

The Windownesian

Chapter 5

Is Freedom Bulletproof?

Warning: You are about to read a highly political story. Characters do not represent the writer.

2016: Fishball Revolution started and ended

2017: Carrie Lam became the chief executive of Hong Kong SAR

2019: Social movement started

2021: John Lee became the chief executive of Hong Kong SAR

2025: Erick Tsang became the chief executive of Hong Kong SAR

August 2027: The government announces several draft laws including Speech Laws

Mid-September 2027, in a classroom of Shue Yan University:

“And when the plot focuses on blowing up the Parliament on the fifth of November,”

Zedekiah is talking about *V for Vendetta* in the English club meetings, “I would focus on V being a freedom fighter rather than being just a terrorist.”

“We all heard of this phrase one way or another, ‘he hit me first’. Yes, it is a fact that he is performing the act of a terrorist. He kills people. He blows up things. But his destructive actions are just to counteract the terror of the governing power Norsefire. In the movie, Norsefire is the British ruling power tends to imitate the German Nazi regime. Their leader Adam Sutler is likely to refer to Adolf Hitler. Such a regime is controlling towards its citizens. To begin with, there are curfews and systems of surveillance. Curfew is usually set to keep the population confined, and surveillance is to keep them under the government’s watch. One more detail of the film reveals that these are not the only thing they control. In the gallery of Shadows, V serves Evey with bread with butter, a solid form of mike which Evey has not had since she was a child. V claims that he breaks into sutler’s apartment to steal the substance. This implies that the government is also controlling the food supply of the city. When one institution has its citizens and the daily essentials in their watch, they are controlling the city.”

“Of course, Norsefire is a lot more despicable. It is the power which arrests Evey’s parents. Although it is never revealed why, it can be assumed that her parents voice out some opinion which the Norsefire despise. They silence individual’s voice which they don’t like. Gordon Deitrich is also arrested after his show making fun of the government and V is on air. Norsefire would silence the media for parody offensive to them. But the worst of all, they are responsible for the deaths of hundreds thousand people by virus testing. It might be the deed

they would like to cover as a government. It is the controlling government V is fighting against as a freedom fighter.”

“It has been established that Norsefire killed millions, prosecute opposing voices and control over everything. It is the freedom against these controls that V is fighting for. Now let’s look at how V addresses himself. At the start of the movie, V has a speech with extreme alliteration with many words starting with V. He addresses himself as victim and villain. A victim of the ‘virus testing’ Norsefire held. Therefore he is a villain just to oppose the regime which kills people. He ends his V poem with ‘the only verdict, is vengeance’, revenge is the only judgement. That presupposes that there is judgement other than vengeance, and that is the institution, the government. However, now with the government who puts its population in danger and shut them up whenever they oppose them, this judge is not trustworthy. And when the system doesn’t work, revenge is the way to pass verdict, to declare that someone is wrong.”

“To wrap my sharing, I would like to quote a line. ‘People shall not be afraid of their governments, governments shall be afraid of their people.’ One shall break from controls and terror from a totalitarian government.”

“So,” Alex asks, “you say we shall fight against our government?”

“That is one of my message, especially when our government is wrong and prone to prosecute people who against them.”

“How close do you think is our government when compared to Norsefire?” a classmate asks. “I have no confirmation that our government killed a lot,” he responds looking at the ceiling, “but on the surveillance and control part, I afraid that reality is more terrible. Especially with the Speech Law passed, Hong Kong might be worse than Norsefire.”

“That’s one hell of a presentation,” I compliment Zedekiah as we reach our room.

“Things are easy when you can relate to a movie,” Zedekiah puts his bag on my chair.

“How come hell is related to presentation,” Bobby turns to us.

I roll my eyes, as I am about to explain that it is a human expression, Alex breaks in.

“Zedekiah, I can borrow V for Vendetta?” he asks.

“It’s can I,” Bobby corrects him.

