

Sold into slavery at six, Yah Ying is kidnapped and sent to the gold fields of San Francisco. A mysterious Mandarin Bottle helps her journey south on El Camino Real. She must confront past deeds and learn to trust the people she meets.

The Mandarin Bottle

By Linda Shields Allison

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BOOK 4

The Mandarin Bottle



Linda Shields Allison

Books by Linda Shields Allison:



The Emerald Bottle

The Bronze Bottle

The Amethyst Bottle

The Mandarin Bottle

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The Missions Of California On El Camino Real



The Characters ~

Yah Ying: Sold into slavery by her father at six, the young Chinese girl ends up in Hong Kong. She works in Master Chen's household as Dum Mi, the lowest of the low, until Chen sends her to a British missionary school to become his secret spy. She is brainwashed by Chen to believe that the English are 'foreign devils' and is groomed to commit a heinous act against the school. At fourteen, she is kidnapped and sent to San Francisco to become a slave working in the gold fields for the tyrant, Li Wu. A chance meeting with Otto and Gray Owl give her the courage to escape to San Francisco. Along the way, she comes into possession of the mysterious bottle. In San Francisco, she encounters new friends who try to unburden her of the guilt she harbors for her past deeds. She feels it is her mission to help Juan Romero guide a mother and her children to unite with their relatives in San Diego as they travel five hundred miles along the old mission trail known as El Camino Real.

Master Chen: The wealthy nobleman is angry that the British have recently annexed Hong Kong to become part of the British Empire and have positioned a British governor to oversee its affairs. He hates that the 'western barbarians' are infecting his country and the purity of the Chinese race. Chen is a patient man and enlists the help of his lowest servant to infiltrate the British missionary school as a student to learn English. He brainwashes Yah Ying with his opinions and forces her to spy on those who teach about the man called Jesus. Chen reminds the girl that to outwit his enemies he must learn how they think and act.

Gabriel and Elizabeth Christian: The newly married English couple fulfill their calling to become missionary teachers at Saint Luke's Anglican School in the recently acquired British Protectorate of Hong Kong. The vicar and his wife are drawn to a young orphan girl who is sent to them by her benefactor, Nobleman Chen. They give her the Christian name, Anne, and instruct her in English. Eventually, she excels as one of their top students. The loving couple do not suspect that Anne's benefactor is brainwashing the girl to do them harm.

Veronica: Anne's Chinese roommate and best friend at Saint Luke's Missionary School.

Juan Romero: The young man tragically loses his Miwok mother when he is a child. His heartbroken Hispanic father follows his wife to the grave, leaving Juan an orphan at fourteen. Taken in by the priests at Mission Dolores in San Francisco, Juan studies at the mission school. Under the guidance of the padres, he discovers a love of medicine and is eventually accepted as a student at the newly-formed university at Mission Santa Clara. He travels with Yah Ying to guide a family south to their relatives' ranch in San Diego. Juan is captivated by the Chinese girl and her mysterious bottle, but suspects that she carries a dark secret from her past.

Greta O'Byrne: Fearing their eldest daughter might never marry, the German woman's parents answer an ad in the newspaper for a mail-order-bride. Greta is devastated by their act, but travels by wagon train to San Francisco and becomes the bride of the burly Irishman, Nathaniel O'Byrne. After her beloved husband, Nate, suddenly dies of cholera, Greta continues with their plans to move to San Diego to live with Nate's family, Isabelle and Colin O'Byrne. With the help of

Yah Ying and Juan, Greta and her two children journey south along El Camino Real.

Evan and Angela: Mrs. O’Byrne’s young children who are coping with the sudden loss of their father.

Otto: After Otto realizes that the Amethyst Bottle has changed again, he helps Yah Ying by giving her work at his family’s produce store. He shares the history and mystery of the Mandarin Bottle as he welcomes her into his circle of friends. He suspects that the girl is burdened with something from her past in Hong Kong.

Mac and Ruby: As owners of the Ruby Slipper Palace, the newly married couple befriend Yah Ying. They help familiarize her with life in San Francisco and lend emotional support as she finds her way in the city. They graciously give her one of Gray Owl’s horses so she can help lead the O’Byrne family south on El Camino Real.

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Preface

Chinese immigration in California flourished with the 1848 discovery of gold in California. By 1852, twenty-five thousand Chinese had flooded to the Pacific shores of San Francisco in the hope of making their fortune in the gold fields. Although Chinese men left their wives and families in southern China, they sent large portions of their earnings home to support their loved ones. Most came from poor rural communities. They spoke no English and were unfamiliar with western culture. These industrious workers were willing to take menial jobs for very low pay. Despite tremendous racial violence and discrimination, the Chinese forged ahead to become a viable force in the settling of California. They prospected for gold but also worked a variety of jobs as laborers, fishermen, cooks, and launderers. Many were skilled craftsmen as stone-masons and wood carvers. In the 1860s, with the proposal to build the Transcontinental Railroad, a new wave of Chinese came to San Francisco. From 1851 to 1871, it is estimated that the Chinese population grew from around 3,000 to approximately 64,000. Mark Twain once quoted the Chinese as being, “industrious as the day is long.” He also added, “A disorderly Chinaman is rare and a lazy one does not exist.” Their contribution to the growth of California is immeasurable.

