

My Soul Is In The Sky

Pages: 326
Format: pdf, epub
Language: English

[DOWNLOAD FULL EBOOK PDF]

My Soul

Is in

the Sky

Summer Murong

Copyright © 2017 Summer Murong

All rights reserved.

The characters and events portrayed in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

ISBN-13: 978-1522800132

ISBN-10: 1522800131

To Marian Stevens

Contents

[1 Night Run](#)

[2 Papa](#)

[3 an injured man](#)

[4 General Wei](#)

[5 Family History](#)

[6 zhao yan](#)

[7 fiancée](#)

[8 number thirteen](#)

[9 Welcome to the Family](#)

[10 Winter Banquet](#)

[11 The Saddle](#)

[12 La Vie en Rose](#)

[13 Run Away](#)

[14 Just a Boy](#)

[15 Nightmare](#)

[16 Imperial University](#)

[17 Kitesurfing](#)

[18 The Lake](#)

[19 Assassination](#)

[20 Escape](#)

[21 Prince Liu Ju](#)

[22 Steal Rain](#)

[23 Proposal](#)

[24 Hot Spring](#)

[25 The Other Woman](#)

[26 Leaving](#)

[27 Journey to Xiongnu](#)

[28 Living on Steppe](#)

[29 Love and War](#)

[30 Battle of Mobei](#)

[31 Death](#)

[32 Back in Chang'an](#)

[33 Cruise](#)

[34 Heqing](#)

[35 Armor](#)

[36 Farewell](#)

[37 Neverynight](#)

[ABOUT THE AUTHOR](#)

“You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have.”

---Bob Marley

1 Night Run

I love running. It has always been a meditation for me. It smooths out every twisted nerve and caresses every tightened muscle. When a tingling sensation waves through my body, usually after two or three miles of running, I can feel the awakening of the real me. Only then my body and soul begin to unite.

My mom always says that when life throws you a curve just run it through. The first time I heard it, it was on my first day of middle school in San Diego. That afternoon, I came home crying my heart out, feeling lonely and self-pity. After twelve years living in China with my grandparents, I found it hard in a new school and a new country. I had no friends and I knew nobody. I was so out of place. I also missed my grandparents, who have been taking care of me since I was a baby.

My Mom and my Dad divorced when I was three. Like most Chinese, my Mom came to the United States to pursue her medical degree. My Dad, a Hungarian descendant, was also a medical student. As two doctors in training, they only realized how impossible it was to take care of a baby after they had me. So I was sent back to China with yearly visits, either they went to China or I flew to them.

When my Mom came home that afternoon, she forced my door open with a key and handed me a warm towel for my tears. Ignoring my red puffy eyes, she insisted on me putting on my sneakers. She then drove me to Sunset Cliff, where we started running and kept on running until the sun sank completely into the ocean.

That was the beginning of my running. To me, its complicity lies in its simplicity. There is no equipment required other than a pair of running shoes, or not, since there are lots of bare-foot runners. I run when I feel happy, I run when I feel sad. No matter what kind of mood I am in, running can always level things out.

So tonight, a beautiful autumn night, I run along the river outside Chang'an, the Capital city of Han Dynasty, and the year is 124BC.

Until now, I still do not understand what happened to me. I went to sleep in my own bedroom after my high school prom, woke up in the morning and found out that I have changed into a fourteen-year-old girl in a totally different place and a different time.

I was surrounded by a woman and two teenage boys. They were dressed in the ancient Chinese

clothes. I could understand what they said since they spoke in a Chinese dialect my grandparents speak. They were telling me how worried they were when I lost consciousness due to high fever. I eventually realized the woman is the mother of the fourteen years old girl and two teenage boys. They kept referring me as "Shiaonu", so I assumed it is the name of the girl I have become.

I thought I was in a deep dream, the one that you can't wake up from. So I closed my eyes and forced myself sleep more. When I woke up again next morning and found out everything stayed the same, I panicked. It terrified me so much that I started screaming and hitting myself against the wall in order to wake up from the nightmare. The woman and two boys came to me quickly and calmed me down with gentle words and warm hugs.

Later that day, that woman brought me a bowl of chicken soup. She cooked it the same way as my own grandma. I drank some broth and then noticed the hungry eyes from the younger teenager. I gestured him to have some. He shook his head and told me it was only prepared for me since I was sick.

From that moment, I knew I was not in any immediate danger. I did not try anything drastic anymore, instead, I stop talking. I knew I'd better shut up and conceal the wild turmoil inside. I pretended I have lost my memory. This strategy brought me time to observe the new world.

From their conversations, I found out some useful information. They live in a village located next to a city called Chang'an, which was the original name for city Xi An. I have lived in Xi An with my grandparents for twelve years. So I know the geographic location right away.

As for the time, I found it out when they talked about their Emperor, who is Emperor Wu. Based on Emperor's current age, I figured out the year, which is 124BC in Gregory Calendar.

People here refer themselves as Han, instead of Chinese. They live in Han Dynasty, their Emperor is Emperor Wu of Han, and their language is Han.

Day by day, I collected more and more information about the world I am in.

I thought about lots of possibilities on what happened to me, from hallucination, parallel universe, worm holes, time bending, teleporting, and something with more Eastern flavor: reincarnation, soul wondering or body snatching. Till now, I still have not figured out. But I learned to cope with it.

Keep calm and stay alive, that is my motto now and I repeat it every day.

In this new world, I have a family of five: two parents and three children. I am the youngest one with two brothers older than me. The Dad, whom I haven't met yet, is serving in the army at a border city next to Xiongnu, a northern neighboring country next to Han. He has been gone for about two years prior to my arrival.

The Mom, whom I had such a hard time to get used to her almost indulging affection, treated me like a little baby. I was never treated with such an attentiveness. I have been in constant embarrassment when she exhibits her love towards me, regardless of time, location or if we are in private or in front of anybody else. I believe my skin got thicker. Day by day, I become more and more attached to her. She is a hard worker like my own mom. Seeing her working non-stop every day, both at home and in the fields, I feel the urge to help. It's not just because she has been so kind to me, but also I feel the guilt of taking the life away from her real daughter.

When I started talking and called her Niang (mom) she burst into tears and cried for hours. I was

thought to be "head-burnt" and would become retarded after the high fever. I believe I came to this world at the same time when the real Shiaonu was suffering.

My older brother Jinu, eighteen years old, comes home every ten days. He works as an apprentice in a blacksmith shop in town. When he comes home, he always brings me little gifts: a small cricket in a straw box, some red flowers to color my nails or a carved box for my hairband. He pulls the weeds, waters the crops and makes sure we have enough fire wood and water while he is not around. Jinu is the big help for my mom and the dependable brother to me.

Ponu, sixteen years of age, is my constant companion and a big headache to Niang. He forgets chores and gets distracted easily. It's quite often to see Niang chasing him with a broom. Ponu is a nut case when it comes to martial arts. He told me that someday he would go tour the world and find himself a martial art Shifu, preferably someone low-key and mysterious. That reminded me of the Master Shifu in Kung Fu Panda.

Every time when Ponu makes some imaginary Kung Fu moves in front of me, I contemplate if I should share some moves I learned from my three years after-school martial art training. But so far, I kept everything as intact as possible. After all, I am a bit concerned about tampering the timeline.

I tried to behave the same way as them. But too often I still see their surprised look. When someone has lived in a family for fourteen years, it's easy to detect the changes. Fortunately, they are not curious type and their love to me is blind. They brushed off those doubts easily.

Niang cried again when she found out I did not know how to light the fire using two rocks. She told me I knew how to start a fire when I was six. She started teaching me, from putting on the awfully complicated clothes, layer by layer, to wearing the wooden clogs, which I am still having a hard time with. I'd rather be in bare feet or in straw shoes.

When I realized that my stay might be long, I re-assessed my situation: I do not have any communication problem. I can speak Mandarin perfectly, thanks to my Chinese Grandparents at my mom side. Mandarin, the official language in modern-day China, is not quite far from the language used in Han. They have the same grammar, same structure, same sequence, but different sounds and a few differences in naming the same objects. The problem lies in writing. Writing is quite different than what I used to know. Luckily, the girl in this world did not learn how to write or read. With the help of memory loss, I can easily be myself in this world.

