

"This genre-spanning novel is rich, profound..." – Booklife Prize Critic
"This is a book that you need to read!" – Rebecca Hill, Reedsy Review

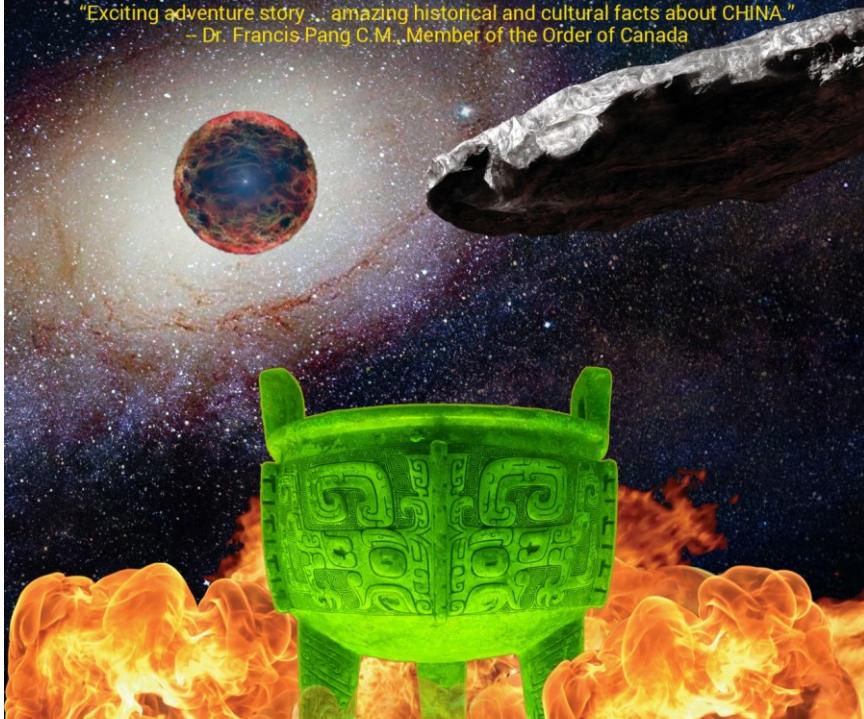
THE **UNCONQUERED**

Children of the Divine Fire



"Fast pace and exciting... everything you wanted to know about Chinese culture."
– Jeff J. Brown, author of The China Trilogy

"Exciting adventure story... amazing historical and cultural facts about CHINA."
– Dr. Francis Pang C.M., Member of the Order of Canada



PETER MAN

MYSTERY . HISTORY . SCIENCE FICTION . ADVENTURE . THRILLER

"This genre-spanning novel is rich, profound...."
" ... the book is very informative and entertaining."
"It's exciting, touching, funny and informative!"
" ... enjoy the crazy fabulous ride."
"Highly recommended!"

Booklife Prize Critic's Report
Onlinebookclub Review
Goodreads Review
Rebecca Hill, Reedsy Review
Dr. Godfree Roberts, author of How China Works



Discover a three thousand year old Chinese historical secret that rivals the HOLY GRAIL and the DA VINCI Mysteries. Learn the secret background of Confucius, Sun Tzu, Mulan, and dynasty builders/corporate giants of China.

Storyline

WHEN small town girl Victoria loses her adoptive parents in a fiery car crash, she discovers that her life is a complete sham. With the help of a shady Chinese art dealer, Victoria takes a perilous journey to China in search of her biological parents. Stalked by mysterious men in black along the way, she

- jumps off a plane mid-flight without a parachute,
- sinks to the bottom of the sea while strapped inside a car,
- dangles from the window at the top of the tallest building in China,
- wrestles a hungry tiger, and bats for the Toronto Blue Jays in the World Series.

VICTORIA learns that her parents have been sentenced to eternal exile for the crime of falling in love. Will she be able to save her parents from the pit of endless sorrow? Victoria also learns that an ancient oracle says that only she can avert a cataclysmic catastrophe known as the "Stopping of the Sun." Is Victoria prepared to sacrifice all she loves to save humanity from extermination?

IF YOU like sci-fi adventures with surprising plot twists, epic battles, historical mysteries, romance, humour, and a clear vision of the future, then let Victoria take you along on her odyssey. You'll witness Victoria's metamorphosis while you traverse the entire history of China! You'll also learn the answer to the biggest question of the century: "How did China do it?" Get your copy today. Carpe Liber—seize the book!



Author

Brought up in colonial Hong Kong and educated by Catholic Brothers, the author immigrated to Canada and established that country's first national Chinese language television station. He later lived and worked in China, witnessing its meteoric rise.

Quotable Quotes

- "Dogma is a bitch."
- "Delusional, ergo sum."
- "As dead as Shrödinger's cat."
- "Dying is easy; revolution is hard."