Spain had ruled Baja and Alta California for over two centuries until The Republic of Mexico took possession of the land in 1821. During the Spanish period, a string of twenty-one Catholic missions, four presidios (forts), and several pueblos (towns) were built along the trail known as El Camino Real, also called The King’s Highway or The Royal Road. The

twenty-one missions stretched from San Diego to Sonoma and were positioned about thirty miles apart, or one day's ride by horseback. The mission lands surrounding the churches were vast and supported the Franciscan and Jesuit priests, and the many mission Indians who were called neophytes. The mission lands maintained an assortment of orchards, produce gardens, and livestock making the missions self-reliant. In 1833, the Mexican government secularized the missions and decreed that all the land surrounding the missions must be turned over to the government. Only the mission churches and a small garden were to remain in the hands of the padres. In time, huge government land grants morphed the mission lands into what became known as the Rancho Period. By 1850, most of the mission churches had fallen into disrepair. During that same year, California became the thirty-first state to join the Union. American settlers flooded into California, wanting land and challenging the legality of the large Mexican land grants until the rancho system gradually declined. Throughout this turbulent time, El Camino Real continued to serve as the main road connecting the coastal towns and farms that dotted the landscape. In the early 1900s, public-spirited citizens recognized the historical significance of the mission churches to California's legacy and efforts were made to restore them to their original style and grace.

Today, a popular tourist attraction is to visit all twenty-one missions that have been restored along the 600-mile road historically known as El Camino Real. In 2001, Assembly Bill 1707 decreed that the many routes and state highways (including sections of US highway 101 and Interstate 5) which extend in a continuous southerly route from San Francisco to the international border of Mexico be designated and marked with historical landmarks and be forever known as ***El Camino Real***.

Prologue ~ October 1855 - San Francisco

With the Mandarin Bottle securely attached to her side in its leather pouch, Yah Ying cautiously made her way up the main street of San Francisco. Very little notice was taken of the poorly dressed Chinese girl in loose fitting coolie pants and top, wearing an enamel cup lashed to the belt around her waist. She wore the clothes of a Chinese laborer. Yah Ying was amazed at how much San Francisco had grown since she had first gotten off the cargo vessel carrying her and many other Chinese into the port in 1854. The girl recalled how scared and empty she had felt when she had been shuffled onto a wooden platform and quickly sold into slavery to the old man called Li Wu.

After buying supplies, Li Wu had forced her to walk many miles up into the foothills to a rough mining town known as Angels Camp. Yah Ying thought that her name, which meant *Precious Jewel*, was unfit for the path her life had taken. She could not erase from her mind the malicious things she had done in Hong Kong when she had been under the control of her evil benefactor, Nobleman Chen. In short, the young girl was broken, so when Li Wu asked what her name was, she wearily mumbled that he should call her 'PJ'. The girl's duties included stoking the kitchen fire day and night, washing dishes in Li Wu's eatery, and running messages to the miners working in the gold fields. Her most taxing job was serving boiling hot tea in two heavy cast-iron pots. Three times a day PJ squatted low to the ground. Li Wu placed a thick wooden pole across her shoulders, and hung the heavy pots at each end of the pole. "Now you must stand," he ordered.

In the beginning, she received several beatings for losing her balance and spilling the tea; but in time her legs grew strong and she mastered the task without spilling a drop. She carried her burden to the Chinese working in town and those working nearby in the gold fields. Her duties left little time to believe that she could ever escape to freedom. In truth, she didn't care to escape. This was her karma and her punishment for past deeds committed in Hong Kong.

A chance meeting with a Russian boy named Otto and his Sioux Indian friend, Gray Owl, gave her the courage to escape from Li Wu. The girl known as PJ had been given the task by Li Wu to deliver the pair to an area in the gold fields known as Cripple Creek to find Otto's brother, Ivan. Otto had requested that the girl ride behind him on his horse, Hawkeye. When he offered her water from a beautiful violet-colored bottle, which he called the Amethyst Bottle, her mouth opened to thank him, and she began to speak in a beautiful English accent. Otto couldn't hide his surprise as she explained that she had learned the language at a British missionary school in Hong Kong. She gave a rather vague description of how her path as a slave had come to be with Li Wu. Otto and Gray Owl told her it was illegal to own slaves in California. Otto also told her all he knew about the mysterious Amethyst Bottle, and how he had received it from a former slave girl named Esther when it had been the Bronze Bottle. She also learned from Otto that Esther had told him that the bottle was very old and that she had received it from an Irish girl named Tara, when it had been known as the Emerald Bottle.

Yah Ying took the brief meeting with Otto and Gray Owl to heart. She began to stand up to Li Wu. She took on extra jobs and insisted that the money she earned would remain in her keeping. One night, PJ decided to escape from the camp and make her way down the trail to San Francisco to find the

friends, Otto had told her about, at the Ruby Slipper Palace. Along the way, she stopped to drink from a nearby stream and found a small pouch entangled, by its strap, in a bush growing along the river bank. She gingerly removed a bottle from the muddy satchel and recognized it as Otto's Amethyst Bottle. To her amazement, the colors began changing from shades of lavender and violet to red, black and gold. Instantly, Yah Ying understood that the mysterious bottle had now come into her possession and would guide her on her future journey. Seeming to hear distant voices from her honorable ancestors, Yah Ying knew that she should name the vessel the Mandarin Bottle.

After several days on the trail, a scared and weary Yah Ying treaded her way up the busy streets of San Francisco. She noticed several Chinese men and women washing clothes under a vibrant canopy of bright rainbow-colored cloths. She stopped and asked one of the women, in Chinese, the directions to the hotel known as the Ruby Slipper Palace. After a brief sharing of verbal directions and hand gestures, the helpful washer woman was ordered to return to her job. Yah Ying thanked the woman and made her way up the hill until she came to a large structure, and a beautiful sign that announced that she had indeed found the Ruby Slipper Palace.

