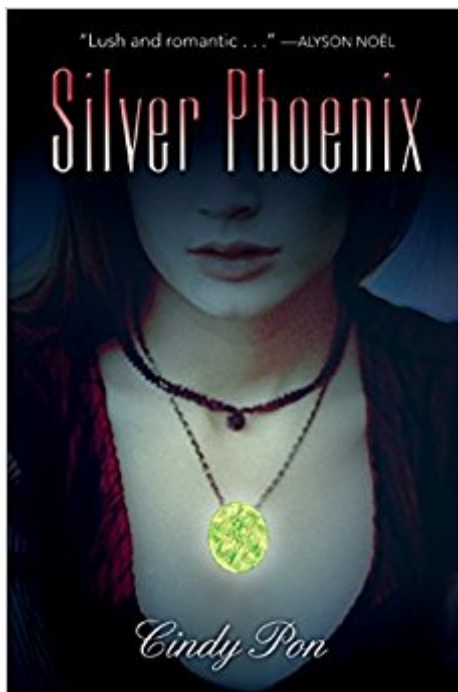


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# Silver Phoenix



## Synopsis

Ai Ling can see into other people's minds and reach into their spirits. But she doesn't know why this power has awakened inside her. She only knows that it is growing. It leads her on an epic journey—one that brings her to the edge of the deepest evil. Chen Yong has a quest of his own, but then his path crosses Ai Ling's. And there's a connection so strong that neither can ignore it. Now they must face terrifying demons determined to kill them, and battle through treacherous lands. It is their destiny. But can destiny keep them together?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up—At 17, Ai Ling is past the age when most girls in the kingdom of Xia have married and borne children. The gods, it would seem, have a different destiny in store for her, one that begins to reveal itself when her father travels to the Emperor's Palace and fails to return. Ai Ling is determined to find him and destroy his captor, a corrupt advisor who has unnaturally extended his life by feeding on the souls of others. On her journey, which is rich in action but a little slight on character development, Ai Ling meets Chen Yong, a young man of mixed race who seeks the truth of his birth and faces a variety of predators, both demonic and sexual. Fans of Tamora Pierce's and Robin McKinley's work will enjoy the adventure and strong female protagonist; the Chinese-influenced society and bestiary may also tempt aficionados of Asian culture and media.—Christi Esterle, Parker Library, CO Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable

edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** If the cover image of a fearless Chinese heroine reminds readers of such films as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, that's intentional; the story inside will, too. First-time novelist Pon has a screenwriter's talent for producing a sweeping saga, and in this, the first of two books set in ancient China, 17-year-old Ai Ling faces demons, monsters, and gods as she tries to fulfill her destiny. Frightened after a local man tries to blackmail her into marriage, Ai Ling resolves to journey to the emperor's palace, where her missing father was last seen. Along the way, she meets the handsome Chen Yong, who is of mixed parentage and on a quest to find answers to questions about his family that have haunted him his whole life. (In the story's prologue, readers get hints about his origins.) As in most martial-arts movies, the story sometimes takes a backseat to the action, but Pon doesn't stint when it comes to her characters. Ai Ling is a clever and determined heroine, Chen's younger brother is a witty teen whose girl-crazy ways transcend the centuries, and even the monsters have dimension. Pon's writing, both fluid and exhilarating, shines whether she's describing a dinner delicacy or what it feels like to stab an evil spirit in the gut. There's a bit of sex here, including a near rape, but it's all integral to a saga that spins and slashes as its heroine tries to find her way home. Grades 9-12. --Ilene Cooper --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I finished reading Cindy Pon's *SILVER PHOENIX* around one in the morning last night & I simply couldn't put it down until I knew what happened to Ai Ling and Chen Yong, her father and the evil Zhong Ye. Despite needing to work on my own book, despite needing to do some lawyering, despite needing to pay attention to the other humans in my life the canine in my life does not allow for being ignored, so he is not on this list & my nose stayed glued to Pon's epic tale of magic, mythology, and brutal love until the last word, which if you're wondering, happens to be "twilight." Check out the notes I furiously typed at that late hour subsequent to closing the book, needing to get my immediate thoughts down on paper: 1) *SILVER PHOENIX* is epic and awesome and so freaking good. a journey reminiscent of *The Odyssey* and really, does it get much better than that? 2) the feels, the adventure, the friendship, the unrequited love. it's too much but you only want more, more, more 3) the badass girl and the boy who lets her be badass, promising always to be at her side & swoon 4) the

