



Published by

AHSA World Publishing
Encyclopedia Circle
Fremont, California 94538
USA
www.ahsaworld.org

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Carmelita H. Chao
The Ultimate Geodesics
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978-1-7338921-7-9

1. Novel. Title
FICTION CARMELITA H. CHAO 2020

Cover Design: by Dr. Hwa A. Lim. Carmelita took the background photo of sunrise on the Aegean Sea on her cellphone while aboard Samos en route to Santorini, July 13, 2017. Carmelita had always wanted to go to the Aegean Sea, and she made it.

The papers in hardcopies of this book were manufactured using responsible forestry methods.

Printed in the United States of America

THE ULTIMATE GEODESICS: FOUR *ULTIMATE* THRILLERS

- First Ultimate Thriller – *Subterranean Palace* •
- Second Ultimate Thriller – *All Quacks Are Experts* •
 - Third Ultimate Thriller – *In An Idyllic Villa* •
 - Fourth Ultimate Thriller – *On A Solar Barque* •

Carmelita H. Chao



Silicon Valley
Milpitas, California
USA

ISBN: 978-1-7338921-7-9

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This English mini thriller series was translated by Dr. Hwa A. Lim from the original Chinese mini thriller series by Carmelita H. Chao. Dr. Lim – born in Asia, educated in Europe and the US, and now working in the US – has actually been to all the places mentioned in the mini thrillers. The background and travel experience have helped make the translation more realistic and lucid.

DISCLAIMER

This “Ultimate Geodesics” mini thriller series is a work of fiction. Space and time have been rearranged to suit the convenience of the book, and any resemblance to persons, living or dead, is coincidental. The opinions expressed are those of the characters and should not be confused with the author’s or translator’s opinions.

THE ULTIMATE GEODESICS

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PROLOGUE

July 2004, I brought my daughter Angela to visit relatives in the Pacific Rim.

In the late afternoon of a weekend, with my brother's family, we were on our way to visit a mausoleum. Brother, while driving, asked Angela, "Has Mom been telling you any ghost stories?"

Before this, I had the feeling that children should not be exposed to the paranormal too early in their tender years. As the mom, I therefore had rarely, if any, told or read Angela stories of this nature.

Brother then said in a prodding way, "Your mom has a lot of ghost stories. Besides what she has read, heard, written about, she also has a lot of interview materials, even first-hand experiences!"

During the journey, Brother and his daughter, Pao Pao, told ghost stories, one after another, while I myself was still thinking whether it was the right time to expose Angela to this new realm. I could not tell whether it was the genetics in the blood, as soon as Angela first 'dared' into this, for her at least, new territory, she was just like when I was young – completely fascinated by this type of stories.

Since then, each night, bedtime stories became bedtime 'ghost' stories. In the beginning, a single ghost would content her; but soon it started to take three to four ghost stories satisfy her. Within a year, Angela has soaked up her mom's over thirty years worth of ghost stories. An amazing thing about this young fellow is her exceptional memory. Once she has heard a story, a retell or a similar, slight variation would not escape her. She would immediately refute, "Heard this before. Tell me another one."

I tried very hard to convince Angela that I really had many ghost stories, and that I really could not compose any more new ones. But it was even more unbearable to look at the disappointment on her face. I therefore followed what the good old sage said, "Up against a wall, try to adapt; then you will find a way out." It was this advice that prompted me to adopt a new approach – compose stories with Angela!

In order to introduce her into the imaginative world of story composition, I tried using planes, trains, automobiles, etc, and other tools, to embed four shorter stories into one longer story. Along this line, we, daughter together with the mother, started work on creating the ghost stories. The "Ultimate Series" was thus born, and the stories in the series are fruits of the collaboration of the daughter-mother partnership...

In the collaborative process, I soon realized that I had really grown old. All the life worth of crystallized experiences was actually impeding creativity. For instance, I could not figure out ways to incorporate roller-coasters in a hospital, or to have ponies in an operation room. Once we managed to do that, it was a fabulous feeling. After all, creativity should not always confine us to the known world. Just like adults should occasionally let their minds wander into the imaginative, yet wonderful worlds in which dragons, phoenixes, one-legged creatures, flying horses, etc, co-exist.

Angela unleashed the childish innocence within me. But I still wanted Angela to understand that in writing stories, even when they were ghost stories, it is crucial to make sure the stories should have corroborative evidences, whenever possible. Equally vital are the responsibilities for the names (living or dead), incidents, and anything described in the stories. Having mentioned this, we also emphasize that we espouse the philosophy that “there should be elements of truth in fantasies; and there should be elements of fantasies in truth.” This, we believe, is the paramount tactic to attract readership.

For “*Ultimate Geodesic*” alone, the two of us have researched no less than thirty books. In the research process, we also enjoyed the opportunity and fun to expand our knowledge and spruce ourselves up. Most importantly, I want Angela to recognize that even though all main protagonists in ghost stories are dead, it is imperative to develop the stories so that they are mysterious and yet interesting.

In “*Ultimate Geodesic*”, we used an Englishman, a Chinese from China, A Japanese, and a Frenchman. We have attempted to bring out the flavor of the cultures and customs of these countries, whenever possible. In “*Ultimate Revenge*”, we used an American, a Malaysian, a Chinese from China, and a Thai. For the diverse casts, distinctive environments, and divergent space-time, Angela and I feel as if we have toured in these countries.

In the years of writing, this is the first time I have felt that writing storybooks is not a lonesome adventure. It is the first time that I have regarded writing not a task, but an interesting adventure. It is also the first time I have really appreciated the verve of creativity, even though all the main protagonists of ghost stories are dead!

Geodesic:

A geodesic is the shortest route between two points.

It is a straight line on a plane / flat surface,
or along an arc of a great circle on a sphere such as the earth.

So, you beeline out the door;
or an airplane flies along a great circle from one city to a distant destination.

But,
as you will see,
when you are running for your life,
a geodesic is not necessary the best path,
or it may be warped,
or it may not even exist!

It is ultimate.
There is no escape...