

The Windownesian

Chapter 12

The Boar Roars

221 BC: First historical record of Hong Kong.

1841: The Foundation of Hong Kong brought with it the earliest modern settlement.

1880s: First human construction was built in Braemar Hill as a private reservoir.

11 November 2021: A boar attacked and wounded a police officer in North Point.

12 November 2021: The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department issued animal euthanasia on any boars that appear in the urban areas.

February 2028:

Legend has it. Back in the 1940s, when the Second Sino-Japanese War was in full swing, the Japanese army invaded Hong Kong. A local farmer lost contact with his five children and tracked them to Braemar Hill. Convinced that his children were descended into the trees, he stepped into the highland forest of the mountain and lost trace for some days. Since it was rumoured that there was a Japanese base on the other side of the hill, local residents presumed he was killed by either enemies or forest beasts. A week later, around the entrance of the forest, an injured albino boar appeared. It was huge, twice the size of average boars with large white fangs. Sitting on its back, there were five children ranging from two to seven. They rode the boar all the way to the urban boundaries. It was unknown what happened afterwards.

“So, this would be the course outline of our Interdisciplinarity Course,” Dr Yeman Lam concludes the first part of the lesson, “as you can see, I am going to teach in the first half of the course and Dr Jose Lam will co-teach the rest. Now, if there is no other problem we can...”

“Problem,” Zedekiah raises his hand, “are you saying that as an interdisciplinarity course, we are just going to study some environmental problems, psychology and media culture for the first half?”

“Well, the design of the course is...”

“I mean there is nothing else for us to learn?” Zedekiah interrupts as Yeman tries to explain, “I know the second half of the course is about Linguistics intersecting with Cultural Studies and the English Language. But the first half is...why don’t we study Science and Culture?”

“We ARE studying science, with all these environmental problems,” says Yeman.

“I mean,” Zedekiah argues, “in year one we have learnt some basic Cultural Studies concepts, year two we studied our city in Urbanscape culture, year three we studied technology and the robots we deed as non-human in Technoscience Cultural and last semester we had Ecology Studies to study animal and plants in our cultural context with cultural texts. And now you tell me that we have these this year? We won’t even read PC Snow or Wendy Wheeler or Deleuze? Com’on doctor, this is the last semester of year 4, I think we should...”

“Andrea,” I mutter to my arm, “what was the course outline like last year?”

“In fact, Jonathan, you can speak to me in your brain rather than articulating words,” Andrea reminds me, “I can read your thoughts alright. The official course outline of ‘ENG 409 Interdisciplinary Approach to English Studies’ has been changed. I found this old version online. Week 1 was about an introduction to Interdisciplinarity. Week 2 and 3 were about quantum physics, complexity and chaos theory. Week 4 and 5 were evolutionary science. Week 6 and 7 were literacy theory. And that’s the first half.”

“Sounds more interesting,” I comment.

“Indeed Jon,” Zedekiah hears me, “even Liberal Studies in secondary school sounds more interesting.”

“We will have a ten minutes break,” Yeman announces, “then we will have a lucky draw for your presentation.”

“It’s all ridiculous,” comments Zedekiah, taking out his water bottle.

“Indeed it is,” Alex agrees, “this doesn’t sound like university-level knowledge.”

“Indeed it isn’t,” the TA Erik walks to us and sits down, “everything has changed since Professor Wong is away. Leaving these...rubbish. I knew this would happen, I just didn’t expect things to change this fast.”

“Jose is teaching us in the next half right?” I ask.

“Yes. She, Amanda and Resnick are the last line of defence of Dawn’s legacy,” Eric responds, “of Shue Yan English Department’s legacy.”

“Anyway,” I say, “we still have to deal with the grouping. Zed, Alex, are you guys with me?”

“Count me in,” says Alex, “tell us your plan.”

“Will the Andrea you mention be one of us?” Zedekiah asks.

Andrea is the prosthetic left arm I installed last week.

“She will be glad,” I say.

“I don’t disturb you guys here,” Eric excuses himself.

“So, if you guys have no specific preference,” I look at the course outline, “we are going to skip all topics in the first half.”

“Agree.”

“Good move.”

“That leaves us with the second half. Now, we might be busy with mid-terms and papers by then, so I wish to pick one I am most confident in, easy to find cultural texts to demonstrate ideas. Let’s have this, intercultural communication, as our first choice.”

“Intercultural communication? What can we do with it?” asks Alex.

“You want to use Biosemiotics don’t you?” says Zedekiah.

“Well other than the East meets the West kind of thing, remember we have nonhumans in Cultural Studies, they are robots, animals and plants, and even aliens. We can first point out their place in Cultural Studies, then quote how scholars expect them to communicate, such as the computer language in the 1990s, biosemiotics from Wendy Wheeler, and perhaps scientific research predicting how they may express themselves. Then we can use books and films to depict how these culturally different groups may communicate, such as Miyasaki films, science fiction involves robots and aliens language.”

“2016 movie *Arrival* might be a good pick for this,” Andrea suggests.

“Nice idea,” comments Zedekiah, “but don’t we think we might go too far with all these?”

“We will just have to list out some concepts of how scientists and linguists expect them, then link the cultural texts to the theories. If we cannot pick this, our second priority would be ecolinguistics, focusing on ecology, talking about biosemiotics, perhaps analysing how Chinese word formation can relate to nature.”

After the grouping, Yeman finds out that there is time, so she starts a small lecture. “You all know what light pollution is, right? Light pollution is unwanted or excessive artificial light. Like noise pollution, light pollution is a form of waste energy that can cause adverse effects and degrade environmental quality. Moreover, because light is typically generated by electricity, which itself is usually generated by the combustion of fossil fuels, it can be said that there is a connection between light pollution and air pollution. Control of light pollution therefore will help to conserve fuel and reduce air pollution as well as mitigate the more immediate problems caused by excessive light. Although light pollution may not appear to be as harmful to public health and welfare as pollution of water resources or the atmosphere, it is an environmental quality issue of no small significance.”

“Light pollution adversely affects professional and amateur astronomers, as well as casual observers of the night sky, because it severely reduces the visibility of stars and other celestial objects. The reduction in night sky visibility is a result of ‘skyglow’, upward-directed light emanating from poorly designed or directed lamps and security floodlights. This wasted light is scattered and reflected by solid or liquid particles in the atmosphere and then returned to the eyes of people on the ground, obliterating their view of the night sky. The effect of skyglow from a town or city is not necessarily localised; it can be observed far from the main source.”

“Excuse me,” Zedekiah interrupts, “we know about light pollution too. But what’s the relation between this and us as English Majors? Like, affecting plants and animals who live in the human world? Is there any cultural text that depicts the problem that we as English Majors may find interest in?”

“Fine, let’s go through some cultural texts. You all know Doraemon right? It is originally a Japanese cartoon. With many objects similar to Japanese people. In Cultural Studies, there is the signification of things, there is a signifier to signify some concepts. Some objects are so common to the Japanese, they represent the culture and become the signifier to the signification of Japaneseness. But when Doraemon is adapted to America, a lot of things are changed for localization. The red bean buns Doraemon loves to eat are Japanese food. They are changed to pizza, a popular American food. The family uses chopsticks to eat, yet in America, they become forks and knives, showing a different habit in food culture. When the show is in Japan, they show Japanese currency. But in America, they use American dollar. That is the cultural difference in cultural texts. Well, it is about time. Class dismiss. see you next week.”

“That’s ridiculous,” Zedekiah bursts out in anger as we return to the dormitory, “this is just unfair.”

“Yea, you have repeated it,” says Alex ejecting a disc from the back of his head and injecting a new one, “several times.”

“Because it is!” roars Zedekiah, “think about it, we would have been learning concepts more profound than biosemiotics, perhaps some quantum physics and even intersection of science and culture. But no, we are just learning several kinds of environmental problems.”

“Alex,” I say to the AI, “don’t mind Zedekiah. If you have experienced the last three years as an English Major, you will have the same sentiment too. Things were just so much better back in the days. Funny, when I say back in the days I mean last semester.”

“I know,” says Alex, “that’s why I am discarding the record of this lesson,” he swings the disc, “such a waste of my storage space.”

“And you know what?” Zedekiah shouts, “I talked to Yeman and she says the course outline has been passed by the department head and the school board. Fuck the ones making decisions, they will never understand what good knowledge is. I am not paying ten thousand a month just to learn things I already know, nor an average Liberal Studies lesson. I mean, even Doraemon, the good old ones I mean, has movies about ecological awareness.”