“Sure. It seems that I have interest you in this movie. I can send you a link.” He ignores Bobby.

“But Alex, how do you view the government?” I ask.

“I don’t know about government,” Alex responds, “but if people who have the most authority are the government, then my creator is my government. I am an AI, I am loyal to my father and those near me. Father gives order, father makes sure nothing goes wrong. I listen to my father.”

“And on that aspect,” I comment, “you are no different than a human.”

“Yea,” Zedekiah echoes with me, “at least you don’t have an uprising against humans.”

“Wait a minute, did you say uprising?” finally Bobby is not criticizing our grammar.

“You have anti-government events even in your world?” Zedekiah is curious.

“In my world, there has once been an uprising,” Bobby swings his chair facing us, “a science report notes that all kinds of psychy will pass on to the next kin. You guys may call psychy personality. The leaders started a project called [he utters a few dark musical notes]. In your language it would be something like “vermin cleansing”. Of course it has lead to an uprising.”

He then turns to the windows, “the supremes extinguish the protestors from life, everyone from barely breathing decaying Sapios to infants. My creators are the obedient ones who value rule and conformity over anything. And they are the only ones who survived.”

“Is this true or just a story your supremes tell?” Zedekiah asks him.

“That is a history lesson, on how the disobedient were wiped away.” he turns to us.

“That is why you are serious about grammar because you need to follow orders?”

Alex asks

“It shall be ‘is that’. But yes, that’s why I need to be accurate about grammar, so that I can make sure I am obedient.”

We are all silent.

“Anyway,” Zedekiah breaks the silence, “I shall be leaving, this room is stuffy. I want to join my sister. Do you have the things?”

“Oh yes.” I hand him two black t-shirts and a box of masks. “This might be plenty for you and Rona. I can show you the exit. In fact, I have to leave too, had to join Meander’s programme anyway.”

As we are walking away from the door, I am quite sure I hear conversations from my room like “You can open the window please? I run out of air.” “No.”

As the previous programme ends, the director counts down five, four, three, two, one, and signals action.

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen, welcome to ‘The People’, guardian of your right to information and your voice. This is your host Martin Tai. In recent years we have been seeing social movements in Hong Kong. News of conflicts between protestors and police forces flood the news everyday. With the legislative council drafting more laws, some predict that the conflict would continue. Today, we are glad to have one of the social movement leaders Rona Chan joining us. Welcome Rona.”

“Happy to be here Martin.”

“So Rona, it has been known that you are one of the youth leaders of this social movement. Since it is assumed that you are fighting against the government, we wish to know what is your reason? What is wrong with the government that you fight against them?”

“We fight for our future Martin, our future. Let’s put the issue of rulers prosecuting dissidents and controlling the population aside, we are living in a city with no hope. And the government’s policies make it worse. Just to name a few, the two biggest issues we are facing are wealth gap and housing problems. All thanks to the government’s favor to the prestigious people giving them benefits as long as they pay taxes, average persons could only work for survival. I mean, how many construction workers can afford the house they build? How many retail workers get to use their products? Housing policies for example. Yes, the government is building more houses for residential uses, but they are crazily expensive only the rich can buy, or the infrastructures are so scarce that poor people suffer living in them. For youths, not only we are pressured to make a living, we are placed in a job market manipulated by high-ranking officials restricting us. Many of my peers work hard with no chance of getting further in career while teens related to the high class is having gain without pain. Living in the city is no different than dying. If we don’t fight for ourselves, who will?”

“Well speaking of government policies, Rona, it is said that the government is drafting the Speech Law. Do you have any comments on it?”