Chapter 1 ~ October 1855 – The Ruby Slipper Palace

Yay Ying walked up the grand brick staircase to the entrance. The wide steps were flanked with large clay pots filled with beautiful green plants and colorful flowers. She paused at a carved wooden door, which led to the lobby of the Ruby Slipper Palace, took a deep breath, and exhaled before stepping inside. A doorman, who had briefly left his post, quickly returned to see a poorly dressed Chinese girl standing at the entrance of the lobby. He was in the process of telling the girl to leave, when the commotion caught the attention of a large bronze-skinned man standing guard near another door, which led to the gambling casino. He moved with purpose and grace across the lobby to where the girl stood.

“That’s all right, Ben. You may go back to your post. I’ll take care of this,” instructed Timothy.

Timothy studied the intruder. He thought the Chinese girl looked to be around fourteen or fifteen. The girl had thick black hair, which she wore in a long braid that trailed down her back almost to her waist. Her eyes were the color of slate, which he found to be very interesting. The eyes framed a delicate nose and full lips. She seemed, to his eye, to be above-average in height and appeared to be very fit. He even considered her tall for her race, as he found most of the Chinese in San Francisco to be of a smaller stature. It was obvious that she was nervous, but she stood up straight and held herself with grace. At length, he introduced himself as Timothy, and his smile gave Yay Ying courage. “Can I help you?”

Yah Ying opened her mouth to speak but found that she could only utter one word. "Otto," she whispered.

Timothy looked at the frightened young girl with confusion. At first, he wondered if this was a Chinese word, but after a moment he declared, "Do you mean Otto Stanoff?"

Yah Ying cleared her throat and nodded her head. "Yes, Otto."

"Wait here a moment," he directed. Timothy guided the girl over to a comfortable chair next to a potted fern and gestured that she should sit down.

The girl watched as Timothy walked across the lobby into what looked like a large arched opening leading into a fancy place to eat. She watched until Timothy disappeared from sight.

"I'm very sorry to disturb your lunch Captain Mac and Miss Ruby, but there is a young Chinese girl in the lobby who seems to know young Otto. I don't think she speaks much English."

The newly married couple looked at each other with understanding and smiled.

"This may be the Chinese girl Otto told us about last year. He asked us to look out for her if she ever came to the hotel," said Ruby. "We may need some translation. Send one of the porters to get Benny Sing, and then bring the girl here."

Mac added, "Ask one of the waiters to set another place setting. If she is who we think she is, she will most likely be hungry."

Timothy nodded and instructed the waiter to arrange another place setting. He walked back into the lobby and summoned a porter to find Benny Sing and bring him to the lobby. He looked to where he had left the girl, to see her staring wide-eyed at the gilded ceiling, chandeliers, and ornate statues and plants around her.

The girl continued to survey the room. Timothy walked over and sat in a wing-backed chair next to where the young stranger sat and said, "It will just be a few more minutes." He gestured for her to stay seated in case she did not understand him.

"I will take you to meet some friends of Otto." Timothy was not sure how much she understood, but the girl smiled and nodded her head.

Benny Sing was slightly out of breath by the time he entered the lobby. Timothy rose from his chair and walked over to meet him. "Good afternoon Benny."

"Porter say you need Benny Sing, so I run here very fast. Chop-chop!"

"Yes, thank you, Benny. Captain McAuliffe and Miss Ruby have need of your services. They are eating lunch in the restaurant. Just a moment." Timothy walked to where Yah Ying sat and motioned her to follow him and another Chinese man into the restaurant. "Please come with me."

Yah Ying looked at the Chinese man and began to panic. She hoped that she would not be sold to this man to work for him as she had worked for Li Wu. Gathering all the courage she could muster, Yah Ying trailed Timothy and the Chinese man into the beautiful dining room and to the table where an attractive man and woman were chatting and eating lunch. The table was adorned with china and beautiful crystal. Sparkling chandeliers sent a prism of colorful lights dancing on the walls that reminded her of fireworks she once saw in Hong Kong.

Mac and Ruby stood up when the three people approached their table. Yah Ying looked at the table laden with a variety of food. The smell of the food made Yah Ying's stomach rumble. She had very little to eat for two days. The handsome couple turned and bowed to Yah Ying, which the girl recognized as a gesture of honor and welcome. Instantly, she breathed a sigh of relief and stood up straighter. She bowed

back to them even lower, which she also knew in the traditional Chinese custom, would give even greater honor.

Ruby smiled and invited both her and Benny to sit at the two vacant seats at their table. “Benny, this girl is a friend of Otto’s. Would you ask her if she would care to join us for lunch?”

Benny looked at the disheveled young girl and asked, in Chinese, if she would graciously honor his bosses by joining them for lunch.

Yah Ying cautiously smiled and answered. “Xié xie.”

“Young girl says, ‘Thank you.’”

“Benny, could you ask the girl what her name is and if she knows any English words?” asked Mac.

Benny turned to ask her in Chinese, but Yah Ying, clutching the satchel holding the beautiful Mandarin Bottle to her chest, raised her hand indicating that he should stop. Benny nodded to her and smiled.

Yah Ying spoke. “First, thank you for being so kind to me. Otto said you were very nice people. With your permission, let me tell you a small story about how I came to be here.”

The three people gasped when the girl began to speak in a perfect British accent. Ruby and Mac looked at each other in amazement. This girl spoke with the same crisp British accent as their English friends, Sir Nigel Churchstone and Simon Walton. The Englishmen had just sailed to London after attending their recent wedding celebration. Yah Ying began to tell her story.