“Are you guys talking about the lesson today?” Bobby, my roommate suddenly speaks.

“Right, you were there too,” I recognize, “Bobby, care to join our group? We need one more groupmate to hit the minimum.”

“Oh I’d love to,” says Bobby Tataraka, “but I do think Yeman’s lecture is not that bad.”

“Mainly because you haven’t experienced good lectures,” comments Zedekiah.

“We study humanities right?” Bobby says, “Yeman’s lecture actually reminds me of what humans have done to the world for survival. And the pollutions she mentions are not fictional, but very real we see everyday. Well one major idea of humanities, at least to me, is to argue about humans and their place in this world. Many may say humans are the most intelligent and the most unique. But I always find it hard to take in. I mean, humans actually do the second most damage to the planet, with most being volcanic eruptions if we define damage as hugely altering land or sea and turning them to be uninhabitable or creating great changes to an extent that all the other lives find it hard to adapt. They are the most unnatural species on their planet. They cannot survive on their own, they don’t have claws or teeth, so they are given fingers to make tools. They have gone against nature from the moment they find ways to manipulate fire, reversing the cycle of day and night. Humans are the true damage to the planet of which they shall never exist. And humans failed to recognize it because it may go against humans’ own ego as the most prominent species.”

“From when on you care about humanity?” Alex says, “I thought you only care about grammar.”

“McSheen you are a human, just like I do,” says Tataraka, “well, at least you possess a human body like I do. And it would not take you long to believe this body is actually weak.”

“Tell me about it,” says the AI.

“My body cannot take in a large concentration of oxygen,” Bobby says, “other than that, the human body is strange. We cannot eat things unless they are processed. Our skins are too thin to protect us from wounds or regulate our body temperature, so we need these things called clothes. We need a tough structure around us to live well. I haven’t talked about the many discomforts we have when we are outside.”

“I almost forgot,” I exclaim, “Bobby you actually belong to another world. It’s called Cer...cer what?”

“My home is called Cerulean,” Bobby Tataraka answers, he is Tataraka, Bobby is just a name I gave him based on what’s on his student ID card, 80667, “or you Earthlings may call it, Kepler 22b. But I have never been to my homeworld. Remember, I am a technology too, dropped by the chug-a-lug. I know only a few about my own planet. Up till now, I am not even sure what comprises of my body but I know I am different from everyone I meet.”

“Kepler 22b is a watery planet,” says Andrea.

“Andrea, can you broadcast?” I ask the voice.

“Sure. I can.”

“Bobby she is Andrea,” says Zedekiah, “she can fill your head with useless info for hours.”

“Some of the information can be useful, Zedekiah Chan, you know that,” says Andrea.

“Andrea, tell us about Kepler 22b,” I command.

“Sure, Jonathan. Kepler 22b is a watery planet, with 85% of land covered with water. Kepler 22b’s radius is roughly 2.4 times that of Earth. Its mass and surface composition remain unknown, with only some very rough estimates established: it has fewer than 124 Earth masses at the 3-sigma confidence limit, and fewer than 36 Earth masses at 1-sigma confidence.”

“What about the lifeforms living in it?” Bobby asks.

“The ecosystem of Kepler 22b is diverse. The most intelligent species are called vetta wight. They are humanoid creatures with relatively larger brains. Their gill-lung combo allows them to venture between land and water. Vetta wight communities are matriarchal societies ruled by an elder female. Female members of the family act as the major working

force while the males are most of the time castaway after they have passed breeding age. Vetta wights feed on the animal by-products, plants and their fruits on both land and water. Most vetta wights are the equivalent of farmers on Earth. They sleep when the solar of their planet is set and are active when their solar shines. Each family is said to manage one species on Kelper 22b with the knowledge and wisdom of the species they are assigned to pass down from generation to generation. Some vetta wights develop higher-level publishing and creative industry to record their life and...”

“Wait Andrea,” asks Alex, “where’s that information from?”

“From a chapter of a fictional science book *The Aquatic Species* by an anonymous writer.”

“A lot of these make sense to me,” comments Bobby.

“Yes, that explains why you need to keep the windows shut,” I say, “your lung-gill combo can’t really take too much oxygen gas, so you find opened windows weird. You are the windowesian, for a good reason.”

“It is not just the opened windows I find weird,” Bobby complains, “you humans not only build structures to enclose yourselves, although that does protect me from oxygen, you also have many weird habits too. You humans go to certain areas to collect food and use certain kinds of colour paper to exchange them. There are too many things I don’t understand.”

“Don’t worry Bobby,” I say to the alien, “I don’t understand either.”

“Andrea, tell us more about Kepler 22b.”

“Breaking News. Live here is Jeremy Pan from TVB news. A group of 12 boars broke into the Chai Wan MTR station an hour ago. The police sealed the station. As you can see here, the police have formed a shield wall and are marching towards the corned boars. Oh look, some elder boars charged into the police for a breakthrough! [Man’s voice: Hey don’t just stand there, take cover!] The alpha male, we believe to be, is charging into the line of police. Oh, the alpha knocks the officer over. [Gunshots] The big boar and several other boars are down. [Man: Hey stop recording! Turn off your camera!] Is the officer there okay? [Woman: He’s bleeding, send me a medic here!] [Man: I said turn off your camera!] We will update you soon. Jeremy Pan from TVB news, signing off.”

“Andrea,” I summon my left arm.

“Yes Jonathan.”

“Do you know Professor Dawn Wong?” I recall the lesson today.

“Professor Dawn Wong, Wong Kin Yuen, born in...”

“No Andrea, I mean, where is he now when Shue Yan is in chaos.”

“Professor Wong is now hired by The University of Chester as an associate professor, teaching Critical Animal and Plants Study, Technoscience Culture, Vampire Studies, Contemporary Literature...”

“What’s the time now in Chester?”

“4 pm.”

“Andrea, can we sneak into The University of Chester?”

“I can search for a student’s account and duplicate one for you. People often attend online lessons with more than one device anyway.”

“No that’s illegal, you are stealing personal information. Okay, perhaps once, Andrea.”

“Thank you for the group, who have just done a wonderful pre-sen-ta-tion!” yes that’s Professor Wong with his signature speaking habit of several words per time and a rising tone in the end, “these people, not only demonstrate, how trans-ver-sal communication can work in literary works, but also, based on actual scientific research, how they may work, in real life! Now let’s have a few words, before we end the lesson~``Wait, am I too late? It is almost the end of the lesson? “We have talked about trans-ver-sal com-mu-i-cation today. The word communication originally comes from the word~commute. This is a word first used in the Caloholatic community, meaning, to~break~bread~. And in any communication, there shall be at least two sides~ If communication is successful, both sides see chang-ges! Now about transversal. We have talked about humans and the categorization of the other. This is the binary categorization, you as Humanities shall hate! Now when there is trans-versal, you trans from you a human, to another cult-ur-ally inferior side, such as animals and plants. You get to find, outside the human-centred thoughts, how the other experience world. So, how do humans do transversal communication! Now we are just humans, our form stays human. Remember the form and event? Culture is event! The Chinese word for it, is Wen Hua! Wan, means pattern, tattooed on the body! It is relatively unmoved, stable. But Hua, the logograph means two men standing back to back, when one is up-side-down! It is ever-changing. Wan Hua, is culture! You are a human, you are stuck in a certain form. You grow in certain culture, they form the Wen on you, the patterns. But in Cultural Studies, you see something not like you, you see someone inverted, subversive to you. You are experiencing their event, the Hua. And when you get to know them, you Hua as them, you learn their stories learn their

symbols! And it goes the same for them too! In the end, both sides, change! You do transversal, by knowing more about what is the other, the different. In Critical Animal and Plants Study, we force you to read a lot about biology, we force you to watch nature-centred movies! Because we want you to know the stories of the other one having a different form from you. We introduce you, their event. And in the end, you study Cultural Studies, because we want you to be a responsible hu-man! We want you to experience the event, of the otherness. We want you, to be kind, to those different from you. We want you, to care for them! Jot these golden words down: I am rooted, but I flow. Here in university, we are not just teaching knowledge, we are teaching you a value. The value of the otherness, a value to care. In the end, you think difference, differently! Good for today. Bye bye class, see you next week.”

Thursday, February the tenth, noon. The commissioner of the police comes out of a hospital and faces the press.

