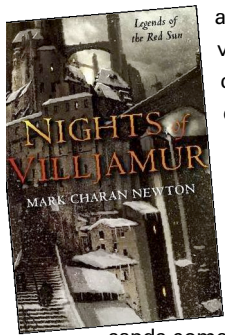


Mark launches his legends of the Red Sun

Nottingham member Mark Charan Newton is looking forward to the publication of his first book this Spring. *Nights of Villjamur* is the first book in what Mark has called the *Legends of the Red Sun* series. Mark has sent us a description of the story to whet our appetite...

In the novel, political intrigue and dark violence converge in an enthralling fantasy. An ice age strikes a chain of islands, and thousands come to seek sanctuary at the gates of Villjamur: a city of ancient spires and bridges, where banshees wail the deceased, cultists use ancient technology for their own gain and where, further out, the dead have been seen walking across the tundra. When the Emperor commits suicide, his elder daughter, Rika, is brought home to lead the Jamur Empire, but the sinister Chancellor plans to get rid of her and claim the throne for himself. Meanwhile a senior investigator in the city inquisition must solve the high-profile and savage murder of a city politician, while battling evils within his own life. When reports are received that tens of thousands of people are dying in a bizarre genocide on the northern islands of the Empire, members of the elite Night Guard are sent to investigate. *Nights of Villjamur* is due to be published by Pan Macmillan in June.



Brave Philip's flight of a lifetime

Friday December 9, 1994. A sunny, calm, cold and rain-free day. The day that changed Philip Watling's life. The day that he stepped off a bus and into a nightmare.

"Quite what happened nobody knows; my memory appears to have stopped the night before the accident... that whole week may be lost in the mists of time."

The accident that Philip writes about at the beginning of his book, almost killed him. After he stepped off the bus he was hit by a car and, as he was falling, hit again, in the head, by the bus.

He was very badly hurt. Indeed, had it not been for the rapid response of London's Helicopter Emergency Medical Service Philip would have died.

As it was, Mensan Philip was to face the best part of a year struggling to recover from his injuries – and is still recovering, on a daily basis.

His fight for life is chronicled, painfully and meticulously, in *Flight of A Lifetime*, a book threaded together from a journal Philip began keeping during the latter stages of his stay in hospital and by the words of friends and family who helped in that recovery.

Parts of the story are chilling, all the more so for the calm and dispassionate way that Philip describes his ordeal and there is a fearsome tone to the manner in which the daily grind that is hospital life is laid bare.

While he himself cannot remember the accident or those early days in a trauma unit, the book pieces together events with the help of eye-witnesses, medical staff and family and friends... many of whom thought that Philip may have died from his injuries.

He, however, was made of stern stuff. As Anna James, a psychologist, was to write later: "Philip is a very brave guy whose 'stand up and fight' attitude should be an inspiration to us all."

Philip himself writes: "In later weeks my father was to voice his concerns about my ability to get better and if I had it in me to go up against this insurmountable wall that was the severity of my accident..."

"Don't worry, I retorted... if I was going to give up I would probably be dead by now."

While this is a book which deals with the past it also looks to the future. Philip explains how the whole incident has changed him – how he has become more confident, less shy, yet more gentle, a somewhat different person to the one who stepped off that bus back in the winter of 1994.

And perhaps the most poignant section of the book comes not in words but in the series of pictures which show the slow and painful progress to recovery, from the battered body of a young man in a hospital trauma unit, through his rehabilitation and to the last picture which shows him once more riding a horse.

"I am able to ride a horse, drive a car and live independently," he says. "Yet my consultant had told my parents that I would not be able to do any of these. He even had serious doubts that I would ever walk again..."

A lot of his recovery, he says, can be put down to sheer determination and stubbornness but, he adds, he would never have had the chance to show those qualities had it not been for the 'air ambulance'.

"A miraculous yellow bird came swooping down to land near where I lay in the middle of a busy road, at the height of the morning's rush hour. It deposited a doctor and paramedic who stayed with me for over half an hour before I was considered stable enough to be taken anywhere... being hit by the car and headbutting the bus may not have killed me but if it were not for the unique qualities of HEMS, its speed and the presence of a doctor I might not be able to talk or to write, to cook a meal or even eat it myself; I could well be reliant on a wheelchair. Even if I was not going to die, the HEMS helicopter saved my life."

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that the foreword book is written by Alan Rock, chief pilot of the London helicopter service.

And it also contains a very long list of what Philip describes as "the miracle workers" – including medical staff from The Royal London Hospital, the Lister Hospital and Northwick Park Hospital.

The book concludes movingly: "Only this morning, my father was thinking and then said 'it's so nice to have you here, I am so grateful that you are still alive and are physically and mentally well. I have a lot to be thankful for'. And do you know what? I have a lot to be thankful for as well."

Philip is a very brave guy whose stand up and fight attitude should be an inspiration to us all...



Flight of A Lifetime by Philip Watling is published by Athena Press, priced £7.99 (paperback).