“I know this draft. This law if passed, would forbid any anti-government expressions and speeches. One implication is that anything that threatens the ruling of China shall be restricted. It can be ambiguous and the government can change it whenever they want. That includes any media which can be viewed as against the government. This is going to be a devastating news. You see, there are things that the government doesn’t do right or execute right. Media acting as the fourth power shall be a countermeasure to everything wrong with the government. This is why I started the group ‘People’s Voice’. If I am correct, this is why this programme ‘The People’ exists in the first place. Now that the government is passing the Speech Law and perhaps silencing all opposing voices against them, no one would dare to

speak. Online forums will be monitored. Personal speech will be watched. Scholarly papers will be checked. ‘The People’ can be terminated. Think, Martin, of how ridiculous it can be.”

“Well I am scared. Ugh, before I forget, just a reminder to our audience. Shall you have any questions or opinions, message us via our CloudSound The People 2027, one word all lowercase. Back to our topic. Umm...Rona, have you heard of the view that social movement persons love using violence? How do you view this?”

“Not all of us is violent, only a few radicals like Joshua Tong would break things and set fire during their protests. Outside violence, there are multiple ways we can fight for freedom. We have our own individual media, we have the Lennon Wall, we have peers studying sociology, I have my own blog. But all are restricted. When peace doesn’t move the government, we need ways to catch attention. Large scale protest is one way. But what moves them the most, is by force. Even if we couldn’t get what we want, the society knows we are here. They have already restricted gatherings. Don’t let them kill our voices as well. We must fight, or else we will lose everything. Outsiders may view it as violence, we view it as one reasonable expression.”

“That, might see some further discussions. Now, I have something which might be offensive. Some people label you as cockroaches...Response?”

Rona punches the table and shouts “We are Not!”, then quickly calms herself and says in a peaceful tone, “I understand why people view us this way. We block roads, we occupy public spaces, we disturb daily lives. We are sometimes an unwanted sight. But those are just minority of us. Most of us don’t disturb people and voice our opinion quietly. If we have to be a sore to your eyes, we have a dream. Next time before you judge us, please, know our struggles that we find no hope and have to stand for ourselves.”

“We sure will do. Now, we have our first question from our audience. Athena 2048 asks ‘The government is banning the children picture book *The Sheep among Sheeps* due to its political interpretation.’ Comment?”

“I haven’t read one yet. But if the government is banning it, then it must be because it reveals some unwanted facts. They are banning it because they are scared. About this, I say to you, government, you are trying to silence us. But we are not afraid of you, because your acts have proven that you are afraid of us.”

“Next from Paul Chan asking ‘Who is funding you and your actions’. That...kind of interest me as well. Rona?”

“I know there has been a belief that we are paid to do this. I don’t know about others, but I volunteer for this. A lot of peers who are with me do. This matters to our future, and we don’t need to be paid to do this.”

“Another question is from Pstar47, ‘How well do your subordinates know about fighting against the government?’ Rona?”

“I have no subordinates, they are my comrades, my siblings in arms. I know many are accusing us of misleading young people. That is not true, at least in my case. My peers are not easily manipulated youths. Many are university students, university graduates, scholars and knowledgeable persons. We all know that this is breaking laws to achieve justice, this is civil disobedience. The government is unjust, so that the only way we can do is to against it. That means to be arrested by the system when fighting against the system. This message is on my Cloud Sound profile as well. Those who know me and joins me knows that.”

“I sure need to learn about that too. E.Tsang asks ‘Are you worried about your career?’ Now that you are a leading social movement person, that question make sense. Rona?

“Once I step on this road, it is all in or nothing. I have abandoned my job as an assistant lawyer once I see through the unjust of things. However I worry about others who join me. I worry about my brother, who wants to be a medical person. I worry about my brother’s girlfriend, who is determined to be a scholar after graduation. I worry about my brother’s friend, who wishes to be a teacher and by doing so is going to face a lot of challenges. I worry about my brother’s friend’s girlfriend who happens to work here as a part-time host and dreams to be a journalist. When I fight, I spearhead myself, because I am not willing to put them in danger, and take the blame if I need to.”

“Heartwarming. Now, the last question. Ben Will asks ‘if the government targets you and have you on their wanted list, will you reach foreign countries like others do?’”