THE UNCONQUERED

Children of the Divine Fire



ROMANCE OF THE FLOWER KINGDOM

Book One

An Epic Drama across the Galactic Stage
Spanning the History of Human Civilization
Including that of the mysterious CHINA

Peter Man

“The breadth of knowledge and content Man integrates into the narrative (art history, world geography, mythology, and literature) is ambitious and often captivating. This genre-spanning novel is rich, profound ... the meaningful connections Man draws between the various characters’ histories and global events are both enjoyable and educational.” — *Booklife Prize, Critic’s Report*

“This is a book that you need to read! ... If you love military history - it's here. Do you love straight history? This book has that too. Sci-fi? Historical fiction? Mystery? Thriller? You got it - this book has everything all rolled into one ... I urge you to give this book a read. Set aside a week ... to tackle this one, and enjoy the crazy fabulous ride.” — *Rebecca Hill
Reedsy reviewer, editor*

“... not only a fast-paced and exciting science fiction story Mr. Man wants to impart to his readers, ‘Everything you wanted to know about Chinese culture and society, but were afraid to ask.’ So, as you read a rollicking good book, you come away with a lot of useful knowledge about the world’s oldest, continuous civilization.” — *Jeff J. Brown
Author, the China Trilogy*

“‘The Unconquered’ combines three of my favorite things: Canada, China, and Sci-Fi—and does so seamlessly (it also features a kick-ass female protagonist, another weakness of mine) ... Highly recommended!” — *Dr. Godfree Roberts
Author, How China Works*

“... an exciting adventure story, and at the same time, it presents some very amazing historical and cultural facts about China.... I encourage anyone who wants to understand China to read it.” — *Dr. Francis Pang C.M.
Member of the Order of Canada
Chairman, Concord College of Sino-Canada*

“This book is really something else: it's exciting, touching, funny and informative! ... it definitely left me with an appetite to read and learn more from this excellent author!” — *Goodreads Review*

“... an exciting science fiction story ... The novel is very engaging ... I loved how the author dug deep into Chinese history ... This helped me to understand the economic differences between China and the West, including America. Those who love to learn more about the relationship between China and America will appreciate this aspect of the book.” — *Onlinebookclub Review*

The Unconquered

Children of the Divine Fire

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This is a work of fiction. All of the character, names, incidents, organizations, and dialogue in this novel either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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Preface

In the beginning, I had started out wanting to write a story about China. After discovering that there are already uncountable uninspiring books on the subject and the world doesn't need another one, I decided to write about socio-economics instead, despite the fact that it's a subject I know less than nothing about. Then I learned that a prominent economist of the north (we the north) John Kenneth Galbraith once said, "The only function of economic forecasting is to make astrology look respectable." I promptly gave up on the mundane and went for the stars.

Experts and well meaning friends have advised me to stick to one genre and one subject. I couldn't make up my mind whether I should listen to them or listen to my own guts, if guts can talk. After wasting several precious minutes on fruitless philosophical contemplation, I decided to go where my growling guts took me, which was the kitchen. As I unsealed the portal of the refrigerator and an avalanche of photons from the fridge light flooded my face, I had an epiphany. It was similar to the one that hit René Descartes: "I think, therefore I'll have a beer." An idea was born and the Shrödinger Wave Function of my fuzzy logic collapsed. I would write an oxymoronic fact based science fiction with everything in it, including the organic craft beer and the kitchen sink.

I had great fun and learned a lot in the course of creating this pièce de résistance. I must however warn treasure seekers that there may or may not be a mother lode underneath. You may hit a leaky pipe and find something odious instead. Don't take my word for it. Dig anyways and have fun discovering what's there. In the end, I regret to confess that while most great works of art has a theme that holds it together, this book doesn't. It is after all just a frivolous fable devoted to the ephemeral epicurean pleasures of the consummate consumer. Carpe Liber—seize the book!

Caveat Emptor: Buyer Beware! For readers who already know everything about China, reading this book may be hazardous to your health.

"Mysteries Explained" Mailing List:

<https://mailchi.mp/4cf8bbb4c3f1/mysteries-explained>

Article: What is China?

<https://stone-man.weebly.com/blog/what-is-china>

Article: Goodbye, Mr. Rittenberg

<https://stone-man.weebly.com/blog/goodbye-mr-rittenberg>

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Why you should write reviews	

This book is dedicated to
Charlie Man Dunn
because he may one day want to learn
the meaning of being Chinese

Acknowledgment

Thanks to my friend Michael Pang for giving me the chance to live and work in China, so that I can witness and experience its meteoric rise. Thanks to Dr. Francis Pang C.M. for his encouragement and support of my writing this book about China. Thanks to Jeff J. Brown who inspired me with his love of China and his books about China. Thanks to Regina Lee and David Rosen whose advice contributed to significant improvements to the story. Thanks to Brother Thomas who influenced me profoundly when I was a student at La Salle College. I was a soldier of his Legion of Mary and had aspired to join the clergy because of him. Thanks to Deng Xiaoping for not giving up when he was purged at age seventy-one, and for opening the doors of China, so that I was able to visit the country in January of 1980 to see it in its innocent splendour. Thanks to my father who inspired me with his historical novels about the Sino-Japanese War. He fought in it and had bayonet scars to show. Thanks to my daughter Bliss for asking me an innocent question many years ago about China which led to the opening of my eyes and the awakening from my stupor. This book is dedicated to her son and my grandson Charlie. Thanks to Tai Pang my best friend for planting the idea of writing a novel in my head. Thanks to all my friends and colleagues in China who have made my life in China an awesome adventure; especially thanks to the distinguished Mr. Yang Qianli who is an inspiration with his lifelong contribution towards the Chinese Renaissance. He launched China's first communications satellite. Through him I met Sidney Rittenburg, an American who had lived through modern Chinese history as a friend and colleague of many of the Chinese leaders mentioned in this book. Through them I learned about the China I didn't know and couldn't possibly have known on my own. I'm of course obliged to everyone in my family who have indulged me and continue to indulge me in my quixotic quest.

Author's Note:

The average reader may find the usage of English alphabets for Chinese names a bit puzzling. How does one pronounce Qin? Is Xian one syllable or two? Fear not. Understanding the intricacies of the language is not necessary for enjoying the story.

Check the table below for pronunciation aid. For those who want to dig deeper, join the “Mysteries Explained” Mailing List.

