Introduction

Webb screamed, falling onto the bed. Then he turned over and stared at the ceiling as lost memories suddenly came back to him. He thought of bodies falling under his gun or his knife. And now he knew the two men within him. One was the man he wanted to be, but for now he had to be the other.

David Webb teaches at a small college in Maine, in the United States. His wife has just been kidnapped and now he understands that he will have to become somebody else, somebody he was earlier in his life—the highly-skilled assassin who was known as Jason Bourne. Webb does not want to become Bourne again but he has no choice.

In the 1970s, more than ten years before *The Bourne Supremacy* begins, Webb was working in Cambodia for the Central Intelligence Agency. In neighboring Vietnam, the war being fought between the Americans and the North Vietnamese was coming to an end. One day a plane from across the border killed his first wife and their children. Crazy with anger, Webb ran away to Saigon, where he was asked to join a top secret special operations group known as Medusa. While working for Medusa, behind enemy lines, Webb met the original Jason Bourne. He killed him, because Bourne was working for the North Vietnamese.

Years later, Webb used the name Jason Bourne in a secret operation that went badly wrong. He was shot in the head and lost his memory. However, his employers in the United States thought he had gone out of control and had stolen a great deal of government money. They—and his real enemies—tried to kill him. The story of how Bourne, with the help of a young Canadian woman called Marie, discovers who he is and defeats

Sample pages

the assassins, is told in the first of the three best-known Bourne books: *The Bourne Identity*. This is also a Penguin Reader.

In *The Bourne Supremacy*, the second book in the series, Bourne is married to Marie, but is forced away from his quiet, normal life in Maine to Hong Kong. This is 1985, and the colony is moving into its last few years under British control.

The island of Hong Kong became a British colony in 1842, after a war between Britain and China. In 1860, following China's defeat in a second war, Britain obtained a part of the mainland. However, most of the colony was gained when a 99-year agreement between the two countries was signed in 1898. In the years before this agreement was due to end, Britain realized that it could not keep the small part of Hong Kong that was given without limit of time. So, in the 1980s, there were discussions between the two countries for the whole of Hong Kong to return to China in 1997. There was an atmosphere of tension and uncertainty. Nobody was sure what the future might bring, and it is in this situation that most of the action of this novel takes place.

Sample pages

In the earlier part of the twentieth century there were great changes in China, leading to a Communist government and the start of the People's Republic of China in 1949 under the leadership of Mao Zedong. Those who opposed Communism were known as Nationalists; they kept control of the island of Taiwan, which today is called the Republic of China. However, as we shall see in the book, some people in the People's Republic remained opposed to the Communist system.

The Bourne Identity, *The Bourne Supremacy* and the third book, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, are all best-sellers and were made into movies starring Matt Damon. The stories in the films, however, are very different from the books. In the film of The Bourne Supremacy, Jason Bourne is living in Goa, India. Marie is killed very early in the story, and later the action moves to Europe and the United States.

Robert Ludlum was born in New York City in 1927 and grew up in New Jersey. His talents first led him in the direction of acting, and he appeared in a Broadway show at the age of sixteen. From 1945 to 1947 he served as a soldier in the South Pacific, and his first serious piece of writing was a 200-page description of his time there. However, after returning home and graduating from college, he continued with his acting career. In the 1950s, he worked as a stage and television actor. He then became a producer of plays for theaters in New York and other cities.

His first novel, *The Scarlatti Inheritance*, appeared in 1971 and became a bestseller. This was followed by *The Osterman Weekend*, which was later made into a movie. The hero of the book, John Tanner, works with the CIA to discover Soviet agents among his closest friends. This sets the style of Ludlum's heroes as strong, independent men who battle against organizations, sometimes secret ones. The action always takes place against a background of real-world events.

From the mid-1970s, Ludlum was a full-time writer. He wrote more than twenty novels. Over 200 million copies have been sold and the books have been translated into twenty-nine languages. Five of the novels have been filmed, and two more are in development.

Robert Ludlum died in Florida in 2001. However, since then a number of novels have appeared in his name, based on writing that was incomplete at the time of his death, and four more Bourne novels have been produced by the writer Eric Van Lustbader.

Sample pages

Chapter 1 The Holy Man

Kowloon, 1985. Across the water from Hong Kong Island, the land belonged to Hong Kong, not to China, but here politics took second place to the more important business of filling stomachs.

As the sun went down, a small motorboat moved into an empty space on the west side of the harbor. The noisy crowds of locals and tourists were silenced as people noticed the figure climbing up the ladder. He was a holy man, tall and dressed from head to foot in pure white cloth, which hid most of his face. He walked slowly through the crowds and disappeared into the busy streets.

The priest went east on Salisbury Road until he reached the Peninsula Hotel, then turned north into Nathan Road, to the start of the brightly-lit Golden Mile. He walked for ten minutes, sometimes giving commands to the same short, strong Chinese man who sometimes followed him, sometimes ran ahead.

The priest nodded to him, twice, then turned and walked through the entrance to a nightclub. The Chinese man stayed outside, his hand inside his jacket, his eyes watching the street.

