

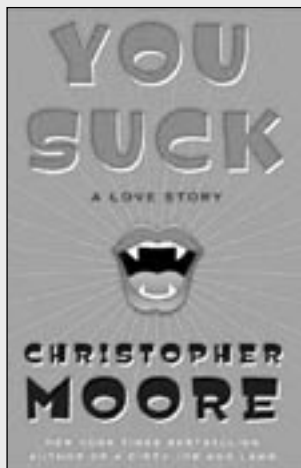
Traveling the entire length of the Great Wall



Nathan Gray

BEST-SELLING US FICTION

1. Plum Lovin' By Janet Evanovich
2. For One More Day By Mitch Albom
3. Cross By James Patterson
4. The Hunters By W. E. B. Griffin
5. Exile By Richard North Patterson
6. You Suck By Christopher Moore



You Suck By Christopher Moore

THOMAS Flood wakes up after a fantastic night and discovers that his girlfriend, Jody, is a **vampire**. And surprise! Now he's one, too.

Making their relationship work is the least of Jody and Tommy's problems. Vampirism has its **perks** (you can turn to mist and live forever), but sunlight is death and blood hunger makes you do some pretty bad things. Also, the couple are hunted by an ancient vampire who "turned" Jody and wants her back. Even worse, they are also chased by a band of amateur vampire hunters known as the Animals.

And that really **sucks**.

perk: 额外好处
suck: 令人失望、烦躁、厌恶
vampire: 吸血鬼

JONATHAN HAAGEN 21ST CENTURY STAFF

MANY people marked the millennium in special ways, but few people went to the extremes that Nathan Gray did.

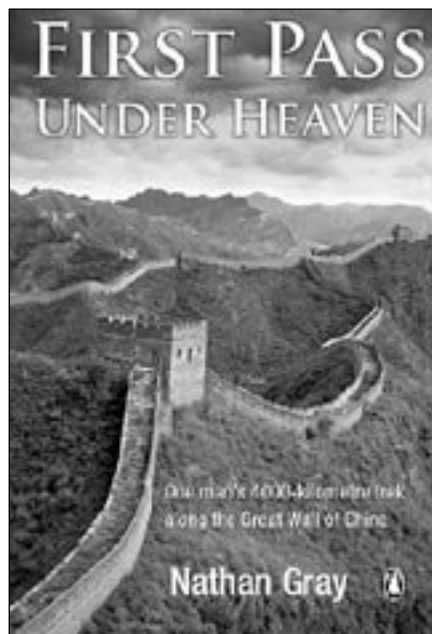
Gray was determined to begin the millennium with a great quest, and decided to become one of first Westerners to walk the entire length of the Great Wall. *First Pass Under Heaven* (Penguin Books, 267 pages) is his account of that incredible 4,000-kilometer **trek** along the wall.

The **epic** journey begins with Gray, a young New Zealand lawyer, setting out with a diverse group comprising a **Buddhist** monk, an Argentinean photojournalist, an Italian recording artist and an American golfer.

They set out with an innocent, excited anticipation of the journey to come, but the five men quickly encounter reality in the form of **blizzards**, lightning, thirst, starvation and snakes.

Each of the five has a different reason for traveling and it doesn't take long for the cracks to start to show. By day 24 of the 256-day journey, Gray is walking with just the spiritually-minded Italian as a companion. Eventually, Gray does succeed in his quest, becoming the first Westerner ever to accomplish the feat.

The story itself is told in the form of 256 different journal entries. For such a young man (Gray was only 28 at the time), the author is a wonderfully poetic observer of the world around him. Although the account is less funny than one might hope for, the book's chapters are littered with quotes from famous people, Gray's companions and Gray himself that are often



both beautiful and powerful.

Gray also relates a number of incidents that will surely **resonate** with foreigners who have visited some of China's less tourist-friendly places.

In one passage, Gray stays at a Chinese **garrison** where he is treated with incredible hospitality by the soldiers who **stuff** him with food and fill his glass "every time it approaches half-empty". However, when he tries to leave the garrison to continue his journey, the soldiers refuse to let him leave. They demand that he wait for their leader to decide. These moments successfully capture the dual experiences that most foreigners have when they visit another country. One moment you experience great kindness and generosity. The

next moment people can seem cruel for no reason. Gray's ability to capture both the good and the bad is one of the books greatest strengths.

The only real problem with the story is that it really does not reveal a great deal about China on either side of the wall. Although he does occasionally discuss the history of his surroundings, the journey really is Gray's primary focus and he tends to dismiss the people he passes along the way. Especially in the case of the rural Chinese who help house and feed him and his companions, one would expect Gray to be somewhat more respectful and grateful for their generosity.

Still, not every book that takes place in China should necessarily be about Chinese culture. Gray himself seems to understand this. In one chapter he gives a quote from Mao Zedong about the wall, "Either side of the wall, one blinding vastness".

Truly, it is a lot to ask one book to explain that "blinding vastness" to perfection. *First Pass Under Heaven* is the story of a remarkable journey. If readers can let it be that, it is a fascinating and enjoyable book to read.

blizzard: 暴风雪
Buddhist: 佛教的
epic: 壮举的
garrison: 驻地
millennium: 千年周年
resonate: 共鸣
stuff: 填满
trek: 艰苦跋涉

First Pass Under Heaven is available in major foreign language bookstores in Beijing and Shanghai.

SNEAK PEEK

There must be a village somewhere

First Pass Under Heaven excerpt

WE crawl out cautiously towards the cliff edge, peering over into the **abyss**. There, carving its timeless impression onto the **crimson** walls is China's Mother, the Yellow River. I stand up, **awestruck** before this superhighway of sustenance which winds its way through seven provinces from the Himalayas to the sea. The Wall ends – mere human-made veins – no match for this **artery**.

Technically, stage four of the Wall is

finished. There is no more of the Wall recorded on the maps until the city of Zhongwei. However, we are literally in the middle of nowhere. The desert lies above the sheer yellow cliffs the river has **etched** out, so we have little choice but to enter the deep valley and follow the flow of the river's current downstream.

We follow a trail down the side of the river. Some of the river walls tower up so steeply that we have to **clutch** the sides of the cliffs so as not to fall in.

...

We continue, cautiously rock-climb-

ing around **ledges**, and finally reach a rock **goat-pen** as a bright orange **twilight** glow sweeps along the **gorge** walls. A shepherd screams out to his goats from up a thin side valley. The goats look like they are laughing at him, behaving like **unruly** children as they run further away. Besides the pen lies a **raft** consisting of 12 dead sheep **carcasses**. The wool has been **shorn** and the bodies have been inflated for **buoyancy**.

"I'm sure we have to take this raft across," I mutter to Paolo. "Let's wait for the shepherd to come. He can't be

much longer."

"No, I think we should try to climb this mountain to the level of the desert. There must be a village up there somewhere."

abyss: 深渊
artery: 动脉
awestruck: 敬畏的
buoyance: 浮力
carcass: 尸体
clutch: 抓住
crimson: 深红的
etch: 蚀刻

goat-pen: 羊圈
gorge: 山峡
ledge: 岩石的突出部
raft: 筏子
shorn: shear 的过去分词, 剪毛
twilight: 曙光
unruly: 不守规矩的

Courtesy of the Penguin Group.