<https://mailchi.mp/4ef8bbb4c3f1/mysteries-explained>

<https://stone-man.weebly.com>

Abbreviations:

Trad: Traditional script (used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau)

Simp: Simplified script (used in China, Singapore, and the UN)

OB: Oracle Bone script (Shang)

BR: Bronze script (Late Shang and Zhou)

Examples of approximate Putonghua (Mandarin) pronunciation using English spelling:

Cao is pronounced Tsao	Sun is pronounced Suen
E is pronounced Uh	She is pronounced Shuh
Ge is pronounced Guh	Tang is pronounced Taang
Huai is pronounced Whuy	Tong is pronounced Tung
He is pronounced Huh	Wo is pronounced Wau
Hui is pronounced Huay	Xi is pronounced Si
Long is pronounced Loong	Xi'an is pronounced Si-aan
Nü is pronounced Nue	Xian is pronounced Sian
Qi is pronounced Tsih	Xie is pronounced Sieh
Qie is pronounced Tzieh	Xu is pronounced She
Qin is pronounced Tsin	Xue pronounced Shueh
Qing is pronounced Tsing	Ze pronounced Tzuh
Ren is pronounced Run	Zhou pronounced Jo

Chapter 1

Everything is a Lie

“Everything is a lie ...” – Sage Didymas

ur tale begins not with an opening scroll of “a long time ago and far, far away” followed by epic orchestral fanfare.

Neither is there an introduction of “once upon a time” by a honey-voiced enchantress with fairy-tale music accompaniment. We have no wizened wizard’s gravelly-voiced narration to set the tone for a most unusual adventure. And we refuse to use that morose monotone to mutter another moronic monologue describing a post-apocalyptic dystopia.

We end up having to make the unenviable choice of either emulating Homer’s invocation of the Muses, or shamelessly plagiarizing Dickens’s rhetoric, “it was the best of times, it was the worst of times,” neither very palatable to the serious readers of the twenty-first century. We therefore decide to launch directly into the crux and climax of the unlikely, unfortunate, and unfathomable events that befell upon one ordinary and unexceptional girl by the name of Victoria Solana.

The saga began with the tinkle-tankle and the tintinnabulation of clanking steel. It woke Victoria from her dark dreams. She was greeted by a headache of biblical proportions. She felt as if all her bones had become disjointed. A scorching fire raged underneath her skin. The sweet smell of burnt flesh filled the air. It reminded Victoria of Chinese barbecue pork. The first addled thought that came to her addlepated mind was, “Where’s my unicorn?”

Victoria Solana was the most unremarkable person you could ever know. For most of her life, she had lived in the inconspicuous town of Dundas about forty-five miles west of Toronto. It's a part of the city of Hamilton and is a short bike ride from McMaster University. In a small town where everyone knows everyone, Victoria was singularly adept at escaping attention. She once bumped into her homeroom teacher Ms. Notrump outside of school, and the poor woman got all flustered trying to remember her name. Victoria had such an average appearance and nondescript demeanor that if she shared a room with more than two other equally unremarkable Dundasians, her presence would promptly disintegrate into quantum uncertainty.

Fortunately for Victoria, she was an only child and therefore her parents doted upon her. She didn't care a whit about what others thought of her if she could live a calm and ordinary life in close proximity to the people she loved, namely her parents and her two best friends Bella and Jackie. This would be quite enough for her. Victoria was living precisely the kind of idyllic life that she wanted, and she was blissfully happy.

Victoria had three faint moles on her face. One was high on her left cheek where beauty moles are usually located. Another one was near the left corner of her lip, which is supposed to signify that she's a connoisseur of good food. The last one was at the centre of her chin below her lips, which by the mystical science of molesophy means that she's a loving and considerate person.

This is the paradox of Victoria. She was by no means a plain or homely girl. If one studied her features carefully, one might even conclude that she was rather attractive. After all, it is said that “there are no ugly girls at sixteen” ... or maybe it’s eighteen. A sage certainly said “there are no ugly girls, only lazy girls.” In any case, one thing can be said about Victoria—she was not lazy.

It all began on Victoria's birthday. It was her Sweet Sixteen. She could ask for anything her young heart desired and her parents would have indulged her, as long as it was something appropriate and within the confines of their modest means. Victoria's parents were immigrants who spoke broken English with an accent. They came to Canada with nothing, but they always seemed to make just enough money to indulge themselves in small pleasures.

"Why don't we have dinner at our favourite Chinese restaurant?" Victoria suggested. "We don't have to worry about the girls. Jackie can't come because she got grounded again for swearing (rolling her eyes), and Bella's going through a vegan phase. It's okay. I'll do something with the girls later."

"That's too bad about the girls," Victoria's mom said. "But for your sixteenth birthday, we should try a better restaurant. What you think, Daddy?"

"You have some suggestions?"

"I feel adventurous," Mommy said. "What about Indian food?"

"Can I make a suggestion?" Victoria asked.

"Sure," her dad said. "It's your birthday. You decide."

"It's just another birthday. Let's go to the place that we already know makes our favourite dishes at a reasonable price. Besides, we go there every year; they know it's my birthday so we'll get a discount and free desserts."

Victoria knew her family's financial situation. They were always tight with money. They had never travelled or engaged in any costly activities. Victoria had no complaints. She had no desire for adventure. Heaven to her was curling up in bed inside the warmth and safety of her blanket with a good book. Victoria loved books. She was a veritable bookworm. She devoured books for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. In fact, both her parents also loved books. That was another reason why the family never seemed to have any savings. They spent all their money on books, and they

had a houseful of it. There's an old Chinese saying, "you can find golden abode and jade-like beauty in books."