Inside the nightclub, moving colored lights cut through the heavy smoke. On the stage a rock group sang fast and loudly, the music changing between western and Chinese.

The priest stood for a moment looking across the large, crowded room. A fat, well-dressed man approached him.

"May I help you, Holy One?" asked the manager.

The priest leaned forward and whispered a name. The manager's eyes opened wider, then he bowed and showed the priest to a small table by the wall.

"Would you like something to drink, Holy One?" he asked.

"Goat's milk, if you have it. If not, plain water. Thank you."

The manager bowed and moved away. This priest had spoken

Sample pages

the name of a powerful taipan*, and on this particular evening the taipan was in the building. But it was not the job of the manager to tell him that the priest had arrived. The holy one had made that clear. When the taipan was ready, a man would come to him.

"Send a kitchen boy down the street for some goat's milk," said the manager to the head waiter. "Tell him to be quick."

The holy man sat quietly at the table; then suddenly, several tables away, a match was struck and quickly put out—then another, and finally a third. This last one was held under a long, black cigarette. The priest moved his head toward the flame and the poorly-dressed Chinese man smoking the cigarette. Their eyes met and the holy man nodded slowly.

Seconds later the smoker's table was in flames. Fire shot up from the surface, spreading quickly to the menus and food baskets. The smoker screamed and turned the table over. Waiters ran in and customers on all sides jumped from their chairs as the fire on the floor, for no obvious reason, spread around their feet. Then there was even greater trouble. Two waiters had come close to the poorly-dressed man. He attacked them with open hands and fast kicks. The manager, now shouting, moved in, then back again after a well-placed kick to his stomach. As three more waiters ran into the fight in defense of their boss, men and women began hitting each other. The rock group played louder and faster. The poorly-dressed man looked across the room at the table next to the wall. The chair was empty.

The priest had stepped through a door near the entrance to the nightclub. Down the passage a man stood up straight, his hand reaching inside his jacket for a heavy gun. The holy man moved slowly toward him.

"Everything is peaceful," he repeated quietly as he approached.

* taipan: a powerful businessman in Hong Kong or China

Sample pages

The guard was beside a door. He pointed the gun. "Are you lost, priest? What are you doing here?" he said.

The guard had no chance. The priest pulled out a long, sharp knife and cut the man's wrist, then swung the blade across his throat. The dead man fell to the floor.

The priest put the knife back into the cloth of his robe, then took out an Uzi machine gun. He kicked the door open and ran inside.

Five men, all taipans, were sitting around a table with pots of tea and alcoholic drinks near each. They looked up, their faces twisted in fear. A burst of bullets flew into them.

The killer knelt down by a pool of blood. He pulled out a square of dark cloth from his sleeve and laid it on the floor, then wrote a name on it in the blood. As he left the room, he removed the knife from his robe and pushed it into his belt. Then he opened the door and moved around the shouting, fighting crowd. Nothing had changed, but why should it? He had left only thirty seconds ago.

The killer priest pulled the robe from his body, dropped it and the Uzi on the floor next to the door, then took off a pair of thin gloves and put them into his pockets.

The priest and his assistant fought their way through the frightened crowd at the door and into the street. They moved through the onlookers and were joined by the short, strong man who had waited outside. He took the killer's arm and pulled him into a narrow street, then took two towels from his jacket. One was soft and dry; the other, in a plastic bag, was warm and wet.

The killer took the wet towel and began rubbing it over his face, removing the make-up that had made him look more Chinese. He dried himself with the second one, then straightened his tie. "Go," he said to the other two. They disappeared into the crowds. And a well-dressed Westerner walked out into the streets.

Inside the nightclub the trouble had suddenly stopped.

Sample pages

Waiters were calming down the customers and clearing up the mess. The manager looked around the room and saw the pile of white cloth in front of the door to the offices. White cloth, pure white—the priest? The *door*! The *taipan*! The *conference*! His face wet with fear, he ran between the tables and knelt down in front of the robe. He saw the machine gun sticking out and spots of blood on the cloth.

"What is it?" asked a second man in a suit, the manager's brother and assistant. "Oh *God*!" he swore under his breath as the manager picked up the gun in the white robe.

"Come!" ordered the manager, getting to his feet and moving toward the door. In the passage the dead guard lay in a river of his own blood. Inside the conference room the manager approached one of the five dead bodies. He wiped away the blood and stared at the face. "We are dead," he whispered. "Kowloon is dead. Hong Kong is dead. All are dead. This man is the Vice-Premier of the People's Republic of China."

"Here! *Look*!" The manager's brother picked up a piece of dark cloth from the floor and stared at the name in blood on it: *JASON BOURNE*.

The manager moved across and stared too. "Oh my God!" he said, his whole body shaking. "He's come back. The killer has come back to Asia! *Jason Bourne*! He's come *back*!"

Sample pages

Chapter 2 The Undersecretary

The sun fell behind the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in central Colorado as the Cobra helicopter landed a hundred meters from a large wooden house. The house was not on any public map and its messages were secret from enemies and also from friends. This was a place for work that was so sensitive that the planners could not be seen together.