small cases without something serious."

He knows that he should show them his ability to represent the scene in his brain, or he will be considered as someone who boasts his ability, which is surely not a good start for his new job. Nevertheless, other things had occupied his brain, something else that is consuming energy as imagining what had happened. When it comes to vividly imagine a scene of crime, one cannot do two such a complicated things at the same time.

Ando knows how he looks like tonight, though a room of corps that was tore by the crazy killer is frightening, Ando knows that it is not the real reason that makes him tremble. Dead body cannot scare him at all. It is not the corps but the names of the corps that make him tremble.

He knows them, all of them, including the insane murderer.

The victims were all his high school classmates.

Eight years ago, because of his father's job transfer, the Makoto family moved to Gunma-ken County.

"I am Ando Makoto, and I come from Haido County... "The young boy on the stage stopped his well-prepared self-introduction. He found out that his future high school classmates looked unfriendly.

The old wooden school building was mad in mountain area and it was an early May morning, the sunshine was dancing through the dancing leaves outside the window. It was supposed to be a warm day. However, Ando Makoto felt shivers down the backbone.

The young boys and girls were not looking indifferent at all, contrarily, they were all smiling, but their eyes stopped his words.

Ando is sure that even tough people who met him told that he was introverted, this time he started to worry about being a member of the class is not out of his personality.

The malicious light in 21 pairs of dark eyes could stun the bravest man, not to mention a thirteen-year-old transfer student.

In the following few days, Ando Makoto learned two facts.

One was that it turned out his feeling at the beginning was totally right. His classmates were not friendly at all.

The other one was that he did not have 21 classmates but 22. The one that did not show up the day was because their classmates locked him in the bathroom compartment. By the way, he learned about it because he was also locked in a bathroom compartment, next to another one that locked the classmate that he



hasn't met.

"Hi, I am Ando Makoto who just transferred from Haido County. I like to read and write, nice to meet you. "For unknown reason—maybe the disappearing hope of being a new person who can easily make friends with others—Ando Makoto spoke out loud the self-introduction draft he had prepared for weeks, hoping that the boy in the next bathroom compartment would answer.

"Hello, I am Mashima Takashi. ...I like to swim and read. Nice to meet you too."

The voice soon broke the silence. It sounded gentle and with energy and confidence. Ando suggested what kind of person were be bullied but in all of his imagination, none of them like this. Ando got a hunch that they'll become friends.

The two boys truly became friends in just a few minutes; though their relationship started in the smelly bathroom.

When the sun set, the two boys finally managed to get out of the bathroom. Ando Makoto found out that his new friend had very attractive appearance. Even in humble cloth, his childish face and innocent eyes shining in the orange sunshine makes him look like a fallen angel. Moreover, Mashima Takashi did have certain relationship with angel: he was an orphan adopted by an old nun.

Few years ago, the kind old nun died, leaving Takashi amount of inheritance which was just enough for him to pay for the tuition. In a poor County like Gunma-ken, there was no social care. Takashi always studies hard to get good grade so he can earn scholarship and leave this pool county to have further study.

Ando thought that there were reasons that made them become friends, but the similarity makes them become friends soon. Takashi was lonely because he had no one to talk to after the nice old nun dead. Ando was lonely too. Though he has family, they were never close. Takashi was different, in another hand. He was such a good person: positive attitude, good appearance, kind, smart and confident, the kind of person Ando dreamed to be. It must be envy that makes the other classmates bully Takashi. To Ando, he is a friend too good to be true.

Though both of the boys were bullied but both of them considered this is the best time they ever had. Every morning before time to school, they met at riverbank and swim for a while. Ando didn't know how to swim because Haido didn't have rivers or lakes. But when he tried to turn down Takashi's swimming invitation, Takashi said "No problem, I can teach you. Swimming is like floating in another world, I hope you can enjoy that good feeling too." Takashi was not that kind of talkative friend. Actually, he seldom talked unless someone talked to him first. Swimming was one of the three things that Takashi taught Ando. The second one was using imagination.

After swimming, Ando and Takashi would try to go to school. If they were not caught by their classmates, they would made it to classroom; if they fail, they would work together to escape from any place they were locked in, and then went to library or some other place to study. Teachers didn't care there are 20 or 22 students in the class—usually in a urban school, students skipped classes so they can play or worked in their parents' farmland. Once students showed up in midterms and got good grades, teachers did not care anything.