Most of Victoria's adventures took place within the pages of her books and inside her imagination. The longest journey she had ever taken was a school trip to the Bethune Memorial House at Gravenhurst, Muskoka. It took two hours to get there; but for Victoria, it felt like a journey to the far side of the moon. When Victoria researched Bethune for her report, she discovered that his last will and testament was dated November 11. She would learn later that this was a very special day. It was no accident.

Victoria shared many interests with her mom, such as cooking, singing along with musicals on video, and sewing her own clothes. She had a close relationship with her dad as well and shared some of his interests in classical music, chess, and watching sports on TV. While her dad loved to watch European soccer, Victoria was a big fan of the Maple Leafs, the Raptors, and the Blue Jays.

Victoria's dad was an amateur stargazer. He had taught Victoria since young to identify the constellations and planets. He also told her the corresponding Greek myths, which were of course the sanitized versions without the sex and the violence.

Victoria loved Cirque de Soleil. Her aspiration before grade 3 was to become a magician and join the circus. It's a phase most kids go through. She later became a fan of the Amazing Randi and Penn & Teller. She taught herself how to do some of their tricks and became adept at prestidigitation and misdirection. In the process, she learned the lesson never to believe in magic.

Although Victoria's parents came from a country where most people followed Orthodox Christianity, they were not particularly religious themselves. On the other hand, they encouraged Victoria to learn about the various faiths and decide for herself what she wanted to believe or not to believe. They felt that the search for the meaning of existence was a deeply personal matter. They had a

whole shelf of books on the subject. Victoria could read them whenever she had theological or ontological questions.

As a whole, the Solana family was a happy and contented entity, consisting of three interacting bodies that had achieved perfect harmony and perpetual equipoise. They never encountered any three-body problems.

For reasons unknown to Victoria—and no explanation was ever forthcoming—her parents didn't want her to partake in any sports, physical games, or competitions. It was just as well, because Victoria didn't like gym, sucked at dodge ball, and she certainly didn't fancy acting like a klutz in front of her schoolmates. On the other hand, Victoria played a mean game of chess, and could probably beat quite a few other players at school, but she didn't like being watched, didn't enjoy humiliating her opponents, and would rather just be a kibitzer. That way, she could checkmate others in her mind and enjoy it just the same.

Despite living a mostly sedentary lifestyle, Victoria was amazingly healthy. She couldn't remember the last time she needed to see a doctor. She had been extremely lucky. Life was all too harmlessly and graciously Canadian for Victoria, and Victoria was as Canadian a Canadian could ever be, ranking way up there with the Canada goose, lumberjacks, maple syrup, ice hockey, and saying sorry when someone steps on your toe.

But without warning and in the blink of an eye—or as Goethe would say, “den Augenblick”—Victoria's life turned upside down and inside out. She lost both her parents and everything else she held dear. She could no longer be sure who she was. Her past life became a puff of smoke, suspending precariously in the air, to be dispersed into nothingness with a wave of the hand. By and large, she was like an ant on a Möbius strip or a ladybird in a Klein bottle, at a loss as to which dimension she belonged to. Victoria

was lucky to still have her two best friends, but she would soon be separated from them by a continent and an ocean.

Never having stayed overnight anywhere outside of Dundas in her life, Victoria ended up half way across the world in a strange land, trying to survive among people who spoke an alien language. Meanwhile, she had to evade decidedly sinister and doggedly determined assassins, staring down the barrel of a pistol aimed point-blank at her face, and narrowly escaping death in a fiery car crash. She jumped off a plane mid-flight without a parachute, almost got crushed by six container trucks during a high speed car chase, and sank to the bottom of the sea while strapped inside a car. She dangled from the window at the top of the tallest building in China, wrestled with a hungry tiger, jumped off a cliff, and killed three men using one arm. On the positive side, she had the chance to win the World Series championship for the Toronto Blue Jays. All this happened to Victoria because, without being aware of it, she held the key to the greatest mystery of the universe.

“Stop exaggerating,” groaned Victoria as she struggled to get up. “Just tell the story the way it happened, please.”

Dear Lord! This is unprecedented in the history of storytelling. The heroine of this epic tale has made a direct request for how she wants her story to be told. While this is highly unconventional, given that she’s the protagonist, she does have the prerogative.

For those readers who may find the pompous and hifalutin lexicon of this literary fabrication discombobulating—or as Jane Austen would say, “extremely vexing”—the last sentence means Victoria Solana is the boss, and we do what the boss says.

So let us begin again, with less poetic licence and with minimal embellishments, to describe the improbable adventures of Victoria Solana and why she woke up wondering the whereabouts of her unicorn. As we all know, the unicorn is a mythical beast; it has no place in a factual story.

Chapter 11

War of the Wolves

The year was 209 BCE. Two years earlier, Mars aligned with Antares of Scorpius presaging great wars. A year after the heavenly sign, Qin Shihuang, the great emperor of the Qin Empire of unified China passed away. The country would be engulfed in war. For the Eastern Wolf (东胡; dong-hu, meaning *eastern barbarian*), it was a good omen. They loved war and a great war was what they wanted.

The camp of the Eastern Wolf Confederation was all agog with excitement and activity. The moment had finally arrived. The order had come down for all men to prepare for the battle they had been hankering for. This would be the battle to end all battles.

The Tengri (chief) of the Eastern Wolf Confederation had gathered two hundred thousand bows, the largest army ever assembled by the northern nomads. Their enemy and erstwhile kin, Modred (冒顿: mao-dun; dialect: mo-du, reigned 209–174 BCE), the murderer of his father the Hunnu Tuman (头曼; tou-man, title of a tribe's chief, sometimes adopted as name), could muster at most forty thousand Huns (匈奴; xiong'nu, dialect: Hun'nu; proto-Hun) with only ten thousand men he could truly call loyal.