“My birth name is Yah Ying. By a cruel twist of fate, it means *Precious Jewel* in your language. I was just a child of six, when my father sold me into slavery. I was taken to live in a poor section of Hong Kong with many other children. The man who bought me was very cruel. During that time, I was

forced to pick pockets and steal off the busy streets of the city. I did this willingly so that I could eat. A year or so went by when I was told he had sold me into the household of a nobleman named Chen. At first, I was happy with the splendor of the grand house, but my life did not improve. I worked there doing the most menial of tasks. Time did not exist for me. Several seasons stretched into years. I was around ten when the master called me to his office. I shook with fear as I believed he was releasing me from my duties. Life in my master's house was hard. I slept in an attic with the rats, but at least I did not have to sleep in the slums. I was quite surprised when he told me I would go to school to learn English. I was very happy until I eventually came to realize the sinister plot that had been devised for me to carry out on his behalf."

Mac and Ruby were speechless. They saw extreme sadness in Yah Ying's eyes.

Yah Ying decided that she had shared too much of her secret life with Chen, and stopped speaking. "I try not to think about that chapter of my life," uttered the girl.

"I was around fourteen when I arrived in San Francisco and was quickly sold at the dock to a man named Li Wu who took me to work in a place called Angels Camp. I was weary of the path on which life had taken me, so when the old man asked me what he should call me, I told him to call me PJ. I had lost all self-worth by this time, and did not consider myself worthy of my real name. Plus, I have a great fondness for your English alphabet. In China, we must memorize hundreds of characters when we learn to read and write. I, of course, had never been taught this method because I was just a lowly servant. By a stroke of good fortune, I learned to speak, read, and write English at a Christian missionary school. I was fascinated that so many different words could be made merely by rearranging the twenty-six letters of the alphabet."

Ruby said, "I can see that your life has been hard, but you speak the English language most beautifully. Your accent is stunning. Let's introduce ourselves. My name is Ruby, and this is my husband, Cornelius, but we call him Mac. This is Benny Sing. He works for us. Benny is the finest tailor in San Francisco. After you eat, he will see that you get a nice hot bath, and he will make some new clothes for you." Yah Ying stood and bowed to Benny, and he extended a bow to her.

"You must be very hungry. Let us order you something to eat. What would you like?"

Yah Ying looked over at Benny for help.

"I think young girl might enjoy small bits of fish with vegetables and rice. This is something she would be very familiar with in Hong Kong," said Benny. "Yes, yes?"

"Xié xie...I mean, thank you."

"Yes, thank you, Benny" said Ruby. "You have been most helpful. When we have finished our lunch, I will have Timothy bring her upstairs to you. Ask Timothy to prepare a room for her. She must be very tired. Benny stood up and again bowed to Yah Ying. "In this very time, Benny make new pants and shirt for you. Practical, but very nice. I make chop-chop...you see!" With that, Benny bowed to everyone at the table and scurried out of the restaurant.

Ruby ordered rice with fish for Yah Ying and a pot of steaming hot tea. "Tell us a little about your journey. You have traveled a long way and must have a very interesting story. How long did it take you to come down from Angels Camp?"

"My legs are very strong. I am fast like a tiger. It took me four days to get here. I covered many miles each day. I stayed off the main trail when I heard noises, and I walked at night when there were few travelers on the road. I had taken some small bits of food and rice but this was gone after two days. I

think I had luck with me carrying Otto's bottle because I did not encounter any trouble."

"Yes, I see that you have found Otto's lost bottle," said Mac. "Did you come here to give it to him?"

Yah Ying looked down at the leather pouch at her side and nodded. She told the couple how Otto had introduced her to the mysteries of the bottle on the horseback ride to Cripple Creek, and how she had discovered it clinging to a branch while stopping to get a drink on her escape down the mountain from Li Wu. She told them how amazed she had been when the colors changed from stunning shades of purple to the red black and gold which now covered its surface. She removed the bottle from its case and presented it to them.

"It's hard to believe that this is the same bottle. But this is how Otto told us it came to him," said Mac. "I believe the mysterious bottle is now yours. You must cherish it. I know that it helped me when I was ill with a lung congestion." Ruby reached across the table and took Mac's hand into her hand.

"I think the new colors are charming," added Ruby, "and red is just about my favorite color in the world." With that, she stood and lifted the hem of her dress so Yah Ying could see her little red boots.

"Ah, yes. I saw your beautiful sign out front with the red glass stones displayed in the shape of your little slippers."

At that moment, the food was served and Yah Ying asked if she could eat because she was very hungry. As Yah Ying ate, Mac and Ruby talked about their life in San Francisco, their recent wedding celebration, and the latest news with Otto and his family.

When the girl was finished eating, she looked at the kind couple and thanked them for the delicious food. She asked if they might like her to continue her story.

“Yes, and tell us more how you came to learn such beautiful English.” offered Mac.

“And tell us a little more about your life in China,” suggested Ruby with excitement.

“Thank you so much for your kindness. It is a long story, but I will do my best to share some more things about my life, being sold into slavery at six, and coming to San Francisco.” Yah Ying took a sip of tea and continued her tale.

“Yes, it is because of my time in Hong Kong that I came to speak English. You see, I was taught the language as a young girl at missionary school. I worked for a very powerful and unkind man who did not like the people at the school. I was only eight when I arrived at his palatial home. I worked very hard, and was surprised that he even knew of my existence. When I was ten, he called me to his office and told me he had a new job for me. He explained that some English missionaries had set up a school to teach young Chinese children the English language and also about the man they called Jesus. My owner was very distrustful of what he called the ‘foreign devils’ who had come to his ancestral land. He said he wanted to know everything about these missionaries. To accomplish this, he felt he needed a spy to learn their language, what they taught, and how they behaved and thought. He was very stern with me and told me there would be dire consequences if I failed. I was told I would be boarding at the school and would report back to him on each school break. The missionary instructors were most happy to accept his generous donation and enroll a young girl as a student.” Yah Ying lowered her head and silently thought, *Only I knew his true purpose.*

“I studied and listened to my teachers very carefully, as I did not want to incur the wrath of my master and risk a beating. He was very intent on my learning everything I could, as his spy, from the people he called the ‘western barbarians’. But

what he did not know was that the man and woman who ran the school were very kind to me. Much kinder than any person had been since being sold by my parents when I was just a young girl.”

