

1. MYSTERY: The Shanghai Mystery

WONG Wai Yin

Mr. Anderson took the photograph and stared. The photo was almost like antique, it had turned yellowish and blurry.

'That's weird,' he frowned at the photo and after a few seconds of staring, he stuffed it back into the envelop and discarded it. 'Who on Earth would know I'm in Shanghai and mail this photograph to me?'

'I am afraid I have no answer for that,' the manger apologized. 'My staff claimed that it was on the desk suddenly. No one witnessed the moment when it was placed there, but it has your name on it so I guess it is for you.'

'Well then, I see no point to investigate it,' he shrugged the thoughts away. 'It's quite late, I'd better get some rest. Good night.'

'Good night, Mr. Anderson.' As he limped towards the elevator, the manager quickly wished him good night, too, as it's polite to do so.

When Mr. Anderson stepped into the elevator, he sighed, as the photo reminded him of the days when he needed not use crutches.

Entering his late 90s, he had seen how the World War II had been triggered, feared for a possible nuclear war between the US and the USSR and experienced the bright era of modern world. He was really old and now incapable of nearly everything. He missed the days when he could run freely, eat anything he wanted.

'If only life could return to those days,' he murmured as the elevator stopped at his floor. 'I am worthless now.'

He had always believed that he is a trouble. His family was kind, they took care of him. When he could not walk properly, they supported him, they slowed down to match his pace. When he could not hold his mug without shaking his hand, they assisted him, they held his hand to stable it. When he could not read because of his eyesight, they reassured him, they read to him every day. He was so lucky to have such a warm family, that he felt ashamed. He felt so useless, that he needed his family to do everything for him, but he could no nothing for them.

'Perhaps they would be better off without me,' he muttered again.

After struggling with the doorknob, he arrived at his room eventually. He eyed his luggage, which was already waiting for him in the corner. He thought to himself, I used to have no problem with it and I could even carry one double this size.

Born in Washington, he travelled to China when the World War II broke out. He was kind-hearted, that he went to Shanghai to help when he heard about the Japanese occupation. He was a member of an organisation of foreigners protecting people in Shanghai. Believing that he could give citizens hope in their lives, he ran a shelter for those who lost their homes or families. He was so proud of himself, that

he was happy he could contribute to something.

Not anymore.

He sat on the bed and closed his eyes grimly. For some reason, he dozed off, and some images flitted through his mind.

It was him, young and energetic, smiling down at a young girl. It was him, holding the girl's hand, leading her through the corridors of a building. It was him, feeling content, as an innocent smile appeared on the girl's face.

When he opened his eyes, he remembered.

It was when Japan troops finished their horrible 'job' in Shanghai that he met the girl.

The girl, prey of war and destruction, had broken her leg. Unfortunately, her father was beyond help. A series of surgeries saved the girl's life, and she united with her mother and her brother. Her mother was safe but in grief.

Mr. Anderson had been the one who delivered the sad news of her husband, that he felt sorry for them. He cared for them, and he spent time with the little girl while her mother was preparing for her husband's funeral.

"Mr Anderson, do you think that I'm a burden?" The girl had asked him. "My mother is already stressed, but she has to take care of me."

"I am such a trouble, I should disappear," she sobbed. "I can't help my mama."

"Do not think that of yourself," he had replied. "I'm sure she loves you and she wouldn't mind. But she will be so worried if she knows how you think of yourself. Everyone exists for a reason. Nobody is useless. Nobody. Have faith and live a happy life, okay?"

Mr. Anderson jumped up.

'How could I forget the lessons that I once taught someone?' He gritted his teeth, grabbed his crutches and rushed towards the door. He waited impatiently for the elevator. When it came he ran in, pressed the 'ground floor' button for lots of times. He dashed out of the elevator, and confronted the hotel manager.

'Where is the photo?' He urged, a little impolite.

'It is... It is right here,' the manager reached into the drawer, a little nervous because of Mr. Anderson's tone. He pulled out the envelop, took out the photo and offered it to Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Anderson flipped over the photo and found some writings.

"Please remember," it said, in Chinese characters. He recognised the writing immediately. It's the girl.

After his encouragement, she had become strong and she had hope again. She snapped this picture of him in her wheelchair and he had told her to keep it. She grew up to be a famous writer, and had visited him several times. However, the girl

hasn't visited for as long as thirty years.

'Have you heard of Mei Yin?' Wanting to thank her, he asked the manager. Luckily, Mr. Anderson remembered her name.

'Of course,' the manager brightened at first, and then his face dropped. 'She was my favourite author. It is a shame that she passed away a few decades ago.'