

**HOW I
LOST MY
KIDNEYS
IN CHINA**

**A TWENTY-FIVE YEAR
OVERINDULGENT ODYSSEY**

RANDALL FLORES

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INTRODUCTION

It's 6 a.m. on a January morning, and I'm standing outside in the bitter cold, still drunk, wearing boxers, a windbreaker, and flimsy slippers. I feel a powerful urge to rid myself of the awful yellow stomach acids percolating in my belly. Presently, I'm on the front line of a battle with a factory in northern China, and my hotel is on fire. It's only Tuesday, the second of a three-day bender through the valley of hard-drinking miners. There would be another trip a few days later: the further, the better. It was my job, but I also fed off the adventure, going to the edge without falling over.

For almost twenty-five years, I lived and worked in the Greater China Region and threw back swimming pools full of alcohol. I drank wine (red, white, yellow, and rice), whiskey, vodka, gin, sake, Chinese firewater (*baijiu*), Jager, beer, and anything else they served me. Why did I drink so much? Seventy percent was for my job, and the rest was the boozier in me. But my life wasn't all about the liquor. I played multiple roles such as a high-flying executive, a nuts-and-bolts factory guy, a road warrior, a family man, a boss, an adventurer, a connoisseur of food and drink, a teacher, a human resources manager, a fixer, an accountant, a runner, a tour guide, and an extremely ill person. I wrote this book to share some of my experiences.

The story begins with my introduction to Mandarin and follows my career as I take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves. Most chapters overlap as I had relationships with factories in multiple cities for many seasons. Although, some sections jump to the future, the book generally follows the original timeline. For nearly two decades, I

had a home in Hong Kong and one in Shanghai. I lived two different lives that coexisted while my illness was always lurking in the background. You can skip around, but I recommend reading it in order to get the full effect. Most places no longer exist, and I changed the names of the people involved. I included a map and a glossary of Mandarin words and slang in the appendix for reference. As exchange rates have fluctuated, the prices in the stories are relative to the period. I converted most costs into U.S. dollars for clarity. Travel times changed immensely during the past twenty-five years. What took seven or eight hours by car when I arrived takes only two today, likewise for train routes. The times noted in the book are what I had to endure.

To be clear, I did not write this book to criticize China. I owe the country and its people a lot. This story is about my journey that primarily **took place** in China. Through my experiences, I hope to portray the development speed of everything around me when my life improved and my choices grew. I tried to remember everything, but anyone who drinks knows you are missing several evenings (years) of memories. They're gone. Just like they never happened, wiped away. Then you have a flashback—moments in time, unlocked by a picture or a song. I write them down before they disappear into the abyss again.

But some recollections never go away. They are the best (or worst) stories. Most of those are included here. They were the easiest to transcribe because they're still clear, as if I filed them in my memory for this book.

After twenty-five years, I had ample tales to fill several volumes. This one is long enough.

So grab a glass of your favorite tippie and enjoy the ride. This is how I lost my kidneys in China.