Captain McAuliffe felt a heavy sadness upon hearing how this poor girl must have suffered in her short life. “Why did your parents sell you?”

“Mother and Father were poor farmers. I was the first-born of six girls, but Father wanted a son. He told Mother that he could not continue to support ‘all these girls’ and that one of us would have to go. I was the unlucky one that was chosen. Mother cried a lot, but she could do nothing to save me. Father arranged for us to go to the village and meet with a buyer. Money was exchanged, and I was told to go with him. I never got to say goodbye to my mother or sisters. I never saw them again. I have very little memory of what they looked like.” Yah Ying sighed, “I was so young.” Yah Ying stifled a yawn.

Ruby glanced over at Mac. “My goodness, look at our manners. You must be very tired. We can talk more about your travels tomorrow. Let Mac and I take you to Timothy. He will see that you have a nice hot bath and get some rest. Tomorrow, we will arrange for you to see Otto and his family.”

Chapter 2 ~ October 1855 – Stanoff Family Produce

Yah Ying had been sleeping for twelve hours when she was awakened by a faint tap on the door. She stretched and reached for the cotton robe that Ruby had loaned her along with a nightgown and some other undergarments and personal necessities. She walked over to the door and could hear Ruby calling softly on the other side. She opened the door to see Ruby in a cream-colored blouse and gray skirt with soft red-leather boots peeking out from the bottom.

“You must have been very tired. It’s nearly nine o’clock.” Ruby stepped into the room carrying a large silver tray laden with biscuits, eggs, bacon, and a large pot of tea.

Yah Ying yawned. “Good morning, Miss Ruby. I cannot believe that I slept for so long. That was the best night’s sleep I’ve had in years. I think the hot bath and food helped relax my body. You and the captain have been extremely kind to me.”

“Are the clothes Benny made for you adequate?”

“The clothes are wonderful. Please extend my thanks to him once again.”

“Benny made your outfits in the style you were wearing yesterday. I could tell him to make a few dresses if you would like?”

“No, the coolie pants and tops are quite perfect. I feel very comfortable wearing them, and they will be most suitable when I begin to look for a job. I am amazed at how well they fit. He did not even take my measurements.”

“They do look very practical...not to mention, comfortable. Sometimes, I wish I did not have to be so bound up with corsets

and petticoats, but we women are ruled by the fashion of the day.”

“The nobleman I worked for in China had several wives and young daughters. It is a custom among the rich nobility to bind women’s feet so they will stay small and look delicate. The smaller the feet, the more fashionable the lady. Once, I heard one of the master’s daughters screaming in pain as the older women bound her toes with cloth. They are bound so tight; the bones will eventually break and curl under the pads of her feet. I must say, at that moment when I heard those screams, I was happy to be but a poor and lowly servant with big feet.”

“I have read about this custom, and I think it’s cruel,” said Ruby. “Quite frankly, Yah Ying, your feet are the perfect size for your height, which seems tall for your people. I have found most Chinese to be small in stature. After we visit with Otto, Mac and I will take you to have shoes made by a skilled cobbler. The ones you are wearing are rather worn out. Levi Wise and his family came to California on the same wagon-train with Otto. I’m happy to say, like Otto, he and his family are doing very well making shoes for the people of San Francisco. He made the boots I’m wearing this morning.” Ruby stretched her right leg from beneath her skirt and pointed her toe revealing a different pair of red shoes.

“But, look at me babbling on like a mocking bird. Your food is probably getting cold. I will leave you to your breakfast. If you could meet Mac and me in the lobby in an hour, we will take you to visit Otto and his family. They run a produce store in town. They are doing very well, I might add. Otto spoke fondly about meeting you in the gold fields. He will be so happy to see you. You know, Yah Ying, you would be most welcome to stay here at the hotel. I’m certain we could find some meaningful work for you, but you’ll want to take a breath for a few days to figure out what you want to do.”

“Thank you, Miss Ruby. You and Captain McAuliffe have been so nice to me.”

“It’s our pleasure. And please, just feel free to call me Ruby. No *Miss* needed. When you have finished your breakfast, just place the tray outside the door and someone will pick it up. We’ll see you in the lobby.”

Yah Ying sat at a small writing table and ate the food from the tray. She was surprised at how hungry she was. She thought of her trip away from the gold fields. She smiled as she thought of how angry Li Wu must have been when he awoke that first morning to find his fire had not been tended. The men around camp would be wondering where their tea was.



The carriage driver stopped in front of a sturdy brick building. The three passengers stepped out onto a recently constructed wooden walkway situated in front of the store. Yah Ying looked at a large sign above the door which said, ***Stanoff Family Produce***. Several wooden outdoor bins, filled with fresh fruits and vegetables, lent a colorful atmosphere to the overall setting. The welcoming produce also shared a hint of what other interesting products a customer might find inside.

Mac and Ruby walked in through the front door with Yah Ying following behind and saw a variety of fresh fruits and produce neatly displayed on the many tables that were situated throughout the store. Shelves resting against the walls of the shop held various nuts, beans and dried produce in wooden bins and glass jars. She thought the store looked very clean. In the front corner, she noticed a young man at the counter helping a woman purchase the various items she pulled from her basket.

Ivan was busy talking to the customer, but looked up when he saw Mac and Ruby enter through the front door with a young Chinese girl following them. He waved at the visitors and smiled. “Good to see you Mac and Ruby. Or should I say *Mr. and Mrs. McAuliffe*?” Ivan chuckled at his comment. “Otto is at the back of the store unloading a new shipment of corn that he just picked up from the Dickerson farm. Personally, I think it gives him the opportunity to spend a few days on the farm and see his friend, Victoria. He will be most happy to see you.”