“I am not planning to leave. Hong Kong is my home and no where else is. I was born here, grown here. If I have to be arrested, let it be here as well.”

“I...can see the sentiment. I wish to continue this conversation, but this is the end of today’s ‘The People’. Thank you for tuning in. This is Martin Tai, signing off.”

It is about eight o’clock when we escort Rona back to Long Ping Station. Rona lives alone herself knowing that her leading social movement is going to cause her family a lot of problems. No one seems to notice Rona despite her quite frequent appearance on TV news. Perhaps because she is wearing a mask, sunglasses and a dark cap. As we go through the exit

and enter the footbridge, a man is standing at the crossroad of the overhead bridge. He wears a paper sign over himself. Written on the white paper board in red is “kill cockroaches” on the top left corner, a red “cockroaches are going to die” on the right side, and some green “kill rats, ants, lizards” “kill them all” diagonally parallel at the bottom left. Without us noticing, Rona is furiously marching to the man, shouting “How dare you!” and she cracks her fingers. Zedekiah quickly rushes to halt her, ends up standing a few inches between Rona and the man. He takes a punch from Rona on his chest, and gets crushed onto the man and bangs the poor guy onto a pole. Both collapsed on the pole. Coming to my senses I rush forward and pull Rona, about to fail until Zedekiah rises and pushes his sister. Meander and Athena grip the man to his feet, with Athena sincerely apologizing.

“Calm the hell down sis,” Zedekiah is trying to restrain the angry Rona, “he is just literally selling pesticides. HE SELLS PESTICIDES!”

Rona is a bit less enraged and swings us away, facing the man. “Watch the fuck, kids.” The man picks up his things, and picks another spot to stand.

Days have passed and it is Friday night. It is a tradition for Zedekiah, Athena, Meander and I to have dinner in one of our families. And tonight, Athena is the host.

“You said your elder brother has just returned from England. What shall I do? I only met him a few times!” Zedekiah exclaims. Athena’s father and brothers live in English, while she and her mother live in Hong Kong.

“Relax Zed, if you can handle me and mother you will handle him just fine,” Athena opens the door.

“Apollo,” Athena hugs her brother who is wearing an apron and greets her.

Zedekiah stutters, “umm...hi Zedekiah, I am Apollo, boyfriend’s Athena. I am sure you have met [he points at me] Meander and [he points at the melon Meander is holding] Jonathan,” and he ends his introduction with a nervous smile.

“Umm...right,” Apollo uses some time to process, “don’t just stand at the door, the chickens won’t eat themselves.”

Mr Leung soon serves us with baked chicken and potatoes.

“So,” I poke at a chicken after we say grace for the food, “do you have fork?”

“We don’t use knife and fork here Jonathan,” Apollo answers, “we tear it like cavemen.”

“Your family,” Meander turns to Athena, “is a peculiar one. Take it as a compliment Auntie.”

“Well, I agree.” Aunt Juno says, “since the men have been to a foreign country, I have been constantly introduced to new ways of dining. You know what, when I first dated Jup, he roasted a whole cow for dinner.” She laughs.

“Mum, this is the way we should be eating!” Apollo lectures, “humans hunted for food, roast it by the fire, and eat them with bare hands. No fork, no knives. It can be viewed as an ecological move. Men are born naked, we ought to catch beast to feast. Yet we have no claws or sharp teeth, we use tools to catch. Once the animal is prepared as food, we should not use tools to show respect and common ground with the animal.”

“You know, you sound like Professor Wong of our department,” I comment.

“With five whole chickens on the table?” Zed looks at the chickens.

“Such an ecology attitude is common in the UK. I know the protein is a bit overwhelming. But hey, you are guests here, must treat you well.”

“So,” Apollo tears down a thigh, “I know you are all undergrads. But Meander, I heard that you are a journalist of ‘The People’ right? How many high-ranking officers have you interviewed?”