Ando was always a good student, but never a clever one. Takashi taught him his way to study, a unique way he invented: using imagination, describe every detail then sees the relationship of all the things that he wants to remember. With time goes by, the shelter they had were discovered by the other classmates. When summer arrives, they stop going to school. Even they go to school, they will not have chance to arrive classroom anyway.



The bully action became more serious. At the beginning, they put insect in their drawer, then dead animals in their locker. Once Ando found out their water bottle floating with strange bobbles, they decided to stop going to school. The one last thing Takashi taught Ando was at the night before Ando's family moved to Tokyo. Ando's father got another job transfer.

"I'm here to say goodbye, Takashi." After his parents went to bed, Ando sneaked out and went to Takashi's place, an abandon waterwheel house in the forest. The two boys build a fire and lie down at the ground, staring at starry night

"I know how I look like in their eyes." Takashi acted as he did not hear Ando.

"I know the motive which made them do those...things to us. They had done it for years before you came. Do you know that the first day they don't like you is because you are an outsider, but if you put a dead mouse's head in my lunch box, you will be part of them" Takashi's face became well-defined because of the shadow from the orange camp fire.

"They'll accept you, eventually, if you were not my friend," Takashi turned his face toward the other side, staring at somewhere dark in the forest." But then they find out you are with me."

"They treat me like this because I'll never be one of them. I don't do bad things, I don't.....well, Anto .....forgive me, if I had told you earlier, you might have had them as friends...."

"Don't say that, both of us disdain to have that kind of 'friend,' we both know that. Let's don't talk about it. Takashi ..."

"You are very right about that. You know you don't need to be unconfident in yourself...it is my honor to have you as my best friend, Ando. Thank you. "

"You are my best friend, too. I'll come to see you in winter vacation. Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

That was the last word Andosaid to Takashi.

After Ando moved to his new school, with the three things that Takashi had taught him, Ando led a new life. Everyone thought that he was a perfect student: clever, confident and good at sport especially swimming.

Every time when Ando heard comments like this, he thought of his friend Takashi. Although Ando was a little bit curious about why Takashi didn't contact with him, it seemed normal because Takashi didn't have telephone and not to mentioned having extra money to pay for the postal fee. Anyway, Ando really missed his friend.

But when he back to Gunma-ken county, the reason was not as he had thought.

"Mashima Takashi ? He passed away few months ago, poor boy. We found his body laying at the riverbank, we thought that he was drowned, well, his classmates said that he didn't know how to swim, I got to say that it's too dangerous for someone to live by river but don't know how to swim..."

Anto couldn't hear it anymore. His friend was killed by those classmates. He must be. Takashi was the one who taught him to swim, how could be not able to swim? He ran to the police but no one believes his words.

Ando knows what he will work for. He will become an inspector, one day he would back and .....

Bbbbbbbbeeeeeeee!

Inspector Ando stops imagining, and gets a glimpse of his watch.

It's seven p.m.

If nothing goes wrong, according to his imagination, waiters will call the police at 23:27 and none of his crew will suspect him. All they will think of is guessing that he is just a too young inspector.

Ando opens the door, ready to join a high school reunion that he was not invited.

"Hi, you might not remember me, but I am Ando Makoto."

# WELCOME TO OUR WORLD, DESPERADO! MIKAE WU

Wrap up the unbearable, desperado. For the sun rises from  
East, then we format our memory spectrum  
Right here, right now, we live to the fullest because yesterday’s a history  
  
Tomorrow’s a mystery. To the present we shall not succumb  
Hope like you’ve never been in despair. Love like it’ll never turn sour  
Embark on your journey and never detour  
  
Choose your love and love your choice  
A day of memory is what we have so seize your 24 hour  
Record everyday so that we won’t forget how to cherish  
Perhaps that’s the only legacy after we perish

Everlasting is the word deleted from our language  
  
Doubt nothing but your determination whether to fail or flourish  
If life is a play full of catastrophe  
Entirely act out every tragedy like comedy  
Mask off and dance like nobody’s watching  
Easy come easy go is our claim  
Super heroes and normal people all die the same  
Epitaph imprinted “Carpe diem”

# DESTINY OR COINCIDENCE HENRY KAO

The golden apple is the curse.  
Young shepherd, would you make the right choice?  
Stupid or amorous.  
Destruction is the cost of romance.  
Was it destiny or coincidence?