“Thanks Ivan,” declared Mac. “It looks like you are doing well these days.”

“We cannot complain.” Ivan waved again and turned back to the customer.

The three visitors walked back to the storage section of the store. They entered through the door to see the back of a tall young man shucking the outer layers from a mountain of corn heaped inside a wooden crate. He neatly arranged the cobs of corn in several baskets. The young man turned around and smiled broadly at Mac and Ruby. “To what do I owe the honor of your presence at our humble store?” Otto asked.

Mac laughed. “I’m not sure you could call your establishment *humble*. From what I see and hear around town, the Stanoff family is doing quite well.”

“We cannot complain.”

Mac laughed, “That’s exactly what Ivan just said.”

“Folks sure seem to like our produce. With the younger children going to school this fall, we are looking to hire some new help.”

Ruby walked over to Otto and gave him a hug. “It looks as though you haven’t stopped growing, Otto. I declare, you look six inches taller since I last saw you!”

“You mean at your wedding? That was only two weeks ago.”

Everyone laughed. Otto then noticed the young Chinese girl standing back from his friends. Otto squinted his eyes for a moment until recognition took hold. “Is that you, Yah Ying? I was hoping you would make it down from Angels Camp one day. It is so good to see you. When did you decide to leave old Li Wu?”

“It is a long story, Otto, and one I hope I can tell you someday. Let me just say that you and Gray Owl had a deep effect on me. Meeting you, when I guided you to find your brother at Cripple Creek started me on a path to a new life after many years of loathing and despair. There are still many disturbing memories that I still have to uncover. I know that it will take time...but it is good to be here.”

All of a sudden, Otto looked at the leather satchel resting across the girl’s shoulder. He was thunderstruck as a kernel of recognition suddenly exploded revealing what he was looking at. Instantly, Yah Ying understood what he was feeling. She smiled and removed the strap from her shoulder and gently handed the leather case to him.

Everyone waited for Otto to speak. “This just seems too much to hope for. I was so angry that I was the only person entrusted with the bottle to have lost it.” Otto looked at Yah Ying with profound admiration and said, “Thank you. I can’t believe you found my bottle. I was certain I would never see it again.”

“I am very happy that I found it...and was able to bring it to you.”

Otto continued to speak rapidly. “This is a most happy day. When that scoundrel, Bull, had Ivan and me cornered at Ivan’s camp with his rifle pointed at us, I thought we were dead. It was shocking when he took mother’s amethyst necklace. But when he ordered me to turn over my precious bottle and callously threw the satchel in the river...I thought I would die. I have

never forgotten his harsh laugh when he saw the devastation on my face. A part of my heart died as the bottle raced downstream. And as hard as I looked the next day, it was gone. I went around depressed for weeks knowing that I had lost this wonderful gift given to me...so precious...and now, it is returned.” Otto spoke hurriedly, “It is a miracle that you found it. How did you find it? Yah Ying, I am forever in your debt.”

Yah Ying began to speak in the same crisp English accent that Otto remembered so well when she had guided Gray Owl and him to the gold fields in search of Ivan. “Otto, the words that you and Gray Owl shared with me that day started a process of uncovering many horrible thoughts and actions I committed before I came to San Francisco. Up until that day, I felt worthless. I allowed Li Wu to mistreat me because I believed I needed to be punished for something I did when I lived in Hong Kong. Our chance meeting gave me the belief that *perhaps* I was not completely responsible for my actions.”

“I feel you are being too hard on yourself, Yah Ying,” said Otto.

“Perhaps, but...now I think you should open the case and see what is inside.”

Otto grasped the leather case in his hands and slowly removed what he was sure to be his beautiful Amethyst Bottle. What he saw took his breath away. He caught his breath for a moment until, slowly, a stark reality came upon him. The Amethyst Bottle had turned to beautiful shades of red, black, and gold.

Otto looked over to where Yah Ying stood and muttered, “The bottle has changed again!” A part of Otto was heartbroken, much as the former slave, Esther, had felt when the Bronze Bottle had changed colors to become the Amethyst Bottle. When the shock began to fade, Otto looked at Yah Ying and said, “The bottle is no longer mine. It is clear that the bottle

has come to help you on your journey, just as it helped me. What have you decided to call it?"

"I know this must be difficult for you, Otto. When I rescued the bottle trapped on some branches near a stream, I gazed at the beautiful shades of lavender and violet. My immediate thought was to get the Amethyst Bottle to you. Then, I observed the colors slowly changing to red, black and gold. It took nearly an hour for the complete transformation. During that hour, I became mesmerized. I was pulled into a different place of being. When the metamorphosis was complete, a powerful impression came into my head. It was as though I was hearing voices from my honorable ancestors. I knew instantly that I should call the beautiful vessel *The Mandarin Bottle*."

Chapter 3 ~ 1848-1850 – Chen Mansion Hong Kong

No one knew or ever asked Yah Ying what her name was when she came to work at the large palatial mansion of the nobleman, Master Chen at age eight. She was given the name, ‘Dum Mi’ by the other servants, which means stupid person. She was pushed around by the scores of other workers who held higher jobs in the mansion. The system held true to the class-system that was practiced all over China. If the servants knew they could boss another servant around, it gave them a feeling of assurance that, as sorry as their lives were, at least they were not the lowest of the low. The girl they called Dum Mi held that position. Yah Ying slept on a woven-rush mat in a rat-infested portion of the attic with four other lowly servants. But even they, who had been there longer, treated her unkindly. Yah Ying was forced to do the most disgusting tasks. She spent hours emptying and cleaning human-waste out of the chamber pots of the master of the house, his many wives, his unruly children, and the various guests that visited each month. When not doing that, she was made to scrub vast areas of tile floors and clean the ashes from the many fireplaces throughout the house. Long after most of the other servants went to bed, she labored into the night washing dishes and scrubbing the kitchen floor. Days became weeks, and months became years. The seasons passed in this monotony of servitude for the girl known as Dum Mi.