I also decided to train myself physically. In such a primitive time, the survivorship depends largely on the physical ability. I work on my flexibility, my running speed, and my endurance. I do not put any effort on strength training since my best chance in a dangerous situation is to run rather than to fight.

I run at night after everyone goes to sleep. My nightly running has been going quite well. I even increased my running from about one mile to about ten miles every night. Every five days, I pull a three-hour running.

I miss a good pair of running shoes badly. But in this world, there is no cotton or rubber yet. Those two items will only be available hundred years later. So I made my own straw shoes and strengthened them by wrapping an old long linen sash. There is silk, but it is too expensive for my family. Linen is the fabric we use most of the time. After the skin on my feet got enough torture, I thoroughly enjoyed them. They are economic, easy-to-make, and mostly, they turned me into a minimalist runner, a goal I could only hope for but was too painful to reach in previous life.

So in this crispy autumn night, I ran again along the river, my favorite path.

It has been seven months since I came to this world. From initial panic, I have accepted the fact that I have transmigrated to ancient China. I don't know how it happened, nor do I know how to get back or if I can get back. I am now living in this world as a fourteen-year-old country girl. I need to learn how to survive in ancient China. With all my knowledge of Chinese history and contemporary science, I have quite an advantage.

I also started to appreciate the world before industrialization. It can be very inconvenient for most of the time, but a night like tonight is something I really enjoy.

It is quiet and beautiful. The moon is high and the breeze is gentle. The willow trees sway beautifully along with the light and shadow. A few dim lights skipped out the farm houses far away. Occasionally I can hear dogs barking.

I have taken off my overly-clumsy clothes, packed them in my self-made backpack. I then put on a pair of shorts, cutting from my brother's old pants, and a t-shirt made of two pieces of linen cloth.

As usual, by this time, most of the people have gone to bed. When I sneaked out of the house, I could hear the calm and even breath from Niang and Ponu.

It is a really a relaxing run. My breath is steady and my pulse is strong.

When I first detected the unusual sound, it was very subtle, just a bit different than the sound of wind. Then it became clear. I can tell it is the sound of a horse galloping coming towards me from my back. I stop my running and listen for a while, estimating how soon they will be able to catch up with me.

No matter who is there, I do not believe it is a good idea to let them see me.

I find a dark spot and hide in the night shadow.

I have stayed calm until the dog barking. I know I am in trouble. The dog has found my hiding place. I start to run as fast as I can.

Normally I would not think I can out run a well-trained dog. But from his heavy panting, I can tell the dog has been running for a while. And I really don't have any other choice but run.

But I am deadly wrong this time after I find myself at the end of a tree branch. I cannot move any further. The branch won't be able to hold my weight. I look down, trying to figure out if I can land safely if I jump, but it's too dark to tell how high I have climbed.

"Who are you?" His face is in the shadow while his sword shines. And it points at my throat.

For the past thirty minutes, this guy has been chasing me on his horse. I have outrun his dog, but he did not stop. So I ran into the woods with lots of low hanging branches. It has caused quite a few curses from him. But he still did not stop. He just got off the horse and pursued me on foot.

So here we are, I got on a tree and stayed on top hoping he would give up. But that was a mistake I made. He is a better climber than I am. When he pulled a sword out of nowhere, I could feel the

cold sweats on my back.

I do not answer.

He deliberately steps on the branch where I am and shake it. I quickly grab another branch over my head and try to keep my balance.

"Why did you run?" He asks again.

"Why did you chase me?" I ask him.

He leans forward and his face is now under the moon light. I can see the disbelief on his face.

"You are a girl? " Or is that a question?

I tighten my lips and decide not to say anything.

Hearing nothing from me. He slowly withdraws his sword and puts it back to his sheath.

"You are a very good runner." He tells me while examining me carefully. When he sees my self-made t-shirt and shorts, he raises his eyebrows.

In Han, women should be covered at least from neck down. Unmarried women from well-off families are expected to wear a veil when they go out. Their faces can only be seen by their family members. A lot of couples have never seen each other until their wedding night.

So he gave me a look of extreme disapproval.

"Have you had hairpin ceremony yet?" He asks me. The hairpin ceremony marks the end of a girl's childhood and the beginning of womanhood. Without a hairpin ceremony, a girl is still considered to be a kid, thus the misbehavior is easier to be forgiven.

"No." I answer him.

But my croaked voice was misunderstood by him.

"Don't need to cry." He says. "I am not going to hurt you. But why are you still outside at this late night?"

"I like to run and my mom won't let me."

He seems surprised by my answer.

"A little girl likes to run... but why?"

"I just like it and it helps me..." I hesitated if I should continue.

"What does it help you?"

"It helps me to run away when I am in danger."

At first, he looks surprised by my answer, then he chuckles as if he just heard something very funny. With me being cornered by him at the end of a tree branch, it does sound like a joke.

"I guess I have not run fast enough." I admit it to him.

"Oh, you did run very fast, and your endurance is very good too." He says. "But you should not expect to deal with dangers on your own. Your family, like your father or your brothers, should protect you. Once you are married, your husband should do the same. Then your son and so on. As a girl, you should stay home doing weaving or embroidery, or something domestic. Instead of running at night, wearing things like that." His voice trails down at the end.

"That is just a male chauvinism shit," I mumble, which is definitely an adrenaline spike. I should have bitten off my tongue.

"A what? " He might not understand chauvinism, but he definitely picked up the disagreeable tone.

I stay quiet this time.

"You don't like staying home?" he asks me again.

"No."

"Then what do you want to do?"

I used to think I would travel the world after my graduation from graduate school, blogging my experience along the way, then go back to school to work on my Ph.D. after a few years of wandering. Anything further than that had not emerged in my mind. But now I am stuck in this world, the plan has detoured.

"First go home and then travel the world." I do not expect him to understand. But I have been living on my tiptoes for so long, I feel the urge to dump it to a stranger and talk it freely for once. It might be the dark night, or it might be the strangely strong feeling that he would not hurt me. Somehow, I feel like he is good with secrets.

"Travel the world by running? " He smirks.

"Maybe, as well as fly, train, ship, car, horses, camels...." I sigh and really miss my own world.

He chuckles again. "You are a weird girl with weird thoughts"

"They are not weird. In my world, they are normal. " I feel good talking with a stranger without pretending.

"I see..." After a long pause. He continues. "Where is your world?"

"I don't know. Somewhere out there. " I point towards the sky. "I am looking for it too. And I don't even know how to get here."

He moves back and leans on a tree trunk comfortably. Then he raises his head and looks at the sky. His glance lands on the moon.

He shows no interests in talking to me anymore. That suits me well too. I have spoken too much anyway.

It is the beginning of fall. Summer gradually gives away its furious steam. Cool breeze slows down

my otherwise pouring sweats and my racing mind.

I can't help wondering if there is anything else other than the moon he is staring at. So I turn my head and look at the same direction where he has been staring at. But other than the moon, there is nothing else. So I switch my eyes back on him again. Then I realized he is not staring at anything. His eyes are closed. And that gives me the opportunity to stare at him as much as I want.

He looks quite young, not too much older than me, about 5'10 or 5'11. He wears a narrow-cuffed, knee-length tunic over a pair of loosely fitted pants. A black belt is around his waist and a pair of same colored soft boots.

He is quite handsome. Straight and dominant nose with a pair of almond shaped eyes. His eyebrows are in sword-like shape slanting upwards towards his temples. His upper lip is thin and straight and the lower one is soft and plump. His split chin is obvious with the moon light casting a dark dimple in the middle.

He stays perfectly still as if his mind has drifted away and his body left behind.

"Hmm..." I clear my throat. "Are you all right?"

"No, my soul is somewhere in the sky. " He says it with his eyes closed and his lips curling up.

"Ha-ha, my soul is in the sky. " Shakespeare would be very happy to find out an ancient Chinese just quoted him or was that Shakespeare copied him?

