



## **The Long Way**

*Michael Corbin Ray, Therese Vannier*

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Moving from China's Opium Wars of the mid-19th century to the California gold rush and the taming of the Wild West, this epic historical fantasy follows the quest for an ancient Chinese dragon lost in a strange new world. A neglected orphan, an angry monk, and a sinister Englishman come together in a clash of wills and cultures that could change the future for the better—or for much, much worse.

## **The Long Way Details**

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Author : Michael Corbin Ray , Therese Vannier

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## From Reader Review The Long Way for online ebook

### Hollie says

I wasn't entirely sure what to expect when I started reading The Long Way, other than the fact that it had dragons in it and at least a part of it was set in China. And really, that's all I wanted to know when starting this book. I don't think there's a summary in the world that could have done The Long Way justice. I've read the book and I know I wouldn't be able to summarise what I've read in just a few short sentences.

What I will say is that The Long Way's plot reminded me very much of a movie plot. That's not a bad thing, but the way a lot of scenes played out just really made me feel like I was reading a screenplay. The Long Way is definitely a book that could be adapted into film very easily, as it is completely action packed from the very first chapter. The action kept building, and the more action there was, the more I found myself holding my breath as I read each page. The Long Way took me on an incredible thrill ride that I had no intention of stopping.

Unfortunately, I didn't connect with the characters as much as I connected with the plot. This didn't have too big an impact on my enjoyment of the book, but I just wish I had found myself more invested in Chi-Yen and Sin-Feng. I admired their bravery and determination to complete the mission fate had handed to them, but I didn't feel much more than that.

I did love the dragon scenes though. Seriously, I have gone from someone who wasn't all that bothered about dragons to being this huge dragon fan that just devours any mention of them. (My reading list is growing with all these dragon fantasy books I find. Obsessions are dangerous for my TBR pile.) Truth be told, the dragon was probably my favourite character in the book, and I was pretty distraught over how his story ended. \*sob\*

The Long Way was an extremely compelling dragon fantasy that had me hooked in from the very beginning. This is the perfect book for people who like fantasy, but aren't sure if they love it just yet.

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### Louise says

A great read i really enjoyed this fantasy novel about a young girls fight and struggle for survival in the world.

A must read

I received this book for free through goodreads first reads

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### Wayne McCoy says

'The Long Road' has all the ingredients to be a better book, but when it was all said and done, I found it to be slightly lacking. I can't put my finger on why.

When we first meet Chi-Yen, she is working in a brothel in China. Her mother's advice to be the second ugliest woman in the house has kept her below notice, but that might be changing. When she decides she must escape her life and find a new one. She finds herself a drunken stubborn monk and his apprentice. They have a strange wooden box with something inside and they are travelling to the new world. She finds herself on board a boat heading to San Francisco. Her resourcefulness and understanding of the English language come in handy and help her survive the trip, but when she accidentally opens the box that the monk has, her life will be linked to something wonderful.

The book spans the opium wars in China, the gold fields in California and the building of the transcontinental railroad. Chi-Yen will find herself tested and tried. She will find a strange new friend in this strange new world.

It's all fine, and Chi-Yen is a likeable enough heroine, but for a book that seems to want to point out and ridicule stereotypes, the book seems to be content to have it's fair share. The villain is over the top to a fault. The cruelty dumped on Chi-Yen is pretty relentless up to the point of being almost ridiculous.

I liked the setting and the story was interesting. So, I liked it, but I just didn't love it.

I was given a review copy of this ebook by Baaa Press and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to review this ebook.

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### **Rod Vilencia says**

This is a fantastic and epic adventure that follows the heroin of the story Chi-Yen a mixed race Cantonese girl and her desperate desire to get out of her impoverished and troubled life. Her trans pacific journey to America and her accidental run in with The Earth Dragon makes for a spellbinding and riveting tale brilliantly written by Ray and Vannier. This story is as powerful as Spirited Away and if you are a fan of that story and film you will love The Long Way!

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### **Kagama-the Literaturevixen says**

I got this ARC from NetGalley and this is my honest review.

1,5

Chi-yen is a girl in 19th century Canton who lives in a brothel as a servant girl, where life is harsh and often brutal and even more so for someone whose blue eyes clearly tell the world that she is mixed race due to her prostitute mother becoming pregnant by a foreigner.

Chi-Yen cant remember much about her mother apart from some words of wisdom she shared with her

"To live a happy life you must always be the second ugliest girl in the house."