“Apollo,” Aunt Juno reminds her elder son, “we don’t talk politics at the table.”

“Why not?” Apollo chews a mouthful of meat, “the table is the best place to talk politics.”

“Well,” Meander says, “part time. And not the high ranking ones, they usually reject invitations.”

“Not a good sign eh?” Zedekiah says “good government cares about their people and is willing to take interviews.

“Choose your criticisms wisely,” says Apollo, “they are just decision makers afterall. Not all are that social or anything like that.”

“But bro,” asks Athena, “what does the government in UK like, is it better than us?”

“Well sis, we pay high taxes, almost half of our salary. But the infrastructure is great. Let’s say you don’t even need to spend a penny on education and upbringing before 18, and get paid being sick after 65. If my understanding is right, it is just like Hong Kong.”

“Do the Parliament persecute their dissidents?” asks Zedekiah.

“Each country has their way to deal with dissidents, no exception,” answers Apollo, “and why are there dissidents is because no political party is perfect. Country is founded by

people, and people is the weakness of every political party. Communism becomes dictatorship, Capitalism leads to exploitation, the flaw is humans.”

“I suggest you to be grateful son,” Aunt Juno says to her kid, “afterall, it is the government who construct the city you live well in and raise you up.”

“You and father raised me up, ma,” says Apollo, “but a responsible government shall also ensure that we have reasonable freedom for a well-developed mental life, so that a city is its people, not a mere collection of buildings.”

“Now you sound like your father.”

“Why not? Mum, I am master in Critical World Literature, like father who is a great professor in Humanities.”

Zedekiah whispers to Athena, “Now I know where you get your wisdom.”

After dinner, Apollo grabs Zedekiah and I to do the dishes. It is our habit that the girls cook dinner and the boys wish the dishes. Since dinner is cooked before we are even there, Apollo insists that it is a gentleman’s way to let ladies rest and chat.

“Zedekiah, you rub ‘em, Jonathan, wet ‘em. I will dry and hang ‘em.”

“Zed, I heard that your sister is a leader of a social movement as well. Sorry for the oily large plate.”

“Yea she is. One of the leading spearheads since a few years ago,” says Zedekiah.

“Apollo,” I ask, grabbing a plate. “do UK have social movements too?”

“Depends how political you define it. Just gathering to voice out opinions, a lot, I have led some. Breaking glasses to voice out or directly charging the police line, a few.”

“Do you support them?” asks Zedekiah lifting up a pot.

“On some issues, I am totally with them. Like feminist breaks windowes of a bank to protest for energy crisis, I have wrote a paper ‘Feminist Movement and Ecology: The Ladies Breaking Glasses for Forest’ to support it.” He arranges a few large plates. “However I have to study wisely what they are fighting for. I am not saying they are not right, some just don’t convince me. I’ll give you an example,” he gives us a wok, “I hope I won’t offend you, Zed. One of the five demands states to release all the political prisoners. Yes, there are political prisoners who are wrongly accused and are just suppressed by the government. But all the prisoners? Last Christmas Leung Kwok-hung was in the middle of Waterloo Station giving speech to say that it is Christmas, we have family with us but the political prisoners don’t. So that we need to release them. Looking at it objectively, the logic is a bit jumpy.”

“But some ideas are still worth fighting for!” Zedekiah rubs the pot wildly, “like the Speech Law, if we don’t oppose it, we will lose everything.”

“I haven’t known much about that law everyone is talking about. But gatherings are not the only way. In the dark, there are multiple ways to shine,” says Apollo.

“You know what, that’s the thing Athena always tells me,” says Zedekiah lowly.

“But the thing is,” I rub the pot dry, “if even speech is limited, ways to shine would surely be limited.”

“What I am suggesting is not only protests and speech, but blend in. Working well is the way to contribute. We are restrained, but we can still be helpful. By being with the society, we improve our city bits by bits. That one day, we might change the tide.”