Then he opens his eyes. "You are quite a little girl."

All right, I might be only fourteen in this world, but I have already had my seventeen year birthday in my original world. Psychologically, I feel even older with everything happened to me. Has there been any seventeen years old need to worry about time traveling or teleporting? Or how to survive afterward? I do not think so.

He pulls himself away from the tree trunk and stands tall on the tree.

"Do you live far?" He asks me.

I am hesitant on how I should answer his question.

He seems to understand what I am thinking. "If you live within 5 li from here, I will drop you off by your door. But if you live further than that, you will have to go with me to Chang'an." Then he adds. "Don't think that I will let you go anywhere alone at this late night."

"Will you promise not to wake up my family?" I ask him.

He nods.

We get down the tree and he finds his dog and horse waiting. They just took a much-needed break.

He mounts on the horse and extends his right hand to me.

I shake my head. "I will run."

He looks amazed. "You can still do that after all the running you have done tonight?"

"Yes."

"All right then." He then calls his dog who jumps right into his arms with a happy bark.

He gives the horse a light squeeze at the belly with his feet and they start moving.

I give myself a good stretch before I run.

"You lead the way." His voice comes in the dark.

2 Papa

I wake up late the next morning and find myself alone on the Kang, the bed platform.

Niang (mom) always let me sleep as much as I want, whenever I want. That is quite different from my own mother, who leads a very self-disciplined life herself. She always thought I have been badly spoiled by my grandparents when I lived in China. So her way of toughening me up has caused quite a friction between us. We had a hard time getting along the first year after I came back to U.S. Things eventually got better, especially after I was accepted to the gifted program later. But I still had to follow a lot of rules. I had to go to bed no later than eleven at night; I had to attend all the activities she signed up for me; I had to learn all the extra curriculums she has found for me. All these rules had made me an absolute nerd and a total bore in the eyes of others. But my mom did not care at all. She likes to say "Someday you will appreciate everything I have asked you to do."

Academically, I was fine. Socially, I was a pure disaster.

"Shiaonu" My younger brother Ponu breaks my thought.

"What is it?" I still lie down on the Kang, stretching a bit, feeling lazy and relaxed.

"Hurry up, I just found the duck eggs." Ponu can never hide his excitement.

I scramble off the Kang and quickly put on my clothes. About seven months back, my older brother Jinu brought home twenty duck eggs. Since I was taking care of chickens for the family, which was the only chore Niang has assigned to me, I think it won't be too much trouble to take care of some ducks along the way. After eating like a vegan for two months, I can literally drool over any dish with a drop of oil, not to mention some delicious meat.

Niang struggles with money all the time. Other than a few acres of farm land and occasional sales of linen fabric woven by Niang, the family doesn't have any other source of income. Jinu, an apprentice for a blacksmith shop, doesn't get paid, but a free room and board.

Other than what grows in our own fields, we don't have money to buy other food. I began to look around for any possible source of food. There are actually lots of food available: fish and crabs from the pond, bamboo shoot from bamboo woods and wild vegetables in the fields. But I'd like to have a steady supply of nutritious food. That's why I have been very enthusiastic about raising chicken and ducks.

I started with five chickens in the backyard. At first, they would not lay eggs, even after Ponu borrowed a big rooster from one of our neighbors. Then I remembered how people feed earthworms to the chickens in the organic chicken farm. So I took Ponu running around the hill every day to dig for earthworms. That worked. All our chickens lay eggs daily. We then expanded our chicken colony and we also started a life with at least one egg per person per day.

By now we have thirty hens laying eggs daily. We also started saving extra eggs. Every time when Jinu goes back to town, he brings eggs with him to sell them at the farmer's market.

"How many did you get?" I rush out to the kitchen and quickly brush my teeth with willow branches and salt.

"Let me take you there. Those ducks did not lay eggs in the chicken nest."

Ponu is never patient. He would rather see me running out with him right off the bed. As soon as I finish brushing my teeth, he grabs my hand and leads me to the lakes.

"Girls are so fussy." He complains.

"..." I have only brushed my teeth. I haven't even got the chance to wash my face or brush my hair.

We live in a village next to Bahe River. Along the river path, a large area of swamps and ponds were formed due to the low altitude and run-off water. As a farming village, villagers are more interested in the property that can grow grains. So this area has been left alone. After the ducklings, hatched by hens, were about 20 days old, Ponu and I have been herding them here every day, where they hunt their own food in the water.

"Look, look over there." Ponu points out a piece of dry land in the middle of the pond.

A couple of white spots between the high reeds. I can barely make it out. "Those white spots?"

"Yes, they are eggs. I only found out when one duck came out there."

This is a good news. "Do you think there are more eggs hiding there?"

"I believe so. They are really bad ducks. Laying eggs at a place where we cannot collect." He

complains. I got tickled by that. I try to tell him that they are the angry birds and we are the pigs. But he would not get the joke.

Anyway, it is a relief. We have been wondering how come those ducks won't lay eggs for quite some time now. They don't like the earthworms we provided to them.

"Let's go make a raft." I suggest.

"Really? How?"

Ponu has always been my accomplice in crime. Most of the time, I come up with ideas and he executes them.

"We can cut some bamboos and tie them as a bamboo raft."

"That will work?" He questions.

"Of course." I have never made one myself, but I have seen many.

Right next to the pond, there is a large area of bamboo woods. It takes us a whole day to get all the bamboos we need. With just a dull knife, Ponu has done all the chopping and cutting. I think it's time to ask Jinu to make a hand saw for us.

When we get home, Niang has started cooking dinner already. Neither Niang nor my mom is a good cook. My mom only cares for nutritional values. She thinks it's a waste a life spending hours cooking. To her, a good book is more satisfying than a good meal. I started cooking after my mom fed me the same food for a week: tuna salad with canned chicken soup.

"Niang, what are you cooking?" I enter the kitchen and see Niang is busy kneading the dough. Ponu went to the backyard to herd the ducks back and feed chickens.

"I was thinking about making some Bing Zi."

Bing Zi is like a pizza slowly bake over the pan. But I am hungry. I have not eaten anything all day.

I see the boiling water in a clay pot and some washed tomatoes. I suggest to Niang. "Niang, how about I cook something quickly. I am hungry and I believe you are hungry too."

"Sure." She immediately stops what she is doing.

I have been cooking a lot recently. At the beginning, my cooking was terrible since most of the ingredients are different than the ones I know. After a while, I got a hang of them and started cooking really delicious food. Both Niang and Ponu enjoy my cooking. And their encouragement made me even more adventurous in replicating what my grandma used to cook.

"Let's make a Mao Er Duo." Mao Er Duo, cat ear, is just a fast-cooking noodle soup, with any soup base you like.

Niang has already got used to my new ideas. She just calmly says. "All right, let me make sure the fire works for you."

I removed some water into a different pot. Mao Er Duo is easy to make. With the dough ready by

hand, I just need to get the soup base ready. So I crack four eggs in the pot with boiling water and gently mix the soup with a pair of chopsticks, then quickly dice tomatoes and put them into the egg soup. With the dough on my left hand, I then use my right hand to quickly pull small pieces of dough with my thumb and index finger. The pulled dough should be the same size as a cat ear, hence the name.

While the Mao Er Duo is cooking, I wash, peel and slice a couple of cucumbers. The idea is to cover the noodle soup with sliced cucumbers when serving. This way the texture will be both chewy and crispy, while mixing with delicious egg-tomato soup.

"Niang, Shiaonu, hurry, hurry, Papa is home. Papa is home." Ponu sounds so excited outside the kitchen.

I haven't figured out what it means before Niang passes out in front of me.

Niang eventually wakes up and we let her lie down on the Kang. She cries in Papa's arms while Ponu and I quietly go to the kitchen and prepare the dinner.

When Ponu and I carry the food in, Niang has already calmed down. She is talking with Papa on the Kang. Papa, with a big smile on his face, looks lean and astute. He pulls a short table from the end of Kang and helps us put down the bowls, spoons, and chopsticks.

