



The Way of the Master

Steve Burns

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Murder and betrayal in ancient China. On his return to his home city of Qufu in the province of Lu during the Zhou dynasty, Yuen Meng Ji is delighted to be reunited with Master Confucius, his old friend and mentor after a five-year absence. But his delight at being home is short-lived as he is given the task of investigating the brutal murder of Shi, a complex former travelling companion and minor dignitary from the neighboring province of Qi. Set in the year 518BC, The Way of the Master is not only an account of violent murder and betrayal, but also a detailed insight into ancient China - its customs, political intrigues and philosophies. For decades the Zhou dynasty had been in a steady decline and had already disintegrated into semi-independent feudal provinces where the ruling Dukes were prepared to use treachery, conspiracy and assassination to further their own political ambitions and territorial expansion. Within this environment of political turmoil the Hundred Schools of Thought emerged, each school competing to promote their own philosophy to guide the ruling Dukes to a more stable and harmonious political situation. As a senior minister in the Lu government, Confucius is forced to try and defend his own values against other conflicting philosophies as well as trying to compete with reality where virtue and harmony have no place in a world of political ambition and territorial expansion. This account breathes life into the daily life of the citizens of Qufu, from how they acted and spoke to who they looked up to and why. Master Confucius is an enigmatic, wise teacher who guides by example, teaching his follower how to unravel the riddles he finds himself ensnared in. Only in asking the right questions, will Yuen Meng Ji ever gain the answers he so desperately needs.

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