“It is with grave sadness we announce that the officer attacked by the boar didn’t survive. Four men are also knocked out. Other than that, 2 reporters are hurt in this clash. All 12 boars have been dealt with. That’s all for today. We won’t answer any inquiries at this stage.”

Meander arrives at her studio earlier than she usually is as she gets a call from the director. Meander works part-time for the radio programme called ‘The People’.

“Emily,” she asks director Cheung, “are you sure it is a wise move? We haven’t had two interviewees with possibly contrasting views in the same studio.”

“I know,” says the director, “that’s why I need you here.”

“But no matter what we ask, we might create arguments and spark wars,” Meander reminds.

“The mission of ‘The People’ as always, Meander, is to reveal truths and views when most other media ain’t willing to. And give chance, for citizens to inquire more about important things happening in our society.”

“That I know. I am just...concerned about our guest. We are sparking war you know.”

“I have that arranged,” explains director Cheung, “they will not arrive together, sit together and leave together. I have hired men to escort each one to enter, stay and leave at different places. To dodge the press and the crowd, and, each other. I also need your friends too.”

“They are in position.”

I accompany a man dressed in a uniform march into a small recording room where the other host Martin Tai is already there. I hear that Meander is in the main studio with an old white man. The whole studio is busy setting up equipment and contingency plans. As the soft music from the previous programme ends, the director counts down for ours to begin. And five, four, three, two, one...

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen, welcome to ‘The People’, guardian of your voice and your right to information. I am your host, Meander Lee. Yesterday evening, we saw an unfortunate tragedy between men and boars, leading to several deaths. We...before the programme starts, ‘The People’ values all lives, I would like to have one minute of silence, to mourn for all lives lost.”

The entire studio stands straight in the sound of nothingness.

“Thank you. May the dead rest in peace, and the living be comforted. Now let’s move on to our topic. Here, with me in the studio, we have Operations Assistant Commissioner of Police Mister KWOK Pak-chung Patrick. Welcome, Mister Kwok.”

“Good evening Ms Lee.”

“And we have also invited the Board of WWF World Wildlife Fund, Professor of Ecology & Biodiversity and Director of the School of Biological Sciences in the Science Faculty at the University of Hong Kong, Professor David Dudgeon. Welcome Professor Dudgeon.”

“Pleased to be here. Please Meander, just call me David.”

“So gentlemen, let’s get right into the topic. What do you guys think about animals?”

“I have studied a lot about biological science,” says David, “so my view according to years of research and observation is that, animals, all sorts of animals have their own personality and habits. We humans, should and actually can live with them and share the planet. In many cases, many animals are actually misunderstood and there are always ways of harmony. That’s my take on animals in general.”

“Well I do agree that some animals can live with us,” says Mr Kwok, “I have a dog. Rocky and I have gone a long way since I was a cadet. She and I are good friends at work and in private who trust each other. But there are some animals that should not live with us. Some animals are too dirty for us. Some animals are a threat to us.”

“I think you misunderstood me, Kwok sir, when I say live together, I am not saying taking animals into our households. I meant to say to let animals live as animals. No matter how much we love animals, they belong to the wild...”

“No it is you who misunderstood me, professor. I am a guardian of the city, not an environmentalist. You don’t expect to see certain animals roaming the streets. They are too dirty, such as mice, it is right to kill them. Some are even a threat to citizens.”

“I have research on this Mr Kwok, so let me tell you, as long as we don’t provoke them, they don’t attack us!”

“I know what I am talking,” the officer says, “some animals such as boars are naturally a threat to people. I mean, they are muscular, they are huge beasts, capable of fighting tigers and lions. They naturally carry weapons, their fangs. If they get into the city, what will happen?”

“Well, that brings us to the next question,” Meander says, “you see, there have always been wild animals around us, why are they going into urban areas more frequently? And, how do you view wild animals in human areas?”

“We police do receive more and more wild animals invading human settlements. But how should I know?” exclaims Mr Kwok, “when you see a mouse in the middle of the market, are you going to ask why?”

“That is because we invaded first,” the professor responds, “hundred of years ago, there weren’t any buildings, people lived on their land and animals lived on theirs. But as urbanization happened, we developed more and more of nature, we stole the homes from them. We built buildings, which took away their habitat. We build roads, which leaves them no place to go. Is it really them who invaded us? It is us who invaded them in the first place.”

“You say as if they are victims,” says Mr Kwok to Professor Dudgeon, “but they are not pets. They are not innocent goats or lost cutty cats. Let me remind you, some animals can be dangerous. Imagine this, a mother takes her two kids and they meet up with a huge boar with large fangs, who protect them? You talk about animal rights and claim that they were here first. But what about those innocent people? One common sense, pigs are not clean. They smell, they push over rubbish bins and they also excrete everywhere. They can be devastating to public hygiene. I am a police, I place the safety of the people in high regard. If someone or something is dangerous, that is what I shall deal with. It is not cruelty, it is security. Because if we don’t deal with them, they are a threat in all sense. Worst they can do is to attack us, and they did.”

“Sadly they do,” Meander says, “but what shall we do when we face animals attacking humans?”

“My top priority is always our people. In any other case, I don’t comment. but if they attack us, they are proved a vivid threat to our people. We then have the responsibility to stop

them, to prevent further damage. And them attacking people is also a sign that they have gone too far. We surely need follow-ups such as restricting their living area and reducing their numbers by sterilizing them.”

“Well despite me being an ecologist,” says Professor Dudgeon, “and I have always been searching for ways to be nice to animals, I don’t take animals attacking people lightly. This is a serious and grim subject because recently we have seen people hurt and died in it. My condolences. Animals attacking humans is the last thing we want to see. Now I am not an expert in countering animal attacks, so I may not be constructive here. But dealing with animals attacking humans is already the last resort. What we can do is prevention.”

“How can we prevent it, professor?” The policeman asks, “these are wild beasts. If they tend to attack people, they attack people.”

“Many, actually. We can actually integrate them into city planning. The first thing we can do is observe the animal’s actions, hence outlining their active area and know how they actually live, and set zones to prevent human settlements. If animals would inspect rubbish bins, we can deploy specially designed rubbish bins around their habitats. There is also an active way to do it rather than just tracking where they live. Animals are straightforward, they live wherever there’s food. And boars in particular feed on various fruits and nuts native to the area. One way of doing it is to plant trees they rely on and therefore constrain them in certain areas. Several countries are currently employing these ideas and see huge success in it. We also support catching and sterilising them, that’s what we do to control their numbers, but just because we can keep the necessary balance in nature.”

“Well, that sounds like a promising solution,” Meander comments, “when humans being attacked by boars is unfortunate, I am sure that we all can do something, leave the precautions to experts and environmentalists, and security as the job of the police force. Now I am sure our audience has some opinions on the issue related. Don’t hesitate, we are ‘the People’, we mediate your voice. Message us via our CloudSound The People 2028 one word all lowercase. Back to our topic. What measures do you suggest if boars spawn in urban areas again?”

I see Martin and several crews busy with their holophones and computers. Clearly, they are selecting audience questions.

“If you do see a boar, remember,” Mr Kwok says, “they are a threat to our safety. Call us, the police, let us deal with it.”

“That would be the last step,” says Professor Dudgeon, “in fact, when you encounter wild animals in urban areas, don’t have to care about them, don’t provoke them. They will go away. Things just work this way, animals don’t threaten us unless we threaten them.”

“No offence professor,” says Mr Kwok, “when I say threat, I am not only saying they may attack people, but they might also break properties and upset hygiene. These are things I care for.”

“Not if we have planned ahead and drawn zones to effectively separate them from us,” says Professor Dudgeon, “they are a threat also to property and hygiene is a consequence of not considering them in early city planning. On the contrary, calling the police may only worsen things. I understand it is for the safety of people. But think from their perspective. They don’t know you are the police, they only see shields and batons, they only see threats. There are actually many ways to deal with them without risking anyone.”

“We have our first question here,” Meander announces, “now audience, sorry we don’t read out your names this time. Someone asks, ‘what is your view about police hunting animals?’”

“I shall make it clear here,” the policeman says, “the police force has a strict guideline of countering wild animals to ensure minimum casualties. And ‘hunt’ is not the right word. We only search for boars when intel suggests that their numbers are too many and become a vivid threat. We hire professionals, trained professionals. Every act we perform is carefully considered.”

“You are being ambiguous here officer,” comments the Professor, “and I understand. But government departments are not the only ones who can act on things. Now you say police have guidelines, I am happy to hear it. That way animal rights organizations like us have a lot less to do. I would suppose that you have integrated suggestions from experts like us. Consider our input officer, we may use a great help. So that you do your job well and we ensure minimum harm.”