Thus, Yah Ying was surprised and frightened when she was summoned to Master Chen’s office. She thought perhaps she had done something wrong and would be thrown out into the cold. Nervously, she knocked on the door.

“Enter,” bellowed a voice so loud, Yah Ying felt certain that she had committed some terrible infraction and was being told to leave. With hands that shook, she pushed open the heavy door and saw Master Chen sitting at his writing desk reading a pamphlet. He did not look up.

The young servant waited and willed herself to stop shaking. She had never been allowed near the master of the house. She studied his appearance as he read. He wore a bright green and gold silk coat with wide A-line sleeves loose at his wrists and embroidered in black and red dragons. From under the desk, she glimpsed a heavy blue and gold silk skirt. Delicate black and gold shoes adorned his feet. He was of medium build with light skin and a thin mustache that drooped from his upper lip to his chin, which beheld a pointed little beard. Yah Ying thought he looked very imposing.

At length, Master Chen looked up to see a young frightened girl dressed in what appeared to be little more than rags. “What is your name?” he barked.

“Dum Mi, your Grace,” she stammered.

Chen looked at her sternly. Finally, he asked, “Are you a stupid person?”

“I don’t think so, Master, but this is the name I was given when I came to work here two years ago.”

Chen furrowed his brow. “And, what age was it when you came to work in my household?”

“I was eight-years-old, Honorable Sir.”

“Was this your age when you were sold into slavery?”

“No, Master. I came to Hong Kong when I was six but for some years...I...worked on the streets...” Master Chen motioned for her to stop. He didn’t care about her sorry life before she came to his household. In truth, he only cared how she might be of use to him now. He would need to gain her trust and mold her mind to do his will.

“I will ask the questions, Dum Mi! How old are you?”

“I believe I am around ten-years-old, Honorable Sir.”

“How do you know this, Dum Mi?”

“I am not certain the day or the month I was born, but my mother always told me I was born in the Year of the Rat. Thus, I know my age is around ten.”

“Hmmm, the Rat! This is a most wonderful character trait on our zodiac calendar. People born under this sign are charming, clever, courageous, and hard working. My wife tells me you work very hard in our household. She has been watching you for many months.” This surprised the girl. “What was the name given to you by your parents?”

The servant girl looked down at her bare feet and felt embarrassed when she noticed how filthy they were. She stayed silent and thought about lying and telling him she didn't remember.

“Speak up, Dum Mi, and don't lie to me!”

“Most Honorable Master, “My parents foolishly gave me the name, Yah Ying,” she mumbled.

“Awe...Yah Ying...Precious Jewel. It is a very pretty name. I will call you Precious Jewel, but it will be our little secret. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Master.”

“I have a very important job for you, Yah Ying; and with this new position, you will receive new clothes and a higher place of standing in my household. Would you like this job?”

Yah Ying could not understand why she would be elevated from sleeping with the rats in the attic to this new station in life, but the young mind of the ten-year-old thought anything would be better than sleeping with rats. She muttered “Yes, Master.”

“Good. There is a school that I would like you to attend. It is here in Hong Kong. The school is run by an English couple who are teaching some of our people to speak English and learn

about a man that is their *god*. His name is Jesus. You may wonder why they are here on our island. The British have recently taken possession of our beautiful Hong Kong because of the infernal in-fighting in China. A new English governor controls our affairs. These people must be stopped! But to do so, we must understand their patterns, their customs, and the way they think and act.” Yah Ying listened with little understanding.

“That is why I need you, my jewel. Like the rat you will be clever, charming, and courageous. Do you feel you are worthy of this important task? Would you like this job?”

Yah Ying was confused, but a part of her was beginning to feel very important. “Oh, yes Master. I will not let you down”

“This is what I was hoping to hear, my Precious Jewel.”

“It will be my honor to serve you, Master.”

“Good. I will be making arrangements for you to attend the English missionary school. You will live at the school for the six-month term. You will learn how to read and speak their language. At the end of each term, you will return to my household for several weeks. You will report to me and tell me everything you have learned at the school. These uncouth people are infecting our country with their western notions and evil customs. Although some of my countrymen have welcomed them, I consider these to be barbarians and nothing more than cockroaches. Do you understand me so far?”

Yah Ying nodded her head, but her mind was still confused. “I understand, Master Chen.”

“Good! Remember, you will be my spy, Yah Ying. These foreign devils must be stopped!” he shouted. He looked at Yah Ying and softened his tone. “The job I am giving you is very important. Although to master my goal, it will take time. You must not only learn their language and their customs; you must study how they think and act. I want you to keep a secret

journal, and tell me everything about them. EVERYTHING!” he shouted. Yah Ying jumped at the sound of his raging voice.

Chen knew he had frightened the girl so he willed himself to speak in a gentler tone of voice. “Even if you do not think it is important, my pet rat, it *may* be important to me. We must be patient, my jewel. To know the mind of our enemy, we must learn how they think and act. You are like a young butterfly coming out of its cocoon. You will make these people trust you. Do you still understand?” he yelled.

Yah Ying flinched as she listened with keen interest. She knew her master must comprehend these matters much more than a mere child. Once again, he softened his words and smiled. The child was beginning to feel very important with the task Master Chen had given her. She desperately wanted to please him. In a voice that was anxious to please, she declared, “I promise that I will be your eyes and your ears, Master. I will give my life to this task.”