magic and evil and wonder 5) Chen Yong's pain of feeling other, being spoken to as if a lesser being, always seeking a place to belong when it's right under his nose, with Ai Ling's promise you I was not delirious Silver Phoenix is just as fantastic as classics like The Odyssey and Lord of the Rings and as I turned its pages, it reminded me of the pure joy I feel whenever I read those tales of the escapades and intrigue, the danger lurking around every corner, in every face, the overall genius of the hero's journey. Silver Phoenix is just all. so. good. But for me, because I am an admitted sucker and sappy romantic at heart although please, please, please make my lovers total badasses to the end even more moving and poetic than the journey is Pony's underlying theme, that wicked slow burn she weaves throughout her novel, of unrequited love. She had me stopping and taking notes and copying passages several times throughout the book: 1) when Ai Ling notices Chen Yong's eyes and immediately wishes she hadn't 2) "I'm glad I followed you here." 3) the LOVE LOST TREE "ugh stop it! please" 4) "Besides, you always had my heart, I just never had yours." 5) Ai Ling's memorization of Chen Yong's letter to her, "the curves and lines of his calligraphy" • "just kill me already because you already ripped out my heart" At one point, I got so brave as to tweet Cindy and based on her response, I think she enjoys that slow burn and our suffering for unrequited love. She certainly knows how to write it. Silver Phoenix, Ai Ling, and Chen Yong are going to hold special places in my little bruised and battered heart for a very long time and already have me rushing off to order the sequel.

#Ididthat Get the book, folks. Now. For real. #thankmelater

Silver Phoenix is the story of Ai Ling, a strong, independent young woman who leaves her home to both escape an unwanted marriage and to find her missing father. A fantasy in a world based on ancient China, Silver Phoenix is filled with adventure, strange creatures, and great characters. Ai

Ling is joined on her adventure by a pair of brothers, the strong, serious Chen Yong and his love-crazed younger brother, Li Rong. I found the three characters to be well-written and distinct individuals.

**World building:** Unlike most of the fantasy novels I've read, Silver Phoenix has an Asian setting. It was a refreshing change from your typical pseudo-European world. It was a great to see characters confronted by new and unique gods, demons, and monsters instead of the standard orcs, elves, and ogres (or variants thereof). I loved the author's world-building efforts; her descriptions of architecture, food, clothing, and the environment made the world come alive.

**Engagement:** A very engaging novel, Silver Phoenix definitely keeps the action rolling. It is fast-paced and tightly written. My only serious complaints would be with the rapidity with which Ai Ling's powers developed and the presence of an overly helpful magic item. Other than that, I found myself engrossed in both the story and the world the author created.

**Writing:** The author writes very clear, straightforward prose. I enjoyed her style. Silver Phoenix reads like a blend of historical fiction, fairy tale, and fantasy. Having said that, my knowledge of ancient Chinese history is pretty sketchy and the author has clearly stated that Xia is only based on Chinese culture and folklore - it is not supposed to strictly represent China at any particular time period. The novel was, in every way, professionally written.

**Impact:** Although classified as a young adult novel, I thoroughly enjoyed the novel from an adult perspective. While aimed at a YA audience, some scenes felt very grown up. A few times I felt myself wondering if it was a serious fantasy or a lighter fairy tale. However, these were minor distractions. I loved the characters, there was a lot of action, tension was high throughout, and the world building was outstanding. As soon as I finished Silver Phoenix I immediately downloaded Fury of the Phoenix.

**Plot Sketch:** Ai Ling's father left the emperor's court in shame, but no one will tell Ai Ling what happened. Now it's time for Ai Ling to marry. After several failed prospects, Ai Ling's father is summoned to the emperor. He tells his wife and child that he will return in about a month. After about three months with no word from her father, a slimy grimy icky man from town offers to take Ai Ling as his fourth wife in exchange for forgiving her father's alleged debt. Since Ai Ling's mother can't read and it's not Ai Ling's place to read, her mother appears to be considering it. So Ai Ling takes to the road in search of her lost father. He had given her a jade pendant that a monk had given him for his daughter should they be separated for any amount of time. Along the way she encounters all kinds of demons that are trying to hinder her progress and makes a few friends. A great read and I can't wait for more!

**Verdict:** I Heart It! Buy this book. Seriously. You won't regret it. This is me raving about Silver Phoenix to you. Cindy Pon has a hit on her hands! I can't wait for

another installment. Not only are there eunuchs and concubines, but also fish who spit venom, three-breasted woman-monsters, dragons, serpents, flying chariots, and a soul-sucking evil that lives in the emperor's palace. You'll lose yourself in this world.

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