Queen of Sparta  
Skin, as white as snow.  
Eyes, like a shining diamond.  
Oh, how many hearts did you steal?  
fatal attraction and dangerous beauty.  
Would you go with the prince of Troy?  
Was it destiny or coincidence?

Bireme and pentekonter shroud the sea  
Blue became black  
Fury Sparta king wield the sharp tomahawk.  
Roaring battle drums, snarling war bugles,

Tear the silence of morning  
The stepping and shouting  
Shake the ground and quake the cities  
Prince of Troy, would you make the right choice.  
Oh God, could you tell me the answers  
Was it destiny or coincidence?

Sky pour down the arrow rain  
clank, clang  
Clash of swords thunder in the field.  
Woe and scream resonate the shield.  
Soldiers, be brave, not to yield.  
Kill them all.  
Slash them all.  
Crush them all.

Morning sunshine glitter on ashen corpses  
Was it destiny or coincidence?

Nine years passed.  
Wooden horse was the sign of end.  
White moon turned into red.  
The Death came for the dead.  
The king whined with a haunting dirge  
Troy was anoited by blood. Oh, this dread,  
Was it destiny or coincidence?

# RUMOR YVONNE WU

I

“Congratulations!”

“There’s no one more suitable than you to be our next club leader!”

Hearing applause, I couldn’t hide my happiness and, to be honest, a bit proud of the result of the election. But of course it should be me. After all, I’ve done so much and sacrificed more.

“You finally get what you want. I am happy for you,” Allie patted on my shoulder and said. I grabbed her closer and bend my arm round her shoulder as I said “Without your supports, nothing can be done, my dearest best friend.” Indeed, Allie is my best friend since kinder garden. Years passed by, but time never drives us apart. We always go to the same school and always walk home together. It’s hard to find such a close friend in this jungle life of high school. It seems like I should ask for no more. However, I still have one more wish uncompleted. “So how’s your hunting game with the...what’s his name?” Allie used her poor acting, faking that she doesn’t know the name of the boy I had a crush on. I move my hand off her shoulder, said “It’s Aden. And it’s not a hunting game; I don’t even have a chance to talk to him. He’s just a transfer student sitting next to me. For now, I hope.”

“Maybe I could help.” Allie bended her arm round my shoulder. It turned out that Aden was not only a boy sitting next to me but also a boy living next door to Allie’s house. “Well, you must have greeted his parents already,” trying to conceal my excitement, I turned around and said. “Yes, and we two family are going to spend some dinner time together. Do you want to come and stay over?”

“It’s a date.”

II

That night came as it was supposed to, but it was not an ordinary day for me. Pearl-white popped out my eyes while peach-pink made my skin glow. I’ve heard that blue is Aden’s favorite color. Maybe I should put a sapphire blue hair band . Though it is not in the 18 centuries, I dressed up like I was making the sixteen-year-old-debute, waiting to be picked by the most attractive male in the ball. And of course, this man was not Allie’s dad or another fifty year old gentleman. My heart beat as the clock ticking. Tic-tac, Tic-tac. There were five more minutes to go before 5p.m. when Allie should pick me up. But she didn’t.

And her phone was off. Dead off.

The next morning, she was absent due to some personnel reason. Sitting in the lady’s restroom, I kept thinking about what could have been the reason. Was she sick? Any urgent things happened? Dozens of excuses I tried to find for her, but none of them could explain the fact that she still had not answered any of my calls.

“Have you heard of what had happened? Someone said she saw Allie and the new transfer student last night.” I couldn’t bear this kind of grating on the ear. But I had to hear on.

“Yeah, so what?”

“So what? What’s the reason they had to sneak out to meet each other? I bet there’s something.”

“Who said it? Who said she saw it?” I slammed the door of the last toilet stall, where I listen to all these crap. Two freshmen in our club were there, stunned and speechless.



“Didn’t you hear my words? Can’t hear but can gossip, huh? I said who exactly said she SAW it!” I tried hard not to pull up my fist or slap them on the cheeks. I only shouted.

“It was the vice-club leader,” she trembled her lips and mumbled.

I couldn’t believe what I heard. Or, I couldn’t believe Allie would do this to me. Ran as fast as I could, I reached to the club office, hoping to find an answer.