“We have our next question,” Meander reads, “‘some people are feeding wild animals on a daily basis. Comments?’”

“No!” “No!” They utter together.

“Well finally,” says the professor, “there is one thing we both agree on.”

“Now we the police force always get complaints of people feeding wild animals. Honestly, I am getting tired of it. Feeding wild animals can cause more of them to concentrate in one place. That always complicates things. Also feeding them means leading them to the road, which increases the risk of humans encountering animals or car accidents. We don’t

want to see either one. So we hereby, on behalf of the police force, urge citizens to stop feeding the wild animals. Anyone who does so will face legal consequences.”

“Many people may feed animals thinking they are helping them,” says the professor of biological science, “I admire the sentiment, but your kind heart will end up in bad effect. Well other than the safety concerns Kwok sir has mentioned, we don’t directly feed wild animals for a reason. The best wildlife preservation is actually to imitate how nature actually works. Animal numbers are linear to the local food supply. If food is scarce, they have fewer cubs or straight up die. That’s how nature works. Now giving food to them actually encourages the birth rate. Seriously, since we have reports indicating someone feeding boars in North Point, the herd size increased by eleven times! With a herd size this large, once food supply runs out or isn’t enough, they go into urban areas for food. Besides, that would cause them to lose their hunting ability, eventually relying on humans’ food and making things worse. Let alone the fact that human food is not suitable for them. If you truly have the determination to help them, join us, we teach you the correct ways.”

“We have our next question,” says Meander, “do you think that animals are more good than harm to us?”

“I am an officer,” says Mr Kwok, “I am practical. Of course animals can be put to good use. They are trustworthy tools, they are great emotional support, they are good entertainment. They are a harm if they attack. Are animals more good than harm? Depend on which animal is it. A dog, yes. Boars, no.”

“I don’t like the phrase ‘more good than harm’,” states the professor, “as if you evaluate animals based on their values alone. You seem to forget one thing, is that we share the same planet and we humans are eventually animals too. Our ecosystem is a sophisticated yet fragile one, comprised of not one, but various food webs. Each species has its important place and any huge changes can upset the entire system. Let’s ask yourself, are you more good than harm to nature? In the end, we all die and decompose into nutrients for the land. Sadly that’s perhaps the only contribution for most people. We already do damage before becoming nutrients. We, humans, are perhaps the most gifted with intelligence. With great power comes great responsibility. If we can, in our best effort, ensure that all lives on Earth lives well, we are doing more good than harm.”

“Well we sure want to know more,” Meander says, “but this is the end of the pro...”

“Wait, are you going through those questions as well?” Professor Dudgeon mutters, “[Meander: Please professor, no] police shot a boar dead...comments?”
The studio is in dead silence.

“Oh sorry, I am not supposed to read them right?”

“Now why don’t you mention the whole story?” Mr Kwok urges, “the boar family, 12 of them, broke into a MTR station, and the huge one with sharp teeth dashed into one of our senior officers killing him.”

“I mean no offence Kowk sir,” says the professor, “but look at your forces, the shield formation made sense but the batons and that big gun were a mistake. And clearly, there were gunshots, not stun guns but live bullets...”

“Then what shall we do?” asks the policeman calmly, “that boar dashed into our defense line, killed one man and left four in grief danger. Those men are still battling with death.”

“I am really sorry for the men, I really do. But it was your initial tactic that caused tragedy. Wild animals know no defensive formation, they only know they are being targeted. That is the worst scenario when we encounter animals. Usually, we distract them and put them to sleep. Now you have killed a dozen of them. A dozen!”

“You accuse me of my tactics, then blame me on the death of boars?”

“[slaps table] There should have been better ways! And where is your guideline?”

“Environmentalist has no say in law enforcement!”

“Law enforcement has no idea about wildlife preservation!”

“Gentlemen we do run out of time,” there is suddenly no voice but Meander’s, “for the time being, this is the end of the programme. Thank you for joining us with ‘The People’. This has been your host, Meander Lee, signing off.”

It is later Athena tells me that it was director Cheung who gave hand signals to mute the mic of the guests, then collapsed into her director’s seat letting out a long sigh “smoother than I expected”.

As Mr Kwok is packing up his suitcase, the lift opens. Rushing in with fury is Zedekiah.

“You, law dog! I am calling you!” he roars, “who do you think you are eh? What right do you have to define threat and kill what oughtn’t to be killed?”

“Who is he?” Martin asks me.

“No,” Mr Kwok blocks his men, “don’t stop him. Young man, they may danger people, threaten innocent people. My duty is to protect them.”

“Oh really?” Zedekiah stands there, keeps saying, “where do the innocent people live? Don’t lie to me! I have friends living in Chai Wan and boars live well with them. Who are you protecting!”

“People living on these mountains face boars every day. Large boars with sharp fangs,” the officer responds coldly.

“Yes, residents living in Mid-Levels,” Zedekiah exclaims, not moving a step, “care for the rich! Very honourable sir. Sharp fangs. Are they anywhere more lethal than your weapons? You ever wonder why only police are attacked?”

There seem to be a glaring sight in Mr Kwok’s eyes, and he asks,

“If you are so smart, tell us.”

“When boars are here in the urban areas,” Zedekiah’s voice turns calm, “we citizens don’t view them as a threat. We just move along, doing our things. We don’t form shield walls to trap them, or arm guns to repel them. That is not us. It is always the ones in blue or black uniforms who possess danger to them. Kwok sir, who is threat now?”

It is then Athena arrives at the lift, and I gesture to her not to step in. Mr Kwok walks by him and stands in front of him,

“When we kill a mouse in the street, everyone cheers. Now we killed a boar and you all scold us. I still don’t understand why. Let’s go. That’s fine Martin, we know the way out.” And he moves to the lifts with his colleagues.

“That was actually wonderful,” Athena comments, “but unwise.”

“That feels amazing,” Zedekiah exclaims.

Friday noon, I shop for some groceries with the gang. As we get off the bus in Braemar Hill Bus Terminus, well we missed a stop because Zedekiah’s bag broke and we need to help him to retrieve all the oranges, we see a small crowd from afar. At the entrance of the hiking trail, there are several people surrounding something white and big. We join them to see what’s the deal. It is a boar. Not any boar, but a dying albino boar, twice the size of his kind, with several wounds on him. There’s still feeble breath from him.

“No Jon, don’t touch him,” Zedekiah urges me, “you may become him.”

“He’s not joking this time,” says Athena, “legend says that albino animals are sacred. Any contact with them will bring bad luck.”

“You guys are all BS,” I say, placing a hand on it, its fur is mildly tough, “white animals are just genetic alterations. Look at Zedekiah, he is already taking out his bandages.”

“They are not wrong, Jonathan,” Andrea says to me, “lost records suggest that there are certain powers imbued in these creatures.”

“Well you shouldn’t touch a dying beast too,” says Meander, “they might possess germs or even a plague,” I retrieve my hand, “now you don’t dare touch me until you have a bath.”

At night, I guide my friends Meander, Athena and Zedekiah to my home. It is a small tradition for us to have dinner with one of our families every Friday. I hold a bag of pork on my right arm, and Meander’s hand with my left one.

“Jon,” Meander says, “do you think Andrea minds?”

“She doesn’t mind,” I respond.

“I don’t mind you holding Meander’s hand,” Andrea says.

“She doesn’t outrank you remember?” I say.

“Jon, your hand is a bit warmer than before,” Meander observes, “I like it.”

“That’s good. Oh, we’re here. Let’s see...key...”

The door opens as I am still looking for my keys. My brother Joshua is here.

“Zhuang Wu?”

“I’m back for the holiday brother.”

“Nice to see you, Joshua,” Athena greets him, “are you thinner than last time?”

“Living in the mountains is not easy,” says my brother, “come, let me take this for you,” he takes the bag of pears Athena is holding.

“Thank you.”

Meanwhile, I head for my desk and search for something.

“Here Zhuang Wu,” I grab a large box, “see what brother got you!”

“Gums! I know those are gums. I have already taken some,” he says.

“Great. Something smells delicious here?” I sniff and others sniff too.

“You are smelling a root plant called...” Andrea instructs.

“Sweet potatoes!” I rush to the dining table and take one or two pieces, “hmm...who knows they taste best when they are crunchy. It’s just that the BBQ sauce is a bit ruining it.”