Modred must be mad, and the Huns must be crazy to follow him into the jaws of the ravenous Eastern Wolves. Everyone expected Modred to slip away during the night. Instead he rode out early in the morning seeking battle. It was his death wish, but so be it. The oracle had spoken; it was going to be a slaughter. The

Eastern Wolf tribes had been looking forward to this for a long time.

Only one person in the Eastern Wolf tribes was not enthusiastic about fighting on this day. He was a young man by the name of Lone Wolf. He was the adopted son of one of the great chiefs, who was also called the Tuman by his tribe.

Lone Wolf was feeding his horses, talking to them to calm their nerves, and making sure his weapons were in working order. Two armed men rode by and one of them deliberately knocked the arrows out of Lone Wolf's quiver with his spear.

"Oops, sorry," said White Wolf, the eldest son of the Eastern Wolf's Tuman, "I didn't know you were joining us."

"You don't have to come if you're afraid," said North Wolf, the younger brother of White Wolf. "Just stay here with the women and make sure you clean all the horse shit."

Both men burst out laughing as they galloped off to marshal their men.

Lone Wolf ignored the insults and stooped to pick up his arrows. He wasn't going to get angry at the Tuman's sons, his adoptive brothers. Someone picked up an arrow and handed it to him. Lone Wolf turned to see a pair of stunning green eyes on the face of a young girl with Eurasian features.

"Wolf Star, you're a sight for sore eyes," Lone Wolf exclaimed. "Where've you been? I haven't seen you since your betrothal."

"I've been spending time with my future husband's tribe," Wolf Star said. "We're going to have the ceremony after the battle. He has a big family. Everyone wants to know me. Just listening to everyone talk all at once drives me crazy."

"Do you know what your future tribe plans to do after the battle?" Lone Wolf asked. "Will they go to the north? If you go away, I'll be losing a good friend."

“I’ll be losing a good friend too,” said Wolf Star with tears welling up in her eyes. “I already miss the times we tell each other amazing stories under the stars. It’s hard to know what’ll happen after the battle. Just in case we don’t see each other, I’ve come to say goodbye.”

Lone Wolf stared at Wolf Star for a few seconds in awkward silence. He wondered if what he was about to do was appropriate.

“Tell me, Wolf Star, why are they planning your ceremony after the battle? Are they so sure we’ll win?”

“Everyone is confident of a great victory,” Wolf Star said. “And that’s the other thing I want to talk to you about. I hear gossip that you’ve been advising the Tuman not to join the war against the Huns. People are saying bad things about you. You’ve got to be careful. Sometimes, an arrow in the battlefield can come from your back.”

“I know,” Lone Wolf said, “I’ve been telling anyone who listens that this war won’t end well for us, but no one believes me. I’m like Cassandra of the Wooden Horse story. People don’t want to hear the truth because they’ve invested too much energy defending the lies. The oracle says that there’ll be great slaughter, but it doesn’t say by which side. We only hear what our prejudice wants us to hear. That’s how the wealthiest man Croesus lost everything he owned.

“I want you to listen carefully and do as I say. Go back to your camp. Prepare dry food and water to last for at least half a moon. Get sheep, goats, and horses. Take your wolfdogs as well. Think of it as a hunting expedition. Go to the east gate. Lupalina, your kinfolk, is there with a group of women and children. Join up with her. Trust me; it’ll save your life.”

“But what about my future husband?”

“Go say goodbye to him as well. We’re all going into the slaughterhouse. No one knows who’ll emerge unscathed. We’ll

leave it to the gods. For me, I'm under the cruel spell of Cassandra's curse; but for you, do as I say and you'll survive. As the old saying goes, 'keep the mountains green and we'll always have firewood.' The survival of our tribe depends on the women and children. You must stay alive."

Lone Wolf looked on as Wolf Star scurried off. What a strange looking girl with her red hair, green eyes, and fair skin. Just like him, she was an outcast. Wolf Star was fifteen or sixteen. She was just a child when Lone Wolf first joined the tribe three years ago. Lone Wolf was eighteen at the time. For some reason, they hit it off immediately, as if they had known each other forever. They even remained friends after Wolf Star was pledged to someone from a neighbouring tribe.

Wolf Star and Lupalina were the Jen's (阙氏; pronounced Yan Shi, title for the wife of the tribal chief) kinfolk from faraway lands. Their tribe had migrated slowly over a hundred years from the west, across the Celestial Mountain (天山: tian-shan) and beyond the ends of the known world. They joined the Wolf tribes when their chieftain gave his daughter to the Tuman for marriage. The alliance produced two strapping sons. The elder son was named White Wolf, and the younger, North Wolf.

Lone Wolf's memory went back to the day he woke up near the Tuman's camp. He was wrapped in a black shroud. He felt as if all his bones had become disjointed. A scorching fire raged underneath his skin. The Tuman saved his life by throwing him into an icy stream and having Lupalina nurse him back from the edge of death. For some time, he couldn't remember his name and only had fuzzy images of his past life.

Lady Fortune smiled on the mysterious young man when the Tuman decided to adopt him and give him the name Lone Wolf. Over the years, memories began to drift back. His family didn't leave him to die in the wilderness because of some strange disease.

He had a name that meant *dragon* and he had an amazing history. But for now, he must repay the kindness of the Tuman and help his Wolf tribe survive the onslaught of the Huns.