There she was, the vice club leader, my vice club leader. Looking at her, I suddenly understood the reason why I was mad like crazy. Vicky is a straight A student and always kind to everyone. Her eyes are bigger than mine, her skin is whiter than mine and, of course, her family is richer than mine. What’s more, her dad is the mayor of our city and her mother is the president of the school charity. I could take a wild guess that her brother’s name is Victor or something. Despite all above, she helps tutoring poor kids in the county church every weekend. My anger was not out of jealousy. It was because such a person would never gossip around something trivial which has nothing to do with their life.

“Hi, Tiffany, would you mind helping me out with this club evaluation form that needs to be sent out tomorrow?” Noticing my arrival, she handed me some paper. Not exaggerating, her soft voice sounds like what angel sounds like, according to the church songs.

“Sure, no problem,” I answered mindlessly, flipping the papers.

“Congratulations again. Having you as our club leader indeed is the best choice our seniors had made.....” Maybe it was her tender voice that made hearing her

difficult; or maybe it was my plan to spit out the next sentence blocked me.

“Did you...did you say that you saw Allie and the transfer student together last night?” I spitted it anyway.

“I am sorry. I never meant to let you know that. I cannot believe Allie was this kind of girl.” I could not believe such an innocent voice will speak out with these evil words.

“What do you mean by that? What exactly did you see last night?”

“I...”

“You can tell me. You must tell me.”

“I saw them walking into a car. I... I am sorry.”

Rumor has that they slept together.

## RUMOR HAS THAT THEY SLEPT TOGETHER.

III

“Vicky? Are you in there? I am here for the club evaluation!”

It was Allie. How dare she.

The door soon was opened by me, her best friend ever. Need only one hand to open the door, the other one spared no rest. I slapped her, a deep fierce hot slap. I knew it must hurt based on how my hand was equally burning. As I coldly whisper “Bitch,” I hoped that was the end; the end of the fight, the end of our friendship, the end of the rumor. But it wasn’t, at least not the fight. Students on the hallway started gathering around. Everyone was discussing, about the fight, about our friendship, about the rumor.

“What are you doing?” an even cooler response from A.

“It’s my way of saying that I don’t want to be friends with people like you.” I turned around, face to her, shouting out my defense with tears rolling.

“I know I canceled our dinner date yesterday. But I have a good reason.”

“What? Turning into another lovely date with another A?”

“Why would I do that? It was you who like him, not me!” I couldn’t decide which one is more embarrassing. I, as the newly selected club leader, fought with my club member in front of the office and everyone. Or, the whole school just learned of my secret crush.

For some moment, silence was the host of this fight.

“Listen, I...” she tried to save it, our friendship.

“what? I can’t believe you have face to come here.” I broke it.

“It is all over the campus. Everyone knows your little affair yet you still decide to lie. You lie to me!” The consistent shouting made my voice hoarse and the tears dried, leaving two straight stains.

“And you choose to believe rumor and random gossip over our friendship?” That was the frostiest voice I’ve heard in my life.

“I can’t be friends with you anymore. In fact, I don’t even want to stay in the same room, in the same club with you. I’ll leave the club. I don’t want to see you again.”

I walked away, from the spot, and from our friendship.

IV

As I walked and tripped to the garden soullessly, I couldn’t help but think over and over again of what had happened back there. Whatever it was, it bushed me. Dragging my tired out body, I sat on the bench, feeling unprecedented emptiness. I was all alone.

“Are you okay?”

The angel-like Vicky walked to me and asked. “Yes, well...no. I am not okay. But I guess it’s a good thing to see her through at this early point. As a club leader and her ex-best friend, I can’t accept it. After all, what you saw was nothing worth bragging about. And now I am neither ... ”

“What did I see?” She put on a tricky smile that was not supposed to be shown on that innocent face.

“You did see it, right? You said you saw Allie and Aden both in the car and...” I looked up at her, frowning, questioning.

“When?” she took a step back, like nothing happened and nothing has to do with her. “I never said that. Even if I did, who can prove it? Just like no one can prove that they did sleep together.” Her angel-like voice turned squawky.

“But you said you saw it.” I stood up and grabbed her shoulder, really hard. In response, she gave me a smile, not an angel-like smile anymore, and moved my hands with no efforts.

“Wake up. ” “I made that up. Stupid thing like you should not be the leader of our club.”

Rumor has that they slept together. Rumor has that.....