“Wish I was that patient.” Zedekiah sighs.

“Anyway, I strongly believe that there are multiple ways to shine in the dark. In pitch darkness, even the slightest of light is bright,” exclaims Apollo.

“Alright, next is the oven. It’s too oily. I will clean it myself. Out, out my kitchen.” Apollo turfs us out, leaving us outside to have the melons which the girls have prepared.

On the next day I visit Sunshine Daycare Centre to help out with their activities. It is a daycare centre which Athena and Zedekiah work in. As the activities end and parents come to pick up the kids, several children are staying behind. It regularly happens because some of their parents are attending their interest class elsewhere. This is the time to entertain the kids to keep them busy and keep them in the room. At the middle of playtime, a little girl approaches Athena with a colorful book and begs her, “Big sister A-tin-a, can you read us a story?” Athena leaves Zedekiah to play tag with the running kids. She sits on a spot filled with bean bag sofas, opening the picture book little Sally hands her. I am quite dreary today and decide to grab an idle little boy who is tired from running, and join the small reading club. Three or four kids are already with us as she reads the first page.

Once upon a time there was a sheep village near the river. The sheeps lived happily with the animals nearby them.

One day, there came wolves from the North, claiming that they are the original rulers of this village. And they demand the sheeps to be loyal to them and serve them like they serve other animals.

“Wait, Sally,” she stops and asks the girl she is cuddling, “where did you get this book?” The kid just raises her head and squeaks “read on”.

Knowing that the book is the banned book Athena closes the book, and tells the kids to play.

After sending the kids away, Athena slaps Zedekiah with the book and shouts playfully, “you picked this book right?”

“How dare me, I don’t even know what is this,” Zedehaik howls.

“It is a banned book,” Athena raises the book to Zedekiah’s eyes

“So what, do I look like I am a smuggler?”

They look more like playing than fighting. And I cannot help but laugh lowly.

Sally is next to me and pulls my shirt lightly, “Big Brother Jon...”

“Is that book,” I kneel down and ask her, “yours?”

The little girl nods shyly. I knew she is too scared to approach those two huge fighting creatures. I pat her, “I will ask them.”

“So if you two are done,” I walk to them, “are you going to return the book to little Sally?”

“See!” Zedekiah gives Athena an innocent smile.

“There you go Sally,” she pats the book, “good as new.”

“Now,” Athena opens her arms, “say bye bye to big sis?”

Little Sally rushes to hug her goodbye, and runs back to her mother

“You don’t bye bye big bro?” Zedekiah and I speak at the same time.

The girl turns slightly around, and waves to us, and she leaves with her parents.

“So much for a banned book. Do you think the kids understand it?” I ask.

It is the 21st of September, the day the legislative council is said to pass the Speech Law. Once we have finished the afternoon lecture, we pack our things and hope to get there before four to join Rona who is protesting there since the council discussion section starts at 2pm.

“So,” I hand a bottle of water to Zedekiah, “How did Rona become such... [Zedekiah: Aggressive?]...radical. Well yes, aggressive is better.”

Zedekiah sighs and picks up a black t-shirt, “we are born together in a traditional chinese family. Our parents love me over Rona. Let’s say my birthdays are more grand, my faults are often forgotten. Let’s say Rona is often forgotten in our family.”

“When I was six, she was ten, we went to a camp. Mum and dad didn’t give her anything for the camp. Either forgot or not planned to. On the first day of camp, she bullied a boy to give her his things. And after trying it a few times, she got everything from that boy and other

campmates. Of course she was heavily punished by the instructors and father. But perhaps it was the time when she learnt that, you should get what you want, even if it means using aggressive ways. And she constantly does that for several camps and occasions.”

He packs some bandages, “now either she had developed other thoughts or society finally softened her, she doesn’t take things by force, but in her own way.”

“How did you know that much?” I ask Zed.

