Layers of time

All was pleasant on this early spring day.

Ancient oaks stood tall, guarding the court like a cage of greens surrounding it. Their insides chirped with delight from the elated mockingbirds that nested in their stomachs, and by their feet, squirrels hurried on in search for fallen treasures. The emerald leaves that spiked off of their branches glistened with the morning dew as the sun emerged from out of nowhere. Bright evergreen blankets of grass swayed, pleased by the night of showers; the caressing curls of wind swam through it like a water snake through water. Tufts of clouds still masked the teal sky and the night’s silver globe had long disappeared, but the soft rays of sweet yellow sunshine made their way to the ground - enlightening the court below.

Down below, on the far side of the court, a woman stretched her muscles, readying herself for her morning exercise. Reaching down to her toes and up to the sky, she finished her quick workout and was ready for a win. With the vivid, neon-yellow ball in one hand and her formidable racket in the other, she threw the ball up and swung her right arm forward. The ball hit the racket with a tremendous shock and the racket deployed the ball like a murderous bullet from a gun. The bullet whizzed through the air piercing through the curls of wind and through the particles of air, for nothing could stand a chance against this ruthless devil.

As the woman’s racket swung over to her left shoulder, satisfied with her shot, her dazzling, pristine white tennis dress sparkled in the sun. The hemmed neck of the dress, painted with two lines of sharp black fabric paint, framed her neck. Fixed onto the ball, her jade eyes positioned in the centre of her face complemented her olive skin, and the short clusters of hazel hair that escaped from her tight ponytail hung loosely by her ears.

Below the khaki, rubber surface, the ground remembered a time when sharp, grey buildings stood above it, a time when nobody could be safe. Track lines from the tanks that drove out of these buildings, still imprinted in the ground like a memory, were remembered by the ancestors of the insects living in the soil. The planes that left and returned to this place – Spitfires, Mustangs, Typhoons – rested in grand museums, yet their memories lay here, soaked into the wind. And above the ground, the faint prints from white trainers of men and women would be remembered by the ground for decades to come.

Looking down, the sun darted its rays to the ground faster than the planes that once cascaded down from the sky. Beaming at the bold black lines carved into the court, it watched the neon ball soar through the air, for only the sun knew the catastrophe awaiting the receiving woman.

From the other side, the woman stared, horrified, at the ball flying towards her. Her racket could not save her now, nor could her seemingly impeccable reflexes. Her eyebrows scrunched up in the middle of her face and the ball zoomed ahead, now inches from her face like a bomb seconds before detonation. As that dreaded moment had come, the bomb plunged into the woman’s face, deforming her skin as the blasts of shock rippled out from the hypocentre.