



The Emperor's Tomb (with bonus short story The Balkan Escape): A Novel (Cotton Malone)

By Steve Berry

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Former Justice Department operative Cotton Malone has received an anonymous note carrying an unfamiliar Web address. Logging on, he's shocked to see Cassiopeia Vitt, a woman who's saved his life more than once, being tortured at the hands of a mysterious man who has a single demand: *Bring me the artifact she's asked you to keep safe*. The only problem is, Malone doesn't have a clue what the man is talking about, since Cassiopeia has left nothing with him. So begins Malone's most harrowing adventure to date—one that offers up astounding historical revelations, pits him against a ruthless ancient brotherhood, and sends him from Denmark to Belgium to Vietnam then on to one of the greatest archaeological sites in the world: the tomb of China's First Emperor, guarded by an underground army of terra-cotta warriors, which has inexplicably remained sealed for more than two thousand years—its mysteries about to be revealed.

DON'T MISS A SNEAK PEEK OF STEVE BERRY'S NEW NOVEL, *THE JEFFERSON KEY*, IN THE BACK OF THE BOOK.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An Interview with Cotton Malone by Steve Berry

Magellan Billet

De-Briefing Report

Agent Interviewed: Harold Earl "Cotton" Malone

Status: Retired (on special assignment here)

Interview Location: Café Norden, Copenhagen, Denmark

Subject: Recent incursion into the People's Republic of China

Question 1: Your impressions of China?

Amazing. Here's a culture that has been around for over 4,000 years yet is still struggling to identify itself. An ancient place, and that old-world feel is still there, especially in the areas I visited. I learned that well over 50% of the world's great inventions and innovations originated in China--things like printing, the zero, the compass, the stirrup, the abacus, the seismograph, the rudder, the parachute, and masts and sails. The list is long. But, because of the country's isolation, and the tendency of one emperor to eradicate all vestiges of those who came before him, the Chinese literally forgot what they had accomplished. Can you imagine?

The country is incredibly varied in geography and culture, it stretches more than 3,000 miles east to west, and it contains two of the world's great deserts, the Gobi and Taklamakan, which I skirted. Some of the highest mountains on the planet rise from the Tibetan plateau in the south, which I visited. Maybe most impressively, 1.3 billion people live in China, so it's the most populous place on the planet. But despite all that, the country remains tremendously fragile, its political culture is volatile and unpredictable, bound together only by force and fear. It would not take much to send it over the edge.

Question 2: Who was there, on the ground, with you?

Stephanie Nelle, head of the Magellan Billet, authorized the incursion, facilitated by a cooperating Russian agent known only as Ivan. Cassiopeia Vitt accompanied me, along with Viktor Tomas, a freelance agent I'd dealt with previously in a file titled *The Venetian Betrayal*. This time Tomas was covertly working with Karl Tang, China's deputy premier. Cassiopeia and I have not worked together in a while, as my experiences in Germany and the Antarctic last Christmas (detailed in a file titled *The Charlemagne Pursuit*) and then in France (*The Paris Vendetta*) did not concern her. Her involvement here came as the result of a long term friendship with a Russian ex-patriot, Lev Sokolov, and the abduction of his son. There's a file, *The Balkan Escape*, which explains in detail her connection with Sokolov.

Question 3: Are you able to offer any insight into the epidemic of child trafficking in China?

This is truly a major problem, which Lev Sokolov experienced firsthand.

Some estimate that as many as 70,000 children are stolen in China every year. Its one-child policy and a cultural preference for boys has fostered a vicious trafficking industry. Sons traditionally care for their parents and, of course, carry on the family name, so female fetuses are many times either aborted or abandoned. Incredibly, it's illegal to abandon, steal, or sell a child in China, but not illegal to buy one. I learned that a young boy costs around \$900 U.S. That's a lot of money considering the average Chinese worker earns only about \$1,700 U.S. annually. But people pay it. The government is doing something, but not nearly enough to stop it. Lev Sokolov was fighting an uphill battle, and that's why he called Cassiopeia.

Question 4: What observations, if any, can you offer on Qin Shi's tomb?

The tomb mound itself has stood in central China for over 2,200 years. It was once the size of the pyramid at Giza in Egypt. It took thousands of men over 12 years to complete the underground palace complex where Qin Shi is buried. His body still rests beneath the mound. The tomb itself is the size of a football field, topped by a jeweled ceiling representative of stars and a floor that depicts Qin Shi's empire in three dimensions including mountains, villages, roads, and rivers, lakes, and oceans fashioned of mercury. It has remained unexplored, as no Chinese emperor or government has ever allowed anyone inside. The only written account of the interior was penned 2,000 years ago. A kilometer away stands the terra cotta army--an amazing collection of 8,000 unique soldiers, 130 chariots, and 670 horses, all arrayed in tight battle formation. That area is open to the public and its museum complex is extensively visited. Interestingly, when the terra cotta warriors were discovered in 1974, no one had any idea that they ever existed. Remember that practice of purging memories? The same thing happened here. The emperors who came after Qin Shi made sure that every detail of his existence was forgotten. Only in the past few decades has interest in the First Emperor been rekindled.

Question 5: What are your future plans?

To return to my bookshop and earn a living. But you never know what will happen next. I had a dream the other night that I was drawn back home, to the United States, for some reason. Odd I'd imagine that.

From Publishers Weekly

Cotton Malone teams with old heartthrob Cassiopeia Vitt on a dangerous mission to retrieve a priceless Chinese lamp from the third century B.C.E. in Berry's rousing fifth thriller to feature the ex-federal agent (after *The Paris Vendetta*). Two high-ranking Chinese government ministers, hard-liner Karl Tang and more liberal Ni Yong, both of whom are vying to be China's next premier, covet the lamp. Tang, in particular, has left a trail of bodies in his own quest for the lamp, which, unbeknownst to Malone and Vitt, contains the secret to how the country will surmount its biggest obstacle to future economic growth, its dependence on foreign oil. Berry layers his narrative with well-chosen, if sometimes overly detailed, doses of Chinese history. His action sequences, particularly a shootout inside the vast network of an underground tomb, often take too long to resolve, though the payoff in the end--a goose-pimple-raising showdown in a remote monastery--is worth the wait. (Nov.) (c)

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Review

“This book combines [Steve] Berry’s action-packed thrills with an adventure through China . . . [a] seamless marriage of intense drama and cultural history.”—*The Virginian-Pilot*

“To read a tale by Steve Berry is to become an armchair world traveler and instant historian. . . . His stories

are fast-moving, solid with research and provocative.”—*Sacramento Bee*

“Hard to put down.”—*Lincoln Journal Star*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Adam Schneider:

The book untitled The Emperor's Tomb (with bonus short story The Balkan Escape): A Novel (Cotton Malone) contain a lot of information on the item. The writer explains the girl idea with easy way. The language is very easy to understand all the people, so do not necessarily worry, you can easy to read it. The book was compiled by famous author. The author brings you in the new age of literary works. You can read this book because you can please read on your smart phone, or product, so you can read the book with anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can open up their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice study.

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