

# Earth to Hell

JOURNEY TO WUDANG  
BOOK ONE

KYLIE CHAN

HARPER

*Voyager*

[harpercollins.com.au](http://harpercollins.com.au)





*The Serpent slides through the black icy water of the Antarctic, wreathed in permanent darkness.*

*The Turtle hides from the weak Arctic sun beneath the ice.*

*They cry, but there is no answer.*

# Table of Contents

[Cover Page](#)

[The Serpent slides through ...](#)

[CHAPTER 1](#)

[CHAPTER 2](#)

[CHAPTER 3](#)

[CHAPTER 4](#)

[CHAPTER 5](#)

[CHAPTER 6](#)

[CHAPTER 7](#)

[CHAPTER 8](#)

[CHAPTER 9](#)

[CHAPTER 10](#)

[CHAPTER 11](#)

[CHAPTER 12](#)

[CHAPTER 13](#)

[CHAPTER 14](#)

[CHAPTER 15](#)

[CHAPTER 16](#)

[CHAPTER 17](#)

[CHAPTER 18](#)

[CHAPTER 19](#)

[CHAPTER 20](#)

[CHAPTER 21](#)

[CHAPTER 22](#)

[CHAPTER 23](#)

[CHAPTER 24](#)

[CHAPTER 25](#)

[CHAPTER 26](#)

[CHAPTER 27](#)

[CHAPTER 28](#)

[CHAPTER 29](#)

[CHAPTER 30](#)

[CHAPTER 31](#)

[CHAPTER 32](#)

[CHAPTER 33](#)

[CHAPTER 34](#)

[CHAPTER 35](#)

[CHAPTER 36](#)

[CHAPTER 37](#)

[CHAPTER 38](#)

[The Serpent raises its head ...](#)

[GLOSSARY](#)

[Voyager online](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Books by Kylie Chan](#)

[Copyright](#)

[About the Publisher](#)

# CHAPTER 1

‘Now,’ I said gently, ‘concentrate. You’ve done it before. This time, bring the chi out as slowly as you can. Feel the rubber band pulling it back.’

Apple bit her lip and the glowing yellow ball of chi floated out of her outstretched palm.

*Emma, emergency, the stone in my ring said. Some third years have run into trouble. They raided a prostitution den in Mong Kok that was holding sex slaves, and instead of humans running the show they met up with demons. They need help.*

‘Let the chi go, Apple,’ I said, still very gentle.

The chi floated back down into Apple’s hand and she sagged.

‘Take a break now, and don’t try it again without supervision,’ I said. ‘I’ve been called away, so we’ll end it there. Head back to the Folly and have a rest.’

Apple nodded. ‘Yes, ma’am. Thank you.’

I patted her shoulder, then quickly rose and spoke urgently to the stone as I charged out to the stairwell. ‘Get Marcus to bring the car around the front. I’ll meet him at the ground floor. Which Masters are free?’

‘Sit, Park, Lee and Edwards are there already. The demons are holding the students hostage. It’s a standoff,’ the stone said.

I jumped over the balustrade to the empty space in the centre of the stairwell, twenty storeys to the ground. I fell at maximum speed until the floor loomed below me, then slowed my fall, levered one foot on the railing and jumped down to the landing in front of the ground floor door.

‘Demons holding third years? They must be big,’ I said.

*Do you need us? General Ma said into my head. The demons holding your students are quite large.*

‘Aren’t you dealing with a demon attack on the Horse Village?’ I asked via the stone.

*The Majia are handling it well, General Ma said. If we bring in the Princess we will be finished very quickly and be back in Hong Kong within the hour to help your students. Western Horsemen are on their way to assist us.*

‘Can the Horses and Horsemen handle it?’ I said. ‘I don’t want to take Simone out of school unless it’s absolutely necessary, you know that. She’s skipping a lot of school with these attacks as it is.’

*They can handle.*

‘Head back when you’re relieved, and we’ll see if we need your help. How long do you think it will be?’

*About an hour and a half.*

‘See you then.’

