

Candles

—Maun Suang Boey and James Zhao

Having spent the night snug on a cosy rug on the floor of the study, you wake up, ready to begin a new day of adventure. As you head for the door, it swings open, allowing White and Chan to step into the room. Taken aback by their grinning faces, you react too slowly to avoid the shorter one shoving a soaked cloth into your face, as his partner grabs your arms. The smell of chloroform overwhelms you, and you try to struggle free, but Chan is simply too strong for you. Darkness starts creeping in at the edges of your vision, and soon engulfs you entirely.

You awake, as usual, in a rather uncomfortable position lying on a hard, cold floor. It is pitch black and silent, the air stale and musty. You pick yourself up off the ground, wincing at the twinges in your back. Your eyes slowly adjust to the darkness, lit only by a single torch on the wall some distance away, and you can now make out the stone walls of the passage that you are in. They look like damper, mildewed versions of the walls of the castle, suggesting that you might be in some kind of cellar beneath it. The passage stretches off further than you can see into the darkness, so in an attempt to get some warmth into your body, you pick a direction and head off into the gloom. Your feet stir up dust from the floor. Cobwebs adorn the corners of the ceiling, though most of them look dusty and abandoned.

You turn a corner in the passage, and come upon a row of small crates. Dragging one back to the lit side of the bend, you find that printed on the lids are the words “Made by White”, and upon prying one open with your fingers, you find it full of candles. Lying on top of them is a familiar-looking map of a small peninsula, with a large X drawn on it. You suddenly realise where you are, deep under the intersecting streets of White and his candle factory. You wonder why his candle factory is in Melbourne, unless he’s been planning this attack for years. The destabilising of the surroundings must have superimposed the castle onto it.