"Shiaonu made this." Ponu tells Papa when he puts down the big clay pot that contains Mao Er Duo.

"My little girl has become a good cook now." Papa rubs on my head affectionately. "Your Niang has told me how much help you have been to her."

My face turns red. Niang and my two brothers have treated me like a little kid. Now Papa joins them. He laughs loudly at my embarrassment.

During the dinner, Papa tells us about his life in the army at the border city as well as the war with Xiongnu Empire.

Xiongnu Empire, combined with different nomad tribes, resides in Xiongnu steppe, which is modern day Eurasia Steppe. Its territory includes modern day Mongolia, Siberia, East Kazakhstan, Inner Mongolia, Western Manchuria and East Kyrgyzstan. Xiongnu people is the direct ancestor of Mongols and Huns. At this time, Han and Xiongnu have been engaged in the so called Han-Xiongnu War for nine years already.

"Papa, have you really killed any Xiongnu?" Ponu asks in excitement.

Papa's face turns little grim. "Yes, I had to. "

"How many have you killed?" Ponu continues without noticing how uneasy Papa looks.

"Ponu," I elbow him a little. "Do you like the Mao Er Duo?"

"Of course. Will you make more tomorrow? I really like it." Ponu's attention switches to food right away.

"Papa, "I ask him, "Are you going back to the army or are you going to stay home now?"

Noticing my effort with Ponu, Papa smiles. "I should be able to stay home unless there is more drafting. I have fulfilled my two-year regular military service for His Majesty."

Under Emperor Wu, every male, between the ages of twenty to fifty-six, needs to serve in the army for two years. However, the extra draft may also apply when in need.

"Papa, who is your commanding general?" I ask.

During Emperor Wu, there are a few famous Generals. Both my grandpas have been very interested in this period. My grandpa at my mom side was a historian specializing in Han Dynasty. My grandpa on my dad side, a Hungarian, also interested in this period since one of the direct impact of the Han-Xiongnu war is the western migration of Xiongnu tribes and the founding of Hun Empire in Hungary. Under their influence, I have read so many books about this period and I have been a translator between them when they researched this time period.

"I have been very lucky. General Wei has been my commanding general." Papa says.

"General Wei Qing?" I ask cautiously.

Papa smiles. "Yes, it's him. Very nice guy. He has treated us very good."

I jump on my feet abruptly.

"Ha ha ha ha...." Unable to hold my excitement, I start laughing and jumping up and down around the room.

Everyone looks at me as if I have just lost my mind. What they don't know is what this means to me. General Wei Qing has been my idol since I was a kid. In Chinese history, he and his nephew Huo Qubing have been called "Two Pillars of Han Empire". They have won every single battle they have engaged. The strategies they have used would have been studied for thousands of years. With their leadership, China expanded its territory all the way north to modern day Russia. Their efforts not only would have protected Han citizens from being robbed and being raided every year, but also would have secured the establishment of Silk Road. They have been the heroes for every Chinese.

For the first time since I came to this world, I feel blessed. Despite over two thousand years between us, I have come to the same period as they are.

"Papa, Papa," I shake his arm excitedly. "Please, please, take me to meet General Wei and General Huo."

Papa is amused by my eagerness, but he also looks puzzled. "Who is General Huo?"

"What? You don't know General Huo? He is...." I stop quickly.

General Huo Qubing has been a shining star as soon as he goes for his first battle. So the only reason Papa hasn't heard about him is because his first battle hasn't happened yet. I calm down and try to remember the sequence of wars I have read.

"So Papa, who was the Xiongnu leader that General Wei was fighting with last time?" I ask him carefully.

"That was Right Worthy Prince of Xiongnu. We have captured 15,000 of his men, dozens of nobles

and millions of cattle."

Papa then starts describing how Right Worthy Prince was drunk with his concubine when General Wei's started the night assault with 30,000 cavalymen. With his guards' help, Right Worthy Prince and his concubine escaped barely.

Based on my memory, General Huo Qubing's first battle should be the one after this one, which is going to be next year. That's why Papa hasn't heard about General Huo yet.

"Papa, please take me to meet with General Wei too." Ponu also begs Papa.

Papa looks a little embarrassed with our pleading. "General Wei is a very busy man. I don't want to bother him. Besides, I am just one of thousands of soldiers. I don't believe he will see us."

Ponu and I exchange the look to each other. Neither one of us wants to give up the chance of meeting General Wei.

"Papa, we just want to see how he looks like. We don't necessarily need to meet him." I persist. I can be satisfied by watching him from far away, so I know if he is tall or short, fat or lean, handsome or ugly.

"I don't know." Papa still doesn't sound so sure. "I might be able to take you two to see him from far. I know where he lives in capital Chang'an."

Ponu and I look at each other. That is good enough. We are just two of the thousands of fans of the General Wei. Being able to see him makes my heart race.

"Papa, when should we go?" I can't wait.

Papa must feel helpless by my persistence. "We can go to capital Chang'an before the mid-autumn festival. This way, we can prepare some gifts to give to General Wei before the festival."

"I know, I know." I raise my hand as if I am still in the classroom. "I will make some delicious mooncakes." My grandma has taught me how to make perfect mooncakes.

"What is mooncake?" Ponu asks me.

"Uh....." It seems like there is no mooncake yet in this world. "Well, I call them mooncakes because they are round like moon."

Actually, mooncakes don't need to be round. They can be in square shape too. They are called mooncakes because they have been served only around the mid-autumn festival, which is also called Moon Festival. It is celebrated on the fifteenth day of August. It is said the moon at this day is the biggest and brightest during the whole year.

"That is a great idea." Niang smiles and finally joins our conversation. "If Shiaonu says mooncakes are delicious. They must be very good."

"But Niang I need help in making the wood mold. Do you know anybody who can carve the wood?"

"If it's not too fancy, I can do it." Papa says.

"That is excellent." I quickly explain to him the size and the patterns I'd like to have for the mold.

"This is very simple." Papa nods his head. "I can carve some flowers if you'd like."

My eyes wide open. "Papa, can you make a set then? I can make mooncakes with different stuffings and different wrappers. "

"Not a problem at all. I just need to find my tools tomorrow. After sharpening them, I should be able to start."

I applaud happily. "This is excellent. I am sure General Wei will love them. I can't believe I am going to make some mooncakes for my hero."

The corners of my mouth must have stretched all the way to my ears. Everyone laughs at me.

3 an injured man

Niang is so radiant. Even Ponu notices that.

"Shiaonu," he says to me while we are having breakfast after Niang waltzed out of the kitchen. "Don't you think Niang is very nice to me today? She did not yell at me even when I forgot about getting the water for the water jar." As if it is not enough yet, he continues. "I think it is because of Papa."

I stifle a laugh with my chopsticks still in my mouth. "Ponu, watch out. If Niang hears this, she will beat you up."

Ponu rolls his eyes. "She never really hits me that hard anyway."

I hand him a hard-boiled egg.

"Eat more eggs instead of congee and buns. There is not much nutritional value. If you really want to build up your body, you should modify your diet." I try to pass on some dietary knowledge to him.

"Right, you reminded me. We should go get those duck eggs." He starts peeling the egg. "I have told Papa about this. He would like to come with us. He is getting some baskets."

"Shiaonu, Can you come here?" Papa calls me from the back yard.

"Coming." I grab my apron and put on my wooden clogs. I carefully walk to the back yard since I can easily stumble with the shoes.

"What is this?" Standing next to the fence at the back yard, Papa points to a bamboo sign with a carved skeleton and bones on it.

"Oh, this is where our earthworm farm is." I kneel down on the ground and remove the bamboo woven lid right in front of the sign. It is a hole about three feet long, one foot in width and in depth. There are hundreds or maybe even thousands live earthworms swarming inside. I watch Papa, who immediately stiffens up by the scene. Ponu and I love to do this to others. Every time when we show the earthworms to others, we got a kick out of their reaction. I still remember Niang screaming and would never get close to them again.

"Ha ha ha ha ha...." Ponu's laughter comes from my back.

