

The Windownesian

Chapter 5 (Extract)

Is Freedom Bulletproof?



Warning: You are about to read a highly political story. Plot and ideas are entirely made up. Characters do not fully represent the writer.

2016: Fishball Revolution started and ended

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

2019: Social movement started

2022: 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:

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“And when the plot focuses on blowing up the Parliament on the fifth of November,” Zedekiah is talking about *V for Vendetta* in an English club meeting, “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’. A revenge strike usually sounds more justified than attacking 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 manipulative 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. .”

“It has been established that Norsefire killed millions, prosecuted opposing voices and took 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 literally 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. And the ones who pass judgement, are the victims.”

“Furthermore, V's destructive actions are counteracting the terror spread by the government. All individuals he eliminates are responsible for the death of citizens. He starts his killstreak with Prothero, the military leader who has the

control over the concentration camps set for torture and death. Another stakeholder he targets is doctor Keller who helped to release the virus to their own population. These are the ones responsible for the enormous death count due to medical experiments. The film concludes itself with the explosion of the Parliament, The government building where leaders make decisions. It signifies the power of the rulers and the birthplace of many laws, particularly the ones related to the surveillance and torture. An anti-terrorism act of destroying a symbol of a terrorist decision could end the governmental terror inside it. He is a terrorist only because the government spread terror first. When he responds to the ruler's terror in his own way, he is fighting for freedom.”

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

“That is one of my messages, especially when our government is wrong and prone to prosecuting people who oppose 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.”

As we reach the studio, the girls are already there. Rona is talking to a man and Meander is among them. As we appear at the door, Meander walks towards us.

“I didn’t know you would show up.” She walks to us.

“Well, cannot miss the show from my favourite host,” I observe Meander’s smile. “Besides, I need to lead him here. He doesn’t know the way.” I elbow punch Zedekiah.

“Glad to know that my friend is going to interview my sister,” and Zedekiah gives a slight bow.

“Well, I am not.” Her news shocks both of us. “Martin is. I am too close to the interviewee. Yes Jon, the man over there talking to Zed’s sister is Martin.”

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 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 are 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 guys 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 a 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."

"Next from Paul Chan asking 'Who is funding you and your actions'. That...kind of interests 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. Even if that means to be arrested by the system when fighting against the system. This message is on my CloudSound profile as well. Those who know me and join me know 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.”

Right after the programme ends, Martin turns to Rona and apologizes “I...er...don’t mean to mention cockroaches and many things. Sorry if there’s anything offending you.”

“Don’t worry Martin, you are just doing your job and read the script.” Martin is relieved. Rona continues, “it is pleasure doing interview with you. you are so much better than the government-controlled channels. Look, my friends come pick me up.”

Rona leaves Martin, the director and Meander for debriefing.

“So, worrying about me, are you serious?” Zedekiah greets his sister.

“No matter how shit you are, you are my brother.” Rona utters in a tone of half warm half tease.

“Yea, one day when you get shot at the front line, it will be me to worry about you.” Zedekiah hands her her bag as they leave.

It is about eight o'clock when we escort Rona back to Long Ping Station. Rona sometimes 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 collapse on the pole. Coming to my senses I rush forward and pull Rona, about to fail until Zedekiah rises and tries to push his sister away. 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.

4

It is already mid-night when we return to the dormitory. After some regular bathing and dressing, me and Meander are on the bed. Usually the boys don't mind, as long as Meander doesn't mind the enclosed airless bedroom. Despite after a robust day and with lessons tomorrow morning, both of us can't sleep. I look at the clock, 1:30 am. I let out a long sigh.

“What is it?” Meander asks in a clear tone.

“I don't know. I mean, I don't know what to know. You must admit that Rona's interview makes sense. Zedekiah's presentation makes sense. Let's say the social movement succeeds, what would happen? These are the people who lead us?”

“And you are not convinced about their reasoning? That the government shall be againsted?”

“I'm just...not sure. I mean, we don't even know our government enough to confidently make comments.”

“But the legislative council is about to draft the Speech Laws. That is real for us to oppose. I mean, if it is as Rona suspects, ‘The People’ will be down.” She turns to face me. “I don't want to see ‘The People’ shut down. I don't want to see my country shut down. Either way, it is hard to choose.”

“What do you mean the country will shut down?”

“Please, Jon, I am a journalist. I have seen things. I mean, when I see many victims of suppression, I also see the reasoning of certain laws. There are extremists, conspiracy makers. Those are indeed what would endanger a nation. Yes, we need to do the right things, to voice out for the have-nots. But as long as people live well, it doesn’t matter which regime is ruling. Strict power is better than no power.”

“Now you sound like Athena.”

“What do you expect, she is always the wisest among us.”

“Okay. But things are not as general as that. Living in this chaotic world where we don’t know what is actually right, we eventually will have to choose between enforcer and victims.”

5

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’ve 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 Zed’s words, “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, “early humans hunted for food, roasted it by the fire, and ate 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,so 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?”

“Cheuk Yin,” 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 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, mum,” 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 wash 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 express opinion 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 glass windows 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 can'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 we need to release all of 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 Laws, 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 bit. 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 of my kitchen."

Apollo turfs us out, leaving us outside to have the melons which the girls have prepared.

6

On Saturday night, we all attend church for a fellowship gathering. This week's topic is Book Sharing. After a few sharings, it is Tim's turn to share his book *500 years of Church History* and the "Separation of Church and State".

"Among all the books," Tim explains his choice, "I particularly like this one. It reminds us how did churches started and how did churches interact with their contemporary governments. Although it never leaves a conclusive answer, it gives stories to demonstrate how shall we as Christians respond to our rulers."

"So," David asks, "shall the church involve in political events?" That is my question too.

