

## Part Four C

The waterfall descends  
from her ragged rock staircase,  
in a gown of mist and mystery.  
Wearing white water, like silk,  
smooth like Dairy Farm milk.  
The backbone, the bridge, the branch of life,  
she's the giver that keeps the City alive.

The farm has left just a shell behind,  
slithered off to faraway heights,  
beyond the water's control,  
soulless without its settlers,  
history left to local predators,  
people combing over it, meddlers,  
they pick and prod, tread and gawk  
at the beauty of what once was.  
The waterfall, and her grown-up daughter.

Perhaps the Farm is the pride  
of villagers and *Hoklo* alike.  
It rose almost overnight  
from a modest city  
once riddled with pests,  
Dairy Farm must confess:  
the waterfall led to its success.

Eighty heads of cattle  
shaped the future of the Dairy Farm.  
When Hong Kong battled, everything shattered,  
the cows, the poultry, and the pigs  
witnessed those tumultuous times.  
Since the first Pokfulam bricks were  
laid, surrounded by trees, near a waterfall,  
overlooking the coast-line,  
grazing pasture was made of barren lands.  
Nourished by the waterflow  
cattle adapted to sub-tropic weather.  
Milk was there refined, local kids

overcame tough times:  
local people are still writing  
the Hong Kong story's sequel.

Our City thrives, its scars underground,  
buried deep down where historians hunt,  
its harrowing tales and tragic details  
laid bare only when roots are uncovered.

The Farm flourishes, its petals bright,  
blossoming in spite of the poor sunlight,  
at night the breeze carries its seeds,  
to lands across the South China Sea.

*Cow and calf*

The beeping of a car's horn  
alerts the flickering ears that lean forward  
udders close to the scorching asphalt;  
The cow lurches forward, a moving body of lard  
- the calf seems startled -  
as they lie down in greener pastures.

The car window slides down, hand protruding,  
Golden red apples given out  
suffice for a meal – but not filled bellies.  
Sweet nectar is being suckled out of her.

The tender touch of the cowherd  
gently lead her through rough pasture  
even as twilight fell and the owl was opening its eyes.  
Next, as morning dew drips into a moss-cooled trough,  
soft on his feet, the boy leads the calf  
to the source of its water.

Distant torrents gush down the ravine -  
a roaring waterfall to the open sea.  
The dragonflies, the water clear and fine.

Her calf sought the cow's warmth, nudged her legs  
apart as by a humming machine,  
warm, fresh white milk sprayed out.

Nature has rummaged through the Cowshed. Her slick vines  
and quick, impatient ferns  
have crept stealthily through its windows.

*derelict cowshed*

She  
    reclaims  
        what  
            is  
                hers.

Nature has rediscovered the Staff Quarters.  
Paints walls with thick mildew.  
Mosses embroider her bridal march.

She  
    makes  
        the  
            forgotten  
                new.

Once enclosing herds  
    Now encased in a thicket.  
Would the placid cows have been pleased to see this?  
Maybe they're more used to human touch.  
Perhaps either way, they don't care too much.

The Government will repurpose the building.  
They've considered careful plans for modern living:  
A museum where pink-faced tots churn fresh cream,  
where mechanical cows grin toothily -- cheese.

But the foliage whispers hush-hush  
(rustling leaves have much to tell)  
There's no rush. Why revive what's been left so long?

*A visitor*

My ribbed sole half-fits in a hoofprint,  
distorting its hazy shape,  
blurry over the years, wiping out its trace.  
Though overridden my steps will surely be,  
There's a path through the valley from the tracks of many.

I run my hands over old brick  
strangled with branches, thick ropes  
bearing down, trapping some secret  
I can't fathom from the decrepit state of it.

Blunt bricks toppled, pits and sheds,  
muddy now, playing 20 questions  
as to their original colour, real purpose  
    *What have you seen? Who built you? Who worked here?*  
    *What did you do? How many lives have you touched?*  
but for now, playing keeper to some stray weeds...  
if the leaves spoke, I'm sure they'd tell me.

I think I heard rumours down the road  
    about demolishing or repairing  
    (retaining and reforming)  
    and then year by year by year –  
dawdling  
until little sprouts                               grew into big trees  
and aside from that buildings stayed empty  
the old silos have no mouths to       feed  
there are no more cows to               keep.

I hop a few paint-peeling fences.  
I can hear it now, the sound of water coming closer,  
a spluttering spray, splitting the air, shaking the trees,  
shivering, skittering,               soaking, ever-shifting,  
formless, the waterfall,            changing with the wind,  
stealing murmurs, moods,         memories from upstream,  
maybe my dad came here,        or his dad, or his dad, decades before me,  
stood where I stand,               smelling the breeze,  
touched these very rocks,         still the same but shaped differently.

Dripping crystal fractals at my feet,  
a million different angles, every droplet speaks,  
sharing for a split second the echoes that it keeps:  
    *The construction of Lapraik's Castle and Bethanie*  
    *The Hoklo, estranged from home, forced to flee*  
    *Arriving from France, Christian MDs,*  
    *Manson, bringing medicinal remedies*  
    *marking the beginning of a hygienic dairy*  
    *The hard-fought battles with disease,*  
    *World War II, invaded by the Japanese,*  
    *The Dairy Farm, slowly trickling empty*  
    *bidding farewell, moving overseas*

*New estates, replacing what had been...*

then disappearing, all of a sudden, back into the water's mass.  
I could not see them, they went by so fast,  
but some people did - they watched the ripples cast  
as they fanned their ways outwards from the past.

*The Waterfall's voice*

Bodily, my ebb and flow thrusts you into  
the ages that come and go. You passed muster  
through plagues, and wars, and races;  
(though left untold, your intriguing tale is).

A stone's throw away, the city makes itself  
A different place. From fragrant wood to funds and bills  
she chases. When typhoons come  
She firmly braces, stands tall against the testy breezes.

You are her witness. Testify: our city's  
gritty prowess has braved the pain  
and turned salt into sweetness.  
As you have magicked milk from plains of sickness,  
and woven foamy silk from ancient wishes.

Open a page of history:

*You are her legacy.*

Blissfully unaware of each sip's ghosts in the  
throats of children.

I look towards the southern seas  
that the farm cows used to face  
with clamouring memories,  
thoughts of an onerous past  
(though the dairy grew year on year  
From the green hills of Pokfulam  
Onto a global field).  
A history, a legacy  
of the people of Hong Kong.  
Up here at this vantage point  
I've seen more than my share:

*Rememberer*

Courage like smooth stones in a stream  
Fearless resistance throughout all  
the calamities of pestilence and war,  
the peaks and troughs of enterprise,  
the changing tides of man.  
Like waves into a blue lagoon  
Like rain into a valley  
Like water draining out of a sink.

*Waterfall*

Saplings by the waterfall  
have grown into trees -  
broadleaf, coniferous, evergreen.  
Now, the great waterfall,  
once gushing, majestic -  
that quenched the thirst of pirates  
and nurtured a taste for milk -  
only trickles, oozes  
But still invites admirers  
to be refreshed, revitalised  
as they look on, sip their coffee,  
or just take photographs  
of the  
Waterfall.