"What are they for?" Papa quickly composes himself and asks us curiously.

"They are high protein food for chickens and fish." Ponu explains without realizing he is using the words way too advanced for this time. After all, he does remember what I said. "Our chickens started laying eggs daily after we fed them with the earthworms. "

"What do you feed these worms?" Papa seems very interested.

"These worms eat almost anything: left overs, scraps, wet straws, even drops from ducks and chickens." I explain. "It's easy to grow them if you do not mind their disgusting look." It is the most eco-friendly way feeding animals.

Niang would never feed chicken with these worms, no matter how much we explain to her the advantage of doing so.

"I've never heard such things. But if it works, why not then?" Papa nods. Then he asks another question. "What do you mean you feed fish with these worms too?"

We then take Papa to the swamp area, where we have built a secret pond by placing bamboo woven fences around it. It is not very big or very fancy, since we don't want to attract any attention. Jinu actually built most of the fences. He splits bamboos into long slices and wove them into a dense fence. Ponu and I then located the best spot to place the fences, where it is deep enough to retain all the trapped fish but shallow enough for us to capture them.

Papa examines the place with a huge interest. "It looks like a funnel".

"Yes, that's why the fish can swim in, but can never swim out." Ponu dumps in a small bamboo jar of earthworms into the pond. It is actually a native Indian way trapping and retaining fish in the river. With a long narrow funnel like entrance and some earthworms along the way, fish swim in

easily. Sometimes when it gets too crowded in the trap, we even close the entrance for a while. We feed the fish with earthworms and leftovers too.

I hand Papa a fish scoop. "We have been eating fish a lot. Papa, do you want to have some fish tonight?"

With the fresh earthworms dumped in, it caused a lot of splashing in the pond. Fish jump right out to the surface fighting for the food. Papa looks totally amazed by what we have done.

"Your kids are very smart." he says. "I have lived here all my life and never thought of doing something like this."

"Actually, there is something else we want to show you and we need your help in making a bamboo raft. Do you see that little island in the middle, we need to go there for our duck eggs. We just found out that our ducks go there laying eggs all these time. We don't know how many are there, but there should be plenty." I say to him.

"Let's find out then." Papa rolls up his sleeves.

With the help of Papa, we quickly put a raft together. They insist on me staying behind while they row to the island with a long bamboo stick.

"Oh, my, my" I hear Ponu's voice.

"What's wrong?" I ask.

"Shiaonu, there are hundreds of eggs." Ponu tells me.

"Daughter, go back home and get more baskets. We will need a lot of them. Tell your Niang to come to help."

We have collected over four hundred eggs. Not all from our own eighteen ducks, but from wild ducks and wild geese.

"What are we going to do with all these eggs?" Niang still cannot believe all the eggs we have collected.

"Shiaonu, Ponu, what do you think?" Papa turns to us. "You two did all these. Do you have any plans?"

"Shiaonu, you tell them." Ponu nudges me.

"I am thinking that we should divide them into three groups. First, we pick the eggs can be hatched for more ducks, then we sell some for money. For the rest, we can make salted eggs. They can be sold later for a higher price."

Everyone seems in agreement.

"But there are a few challenges: First, I don't know how we can hatch so many ducklings. I used hatching hens to hatch ducks before, but I don't know how to find more hatching hens. Second, we will need some money to buy salt and clay jars. Third, which is not quite urgent at this time, but we still need to think about how to sell them. There should be restaurants and shops willing to buy eggs, ducks and chickens from us. But we don't know any of them. "

"Hmm..." Papa finally says, "I think I get what you just said. We will have them separated into three groups, for hatch, for sell and for salted eggs. But we have to take care of something first before we get more ducks. We need to buy the property around the swamps. I believe it is still a public property. That's why we have not heard anybody complain yet. But if we are going to make it big, others will complain. "

Papa is talking about upscaling the whole idea of farming. I suddenly realize Papa is a natural business man. As soon as he sees the opportunity, he seizes it right away.

"I will go talk with the head of the village right away. Hopefully it won't cost that much. Ponu, you go with me."

Papa and Ponu change their clothes and go to see the head of the village. Niang hands them a basket of chicken eggs as a gift.

I am very satisfied with all the progress today. I have only thought about having nutritious food on the table, but Papa is turning it into a business. For some strange reason, professional business men in Han have been despised by society. They have been stereotyped as greedy, petty and with low moral standards. In Han, business men have money, but they don't have respect.

To me, none of this concerns me. I will appreciate it if my life in this world becomes better. Maybe after Papa has some money, I can suggest a new house with a toilet and shower.

I have continued my running routing even after Papa comes home. But I don't dare to run at late night or run on the same route anymore. That night I stopped in front of a house at the other end of the village and waved goodbye to the guy who has chased me for miles. Only after he rode off, I then ran back home. I don't think he will come back looking for me or anything like that, plus he might think I am a lunatic, but I don't want any unnecessary trouble. So I changed the time and route of my running. Stay here, stay low and stay alive is my only goal at this time.

I try to finish my run by the ponds, where Papa and Ponu are supposed to be. They were trying to catch the fish and prepare them to be sold tomorrow. Papa has decided to sell all the fish we kept in our trap. We are still short in money to buy the property. But the head of the village agrees on us using the land and pay off the rest when we save enough.

When I see a leisurely wondering horse at the area of ponds, I stop my running. It is a tall, beautiful, black horse. With a blanket on the back of the horse, there is nothing else. without a saddle, I wonder how anybody can ride on it.

Then I see somebody lying on the ground. He is on his stomach with his back soaked with blood.

I run to him. He is not moving at all. For a second, I thought he is dead until I put my finger next to his carotid artery. I get a weak pulse. I check on his breath, it's barely there.

"Sir, Can you hear me? Please wake up." I dare not move him.

I raise my head and call for Papa and Ponu again. There is no reply.

Then I feel the man move. He tries to say something. I lower myself next to his mouth.

"Shut up." he says.

"Good, you are awake. Other than the injury to your back, do you hurt somewhere else?" I ask him.

He doesn't answer me.

"I need to check you out." I search him for anything that can cut through clothes. A dagger is on his waist belt. I pull it out and cut open his clothes at his right shoulder. Somebody must have sliced him from the back. The wound is long, from upper right shoulder to the lower left back. And it is deep too. I can see the shoulder bone.

Apparently, he needs stitches. But I have to stop the bleeding first.

I cut off the rim of my skirt and press it on the top of the wound. Then I cut more and wrap them around.

I know he is awake. I can hear his grumbling curse. But he is too weak to stop me.

"You need stitches. Your wound is too deep and too long. You are lucky I know a little about urgent care. Now you stay here while I go get some help."

By now my whole skirt is gone and I only have my running shorts on.

"Don't go." He says to me.

"I will be right back. My Papa and my brother should not be far." I thought he was worrying about me leaving him alone there.

"Don't do it." He says.

"Why not? Because you are a Xiongnu?" I have already figured that out when I see the patterns on the dagger.

He stays silent.

"So what about you are a Xiongnu? You need help now."

The war between Han and Xiongnu has lasted for years. Even before Han Dynasty, there was Qin Dynasty fighting with Xiongnu and the Great Wall was built to keep them out.

After Han lost the battle to Xiongnu on Mount Baiden, about 70 years ago, Han was complaisant to Xiongnu Empire. Han Emperors have sent beautiful women, including the princesses, to marry Chanyu, the Emperor of Xiongnu. And they have also provided Xiongnu with plenty of gifts every year, including grains, silk, salt, sugar and other necessities. There have been fewer raids from Xiongnu tribes and less slaughter of Han people along the border. It gave Han enough time to recover psychologically and economically.

However, Han, under the ruling of Emperor Wu, who has built a strong cavalry, fought back. By now the war between Han and Xiongnu, the so called Han-Xiongnu war, has already been about nine years. As far as I know, it will continue.

"Don't worry about anything." I comfort him. "Just wait here and I will go get help. "

In two hundred years, Xiongnu will disappear forever.

"Can you hold me up against the tree?" He asks me weakly.