“Good! You are wise, my butterfly, because if you fail me, you will suffer a fate so horrible, I cannot even describe it to you now because you would faint with horror.”

Yah Ying forced her mind not to envision what might be her fate if she failed. She stood stone-still as Chen looked at her long and hard, before softening again. “But we will not think about that now.” He reached into his desk drawer and told her to come stand near him. She inched around the desk and stood in front of him. He told her to close her eyes and open her mouth. Although afraid, she did what he asked. Chen popped something round and hard into her mouth. “Now close,” he ordered. Chen then issued a roar of laughter that exploded deep within his throat. Yah Ying opened her eyes wide. She was astonished to taste the melting sweetness of the boiled candy. It was the first time she had ever tasted sugar in her short life. With that, Master Chen pulled a cord behind him and a servant

entered and took Yah Ying away to be scrubbed, cleaned, and given new clothes. *Time. Now all I need is time to bend her to my will.* Master Chen watched the girl being whisked away for cleaning and instructions on how to eat and dress. He let out a low growl like a dragon and thought, *My plan has begun.*

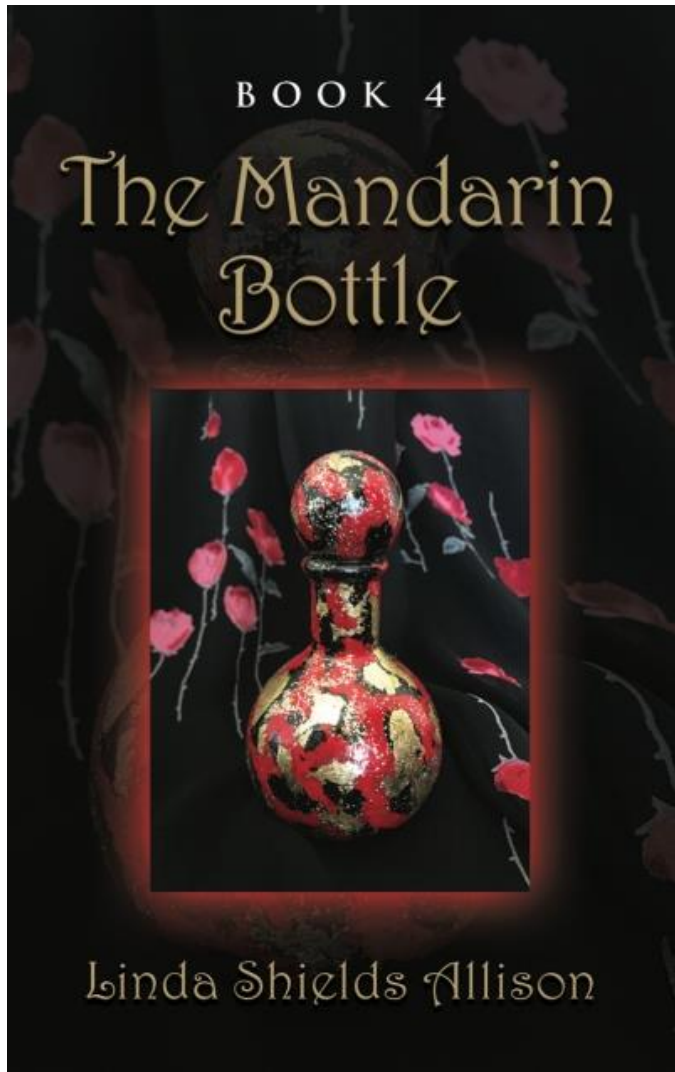
Before choosing Yah Ying for this task, Master Chen had thought long and hard who he might groom to be his spy at the missionary school. He knew that it would take time, but he was a patient man. He enlisted the advice of his first wife who kept a close eye on all things that went on in his household. She had been impressed with the young slave's work ethic, and that she seemed to have no other friends in the house. She informed him how poorly she was treated by the rest of the staff. Master Chen listened to his clever wife. The cunning woman reminded Chen that in choosing the most vulnerable of his servants, and one who had very limited prospects in life, the girl would be easy to adapt to his thinking and do his bidding. "Honorable husband, this pathetic girl will naturally bend to your will, and do everything in her power to please her master."

With that, it was done. Master Chen's evil plan had been put into motion. Over the next several weeks, the girl called Dum Mi was instructed by the master's first wife on how to sit and eat at a table and "...not like a dog on the floor," she would scold. Chen's wife told her she must smile at her teachers to earn their trust. She was reminded each day to listen and learn so she could report back to Master Chen at the end of each term. She was informed that if she failed in her task, she would be dealt with severely.

Four weeks later, Yah Ying found herself standing in the school office being processed as a boarding student, at the Saint Luke Anglican Missionary School, attired in a western-style

school uniform. Yah Ying looked down at her long blue pinafore jumper covering a crisp white blouse with a high mandarin collar. She wore cotton stockings and low black-leather boots with slightly elevated heels that were very uncomfortable for someone who had never worn shoes. The master's wife had made her practice walking in them for an hour each day. Yah Ying hoped that in time the leather would yield and her blisters would heal.

Master Chen did not want the school to know her Chinese name. When he sent the fee to enroll her, he asked if she might be given an English Christian name. The missionary couple were only too pleased to accommodate the forward-thinking nobleman who had informed them that, as a benevolent gesture, he wanted to raise the poor girl's station in life. The teachers, who were grateful for this gesture, decided to add Nobleman Chen to their nightly prayers.



Sold into slavery at six, Yah Ying is kidnapped and sent to the gold fields of San Francisco. A mysterious Mandarin Bottle helps her journey south on El Camino Real. She must confront past deeds and learn to trust the people she meets.

The Mandarin Bottle

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