*My Lady.*

It took nearly forty-five minutes to reach the area of Mong Kok where the students were being held hostage. Marcus wound his way through the narrow, busy streets of the area and dropped me outside the brothel, then went off in search of a car

park. The brothel had a large sign outside advertising the prices: *White Russian 500; Fair Skin Thai 400; North and South Chinese 300.*

Two of the Masters, Sit and Park, stood outside the brothel with a group of five or six seniors, looking up at the second-storey windows. The brothel was a blackened concrete apartment building, 1950s era, with small barred windows on each floor. The ground floor was occupied by a microscopic mobile phone shop, all pristine white tiles and blazing lights. The brothel's single front door had a steel gate, which now hung open. Plain narrow concrete stairs led up inside.

'Where's Edwards?' I said.

'Around the back in the alley with another couple of seniors,' said Lee.

'What do we have here?'

'Six level fifty to sixty demons. A couple of them appear to be Mothers. They're holding a team of third years who came in to practise on them and were taken by surprise.'

'Mothers? Damn. Anybody hurt?'

'One of the prostitutes tried to escape and a demon smacked her down; she's probably concussed,' Sit said. 'A couple of the students sustained some severe injuries when they were taken—these demons hit them hard with some sort of energy blast.'

'The police aren't aware of what's going on? We won't see uniforms and guns roll up?'

'No,' Park said.

'What do the demons want?'

'Free passage.'

'That's all?'

'Yes. We're just waiting for you to give the go-ahead on either a raid or to let them go. We're prepared either way.'

'Recommendation?'

'Let them go.'

'Can we take them down without hurting any more girls or students?'

Park hesitated, then, 'No.'

'Let them go.'

'Ma'am.'

Park concentrated, and the teams moved into action. Sit and Lee went upstairs to deliver the deal to the demons. A bus appeared around the corner and stopped outside the brothel.

'Demons took off,' Park said. 'Lee has taken a recording.'

'Good.'

Three more of the seniors with us charged into the building and up the stairs. Two of the four third-year students who had been held hostage came limping down the stairs, obviously nursing injuries. They made for the bus.

'By your leave, ma'am,' Park said, 'we'll take the other two injured students directly to the infirmary.'

'Go,' I said.

Park and Lee went into the building.

The seniors who had run up the stairs shortly before came down escorting ten or so prostitutes. The girls were tiny and slim; some of them only looked about fourteen

or fifteen. There were no Europeans, only Thais, Indonesians and Chinese. They were obviously terrified as the seniors guided them onto the bus.

A few bystanders watched, curious. One of the seniors jumped off the bus, walked over and loudly told them in Cantonese that this was a police plainclothes operation and to move along. The bystanders grinned but continued to watch, unfazed.

‘Update on the Horse Village,’ I said to the stone.

*Under control. A squad of about fifty demons attacked the village, but the Horses held them off. Three Horses were killed and four were injured before the Generals arrived to help.*

‘Tell General Ma we have a lid on things here and he’s not needed,’ I said.

*We have been called to another attack anyway, ma’am, Ma said. A phoenix has called for help—a Mother is outside her nest and threatening her clutch.*

‘Can they make it in time?’ I said.

*If we move now we may make it, but we will be cutting it close, Ma said.*

‘Need help?’

*Simone could be there immediately to protect these chicks, Ma said. It is the phoenix’s nursery; she thought it would be safe in this remote area, but some Mothers have found it. She and her children are fighting but there is a large number of demons after her clutch. He hesitated a moment, then, This looks very bad. Please allow us to send in Princess Simone.*

*Help, General Danahuo, a woman’s voice said into my head. All of my babies are here, and a Mother and sixteen of her demon spawn are attempting to break into my nursery. Her voice became strained. Help!*

‘Can you relay, stone?’ I said. ‘Let me see.’

‘Networking...’ The stone’s voice trailed off. ‘I have a link. The phoenix has a sentient stone Shen as a jewellery item. Oh! It’s Glauconite, I know this one. Bringing up an image.’

A phoenix appeared in front of me, transparent against the buildings and people around me. She bowed, spreading her scarlet wings; royal blue and purple peacock-like feathers rippled among the flaming red pinions.

‘General Danahuo,’ she said. She gestured with her head to her left. ‘There they are. They threaten my clutch.’