"Of course." Anything can make him comfortable. I help him up. To my surprise, he decides to stand up instead of just sit up. He digs into a pocket in the front, pulls out a small black ball and swallows it.

"Now," He pulls his sword out and rests it on my shoulder. "You need to take a trip with me."

I am speechless, and honestly, I think it's funny. This Xiongnu apparently is not quite clear on the situation. He can barely stand up. And he thinks he can threaten me?

"Do you seriously think you can force me to go with you?" I can't help giggling.

"Ugh...." He utters out a groan and admits the situation unwillingly. "Unlikely."

"Then don't act stupidly." I push his sword away. "Do you have a place to go? "

I don't want to force him to accept my help, and I can't just walk away either.

"Yes, my friend is waiting for me. But with my condition, I do not think I can get there." He looks like he is in pain.

"How far is it from here?"

"About 5 li." That's only about one and a half miles.

"Can you ride on your horse?" I ask again.

"I think so."

"Then let's go." I tell him. "You ride the horse and I will run."

I manage to help him mount on his horse and walk towards his friend's place.

His friend, an old gentleman with a long gray beard, lives in a large compound. It is heavily guarded by soldiers everywhere. We were ushered into a room through a winding veranda.

Another long beard old guy, with a wooden case in his hand, comes in and checks on Xiongnu's wound. I hear people call him Doctor Liu. I was shocked when I hear what he said next.

"The wound is too deep and he lost too much blood. There is nothing I can do."

"What? Are you sure?" I ask him. Xiongnu still breathes, with a good heart beat. How can he say that?

"Yes, I am positive."

Realizing I might know more about this situation from my mom, I decided to take the matter into my own hands. After all, the earliest recorded surgery is not going to happen for another 200 years.

"Then let me work on him. Please boil lots of water. And please find me a pair of sharp scissors, a forceps, a sharp knife, a small sewing needle, preferably bent one, and some silk threads. Boil

them all in hot water in different containers. A bottle of Dukang Wine is also needed. By the way, I also need lots of clean silk fabric, the one that has been washed in boiling water." I turn to the first old guy without explaining anything. He signals his men to get those things.

I then turn to Doctor Liu. "Do you have anything that can help with the pain?"

"Yes. I do. I have something can help with the pain." He then gives out a lot of plant names. The only one I recognize is Marijuana. Then he asks me. "What do you plan to do?"

"I am going to sew up his wound." I believe I need to sew up two layers: tissue layer and the superficial layer. I don't worry about the sewing part, I worry about the infection. The only sanitizing liquid I can think of is DuKang wine, with the highest ethanol concentration I know of. Without distilled water, without iodine, I hope this guy will be able to survive.

"Have you done it before?" His eyes wide open.

"Not on a human." Or not on live one. My dad has taught me how to suture and how to tie a perfect surgical knot on pork feet.

I know it's too daring, but If I don't do it. This Xiongnu is going to die.

After the last stitch, I feel exhausted. The only thing in my mind is to have a hot shower and lie down in bed. After running for almost ten miles and then sewing up Xiongnu, I don't even want to eat anymore.

"This is amazing. Where did you learn all this?" Doctor Liu has been by my side all the time. I explained everything I know to him while I was working on Xiongnu.

"Some of my relatives used to be doctors." I vaguely explained and then switch to the topic on post care.

I know I need to leave fast. The place gives me a creepy feeling. There are a lot of people in the compound, but I don't hear too many noises. Those people look like well-trained Ninjas.

"I am going to take a walk in the courtyard and catch some fresh air." I tell Doctor Liu, who is apparently occupied by everything he just saw.

I walk out of the room and make a quick turn to the kitchen when no one is watching. When I was in the kitchen sanitizing surgical equipment, the young servant girl told me the delivery door leads to Bahe River.

I quickly sneak out the delivery door and start running again.

4 General Wei

I have been staying within the fences of our yard most of the time. It was way too risky showing off knowledge beyond this time period and way too scary just thinking about what might happen to Xiongnu. I do not regret doing the surgery, since without my daring act, he is definitely dying. But I do need to put my own safety first.

I still run, just switch to early morning and on a different route. Sometimes I think it is funny: Who would ever think my love of running would have to be kept as a secret.

With Papa home, everybody looks more relaxed and more relieved. He is like a working horse, takes a lot of our chores away from us. He likes to joke that he is repaying us, especially Niang, for all the hard works we have done while he was away.

We did not sell any of the duck eggs, instead, we soaked about 100 of them in salted water and sealed them with mud in clay jars. For the rest of the duck eggs, Papa decided to hatch all of them. Other than putting duck eggs under our own hatching hen, Niang was out every day visiting our neighbors and relatives asking for the favor of hatching duck eggs with their hens. Usually, every family will have a couple of hens in their house yard and they are willing to do it for us with a gift of five chicken eggs.

The fish farm is also on the way. Papa and Ponu made a few large top-open bamboo baskets. Instead of catching fish one by one with the bamboo net, they can now capture basketful fish by simply lifting it up. I was totally amazed on their invention. After all, I cheated on ideas with all my past (or rather future) knowledge. But ideas from Papa are genuinely creative.

However, there is still one thing I need to remind Papa. I simply don't know how to start the conversation. In order to have a real fish farm, a helping hand is always needed in the reproduction process. If left alone, the majority of the small fish would end up as the food for bigger fish and they will never get the opportunity to grow big. I have seen fish farmers extract sperms and eggs from male and female fish by massaging their belly, then mix them and keep them in a separate tank. Until small fish comes out and grow to certain size, they are cared for in isolated tank without the danger of bigger fish. I just cannot imagine starting a conversation like this with Papa, Ponu or anybody in that matter.

When Papa finally got around making me the mooncake mold, I started working on jello, since I was not sure if he would ever have time for it. But the mold turned out to be marvelous. Papa is quite a carpenter. He made a couple of molds with simple but elegant geometry patterns and a couple of beautiful flowery patterns.

The recipe for mooncake requires a lot of ingredients and they are not handily available. The type of mooncake I have worked on is called ice-skin mooncake. It's translucent smooth marble like skin and decorated shape make it more like a piece of art. But it also tastes awesome. The wrapper for mooncake requires four major ingredients: rice, sweet rice, wheat, and wheat starch. Wheat and rice only need to be ground into fine powder. But for wheat starch, which gives the translucent

look, it needs to be washed away with all the glutens. As for sweet rice, it needs to be soaked, grounded and squeezed dry. After mixing and steaming them, with the right ratio, I colored them in different colors: green (with green tea), purple (with taro juice) and red (with safflower juice). There are three kinds of stuffing: green bean paste, red bean paste, and mixed chopped nuts. They all been added with honey. Wrapping different stuffing with different wrappers, I made a total of nine kinds of mooncakes with different wrappings or stuffing. I don't know which one General Wei will like, but hopefully he will like at least one.

It is also quite tedious making the jello. Unable to find a supermarket with the boxed gelatin powder. I have to make the gelatin from scratch: boil pork skin in water, then scrape off all the residues fat from the cooked skin; Chop them into small pieces and boil them again in a fresh pot of clear water for two hours. After numerous filtering with the linen cloth, the clear liquid then becomes the gelatin water, which I can work with just as the store sold one. I like to make jello with flowers and fruits inside. In the middle of fall, I can only find sweet olive flowers, lotus flowers, and mums flowers. Gently put flowers or diced fruits in clear gelatin water in small tea cups, adjust their look and position with a chopstick, in a couple of hours, the jello is ready to eat. It looks like beautiful flowers or colorful fruits frozen inside an ice cube.

It is a lot of work making gelatin and mooncakes. But every time thinking of General Wei, my forever hero, will have the chance eating them, I know it will worth every bit of the effort.

If staying alive is my only goal in this world, meeting General Wei is the huge bonus, lottery size.

On tenth day of August in Han's calendar, five days before the mid-autumn festival, my whole family, put on our best dresses, wore our best wooden clogs, hopped on a rented buffalo wagon, and went to visit General Wei in capital Chang'an, which is about 40 Li (12 miles)away.