“Brother,” Joshua observes, “from when on you like sweet potatoes?”

“Put that down Zhuang Man!” my mum walks out from the kitchen, “sorry dear, those are not cooked yet!”

In an awkward silence, I swallow the bite and put down the piece in my hand.

During dinner, Zhuang Wu is sharing his experience in Sichuan.

“Oh how I miss home food,” he exclaims, “everything is just spicy back there.”

“Son, you haven’t got the milk powder I sent you?” mother asks.

“Ma, I have learnt to cook, so I need less of them. Eating out is still horrible,” my brother remarks, “luckily the farmers who work with us gladly offer food so that we don’t have to eat out or walk a long distance to shop.”

“Wait Joshua,” Meander asks, “you are working with the farmers?”

“It’s one of the university projects,” Zhuang Wu explains, “I major in Agriculture and have great collaborations with the farmers nearby to test out farming methods to increase yield. I admit some of them failed but some see success.”

“I heard rumours that Sichuan farmers would plant chillies around their farms to repel boars from eating their crops,” Zedekiah says, “is it true?”

“Zed...” Athena utters.

“What?” Zedekiah says, “it’s a lot better than to hunt them down like our government did.”

“Well funny you mention that,” says Joshua, “they just found out that boars in Sichuan love spiciness as much as the people do. Okay, I’m just kidding. See, no one stops boars from entering farms anymore. My research hypothesizes that despite boars eating part of the crops, them digging the ground benefits the next yield, and their faecal extraction actually helps crops grow. We have convinced the farmers to allow boars to enter in the first few months of crop growth. Once the land becomes ideal, start planting. It usually increases yield by 1.5 times. We only have to explain to farmers to not treat it as losses but an investment.”

“But how do you stop boars from eating the next crops and prevent them from growing in number?” Athena asks.

“That’s the tricky part because we don’t want to unintentionally increase herd size with it. So one, we hired experts to sterilize the boars. And two, conduct studies on what food they prefer, and avoid them once the land is already threaded by boars. We also planted their favourite food far from the farmland to draw them away. Surprisingly it works, as it turns out.”

“So you are telling us boars help farms rather than harm farms?” exclaims Meander.

“It turns out the best way of farming is to let things work as nature intended it to be,” Zhuang Wu concludes, “we still have much to learn.”

As we finish dinner, Zedekiah and I volunteer to wash the dishes.

“Let me handle them, ma,” I say, “I haven’t washed dishes for days because of my arm.”

“You sure,” says mum, “but yours is a robotic hand, will that be broken by water?”

“I am not an old-style robot. I am not afraid of water,” Andrea says.

“Ma, you have seen Alex right?” I tell my mum, “you know what, he can take baths without damaging any electronics inside him.”

And we occupy the kitchen.

“Zed, I still don’t understand,” I say when wiping a plate Zedekiah passes to me, “why do you have to step out and shout to Mr Kwok.”

“Killing is wrong,” says Zed rubbing some bowls, “killing the innocent is even more despicable. I am quite surprised you didn’t step out too. Jonathan, there are several things the police have done wrong this time around. They used an excessive amount of manpower, they didn’t evacuate the station fast enough, and they used live bullets. I am no law dog but that doesn’t seem to be in their guideline. Violence, is all they trust.”

“I get it,” I take a large plate from him, “but you don’t have to rush out.”

“Then who will, Jon,” he takes the pot, “once they take action, they seldom reflect. Even if there are prominent opposing voices, they are quickly muted. We need to voice out. Besides, I am not wrong.”

“It is not what you said is questionable, it is the way you do it,” I say when wiping the pot he hands me, “not everyone makes the right decisions, especially the government which has several stakeholders to deal with. I agree with you Zedekiah, but not for being...”

“Aggressive? Jon, I am not dumb. My goal is to let the people responsible, the cops know what people think. That’s why I waited until the programme ended and directly talked to the commissioner. You can disagree with me, but Jon, some people are just stubborn. They only allow one voice. If no one points out what’s wrong, they will just keep doing it wrong. I am not a protestor or dissident, I have become a stakeholder whose voice may not be desired but necessary.”

“I admire that. Only brave people like you can pull this off. Throw me a cloth Zed, I want to clean the stove. Now your voice is heard, at least by one of their officers. What do you expect next.”

“I don’t know. After a lot of things, I have no faith in government anymore. If they really value what their people are thinking, they may at least do something, even just meaningless things just to please us, such as public consultation.”

“But have you forgotten one thing?” I point out, “they passed the speech laws last summer. If anyone is deemed giving speeches against the government, it is crime. At least on paper.”

“I am not against the government,” Zedekiah says, “I am against their actions which they may not know are consequential. I in fact love our government, that’s why I need to let them know what they may not know. I am so eager to voice out, because I do believe someone is listening. I always act impulsive, because I want someone to care, I wish that I can bring some constructive changes. I might just be a madman like my sister Rona who is a freedom fighter. But in our eyes, we are just the ignored ones who have strong views. Now, the worst case I can think of is that they do decide to kill boars. If they do, then they have proven themselves more foolish than I think. Then this government does not worth my trust.”

“Right. Wait,” I open the kitchen door, “ma can you turn up the volume?”
“Regarding the recent boar attack incident, the Police Department has decided to commission The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department to reduce the number of boars, and deal with any that appear in urban areas. [Woman’s voice:] ‘I hereby reiterate, those are not your pets, those are very dangerous animals. We the police put your safety in high regard. Therefore from now on, we will be working with The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department to ensure that no tragedies will happen again. Thank you.’ This is Terry Fung from TVN news, signing off.”

“Well Zedekiah,” I say, “they truly are more stupid than you think.”

“Worse is that,” comments Athena, “their measures are ambiguous, they can say whatever they want.”

“That is never a good phenomenon,” Meander comments, “when they actually have the power to do so.”

Saturday, before James Fellowship begins, Joseph rises and pulls out a large piece of paper with a QR code on it.

“I want to borrow you a few minutes,” Joseph announces, “to introduce to you this petition regarding the recent actions of the police against the wild boars.”

“Well, tell us about it,” says Sara, the fellowship head.

“Recently we have seen police clashes with the boars in the Chai Wan MTR station leading to at least 13 deaths. Unfortunate. But what we are unhappy with, are the follow-up measures of the police department. They now announced cooperating with The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department to reduce the number of boars, and to deal with every

boar found in urban areas. I, a pet owner, a university graduate, and a member of society cannot tolerate it. Animal Companion Union has started a petition, urging police to first be specific about what they actually mean to ‘reduce the number of boars’ and ‘deal with boars that are found in urban areas’. We also plea the government to take complaisant actions including but not limited to: One, review current policies regarding countering wild animals and consult experts on the subject related; Two include boars in city planning to identify their active zone, such as to plant trees they like in certain areas to confine them; Three, improve the design of facilities for example rubbish bins with the design of anti-boars in mind; and Four, input effort in public education including how to react to wild animals and raising ecological awareness. A hundred thousand have signed.”

“Well,” asks Sally, “why do we need to sign this anyway?”

“Because all lives matter!” several members including Zedekiah, Tim, Joseph and Peter speak at the same time.

“I mean no offence,” says Sally, “I am just, still don’t understand. Animals are inferior to us, so why do we care about them and spend resources on them?”

That enrages several people standing on their feet.

“Guys,” Tim says, “let me handle her. If it is anyone else I don’t even argue. But we believe in God right? All living things are created by God, and in God’s eyes, there shall not be superior or inferior.”

“Is that really the case?” Sally doubts, “I am just wondering why all of a sudden we care about animals instead of humans. Because, in The Bible, animals are most of the time portrayed as inferior to humans.”

“She’s right,” says Edmund, “in Genesis, only humans are made under God’s image when the animals are not specified.”

“Yes Edmund, God specifically made us out of his image,” says our mentor Simone, “but humans are not the only thing God made. Remember Genesis chapter 2, God formed every beast out of the ground. Unlike others created with words, God moulded the animals. They might be treated less, but they belong to God nonetheless.”

“And if you think humans are the only one God made with intelligence,” our mentor Bronze gestures, he is mute and speaks in hand signals, “then you possibly haven’t grown up with an animal. When I was young, my family had a cow, a bull in fact. He has been a good friend and a family member ever since we adopted him. Many villagers would say that he is more human than most humans. Sure in that aspect animals are not inferior.”

“Do you think,” asks Alex, “we will see animals in heaven?”

“Animals are not human,” Edmund says, “they have no free will, they don’t sin, they are not us. At least they won’t enter heaven through Jesus’ blood.”