She was standing on a barren, rocky hillside somewhere in southern China. About twenty metres down the slope, some red-garbed warriors fought with a band of demons. A Snake Mother stood behind the demons; the top half of her body was human, but with the skin flayed off, while the bottom half was an enormous black snake with clear gelatinous toxin oozing from between her scales. She must have been close on four metres in length; a really big one. I gasped when I saw the demons she was controlling—fake stone elementals. They appeared to be made of rough-hewn blocks of granite held together with an invisible force. They were about two metres tall, had featureless faces and moved with disturbing smoothness as they battled the phoenix’s defenders.

‘More of these things!’ Edwards said as he approached me from the back of the building and saw the projection next to me. ‘Who’s making them? They keep popping up everywhere!’

‘I’m surprised they sent stone to fight the phoenix’s guards,’ I said. ‘Wouldn’t

water be more effective against fire?’

The guards, wearing traditional all-red Chinese armour, were fighting valiantly with both swords and phoenix fire, but the demons outnumbered them about three to two. None of the guards had fallen yet, but they were obviously losing the battle—the stone demons were completely unharmed by their weapons and fire.

‘Tell Simone,’ I said to the stone. ‘Tell her where to go.’

*Thank you, ma’am,* both the phoenix and General Ma said at the same time. The image of the battle snapped off.

*On it,* Simone said into my head. *It was only PE anyway.*

‘I’ll go on the bus with the girls,’ I said to the stone. ‘Tell Marcus to take the car back. How are the injured seniors?’

*In the infirmary back at the Academy,* the stone said. *Serious injuries but not life-threatening. There’s some debate about whether to send them to hospital.*

‘What does Regina say?’ I said as I got onto the bus and sat next to Edwards. Edwards, as usual, wore a pair of plain slacks and a business shirt without a tie. His bald head, glasses, and paunch made him look like a fifty-year-old schoolteacher—and deceptively harmless.

The driver pulled away from the kerb and into the traffic.

*Regina says hospital.*

‘Damn, we can’t afford this. If they don’t go to hospital what are the consequences?’

*They will just receive better care in hospital,* the stone said. *Regina doesn’t have the facilities to deal with this type of fracture.*

I hesitated. We would be asked too many awkward questions if the students were checked into a hospital. ‘Stone, get me Bai Hu, please.’

*Ma’am,* the White Tiger said into my head.

‘Ah Bai. We have two badly injured students and Regina wants to hospitalise them. Any room in your clinic?’

*Stand by.*

His voice returned a couple of minutes later. *Either of them demons?*

*No,* the stone said. *Human.*

*Ah shit,* the Tiger said. *Well, okay, I’ll take them. A Horseman is on his way to get them.*

‘Thanks,’ I said. ‘Why do you always want my injured demon students?’

The Tiger didn’t reply.

‘He has a group of his children researching demon nature,’ the stone said.

‘Dear Lord, he’s not doing any genetic experimentation on them, is he?’

*Nah, just having a look inside,* the Tiger said. *They’re moving way ahead of us in breeding research, they always have. I thought it was about time that we caught up.*

‘Breeding?’ I said, horrified.

‘The Tiger is breeding demons?’ Edwards said.

*No, no, of course not,* the Tiger said. *We just collect them as we go along. Some of yours would be fun to have—a few of yours are the results of some very interesting breeding experiments. That’s why they have so much free will and have joined you in the first place.*

‘You hurt one hair on any of my demon students’ heads and your tail is in serious



trouble,' I said.

'Hear, hear,' Edwards said quietly.

'He's not breeding them, he's collecting them and doing research,' I said for Edwards' benefit. 'He wants some of ours 'cause they're the result of some "interesting breeding experiments".'

Edwards leaned back in his seat and crossed his arms. 'No way is that bastard laying his paws on any of my students. My kids are not guinea pigs.'

*I promise I won't hurt them, Jim,* the Tiger said.

Edwards gave an excellent British harrumph. 'The psychological damage of undergoing that level of medical examination would undo all the good work we've done in getting these kids over what they've endured in Hell. The Tiger can piss off, he's not getting any of mine.'

*What if they volunteer?* the Tiger said.

'Oh, now that's clutching at straws,' Edwards said with amusement.

*It's like a holiday for them, Jimmy,* the Tiger said. *You know how nice it is out here. Let them come and check it out.* His voice became eager. *How many good demon students do you have anyway?*

'None of your damn business, and shut the fuck up,' Edwards said. He winced. 'Sorry, ma'am.' His tone was amused as he spoke to the Tiger again. 'Get lost. You're not getting any of my demons.'

