



Art work by S3 students I6-17 and I7-18

Dear Sham Shui Po,

How are you? I have been coming to you almost every day for about four years, and counting down the days, I realise I won't visit you as often after a year. Time flies, doesn't it? To me, you're special and somehow mysterious. I live just beside you, in Tai KokTsui, so walking down my childhood memory lane, you have always been an inseparable part of me.

When I was still a child, my father used to take me to Ap Liu Street to look for cheap electronics products. I remember I was always mesmerised by all the things surrounding me, the colourful neon signs flashing brightly in front of my eyes along with the shimmering metal sheds under the bright sunlight and various products like clothes, toys and accessories hanging on racks decorating the street.

Nevertheless, despite the colourful scenery, my father told me that I should never be near you myself, otherwise I could be kidnapped and never be seen again as Sham Shui Po is a place full of crime. As I was still little, without knowing why, I was somehow convinced this was true just because of the rats running between the stalls, wiggling their long tails in dark alleys. I thought I wouldn't want to visit you again.

Then, I entered Ying Wa.

As I have grown up, I am not really that afraid of you anymore. I was curious to know more about you. People around me always told me to be careful, because there are a lot of strange people here. But what I realise is that we have been blinded

by our stereotypes of you. I remember crossing the roads to the Jade Market, seeing a lot of homeless people sleeping on cardboard. Starting from that moment, I no longer see them as an annoyance, but as a social problem we all have to face.

While most people only focus on the stigma attached to you, there are actually many hidden gems, which people just don't try to find out.

Eating out has been everyone's favourite moment while staying here. You have all kinds of food and deciding where to eat is already a "big issue" among my friends. Bean curd pudding, egg waffles, sushi, milk tea... These foods are just like paint brushes adding colours to my school life. Whenever

Grace Yiu 4C

we are upset or stressed, the food never fails to brighten our mood. Indeed, you're our food paradise, and this is one of the reasons why we love you so much.

It's been wonderful having you accompanying me for four years in my school life. The moments of studying in the classroom, the laughter between friends and the noise from the traffic, and the crowded streets will always stay in my memory. Thank you for giving me these amazing four years; you will definitely be in my heart forever.

Goodbye, Sham Shui Po.

Grace Yiu

A piece in our hearts

Cherry Hung 5A

Do you ever miss jumping up and down on your bed, running all over the place in your pajamas and laughing your heart out, getting away with anything just because you're "cute" and "innocent"?

Childhood, the time when we thought we could be anyone we wanted to be, do anything we set our minds to and live our lives without a care in the world. I used to be a carefree little girl, used to think I had the world in the palm of my little toddler hands, that I had my life all planned out for me. Nothing worried me and nothing bothered me. Every day, I would wake up, get dressed, go to school, play with my friends then come home, play with my cats, relax and that's it. The only thing I ever had to "worry" about was what games to play when I got home from school. I didn't even have to think about what to wear or what to have for dinner as it was all planned out already. Life was simple back then.

I believed in fairies, princesses and happily-ever-afters and that anything was possible. I had enormous faith in life and always looked for the best in people. I never even had the slightest thought that people could be evil. When I was alone, I would dance around in my room and find myself completely immersed in a world of make-believe, wondering what it would be like to be a princess or to have someone else's life. I was the princess in my own little castle and went through life as if I were in a fairy tale of my own.

But it came to the time when I realised that it was time to say goodbye and bid my once golden and innocent childhood farewell. No more running and fooling around, no more sitting on mummy's lap nor riding on daddy's shoulders, and no more of that unwavering hope, pure happiness and carefreeness in life.

Soon I realised that everything had changed. I can no longer hold on to that innocent and unworried child I used to be. People have expectations now. They expect me to be greater, better and stronger. Nothing is as easy as it seems. Friendships, family, emotions and relationships, all of which I thought I had complete control over, now seem to be slipping away from my grip. And unlike when I was younger, I now have responsibilities. I no longer have my life planned out for me. I have to make my own decisions, face my own difficulties and have a clear goal of what I want; I have to deal with the complications of human nature, and also the stress and tears from relationships and schoolwork, none of which I am prepared for. Every day, instead of "worrying" about what to do to spend my free time, I have to worry about how to finish all the work I have accumulated within the limited time I have.