“I haven’t been to heaven,” Joseph says, “so I don’t actually know. But if we see animals in heaven, perhaps they belong there in the first place. The Garden of Eden had animals because I believe it tends to be an extension of heaven. We may not know why but animals have their place other than being mere food.”

“Okay, if animals are not inferior,” argues Sally, “then explain these. Why do after God created humans, he told them to ‘have domination over the animals’ even that word in Greek means ‘to tread down’. If animals are so important, then why do after humans sinned, there is a skin of a beast for them? Where does that skin come from? God specifically made a skin or killed a beast for us? And why is it, when Abraham sacrificed Isaac, God prepared a goat to replace Isaac? And why, in one case, when Jesus told the devils to go away, they went into a herd of swine, and the swine suicidally ran into a cliff? Clearly, humans deserve the attention more than animals.”

“I don’t know everything Sally,” says Tim, “I am just a believer. But I have some convincing explanations I believe in. First, you mention the beast’s skin and sacrifice and devils. Those are not supposed to happen. Originally, everything is fine in the Garden of Eden. That is until humans sinned and ruined everything. Sin entered the world, so that we never know what good things should have happened, including how humans should have lived with animals. Second, and most importantly, The Bible is just, after all, a book. Yes, I recognize that The Bible is what every Christian should stick to. The Bible is God’s words, but it is written in human language. In specific cases like this, it has human flaws. The Bible is anthropocentric, storytelling centred around humans and from the perspective of humans, particularly the patriarchal ones. There is no problem if you wish to know God or explore the relationship between God and men. But if you intend to take reference for ecology, gender or race, you only get one side of the story. The Bible is written in Jewish society and translated in King James era England, both are conventional communities and in my opinion, overrated men above everything. I’ll make it simple, The Bible rarely focuses on the perspective of animals. Think about it, would you rather kill Isaac or kill a goat? The goats may disagree and they would possibly write a book that contrasts with ours if they had the ability to write. The Book of Leviticus is remarkable because it guides the Israel people to perform different kinds of sacrifices to maintain the relationship with God? Cows and goats may disagree and view it as a horror book. Just...take one chapter about sacrifices and replace all the animal names with ‘human’ and you will feel something’s wrong. All I’m saying here is that, The

Bible is no longer restricted to Israel people anymore, just like the old concepts of animals being inferior doesn't apply anymore. We are modern people, we have modern views. Our God is modern, I believe. If treating animals well doesn't contrast with God's important teachings, we shall do it."

"Furthermore," Athena adds, "God created us, and he also created the animals. Regardless of what he told us in Genesis, we are supposed to live in harmony with these animals. And in advance, because we are made according to his image, we shall act like him, to find ways to care for the created ones who don't share God's image. Yes, eventually we Christians belong to God's world. But we belong to our world too, and it is our responsibility to take good care of this world. Animals to a large extent are our food, God said so. But when God told humans to manage the Garden of Eden he created, he perhaps meant to say give effort to maintain the garden, while enjoying the resources. Many primitive societies relying on hunting always take animals as food, but not without a religious ritual to pay respect to the animals. Many advanced cities integrated wildlife into their city planning and succeeded in either keeping animals outside urban areas by planting their food in specific areas or co-live with animals without major troubles. That's why some say the most successful cities, are those who can manage their wildlife."

I take a midnight shower at home. I actually prefer showering at home because the water temperature is much more stable and there is no one competing for hot water with you. As I rub the soap on my naked body, I recognize one thing. My hands are tenser than before, almost rocklike, so as my legs. I have grown strong, without me noticing.

"Your body muscle has increased by 40%," Andrea suddenly says.

"What the..." I almost slip down being shocked, "Andrea, learn to stay silent when I'm taking a shower. Humans' most weakest form is when they are naked and hear voices of the opposite sex."

"Sorry."

"Tho, do you think Meander will like this body?"

"Muscle density is typically a factor of male attractiveness. But I can't tell, I am not Meander."

On Sunday afternoon, we take the kids of Sunshine Daycare Center for a hike. Ms Leung has assigned Zedekiah and I to walk at the front with some energetic kids, while

Meander and Athena stay at the back of the line to watch over slower children. In the middle of the way, Garfield is standing still, pointing at something.

“What is it Garfield?” I ask the boy, and I recognize it now, “oh that’s a big one.”

A huge grey boar is in front of us. Its fur matches the colour of the stone wall so it takes a search or two to see it. It walks along the concrete road, slowly paralleling our steps.

“Jon, keep the kids behind us,” orders Zedekiah, “wait is that...Kiki?” he screams softly, not wanting to alert the boar, “come back! Jon, can you fetch her?” says Zedekiah blocking several curious heads.

I quietly approach the girl. She reaches out her arm, stepping steadily to the boar, desiring to have a touch. As she is several inches away from the boar, I grab her by her shoulder,

“Come, little Kiki,” I take away the child, “remember what big bro Zedekiah said at the beginning? Never touch the wild animals.”

“Are they dangerous?” she asks.

“Look at those big teeth, they can hurt you,” I say to her, “look at that size, it can slam you away!”

“Are they more dangerous or are we more dangerous?” the little girl asks.

“Umm...why don’t we ask big sis Athena later?”

“Big brother sad,” some kids ask Zed, “they say that boars are dangerous, is it real?”

“Kids,” Zedekiah says, “as long as you don’t provoke them, they are not dangerous.”

“But the adults say boars are a danger and shall be killed,” an elder kid states.

“Listen children,” Zedekiah starts lecturing, “you better ask your parents. Big brother Zed can only tell you, all lives deserve living. Unless the situation is extremely dire, we don’t easily kill life. Now that the boars are being hunted by humans. It is really complicated. But I see this as eggs and walls. Eggs are really weak and easy to die. Now they are being thrown to a wall. The walls are here to break the eggs, they are really powerful and need no support. Between the egg and the wall, I am always on the egg’s side, on the weaker one’s side.”

“Big brother Jon,” a child asks, “what is big bro Sad talking about?”

“That is just an oversimplified explanation of things,” I answer, “kids, big brother Zed is supporting the boars because, in his view, the boars are the suppressed ones. I can’t tell you which side I will support or am going to take sides. Because reality is not simply eggs and walls. You shall ask your parents later. Or, let’s ask big sis Athena later.”

At the end of the hike we all gather to wait for the shuttle bus.

“You are in what?” Ms Leung shouts to her phone, “fine, just arrive as soon as you can. Alright, Athena?”

“I’m here.”

“The driver gets lost. We might need to wait longer.”

“Got it. I will tell the kids to appreciate the view then.”

When we are at the hill bottom car park, a man approaches with his two dogs. He stands facing the mountain, and releases his dogs. The two dogs dash into the dense trees and later come out of the forest, a mid-size boar running, and the two hounds follow. They chase their target sometimes next to the ridge, sometimes across the car park.

“Hey you!” Zedekiah is marching angrily to him, “what are you doing here?”

Meander clips a chest camera on herself and walks in,

“Peter, this is none of your business,” she addresses Zedekiah and then turns to the man, “sir, are those dogs yours?”

“Yes they are mine. Problem?” the man responds.

“Then what are you doing with them?” Meander asks.

“Giving them good exercises, there is no wrong here,” the man says.

“No sir there is wrong here,” Zed roars, “apart from disturbing the wildlife here, you letting your pets to hunt the boars puts people in danger too! What if they rush to people, or the kids over there?” he points at the children afar.

“I have this all under control,” the man says coldly.

“This is illegal you know,” says Meander, “we can sue you for this.”

“But I am just giving my dears some exercises,” claims the man.

“Jonathan,” Andrea says to me, “the boar is going to hit Meander!” and Meander is in the way of the running boar.

“Meander!” I shout, “dodge!”

“No wait Jonathan, tell her to dodge left!” Andrea says.

But it’s all too late. Meander dodges right and the boar passes her. Then before she could twist her body she is hit by a dog ramming its head onto her leg. She drops to the ground and slides for a meter or two. The kids are screaming and crying. Zedekiah immediately checks on her.

“Meander are you okay?” he asks her.

“My leg...painful,” she squeaks.

“Meander,” I rush to her, “oh no.”

“She is conscious,” Zedekiah observes, “it may not be too bad. But she needs help fast.”

“Andrea?” I summon the AI inside me.

“I have called an ambulance,” says Andrea.

Meander suffers a knee fracture. Fortunately, it can be recovered, but she has to walk with crutches for a few days.