'You're not getting any of the Academy demons,' I added. 'Get your own. And if I send any over to you for medical attention and find that you've experimented on them, your tail is mine.'

*Fine thanks I get for helping you out here,* the Tiger grumbled in my head. *Just one or two—*

'No!' Edwards and I said at the same time.

*Fine!*

'Oh, and Ah Bai?' I said.

*What!*

'Thanks for looking after these students for me, my friend. Most appreciated.'

*Stop sounding like Ah Wu,* he said, and went quiet.

'Be interesting to see what he's finding out about them,' Edwards said. 'I've always been fascinated by demons. Never knew they existed when I was back in the UK, but I must have run into a couple of them without realising.'

'You think so?' I said.

'It follows. Demons are often in on the nasty stuff that goes on.' He nodded towards the prostitutes, who cowered in their seats at the back of the bus as the students tried to explain to them that they were no longer slaves. 'We were often called in to deal with this sort of thing.'

'Ever run into any nasties that seemed more dangerous than your average felon?' I said. 'That gave even a group of trained fighters like yourselves a tough battle?'

He thought for a moment. 'Never had anybody that didn't drop when we shot them, and demons would be unaffected by guns.' He hesitated. 'But some of them did seem tougher. We were given extensive training, and it's like they were too.' He shrugged. 'Stronger, faster, smarter. A match for us. Could have been demons.'

'But if you shot them, they fell down,' I said. 'Never had any explode into demon

stuff?’

‘Never,’ he said. ‘Must go back to the UK and have a look one day.’

‘I’ll come with you,’ I said.

He harrumphed again. ‘Neither of us have the goddamn time, ma’am. We’re both flat out keeping our people here safe from the Demon King and his little kiddies.’

I sighed. ‘I know.’ I touched the stone. ‘How’s Simone doing?’

‘Let me see,’ the stone said. ‘She’s just arriving there now.’

‘Can you link me up, please?’

Simone appeared as a small image in front of us, running downhill towards the demons from where the phoenix was standing guard at the entrance to her nest. She was wearing her school PE uniform—a pair of green shorts and house T-shirt—and carrying her father’s sword, Dark Heavens. The sword was completely without adornment on either the handle or the blade. It was slightly too big for her but it was her weapon of choice.

As she closed on the demons, she lifted into the air, her tawny hair flying around her. She raised Dark Heavens horizontally above her head, and held her left hand up, her first two fingers pointing towards the demons, ready to use chi energy if necessary.

She flew lightning-fast over the Snake Mother, somersaulted directly above it and sliced diagonally through its skinless body. It fell in two pieces, the snake part writhing across the ground, the human hands scrabbling at the gravel.

Simone landed in a crouch, and I was breathless for a moment thinking she had hit the ground too hard. She spun and rose and launched shen energy at two nearby demons, blinding white blasts that destroyed them. The red warriors that had been fighting the demons stepped back in shock and raised their hands.

About six of the fake stone elementals remained. Simone ran to the centre of the battle, concentrated for a split second, then rammed Dark Heavens into the ground. Her hair flew up, the gravel lifted from the ground around her and a shockwave spread outwards from the blade of the sword, creating a visible ripple in the stony ground. When the shockwave hit the warriors, it knocked them off their feet; but when it hit the demons, it completely shattered them. They fell to the ground in shards of stone.

The shockwave stopped and the gravel that had been flying around Simone dropped to the ground. She pulled her sword free, and walked back up the slope to the phoenix. The red warriors rose and checked the area; the demons had all been destroyed.

Simone shared a few short words with the phoenix, then they touched wing to hand, the flaming feathers doing her no damage. She nodded to the warriors, who saluted her, then she shot straight up into the air and disappeared towards the north, leaving behind a trail of vapour.

*I thank you, Madam General,* the phoenix said into my head. *You and the Princess have saved my babies. I am your servant.*

‘Tell her she’s welcome,’ I said to the stone, and the image of the phoenix snapped off.

‘Never ceases to amaze me how such a sweet young lass can kick so much serious arse,’ Edwards said.

One of the seniors called to us from the back of the bus. ‘A few of these girls don’t speak anything but Indonesian and Thai, and one is Vietnamese. We need your