I miss it. I miss my childhood. I miss how light-hearted life could be, what it was like to be as free as a bird and what it was like without the weight of the world crushing me into pieces.

Goodbyes are never easy and this might as well be one of the hardest goodbyes in life, bidding farewell to our childhoods. Never will we stop missing it and never will we be ready to completely accept walking away from this ideal, dreamy and fantastical stage. It will forever remain in our hearts, that purity and innocence. No one could ever take that away from us. But are you ready to let go of it completely and let it remain, forever, a piece in your heart?

first farewell

Abigail Lam Hiu Yau 3E

Farewell. Everyone is bound to go through it sometime in life. It doesn't matter whether you are a three-year-old child, or an eighty-year-old man wrinkled with age.

There is nothing extraordinary about bidding farewell. Yet when realisation strikes you that you will never see this person or place again, it cripples you, and you might not recover from the pain.

I still remember my first farewell, when I saw my sister take her last breath in the hospital ward with my own eyes. Her last words, spoken while clasping my hands in hers, were "Don't let grief block your way to success." Her voice, ragged and battered, combined with the rasping gasps as she struggled to breathe, was enough to reduce me to tears. Watching the curve on the monitor become a flat line, I couldn't believe that this lifeless body in front of me was once the lively and funny person that I adored.

Elaine was three years my senior. Since I was a baby, she had fussed over me like an overprotective mother. Standing on tiptoes, she would smile down at me as I lay in my crib, draping her arms over the sides. Sometimes I would crawl over to her and try to hold her fingers, and she would laugh and hold her hand out, letting me clutch her thumb with my tiny hands.

When I was old enough to understand English, she would pull me on her lap and tell me stories about flying unicorns and talking birds. We would fly to outer space, traveling from planet to planet, visiting worlds filled with cats, dogs, even flying fish. Once we crash-landed onto a planet where everything was made of chocolate. We had so much fun that my mum had to pry me away from Elaine to get us to eat.

She once took me to a bridge to bungee jump. Looking at the green murky water rippling a hundred feet below, I stood my ground and looked straight into Elaine's eyes. "No," I had said, firmly, with a voice that suggested no room for discussion. One glance at her pleading eyes and my defenses crumbled. Five minutes later we were flung off the bridge, screaming our heads off. I was then hauled back up the bridge, shaken yet exhilarated. From that day on, I learnt nothing was too scary if I had Elaine by my side.

Then the sickness came. I watched as my beloved mentor grew weaker and weaker, from using a walking stick to lying in bed, until finally she had to rely on machines to stay alive. Watching her like that tore my heart apart. She was supposed to be my guardian angel, supposed to protect me and guide me, and yet she abandoned me and left me in this cruel, harsh world, not even able to save herself. How was I supposed to survive without a shoulder to lean on? After her death, I sank deep into a sea of despair.

You may ask me, how did I get over it? Well, I didn't. There hasn't been a day that has gone by that I haven't thought about Elaine and our times together. They say time helps us forget, but in reality, time sharpens your memories and makes them even more painful. Every time I want to give up, I think of Elaine's last words, "Don't let grief block your way to success." Her words have given me courage to face whatever challenges life gives me, and comfort to get through other farewells as well.

GRASS AND GOODBYES

You wake to the sound of hurried rustling. At first you ignore it, pulling the warm covers over your head, but then the rustling gets faster, muffled as if it didn't want to be heard.

With a creeping feeling of unease, you push away the quilted blanket and lower your bare feet on the cold wooden floor. Morning rays are peeking through the curtains, but the room is still damp and cold.

You throw on your slippers and hurry out to the living room. What you see hits you like an icy splash of water — your son is packing clothes and rations into a duffel bag, your old dog whimpering at his heels.

"What are you doing?" you ask anxiously. But you know the answer. You're just afraid of saying it out loud.

"The letter came yesterday," he says, not looking up as if he's afraid to meet your eyes. "Thought it would be easier if I didn't tell you."

Your hands fly up to your mouth. "But you're only eighteen!"