Lone Wolf inspected his sabre which he named Luna. He had forged it from scratch. Lone Wolf didn't learn sword-making from anyone. He got the skill and knowledge from his own memory. The sabre turned out to be of surpassing beauty and strength. It easily sliced through four horse carcasses in one slash. Luna was likely the most fearsome weapon in the whole tribe.

A horseman rode over with a message from the Tuman.

"Lone wolf, the Tuman has summoned you to be his spear carrier today. Follow me."

Upon receiving the order, Lone Wolf put on his mantle, which he had fashioned from his black shroud, and mounted his steed of ebony black. He had attached black eagle feathers on the mantle, so that when he rode, he would resemble the angel of death, descended on earth to strike fear into the hearts of mere mortals.

The Tuman had a large spear which was the symbol of his authority, prestige, and power. A trusted chieftain usually carried it beside the Tuman whenever he rode in public. It was a great honour to be the Tuman's spear carrier, especially for a major battle. Lone Wolf didn't know what prompted the Tuman to make him the spear carrier on this day, but he was glad that he would be close to the Tuman, and therefore he could protect his adoptive father from harm.

Chapter 21

Fall of an Empire

 ictoria and David found themselves at the countryside east of Beijing (北京; north capital). The whole area was covered with woods and shrubs. The date was September 21 in the year 1860. It was the crack of dawn. The autumn morning was crisp and the sky was clear. Death hung heavily in the air. The final battle for the defence of Beijing would be fought today. The Chinese army of the Qing dynasty (清; means *clear*) received reports that the enemy had started marching north. They were about an hour away. The Qing army had set up their defences with their back against the Beijing-Tianjin (天津; port of Beijing) section of the Grand Canal. They were blocking the way to two bridges, one of stone and the other of wood. There would be no retreat. A cornered beast is a dangerous beast.

A massive array of armoured Mongolian cavalry was moving into position at the centre of the Qing line. The left and right wings of the army were foot soldiers of equal strength. The famous Mongolian general Sengge Rinchen (僧格林沁; seng-ge-lin-qin) was well prepared. The infantry had thrown up defence works at the front, and the artillery was deployed at strong positions with effective coverage of the battlefield.

The stone bridge is known as the Eight Mile Bridge (八里桥; ba-li-qiao). It's about two and a half miles from here to the outlying district of Tong'zhou (通州; meaning *through-district*), the last line of defence of the eastern approach to the capital of the

Qing Empire, Beijing. Eight Chinese miles is equal to four kilometres, which is about 2.4 miles. This was where the enemy must cross the canal to reach the capital, about nine miles to the west of the crossing. The Qing army must stop the enemy here.

The English horse regiments in their distinctive redcoats soon arrived at the scene with a number of six pounders. They were closely followed by the French horsemen in their smart blue jackets. The troops immediately occupied a small village in the neighbourhood to be used as their base. Then the main Anglo-French army and the artillery caught up. Without stopping to take a break, they marched straight to the front.

There were about eight to ten thousand Anglo-French soldiers facing about thirty thousand Chinese defenders in grey battle garb. The armoured Mongolian cavalry at the centre was ten thousand strong, while the Anglo-French had about one thousand horsemen posted at their left flank, with the elite King's Royal Dragoons out in front. The Qing army had a great numerical advantage, and they were dug in. They would be immovable if they were well-armed and led by competent leaders.

Unfortunately, the Chinese foot soldiers were hurriedly enlisted, barely trained, and poorly armed. Their cannons and what few muskets they possessed were ineffective. The majority of them still used spears and swords. Sengge Rinchen would have to depend on his elite Mongolian cavalry to deliver the knockout punch.

“The Anglo-French army is so small,” Victoria exclaimed. “And the Chinese is defending their capital. I don’t understand why the Qing emperor can’t stop the invaders?”

“Actually, the Qing dynasty is quite weak at this time,” David said. “They’re facing huge challenges from their own Chinese subjects. A serious peasant rebellion has been gnawing at the heart of the empire for almost a decade, and the Qing emperor can’t do a damn thing about it.

“The rebellion is known as the *Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace*, led by a failed scholar of Hakka (客家; ke-jia, literally *guest-families*, migrants from the north) origin from the Guangxi province in southwest China. The leader calls himself the brother of Jesus, and the group controls much of the wealthy provinces of East China, including important cities such as Nanjing (南京; same as Nanking, the south capital). Their armed forces have threatened Shanghai and Beijing. The Western powers see this as a great opportunity to extract their pound of flesh from the Qing emperor.”

“Still, China is huge and has a gazillion people,” Victoria said. “If the people want to defend their country, no way ten thousand foreign soldiers can conquer it.”

“You’ve hit the nail on the head. I guess you don’t know that the Qing emperor is not Chinese, strictly speaking. His family name is Aisin Gioro. That sounds as Chinese as Solana. He may look Chinese to you, but he’s actually Manchu. His ancestors were Jurchens (女真 : nü-zhen) from southern Siberia. They had previously ruled northern China as the Jin dynasty (金; means *gold*; 1115–1234 CE). The Chinese considered them barbarians. But when the Manchu replaced the Ming dynasty with their Qing dynasty, their rulers were more Chinese than most Chinese.”

“Now you’re really messing with my concept of China.”

“China is not what you think. The Qing Manchu would end up ruling China for two hundred and sixty-eight years, abdicating in 1912. That’s nine generations of China under foreign rule. The pigtail we saw on the Chinese man aboard Warren Delano’s ship was actually Manchurian hairstyle, imposed on pain of death on the Han population in China. His vest known as Magua (马褂; *horse jacket*) and the traditional long dress worn by Chinese women known as Qipao (旗袍 ; *banner-robés*) are also Manchurian. To the Manchu, China is their home, and their culture is now a part of the Chinese culture. The Manchu changed China

but China also changed the Manchu. They became Chinese.

