

Chapter III

Update of the Lost Palace Museum Lunch Bookstore Dinner on our Own

Our missing bag is, as of yet, unaccounted for. Many possibilities exist for its whereabouts and current status. According to the airline it is simultaneously hopelessly lost, sitting in the Detroit Airport, and on a plane soon to land in Taipei. Nothing can be done, we forge ahead.

Erin, our mysterious seventh traveler, has left Baton Rouge and will land in Taipei around 9:30pm tonight, unless the Typhoon arrests air travel. Oh yes, I forgot, we have a typhoon coming in today, so lots of rain, etc. Yesterday the hotel staff slid a memo under our door explaining that during the typhoon we should take cover in our rooms. Sue expressed interest in gathering some food stuffs in case of calamity. Taipei is huge, New York size. There is no hoarding food, if the city is that badly damaged you must be prepared to eat the bodies.

The first order of the day was to visit the Palace Museum. The building was huge, imagine stacking 4 Wal-Marts one on top of another. No picture taking allowed, so I can only offer up a shot of the gift store. Verbal descriptions of the displays will have to suffice. Before we began to wander we rented audio tour sets. These consisted of a half moon phone shaped device with a telephone earpiece on one end. There was a small display panel and a numeric key pad. Many artifacts had three digit numbers outside their cases, and upon entering said number a very nice man would tell you in detail about what you were looking at. It was very nice and added a lot to the tour.

If you ever read The Lord of the Rings trilogy you'll come across many instances of the narrator commenting on some blade, piece of armor, or artwork that was very ancient but could not be rendered in present times,



The most elegant gift shop I have ever attended.

as the needed skills and technology no longer existed. Its rather romantic to think of such things in our cutting edge society where nothing seems impossible, and so much we do now was impossible just a few years back. However, there were more than a few pieces of artwork here that couldn't be made today. While not impossible, it would

certainly take 20 or 30 years for someone to amass the skill to produce such an object, and even after all that time many still wouldn't be up to the challenge. This is assuming you don't need a master and apprentice set up, which would probably take a couple generations to get really good. All in all, someone financing, say, 20 people over 10 to 15 years might have a shot at getting something similar to that which was in the museum.

Its not all plates and bowls. Nor is it all ax heads and spears. I'll try to describe a couple things that really stood out. One was the vase within a vase. An inner vase, small at the bottom, ballooning toward the middle and necking at the top, was encased in a similar outer vase with large windows cut in the sides. Both were separated by only a 1/16th of an inch, so that by gripping the outer vase and the longer neck of the inner vase they could be rotated. The whole thing had to be made and fired as one piece. Of course both were painted in beautiful ornate designs.

Another was a box, I believe it held a tea set. It was made of ivory that had been carved through to look like a piece of tatting complete with scenes of birds, dragons, flowers, people, etc. Very fine details. And they had several miniatures, too, made of what looked like ivory. An entire house, or boat laden with animals complete with working doors, tea sets, etc. carved all the way through was less than two inches long and one inch wide. A large strategically placed lens enabled the viewer to see to great detail.

The most impressive thing I saw was also carved from ivory. It was a single piece, about two and a half feet long. There was a carved hanger at the top with a short ivory chain leading to a house complete with every detail imaginable including residents. From this hung another chain which held a sphere about 6 inches in diameter. Intricate designs surrounding huge holes were cut in the side, revealing another sphere with even more intricate designs and smaller holes, revealing another sphere with even more intricate designs and smaller holes, etc. Reportedly there were at least 17 spheres, one inside the other, all rotatable, all carved from a single piece of ivory. Below the sphere was more chain, and a very beautiful end piece, although I don't remember of what it was. This was all from a single piece of ivory, and is still a single piece of ivory. Amazing. If the Chinese had put as much effort into science as they put into art, the world would be a very different place.



Taipei 101

Taipei is a very tall city. Many buildings are 6 or 7 stories high, with others in the 12 to 15 range. However there is one building, known as Taipei 101, that stands above all the others. It is massively huge. I don't know what they do with it, but its an amazing Icon. I was able to get a quick picture through the typhoon enhanced rains as we entered the mall for lunch and shopping.

We went down a level to the food court. This is the same set up as any other mall with a dozen or so booths all selling various food items. There was one odd thing. None of the booths sold drinks. Not even water. Luckily there were some booths off to the side that had a few cans of Coke, or Apple Juice.



Lunch

Matt and I ordered by pointing to a picture, as did Chris and Victoria. It was good, although unusual food. Yaw-Wen and Dr. Wong got normal food. I love my lense! (I'll tell you the story later) So it was easy to get a picture of the entire party (sans the Staines'), even though those on the edge are a bit distorted.

But this is not just any mall, it's a special mall. This mall has a bookstore that occupies the second, third, and fourth floors! So after lunch (and after an apple juice I drank- my after lunch hydration event) we tore up to the third level and crowded into the insect corner of the nature section. I got the last copy of Dragonflies of Taiwan (the cover's falling off, but otherwise it's a great book), a book on the Neuroptera (lacewings!) of Taiwan, two books on the stag beetles (they have a lot here), another general book on the bigger beetles of Taiwan, and finally a book on selected ground beetles of Taiwan. Not a bad haul!



Eslite Bookstore Levels 2, 3, and 4



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I got a couple books!

Chris is off to the airport to collect Erin, so its supper on our own. Matt and I wandered down to the crosswalk and wove back and through until we found a nice little Vietnamese restaurant. There was no English here at all, but they brought out a nice picture menu with numbered items and a order form. You checked the box by what you wanted and wrote in how many. All in all not a bad meal. After, we slid back into the rain and on to the hotel.