

Two writers and a marriage made in literary heaven

Chongqing-born writer Hong Ying, whose influential works have been published in foreign languages since the 1990s, first met Adam Williams at a friend's party, when he was caught up in the excitement of the publication of his first novel.

Then she was widely known for her novels *K: the Art of Love*, *Peacock Cries*, and the autobiographical *Daughter of the River*, and had lived in London for almost nine years.

"I spent an hour telling her how to write a book and get published in the UK, not knowing she was already a world-known writer," Williams says.

Hong Ying, when recalling the first encounter, says she just listened patiently, and noticed how frank the man was, telling her all things - including the secrets of getting published.



Chongqing-born writer Hong Ying married Adam Williams. The couple goes to Italy in summer to focus on writing. Provided to China Daily

The two met again at Williams' book launch in London.

"I got a copy of his book. After reading it, I was surprised that a businessman could go this far in writing," Hong says.

Hong Ying is also impressed by the smart and complete ways that Williams constructs his works.

"He carefully arranges lots of hints that foreshadow the plot, and in very logical and efficient ways," she says, adding his works offer a different but truthful taste of Chinese history that touches her deeply.

The duo eventually got married and now live with their young daughter in Beijing. And in summer, they go to Italy to write.

"I thought that life would throw me no new surprises. But in Venice I met a Chinese writer, a feminist and a



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marvelous cook, and now we have a daughter. So a new adventure begins," Williams writes.

But the adventure, shared by two writers from two different countries, is far more interesting and fruitful than expected.

Williams likes to test ideas on people, and he sometimes reads passages aloud to her. Although she admits to being a little irritated at being awakened and having to listen to the passages at midnight, she will always answer with, "Oh, they're good" and suggest useful literary devices if required.

In Italy, they write on separate floors: she on the top floor and he on the bottom.

When he struggles with writing, she is the one who "understands immediately what you're trying to do", he says.

He says that writing books is a lonely quest in which nobody can help. And he says it's good to live with a writer who can offer professional criticism once the book is finished and is moving into the "most creative stage of being scrutinized by professional readers".

And she spent a year to revise and polish the Chinese translation of his book, willingly, because she is "a faithful reader and meantime, Mrs Williams".