“As for the local population not coming to the aid of their rulers, that’s also not strange. The peasants were illiterate and had no say in Qing policies. They paid their taxes to the landed gentry and tax collectors. They really didn’t care who sat on the throne. If the rulers make life hell, the peasants would simply rebel. China has a long history of peasant rebellions starting from the fall of Qin. After Qin, all dynasties except Song have fallen because they were weakened or overthrown by peasant rebellions. Emperors ignore the plight of the Chinese peasants at their own risk.”

David pointed at the village behind the Anglo-French line.

“Here is something you won’t learn reading history books in your little house in Dundas,” he said, “If you look carefully, you can see the villagers setting up a market to sell supplies to the Anglo-French army. The foreigners even have Chinese guides, baggage handlers, camp servants, coolies, and ditch diggers, some of whom have followed the army’s advance from south China. These collaborators have very little concept about saving China or building a future for their children. The Qing rulers have only themselves to blame for losing the support of their subjects.”

With a round of cannonade from both sides, making a lot of clamour and smoke, the battle began. Victoria at first shrank from the explosions, but she soon recovered. She was no longer the same timid teenager who had spent her entire life watching grass grow in the small town of Dundas. She could hardly believe her own transformation in the last thirty hours or so. From living a quiet life in small town Ontario, Victoria was now watching a battle in progress near Beijing, and she was fearlessly walking towards the battlefield for a better view of the action. She kept telling herself, “Calm down, girl. All of this is only in your head.”

General Sengge Rinchen knew that the future of the Qing dynasty rested on his Mongolian horsemen. The heavy cavalry of

Genghis Khan's lineage would trample the Anglo-French army with their iron hoofs. Unfortunately for Sengge Rinchen, his horsemen were facing soldiers who had won the Napoleonic War, defeated the Tsar in the Crimean War, and had recently quelled the rebellions in the Indian War of Independence. The English soldiers knew how their impregnable squares repulsed Marshal Ney's famous cavalry charge at Waterloo. The disastrous *Charge of the Light Brigade* at the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War was still fresh in their memory. It would be the Mongolian cavalry's turn to make that same fatal mistake.

Relying on his numerical superiority, Sengge Rinchen sent wave after wave of his elite horsemen in a direct frontal attack on the Anglo-French centre. These brave men didn't ask the questions why, but rode straight into withering fire. The next waves followed that same foolish act, fulfilling their duty to do and die. That was how Sengge Rinchen destroyed the flower of his army. Rank after rank of the courageous horsemen was indiscriminately mown down. With the Mongolian cavalry decimated, the Anglo-French horses launched the coup de main and charged the Qing centre, routing the reserves. The gaping hole at the Qing centre left their two wings hopelessly isolated and exposed. The valiant defenders vainly defended their untenable positions against superior Western firepower. Despite their stubborn defence, the two wings inevitably collapsed, and Beijing had no army to defend it.

While the battle was not a major action because of the small numbers involved, the complete capitulation of the Qing emperor to this minuscule Anglo-French army started the unstoppable fall of the Qing Empire. It was plain for all to see that the emperor had no clothes. From here on, the collapse of the Manchurian Qing dynasty would only be a matter of time.

After the battle, the Anglo-French army looted and burned down the Old Summer Palace. The emperor didn't own whatever

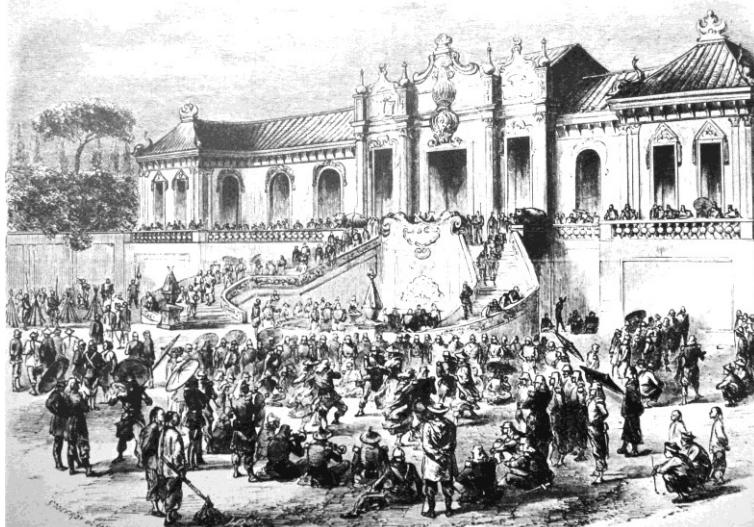
he couldn't defend. No one cared about property rights and rule of law then. A century and a half later, many Chinese national treasures still languish in foreign cells.

David took Victoria to the Summer Palace to witness the charred remains of a past grandeur. The Anglo-French soldiers were helping themselves to whatever they could get their hands on. What they couldn't take they either burned or destroyed. One of the most valuable royal libraries was in fact turned to ashes.

"To this day," David told the distraught girl who was disgusted by the wanton destruction and the blatant banditry, "the ruins are left standing as a reminder of what happens to a country when it cannot defend itself. After the war, Chinese intellectuals saw the need for change if the Chinese civilization was to survive the onslaught of the West. Come to think of it, opium caused the Chinese dragon to wake from its stupor."

Moira dressed as an officer of the King's Dragoon and astride her charger emerged from the lingering smoke.

