



IMAGINE A DEN FULL OF HUNGRY DRAGONS stirred awake from their comatose state. For all you doubters out there, I have one word of warning —beware. It is happening. The dragons have awakened and they are on the prowl. If the sounds of those thunderous drums in the 2008 Summer Olympics opening ceremony struck a nerve, you have heard nothing yet. Those were only pulses emanating from the dragons' hearts.

It has been years since I first set foot on the streets of Beijing. I remember the day when everything shut down and stores emptied out when the light began to fade. Yes, I was sitting in a simple hotel room with a small bed, a cushioned chair, and a body-length mirror, looking out the window and staring in awe at a dust-filled boulevard. It was only six o'clock and the last of the cyclists had already cleared the street. The only sign of life was an unfamiliar Mandarin voice streaming from a TV set a few feet away. It was a steady voice that spilled into the vacuum of the room, a voice filled with coded propaganda that echoed into the back of my mind. Things have changed since that day. In less than two decades, over two-thirds of those 600-year-old one-story buildings that I had curiously ventured by have been razed. In their places are new skyscrapers and glass buildings that reflect a nation on the rise again at rocket speed, a nation whose ambition stretches as far as the moon and beyond.

All nations rise and fall, but only great nations will last more than a thousand years. China, despite her flaws and humiliations, has withstood the test of time. She has stood around long enough to rediscover her youth. From a time of kings and concubines to an era of steel buildings and larger than life dams, China has truly transformed herself. She exploded from the Foun-

tain of Youth a new woman, a metamorphosis quicker than the world has anticipated. Her wrinkled skin softened and smoothed out. Her long gray hairs turned silky black like the shadow of the thousand-mile long Great Wall that stretches across the vast belly of her landscape. Her curly nails trimmed and polished, and the womb that once lay barren is now filled with life. The shriveled vessels inside her once more engorged with blood, fed by a greater voracity than ever before. But China must take great caution. For in youth, there are lessons to be learned.



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