So she keeps ugly and this plan works well enough until her mothers strategy fails and she is noticed by a costumer there is only one thing to do- run away but of course she has nowhere to go so she returns pretty soon.

But luckily she is given a respite from having become a prostitute for a while.

Then we meet Sin-Feng who is a young apprentice monk at the Temple of Seven Dragons who often has to come by the brothel to pick up his master Liu Kun who is always intoxicated either from opium or alcohol.

All their lives are upset when there is a rebellion against the western foreigners living in the city and The temple of the Seven Dragons is destroyed, the monks killed and the treasure of the monks is sought by the evil Basil Malvenue (names to run away from really fast) who is on a mission to secure the it at all costs on behalf of Queen Victoria

Escaping with the treasure that is actually dragons egg and with instructions to take it to San Francisco they are on their way to the new country pursued by Basil Malvenue.

This was a lot more dull than I expected.

The title of the book "A long way" felt very fitting as it took so long for something to happen and during the book at least a decade passes---so slow. Much of it is traveling first to go to another country and then later trying to find the illusive dragon.

I didnt feel much for the characters. I did admire Chi-Yens craftiness but I also found verging on the Mary-Sue-ish that some things like languages came so easily to her.

The book tries to explain it by saying that she has been around so many foreigners during her life she picked up things-and it comes pretty natural to her because she has an ear for language. If you say so book...  
I found the supporting characters of Liu Kun and Sin-feng to be less than lovable. Always tricking or being mean to Chi-Yen despite the fact that she is the most resourceful of them.

When she finally stands up to them it was a pretty great thing. But I kept hoping she would ditch them as I didnt really understand what kept them connected.

Wich brings me to another thing there are no significant female characters for the most of this book, well not anyhow after they reach USA

Out of the 4 other female characters in China ,apart from the main character who appears in this book two are more or less villains, the third one only has two lines and the fourth one while showing some positive traits is killed off pretty soon.

The writing is very dry and cumbersome and quite a lot of it was just info dumping to be honest. I just find it very hard to believe that a 12 year old girl would think like a history book reads especially if she supposed to be a simple servant girl.

Omniscient writing works sometimes but mostly it doesnt-That is very true for this book.

And something else that bothered me is how so many men seems to have lecherous intentions or expresses interest towards Chi-Yen from age 12 and up. It had me abit uncomfortable to be honest and leads up to my final thought on The long way"

I cant quite figure out if this is actually an adult book with a teen character or a YA with claims to wanting to be gritty and real. It just seems like it ends up in between those.

For those who go into reading this because of the magic aspect there isn't much and what comes across as vague and more than a little esoteric.

And for those who want to read it because of the historical aspect may find it has too much magic.

And then there is the ending I have read worse but it was pretty much a downer. Empowering maybe but left me thinking...so this was it?

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### **Debby says**

The first few pages mystified me with the elaborate detail but pushed me forward with humor, history, and intrigue. This blend of history and hope made me a very happy reader. I find it difficult to write a fabulous review without giving away some of the best parts of the book. The only thing missing from this book is a sequel, as I was very sad to see it end.

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### **Mely P.E. says**

È un libro peculiare, sospeso tra affresco storico e fantasy, scritto in uno stile asciutto ma ricco. La trama è originale. Tutto sommato mi è piaciuto.

Non da impazzire però: come atmosfera e narrazione assomiglia troppo alla Storia Infinita, di cui non sono mai stata appassionata. La trama avrebbe potuto essere sviluppata meglio, perché nei primi capitoli nulla, assolutamente nulla fa sospettare dell'esistenza della magia nel mondo di Chi Yen, e nulla prelude alla scoperta dei draghi. Un momento stai leggendo un romanzo storico, e di colpo ti ritrovi un uovo di drago fra le mani. Un pochino di anticipazione avrebbe reso il momento più potente, oltre che plausibile.

La prima parte mi ha coinvolto di più, per le descrizioni vivide della Cina, della sua società e gli avvenimenti storici (anche se una mappatura precisa della città non sarebbe stata una cattiva idea, visto che non tutti conoscono la disposizione del centro storico di... ops, non ricordo dove, e non hanno tempo di documentarsi mentre leggono); la seconda mi ha lasciata più distaccata. Lo ascrivo al fatto che i personaggi da soli non riescono a riempire il vuoto lasciato dalla città brulicante di vita. Sia la protagonista sia il migliore amico sembrano sempre distanti, le loro emozioni arrivano attutite, come se si osservassero le scene attraverso un binocolo. C'è forse chi apprezza questo tipo di narrazione distaccata, quasi da annale, ma io preferisco essere emotivamente coinvolta dai personaggi, sentire le loro emozioni come se fossero le mie... e qui non è successo.