"We're five minutes away from the next service station," she said. "Let's take a break."



Looting of the Old Summer Palace (1860)

Chapter 23

The Unicorn Rings

Lady Diane sent messengers to summon the commanders of the various units to Queen Zia's tent for the war meeting. The queen's army was the most sophisticated military organization of the times, and Lady Diane developed it. Shang hoplite order, which was the best in town, was organized in units of ten, a hundred, five hundred, and a thousand. Depending on the number of chariots available, twenty-five to fifty men fought as a unit under a phalanx commander in a chariot drawn by four horses. Lady Diane took the structure and trained specialized fighters for specific tasks. For the coming battle, Lady Diane sensed a tough tussle. The Gotts had their backs to the river. A cornered beast is a dangerous beast.

Contrary to the common belief that the Gotts were wild savages, they actually had an organized army with a brigade of elite armoured cavalry. They used the grain wagons to form a mobile fortress where they corralled all the plundered animals and where they kept in bondage all of their kidnapped boys and girls from the Shang villages. The Gotts would be a formidable foe.

Nevertheless, Lady Diane planned to spring a few surprises on the Gotts. Fighting would start early in the morning with the sun shining into the Gotts' eyes. An early battle would surprise the Gotts. The Shang armies always made an elaborate offering to the sun at first light. Then they ate a full breakfast. After the battle lines were drawn up, the military diviner would ask the oracles

whether to fight or not to fight. It was surprising that the Shang armies ever fought any battles at all.

Lady Diane wasn't going to follow unreasonable rules. She sent heralds around the camp announcing the favourable oracle for early battle and the promise of rewards. Aside from the regular bounty, for each enemy's left ear collected, the reward would be fifty cowry shells. It's two hundred cowry shells for a breathing prisoner. For killing an enemy chieftain in single combat, the Shang commander would get the *spolia opima*—rich spoils—which included all the arms and properties of the slain enemy chieftain. In addition, the queen would reward the commander with fifty bronze cowry shells and five bronze spades known as *qian* (钱 ; money). The commander would be a hero and he'd be rich. Disobedience and cowardice during battle would be rewarded with instant death.

It may be necessary to clarify that the soldiers weren't getting trumpery as their rewards. The cowry shell was a currency of the Shang. They're beautiful shells from the oceanic coasts far to the south and southeast. The Chinese word for *Cowry-shell* (贝: bei; OB: ) is an important radical, or root, which forms a part of many modern Chinese words that relate to money and trade. The Shang people were famous traders—some say they're the first merchant-traders in China. Their Promethean ancestors probably brought the cowry shells along their migratory route from the south Pacific and the Indian Ocean. When the cowry shells became worn, debased, and inadequate as society developed, bronze money appeared.

In the early days of Bronze Age in China, any useful and valuable bronze object that required a lot of expertise and efforts to produce became *money*. The production of bronze implements would not be possible without a big investment of surplus food. The producers of the surplus food are peasants. Therefore without

the production and investments from peasants, there would be no *money*, and without *money*, large scale trade would be difficult if not impossible. Without the initial investments of the peasants, there would be no nation builders, no inventors, no scientists, no artists, no major projects, and no advanced civilization.

Unfortunately, the peasants needed soldiers to defend their fields, their water, and their produce. They soon lost everything to the cleverest killers, who made themselves kings. The religionists vied for power. They made a monopoly of the knowledge they gained while consuming the fruits of the peasants' labours. The original investments of the peasants were erased from the narrative by the first law of economics, "you do not own anything that you cannot defend, and you can't trade what you do not own." Peasants have been oppressed ever since by the big lie that capital built civilization, conveniently forgetting that the capital was looted from the peasants in the first place.



Cowry money



Spade Money

The bronze spade *qian* (钱) was valuable and became currency. At first, actual bronze spades represented a large sum of money. Later, people minted tiny bronze spades for daily trading between individuals. There were also bronze knives, hoes, chimes, and bells serving the same purpose. Eventually, the bronze spade called *qian* (钱) became the Chinese word to mean *money*. When a Chinese asks if you have any money, he's actually asking if you have any

spades. And if a Chinese lends money, he's going to call a spade a spade and he'll want to be paid back in spades.

After the war meeting, Lady Diane stayed at the queen's tent for the sleepover. Queen Zia laid out a pair of beautiful jade archer-rings (鞬; pronounced *she*) in front of Lady Diane. The design of a mythical beast was carved on each ring. It represented a Shang unicorn known as the *Zhi* (鷩). These rings of power were no strangers to Lady Diane.

A one-eyed caravan trader with a staff made of fossilized root and capped with a golden knob had given these rings to the queen. It was said that he had travelled from beyond the Celestial Mountain in the northwest. The trader had made a supplication to King Wotan for leave to trade in the capital. Bribing the powerful queen was a clever way to go about it. The trader eventually settled in the capital Yin (殷; thriving), and later became an important official of the Shang court. He was known as the One-eyed Servant Huang Yin (黃尹). Here, *yin* (尹) is an official title, sort of like *minister*. The Oracle Bone word for *yin* (尹) is the drawing of a hand holding a staff (𢂔). The name Huang Yin means *aristocratic jade minister with a staff*.

Queen Zia granted Lady Diane the first pick. Lady Diane chose the ring with the words *Return-Not* (𢂔 𩫕), Queen Zia kept the ring with the words *Go-Come* (𢂔 𩫔). At the time, no one understood the hidden meaning of these words.

“Use it for the battle tomorrow,” Queen Zia said, “and may every arrow you shoot find its target.”



Shang halberd (ge; dagger-axe 戟)

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