

There they were. Hundreds... no, thousands of warriors standing row upon row. Massed in battle dress, the army stretched beyond her, sheltered by the great roofed-in space. Jennifer just stood there with her mouth open as she stared down into the excavated pits that held them.

All the way to China – and it was a very long flight – she’d had to listen to Maggie and Sam going on about Emperor Qin Shi Huang. Emperor Qin or Ch’in was the amazing warrior who’d unified China in 221 b.c.e. and given the country its name. She swore she’d scream if she heard another word about him and his tomb.

In spite of herself she’d even learned a couple of words of Mandarin. *Bin Ma Yong* was what the Chinese called the famous Terra Cotta Warriors that had been found in Chin’s tomb. *Bin Ma Yong* (it sounded more like bin ma yo) meant “old soldiers.” Cute.

They certainly were old, they'd been sealed up in the Emperor's tomb in 210 b.c.e. For centuries they'd remained hidden until the tomb was found in 1974. So far, according to Maggie, nearly 8,000 "old soldiers" had been uncovered. There was more excavating to be done and Sam's grandfather had been invited here as an observer. And that was why Grand had decided that it would be a very "educational trip" for everybody.

"Educational trips" didn't rank high on Jennifer's list, but trips with Grand had, so far, featured a lot of excitement. Secret agents in Greece and Turkey, and gun smugglers in Mexico. It was amazing how the three of them travelling with Grand just seemed to attract some sort of adventure.

"We really can't let her travel alone," Jennifer's twin sister Maggie had said when Grand first suggested the trip, "what would have happened in Mexico when she was taken hostage if we hadn't been there to rescue her?"

"And besides," Jennifer had agreed, "Sam's going to visit his grandfather Martell at the dig near Xi'an anyway...and we can't let him travel alone...he'd have been shot by a spy in Greece if I hadn't been there to rescue him!"

So here they were. She knew that one of the reasons their mother had agreed to this trip so soon after the one to Mexico was that Maggie had persuaded Jennifer to come back from Mexico raving about the Mayan ruins and how much she'd learned. Anything, Mum thought, to get Jennifer's Social mark out of the cellar.

“Travel is broadening,” Mum had said, and when Jennifer argued that she hadn’t eaten all that much, Maggie had glared at her and said, “It broadens the *mind*, stupid!” It was tough having a sister who couldn’t take a joke.

Now, standing here looking at this amazing sight, Jennifer was beginning to agree. And even, though she’d complained at them and frequently told them to “shut up” all the way from Edmonton to Xi’an, she was now grateful to Sam and Maggie for their in-flight lectures.

She couldn’t get over this place. Below her thousands of warriors lined up as if ready for battle. And each of them different.

The mystery was – had they been copies of individual men in the Emperor’s real army or had the hundreds of artisans who’d worked on the terra cotta decided to make copies of themselves and be immortalized for Eternity like Emperor Chin?

Jennifer wanted to wander through the ranks and stare in the men’s faces to see if she could find a clue. But of course the pits were fenced off and tourists could only look at them from behind the railings above.

Somehow, she decided, she would have to figure out a way to get in here when she was invisible. But she’d have to tell Sam and Maggie so that they could be sure Grand didn’t worry. She needed a very good plan, she decided.