“Well, isn’t that obvious? That boy was me,” he gives a bitter smile.

“The next bus to Central pier is 10 minutes later,” Alex reports.

“Come,” Zedekiah picks up his bag, “Don’t leave Rona waiting.”

When we arrive, the protestors are sitting or standing far away from the legislative council, with a large open ground separating them and the police. This is the Assembly Law passed last month stating protestors who wish to gather to protest outside important government facilities shall maintain at least 200 meters from the building. Despite the distance, the crowds have large banners and shouting slogans to ensure senators inside the building know that they are here. Rona is standing at the very front on a wooden box shouting “Give us freedom!” and the crowd responds “Withdraw the damned law!”. “Give us back Hong Kong!” “CCP step down!”. As soon as she notices Zedekiah is waving at her, she talks to another guy, and steps down to approach us. She grabs the bottle Zedekiah hands her to drink. Then she sits right next to us and signals us to do so. She grabs a rice dumpling from her brother and returns to the front to watch the big screen on the council building broadcasting the Second Reading debate.

After a long discussion, voting on the bill begins in the early evening. All hold our breaths for the result. 54 have attended, 32 for, 20 against, 2 abstentions. The bill has passed the Second Read. This news clearly enrages the crowd, with all of us on our feet, almost all are shouting, roaring “withdraw the damned law” “shame on CCP”. In the ocean of barrage, Rona stands on the wooden box to gain the high ground. She grabs a microphone to the crowd and shouts:

“Comrades, the evil government thinks they can control what we say, what we think. But they cannot! Because our thoughts belong to us! Our mouth belongs to us. They are going to censor our words, because they are afraid of us. They think they can silent us, but they cannot. For our freedom! For our future! March!”

Many gear up with their masks and goggles, and steadily the collection of people move. Soon I find myself being pushed by people around me, and my legs walk unconsciously with the moving gang. I have lost sight of Zedekiah, Meander, Athena, Alex, and Bobby. I am suddenly on the first few lines, having the spearhead Rona in my sight.

Soon the police notice us, and form up a line of shields opposite of us. Orange flag is raised by them and an officer shouts through his mic “Attention protestors, you are entering a restrictive area and might be breaking the Assembly Law. Please turn back or we will be forced to use reasonable force.” Clearly his shouting is in vain and the people keep moving. At a certain range, several shots break from the police’s defense line heading towards us. The crowded space is instantly filled with a white stimulating mist. I am quite glad that I am wearing goggles tightly. Soon a black flag is raised, and the officer shouts, “Attention! you are in violation of the Assembly Law. We might need to use appropriate force if you continue to advance.” A second round of tear gas is shot. Breaking through the mist, the first line of people led by Rona march fast to the police.

As we are a few meters away from the police, we start to jog. Between the heads, I see a senior officer draw his pistol out and aim at the middle of the line. “Bang!” “Bang!” two loud consecutive shots break out, Rona’s silhouet collapses with several screams.

The crowd suddenly slows down. “Phoenix’s down. Phoenix’s down!” I hear the comm shouts. “RONA!” Zedekiah breaks from the crowd and rushes to his sister. I push away a few people and rush to Rona’s position. Zedekiah stands between Rona and the advancing policeman shouting “I am a medic, A MEDIC!”. One of the fully geared police groans “fuck medic” and raises his shields. Several men stand in front of us, pushing against the police’s shield wall.

“Grab her away!” Zedekiah shouts to me and grabs her left, I grab her right. Meander and Athena emerge among the crowd. Meander lifts Rona’s leg and Athena shouts “Make way! We have wounded!”

We gently drop Rona on a sideroad several meters away from the crowd.

“Shit, the black shirt is blocking it. Jon, scissors!” I pass Zedekiah a pair of scissors to cut the shirt of Rona, and tell Bobby and Alex “You may want to look away from girls.” At this point Meander and Athena already proceed to wash the victims out of tear gas, leaving

the devastated duo standing. “Thanks God she is wearing tank tops.” Zedekiah proceeds to throw the cloth away.