"I'm already eighteen, Mum!" he says, looking at you directly now, a little exasperated. "You know I am. All the guys of age in the village have to go. We have to be in London by evening, and the rover's going to pick us up soon."

You are shocked speechless, your blood running cold. You knew this would happen sooner or later, but you had never really expected it to actually happen.

Or you just don't want to admit it. The war does not seem to have any intention of stopping. Colour TV came with only more anguish — there was far too much crimson on the flickering screen than you would have liked to see in a lifetime.

You realise you have been holding your breath when all of a sudden Daisy's barking snaps you back into reality. *Zippping up a thick jersey, your son should the heavy duffel bag and makes for the door.*

"Wait!" You shout, your voice higher than it should be. "Julian!"

His long legs have taken him halfway across the windy, untidy garden before you catch up to him, still in your nightgown. The sun has only just risen, and the peaceful, quiet town is bathed in golden yellow. A cool breeze is blowing, rippling the overgrown grass, your thin hair floating as you catch up to him and grip his arm tight.

"You can't just leave like this." There is more desperation in your voice than you would like.

He tries to shrug off your hold, still not looking back. "Mum, please."

"Julian, you don't have to do this."

"I don't have a choice, Mum!" he shouts, his voice cutting through the crisp morning air. He is glaring fiercely at you now, his beautiful auburn eyes ablaze, but you see through his defense.

You know he is as scared as you are.

"Dear, listen to me," you say, pleading. Your throat is dry in the chilly air. *"It's a terrible - merciless place you're going to, and nothing is predictable. Nothing is ever going to prepare you for what you'll be facing..."*

You are rambling now, talking to yourself as much as to him. The withered weeds crackle, fragile in the wind.

"I had to learn this the hard way, Julian. I lost your dad this way. I don't want to lose you too."

Your voice breaks and all at once you can't stop sobbing. Julian softens and holds you tight. You feel safe and warm in his arms. When did he get so... grown up? It seems like only yesterday you were watching him toddle around the cottage. Now he's a man of his own, and he's leaving, just like how his father did ten years ago.

It's funny how alike they are. You remember this moment: how one moment you were in your husband's arms, Julian, so little, hugging his leg, and the other he was scrambling onto this military vehicle, waving goodbye in the sunrise. And you're reliving this again.

You don't want to say goodbye.

"It's okay, Mum," says Julian. His voice is low and husky, and he wipes your tears tenderly. "I'll be back. I promise."

"He said this too, you know."

He manages a weak laugh. You don't laugh back.

"But I will be. For you. For Dad."

You look into the warmth of his eyes, the tousled dark hair, the consolation of his smile, the moisture on his face. You try hard to capture this moment, this feeling, because you don't know if you'll ever see him again.

Then he plants a soft kiss on your wrinkled forehead and he's gone. Gone jogging down the path, his shadow hurrying onto the rover, waving goodbye as it speeds down the cobblestone road, wiry fumes lacing the golden sky.

By this stage your tears are streaming, and you cry, devastated as you crumple to the ground. You hear the parched weeds cracking, breaking as you sink onto them, the natural smell of grass hitting you in the brisk air. The garden is over-strewn with weeds, cutting long overdue. Your tears give them the first moisture they've tasted in days, and in a frenzy you start tearing the weeds out, crushing the brittle things in your fist. You stop your childish tantrum only when the creaky pet door finally breaks free and Daisy bounds out barking. She licks the wet tears off your face.

It's not goodbye, you tell yourself over and over. It's not goodbye.

But you know it most likely is.

The sun hangs higher in the sky now, the brilliant gold giving way to pale blue. The breeze is less chilly, and the weeds crackle like a wailful symphony.

You breathe hard and look to the street again. The rover has gone far now, dawn breaking and morning on the horizon. You wonder what Julian is thinking. Is he afraid? Is he feeling brave? Is he about to break?

You know you are. A fresh surge of tears is on the way.