Anche il finale è da fantasy realistico-epicizzante, intravisto attraverso le nebbie. Just not my cuppa.

È stata comunque una lettura interessante e non mi pento di averlo letto :) solo, non credo che lo rileggerò più.

Ringrazio Netgalley per avermi offerto una copia advanced reader del libro!

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## **Tom Donaghey says**

“The Long Way” is one of those pleasant surprises that life hands you now and again. In this case it wasn’t life but Goodreads doing the handing, but you get my intention. This book is a wonderful read with a fascinating lead character. She is Leung Chi-Yen, 12 years old and in the middle of the Second Opium War between Britain and China. Her world of trying not to be pretty nor ugly and thus living somewhere in the middle realm of the house of pleasure where she is kept does not daunt her determination and in fact hones her wiles and sensibilities to the point where she can confront tremendous odds.

During a pitched battle in Canton, she, along with an opium addicted warrior monk and his apprentice, is given a secret treasure, a 9 inch square, ornately carved box which the trio must preserve from the hand of an evil Englishman. It is this secret which compels the three and the story as together they pitch through certain death and ruin as they try to preserve the box. This leads to daring escapes, complications and tragedy as they struggle to leave China for the golden shores of San Francisco, and the future that awaits them.

Not all survive. Not all turns out golden. And the secret of the box is revealed to Chi-Yen. All of this is a struggle for the characters but a pleasure for the reader, as old China is revealed to us in all its sensory delights. The authors have described a vivid world, exciting and one that commands you to read more.

When I closed in on the final few pages I hoped I was wrong, that the book didn’t end there but somehow magically continued on past the last word of the final page. One is hoping a sequel would not be too much to ask for?

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## **Josiphine/Tessa says**

This book hit a lot of my buttons--both good ones and bad ones. There were some parts that I loved, some parts that I did not.

Good buttons:

--CHINA! I am the aunt who taught her nephew Chinese pleasantries when he was one year old (he still says 'xiexie' to me and 'thank you' to everyone else). I love China. It's on my top ten places to visit and the fact that a book takes place there is alone a reason for me to read it.

--DRAGONS! I love dragons! My little brothers instilled this in me when they got a book for their birthday about how *dragons were real and actually dinosaurs*. I was hooked. (The book is by Ken Ham, I think.)

--Occasional moments of brilliance like the following excerpts. These were taken from an uncorrected proof and may change in the final version (though I certainly hope they don't!).

"So she did what any young, multilingual, half-Chinese girl disguised as a boy needing passage from Hong Kong to San Francisco would do."

"She could not help but think that she could argue a much better price for herself."

"That was an understatement. But understatement was his duty as an Englishman at the edge of the empire--stiff upper lip and all that."

--Nineteenth century! I love the 19th century. I blame it on Dickens.

--Romance is kept to a minimum. Yay! I love books that can stand without a romance-crutch.

--The very end. I thought that it was much more believable than the alternative would be. I liked that not everything was tied with a bow.

Bad buttons:

--Despite the quotes above, most of the writing was just okay. Some of it was even bad. There were a few of my writing pet peeves including having multiple years pass in a few sentences, referring to the characters by their attributes instead of their names, and worst of all, using the word *China-man*. One Chinese character calls another a 'China-man.' I can't take that. I do admit, though, that 'China-boy' made me laugh.

--Chi-yen: the girl who can do no wrong. It's true. Throughout the entire book our MC is perfect in every sense, including being *the most beautiful person in the world*. She was far too unsympathetic for my taste. I like a character that struggles with some things. Also, she was a stick champion. The other characters were more interesting.

--Innuendos. I hate them, and since the first twenty percent of the book takes place in and around a brothel, they were numerous (the MC is not a prostitute but she works as a servant in the kitchen).

--A 'bad guy' with no layers. He was simply bad. You can only pull that off if you're Prince Humperdink, :D. He improves slightly towards the end, but by then he didn't have enough time to really branch out.

--The almost ending. Too sappy. I am particularly averse to sap though (those 'Follow Your Heart' plaques? I hate them) and I can see a lot of people not minding it at all.

This book was interesting--very different than a lot of what I've read recently. However the writing--which could have pushed this book to greatness--was just okay, and in the end, it was just okay.

\*\*\*This book was given to me by the publisher for an honest review\*\*\*

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### **Andrea says**

I won this book through the Goodreads First Reads program in exchange for an honest review.