But he was not home. The guards told us he went to Weiyang Palace and they do not know when he would be back. Disappointed by me, expected by Papa, we left them our gift contained in three tiered, red lacquered wood box.

It has dampened my spirit big time. I did not feel like doing anything since we came back. I am not sure if those guards will truly give the gift to General Wei. After all, they looked at us like a bunch of poor peasants. Although Papa knew one of the guards, with whom they went to war together, it is still very clear we are just like so many other visitors flocking in front of General Wei's front door. After the last astounding victory over Xiongnu, including 15,000 captives and millions cattle and story of how Xiongnu's Right Worthy Prince ran for his life with only his concubine following, General Wei has been made the Generalissimo of all armed forces. Eleven generals under his command have been made Marquesses.

Papa promised me to visit General Wei again at Spring Festival, which is about four months away. Who knows if he will be available at that time? I know everyone at home must think I am very childish, I don't blame them. How can they imagine the excitement in meeting a legend two thousand years in the past? How can anybody imagine that?

The only thing that cheered me up is when Jinu came home yesterday and he brought me the handsaw and handplane that I had him make for me. I showed Papa these two tools and he immediately likes them. So I gave them to him. With Papa's carpentry skill, I know he can make better use of them.

"Shiaonu! Shiaonu!" Ponu runs to me when I am standing in the silt pulling out lotus root from the swamp.

"What is it?" I ask him. Summer is gone, all the lotus roots are ready to be pulled. They can be made in lots of dishes: soups, desserts, and salad. Niang likes the lotus root desserts with olive flowers and honey.

"General Wei is here." He says while helping me put the lotus root in the basket. "Hurry."

I cannot believe what I am hearing. "You mean, he is here? Here in our house?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" He grabs the basket with his right hand and extends his left hand to me. "Hurry, let's go home."

So we run home.

There is already a crowd at the front door of our house. Neighbors are talking and cheering. But they are kept away by two guards in uniform. There are five horses with their reins tied on the tree branches in front of our house.

Ponu and I get in without any trouble.

They are all in the front yard. Everybody is standing while one guy with a short cloak is sitting by the stone table. I assume he is General Wei. Another two guards are standing behind him.

They all turn to us when Ponu and I come in. Papa stops us first when he sees us. He quickly scolds me in low voice. "Where are your shoes? How did you get yourself so dirty?"

I open my mouth but don't know what to say. I forgot my wooden clogs by the pond. Papa shakes his head in disapproval, then he turns to General Wei.

"Please pardon their rudeness, General Wei." Papa says. "They are my younger son and daughter. They have lived in the country all their lives. They don't know how to behave properly."

Wow, I stare at Papa with my eyes wide open. I am not used to such a humble tone.

General Wei, with a smile on his face, looks at Ponu first, then at me. I feel my blood rushing towards my ears since I can hear nothing but blood whooshing sound.

He is not quite what I expected. He is in his thirties with a long and narrow face. He is very good-looking with a straight nose and soft eyes. But he attracts others not by his external beauty, but by his calm and gentle disposition. He has the power of soothing others by just looking at you. His slender build and almost artistic temperament make him more like a highly intelligent professor in college than a macho general that kills thousands in battles. Two small dimples, partially covered by his mustache, make him look like he smiles all the time. If there is anything betraying his professor outlook, it must be his rough skin, frown lines as well as the crow's feet at the outer corner of his eyes, which only add the age-perfected grace to the overall enchantment surrounding him.

My mind has drifted away about General Wei when Papa's raises his voice to me.

"Shiaonu." His voice is stern. "Pay your respect to General Wei and stop the staring."

I blush right away. Even in my most laid-back San Diego beach style, staring is still very rude.

Then I become panicked. I don't know how to perform a curtsy in Han's style. Nobody ever taught

me that. Quickly searching all the scenes I have seen in Chinese movies and TV dramas, I think it should be holding both hands together by the side of the waist and then lower on one knee. But I don't remember which side hands should be and which leg should be lowered. So I put my hands on my left side and lower my left knee. In the middle of all this, through the corner of my eyes, I see Ponu simply bow down with his two hands holding in front of him. I stop what I am doing midway and repeat what Ponu just did. Then I know I was wrong when I heard the sneer. Only men are supposed to pay respect that way.

I have made a big fool of myself.

While everyone laughs and Papa swallows a hard embarrassment, General Wei, ignoring everyone, stands up and walks to me. He puts his right hand on my head. I only reach his chest. He should be about six feet tall.

"Your name is Shiaonu?" he asks. His voice is gentle and warm.

"Yes," I answer sheepishly, with my face burning red.

"I have really enjoyed your mooncakes and jellos. They are beautiful and delicious. I have never had anything like them before. Thank you very much!" His eyes are soft and his words are softer.

My heart has been stolen by his kind words, gentle manner and considerate nature.

"You really like them?" I ask him foolishly.

He nods to me with a smile curling up his lips.

"Oh, that's so wonderful. That makes my day. No, that makes my year. No, no, no, actually, it makes my whole life. I am so glad. I am so happy. I am going to laugh loud." I don't even know what I am talking now. My laughter cannot be contained in my chest anymore. They escape out loudly and cheerfully.

"General Wei ate my mooncakes and my jellos. And he just told me he loves them." I yell loudly and proudly.

I have finally reached out to somebody who is not only two thousand years away from my time, but also a hero being worshiped as a god in history.

NOTHING CAN TOP THIS!

Laughter joins me again. I must have been the best entertainment for them today. But I don't care. I don't care and I really don't care. None of them understand the significance, none of them understand my joy, and none of them understand the impossibility.

Then the thought that nobody in this world understands me saddens me.

I have been coping relatively well in this ancient world. But at this moment, I just want to share this exciting news with someone, anyone. But not a single person in this world. I suddenly miss my mom, my dad, and my grandparents. If any one of them knows what have happened, he or she will be able to understand my joy and celebrate the historical moment with me. But no, not a single one here. I am here all alone, with a secret that is too big to bear. I don't know if anybody has noticed my missing, or if there is another imposter has already taken over my body and

everything mine has become hers, just like what I have done to Shiaonu. If they don't know I was gone, how will they ever come to help me? If so, will I, by myself, ever find a way to go back? Or if I will ever be able to go back.

The thought of never be able to go back finally hits me. All these time, I have kept myself busy in seeking ways to hide my true nature and blending with the world. But now I feel being abandoned.

Tears well up in my eyes. The excitement of meeting General Wei as well as the feeling of abandonment, all surge out at the same time. My face is covered with running tears and I try to stop them by keep wiping my eyes with my sleeves.

General Wei looks at me with a surprise in his eyes. He probably has never seen anybody switch from laughter to tears instantly. And he probably wonders what he said caused my tears.

I believe I have successfully shocked everyone. They are all in silence.

I feel Ponu's hand reaching to me. I turn to him, with teary eyes. He pulls me into his arms and lightly pats on my back.

"It's all right. It's all right." He calms me like I am a baby.

"Ponu," I sniffle. "I must look like a fool." I hide my face further into his arms and continue sobbing.

I hear Papa apologize to General Wei again. "My daughter is a country girl. She really does not have any manner at all. Please forgive me for not teaching my daughter properly." Papa's words make me want to laugh.

"On the contrary, I like Shiaonu a lot. She is just like a crystal, with all emotions clearly shine through. She has a heart of Linglong." Linglong heart usually describes people who like to think more and can feel more emotions than others.

"Thank you for your kindness. General Wei." Papa says. "Shiaonu is truly a very smart kid. She can see things others don't see. She can think of things others have never thought of."

I raise my head away from Ponu's chest. "I am very sorry that I have made such a scene. Please forgive me. I am just very glad that you like the desserts I have made."

Through my red puffy eyes, I see General Wei is looking at me thoughtfully as if he is evaluating me.

"There is nothing need to be forgiven. " He says. "Many have lost the freedom of laughing or crying at will. Enjoy it when you can do both freely."

I wipe off my tears. "Thank you. From now on, I will behave like a lady."