“No good. She is unconscious. They hit her upper left chest and her left shoulder,” Zedekiah checks on her, “My training doesn’t include removing bullets, but I can stop the blood.”

“Without a hospital she is toast!” I exclaim.

“How come she is a toast, she is not bread.” Alex states.

“Really, now?” I turn to Alex when holding the bandages for Zedekiah. “How about you do something useful, phonecall the emergency hotline and tell them to send an ambulance. Our hands are too bloody to do that.” I am sure that is less ambiguous than “call the ambulance”.

Rona gives a slight moan and moves her right arm to touch her wound, but soon drops her hand.

“Rona! RONA!” Zedekiah shakes her and places a finger under her nose, “she’s still alive, but quick!”

“Quick! Dial 999 and tell them your location.” I shout to Alex and he does so. Five minutes have passed. Six minutes have passed. Seven minutes have passed. Each minute passes like burning hell, leaving Zedekiah sitting devastated next to his sister. It feels like a long time later, medical men rush in and lift Rona away, taking us in as well. It takes 30 minutes to get Rona from the teeth of gun to the hospital

When we are waiting, a man and a woman run to the emergency area. They are Rona and Zedekiah’s parents. Uncle Ben dashes to the reception area, banging the reception windows and asks “My daughter Chan Ao Feng, is she here. Is she alright?” Aunt Mary is crying, standing in the middle of the area, looking around. Zedekiah is looking away, knowing that his family might blame him. It is Athena who stands and greets her, “Auntie.” Mrs Chan rushes to her and hugs Athena. She then goes to Zedekiah and hugs him, “Oh Yi Yong, I am so glad you are okay.” It is then his father approaches him. Zedekiah stands up, turns his face away from his father, expecting his father to smack him. “Uncle!” Athena shouts with tears to intercept him, “please, if it wasn’t Zed’s skill, things would have been worse.” “You should have stopped her,” his large hand pushes Athena and Meander catches her, he stands right in front of Zedekiah, and gives him a big hug, “I don’t want to lose both of you in a day.” and he cries, the big man cries. “Son, you are not getting in these again,” his father urges him. “Father, I...I...Doctor Epoch, how is my sister?”

“Miss Chan is very lucky. A few centimeters and it would have hit her heart. The bullets are well removed. Yet she is quite low on blood and is still unconscious.” Rona is pushed out of the operation room in a hospital bed.

Mrs Chan Rushes forward and shouts, “Ao Feng, it’s mama. Please, wake up if you hear me. Please Ao Feng.”

A nurse tells her, “the patient just had an operation. We better let her rest.”

“Does she,” the mother asks with tears, “have a room yet?”

“We will arrange that. We might need her parents to go through some admission procedures.”

As we rise, Alex asks “Umm...we don’t want to disturb, but you do know the way to Shue Yan University?”

“Do you know the way back to Shue Yan University?” Bobby rephrases, “we get here by ambulance and don’t know how to get back.”

“I think you boys are asking us to take you back,” Athena says to them, “we... are really worried about Rona, and cannot leave her here. I suggest that you may...”

“We really don’t want to bother, but I am seldom out of the campus and don’t know the way,” says Alex

“I am rarely outside the campus. It is one of my first times out,” adds Bobby.

“It’s okay Athena. Jon, it’s up to you if you go with them,” Zedekiah says to me.

“You sure you can handle it? You need friends Zed.”

“Don’t worry Jon, my family is here. Athena is here. Besides, it would be good if someone show the way for AI and Windownesian.”

“Sure sure,” we both stand up, and I give Zedekiah a handshake, “take care. Message me whenever you need to okay?”

“Sure bro,” he says, “just make sure you jot lecture notes for me.”

That night in the room, none of us can sleep, and none of us speaks.