I don't give out 5 stars all that often but there was something about this book that just drew me in right from the start. Leung Chi-Yen is a young girl working in the Canton brothels. But she has a spark of independence, a desire to get away from the life in which she was trapped at no fault of her own. While depressing to read about the treatment of women as property, both in China and later in the US, she would have none of it. But most fascinating is her connection to the dragon.

I was concerned at first that the dragon might turn out to be metaphorical but it was flesh and blood and utterly unlike most dragons I've read about. I kept having visions of Haku, the dragon from Spirited Away (though this dragon is quite different), but it gives you the visual of its perpetually undulating form, its deep and ancient wisdom while at the same time seeming little more than a simple beast. It is not a human mind in dragon shape, it is truly something other, something magical and nearly divine and not to be understood by

mere mortals such as us.

And the plot has so many unexpected twists in turns that I could in no way predict what would happen next. And even while there are long stretches where it seems nothing much happens, you are drawn into those chapters as much as you are into the ones where all the action is. And the ending, completely not what I had expected. While the book could easily stand alone, leaving what happens next to the imagination of the reader, I'm glad to see that the authors plan on making it a series. I would very much like to return to this world and learn more about the seven dragons that inhabit it.

I think my only complaint I had was the name of the villain, Malvenue...I basically had the same reaction to the Malfoys in Harry Potter. Maybe it sounds exotic to non French speakers but calling your villain literally "unwelcome" (or in the case of HP, "bad faith") is a bit...well...cheesy. We already know he's the villain, we don't need him to have a blatantly villainous name too.

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### **Antonio Urias says**

*This review and others are available on my blog.*

The Long Way stretches from Canton to San Francisco, from the Opium Wars to the building of the Transcontinental Railroad and here there be dragons. The novel follows Chi-Yen, the young, mixed race daughter of a prostitute, whose efforts to survive the outbreak of the Opium Wars leads her to the apprentice, Sin-Feng, and his drunken master, Liu Kun. They are the last survivors of the Temple of the Seven Dragons and have been charged with protecting a sacred treasure. Chased around the world by East India Trading Company's Basil Malvenue, their quest will unlock secrets and a power that could shift the fate of empires.

Ray and Vannier have filled the novel with an impressive amount of historical detail. This is a secret history, and they have made the effort to ensure the history is as accurate as a story with dragons can be. They breath life into both their Chinese and Old West settings, making them feel dirty, gritty, dangerous, and, most importantly, real. Equal care has been taken with Chi-Yen. We meet her as a downtrodden, world-weary preteen, wise and clever beyond her years. Her journey is the backbone of the novel. The reader experiences events largely as she does. Sin-Feng and Liu Kun are less well drawn. The relationship between the three is strained and develops largely unseen.

The novel covers a large span of time and geography. This is one of its strengths, but also its greatest weakness. The plot is not as intricate or as well realized as either the setting or the characters, and on several occasions jumps forward in time suddenly. This was slightly jarring but didn't adversely effect the flow of the story. During the gap, however, all three of the main character, and even the villain, undergo drastic changes and development that is unfortunately glossed over.

The Long Way is, nevertheless, a well-written secret history that approaches its settings and concepts from a different angle. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

\*\*Received copy from NetGalley for review

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## **Abbie DiscoSuperFly says**

This was an interesting take on the wild west! We start out in China with an orphan, with a quest takes her and a few other halfway around the world to San Francisco during the Gold Rush.

The quest is to take a box, which contains an egg of one of the seven dragons to a temple in America. During the trip Chi-Yen, opens the box, the Dragon hatches, bites her, and disappears. The bit Mark somehow connects the two, and the Dragon reappears whenever she is in need. Now we throw in some cowboys trying to find the dragon, they figure out the connection between the girl and Dragon, and now the chase is on! Chi-Yen figures out she is a guardian of the Seven Dragons, and searches for the other six eggs, she makes sure all is safe and out of reach of the cowboys.

Overall I enjoyed the story, and the characters.

What I didn't like: I felt like the search for the other six dragon's was a little rushed.

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## **Alysa H. says**

This is a very ambitious novel with a great protagonist in Chi-yen. The first section, set in 1850s China, paints a very vivid picture of that time and place (though not a very sympathetic one). Chi-yen is victimized and beaten, but she's very clever and manages to get herself out of many scrapes -- and eventually on board a ship to California. The journey is as harrowing as the opening section, but unfortunately the book takes a downturn once the destination is reached.