Somebody made a snorting sound. General Wei turns and gives a sharp look at one of his guard, who I paid no attention to.

"Just be yourself." General Wei says.

"Shiaonu," Papa turns to me. "General Wei wants to know if you can make more mooncakes and

jellos. He'd like to present them as gifts to Emperor Wu and Empress Wei at the Moon Banquet."

Empress Wei is the sister of General Wei, who gave birth to the oldest son for Emperor Wu.

"I will be honored. When do you need them?" I ask.

"Can it be ready by the mid-autumn festival, which is two days from now?"

"How many you'd like me to make?"

"How about four for each serving. I will need 100 servings."

"It will be ready by noon in two days."

"That is perfect." General Wei stands up. "I will send someone to pick them up."

Then he waves to one guy, who brings out a purse in gold thread. "This is the fee. If it's not enough, just let me know and I will send more." General Wei says to Papa.

Papa pushes back a little. Then with the insistence from General Wei, he takes the purse.

General Wei then turns to me. "Shiaonu, hopefully, I will see you laugh more in the future."

A little embarrassed, I say to him "I will."

General Wei says goodbye to us and walks out. We walk out with them and see them get on their horses.

I then remember our duck eggs.

"Wait, General Wei, just wait a little." I say to him. "I have something for you."

I run back to our kitchen and take one Jar of salted eggs. It's heavy, so when I carry it to them, I am out of breath.

"They are salted eggs from our own ducks. You can boil them like hard-boiled eggs." I say to him. "They taste great when you drink wine."

General Wei laughs. "Shiaonu, thank you very much. I am sure I will enjoy them a lot."

Then he turns to one guy. "Qubing," he says, "Get the eggs." Then he laughs and rides off.

I freeze with the name Qubing. Can it be true? Qubing, Huo Qubing, General Wei's nephew? The one who has been called "Empire's Two Pillar-Stones" along with General Wei?

I raise my head to see the guy on the horse approaching me. He is in the dark shadow and I cannot tell what he looks like.

He lowers his body, extends his right arm and takes the jar away.

"You are still a weird girl with lots of weird thoughts." He whispers into my ear. "And a little liar too."

Ugh...I finally recognize him.

5 Family History

What was inside the purse are two gold cakes, gold ingots made in the cake shape. Each one is about the size of my palm and weight about 200 grams. It's my first time ever see gold in Han. Usually, we use the money coins made of copper in round shape with a square hole in the middle. People like to link them together through the middle holes with a string for easy carrying. Then there is silver, which to my family, it's a rare item. But gold cake, I wonder if my parents have ever seen them.

"Papa, how much are they worth? Is this going to be enough?" I ask while turning the gold cake back and forth.

My whole family is sitting on Kang with a little table in the middle. Papa and Niang took the inside side, while Jinu and Ponu sitting across from each other. I don't like to sit on my heels, so I just sit outside with my two legs hanging over the Kang.

"It is more than enough. Not only we can pay off our debt for the lake property, we will even have extra for a good saving." Niang says. Like any married woman, she has been staying inside the room during the visit from General Wei. But I am sure she heard everything we have said.

"All right." I nod and hand the gold cake to Ponu, who is studying the other one as well.

"Niang and Papa, I have something in my mind for a while now." Jinu says. He has never been the vocal one in this household. Sometimes I feel like he is a smaller version of Papa: mature, hardworking and very responsible.

"Speak out then." Papa takes a sip of mums tea I just made. I collect flowers, spread them thinly over the flat bamboo containers and dry them under the sun. I use them for drinking, for cooking, or just for their nice fragrance. Someday when I collect enough, I will make myself some nice essential oil, or even perfume.

"I know we have a lot of things planned: duck farm and fish farm. In addition, we have our fields we have to attend. But all of these works take a long time to see the result. Last time, after I took

some jellos as a gift to my Shifu at the blacksmith shop, so many people have been asking me where to buy it." Jinu says. "I have been thinking to lease a storefront in town and open our own shop for jellos, mooncakes, and any other desserts Shiaoan has been playing with. I did not say anything because of the upfront money we will need. But now, with the money from General Wei, I believe we can have our own store. "

"I don't want to do it." It just snapped out.

Tying down to a store is the last thing I want. With General Wei's visit, I start to think that I should step out my safety zone a little and explore Han Empire. Living in the real world with the knowledge from future history books should give me some good advantage points. I will not interfere or meddling historical significant events, but I can watch every event like a quiet bystander. Just like meeting with General Wei. Without me, there might be another family make the desserts for the banquet. No history has ever recorded such events. As for the mooncake and jello, nobody was ever really sure when they have been created. It's not like you get online, watch youtube, and voila, everything you just created can be spread all over the world. By the time everyone in China knows how to make mooncake or jello, I am sure it will be evolved to different shape or form. Why do I need to worry about when, where or who really created mooncake or jello? They might even die out after a while. It is not uncommon to see the extinguished culture, extinguished race, or the extinguished Atlantis. Why can't I watch live history unfolding in front of me? I might even write a book recording what I know. *

A California girl found herself transported into ancient China. She struggled to survive and to deal with poverty, discrimination, and the war between Han and Xiongnu. In the midst of all, she found love, with two different men.

Based on actual historical events, author of 'My Soul is in the Sky' gives a vivid description of the lives of ancient China, from Emperor to Empress, from generals to shop owners, from the Imperial University to nomadic tribes on Mongolia Steppe.

Starry Nights with my Soul Sista - Dark Sky Guides, Waterton Lakes - The below excerpt from my book, 'My Journey down the Reincarnation out of body experience that yanked me up 150 feet into the sky over my house and to The Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper; - The poem was originally published in 1958 in a book of original poems entitled Stood staunch against the sky and all around I am at peace, my soul's at rest 'Sky' poems - Hello Poetry - There is sunshine in my soul today, More glorious and bright. Than glows in any earthly sky, For Jesus is my light. Oh, there's sunshine, blessed sunshine Laois priest reveals devastating story of loss in new book - Here are the most well-known ones with their locations in the book. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is

as different. I lingered round them, under that benign sky: watched the moths fluttering among Book My Soul To Take A Novel Of Iceland 2009 - MKS - "â€”New York Times Book ReviewIntrepid archaeologist and superior sleuth Amelia A Beautiful Soul pushed beyond the limits of human endurance by the Sky King and, somewhat later, Whirlybirds were a couple of my favorite TV shows. I am the Captain of My Soul â€” Lusicovi Creative - Genius Lyrics LYRICS - The film is based on a children's book written by Molly Eastling. The story for The Day My Soul Became a Star is inspired by a Native American belief The story comes full circle as the dog looks up to the night sky to find his owner's shining Bad omens in roman times - Pasadena Community - I am Only the House of Your Beloved; The Springtime of Lovers Has Come I am a sky where spirits live.. Because my soul has absorbed your fragrance,.. book a session with the sky priestess - A book trailer â€” Amazon

<https://www.amazon.com/My-Soul-Sky-Summer-Murong-ebook/dp/B019P7EN2E>.

Listen to skyking - It was 2008 when I moved to Dublin. I doubled the pay-check I'd been getting in Belfast and my husband and I (then boyfriend and girlfriend) Buy Books Online - Explore your Starseed Origins, your cosmic soul family and your. Read this book to find out more about these unusual and special people and how to the same part of the sky You will need to draw up your astrological chart and then to plot

Relevant Books

[[DOWNLOAD](#)] - Download ebook The 7 Figure Mastery - How To Earn 7 Figures Online: 7 Figure Mastery ! This is the Culmination Of All My Years Of Experience as an Internet Marketer, ... and Errors, Successes and Tribulations! pdf

[[DOWNLOAD](#)] - The Hypno App: Part I pdf

[[DOWNLOAD](#)] - Cognitive Automation Primer: The World of Machine Learning pdf online

[[DOWNLOAD](#)] - Drawing the Iron Curtain: Jews and the Golden Age of Soviet Animation pdf

[[DOWNLOAD](#)] - Book Multiple Classifier Systems: 7th International Workshop,