Tim answers him, "Christianity, or more precisely Catholicism was once the national religion of Rome several decades after Jesus died and his disciples were persecuted. The church has power over state affairs, and was practically the ruler of that time. Eventually, churches became the institution every true Christian detest. Corrupted and evil. The believers believe in the benefits, not Jesus Christ who sacrificed for us. People started suggesting 'Separation of Church and State' so that churches no longer be corrupted with power. State can also be interpreted as politics. As for whether christians participating in political events..."

“We shall,” Zedekiah cuts in, “the Methodist churches were founded to respond to the world and everything unfair in it. Today, they are also the pioneers among churches to stand against the government’s control.”

“Well that is just one branch of church,” Bronze, our mentor who is muted expresses, “involves in politics or not, it is quite for sure that politics has influence over churches.”

Tim adds, “My mother, who is a missionary sent to China, tells me that the government is starting to control local churches. The idea of national security has been expanded from physical, military threat to ideological. Anything they deem going south to the nation leaders, they will instruct us to censor it. And on top of all, stating that churches shall serve the nation.”

“Christianity is always foe with ruling power,” Meander states, “whenever we explicitly state ‘Jesus is our Lord and Savior’, we are a threat to the ruler, especially those who are obsessed with power. Look at history, we are always the target of the ruling power.”

Zedekiah claims, “that’s why we shall react, or else we are going to lose everything.”

“Yes I agree that we Christians shall be alert about the government,” Sandy states, “but is every person in the government that bad?”

“A better question shall be, what and how is our government, and how to respond to them.” Bronze expresses.

“What is our government like?” Zedekiah complains, “isn’t it obvious? Oppressing the poor and helping the rich, passing ridiculous laws which only benefit themselves. Now they are banning gatherings and later freedom of speech.”

“Well, no government is perfect,” Athena says, “since they are dealing with several stakeholders, and there is no perfect way.”

“I agree, Sandy echoes. “My father is an assistant senator and countless times I see him negotiating between people who have their own interests. Haven’t seen him relaxed even on holidays.”

“I understand your situation Sandy,” Zedekiah responds, “but not every person is as thoughtful as your father.” And in anger he says, “as the government is restricting the churches in the Mainland, if we don’t act now, who knows what will happen to us.”

Bronze puts a hand on Zedekiah’s shoulder and expresses through his Think Pad, “alright. It’s okay to have your own opinion. How about we move on to next book? I will get you some water.”

After Athena shares her book *Shines in Darkness: Light and Salt in the Chaotic World*, we head to dinner. On the way in search of a restaurant, we walk side by side, none speaks a word.

And on the way Zedekiah says “I have seen peers injured by institutional forces, just because they want their voices to be heard, to make our world a better

place. I don't know. The feeling is complex. On the one hand, I don't like what the government is doing. What I can do, is to be a medic and help the wounded. On the other hand, I am not sure if I am doing the right thing as a Christian."

"I know," Athena who is next to him says, "I have been there with you when you stand between people and police. I have seen you get shot by tear gas. I was there when you were trying to save one injured man after another."

Sandy who is behind us doubts, "but do people who rebel deserve saving?"

Meander turns to her, "hush Sand, you are not us, you haven't walked a mile in our shoes."

"Well, I have," Zedekiah says, "I was once an officer on the police's side, literally. It is quite hard to explain. (note: see his story "On Both Sides of War" for details). But I know the enforcer has their difficulties too. They have orders to follow, a family to feed. That's why I struggle. I often think of Athena's wrist band, "WWJD", What Would Jesus do."

"Thanks Zed, I love my wrist band too." Athena says. "And on the topic of how to deal with government. Remember, Jesus was born in Roman-ruled Israel, and died on a Roman torture tool. If he is here to save everyone, that includes the power which killed him. Even when his disciples were persecuted by the government, they did not fight back. Interestingly, it is because of the government's prosecution, the gospel was spread with the apostles fleeing. Was the government hateful in Jesus' time? Fuck yes, definitely. Did Jesus teach us to hate them? Remember, among the many people saved by Jesus, a few were

Romans or government officials. Among the letters Paul wrote to churches, one is dedicated to Rome.”

Bronze pokes us from behind, and displays his Think Pad: “Yes, I agree. We Christians are the salt and light, especially in these dark times.”

“Not all of them are dark,” I say, “I specifically appreciate the night that Christian gathered on a footbridge and Sang Sing Hallelujah to the Lord.”

“Fun fact,” Tim turns to us and says, “that song was supposed to be the ending song of a prayer’s gathering. However, as the crowd joined at the last minute and repeated the song over and over, it became a singing marathon. I know this because my father’s friend was the host of that prayer’s gathering.” Meanwhile David has reached the restaurant and shouted to us “How many people do we have, eight? Eight!”

7

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 has developed other thoughts or society finally soften 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."

8

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. A young senator is speaking against the Speech Law, claiming that it goes against the freedom of Speech alongside several laws in the Basic Law. As he speaks and concludes his speech, the gatherers cheer, swing the Union Jack flag wildly. Whenever senators reason for the Speech Law, the crowd boos and shout slogans.

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.

9

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 restricted 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 silhouette collapses with several screams.

The crowd suddenly slows down. I hear the comm shouts,

“Phoenix’s down. Phoenix’s down!”

“RONA!” Zedekiah breaks from the crowd and rushes toward 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 from the crowd. Meander lifts Rona’s leg and Athena shouts,

“Make way! We have wounded!”

10

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

“Shit, the black shirt is blocking it. I can’t see. 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, phone call 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 me an 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 an eternity later, medical men rush in and lift Rona
away, taking us in as well.

It takes 30 minutes to get Rona to the Ambulance

This is just an extract. If you want the full story please contact the author.

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By The Sapient Sabre

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