That night I don’t shower, don’t have the mood. So I just change some clothes. As I remove my t-shirt, my chest hair shocks me. Grey hair grows on me like short hair, all over my chest, my torso, upper arms and legs. I smell them, there is a wild scent of pet stores.

Monday after the lesson, I don’t head for my room, I head to Choi Sai Woo Park. I walk down the slope from the campus to the bus stop, feeling my back getting heavier and heavier. The downhill path leads to the road where most cars would pass. I cross the road, and reach the other side. I walk down a stone staircase. On my left, there is a restaurant, two more on the far right end. On my right, there is a 7-11 convenience store. This is why I am here, I want to see if I can buy some medicine for Meander. As I grab a pack of it and line up at the cashier, something catches my sight. Some convenience stores have a fruit section and I see the apples in my eyes, bananas too. I don’t usually eat fruits from a convenience store. But today I have the urge to eat each and every one of them. I reach out my hand to grab as much as I can and bring them to the cashier. After scanning the medicine, the cashier scans the fruits. The bar code must be broken because she cannot scan them. She inputs some codes into the computer one by one. It is then I find myself imagining peeling the skins and taking bites after bites out of them. I ask for a plastic bag and am already eating one when paying. I get out of the convenience store putting the core of an apple into the plastic bag, and grab another one to eat. I am at the conjunction of the road, head straight I can get to dormitory, turn left I can go to Braemar Hill hiking trail. I look back. I feel a strong connection with the trees behind me. Without me noticing I have already turned left and walking to the hiking trail. I climb those stairs and reach the track. My back is killing me and I can sense it dropping. My head is closer and closer to the ground and my hands start crawling. A female sound in my head is shouting at me but I can’t get the words. I am suddenly fainting. I lost balance and roll down a cliff.

The world is dark. All of a sudden I feel something warm and rough on my behinds. I open my eyes. A white dough-like object is floating above me. It gets smaller, and smaller, and disappears somewhere in the light blue dome. I take a breath, the gas mix here is dry and slightly stimulating. The first breath hurts and I cough a few times. I start to take small breaths. I sit tall, touching my forehead. I see something, one part of myself swinging before me. It's my arm, I know it. I stable it. And touch it with my other arm. Attached to its end, there is a pad of meat, it is a palm. On my palm, I see five sticks. Those are my fingers. I look down, I can see a torso, my waist and my legs. I turn to my back and there is a black soft container. I instinctively know what it is, I look for the zipper and open it. Inside this backpack, I find several things I cannot recognize. Took me some time to remember, there is a large air tank with a compressed gas mix inside, and a mask attached. I put them on and take a deep breath again. This is the right air mix. There is a small piece of folded cloth under the air tank, it can be opened by the folds. Inside it, there are some colourful rectangular papers and some cards. I take out the card right under a transparent plastic cover. On it there is a picture of an unknown object, a series of numbers in the middle, '80667', and on the bottom right corner, 'Tataraka'. I may not predict, for the next few months, I will be called 'Bobby' by some Earthlings.

(And italic words are the experience of Bobby prior to Chapter 2)

I wake under some trees. I give out a yawn but this yawn feels different. In fact, the ground feels different. I clearly remember I am out in the wild, but the hard sandy floor is comfortable to lie on. There is a layer of fur between me and the ground, cushioning me in my sleep. I open my eyes, my sight is blurred, I can see no further than a few trees away. But I can hear the wind beyond that distance. I take a breath and I can smell a mix of several fragrant scents, wrapped by a strong stinky smell. I step my hoofs on the ground to get up. Hoofs? At the tip of the dark grey hairy leg? I let out a sound and it sounds deep 'oink'. I am Jonathan, I am...a boar.

I rise up on my feet. For some reason my long slender legs are weak. I support myself on the sandy wall next to me. I adjust my leg position and finally, I am able to stand. I take a step and it turns out I am heavier than I expected. I take a deep breath in and march out a little, then another leg, and another leg, then another leg. I can balance my weight and move now. I grab my bag, it is hefty so I drag it. After some hundred meters, I decide that it is lighter if I just wear that on my shoulders.

I stand tall, I can feel my legs filled with muscles. They are transferring energy from the land to my body. I want to run! I really have the urge. But I happen to be distracted by an odor in the air. It smells like the body, like mine, but stinks a lot more, as if someone hasn't had a bath for days and washed oneself with pee and poo. Soon the excitement wins over the concern, I point in a certain direction, and march out my first step. It is harder than expected, I haven't controlled two pairs of legs before. I soon find the rhythm, that is to never lose the beat of either front left and hind right then front right and hind left, or front two then hind two, with caution not letting them tip over each other. I take another breath and I start dashing.

With great effort, I can finally bring myself to locomotion with my feeble legs. I notice that this place I am standing on is not exactly the middle of nowhere. As the area becomes bright with a shining ball rising somewhere, I can see what's around me. This place is not all sandy and cliffy, there is a flat long surface reaching a distance I cannot visibly see. This might be a road. I don't know why I know, I just do. And if it is a road, it must lead to a certain destination. I stand and walk on it, willing to see where it will take me. As I stroll, I feel something's not right. Thousands of sand and small stones keep grinding under my feet and in-between my short feet fingers. I soon feel sore. I unintentionally kick an object and I look down, it is a pair of them. Long round boxes with an opened hatch. They shape like my feet, but slightly bigger, and coloured grey. I guess humans put these on for walking, so I put them on. It's good, my feet don't hurt anymore.

Sprinting is great! I dash among trees. Sand and mud fly whenever I go, so as the wind which smells green. I cannot see far, but I can sniff and sense trees from afar, and dodge one once the smell is the strongest. I turn left and reach a concrete road. I see an artificial stone cliff. When I was young I used to climb on these to see how far I could get. Taking in another breath, I run onto it. My feet automatically balance themselves as they climb, and I walk on the surface just fine. As I land on the ground again, I feel triumphant.

The bright dome above me turns dark. Cool wind blows. Millions of ocean drops fall from above and hit me. They flow through my head, my face, and my body. I feel a disturbance throughout myself. My outer layer itches. The drops start to grow big. Soon I feel myself heating up and my outside about to burst. I let out a scream, and run, leaving my

backpack behind me. The ocean drops fill my sight. And through my dancing vision I see an odd shape. It is built straight with two hard trees on each side. But the trees are not trees, there are no leaves or branches, and it has a solid top. Inside I enter, it repels all the drops. There is a horizontal wood on the side, and I sit on it, trying to shudder away the drops. This tree is large, and it is sealed on one side. On that side, there is a square drawing of green and brown thick lines on it. I touch it, and it can be taken down. I place it on my head, retrieve my backpack, and stay there until there are no longer drops.

The sky turns dark, cold breeze brows. Soon raindrops fall onto the land. My fur becomes wet. I look for a huge tree, there are plenty across the hill. I stay under one. Thankfully the rain stops soon. I stare at the muddy ground. Hours ago it is dried. I have a funny thought. I roll on the ground, letting the mud stick to me. Squashy mud flows under my coat of fur and fills my rough skin. It is smooth as silk and comfortable as a fluffy cushion, lingering on my skin. After rolling in this pond, I roll to another trunk, deliberately slam my body into it so that all the water on it drops onto the group and I have another mud bath.

Thankfully the ocean drops stop falling from the blue dome. However, drops are still falling, falling from those trees and any higher surface. So I decide to sit until all is dried. It is then I realise one thing, the thin cloth on my body isn't wet. The ocean drops runs through the gaps and boils my body. I take off my upper cloth, and fetch a soft cloth. This one can soak the drops. As I hang my upper and lower cloth on the horizontal wood, a she human enters the opened tree. She wears a shiny cloth around her forehead. She wears so little cloths on her. I can see her legs and belly uncovered.

*“Oh hello.” She recognises me, and tends to walk away.
I shape my mouth and I let out a sound,
“Where... Where is city?”
“2 km east, about twenty minutes walk.”
“Thank you.”*

Once I ensure there are no drops on me, I take some rest, and get up to walk again. The shining ball becomes bigger and bigger, and I can feel myself getting hotter and hotter. I roll up the cloths on my arm and my legs. A he human with short cloths walks by me. I see a flying black insect land on his arm. And almost immediately the man slaps his arm where it lands. The black insect dodges him and it lands on me instead.

“Sir,” I address the he human, “why do you attempt to kill it?”

“You’ll see, young man.”

The black insect stays for a while, then it flies away.

