

In the Time of War by David Jen

By David Jen, 10 years old, Pennington New Jersey

So there I was in the shadow of our family's tall brown shady oak. I asked myself a silent question, "Are they still here?" I closed my eyes to try to hear the laughter of our family, together by the tree. "All dead," the lieutenant reported. "Yes, all dead," I thought bitterly "There is no one, absolutely no one." "Hey," the general said, "I think I heard someone." He came toward the oak. I flung my hands out, and he flew back and hit the nearest tree.

"Witchcraft!" the lieutenant screamed. I curved my hand in a sweeping gesture and he was flung into the sky. The soldiers looked around; one clutched his cross necklace. Yes, I Jessica Chung was a so-called "witch". The witch trials were absolutely absurd. I mean, who doesn't float? Do you have to be from another country for that to make sense? Anyway, back to my scene. I didn't want to hurt the soldiers. They were drafted from America, poor people, so I let them go. It was the British I wanted, the people who killed my mama, papa, brothers, and sisters, when I was eleven. Now I am fifteen and have learned from the Chinese proverb "Eat bitter taste sweet."

By the way, if you are wondering, I am no ordinary person. I have one power, which has been passed down in the Chung family. My uncle has a power, my grandpa does too. It has been passed down for as long as the name Chung existed. Now I am in hiding trying not to die. I will not last long. I have complete records. I am the most wanted "witch" in England. Since I had nowhere to go I came here. Here where so many important things had happened. This was where I broke my first tooth, went to school, was born, spelled my first word, cried, laughed, and the British they, they burned it down. They took it away and ruined my life. My fate was dim. I had no choice, they did this. Now I was going to be a refugee in America.

The war was almost ending and the British were winning against the Qing Dynasty, my homeland. It was 1904 and I was boarding the Sun Ma Chinese for sun horse. The ship was rather beautiful as I went to sleep I hummed myself my mother's favorite lullaby.

Hush little baby wake up in the morning

When it is neither cold nor stormy

Tomorrow we will have some fun

And play all day in the sun

I still can feel myself crying myself to sleep. That night was the last night I would not sleep peacefully. The next day I felt horrible I had cramps all over me after I stretched and looked around. There were about ten boys fifteen years old, like me, were staring at me. I was aware that I was very pretty, but I was not shy. I introduced myself to all of them and I especially liked; favored, one named

Dylan. He was tall and muscular and German he had blond hair and blue eyes. They all did like me. There were no British, thank the Lord.

The next few days were awfully dull and boring. There was only one girl on board and she seemed to despise me her name was Theresa. Theresa had sharp features it seemed was British. I wasn't scared since she was a girl. It surprised me how many people of different countries there could be on one small boat, going to the same space. Since Theresa didn't like me I was left to teach the unruly, grimy handed, dirty faced, strong built boys how to behave like proper gentlemen.

Teaching was easy. Teaching misbehaved and unexperienced BOYS was hard. These BOYS tried hard to pay attention and listen. But most of them had dreams of becoming a sailor and tried learning to look at the skyline to figure out what time it was. "Attention!" I just about screamed. "Benjamin, stop looking out the window!" "Caleb, don't bite your fingernails!" "Elijah, put on your shoes!" I took one deep breath. "Phew," I thought nothing but crazy, dirty boys. I was keeping a countdown; when it came to one more day I was overjoyed.

I learned Dylan and relatives and Theresa's relatives lived close to mine and we would be going to the same school! I was pretty happy. Dylan was too Theresa, not so much. When I got to my house I had no relatives. The house was dark and dingy I knew with some fixing it would be livable. First I walked over to Dylan's house. Dylan when I got there I saw Dylan's Uncle Michael and his Aunt Bessie. They were rather glad to meet me. I got the news I would be walking with Dylan to school. On the first day of school I walked with Dylan to school. Dylan didn't stand in front of me. He knew about my powers and that I could protect him way better than he could.

When we got to school apparently everyone thought Dylan was handsome and cool. Gross. I tried to walk away, but Dylan kept on following me." Go, introduce yourself." I whispered urgently. "They're creepy," he hopelessly replied "What did I teach you about adequate?" I said disappointedly. "Here," I said "Follow me." I went up to a boy that looked sort of like Dylan. "Hello," I said "My name is Jessica, what's your name"" My name is Jason." He replied shyly. "See, easy." He smiled and tried it on his own, but at lunch time he still followed me. Later a bully got jealous and hit him in the face. I pushed him back and he went unconscious. Seriously boys should gain some respect for girls. "Ok," I said "You are staying twelve feet away from me." I pushed Dylan away." Seriously, you should totally find some new friends and you know adequate this is why my lessons for you guys were so important. He nodded. From that day on I only walked with Dylan to school.

One day when I woke up, there were people at my door. I looked out the window. British, How did they follow me here, I thought how do they know. I ran up and hid. Dylan was there, he was buying me time by talking to the guards. I pulled a long shawl over my head and tried to go out unnoticed. I ran out to the courtyard. There were hundreds of British soldiers, all because of me. I looked around some signs said I was a dangerous criminal they were giving 2000 British pounds for me dead or alive. I couldn't believe it me a dangerous criminal. Plus 2000 pounds is about 17,594 Chinese yuan for anyone who could find me. I was petrified completely petrified.

There were people looking at me and whispering. Did they know me I thought if they do will they turn me in? Among the people looking at me stood Theresa she gestured to me to come her way. Was it trap? I thought. I went toward her. She put her hand over my mouth then led me to a dark alleyway. "The war is over." She explained. "I am a spy from Italy." She added. I gasped and pinned her against the wall. "Against the British," she whisper screamed.

Okay my life: my parents and siblings die, we lose the war, the British are trying to kill me, and my worst enemy just saved my life. I sat down and sobbed. "Wait," Theresa said "They won't find you if you go back to your hometown." Since the British didn't succeed to hurt Shanghai, your hometown. "How do you know all this?" Theresa grinned "I'm a spy." A few days later I was aboard a different ship sailing for a new adventure. A few months later I arrived at where I started. Now here I am by the family's tall brown shady oak tree thinking about how things used to be and are.