Once across the sea, Chi-yen's cleverness becomes a narrative problem, as it it used to try to explain things that don't really work. At one point, she eludes to events (a fight between two warring groups of Chinese migrants) that have occurred locally before her arrival, about which she couldn't possibly have known. At another, her supposed ease with the English language -- learned by observation during her childhood as a servant in a whorehouse -- is meant to explain how she picks up tons more, all willy-nilly like (German, various Native American dialects, etc.).

Chi-yen's cleverness also seems to go against her steadfastly sticking with traveling companions Sin-Feng, an apprentice monk, and his drunken master, Liu Kun. The needs of the story dictate that the three of them still be together towards the end of the book, but the authors don't pull off the necessary earlier steps for that to work. NO WAY would Chi-yen as written -- a girl supposedly damn near perfect -- let herself be treated the way that Sin-Feng and Liu Kun treat her for the majority of this book, without making a break from them.

The ill treatment of Chi-yen, as well as some of the other characters (mostly female) at the hands of others (sometimes also female, at least in the first half) is quite painful to read at times. Most of the time, actually. This is a book that walks a fine line between supposed historical accuracy and gratuitous violence and abuse.

The main villain was kind of a caricature, but I didn't mind that. His appearances were some of the highlights of the book because he was so over the top. Almost like a Bond villain!

And as for the dragons... well, for the most part there weren't any. This element, too, is saved mostly for the latter part of the book, and isn't particularly well integrated. It's like taking straight historical fiction, and then suddenly adding a huge jolt of magical realism. The ending was also abrupt, as if a poorly attempted set-up

for sequels.

My comments may sound like I'm totally bashing this novel, but I'm not. I found it to be an engaging read and I would probably recommend it to fans of historical fantasy with young female protagonists. I'd just give my recommendation with plenty of caveats.

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\*\* I received a Review Copy of this book via NetGalley \*\*

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### **Kara says**

By the time I was closing in on the end of *The Long Way* I had grown so fond of -- so warmly attached to this story -- that I felt compelled to nominate it for a Goodreads Choice this year, and I still feel invested personally, to some degree, in whether this story will reach as wide an audience as my hopes would dictate (please read this, dear reader! :).

I am always driven to promote literary fiction I think is really worthwhile from my own reading and study. But, *in this case*, I just love this book from my heart along with and beside my mind. It engaged me in the type of complete imaginative immersion that has made reading the only activity that could excite my mind and soothe my spirit consistently since as a young girl I finally read well enough to spend hours and hours engrossed in novels (nothing hard or deep for my age--Sweet Valley High, Baby-Sitter's Club, etc).

This is just a good old-fashioned, mind-transporting tale. I always enjoy reading, but this gave me a pure, unmitigated pleasure I associate with another time, place...self even!

The very wide relatability and endearing nature of the young girl we meet at the start of the story and follow throughout the adventures of *The Long Way* certainly was instrumental in captivating my imagination and emotional investment. Also, it's really kind of magical how this brainchild of the writers takes the reader on such a varied and rich adventure in only 259 numbered pages, in my copy anyhow...The title must be at least partly ironic because it felt a bit more epic than not to me...the novel opens one kind of story in a given environment, which bears no resemblance to the circumstances surrounding the action of the last few pages - - that's for sure! These pages pack a lot of punch -- a great, big story told with amazing efficiency -- but without rushing or creating any plot/structural problems.

I think a broad audience would enjoy this smart historical fantasy -- it was a uniquely happy reading experience for me, and I'd hate for others to miss out! By the way, please know I was able to read this book so early because I won a copy through a Goodreads giveaway.

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### **Debbi says**

I loved this book! It was a great read, a bit reminiscent of *His Majesty's Dragon* by Naomi Novik, but with a story all its own.

Young Chi Yen, sold at a young age by her prostitute mother, leads a harsh life in the worst part of Canton.

Her initial goal in life is to be the "second ugliest" and remain unnoticed, so that she doesn't end up a prostitute herself. Through a series of events, Chi Yen finds herself on the run, taking ship to America. It's gold rush time, and America is a harsh, lawless place. But during the course of her travails, Chi Yen finds a wonderful box, and unknowingly helps hatch a dragon.

Now in America, with a drunken, opium smoking monk from the Temple of Seven Dragons and a novice monk, chased by an evil Englishman who wants the dragon, Chi Yen and friends fight to save the dragon and themselves and the world from a terrible fate.

From the ravages of China invaded by the British to the hills of San Francisco and the deserts of Nevada, this interesting tale bends history and gives us a story that keeps you turning pages til the very end.

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