“Wow,” amazes the man, “you are mosquito-proof.”

“I am what?”

“Young man, these insects suck blood. And I have never seen one that gives up on blood, except this one. By the way, ain’t you hot in those long-sleeves and mask? Those are not best gear for hiking.”

“I need them.”

“Sure you do. I need to move. Bye.”

Before all the mud dries off, I hear sound from below. I get up, walk down to the lower part of the hill. That awful wild smell still roams around, but there is a new scent on top of it, something familiar. I stay at the top of the cliff and look down upon a concrete hiking trail. For some reason, I can smell danger in them. I can’t fully describe the odour. Some smell of plastic wrapping preservatives and a slight scent of chemicals mixed with gunpowder. This is the smell I don’t want to stay close to. But I must get through them. That recognizable scent is stronger and stronger. Slowly I walk down the cliff. A few human cubs see me, point at me and shout. I ignore them, focusing on my balance and I touch the ground. I walk past the excited children and shocked adults. One little girl reaches out her hand, eager to touch me. I give her a sharp glance, manage to frighten her to retrieve her hand. I move on. Usually, if I was a human I would give her a pat, but I wasn’t. And I don’t like her smell. I quickly head to where I feel the presence of the stronger scent.

Passing all the wild roads with sand walls on the left and cliffs on the right, I find an indicate board made out of wood, it says, “Braemar Hill”. I follow the direction of that indicate board, I see some human settlements. Down the hills, there are huge silver boxes, and their density increases the further they are to the mountain. There is a long ocean, a surprisingly straightened one, separating the concentrated tall shining boxes. This is human civilization? Why would they build such large boxes to replace the land? I look left and see a long thin orange and white box, standing in the middle of the mountain. I take out the card which has a number and a word on it. That box looks exactly like what’s on the card. I walk further, and that orange and white box becomes bigger and bigger. Two humans approach me, one male one female. I intercept them, point at that box and ask them,

“What is that?”

“Oh, that?” the he human says, “that is...”

“Shue Yan University,” the she human says.

“That there is Shue Yan University?” I say.

“Yes,” the he man says.

“Thank you.”

And the two leave. I stare at this box. Suddenly many images come to mind. I remember studying here until one day a while dough-like object swallowed me.

That wild odor becomes increasingly clear. I can identify it now. It smells just like me, but slightly different. I see him from afar now. He pushes over a rubbish bin and finds food in it. I can tell now, the scent I have been sensing belongs to this boar in front of me, he is the male boar who owns this section of the mountain. This is his territory. I hide behind a tree, predict my attack speed. I dash to him at full speed and stab him by his side with my fang. He is wounded and bleeding but he is not down. We stand facing each other, stomping our hoofs. We charge at each other, with one push, plus the fact that he is already wounded, he is down. And he can never stand again. To celebrate, I grind my fang, and urinate around to cover his scent. I know by now I should claim this land. I find a river, have a long drink, and urinate whenever I sense his smell. I am going to be busy.

In the middle of the way, the mountain tracks end. A she human appears from the right. Judging from the direction she walks, she is going to walk the way I have been to. I trace her steps and see a hard grey road. I walk down along it, and there are downward stairs. Soon I am on a rock road. In front of me, there are moving rectangular giants. They stop at some spots, a hatch on its side opens and it swallows people. Oh wait, those are buses. I feel a rumble from my stomach. My powers have been dwindling since those ocean drops fall. And I am in urgent need of substance. I walk down the road. On my right, there is a downwars stair and some large boxes here. Those are restaurants. And I see a colourful one on my right. It is a convenience store, food! I rush into it. There are various objects in display but none of it looks like food. Next to a line of humans, I see some red balls and yellowish sticks. I rip down my mask, smell them and they feel tasty. I immediately take a yellow stick and shove it into my mouth. It splits open and spills all over me.

“Hey!” a human with a distinctive uniform halts me, “pay before you eat.”

Pay? Humans here have certain things to do before they eat? Not planning to stop, I bite the red ones. Two buffed he humans come and grab me away. By the entrance I see some man cubs opening some colourful bags and eating the objects inside them. Oh, so that's what humans eat. I mumble with my mouth shut. The he humans set me loose. I reach for my backpack and take out the contents one by one. Not until I raise that thin folded cloth to them with a corner of the colourful paper peeking out.

“A wallet,” exclaims one of them, “you don't have to steal, you can just buy things.”

“What a waste of our time,” exclaims the other.

I enter the store again, pick a few good-looking boxes, line up, and give the she human the colourful paper in exchange of a few more colourful papers.

As I am heading uphill, I can feel my stomach rumble. I need to eat. Other than my smell, I can sense something sweet, just under my hoof. I start digging. I make a huge hole and see some white roots. Those are tree roots, their smell is so tempting. Not sugary sweet, but a natural fruit sweetness. Humans eat these during famines. But they haven't dug enough to find the quality ones. I chew on one, it is coarse. That's because I chew the wrong one. I dig deeper, and there are white roots. I take a bite and they are wonderful. They are tender and rich in flavour. You can taste a bit of dirt, an addictive taste of earth. Sugary liquid soon flows over the wild taste of the land. I move on to another area. I shoot my urine next to some trees which their smell I like. I need to secure this area so that I can enjoy the food here. I find some acorns. They are just on the ground and here for me to eat. They have a nutty texture and a smokey flavour. The mountain, unlike what I have presumed, has a wide range of menu. As I am looking for acorns, a rat passes by. Protein! I make a jump over it, bite it between my teeth, and crush it into death and blood cake. Something is difficult to describe about this meat. It is tense, it is actually juicy, but there is a hateful aroma of decomposition.

After I eat, the shining ball is high and the place is hot. I manage to get into the university building. I observe some humans and see them pushing through a transparent wall and enter the big box I now know is called building, or research complex. I do the same. I see an entrance down a stair to an inside area where no he humans are guarding, unlike any other entrances. I push the door and there's cool air. This is where I want to stay. I take off my mask and take a breath. The air here is less stimulating but still I prefer my breather. I find a horizontal wood made out of some colourful materials. I lie there, and close my eyes.

Soon I am woken by a he human with black cloths on, he says to me,

“Hey who are you? Where is your ID card?”

I show him my wallet, or that’s how they call it, and open it to reveal my card.

“80667, Tataraka. Oh so finally you are here. Come, don’t sleep here, we take you to the HMU”

“What is HMU?” I ask wearily.

“Hall Management Unit. Come. Ling,” he talks to a black box, “we have an exchange student here, tell the HMU to get ready. Now get up, young man. I don’t have all day.”

In the late afternoon, I see several boars rushing down the hill. In confusion, I follow them. They seem excited. I grunt and groan to them and they respond with short grunts. I cannot get a word from them but I know what they attempt to express: food down the hill! As I rush down with them to the bottom of the mountain, they all hide in the bushes, staring at the human concrete road. A four-wheeled red metal giant comes down from above. That is a taxi. All boars are chasing it. The taxi stops at a spot, its door opens and a human drops a large plastic bag. The taxi advances for a little, and the door opens again and another bag drops. It happens for one more time until the taxi leaves. The boars tear the plastic bags apart. Those are bread skins. I can smell it from afar. It smells somewhat chemical but I am hungry again, so I rush in to get a few slices. They are fragrant, they are too soft. They are not my cup of tea. Some boars grunts with gratitude claiming that it drops goodies everyday. Soon when I retreat to my own territory, I feel my stomach roaring, uncomfortable roaring. This food is too soft for my tough belly.

After filling in some forms and being issued a new card, the humans instruct me to a place with moving doors, the lift. I take the lift, reach the ninth floor and find room 918, just like the one written on my new card. The shining ball turns orange and sinks under the mountains afar. I tap the card on the card reader. With a huge “beep” sound the door is unlocked. Two he humans are already here. They stare at me for a long time. The one on the left stands up, walks to me, reach out a hand and says,

“Jonathan Wills.”

That might be how he calls himself, a name. So I grab his hand and tell me mine,

“Tataraka.”

Night falls. I find a spot to lay on and sleep. But I can't. I feel a stir in my heart. I march to an opening where I can see the city. I can only see blurry light dots. But from the metallic smell I can tell, I am facing the city. I can hear distant gunshots and painful oinks. I hear deep grunts and oinks across the mountains, mourning our kind dying in the city.

I raise my head, and let out a long loud roar.

Drafted on 30th March 2022

By The Sapient Sabre

Jonathan will return in Chapter 13 (if there is one).