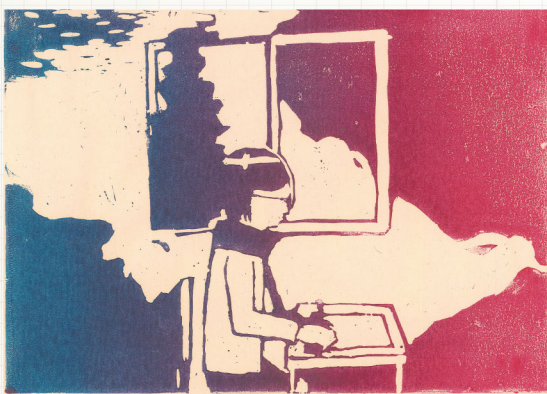
Then you noticed the light green in front of you. Squinting through your tears, you notice little plants of fresh grass poking out from the dry dirt. They dot the land in between the shriveled weeds, sprouting from seeds invisible. Now that you pay attention, you smell their freshness, their grassy scents caressing you, carried on by the light air. The early sunlight is bright now, painting the land ablaze with colour, and the seedlings are more emerald than ever before by nature's touch.

Life comes back in never-ending cycles. There is no farewell.

A smile finally creeps on your face. Your tears are refracting the light and all is blinding. You burry your face in Daisy's warm fur and hug her tight, breathing in the grass and morning air. The chill has subsided, the sunlight warm on your face.

There is hope in life, and there is life in hope.

Minnie Ip 4B



13th December 2017

Dear Keifer,

It's Dad. Listen son, I know you're feeling very despondent. You're probably not in the mood to read a letter from your old man. I completely understand. But please, read on. Unexpected things always occur in life. They are inevitable. At times like this, you need someone for guidance and comfort. No father wants their child to be caught in an emotional turmoil. I'm here to help you. Please keep on reading, for the sake of Ollie.

As a father, never have I seen someone as obsessed with a dog as you have been with Ollie. From your 3rd birthday onwards, Ollie had taken up the full-time positions as your personal security guard, psychologist and life-long soulmate. You two have been inseparable, like two peas in a pod. Ollie has been your little lamb whose fur is as white as snow. That day when Ollie leaped into your little arms, I saw how your smile lit up the entire room. And at that moment, I knew something extraordinary was about to begin.

A decade has passed filled with perpetual happiness. You are thirteen now. That little White Terrier has grown bigger. Though time has passed, I still see the same toddler waddling around with the puppy. Well, what can I say? In a parent's eyes, their children never truly grow up. You cannot imagine how my heart flutters every time you two run across the backyard, faces filled with glee. I

wish we could go back to those days filled with sunshine, never having to face the dreaded news. But of course, sooner or later, a storm is bound to arrive.

Son, I really don't want to upset you. But one day, we all have to face reality. You need to accept that something unfortunate has happened. Ollie is fairly old for his breed and what the little dog has to go through is unimaginable. The news from Dr. Cheng was astonishing, indeed. I understand you have sought a sanctuary at your friend's house. But running away from the problem is never a solution, is it? At times like this, you're the one Ollie needs the most. The poor dog is suffering so much. I can't bear to listen to his bad whimper. Please come back home for the sake of Ollie. With our unwavering love, we could end the hurricane. Ollie's last few days could be as colourful as a rainbow.

Something I've picked up from my lifetime is that death is not the greatest loss. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we still live. Yes, Ollie isn't going to be here forever. But I don't want that to destroy your high spirits and optimism. While there is still some time left, please come back...be here, at least for Ollie. Hold onto memories, and Ollie will be with us forevermore. I'm always by your side, and you never have to be alone.

For Ollie, please come back home.

Yours,

Desperate Dad

Rudaba Rubaiyath 2C

Farewell poem

The 'clippity clop' up the stairs
Of students going up in pairs.
Hurry, hurry—
Past the countless classrooms
Or laboratories with fumes.
Past the tiny posters on
The walls students come upon.
Past the corridors that matter
To those who gather and chatter.
Past the hall
Where silence is all.
Past the tuck shop
By the students that never stop.
Past the main entrance to see
Students buying lunch returning with glee.
Past the covered playground
Where gym mats cover the ground.
Up the stairs so white
In the cozy autumn sunlight.
Leaning against the blue statue,
I can't help but think,
"These will all be memories
Stained in our minds like permanent ink."

